

# Power to ~~the People~~ Men

Can issue salience explain the gender gap in populist radical right voting?

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master in Political Science (MSc)  
Specialization Comparative Politics

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Word count: 16644

5 August 2021

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## Abstract

While the political representation of women is increasing, there are still several areas of the political landscape where women remain underrepresented. One of these areas is the vote for populist radical right parties. Just like women, the populist radical right is gaining political influence. However, these two trends do not seem to be working together. Across the voter base of almost all populist radical right parties, women are significantly underrepresented. Despite plenty of efforts to uncover what causes this so-called gender gap in the populist radical right vote, current explanations fall short of providing a comprehensive answer. Research has found that women do not tend to be less anti-immigrant, less anti-authoritarianism or less populist than men, meaning the gender gap cannot be explained by political attitudes. This thesis turns to a difference in issue salience between men and women as a possible explanation for the gender gap. Using data from the European Social Survey (2018) covering 19 countries, this thesis does not find evidence that the gender gap in the populist radical right vote is caused by a gender gap in issue salience. The research does, however, prove a useful starting point for further research on issue salience in relation to the gender gap in the populist radical right vote.

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## List of abbreviations and acronyms

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PRR	Populist radical right
ESS	European Social Survey
POPPA	Populism and Political Parties Expert Survey
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual plus any sexuality or gender identity outside of heterosexual and cisgender

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## 1. Introduction

Women worldwide are increasingly finding their place in the political space. While at the start of the 20th century women in countries all over the world were still fighting for voting rights, a hundred years later, they make up just as much of the voting population as men do (Kostelka, Blais and Gidengil, 2019; Carreras, 2018; Childs, 2004). Female representation in politics has also significantly increased over the past years (Paxton, Kunovich and Hughes, 2007; Hessami and Da Fonseca, 2020). While in 2000 a mere 13,4% of parliamentary seats worldwide was held by women, this number had already increased to 24,3% in 2019<sup>1</sup>. While this indicates significant improvements are being made, it also shows that gender equality has not been reached yet. With women making up 24,3% of the parliamentarians, they still clearly belong to the minority. Apart from female representation in the form of parliamentarians, a political gender gap remains in more areas in politics. For example, women are less likely to vote in secondary elections (Kostelka et al., 2019). Women are also less likely to be active within a political party or to directly engage with representatives (Coffé and Bolzendahl, 2010).

A gender gap can also be found in the vote for the populist radical right (PRR), in the sense that women are less likely to cast their vote for a PRR party than men (Immerzeel, Coffé & van der Lippe, 2013; Givens, 2004). This is especially a topic of interest since these populist radical right parties are becoming increasingly popular. This means the rise of these populist radical right parties co-exists with the increasing political emancipation of women. Yet, given the underrepresentation of women in the PRR electorate, these two trends do not seem compatible. Starting from the 1980s, the populist radical right established themselves in Western Europe and since then they have been a stable part of the political landscape (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013). Parties such as Front National in France and the Swiss Peoples party have also had a real political impact by influencing politics and being serious contenders for political power (Biard, 2018). Research by Meijers (2015), for example, has shown that populist radical right parties are able to influence other parties by making them more Eurosceptic. Populist radical right parties have also been involved in governing in Norway, Finland and the Netherlands, among other countries (Henley, 2018). The fact that these parties have a real impact but are disproportionately voted into office by men, in a time where

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<sup>1</sup> Source: 'Women in Politics: 2019' map published by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

women are gaining political influence in other regards, makes the gender gap a topic worthy of further investigation.

### **1.1 Research question and method**

The obvious cause for the gender gap might be that men simply agree with the populist radical right platform more, thus making men more likely to cast their vote for these parties. However, research has continuously shown that this is not the case (Harteveld, van der Brug, Dahlberg and Kokkonen, 2015; Immerzeel, Coffé & van der Lippe, 2013; Givens, 2004; Gidengil, Hennigar, Blais and Nevitte, 2005). Previous attempts have been made to uncover what else could lie at the heart of this phenomenon. Scholars have for instance turned to socio-economic factors such as a person's place in the workforce (Givens, 2004) or their religiosity (Mayer, 2015). Since these attempts at finding the cause of the gender gap fell short, this thesis aims to contribute to the search for an explanation and tries to answer the question: what causes the gender gap in populist radical right voting?

To answer this question, this thesis turns to issue salience as a possible explanation. The expectation is that there is a difference in issue salience between men and women, and that this can explain a difference in men's and women's likelihood to vote for the populist radical right. To test whether issue salience is indeed the cause of the gender gap, a quantitative research design is used. Based on the responses to the European Social Survey from 19 countries, this thesis works with a large sample to draw conclusions from. Since the data at hand includes such a diverse range of countries, this thesis first has room to pay attention to differences between these countries. Then, using a logistic regression analysis, the hypothesis is tested that a gender gap is present in populist radical right voting. After establishing the presence of this gender gap, logistic regression analyses are carried out including attitudes and issue salience of the respondents. Finally, issue salience and gender are combined into interaction variables to test an explanation for the gender gap that is based on the interplay between gender and issue salience. The findings in these models do not provide a definitive answer to the research question, meaning that, in line with previous research, the cause for the gender gap in PRR voting remains unknown. However, the results do give reason for further investigation of issue salience in relation to gender and the PRR vote.

### **1.2 Relevance**

The aim of this thesis is to answer this question by adding the perspective of issue salience. Research by Gidengil et al. (2005) and Harteveld et al. (2015) has already pointed in the

direction of issue salience and their results show this is a direction worth investigating further. The research incorporating issue salience as an explanation is, however, limited. A perspective that is missing, is an issue salience explanation departing from gender. While research so far was centered around the core values of the PRR and a possible gender gap in their salience, this thesis adds a gendered perspective of issue salience aiming to incorporate issues that are not typically associated with the PRR but are associated with gender in politics. This is where the scientific relevance of this thesis lies. With the question of the gender gap in PRR voting remaining unanswered, the current literature could benefit from an approach which is related more to the literature on gender in politics.

The societal relevance of this thesis lies in the previously mentioned representation of women as well as the increased influence of the populist radical right. Researching the cause of the gender gap gives insight into the areas women's interests are unaccounted for in PRR politics. This becomes especially relevant given the fact that PRR parties increasingly take part in governing or are otherwise influential in policymaking. The sustainable development goals formulated by the United Nations include the goal of achieving "gender equality and empowering all women and girls" (United Nations, 2015). Part of this 5<sup>th</sup> sustainable development goal is a political target which states that we need to "ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life" (United Nations, 2015). An increase in power for the male-dominated PRR would be a move in the opposite direction. Uncovering the cause of the gender gap would be a way of gaining insight into the consequences growing power of the PRR has for women in the political space.

Apart from the representation of women, gaining more knowledge of the populist radical right is useful in itself. As a serious political actor, the parties and their voter base deserve serious consideration. Finding an explanation for the gender gap in the PRR vote would contribute to a more complete picture of the PRR and its voter base. This could also give insight into the future of the PRR. Depending on what causes the gender gap, we might be able to determine whether the PRR can expand their voter base to include a new demographic, meaning they would increase their political power. Even though previous research has been done regarding the gender gap, paying continuous attention to the phenomenon remains relevant as the political landscape, parties and voter bases keep changing.



### **1.3 Outline**

This thesis will start with a review of the existing literature on the topic of the PRR gender gap. The literature review starts with a deeper dive into the phenomenon of the populist radical right and will take a look at the relation between the PRR and gender. Then, previous work investigating the gender gap in PRR voting is discussed and the possibility of a gender gap in issue salience being the cause for the gender gap in PRR voting is explored. Based on previous work using issue salience to explain the gender gap, expectations for the rest of the thesis are formulated. The data and methods used to test these expectations are covered in the third chapter. The fourth chapter presents the findings of this thesis with a fifth chapter discussing these findings and what they mean for women in politics and for the PRR. The fifth chapter also discusses directions for future research on the gender gap in populist radical right voting. The sixth and final chapter of the thesis provides the conclusion and wraps up all that has been discussed in the thesis.

## **2. Literature Review**

To be able to investigate the gender gap in populist radical voting, let us first take a look at what the populist radical right is. Mudde defines populism as follows; ‘an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people’ (2004, p. 543). But populism has different meanings and forms across the world. To make sense of different kinds and interpretations of populism, Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013) distinguish three subtypes. These subtypes of populism are agrarian, socioeconomic and xenophobic populism. In Western Europe specifically, what is meant by populism is mainly xenophobic populism. More commonly, these parties are referred to as populist radical right. Since the 1980s/1990s populist radical right parties have successfully entered the Western European political landscape (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013). These populist radical right parties (PRR) are characterized by their focus on post-materialistic issues of identity, mainly reflected in their anti-immigrant sentiments (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013). Eastern Europe on the other hand, knows a history of the agrarian type of populism, which is now disappearing from the political landscape (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013, p. 3). The xenophobic sub-type, or the populist radical right, is now also a consistent and influential party family in Eastern Europe. The socioeconomic subtype can be found in Latin America, with leaders calling themselves socialist and advocating for state involvement in the economy (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013).

These different types of populism have one central idea in common: society is divided into two groups, one being the corrupt elite and the other the pure people, as Mudde (2004) defines it. However, as the different typologies of populism already indicate, based on this definition there can still be varying types of populism ranging from the left to the right of the political spectrum. For this thesis, the focus is on xenophobic populism or populist radical right (PRR) parties and their gender gap. What follows first is a look into what defines these PRR parties.

Mudde (2007b) uses three core elements to define the populist radical right. First is populism, which, as we have seen, is about the contrast between the people and the elite. The elite in the populist world view does not act in the interest of the people. The elite or establishment in this case can take on multiple forms ranging from the media and political parties to universities (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013, p. 5). The people will, in populist radical right

ideology, always refer to native people of the country and will not include immigrants from outside the Western world. This relates to the second core characteristic, which is nativism. Nativism is the idea that the country should strictly be made up of people native to that country and that people from outside of that group pose a threat to the nation (Mudde, 2007b). What should be noted is that who is native to the country in some cases is a contested concept. In the case of the United States for example, politicians on the populist radical right side of the spectrum will advocate for the rights of white Americans and will not pay particular attention to Native American people. The final central concept to the populist radical right according to Mudde is authoritarianism. Authoritarianism is the belief that a society should be strictly ordered, and that the government should have the means to enforce this order (Mudde, 2007b).

These core aspects are in the basis what defines the PRR and they are at the heart of the political stances of the PRR. The anti-elitist sentiment, for example, is reflected in the PRR stance on climate change. The climate change attitudes also reflect the fact that the PRR sees the elite as more than those who hold political power. Populist radical right parties tend to be skeptical towards climate change, and the PRR parties as well as their supporters are often against climate change policy. Lockwood (2018) argues that the PRR position on climate change is rooted in their ideology of nativism, authoritarianism and anti-elitism. The three of those core elements combined create a world view of the people versus a corrupt elite (Lockwood, 2018). The elite in this instance includes those in political power who advocate for climate change policy as well as the scientific community and environmental activists. The fact that combatting climate change is such an international affair, is what evokes the nativist sentiments and the need to protect the people from outside influence. While the PRR climate change stance is not a defining characteristic of the PRR party family, it is an example of how the three core values are the framework through which the PRR policy preferences are formed.

The economic stances of the populist radical right are also not part of the core elements Mudde names when defining the PPR. This fits the idea of a party family focused on post-materialistic issues and identity. However, Zaslove (2009) argues that despite the economic attitudes commonly being treated as a secondary characteristic in PRR literature, the economic perspective does deserve serious attention. The economic preferences of the PRR are characterized by Mudde (2007b) and Zaslove (2009) as supporting the market economy, while also wanting protection from the state and supporting welfare. This gives the PRR their

own unique economic platform in which they support capitalism as well as the welfare state (Zaslove, 2009, p. 314).

## **2.1 Gender and sexuality in the populist radical right**

For this thesis specifically, it is worth taking a look at the role of women and gender within the populist radical right platform. For the populist radical right, women have even been an important part of the platform (Akkerman, 2015). Despite the (increasing) attention the PRR pays to gender, according to de Lange & Mügge (2015), little has been written and researched to further clarify what role gender plays exactly. This claim of little knowledge on the role of gender within the populist radical right is also supported by Mudde when he asks the question if PRR parties are “Männerparteien” (parties for and by men) (2007a). Mudde claims little has been written and researched when it comes to the role of women in the radical right. The literature that does exist derives from feminists and activists who, according to Mudde, do not start from an objective and unbiased point. Therefore, he pays extensive attention to work from Amesberger and Halbmayr (2002) which has been written in German and will therefore in this section be discussed based on the interpretation by Mudde. Amesberger and Halbmayr make a distinction between a traditional view of women and a modern traditional view. The traditional view sees women as mothers and nothing else. This means policy that would encourage women to do anything else, mainly working, will be discouraged. Instead, parties that adhere to a traditional view of womanhood will make it harder for women to work and as easy as possible for women to stay at home and take care of the children (Mudde, 2007a, p. 93). The modern traditional view on the other hand, also prefers the role of a mother for women but is more open to the possibility of a woman striving to have a career. Within this view of womanhood, there exist different degrees and levels to facilitating the option of both having a career and being a mother. Some parties will simply not be against this idea while others work actively towards making this possibility a reality (Mudde, 2007a).

While Mudde was working with limited resources at the time of his writing in 2007, in the meanwhile gender and the populist radical right have increasingly become subject of research. A connection that is commonly seen between gender and PRR, especially within intersectional feminism, is the link between women’s rights and anti-Islam or anti-immigration rhetoric (de Lange and Mügge, 2015). Some PRR parties will name women’s

rights as one of the reasons to be against immigration and to claim that the Islamic religion is a threat to the values held in the West. De Lange and Mügge nuance this claim. Their research finds that while some PRR parties clearly see this connection and mention it in their party manifestos, there are also PRR parties who do not.

De Lange and Mügge find two ways of looking at gender within the PRR family, they distinct neo-traditional views and a more modern perspective. They consider PRR parties in the Netherlands and Belgium and analyze their platform regarding classical gender issues, meaning economic participation, family structures, reproduction and representation (de Lange and Mügge, 2015, p. 70). An important conclusion de Lange and Mügge draw is that there is diversity in attitudes between PRR parties, when it comes to gender no one single gender ideology can be attributed to all populist radical right parties.

This notion of diversity within the populist radical right party family is also recognized by Spierings (2020a). Despite these differences, Spiering does provide a framework through which to see the role of gender in the PRR. He looks specifically through the lens of the three core elements named by Mudde (2007) (elite versus people, authoritarianism, and nativism).

For the populist part of the PRR, the divide between the people and the elite, the current gender reality represents the will of the people. The present role women have in relation to men is, according to these parties, the natural order that the people want and progressive efforts to increase gender equality are attempts by the elite to destroy that natural order (Spierings, 2020a). Given the differences in gender equality throughout different European countries, this means the status-quo PRR parties try to defend also differs. This gives the PRR parties the same general goal of maintaining the status quo while having specific goals that differ from country to country because the status quo differs.

The authoritarian side of the PRR is reflected in their stance on gender as well. The authoritarian notion that society should be strictly ordered and that citizens should follow that order can be applied to the gendered order of society (Spierings, 2020a).

Finally, the PRR's nativist stances in terms of gender mean that PRR parties want to protect the current order from outside influences. The PRR says influences from outside, through immigration, are a threat to the relatively strong gender equality attained in the native country (Spierings, 2020a). This argument that we should protect current gender relations in from outside influence is called femonationalism (Farris, 2021). The stance of protecting the current reality in the field of gender equality from immigration while being against further

changes in the progressive direction is often seen as hypocritical. Spierings, however, argues that when you look at it from the perspective of the three core elements that define the PRR, there is in fact a logical ideology to be detected in the PRR stance on gender (2020a).

The apparent contradiction here, PRR parties being against a minority group while using a different minority group to further that agenda, can also be found in the stances on the LGBTQIA+ community. Given the focus on the traditional family and the role a woman plays in that family, one might expect the LGBTQIA+ community to be seen as a threat by the PRR. While this is true for some populist radical right parties, others use the protection of this community as a way to shield the country from outside influences and possible threats to the already achieved equality (Spierings 2020b). This idea of protecting the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community from threats from outside is similar to femonationalism and is called homonationalism (Spierings, 2020b). Findings on the role homonationalism plays in a voter's choice for PRR parties differ. While studies have shown a connection between homonationalism and voting for the PRR, this connection was weakest for parties where the homonationalist rhetoric was strongest (Spierings, 2020b). Lancaster (2019) also finds these so-called sexually modern nativists. Her research shows that a growing number of the PRR voter base adheres to a more progressive view on sexuality while also scoring high on the typical PRR issues such as populism and authoritarianism (Lancaster, 2019). Again there is reason to believe these homonationalist sentiments seriously differ per country. While countries such as the Netherlands have fairly progressive sexuality laws, this is not the case for countries such as Hungary or Poland. It would thus make a lot more sense for PRR parties in the Netherlands to want to protect the LGBTQIA+ community from conservative voices in other cultures. Spierings (2020b) raises the point that the rest of the political system in a country matters as well. If other parties manage to convincingly stand up for LGBTQIA+ rights, those who care about the issue but not necessarily agree with the other rhetoric from the PRR will turn to a competitor.

## **2.2 The gender gap in populist radical right voting**

While populist radical right parties have been on the rise, not every group of people is evenly keen on voting for them. Specifically, women have consistently been underrepresented in PRR support (Immerzeel, Coffé & van der Lippe, 2013; Givens, 2004). This phenomenon of underrepresentation is called the gender gap and has been well documented (Givens, 2004; Gidgengil et al., 2005; Spierings, Zaslove, Mügge & de Lange, 2015). Support for the

Populist Radical Right is a topic of interest because the parties, as well as the topics they focus on, and their ideology have been influential. As we have seen in the US with Trump or in the UK with Brexit, populist parties and sentiment can gain access to power. Even if PRR parties are not in government, they influence the agenda and policy output. Research by Meijers (2015) for example has shown that electoral success for Eurosceptic parties has an effect on the attitudes towards to European Union of mainstream political parties. In the Swiss case, Afonso and Papadopoulos (2015) disclose the impact the SVP has had on Welfare policy, and Biard (2019) concludes that in Sweden the PRR party has been able to significantly influence policy and especially the political agenda. This makes the populist radical right and their supporters a subject worth studying.

Many speculations have been made and research has been done aiming to explain the gender gap in the populist radical right vote, but few came to a definite conclusion. Research that has been done has also yielded contradictory results, leaving us puzzled for a conclusive answer (Harteveld, van der Brug, Dahlberg and Kokkonen, 2015). Gidengil, Hennigar, Blais and Nevitte (2005) did manage to get an idea of what explains the gender gap in the Canadian case. They found that the gender gap in Canada can be explained by the difference in the beliefs of men and women as well as different issue salience. Apart from these findings by Gidengil et al. (2005), most have not found conclusive answers, leaving room for new research to be done.

Possible explanations for the gender gap in the populist radical right can be divided into roughly two categories: the supply side and the demand side, each with several sub-categories. The supply side concerns the party, meaning their policy preferences and ideology as well as the party itself, meaning the organization and its leadership (Spierings et al., 2015). The demand side concerns these parties' voters, from their ideology and attitudes to their socio-economic characteristics. Below I will consider both sides, and the research that has been done using these sides as possible explanations for the gender gap.

### **2.3 Supply side explanations**

Answering the question of the gender gap in the PRR vote from the supply side means being concerned with the parties in question. An interesting study was done by Mayer (2015). Studying the case of the French PRR party Front National, she sees that the gender gap might be disappearing. In her research she names the party leadership of Marine Le Pen as a possible cause for the closing of this gender gap (Mayer, 2015, p. 399). Le Pen presents

herself as a modern, working woman, which might be more appealing to female voters than her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, was before her. Mayer links this to the party's positions as well. For example, Marine Le Pen seems to be somewhat more liberal on moral issues like abortion (Mayer, 2015, p. 401). This could make female voters more likely to support the party. Mayer does indeed find some evidence that suggests that Marine Le Pen's personality is what eventually convinced women to vote for her (Mayer, 2015, p. 405). The idea of female leadership being able to influence the party and its platform when it comes to gender issues, is in line with the above-mentioned discussion on gender within the populist radical right. Here, the conclusion was that there is coherence in the way that the PRR views gender and incorporates gender into its political platform (Spierings, 2020a). At the same time, there are also differences among the PRR parties depending, among other things, on the current state of gender equality within a country. Given the fact that the PRR can differ in their view of gender, it might also be possible to find some diversity according to who leads the party. This leadership could then be able to influence the female vote. Given the attention Mayer (2015) pays to the substantive change in attitude towards women that came with the party leadership of Marine Le Pen, concluding that having a women lead the party will lead to an increase in the female vote would be too simple. A female leader could still be very conservative on gender issues and therefore not have as big of an impact as Marine Le Pen had.

Mudde (2007a) contradicts the expectation of female leadership leading to increasing female support in his article. He states that female leadership is rare within all parties, not just PRR parties, and that it might even be more common within the radical right compared to other parties. Either way, he argues, PRR parties do not perform worse than non-PRR parties when it comes to female leadership within the party (Mudde, 2007a, p. 99). He mentions examples of female party leadership but does admit that more data is needed to derive a more definitive conclusion about the number of female leaders in the PRR. Meret (2015) notes that charismatic leadership is often said to play an important role in the electoral success of PRR parties but that little attention has been paid to female charismatic leadership in this context, even though there are plenty examples (Meret, 2015, p.86). In that sense, Meret might agree with Mudde that the frame of male-dominated populist radical right parties deserves some further consideration and possibly nuance. Givens (2004) does say that PRR parties tend to have male-dominated hierarchical structures but still acknowledges that women have played an important role in some PRR parties as well and even then, the gender gap remains. The



point raised by Givens (2004) of the gender gap remaining in some parties even when they do have female leaders, could be an extra reason to believe that simply having a woman leading the party is not enough to attract female voters, the substance of the party matters as well. Givens also agrees with Mudde that a lack of female leadership can be found in political parties in general and is not exclusive to PRR (Givens, 2004, p. 32).

If it is indeed the case that women are not underrepresented in leadership positions in PRR compared to other political parties, this will likely not be an explanation for the gender gap in voting. Because the authors who raised this point did not provide conclusive evidence yet, and because the French case of the gender gap decreasing after Marine Le Pen obtained her position, the issue of leadership as a possible explanation for the gender gap remains worth exploring.

## **2.4 Demand side explanations**

### **2.4.1 Socio-economic explanations**

On the demand side, many authors have considered different socio-economic characteristics of men and women as possible predictors for the PRR vote. Givens (2004) theorizes that occupational structures might provide an explanation for the gender gap. Not only does a gender gap exist within the PRR vote, women and men also tend to be represented differently within the workforce. While women are overrepresented in service jobs, men tend to be overrepresented in industry jobs (Givens, 2004, p. 38). The industry sector is also the sector that is hit hardest by globalization with industry jobs disappearing in the West. Since the nativist attitudes of the PRR lead these parties to be anti-globalization, this means workers in that industry might be more drawn to the PRR agenda. In her case study of Denmark, Austria and France, Givens found that being a blue-collar worker does indeed increase the likelihood of having an anti-immigrant attitude. However, she did not find that controlling for occupation reduced the gender gap (Givens, 2004, p. 50). This means that her findings do not support the claim that the gender gap in PRR voting is caused by a gender gap in the workforce.

Rippeyoung (2007) researches the gender gap in Belgium, France, Austria, Germany and Italy and, contrary to the findings by Givens, *does* find a significant effect of the lower likelihood of women making up part of the blue-collar workforce on the likelihood of voting for the PRR. Harteveld et al. (2015) consider these contradicting findings and argue that the gender gap in occupation remains so significant, we should still consider this as a possible

explanation. They argue that occupational structure might have a bigger effect on the vote choices of men than women (Harteveld et al., 2015, p. 109). In their research, Harteveld et al. do indeed find that part of the gender gap in PRR voting can be explained by the gap in occupation (Harteveld et al., 2015, p. 128).

The possible connection between a workforce gender gap and the PRR vote also exists regarding unemployment. Since the PRR hints at a connection between immigration and unemployment, the unemployed might be more prone to voting for the radical right, thinking it will increase their chances of finding a job. Women often work in different fields than the migrants coming to a new country do. This means women might not feel the same sense of competition with immigrants, which could lead to the expectation that unemployed males are more likely than unemployed females to vote for PRR parties (Givens, 2004, p. 40). This is related to what Harteveld et al. (2015) propose, namely looking at moderation. Moderation means that the relation between two factors is influenced by a third. In this case the relation between unemployment and likelihood to vote for the PRR might be influenced by gender. While both men and women suffer from unemployment, it might be more of a reason for men to vote for the PRR than it is for women.

A final explanation that is often used regarding the socio-economic differences between men and women is religion (Mayer, 2015). Since churches have often spoken out against PRR parties, the hypothesis is that churchgoers might be less likely to vote for these parties, especially when there is a conservative or confessional alternative party to vote for. Since women make up a larger part of the religious community than men, this might be an explanation for the gender gap in the PRR vote (Mayer, 2015). Mayer's article refers specifically to the gender gap in religion in France and refers to an article by Sineau (2004) whose research confirms this relationship between religion gender and attitudes towards the populist radical right. Apart from France, this gender gap in religiosity exists around the world and is especially common within Christianity (Mitchell, 2016). This gives reason to think that this effect of religion on the PRR vote and its connection with gender, could exist outside of France as well.

#### **2.4.2 Issue salience**

Harteveld, van der Brug, Dahlberg and Kokkonen (2015) try to answer the question of the gender gap from the demand side. While many have seen different attitudes in men and women as a possible explanation for the gender gap, they argue that this explanation does not

suffice. Especially because research has also shown that men and women do not differ that much in the degree to which they adhere to radical right attitudes (Harteveld et al., 2015). Givens (2004) also mentions that women are, for example, not less anti-immigration than men. This means the gender gap is unlikely to come from a difference in attitudes and might instead come from a difference in issue salience. In the article by Harteveld et al (2015), the authors differentiate between mediation and moderation. Mediation means considering that men and women may have different characteristics or ideologies that explain the gender gap in the radical right vote. Moderation means that predictors for a PRR vote affect women and men differently. The idea of moderation implies that men and women evaluate the importance of certain topics differently. So, when men and women have similar opinions, issue salience could be the variable that explains the gender gap in the PRR vote (Harteveld et al., 2015, p. 105). Their research shows that there is indeed no difference in nativism and authoritarianism between men and women, meaning the explanation for the gender gap cannot be found in differences in attitude. They do, however, find a difference between the genders in the degree to which nativist and authoritarian attitudes are related to the populist radical right vote. This points to the possibility that issue salience differences could explain the gender gap in populist radical right voting (Harteveld et al., 2015).

Harteveld et al. (2015) for example, raise the point that women are more likely to find health and education important political issues whereas men are more likely to value issues surrounding crime (Harteveld et al. 2015, p. 112). Research by Norris et al. (2004) seems to support the suggestion of a difference in issue salience. They find that men are more likely to know more about European Union issues while women are more likely to have knowledge on social issues. As Campbell and Winters (2008) write, people are likely to have knowledge on the topics that interest them, implying that men find the European Union a more important topic than women. And since Euroscepticism is an important part of the PRR platform (Mudde, 2004), this could be an explanation for the gender gap. Women and men might still be Eurosceptic to the same degree but for men this issue might be more salient. Campbell and Winters (2008) find that while women have an interest in domestic politics, men have more of an interest in politics overall. This again could be an explanation for the gender gap in the PRR vote since the populist radical right in its rhetoric is very much focused on threats from outside of the domestic sphere. The idea that different issues might be salient for men and women is also reflected in research on a gender gap in left right voting in general. Since the

1980s, a gender gap in voting started to appear, with women becoming increasingly more left-wing than men (Abendschön and Steinmetz, 2014, p. 317).

For the Canadian case, Gidengil et al. (2005) do find that a difference in attitudes is part of the explanation for the gender gap. Specifically, men and women in their research differ in their views of the authoritarianism and nativism, making the differences in views a suitable partial explanation for the gender gap in PRR voting. However, these same results have not been found outside of Canada. Apart from differences in political attitudes, Gidengil et al. (2005) also find that salience is part of the explanation. They conclude that the tougher approach of men, focused on law-and-order and their conservatism regarding traditional cultural values, is what explains the gender gap in the Canadian case (Gidengil et al., 2005, p. 1188).

At the end of the day, the previously mentioned socio-economic factors are also related to issue salience. If the explanation for the gender gap is the difference in the workforce participation between men and women, the influence this can have on the PRR vote lies with issue salience. Men working in blue collar jobs will likely pay more attention and attach more importance to the possibility of immigration as a threat to employment. If religion is the determining factor, this would be because the religious values are more salient to women than to men, meaning they play a bigger role in determining vote choice for women compared to men. This is in line with what Harteveld et al. (2015) state about moderation, namely the idea that a difference in issue salience could be the explanatory factor in the question of the gender gap.

## **2.5 Expectations**

To come closer to an answer to the question of what causes the gender gap in radical right voting, this paper takes another look at the topic of issue salience. Despite multiple efforts to find a definitive answer to the question of what causes the gender gap, questions remain unanswered. Articles including issue salience as possible explanations, such as the articles by Gidengil et al. (2005) and Harteveld et al. (2015), came closest to answering the question, making issue salience a topic worthy of further research. Apart from these two papers, research connecting issue salience to the gender gap in populist radical right voting is very limited. Therefore, this thesis takes a new look at issue salience as a possible cause for the gender gap in populist radical right voting, departing from issues commonly related to gender. The first hypothesis for this paper is that the gender gap in the radical right still

exists. While there is also evidence for the gender gap decreasing, for example in the French case (Mayer, 2015), the majority of PRR parties are still likely to have a largely male voter base. This is not a surprising hypothesis, and it is not where this thesis aims to add something new to the existing literature. This is purely to see whether the gender gap is still present. After all, it only makes sense to investigate the causes of the gap if the gap exists.

*H1: The likelihood of an individual voting for the populist radical right increases when the voter in question is male.*

Based on previous findings, it would be expected that controlling for variables such as education, age and political attitudes will not be able to explain this gender gap. This is especially relevant regarding attitudes that would be likely to predict someone's likelihood of voting for the PRR. These attitudes will likely include those that are commonly part of the definition of the populist radical right. This means a person's populist, nativist and authoritarian views, as defined by Mudde (2007b). Specifically, this means that if a person agrees with those populist, nativist and authoritarian sentiments, he or she will probably be more likely to vote for the populist radical right. But a voter's economic attitudes, despite being secondary to the definition of the PRR, will likely also play a role here (Zaslove, 2009). Given the somewhat ambiguous economic standpoints of the PRR (both finding it important that the government does not intervene too much in the economy as well as believing in welfare), economic attitudes are likely to have a somewhat smaller effect than the other attitudes. Combined with the anti-elitist views of the PRR those who vote for the PRR are likely to lean slightly more to the economically right side of the spectrum. Given the role of gender and sexuality within the PRR (Spierings, 2020b; Lancaster, 2019), these attitudes might also have a part in a voter's choice for the PRR, although this is likely to differ per country. Based on earlier research, it is likely that the political attitudes influencing the PRR vote do not significantly decrease the gender gap, leaving the need for finding another factor that can explain this. This is where issue salience comes in.

Based on research by Gidengil et al. (2005) and Harteveld et al. (2015), issue salience is also likely to play a role in a person's choice to vote for the populist radical right. Here again, the issues that might play a role are those that relate to the core definition of the populist radical right and issues that are important to their platform. This means the salience of issues such as nativism and authoritarianism are likely to play a role.

The expectation is that issue salience plays a role in explaining a voter's choice to vote for the populist radical right and in this case, can be the cause for the gender gap in PRR voting. This would mean that there is a difference in issue salience for men and women and that it causes the gender gap in the PRR vote. For this hypothesis, not only do the issues that are normally associated with the PRR play a role, but there is also an important role for issues that differentiate men from women. Environmentalism for example, is not an issue normally associated with the PRR. However, since the PRR does have a clear stance on the issue and, more importantly, since there is a clear gender gap in the salience of environmental issues, this topic could very well play a role in the gender gap in PRR voting. This thesis aims to add to the existing literature by putting a gendered perspective more to the forefront in this research, rather than keeping the focus on typical PRR issues.

A gender gap in issue salience also seems to exist in the representation of women in politics. For example, in parliamentary committees, women tend to be overrepresented in committees on social issues such as health, education and family affairs. Men on the other hand, tend to be overrepresented in committees on finance, defense and foreign affairs (Murray and Sénac, 2018; Espírito-Santo and Sanches, 2019). The same gender gap can also be found in the ministerial portfolios that men and women hold. The top 5 most commonly held ministerial portfolios for women are family affairs, social affairs, environment, labor and women affairs<sup>2</sup>. There are multiple possible explanations for this gender gap, ranging for example from seniority to discrimination. But Murray and Sénac (2018) find that preferences of the parliamentarians themselves play a significant part too. This is because men and women internalize what is expected from them, which is that they care about certain topics that are deemed to be more fitting for a certain gender (Murray and Sénac, 2018). Assuming the gender gap comes from either discrimination or internalization of expectations also means that the assumption of this research is not that men and women are inherently different in their political stances and prioritizations. It means that within the current gender structures and dynamics in society, men and women tend to fulfill different societal roles. If this internalization is found in politicians, it is likely to be present within the public as well. This possibly causes the gender gap in the PRR since the important topics for the PRR are not those women tend to attach the most value to.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: 'Women in Politics: 2020' map published by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

As mentioned earlier, a gender gap in issue salience might be present for domestic versus international politics with men being more interested in the latter while women show more interest for the former (Campbell and Winters, 2008). Or, as mentioned by Hartevelde et al. (2015), women find issues of health and education more important while men attach more value to combatting crime. The focus on safety and crime by men compared to the more compassionate concerns of women can be connected to the populist radical right. Since the PRR has a large focus on authoritarianism (Mudde, 2007b), people who find issues of safety to be a priority might be more inclined to vote for the PRR. However, someone who has the same attitudes towards crime fighting but finds education to be a more important topic, might have a higher chance of voting for a party with a platform more focused on education.

This can also be related to the PRR issue of nativism, since the threat that the PRR sees immigration is a threat to safety and economic welfare. This leads to hypotheses regarding authoritarianism and nativism. The more salient someone finds these issues, the more likely it is that they will vote for the populist radical right. The expectation is that men find these issues more salient than women, thus explaining the gender gap in populist radical right voting.

*H2: The salience of authoritarianism moderates the effect of gender on the populist radical right vote*

*H3: The salience of nativism moderates the effect of gender on the populist radical right vote*

Given the important role gender, and, closely related, sexuality, plays within the populist radical right (Spierings, 2020a; Spierings 2020b; Lancaster, 2019), this might also be an issue where men and women deviate in their views. While gender issues might not be at the forefront of a man's concerns, chances are that they are important to women. Bittner and Goodyear-Grant (2017) point out that the salience of gender also differs among women, some women identify more strongly with their gender than others. A difference in the salience of gender might also be present between countries and cultures, making women in one country more likely to take gender issues into account when casting their vote than women from another country.

We could expect the fact that women attach more value to education, healthcare and equality to influence populist radical right voting. These more caring priorities can be characterized as a pluralistic view of the world, in the sense that different people and groups should be cared for and that this is an important issue in society. This also ties in with the topic of gender

equality and men and women being able to co-exist in the same spaces in society. This means we would expect that the more salient someone finds pluralism, the less likely they are to vote for the populist radical right and that women find pluralism more important than men, making them less likely to vote for the PRR. This leads to the following hypothesis:

*H4: The salience of pluralism moderates the effect of gender on the populist radical right vote*

An issue for which men and women have also continuously shown a different amount of concern is climate change. As mentioned, this is an area in which women are more likely to hold ministerial positions. Women outside of politics also show more concern for the issue of climate change than men do. McCright (2010) finds that women have more knowledge on climate change and express more concern for climate change. The difference in concern remains significant even after controlling for relevant factors such as knowledge and religiosity. Turning to women in politics rather than female voters, research has also shown that female political representation leads to more ambitious climate change policy and lower CO<sub>2</sub> emission (Mavisakalyan and Tarverdi, 2019). This further strengthens the connection between gender and prioritizing climate change. In the context of the PRR this connection especially deserves attention because of the role of climate change skepticism in the PRR (Lockwood, 2018; Ćetković and Hagemann, 2020). An expectation that can be derived from this, is that due to the higher salience of climate change for women than for men, women are less likely to vote for the PRR.

*H5: The salience of environmentalism moderates the effect of gender on the populist radical right vote*

This gives us five hypotheses. The first one concerns the effect of gender on populist radical right voting and the other four posit issue salience as a possible explanation for this effect.

The next section will lay out the research method and design used to test these hypotheses and to try to find an answer to the question what causes the gender gap in populist radical right voting.



### **3. Methods**

This chapter lays out the way in which the hypotheses will be tested. First, the choice for a quantitative study rather than a qualitative approach is discussed. Then, there is room to dive into the European Social Survey data that is used in this thesis. Lastly, the operationalisation of the concepts used in the hypotheses is laid out.

#### **3.1 Quantitative approach**

To test the hypotheses as formulated in chapter 2, a quantitative research design is used. A quantitative research design can be used to test theories and expectations whereas a qualitative design can serve to gain a deeper understanding of mechanisms. Since previous research has pointed towards issue salience as a possible explanation for the gender gap and this research aims to further expand on those findings, quantitative research is a more suitable fit and we have opted for a quantitative study.

Given the fact that most countries have just one or two populist radical right parties, a larger sample, as indeed used in this research, is also helpful in drawing conclusions. It might also be useful to conduct qualitative research on issue salience and the gender gap, researching one or a few cases in-depth. This would allow for a closer look at the mechanisms at hand and could reveal more information about context-specific effects of issue salience. The aim of the present research, however, is to operate at a stage before the qualitative research becomes relevant. The quantitative research in this thesis seeks to uncover larger patterns which, if present, could be further explored using a more qualitative approach.

#### **3.2 Data**

For this analysis, data from the European Social Survey is used. The European Social Survey (ESS) is a cross-national survey that records people's vote choices and political attitudes in nearly all European countries. The analysis in this paper will be based on the ESS data from 2018. This is the most recent ESS data available, making the findings as relevant and current as possible.

The decision of what countries to include in this analysis, is based on data from the Populism and Political Parties Expert Survey (POPPA). Since the present research focusses on the populist radical right, countries included need to have active populist radical right parties. The POPPA dataset measures parties' positions and attitudes related to populism. Each party received a populism score between 0 and 10. The populism score is based on the scores

parties received for five different items. These items include anti-elitism, people centrism, the belief in a general will of the people, the belief in a homogenous people and the belief that politics is a struggle between good and bad (Meijers and Zaslove, 2020). Countries that have a party that scores a 7 or higher on the populist scale were included in the dataset used for this analysis. While Meijers and Zaslove classify a score above 7,5 as scoring high, this would exclude parties such as the Swedish party *Sverigedemokraterna* (the Sweden Democrats), which is commonly classified as a right-wing populist party (Jungar & Jupskås, 2014). Therefore, to include a diverse and large sample of populist radical right parties, the cut-off point is set at 7.

Since populist parties can also be found in other party families while the focus here is on the PRR, out of the parties with a populism score higher than 7, only those belonging to the radical right are coded as a populist radical right party. The party family classification that is used comes from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (2020) and is also used by Meijers and Zaslove for their POPPA data. Those countries that have a party that meets the two criteria of belonging to the radical right party family and scoring a 7 or higher on the populism scale, are the countries included in the analysis. All parties that meet both criteria and are included in the ESS dataset can be found in table 1. For Cyprus, POPPA did not get enough response to create a mean populism score, therefore Cyprus will not be included here. The Norwegian parties do not have a mean populism score either due to a lack of response, but the Norwegian *Fremskrittspartiet* is commonly classified as a PRR party (Moffitt, 2017; Akkerman and Hagelund, 2007) and will therefore be included in this analysis. The *Fremskrittspartiet* has also been under female leadership since 2006, making this an interesting case to include in the analysis. Greece, on the other hand, is included in the POPPA data with two parties meeting the criteria to be classified as a populist radical right party. However, Greece was not included in the 2018 round of the European Social Survey and will therefore not be part of the analysis.

**Table 1. Parties included in the analysis and their populism scores**

Party	Country	Populism score
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	Austria	8,89
Vlaams Belang	Belgium	8,8
Ataka	Bulgaria	8,56
Živi zid	Croatia	9,27
Svoboda a přímá demokracie Tomio Okamura	Czech Republic	9,11
Dansk Folkeparti	Denmark	7,96
Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond	Estonia	9
Perussuomalaiset	Finland	8,43
Front National	France	9,07
Les Patriotes	France	8,71
Alternative für Deutschland	Germany	9,44
Jobbik	Hungary	7,33
Fratelli d'Italia	Italy	7,44
Partij voor de Vrijheid	the Netherlands	10
Forum voor Democratie	the Netherlands	8,9
Fremskrittspartiet	Norway	n/a
Prawo i Sprawiedliwość	Poland	9,19
Kukiz '15	Poland	9,43
Ludová strana Naše Slovensko	Slovakia	9,27
Sverigedemokraterna	Sweden	7,18
Schweizerische Volkspartei/Union Démocratique du Centre	Switzerland	9,26
Liga der Tessiner/Ligue des Tessinois	Switzerland	8,93
Mouvement Citoyens Genevois	Switzerland	8,58
United Kingdom Independent Party	United Kingdom	6,99

### **3.3 Measures**

#### **3.3.1 Dependent variable**

The dependent variable for this analysis indicates whether a respondent voted for the populist radical right. In the European Social Survey dataset, each respondent was asked to indicate what party they voted for in the last national election. This results in a variable for each country indicating for each respondent who they voted for. These variables were recoded into a dichotomous variable indicating that a respondent either did or did not vote for a populist radical right party. The separate variables for each country were then added together, creating one main dependent variable where a score of 1 means the respondent did vote for the populist radical right and a score of 0 means a respondent did not vote for the populist radical right.

#### **3.3.2 Independent variables**

The independent variables in the model can be divided into two categories. Four of the independent variables measure political attitudes while four other variables measure the importance a respondent attaches to an issue. These four attitudes are lifestyle attitudes, economic attitudes, immigration attitudes, and whether a respondent believes the government takes into account the citizens' interests. The lifestyle attitudes of a respondent are measured using the answers to the statement "Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish". Answers to this statement are given on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 meaning strongly agree and 5 meaning strongly disagree. Including this lifestyle variable is meant to give an insight in the overall progressivism or conservatism of a respondent but is also specifically included to account for possible homonationalist sentiments.

The economic attitudes of a respondent are measured using the answers to the question "The government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels". The answers to this question are again given on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 meaning strongly agree and 5 meaning strongly disagree.

The immigration attitudes of a respondent are measured with the statement "Is your country made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?". Answers to this question are given on a scale from 0 to 10. 0 means the respondent believes the country is made a worse place by immigrants and 10 means the respondent believes the country is made better place by immigrants.

The final attitude is the degree to which respondents believe the interest of a country's citizens is taken into account by its government. The question respondents had to answer was: "the government takes into account the interest of the citizen". The answers to this statement were given on a scale from 1 to 5, where a score of 1 means "not at all" and 5 means "a great deal".

The second category of independent variables is used to measure issue salience. To measure issue salience, in the ideal situation, a respondents' ranking of the importance of different issues would be used. However, the European Social Survey does not contain such a question. It *does* ask respondents how important certain values and morals are by answering to what degree a statement sounds like them. An example of such a question is "She/he thinks it is important that every person in the world should be treated equally. She/he believes everyone should have equal opportunities in life". While these questions do not perfectly measure issue salience, they are its closest approximation available on this large of a scale. This gives a slightly different meaning to the concept of salience. In this analysis, salience means importance rather than prominence (Bittner and Goodyear-Grant, 2017). The importance variables can serve as a first exploration into the possible effects of issue salience and can be used as a starting point for future research which might be able to properly include a measure of issue salience in the form of a ranking. Such a ranking would give more of insight into the topics that are deemed more important or most important by voters. The four issues for which importance is measured are authoritarianism, following traditions, pluralism and environmentalism.

The importance of following traditions and environmentalism are measured using the answers to one statement for each concept, while measuring authoritarianism and pluralism is done using multiple statements combined into a single new variable. The importance someone attaches to traditions is measured using the statement "Tradition is important to her/him. She/he tries to follow the customs handed down by her/his religion or her/his family". Answers to this question are given on a scale from 1 to 6. On this scale, 1 means "very much like me" and 6 means "not like me at all". The answers to this statement are meant to give insight into the salience of nativism, which was mentioned by Mudde (2007b) as a core element of the PRR. Some caution is advised when interpreting the results this variable delivers because the question does not directly pertain to the traditions and customs of a country but rather on the smaller scale of someone's family. However, the question can still give insight into value a respondent attaches to the group they belong to and how

important a respondent finds it to stick to the way things are normally done, rather than welcoming new practices.

To measure the importance of environmentalism, the statement “She/he strongly believes that people should care for nature. Looking after the environment is important to her/him” is used. Answers to this question are also given on a scale from 1 to 6 with one meaning very much like me and 6 meaning not like me at all. As mentioned earlier, the PRR is very sceptical towards climate change (Lockwood, 2018; Četković and Hagemann, 2020), meaning people who find it important to look after the environment will be less likely to cast their vote for a PRR party. We have also seen that women are more likely than men to care about climate change (McCright, 2010). This leads to the expectation that women will find it more important to care for nature leading them to be less likely to vote for a PRR party.

To measure pluralism, two different statements are used. These statements are “She/he thinks it is important that every person in the world should be treated equally. She/he believes everyone should have equal opportunities in life.” and “It is important to her/him to listen to people who are different from her/him. Even when she/he disagrees with them, she/he still wants to understand them.”. The answers to both of these questions are also measured on a scale from 1 to 6 where 1 means “very much like me” and 6 means “not like me at all”. Pluralism is about multiplicity and the idea that groups in society that differ can coexist. The expectation here is that people who care about coexisting with people that may differ from themselves, are less likely to vote for the populist radical right. After carrying out a factor analysis including the two items, it turned out they load on the same factor<sup>3</sup>, making it possible to add the two items together creating a new variable for pluralism.

Measuring authoritarianism is done in a similar way. Three different items in the dataset seemed to measure aspects of authoritarianism and after carrying out a factor analysis it turned out these three indeed load on the same factor. Therefore, these three items were added together into a new variable called authoritarianism, which measures the importance of authoritarianism on a scale from 1 to 6. 1 on this scale means authoritarianism is highly important while 6 means authoritarianism is not important at all. The three statements the authoritarianism variable consists of are: “It is important to her/him to live in secure surroundings. She/he avoids anything that might endanger her safety.”, “She/he believes that people should do what they're told. She/he thinks people should follow rules at all times, even

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix A for the factor analysis results detailing both the results for the pluralism variable and the authoritarianism variable.

when no-one is watching.” and “It is important to her/him that the government ensures her/his safety against all threats. She/he wants the state to be strong so it can defend its citizens”.

To test the hypotheses that issue salience can be used to explain the gender gap in the PRR, interaction variables are made combining gender and the importance variables. To be able to include the importance variables in the interaction model, they have first been means-centred. Table 3 displays the descriptive statistics of all variables included in the models. For the variables measuring importance both the original importance variables and the means-centred versions have been included in table 3.

### 3.3.3 Control variables

The control variables used that are used in this analysis are level of education, age, being religious, and country. For religion, a respondent gets the value 0 if he/she does not belong to a particular religion or denomination and the value 1 if he/she does. For the variable age, every respondent simply has their age recorded in numbers. The variable education was originally measured in 7 categories, this is simplified into 3 categories being lower, middle and higher. These categories are based on a categorisation used by Statistics Netherlands<sup>4</sup>. The new categorisation of the education levels can be found below in table 2. The ESS dataset consists of respondents coming from different countries, meaning there is a risk of intra class correlation occurring. Therefore, country dummies will be added to the model as well, controlling for this intra-class correlation. These dummies are included in all models in the results but are not shown in the tables. Tables including the country dummies can be found in the appendix. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of all variables included in the analysis.

**Table 2. Level of education**

<b>Level of education in European Social Survey data</b>	<b>Converted into</b>
ES-ISCED I , less than lower secondary	Lower
ES-ISCED II, lower secondary	Lower
ES-ISCED IIb, lower tier upper secondary	Lower
ES-ISCED IIIa, upper tier upper secondary	Middle
ES-ISCED IV, advanced vocational, sub-degree	Middle
ES-ISCED VI, lower tertiary education, BA level	Higher

<sup>4</sup> Education level classification based on classification from the CBS, 2019.

<https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2019/33/verschil-levensverwachting-hoog-en-laagopgeleid-groeit/opleidingsniveau>

**Table 3. Descriptive statistics of variables included in the analysis**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
PRR vote	21093	0	1	10,6%	
Gender	35624	0	1	47,2%	
Lower education level	14793		1	41,8%	
Middle education level	12092		2	34,1%	
Higher education level	8532		3	24,1%	
Religion	35360	0	1	55,5%	
Age	35472	15	90	50,64	18,76
Citizens' interest	34414	1	5	2,57	0,91
Immigration attitude	34225	0	10	4,96	2,38
Lifestyle attitude	34521	1	5	2,06	1,14
Economic attitude	35005	1	5	2,16	1,01
Importance authoritarianism	34234	1	6	2,67	0,92
Importance traditions	35025	1	6	2,73	1,36
Importance pluralism	34600	1	6	2,30	0,88
Importance environmentalism	35012	1	6	2,04	1,00
Importance authoritarianism centred	34234	-1,67	3,33	0,00	0,92
Importance traditions centred	35025	-1,73	3,27	0,00	1,36
Importance pluralism centred	34600	-1,30	3,70	0,00	0,88
Importance environmentalism centred	35012	-1,04	3,96	0,00	1,00



## 4. Results

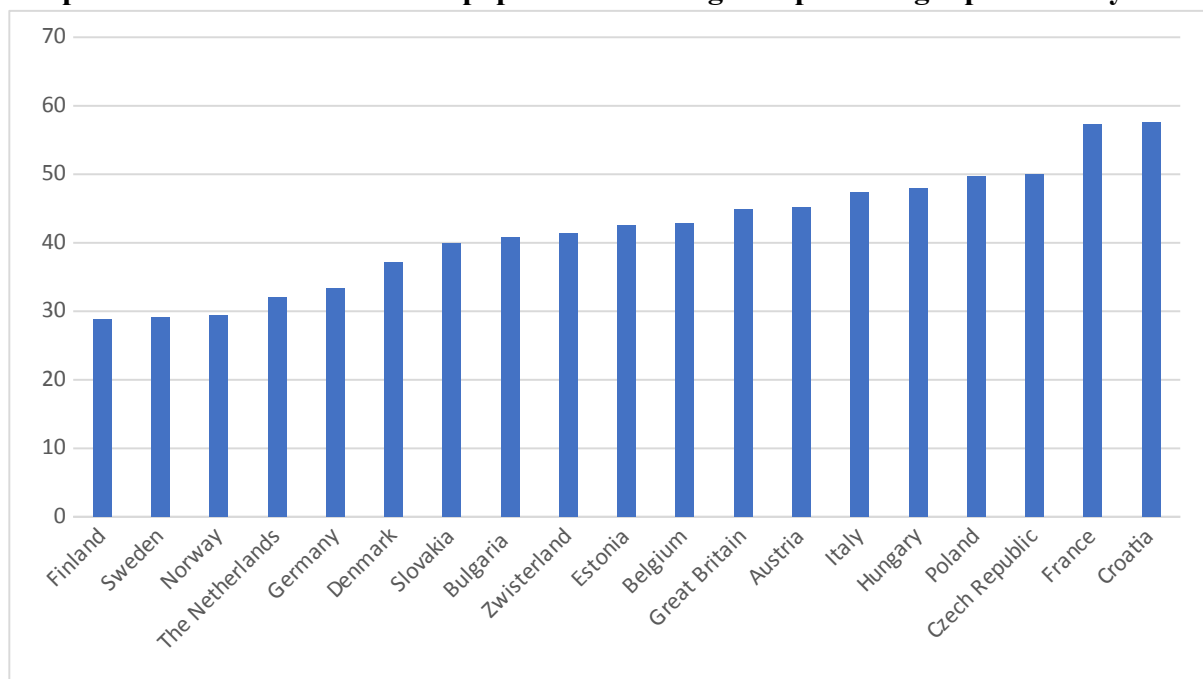
In this chapter, the results of the analyses will be presented. This will consist of two sections.

The first section takes a closer look at the gender gaps per country, separately considering the data for each country include in the analysis. This gives a first look at the question whether the gender gap still exists. Differentiating between the different countries teaches us about the differences in the gender gap in PRR voting that might exist between different countries and parties.

The second section of the results chapter presents the results of the logistic regression analysis. This analysis is used to test the hypotheses as formulated in chapter 2 and ultimately to answer the question what causes the gender gap in populist radical right voting.

### 4.1 A comparative perspective

**Graph 1. The female vote for the populist radical right in percentages per country**



Since the ESS dataset gives the opportunity to include many countries and their populist radical right voters, we might be able to learn some things from the comparison between these countries. Graph 1 shows the percentage of female voters for PRR parties for each of the countries included in this analysis. What can be seen in the graph, and what corresponds with the findings from the regression analysis, is that for most of the countries, a majority of

the PRR voters is male. For Poland and the Czech Republic, the percentage of female voters in this dataset is 50%, meaning there is no gender gap. For France and Croatia, the gender gap is the other way around, the PRR parties in those countries have a higher percentage of female voters than male voters. For France, these results are in line with findings from Mayer (2015) who suggested the gender gap might be disappearing in the French case. Mayer hypothesized that the shrinking gender gap might be caused by the female leadership of Le Pen for the PRR party *Front National* (Mayer, 2015, 399).

While this graph might at first give reason to indeed believe this is what causes French women to vote for the PRR, conclusions cannot be drawn too soon. PRR parties outside of France have also been under female leadership while they do not show the same shrinking gender gap. In Norway, for example, the *Fremskrittspartiet* has a female voter percentage of only 29,4% according to the ESS data from 2018. However, it has been under the female leadership of Siv Jensen since 2006. Even after Jensen resigned in 2021, she was replaced by different female leader, Sylvi Listhaug. In the case of Denmark, the Danish populist radical right party *Dansk Folkeparti* was even founded by a woman, Pia Kjærsgaard. The party was under the leadership of Kjærsgaard from 1995 until 2012. When the ESS dataset was collected that was used for the present study, she was no longer the leader of the party, but she was still a member of parliament and as the founder of the party one might expect her to still have influence on the party itself as well as its public image. Nevertheless, the *Dansk Folkeparti* only received a female voter percentage of 37,2%. A possible explanation is that simply having a female leader is not enough; the platform of the party also matters. Marine Le Pen has had more progressive views on gender equality than her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, had before her, making this a possible explanation for the shrinking, and even inversed, gender gap (Mayer, 2015). This is not to say that the two Scandinavian PRR parties do not engage with gender issues in their platform. The *Dansk Folkeparti* and the *Fremskrittspartiet* are examples of parties that use the emancipation already achieved in the country as an argument to warn against foreign influences that might set the achieved emancipation back (Meret and Siim, 2017). The difference in percentages of the female vote between countries, even when the parties all have female leaders, means no clear conclusions can be drawn regarding female leadership and the PRR gender gap purely based on the data presented in this graph.

Graph 1 also shows there is variation in the gender gap between the different countries, ranging from a 28,9% female vote in Finland to a 57,6% female vote in Croatia. Interestingly

enough, low percentages of female voters can be found in the Northern European countries of Finland, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. Higher percentages of female voters can be found in Eastern European countries such as Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Croatia. A possible explanation for this difference could be the different types of populist radical right parties that can be found in Eastern Europe compared to Western Europe. As Mudde and Kaltwasser explain it, Eastern Europe knows a history of populist agrarian parties while these were absent from Western Europe (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013). In Western Europe, the history of populist radical right parties is rooted in xenophobic populist parties by Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013). While the agrarian parties from Eastern Europe are history now, given the remarkable difference in the gender gap, this could be a direction to look at when trying to explain its origin.

Apart from the difference between Western and Eastern Europe, the gender gap variation deserves further attention. The fact that the gender gaps differ so much per country might be reason not to speak of *the* gender gap but rather pay attention to the cases where the gender gap does in fact exist. Something that could be examined for example is the salience of gender, as Bittner and Goodyear-Grant (2017) show that this differs per person. Their research is conducted only in Canada, but differences might also be present between countries. If, according to different cultures and countries, people identify with their gender in different ways and to a differing degree, this might be part of the explanation for the variation in the gender gap. This is not further examined in the present study.

It is important to note that graph 1 shows the gender gap per country instead of per party. This allows for insights in cultural differences, but not differences per party. For most countries included in the analysis there is only one populist radical right party but for Switzerland and the Netherlands, for example, multiple parties were included in the data. For the Netherlands, this model includes the *Partij voor de Vrijheid* and the newer party *Forum voor Democratie*. While these parties both belong to the populist radical right in the same country, the gender gaps in the votes for these parties do differ. Splitting the votes for these two parties, the percentage of female voters for the *Partij voor de Vrijheid* is 34,15% while *Forum voor Democratie* only had a female voters percentage of 22,22. Both numbers are on the lower end compared to the other countries but there is still a significant difference between the two. Later research among Dutch voters even shows that while men are heavily overrepresented in the voter base for *Forum voor Democratie*, the degree to which men and women vote for the *Partij voor de Vrijheid* is now almost equal (EenVandaag, 2019).



**Table 4. Logistic regression analysis for the chances of voting for the populist radical right**

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>	<b>Model 6</b>	<b>Model 7</b>
(Constant)	-2,126***	-1,303***	-2,383***	-1,464***	-1,498***	-2,721***	-2,395***
	(0,220)	(0,251)	(0,237)	(0,233)	(0,220)	(0,230)	(0,221)
Gender (ref=female)	0,412***	0,366***	0,372***	0,402***	0,414***	0,329***	0,453***
	(0,051)	(0,054)	(0,052)	(0,050)	(0,050)	(0,050)	(0,111)
Level of education (ref=lower)							
Middle	-0,464***	-0,299***	-0,390***	-0,434***	-0,445***	-0,437***	-0,447***
	(0,061)	(0,063)	(0,061)	(0,059)	(0,058)	(0,059)	(0,058)
Higher	-1,302***	-0,909***	-1,130***	-1,232***	-1,245***	-1,218***	-1,252***
	(0,075)	(0,079)	(0,076)	(0,73)	(0,072)	(0,073)	(0,058)
Religious (ref=non- religious)	-0,100	-0,186**	-0,255***	-0,145**	-0,219***	-0,116*	-0,115*
	(0,056)	(0,059)	(0,059)	(0,055)	(0,056)	(0,055)	(0,054)
Age	-0,008***	-0,011***	-0,010***	-0,009***	-0,010***	-0,009***	-0,008***
	(0,002)	(0,002)	(0,002)	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,001)
Citizens' interest		-0,191***					
		(0,033)					
Immigration attitude		-0,332***					
		(0,013)					
Lifestyle attitude		0,186***					
		(0,027)					
Economic attitude		0,074**					
		(0,027)					

Continued on next page

**Table 4. Logistic regression analysis for the chances of voting for the populist radical right (continued from previous page)**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Importance authoritarianism			-0,251*** (0,033)	-0,232*** (0,043)			
Importance traditions			-0,155*** (0,023)		-0,155*** (0,030)		
Importance pluralism			0,384*** (0,032)			0,297*** (0,042)	
Importance environmentalism			0,133*** (0,29)				0,160*** (0,036)
Gender X Importance authoritarianism				0,105 (0,055)			
Gender X Importance traditions					0,032 (0,038)		
Gender X importance pluralism						0,074 (0,055)	
Gender X importance environmentalism							-0,042 (0,048)
-2LL	11077,296	10129,554	10795,236	11834,083	12010,586	11789,512	12010,023
Cox & Snell R <sup>2</sup>	0,088	0,131	0,101	0,092	0,092	0,097	0,092
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	0,180	0,270	0,208	0,187	0,187	0,198	0,186

1. Binary logistic regression coefficients with standard deviations between brackets \*\*\*p < 0,001, \*\*p < 0,01, \* p < 0,05
2. Country dummies are included in all models but not shown in the table



## 4.2 Regression Analysis

To test the effects of gender and the other variables on the popular radical right vote and find out whether issue salience could explain the gender gap, a logistic regression is used. Before working with the variables, the models were tested for multicollinearity. To test for multicollinearity the VIF score and tolerance are considered. The VIF lies around 1 for all variables and the tolerance lies between 0,7 and 1<sup>5</sup>. These scores mean the data does not display issues with multicollinearity, and the regression can be carried out.

The results of the analysis can be found in table 4. The first model tests the main effect gender has on the likelihood of voting for the populist radical right. The variable for gender is included as the main explanatory variable. Level of education, religiousness, age and country<sup>6</sup> are included as control variables. The expectation, and first hypothesis, is that men are more likely to vote for the PRR than women. This model shows that there is indeed a positive relation between being male and voting for a populist radical right party. In line with what would be expected, the included control variables show that the higher someone's education, the less likely it is that they vote for the PRR. The control variable for age shows that the older a respondent is, the less likely it is that they vote for the PRR. Contrary to what might be expected based on previous research on the gender gap in PRR voting, being religious does not have a statistically significant effect in model 1. With regards to the size of the effect gender has on the likelihood of voting for the PPR, model 1 shows that when a respondent is male instead of female, they are almost 1,5 times more likely to vote for the PRR. This means that model 1 shows support for hypothesis 1: Men are more likely to vote for the populist radical right than women.

In model 2, some political attitudes are added to the model. This model thus tests whether a respondent's attitudes on certain topics influence their chances of voting for the PRR. The model includes citizens' interest, meaning if the respondent believes the government takes into account the citizens' interest, immigration attitudes, lifestyle attitudes and economic attitudes. The results indicate that there is indeed a relationship between a citizens' attitude on these topics and their likelihood to vote for the PRR. Model 2 shows that the more a respondent believes that the government takes into account the interest of citizens, the less likely they are to vote for the populist radical right. This is in line with the people-elite

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<sup>5</sup> See appendix B for the collinearity statistics.

<sup>6</sup> The country variables are included in the model but not in table 4. See appendix C for a table detailing the results of the country dummies.



contrast that was named by Mudde (2007b) as one of the core elements of the populist radical right ideology. The variable for immigration attitude shows that the more a respondent believes immigrants make the country a better place, the less likely they are to vote for the PRR. This result is in line with the observation by Mudde (2007b) that nativism is one of the core elements of the populist radical right ideology. The lifestyle attitude variable shows that the more someone disagrees with the notion that gays and lesbians should be free to live life as they please, the more likely they are to vote for the populist radical right. This is surprising given previous studies which have pointed to a homonationalist vote and the connection between wanting to protect the LGBTQIA+ community and the PRR vote (Spierings, 2020b; Lancaster, 2019).

The smallest attitude effect on voting for the populist radical right comes from economic attitudes. The results show that the more a respondent disagrees that the government should reduce differences in levels of income, the more likely they are to vote for the populist radical right. The small size of this effect is not surprising given the fact that the economic stances of the PRR get classified as being both capitalist and in favour of welfare (Mudde, 2007b; Zaslove, 2009). Economic stances are not clearly leftist or right-wing and moreover, the economic platform does not belong to one of the core characteristics of the PRR as mentioned by Mudde (2007b). This is yet another reason to expect this rather small effect compared to the other attitudes that this paper investigates. In short, these results lead to the conclusion that political attitudes indeed affect the likelihood of voting for the populist radical right. Controlling for political attitudes also leads to a small decrease in the relationship between gender and the PRR vote. However, the gender gap remains substantial, which means that the attitudes alone cannot explain the persisting gap in populist radical right voting.

Model 3 includes variables to measure issue salience. These variables are included in the form of importance variables, each variable indicating how important someone finds a certain issue. The variables included are the importance of authoritarianism, following traditions and customs, pluralism, and environmentalism. The model shows that for each of these variables there is indeed an effect on the likelihood of voting for the populist radical right. As expected, the more important a respondent finds authoritarianism and following traditions, the more likely they are to vote for the populist radical right. For pluralism and environmentalism, more importance makes the respondent less likely to vote for the populist radical right. The largest effects in this model can be found for authoritarianism and pluralism. Given the fact

that authoritarianism is one of the core elements defining the populist radical right according to Mudde (2007b), this result is to be expected. The same can be said for pluralism given the fact that this goes against the PRR idea of a homogenous in-group positioned against either the elite or forces from outside.

The importance of following traditions shows a smaller but still significant effect. Interestingly, the importance of environmentalism shows a similar effect to the importance of following traditions. Partially, this is to be expected due to the denying stance many PRR parties have when it comes to climate change, but it is rather interesting considering that advocating against environmentalism is not part of the core definition of the PRR whereas nativism is. This means that model 3 shows that the likelihood of voting for the populist radical right is affected by issue salience. Controlling for issue salience instead of political attitudes does not seem to have a bigger effect on the relation between gender and the PRR vote. Since these attitudes and salience variables do not exactly measure the same issues, it is hard to directly compare the values in model 2 and 3 representing the relation between gender and the PRR vote. However, this does indicate that the inclusion of issue salience, in this analysis, is unlikely to be the cause of the gender gap.

To further explore the possible connection between gender and issue salience, models 4, 5, 6 and 7 include interaction variables measuring the interaction between gender and the importance variables. Again, the importance variables included in this model, together with gender, are importance of authoritarianism, traditions, pluralism, and environmentalism. Model 4 shows the interaction variable for gender and importance of authoritarianism. The result for this interaction variable shows a positive relation with voting for the populist radical right while the result was negative without the interaction. This would indicate a different effect of the salience of authoritarianism for men than for women. However, the result is not statistically significant. This means the results do not show support for the second hypothesis that the salience of authoritarianism moderates the effect of gender on the populist radical right vote. The same can be said for model 5, which includes the interaction between gender and the importance of following traditions. For this interaction, the relation also turned negative while it was previously positive. However, these results are also not statistically significant. The third hypothesis, *The salience of nativism moderates the effect of gender on the populist radical right vote*, is thus not supported by these results.

Model 6 includes the interaction between gender and the importance of pluralism. Here, the effects are smaller for the interaction variable than they were without the interaction, but the relation still holds in the same direction. This would indicate a larger effect of finding these issues important for women than for men. However, these results are again not statistically significant meaning no conclusions can be drawn. Hypothesis 4, that the salience of pluralism moderates the effect of gender on the PRR vote can therefore not be accepted either based on the present analysis.

Model 7 shows the interaction variable for gender and the importance of environmentalism. This model shows a negative relation between the interaction variable for importance of environmentalism while the result was positive without the interaction model. This would again indicate a different effect of the salience of environmentalism for men than for women. However, these results are also not statistically significant. This means hypothesis 5, *the salience of environmentalism moderates the effect of gender on the populist radical right vote*, is also not supported by these results.

The next chapter will go into further detail on the findings of the analysis and will discuss what the implications of these findings are, as well as provide some recommendations for further research.

## 5. Discussion

The regression analysis shows that the gender gap in populist radical voting is still present in most European countries. This means that the first hypothesis, that women vote less for the populist radical right than men, can be confirmed. This result is unsurprising given that most previous literature on the PRR has also shown this to be true. This does not mean that the voices suggesting the gender gap might be disappearing, such as Mayer (2015), are incorrect. Data on the gender gap per country, as seen in graph 1, shows that there is serious variance within Europe with France and Croatia showing a reversed gender gap and many other countries such as Italy Poland and Hungary having the gender balance in PRR voting be close to 50/50.

The expectation was also that political attitudes do affect PRR voting but cannot be seen as the explanation for the gender gap. While controlling for economic, lifestyle, populist and anti-immigration attitudes did decrease the gender gap somewhat, gender remained a substantial factor in predicting the likelihood of someone voting for the PRR. This means that it would seem that there is indeed a factor outside of political attitudes that makes women less likely to vote for the populist radical right. The results of the political attitude variables show that when a person is more progressive on lifestyle issues, they are less likely to vote for the populist radical right. A person who is more anti-immigration on the other hand is more likely to vote for a PRR party. Believing that the people in government do not take into account the interests of the people also increases the likelihood of voting for a PRR party. For the economic stances of voters, someone who does not believe the government should work to decrease income difference between people is slightly more likely to vote for the PRR. Except for the effect of the lifestyle attitude, these attitudes all have an effect on the likelihood of voting for the populist radical right in the expected direction. Populist and anti-immigration attitudes are crucial to the political platform of the PRR (Mudde, 2007b), making it unsurprising that they have such an effect on someone's likelihood of voting for a PRR party.

This thesis set out to test "issue salience" as the possible explaining factor on the populist radical right gender voting gap. Based on the models in this thesis, the hypotheses on issue salience (H2-5) cannot be accepted. This means that based on the data used in this study, we cannot conclude that the gender gap can be explained by differences in issue salience between genders. This is surprising since research by Gidengil et al. (2005) and Harteveld et

al. (2015) did point in the direction of issue salience. The expectation was that a person attaching more value to following customs and traditions, and a person attaching more value to authoritarianism would be more likely to vote for the populist radical right and that men attach more value to these issues than women. The models showed that the importance of these issues does indeed result in a higher likelihood of voting for a PRR party, but that this is not related to gender. Previous research has shown there to be a difference in the issues men and women care about throughout different levels of politics. The salience of nativism and authoritarianism are topics where Gidengil et al. (2005) did find an explanation for the gender gap in the case of Canada. Based on this thesis, the same conclusion cannot be drawn for Europe. Nativism and authoritarianism are also the two issues for which Hartevelde et al., (2015) found that their salience can be the explaining factor for the gender gap. Their research also focused on Europe, meaning the results of the analysis here do not support those earlier findings.

To add an issue which has previously proven to be evaluated differently by men and women (McCright, 2010; Mavisakalyan and Tarverdi, 2019), this analysis also included environmentalism. This issue might normally not be included given the fact that environmentalism is not part of the core elements of the PRR as defined by Mudde (2007b). However, the PRR does have strong opposing opinions on environmentalist policy (Lockwood, 2018). These stances, combined with research that shows women care more about the environment and environmental policy than men (McCright, 2010; Mavisakalyan and Tarverdi, 2019), led to the expectation that a difference in the salience of environmentalism between men and women contributes to the gender gap. The results of the analysis, however, do not give reason to believe this is where the cause of the gender gap lies.

For the importance of pluralism, the expectation was that people who find pluralism more important are less likely to vote for the PRR and that women would find pluralism more important than men. As previous research has shown women to be more concerned about health, education and care, the expectation was that they are more likely to be invested in a society where people peacefully coexist and care about others. However, the results showed that finding pluralism important does indeed have a negative effect on the likelihood of voting for the populist radical right but that this is also not related to gender.

This means the research conducted in this paper does not provide an explanation for the gender gap in populist radical right voting. This research does have some implications for

gender in politics and the populist radical right and can be a starting point for further research on the topic. Those implications and recommendations for future research will be discussed below.

## **5.1 Implications**

For the gender gap in populist radical right voting, this thesis still has not found a cause, leaving the PRR without an answer as to why they perform poorly with women. The female leadership of Marine Le Pen seems to be a way for PRR parties to expand their voter base but the figures from Norwegian and Danish PRR parties also show that it is not a question of simply appointing female leaders and being immediately rewarded by more votes. The variation in the gender gap between countries is an indication that female voters are not an impossible demographic for the PRR and that despite a current poor performance for a majority of the PRR parties, there lies a possibility to grow.

The research at hand does not bring us closer to finding out what the gender gap in PRR votes means to women's representation in politics, especially with the PRR gaining political influence. If we want to know what the consequences of growing power for the PRR are for female political representation, finding the cause of the gender gap would still be beneficial. The results so far are not an immediate cause for concern. Research has repeatedly shown that men do not necessarily agree with the PRR platform more than women. This would not indicate an immediate lack of representation of women's policy preferences in the PRR. However, finding out what does cause the gender gap would bring us closer to a complete understanding of women's representation in politics with the PRR in power.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

As for the scientific implications, this thesis has not been able to provide a definitive answer to the question what causes the gender gap in PRR voting, leaving this knowledge gap intact. However, based on the research, starting points for further research and improvements to the research carried out here can be identified. A concern with the research carried out in this thesis, is the way issue salience was measured here. Rather than working with questions where each respondent ranks different topics according to how important they find them, the questions that were used here asked respondents to indicate how important they found each individual topic. This means questions were asked such as "how important do you find

following traditions”. Salience in this context thus means importance rather than “prominence” (Bittner and Goodyear-Grant, 2017). This makes it harder to compare the importance of different issues meaning it is hard to distinguish which issue is more salient than another.

For further research it would be useful to include a ranking of issues to really be able to assess the influence this has on the gender gap by paying attention to the prominence of an issue for the voter. A ranking of issues allows a respondent to indicate what issues are important in determining their vote.

Apart from the improvements of measuring issue salience, it would also be useful for further research on the gender gap to focus only on those countries that indeed display such a gender gap. In this thesis countries such as France and Croatia, where the gender gap is not present, could skew the results and therefore the conclusions these results lead to. Excluding those countries from the data could bring us closer to an understanding of what causes the gender gap in instances where the gender gap does in fact exist. Taking a closer look at countries where the gender gap is reversed or smaller could also be helpful because it might bring insights into the reason why this is not the case for other countries such as Finland, Norway and the Netherlands where the gender gap remains large. A comparative design that takes a closer look at differing cases could bring us closer to finding the explaining factor.

Longitudinal research might also provide direction in the search for the cause of the populist radical right gender gap. In the case of France, for example, the ESS data from 2018 does not show the presence of a gender gap, while this gap was in fact present in the past (Mayer, 2015). This decline in the gender gap might be present outside of France as well. Figuring out what factors play a part in the shrinking of the gender gap could also help in figuring out the cause of the gender gap itself. Female leadership is already a possible explanation but the data in this thesis also shows female leadership is not a certainty in leading to a higher percentage of female voters.

To give the gendered perspective on issue salience a more prominent role in explaining the gender gap, issues not normally associated with the populist radical right could also be included in future research. This thesis aimed to do so by adding the salience of environmentalism and paying explicit attention to pluralism. While a voter’s opinion on environmentalism and pluralism did not directly relate to gender based on the ESS data, it did prove to be useful in predicting someone’s likelihood of voting for the PRR, regardless of

gender. The salience of other issues such as education and health, which have proved to be deemed important by women more often than by men, can be included in further research. While these issues do not directly relate to the platform of the PRR they could still be a reason for women to vote for another, non-PRR party. This would mean the reason women do not vote for the PRR as much is not because they do not want to vote for the PRR, but rather that they find that other parties fit their priorities more. Further research should be done to explore this possibility.

## **6. Conclusion**

This thesis started by placing the increasing influence of women in the political sphere opposite of the increasing influence of the populist radical right. The gender gap in PRR voting seems to indicate that these two developments contradict each other. On the other hand, the argument could also be made that the rise of the populist radical right is a logical consequence of shifting balance in who holds power. As Spierings (2020a) argues, the PRR aims to uphold existing gender structures. Increased emancipation of women can be seen as a threat to the status quo. Since women are the ones benefiting from the emancipation, they might be less likely to perceive this as a threat thus making them less likely to vote for the PRR. On the other hand, if a PRR party succeeds in making the case that influences from outside the country, mainly from the Islamic religion, are a threat to achieved gender emancipation, women might also be willing to vote for the PRR to protect the progress already made.

Research so far has continuously identified the gender gap in populist radical right voting but convincing answers to what causes this gap remain unfound. To contribute to the existing research and to try and come closer to an answer of what causes the gender gap, this thesis turned to issue salience as a possible explanation. While most research concerning issue salience and the PRR gender gap has been centered around the core characteristics of the PRR as Mudde (2007) defines them, this thesis included the salience of pluralism as well as environmentalism. In doing so, this thesis aimed to incorporate a more gendered perspective while also sticking to the issues traditionally associated with the PRR. The research at hand does not provide evidence that issue saliency is indeed the cause of the gender gap in populist radical right voting.

Future research could get closer to finding the cause of the gender gap by focusing more on gender and female emancipation. This thesis was a start but more extensive research



incorporating issues not normally part of the core identity of the PRR might lead to a better understanding of the gender gap. Furthermore, a different definition of issue salience as well as longitudinal research and research taking a closer look at different countries and their differing gender gaps, could all lead towards a better understanding of the gender gap in PRR voting.

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## Appendix A.

**Table 5. Factor loadings and communalities based on a factor analysis with oblimin rotation**

	Importance authoritarianism	Importance pluralism	Communalities
Important to live in secure and safe surroundings	0,777	-0,011	0,600
Important to do what is told and follow rules	0,669	-0,073	0,431
Important that government is strong and ensures safety	0,730	0,127	0,591
Important to understand different people	-0,043	0,851	0,710
Important to help people and care for others well- being	0,052	0,822	0,697

**Table 6. Descriptive statistics for the two new importance variables**

	No. of items	<i>M (SD)</i>	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Importance authoritarianism	3	8,02 (2,760)	0,555
Importance pluralism	2	4.58 (1,722)	0,583

## Appendix B.

**Table 7. Collinearity Statistics**

	Tolerance	VIF
Gender	0,971	1,030
Level of education	0,978	1,022
Religiosity	0,867	1,153
Age	0,884	1,131
Citizens' interest	0,913	1,095
Immigration attitude	0,805	1,243
Lifestyle attitude	0,807	1,239
Economic attitude	0,925	1,081

Importance authoritarianism	0,784	1,275
Importance traditions	0,750	1,334
Importance pluralism	0,773	1,294
Importance environmentalism	0,808	1,238

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**Table 8. Logistic regression analysis for the chances of voting for the populist radical right including country dummies**

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>	<b>Model 6</b>	<b>Model 7</b>
(Constant)	-2,126*** (0,220)	-1,303*** (0,251)	-2,383*** (0,237)	-1,464*** (0,233)	-1,498*** (0,220)	-2,721*** (0,230)	-2,395*** (0,221)
Gender (ref=female)	0,412*** (0,051)	0,366*** (0,054)	0,372*** (0,052)	0,402*** (0,050)	0,414*** (0,050)	0,329*** (0,050)	0,453*** (0,111)
Level of education (ref=lower)							
Middle	-0,464*** (0,061)	-0,299*** (0,063)	-0,390*** (0,061)	-0,434*** (0,059)	-0,445*** (0,058)	-0,437*** (0,059)	-0,447*** (0,058)
Higher	-1,302*** (0,075)	-0,909*** (0,079)	-1,130*** (0,076)	-1,232*** (0,73)	-1,245*** (0,072)	-1,218*** (0,073)	-1,252*** (0,058)
Religious (ref=non-religious)	-0,100 (0,056)	-0,186** (0,059)	-0,255*** (0,059)	-0,145** (0,055)	-0,219*** (0,056)	-0,116* (0,055)	-0,115* (0,054)
Age	-0,008*** (0,002)	-0,011*** (0,002)	-0,010*** (0,002)	-0,009*** (0,001)	-0,010*** (0,001)	-0,009*** (0,001)	-0,008*** (0,001)
Citizens' interest		-0,191*** (0,033)					
Immigration attitude		-0,332*** (0,013)					
Lifestyle attitude		0,186*** (0,027)					
Economic attitude		0,074** (0,027)					
Importance authoritarianism			-0,251*** (0,033)	-0,232*** (0,043)			
Importance traditions			-0,155*** (0,023)		-0,155*** (0,030)		

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**Table 8. Logistic regression analysis for the chances of voting for the populist radical right including country dummies (cont. from**

previous page

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Importance pluralism			0,384*** (0,032)			0,297*** (0,042)	
Importance environmentalism			0,133*** (0,29)				0,160*** (0,036)
Gender X Importance authoritarianism				0,105 (0,055)			
Gender X Importance traditions					0,032 (0,038)		
Gender X importance pluralism						0,074 (0,055)	
Gender X importance environmentalism							-0,042 (0,048)
Country (ref = Slovakia)							
Austria	1,069*** (0,205)	1,687*** (0,211)	1,131*** (0,198)	1,048*** (0,193)	0,987*** (0,188)	1,077*** (0,191)	1,059*** (0,191)
Belgium	-0,778** (0,275)	-0,090 (0,279)	-0,702* (0,271)	-0,788** (0,267)	-0,878** (0,261)	-0,732** (0,263)	-0,808** (0,263)
Bulgaria	0,217 (0,261)	0,413 (0,256)	-0,087 (0,250)	0,179 (0,240)	0,130 (0,231)	-0,039 (0,240)	0,116 (0,235)
Switzerland	1,666*** (0,217)	2,863*** (0,229)	1,913*** (0,212)	1,740*** (0,206)	1,618*** (0,201)	1,719*** (0,204)	1,677*** (0,203)
Czech Republic	-0,166 (0,236)	-0,149 (0,239)	-0,389 (0,226)	-0,190 (0,221)	-0,265 (0,217)	-0,306 (0,220)	-0,193 (0,219)
Germany	0,040 (0,222)	0,837*** (0,228)	0,238 (0,216)	0,080 (0,211)	-0,001 (0,206)	0,108 (0,209)	0,029 (0,208)
Denmark	1,016*** (0,213)	2,004*** (0,223)	1,157*** (0,206)	1,081*** (0,201)	0,979*** (0,196)	1,069*** (0,199)	1,029*** (0,198)

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**Table 8. Logistic regression analysis for the chances of voting for the populist radical right including country dummies (cont. from previous page)**

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>	<b>Model 6</b>	<b>Model 7</b>
Estonia	0,207 (0,238)	0,447 (0,241)	0,147 (0,232)	0,212 (0,227)	0,112 (0,223)	0,069 (0,226)	0,167 (0,225)
Finland	0,973*** (0,215)	1,869*** (0,222)	1,168*** (0,209)	0,971*** (0,204)	0,926*** (0,200)	1,023*** (0,203)	0,957*** (0,202)
France	0,798*** (0,221)	1,492*** (0,229)	1,098*** (0,217)	0,865*** (0,211)	0,752*** (0,206)	0,823*** (0,209)	0,722** (0,208)
United Kingdom	-0,569* (0,247)	0,168 (0,253)	-0,416 (0,239)	-0,504* (0,234)	-0,575* (0,230)	-0,528* (0,234)	-0,566* (0,232)
Croatia	0,211 (0,234)	0,558* (0,238)	0,318 (0,227)	0,174 (0,223)	0,094 (0,218)	0,238 (0,222)	0,176 (0,220)
Hungary	0,773*** (0,220)	0,956*** (0,223)	0,747*** (0,212)	0,835*** (0,207)	0,745*** (0,203)	0,670** (0,206)	0,735*** (0,205)
Italy	-0,868** (0,263)	-0,634* (0,263)	-0,831** (0,252)	-0,864** (0,249)	-0,914*** (0,244)	-0,859*** (0,247)	-0,844** (0,246)
The Netherlands	0,432 (0,223)	1,497*** (0,233)	0,551* (0,217)	0,458* (0,212)	0,314 (0,208)	0,437* (0,210)	0,354 (0,209)
Norway	0,595** (0,224)	1,701*** (0,232)	0,654** (0,218)	0,643** (0,213)	0,528* (0,209)	0,543* (0,211)	0,512* (0,210)
Poland	3,003*** (0,209)	4,008*** (0,216)	2,991*** (0,201)	2,972*** (0,196)	2,889*** (0,191)	3,002*** (0,195)	2,974*** (0,194)
Sweden	0,809*** (0,215)	1,983*** (0,225)	-0,250*** (0,032)	0,870*** (0,205)	0,767*** (0,199)	0,816*** (0,203)	0,749*** (0,201)
-2LL	11077,296	10129,554	10795,236	11834,083	12010,586	11789,512	12010,023
Cox & Snell R <sup>2</sup>	0,088	0,131	0,101	0,092	0,092	0,097	0,092
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	0,180	0,270	0,208	0,187	0,187	0,198	0,186

1. Binary logistic regression coefficients with standard deviations between brackets \*\*\*p < 0,001, \*\*p < 0,01, \* p < 0,05