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DOI

[10.1017/S0007123415000745](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123415000745)

Publication date

2018

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

British Journal of Political Science

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Citation for published version (APA):

Harteveld, E., & Ivarsflaten, E. (2018). Why Women Avoid the Radical Right: Internalized Norms and Party Reputations. *British Journal of Political Science*, 48(2), 369-384. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123415000745>

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Why Women Avoid the Radical Right: Internalized Norms and Party Reputations

EELCO HARTEVELD AND ELISABETH IVARSFLATEN*

Radical Right Parties (RRPs) consistently attract more male than female voters. Puzzlingly, there is no equally consistent gender difference in policy preferences on the main issues of these parties – immigration and minority integration policies. Indeed, in some countries, for instance the UK, women have as restrictive immigration policy preferences as men, but are still less likely to vote for RRP. This article proposes a novel answer to this gender gap puzzle that emphasizes the normative conflicts about prejudice and discrimination that surround RRP across Europe. It uses representative survey data to show, for the first time, that women are more likely than men to be motivated to control prejudice, and that this difference in motivations has political consequences. More specifically, the study demonstrates that the higher prevalence of internal motivation to control prejudice among women accounts for the gender gap in voting for RRP that become trapped in conflicts over discrimination and prejudice. Voting patterns for RRP that have been able to defuse normative concerns about prejudice, such as the Progress Party currently in government in Norway, are different.

In mature Western European democracies, the Radical Right is the most recent party family to have emerged, and its members have become influential political actors in most of these states.¹ By now, we know quite a bit about the voters of these parties. We know that they support more restrictive policies on immigration and integration than other voters, but that their preferences are more heterogeneous in other policy areas.² We also know that they tend to have lower education, on average, than the voters of other parties.³ Furthermore, there tends to be a substantial gender gap in their electorates: on average, more men than women vote for the Radical Right (Immerzeel 2015).⁴ In fact, this is among the most consistent and universal findings in electoral research about these parties.⁵

The anti-immigrant stance and the education gap are fairly well explained by the ‘losers of globalization’ hypothesis,⁶ which holds that the groups most vulnerable to competition from immigrant labor will most strongly oppose immigration and ethnic diversification.⁷ The gender gap, however, is not well explained by this hypothesis. In many countries, women are more supportive of restrictive immigration and integration policies, but they are still less likely to vote for the Radical Right.⁸

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¹ Art 2011; Bornschieer 2009; Kitschelt 1997; Mudde 2007.

² Ivarsflaten 2008.

³ Bornschieer 2009; Ivarsflaten and Stubager 2012.

⁴ Coffé 2012; Givens 2004; Immerzeel 2015.

⁵ Harteveld et al. 2015.

⁶ Kriesi et al. 2006.

⁷ Rydgren 2008.

⁸ Harteveld et al. 2015.

The persistence of a gender gap in radical right voting, even in models that take into account the key policy preferences on immigration,⁹ suggests that the conventional models are incomplete. In fact, the non-policy causes of RRP voting patterns remain poorly understood. We argue that to improve explanations, we need to study not only voter policy preferences or attitudes, but also voter *motivations*: the strength of their commitment to certain goals and aims.¹⁰ We show that motivational gender differences regarding the aim of avoiding prejudice, rather than gender differences in immigration policy preferences, are key to explaining the Radical Right gender gap.

While the anti-immigrant message of RRP resonates with many voters, many of these parties also raise normative concerns about discrimination and prejudice due to fascist or extremist legacies or contemporary rhetoric and symbols.¹¹ When parties continuously become trapped in conflicts about discrimination and prejudice, internalized motivations to avoid prejudice can prevent voters from voting for such parties, even if they agree with the policies they propose. If women are more likely to be motivated to control prejudice than men, then such differences can explain why women are less likely to vote for RRPs.

Our explanation of the RRP gender gap builds on and extends work by Blinder, Ford and Ivarsflaten,¹² which shows that people who are highly motivated to control prejudice are less likely to support extreme right parties and less likely to support restrictive immigration policies proposed by extreme right parties. We show for the first time using representative survey data from Europe that women are more likely to be motivated to control prejudice than men. Furthermore, we demonstrate that taking this gender difference in motivation into account explains the non-policy gender gap in the two countries in which the Radical Right has been the least able to defuse normative concerns – the British National Party (BNP) and the Sweden Democrats (SD). However, gender differences in the motivation to control prejudice do not explain the gender gap where the Radical Right is widely considered to have successfully overcome such concerns by advocating a diverse policy portfolio, such as in the case of the Progress Party (FrP) currently in government in Norway.

Put differently, the electorate of ‘toxic’ parties that have become mired in conflict over past and present discrimination and prejudice is restricted to the subset of voters that is not motivated to control prejudice, and these are more likely to be male. From this we conclude that the motivation to control prejudice is an important part of the explanation of the persistent gender gap of RRPs.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Gender differences in various types of political attitudes and behaviors are well documented.¹³ Studies have investigated topics such as the general shift of women toward the left of the

⁹ Cutts, Ford, and Goodwin 2009; Van der Brug and Fennema 2009.

¹⁰ Bargh, Gollwitzer, and Oettingen 2010.

¹¹ Blinder, Ford, and Ivarsflaten 2013; Carter 2005; Ivarsflaten 2006.

¹² Blinder, Ford, and Ivarsflaten 2013.

¹³ However, it should be noted that the term ‘gender gap’ to denote such findings is not fully appropriate, because what most previous studies have studied empirically is a ‘sex gap’. ‘Gender’ relates to characteristics that are socially constructed as ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’, while ‘sex’ refers to the biological categories of men and women. Almost all of the studies about male-female differences in political behavior employ the term ‘gender gap’, even though they mostly rely on sex categories in their operationalization. Because the term gender gap has become firmly established in this literature, we follow this convention in the current paper. The differences we describe may well be socially constructed, i.e., gender rather than sex differences, but our study is not designed to test this claim empirically.

political spectrum in established democracies,¹⁴ and gender differences in the saliency of issues¹⁵ and in turnout for elections.¹⁶ Because the pool of eligible voters in established democracies is divided roughly equally between men and women, gender has been dubbed the ‘fault line of maximum political cleavage’.¹⁷ Gender differences have been found in the electorates of individual parties (such as male over-representation in the Republican Party in the United States) or party families (the Radical Right as *Männerparteien*, the Greens as *Frauenparteien*).¹⁸ Paradoxically, while gender is one of the default variables in almost all studies on public opinion and voting behavior, its inclusion and impact in electoral research is too seldom theoretically motivated.

Among virtually all European Radical Right electorates, women are under-represented, often constituting only one-third of the voters.¹⁹ In fact, gender is the only socio-demographic variable that is consistently relevant in practically all European countries.²⁰ Among the proposed factors responsible for this gap are gender differences in religiosity, work sector, welfare dependency, aversion to violence and war, and support for nativist policies.²¹ However, thus far no satisfactory explanation of the gender gap has been found. Existing studies have yielded contradictory or inconsistent results.²² As Mudde has noted, the assumption in some studies that men are more likely to support the core ideology of the Radical Right – nativism or ethno-nationalism – has not been empirically documented.²³ In several studies, women were even found to be *more strongly* opposed to immigrants than men.²⁴ In a study of seventeen countries, Hartevelde et al. show that, across the board, female voters are less likely to vote for an RRP *even if they agree with the core ideology*.²⁵ Our novel contribution to this debate is to argue that the gender gap in voting for RRP that are mired in conflict about prejudice and discrimination is a ‘special’ one, because it is to a large extent caused by gender differences in *motivations* rather than *ideological positions*. Below, we first outline why normative motivations are crucial for understanding Radical Right voting in general. Subsequently, we discuss how this affects the gender gap in RRP voting.

Prejudice versus Social Norm

When it comes to group politics, citizens’ opinions and actions are shaped by opposing forces.²⁶ On the one hand, it is well established that many majority population citizens have negative

¹⁴ Inglehart and Norris 2000.

¹⁵ Gidengil 1995.

¹⁶ Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001; Gallego 2007.

¹⁷ Jennings 1988, 9.

¹⁸ Mudde 2007.

¹⁹ E.g., Givens 2004, 32; Norris 2005, 145. In this study, we use the term ‘Radical Right’ to denote parties on the far right of the political spectrum with a shared core of nativism and authoritarianism (Mudde 2007). Many scholars further differentiate Extreme Right parties from Radical Right parties by pointing to the anti-democratic nature of the former, contrasted with an endorsement of democracy (though not necessarily liberal democracy) by the latter (Mudde 2007, 24). We expect our core hypothesized mechanism to inform voting for both types of parties, but use the term Radical Right to denote both.

²⁰ Mudde 2007, 111.

²¹ For an overview of some of these explanations, see Mudde (2007, Ch. 4), Hartevelde et al. (2015), and Arzheimer (2009).

²² Givens 2004; Fontana 2012; Immerzeel, Coffé, and van der Lippe 2013; Rippeyoung 2007.

²³ Mudde 2007, 113.

²⁴ Coenders, Gijsberts, and Scheepers 2004; Immerzeel, Coffé, and van der Lippe 2013.

²⁵ Hartevelde et al. 2015.

²⁶ Blinder, Ford, and Ivarsflaten 2013.

biases against immigrants, ethnic minorities, Muslims or other ‘out-groups’.²⁷ On the other hand, present-day Western societies are characterized by a widespread social norm *against* prejudice, and many citizens sincerely wish to conform to this norm: they are internally motivated to control prejudice. Researchers have developed and validated individual-level measures of the extent of internalization of such motivation, and they show that this internal Motivation to Control Prejudice (MCP) is not distributed equally among citizens.²⁸

The psychological model of how motivations shape attitudes and behavior is based on dual-process logic.²⁹ The core of this logic is that attitudes consist of both automatic and controlled components. Automatic responses (or implicit attitudes) are generated without cognitive effort. Controlled responses (or explicit attitudes), by contrast, involve effort. This controlled process brings behavior into line with conscious normative commitments. While stereotypes are automatically activated in the presence of a member of an out-group, citizens who are motivated to control prejudice can bring this automated response in line with egalitarian beliefs.³⁰

However, people need to be *aware* that a norm is at stake before they take the cognitive effort to control prejudice³¹ and adjust their response in accordance with it. In the context of MCP, Blinder, Ford and Ivarsflaten show how the presence of cues suggesting racism or discrimination can ‘trigger’ MCP to override negative biases.³² They show that respondents with a high MCP respond differently to arguments attributed to RRP that trigger normative concerns than do respondents with a low MCP. Blinder, Ford and Ivarsflaten argue that the conflicts about racist and/or fascist heritage, symbols or arguments that surround RRP make them what we term ‘toxic’.³³ Indeed, they show that the likelihood of voting for toxic RRP is negatively related to MCP.

Gender and MCP

Although the number of population-representative samples that include measures of MCP is currently growing, its application in European countries (and in the context of migration and integration policies) is recent. The first major European validation study was published in 2010. Our knowledge about the distribution of MCP – both at the individual level (across socio-demographic categories) and at the systemic level (depending on party systems and media debates) – is therefore limited. In this study, we focus on gender differences in such motivations and their effect on the composition of Radical Right electorates.

To our knowledge, only one previous study employing MCP measures has reported a comparison between men and women. Ratcliff et al. found in their study of 760 students in Ohio that men’s average MCP score was significantly and substantially (over 20 per cent) lower than women’s.³⁴ Empirical evidence of a gender difference in MCP is thus supportive but scarce.

There are, however, theoretical reasons to expect women to be more motivated to control prejudice than men. Women have been argued to place a greater importance on interpersonal relations³⁵ and generally score higher on empathy.³⁶ It is therefore reasonable to expect

²⁷ Coenders, Gijssberts, and Scheepers 2004; Sniderman 1995.

²⁸ Dunton and Fazio 1997; Ivarsflaten, Blinder, and Ford 2010; Plant and Devine 1998.

²⁹ Chaiken and Trope 1999.

³⁰ Devine 1989.

³¹ Kahneman 2011.

³² Blinder, Ford, and Ivarsflaten 2013.

³³ Ivarsflaten, Blinder, and Ford 2010.

³⁴ Ratcliff et al. 2006.

³⁵ Gilligan 1982.

³⁶ Lennon and Eisenberg 1987; Macaskill, Maltby, and Day 2002.

a stronger focus on interpersonal relations to be associated with a greater commitment to the goal of acting without prejudice toward others. Furthermore, women as a group in contemporary Europe have a self-interest in opposing traditional social hierarchies. Due to past and present experience of gender discrimination, women as a group may have become more strongly motivated to fight prejudice of all sorts. For example, studies have repeatedly pointed to consistent gender differences in Social Dominance Orientation.³⁷ These studies show that men are more likely than women to desire and support group-based hierarchies, in which particular groups dominate others. The anti-prejudice norm aims to control biases that are associated with (and supportive of) traditional group hierarchies, and it is therefore theoretically plausible that the commitment to control prejudice will be lower among those who stand to benefit from the traditional hierarchies.

If, indeed, MCP is generally lower among male than among female voters, this can potentially explain the gender gap in voting for toxic RRPs: women's generally higher motivation to control prejudice will then offset the effect of policy attitudes. However, these theoretical conjectures should of course not be accepted without empirical investigation. We therefore propose to test the following hypothesis:

HYPOTHESIS 1: male-female differences in MCP, rather than policy attitudes about immigrants, explain the gender gap in voting for toxic RRPs.

Triggers

According to the dual-process logic, MCP can easily coexist with negative biases in the same individuals, and a signal that raises normative concern is therefore necessary for MCP to constrain thoughts and actions. In other words, a normative trigger needs to be present for behavioral differences to be evident between high-MCP and low-MCP individuals. Our argument, following that of Blinder, Ford and Ivarsflaten, is that toxic RRPs that have no shield against accusations of racism and extremism will trigger such normative concerns, while non-toxic RRPs that have a shield against such accusations will not trigger normative concerns.

Few of the parties considered part of the Radical Right family resort to blatantly racist arguments in their party programs. Parties usually need a 'legitimate' or 'modern' image in order to be potentially successful.³⁸ Ideological links to the historical extreme right have hindered the development of some of these parties.³⁹ Ivarsflaten shows that, in order to achieve electoral significance, parties rallying against immigrants need 'a legacy that can be used to fend off accusations of racism and extremism' or a 'reputational shield'.⁴⁰ For example, she shows how a party with a clear reputational shield against charges of racism, the Swedish Liberal People's Party, was able to successfully mobilize a large share of the Swedish electorate around the controversial policy proposal of a language test for immigrants in 2001 – long before (and to a much larger extent than) any of the contemporaneous extreme right parties managed to mobilize similar sentiments.⁴¹

Consequently, we expect that motivational differences between men and women *only* explain the gender gap in voting for RRPs that lack such a reputational shield. Conversely, normative motivations will not result in a gender gap where RRPs have been more successful at shielding

³⁷ Sidanius, Pratto, and Bobo 1994.

³⁸ Cole 2005; Ignazi 2005; Taggart 1995.

³⁹ Hainsworth 2008; McGann and Kitschelt 2005.

⁴⁰ Ivarsflaten 2006a, 2006b.

⁴¹ Ivarsflaten 2008.

TABLE 1 *Cases*

Party	Nature of signal	Expected role of MCP
British National Party, UK	Association with extremism and street gangs, no reputational shield	Strongest
Sweden Democrats, Sweden	Origin in extreme right, no reputational shield, but recent moderation	
Progress Party, Norway	Radical Right ideology, but reputational shield due to anti-tax origins; broad policy portfolio; had been accepted into the governing coalition at the national level at the time of data collection	Weakest

themselves from charges of racism. The electorate of toxic parties that trigger normative concerns is restricted to low-MCP voters, who are more often male than female. Shielded RRP, by contrast, *do* attract high-MCP voters. Such parties may or may not have a gender gap in their electorate, depending on the rest of their ideological program, but MCP should not account for such gender gaps. An important implication of this argument is that RRP that make a credible effort to distance themselves from extremism, racism, prejudice and discrimination can (depending on the rest of their policy portfolio) experience a feminization of their electorates, while parties that become trapped in these conflicts are likely to exhibit a stable gender gap.

Cases

In Table 1, we summarize our expectations of the extent to which the RRP in our study are toxic and therefore can be expected to trigger the anti-prejudice norm. We study three cases that vary on the toxicity dimension: BNP (UK), SD (Sweden) and FrP (Norway). The BNP is an extreme right case without a reputational shield. The SD do not have a reputational shield either. The party has tried to substantially reform itself out of the extremist stigma, but it is still mired in controversy over prejudice and discrimination and had not been able to successfully defuse normative concerns at the time of data collection for the present study. The Norwegian FrP is a right-wing populist case with a reputational shield that has been frequently met with charges of inciting prejudice, but has become increasingly successful at defusing such concerns, to the extent that it has now been included in the governing coalition with the mainstream right *Høyre*. The case selection allows us to probe the hypothesis that MCP explains the gender gap only in RRP that are trapped in conflicts over racism and discrimination.

At the one end of the scale, the BNP is the most strongly associated with outright extremism and racism. The party continues to be ‘associated [...] with an illegitimate tradition’.⁴² While the BNP leadership has attempted to distance itself from the old extreme right, notably by stressing cultural and populist arguments over racism, the party’s ‘continuing dependence on right-wing extremists [associated to violence] consistently undermined the party’s strategy of “modernization”’.⁴³ We therefore expect a gender gap due to differences in MCP to be clearly present in the UK case.

⁴² Goodwin 2013, 11.

⁴³ Goodwin 2013.

The SD has roots in historic fascism as well, and party members wore uniforms as late as the 1990s.⁴⁴ In the 2000s, under new leadership (including current leader Jimmie Åkesson), the SD has gone through a substantial moderation process. It publicly rid itself of several former extremist elements, substituted a flower for the torch in its party logo, and managed to increase its voter base in local, national and EU elections. However, because reputations are sticky and the party has no main policy agenda other than exclusionist nationalism, it is still not able to provide a sufficient shield against normative concerns for large parts of the Swedish public. We therefore expect that MCP explains an important part of the gender gap in SD voting.

At the least toxic end of the scale, the FrP is a clear example of an RRP with a reputational shield. It was founded in the 1970s as an anti-tax party, and paid little attention to immigration during the first decade of its existence.⁴⁵ Its status as one of the biggest parties in the country – the second largest between 1997 and 2013 – signaled social acceptability, as did its inclusion in the government with the mainstream Conservative Party just a few weeks before the data we analyze were collected.

This reputational difference between the FrP and the other parties is backed by empirical evidence. In surveys that were part of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) project, respondents were asked to score parties on a scale from 0 (extremely dislike) to 10 (extremely like). A large percentage of extreme dislikes (0's) can be argued to signal social stigma, as it represents a very strong repulsion that is qualitatively different from assigning a low but not extreme score like 2 or 3. The data show that the SD is denounced to a much larger extent than the FrP: they are extremely disliked by almost two-thirds of the electorate (64 per cent), versus a quarter for the FrP (26 per cent).⁴⁶ In short, we expect that the FrP triggers few, if any, normative concerns, and that motivational differences therefore play a limited role in shaping FrP voting – let alone explaining a gender gap.

METHODOLOGY

To investigate the hypotheses posited above, we rely on data incorporating measures of MCP from three countries. For the United Kingdom, we use the British version of the 2009 CCAP project (B/CCAP), a multi-wave panel conducted in conjunction with national election campaigns.⁴⁷ For Sweden and Norway, we rely on data collected in the Citizen Panel surveys of both countries in 2013.⁴⁸ Given the multiplicity of data sources, no completely identical measures are available in all countries. However, the measures are sufficiently equivalent to allow for a comparison of the way they are related to gender and voting within each country.

Appendix A provides an overview of the attitudinal variables used in each country. To measure motivational differences, we relied on available indicators of (internal) MCP.⁴⁹ This measure scaled well in all cases, with Cronbach's α ranging between 0.79 and 0.84 (see Appendix A for details). Preferences with regard to immigration and integration, the core policy agenda of the Radical Right, were measured using multiple questions about

⁴⁴ Rydgren 2006.

⁴⁵ Widfeldt 2000.

⁴⁶ No CSES data are available for the BNP.

⁴⁷ For more information, see <http://ccap.nuff.ox.ac.uk/>.

⁴⁸ For the Swedish Citizen Panel, see <http://www.lore.gu.se/surveys/citizen/>. For the Norwegian panel, see <http://www.uib.no/en/citizen/43063/about-panel>.

⁴⁹ Studies of MCP often distinguish between internal and external motivation to control prejudice. Given our interest in the internalization of the anti-prejudice norm, we only focus on internal MCP.

immigrants and their integration; these questions also scaled well (Cronbach's α 's between 0.79 and 0.82). For reasons of space, we label this variable *Restrictive Immigration Preferences*.

The items used in these surveys were validated (based on similar scales) in earlier studies, which show that they are empirically unrelated to the Social Desirability Scale and the Self-Monitoring Scale.⁵⁰ This ensures that the measure does not merely pick up a general tendency to give socially desirable answers. Furthermore, as expected based on the dual-process theory presented above and empirical findings from previous studies, the motivational items correlate negatively with restrictive immigration preferences, but are still distinguishable from them. Appendix A presents the results of a confirmatory factor analysis, which shows that, in all three countries, the motivational and policy preference items load on different latent factors.⁵¹

Gender was measured using a dummy for the sex of the respondent (0 for men, 1 for women). The dependent variable – voting for RRP – was measured in slightly different ways in each country. Any analysis of vote choice for RRPs in the UK suffers from the low number of respondents that have voted for the BNP in a single survey. Therefore, in the UK, our dependent variable consists of a dummy indicating whether respondents indicated a vote preference ('if there were elections today') for the BNP in any of the five waves – collected over slightly more than one year – of B/CCAP. Still, this number is relatively limited (forty-six women and fifty-five men), which restricts the complexity of the models we can estimate for the UK. No such problems arose in the Norwegian case, due to the relatively large vote share of the FrP.

In the Swedish Citizen Panel, no vote preference question was asked of the respondents who received the battery of MCP questions. We therefore rely on a propensity to vote question instead: respondents were asked to indicate how likely they would be – on a scale from 0 to 10 – to ever vote for the SD. This measure is strongly correlated with party sympathy scores (thermometer scores), but previous research shows that the propensity to vote question is more closely linked to the actual vote.⁵² The dependent variable thus differs between countries, preventing direct comparisons of the *size* of gender gaps in absolute terms. However, and more importantly, these measures *do* allow for a valid comparison of the *mechanisms* behind the gender gaps. See Appendix B for descriptive statistics of the main variables.

We rely on the following strategy to test our hypotheses. First, we estimate models in which voting for the Radical Right is regressed on the gender dummy. The coefficient of this dummy reflects the size of the gender gap. Subsequently, we add the traditional policy attitude variable *Restrictive Immigration Preferences*, and the new variable, *Motivation to Control Prejudice*, in turn. The motivational hypothesis will be supported if we observe a significant decline in the gender coefficient when we include the new motivational variable in the model.⁵³

⁵⁰ Ivarsflaten, Blinder, and Ford 2010.

⁵¹ The measures of immigration policy preferences used here are deliberately chosen to be comparable to those used in most other studies of Radical Right voting. Seen in terms of the dual-process psychological model, these preference measures are composites, related to an unknown degree to both implicit negative bias and explicit MCP. Importantly, the items do not clearly and consistently trigger MCP, because they ask about normatively ambiguous categories that do not necessarily trigger MCP, such as immigrants (see Blinder, Ford, and Ivarsflaten 2013). Implicit measures of negative bias would allow a full and detailed test of the psychological mechanisms implied by the dual-process logic. Such a test is not needed in the current study, which investigates whether taking into account motivations improves explanations of the gender gap in Radical Right voting beyond the conventional accounts, which use the composite measure of policy preferences. For this reason we also refrained from using overly contentious items in our migration policy preference scale.

⁵² Van der Eijk et al. 2006.

⁵³ For a comparable procedure, see Hartevelde et al. (2015). We refrained from pooling the data sources because of differences in operationalization and sampling procedures. It is therefore not possible to formally test

Given that the dependent variables in the UK and Norway are binary, we use logistic regression in these two countries. Because comparing coefficients between logistic models is not reliable, we present coefficients based on the so-called y-standardization procedure, which do allow for such comparisons.⁵⁴ The regular coefficients are presented in Appendix B.

RESULTS

Descriptives

Before we can test whether gender differences in MCP shape the gap in RRP voting, we have to establish whether the men and women in our samples actually differ in their scores on these variables. For both the MCP and immigration policy preference measures, we divided the respondents into three groups with an equal number of participants: low, medium and high. Figure 1 shows the percentage of men and women that fall within each group for both measures. It confirms that men are *not* consistently more ‘tough on immigrants’ than women.⁵⁵ In Sweden and Norway, men do report a significantly – though not very substantively – stronger anti-immigrant sentiment than women, while in the UK no significant differences are found. The evidence suggests that, if anything, men in the UK are *less* opposed than women to immigrants. The gender gap in attitudes is thus not universally present or always substantial. Moreover, the graph reveals that, as expected, *women score significantly higher than men on the MCP scales*.⁵⁶ In all countries, this gap is substantially larger than any gaps in restrictive immigration preferences.

To assess whether these gender differences in MCP are robust, we subsequently estimated models controlling for socio-demographic characteristics.⁵⁷ Table 2 shows the difference between men and women in MCP before and after controlling for these characteristics. To ensure comparability across scales and countries, the scores have been standardized. Again, we find gender differences in MCP, and they are sizeable – approaching half a standard deviation. Moreover, the second column shows that the gender differences are highly robust, as they are hardly affected by controlling for a range of other variables. The finding that women are consistently and – at least in the cases we have examined – universally more motivated to control prejudice than men is original knowledge. It contributes to our understanding of the nature of the relationship between different groups experiencing discrimination, such as women

(Footnote continued)

whether the patterns differ between countries. The separate country analyses can be compared only in terms of the general conclusions of each analysis.

⁵⁴ Winship and Mare 1984.

⁵⁵ Coenders, Gijsberts, and Scheepers 2004; Mudde 2007.

⁵⁶ Of course, a comparison of means does not tell the whole story. Such differences could either reflect that (a) most men score somewhat lower than women (a shifted distribution) or that (b) some men score very low and/or some women score very high (outliers). Inspection of the kernel density distributions (presented in Appendix C) suggests the former, as the distribution among women is similar to that among men, but shifted to the higher end of the scale. This is relevant for our present analysis: if MCP turns out to play a role in explaining Radical Right behavior, it means that it makes *most* women *somewhat less likely* to vote for these parties, rather than making *a subgroup* of women *highly unlikely* to do so.

⁵⁷ These include age and education in all three countries; in addition, income is included in the UK and Norway, and work sector in the UK only. In contrast to many voting studies, controlling is not needed to prevent spurious relations: we are interested in gender differences, and gender is largely an exogenous variable. The fact that this effect is robust to the inclusion of socio-demographic variables indicates that it is not the result of a composition effect, which suggests that these differences exist regardless of men’s and women’s age, jobs or education.

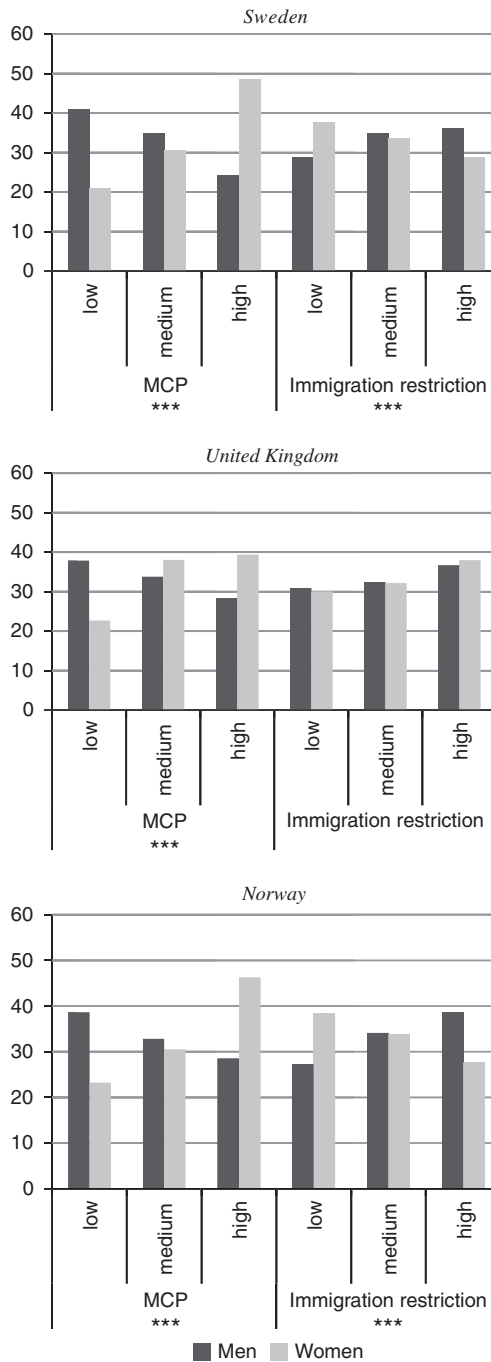


Fig. 1. Comparison of gender differences in motivation to control prejudice and restrictive immigration preferences in Sweden, the UK and Norway

Note: distribution in percent. Asterisks next to the scale label indicate whether men and women differ significantly in their average score ($p < 0.001$).

Source: Sweden UK

TABLE 2 *Difference between Male and Female average MCP (in standard deviations)*

	No controls	With controls
UK	0.33	0.32
Sweden	0.48	0.44
Norway	0.29	0.28

TABLE 3 *Regressions (UK and Sweden)*

	Model I		Model II		Model III		Model IV	
	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>
United Kingdom – BNP								
Gender (male)	0.21	0.07	0.21	0.05	0.09	0.42	0.14	0.22
Restrictive immigration pref. MCP			0.35	0.00			0.25	0.00
Intercept	-2.62	0.00	-5.43	0.00	-1.15	0.00	-3.76	0.00
Pseudo R ²	0.5%		5.4%		4.6%		6.6%	
Sweden – SD								
Gender (male)	0.81	0.00	0.52	0.00	0.16	0.27	0.22	0.08
Restrictive immigration pref. MCP			1.29	0.00			0.95	0.00
Intercept	1.64	0.00	6.23	0.00	-1.47	0.00	-0.82	0.00
Adjusted R ²	2.0%		28.0%		22.3%		32.5%	

For UK: logistic regression. Dependent variable = voted for BNP in any of the waves. Coefficients on basis of y-standardization procedure (Winship and Mare 1984). N = 1,253; number of BNP voters = 101.

For Sweden: OLS regression. Dependent variable = reported propensity to vote for SD (0–10 scale). N = 1,381.

and minorities. Our findings suggest common interests and solidarity, rather than competition, between groups that experience discrimination.⁵⁸

Explaining the Radical Right Gender Gap in Non-reputational Shield Cases

Above, we have established that men are significantly less motivated to control prejudice than women in all of the studied cases. Does this explain the gender gaps in voting for toxic RRPs – the BNP and SD – as suggested in the theoretical discussion above? Table 3 shows the result of regression models predicting a vote for the Extreme and Radical Right in the British and Swedish cases. The analyses presented here do not include any socio-demographic or attitudinal controls, because we are mainly interested in the nominal gap. However, Appendix C presents the models controlling for age, education and left-right position in all cases, and also income and work sector in the UK. These models with additional controls show an identical pattern.

In Model I, we predict the vote by gender only. The positive coefficients of the gender dummies (female = 0, male = 1) in both countries indicate that, in line with earlier studies,

⁵⁸ Scholars examining support for the Tea Party movement in the United States have emphasized this link between the struggle for equal treatment among a variety of groups (Parker and Barreto 2013).

TABLE 4 *Regression (Norway)*

Norway – FrP	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender (male)	0.59	0.00	0.39	0.00	0.47	0.00	0.37	0.00
Restrictive immigration pref.			0.41	0.00			0.35	0.00
MCP					-0.32	0.00	-0.13	0.00
Intercept	-2.36	0.00	-2.75	0.00	-2.54	0.00	-3.05	0.00
Adjusted R ²	2.2%		17.1%		11.2%		22.8%	

Note: logistic regression; dependent variable: voted for FrP; coefficients with y-standardization.

men are more likely than women to vote for RRP. In the UK, the gap is only significant at the 10 per cent level, which might reflect the low number of actual BNP voters (101).

In Model II, controlling for restrictive immigration preferences does not affect the gender gap in the UK. This is not surprising, given the earlier finding that British women and men score equally high on such policy preferences. In Sweden, where women were found to have somewhat less restrictive preferences than men, including this measure reduces the gap. Still, a sizeable and statistically significant gender gap remains. This is in line with earlier studies showing that conventional predictors of Radical Right voting – both attitudinal and socio-structural – do not consistently and fully explain the gender gap in SD and BNP voting.⁵⁹

Model III adds controls for respondents' MCP. Taking this motivation into account has a much larger impact on the estimated gender gap than do immigration policy preferences. In fact, unlike any other studies we have seen of the RRP vote, the gender gap *shrinks to insignificance in both cases studied when this variable alone is taken into account*. This is in line with our hypothesis that motivational, rather than attitudinal, differences are responsible for the gender gap in voting for toxic RRP. The models presented in Appendix C, which include demographic and ideological controls, replicate these findings.

Explaining the Radical Right Gender Gap in the Reputational Shield Case of the Norwegian FrP

If the normative signal theory is correct, then we should find that any gender difference in voting in the Norwegian case is not accounted for by gender differences in MCP. In other words, the gender gap in the Norwegian case – which earlier research has found to exist⁶⁰ – ought to be a traditional one based on gender differences in ideology rather than MCP. This is precisely what we find in our analysis. A significant gender gap exists, part of which can be explained by restrictive immigration preferences. The third model shows that MCP has a general effect on the vote, suggesting that those most concerned with controlling prejudice are less likely to vote for this party. However, unlike in the two other cases, taking the motivational measure into account does not explain the gender gap, or even reduce it as much as the models that include the anti-immigrant attitudinal measure. Table 4 reports the regression results for Norway.

The gender gap in voting for the FrP likely reflects other aspects of its program. The party's economically liberal ideology (reflecting its anti-tax origins) draws more support among men, who have in earlier studies been found to more often uphold anti-statist and neoliberal values.

⁵⁹ Hartevelde et al. 2015.

⁶⁰ Immerzeel, Coffé, and van der Lippe 2013.

The party's transportation policy, which emphasizes road building and opposition to toll stations, also probably contributes to this pattern. Neither the SD nor the BNP has such significant additional policy issues. Indeed, using data from the European Value Survey of 2010, Immerzeel, Coffé and van der Lippe show that controlling for attitudinal variables explains the gender gap in voting for the FrP in Norway, turning it insignificant.⁶¹ This was not true for the other RRP in their study, which led the authors to conclude that '[o]nly in Norway does the gender gap decrease by including the attitudinal items'.⁶²

CONCLUSIONS

The gender gap in voting for Extreme and Radical Right parties is one of the most consistent findings in studies of that party family. Paradoxically, women have been found to be less likely to vote for these parties *even* if they support their nativist agenda.⁶³ This suggests that conventional models of Radical Right voting are incomplete. In this study, we argued and showed that the RRP gender gap must be understood in light of the normative conflict surrounding these parties. While the anti-immigrant message of these parties resonates with many voters, the strong social norm against prejudice often prevents parties from fully mobilizing this electorate. Only parties that do not become trapped in conflicts over prejudice and discrimination can grow to substantial electoral significance.⁶⁴ The parties that *are* trapped become toxic, and their electoral potential is limited to the smaller group of voters that is weakly normatively motivated to control prejudice.⁶⁵ In this subset of voters, we find far fewer women than men.

This insight is relevant for explaining the RRP gender gap. We argued that there were good theoretical reasons to expect women to have internalized the social norm against prejudice. Our analysis in this article showed that this indeed is the case: in all three countries studied, men scored substantially and significantly lower on the MCP scales. Crucially, this difference is much more substantial and consistent than gender gaps in anti-immigrant attitudes reported in the present and other studies. We hypothesized that motivational differences would explain the low popularity among women of toxic RRPs, and this is what we found. The gender gap in voting for the BNP and the SD – parties we argued were toxic at the time of our study – disappears after controlling for men's and women's different scores on the motivation scale. The electorate of these parties is restricted to less normatively motivated voters – and these are more often male.

A different pattern was found in the case of the FrP, which can rely on its legacy as an anti-tax party and a more diverse policy portfolio and did therefore not trigger the anti-prejudice norm to a similar extent. Such parties can attract both voters who are highly motivated to control prejudice and those who are not. An important implication of this argument, which could not be tested in this article on the Norwegian case, is that RRPs that make a credible effort to distance themselves from extremism, racism, prejudice and discrimination can experience a feminization of their vote, while parties that become trapped in these conflicts are likely to exhibit a stable gender gap.

While the relationship between gender and immigration policy preferences differs between countries, and probably over time, gender differences in MCP appear more deeply anchored in contemporary (Western) societies. This calls for a wider research agenda to study persistent

⁶¹ Immerzeel, Coffé, and van der Lippe 2013, 17.

⁶² Immerzeel, Coffé, and van der Lippe 2013, 17.

⁶³ Hartevelde et al. 2015.

⁶⁴ Ivarsflaten 2006.

⁶⁵ Blinder, Ford, and Ivarsflaten 2013.

gender differences in voting patterns. Male-female gaps in policy preferences have been found, but are often small. Studies of gender gaps in political behavior can thus benefit from an approach that goes beyond policy preferences and considers differences in motivations.

This study also has another implication. While it is well established that RRP's image restricts the size of their potential electorate, our study further shows *how*. Association with (historic) fascism or violence does not deter all voters to the same extent. After all, negative bias against out-groups appears to be fairly broadly distributed, but is often kept in check by internalized norms to avoid acting based on prejudice. Such motivations, rather than ideology, thus constitute the natural boundary of the Radical Right's potential – especially of the more toxic parties. Evidently, citizens' levels of normative motivation are not only correlated with gender, but also with other socio-demographic factors. This can potentially explain other patterns of Radical Right voting. For instance, low Radical Right electoral potential among the more educated might originate in relatively high normative motivation among this group.

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