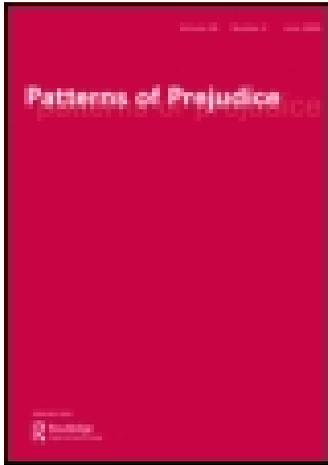


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# Gender and right-wing populism in the Low Countries: ideological variations across parties and time

SARAH L. DE LANGE AND LIZA M. MÜGGE

**ABSTRACT** Although scholarship on the general ideological orientation of right-wing populist parties is well established, few scholars have studied their ideas about gender. De Lange and Mügge therefore ask how differences in ideology shape right-wing populist parties' ideas on gender. Drawing on the qualitative content analysis of party manifestos, they compare the gender ideologies and concrete policy proposals of national and neoliberal populist parties in the Netherlands and Flanders from the 1980s to the present. They find that some parties adhere to a modern or modern-traditional view, while others espouse neo-traditional views. Moreover, some right-wing populist parties have adopted gendered readings of issues surrounding immigration and 'Islam', while others have not. The variation in stances on 'classical' gender issues can be explained by the genealogy and ideological orientation of the parties, whereas gendered views on immigration and Islam are influenced by contextual factors, such as 9/11.

**KEYWORDS** Flanders, gender, nationalism, neoliberalism, Netherlands, political parties, populism, radical right, right-wing ideology

Right-wing populist parties have become important players in contemporary Western European politics. They have entered many national parliaments, either taking office themselves or supporting minority

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governments, thereby enabling them to influence policymaking directly. The burgeoning scholarship on right-wing populism includes many detailed analyses of ideology and party programmes, with particular attention to salient right-wing populist issues such as immigration and integration. Nevertheless, little is known about the role gender plays in right-wing populist ideology. This is a lacuna in our understanding since right-wing populist parties increasingly pay attention to gender, often to justify anti-immigration positions by focusing on 'harmful cultural practices' such as female genital mutilation, honour killings, the wearing of headscarves, forced marriages or polygamy.

According to feminist scholars and activists, the inclusion of gender equality and sexual emancipation in the programmes of right-wing populist parties has given rise to a new nationalism in which 'women's rights and gay-and-lesbian rights are deemed core civilisational values of the West, while migrant communities, particularly Muslims, are cast as menacing them'.<sup>1</sup> However, the 'newness' of the inclusion of gender in right-wing populist and nationalist ideologies is debatable, given that gender ideologies were prominent in, for example, colonial policies and in nation-building processes.<sup>2</sup> The feminist argument above also assumes that right-wing populist parties form an ideologically homogeneous bloc. But, despite ideological similarities, right-wing populist parties differ considerably when it comes to their issue profiles and programmes. On the basis of these differences, parties can be characterized as either *national* populist or *neoliberal* populist.<sup>3</sup>

This paper traces the role gender plays in the ideology of right-wing populist parties, using a qualitative, inductive approach. It asks: how does ideology shape right-wing populist parties' ideas about gender? To examine the gender ideologies of right-wing populist parties, we focus on ideas about

- 1 Sirma Bilge, 'Mapping Québécois sexual nationalism in times of "crisis of reasonable accommodations"', *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2012, 303–18 (303). See also Judith Butler, 'Sexual politics, torture, and secular time', *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 59, no. 1, 2008, 1–23; Paul Mepschen, Jan-Willem Duyvendak and Evelien Tonkens, 'Sexual politics, Orientalism and multicultural citizenship in the Netherlands', *Sociology*, vol. 44, no. 5, 2010, 962–79; Sara R. Farris, 'Femonationalism and the "regular" army of labor called migrant women', *History of the Present*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2012, 184–99; and Diana Mulinari and Anders Neergaard, 'We are Sweden Democrats because we care for others: exploring racisms in the Swedish extreme right', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2014, 43–56.
- 2 See, among others, Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1990).
- 3 Hans-Georg Betz, 'The two faces of radical right-wing populism in Western Europe', *Review of Politics*, vol. 55, no. 4, 1993, 663–86; Hans-Georg Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 1994); Elisabeth Carter, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe: Success or Failure?* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press 2005); Herbert Kitschelt with Anthony J. McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1995).

family, men and women as presented in their party manifestos. More specifically, we explore how differences in ideology manifest themselves in these parties' stances on 'classical' gender issues (such as the division between labour and care, and reproductive rights) on the one hand, and on 'newer' issues related to gender, immigration and 'Islam' on the other.<sup>4</sup> To answer our central question, we study the manifestos of national and neoliberal parties in the Netherlands and Flanders, where both kinds of parties experienced electoral breakthrough in the late 1970s and early 1980s, respectively.<sup>5</sup> Through qualitative content analysis of the manifestos, we are able to map differences in gender ideologies systematically across parties and over time, and account for the observed patterns of variation.

Our analysis, mainly descriptive in nature, shows that some right-wing parties adhere to a modern or modern-traditional view when it comes to gender issues, while others espouse more neo-traditional views. This categorization of party gender ideologies, however, does not neatly mirror the distinction between national and neoliberal populist parties. Moreover, our analysis shows that the inclusion of gender in the ideology of right-wing populist parties is hardly new—as is sometimes suggested in contemporary feminist scholarship—but has significantly *changed* over time. Since the mid-1990s, anti-Islam positions have been gradually linked to gender and family. As part of this development, anti-immigrant politics has not only become focused on *Muslim* immigrants, but has become explicitly gendered.

The article proceeds as follows. First, we take stock of the literature on gender, ideology and right-wing populism. Second, we discuss Dutch and Flemish national and neoliberal populist parties' genealogy and ideology. Finally, we explain differences in gender positions by analysing parties' stances on 1) classical gender issues, and 2) gender, immigration and 'Islam'.

## Gender, ideology and right-wing populism

This article adopts a classic approach to ideology, defining it 'as a set of beliefs, values, principles, attitudes and/or ideals—in short as a type of political thinking'.<sup>6</sup> As such, an ideology offers a framework to explain, evaluate, orient and programme. Ideologies are powerful tools as they offer solutions in daily dilemmas of a political nature and 'direct, or at least

4 The parties under study refer to 'Islam' and 'Islamic' practices when addressing issues arising from immigration from predominantly Muslim countries; references to the religion Islam are thus used to describe both cultural and religious practices. Throughout this article, where appropriate, therefore, we have inserted '[sic]' following 'Islam' in direct quotations.

5 For the significance of these cases in the broader framework of gender and populism, see Niels Spierings, Andrej Zaslove, Liza Mügge and Sarah de Lange, 'Gender and populist radical-right politics: an introduction', in these pages.

6 John Gerring, 'Ideology: a definitional analysis', *Political Research Quarterly*, vol. 50, no. 4, 1997, 957–94 (967).

influence, political behavior'.<sup>7</sup> A gender ideology is defined as the part of a political ideology that contains 'structured beliefs and ideas about ways power should be arranged according to social constructs associated with sexed bodies'.<sup>8</sup>

There are two prominent themes within the ideologies of right-wing populist parties. First, they reject the notion that individuals are equal, perceiving inequalities (such as economic, ethnic or religious) as 'natural' and opposing political projects that aim to create egalitarian societies.<sup>9</sup> Second, right-wing populist parties adhere to a belief system in which 'society [is considered] 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'.<sup>10</sup> These parties therefore accept democratic institutions and procedures, while criticizing the existing party and parliamentary system. On the basis of differences in ideology, right-wing populist parties can be categorized as either *national* populist parties or *neoliberal* populist parties.<sup>11</sup> Whereas the first group focuses primarily on cultural, ethnic and religious inequalities, the second emphasizes economic inequalities.

National populist parties, also sometimes referred to as populist radical-right parties, adhere to a combination of nationalist and xenophobic attitudes. In their view, the nation-state should be inhabited exclusively by natives. Non-native elements—including people, objects and ideas—are seen as serious threats to the ideal homogeneous nation-state in which territory and nation coincide.<sup>12</sup> National populist parties are known for their calls to close borders to non-western immigrants and to enforce their compulsory assimilation. Since the 1990s they have targeted Muslims, claiming that their growing numbers and unwillingness to integrate are incompatible with European Judaeo-Christian values. In this view, Islam is a totalitarian ideology, a fundamental threat to individual freedom and liberal democracy.<sup>13</sup>

7 Ibid.

8 Georgia Duerst-Lahti, 'Gender ideology: masculinism and feminalism', in Gary Goertz and Amy G. Mazur (eds), *Politics, Gender, and Concepts: Theory and Methodology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008), 159–92 (182).

9 Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe*, 4.

10 Cas Mudde, 'The populist zeitgeist', *Government and Opposition*, vol. 39, no. 4, 2004, 541–63 (543).

11 Betz, 'The two faces of radical right-wing populism in Western Europe'; Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe*; Carter, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe*; Kitschelt, *The Radical Right in Western Europe*.

12 Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), 19.

13 Hans-Georg Betz, 'Against the "green totalitarianism": anti-Islamic nativism in contemporary radical right-wing populism in Western Europe', in Christina Schori Liang (ed.), *Europe for the Europeans: The Foreign and Security Policy of the Populist Radical Right* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2007), 33–54 (47).

Neoliberal populist parties differ from national populist parties in two ways. First, nationalism and xenophobia are not central to their ideologies. Although neoliberal populist parties may hold nationalist and xenophobic beliefs, they pay considerably less attention to immigration and integration issues than national populist parties.<sup>14</sup> Their policy proposals to solve immigration and integration problems are also often less radical than those of national populist parties. Hence, whereas national populist parties oppose multiculturalism, neoliberal populist parties are sceptical of multiculturalism.<sup>15</sup> The core of the ideology of neoliberal populist parties is formed by economic liberalism: they advocate anti-egalitarian measures, aim to reduce government and state intervention, and defend the 'ordinary people' against an allegedly 'corrupt elite'.<sup>16</sup>

In recent years the ideological differences between these two types of parties have become less clear-cut. In an attempt to become more acceptable to mainstream parties and voters, national populist parties have increasingly been resorting to liberal democratic arguments to defend their opposition to immigration. The national populist critique of Islam, for example, stems from the observation that 'Islamic values' are at odds with liberal democratic values such as the autonomy of the individual, democracy, the emancipation of homosexuals and women, the equality of men and women, freedom of expression, and separation of church and state.<sup>17</sup> The convergence of national and neoliberal populist parties is particularly visible when it comes to the rights of Muslim women. Harmful cultural practices such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation are linked to anti-immigration policies and presented in a broader human rights and gender equality framework by both national and neoliberal populist parties.<sup>18</sup> But it remains unclear whether this rapprochement between national and neoliberal populist parties can also be observed when it concerns the emancipation of native women and women's rights more generally.

While feminist scholarship distinguishes between governing ideologies—for example, in the familiar distinction between the left and the right—it pays no attention to variations *within* these ideologies.<sup>19</sup> This literature thus offers few clues as to how ideas on gender may vary between national and

14 Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 30.

15 Frank Decker, *Der neue Rechtspopulismus* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich 2004), 219–20.

16 Teun Pauwels, 'Explaining the success of neo-liberal populist parties: the case of Lijst Dedecker in Belgium', *Political Studies*, vol. 58, no. 5, 2010, 1009–29 (1009).

17 Hans-Georg Betz and Susi Meret, 'Revisiting Lepanto: the political mobilization against Islam in contemporary Western Europe', *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 43, no. 3–4, 2009, 313–34; José Pedro Zúquete, 'The European extreme right and Islam: new directions?', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2008, 321–44.

18 Tjitske Akkerman and Anniken Hagelund, "'Women and children first!' Anti-immigration parties and gender in Norway and the Netherlands", *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2007, 197–214.

19 Duerst-Lahti, 'Gender ideology', 182.

neoliberal populist parties. Studies of right-wing populist ideology do, however, offer some suggestions. Eleonore Kofman, for instance, concludes that 'there is not a single and consistent attitude to the family and its social relations among far right movements'.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, Cas Mudde observes a consistent gender ideology that he argues consists of three tenets: 1) the equating of women's politics with family politics; 2) the staunch defence of 'natural differences' between the sexes; and 3) the idea that, since women are the only sex that can give birth and offspring are vital to the survival of the nation, women should be 'protected'.<sup>21</sup> There is thus no agreement among scholars that there are variations related to gender across the ideologies of right-wing populist parties. More importantly, to our knowledge no attempts have been made to explain such variations.

### **Dutch and Flemish national and neoliberal populist parties**

Right-wing populist parties exist in many countries, but only Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland have witnessed an electoral breakthrough by both neoliberal and national populist parties. Of these countries, Belgium (and more specifically Flanders) and the Netherlands are the most comparable in terms of parties and party systems, as well as in terms of language, history and the emancipation of women. Flanders and the Netherlands both have fragmented multiparty systems with left-wing (green) and right-wing (national populist and neoliberal populist) new political parties, as well as Christian democratic, liberal and social democratic mainstream parties. As a consequence, they are traditionally governed by broad centre-left or centre-right coalitions. Both Flanders and the Netherlands score relatively high on the United Nations emancipation indexes, such as the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Inequality Index (GII). The percentages of women in their parliaments are comparable. Using a 'most similar systems design' to study the gender ideology of right-wing populist parties allows us to exclude the possibility that differences in gender ideologies are caused by differences between countries rather than parties. By focusing on Flanders, and not on Belgium, the influence of differences in history, language and the political system is minimized.

Most importantly, for this study, Flanders and the Netherlands have both witnessed the emergence of multiple national and neoliberal populist parties. In the literature on Flemish right-wing populism, the Vlaams Belang (VB, Flemish Interest), previously known as the Vlaams Blok, has often been described as a national populist party,<sup>22</sup> and the Lijst Dedecker or Libertair,

20 Eleonore Kofman, 'When society was simple: gender and ethnic divisions and the Far and New Right in France', in Nickie Charles and Helen Hintjes (eds), *Gender, Ethnicity and Political Ideologies* (London and New York: Routledge 1998), 91-106 (91).

21 Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 92-4.

Direct, Democratisch (LDD, Libertarian, Direct, Democratic) as a neoliberal populist party.<sup>23</sup> The two parties not only differ in their ideological outlooks but also in their backgrounds and electoral trajectories. The VB first entered the Belgian federal parliament in 1978, winning 1.4 per cent of the vote. The party had strong ties to right-wing nationalist and orthodox Catholic groups, and espoused extreme right-wing views; its electoral success remained limited until the early 1990s. Its fortunes changed under the leadership of Filip Dewinter, who exchanged traditional right-wing extremism for right-wing populism. Since 1991 the party has grown continuously, from 6.6 per cent of the vote in 1991 to 12.0 per cent in 2007. But in 2010 the party's fortunes crumbled when it won only 7.7 per cent of the vote. The LDD emerged, more recently, in 2007. It won 4.0 per cent of the vote in 2007 and 2.3 per cent in 2010. In contrast to the VB, the party has never been associated with right-wing extremism and its leader hails from mainstream politics.

In the Netherlands, the Centrum Democraten (CD, Centre Democrats), CentrumPartij (CP, Centre Party), CentrumPartij '86 (CP'86, Centre Party '86) and Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV, Party for Freedom) belong to the group of national populist parties,<sup>24</sup> while the Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF, List Pim Fortuyn) has been described as a neoliberal populist party.<sup>25</sup> The CP, and its successor parties the CD and CP'86, had their electoral breakthrough in the 1980s; like the VB, they can trace their genealogy to extreme right-wing subcultures. In contrast to the Flemish VB, the Dutch CD and CP'86 did not manage to consolidate their support in the 1990s. Although the CD obtained three seats in the 1994 elections, it disappeared from parliament in 1998, while the CP'86 never secured parliamentary representation. In 2002 the LPF was founded by the maverick Pim Fortuyn, who had previously been active in an array of mainstream parties. It was the first right-wing populist party in the Netherlands to gain a large following (17.0 per cent of the vote in 2002), but the party disappeared from parliament in 2006, unable to overcome the challenges posed by the assassination of its founder just ten days prior to elections in May 2002. In 2006 a new right-wing populist party emerged, led

22 Betz, 'The two faces of radical right-wing populism in Western Europe'; Hilde Coffé, *Extreem-rechts in Vlaanderen en Wallonië: Het verschil* (Roeselare: Roularta Books 2005); Paul Lucardie, 'Tussen establishment en extremisme: populistische partijen in Nederland en Vlaanderen', *Res Publica*, vol. 52, no. 2, 2010, 149–72; Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 43.

23 Lucardie, 'Tussen establishment en extremisme'; Pauwels, 'Explaining the success of neo-liberal populist parties'.

24 Cas Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2000); Koen Vossen, 'Populism in the Netherlands after Fortuyn: Rita Verdonk and Geert Wilders compared', *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2010, 22–38; Lucardie, 'Tussen establishment en extremisme'.

25 Lucardie, 'Tussen establishment en extremisme'; Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 47.

by former liberal MP Geert Wilders. His national populist PVV obtained 5.9 per cent of the vote in 2006, 15.5 per cent in 2010, and 10.1 per cent in 2012. Moreover, it supported a minority government led by the liberal Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD, People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) from 2010 to 2012.

## Data and method

Parties' gender ideologies are reflected in various types of documents, such as election manifestos, parliamentary proceedings, questions and speeches. We have opted for the analysis of election manifestos for two reasons. First, they are authoritative documents that party leaders can only depart from with great difficulty;<sup>26</sup> and, second, they are reasonably comparable across cases and over time.<sup>27</sup> We have collected the manifestos of all Dutch and Flemish right-wing populist parties represented at national and European elections between 1980 and 2012, as well as documents containing founding ideological principles. Given the confederal nature of the Belgian political system, we have also analysed manifestos presented at the Flemish elections. [Table 1](#) provides an overview of the number of manifestos and documents analysed for each party.

Table 1 Primary sources

<i>Party</i>	<i>Manifestos and party documents</i>
CD	National elections: 1994, 1998
CP/CP'86	National elections: 1986, 1989
LDD	European elections: 2009 Flemish elections: 2009
LPF	National elections: 2010 European elections: 2004
PVV	National elections: 2002, 2003, 2006 European elections: 2009
	National elections: 2006, 2010, 2012 Other: 2005
VB	European elections: 2009 Flemish elections: 1995, 1999, 2004, 2009 National elections: 1985, 1987, 1991, 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2010 Other: 1991, 1992, 2012

26 Michael Laver and John Garry, 'Estimating policy positions from political texts', *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2000, 619–34 (620).

27 Robert Klemmensen, Sara Binzer Hobolt and Martin Ejnar Hansen, 'Estimating policy positions using political texts: an evaluation of the Wordscores approach', *Electoral Studies*, vol. 26, no. 4, 2007, 746–55 (747).

Our research on the documents was based on a qualitative content analysis. Our method was inductive in nature and focused on the explicit content of manifestos (that is, their positions on gender issues and their salience). Our analyses did not concentrate on discourse or implicit messages. We identified all passages in the election manifestos that addressed gender issues and, more particularly, references to emancipation, men, women, women's health (including abortion), women's rights and family arrangements. The passages were categorized on the basis of the policy field they touched upon (such as family policy, immigration policy, labour market policy) and the content of the policy proposal(s) they contained.

### The gender ideology of right-wing populist parties

The attention Dutch and Flemish right-wing populist parties devote to gender issues varies. Most parties touch upon gender issues only sporadically, and integrate them within other themes such as economic development, labour market participation or the integration of immigrants. The Flemish VB is the exception here, and has devoted considerable attention to gender issues in separate sections of its manifestos since the early 1990s. Remarkably, these sections address family policies rather than labour market or social policies, as is common in the manifestos of mainstream parties, as well as ethical issues such as abortion. In 1991 the VB even listed the protection of the family and the fight against abortion as one of its programmatic priorities, together with crime and drugs, Flemish independence, and immigration.<sup>28</sup> In the same year the party organized a conference on family policies, resulting in the publication of *Het Vlaams Blok: De Gezinspartij* (The Flemish Bloc: The Family Party).<sup>29</sup>

While some of the right-wing populist parties discuss both 'classical' gender issues (such as the division between labour and care) and gender issues related to the immigration of non-westerners (such as CD, CP/CP'86, LPF and VB), others do not. The LDD only discusses classic gender issues, and refrains from commenting on gender issues in relation to immigration or 'Islam', while the manifestos of the PVV show the opposite tendency. Finally, it should be noted that the focus is almost exclusively on the family, feminism, women and women's rights. Men and their position in society are rarely mentioned explicitly, while ideas about masculinity are absent from all manifestos.

28 Vlaams Blok, *Uit Zelfverdediging: Verkiezingsprogramma 1991* (Brussels: VB 1991), 23.

29 Vlaams Blok, *Het Vlaams Blok: De Gezinspartij* (Brussels: VB 1991).

*Classical gender issues*

In order to analyse the gender ideologies of right-wing populist parties, we first present their attitudes to 'classical' gender issues such as economic participation, family structures and reproduction, and (political) representation. We describe how attitudes vary across parties with the neoliberal parties espousing modern views and the CD, CP/CP'86 and VB more modern-traditional or neo-traditional views and, over time, with parties having more modern ideas in the 2000s than in the 1980s and 1990s.

The majority of right-wing populist parties, namely the Dutch CP/CP'86, LPF, PVV and Flemish VB, argue that they are in favour of equality between men and women. According to the Dutch CP/CP'86: 'All people are equal. Men and women are fully equal and are entitled to equal positions in society and should be treated as such. Emancipation cannot lead to [state interference] or the preferential treatment of one sex over the other.'<sup>30</sup> The Dutch LPF, PVV and Flemish VB make similar statements, but couch their positions more explicitly in the rhetoric of enlightenment, humanism and modernity. In contrast to the CP/CP'86, they implicitly distinguish their ideas from those of immigrants and/or Muslims, who allegedly do not share the same values:

Fortuyn identified the core values of modernity, such as the separation of Church and State, the development of parliamentary democracy, the equality of men and women, of hetero- and homosexuals, the free market, freedom of speech, individual responsibility and community spirit.<sup>31</sup>

The PVV supports the rights of women and homosexuals. The PVV defends the traditional Judeo-Christian and humanist values that have made the Netherlands successful.<sup>32</sup>

[The VB] applaud the fact that men and women are equal today. This is an important achievement of our western civilization.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, from the outset, some right-wing populist parties (LPF, PVV, VB) have linked gender equality and classic gender issues to immigration and 'Islam', while others do not discuss gender equality as a general principle (CD, LDD) or connect it to immigration and/or Islam.

30 Centriumpartij '86, *Voor en veilig en leefbaar Nederland! Programma van de Centriumpartij '86* (Bergentheim: CP'86 1986), 24.17. Translations into English, unless otherwise stated, are by the authors.

31 Lijst Pim Fortuyn, "'Dit is niet het land wat ik voor mijn kinderen will achterlaten": Verkiezingsprogramma van Lijst 5 Fortuyn', 30 September 2006, 7.

32 Geert Wilders, 'Voorwoord', in Partij voor de Vrijheid, *De agenda van hoop en optimisme: Een tijd om te kiezen PVV 2010–2015* (The Hague: PVV 2010), 6, see also 33.

33 Vlaams Blok, *Een toekomst voor Vlaanderen: Programma en Standpunten van het Vlaams Blok* (Brussels: VB 2002), 13; Vlaams Belang, *Programmaboek* (Brussels: VB 2005), 14.

Although most parties pay nominal lip service to equality between men and women, the gender ideologies expressed in their manifestos differ considerably. The content of their policy proposals shows that they have different conceptions of what equality means and how it could or should be achieved. According to Cas Mudde, a clear distinction can be made between parties with neo-traditional or more modern-traditional gender ideologies.<sup>34</sup> For neo-traditionalists, the goal is to provide a favourable climate for women to become mothers and housewives. These types of parties generally do not support policies that encourage women to work—they instead make it more difficult through taxation—and favour large families. Modern-traditionalists combine traditional views with modern elements such as promoting a combination of work and raising children, and advocating equal pay for equal work.<sup>35</sup>

In our study, the gender ideologies of the Dutch CD and CP/CP'86 (national populist parties active in the 1980s and 1990s) fit the neo-traditional view while the ideology of the Flemish VB (a national populist party active since the 1980s) can best be classified as modern-traditional. The gender ideologies of the Flemish LDD and the Dutch LPF (both neoliberal populist parties founded in the 2000s) do not fit Mudde's classificatory scheme as these parties support equal pay and the labour market participation of women without espousing neo-traditional views on the family or gender issues. These parties can therefore better be qualified as modernists rather than modern-traditionalists. Thus national populist right-wing parties seem to advocate either a neo-traditional or a modern-traditional gender ideology, while neoliberal populist parties adopt a modern gender ideology. The differences between the two types of parties are visible in their positions on abortion, family structures and labour market participation (see Table 2). Note that the Dutch national populist PVV is hard to place in this typology given its silence on classical gender issues.

The Flemish LDD and the Dutch LPF, the two neoliberal populist parties included in this study, promote progressive ideas on labour market equality

Table 2 Party attitudes to classical gender issues

	<b>CD</b>	<b>CP/CP'86</b>	<b>LDD</b>	<b>LPF</b>	<b>PVV</b>	<b>VB</b>
Abortion		–				–
Childcare			+	+		+
Divorce and marriage	–			–/+		–/+
Family	–	–				–
Labour market participation			+	+		–/+

Italics: neoliberal populist parties + / – modern-traditional perspective

+ modern perspective – neo-traditional perspective

34 Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*.

35 *Ibid.*, 93.

and hardly mention ethical or family issues. They argue that the labour market participation of women should increase and they propose measures, such as affordable and flexible childcare, to achieve this goal. The Lijst Pim Fortuyn states: 'The LPF understands emancipation means real freedom of choice for men and women, preferably with economic independence for all. Individually and together, taking responsibility for life at home, at work and in the public space, with loving attention for the other.'<sup>36</sup> In its 2002 manifesto, the LPF advocates equal pay for equal work and greater labour market participation by women, especially those who want to reintegrate into the labour market. The LDD's policy proposals are more specific: they argue that the labour market participation of Flemish women is relatively low and should be increased by introducing 'flexibility in the labour market and good quality facilities for childcare. A family policy that subsidizes childcare ensures that many young mothers can continue to work.'<sup>37</sup>

Among the national populist parties, the Dutch CD and CP/CP'86 do not discuss the labour market participation of women, while the Flemish VB discusses it mainly in the context of the importance of raising children. The three parties primarily focus on ethical and family issues in their manifestos. They oppose abortion, deeming it 'mass murder' and 'unacceptable'.<sup>38</sup> They also emphasize that the family is the cornerstone of society.

The traditional two-parent family ... is the cornerstone of our society. The family is the ideal and irreplaceable environment for the raising of children.<sup>39</sup>

The family is the cornerstone of society. The government should develop policies to protect families.<sup>40</sup>

The VB is the family party par excellence. As the cornerstone of society, the family creates certainty and protection, and ensures the education of children. Families form the bond between generations, between the past and the future. They are best situated to pass on norms and values. A weapon against egoism

36 Lijst Pim Fortuyn, "'Politiek is passie": Verkiezingsprogramma 2003', in Joop van Holsteyn, Tom van der Meer, Huib Pellikaan, H. Ijsbrandy and Gerrit Voerman (eds), *Verkiezingsprogramma's: Verkiezingen van der Tweede Kamer 15 Mei 2002 en 22 Januari 2003* (Amsterdam: Rozenberg 2003), 368–91 (383).

37 Lijst Dedecker, *LDD-programma Vlaamse verkiezingen* (Ghent: LDD 2009), 3 ('Vlaanderen zorgt').

38 Centruumpartij '86, *Voor en veilig en leefbaar Nederland!*, 12.9; Vlaams Blok, *Een toekomst voor Vlaanderen*, 38; Vlaams Belang, *Programmaboek*, 17; Vlaams Belang, *Programmaboek* (Brussels: VB 2008); Vlaams Belang, *Dit is ons land: Programma Europese verkiezingen 7 juni 2009* (VB 2009); Vlaams Belang, *Dit is ons land: Programma Vlaamse verkiezingen 7 juni 2009* (Brussels: VB 2009), 29; Vlaams Belang, *'Een beter Vlaanderen voor een lagere prijs!': Sociaaleconomisch programma* (Brussels: VB 2012).

39 Centruumpartij '86, *Voor en veilig en leefbaar Nederland!*, 5.23.

40 Centrum Democraten, *Trouw aan rood wit blauw! Partijprogramma verkiezingen Tweede Kamer 1998* (The Hague: CD 1998), 13.

and materialism, against indifference and increasing aggression in our society. A family-friendly climate is the best guarantee for a healthy society.<sup>41</sup>

The VB's views on the family have a distinctly nationalist ring to them. The party argues: 'Family-building contributes to the fundamental organic structure of the nation. After all, the family plays a vital role in the continuance of the people and, therefore, nationalism should start from a balanced conception of the family.'<sup>42</sup> To protect the nuclear family, the Dutch CD proposes measures that would 1) complicate divorce between parents whose children are minors, and 2) prohibit divorce in the first two years of marriage.<sup>43</sup> Although it initially opposed divorce and cohabitation, and adopted a neo-traditionalist stance on these issues, the Flemish VB has adjusted its position in response to contemporary circumstances. In recent manifestos the party does not encourage separation, but does mention the difficulties families may experience due to failed relationships. Towards this end the VB supports initiatives to coach partners in developing sustainable relationships.

In our society the incidence of divorce continues to increase. Children suffer, especially in cases of heated conflict. Therefore the prevention of conflict between parents deserves special attention. Greater access to divorce and parenting mediation is urgently required. A measure should be introduced to regulate divorce in the interest of the children, and this measure should be automatically applied to all divorcing parents.<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, the Dutch LPF argues that the government should 1) make family therapy more readily available, 2) impose cooling-down periods in conflict situations related to divorce, 3) reform family law to protect the interests of children in case of divorce, 4) improve alimony and visitation rules, and 5) improve the legal position of the parent who is not the primary caretaker.<sup>45</sup> Since the parties do not reject divorce outright and propose treating parents equally in case of divorce, their position on this issue is more modern-traditional than neo-traditional.

Based on this collection of their statements, we can conclude that the manifestos of the Dutch LPF and Flemish VB contain elements of modern, modern-traditional and neo-traditional views, with the LPF leaning towards the modern and the VB gravitating towards the modern-traditional view. The VB's comprehensive plans to reform family policies, in particular, cannot easily be classified as either modern or traditional. Among other issues, the

41 Vlaams Blok, *Een toekomst voor Vlaanderen*, 13.

42 Vlaams Blok, *Baas in Eigen Land: Verkiezingsprogramma* (Brussels: VB 1999), 101.

43 Centrum Democraten, *Oost west thuis best: Partijprogramma verkiezingen Tweede Kamer 1994* (The Hague: CD 1994), 14; Centrum Democraten, *Trouw aan rood wit blauw!*, 14.

44 Vlaams Belang, *Dit is ons land*, 29–30.

45 Lijst Pim Fortuyn, *“Politiek is passie”*, 383.

Table 3 Party interest in gender and immigration issues

	CD	CP/CP'86	LDD	LPF	PVV	VB
Export of child benefits	+				+	+
Family reunification		+		+		+
Forced marriage and 'import brides'	+	+				+

*Italics: neoliberal populist parties*

+ issue discussed

party campaigns for family insurance, fiscal advantages for families, higher social security benefits for larger families, increased child benefits, and a salary and social status for stay-at-home parents. These proposals, which largely resemble those of the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ, Austrian Freedom Party) in the 1990s,<sup>46</sup> serve several purposes. First, they are designed to make having children more attractive. Second, they support the traditional nuclear family and facilitate stay-at-home parents raising children. Both aspects can be classified as neo-traditionalist. At the same time, the party proposes a series of measures to facilitate the labour market participation of women—such as the introduction of a more family-friendly business culture, the extension of maternity and paternity leave, flexible working hours and the protection of pregnant women from dismissal—that can be seen as more modern positions.

These findings reveal significant differences between the classical gender ideologies of national populist and neoliberal populist parties. Whereas national populist parties tend to embrace neo-traditional or modern-traditional views, neoliberal populist parties espouse more modern-traditional or modern gender ideas. It should be noted that the classification is not perfect as the PVV cannot be qualified as neo-traditional, modern-traditional or modern due to a lack of statements on classical gender issues. Although this could be considered a case of 'missing data', the absence of statements on traditional gender issues could also be due to strategic or ideological considerations, such as divisions within the party or incompatibility between the party's stances on Islam and immigration and its positions on classical gender issues.

### *Gender and immigration*

To analyse the gender ideologies of right-wing populist parties in more detail, we examine how these parties discuss gender, immigration and Islam, and how their views are connected to their stances on classical gender issues. In their views on immigration and Islam, we again observe variation across parties and over time. While gender and immigration are consistently important over time for all parties, the relationship between gender and Islam has become increasingly significant since 9/11.

46 Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*.

As has been shown in the literature on right-wing populism, gender and immigration are frequently linked by right-wing populist parties. All Dutch and Flemish right-wing populist parties, with the exception of the LDD, mention issues of immigration and gender in their manifestos (see Table 3). Whereas the Dutch CD, CP/CP'86 and Flemish VB (all founded in the 1980s) discuss these issues occasionally, they play an important role in the manifestos of the Dutch LPF and PVV (established in the 2000s) which emphasize the disadvantaged positions of women of immigrant descent and the importance of their emancipation.

Mass immigration has enormous consequences for all facets of our society ... and it flushes decades of women's emancipation down the drain.<sup>47</sup>

Cultural developments that are not compatible with desirable integration, such as forced marriages, honour killing and female circumcision, should be combatted by legal measures and public education. The discrimination of women in Islamic fundamentalist circles is especially unacceptable. In a democratic society all citizens have equal rights and duties, regardless of race, sex, religion and sexuality. In the Netherlands church and state are separated, and the same separation holds for mosque and state.<sup>48</sup>

Among the immigration-related gender issues, the most often mentioned are family reunification, forced marriages and 'import brides':

Bad government policy ... has led to multicultural marriages. The government is fully responsible for the consequences and offers all possible facilities—to the request of the Dutch partner—to end these marriages and to let the partner return to their country of origin as soon as possible.<sup>49</sup>

The number of immigrants (2001: 21,000) who settle in the Netherlands in the context of family reunification should be reduced. This would also improve the effectiveness of the integration process for large minority groups in the Netherlands.<sup>50</sup>

[The majority of the second generation] look for a partner in the country of origin. These imported brides create new problems. Because they have no knowledge of the Netherlands and the Dutch language, they don't really develop into citizens.<sup>51</sup>

47 Wilders, 'Voorwoord', in Partij voor de Vrijheid, *De agenda van hoop en optimisme*, 6.

48 Lijst Pim Fortuyn, *Zakelijk met een hart* (Rotterdam: LPF 2002), 5.

49 Centrum Democraten, *Oost west thuis best*, 14; Centrum Democraten, *Trouw aan rood wit blauw!*, 13.

50 Lijst Pim Fortuyn, "'Politiek is passie'", 373.

51 Lijst Pim Fortuyn, "'Dit is niet het land wat ik voor mijn kinderen will achterlaten'", 20.

[The Vlaams Belang] feel that so-called family reunification slows down the assimilation of foreigners. Many children from those families are forced to marry at a young age and therefore miss the opportunity to pursue higher education. Moreover, the marriage partners who come [to Flanders] have been raised in a completely different culture. The children from these marriages begin with big deficiencies. Often they do not master the Dutch language sufficiently.<sup>52</sup>

Another issue raised by parties in both countries is the export of child benefits to the immigrants' countries of origin. In the late 1980s the Dutch CP/CP'86 claimed that the eligibility for child benefits should be assessed on the basis of where the beneficiary lived.<sup>53</sup> In other words, they aimed to prevent migrants and circular migrants from receiving Dutch social welfare payments while living (partly) in their country of origin. In 1992 the VB made similar claims, arguing that it should be impossible to receive benefits for children raised abroad.<sup>54</sup> In its early incarnation as Groep Wilders, the PVV stated that there should be 'no export of social welfare payments [including benefits related to childcare and disability] outside of the EU',<sup>55</sup> and that 'all child benefits sent to foreign countries should be abolished'.<sup>56</sup> The parties also support benefits for fewer children (the PVV for two children, CP/CP'86 for four, the VB for only three children in case of non-European parents) as immigrants with allegedly large families thereby profit from child benefits. Interestingly, the Flemish VB also wants the birth rate among native women to increase to ensure that immigrants do not take over society. It proposes several measures to make having children more attractive, including the provision of a birth premium and the increasing of child benefits for Flemish parents.

The Dutch LPF and PVV and the Flemish VB not only take issue with immigration in general, they specifically target Islam as a religion that does not respect equality between men and women, and that therefore impedes the emancipation of Muslim women.

It is very difficult for foreigners with an Islamic [*sic*] background to adapt. Sometimes, even, there is no adaptation. The culture of these [people] is different from ours. They are not acquainted with values like equality between men and women, freedom of speech and the separation between church and state: the foundations of our western democracy.<sup>57</sup>

52 Vlaams Belang, *Programmaboek*, 20.

53 Centruumpartij '86, *Voor en veilig en leefbaar Nederland!*, 12.4.

54 Vlaams Blok, *Immigratie: de oplossingen. 70 voorstellen ter oplossing van het vreemdelingenprobleem* (Brussels: VB 1992), 62.

55 Geert Wilders, *Onafhankelijkheidsverklaring Groep Wilders* (The Hague: Groep Wilders 2005), 5.

56 Partij voor de Vrijheid, *De agenda van hoop en optimisme*, 23.

57 Vlaams Belang, *Programmaboek*, 22.

Europe is Islamizing rapidly... . Already 20 million Muslims live in the EU and their numbers are increasing. This growing and strong community has a completely different vision of society. Islam is more than a religion. It is a way to organize society, an ideology that encompasses all aspects of life. In Islam there is no room for freedom of speech, freedom of religion, democracy, equality between man and woman, and the separation between church and state.<sup>58</sup>

Encourage the emancipation of Islamic [*sic*] women according to universal human rights principles.<sup>59</sup>

The Qur'an prescribes behaviour that is incompatible with our constitutional state, such as antisemitism, discrimination of women.<sup>60</sup>

The LPF, PVV and VB also focus on 'Islamic practices' that violate women's rights such as genital mutilation, honour killings, the prohibition against Muslim girls attending secondary school, the refusal to allow male physicians to treat Muslim women, the segregation of men and women in public spaces such as hospitals, libraries, theatres and swimming pools, the wearing of the veil and headscarves, and violence against women (see Table 4). The following passage from the VB is illustrative:

... Islamic headscarves [*sic*] should be banned, since they represent an ideological element of Islam, namely unequal social interaction between men and women. Thus [they] don't only refer to a religious symbol. We oppose this public submission of the woman to the man. Especially in public schools and public services, this absolutely cannot be tolerated.<sup>61</sup>

Table 4 Party interest in gender and 'Islamic practices'

	<i>CD</i>	<i>CP/CP'86</i>	<i>LDD</i>	<i>LPF</i>	<i>PVV</i>	<i>VB</i>
The veil					+	
Forced marriage				+		+
Genital mutilation				+	+	
Headscarf					+	+
Healthcare					+	
Honour killings				+		+
Women's education				+		
Segregation in public facilities					+	+
Violence against women				+		

Italics: neoliberal populist parties

+ issue discussed

58 Vlaams Belang, *Dit is ons land: Programma Europese verkiezingen*, 32.

59 Lijst Pim Fortuyn, "Politiek is passie", 383.

60 Partij voor de Vrijheid, *De agenda van hoop en optimisme*, 13.

61 Vlaams Belang, *Programmaboek*, 23.

Table 5 Summary

		Classical gender issues			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned		
			Modern	Modern-traditional	Neo-traditional
<b>Gender and 'Islamic practices'</b>	Not mentioned		<i>LDD</i>		CD, CP/CP'86 VB (before mid-1990s)
	Mentioned	PVV	<i>LPF</i>	VB (after mid-1990s)	VB (before mid-1990s)

Italics: neoliberal populist parties

Interestingly, 'Islam' is not mentioned by the Dutch CD and CP/CP'86, two national populist parties active in the 1980s and 1990s, or by the Flemish LDD, a neoliberal populist party founded in 2007.

In sum, when it comes to gender and immigration from predominantly Muslim countries, the main difference does not seem to be between national populist parties, on the one hand, and neoliberal populist parties, on the other, but between parties active in the 1980s (the Dutch CD and CP/CP'86) and parties active in the 2000s (the Dutch LPF and PVV). The parties that emerged in the 2000s pay significantly more attention to gender and immigration and/or Islam, even though it should be noted that, since the early 1990s, the VB has been paying increasing attention to these issues as well. Since its infamous '70-point plan', the VB has linked Islam and immigration to gender issues, starting out by objecting to immigrant practices such as forced marriage and family reunification, and gradually focusing more explicitly on the position of women in Muslim cultures. In 1995, for example, the VB had already claimed that 'Muslims permit polygamy' and 'women are not treated equally' in Islam.<sup>62</sup> In more recent years, these issues have gained greater prominence in the party's manifestos. In contrast, the recently founded LDD pays no attention to gender and immigration/Islam. While the gendering of immigration and 'Islam' has been the result of generational change in the Netherlands, in Flanders it is the result of ideological change within a national populist party. The emergence of gender and 'Islam' as a theme in the Netherlands seems to be related to 9/11 as well as other national and international incidents that have reshaped the agenda of Dutch right-wing populist parties,<sup>63</sup> while similar developments in Flanders

62 Vlaams Blok, *Een Programma voor de Toekomst van Vlaanderen* (Brussels: VB 1995), 12.

63 Tjitske Akkerman, 'Anti-immigration parties and the defence of liberal values: the exceptional case of the List Pim Fortuyn', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2005, 337–54.

predate the attacks on the Twin Towers and have not affected all right-wing populist parties to the same extent.

More generally speaking, no significant differences between Flanders and the Netherlands can be observed: both have experienced the emergence of right-wing populist parties with neo-traditional, modern-traditional and modern views, right-wing populist parties that campaign on gender and immigration/Islam, and that do not express their critique of multicultural society in gendered terms. A summary of our findings can be found in [Table 5](#). Above all, the table highlights the complexity and diversity of the gender ideologies adopted by right-wing populist parties, with most parties espousing a unique mix of ideas on gender. This complexity and diversity is not adequately captured in the existing literature on the gender ideologies of right-wing populist parties.

### **Variation in radical-right gender ideologies**

Gender issues are increasingly incorporated into the ideologies of right-wing populist parties. The emphasis placed by these parties on the veil, forced marriage, genital mutilation and honour killings have triggered the interest of both interdisciplinary feminist and non-feminist political science scholars. Our study of the gender ideologies of the Dutch CD, CP/CP'86, LPF and PVV and the Flemish LDD and VB reveals that interdisciplinary feminist as well as non-feminist political science accounts of gender and right-wing populist parties underestimate the variation in gender ideologies across parties. While some parties adhere to a modern or modern-traditional view, others espouse neo-traditional views. Moreover, some right-wing populist parties have adopted gendered readings of immigration (CD, CP/CP'86, LPF, PVV, VB) and/or 'Islam' (LPF, PVV, VB), whereas others have not (LDD).

Interestingly, the different gender ideologies that exist among right-wing populist parties do not mirror the distinction between national populist and neoliberal populist parties often made in the literature. Although all neoliberal populist parties have modern views on classical gender issues, some national populist parties espouse modern-traditional views on these issues while others embrace neo-traditional views or refrain from taking a position altogether. Furthermore, gendered views on immigration and 'Islam' are not the prerogative of national populist parties as some, though not all, neoliberal populist parties have adopted identical stances.

The diversity of gender ideologies among right-wing populist parties can partly be explained by their different ideological roots. The Dutch and Flemish right-wing populist parties studied here were either established by leaders who previously represented mainstream parties (LDD, LPF and PVV) or had connections to the extreme right (CD, CP/CP'68) or, in the case of the VB, to orthodox Catholic groups. These ideological and historical differences

continue to be reflected in the parties' gender ideologies, especially when it concerns their views on classical gender issues.

Views on gender, immigration and 'Islam' are influenced more by contextual factors such as 9/11 and, in the case of the Netherlands, the murder of Theo van Gogh. Right-wing populist parties' views on classical gender issues appear to be crucial for their stance on gender, immigration and 'Islam': not all gender ideologies can be easily combined with a gendered critique of immigration and 'Islam'. It is, for example, difficult to combine a neo-traditional view on classical gender issues with an emancipatory agenda for immigrant or Muslim women, as such a combination of ideas would be inconsistent. But it is possible to combine modern or modern-traditional views on classical gender issues with a gendered immigration agenda, as can be seen in the manifestos of the LPF and VB. Other right-wing populist parties avoid inconsistency by mentioning only classical gender issues (LDD) or only gender, immigration and 'Islam' (PVV).

The analysis in this article has been guided by explicit references to gender issues in right-wing populist discourse. As we have seen, regardless of the era in which these parties were founded or their ideological roots, men and masculinity are not explicitly mentioned. The party manifestos studied were written by men, for men. Their architects probably see no need to address explicitly their own needs or roles: men are the norm. It is for future research to reveal the implicit meanings of right-wing populist policy proposals for men and masculinity, and to what extent these vary across parties and time. This will require the critical 'close reading' of party programmes, preferably combined with interviews with party leaderships to validate researchers' interpretations.

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