
Original Article

Explaining the gender gap in radical right voting: A cross-national investigation in 12 Western European countries

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Abstract It is common wisdom in radical right research that men are over-represented among the radical right electorate. We explore whether a radical right gender gap exists across 12 Western European countries and examine how this gap may be explained. Using the European Values Study (2010), we find a radical right gender gap that remains substantial after controlling for socioeconomic and political characteristics. However, our results indicate strong cross-national variation in the size of the gap. Explanations for these differences are explored by looking at the outsider image and the populist discourse style of the radical right parties, which are hypothesised to keep women from voting for the radical right. Our results do not confirm this expectation: differences in party characteristics do not account for cross-national differences in the gender gap. Implications of these findings and suggestions for further research are discussed.

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Introduction

Radical right populist parties (RRPs) have become popular in many Western European countries over the last three decades. In different Western European countries, RRP have been in office or supported a minority government. Together with their electoral rise, RRP and their electorate have received substantial scholarly attention (see Rydgren, 2007). Empirical investigations into the RRP's electorate led scholars to conclude that gender is important in explaining voting for RRP (for example, Mayer, 2002; Givens, 2004; Norris, 2005), with mainly men voting for RRP. Obviously, a gender gap in party preference is not new. Ever since the



introduction of women's right to vote, gender differences in voting behaviour have received scholarly and social interest because they have major consequences for the electoral outcome of parties and the composition of the party system (for example, Inglehart and Norris, 2000).

Despite the fact that gender differences in voting behaviour and the rise of RRP have been amply studied, research describing and explaining the gender gap in radical right voting is relatively scarce (Givens, 2004; Gidengil *et al*, 2005; Fontana *et al*, 2006; Rippeyoung, 2007). Moreover, while focusing on individual level structural and attitudinal characteristics, most of these studies have not been able to find an explanation for the gender gap (notable exception is Gidengil *et al* (2005) who show that political dissatisfaction and social conservatism explain the gender gap in Canadian Alliance voting). This is surprising because we know that various other gender gaps in party choice have been explained by gender differences in structural characteristics and attitudes. For example, in Britain and Australia, gender differences in occupational attainment explained why women tend to vote more conservatively than men; whereas in the United States, gender differences in political and cultural attitudes make women more likely to vote for the Democrats than the Republicans (Studlar *et al*, 1998; Inglehart and Norris, 2000).

Furthermore, the few studies investigating the gender gap in radical right voting have a limited comparative scope, focusing on Canada or a restricted number of European countries. Consequently, little is known about the presence and magnitude of a gender gap in radical right voting in a wide range of Western European countries and the differentiation of the gender gap between the countries.

In this article, we aim to improve the current knowledge about the gender gap in radical right voting in Western Europe by looking at a larger number of countries than previous empirical research and by exploring explanations for cross-national differences in the radical right gender gap. First, we describe the gender gap in 12 Western European countries and test various explanations for the gender gap in these countries. To compare RRP cross-nationally, we draw upon Mudde's (2007) definition about the European RRP that describes three shared characteristics: nativism (anti-immigrant and nationalism), authoritarianism and populism. On the basis of this definition, we assume that people vote for the party that is closest in issue position to their own opinions and structural position, and we examine to what extent mainstream socioeconomic characteristics and political attitudes (nativism, authoritarianism and populism) may explain the radical right gender gap. Hence, the first question we pose is *to what extent is there a gender gap in Western European radical right voting, and, if there is a gender gap, to what extent can this gap be explained by gender differences in socioeconomic characteristics and radical right attitudes?*

In addition, we explore how cross-national differences in the gender gap may be explained. Owing to the limited number of countries in previous studies, there has been a focus on individual level explanations, and little attention has been paid to cross-national variation in the gender gap size. Yet, descriptive results of earlier



studies show evidence for such variation over time within and between countries (for example, Mudde, 2007). Inspired by Kitschelt (1995), we account for party characteristics as potential explanations. In particular, we investigate to what extent the populist image of RRP, as political outsiders and users of a populist rhetoric, may explain variation in the radical right gender gap. Taking insights from Roth (1989), we claim that, given women's lesser political interest, women are more hesitant to vote for political outsiders than men. Next, in line with Mayer (2002), we argue that the polarising, populist style of discourse of RRP is typically masculine and therefore keeps women from voting for a RRP. However, as a party loses its outsider image and employs a less populist style of discourse, we anticipate that women will become less restrained to vote for these parties, which will decrease the gender gap. In sum, our second research question asks: *to what extent can the image of a populist outsider explain cross-national variation in the gender gap in radical right voting?*

To test our hypotheses, we use the cross-national European Values Study (EVS) (2010) that contains information on party choice, background characteristics and political attitudes. We use a recently administered Expert Survey 2010 (Immerzeel *et al*, 2011) to obtain information about the political outsider image and the populist style of discourse of the RRP. The combination of these data sets enables us to explore and explain the gender gap in radical right voting in 12 Western European countries simultaneously and test to what extent cross-national differences can be explained by RRP's characteristics. Before turning to our analyses, the next section describes relevant theories and introduces our hypotheses.

Theory

To answer our first research question, we present an overview of the theoretical arguments and hypotheses on the individual-level explanations of the gender gap. The hypotheses will be discussed according to the three characteristics of Mudde's (2007) definition of RRP: nativism, authoritarianism and populism. After having described our hypotheses related to individual-level explanations, we turn to our second research question and present hypotheses regarding party characteristics that could explain potential cross-national variation in the gender gap in radical right voting.

Individual-level explanations for the gender gap

Nativism

In his definition, Mudde (2007) emphasises the strong sense of nativism that characterises RRP: natives should be the sole inhabitants of a nation-state and *non-native elements (ideas, persons) are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous*

nation-state (Mudde, 2007, p. 19). Nativism is a combination of a preference for the native and xenophobia (a fear/hatred of everything that is non-native), and various arguments have been formulated about the reasons why men are more likely to be attracted by RRP's nativist stance than women.

First, it is argued that modernisation and globalisation of Western societies are fundamentally threatening national economies, particularly blue-collar sectors with high numbers of manual workers, because multi-national industries are transferring their manual jobs to cheaper (non-Western) countries. This means that industrial manual workers are more likely to lose their jobs or to be forced into lower-paying jobs in the new global economy (Givens, 2004). As men are over-represented in these occupations, men experience an insecure economic situation, making them the 'losers of modernisation' (Betz, 1994). They develop insecure and resentful sentiments that lead to positive attitudes towards nativist policies (Studlar *et al.*, 1998).

Second, the ethnic competition theory (Olzak, 1992) asserts that immigrants are seen as competitors in the labour market. Being 'in competition' with immigrants over scarce resources triggers exclusionary reactions because workers experience feelings of threat (Fennema, 2005). Such reactions may result in voting for RRP's, which want to reduce competition from immigrants over scarce resources by rejecting equal access to resources for immigrants (Olzak, 1992). As immigrants mainly compete with people from lower strata and because men are over-represented in these strata (Givens, 2004), it is argued that men are more likely to have nativist attitudes than women. Moreover, women more often work at home or do not search for a job (Rink *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, they do not feel the competition over jobs and are less likely to have strong nativist attitudes. On the basis of both theories, we expect that structural characteristics may explain the gender gap in radical right voting:

Hypothesis 1a: Men are more likely to be manual workers and are therefore more likely to vote for RRP's than women.

In addition, we expect that nativist attitudes may explain the gender gap:

Hypothesis 1b: Men have more nativist attitudes than women and are therefore more likely to vote for RRP's than women.

Authoritarianism

RRP's are also known for their authoritarian appeal and strong emphasis on law and order. Mudde (2007, p. 23) notes that an important part of the RRP's ideology is the *belief in a strictly ordered society in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely*. Various theories describe why men are expected to be attracted by this authoritarian stance. Researchers have argued that with modernisation, gender egalitarian attitudes have become more mainstream in many Western societies (Betz, 1994), which affected men and women differently (for example, Inglehart and



Norris, 2000, 2003). In particular, these modernisation processes caused the erosion of traditional, authoritarian values that made men fear a loss of status (Ignazi, 2003). *The shift in cultural values (...) has undercut the traditional dominance of the White male* (Gidengil *et al*, 2005, p. 1176), which fuelled a ‘silent counter-revolution’ where men nostalgically reacted to post-modern values by favouring parties that emphasised traditional views about the order of society (Ignazi, 2003).

Second, socio-psychological theories focus on gender differences in authoritarian attitudes. Gilligan (1982) maintains that men emphasise the strictness of the law and individual responsibility by solving practical morality issues. Women, by contrast, treat these issues in terms of conflicting responsibilities that should be solved by the collective in a world where people care for each other (Gilligan, 1982). Research on attitudes towards military use and defence spending in the United States confirm these arguments (Kaufmann and Petrocik, 1999): women are more strongly opposed to the use of force and more supportive of compassionate policies (Gilens, 1988). Similarly, Gidengil *et al* (2005) show that men have stricter attitudes towards law and order issues, which helps to close the gender gap in voting for the Canadian Alliance party.

On the basis of these theories, we expect that authoritarian attitudes may explain the gender gap in radical right voting:

Hypothesis 2: Men have more authoritarian attitudes than women and are therefore more likely to vote for RRP than women.

Populism

According to Mudde (2007), the third characteristic that RRPs share is populism. Populism is defined as an ideology that states that the society is divided into two groups: the ‘pure people’ that have a common will, which is embodied by the RRPs; and the distrustful ‘corrupt elite’ that are formed by the other established political parties. As RRPs reference established parties as corrupt, they are often seen as anti-establishment parties that are subject to a *cordon sanitaire* (Mayer, 2002). So far, the anti-establishment image of RRPs has only been implicitly related to the gender gap in radical right voting. However, we argue that it may be relevant in explaining the gender gap in radical right voting. Owing to socialisation and life experiences, women are less politically interested and active than men (for example, Burns, 2007; Dalton, 2008). Similar to Mudde (2007), we argue that less politically interested and active people are likely to become aware of new political developments later in time than politically interested and active citizens. This makes citizens who are less politically interested and active less likely to vote for new ‘extreme’ parties, and more likely to follow the widespread norm to vote for an established party. Given that women are generally less politically interested and active, they are expected to be more likely to vote for established parties rather than political outsiders with an

‘extremist’ image such as RRP (Kitschelt, 1995; Mayer, 2002).¹ Hence, we hypothesise:

Hypothesis 3: Women are less politically interested and active than men and are therefore less likely to vote for RRP than men.

Party characteristic explanations for cross-national variation in the gender gap

There is ample agreement among scholars that nativism, authoritarianism and populism are defining features of RRP. However, there is variation in the strength of these party characteristics among various RRP (for example, Arter, 2010). This is a crucial assumption to answer our second research question addressing cross-national variation in the gender gap. We maintain that RRP are generally anti-establishment outsiders with a populist discourse style (Mudde, 2007), but argue that the extent to which a RRP has a political outsider image and uses a populist discourse style varies across countries, which influences men and women’s likelihood to vote for a RRP. Consequently, we assume that these characteristics may explain cross-national variation in the gender gap in radical right voting.

Regarding the political outsider image, Roth (1989) maintained and showed in the case of the German Green-party that women are more hesitant to new political developments, whereas men are aware earlier of new political developments and therefore more likely to vote for a relatively new political party. Logically, it follows that when a RRP loses its ‘newcomer’ outsider image and obtains a stable position in the political spectrum, women will be as likely as men to vote for a RRP. Hence, we expect the following:

Hypothesis 4a: The weaker the image of a RRP as a political outsider, the smaller the gender gap in radical right voting will be.

Accordingly, we expect that in countries where RRP are more electorally successful, the general perceptions about voting for the RRP change. As more people vote for the party, it becomes more ‘normal’ to do so. Moreover, once a RRP becomes larger, questions arise about the extent to which a RRP is actually radical right. In the Netherlands, for example, a research project that concluded that Party for Freedom (PVV) was radical right (Moors *et al*, 2009) led to a public debate in which many people doubted the radical content of the party. Furthermore, RRP have played a prominent role in the functioning of a minority government and have cooperated as a tolerating partner with other political parties in some countries. In doing so, RRP show that they become part of the establishment, which may reduce their outsider image. In summary, we argue that the political



outsider image weakens in countries where the RRP has become electorally successful:

Hypothesis 4b: The more electorally successful a RRP, the less it will be seen as a political outsider and the smaller the gender gap in radical right voting will be.

Various scholars argued that RRP employ a populist, simplistic ‘us versus them’ discourse in which the antagonistic groups (the elite, the immigrants) are seen as unreliable deviant free-riders (Papadopoulos, 2002). This polarising tone belongs to the RRP’s populist ideology, but can also be seen as a separate ingredient of the message. Naidoo and Lord (2008) have convincingly shown that the utterance of a message is important in getting a public committed to a speaker’s ideological content. We argue that the populist, that is, polarised and simplifying, style of discourse is typically masculine (Tannen, 1990) and strongly opposes the more compromising feminine discourse styles (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993). Following Mayer (2002), who argued that mainly men are attracted by masculine verbal violence, we hypothesise that:

Hypothesis 4c: The less populist the discourse style of a RRP is, the smaller the gender gap in radical right voting will be.

Data and Methods

To test our hypotheses, we used the 2008 round of the EVS (2010). In total, 47 European countries participated in this standardised, cross-sectional, national representative survey. In every country, respondents were selected by means of stratified random samples of the resident populations aged 18 years and older. The target sample size of 1500 respondents per country was generally met, but the response rates differed considerably among countries, ranging from roughly 35 per cent to 85 per cent.² As not all countries have a RRP, and because we are interested in Western European countries, we focused on the 12 Western European countries that have at least 20 radical right voters in the sample. The original number of respondents in the 12 countries was 17 777. We excluded 2250 respondents who initially stated that they would not go vote (948 males and 1302 females). Then, we excluded 3751 voters who were missing items about which party they would vote for (1635 males and 2116 females) and performed listwise deletion, resulting in 10 643 respondents.

To assess the party characteristics, we draw on the Expert Survey 2010 (Immerzeel *et al.*, 2011), which was held in November–December 2010. In total, 863 political scientists from 34 European countries participated in an online survey that asked for various characteristics of the political parties in the country the experts were most familiar with. Only those countries where at least five experts filled out at least two of the survey questions were included in this survey. The overall response rate of the Expert

Survey was 40.6 per cent. The consistency patterns in answering the items concerning political outsider image and populist discourse style were generally high among experts in all countries under study (Cronbach's α 's were >0.95). Luxembourg was dropped from the survey, because there was no sufficient number of participating experts.

Dependent variable

Radical right voting was measured by the question, 'Would you vote if there were general elections tomorrow?'³ If assenting, 'What party would you vote for if there were general elections tomorrow?' On the basis of the classification of Mudde (2007), we coded the RRP votes as '1' and other parties, invalid or *blanco* votes as '0'. In line with earlier radical right research (for example, Lubbers *et al*, 2002), we performed analyses that compared radical right voters with other party voters and excluded the non-voters. In addition, we excluded the respondents who did not specify a party they would vote for but who would vote. For an overview of the selected RRP, see Table 2.

Independent variables

Individual level

Our main explanatory variable, *gender*, is measured as a dichotomous variable with men coded as 0 and women as 1.

The main structural explanatory characteristics introduced in our models are employment status and occupation. *Employment status* measures the respondents' current main daily activity and is represented by three dummies: employed, self-employed and inactive/unemployed.

Occupation measures the kind of occupation respondents currently have. The reported occupations were summarised on the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) occupational scale (Ganzeboom and Treiman, 1996) and were then rearranged according to Oesch's occupational class measure, which accounts for the sector in which people work (Oesch, 2008). The scale distinguishes the following categories: 'manual workers', 'service workers', 'office clerks', 'socio-cultural professionals', 'technical professionals' and 'managers and administrators'. Oesch's scale distinguished between self-employed and employee. As the two self-employed categories are very small in our sample, we decided to place all self-employed in one separate dummy (see above). For those respondents who are currently unemployed, the occupational type of the last job is reported. For those respondents who never had a paid job, we added a separate dummy 'never had a paid job'.⁴

In addition to socioeconomic, structural characteristics, we enter a variety of political attitudes and characteristics and explore to what extent these can account for the radical right gender gap. *Nativist attitudes* (Schneider, 2008) is an interval mean scale (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.87$) that measures the attitudes towards immigrants and



immigration. Respondents gave their opinion about the following five statements: 'Immigrants take jobs away from natives'; 'A country's cultural life is undermined by immigrants'; 'Immigrants make crime problems worse'; 'Immigrants are a strain on a country's welfare system'; and 'In the future, the proportion of immigrants will become a threat to society'. For all items, respondents could answer on a 1–10 scale, with 1 'disagree strongly' to 10 'agree strongly'. For an overview of the country-specific reliability of the scale, see Appendix A, Table A1.⁵

Authoritarian attitudes were measured by two items in the survey. First, we used the item that asks what the respondent thinks is the most important issue for the country in the next 10 years (Abramson and Inglehart, 1995). We made a dummy with 1 for those who chose 'maintaining order in the nation' and 0 for those who chose one of the other three aims: 'giving the people more say in important political decisions'; 'fighting rising prices'; and 'protecting freedom of speech'. Second, we used the item that asked respondents whether it is either good or bad to have a strong leader who governs the country and does not have to bother with parliament and elections. Respondents could answer on a scale ranging from 1 'very bad' to 4 'very good'. Owing to the non-normal distribution of the variable, we recoded these categories into a dummy variable with 0 'bad' and 1 'good'.

Political interest is an interval variable based on the item 'How interested would you say you are in politics?' Respondents could answer on a 1–4 scale with 1 being 'not interested' and 4 being 'very interested in politics'.

Political action is an interval mean scale (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.74$) based on 5 items that ask for whether a person has ever participated in a certain political action, and if not, whether they would do so. The political actions were signing a petition, joining a boycott, joining an unofficial strike, attending a lawful demonstration and occupying buildings or factories. Respondents could answer with 1 'have done', 2 'would do that' and 3 'would never do' for all of these 5 items. We recoded the scale such that it runs from 1 'low intention (would never do any action)' to 3 'high intention (have done all actions)'.

Finally, we control for a number of sociodemographic characteristics that have been linked to radical right voting and that may influence the gender gap. *Age* is the age of the respondent when interviewed in 2008. *Education* is operationalised by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) measure that asks for the highest level of completed education, which we recoded into three dummies: 'primary/lower secondary', 'higher secondary' and 'tertiary' education. For *marital status*, we created the following dummies: 'having a partner', 'never had a partner' and 'had a partner' (divorced, separated and widowed). The *degree of urbanisation* is measured by four dummies that measure how many inhabitants live in the respondent's place of residence: '<5000'; '5001–20 000'; '20 001–100 000'; and '>100 000' inhabitants. Finally, we control for *religiosity* by using two measures: religious denomination and religious attendance.⁶ Religious denomination is operationalised by three dummies: non-religious, Christian and other religion. Religious attendance is operationalised by the item 'Apart from weddings, funerals and Christenings, about how often do you attend religious services

these days?’ Respondents could answer on a scale from 1 ‘never’ to 7 ‘weekly’. Owing to the U-shaped distribution of this variable, we decided to recode this variable into three dummies: ‘never’, ‘sometimes’ (including the categories ‘less than once a year’–‘only on specific holidays’), and ‘often’ (‘once a month’ or more).

Party characteristics

Three party level characteristics are considered: the political outsider image, the electoral success and the political discourse style of RRP. The *political outsider image* of the RRP is a measure based on the Expert Survey 2010 (Immerzeel *et al*, 2011). The experts were asked: ‘Consider the following political parties in your country, and place them on the scale that concerns the extent to which the party is considered as anti-establishment (0 = not anti-establishment, 10 = very anti-establishment)’. We calculated the mean score of all experts on this issue for all political parties in their country. Then, we used the mean score of the RRP as the *absolute* measure of political outsider image. In countries with multiple RRP, we took the average of their scores on this item. To deal with the notion that the outsider image also depends on the outsider scores of the other parties in a country, we constructed a *relative* measure of political outsider image. We took the average difference between the outsider score of the RRP and the outsider score of all other parties that received at least 5 per cent of the votes in the latest elections and which are considered as establishment parties, that is, the mean score on the outsider scale was lower than 5.

Electoral success of the RRP is operationalised in two ways. The *absolute success* is based on the percentage of radical right voters in the latest elections before 2008 (when the survey data were collected). Data were retrieved from official electoral institutes in the countries under study. In countries with multiple RRP, we took the sum of their percentages. The *relative success* is measured by how successful the RRP is as compared with the most electorally successful party in a country. We took the ratio of the two percentages. To illustrate, if the most successful party in a country received 40 per cent of the votes and the RRP received 15 per cent of the votes, then this variable scored: $15/40 = 0.375$. The inclusion of such relative measurement is important because in countries with a (*quasi*) two-party system, 15 per cent is a small percentage, whereas in a multi-party system, a party attaining 15 per cent of the votes may be considered as a relatively large political player.

Populist discourse style is measured by an item of the Expert Survey 2010 (Immerzeel *et al*, 2011): ‘Consider the following political parties in your country, and evaluate their *style of discourse* (0 = non-populist, 10 = very populist)’. We calculated the mean score of all experts on this issue for all political parties in their country. Then, we used the mean score of the RRP as the *absolute* measure of populist discourse style. In countries with multiple RRP, we took the average of their scores on this item. To deal with the notion that the populist discourse style may also be present among other parties in different countries and RRP are thus not



necessarily unique in their populism, we constructed a *relative* measure of populist discourse style. We took the average difference between the populist score of the RRP and the populist score of all other parties that received at least 5 per cent of the votes in the latest elections. Table 1 presents an overview with the descriptive statistics of our dependent, independent and control variables.

Analytical strategy

To test the individual-level hypotheses, we utilised logistic regression models with robust standard errors (SEs) that correct for clustering at the country level. As our first goal is to explain the gender gap in radical right voting, we are interested in the gender effect on the probability of radical right voting. Therefore, in the first model, we only present the general gender effect on radical right voting with control variables to investigate whether there is indeed a significant negative effect of being female. In the second model, we add our hypothesised structural characteristics to investigate to what extent the gender gap is due to gender differences in socioeconomic characteristics. Our political attitudes are added in a third model. If the inclusion of these variables leads to a decrease of the gender effect on radical right voting between the models, we are able to (partly) explain the gender gap in radical right voting.

To assess whether there is cross-national variation in the size of the gender gap, we also present separate analyses for each country. Ideally, one would perform multi-level modelling where a random slope of the gender effect on radical right voting is added and slope variance is explained by cross-level interactions of the party variables with gender (Hox, 2002). However, the number of countries included in our study ($N_2 = 12$) is too limited to perform a robust multilevel analysis (Hox, 2002). Therefore, we apply an exploratory approach and correlate the country-specific gender coefficients with the party variables retrieved from the Expert Survey.

Results

Descriptive analyses

Before turning to our multivariate analyses, Table 2 presents an overview of the gender gap in radical right voting in all countries under study. We find that, in general, in comparison to women, men are more likely to vote for RRP compared with any other party. These descriptive results also show considerable variation in the gender gap. The gender gap is largest in Norway, where the electoral successful Progress Party receives almost twice as many male than female votes. In addition, in Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands, we find large gender gaps with men being much more likely to vote for RRP than women. One exception is France, where we find the same percentage of men and women voting for RRP.⁷

Table 1: Descriptive statistics dependent, independent and control variables^a

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Mean women</i>	<i>Mean men</i>	<i>Significance^b</i>
Radical right voting	0.09	—	0/1	0.07	0.11	***
Female	0.50	—	0/1	—	—	—
<i>Employment status</i>						
Employed	0.50	—	0/1	0.48	0.52	***
Self-employed	0.07	—	0/1	0.04	0.09	***
Inactive/unemployed	0.43	—	0/1	0.47	0.39	***
<i>Occupation</i>						
Never had a paid job	0.07	—	0/1	0.10	0.04	***
Production worker	0.19	—	0/1	0.09	0.29	***
Service worker	0.17	—	0/1	0.24	0.10	***
Office clerks	0.12	—	0/1	0.15	0.07	***
Socio-cultural professionals	0.16	—	0/1	0.22	0.10	***
Technical professionals	0.08	—	0/1	0.03	0.12	***
Managers and administrator	0.22	—	0/1	0.17	0.27	***
Nativist attitudes	5.86	2.16	1–10	5.78	5.93	***
<i>Strict attitude towards law and order</i>						
Having strong leader	0.24	—	0/1	0.23	0.24	—
Maintaining order important	0.29	—	0/1	0.29	0.30	—
Political interest	2.69	0.90	1–4	2.56	2.83	***
Political action	1.77	0.48	1–3	1.74	1.80	***
Age	49.11	17.45	17–99	48.97	49.33	—
<i>Education (ISCED)</i>						
Primary or lower	0.25	—	0/1	0.27	0.23	***
Secondary, non–tertiary	0.43	—	0/1	0.41	0.45	***
Tertiary	0.32	—	0/1	0.32	0.32	—
<i>Marital Status</i>						
Partner	0.57	—	0/1	0.54	0.59	***
Ever had partner	0.18	—	0/1	0.23	0.13	***
Never had partner	0.26	—	0/1	0.23	0.28	***
<i>Urbanisation</i>						
<5000 inhabitants	0.25	—	0/1	0.24	0.25	*
5–20 000 inhabitants	0.26	—	0/1	0.26	0.26	—
20–100 000 inhabitants	0.28	—	0/1	0.27	0.28	—
>100 000 inhabitants	0.22	—	0/1	0.23	0.21	*
<i>Religious denomination</i>						
None	0.29	—	0/1	0.26	0.31	***
Christian	0.69	—	0/1	0.71	0.66	***
Other	0.02	—	0/1	0.02	0.02	—
<i>Religious attendance</i>						
Never	0.38	—	0/1	0.35	0.41	***
Sometimes	0.40	—	0/1	0.40	0.41	—
Often	0.22	—	0/1	0.26	0.18	***
<i>N</i> ₁	10 643	—	—	5309	5334	—
<i>Political outsider image</i>						
Absolute image score	7.01	1.57	3.8–9.0	—	—	—
Relative image score	4.39	1.53	2.2–6.4	—	—	—

**Table 1:** *Continued*

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Mean women</i>	<i>Mean men</i>	<i>Significance^b</i>
<i>Electoral success of RRP</i>						
Absolute success	10.96	8.32	2.2–19.4	—	—	—
Relative success	0.42	0.41	0.06–1.51	—	—	—
<i>Populist style of discourse</i>						
Absolute populist measure	9.04	0.35	8.5–9.5	—	—	—
Relative populist measure	3.90	0.93	2.5–5.2	—	—	—
<i>N₂</i>	12	—	—	—	—	—

^aThese numbers reflect the average mean differences after cluster correction for countries.

^bThese tests are based on bivariate regression analyses with robust SEs corrected for country-clusters and indicate to what extent gender differences are significant.

* $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed tests).

Source: EVS (2010); Expert Survey 2010 (Immerzeel *et al.*, 2011)

Multivariate analyses

We now turn to our multivariate analyses. Table 3 presents the results of the logistic regression model with robust SEs and country-clusters to test Hypotheses 1–3. These analyses include all countries simultaneously.

In line with our expectations and previous research on radical right voting, our findings (Model 1) reveal a negative effect of being female on radical right voting: women have 39 per cent ($1 - e^{-0.497}$) lower odds of voting for a RRP than men.⁸ Model 1 further shows, in line with earlier research (for example, Lubbers *et al.*, 2002), that being younger, having lower education and attending religious meetings less often are strong indicators of radical right voting. In Model 2, we add our hypothesised structural explanatory variables. We find that the negative effect remains but decreases compared with Model 1. This indicates that our structural characteristics do partly mediate the gender effect on radical right voting. Men are more likely to be self-employed and are over-represented in the manual worker category – see Table 1 – which seems to partly explain the gender gap in radical right voting. Thus, we find some evidence for Hypothesis 1a. Our analysis also reveals that socio-cultural professionals, who are mainly women, are substantially less likely to vote for a RRP compared with manual workers.

Model 3 indicates that the gender gap remains, even when political attitudes are controlled for. When adding nativist attitudes (Hypothesis 1b), authoritarian attitudes (Hypothesis 2), political interest and action (Hypothesis 3), we see that the gender effect only slightly decreases: the odds of radical right voting are 33 per cent ($1 - e^{-0.395}$) lower for women. Hence, even though men are in general more nativist, more politically interested and more active than women (see Table 1), these characteristics cannot explain the gap. Consequently, we must conclude that we find little evidence for our hypotheses on political attitudes.

Table 2: Gender gap in radical right voting in 12 Western European countries
 Definition: percentage of (wo)men voting for RRP (excluding non-voters)

Country	EVS (2010)					
	Party	N	N (total RRP-voter)	Percentage of men	Percentage of women	Percentage of gap
Austria	FPÖ, BZÖ	752	131	22.3	13.3	9.0
Belgium	FN, VB	1292	67	6.8	3.7	3.1
Denmark	Danske FP	1076	97	10.4	7.5	2.9
Finland	True Finns	577	68	13.2	10.2	3.0
France	FN, MNR	1147	26	2.3	2.3	0.0
Germany	Rep., NPD/NVU	1032	20	2.6	1.3	1.3
Greece	LAOS	861	30	5.4	1.8	3.6
Italy	Lega Nord, F. Tricolore	667	67	11.4	8.5	3.1
Luxembourg	ADR (Comité d'Action)	712	22	3.2	3.0	0.2
The Netherlands	PVV, ToN	1123	116	13.0	8.0	5.0
Norway	Progress Party	860	187	27.9	14.6	13.3
Switzerland	SVP, Swiss Democrats	544	125	25.9	19.5	6.4
Total	—	10 643	956	11.1	6.8	4.3

Source: EVS (2010).

Although attitudes only slightly decrease the gender gap, Model 3 shows that attitudes do strongly affect radical right voting. Given Mudde's (2007) definition of the RRP as nativist, it is not surprising that nativist attitude is the best predictor of radical right voting; a one standard deviation (SD) increase in the nativist scale is related to 198 per cent ($e^{0.505 \times 2.16}$) higher odds of voting radical right. In addition, authoritarian attitudes play a role in explaining radical right voting; stating that it is a good thing to have a strong leader who governs the country and does not have to bother with parliament and elections is related to 27 per cent ($e^{0.238}$) higher odds of voting for RRP. In contrast, we do not find that rating maintaining order as the most important aim of the country's government, being politically active or being politically interested are positively related with radical right voting.

Country-specific analyses

To explore whether there is variation in the size of the gender gap, we now move on to the country-specific analyses. Table 4 presents three models: bivariate, structural and attitudinal models.

Three important patterns emerge in Table 4. First, for those countries with a gender gap, we find that structural characteristics generally explain at least part of the gender gap in radical right voting, which corroborates Hypothesis 1a. In particular, we find that the gender gap ceases to be significant after inclusion of the structural items in

Table 3: Logistic regression analyses for radical right voting in 12 Western European countries (robust SEs, dummies for countries not shown)

	<i>Model 1</i>			<i>Model 2</i>			<i>Model 3</i>		
	<i>b</i>		<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>		<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>		<i>SE</i>
Female	-0.497	***	0.066	-0.423	***	0.079	-0.395	***	0.094
<i>Employment status</i>									
Employed (<i>ref.</i>)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Self-employed	—	—	—	0.421	*	0.169	0.391	*	0.195
Inactive/unemployed	—	—	—	0.162	**	0.062	0.099	*	0.056
<i>Occupation</i>									
Never had a paid job	—	—	—	-0.801	***	0.140	-0.634	***	0.188
Manual (production) workers (<i>ref.</i>)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Service workers	—	—	—	-0.004	—	0.160	0.068	—	0.187
Office clerks	—	—	—	-0.175	*	0.093	0.065	—	0.132
Socio-cultural professionals	—	—	—	-0.821	***	0.165	-0.440	**	0.157
Technical professional	—	—	—	-0.234	—	0.176	0.013	—	0.170
Managers and administrators	—	—	—	-0.248	—	0.172	-0.026	—	0.175
Nativist attitudes	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.505	***	0.038
<i>Strict attitude towards law and order</i>									
Having strong leader	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.238	*	0.143
Maintaining order important	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.020	—	0.076
Political interest	—	—	—	—	—	—	-0.039	—	0.069
Political action	—	—	—	—	—	—	-0.154	—	0.177
<i>Control variables</i>									
Age	-0.007	—	0.004	-0.009	*	0.004	-0.013	***	0.003
<i>Education</i>									
Primary or lower (<i>ref.</i>)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Secondary, non-tertiary	-0.259	**	0.098	-0.200	*	0.094	-0.033	—	0.104
Tertiary	-1.183	***	0.136	-0.880	***	0.153	-0.416	***	0.115
<i>Marital status</i>									
Partner (<i>ref.</i>)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—



Table 3: *Continued*

	<i>Model 1</i>			<i>Model 2</i>			<i>Model 3</i>		
	<i>b</i>		<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>		<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>		<i>SE</i>
Ever had partner	-0.005	—	0.104	-0.004	—	0.105	-0.048	—	0.100
Never had partner	-0.115	—	0.106	-0.089	—	0.080	-0.043	—	0.078
<i>Urbanisation</i>									
<5000 inhabitants (<i>ref.</i>)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5001–20 000 inhabitants	0.036	—	0.134	0.061	—	0.131	0.045	—	0.127
20 001–100 000 inhabitants	-0.118	—	0.148	-0.079	—	0.144	-0.045	—	0.159
>100 000 inhabitants	-0.343	*	0.162	-0.293	*	0.157	-0.108	—	0.156
<i>Religious denomination</i>									
None (<i>ref.</i>)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Christian	0.099	—	0.092	0.095	—	0.088	-0.047	—	0.089
Other	-0.350	—	0.211	-0.447	*	0.198	-.191	—	0.283
<i>Religious attendance</i>									
Never	0.381	***	0.083	0.363	***	0.081	0.328	*	0.106
Sometimes	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Often	-0.350	*	0.162	-0.335	*	0.159	-0.288	*	0.151
Constant	-0.650	*	0.258	-0.556	**	0.196	-4.063	***	0.597
Pseudo R^2	0.13	—	—	0.14	—	—	0.24	—	—
N_1	10 643	—	—	10 643	—	—	10 643	—	—

Source: EVS (2010).

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (one-tailed tests).



Table 4: Logistic regression results for women's radical right voting (robust SEs in parentheses) in 12 Western European countries, separate models

Country	Bivariate			Structural ^a			Attitudes ^b			N
Austria	-0.62	***	(0.20)	-0.63	***	(0.22)	-0.82	***	(0.26)	752
Belgium	-0.65	**	(0.26)	-0.58	*	(0.31)	-1.00	**	(0.35)	1292
Denmark	-0.37	*	(0.22)	0.19	—	(0.29)	0.22	—	(0.31)	1076
Finland	-0.30	—	(0.26)	-0.47	—	(0.33)	-0.35	—	(0.36)	577
France	-0.00	—	(0.40)	-0.24	—	(0.45)	-0.31	—	(0.61)	1147
Germany	-0.68	—	(0.47)	-0.51	—	(0.49)	0.52	—	(0.78)	1032
Greece	-1.15	**	(0.42)	-0.91	*	(0.43)	-0.95	*	(0.44)	861
Italy	-0.32	—	(0.26)	-0.07	—	(0.30)	-0.22	—	(0.35)	667
Luxembourg	-0.08	—	(0.44)	-0.24	—	(0.58)	-0.04	—	(0.55)	712
The Netherlands	-0.55	**	(0.20)	-0.46	*	(0.23)	-0.45	*	(0.25)	1123
Norway	-0.82	***	(0.18)	-0.57	**	(0.20)	-0.34	—	(0.21)	860
Switzerland	-0.37	*	(0.21)	-0.36	—	(0.24)	-0.38	—	(0.27)	544

Source: EVS (2010).

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (one-tailed tests).

^aModel controlling for age, education, employment status, occupation, marital status, religious attendance, religious denomination and urban residence.

^bStructural model plus nativist and authoritarian attitudes, political interest and political activeness.

Denmark and Switzerland.⁹ In both countries, this is mainly due to the over-representation of men in the manual occupations and the over-representation of women in the socio-cultural professions (see Güveli *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, in Denmark, women are over-represented in the highest level of education. This level of education is negatively associated with radical right voting. In Belgium, Greece, the Netherlands and Norway, we find that the gender gap declines after inclusion of the structural items, which partly corroborates Hypothesis 1a: men are more likely to be employed as manual workers, which partly explains why they are more likely to vote for a RRP. The only exception is Austria where we do not find evidence for Hypothesis 1a. Despite the over-representation of men in the manual occupations and in the self-employed group, the gender gap remains the same after inclusion of these characteristics.

Second, we find limited evidence for our hypotheses on political attitudes (Hypothesis 1b: nativism, Hypothesis 2: authoritarianism and Hypothesis 3: political interest and action) in most countries. Only in Norway does the gender gap decrease by including the attitudinal items. The main reason is that Norwegian men are much more nativist and authoritarian than Norwegian women, which aids in explaining the gender gap. By contrast, in Austria, Belgium and Greece, the gender gap increases after inclusion of the political attitudes. This can be explained by the *higher* levels of political interest and action among men. In contrast to what we had expected, these higher levels of political interest and action are associated with a smaller likelihood of radical right voting in these three countries.

Third, and most interestingly, the bivariate models in Table 4 show that in only seven of the 12 countries, a significant gender gap exists. We find no significant gender differences in the probability of radical right voting in Finland, France, Italy or Luxembourg. In the case of France, Germany and Luxembourg, we are cautious in interpreting the results because of the small number of RRP voters ($N = 20\text{--}30$) in the sample. The pattern remains after controlling for all individual-level variables (see Models 2 and 3).

Altogether, these results show a mixed pattern of the gender gap in radical right voting and indicate more cross-national differences in the extent of the gender gap than has been presumed in previous research. In some countries, there is no gender gap; in other countries, the gender gap decreases after inclusion of structural characteristics; in some countries, the gender gap is persistent and does not change after inclusion of explanatory variables; and finally, in some countries, the gender gap increases. This suggests that gender differences in radical right voting may be mainly due to differences in party characteristics rather than individual-level explanations. Hence, considerable variation in the size of the gender gap requires contextual explanation.

Explaining cross-national variation in the gender gap

In this section, we explore to what extent the cross-national variation may be explained by the party's image as a political outsider and its populist discourse (both measured by expert scores) and by the party's electoral success. With Hypothesis 4a, we expected that the less a RRP is perceived as an anti-establishment party, the smaller the gender gap in radical right voting. Table 5, however, shows no significant effect of the absolute and relative image score on either the bivariate gender coefficient or the controlled gender coefficient.

With Hypothesis 4b, we anticipated that the more electoral successful the RRP was in earlier elections, the smaller the gender gap in radical right voting would be. As the

Table 5: Bivariate correlations *b*-coefficients (derived from Table 4: Model 1 – Bivariate; and Model 3 – Attitudes) and party characteristic variables

<i>Party characteristics</i>	<i>Gender gap in radical right voting</i>	
	<i>Bivariate model</i>	<i>Multivariate (attitudinal model)</i>
Absolute image score	0.486	0.324
Relative image score	0.406	0.379
Absolute success	−0.022	−0.213
Relative success	0.014	−0.225
Absolute populist score	0.144	−0.375
Relative populist score	0.397	−0.043

Source: EVS (2010); Expert Survey 2010 (Immerzeel *et al*, 2011).



effect of female is generally negative, we expected to find a significant positive r -coefficient. Table 5, however, shows that there is no significant relationship between the effect of being female in the country-specific logistic regression analyses and the RRP's absolute and relative electoral success. Finally, we hypothesised that the less populist the style of discourse a RRP employs, the smaller the gender gap in radical right voting (Hypothesis 4c). Table 5 does not display any significant effect and we thus cannot corroborate this hypothesis. In sum, we do not find evidence for Hypotheses 4a, 4b and 4c.

Summary of tests of hypotheses

Summarising, concerning the individual-level hypotheses, we find evidence for Hypothesis 1a that gender differences in employment status, occupational type and education partly explain the gender gap in radical right voting in most countries. Gender differences in nativist, authoritarian and political attitudes do generally not aid to explain the gender gap in radical right voting, thus contradicting Hypotheses 1b, 2 and 3. Regarding the party-level indicators, our results suggest that variation in anti-establishment image, populist rhetoric and electoral success of the RRP cannot aid to explain the cross-national variation in the gender gap in radical right voting, and thus contradict Hypotheses 4a, 4b and 4c.

Conclusion

Our article presented tests of various explanations for the gender gap in radical right voting in 12 Western European countries. First, we examined to what extent there is a gender gap in these countries and to what extent a wide range of individual-level factors, including both structural and political attitudinal characteristics, can explain the gender gap in radical right voting. These individual-level explanations were based on the definition of RRPs by Mudde (2007), who says that RRPs are generally nativist, authoritarian and populist. We hypothesised that people vote for RRPs because their own attitudes, opinions and structural positions coincide with the parties' opinions and characteristics. Second, we developed and tested new hypotheses to explain cross-national differences in the gender gap. In particular, we explored to what extent cross-national variation can be explained by party characteristics, in particular outsider image and populist discourse style.

Our analyses, based on the EVS (2010), reveal that men are on average significantly more likely to vote for a RRP, which confirms previous studies. However, our analyses provide more detail, indicating that although gender differences in employment status, occupational types and education explain some part of the gender gap in radical right voting, the gap remains substantial once these characteristics and different attitudes are

controlled for. Furthermore, our separate country analyses indicate that considerable cross-national variation exists in the size of the gender gap. Indeed, whereas we do find an overall gender gap, there is no such gender gap in some countries. Hence, a first important finding of our study challenges the common wisdom of a radical right gender gap and demonstrates a more diverse picture. In addition, in countries with a gender gap, explanations for the gender gap differ. Whereas in some countries, the gender gap can be (partly) explained by structural characteristics, it remains substantial in other countries. In general, gender differences in political attitudes have limited explanatory power. In some cases, the gender gap even increases once these attitudes are introduced. This indicates that if men and women were to have similar attitudes (for example, towards the presence of immigrants), the gender gap would be larger.

To gain further understanding of the cross-national differences in the radical right gender gap, we explored to what extent party characteristics, that is, RRP's outsider image and populist discourse style, may explain this cross-national variation. Taking insights from Roth (1989) and Mudde (2007) who argue that these party characteristics are important in understanding the gender gap, we hypothesised that once RRP's are political insiders and use a less populist discourse style; women will be more attracted to vote for these parties, resulting in a smaller gender gap. However, our findings do not support our hypotheses. Yet, we believe that the role of party characteristics deserves further attention in understanding cross-national variation in the gender gap. As the EVS had few European countries with considerable numbers of RRP-voters, we could only perform an explorative analysis in 12 countries, which makes significant effects difficult to find. We should thus be careful in concluding that party characteristics cannot help in explaining variation in the gender gap in radical right voting. Ideally, future research applies a random slope multilevel model incorporating more countries or time periods to replicate our study and disentangle whether these characteristics affect the gender gap in radical right voting.

Moreover, we think that future research could investigate more carefully the cross-national differences in individual explanations of the gender gap. In some countries, the gender differences in our explanatory characteristics are more substantial, which could explain why, in these countries, a decrease of the gender gap is found. Further work can investigate why these cross-national differences in explanatory characteristics may exist, while also considering that other factors may be relevant in understanding male and female radical right voting behaviour in different countries. For example, Coffé (2005) suggests that RRP's differing strategies, for example, softening political stances concerning immigration, may be relevant when explaining the vote for a more established RRP compared with a new one.

For now, we believe our study added to the research on gender and radical right voting by exploring this gap across a wide range of Western European countries and including a cross-national comparison. By doing so, our work revealed substantial cross-national differences in the gender gap in radical right voting, which have been largely ignored in previous research. Despite the inability of the party characteristics



to explain cross-national differences in the gender gap, we see our study as a starting point for developing new theoretical perspectives on how to explain the gender gap in radical right voting behaviour.

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Notes

- 1 One could argue that as ‘modernisation losers’, men are more dissatisfied with the established parties and are therefore more likely to vote for an anti-establishment party (cf. Betz, 1994). However, amongst others, Coffé and Bolzendahl (2010) have shown that women are less satisfied with political institutions than men. Hence, political dissatisfaction cannot explain the gender gap in radical right voting. We

performed additional analyses including a measure of political dissatisfaction (results not shown, but available upon request). The results of these analyses were similar to those presented here. Hence, we excluded this variable from our analyses.

- 2 More EVS information is available on the Website: info1.gesis.org/EVS/Studies/.
- 3 'Radical right voting' draws on the expected vote rather than the actual vote. In the 2008 wave of the European Social Survey (ESS, 2010), respondents did indicate their actual vote. The number of RRP-voters is highly similar in both data sets.
- 4 We are aware that Oesch's occupational scale does not perfectly represent a sector scale. However, because the argument is mainly about industries where people perform manual work, we see the operationalisation of Oesch as most appropriate, given the information available in the EVS survey.
- 5 Nativism also addresses a preference for the native. Because of the lack of good measures for nationalistic attitudes, we performed additional analyses with strict attitudes towards citizenship. Including this scale did not, however, change our main conclusions, and we therefore excluded this variable from our analyses. The results are available upon request.
- 6 Religion has been introduced as explanatory factor for gender differences in voting behaviour (for example, Studlar et al, 1998). However, Rippeyoung (2007) showed that religiosity cannot explain the gender gap in radical right voting, which made us decide to include it as a control variable.
- 7 Mayer (2002) does find a significant gender gap in radical right voting in France. However, in the ESS (2010), we find nearly the same percentage of men (2.7 per cent) and women (2.3 per cent) having voted for RRP. In earlier waves of the ESS, we do find gender gaps in France. Hence, the year 2008 seems exceptional for France in that there is no significant gender gap in radical right voting.
- 8 To obtain the standardised effect, we use the formula $e^{(b\text{-coefficient}*\text{SD})}$ for a positive b -coefficient and the formula $1 - e^{(b\text{-coefficient}*\text{SD})}$ for a negative b -coefficient.
- 9 The country-specific descriptive results are not shown here but are available upon request.

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Appendix

Table A1: Overview reliability scale and country data

<i>Country</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Nativist (α)</i>	<i>RRP</i>	<i>Absolute image score</i>	<i>Relative image score</i>	<i>Absolute success</i>	<i>Relative success</i>	<i>Absolute populist style</i>	<i>Relative populist style</i>
Austria	752	0.92	FPÖ, BZÖ	6.19	2.89	15.15	0.43	8.75	3.09
Belgium	1292	0.88	Vlaams Belang	8.67	5.66	13.96	0.75	9.35	4.87
Denmark	1076	0.83	Danske FP	5.34	2.78	13.90	0.53	8.50	3.23
Finland	577	0.90	True Finns	6.82	4.27	4.05	0.18	8.88	3.98
France	1147	0.90	Front National	8.98	6.39	11.52	0.15	9.52	4.79
Germany	1032	0.87	Die Republikaner	8.32	6.23	2.20	0.06	8.77	3.34
Greece	861	0.85	LAOS	3.81	2.22	3.80	0.09	9.35	2.48
Italy	667	0.89	Lega Nord	7.29	4.10	5.19	0.17	9.22	2.91
Luxembourg	712	0.83	ADR	—	—	9.95	0.28	—	—
The Netherlands	1123	0.87	PVV	8.47	6.30	5.90	0.22	9.28	4.60
Norway	860	0.83	Progress Party	6.91	3.53	22.10	0.68	8.62	4.44
Switzerland	544	0.87	SVP	6.34	3.92	29.40	1.51	9.23	5.18
Total	10 643	0.87	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Source: EVS (2010); Expert Survey 2010 (Immerzeel *et al* 2011).

