Uncertainty Avoidance and Right-wing Populism

Johann Gründl[1], Julian Aichholzer[1]

[1)] University of Vienna, Department of Government, Austria

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Correspondence:

Johann Gründl

Department of Government, University of Vienna

Rathausstraße 19/9, 1010 Vienna, Austria

E-mail: johann.gruendl@univie.ac.at

Abstract

The last decades have witnessed a structural change of political conflict toward cultural and identity conflicts, accompanied by the rise of populist radical right (PRR) parties. Yet, we know surprisingly little about psychological or cognitive-motivational processes underlying PRR support. We claim that uncertainty avoidance (UA)—an epistemic avoidance motivation—represents a central motive. We propose that UA ultimately resonates with the PRR platform and precedes previously found predictors, such as authoritarianism, nativism, exclusive nationalism, rejection of European integration, and populism. Using data from the Austrian national election study and applying structural equation modeling (SEM), we found that UA was indeed indirectly associated with PRR voting. This is because greater UA fostered right-wing socio-cultural views, in general. In turn, associations with populist attitudes were more ambiguous. We conclude by discussing the contribution of a cognitive-motivational account to explain PRR voting.

Introduction

Recent years have witnessed the rise of populist parties and like-minded political leaders across the globe (Müller, 2016). In Western Europe, the rise of one party family became of particular interest: the populist radical right (PRR), which can be characterized by a strict right-wing agenda fused with populist ideas (Mudde, 2007). The electoral success of the PRR is often attributed to broader societal transformations that can be subsumed as globalization, Europeanization, or de-nationalization. These transformations are perceived as disadvantageous by some—the so-called losers of globalization. Hence, they make up the core of the PRR's constituency (Kriesi et al., 2006).

Two reasons for PRR support are discussed in the literature: while economic pressure plays an important role (Betz, 2004; Pappas & Kriesi, 2015), ample evidence suggests that so-called socio-cultural factors and perceived cultural threats matter even more for voters' PRR support (Aichholzer, Kritzinger, Wagner, & Zeglovits, 2014; Aichholzer & Zandonella, 2016; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012; Oesch, 2008; Rooduijn, 2017). The societal cleavage between winners and losers of globalization would manifest itself in a new socio-cultural cleavage dimension that comprises divisions in values (authoritarian/traditionalist versus libertarian/progressive), identity (national versus trans-national), and political preferences (regarding issues such as immigration or European integration) (Kriesi et al., 2006; van der Brug & van Spanje, 2009).

With its strong focus on national identity and its rejection of the political elite, PRR parties also portray themselves as the only ones representing the ordinary people and their interests against the forces of globalization. In this line of reasoning, support for PRR parties might be considered a psychological response to increasing societal instability and uncertainty due to globalization (see Hogg, Kruglanski, & van den Bos, 2013). Yet, we know little about cognitive-motivational processes underlying PRR support. In this study, we examine individual psychological differences in how people generally approach and deal with uncertainty. Our

main research question is: How are deep-rooted desires for *uncertainty avoidance* (UA) related to PRR voting?

UA represents aspects of individuals' personality that pertain to epistemic needs to manage uncertainty and ambiguity. In this paper, we explore how the PRR ideology—authoritarianism, nativism, and populism (Mudde, 2007; Rydgren, 2007)—might represent a means to deal with uncertainty for voters and which consequences this has for people's voting behavior. Our arguments are based on theories suggesting that people's political belief systems serve basic psychological functions, such as needs to attain epistemic *certainty*, existential *security*, and social *belongingness* (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003b), as well as *approach* and *avoidance* motivations (Janoff-Bulman, 2009).

By analyzing how individual differences are related to actual vote choice for a PRR party, we contribute to an increasing literature in political psychology which tries to understand the psychological motives underlying political orientations more generally and factors underlying populism and PRR voting in particular. We based our analysis on a large-scale election study in Austria, home to a prominent PRR party: the Freedom Party of Austria (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, FPÖ). These data provide us with measures on epistemic avoidance motivations and populist beliefs previously unavailable to researchers.

Overall, our main results revealed that UA is indeed associated with voting for PRR parties. The radical right ideological core—authoritarianism and nativism—clearly resonated well with needs to manage (i.e., to reduce) uncertainty. The relationship of UA with populist attitudes and actual PRR voting turned out to be somewhat ambiguous. We discuss implications of our results for research on PRR support and motivated social cognition.

Uncertainty Avoidance and the Populist Radical Right's Promise

So far, there is little evidence linking aspects of personality to PRR voting. Existing studies focus on the Big Five personality traits. These suggest that low o*penness to experience* and low

a*greeableness* predict a vote for the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) (Aichholzer & Zandonella, 2016) and the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) (Bakker, Rooduijn, & Schumacher, 2016), whereas higher *conscientiousness* additionally matters for a vote of the German AfD (Aichholzer, Danner, & Rammstedt, submitted). Moreover, the trait *risk aversion* seems to relate negatively to populist attitudes but ultimately does not affect voting for the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) (Steenbergen & Siczek, 2017). Chirumbolo and Leone (2008) further suggest that the trait *cognitive closure* might be consequential for right-wing or conservative party preferences, more generally. Overall, however, research in this field still lacks consistent hypotheses on how the constituents of the PRR ideology resonate with personality traits such as the Big Five or UA.

The literature on ideology as motivated social cognition suggests that our belief systems serve deep-rooted epistemic, existential, and relational needs (Jost, 2017; Jost et al., 2007). Indeed, Mudde (2007) identified three ideological features of PRR parties which might serve such needs: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (i.e., PRR parties represent a form of "exclusionary populism," see Betz, 2004). Based on the conjecture of motivated social cognition and prior evidence, we claim that uncertainty avoidance (UA)—an epistemic avoidance motivation—represents a central motive for PRR voting. In the following sections, we build our theoretical framework by (a) discussing UA as an epistemic motivation, (b) analyzing how the PRR's ideological core (nativism and authoritarianism) resonates with needs for certainty, (c) exploring the more ambiguous relationship between UA and populism, and (d) considering behavioral consequences.

Epistemic Avoidance Motivations and Ideology

We describe uncertainty avoidance as deep-rooted individual differences in people's needs for certainty (Jost et al., 2003b). While every individual seeks to reduce states of uncertainty, people differ in the degree to which uncertainty is accepted or avoided. Often, UA is also referred to as *(in)tolerance of uncertainty* or *ambiguity* (see Budner, 1962; Frenkel-Brunswik,

1949). It is closely related to a cluster of psychological traits pertaining to needs to manage uncertainty, such as *need for cognitive closure* (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), *need for order*, and *openness to experiences* (Jost et al., 2007).

UA manifests in preferences and behavioral patterns: a desire for predictability and familiarity (e.g., regarding life events and social situations), preference for structure and repetitive tasks (e.g., in work tasks), and preference for simplicity and decisiveness (vs. extended rumination) (see Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). More importantly, the social psychological and political psychology literature has long recognized that UA motivationally drives peoples' ideological orientations (Jost et al., 2003b) and, therefore, also their voting behavior. However, why should UA favor PRR voting? We argue that UA comprises two important and intertwined motivations regarding ideology:

(a.) UA is an *epistemic avoidance motivation* that represents people's preference for predictability and familiarity, simplicity and structure as well as a heightened status quo bias. *Avoidance* and *approach* are central psychological motivations for adopting certain beliefs and behaviors (Janoff-Bulman, 2009). The core idea is that, as an epistemic avoidance motivation, UA resonates with ideological platforms that offer a way to reduce societal or political uncertainty and complexity. This notion is in line with a vast body of evidence suggesting that people with higher needs for certainty are ideologically conservative or right-leaning (Hibbing, Smith, & Alford, 2014; Jost et al., 2007; Jost, 2017; Jost et al., 2003b).

(b.) UA entails the development of an *exclusive identity*, higher preference for a closed and homogeneous in-group and possible derogation of out-groups. This is an essential conjecture of uncertainty-identity theory which states that social category-based self-conceptualization, in-group preference, and inclusive-exclusive intergroup attitudes are motivated by uncertainty reduction (see Hogg, 2000). This idea is supported by research showing that UA (or need for closure), but also situational factors that induce the need for

certainty (e.g., stress), go hand in hand with heightened group-centrism (Kruglanski, Pierro, Mannetti, & De Grada, 2006). In a nutshell, expressing an exclusionary social identity is assumed to represent a means to deal with uncertainty.

We, therefore, hypothesize that UA entails motivations that ultimately favor voting for PRR parties: epistemic avoidance motivations and affinity for an exclusive identity (*Hypothesis 1*).

The Populist Radical Right's Ideological Core

Nativism and *authoritarianism* represent the two ideological building blocks that constitute the PRR party family's right-wing core. Their *authoritarianism* manifests in the promise of a return to traditional values as well as their preference for law and order and punitive measures for criminals or deviants. *Nativism*, a form of exclusionary nationalism, comprises an exclusive and pronounced national identity, the protection of the nation's cultural identity, and policy preferences that express this exclusive and xenophobic nationalism (Mudde, 2007; Rydgren, 2007). The PRR's authoritarian nativism has also be summarized in an overall cultural cleavage dimension of ideology, including questions over globalization/Europeanization (Kriesi et al., 2006; van der Brug & van Spanje, 2009). As will be argued below, this ideological core serves an epistemic avoidance motivation and serves the formation of exclusive identities.

Nativism: For one side, nativism and anti-immigrant sentiments serve as a mental reduction of societal complexity by applying (prejudiced) abstractions of social out-groups (Allport, 1954). Furthermore, as argued by Steenbergen and Siczek (2017), people less willing to take risks (i.e., those who seek to avoid uncertainty) are more likely to frame immigration as a challenge rather than an opportunity. On the other hand, UA favors the development of an exclusive national identity (see, e.g., Hooghe & Marks, 2004), which also comes in the form of the PRR's nativist ideology. While the nativist core of the PRR does not necessarily include support for leaving the European Union, it usually is also expressed in preferences for strong and sovereign nation-states, the conclusion that the European integration has already gone too far, and the rejection of further integration (Mudde, 2007). Because European integration brings

about increasing political and cultural complexity, the PRR's focus on sovereign nation-states should add to its appeal for citizens who long for reducing uncertainty (UA) related to globalization or Europeanization.

Authoritarianism: The PRR's authoritarian stance blends into the nativist worldview (Mudde, 2007) and appeals to individuals with greater UA in various ways: first, an individual's (right-wing) authoritarianism as an ideological attitude (RWA; Duckitt & Sibley, 2010) or "status quo conservatism" (Stenner, 2009) follows from motivations to seek group security, stability in societal order, and resistance to social change. These motivations are responsible for "intolerance of difference" and the goal to "minimize diversity" (Stenner, 2009) and, hence, favor an exclusionary social identity. Second, authoritarianism can be described as avoidance or prevention-based motivation in the interest of protecting one's group (here, those sharing one's national identity and culture) from harm (Janoff-Bulman, 2009). Third, facets of cognitive closure that tie in with the concept of UA, namely the need for simple structure and predictability, relate very clearly to RWA (Cornelis & van Hiel, 2006; van Hiel, Pandelaere, & Duriez, 2004).

Overall, this ideological core represents a socio-cultural dimension along which PRR parties mobilize voters. Summarizing, we hypothesize that individuals scoring high in UA will adopt the radical right core that comprises the socio-cultural dimension of political conflict, i.e., nativism, authoritarianism, and rejection of European integration (*Hypothesis 2*).

The Role of Populism

Apart from the PRR's ideological core or "host" or "thick" ideology, which is comprised of nativism and authoritarianism, *populism* is the third building block of the overall ideology. Following Mudde's (2007, p. 23) now famous definition, populism "considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite,' […] which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people." The populist message thus offers clear distinctions and

simple explanations on how the political world operates (Mudde, 2004)—often also in simple language (Bischof & Senninger, 2018).

In fact, there are good reasons to believe that populism adds to the attractiveness of the PRR. First, its simplicity should speak to people high in UA. Furthermore, populism is in large parts a story about group-centrism: it emphasizes groupness of a collective (the people), its alleged coherence (the people as a homogenous group), and normativity of the group's views (politics as an expression of the people's general will) (Mudde, 2004; Müller, 2016). By allowing social identification and assimilation to a prescriptive prototype of a group ("the people") populism might offer a psychological means for uncertainty reduction (Hogg, 2000).

However, populism also exhibits proximity to radicalism. Indeed, radical left- and right-wing parties also tend to adopt populism more readily (Rooduijn & Akkerman, 2017). That proximity nevertheless adds ambivalence to the proposed association between UA and support for populist ideas. On the one hand, radical formulations of ideology could, among other factors, attract individuals who long for certainty (i.e., UA, see Greenberg & Jonas, 2003). So, it might be that people high in UA adhere to any extreme ideology. Empirically, however, this proposition has received limited support (see Jost et al., 2007; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003a, p. 388)—but also less scholarly attention. On the other hand, as a Manichean ideology (the good vs. the bad) populism challenges the prevailing political system. Individuals high in UA however disproportionally prefer the status quo over the uncertainty of change, a form of "status quo bias" (e.g., Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1988). As argued by Steenbergen and Siczek (2017, p. 123), although appealing to citizens' feelings of uncertainty, PRR parties might nevertheless represent "risky prospects" which repels people high in UA (i.e., risk-averse people).

Summarizing, the role of populism is ambiguous. Through its simplicity and group-centrism, we expect populism to resonate with UA (*Hypothesis 3a*), whereas radicalism and the challenging of the status quo could alienate individuals longing for certainty (*Hypothesis 3b*).

Now, how are the PRR's ideological components—the radical right core and the populist aspect—connected? In case of the PRR, populist attacks on the status quo often allude to a return to an idealized past, which is centered around nativist and authoritarian ideas and contrasts an "uncontrollable" present (Rydgren, 2017). Therefore, the adoption of populist beliefs might be contingent on the adoption of the PRR's radical right core ideology. Following from our previously stated hypothesis we expect that UA is at least indirectly associated with more populist attitudes—as far as they are driven by the radical right core ideology (*Hypothesis 4*). As long as attacks on the political status quo contain the promise of returning to a traditional order, there is also no contradiction between UA and the choice for a radical or populist party.

Behavioral Consequences: Populist Radical Right Voting

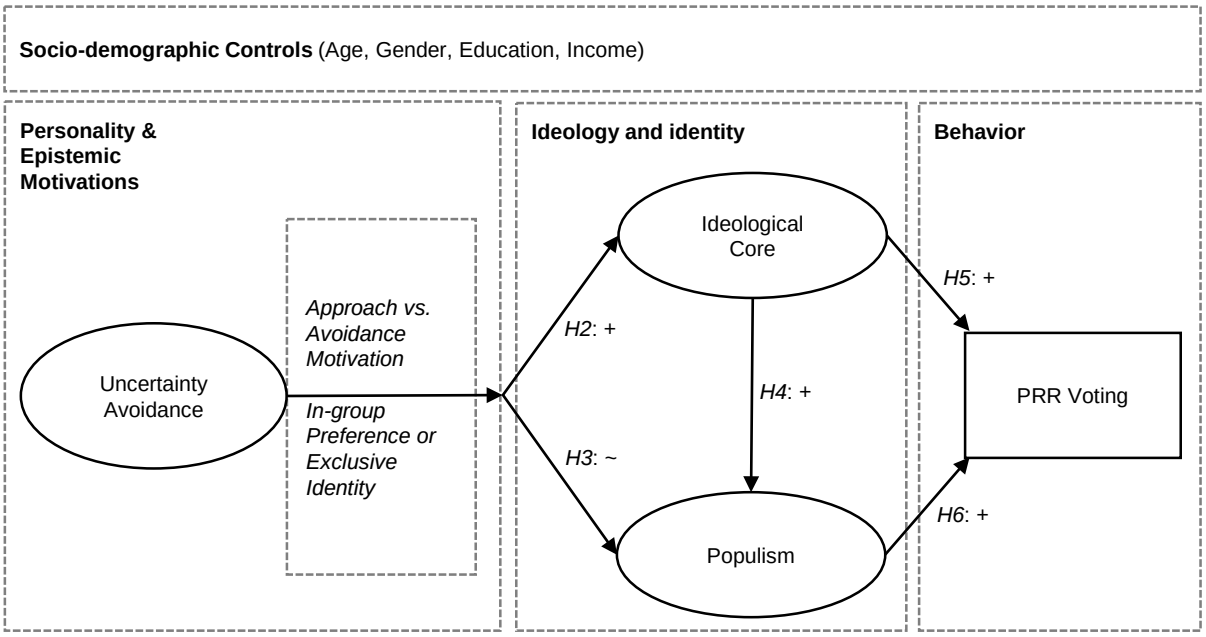
We argue that UA not only favors the adoption of the PRR ideology but eventually becomes consequential for people's voting behavior. Yet, we expect UA to act only indirectly through (i.e., mediated by) ideological attitudes that are essential predictors for PRR voting (for similar models see, e.g., Aichholzer & Zandonella, 2016; Chirumbolo & Leone, 2010; Duckitt & Sibley, 2010), namely nativism (i.e., anti-immigrant sentiments, exclusive nationalism), authoritarianism, rejection of European integration, and populism.

Extant literature quite unequivocally shows that the most consistent predictors of PRR voting are perceived threats by immigration or disapproval of further immigration (e.g., Aichholzer & Zandonella, 2016; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012; Oesch, 2008; Rooduijn, 2017) and exclusive nationalism (Dunn, 2015; Lubbers & Coenders, 2017). Furthermore, it has repeatedly been shown that authoritarianism is—at least indirectly—consequential for PRR voting, either being conceptualized as a personality predisposition or a social attitude (Aichholzer & Zandonella, 2016; Dunn, 2015). In Europe, the rejection of the EU is also a common denominator of the PRR vote choice (Hobolt, 2015; Werts, Scheepers, & Lubbers, 2013). Summarizing, these ideological core beliefs make voting for the PRR more likely and ultimately mediate the effect of UA (*Hypothesis 5*).

In turn, research on the consequences of individual's populist beliefs for their voting behavior is still in its infancy. Nevertheless, research so far has shown that populist ideas regarding anti-elitism and distrust in politicians matter because they represent a common denominator that drives voting for any populist party (Rooduijn, 2017; van Hauwaert & van Kessel, 2018). Even though populism might play a subordinate role in the PRR's overall ideology, we expect it to be consequential for vote choice and to mediate the effect of UA as well (*Hypothesis 6*).

Figure 1 summarizes and depicts our analytical model derived from the theoretical reasoning above.

Figure 1. *Analytical model*



Data and Methods

We test our model with voter data collected in the context of the Austrian parliamentary election campaign in 2017. Austria hosts a very successful and "prototypical" PRR party (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013, p. 155), the Freedom Party of Austria (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, FPÖ). Starting in the mid-1980s, the FPÖ has built a strong populist stance (Luther, 2007). Under its current leader Heinz-Christian Strache, it increasingly relies on nativism that is expressed through anti-immigrant sentiments and welfare-chauvinism (Aichholzer et al., 2014; Ennser-Jedenastik, 2016).

Sample

Respondents were recruited using a commercial online access panel (MarketAgent) in Austria, a survey conducted by the Austrian National Election Study (Wagner et al., 2018). The sample was a priori quoted for age and gender (combined), region, educational level, household size, and population size to match known population distributions from census data in 2016 (Statistics Austria). Hence, the sample was heterogeneous with regard to age (*Min* = 16, *Max* = 85, *Mean* = 43, *SD* = 15), gender (50% male) and formal education. The analysis is based on *n* = 1519 respondents who answered all survey questions of interest.

Instruments and Variables

The survey was designed as a panel study (see Table 1). Socio-demographic variables were collected in the first wave of the panel. Support for the FPÖ was measured post-election (wave 5). All other variables stem from the third wave. Appendix A includes the questionnaire items described in this section.

Table 1. Data collection in Study 1 (Austria).

Wave	Fieldwork Period	Variables
Wave 1	6 Jun – 14 Jun 2017	Socio-demographic controls
Wave 3	30 Aug – 14 Sep 2017	All independent variables
Wave 5 (post-election)	17 Oct – 27 Oct 2017	Vote choice for PRR party

Uncertainty avoidance (UA). To measure uncertainty avoidance, we applied a rating scale format that avoids the commonly used agree/disagree Likert-type format, because it is known to be prone to response biases, such as acquiescence. Pieces of items were selected from German ambiguity intolerance and cognitive closure scales (Dalbert, 1999; Schlink & Walther, 2007). The items form directly opposed statements regarding behavioral tendencies (e.g., "I can deal very well with unknown and unpredictable situations" vs. "I prefer situations that I am familiar with, that I know well").[1] Overall, respondents were presented with six sets of short oppositely-worded self-descriptions (see Appendix A) and had to place themselves in between these self-descriptions using a 6-point rating scale.

Radical right ideological core. We estimated radical right core attitudes as a second-order factor, which summarizes authoritarianism, anti-immigrant attitudes, rejection of European integration, and exclusive nationalism as first-order factors. The three latter factors express the nativist ideology.

Authoritarianism. Five Likert-items were selected from a short German scale that taps into social attitudes described as right-wing authoritarianism (RWA; Aichholzer & Zeglovits, 2015), such as "This country would flourish if young people paid more attention to traditions and values."

Anti-immigration attitudes. We use six commonly used Likert-items to measure anti-immigration attitudes (e.g., "Immigrants should adapt to Austrian customs and traditions").

[1] It should be noted, however, that similar items have also been used in conceptualizations of an authoritarian personality tendency to capture rigid and inflexible behavior (see Oesterreich, 2005, p. 289).

Anti-EU attitudes. We make use of a standard survey question, asking whether unification *should be pushed further* (0) ranging to *it has already gone too far* (10) as the scales' poles (*Mean* = 4.0, *SD* = 3.2).

Exclusive nationalism. We measure exclusive nationalism by taking the simple difference of the strength (4-point scale) of attachment with the nation (Austria) minus attachment with Europe (i.e., exclusive nationalism = $\text{attachment}_{Austria} - \text{attachment}_{Europe}$). High scores thus represent exclusive national attachment (*Mean* = .7, *SD* = 1).

Populist attitudes. Our populist attitude measure aims at capturing at least three interrelated sub-dimensions of populist attitudes: anti-elitism, belief in the homogeneity and virtuousness of the people, and a preference for wide-ranging popular sovereignty (Akkerman, Mudde, & Zaslove, 2014; Schulz et al., 2018). A set of six Likert-items (Hobolt, Anduiza, Carkoglu, Lutz, & Sauger, 2016) was selected (e.g., "Most politicians care only about the interests of the rich and powerful"). All items could be answered on a fully labeled 5-point rating scale (1 = *agree completely* to 5 = *disagree completely*).

Support for a PRR party. As our dependent variable, we use actual vote choice for the Freedom Party (1 = *FPÖ*, and 0 otherwise, including all respondents who cast a valid vote). 35% of the respondents in the final sample reported a vote for the FPÖ.

Controls. In addition, we included the following socio-demographic variables as controls, since they are known to be associated with ideological differences and PRR support: *age* in years; *gender* (1 = *female*); formal *education* (1 = *upper secondary school-leaving certificate or "Matura"*, 0 = *lower education*); *subjective income situation* (1 = *get along (very) well*, 0 = *get along with (great) difficulty*).

Analysis

We analyzed our data using structural equation modeling (SEM), which, on the one hand, allows taking measurement errors that disturb the associations between the constructs into

account and, on the other hand, allows studying the effect of UA on and mediation through ideological variables.[2] For our analysis, we used the software R (version 3.5.0) with the lavaan package (version 0.6-1) and diagonally weighted least squares (DWLS) estimation with robust standard errors and mean-and-variance adjusted test statistics (Rosseel, 2012).

Results

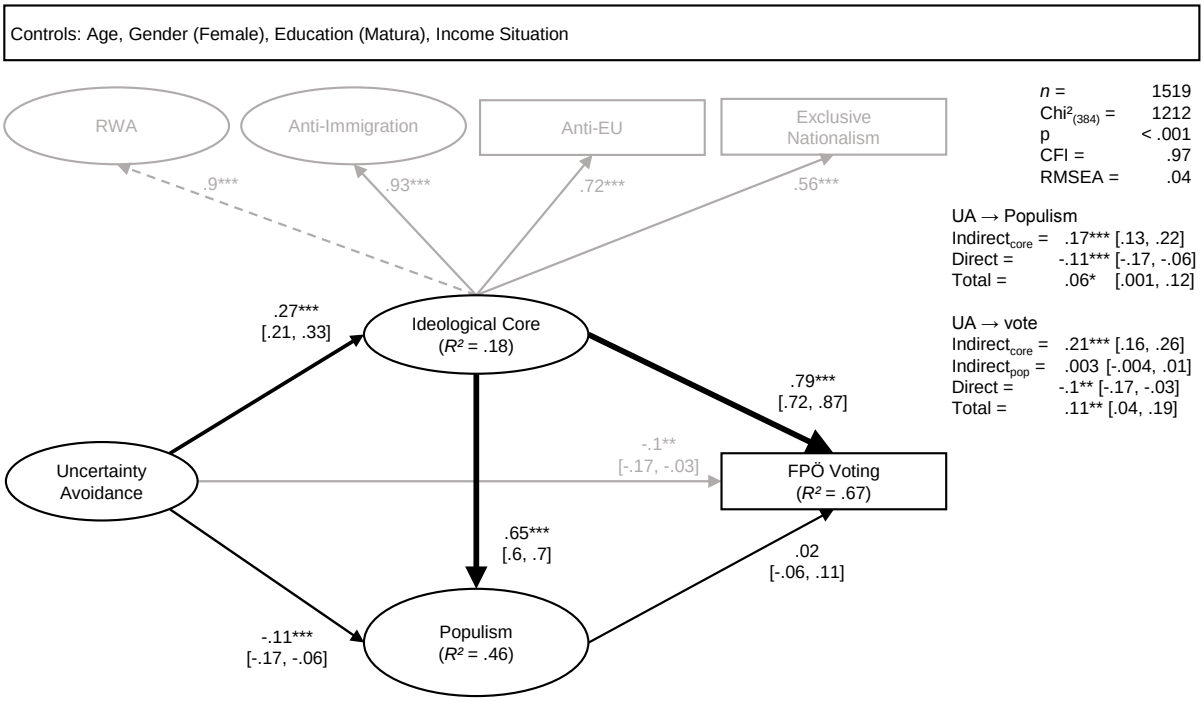
We estimated the impact of differences in UA on voting for a PRR party and how this effect is mediated by the adoption of PRR beliefs (i.e., radical right attitudes and populist attitudes). Figure 1 illustrates the structural equation model we used to test our hypotheses; results are further detailed in Appendix B. According to the CFI and RMSEA fit statistics, our specifications indicated a good fit to the data (n = 1519; $\chi^2_{(384)}$ = 1212; CFI = .97; RMSEA = .04).

Our model confirmed a significant overall effect of UA on PRR voting (β_{total} = .11), thus corroborating *Hypothesis 1*. This *total* effect is distinct from the *direct* effect because it additionally includes *all indirect* effects that would not appear in a standard regression model showing only the direct effects. From the specific indirect effects, we could infer that the association between voting for PRR parties and UA runs mainly through radical right core attitudes (β_{indirect} = .21) rather than populist attitudes (β_{indirect} = .003).

The substantial indirect effect through radical right core attitudes resulted from both our *Hypotheses 2 and 5* being confirmed by our model. The radical right core—consisting of authoritarianism and nationalist anti-immigrant and anti-EU sentiment—was correlated with needs to deal with uncertainty (β = .27). Furthermore, such attitudes were then also highly consequential for PRR voting (β = .79).

[2] We note that, even though we provide substantial theoretical grounds, causal claims in SEM based purely on observational data must be treated carefully.

Figure 2. Structural equation model used for Study 1 (Austria)



Note. Entries are standardized regression coefficients. R^2 represents proportions of the outcome variables' variation explained by the model. The arrows' thickness in the structural model visually represents the effect size. 95% confidence intervals in square brackets. Two-tailed significance levels: $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$.

Based on our model, populist attitudes were not consequential for PRR voting in Austria (β = .02). This result is inconsistent with *Hypothesis 6* and in large parts explains the missing indirect association between UA and PRR voting through populist attitudes. In line with our expectations, the way populist attitudes reflected individual's needs to deal with uncertainty is more ambiguous. Overall, our model yielded only a small positive effect of UA on the adoption of populist attitudes (β_{total} = .06). However, looking at the direct effect estimates, higher UA lowers the appeal of populist beliefs (β_{direct} = -.11). Instead, the positive association between UA and populist attitudes was contingent on the connection with right-wing beliefs (β_{indirect} = .17).

Returning to voting behavior, we observed that in our model the effect of UA on voting for the PRR party FPÖ in 2017 was not entirely mediated by core right-wing beliefs and populist attitudes. Instead, a small and significant negative direct effect (β = -.10) remained. We argued that PRR parties, on the one hand, might appeal to voters high in UA because they provide

answers to deal with a complex and uncertain globalized world. On the other hand, they challenge the political establishment and status quo and, particularly when compared to other parties, they are considered a "risky prospect" to some extent. Such remaining uncertainties that make PRR parties a risky vote choice might be concerns about their capability in government, government stability, the country's international reputation, or even prospects to leave the EU. We thus interpret the aforementioned negative direct effect of UA as representing this ambiguity, which was not fully mediated by populist attitudes in our model.

Supplemental Analyses

We finally conducted supplemental analyses to see whether or not additional variables would mediate the negative direct effect of UA on PRR voting. We ran an extended model including voter's expectations for the FPÖ's performance in government and their general willingness to take risks (see Appendix C).[3] We consider both measures to be proxies of voters' needs for stable government, willingness to cast a risky vote, and their perception of the FPÖ as a risky vote. The extended model provided preliminary support to our assumptions about the remaining direct effect, which seems to be mediated primarily by the fear of the FPÖ delivering a bad government performance. For future research on the impact of UA on vote choice, this also hints at the need to include measures about how important it is to individuals that their elected party could provide a stable, predictable, and competent government.

General Discussion

This study was interested in individual differences regarding needs to deal with uncertainty in life (uncertainty avoidance, UA), from which differences in the support for populist radical right (PRR) parties may arise. That is not to say that each and every person is born as a right-

[3] Note however that the willingness to take risks was measured only after the election and our outcome measure (wave 6).

wing populist or not, but certain predispositions such as UA, make it more likely to lean toward a specific ideology. Indeed, we claimed that the PRR's ideological core provides a clear match (elective affinity; see Jost, 2017) with the motives of this personality trait.

Our results indeed suggested that UA indeed entails voting for PRR parties. We identified a significant effect of UA on PRR voting, although the utilized UA measure captures a very general epistemic motivation unrelated to politics. Our findings thus add to the literature on psychological antecedents of PRR voting, which thus far mainly focused on the Big Five personality traits (Aichholzer et al., submitted; Aichholzer & Zandonella, 2016; Bakker et al., 2016). Our results further suggested that people who tend to avoid uncertainty (greater UA) were, on average, significantly more inclined to embrace radical right beliefs (right-wing socio-cultural attitudes). Consequently, they were also (indirectly) more likely to support the PRR party FPÖ. Overall, these findings also fit well with the literature on ideology as motivated social cognition, which suggests that right-wing ideology fulfills deep-rooted epistemic and existential needs (Jost, 2017; Jost et al., 2007).

It is quite surprising to see that, considering the fuss around populism in recent years, populist attitudes generally had little to no impact on voting for the Austrian Freedom Party in 2017 (contrary to van Hauwaert & van Kessel, 2018; but cf. Stanley, 2011). While the decision to vote for a certain PRR party might be affected by a variety of context-specific factors such as campaign dynamics, this finding also reminds us that PRR parties such as the FPÖ should be considered foremost radical right parties, that are also populist— and not the other way around (Mudde, 2007, p. 26).

Individuals high in UA were also slightly more likely to exhibit populist attitudes when looking at its total effect. Yet, this association was more ambiguous. The reason is that populism not only simplifies politics and provides a group identification via the "people," it also challenges the status quo and established authorities. People longing for certainty might be deterred from populist or radical ideologies which "demand for major transformation of the

society, either towards some future vision or back to an idealized past" (Powell, 1986, p. 358). This could explain the finding that UA might even *decrease* populist attitudes when also taking peoples' proximity to the radical right core ideology into account. Hence, the association between UA and populist attitudes seem to be strongly contingent on the adoption of the radical right host ideology. Seemingly, *only* the radical right's demand for political change, which is presented as a restoration of order and return to traditional values, might provide means to deal with uncertainty, whereas radicalism or populism *per se* do not.

Still, there are some limitations. Using data from Austria allowed us to study a prototype-case for PRR parties, whereas the Austrian party system lacks actual left-wing populist parties. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise to find a powerful connection between populism and genuine rightist attitudes. It might be worthwhile to compare our results to other countries, where being ideologically left-wing is generally associated with more populist attitudes, such as Spain (Rico, Guinjoan, & Anduiza, 2017) or Greece (Tsatsanis, Andreadis, & Teperoglou, 2017). Nevertheless, we believe that associations between UA and voting for a populist party are less plausible in party systems where populism connotes left-wing beliefs.

Given our results, we consider it worthwhile to investigate the ambiguous prospects of PRR parties further, which on the one hand offer certainty in a complex and globalized world and on the other hand remain a risky choice. PRR parties' ability to reduce worries regarding their performance if elected into government might in part explain differences in their success.

Regarding the role of populism, future work should consider that populism rather attracts voters looking for certainty as a communication style or framing strategy than as an ideology. It is well documented in the literature that UA is connected with individual differences in the preference for "simple" over "complex" things such as text or art (see, e.g., Hibbing et al., 2014). Populist communication might, therefore, be attractive to people high in UA using easy (i.e., less complex, simplified) language (Bischof & Senninger, 2018). These issues thus deserve to be studied further.

Research on the endorsement of PRR parties and its association with personality traits has been very scarce so far. By showing that individuals with higher needs for UA tend to gravitate towards PRR parties, rather than other parties, we provide a novel contribution to understanding the rise of PRR populist parties and like-minded leaders. Adopting the PRR's ideological agenda, and consequently also voting for PRR parties, seemingly offers a way to deal with uncertainties and complexities people face in life, such as loss of political and national sovereignty or increasing cultural variety.

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Appendix A: Measurements

Uncertainty avoidance (UA):

"Below, you will find contradictory statements which can be used for describing people. Which of these statements applies to you personally? The further you click on the left or the right, the more the statement applies to you." [FIXED ORDER OF ITEMS]

		1	2	3	4	5	6	
Item 1	I can deal very well with unknown and unpredictable situations.	□	□	□	□	□	□	I prefer situations that I am familiar with, that I know well.
Item 2	I prefer steady tasks.	□	□	□	□	□	□	I prefer tasks that change frequently.
Item 3	I can deal very well with people who are complete strangers.	□	□	□	□	□	□	I feel uncomfortable in the presence of unfamiliar people.
Item 4	I prefer to know what life brings for me.	□	□	□	□	□	□	I like the unexpected in what life brings.
Item 5	I like tasks that are ambiguous in how they should be done.	□	□	□	□	□	□	I prefer tasks that are clear-cut and unambiguous.
Item 6	I deliberately seek conversations about controversial and sensitive issues.	□	□	□	□	□	□	I try to avoid controversial and sensitive issues in conversations.

Populist attitudes:

1. When talking about "compromises" in politics, one actually means that one is betraying one's principles.
2. Most politicians only care about the interests of the rich and powerful.
3. Most politicians are trustworthy.
4. The parties are the main problem in Austria.
5. The people should take important political decisions, not politicians.
6. I would prefer an independent citizen as a deputy in parliament instead of a party member.

(1 = *completely agree*, 2 = *somewhat agree*, 3 = *partly agree/disagree*, 4 = *somewhat disagree*, 5 = *completely disagree*)

Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA):

1. The age in which discipline and obedience for authority are some of the most important virtues should be over.
2. Our society for once has to crack down harder on criminals.
3. It is important to also protect the rights of criminals.
4. This country would flourish if young people paid more attention to traditions and values.
5. Our country needs people who oppose traditions and try out different ideas.

(1 = *completely agree*, 2 = *somewhat agree*, 3 = *partly agree/disagree*, 4 = *somewhat disagree*, 5 = *completely disagree*)

Anti-immigration attitudes:

1. Immigrants should adapt to Austrian customs.
2. Immigrants enrich Austrian culture.
3. Immigrants are generally good for the Austrian economy.
4. Immigrants take jobs away from Austrians.
5. Crime rates increase in Austria because of immigrants.
6. Immigrants pay more into the Austrian social security system than they take out.

(1 = *completely agree*, 2 = *somewhat agree*, 3 = *partly agree/disagree*, 4 = *somewhat disagree*, 5 = *completely disagree*)

Anti-EU attitudes:

Some say that European unification has already gone too far, others say that European unification should be pushed even further. Where would you place yourself on that scale?
(recoded to: 10 = *already gone too far*, 0 = *should be pushed further*)

Exclusive nationalism:

Do you feel very strongly, strongly, less strongly or not connected at all to…? …Austria/…Europe
(recoded to: 4 = *very strongly connected*, 3 = *strongly connected*, 2 = *less strongly connected*, 1 = *not connected at all*)

Appendix B: Model details

		Unstandardized solution				Standardized solution			
Structural Model		*b [95%-CI]*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*β [95%-CI]*	*SE*	*z*	*p*
RR core ←	UA	.14 [.099, .181]	.021	6.655	.000	.267 [.208, .327]	.03	8.815	.000
Populism ←	UA	-.072 [-.108, -.035]	.019	-3.807	.000	-.112 [-.167, -.057]	.028	-4.009	.000
	RR core	.792 [.647, .938]	.074	10.7	.000	.649 [.603, .696]	.024	27.434	.000
Vote ←	UA	-.11 [-.189, -.032]	.04	-2.76	.006	-.098 [-.167, -.029]	.035	-2.799	.005
	RR core	1.697 [1.419, 1.976]	.142	11.948	.000	.791 [.716, .867]	.039	20.517	.000
	Populism	.044 [-.109, .197]	.078	.558	.577	.025 [-.062, .112]	.044	.558	.577
Effects of UA									
UA → populism	Indirect (→ RR core)	.111 [.078, .144]	.017	6.578	.000	.174 [.131, .216]	.022	8.012	.000
	Direct	-.072 [-.108, -.035]	.019	-3.807	.000	-.112 [-.167, -.057]	.028	-4.009	.000
	Total	.039 [0, .079]	.02	1.972	.049	.062 [.001, .122]	.031	2.007	.045
UA → vote	Indirect (→ RR core)	.238 [.17, .305]	.034	6.89	.000	.212 [.159, .265]	.027	7.829	.000
	Indirect (→ populism)	.002 [-.005, .008]	.003	.529	.597	.002 [-.004, .007]	.003	.53	.596
	Direct	-.11 [-.189, -.032]	.04	-2.76	.006	-.098 [-.167, -.029]	.035	-2.799	.005
	Total	.129 [.045, .213]	.043	2.998	.003	.115 [.042, .188]	.037	3.08	.002
Controls									
RR core ←	Age	.002 [0, .004]	.001	1.853	.064	.05 [-.002, .102]	.027	1.866	.062
	Gender (female)	.002 [-.051, .055]	.027	.069	.945	.002 [-.051, .055]	.027	.069	.945
	Education (Matura)	-.276 [-.343, -.209]	.034	-8.082	.000	-.269 [-.321, -.217]	.027	-10.127	.000
	Inc. situation	-.12 [-.178, -.063]	.029	-4.084	.000	-.115 [-.169, -.062]	.027	-4.249	.000
Populism ←	Age	0 [-.002, .002]	.001	-.128	.898	-.003 [-.051, .045]	.025	-.128	.898
	Gender (female)	0 [-.057, .058]	.029	.005	.996	0 [-.047, .047]	.024	.005	.996
	Education (Matura)	-.067 [-.132, -.001]	.033	-2.004	.045	-.053 [-.105, -.001]	.026	-2.013	.044
	Inc. situation	-.207 [-.27, -.144]	.032	-6.419	.000	-.163 [-.211, -.115]	.024	-6.679	.000
Vote ←	Age	-.012 [-.017, -.008]	.002	-5.57	.000	-.157 [-.211, -.102]	.028	-5.666	.000
	Gender (female)	-.047 [-.164, .07]	.059	-.79	.429	-.022 [-.076, .032]	.028	-.791	.429
	Education (Matura)	-.097 [-.227, .033]	.066	-1.468	.142	-.044 [-.102, .014]	.03	-1.482	.138
	Inc. situation	-.155 [-.28, -.031]	.063	-2.456	.014	-.07 [-.125, -.015]	.028	-2.479	.013

Note. Results are based on DWLS estimation with robust standard errors and mean-and-variance adjusted test statistics. UA = uncertainty avoidance, RR core = radical right ideological core, Inc. situation = Income situation.

		Unstandardized solution				Standardized solution			
Latent variables		*Coef. [95%-CI]*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*Coef. [95%-CI]*	*SE*	*z*	*p*
UA →	UA 1	1 [1, 1]	0			.645 [.584, .706]	.031	20.696	.000
	UA 2	.801 [.653, .948]	.075	10.633	.000	.542 [.483, .6]	.03	18.096	.000
	UA 3	.759 [.629, .889]	.066	11.473	.000	.512 [.45, .573]	.031	16.321	.000
	UA 4	.796 [.655, .936]	.072	11.123	.000	.586 [.525, .648]	.031	18.64	.000
	UA 5	.804 [.668, .941]	.069	11.576	.000	.519 [.456, .583]	.032	16.111	.000
	UA 6	.551 [.436, .665]	.058	9.414	.000	.38 [.321, .44]	.03	12.551	.000
Populism →	Pop. attitudes 1	1 [1, 1]	0			.569 [.525, .614]	.023	24.959	.000
	Pop. attitudes 2	1.061 [.922, 1.201]	.071	14.916	.000	.617 [.573, .66]	.022	27.653	.000
	Pop. attitudes 3	.941 [.81, 1.073]	.067	13.998	.000	.579 [.534, .623]	.023	25.405	.000
	Pop. attitudes 4	1.395 [1.222, 1.568]	.088	15.777	.000	.713 [.674, .752]	.02	36.081	.000
	Pop. attitudes 5	1.458 [1.267, 1.649]	.097	14.985	.000	.738 [.7, .776]	.019	38.006	.000
	Pop. attitudes 6	1.039 [.883, 1.195]	.08	13.048	.000	.546 [.499, .593]	.024	22.826	.000
RWA →	RWA 1	1 [1, 1]	0			.456 [.408, .503]	.024	18.772	.000
	RWA 2	1.443 [1.237, 1.649]	.105	13.71	.000	.778 [.743, .813]	.018	43.998	.000
	RWA 3	1.227 [1.037, 1.416]	.097	12.675	.000	.562 [.52, .604]	.021	26.254	.000
	RWA 4	.94 [.788, 1.092]	.078	12.1	.000	.449 [.402, .495]	.024	18.909	.000
	RWA 5	1.209 [1.042, 1.377]	.085	14.158	.000	.612 [.572, .651]	.02	30.396	.000
Anti-immigr. →	Anti-immigr. 1	1 [1, 1]	0			.617 [.583, .652]	.018	35.17	.000
	Anti-immigr. 2	2.037 [1.8, 2.274]	.121	16.838	.000	.737 [.705, .769]	.016	44.985	.000
	Anti-immigr. 3	1.871 [1.656, 2.086]	.11	17.066	.000	.73 [.699, .76]	.016	46.566	.000
	Anti-immigr. 4	1.579 [1.374, 1.783]	.104	15.118	.000	.605 [.567, .643]	.019	31.135	.000
	Anti-immigr. 5	2.096 [1.882, 2.31]	.109	19.215	.000	.813 [.784, .841]	.015	55.639	.000
	Anti-immigr. 6	1.538 [1.348, 1.727]	.097	15.871	.000	.595 [.555, .634]	.02	29.738	.000
RR core →	RWA	1 [1, 1]	0			.896 [.87, .922]	.013	67.368	.000
	Anti-immigr.	.845 [.712, .978]	.068	12.446	.000	.927 [.906, .948]	.011	86.007	.000
	Anti-EU	4.79 [4.065, 5.516]	.37	12.934	.000	.719 [.685, .754]	.018	40.778	.000
	Excl. national ID	1.124 [.952, 1.296]	.088	12.785	.000	.562 [.523, .601]	.02	28.475	.000

Model summary	*n*	1519	*CFI*	.969
	Chi² (df)	1212 (384)	*RMSEA [95%-CI]*	.038 [.035, .04]
	p	< .001	*SRMR*	.043

Note. Results are based on DWLS estimation with robust standard errors and mean-and-variance adjusted test statistics. RR core is a second-order factor. Manifest variables are described in detail in Appendix A.
UA = uncertainty avoidance, Pop. attitudes = populist attitudes, RWA = right-wing authoritarianism, Anti-immigr. = anti-immigration attitudes, RR core = radical right ideological core, Excl. national ID = exclusive national ID.

Appendix C: Extended model

Structural model		Basic model	Extended model
RR core ←	UA	0.267*** (0.03)	0.279*** (0.033)
Populism ←	UA	-0.112*** (0.028)	-0.121*** (0.03)
	RR core	0.649*** (0.024)	0.637*** (0.026)
Gov. expect. ←	UA		-0.069** (0.024)
	RR core		0.741*** (0.022)
Risk taking ←	UA		-0.504*** (0.024)
Vote ←	UA	-0.098** (0.035)	-0.018 (0.043)
	RR core	0.791*** (0.039)	0.304*** (0.055)
	Populism	0.025 (0.044)	0.143*** (0.041)
	Gov. expect.		0.542*** (0.038)
	Risk taking		0.056 (0.035)
UA → populism			
Indirect		0.174*** (0.022)	0.178*** (0.023)
Direct		-0.112*** (0.028)	-0.121*** (0.03)
Total		0.062* (0.031)	0.057 (0.033)
UA → gov. expect.			
Indirect			0.207*** (0.026)
Direct			-0.069** (0.024)
Total			0.138*** (0.031)
UA → vote			
Indirect (→ RR core)		0.212*** (0.027)	0.085*** (0.018)
Indirect (→ populism)		0.002 (0.003)	0.008 (0.005)
Indirect (→ gov. expect.)			0.074*** (0.018)
Indirect (→ risk taking)			-0.028 (0.018)
Direct		-0.098** (0.035)	-0.018 (0.043)
Total		0.115** (0.037)	0.121** (0.041)
R^2			
RR core		.181	.186
Populism		.488	.477
Gov. expect.			.528
Risk taking			.311
Vote		.664	.787
Model summary	*n*	1519	1256
	Chi² (df)	1212.3 (384)	1075.6 (428)
	p	<.001	<.001
	CFI	.969	.975
	RMSEA	.038	.035
	SRMR	.043	.042

Note. Entries are standardized regression coefficients. R^2 represents proportions of the outcome variables' variation explained by the model. Two-tailed significance levels: $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$.