

Traditional Gender Attitudes, Nativism, and Support for the Radical Right

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Using data from the 2017 European Values Study, I analyze the link between harboring traditional gender attitudes and supporting radical right-wing parties. I theorize that the intrinsically gendered elements of the radical right's platforms and rhetoric, which mirror traditional masculinity and femininity in both explicit and implicit ways, make the ideology a comfortable home for individuals who hold traditional gender attitudes. My analyses reveal that gender traditionalists are more likely than egalitarians to express support for the radical right, even after controlling for a host of existing explanations. The same impact is not replicated for mainstream conservative parties. In addition, holding more gender traditional attitudes raises the probability of supporting the radical right among both nativists and non-nativists alike. These findings provide important evidence that gender attitudes seemingly constitute a significant pathway to support for the radical right across Europe.

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Traditional gender norms and sexuality are closely intertwined with radical right politics in Europe (Akkerman 2015; Grzebalska and Petó 2017a). Through their repeated emphasis on concepts such as the nefarious impact of “gender ideology” on society, and their explicit support for traditional gender roles, the radical right has made a name for itself as defenders of a way of life that exalts the traditional family and embraces (at least some semblance of) a patriarchal social system. Despite the radical right’s broader emphasis on the traditional family and gender norms, however, an equally strong narrative surrounding the preservation of “[European/Western] gender equality” has arisen in a variety of (primarily Western European) radical right parties, who use such language as part of a larger anti-immigrant or anti-Muslim discourse. While this “femonationalist” (Farris 2017) rhetoric has become commonplace among some of these parties, its reception and potential impact on the general electorate so far appears to be largely non-existent (Spierings and Zaslove 2015b).

These developments present a challenging paradox to radical right scholars, who have yet to fully make sense of this phenomenon. Strong arguments are emerging that traditionalism is no longer even a primary motivator for the radical right, and that immigration and nationalism are now the “core” sources of concern for its supporters (Lancaster 2020). This is in line with one of the most consistent findings in the literature on the radical right over the last half-century: that there is a robust connection between harboring xenophobic, anti-immigrant attitudes and supporting the party family¹ (Iversflaten 2008; Mudde 2007; Spierings and Zaslove 2015a).

¹ I use the term “party family” to refer to the constellation of parties on the European continent that exhibit the ideological platform scholars have identified as consistent with the radical right. A full list of these parties can be found in Appendix A.

I argue that it is too soon to abandon the idea that traditional attitudes, particularly gender attitudes, matter deeply for radical right support. While it is true that we have well established evidence that nativism is a significant driver of the demand for radical right politics, we still have a limited understanding of how attitudes beyond authoritarianism and populism (the other two “pillars” of the radical right ideology), such as gender attitudes, may factor in.² A growing body of work has noted that gender and nativism are related to the radical right project - especially in certain contexts (Farris 2017; Mudde and Kastwaller 2015, Spierings and Zaslove 2015b), but the nuances of this relationship are still largely unknown.

In this paper, I analyze the relationship between gender role attitudes, nativism, and radical right support in 23 European countries using data from the 2017 European Values Study. I seek

² Over the last decade, Cas Mudde’s (2007) definition of the three core principles that constitute the radical right (populism, nativism, and authoritarianism) has become incredibly influential (Muis et al. 2016) and widely accepted as one of the more accurate definitions of this ideology. Although variation across time, space, parties, and individuals is to be expected, these three features are considered the nucleus of the movement, and all radical right parties share “at least these three features as (part of) their ideology.” Mudde defines populism as a belief system that separates the “pure, average person” from the “corrupt elite” and argues that government should reflect the will of the people; nativism as a combination of nationalism and xenophobia that argues countries should be made up solely of members of the “nation” (natives) to the exclusion of non-native outsiders (who are perceived as a threat to the largely homogeneous shared values and customs encapsulated by the nation-state); and authoritarianism as the prioritization of strict adherence to law and order with stern punishments for those that deviate from it (Mudde 2017).

to answer two sets of questions about the radical right and its connection to traditional gender norms. First, are the traditional gender attitudes that radical right discourse seemingly seeks to tap into uniquely associated with radical right-wing support, or is it associated with support for mainstream conservative parties more broadly? Although the radical right appears to dominate the socially conservative issue space in many European countries, gender traditional individuals might instead find a home in other more mainstream conservative parties. Second, is the relationship between traditional gender attitudes and support for the radical right moderated by the influence of other factors, namely nationalism and xenophobia (i.e. nativism), that have previously been identified as major conduits of support for the radical right? As I will argue, nativism and traditional gender norms share an analogous structure, which implies that they might complement each other in drawing individuals to the radical right fold.

I find that holding highly gender traditional attitudes increases the likelihood of supporting the radical right, but not mainstream conservative parties. Furthermore, an analysis of the interactive effect of gender attitudes and nativist attitudes on support for the radical right reveals that holding more gender traditional attitudes increases the likelihood that both nativists *and* non-nativists will support the party family. Considering how integral nativism is to the radical right project, this finding is particularly poignant, and suggests that traditional gender attitudes are an additional pathway of support for individuals who would otherwise not be inclined to identify with the ideology.

These findings speak to the radical right's unique ability to capitalize on matters related to gender norms, the nation, and the intersection of the two. In addition to their strong nativist ideology, they have, with few exceptions, a long history of associating themselves with traditional positions on matters related to gender, the family, and sexuality, and have repeatedly

emphasized childbirth and childrearing as matters related to the national interest (Akkerman 2015).³ Even in countries where the radical right has embraced what they characterize as “Western” or “European” gender equality, much of their nativist rhetoric is framed in a way that speaks to implicit conceptualizations of gender. This allows both openly gender traditional radical right parties *and* their slightly more progressive (at least in terms of their rhetoric) counterparts similar opportunities to appeal to people on a gendered dimension.⁴

Ultimately, my findings suggest that both gender attitudes and nativism, including their intersection, play an important role in the radical right electorate. These findings also provide an additional explanation for the motivations that might prompt an individual to support the radical right more broadly, an area of study that has so far been lacking in the research addressing the “demand” side of the radical right’s emergence and persistence (Fitzgerald 2018).

Theorizing Gender Attitudes & Nativism

Gender is a multifaceted paradigm that exists as part of an unspoken, taken for granted social ordering that both organizes power over individuals and dictates how they perceive the world around them (Brush 2003). The state actively creates, reinforces, and reproduces the

³ Tjitske Akkerman (2015) goes so far as to argue that gender issues have historically been the defining characteristic that separates radical right parties from mainstream right parties in *Western* Europe, although that characteristic is growing less salient in the region as immigration and integration concerns related to Muslims challenge the dominant gender narrative.

⁴ I do not make any claims as to whether or not these parties are *intentionally* attempting to appeal to gender traditionalists or egalitarians, although certainly there are instances where such appeals are calculated and instrumental.

aforementioned social structures, which include the sexual division of labor, heteronormativity, and other gendered power hierarchies, through its various laws and policy priorities (Htun 2005; Young 2002). Because this “gendering” is inherent to so many of our interactions and spaces, it becomes “invisible” and “second nature” in a way that makes its outcomes and consequences feel inherent and intuitive. It is one of the first systems of power that becomes fully fleshed out in our psyche, and its psychological potency over how we organize and interpret the social world is evident even in very young children (Charafeddine et al. 2020; Leinbach, Hort, and Fagot 1997). These dynamics also structure adult behavior, with men and women segregating themselves into social and professional roles that reflect sex role stereotypes, for instance (Cejka and Eagly 1999).

A vast literature has identified how identity related attitudes, such as racial attitudes in the United States, shape how people both interact with and process the world around them (e.g., Gilens 1999; Tesler 2012; Winter 2008). For example, over the course of Barack Obama’s presidency in the United States (U.S.), several studies demonstrated that racial predispositions had a growing impact on individual perceptions of politics (Tesler and Sears 2010; Tesler 2016). Given how intrinsic gender is to how we process the world, we should expect that an individual’s beliefs or feelings (either conscious and subconscious) that are gendered also have important implications for how he or she arrives at certain political opinions. This point has been emphasized recently by Monica Schneider and Angela Bos, who argue that we should expect gender roles and expectations to “shape public opinion, political participation, and elite and voter prejudice” (Schneider and Bos 2020: 202). These are the gender “attitudes” referred to in this paper.

Historically, however, most of the research focused on the intersection of gender and public opinion has been concentrated on either the “gender gap” in voting or opinion differences, or on how one’s understanding of his or her own gender (i.e. gender consciousness) impacts political behavior – with several important exceptions.⁵ Nicholas Winter (2000; 2008) found that gender attitudes significantly influenced opinions about Hillary Clinton during her time as First Lady of the United States in the 1990s, while Mary McThomas and Michael Tesler (2016) extended this research and found that Clinton’s exceptional popularity during her tenure as Secretary of State was driven almost entirely by gender egalitarians. More recently, the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States, and the growing influence of the far right globally, has prompted a variety of scholarship on the role of *sexist* attitudes on vote choice, largely confined to the 2016 U.S. presidential election (Bracic, Israel-Trummel, and Shortle 2019; Cassese and Barnes 2019; Glick 2019; Ratliff et al. 2019; Schaffner, Macwilliams, and Nteta 2018; Valentino, Wayne, and Ocen 2018; Winter 2018) and with comparatively little focus on party systems across Europe (Lodders and Weldon 2019).⁶

⁵ Like Spierings and Zaslove (2015a), I am reluctant to use the term “gender gap” when discussing male vs. female behavior, because demarcating quantifiable differences in outcomes between the two sexes is not the same as grappling with behavioral patterns that are rooted in gender. Going forward I will use the phrase “sex gap” where applicable.

⁶ While the trend towards taking sexism seriously as a predictor of political behavior is a welcome development, I should emphasize that attitudes related to potential prejudice towards the opposite sex are not the same as attitudes related to what are perceived as acceptable gender roles or gender expression, which are the focus of this paper.

In the European context, most recent scholarship related to gender attitudes has focused on the *development* of pro-gender equality attitudes (rather than the consequences of persistent traditional gender attitudes) and how these attitudes are related to questions not directly related to party evaluations - a practice Niels Spierings (2018) labels “progress bias.” Even research that is framed as more questioning or skeptical “take positive development [towards gender equality] as their starting point” (pg. 173). Important exceptions to these trends include Niels Spierings and Andrej Zaslove (2015), who use data from the 2010 European Social Survey to assess whether attitudes regarding gender equality and equal rights for gays and lesbians helps explain the sex gap in voting for radical right parties, and Jane Green and Rosalind Shorrocks (2021), who find that “gender resentment” and other gender-related concerns appear to have played a role in prompting some individuals in the United Kingdom (particularly men) to vote to leave the European Union in 2017.⁷

We therefore still have much to learn about how gender attitudes impact political behavior, including how they interact with other factors known to influence opinion, such as nativism. Preliminary scholarship to this end is beginning to emerge in the American politics literature. Laura Van Berkel et al. (2017) analyze whether the American identity itself is gendered, and find that both men and women were likely to construct the “prototypical” American as more masculine than feminine. Meanwhile, Melissa Deckman and Erin Cassese (2019) find that “gendered nationalism” strongly predicted support for Donald Trump in the

⁷ The belief that women now have an unfair advantage socially, culturally, and economically relative to men.

2016 U.S. presidential election among both men and women.⁸ This literature is nascent, however, and much work remains to be done – particularly in the non-American context.

I theorize that traditional gender attitudes are an important conduit for radical right support. The considerable influence of these attitudes stems from their ability to, on their own, increase the likelihood that an individual supports that radical right, as well as their ability to magnify the influence of other conduits for radical right support, including nativism. Regarding the latter, I theorize that gender attitudes can moderate the relationship between radical right support and nativism both due to the implicitly gendered structure of nativism and the explicitly gendered goals of the nativist project. As a result, traditional gender attitudes have the capacity to influence public opinion on their own, as well as work in conjunction with nativism to produce support for political leaders and parties that adopt a nativist policy agenda and rhetoric - such as the radical right. For clarity, I am not arguing that gender traditionalism raises the probability of being nativist and therefore support for the radical right. Rather, I argue that while each likely exerts an independent influence on the propensity to support the radical right, nativism and gender traditionalism are also attitudinally compatible in such a way that, when both are present, the likelihood of supporting the radical right is higher than when one is not present.

Nativism's implicit congruence with gender traditionalism is most closely connected to the ways in which patriarchal power relations are analogous at both the macro (state) and micro (individual) levels. For example, Iris Young traces the existence of the security state to the pervasiveness of patriarchy, arguing that individuals raised in societies where women are used to

⁸ The belief that the United States has grown “too soft and feminine” (Deckman and Cassese 2019)

trading freedom for security from a benevolent patriarch are much more receptive to similar trade-offs made with the state, a phenomenon she dubs the “logic of masculine protection” (Young 2003). Just as a husband and father can expect obedience, respect, and loyalty in exchange for providing protection (be it physically or financially), the state can demand the same fealty from its citizens in exchange for protection from all enemies “foreign and domestic.”

The logic of masculine protection creates a parallel relationship between the man protecting the woman and children at home and the state protecting the nation and its citizens. The normalization of this dynamic has important implications for democracy and the citizenries’ willingness to acquiesce to the erosion of their freedoms and privacy under the guise of “protection.”⁹ The security state becomes normalized because individuals are already conditioned to the protector (masculine)/protected (feminine) dynamic in their homes and throughout society and popular culture.

If the security state naturally becomes gendered masculine as it takes on the role of protector, the *nation*, which must be protected, becomes gendered feminine. This symbolism lies at the heart of the congruence and potential synergy of nativism and gender traditionalism. Nira Yuval-Davis emphasizes that we cannot understand the nation without considering that women reproduce it biologically, culturally, and symbolically (Yuval-Davis 1997). This reality,

⁹ It is not my intention here to insinuate that any government involvement in citizens’ lives is a gross violation of freedom and security, nor do I wish to convey the idea that I think citizen security is not a valid concern. Instead, my aim is to point out the state’s capacity to abuse the citizenry’s predisposed preference for security as a justification for questionable surveillance and violence.

combined with the reinforcement of the traditional family (wherein women are confined to the private home while men occupy the public world) creates a scenario where female bodies become wrapped up in conceptualizations of the nation itself. As the embodiment of a common historical identity or destiny that must be continually renewed and carefully preserved, the nation displays a sense of vulnerability and defenselessness - two traits that are gendered feminine. The nation becomes a feminine space that calls for protection from masculine actors (i.e. the state) because “protection” and “defending” are gendered masculine.¹⁰

Of course, not all the connections between gender and the nation are symbolic. The survival of individual, unique nations cannot be achieved unless *native* women commit to having children, and therefore this particular gendering must become much more explicit. Literal women are essential to the nationalist project, because they not only physically reproduce the nation via childbearing, but conceptually reproduce it by raising ethnically-pure children with a nationalist mindset (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989). When Hungary promises to give a mini-van to every native woman with more than three children, or when the Alternative for Germany party puts up a poster featuring a photo of a white pregnant belly and the slogan “New Germans? We’ll Make Them Ourselves” (Rueters 2018; Nelson 2017), the message is subtle but still clear: have children so we can rely on your offspring, and not migrants, to keep this country alive.

The radical right is enmeshed within the gendered logic of masculine protection and feminine vulnerability just outlined. As a nativist party family, their rhetoric and imagery are replete with calls to protect both the physical borders of the nation and its values; and because a portion of these nationalistic claims rest on an unspoken, traditionally gendered logic, they are

¹⁰ See Mostov (2012) for more on the masculine state and the feminine nation.

able to speak to voters who are already predisposed to thinking about the world through an analogously gendered lens (Winter 2008). For individuals with a more “traditional” gender lens, their gendered beliefs may serve as a beacon for what is true and real in a world that seems increasingly unfamiliar. When America was “great,” for instance, the world was organized around what are now considered traditional gender roles (man at work, woman at home).

For these individuals, a return to traditional roles and values is a critical step in life returning to “normal,” because life as they once knew it feels like it is slipping away. By espousing policies that seek to “turn back the clock and reestablish eras of homogeneous demography, rigid hierarchy, and protectionist economics” (Gest, Reny, and Mayer 2018: 1695), radical right parties portray themselves as some of the last and only institutions and people capable of bringing back this lost sense of “normalcy,” which is closely tied to traditional gender norms - even if they are never mentioned outright. This phenomena fits within the umbrella of the larger “cultural backlash” to the displacement of traditional gender roles, familial structures and sexuality, in addition to countless other socially liberal and post-materialist values that have swept the Western world over the last several decades (Norris and Inglehart 2019).

Given the ways in which traditional gender norms are closely intertwined with the nativist elements of the radical right, I have several expectations. First, traditional gender attitudes will be associated with support for the radical right more generally. Stated formally:

H1a: *Compared to those with more gender egalitarian attitudes, highly gender traditional individuals will be more likely to select a radical right party as most appealing.*

One way to further test this hypothesis is to compare support for the radical right among gender traditionalists to their support for mainstream conservative parties, which have not been as closely associated with gendered and nativist rhetoric over the last several decades. In other words:

H1b: *Compared to those with more gender egalitarian attitudes, individuals with stronger gender traditionalist attitudes will have a greater likelihood of finding radical right parties more appealing than mainstream conservative parties.*

Finally, if nativism and gender traditionalism are psychologically congruent in the way argued above, I anticipate that this will be reflected in support for the radical right among people who profess high levels of both attitudes:

H2: *Compared to those who hold more gender egalitarian and non-nativist attitudes, individuals who hold both stronger gender traditionalist attitudes and nativist attitudes will have a greater likelihood of finding radical right parties more appealing.*

Data and Methods

To analyze the connections between gender traditionalism and the appeal of the radical right, I utilize data from the 2017 European Values Study (EVS). The EVS is conducted every nine years and is intended to gauge how Europeans “think about life, family, work, religion, politics, and society” (European Values Study). As of this writing, it included the most comprehensive and current data on the items and countries of interest to this analysis. The 2017 study features a

probabilistic representative sample and a minimum of either 1,000 or 1,200 respondents per country depending on whether or not the population was below or exceeded two million. All told, the analyses presented in this paper draw on upwards of 20,000 observations across twenty-three countries from within the EVS.¹¹

Dependent Variables

To assess support for the radical right, I created a binary variable coded “1” when an individual selected a radical right party as “most appealing” and “0” for all other parties.¹² Responses labeled “don’t know,” “no answer,” “not applicable,” “not included,” or “missing” were dropped from the dataset.¹³ To assess the equivalent support for mainstream conservative parties, I created a second binary variable coded in the same fashion.

¹¹ Several countries included in this release of the EVS are excluded from the models in this paper because either they do not have a clearly defined radical right party or the radical right party active in the country was not included in the EVS questionnaire (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Romania, Russia, and Spain).

¹² Respondents were given a country-specific list of parties and asked “[w]hich (political) party appeals to you most?” They were then asked whether or not there was a second party that appealed to them (this response was not included in either party choice variable). The EVS does not ask respondents which party they voted for in the last election. Please see Appendix A for a full list of the parties included in this analysis.

¹³ I also re-estimated all the models in the paper coding this data as “0”. Doing so did not alter any of the substantive results.

There are drawbacks to relying on self-reported data about either people's preferences for parties or their vote choice. It is possible that an individual might be willing to express a preference for a radical right party and not actually follow through with that preference at the ballot box. However, it is also possible that an individual might be hesitant to express open preference for a radical right party on a survey due to social desirability bias. A meaningful difference likely exists between someone's preference versus their actual behavior, as the former may capture the radical right's *potential* electorate, while the latter (at least attempts) to capture their present electorate. I approach my analysis of expressed *appeal* for the radical right (vs. confirmed vote choice) with these realities in mind.

Independent Variable

To gauge an individual's gender attitudes, I constructed a scale from eight survey questions asking about opinions regarding the roles men and women should play in society. Exploratory factor analysis confirmed that each of these survey items load on the same factor.¹⁴

The survey items included are:

- When a mother works for pay, the children suffer
- A job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children
- All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job
- A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family
- On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do
- A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl

¹⁴ Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO): 0.883; Bartlett's Test ($p < .000$); Eigen value 3.794; all factor loadings $> .6000$.

- On the whole, men make better business executives than women do
- When jobs are scarce, men have more right to a job than women

Each question was measured using a four-point scale (except for the job scarcity question, which used five). The combined gender attitudes scale created for this analysis was normalized to run from 0-1, with higher values indicating higher levels support for gender traditionalism.

Moderating Variable: Nativism

To capture nativist attitudes, I selected questions that fall along both the nationalist and xenophobic elements of the ideology. This is in keeping with the accepted definition of nativism in the broader literature on the radical right, which sees the ideology as a combination of nationalism and xenophobia that argues countries should be made up solely of members of the “nation” (natives) to the exclusion of non-native outsiders, who are perceived as a threat to the largely homogeneous shared values and customs encapsulated by the nation-state (Mudde 2017). To approximate the nationalist component of nativism, I include a question asking the respondent’s opinion about the importance of being born their native country. The question was prefaced with the following statement: “[s]ome people say the following things are important for being truly [nationality]. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is?” The respondents were then asked whether or not being born in their country was important. For xenophobia, I created an index from four variables that deal with a respondent’s attitudes towards immigrants: what impact do you think immigrants have on the development of [your country]; do immigrants take away jobs from [nationality]; do immigrants

increase crime problems; and are immigrants a strain on the welfare system. Each of these survey items load on the same factor.¹⁵

It is important to note here that despite the fact that nativism is a singular construct, these questions are entered into the model separately due to methodological constraints. There is no singular question on the EVS that fully captures nativism, nor do any of the separate survey items in the dataset dealing with nationalism and xenophobia load onto the same factor, which significantly lowers the reliability of any scale that attempts to combine them.

Controls

A number of other ideological positions have been identified as predictors of support for the either nativism or the radical right, including authoritarianism and beliefs about income redistribution. To capture authoritarianism, I include one item measured using a 10-point scale asking whether or not people think it is an “essential characteristic of democracy that people obey their rulers” (with higher scores indicating this is an essential characteristic) and one categorical variable asking whether or not respondents’ think it would be “good,” “bad,” or “don’t mind” if there was a societal shift towards greater respect for authority. To account for attitudes about income redistribution, I include a 10-point scale asking whether the respondent considered “governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor” an essential characteristic of democracy, with higher levels corresponding with the belief that such measures are essential.¹⁶

¹⁵ Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO): 0.771; Bartlett’s Test ($p < .000$); Eigen value 2.168; all factor loadings $> .6000$.

¹⁶ Euroskepticism has also been identified as a potential explanation for radical right support. As

I also include controls for a respondent's left-right ideology, whether or not a person identifies as religious, and the level of confidence an individual has in their national parliament. Ideology was measured using a 10-point scale by asking "in political matters, people talk of 'the left' and 'the right'. How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?", with higher items indicating the right. Religious identity is a categorical variable asking whether or not a person identifies as "religious," "not religious," or a "convinced atheist" independent of church attendance. Confidence in parliament was measured with a categorical variable asking respondents' whether they considered themselves to have a "great deal," "quite a lot," "not very much," or "none at all" in terms of confidence.

Controls were also added for demographics, socio-economic factors and other attitudes identified as predictors of support for the radical right in the existing literature, including age, sex, education, employment status, and political memberships. Finally, to account for unobserved heterogeneity between the different countries represented in these data, I employ country-level fixed effects in the form of dummy variables for each country represented in the analysis.

Results

Descriptive Analyses

Figure 1 displays the full distribution of gender attitudes in the EVS sample. Among all respondents, the mean score on the gender attitudes scale was .35 and the median was .36.

a robustness check, I included a binary variable asking how much confidence the individual has in the European Union, with "0" indicating a great deal or some trust and "1" indicating little to no trust. Including this variable did not substantively change the results, and therefore is not presented in the manuscript due to space constraints.

Broken down by sex, the mean gender attitudes score for all women in the sample was .34 versus .38 for men.

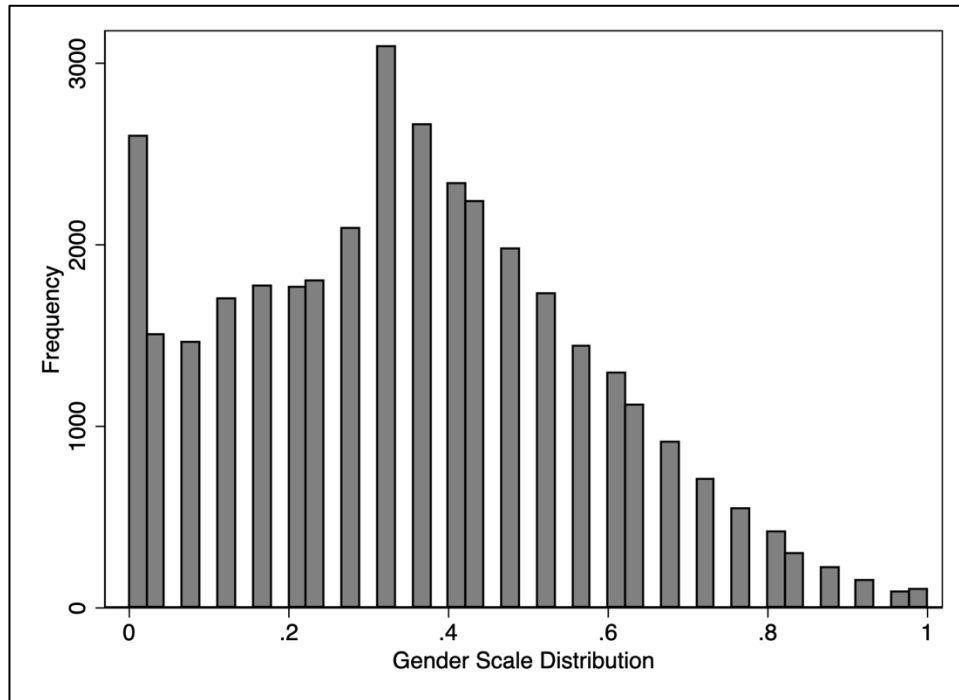


Figure 1

This distribution tells us that a majority of respondents in the EVS sample trend towards gender egalitarian in their beliefs, with relatively few individuals selecting answers that would place them at the highest levels of gender traditionalism. Amongst the countries included in the full analyses in this paper, Slovakia had the highest mean score on the gender scale (.48) and Norway had the lowest (.13). Northern European countries had a mean score of .19, Western European countries had a mean score of .29, and Eastern European countries had a mean score of .45.

Regarding nationalism, a clear majority of respondents (61%) said that they felt it was important to be born in their country in order to be a part of their country’s nationality. For the more xenophobic attitudes, the mean value on the constructed immigration attitudes scale amongst all respondents was .54 (see Figure 2 for the full distribution) and the median was .55, which indicates that the average respondent in the sample was mostly neutral on the potential contributions or downsides of immigrants in their country.

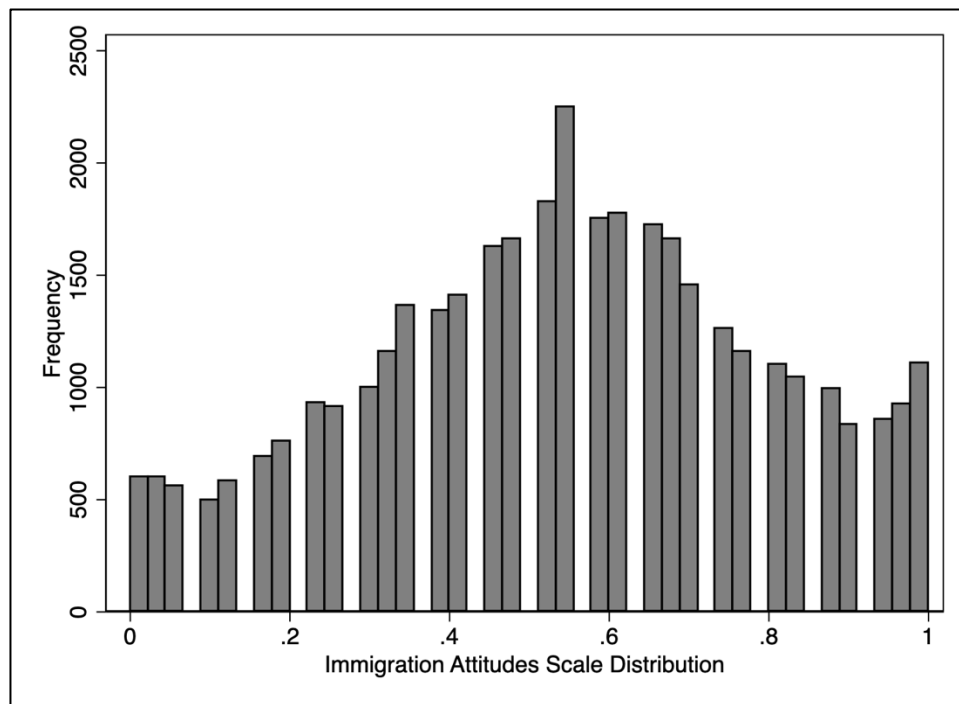


Figure 2

Amongst the individual countries included in the full analysis, Hungary had the highest mean score on the immigration scale (.72) and Albania had the lowest (.32). When categorized by region, the mean immigration score was much closer across the three groups than the mean gender attitudes score. Northern European countries had a mean score of .49, Western European countries overall had a mean score of .54, and Eastern European countries had a mean score of .58.

In terms of overall support for the radical right, 7.6% of respondents selected a radical right party and 14% selected a mainstream conservative party as “most appealing.” Broken down by sex, 46.7% of respondents who selected the radical right were women, and 53.3% were men, a 6.6 percentage point difference ($p < 0.000$).¹⁷ Among those who selected a mainstream conservative party 51.9% were women, and 48.1% were men (3.8 percentage point difference, $p < 0.000$).

From here I divide the explanatory results into two sections: gender attitudes and support for the radical right, and the potential interactions between both gender attitudes and nativist attitudes on radical right support.

Explanatory Analyses

Gender Attitudes and the Radical Right

In order to assess the relationship between gender attitudes and support for the radical right, I estimated two different logistic regression models. The first model looks solely at the

¹⁷ The data includes 31,013 female respondents and 25,298 male respondents.

bivariate relationship between support for the radical right and gender attitudes. The results are presented in the first column of Table B1 in Appendix B.¹⁸ This initial model is consistent with **H1a**: higher levels of gender traditionalism positively predicts support for the radical right ($B=.73$, $SE=.078$, $p<0.000$). This finding holds in the fully specified model that includes the nativist and other control variables outlined above (column five in Table B1, Appendix B).

To illustrate whether or not gender traditional attitudes have a unique impact on support for the radical right, I re-estimated the above models after replacing radical right support with mainstream conservative support in the dependent variable. The results for the bivariate model (column two in Table B1) show a negative, statistically significant correlation ($B=-.67$, $SE=.062$, $p<0.000$), but this result disappears in the fully specified model (column six in Table B1).

Because logistic regression coefficients must be interpreted through either logged odds or odds ratios (which are not as intuitive as the interpretations for coefficients reported using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression) I turn here to predicted margins/probabilities for a more straightforward, fine-grained interpretation of the results discussed above. Figure 3 displays the predicted probability and 95% confident interval that an individual selected a radical

¹⁸ All the tables presented in this manuscript were created using *asdoc*, a Stata program written by Shah (2018).

right party as “most appealing” across all potential values of the gender traditionalism scale, holding the other variables in the model at their observed values.^{19 20}

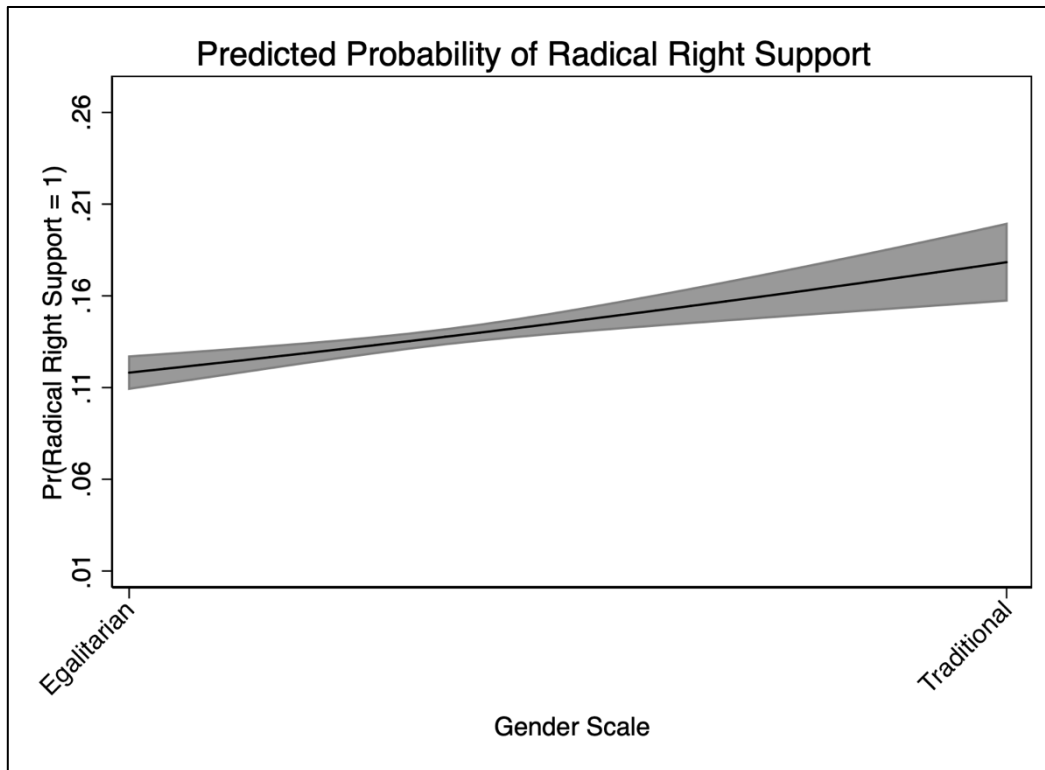


Figure 3

Those at the highest level of gender traditionalism have a .178 predicted probability of supporting the radical right, while those at the lowest level have a .118 predicted probability – a

¹⁹ Graphs are scaled the same throughout this paper. The lowest and highest points on the y-axis for each graph are always ten points below and above the lowest and highest values of the predicted probability values being presented.

²⁰ See Appendix C in the online supplementary materials for numerical results of the predicted probabilities presented here.

six percentage point difference. The results are statistically significant at the $p < 0.000$ level.^{21 22}

This suggests that, all else equal, being more gender traditional raises the probability that an individual will support the radical right.

To ascertain whether gender traditionalism has a unique impact on support for radical right parties, I conducted the same analysis on an individual's likelihood of selecting a conservative party as "most appealing" given their position on the gender traditionalism scale. The predicted probabilities are presented graphically in Figure 4. Note that in the full models, gender traditionalism is positively correlated with support for mainstream conservative parties, but this result is not statistically significant.

²¹ See the "Gender Scale" variable in column five of Table B1 in Appendix B for the corresponding regression coefficient and p-value.

²² As an additional step, I disaggregated the results above by each country in the sample. Being more gender traditional increased the likelihood of supporting the radical right at a statistically significant level in Denmark, France, Hungary, Lithuania, and Switzerland and *decreased* the likelihood in Italy (it did not reach statistical significance in the remaining countries in the sample). Due to the small number of both gender traditional and radical right voters in each sample, I approach these results with a high degree of caution and am reluctant to speculate as to their broader meaning without more data. However, the fact that gender traditional attitudes reached statistical significance across countries with both geographic and radical right party heterogeneity is a positive sign for my assertion that gender traditional attitudes could matter across a variety of contexts where the radical right is an active presence.

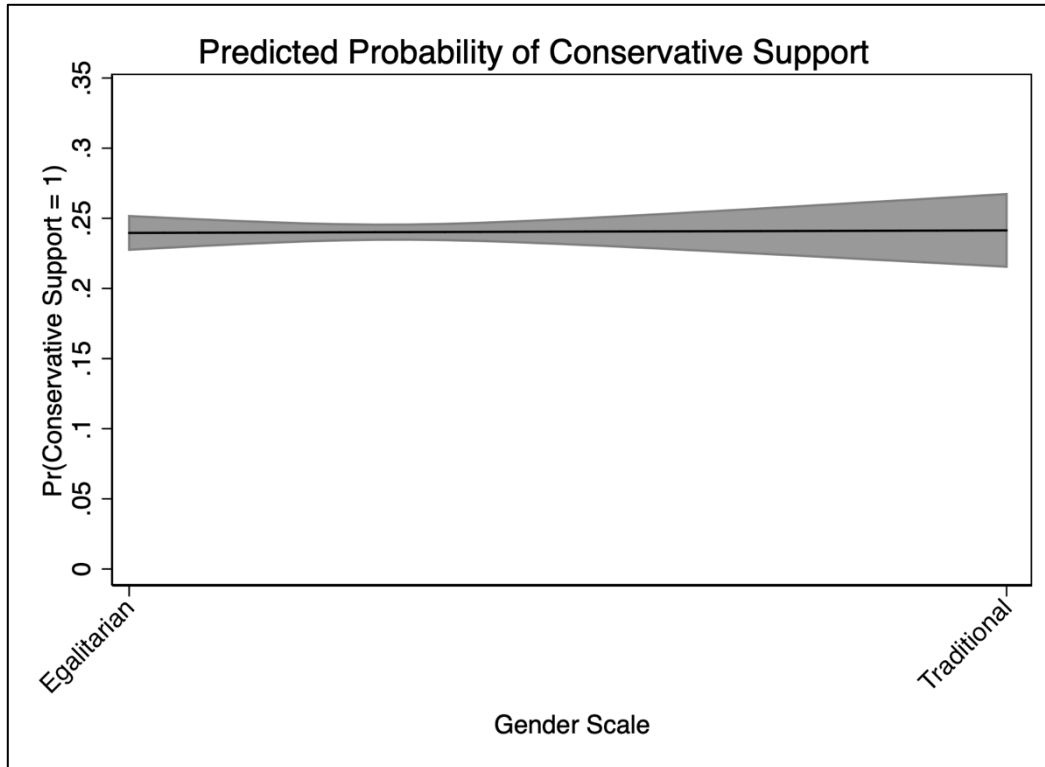


Figure 4

As the graph demonstrates, those who are more gender traditional do not have a significantly higher likelihood of supporting mainstream conservative parties than gender egalitarians, with the predicted probability of support increasing by only .2 percentage points between the lowest and highest values of the gender attitudes scale (.239 vs. .241). This suggests that while there is a greater probability that respondents will choose a conservative party over a radical right party more generally (and therefore slightly less ability for gender traditionalism to shift support either way), moving from low to high gender traditionalism appears to play almost no role in the probability of choosing to support mainstream conservative parties, providing support for the second component of my first hypothesis (**H1b**²³).

²³ As a robustness check, I re-estimated my full model using a multinomial regression looking at

Gender Attitudes and Sex

It is also worth mentioning that in these data respondent sex does not moderate the relationship between gender attitudes and radical right support. In the full model (Appendix B, Table B1), respondent sex is correlated with a higher likelihood of supporting the radical right. However, this finding disappears when respondent sex is interacted with the gender attitudes scale (Table B2). Although the average marginal effect of gender attitudes on support is 1.4 percentage points higher for men (7.3) than it is for women (5.9), there is no significant difference between the two (Figure 5).

support for radical right parties, mainstream conservative parties, and all other parties. Compared to the radical right baseline, gender traditionalism was negatively correlated and statistically insignificant in predicting support for conservative parties and negatively correlated and statistically significant in predicting support for all other parties.

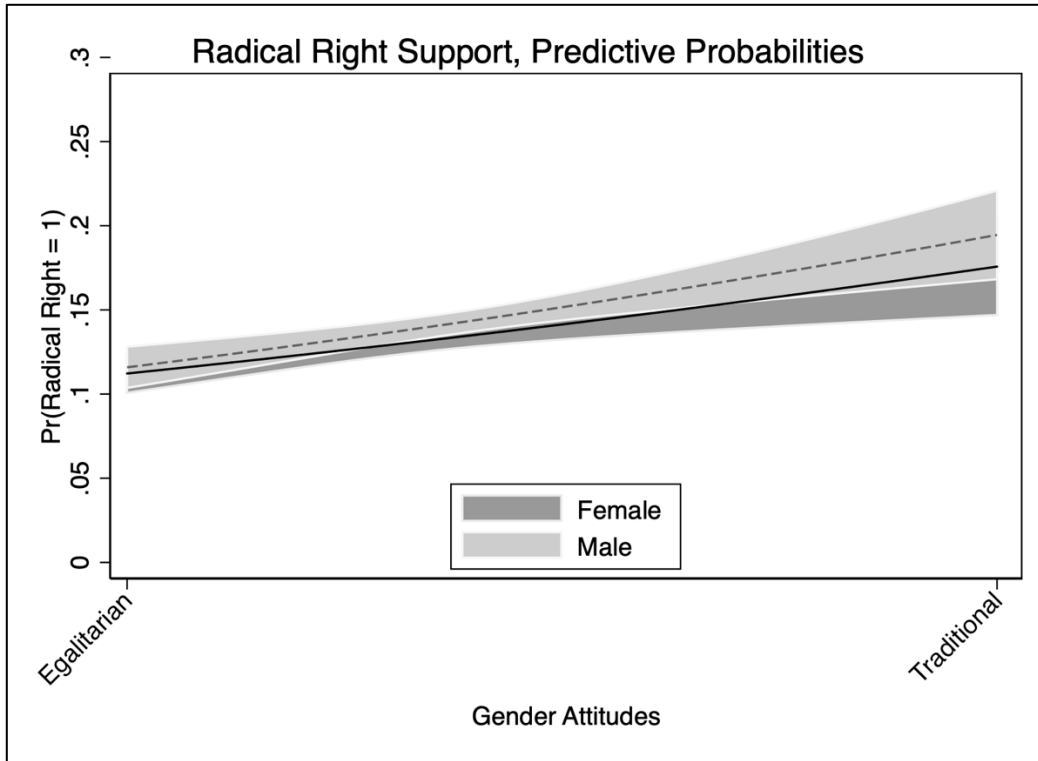


Figure 5

In other words, whether or not someone *identifies* as male or female does not appear to be the primarily “gendered” avenue to radical right support in these data. Instead, it appears to be certain *beliefs* and *attitudes* (either more egalitarian or more traditional) about the ways in which men and women are expected to operate within society that increase the likelihood of supporting the radical right party family.

Gender Attitudes, Nativism, and the Radical Right

So far I have presented evidence that gender attitudes predict support for the radical right but not mainstream conservative parties. This finding suggests that gender traditionalism, like the well-established conduit that nativism provides, is a probable pathway toward supporting radical right-wing parties. But do these two pathways interact in any significant way? This section investigates whether or not simultaneously being both more gender traditional *and* nativist

matters for radical right support. Studying the interactions of these two variables greatly enhances our understanding of the dynamics of these two constructs as they relate to supporting the radical right.

Using the same base model from the previous section, I interacted the gender attitudes scale with both the country of birth variable and the immigration attitudes scale. From there, I calculated the predicted probability that an individual selected a radical right party as “most appealing” across all potential values of the gender traditionalism scale and each of the nativist variables in question.²⁴

Country of Birth Attitudes and Gender Attitudes

Figure 6 graphically examines that relationship between a respondent’s belief in the importance of being born in one’s country to having one’s nationality, holding gender traditional attitudes, and radical right support. Fervent nativists tend to place a particularly high importance on the genetics of an individual for national “belonging,” and while this question does not directly capture the question of genetics (certainly someone could be born in one’s country yet still have a different national or ethnic ancestry), it is a close proxy. It strikes right at the heart of the implicit connections between nativism and traditional gender norms – i.e. the idea that native women need to produce native children in order to preserve the nation’s legacy and heritage.

²⁴ Note that it is not possible to take the marginal effect of an interaction. While the interacted term exists in the original model, the marginal effects are calculated simultaneously but separately.

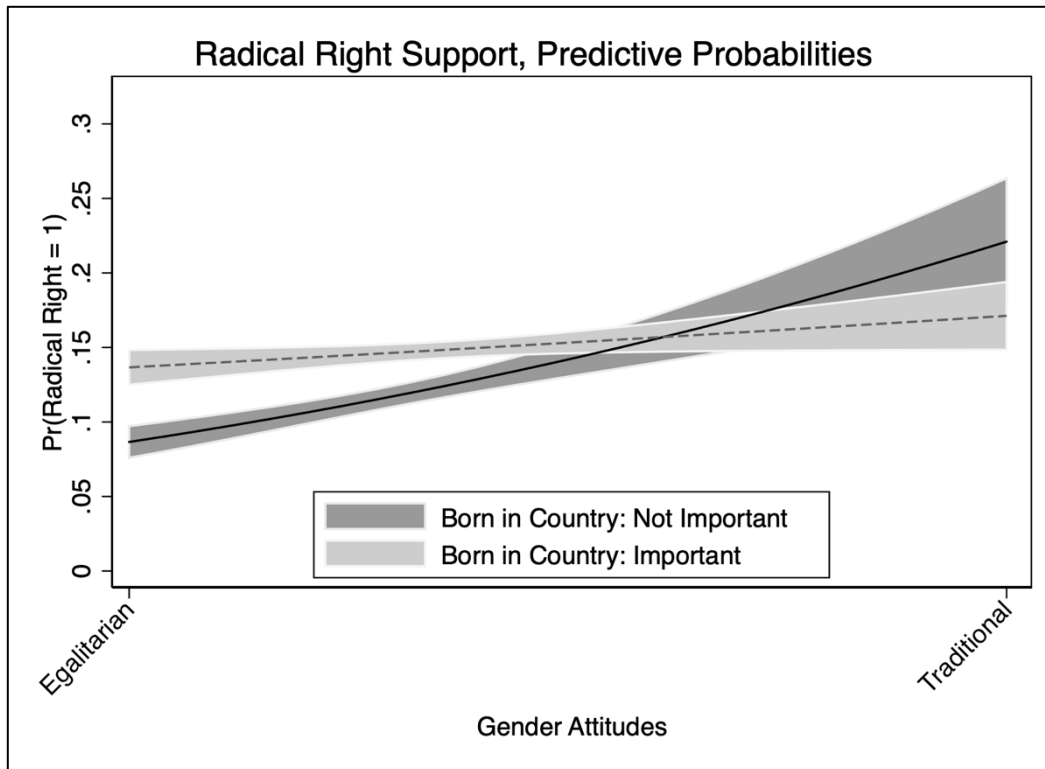


Figure 6

The results here indicate that being more gender traditional moderates the relationship between attitudes regarding the importance of one's birthplace and support for the radical right, but the "effect" size is much greater (13.5 vs. 3.5 percentage points) for those who *do not* think being born in his or her country is important for nationality. The boost for nativists, while modest, is still significant at the $p < 0.000$ value. What is fascinating, however, is the steep increase in the probability of support between the non-nativist egalitarians and the non-nativist traditionalists. While it is possible that some of this effect may be coming from non-native, socially conservative migrants (who therefore would be less inclined to think being born in the country was important for nationality), one would expect those individuals to be even more likely to eschew the radical right due to the party family's exclusionary rhetoric towards non-natives. Therefore, while these results do provide evidence in support of **H2**, they also suggest that gender traditionalism does not work solely in favor of nativists.

Immigration Attitudes and Gender Attitudes

As with the gender scale, I selected several points of interest along the composite immigration scale (the 25th, 50th, 75th, and 99th percentiles) before calculating the marginal effects. As a reminder, higher values on the scale indicate higher levels of anti-immigrant (and therefore xenophobic attitudes). Figure 7 displays the results.

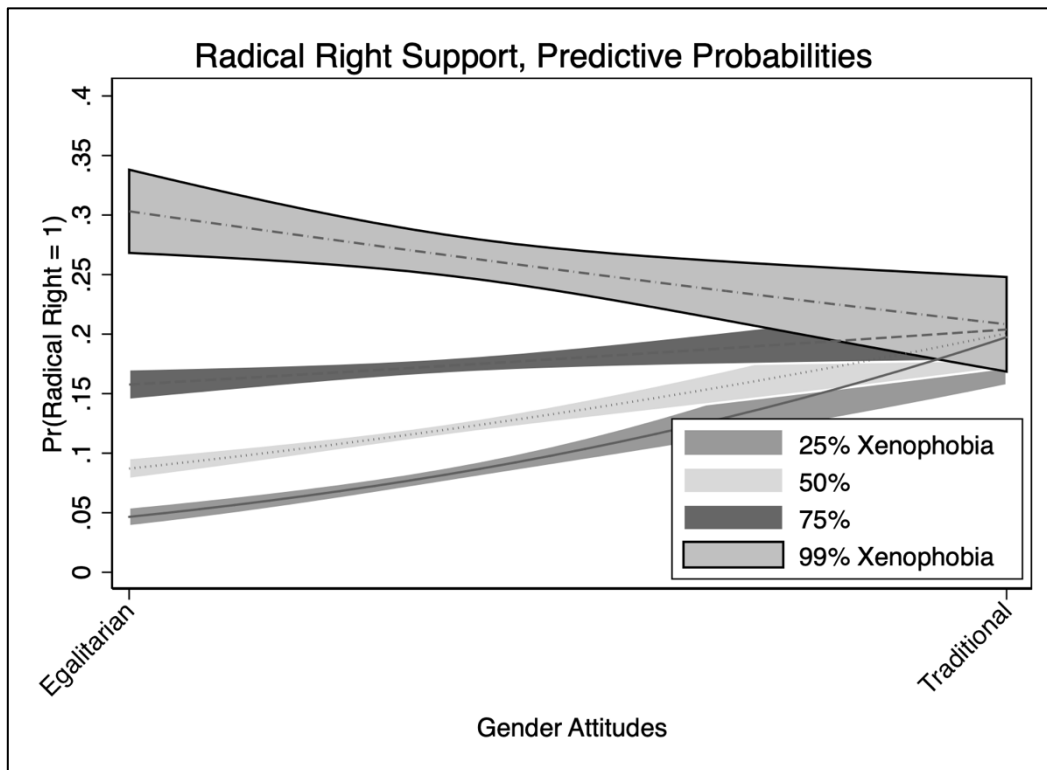


Figure 7

Here we see clear variation. Holding more gender traditional attitudes is associated with a reduced probability of support for the radical right amongst the most fervent xenophobes (99th percentile, an overall 9.5 percentage point reduction), but a higher probability of support for everyone else.²⁵ This finding provides mixed support in favor of **H2**. Gender traditional

²⁵ 15.1 percentage points for the 25th percentile, 11.3 percentage points for the 50th percentile,

individuals at the 75th percentile of xenophobia do appear more likely to support the radical right than egalitarians, but this finding does not extend to the most (99th percentile) xenophobic individuals. While the most xenophobic gender traditionalists have the same probability of support for the radical right as those individuals in the other three quartiles, the largest probability of support comes from the most xenophobic egalitarians.²⁶

Why might this be the case? Prior work has identified a subset of “sexually modern nativists” (Spierings et al. 2017) who are pro-gender and LGBTQ+ equality and have strong anti-migrant attitudes. It stands to reason that some sexually modern nativists might feel threatened by an influx of conservative immigrants and respond to such threats by choosing to vote for the radical right. These results suggest as much. However, the mechanisms behind why these individual become activated along an anti-migrant dimension are still unclear, particularly because there is a current lack of evidence demonstrating a strong link between sexually modern nativists voting for the radical right in countries (such as the Netherlands) where the radical right is most vocal

and 4.6 percentage points for the 75th percentile.

²⁶ As Hainmueller et al. 2019 show, researchers need to be particularly sensitive to a host of potential analytical and interpretive pitfalls when estimating linear interaction effects, such as extrapolation and interpolation that stem from a lack of common support. If there is a lack of common support, estimated linear marginal effects may be model dependent and misleading. To check for this, I ran various diagnostics using Hainmuller et al.’s *interflex* package. Diagnostics show that my data do not lack common support and that there are minimal issues related to extrapolation and/or interpolation. These diagnostics are depicted and overviewed across Figures 1-2 of Appendix D in the online supplementary materials.

about its support for LGBTQ issues (Spierings 2020). Further work is still needed to understand this phenomenon.

Discussion and Conclusions

The radical right has long placed an emphasis on traditional family values in their manifestos, rhetoric, and policy agendas (Akkerman 2015). In doing so, they speak to fears individuals may have surrounding the decline in what they perceive as the “proper” roles for men and women to hold in society, as well as more deeply rooted anxieties about what it means for the traditional gender order to be disrupted.

Overall, I find that traditional gender attitudes do predict support for the radical right, which is in contrast to recent preliminary work on the topic (e.g. Spierings and Zaslove 2015a), a difference that could be the result of different samples (European Social Survey vs. European Value Study, seven Western European countries vs. a larger sample of countries across the continent, etc.) or time periods. What is clearer than ever is that there is still much we do not understand about the relationship between gender and radical right-wing parties, and more research is urgently needed to further enhance our understanding of this relationship. A second major finding of this paper is that, while gender traditionalism is positively associated with radical right support, this was not the case with more mainstream or “traditional” conservative parties. This finding suggests that the appeal of radical right parties is uniquely gendered and that more research is needed to understand the ways that radical right parties and politicians incorporate traditional gender appeals in their political communication.

Importantly, I also find that traditional gender attitudes and nativism combined have a nuanced yet meaningful impact on the likelihood of finding the radical right appealing. Anti-immigrant attitudes remain the highest predictors of support for the radical right in the full

models - above and beyond gender attitudes and other common explanations – and a belief that it is important to be born in one’s country in order to “truly” be a part of one’s nationality was also a strong predictor. Although nativists appear to need very little extra “help” to support the radical right, however, being gender traditional provides a boost that fits nicely within their broader paradigm.

Even more telling is that the “effect” of gender traditionalism on support also extends to non-nativists. This is a poignant finding, because most non-nativists should have strong priors against supporting the radical right, who are by and large defined as a party family by their subscription to nativist ideology. Theoretically they should be able to find a “home” with another conservative party who, while perhaps not being as publicly forceful about their socially conservative agenda, still harbor similar views. We do not see that story play out in these data, however, since gender traditional attitudes appear to play little role in inducing support for mainstream conservative parties. This finding forces us to reckon with whether or not nativism is always the common dominator of radical right support, and suggests that holding gender traditional attitudes is a potential backdoor pathway into the radical right fold for non-nativists. Although this is a purely speculative statement (this dataset cannot fully validate this argument either way), such conjectures remain a potentially fruitful area for future research.

One limitation of this analysis is that I cannot ascertain a causal direction between either gender attitudes and nativism or gender attitudes, nativism, and radical right support. It is possible that the relationship between nativism and gender attitudes is truly multi-directional due to the analogous structure of both phenomena. Supporting more nativist viewpoints may subsequently increase the likelihood of expressing more gender traditional attitudes *or vice versa* and the subsequent outcomes would be relatively unchanged because they are so closely

intertwined. On the other hand, experimental evidence is certainly needed to validate my claim that at least some of the connection between gender attitudes and nativism as it relates to the radical right is due to the congruence between implicitly gendered, nativist rhetoric and traditional gender attitudes. Future research should investigate these questions directly.

Another drawback of this paper is that, while it provides illuminating insights regarding the relationship between traditional gender attitudes and support for the radical right in Europe at a broad level, it is incapable of speaking directly to developments in strategic choices being made by radical right parties regarding gendered rhetoric. In particular, to help advance their nativist agenda while simultaneously expanding their base of support, some radical right-wing groups frame their Islamophobic stances as being primarily rooted in a defense of gender equality, a strategy seemingly at odds with gender traditionalism. Future research should investigate directly how such rhetoric is received by gender traditionalist individuals that this paper has identified as being more likely to support radical right-wing parties.

My results provide us with an additional motivation for why someone might be drawn to the radical right above and beyond our prevailing explanations. Although we know much about the demographic profile of the average radical right voter (male, working class, lower-educated, etc.), we still lack a complete explanation of the motivations that prompt individuals to support the radical right or not (Fitzgerald 2018), and therefore why these individuals find the radical right so appealing. This paper adds individual gender attitudes to the list of potential motivations - both for nativists and non-nativists alike. Gender traditionalism can heighten the already vigorous connections between nativism and the radical right and draw in non-nativists who might otherwise be less inclined to support the party family.

Finally, this paper imparts new context to our growing knowledge of how gender attitudes, similar to racial attitudes, impact political behavior (e.g., Deckman and Cassese 2019; Schneider and Bos 2019). There is a large scholarship on the impact of being either “male” or “female” on political behavior, but we know relatively little in comparison about the ways in which *ideas* regarding how either “men” or “women” should behave, or what is appropriately “masculine” or “feminine,” may exert an additional influence. Considering the fact that ideas about gender pervade almost every aspect of our lives, it is more important than ever to fully explore how they shape our politics.

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**Appendices for “Traditional Gender Attitudes, Nativism, and
Support for the Radical Right”**

Appendix A: List of Parties	2
Appendix B: Full Logistic Regression Models	3
Appendix C: Predictive Probability Tables	6
Appendix D: <i>interflex</i> Analyses	8

Appendix A: List of Parties

Radical Right Parties

Albania: Albanian National Front
Austria: Freedom Party of Austria
Bulgaria: Attack
Croatia: Croatian Party of Rights
Czechia: Freedom and Direct Democracy
Denmark: Danish People's Party
Estonia: Conservative People's Party of Estonia/EKRE
Finland: Finns Party
France: National Front/National Rally
Germany: Alternative for Germany
Great Britain: British National Party
Hungary: Fidesz; Jobbik
Iceland: Icelandic National Party; Progressive Party
Italy: Lega Nord/League
Lithuania: Order and Justice
Netherlands: Party for Freedom; Forum for Democracy
Norway: Progress Party
Poland; Law & Justice
Serbia: Serbian Radical Party
Slovakia: Slovak National Party; Kotleba/People's Party Our Slovakia
Slovenia: Slovenian Democratic Party
Sweden: Sweden Democrats
Switzerland: Christian Democratic Party; The Liberals

Conservative Parties

Albania: Justice Integration, and Unity
Austria: Austrian People's Party
Bulgaria: Citizens for European Development
Croatia: Croatian Democratic Union
Czechia: Civic Democratic Party
Denmark: Conservative People's Party; Venstre, Denmark's Liberal Party
Estonia: Estonian Reform Party
Finland: Center Party; Christian Democrats
France: The Republicans
Germany: Christian Democratic Union
Great Britain: Conservative
Hungary: Christian Democratic People's Party
Iceland: Independence Party
Italy: Let's Go Italy/Forza Italia
Lithuania: Homeland Union; Lithuanian Christian Democrats
Netherlands: Christian Democratic Appeal
Norway: Conservative Party
Poland: Korwin
Serbia: Serbian Progressive Party
Slovakia: Freedom and Solidarity
Slovenia: New Slovenia - Christian People's Party
Sweden: Moderate Party
Switzerland: Swiss People's Party

Appendix B: Logistic Regression Tables

Table B1: Party Family as Dependent Variable

	(1) Radical Right	(2) Conservative	(3) Radical Right	(4) Radical Right	(5) Radical Right	(6) Conservative
Gender Scale	0.729*** (0.077)	-0.669*** (0.062)	0.797*** (0.153)	1.248*** (0.148)	0.685*** (0.155)	0.013 (0.130)
Immigrant Attitudes			2.947*** (0.138)		2.804*** (0.140)	-0.091 (0.095)
Born Country				0.552*** (0.055)	0.332*** (0.058)	0.075* (0.044)
Authority Respect			-0.088*** (0.033)	-0.100*** (0.032)	-0.085*** (0.033)	-0.056** (0.025)
Democracy: Obey Rulers			0.026*** (0.009)	0.023** (0.009)	0.024** (0.009)	0.013* (0.007)
Tax Rich/ Subsidize Poor			0.025** (0.010)	0.027*** (0.010)	0.025** (0.010)	-0.044*** (0.007)
Religiosity			0.064 (0.042)	0.095** (0.041)	0.067 (0.042)	-0.242*** (0.033)
Sex			0.091* (0.054)	0.092* (0.052)	0.091* (0.054)	-0.003 (0.041)
Age			-0.044* (0.023)	-0.041* (0.022)	-0.043* (0.023)	0.074*** (0.018)
Low Education			0.712*** (0.087)	0.809*** (0.084)	0.678*** (0.088)	-0.027 (0.063)
Medium Education			0.628*** (0.066)	0.685*** (0.064)	0.609*** (0.067)	-0.026 (0.046)
Work Fulltime			0.143 (0.092)	0.120 (0.090)	0.130 (0.092)	-0.178** (0.070)
Work Part-time			-0.078 (0.131)	-0.148 (0.128)	-0.087 (0.132)	-0.270*** (0.097)
Retired			-0.152 (0.106)	-0.224** (0.103)	-0.168 (0.106)	-0.091 (0.080)
Homemaker			-0.246 (0.172)	-0.235 (0.168)	-0.264 (0.172)	0.054 (0.131)
Student			-0.160 (0.161)	-0.277* (0.156)	-0.163 (0.161)	-0.067 (0.123)

Unemployed			0.210 (0.155)	0.197 (0.151)	0.208 (0.155)	-0.299** (0.118)
Political Memberships			-0.151** (0.067)	-0.203*** (0.063)	-0.151** (0.067)	0.114** (0.055)
Parliament Confidence			0.211*** (0.034)	0.286*** (0.033)	0.217*** (0.034)	-0.298*** (0.028)
Ideology			0.329*** (0.013)	0.374*** (0.012)	0.326*** (0.013)	0.432*** (0.010)
Constant	-2.438*** (0.034)	-1.259*** (0.025)	-6.815*** (0.253)	-5.736*** (0.238)	-6.858*** (0.254)	-1.991*** (0.186)
Obs.	36015	36015	19775	20317	19743	19242
Pseudo R ²	0.004	0.003	0.309	0.281	0.310	0.205
Country Dummies			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Standard errors are in parenthesis
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table B2: Logistic Regression Results (Sex*Gender Attitudes Model)

	(1) Radical Right
Gender Scale	0.544** (0.206)
Female*Gender Scale (Baseline)	
Male*Gender Scale	0.64 (0.250)
Constant	-6.738*** (0.268)
Obs.	19587
Controls	Yes

Standard errors are in parenthesis

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table C2:
 Predicted Probability of Conservative Support =1 along Gender Scale

Predictive margins		Number of obs. = 19,242				
Model VCE : Robust						
Expression : Pr(Radical Right), predict()						
1._at	: Gender Scale =	0				
2._at	: Gender Scale =	.04				
3._at	: Gender Scale =	.2				
4._at	: Gender Scale =	.36				
5._at	: Gender Scale =	.52				
6._at	: Gender Scale =	.64				
7._at	: Gender Scale =	.76				
8._at	: Gender Scale =	.88				
9._at	: Gender Scale =	1				

	Delta-method					Interval]
	Margin	Std.Err.	z	P>z	[95%Conf.	
_at						
1	0.2396	0.006	39.070	0.000	0.228	0.252
2	0.2397	0.005	43.700	0.000	0.229	0.250
3	0.2399	0.003	73.270	0.000	0.234	0.246
4	0.2402	0.003	81.640	0.000	0.234	0.246
5	0.2405	0.005	49.150	0.000	0.231	0.250
6	0.2407	0.007	35.180	0.000	0.227	0.254
7	0.2409	0.009	27.010	0.000	0.223	0.258
8	0.2411	0.011	21.820	0.000	0.220	0.263
9	0.2413	0.013	18.270	0.000	0.215	0.267

Please contact the author for tables of the following models, which are too large to reproduce in this document:

- Predicted Probability of Radical Right =1 along Gender Scale and Born in Country Importance
- Predicted Probability of Radical Right =1 along Gender Scale and Immigration Attitudes

Appendix D: *interflex* Analyses

Figure 1 provides confirmation that there is common support in my interactive model of immigration attitudes and gender attitudes as they relate to radical right support.

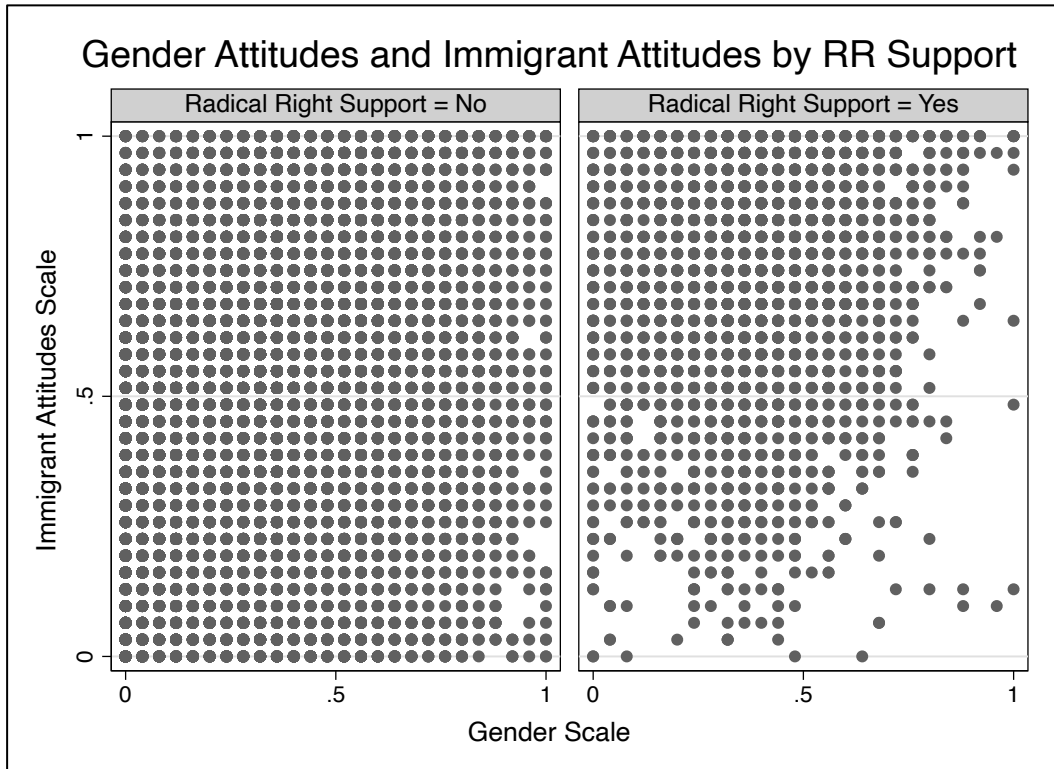


Figure 1

There are 954 individuals in the full dataset who score at the 99th percentile of xenophobia and can be also be classified as gender egalitarian (i.e. in the 25% percentile or below on the gender attitudes scale), which equates to roughly 3% of the sample.

Employing a kernel estimator on the same model presented in Figure 6 in the main body of the paper does not substantively change the results (see Figure 2 below). While the non-linear relationship is perhaps a bit starker overall than the linear relationship presented in the paper, the high-level takeaway is the same as in the linear model: the marginal effect of gender traditionalism on support for the radical right is greater, on average, for those with lower levels of xenophobia than those who harbor higher levels of xenophobia. Indeed, at the highest levels of xenophobia, high levels of gender traditionalism are associated with a decreased likelihood of supporting radical right parties.

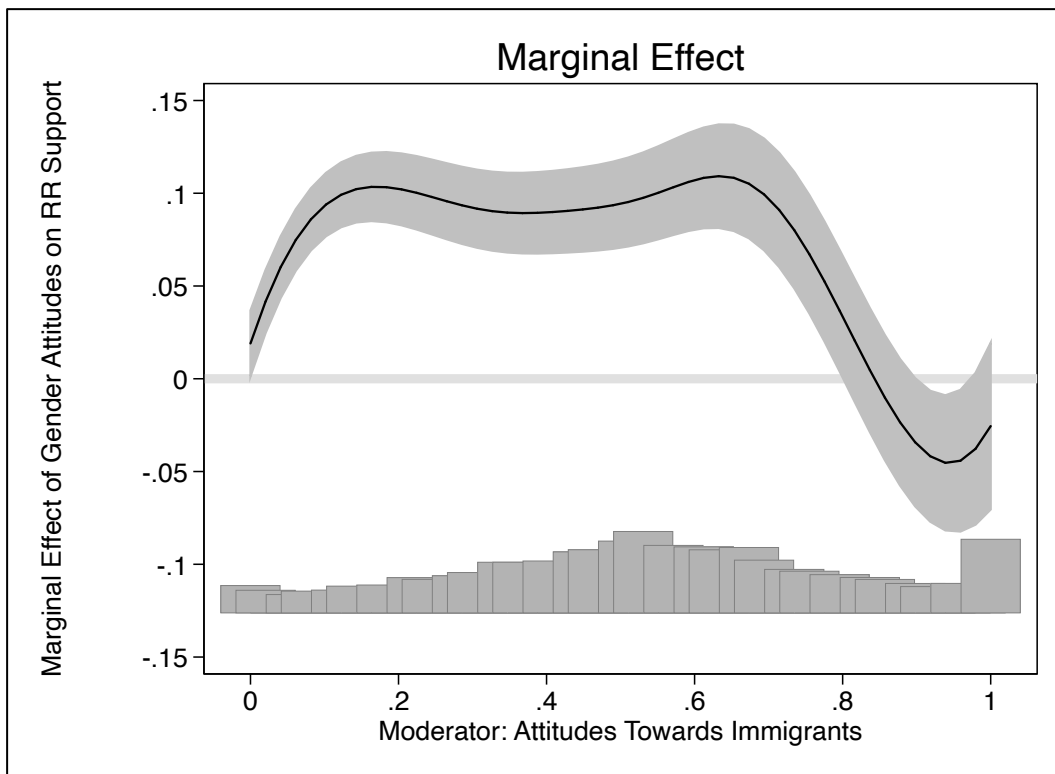


Figure 2