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## **The transformation of the Radical Right Gender Gap: The case of the 2014 EP Election**

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*Abstract:* In 2004, the term « Radical Right Gender Gap » was coined to capture the greater reluctance of women to vote for these parties in Europe (Givens, 2004). Several lines of explanation were put forward: women were more educated, less exposed by the types of jobs they held to competition with immigrants, less supportive of political violence and extremism, more religious, etc.. Yet systematic analysis of survey data shows large variations in the gap from one country to another (Immerzeel, Coffè and van der Lippe, 2013). In addition, even where this gap existed, things might be changing (Barisione and Mayer, 2013), as Radical Right Parties present themselves as women friendly and target Islam and Muslims in the name of democratic values and women's rights (Akkerman and Haggelund, 2007; de Lange and Mügge, 2015). Using the 2014 European Election Studies dataset, this paper revisits the RRGG in a comparative perspective, analyzing gender as a predictor of vote choice for Radical Right Parties in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Netherlands and Sweden. While the gender gap persists once controlled for education, age, religion and occupation, the interaction of gender with political attitudes and left-right ideology significantly affects electoral support for RR parties in the six cases studied. And the RRGG appears tightly entangled with the “traditional gender gap” on the one side and the “modern gender-generation gap” on the other.

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## **Introduction**

Since the pioneer insight of Hans Georg Betz (1994) a large body of literature has tried to explain the unequal support of men and women for the Populist Radical Rights that have developed in Europe since the 1980s - or “Radical Right Gender Gap” (Givens, 2004; Norris, 2005; Rippeyoung, 2007; Mudde, 2007 ; Immerzeel et al., 2013; de Bruijn, Veenbrink, 2012; Coffé, 2013)<sup>1</sup>. However until recently few studies had attempted a systematic study of the RRGG, controlling for the possible effect of other variables. Those who did show large variations in the gap from one country to another (Immerzeel, Coffé and van der Lippe, 2013). In addition, even where this gap existed, things might be changing (Barisione and Mayer, 2013), at a time when Radical Right Parties increasingly present themselves as women friendly, targeting Islam and Muslims in the name of democratic values and women’s rights (Akkerman and Haggelund, 2007; de Lange and Mügge, 2015). In France for instance, while gender had a significant impact on the votes for Jean-Marie Le Pen, it had none on the votes for his daughter in the 2012 presidential election, once controlled by age, education, religious practice, occupation and left right position (Mayer, 2013a and 2013b). Therefore this paper proposes a re-examination of the impact of gender on voting in the 2014 EP (European Parliament) Election.

A first section revisits the literature about the successive electoral gender gaps through recent decades. A second one presents our research strategy and methodology. A third one tests our hypotheses, using data from the 2014 European Election Studies in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Netherlands, and Sweden.

### **1. Theoretical framework: revisiting the electoral gender gap(s)**

#### *1.1. From traditional to modern gender gap*

The term “gender gap” was coined in the US by the National Organization of Women (NOW) at the time of the election of Ronald Reagan. In the 1980 American presidential race, for the first time since they got the right to vote, women gave more support to the Democrats. Since then this gap has persisted, and there is a robust relation between gender and vote, still significant after controlling for age, class, race

and religion (Manza and Brooks 1998; Whitaker, 2008; Abendschön and Steinmetz, 2014). A similar divide has appeared since in several post industrial democracies, and notably in Europe (Inglehart, Norris, 2003; Mossuz-Lavau and Le Hay, 2010; Giger, 2009), women moving more to the left than men whatever the indicator used. It was called the “*modern gender gap*”, in opposition to the previous “*traditional*” one. Women in most countries got the right to vote long after men. They first tended to be more conservative, and give more support than men to right wing parties with a traditional view of women’s role and family (Mossuz-Lavau and Sineau, 1983). Their progressive dealignment from the right and realignment towards the left, according to the developmental theories framed by Inglehart and Norris (1999), reflects structural and cultural changes occurring in most post industrial societies after World War 2. Women’s rising level of education and their massive entrance in the labour market on the one hand, the process of secularization, the break-up of traditional family units, and the emancipating influence of post-materialist values and feminist movements - encouraging autonomy and self expression - on the other hand, brought them gradually closer to left-wing parties. This was particularly the case among the younger generations, leading Pippa Norris to coin the term of “*generation gender gap*” (Norris, 1996). In the long run, generational replacement should even expand the process: “If a generational rather than a life-cycle effect, as seems most likely, this suggests that the process of generational turnover will probably continue to move women leftwards. In the long-term, as younger voters gradually replace older generations, through secular turnover, the modern gender gap should therefore strengthen and consolidate in established democracies. “(Inglehart and Norris, 2000, p. 459).

### *1.2. The emergence of a Radical Right Gender Gap*

Since the 1980s though, the electoral boom of radical right anti immigrant parties, especially in Europe, has brought about a third cleavage, women appearing more reluctant to give their votes to these parties. Hans-Georg Betz was the first to outline the phenomenon (Betz, 1994, p.142-148), and the difference seems to persist (Givens, 2004; Norris, 2005; Immerzeel et al., 2013; de Bruijn and Veenbrink, 2012). Both structural and attitudinal factors have been put forward to account for what has become known as the “*Radical Right Gender Gap*” (Givens, 2004).

A first line of argument considers the gendered division of labour (Mayer, 2002; Givens, 2004; Rippeyoung, 2007; Studlar et al., 1998). Men are still overrepresented in manual occupations, particularly among industrial blue collars (*ouvriers*), the “globalization losers” by excellence. In competition with cheap labour in developing countries on the one side and with immigrants inside the country on the other, they are the most likely to support the Radical Right (Betz 1994; Kitschelt and McGann, 1995; Kriesi et al. 2008; Oesch, 2008; Bornschier and Kriesi, 2012). Conversely, women are more often employed in non-manual clerical or services jobs and in the public sector, and hold on the whole economically more secure positions and less exposed to immigration. Therefore they should be less inclined to turn to the Radical Right.

A second line of research stresses the greater religiosity of women. Christian Churches all over Europe have repeatedly condemned the anti-immigrant and inegalitarian message of the Radical Rights in the name of the Evangelists. Although a process of secularization is taking place in post-industrial European societies, women, especially the elderly, still attend religious services more often than men. They should therefore be more likely to hear the warnings of the Church. Sineau (2004, p.220) has showed that in Catholic France, not only women go to church more often than men, they are also more receptive to the Christian message. At similar level of religious practice than men, they were far less inclined to vote for Jean-Marie Le Pen in the 2002 Presidential election, the gap reaching its peak among elderly women that were catholic and regular church-goers. These remnants of the “traditional gender gap” could explain the RRG of today.

A third block of research, more in line with the modern gender gap perspective, points on the contrary to the gradual diffusion of feminist ideas at all levels of society - a “rising tide” (Inglehart and Norris, 2003). This could prevent women, especially the new highly educated generations, from supporting far right parties that defend a traditional ideology, reducing them to their role of spouses and mothers. Conversely, the very spread of feminist ideas, the claims for equality and the growing presence of women in the work force could be seen as a threat for masculine supremacy, breeding insecurity and resentment and feeding an authoritarian anti-feminist vote for the far right (Perrineau, 1997). This is even more likely in working class and blue collars

milieus, where norms of strong manhood and masculinity, based on physical strength, still predominate (Frader, 2008; Molinier, 2004).

A last line of research stresses the persistence of gender stereotypes from early socialisation and their impact in the political realm (Mossuz-Lavau, 2014; Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993; Lahire, 2001). Girls are still brought up differently than boys, expected not to be violent or aggressive. Women in surveys, for instance, appear systematically less in favour of war and conflict<sup>2</sup>. The image of extremism associated to Radical Right Parties could be a deterrent factor for them. Women are also less trained to assert themselves, to confront disagreement or question social norms (Immerzeel, Coffé, van der Lippe, 2013). One of the main findings of a study based on three waves of the CSES data in 32 countries shows that men are politically more “assertive” than women, more likely to cast a vote for new or ambiguous parties, whatever their political stands: “the more other respondents indicated to highly dislike the party, the smaller the relative share of female voters” (Harteveld and al., 2013; p.12; also see Immerzeel et al., 2013).

### *1.3. Beyond the “Radical Right Gender Gap” approach*

That having been said, one may ask if the different explanations put forward to explain the RRGG are still relevant today, in a context of economic recession and political disaffection. Indeed, new conditions potentially favoring a shift toward the opposite direction, i.e. an erosion of the RRGG, could easily be identified.

Since 2008, the deteriorating economic situation is blurring the *bordure* between manual and non-manual positions, with both white-collar women in service jobs and blue-collar men in manufacturing jobs being increasingly exposed to part time and low paid insecure positions. As a consequence, women’s level of support for the Radical Right should come closer to men’s<sup>3</sup>. In addition, religion could work less as a protection against intolerance and feed, on the contrary, anti-Muslim and anti-minorities’ resentment in a context of anti-Muslim polarization. A similar backlash trend may concern feminist attitudes. As a belief in equality between men and women, feminism should less clearly deter women from supporting Radical Right Parties, which are gendering the immigration issue and presenting Islam as a threat to women’s rights. Finally,

the ideologically less extreme and thus more acceptable image given by some of these Radical Rights could weaken the reluctance of female voters to vote for them. Hence, the RRGG might well be in transition, with forces pulling in different directions.

One may even go further, considering that the exclusive focus on the latest research on the “RRGG” and its size are more an obstacle than a help to understand what gender does to electoral behavior. Indeed, the emergence of a RRGG does not necessarily mean that the two previous electoral gaps have disappeared; they need to be articulated together. Moreover, what matters is not just the size of the gap, but the level of support for RR. The fact that there is no radical right gender gap left could have two opposite meanings: that women give the same high support to RR than men or, conversely, that they show the same rejection of these parties. Similarly, the same gap in size can have totally different meanings. Our assumption, in line with Sineau’s finding, is that two types of women can be less willing than men to vote for the radical right for opposite reasons. In certain parts of the electorate, this will reflect a modern gender gap, with young educated women being ideologically more progressive and left-wing than men, thus more reluctant to support RR. In other parts, a traditional gender gap may subsist, with elderly, religious women being more prone than men to support conservative mainstream parties rather than the extreme right.

This implies that one should explore more closely the specific interactions between gender and the other variables that explain support for the radical right: age, education, occupation, religion, left-right position and social attitudes (especially relative to immigration and feminism/post materialism), and see how gender gaps –in the plural – appear, disappear or overlap.

#### *1.4. Theoretical expectations*

In this paper, due not only to limitations of space but also in the number of variables available in the 2014 EES dataset, we focus on a specific set of expectations arising from our theoretical framework, which combines – as suggested above – presence/absence of the RRGG with high/low levels of support for the radical right.

In addition, we are interested in disentangling “traditional” and “modern” forms of radical right gender gap.

The framework presented below precisely combines levels of gender gap (yes=significant; no= absent or statistically non significant) with levels of support for radical right parties (yes=highest; no=lowest). This four-cell table enables us to differentiate between cases of inter-gender “equal rejection” (no Gender Gap and no Radical Right support) and “equal support” (high RR score with no GG) on the one side; between cases of “traditional” gap in radical right support (high RR score, especially among men voters) and “modern” patterns of rejection of the RR (women scoring particularly low) on the other side. Within this bi-dimensional framework for analysis of the radical right gender gap, the conventional concern about the magnitude of this gap is only a starting point – a broad picture that necessitates zooming in further into the complexities of this topic.

As for this “broad picture”, we expect - given the contradictory trends outlined in the previous section - to find only a mild gender gap in our overall measure of support for radical right parties in the six countries considered. We also anticipate that this gap should be reduced further, if not entirely suppressed, when introducing controls for the main sociological variables – especially education and religiosity – due to compositional gender differences along these societal lines. Finally, more general ideological orientations (such as left-right self-placement) and social attitudes (e.g. toward immigrants) should result as the fundamental “mediators” of support for radical right parties, i.e. the radical right gender gap should disappear when holding these factors equal across gender.

After investigating this general pattern, however, we will move on to consider more specific interactions of gender with a set of theoretically relevant variables, which might act as “moderators” of the radical right gender gap<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, we argue that the issue of gender heterogeneity – i.e. women and men voters being considered not as homogenous blocs but in their intra-group differentiations – is too often neglected in the study of political gender gaps in general, and of the radical right gender gap in particular. Yet we know from scholarly literature that two gender-based mechanisms might coexist and drive the overall RRGG: the first one implies that a category of



women present, both in social and ideological terms, all the typical features of RR voters but actually tend to vote less for these parties than men, possibly due to their lower political “assertiveness”. This category of women would thereby reflect the idea of a “traditional gender gap”, with higher support for mainstream right-wing parties and lower support for radical right parties. We expect to find evidence of this mechanism possibly among elder and more religious women, and even more clearly among those with conservative ideology and less tolerant attitudes toward social outgroups.

The second mechanism points, on the contrary, to the importance of a category of women with social and political profiles completely averse to the radical right, and which we would expect to reject RR parties even more strongly than men. This expectation is based on the notion of a “modern gender gap” resting on new generations of highly educated women characterized by culturally more liberal and politically more progressive attitudes. Alongside a “modern” pattern of greater women’ rejection of the radical right, we might also find evidence of “equal rejection” across similar categories of women and men voters. Finally, social economic insecurity aggravated by the economic crisis exposes women in service jobs as well as blue-collar men to unemployment, part time jobs and low paid insecure jobs. This should bring women, especially those already excluded from labour force, close to men in their level of support for the Radical Right.

**Theoretical framework: Gender Gap (GG) and Radical Right support (RR)**

		Gender gap	
		NO	YES
RR support	NO	EQUAL REJECTION (Left-wing)	MODERN REJECTION (High education)
	YES	EQUAL SUPPORT (Occupational exclusion)	TRADITIONAL SUPPORT (Conservative)

Hence, our set of theoretical expectations transcends – as suggested above – the mere issue of the overall magnitude of the radical right gender gap and aims to attain a more fine-grained comprehension of the phenomenon in its multiple dimensions.

Although our main interest lies in radical right parties as a relatively homogenous ideological family, we are not assuming cross-country homogeneity in patterns of Radical Right Gender Gap. Not only do general levels of support of RR parties differ across countries, but also the gender gap itself could differ across countries, especially depending on whether or not the RR party has pursued a strategy of normalization in the national political arena. To the extent that a normalization strategy – such as that pursued by National Front, Party of Freedom, FPÖ, and Danish People’s Party – makes the RR more socially acceptable and less perceived as an ideological “outsider”, women might come to present roughly the same support as men for RR parties. Of course, results concerning this last hypothesis will be suggestive at best, given the very limited number of national cases selected for this study.

## **2. Data and Method**

A special attention will be given to methodological issues. Indeed, very few studies attempt a systematic analysis of the RRG. Some just acknowledge the gap based on cross tabulations comparing the level of electoral support of these parties by gender and by country, sometimes only at one point in time, not controlling for the possible effect of other variables. When they do attempt systematic controls (for instance Immerzeel, Coffé, and van der Lippe, 2013; Norris, 2005; Rippeyoung, 2007), it is usually on the basis of large cross-national surveys (European Values Study, European Social Survey, World Values Survey) that are not fit to such a purpose and result into a distorted image of actual votes for such parties. The reason for this is the non-electoral nature of these surveys, which collect voting intentions or past votes in the next or last national election, but outside the context of a real election (Banducci and Stevens, 2015). Moreover, the country subsamples are usually small, resulting into very small numbers of self-reported far-right voters, a tendency that is further

aggravated by moral reprobation being still attached to support for many of these parties.

Therefore our choice went to the European Election Studies, and for the most recent election, 2014, all the more interesting to study as the Radical Rights did very good scores (over one quarter for the Danish People's Party, the French FN, the British UKIP). We chose to limit ourselves to six well-established "radical right populist parties"<sup>5</sup> in Europe that are clearly positioned on the right side of a 0-10 left-right scale by public opinions in their countries. We excluded other potentially relevant parties that are less congruent with a radical right ideology, such as the Northern League and True Finns. We excluded Eastern Europe countries as well, because of the specificity of the post-communist context. The selection of cases presents contrasted features, in that the scores of these parties in the EP election range between 26.6 percent for the Danish People's Party to 4.3 for the Flemish Interest (see Appendix table 1). Some of these parties are also perceived as more extremist than others. If one compares their average score on an 11-point left-right scale (0-10), the French FN comes ahead with a peak score of 8.8, while the Danish People's Party gets only 7.4 (see Appendix table 2).

However, in spite of their relative differences, these six parties undoubtedly belong to the same line of the "Radical Right" in contemporary Europe (2015, Kallis) and are suitable, as such, for an aggregate study of the radical right gender gap. Hence, this study aims to test and explain the European radical right gender gap altogether – i.e. with a 'pooled' approach – rather than to seize 'in-country' specificities. For this reason, our methodological strategy consists of constructing a single measure of support for radical right parties across the six countries, i.e. a unique dependent variable resulting from the aggregation of voting probabilities for each national party.

Lastly, we opted for voting probabilities rather than for actual votes, since even in specifically comparative electoral surveys like the EES (European Election Studies), the number of self-reported radical right voters is often too small to permit any statistical analysis. In this 2014 EES survey, for instance, in spite of the high score of the National Front at the EP election (25%), the number of self-reported NF voters amounts to 58 (16%, see Appendix table 1).

Therefore, to properly analyze the RR gender gap and its relationship with other social and political factors it is safer to turn to a continuous measure of party support such as the propensity to vote (PTV) score. This variable indicates the self-assessed degree of probability (on a 0-10 scale) that each respondent “will ever vote” for a RR party, where ‘0’ means “not at all probable” and ‘10’ means “very probable”. Using this variable, the number of respondents for each RR party increases from a minimum of 580 (Vlaams Belang) to a maximum of 1114 cases (Sweden Democrats) (see Appendix table 3).

Not only does this variable present the clear advantage of a much larger number of cases, it also proves to be a very good proxy for real vote choices. We draw this conclusion from two statistical tests. First, appendix table 3 presents the average PTV score by vote choice at the 2014 EP election (RR party voters vs. other voters). In all cases, propensities to vote for RR parties always exceed the average score ‘8’ on the 0-10 scale among RR party voters, with a clear homogeneity across countries. Secondly, we test the measure of association between the two variables (vote choice and propensities to vote for a RR party) using an ANOVA. Both their overall correlation ( $\eta = .737$ ) and effect size ( $\eta^2 = .542$ ) prove very strong. Therefore, voting probabilities as collected in an immediate post-election context provide an excellent piece of information about the behavioral propensities of each respondent.

As shown in Appendix figure 1, most respondents will give the radical right party the score ‘0’ – almost 60% overall, which corresponds to the portion of those who do not vote, and do not consider to do it, for a radical right party. But the presence of a continuous scale prevents from losing important information about: (1) radical right voters who did not turn out at a “second-order election” such as the EP election (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Hix and Marsh, 2011); (2) actual or would-be radical right voters who are not declaring their vote choice due to a “social desirability” bias (Holbrook and Krosnick, 2010).

Using a stacked data matrix, we thus create a new “PTV” variable, which measures propensities to vote for the six parties altogether. To account for the country-level

differences, we use a mixed effect multilevel method in which individual respondents represent level 1 and their country level 2. Our multilevel models include random (or varying) intercepts and slopes, because we assume not only that average levels of support for radical right parties vary significantly across countries, but also that gender differently predicts radical right support in different countries.

### **3. Results**

#### *3.1. The broad picture: multilevel regression models predicting the radical right gender gap*

Our first hypothesis concerns the presence, magnitude and direction of a gender gap in the support of radical right parties at the 2014 EP election. As anticipated, we expect to find only a mild gender gap referencing higher male support for the European radical right, and this gender gap to possibly disappear after controlling for a set of key ‘sociological’ variables – namely education and religiosity.

Table 1 shows patterns of RRGG (Radical Right Gender Gap) in the six countries altogether, across different multilevel models that include varying sets of control variables: model 0 (or “Basic”, i.e. with only gender as an independent variable and no other controls); model 1 (“Societal”, with age, education and religiosity as controls); model 3 (“Political”, which includes the respondents’ participation in the 2014 EP election, their degree of political interest and their left-right self-placement); model 4 (“Policy-related”, which adds two more variables tapping respondents’ orientations toward two key issues in radical right parties’ platforms and discourses, namely immigration and same-sex marriage).<sup>6</sup>

As the coefficient for gender in model 0 shows, there is a fully significant gender gap in favor of higher male support for the six European radical right parties altogether. Since the independent variable is dichotomous (male vs. female), interpretation of the coefficient is straightforward: the average PTV score (our measure of support for radical right parties on a 0-10 scale) is, on average, 0.46 points lower among women. While this gender gap is statistically fully significant, however, in substantive terms it

also looks relatively mild: if translated in percentage terms, it amounts to a gap of less than 5 percentage points between men and women voters.

The second important result comes from model 1, which reveals that the radical right gender gap is virtually unaffected by potential compositional gender differences in terms of education and religiosity. Of course, both control variables do exert an impact on radical right support, as well as age does. It is among younger, low-educated voters who do not often attend religious services that the propensities to vote for radical right parties are relatively higher. But even taking this into account, women continue to appear more reluctant than men to support these parties. As a result, our starting hypothesis is only partially confirmed: the RRGP is substantively mild, but it fails to decrease when controls by education and religiosity are introduced.

\*\*\* Table 1 here \*\*\*

Model 2 goes further in testing the socio-political bases of the radical right gender gap. To do so, it investigates whether the RRGG depends on different gender compositions in terms of actual turnout at the 2014 EP election, of political interest and of distribution on the left-right ideological axis. While participation in the European election makes a barely significant difference on the support of the radical right (which slightly tends to decrease among actual voters in 2014), a more important role is played by political interest (the higher the interest in politics, the lower the chances to vote for a radical right party) and, much expectedly, by left-right self-placement: as the latter gets closer to the far-right pole by one unit, the average PTV score increases by more than 0.4 points, all else being held constant. But even in this case – including these political control variables – the radical right gender gap remains fully significant, even though substantively reduced (from 0.46 to 0.33 average points).

It is only when the policy-related dimension of radical right voting – agreement/disagreement with restrictive migration policies and with same-sex marriage (model 3) – are entered in addition to left-right position that the gender gap loses any residual significance. This implies that men are more prone to vote for the

radical right partly because they are, on average, in 2014, more right wing-oriented than women, but also slightly more restrictive than women on migration policies, as well as clearly more conservative on gender-related issues such as same-sex marriages. Hence, while there is no evidence of a compositional basis of the RRGG in societal terms – i.e. it is not because they are, on average, more religious than women vote less for the radical right (and education levels do not differ, overall) – we do find evidence of a compositional effect in terms of ideology and policy orientations across gender. Men’s greater inclination to voting for RR parties, in other words, is partly mediated by their more radical-right oriented political attitudes (see histograms in following figures 4, 5a and 5b). In the next section, we will analyze intra-gender variations in the relationship between ideology and voting, i.e. whether ideology moderates propensities to vote for the radical right across gender.

\*\*\* Figure 1 here \*\*\*

Figure 1 shows the same results (magnitude of RRGG by each model) across countries. Patterns of gender gap do change, of course, across countries. In the basic model, the gap is of about 0.6 points in France and Denmark, but it does not reach 0.4 points in Sweden and Belgium. Moreover, decrease of the gender gap in the support of the National Front is linear as we proceed from model 0 to model 3, whereas the pattern appears to be “flatter” for other countries.

However, the broad picture is fundamentally the same across countries: a mild radical right gender gap, which is not affected by social/compositional control factors but tends to disappear when introducing left-right ideology and attitudes toward social outgroup-related policies. Hence, the hypothesis that the degree of normalization and gender friendliness of these parties matters does not hold, as the gender gap is not higher in Flanders where such a normalization strategy is not much developed, while it persists in Denmark where the People’s Party has definitely made an effort to gender the immigration issue.

### *3.2. Going further: interaction effects of gender in the support for the European radical right*

If women still are, on average, slightly less prone to support European radical right parties than men, is this gap amplified or, conversely, suppressed within certain categories of women by socio-occupational and ideological lines? Our second set of hypotheses posits the existence of significant interactions between gender and other variables that are, as shown in section 1, crucial to explaining electoral support for radical right parties. Moreover, we expect not only the magnitude, but also the meaning of the radical right gender gap to vary across categories of voters, given that no gender gap, for instance, can imply men and women equally supporting or, on the contrary, equally rejecting radical right parties.

Following the framework presented in our “four-cell table”, we estimate five different interaction models based on mixed-effect multilevel regression model 1 (societal), as shown in equations 1-5 (see Appendix A). For each model, we will not present all parameter estimates for every interaction term and control variable included, but just the specific marginal effects of gender resulting from the interaction model, i.e. the statistically most meaningful results (Brambor, Clark and Golder, 2006).

Figure 2 presents marginal effects of low vs. high education levels on the RRG. We find no significant gender gap at low education levels but a clear gender gap (0.8, i.e. significantly higher than the average value of 0.45 drawn from Table 1) at high education levels. These two gaps conceal however different average levels of RR support. Among the less educated respondents, PTV scores are significantly higher than average (3.4 for men, 3.0 for women, 2.3 the overall average); among the more educated, while scores reflect the average value among men (2.2), they reach their lowest level among women (1.4). In other words, what we find here is a pattern of “modern rejection”, with educated women presenting – as in the more general case of the “modern gender gap” – more progressive, less conservative political attitudes.

\*\*\*Figures 2 and 3 here\*\*\*

While levels of religiosity do not appear to significantly affect gender patterns of radical right support (in both cases, the PTV scores decrease at highest levels of religiosity – figure not reported), social economic insecurity and exclusion from labour force does seem to alter the gender balance in this respect. In the 2014 EES



questionnaires, our best proxies are such occupational conditions as “manual worker” (whether skilled or unskilled) and “non active” out of work respondents (i.e. homemaker, unemployed or temporarily not working). We thus isolate these two employment statuses from the rest of the sample (“Else”).

Figure 3 shows that the gender gap is neutralized, and tends even to be reversed, among non-actives (value above the zero line indicates women supporting the RR more than men, although the gap is not statistically significant here), whereas it is reinforced among manual workers (1.0). In both cases, however, women’s support for the radical right is higher than their average score (2.1) (the score among non-active women is 2.7, among manual works 2.8). But it is among non-actives that women’s position appears most noteworthy, firstly because they even tend to score higher than men, secondly because they account for two thirds of this occupational category. Among manual workers, on the contrary, men are not only more numerous (68%), but also much more strongly supporting the radical right (3.8). As mentioned in section 1, this could be associated with norms of masculinity permeating blue collars milieus and reflecting an “angry white men” basis for RR support.

Overall, non-active workers provide an excellent example of “equal support” across gender, i.e. RR support with no gender gap. Manual workers, on the contrary, fit the cell of “traditional support”, or traditional gender gap in support for radical right parties.

\*\*\*Figure 4 here\*\*\*

If the societal dimension matters in this respect, intra-gender variations of the RRGG also depend on ideological and policy-related factors. Table 1 has already shown that the latter are strongly associated with voting for radical right parties, but also that they partly mediate the radical right gender gap, which disappears when gender compositional differences in terms of left-right ideology, attitudes toward migration and homosexuality are all simultaneously accounted for. We now test possible interactions of gender and ideology first, gender and policy-related attitudes secondly, on patterns of support for the radical right. This follows our theoretical expectation – outlined in the “four-cell” table – whereby political attitudes should differently affect

different categories of women and men voters in their levels of RR support, consistent with the idea that both a “modern” and a “traditional” gender gap contribute to explaining gender-based attitudes toward radical right parties.

\*\*\* Figures 5a and 5b here \*\*\*

First, is ideology differently moderating RR support across gender? A clearly significant interaction coefficient ( $p=0.008$ , table not reported) suggests that this is the case. Figure 4 presents the estimated marginal effects of left-right self-placement on RR support conditional on gender, as drawn from interaction model 3 (see Appendix A). As it turns out, levels of support for RR parties differ across gender at the right but not at the left of the ideological scale. The average PTV score for RR parties is, for instance, 0.69 points lower among women than men voters positioning themselves at the extreme right of the scale (position 10), but it does not significantly differ across gender within positions 0 to 4 (center-left). Therefore, the effect of gender on RR support is moderated by ideology, in that women placing themselves at the radical right appear to be less assertive than men in their propensities to vote for radical right parties. In our theoretical framework (four-cell table), this stands for a “traditional” pattern of RR support, with right-wing women less disposed to support radical right parties and more favorable to established conservative parties.

In addition, histograms in Figure 4 provide the actual distribution of left-right self-placement across gender. This reminds us another fundamental element: in 2014, European women lean, on average, more to the left than to the right or, alternatively – and consistently with persisting lower assertiveness in politics – prefer to position themselves at the center of the ideological spectrum, not choosing between left and right. Hence, to correctly understand the relationship between gender, ideology and voting, one should keep these three elements in mind: women voters are (1) less often on the right than men (modern gender gap); (2) they are more often on the center (lower political assertiveness); (3) when positioned on the right, they are less prone to express support for the RR parties (traditional radical right gender gap). While the first two elements are compositional in nature, the third points to a moderating effect of ideology in predicting gender-based patterns of RR support, with men’s greater propensity to vote for these parties having a clearer radical right connotation.

We finally test interactions of gender with the two policy-related attitudes that proved most strongly associated with RR support, namely migration and same-sex marriage. Both figures 5a and 5b show very similar patterns of gender-policies interactions, which tend to replicate what we have already observed about left-right ideology. The RRGG is highest among voters who are more hostile to policies favoring immigrants and homosexuals, whereas it disappears among those with the most tolerant stances (positions 7 to 10 for migration, positions 0 to 1 for same-sex marriage) on these issues. Once again, not only are men slightly more radical in their positioning with respect to these issues (see histograms for positions 0 to 3 in figure 5a, for position 10 – especially when compared with position 0 – in figure 5b), they are clearly more supportive of radical right parties when they take these “tougher” stances. Conversely, women who most clearly affirm their tolerance vis-à-vis social outgroups do not differ from men in their firm rejection of the radical right (PTV scores close to 0 for the migration issue, around 1.6 for the moral issue). Hence, we obtain once again a twofold picture in relation to the radical right gender gap: on the one side, disappearance of the gender gap in the presence of left-wing and more tolerant political positioning (“equal rejection”); on the other side, permanence of the radical right gender gap as a result of “traditional support” based on a mix of higher male ideological ‘toughness’ and lower women’s political assertiveness.

## **Conclusion**

A broad picture results from this analysis of voters’ support for six European radical right parties. It suggests that, consistent with previous findings in recent decades (Betz, 1994; Givens, 2004; Immerzeel et al., 2013), a Radical Right Gender Gap (RRGG) exists, with women significantly less likely than men to support RR parties. Yet, contrary to conventional wisdom, this gap appears relatively mild (if translated in electoral terms, roughly 4-5 percentage points at the most). And given that women account for some 53 percent of the electorate in general, one should keep in mind that in spite of the RRGG, there are as many if not more women than men in RR electorates.

Above and beyond the broad picture, however, this paper has first investigated the compositional bases of the RRG and found that this gap does not depend on education- and religion-related gender differences between men and women voters; secondly, it has identified the fundamental *mediators* of the RRG, i.e. ideological and political attitudes that logically precede electoral support. In particular, left-right self-placement and attitudes toward immigrants and homosexuality have emerged as the main factors that mediate between gender and vote, with the gender gap losing all significance when they are simultaneously held constant.

Thirdly, and perhaps more importantly, our paper has demonstrated that at least two patterns lie behind the general idea of “radical right gender gap”. Indeed, when the RRG is there, it can have two opposite meanings across different intra-gender categories of voters. On the one hand, it implies relatively high levels of support for radical right parties, but even higher support among men. On the other hand, it involves clear rejection of the radical right, but even clearer rejection among women. In the first case (“Traditional support”, according to the theoretical framework outlined in the four-cell table), the explanation is compositional in ideological terms (i.e. women are less often on the right of the ideological spectrum and tend to be more tolerant than men vis-à-vis social outgroups), but rests also on a different – i.e. lower – women’s propensity to turn right-wing attitudes into explicit support for the radical right. In other words, women tend to “agree” less – although, admittedly, only slightly less – than men with the ideological and political stances of radical right parties, but even when they do agree, they are less willing to support these parties. Hence, and consistent with what other researchers have found in relation to the 2009 EP election and across a more heterogeneous group of populist radical right parties (Harteveld et al., 2015), one may also conclude that political attitudes – namely, political attitudes that are less assertive and less “tough” among women – both *mediate* and *moderate* the relationship between gender and RR voting.

Conversely, in the second pattern (“Modern rejection”) women appear to be at least as categorical as men in refusing the radical right. The explanation for this apparent paradox – co-presence of “modern” and “traditional” patterns of gender gap – is in truth very simple, and rests on the idea of intra-gender heterogeneity, with women appearing particularly split along societal and ideological lines (DiMaggio et al.,

1996; Campbell, 2006; Gidengil, 2007; Barisione, 2014). If we consider the similar cases of “modern rejection” and “equal rejection” together, what we are confronted with is the ideal type of a younger highly-educated left-wing woman who clearly does not lack assertiveness in contrasting the radical right, and who is very far from the profile of the woman on which the traditional RRGG rests – i.e. older, less-educated, more religious and politically conservative. In addition, a third type of woman, characterized essentially by socioeconomic insecurity and exclusion from the labour force, tends to assimilate men’s inclination to vote for a radical right party (“Equal support”).

Although we have not found cross-country clues for the hypothesis that the erosion of the RRGG is associated with a normalization strategy pursued by some RR parties, the comparative perspective was admittedly marginal in our research design, whereby ensuring inter-party homogeneity was more important than enlarging the number of cases. The longitudinal dimension was also missing in this paper, and should be incorporated in an enlarged research design including all of the waves of the European Election Studies at least since 1989.

As for the dependent variable, we maintain that the PTV (propensities to vote) score is particularly suitable to study the structure of attitudes and patterns of behaviors toward radical right parties in Europe, given both the often too small number of observations referencing actual votes for these parties and the overall reliability, as shown in section 2, of these scores as measures of electoral support. A further step would be to test our findings on actual voting for the RR, drawing from national electoral surveys.

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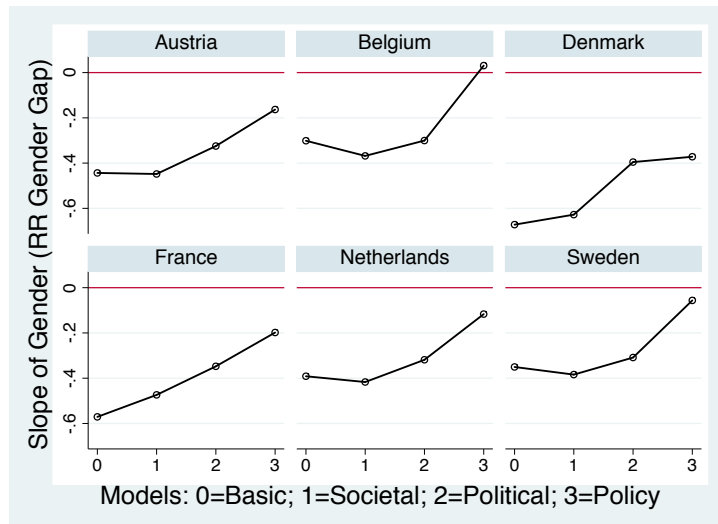
**Table 1.** Parameter estimates (coefficients with standard errors in parentheses) of four different mixed-effects multilevel regression models predicting the propensities to vote for radical Right parties

	Model 0 (Basic)	Model 1 (Societal)	Model 2 (Political)	Model 3 (Policy)
Gender (Man/woman)	-0.455*** (0.12)	-0.453*** (0.10)	-0.333*** (0.09)	-0.146 (0.11)
Age		-0.016*** (0.00)	-0.017*** (0.00)	-0.025*** (0.00)
Education (1=lower; 3=higher)		-0.741*** (0.06)	-0.598*** (0.06)	-0.425*** (0.06)
Religion (Church attendance 0=never; 7=weekly)		-0.062** (0.02)	-0.103*** (0.02)	-0.120*** (0.02)
Voted at EP 2014 (No/yes)			-0.215* (0.10)	-0.121 (0.09)
Political Interest (1=low; 4=high)			-0.231*** (0.05)	-0.116** (0.04)
Left-Right ideology (0-10)			0.428*** (0.02)	0.307*** (0.02)
Immigration (against restrictive policy) (0-10)				-0.318*** (0.01)
Oppose same-sex marriage (0- 10)				0.106*** (0.01)
Intercept	2.939*** (0.42)	5.704*** (0.48)	3.949*** (0.46)	5.103*** (0.47)
Random-effect parameters:				
Gender (std. dev.)	0.188	0.145	0.080	0.178
Gender (std. err.)	0.116	0.124	0.156	0.103
Intercept (std. dev.)	0.983	0.979	0.910	0.949
Intercept (std. err.)	0.309	0.318	0.302	0.301
N	5853	5853	5853	5853
p	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Log Likelihood	-15221.393	-15138.88	-14793.73	-14485.809
aic	30452.787	30293.761	29609.460	28997.618

Significance levels: \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

**Figure 1**

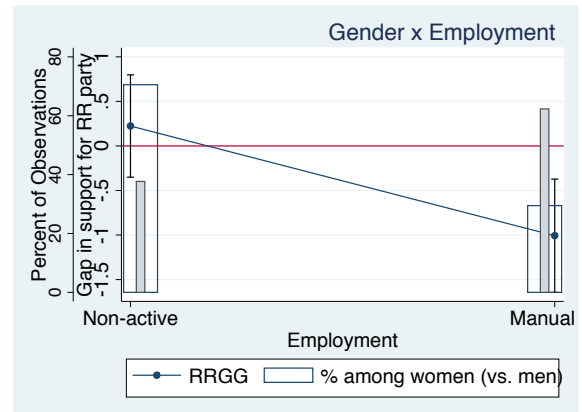
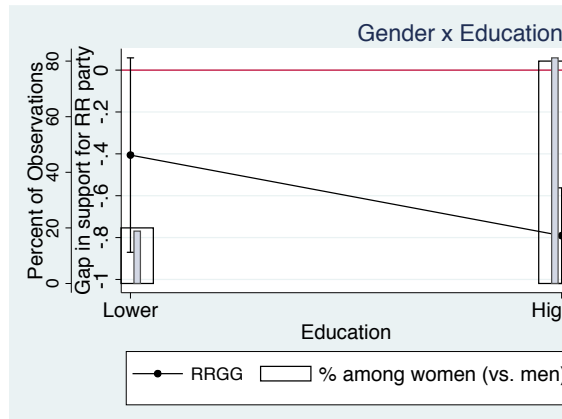
The effect of gender on the propensities to vote (PTVs) for RR parties by country



Note: each point indicates the relative gender gap (men’s score minus women’s score) on the 0-10 PTV scale, and corresponds to the estimated coefficient (slope) drawn from four mixed-effects (random intercept and slopes) multilevel models (basic, societal, political and policy-related).

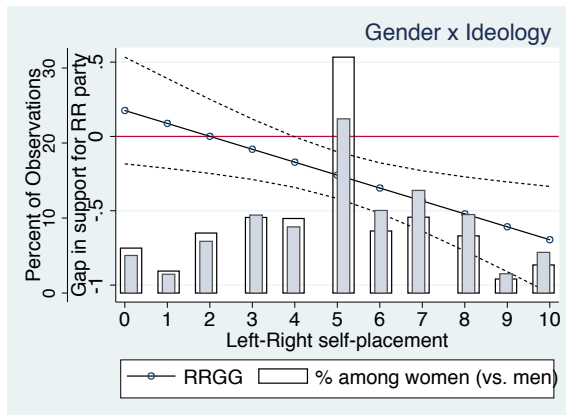
**Figures 2 and 3**

Marginal effects of Education and Employment on RR support conditional on gender (women voters) (with 95% confidence intervals) (see interaction models 1 and 2)



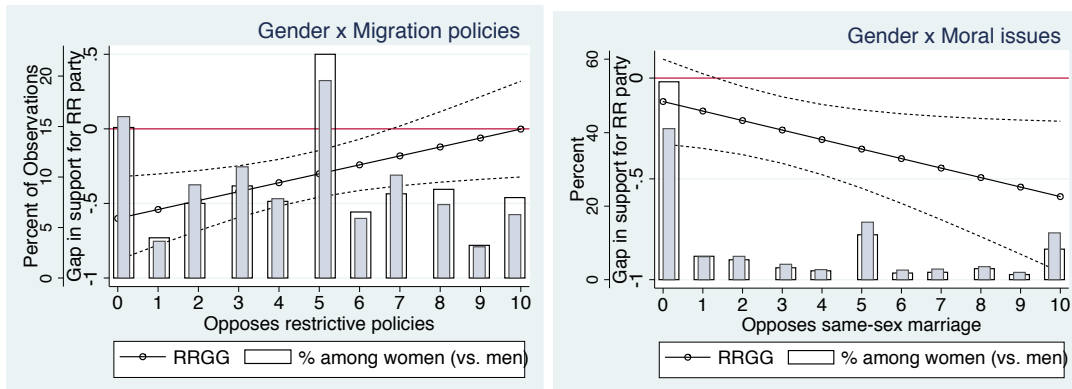
**Figure 4**

Marginal effects of left-right self-placement on RR support conditional on gender (women voters) (with 95% confidence intervals) (see interaction model 3)



**Figure 5a and 5b**

Marginal effects of attitudes toward migration and homosexuality on RR support conditional on gender (women voters) (with 95% confidence intervals) (see interaction models 4 and 5)



## APPENDIX

### Appendix A

#### *Interaction model 1*

$$RRPTV_i = \beta_0j + \beta_1jGENDER_i + \beta_2EDUCATION_i + \beta_3 GENDER_i*EDUCATION_i + \beta_4AGE_i + \beta_5RELIG_i + \epsilon_i$$

#### *Interaction model 2*

$$RRPTV_i = \beta_0j + \beta_1jGENDER_i + \beta_2EDUCATION_i + \beta_3EMPLOYMENT_i + \beta_4GENDER_i*EMPLOYMENT_i + \beta_5AGE_i + \beta_6RELIG_i + \epsilon_i$$

#### *Interaction model 3*

$$RRPTV_i = \beta_0j + \beta_1jGENDER_i + \beta_2EDUCATION_i + \beta_3IDEOLOGY_i + \beta_4GENDER_i*IDEOLOGY_i + \beta_5AGE_i + \beta_6RELIG_i + \epsilon_i$$

#### *Interaction model 4*

$$RRPTV_i = \beta_0j + \beta_1jGENDER_i + \beta_2EDUCATION_i + \beta_3IMMIGRANTS_i + \beta_4GENDER_i*IMMIGRANTS_i + \beta_5AGE_i + \beta_6RELIG_i + \epsilon_i$$

#### *Interaction model 5*

$$RRPTV_i = \beta_0j + \beta_1jGENDER_i + \beta_2EDUCATION_i + \beta_3HOMOSEX_i + \beta_4GENDER_i*HOMOSEX_i + \beta_5AGE_i + \beta_6RELIG_i + \epsilon_i$$

All models, which have the PTV (propensities to vote) score for RR party as the dependent variable, are mixed-effects multilevel models with varying intercepts and slopes (for gender) for group indicator j (country).

### Appendix Table 1

Vote choice for radical right parties in the 2014 EES sample and at 2014 EP election.

Country		Other party	RR party	Total	% EP 2014
Denmark (Danish People's Party)	N %	592 76.68	180 23.32	772 100.00	26.6
France (National Front)	N %	305 84.02	58 15.98	363 100.00	24.86
Austria (Austrian Freedom Party)	N %	436 80.44	106 19.56	542 100.00	19.72
Netherlands (Party of Freedom)	N %	638 94.10	40 5.90	678 100.00	13.3
Sweden (Sweden Democrats)	N %	856 94.17	53 5.83	909 100.00	9.67
Belgium (Flemish Interest)	N %	451 94.55	26 5.45	477 100.00	4.26
Total	N %	3,278 87.62	463 12.38	3,741 100.00	

**Appendix Table 2**

Respondents' average placement of each Radical Right party on 0-10 left-right scale

	L-R Mean	Std. dev.	N	Min	Max
National Front	8.79	2.38	947	0	10
Austrian Freedom Party	8.14	2.29	963	0	10
Flemish Interest	8.03	3.06	550	0	10
Sweden Democrats	7.78	2.84	959	0	10
Party of Freedom	7.67	2.79	979	0	10
Danish People's Party	7.44	2.40	985	0	10

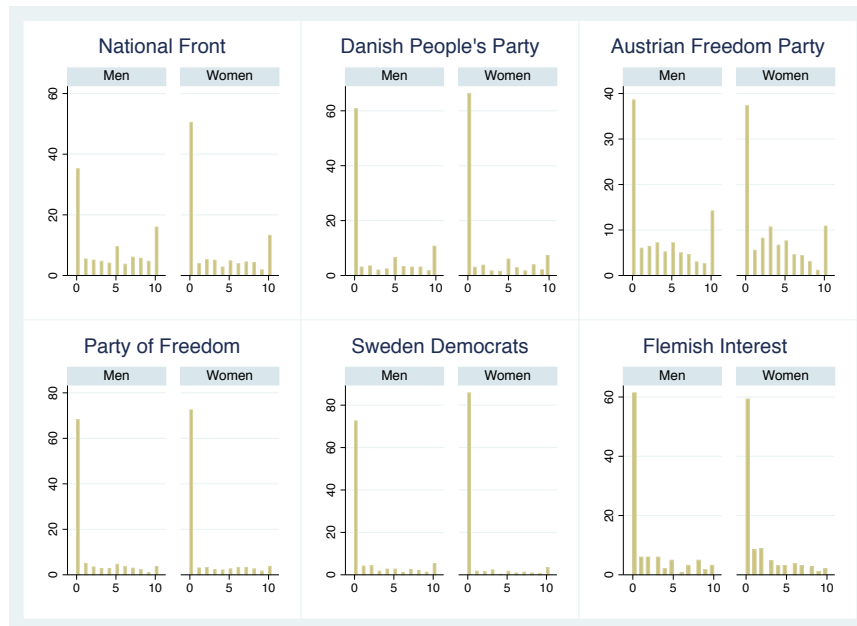
**Appendix Table 3**

Average score on the "propensity to vote" variable for each Radical Right party by respondents' vote choice

Party	Avg. All respdts	Std. Dev.	N	Avg. RR voters	Std. Dev.	N	Avg. Other voters	Std. Dev.	N
Danish People's Party	3.53	3.86	1051	8.48	2.13	180	1.86	2.77	592
National Front	2.23	3.48	993	8.26	2.74	58	0.95	2.25	305
Austrian Freedom Party	3.34	3.56	1025	9.09	1.86	106	1.87	2.42	436
Party of Freedom	1.55	2.88	1090	8.25	2.63	40	0.65	1.72	638
Sweden Democrats	1.17	2.69	1114	8.19	2.90	53	0.58	1.76	856
Flemish Interest	1.72	2.79	580	8.77	1.21	26	1.32	2.29	451
Total	2.28	3.39	5853	8.56	2.27	463	1.13	2.24	3278

## Appendix Figure 1

Percentage distribution of 0-10 PTV scores by each RR party and gender



<sup>1</sup> For a good introduction to the debate see the special issue of *Patterns of prejudice*, on Gender and populist radical rights politics, especially the opening paper (Spierings, Zaslove, Mügge & de Lange, 2015 and in the same issue Mudde, Kaltwasser).

<sup>2</sup> For an interesting approach of the contrasted reaction of women to the use of torture in the post 9/11 context, because of the opposed impact of feminism and motherhood, see Wemlinger, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance the comparative analysis conducted at OFCE (Eydoux, Math and Périvier, 2014) showing how the recession first had an impact on men and then on women, from “he-cession to she-austerity”.

<sup>4</sup> For a close yet slightly different definition of the « moderating » and « mediating » effects explaining the RRG also see Hartevelde, van der Brug, Dahlberg and Kokkonen (2015).

<sup>5</sup> We refer in this paper to the definition of the populist radical right parties given by Cas Mudde, based on nativism, authoritarianism and populism (Mudde, 2007, p.19).

<sup>6</sup> In the EES 2014 dataset a set of other relevant policy-related variables are available – from national sovereignty to public spending, from crime to environmental issues. For the sake of parsimony, we decided to focus only on the two issues that emerged from the multivariate analysis as the most strongly associated with voting for radical parties.