



UNIVERSITY  
OF TURKU

# THE CHOICE IS YOURS BUT IT IS POLITICALLY TINGED

The social correlates of political party  
preferences in Finland

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Aki Koivula





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## Tiivistelmä

Käsillä olevan väitöskirjan ensisijaisena tavoitteena on tuoda empiirisesti esiin, minkälainen merkitys puoluekannalla on suomalaisten asenteisiin ja käyttäytymiseen. Väitöskirjaan sisältyvissä artikkeleissa osoitetaan puoluekannan olevan uppoutunut kansalaisten elämään ja samalla tutkimus kiinnittyy taloussosiologiseen perinteeseen haastaen näkemykset yhteiskunnasta, joka koostuisi pelkästään sosiaalisista rakenteista irtautuneista rationaalisista yksilöistä. Väitettä tukevat empiiriset havainnot, joissa puoluekanta oli merkittävä ihmisten käyttäytymistä ja asenteita jäsentävä sosiaalinen kategoria. Tulosten mukaan suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa on nähtävissä eräänlaisia puoluekannan mukaan muodostuvia arvoverkostoja, jotka voidaan erottaa useissa asioissa muiden puolueiden kannattajien muodostamista verkostoista

Toissijaisena tavoitteena väitöskirjalla on tarjota kuvailevaa tietoa Suomen poliittisesta kentästä ja poliittisista ajoista erityisesti suurimpien puolueiden kannattajien ja jäsenten näkökulmasta. Tutkimukset kiinnittyvät ajallisesti 2010-luvun eduskuntavaaleihin, joissa perussuomalaiset muovasivat uudelleen suomalaista poliittista hegemoniaa ja aikaisempia käsityksiä puolueiden profiileista. Väitöskirjan viidessä tutkimusartikkelissa käsitellään puoluekannan vaikutusta erilaisiin ilmiöihin vertailemalla eri puolueiden kannattajista ja jäsenistä muodostuvia ryhmiä. Tutkimuksissa hyödynnettiin useita väestötasolla edustavia kyselyaineistoja sekä ainutlaatuisia puolueiden jäsenrekistereihin pohjautuvia kyselyaineistoja.

Ensimmäisessä artikkelissa vertailimme puolueiden kannattajien kulustottumuksia. Tulostemme mukaan puoluekannan avulla voidaan ainakin osittain selittää kansalaisten kulustottumuksia, kun kokoomuksen kannattajien kulutus poikkesi selvästi muista huolimatta taustamuuttujien vakioinnista. Toisessa artikkelissa käsitelimme puolueiden kannattajien sosiaalista luottamusta Pohjoismaisessa kontekstissa. Tuloksemme tukivat hypoteesia, jonka mukaan oikeistopopulististen puolueiden kannattajien luottamus muihin ihmisiin on verrattain vähäistä. Havaitsimme myös, että luottamusta yleisesti lisäävät sosiaaliset tekijät, kuten koulutus, eivät toimi vastaavasti oikeistopopulistien keskuudessa. Kolmannessa artikkelissa tarkastelimme, miten suomalaisen poliittisen kentän jakautuminen on edennyt 2000-luvun alusta nykypäivään tarkastelemalla väestön käsityksiä terrorismista yhteiskunnallisena riskinä. Havaitsimme, että väestön suhtautuminen terrorismiin on politisoitunut vuosina 2004–2017, kun vasemmisto- ja oikeistopuolueiden kannattajien riskikäsitykset ovat erkaantuneet yhä enemmän toisistaan.

Kahdessa viimeisessä artikkelissa keskityimme puolueiden jäseniin. Ensimmäisessä niistä vertasimme puolueiden jäseniä ja kannattajia määrittelemällä puolueiden sisäistä dynamiikkaa sosiaalisen aseman ja keskeisten ideologisten indikaattorien valossa. Jälkimmäisessä jäsentutkimuksessa ja väitöskirjan viimeisessä osatutkimuksessa vertasimme puolueiden jäsenten näkemyksiä erilaisista yhteiskunnallisista riskeistä. Molemmat jäsenpohjaiset tutkimukset osoittivat, että puoluekannan vaikutus on voimakkaampi jäsenten kuin kannattajien keskuudessa. Lisäksi havaitsimme, että erityisesti vihreiden ja perussuomalaisten välillä ilmenevä uusi poliittinen jakolinja selittää myös muiden puolueiden kannattajien ja jäsenten aseoitumista eri asioihin.

Tässä väitöskirjassa esitetään yhteenveto tutkimusartikkeleista ja käydään samalla perusteellista keskustelua puoluekantaan liittyvistä sosiaalisista mekanismeista ja suomalaisen poliittisen kentän erityispiirteistä. Väitöskirjassa osoitetaan, että suomalainen poliittinen kenttä on jakautunut ja se on uppoutunut kansalaisten käyttäytymiseen ja asenteisiin, mikä heijastuu puoluekannan välityksellä. Väitöskirjassa esitettyjen tulosten valossa puoluekanta voidaan pitää hyödyllisenä analyttisenä työkaluna muiden sosiaalisten tekijöiden lisäksi, kun haluamme ymmärtää kansalaisten sosiaalista käyttäytymistä ja asenteita.

Avainsanat: poliittiset puolueet, taloussosiologia, asenteet, käyttäytyminen, sosiaaliset verkostot, Suomi

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Doctoral Dissertation  
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## Abstract

The present study investigates the significance of political party preferences in Finland by drawing upon two perspectives. Firstly, the research engages in the tradition of economic sociology, as one of its critical premises is to address political preference as an essential factor driving individual action. In this respect, this dissertation argues that political preference is strongly embedded in citizens' lives by also challenging the views of individuals as atomised rational actors. This argument is supported by the empirical articles, in which party preference was the influential factor associating and influencing different attitudinal and behavioural variables. Accordingly, Finnish parties are comprised of groups of similar supporters, which make the parties separate networks that contribute to the structuring of Finnish society.

Secondly, the study provides a comprehensive picture of the Finnish political spectrum and political cleavages in the early 2000s, especially regarding the supporters and members of the major parties, namely the Centre Party of Finland (CPF), the National Coalition Party (NCP), the Finns Party (FP), the Social Democratic Party of Finland (SDP), the Green League (GL), and the Left Alliance (LA). The central context of the research revolves around the 2011 and 2015 parliamentary elections, in which the populist party, the FP, shaped Finnish political hegemony to such an extent that a review of the party features by means of adequate analyses and interpretations is required.

To that end, the dissertation consists of five research articles, each of which addresses the multidimensionality of party preference from different perspectives using different datasets. Party preference is examined through party identification and party membership. The research utilised multiple nationwide survey datasets and unique datasets gathered from member-based surveys sampled from the membership registers of the six major parties.

The first article compares the consumer preferences of party supporters by utilising nationwide surveys. In accordance with the results, we concluded that party identification predicts citizens' perceived consumption expenditure significantly even after controlling for social background and temporal variance. The second article addresses the social trust of different party supporters in the Nordic context, taking advantage of European Social Surveys (ESS). Our findings supported hypotheses on low trust among the supporters of populist parties. Remarkably, confounding factors did not function similarly among the populists when compared to the supporters of other parties. In the third article, we studied how political fragmentation has progressed from the beginning of the 2000s to the present by examining terrorism risk perceptions with a nationwide time series. Our main finding was that political fragmentation has become radically prominent, especially with regard to the external threat perceptions of citizens.

The last two articles focused on the members of the parties. In the former member-based article, we compared the members and supporters of parties and defined the parties' internal dynamics in the light of social status and essential ideological indicators. The latter member-focused article and the final part of the dissertation compared the views of party members regarding societal risks. We targeted the comparison framework both between the parties and also within the different parties. Both member-based articles underlined the first

hypothesis regarding the meaning of party preference behind citizens' attitudes. Additionally, we found an increasing difference between the new ideological parties, namely the GL and the FP, which is associated with the realignment of the traditional parties as well.

This dissertation summarises the original articles with an in-depth discussion upon the social mechanism of political party preference and the contemporary characteristics of the Finnish political spectrum. The dissertation suggests that the Finnish political spectrum is divided and that it is embedded in citizens' behaviour and attitudes. In this respect, it is possible to evaluate citizens' behaviours and attitudes through their political party preference in addition to demographic and other behavioural factors.

Keywords: political parties, economic sociology, attitudes, behaviour, social networks, Finland



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- Tapani Tölli

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*Aki Koivula*

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## LIST OF THE ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

1. Koivula, A., Räsänen, P., & Saarinen, A. (2017). Does party identification associate with consumer preferences? Analysing Finnish consumers in 2009 and 2014. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 41(5), 475-483. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12355>
2. Koivula, A., Saarinen, A., & Räsänen, P. (2017) Political party preference and social trust in four Nordic countries. *Comparative European Politics*, 15(6), 1030-1051. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41295-017-0103-0>
3. Koivula, A., Keipi, T., Oksanen, A., & Räsänen, P. (2019) Political compartmentalisation and societal risks: A population-level analysis of terrorism risk perception in Finland between 2004 and 2017. (Manuscript submitted for publication)
4. Koivula, A., Koironen, I., Saarinen, A., & Keipi, T. (2019). Social and ideological representativeness: a comparison of political party members and supporters in Finland after the realignment of major parties. *Party Politics*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068818819243>
5. Koivula, A., Keipi, T., Saarinen, A., & Räsänen, P. (2018). Risk perceptions across the current political spectrum in Finland: a study of party members. *Journal of Risk Research*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13669877.2018.1437060>

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Within the social sciences, variations in citizens' attitudes and behaviours are generally explained by some individual background feature, such as gender, age, and socioeconomic factors (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996; Stinchcombe, 1987). Consequently, it has also been popular to understand socially determined values and opinions as the basis of political party choices (Knutsen, 2009, 2017; van der Brug, 2010). Citizens' social networks have also explained voting patterns and political identification (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee., 1954; Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Knoke, 1990) and have also been regarded as prominent in the formation and structure of individual actions and attitudes (Granovetter, 1985; Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). However, particularly in the field of economic sociology, only a few studies have dealt with the behaviours and attitudes that correspond to party preference, that is, the social correlates of party preference.

The political party as a meaningful social category was already present in the classical sociology of Max Weber (Swedberg & Agevall, 2005, p. 246; Weber, 1906/1946). Within his writings, an individual's status in society was founded upon three different factors: namely class, status, and party (Parkin, 2002, pp. 90–109). Within this separation, class refers to an individual's productive position or, correspondingly, to economic disparity; and by status Weber denoted the social recognition enjoyed by the individual within society. Notably, political parties were considered a manifestation of social influence, that is, as 'agencies that were empowered to alter the opportunity structure in various ways' distinct from class and social position. Weber (1922/1947) also implied that social relations were politically tinged, thereby making the political party, to some extent, the purpose of the political action rather than simply a tool for obtaining solutions to overcome social conflicts. Consequently, it may be assumed that the party was shaped by a kind of bureaucratic system whose existence was legitimised in various social situations (Weber, 1906/1946, p. 369, 1922/1947, p. 407).

Weber's ideas were founded on party organisations and party elites in the early stages of industrialisation. For this reason, they cannot be generalised to the current social order and its citizens as such; nonetheless the idea of influential and distinctive political party preferences can be generalised. Political parties and their power relations continue to be essential components of the social order through their involvement in various aspects of institutional and economic phenomena (Swedberg, 2009). Political organisations have previously been assessed in terms of the relationship that exists between communities and individuals and the state, especially within economic sociology, as scholars have stressed the influence of political actors on the redistribution of economic resources, attempts to direct the economy, and the establishment of the basic rules of the economy (Dimaggio, 2001; Swedberg, 2009).

This dissertation examines whether the political party can be utilised as an empirical factor that correlates individuals by focusing on phenomena which have been prominent in Finnish economic sociology, such as consumption experiences (Sarpila, 2013), social trust (Saarinen, Räsänen, & Kouvo, 2016), and societal risk perceptions (Räsänen, Näsi, & Sarpila, 2012). In this respect, the research provides complementary information to previous studies and insights into the significance of political party preference especially in the analysis of individual attitudes and behaviours.

## **1.1 Changing political frameworks**

In addition to its contributions to the tradition of economic sociology, this research affords a versatile overview of the social structure of political parties in Finland. Recently, within the Western context, we have witnessed political upheavals such as the election of Donald Trump as the president of the United States, the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, and the upsurge of radical-right parties in Western Europe; these are clear indications of the changing patterns of the political frameworks of the individuals within these societies (Inglehart & Norris, 2017).

What has been common to these recent political upheavals is the shock experienced by the liberal democratic social hegemony, which was particularly unexpected by the mainstream media and political elites (Sayer, 2017). Although scholars and those deeply conversant with the political situation have not necessarily been surprised by recent events, the upheavals are themselves significant evidence that we need more information about party supporters and the underlying social factors that exist behind the political order.

A substantial portion of the twentieth century was characterised as a time of class-based politics, as different groups were identified with their own political movements and party groups on the basis of their positions in society (Berelson et al., 1954; Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). Party identification and voting decisions were, in general, extensions of recognised and easily distinguished classes filtered by occupation. In the European context, the working class supported left-wing parties and, in contrast, right-wing parties were popular among the middle- and upper-classes (Nieuwbeerta & Ultee, 1999).

However, class-based voting declined in Western democracies, including Finland, at the same pace as the industrial jobs declined (Bengtsson, Hansen, Harðarson, Narud, & Oscarsson, 2013; Evans, 1999). The decline of industrial jobs can be linked to the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial society (Cohen & McCuaig, 2009), within which the private service sector has become a more prominent feature of economic structures (Eichengreen & Gupta, 2013; Honkatukia, Tamminen, & Ahokas, 2014). The highly educated new middle class has ambiguous voting preferences, which have also

been regarded as a modifying factor in the political alignments of democracies (Dalton, 2008; Nieuwbeerta, 1996). While the importance of the traditionally large class divisions as a factor in political order has diminished, citizens' preferences are increasingly linked to smaller, micro-professional divisions (Weeden & Grusky, 2012). To underline this notion, several studies have indicated that the professional status of citizens still has explanatory power with regard to party choice, especially when analysing party choice by means of the sophisticated measurements and classifications which take into account the changes that have occurred in professional structures (Güveli, Need, & de Graaf, 2007; Oesch & Rennwald, 2018).

Inglehart (1977) proposed in the 1970s that Western societies were facing cultural change, 'the silent revolution', resulting in an emphasis upon post-material values as people began to have new needs related to quality of life in addition to well-being and physical security. This contributed to the value changes linked to the declining legitimacy of authorities, patriotism, and religion. In the same way, this change also contributed to shifts in political participation (Inglehart, 1977, pp. 3–18). By way of highlighting this, the post-modern approach assumed that the end of class-based politics and the general rise of education levels would also increase the individualisation of politics (Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994). This can be held to be true across West European democracies if we examine instances of formal political participation. The formal membership levels of political parties have been in a constant decline (van Biezen & Poguntke, 2014; Mair & van Biezen, 2001), and a growing number of voters are switching parties from election to election (Dassonneville, 2018; Drummond, 2006).

Recently, the Internet and social media have provided tools for individualised participation through the introduction of self-expressive and direct communication with political elites (Bennett, 2012; Bimber, Cunill, Copeland, & Gibson, 2014; van Dijk & Hacker, 2018). In the 1980s, Dalton (1984) suggested this process was one of cognitive mobilisation in which the average educational level is improving and the spread of information is simultaneously increasing through mass media (Dalton, 1984). Nowadays, this dissemination of information occurs ever more through digital media (Bennett, Segerberg, & Knüpfer, 2018). Accordingly, citizens have become self-starting and reflective political consumers who are no longer interested in party agendas, but rather increasingly emphasise the long-term subjective value-based choices of civic activities (Bernstein, 2005; Dalton & Wattenberg, 2002; Whiteley, 2010).

However, recent political upheavals have been based on decisions and implementations which have been the result of the conventional democratic process being shaped within specific cultural contexts. In that sense, it appears that despite the substantial decline in class voting and changes in economic structures, citizens are still interested in party politics. Recent empirical research indicating that people continue to feel a closeness to political parties (Hooghe & Kern, 2013) confirms this assumption, and

voting behaviour is still associated with political orientation and party preference (Bonneau & Cann, 2015). However, what has changed is that along with economic conflict, new political cleavages are increasingly based on cultural values (Inglehart, 2008; Knutsen, 2017; Kriesi, 2010). These values are not only fostered on the Internet but also in the ballot boxes, thus societies are being structured in a new way through party supporters.

Nonetheless, it seems that dissatisfaction with the traditional political structure is contributing to the demand for new kinds of political movements and parties in Western countries (Inglehart & Norris, 2017; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). What is noteworthy here is that where earlier political conflicts, such as those in the twentieth century, were based on the demand for economic redistribution, recent upheavals are not only linked to the depletion of economic resources but also to the fragmentation of cultural contexts. Inglehart and Norris (2016; 2018; 2019) have recently analysed these upheavals using the concept of ‘cultural backlash’ by stating that, ‘support for populist authoritarian parties is extensively motivated by a backlash against the cultural changes linked with the rise of post-materialist and self-expression values, far more than by economic factors’. In this respect, as we are living in a post-industrial age, societal divisions addressed towards economic conflicts no longer seem to be the only prominent factor behind the political behaviour of citizens, even though it has been suggested that economic inequalities between the population groups have increased in Western democracies (Piketty, 2014).

Accordingly, this so-called cultural backlash intimates the strong premise that political preference contains hidden and embedded features that are not determined solely by citizens’ backgrounds, that is, social class. These features need to be uncovered in order to gain a better understanding of the surrounding social spheres, and, thus, also realise an increased likelihood of predicting future changes and upheavals. To this end, in order to fill this research gap, the five articles within this dissertation present the distinct correlates of political preferences.

## **1.2 The study contexts**

The articles are mainly based on Finland and Finnish parties. Finland is perceived as one of the Nordic welfare societies associated with a high-quality education system, a stable political system, equality between the sexes, low rates of poverty, and small economic inequalities (Pfau-Effinger, 2017). As in other Western countries, the long-standing economic growth and increase in the standard of living in Finland united the goals of political parties in the late 1900s into consensus politics (Karvonen, Paloheimo, & Raunio, 2016). Simultaneously, Inglehart (1997) empirically indicated that Finland, alongside other Nordic countries, was at the forefront of Western countries with regards

to the fostering of post-material values. The increasing uniformity of the parties and the negative impact of this upon the political participation of citizens, especially with regard to declining election turnouts and party memberships (Sundberg, 2012), was also the subject of active discussion.

In the early 21st century, however, there have been multiple challenges to the Finnish societal order. Firstly, there has been a strong emphasis on globalisation and immigration, which culminated in a significant increase in the number of refugees accepted into Finland in 2015 (Sarvimäki, 2017). Secondly, there has also been a long-standing economic recession, which began in 2007–2008 as a result of the international financial crisis (Gulan, Haavio, & Kilponen, 2014).

Notably, the eventual move to uniformity among political parties may seem implausible, as there are significant differences between the parties and their ideological roots. Political fragmentation became apparent – finally – after the parliamentary elections in the spring of 2015, when the nationalist conservative populist party, the FP, achieved another substantial election victory and entered the government. To underscore the notions of cultural backlash presented by Inglehart and Norris (2016), the rise of the FP was not solely based on the votes of the economic have-nots and the working class; rather, a substantial share of the votes came from entrepreneurs and technical professionals (Oesch & Rennwald, 2018; Sivonen, Koivula, & Saarinen, 2018). Meanwhile, by emphasising the changing value patterns of the Finnish political spectrum and its emerging polarisation, the GL and the LA have functioned as significant counterforces to the FP by fostering new cultural values in terms of equality, tolerance, and minority rights, especially with regard to gender, ethnicity, and sexuality (Lönnqvist, Mannerström, & Leikas, 2018).

However, in contrast to many other Western countries, in Finland, the traditional major parties, namely the SDP, the NCP, and the CPF are still remarkably popular (Karvonen et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the rise of the values-based parties has not only entailed a significant change in the power balance of the parties but also potentially influences the alignment of the old parties which are adopting a new direction with their policies (Abou-Chadi, 2016; Bale, Green-Pedersen, Krouwel, Luther, & Sitter, 2010; Kriesi, 2010).

In the previous studies conducted upon Finnish parties, scholars have not typically focused upon the profiles of the parties themselves. Rather, the studies have largely been devoted to the cleavages between the Finnish parties by ascertaining the multiple conflicts that predict party choice. Uusitalo (1975), for instance, emphasised the existence of an occupation-based cleavage behind party choices in the 1970s by finding support for the three-pole model developed by Valen and Rokkan (1974). In this model Finnish parties (alongside with other Scandinavian parties) could be organized by contrasting interests of labour (SDP), business (NCP), and farms (CPF). Two decades later, Sundberg (1999) found that political volatility had increased in Finland but three poles still dominated the

electoral arena. Recently, Westinen (2015) has discussed the traditional cleavages related to linguistic, regional, and social conflicts behind party choices in the 2010s.

The results these studies produced are valuable when contextualising the Finnish parties and their differences. However, none of them analysed the *de facto* structures of the parties but rather the party structures of different social divisions. In this regard, a recent study indicated that the supporters of Finnish parties vary considerably in their empathic perceptions, and it is of note that these differences could be linked to the life experiences of supporters and their own social networks (Kainulainen & Saari, 2018). Apart from the fact that social networks can be expected to guide political participation and party formation, the mechanism may also operate inversely by shaping social networks and, therefore, the activities and attitudes of individuals. Party supporters live in different worlds and undergo different experiences in their lives. Thus, previous studies that endeavoured to predict party choice as a rational activity require a corresponding analysis concerning what the party itself explains about its supporters.

In the original articles analysed within the thesis, political preference was examined through party identification and party membership. With regard to theoretical and descriptive interests, it was very important to evaluate the individual political parties. The articles utilised multiple surveys conducted between 2004 and 2017, thus providing a broad description of the political structure within this century. The member-based analyses are based on unique survey data sampled from the membership registers of the six major parties for the first time in the history of Finnish social science. Accordingly, the thesis advances the detailed implications of party preference, while also offering an extensive exploration of the social structure of the Finnish political spectrum. In this respect, the results of the empirical analyses are also a valuable asset to the conceptualisation of the current political situation.

The original articles did not consider the impact of party preference in a strict choosing situation as a result of the experimental design, instead the focus was on the effects of party preference along with other social categories, such as age, gender, education, and occupation. Accordingly, the primary objective of this dissertation is to study the significance of party preference in citizens' lives and consider whether party preference can be used as an analytical tool, particularly in economic sociology which has traditionally been interested in discovering the socially determined variables that affect people's activities.

Before moving onto the study descriptions, however, it is essential to construct a cross-cutting theoretical framework in order to provide a more in-depth understanding of the multidimensionality of party preference by discussing the previous theoretical and empirical literature on the social mechanisms of political party preference. Following this, the Finnish political context within which party supporters and members act is described. Each study design is then presented step-by-step with detailed descriptions of the applied

data and methods. The main results of each article are summarised with a short discussion on their contribution to the previous literature. Finally, the results of the articles are more broadly discussed with regard to their theoretical and practical implications as well as their notable limitations.

## 2 SOCIAL MECHANISMS OF POLITICAL PARTY PREFERENCE

Robert K. Merton was the first to conceptualise social mechanisms as ‘social processes having designated consequences for designated parts of the social structure’ (Merton, 1967, pp. 43–44). Further to this, mechanisms can be understood as the frameworks and contexts within which individuals act and construct a society. Equally, these frameworks and contexts guide the activities of individuals and, hence, also the way in which individuals construct society (Hedström & Swedberg, 1996, 1998). This chapter describes political party preference as a social framework that separates citizens from each other, while also providing the basis for examining the social contexts in which the party preference is formed and through which the party is reflected in substantive terms. The primary purpose of this chapter is to ascertain why the supporters of one particular party conspicuously differ from the supporters of other parties when examining the social correlates of the citizens.

Several conceptualisations indicate party organisations to be a social manifestation. In 1770, Edmund Burke defined the social nature of a political party by stating: ‘Party is a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed’ (Burke, 1770/2002). The post-Burkean party definitions have considered the party a component of the dynamics between the nation and the state. In these views, the party is, above all, an interest group utilised to obtain the power required to achieve the economic and ideological goals of its supporters and members (Ware, 1996; Weber, 1922/1947). However, the party is a social collective that also operates at a local level and brings people together to seek solutions to social conflicts (Mickelsson, 2012).

The political party is, therefore, principally a socially formed organisation that brings together like-minded people who differ from those who are attached to other parties. On the basis of this premise, the next four subchapters focus on the theoretical approaches and empirical studies that form the basis for understanding party preference as a more meaningful social category than merely a predictor of voting behaviour.

Firstly, it is necessary to discuss the formation of citizens’ political preferences, especially from a social point of view. Following this, I define party preference as an influential social group that may directly affect the behaviours and attitudes of individuals. I then develop a way to understand the political party as an enabling and restricting social factor by drawing on an accumulation of social resources concerning social embeddedness. Subsequently, it is essential to fill out the theoretical outline by discussing the contextual factors, namely the social conflicts and cleavages.

Finally, I summarise the key theoretical lenses that are suitable for examining the influence of political preference on citizens’ attitudes and behaviours. At the end of the



chapter, I present a graph in which I identify how different theoretical lenses can be utilised in considering the social explanatory power of political party preference and how the differences between the parties become concrete on the basis of social cleavages.

## 2.1 Party preference

Studies in the social sciences have generally suggested that the social environment is the primary determinant of citizens' party preferences. In addition, genetic studies have demonstrated that citizens' party preferences are mostly determined by their social surroundings, even though turnout and political ideology, for example, are also strongly differentiated by genes according to the meta-analysis of twin and kinship studies (Hatemi & McDermott, 2012).

The link between party choice and social groups was previously established in the classic study, *Voting*, authored by Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (Berelson et al., 1954). They proposed that individuals reinforce norms and identity with those organised groups to which they are attached when making election decisions. Another classic of the social sciences, namely *The American Voter* authored by Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes (Campbell et al., 1960), indicated that party identification and voting choice are significantly based on the variety of social ties considered significant in individuals' life spheres.

Generally, a social tie is defined as the relationship existing between two or more interacting persons whose relationship involves some sharing or exchanging of resources to do with information or social support (Granovetter, 1973; Wellman, 1996). In most research, party choice has been assumed to be the result of the socialisation process, typically through parental influence during childhood (Achen, 2002; Campbell et al., 1960; Jennings & Niemi, 1968; Wolak, 2009). Scholars, however, have suggested that other social networks also influence the formation of individual political preferences (Christakis & Fowler, 2009, p. 198; Klobstad, Sokhey, & McClurg, 2012; Sinclair, 2012, p. 115; Sokhey & McClurg, 2012). The social networks that may affect political preference are made up of close social ties, such as partner relationships, friends, or work colleagues (Zuckerman, 2005).

The social mechanism of party formation can also be understood through a wider social framework. In Western democracies, social class has generally provided a base for party choice (Nieuwbeerta & Ultee, 1999). In this perspective, individuals identify, above all, with a social class and became gradually engaged with the party that is prominent in that class. This is a central component in the concept of social cleavages that is discussed in more depth in Chapter 2.4.

The social premises of party preference have been questioned by interpretations based upon the observation that different political issues affect party preference (Fiorina, 1978). Here, the idea is that individuals evaluate their party preferences in relation to party activities. If a party cannot provide the political or ideological convictions that align with those of the citizen, the citizen will be inclined to choose another party (Franklin & Jackson, 1983; Niemi & Jennings, 1991). This approach may be understood through rational choice theory based upon which political party is posited to be an instrumental tool for citizens to achieve their desired goals (Achen, 2002). These goals may be determined by the economic or sociocultural outcomes that citizens prefer (Dowding, 2017).

Within this study, it is noteworthy that the interpretations based on the rational and social premises of party formation ultimately overlap with each other. Achen and Bartels (2017) have recently suggested that by more broadly combining the progress of individualisation, cultural change, and the decline of class-based voting, nowadays people are choosing parties that validate their own social and political identities. Here, it is also significant that this rationalisation continues even after the voting decision or party selection has been made, when citizens validate their decision by looking for party activities and policies that emphasise their own social and political identities (Achen & Bartels 2017, 232). In other words, it is quite possible that the social framework functions as both a rational and irrational force behind the party preference. Individuals may choose a party that directly represents their own social reference framework or, alternatively, choose a party based on their reference framework that does not necessarily represent their own personal values or interests.

Newer studies demonstrate that both the social and rational viewpoints explain the formation of party identification (Kroh & Selb, 2009). In this approach, the factors determining the formation of one's party choice will be essential in political choices throughout one's life span. In other words, those who have inherited their political orientation from their social surroundings will be more reluctant to change their party preference due to political issues. Instead, those who have been less socially influenced are more inclined to change political preference due to particular issues.

It is, however, noteworthy that citizens do not usually unreservedly choose a party from all the parties presented. In most cases, potential parties are restricted to parties closer to their initial, socially formed, party preference than to an opposing party (Neundorff, Stegmüller, & Scotto, 2011; Zuckerman & Kroh, 2006). Moreover, previous studies do not support the idea that citizens are likely to change their preference to a diametrically opposed party, instead the party preference may be more likely to change to 'none' (Dinas, 2013; Zuckerman, Dasovic, & Fitzgerald, 2007).

## 2.2 Reference group influences

Political preference is a particularly latent collective that can be used in assessing reference groups and social categorisations. Individuals categorise themselves with others in order to understand their societal context; categories are employed in this identification process and thus can be used to facilitate social comparisons between groups and to which group norms and beliefs can, for example, be applied (Festinger, 1954).

Identification with a political party may also carry significant consequences, as it provides a starting point of reference from which to understand contrasting views and factors linked to the self-categorisation undertaken by others (Greene, 2004; Jacoby, 1988). The first well-known analogy of influential party preference was developed by Campbell et al. (1960, pp.133). They proposed that party identification functions as a kind of 'perceptual screen', through which individuals look at the world and conceptualise its contents in a way that is appropriate for their own orientation. In this case, the party is a kind of 'guide' that allows for the making of choices even when the individual has insufficient knowledge to make a considered choice (Fiorina, 1990; Kinsey & Popkin, 1993). Jacoby (1988) has pointed out that the idea of the 'perceptual screen' is based on the same premise as reference group theory (Hyman & Singer, 1968; Merton, 1967), which states that individuals form bonds with groups that promote particular types of activities or attitudes. From the party perspective, an individual can form a relationship with these groups, for example, through the socialisation process (Jennings & Niemi, 1968) or through earlier political experiences (Franklin & Jackson, 1983).

Empirical studies provide confirmation of these early theories that posit that party identification has the potential to shape the attitudes and values of citizens. Goren (2005) revealed through panel analysis 'that partisan identities are more stable than the principles of equal opportunity, limited government, traditional family values, and moral tolerance; party identification constrains equal opportunity, limited government, and moral tolerance; and these political values do not constrain party identification'. A striking result of this is that party identification can also produce notable shifts in individuals' value preferences over a certain time (Goren, 2005).

Even though a party can spontaneously influence an individual's actions, it has also been argued that the effect is common when the party identification is activated by the 'party cue' (Bullock, 2011). In this case, individuals will adopt, for example, the opinion or policy presented by a party leader or other notable party representative (Brader, Tucker, & Duell, 2013). For example, an experimental study conducted by Goren, Federico, and Kittilson (2009) proved that 'the relationship between individual partisan identities and expressed value support is stronger in the presence of party source cues'. In other words, individuals have a propensity to change their responses to value issues on the basis of party elites' responses to those issues. Interestingly, the effect was stronger when out-

party cues rather than in-party cues were analysed (Goren, Federico, & Kittilson, 2009). This indicates that citizens are more likely to realign themselves in reaction to counter ideologies than to support their own party ideology.

By identifying with a party and adopting information from the party, the citizens form opinions in relation to their own values and social identity, which has also been demonstrated to have significant implications upon their political attitudes (Druckman, Peterson, & Slothuus, 2013). However, it is important to note here that citizens are inclined to adopt the political cues that suit their preexisting beliefs and worldviews (Slothuus, 2010).

To sum up, parties are not only tools through which individuals promote their opinions but they also have the potential to shape those opinions (Druckman et al., 2013). Some citizens may utilise their party attachment as a kind of reference group, especially when examining political information (Goren et al., 2009). In this way, political parties play a significant role in providing citizens with a framework for making political choices (Brader et al., 2013; Slothuus, 2010; Slothuus & de Vreese, 2010). In other words, as Green et al. (2002) state, 'when people feel a sense of belonging to a given social group, they absorb the doctrinal positions that the group advocates' (Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002). In this sense, figuratively speaking, party supporters can be conceived of as members of religious sects who follow different doctrines and leaders.

### **2.3 Social embeddedness**

The previous chapter presented approaches that do not focus on the *structuration* of social networks; rather, networks are treated, to some extent, as given factors that guide individual behaviour. In addition, the theories regarding the influential reference group have proposed that the party is prominent especially in terms of political attitudes. To understand the explanatory power of party preference in a wider frame, I need to refine the approach by taking into account the holistic social nature of political preference.

In this regard, it is possible to draw on the interplay of the different forms of social resources that are related to political preference. This can be illustrated through reference to Karl Polanyi's (Beckert, 2009; Polanyi, 1957) theory of embeddedness, which has been elaborated upon by Mark Granovetter (1985), in order to clarify the impact of significant social relations on the economic actions of individuals. Generally, the theory of embeddedness criticises economists earlier idea of an atomised and rational actor by assuming that an individual's choices and actions are generated by the actions and expected behaviours of other actors within the individual's networks (Beckert, 2009; Granovetter, 1985, 2018; Polanyi, 1957; Zukin & Dimaggio, 1990). Granovetter (1985) emphasises, in addition, that socially embedded actions and choices are more likely to be

formed through the dynamic of social interactions than by mechanically following different customs, habits, and norms. As Little (2014) puts it: 'The actor is not an atomised agent, but rather a participant in a flow of actions and interactions'. Granovetter (1985) also stressed that the theory of embeddedness does not deny the purposiveness of individual actors, while stressing the roles of social surroundings and social interactions that lie behind the consciousness, beliefs, and purposes of the individual.

Subsequently, Granovetter (1992) differentiated embeddedness into relational and structural dimensions. Relational embeddedness describes the quality of dyadic relationships with other actors whose choices also have an impact upon the individual's own choices. Structural embeddedness, in turn, refers to the overall structure of the social networks which also configure social relations and individual behaviours (Granovetter, 1992).

Notably, as discussed in the previous chapters, there is strong and long-standing evidence concerning the impact of social networks upon the political preferences and political behaviours of citizens (Berelson et al., 1954; Campbell et al., 1960; Jacoby, 1988; Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2009; Zuckerman 2005). These notions can be utilised when analysing other outcomes of political preferences as well. The mechanism at work here is based on the idea that people interact with individuals who are similar to themselves in terms of political preferences, among other things (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954; McPherson et al., 2001). In this respect, cultural similarity and the similarity of values and opinions can be presented as fundamentals of personal attraction and the formation of social relationships (DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985). Thus, by utilising the idea of social embeddedness, it can also be suggested that party supporters themselves constitute a network that reciprocally influences the network constituents' activities and attitudes.

When trying to understand the extent of these networks, we can draw upon Granovetter's (1973) concept of strong and weak ties, both of which can be regarded as significant in the spread of political information, and, therefore, also potentially affect individual behaviour and attitudes. Strong ties are composed of frequent interactions on a longer-term timeline, for example, in the form of family or friends. Although the social ties individuals typically form with family and close friends are for non-political reasons (Sinclair, 2012), these social settings exert an influence by driving preferences and behaviour in a particular way, for example, for having certain types of political discussions based around socially reinforced norms (Bello & Rolfe, 2014).

Weak ties, on the other hand, are regarded as based on mutual interests, but include those in which interactions take place less frequently (Freitag & Traunmüller, 2009). Nevertheless, weak ties can be regarded as significant networks, for example, for attaining jobs (Granovetter, 1973; Lin, Ensel, & Vaughn, 1981), and they appear in the form of political relations as well (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). Large-scale networks mobilise

people for a variety of political activities (La Due Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998; Lim, 2008), and they also broaden networks themselves (Quintelier, Stolle, & Harell, 2011). In this way, political opinions spread, affecting individual party choice as well and are reflected in certain attitudes and behaviours of the whole network through embeddedness.

Embeddedness can take many forms, ranging from purely socially structural to cultural forms. Nevertheless, linkages to certain ideas, people, and social resources provide fuel for individual social behaviour (Granovetter, 1985, 1992; Polanyi, 1957). Here, one can assume that the political conceptions of individuals also render certain attitudes more likely than others. Individuals who share similar political ideas are also more likely to similarly define their decisions, while perceiving themselves as a certain type of citizen, especially when compared to those with different political views. In this case, it is also assumed that different internalised cultural perceptions create differing actions by individuals from different backgrounds (Zukin & Dimaggio, 1990). By drawing on Bourdieu (1986), this means that these networks are comprised of different forms of cultural, social, and economic capital that will be reflected in differentiated behaviours, attitudes, and values when compared to the supporters and members of other parties. Accordingly, the party group becomes a visible social factor behind individual behaviour and attitudes, along with other factors.

Overall, this means that there are existing politically similar networks that are made up of citizens from common backgrounds. Here, it is important to note that networks may not necessarily be attached solely to social status, for example, but rather that it is possible to conceptualise a political party as the connecting force of the network. On this basis, it can be argued that the political party or ideology is also reflected in the activities and attitudes of individuals—beyond the traditional socio-demographic and economic factors.

## **2.4 Political cleavages as concretising social factors**

In the tradition of Western political research, social cleavages have been perceived as a central factor in the formation of the political system (Bartolini & Mair, 2007). Apart from the fact that cleavages are of interest when conceptualising a divided society, they are also a visible form through which the substance of a political preference is reflected in people's lives and actions. Thus, they are also a visible reflection of how people differ from each other as a result of political preference, especially in a multiparty context. In this subchapter, I examine the existing literature on the subject of cleavages on the basis of social and cultural approaches forming the contextual basis of the above-mentioned party effects.

Social cleavages initially result from social conflicts that arise between different layers of social strata, as, for example, resources and power are unequally distributed across the

different layers (Wieviorka, 2013). Primarily, modern political parties have made it possible to conclude that a factual resolving of the social conflicts between these various layers can be achieved democratically (Manin, 1997, pp. 206–214). Thus, the social conflict between the different social layers is also the principal basis for the demand for political parties in systems of representative democracy (Aylott, 2014).

The political form is also a vital part of the social cleavage models, the most famous of which is presented by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). This model distinguished the four social cleavages that determine the place of citizens in the social strata and, therefore, the importance of the various parties as representatives of these strata layers as well as resolvers of societal conflict. Initially, these cleavages were based on economic conflicts: firstly, between owners and workers; and secondly, between the land and industry. The model also involved conflicts related to values and cultural identities regarding the divisions between the centre and the periphery, and between the state and the church (Dalton, 1996; Lipset & Rokkan, 1967).

To underline the difference between social conflict and cleavage, Lipset and Rokkan argued that the social cleavage, and its positioning in relation to that, is the crucial basis of the existence of a party organisation. In other words, without positioning in relation to the cleavage, there are no grounds for the party to exist. However, this fundamental point was criticised by Sartori (1969), who suggested that the political party is not only a consequence of class, but rather the party also has the potential to shape class, especially in terms of identity (Sartori, 1969, 2005).

It is also important to note that not every social conflict constitutes an actual cleavage despite the fact that political parties often take positions concerning different conflicts (Schoultz, 2017). Bartolini and Mair (2007;1990) have identified that a cleavage must fulfil three crucial elements, which overlap but also manifest in different manners. Firstly, cleavages should be *empirically* determinable between different population groups. Secondly, these groups of people should have *normative* interests or values through which they also form a collective identity. Thirdly, cleavages should have institutionalised forms, such as parties, through which the different population groups are able to express their identity *behaviourally*.

The significance of social cleavages has also been criticized (Franklin, 2010), but to some extent, the general features of the Lipset-Rokkan model are still visible in several Western democracies (Kriesi, 2010), such as Finland (Westinen, 2015). However, it is important to note that scholars have emphasised that social conflicts are in a kind of process that is constantly refining the existing cleavages and forming new cleavages, while also affecting the party structure (Hooghe & Marks, 2018; Mair, Müller, & Plasser, 2004). New social cleavages develop in response to crucial social transformations, as Lipset and Rokkan (1967) represented by describing the crucial societal changes as critical junctures in the generation of cleavages. This notion is even more accurate

nowadays as there have been multiple conceptualisations of current Western societies in the light of new cleavages related to the transformation of cultural values within these societies (Schoultz, 2017).

As noted in the introduction, this transformation of values is related to the cultural change that researchers have recently asserted to be behind the current political upheavals, such as the rise of right-wing populism (Inglehart & Norris, 2017). In this context, cultural change may be understood as the transformation of political conflicts towards, for example, an emphasis on environment, globalisation, immigration, individualisation, urbanisation, and marketisation. Inglehart had already predicted this ‘silent revolution’, such as the transformation of values and cultural change in the 1970s (Inglehart, 1971), while also expounding a cleavage between post-materialist and materialist values (Inglehart, 1977). Kitschelt (1994) conceptualised a new cleavage between libertarian and authoritarian values, while Bornschieer (2010) positioned the cleavage between libertarian-universalist and traditionalist-communitarian values as behind the rise of the right-wing populists. Teney et al. (2014) established the conflict as being between the winners and losers of globalisation along the communitarian-cosmopolitan dimension. Hooghe et al. (2002) proposed a new cleavage ‘GAL/TAN’, placing green-alternative-libertarian and traditional-authoritarian-nationalist values into opposition.

What is noteworthy here is that these new cleavages, or the new cleavage, have been denoted as being crucial to the formation of new parties in Western Europe, such as the green parties and the right-wing populist parties (Bornschieer, 2010; Hooghe & Marks, 2018; Hooghe et al., 2002). In general, populism can be defined as an ideology in which society is assumed to be divided into two homogeneous and opposing cleavages, the common people and the corrupted elite, and which considers that politics should be a manifestation of the common people (Mudde, 2004). Previous research has suggested that right-wing populism principally combines traditionalism, authoritarianism, and nationalism (TAN), that is, a strict belief in law and order-oriented politics (Mudde, 2014). Conversely, by forming counterforces to the rise of right-wing populism, the green parties have solidified their places in many European countries by contributing, for example, to European integration and pro-immigration attitudes (Hooghe & Marks, 2018).

Meanwhile, the traditional parties based on the traditional social cleavages have also adopted new directions in their policies to remain involved in the party competition (Kriesi, 2010). Following this and drawing upon empirical studies (Henjak, 2010; Kriesi et al., 2006; Stoll, 2010), Kriesi (2010) suggests that the traditional cultural cleavage related to, for example, religious values has been mainly divided by the transformed cultural values, while the socioeconomic cleavage is still predominant in most West European countries.



This also contributes to the fact that, despite the cultural changes and the decline of class voting, people are still identifying with political parties, for which they are also likely to vote in elections (Bonneau & Cann, 2015). Equally, the public policies of parties are still reflected in the attitudes of their supporters. Studies have shown, for example, that party is a powerful factor that explains the attitudes of individuals when examining environmental issues (Carter, 2013; Clements, 2014; Dunlap & McCright, 2008; Linde, 2018). Within the results of those studies, it was common to find that party supporters with right-wing policy preferences generally had less ecologically minded attitudes, while supporters of the Greens and left-leaning parties (including Labour and the Democrats) had the most consistently environmentally friendly attitudes and behaviours.

In conclusion, the conflicts and the established cleavages, above all, posit one party's distance to the other parties. They are also key factors in explaining why and how the parties differ from each other in terms of assorted issues. In other words, social conflicts, and eventually cleavages, are reflected in the attitudes and behaviours of party supporters in forming a social framework, the factual screen, through which supporters may, in turn, form attitudes and behaviours. In particular, it is also possible to consider that cleavages assess the kind of theoretical distance that exists between the supporters of a particular party and other party supporters. Consequently, cleavages are the substantive factors that explain, to a considerable extent, how party supporters differ from each other on a variety of issues. In the following subsection, I further discuss how cleavages complement the theoretical framework of this dissertation.

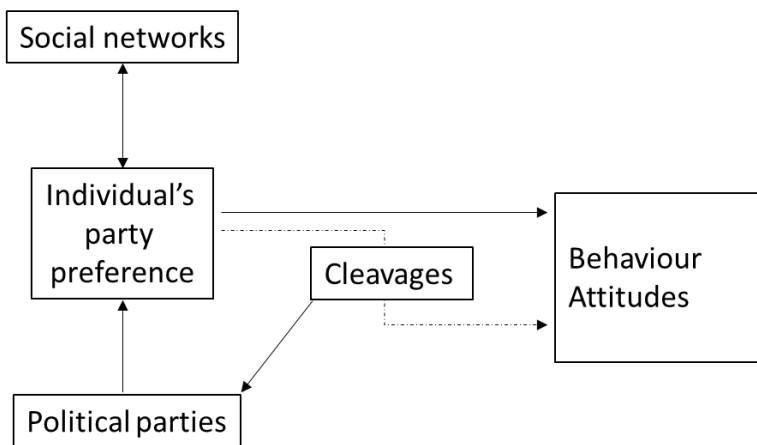
## **2.5 Theoretical outline**

The aim of this chapter is to summarise the theoretical outline for understanding party preference as an essential factor behind the attitudes and social behaviour of citizens. Firstly, on one hand, party preference is mainly generated from within the social environment (Campbell et al., 1960; Zuckerman, 2005), and, on the other hand, the party may modify the networks to which the citizens are attached (Granovetter, 1985; Jacoby, 1988). In practice, this means that a significant proportion of citizens are in constant interaction with other citizens who have the same or similar party preference (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954; McPherson et al., 2001). Accordingly, parties are supported by networks composed of politically similar actors who, depending on the issue to be examined, appear as particular groups in the population-level analysis. Additionally, by referring to reference group theory, we can assume that political party preference has the potential to affect individual behaviour and attitudes through social comparisons with the supporters of other parties (Festinger, 1954; Merton, 1967).

The factor that establishes when and how party supporters are conspicuous as a particular group is mainly determined by different social conflicts and cleavages (Kriesi, 2010). Parties are founded to resolve societal conflicts, thus also allowing for the conceptualisation of the distinctions manifesting between parties' supporters on various issues. Obviously, the distinctions are likely to be more essential when examining issues related to particular conflicts and cleavages. By the same token, it can be assumed that the narrowest differences will be found between the supporters of parties placed on the same poles of the cleavages related to the examined issue.

However, by drawing on social embeddedness, we may generalise party differences to issues that are not directly related to the core values of cleavages. In this view, the supporters of particular parties are likely to be in contact with politically similar citizens, thus forming politically similar networks (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954; McPherson et al., 2001). These networks may indirectly determine supporters' attitudes and behaviours as they are affected by the 'flow of social interactions' (Granovetter 1985; Little 2012).

An illustration of the theoretical outline is presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** Theoretical outline of the original articles

Party preference is, undeniably, a unique phenomenon and its significance varies from one individual to another. Some citizens may be very loosely attached to a party and may not even vote for the party with which they purport to be identified. For others, in turn, identification can lead to professional and economic engagement, for example, through party membership (Heidar, 1994). Consequently, it can also be assumed that party membership has a stronger influence on attitudes and behaviours when compared to party identification.

It is also important to note that individual placement on different social cleavages may be based on factors that form the basis of a party preference. This means that the factors closely related to social conflicts; such as gender, occupation, education, and residential area; determine party preference, while also affecting the behaviours and attitudes of individuals. Here, social embeddedness explains why the party could be a separating factor in these divisions even though the effect of the demographic and socioeconomic factors is equated when analysing the behavioural and attitudinal variations of citizens. Various resources related to particular party preference are accumulated within the individuals' networks which are embedded in the individuals' attitudes and behaviours, thus forming a diverse social category that separates party supporters from other party supporters.

Evidently, confounding effects should be considered if we wish to form interpretations on the basis of party preference in empirical research. Accordingly, within the original articles, we controlled for the influence of multiple sets of background variables on the association between the party preference and the studied phenomenon. We paid especially close attention to the variables demonstrated to be crucial as variables of interest, that is, dependent variables.

Finally, it should be noted that previous studies have made it clear that the research context crucially alters the social mechanisms of party preference (Bendor, Diermeier, Siegel, & Ting, 2011, p. 161). Therefore, before undertaking a review of the empirical results, it is essential to examine the characteristics of the Finnish multiparty system, which contribute to the attitudes and behaviours of parties' supporters and members in various matters.

### 3 CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL CONTEXT IN FINLAND

Several of the studies presented in the previous chapter focused on the individuals who support the Democratic Party or the Republican Party in the US. We need to bear in mind, however, that the issues manifesting in the US may actually be fairly minor occurrences in other countries, especially in Finland. The US exemplifies the two-party system, while Finland and other Nordic countries exemplify the multiparty system, which means that citizens have more party options and, therefore, the political spectrum is also much more complex and multidimensional.

Table 1 depicts the results of the Finnish parliamentary elections from 1945 to 2015. Currently, the six largest parties in Finland are the SDP, the NCP, the CPF, the FP, the Greens, and the LA. Other parties in the current Finnish parliament are the Christian Democrats (CD), the Swedish People's Party (SPP), and the Blue Reform<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, there are seven minor parties that do not have representatives in the current parliament but each has over 5,000 official supporters, thus they are registered as political parties.

The SDP, CPF, and NCP were founded over 100 years ago (Mickelsson, 2015), and they are still a crucial part of the Finnish parliament, currently holding 61% (121/200) of parliamentary seats. This is an indication of the stability and consistency manifesting in the Finnish social and political order. The traditional owner/worker and urban/rural cleavages have been clearly present in the Finnish party structure from the 1970s to the current decade. The left-wing parties, namely the LA and the SDP, accounted for 30% of the votes for a long period of time until the 2010s. Despite the changes to the labour market and increasing urbanisation, the centre-agrarian party, the CPF, has remained relatively popular in Finland, especially when compared to the other agrarian parties in most of Western Europe (Arter, 2015b, p. 77). Additionally, the NCP has been consistently popular capturing approximately 20% of the votes from the 1970s onwards (Karvonen et al., 2016).

In the last four decades, Finland has also been a country with a tradition of stable majority governments assembled by the two major parties and a varying number of smaller parties. The government assemblers in the election years 1983-2017 are presented in bold in Table 1. Either the centre-left coalition or the centre-right coalition has usually been the basis for the governments. In addition, there have also been several so-called rainbow coalitions (in 1995, 1999, and 2011) composed of parties from all sections of the

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<sup>1</sup> The Blue Reform was founded in the summer of 2017 after the party congress of the Finns Party in which Jussi Halla-Aho, known for extreme opinions and policy especially regarding immigration and multicultural questions, was elected as a chairman of the party. The election result caused the division of the party's parliamentary group into the Finns Party and the Blue Reform.

left and right (Paloheimo, 2016). The most crucial changes in the political order manifested when the populist right-wing party, the FP, entered the nucleus of the political system by gaining a major election victory in 2011. Subsequently, their success continued in the 2015 elections after which they entered the government with the CPF and the NCP leaving the SDP, the GL, the LA, the SPP, and the CD in opposition (Arter, 2015a). Prior to this electoral triumph by the FP, the three major parties were the largest parties and had been the main assemblers of government for three decades (Arter, 2012).

**Table 1. The results of parliamentary elections and the formation of governments 1983–2015, vote shares %**

Year	SDP	CPF	NCP	LA*	GL	FP**	SPP	LIB***	CD	Others
1945	25.1	21.3	15.0	23.5	-	-	7.9	5.2	-	2.0
1948	26.3	24.2	17.1	20.0	-	-	7.7	3.9	-	0.8
1951	26.5	23.2	14.6	21.6	-	-	7.6	5.7	-	0.8
1954	26.2	24.1	12.8	21.6	-	-	7.0	7.9	-	0.4
1958	23.2	23.1	15.3	23.2	-	-	6.8	5.9	-	2.5
1962	19.5	23.0	15.0	22.0	-	2.2	6.4	6.3	-	5.6
1966	27.2	21.2	13.8	21.1	-	1.0	6.0	6.5	0.5	2.7
1970	23.4	17.1	18.0	16.6	-	10.5	5.7	6.0	1.1	1.6
1972	25.8	16.4	17.6	17.0	-	9.2	5.4	5.2	2.5	0.9
1975	24.9	17.6	18.4	18.9	-	3.6	4.7	4.3	3.3	4.3
1979	23.9	17.3	21.7	17.9	-	4.6	4.2	3.7	4.8	1.9
1983	<b>26.7</b>	<b>17.6</b>	22.1	13.5	-	<b>9.7</b>	<b>4.6</b>	-	3.0	2.8
1987	<b>24.1</b>	17.6	<b>23.1</b>	13.6	4.0	<b>6.3</b>	<b>5.3</b>	1.0	2.6	2.1
1991	22.1	<b>24.8</b>	<b>19.3</b>	10.1	6.8	4.8	<b>5.5</b>	0.8	<b>3.1</b>	2.7
1995	<b>28.3</b>	19.8	<b>17.9</b>	<b>11.2</b>	<b>6.5</b>	1.3	<b>5.1</b>	0.6	3.0	6.4
1999	<b>22.9</b>	22.4	<b>21.0</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>7.3</b>	1.0	<b>5.1</b>	0.2	4.2	5.1
2003	<b>24.5</b>	<b>24.7</b>	18.6	9.9	8.0	1.6	<b>4.6</b>	0.3	5.3	2.6
2007	21.4	<b>23.1</b>	<b>22.3</b>	8.8	<b>8.5</b>	4.1	<b>4.6</b>	0.1	4.9	2.4
2011	<b>19.1</b>	15.8	<b>20.4</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>7.3</b>	19.1	<b>4.3</b>	-	<b>4.0</b>	2.0
2015	16.5	<b>21.1</b>	<b>18.2</b>	7.1	8.5	<b>17.7</b>	4.9	-	3.5	2.5

Notes: The bolded shares indicate parties that were involved in the government after the elections from 1983-2015.

\*Finnish People's Democratic Party (FPDL) 1945-1987

\*\* Finnish Rural Party (FRP) 1962-1995

Source: Official Statistics of Finland (OSF, 2019)

### 3.1 The major Finnish parties

The original articles focused on the six major parties in contemporary Finland. In this chapter, I present the characteristics of the parties according to their voter structure and political goals.

The LA (The official name in Finnish, *Vasemmistoliitto*) was founded in 1990 as the successor of two communist parties, namely the Finnish People's Democratic League and the Communist Party of Finland. In contrast to its communist predecessors, the LA deployed its programme to a wider extent by emphasising ecological and globalisation issues more than ever before (Puhakka, 2015). Despite a wider scope, however, the party has not been able to regain its position among the major parties and, therefore, has lagged far behind its predecessor, the FPD, when it comes to vote share (Arter, 2015b, pp. 112–113). The party also strongly opposes inequality regarding gender, ethnicity, and sexual preference (Dunphy, 2007). However, it is reasonable to argue that the LA is still primarily concerned with issues of income equality, supporting efforts for a universal basic income, for example.

The GL (*Vihreä liitto*) was founded in 1987. The party was originally based on working for the advancement of environmental issues and environmental policy. Many of the founding members of the party participated in the Kojjärvi Movement, which is regarded as the first Finnish environmental policy activity (Kontinen, 1999). While environmental issues have become more and more mainstream in the political discourse, the GL has extended its scope (Karvonen, 2014; Mickelsson, 2015). As such, the Greens can be viewed as an alternative party for the 'new middle class' without strong associations with class interests (Zilliacus, 2001). Rather, according to the analyses of the voters, supporters, and members, the party can be thought of as an ecological party for young, educated, and urban people (Keipi, Koironen, Koivula, & Saarinen, 2017; Koironen, Koivula, Saarinen, & Räsänen, 2017).

The SDP (*Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue*) was founded as the Finnish Labour Party in 1899. Nowadays, the party has coined itself as a modern centre-left party with progressive ideals, focusing on fairness and equal opportunity efforts. As in many other European countries, the Finnish Social Democrats are strong defenders of labour unions (Koironen, Koivula, Saarinen, & Räsänen, 2017). On the other hand, the SDP has also adopted ideas of market economy and interests of middle-class in connection to social security issues (Outinen, 2017). Recently, the demographic composition of party supporters and voters has emphasised the elderly (Keipi et al., 2017), and the party has been driving the interests of pensioners (Airio & Kangas, 2017; SDP, 2018).

The FP (*Perussuomalaiset*) was founded in 1995 on the base of the Finnish Rural Party recognised as the defender of farmers and the opponent of elite classes (Kuisma & Ryner, 2012). Recently, the party has combined conservative social values with centre-wing

economic policies (Arter, 2012) and a distrust of the older parties (Back & Kestilä-Kekkonen, 2014) and the European Union (Herkman, 2017). However, it has been proposed that the direction of the party has shifted during the past decade, while more radical right-wing positions towards feminism and immigration have become more popular (Jungar & Jupskås, 2014; Kuisma & Nygård, 2017; Ylä-Anttila & Luhtakallio, 2017).

The NCP (*Kansallinen Kokoomus*) was founded in 1918. The party continues to honour its historical roots as both a conservative and a liberal party which strongly represents the interests of the upper classes and entrepreneurs (Karvonen, 2014; Koiranen, Koivula, Saarinen, & Räsänen, 2017; Westinen, Kestilä-Kekkonen, & Tiihonen, 2016). With a focus on individualisation and market-oriented policies, the party has established its place as the major driver of ‘neo-economic’ policies in Finland. Despite this, however, the party has been receptive to the universal welfare state (Karvonen, 2014, p. 20).

The CPF (*Suomen Keskusta*) was founded in 1906. The party, known as the Agrarian League 1906–1965, has been exceptionally popular in Finland when compared to other Nordic countries. The CPF has fostered conservative values by representing the interests of entrepreneurs, farmers, and the rights of rural communities (Arter, 2015b). Notably, the centre party has been successful in the Finnish political system despite the expansion of new cultural values and the decline of agrarian jobs (Karvonen et al., 2016). The party has cemented its place as a party for the whole country with a large membership network consisting of more than 100,000 members and thousands of local associations (Jutila, 2003).

There are two parliamentary parties in Finland, which essentially represent notable social cleavages, namely the SPP and the CD. Unfortunately, the materials employed did not allow for the analysis of the supporters or members of these two parties.

### **3.2 Political cleavages and current academic disputes**

According to a recent study by Knutsen (2017, pp. 221), orientations towards environmental values, immigration, and libertarian-authoritarian values were generally correlated more prominently with the party choices in Finland and other Nordic countries when compared to other European countries. The rise of the new cleavage has also forced the traditional parties to assume new directions with their policies (Bale et al., 2010; van Spanje, 2010). For example, in many European countries, the social democratic parties have converged their policies with the green parties, while the conservative parties have, to some extent, moved towards the policies of right-wing populists (Kriesi, 2010; Schoultz, 2017). This realignment is also reflected in changes among supporters’ attitudes

and behaviours, as supporters have a propensity to adopt the policy preferences driven by the supported parties (Brader et al., 2013; Slothuus, 2010).

However, the general features of the Finnish political spectrum are still based on the socioeconomic cleavage, even though the significance of traditional class-based voting has also decreased in Finland (Bengtsson et al., 2013). Analyses of supporters and members have indicated that the NCP is still related to the issues which are in the best interests of entrepreneurs and the upper-class (Keipi et al., 2017; Koironen, Koivula, Saarinen, & Räsänen, 2017). When analysing the socioeconomic attitudes and social networks of the party members and supporters, the LA and the SDP are still strongly associated with workers and trade unions (Koironen, Koivula, Saarinen, & Räsänen, 2017; Tiihonen, 2016). The CPF is still the most popular party in rural areas (Westinen, 2016), and approximately 20% of their working members are agrarians (Koironen, Koivula, Saarinen, & Räsänen, 2017). In this sense, the traditional Finnish parties can still be easily positioned on the left-right axis.

However, scholars have also suggested that, although economic conflict with regard to occupational differentiation is still prominent among voters, the occupational patterns have altered strikingly from the golden age of class-based voting. Currently, support for the left-wing parties has increasingly come from the middle class, while a significant proportion of the working class has shifted towards the right-wing populists (Oesch & Rennwald, 2018; Sivonen et al., 2018). Nevertheless, it is hard to place the FP on the conventional left-right dimension in terms of their voters' attitudes (Westinen et al., 2016). Instead, the FP is generally situated by following the new cleavage, as their policy is primarily based on the reinforcement of traditional values and the restriction of immigration, which are also seen as important by their voters (Sivonen, Koivula & Saarinen 2018).

In opposition to the FP on the new cleavage are the GL, emphasised as the urban ecological party (Saarinen, Koivula, Koironen, & Sivonen, 2018a), and the LA, considered the green left party with regard to post-material values (Puhakka, 2015, pp. 235–236). Lönnqvist et al. (2018) found an interesting example of this party divide. According to their study, attitudes towards immigration have become more favourable among those who did not vote for the FP after the 2015 parliament elections. Interestingly, support for the GL or the LA and disliking the FP predicted increased support for migration. In this respect, Finland does not differ from other Western countries; as is the case elsewhere, the green and left parties are viewed as the opposite of the right leaning populist parties (Bornschieer, 2010; Kriesi, 2010).

Traditionally in Finland, cultural-ethnic issues have also been strongly influenced by the opposition between the interests of the Finnish and Swedish-speaking populations. Westinen (2015) has suggested that there is still a language-based cleavage in Finland, as



empirically recognisable demographic features, a collective identity and values basis, and an institutionalised party organisation related to the Swedish minority can still be found.

Currently, the most prominent factor in the Finnish political field has been the rise of the FP into the centre of recent parliamentary decision-making. The FP was previously considered to be the nationalist-conservative populist party (Jungar & Jupskås, 2014; Kuisma & Nygård, 2017). Inglehart and Norris (2017) have presented two general models in order to explain the popularity of populism. Firstly, on one hand, it is noted that the underlying phenomenon is the economic uncertainty of the post-industrial society, which is affecting, in particular, workers and those who are economically dependent on society. The second hypothesis, on the other hand, assumes that the rise of post-material values and multiculturalism has caused a ‘cultural backlash’, especially among older age groups, white men, and less educated people. This group perceives that traditional values are under threat of marginalisation, which has increased the attractiveness of populism. As noted in the introduction, the hypothesis of a cultural counter-hypothesis is even more explanatory, but it must be noted that economic uncertainty has also increased the popularity of populism in the long run (Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Norris, 2018).

The dual model has also appeared in Finland. In the elections held in the 2010s, the FP was the most popular party among the most socioeconomically disadvantaged, but on the other hand, the party also gathered voters from the upper professional classes. Our recent research reveals that attitudes to immigration specifically explain a significant amount of the occupational heterogeneity of the FP votes (Sivonen et al., 2018).

Notably, in various branches of science, populism is associated with the concept of post-truth politics (Fraune & Knodt, 2018; Speed & Mannion, 2017; Suiter, 2016). The concept of post-truth politics merely means that emotions and feelings have a stronger role to play in the political order when compared to studied objective facts. Ylä-Anttila (2018), however, has emphasised that Finnish populists are not against the truth; on the contrary, they simply do not value the truth and facts that are offered by the mainstream media.

To refine this notion, the supporters of the FP also have the lowest probability of regarding social scientists as disseminators of trustworthy results (Saarinen, Koivula, & Keipi, 2018). A visible example of the post-truth era has been in the fact that different kinds of counter media have become more popular, especially among populists. One of the best known is a counter media source in Finland known as WTF Media (*MV-lehti*), which specialises in immigration-related reporting (Ylä-Anttila, 2017, p. 46). Based on our analysis, the members of the FP credit *MV* with being a trustworthy source of information equal to that of the largest newspaper in Finland, namely *Helsingin Sanomat* (Koivula, Saarinen, & Koironen, 2016).

One of the key elements behind post-truth politics and recent populism has been the rise of new digital media (Hatakka, 2017), especially social media, which has also

reshaped the political field (Bennett et al., 2018; Gil de Zúñiga, Molyneux, & Zheng, 2014; van Dijk & Hacker, 2018). Social media has provided a space for political debate, and a number of studies have highlighted the increasing importance of social media within the recent elections in Finland (Khaldarova, Laaksonen, & Matikainen, 2012; Marttila, Laaksonen, Kekkonen, Tuokko, & Nelimarkka, 2016).

### **3.3 Party members in Finland**

Studies on the ideological and demographic structures of the Finnish political spectrum have generally focused on voters and citizens, leaving a significant research gap regarding party members. The members are of interest because they are deeply involved in various organisational functions and communities (Koiranen, Koivula, Saarinen, & Räsänen, 2017). They act as a significant link between the voters and the decision makers (van Haute & Gauja, 2015), and they continue to define the political scope of different parties thus being the crucial component of the parliamentary system (Karvonen, 2014, pp. 49-50). Party members can be regarded as the ears and conscience of the party in conveying new ideas from the grassroots level, thus also playing a vital role in the political landscape (Rohlfing, 2013; van Haute & Carty, 2011). Furthermore, party membership is considered to be a more permanent and ideologically coherent measurement of political orientation than, for example, actual voting behaviour or party identification (Gauja & van Haute, 2015).

In general, formal political participation has decreased over the past decades in most Western democracies, which has significantly influenced party organisations. Nevertheless, members of influential political parties can still effectively exercise power at different levels of civil society. Indeed, the importance of party members has been emphasised in recent years as the decline in membership has increased the relative importance of the individual members within party organisations. Additionally, parties have reacted to membership losses by increasing the opportunities for members to participate in the decision-making process. In this regard, some parties are becoming a kind of democracy in which, for example, the selection process of leadership has been opened to all members (Achury, Scarrow, Kosiara-Pedersen, & van Haute, 2018; Scarrow & Gezgor 2010).

Political party members are a little explored group in Finland. In this chapter, I draw upon the figures from member-based analyses that support the construction of the theoretical framework of the dissertation. The results are based on the recent research project, *The Political Bubbles – Mutual and Shared Networks of Political Party Supporters and Members*, which is the first wide-scale survey-based research focused solely on Finnish party members (Keipi et al., 2017; Koiranen, Koivula, Saarinen, & Räsänen, 2017).

The member-based surveys focused on the six largest parliamentary parties in 2016. The analyses indicated substantial changes had occurred in both the structures and networks of the party members. Firstly, the total number of party members continued to decline in the late 2010s. However, the radical drop in numbers only involved the major parties, namely the CPF, NCP, and SDP. Meanwhile, the FP, GL, and LA have managed to maintain or even increase the number of their members in recent years. Table 2 indicates that the major parties have lost a remarkable number of members since 2011: the CPF has lost 37%, the SDP 24 %, and the NCP 17 % of their members. At the same time, the number of members has increased in the FP by 84 %, the GL by 92%, and the LA by 25%.

What is noteworthy here, however, is that the three largest parties still contain over 70% of all Finnish party members. This is a clear indication that the party field has remained consistent, and that the membership growth of new parties has not been enough to challenge the old parties or stop the decline in total membership.

**Table 2. The changes in party memberships in Finland 1970-2018 by party group**

	1970	1980	1995	2004	2008	2011	2013	2016	2018
SDP	61000	100000	70000	57000	51000	50000	45800	40754	38314
	<i>(-37.1)</i>	<i>(-61.7)</i>	<i>(-45.3)</i>	<i>(-32.8)</i>	<i>(-24.9)</i>	<i>(-23.4)</i>	<i>(-16.3)</i>	<i>(-6.0)</i>	
CPF	288000	305000	257000	206000	176000	163000	151600	101618	102772
	<i>(-64.3)</i>	<i>(-66.3)</i>	<i>(-60.0)</i>	<i>(-50.1)</i>	<i>(-41.6)</i>	<i>(-36.9)</i>	<i>(-32.2)</i>	<i>(1.1)</i>	
NCP	81000	77000	47000	39000	40000	41000	40000	35000	34000
	<i>(-58.0)</i>	<i>(-55.8)</i>	<i>(-27.7)</i>	<i>(-12.8)</i>	<i>(-15.0)</i>	<i>(-17.1)</i>	<i>(-15.0)</i>	<i>(-2.9)</i>	
FPDL/LA	52000	45000	16000	11000	9600	9100	10800	10173	11400
	<i>(-78.1)</i>	<i>(-74.7)</i>	<i>(-28.8)</i>	<i>(3.6)</i>	<i>(18.8)</i>	<i>(25.3)</i>	<i>(5.6)</i>	<i>(12.1)</i>	
GL			1000	2000	3100	4600	8000	6951	8818
			<i>(781.8)</i>	<i>(340.9)</i>	<i>(184.5)</i>	<i>(91.7)</i>	<i>(10.2)</i>	<i>(26.9)</i>	
CD	3000	20000	16000	13000	12000	13000	10700		9000
	<i>(200.0)</i>	<i>(-55.0)</i>	<i>(-43.8)</i>	<i>(-30.8)</i>	<i>(-25.0)</i>	<i>(-30.8)</i>	<i>(-15.9)</i>		
SPP	49000	42000	37000	32000	32000	28000	30800		24561
	<i>(-49.9)</i>	<i>(-41.5)</i>	<i>(-33.6)</i>	<i>(-23.2)</i>	<i>(-23.2)</i>	<i>(-12.3)</i>	<i>(-20.2)</i>		
FRP/FP	27000	20000	13250	2000	2700	6000	8600	9520	11000
	<i>(-59.3)</i>	<i>(-45.0)</i>	<i>(-17.0)</i>	<i>(450.0)</i>	<i>(307.4)</i>	<i>(83.3)</i>	<i>(27.9)</i>	<i>(15.5)</i>	

Sources: 1970-2016 Finnish Election Study Portal (FNES 2018); 2018 data was obtained from the party offices in August 2018.

Note: The relative change in percentage (in relation to the year 2018) is presented in parentheses.

The descriptive findings of the member-based surveys (Keipi et al., 2017; Koironen, Koivula, Saarinen, & Räsänen, 2017) also revealed that the major parties continue to be formed on the basis of socioeconomic categorisation when demographic attributes are compared. The SDP represents working-class interests, the majority of CPF members still live in less urban areas in Northern or Eastern Finland, and NCP members are still relatively strongly linked to entrepreneurship by their occupational status. The GL and FP appear to be counterparts when their membership structures are compared. The majority of GL members and supporters are highly educated and have a relatively high income, while also living in the capital region and being relatively young. The FP seems to be more clearly a working-class party. This party has the highest proportion of working-class members as well as those with relatively low levels of education and an unstable labour market position.

The structure of party members is, however, changing which becomes noticeable when party members are analysed on the basis of the joining year. Firstly, the regional role of the parties is changing. Traditionally, the CPF has been strong in Northern and Eastern Finland, but they have also been consistently gaining in strength with new members coming from Uusimaa and other urbanised areas (Koironen, Koivula, & Saarinen, 2017). Meanwhile, the GL has widened its popularity in Western Finland in addition to the Helsinki and Uusimaa regions. When comparing members' educational levels, the parties are homogenising. A substantial number of new members with a middle-level education have joined the NCP and the GL, while the LA and the CPF have been increasingly driven by highly educated people.

The members of the major parties, namely the CPF, NCP, and SDP, are still strongly attached to the economic and regional interests that have traditionally been important to them. The CPF and NCP are more strongly networked with business communities, while the SDP maintains close ties with trade unions. Notably, the relationship between the LA and trade unions is weaker than before, and they are progressively attracting more young educated women. One striking result was that the members of the FP and GL were clearly separated from the traditional interest groups, but they were more attached to the social media communities and network sites when compared to the members of the other parties (Koironen, Koivula, Saarinen, & Räsänen, 2017).

The decline in overall membership has not entirely diminished the significance of the party members in Finland. In contrast, the newer parties, namely the FP and the GL, along with the LA have empowered members to be eligible to vote—directly or indirectly—for the chairman of the party and other important positions. According to international research, empowered members are not the norm but rather a manifestation of parties' reactions to the issue of declining membership (Gauja, 2013; Scarrow, 2017).

As a matter of fact, an excellent example of the significance of the party members at a societal level was witnessed in Finland during the summer of 2017, when the FP arranged

a party congress. In contrast to most of the Finnish parties, all the members of the FP were allowed to vote in the leadership election held at the congress. The party members selected Jussi Halla-aho as the party's new chairman to replace the long-standing leader of the party, Timo Soini. In contrast to the moderate populist Soini, Halla-aho is specifically known for his extreme views on immigration, having once been convicted of ethnic agitation, for example (Kuisma & Nygård, 2017).

Prior to the party congress, the FP had established its place among the ruling parties in the Finnish government over two years. However, the change of chairman caused a government crisis, which resulted in the division of the party's parliamentary group into two groups, namely the FP and the Blue Reform. The latter represents the more moderate segment of the original party and they remained in the cabinet, while the former became an opposition party. Accordingly, the parliamentary power of the Finnish government has been considerably reduced, which has, in part, restricted their executive power.

Despite the fact that the FP and the GL are a kind of counterforce within the Finnish political spectrum, they are united by the fact that they have both separated from the formal and hierarchical practices that are still characteristic of the traditional parties in Finland. In this respect, development in Finland has followed other Western countries, as it has been found that the power of party members has grown, especially in terms of new parties in which the costs and benefits of party membership have been reconfigured (Achury et al., 2018; Scarrow, 2017).

## 4 RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter presents the detailed research questions for each of the articles, while attaching them to the entire research framework of the dissertation. The previous chapters focused on the social mechanisms of the political party preferences and changing cleavages within the Finnish political spectrum. These two approaches opened up paths through which to explore how the political ideology reflects upon the different spheres of citizens' lives. Firstly, political preference may be understood as an effective social factor through which citizens form their attitudes and behaviours. Each article concerned the extent to which political party preference determined the attitudinal and behavioural correlates of citizens.

As noted, the prevailing political situation has a meaningful effect on this proposed association. In addition to socialisation effects, social conflicts and personal interests make people join, support, and vote in the parties, which in practice means that parties accumulate different people at different times. In other words, if political parties always remain similar, it would also be difficult to find exciting and noteworthy differences between the supporters' attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, each article is also concerned with the cleavages and features that are prominent in the current political spectrums across Western democracies.

The comprehensive hypothesis of the original articles was that party preference is a significant social category that has an individual effect on the attitudes and behaviours reported by supporters and members. A pervasive argument for this hypothesis was that the parties had formed a kind of network through the interactions of different values and social factors. The network actors, that is, the party members and supporters, report their activities and attitudes concerning other elements of the same networks, or they report a particular activity as the counterforce to the other parties. This assumed mechanism will be reflected in our data if the parties differ from other parties as separate clusters, even though we take into account the other crucial factors of party preference and attitudes or behaviours. In general, the differences between the parties were grounded in the traditional socioeconomic cleavage and new cleavage dimensions depending upon the research topic.

The research questions and the primary hypotheses of the original articles are presented in the next chapter. Following this, I discuss the methods used, along with a comprehensive description of the applied datasets and technical overview of the measurements and analysis techniques.

## 4.1 Research questions

In the first article, we were interested in the extent to which party identification associates with perceived consumption expenditure. For the purpose of the dissertation, perceived consumption provided a prolific starting point for evaluating the social correlates of party preferences. Scholars have suggested that citizens express their lifestyles, the characteristics of their identities and social circles in current societies through their consumption habits (Featherstone, 2007; Räsänen, 2003; Sarpila, 2013; Warde, 2016; Wilska, 2002). We hypothesised that party identification is a significant predictor when examining perceived consumption expenditure. By drawing upon the studies on the voter cleavages and the determinants of consumer preferences, we also hypothesised that the effects of party identification varied across different social conditions by taking into account the interaction effects in terms of education and income level.

In the second article, we investigated whether party identification explains variations in citizens' levels of social trust and what kind of interactions occur between party identification and the factors found to be relevant for social trust. According to previous research, social trust is the one key element in all social relations, functioning as the glue that keeps societies and communities together (Coleman, 1988; Freitag & Traunmüller, 2009; Putnam, 2000; Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005). In this respect, it is also a relevant factor to be analysed as we are interested in the differences between party supporters in a wider social and economic manner. We expected that the supporters of the populist parties would differ significantly from the supporters of other parties because of the low level of social networking, institutional trust, and social status.

In the third article, we widened the interpretation of party effects from the first two articles for a temporal development. We evaluated the extent to which Finnish citizens perceive terrorism as a societal risk when compared to other risks and whether political compartmentalisation has altered those perceptions from 2004 to 2017. Societal risks and threats are generally perceived differently by various population groups, which are affected by both personal experience and a shared group ideology (Curran, 2013; Räsänen et al., 2012). We assumed that ideological factors, such as party preference, had become a prominent factor behind citizens' terrorism perceptions during this decade compared to the beginning of 2000 due to the increasing fragmentation of the Finnish political spectrum.

In the fourth article, the dissertation was complemented by an analysis of aspects of party members. The article compared members and supporters in terms of the socioeconomic positions and ideological dimensions related to the crucial political issues measured by societal risks. We also examined how the parties differ in these comparisons between the members and supporters. Our first hypothesis was that members of the parties have a higher social status than do the supporters. Secondly, we reasoned that the

members and supporters are similar to each other when scrutinising the core values of the parties. In addition, we expected that the newer parties, namely the FP and the GL, would share the values of their members and supporters on post-material issues such as immigration and environmental problems. Conversely, we expected the members and supporters of the traditional parties to be similar to each other when examining income distribution issues.

In the fifth article, we continued the analysis of the party members and their perceptions of societal risks. The purpose of the article was to increase the knowledge of the little studied population of party members, but also to analyse the crucial differences between the parties. We also analysed the impact of membership length on a member's risk perception. With this question, we were also able to consider, to some extent, how the core values of the various parties have changed in recent years while the political field has been in a state of turmoil. Our central hypothesis was that the parties differ significantly from one another with regard to different risk perceptions based on values that are important to the parties. We also assumed that the differences between the FP and the red-green parties, namely the GL and LA, would be higher when we considered the newest members of the parties.

The last three articles utilised party supporters and members' risk perceptions in both a substantive and symbolic manner. Evaluating societal risks refers to how the group or individual categorises and prioritises the experience or potential experience of fear. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Durkheim (1895/2014) had already theorised that challenging situations provide disruptions so that a society can connect the functions of its members. In this respect, it is also noteworthy that various population groups perceive risks differently, affected by both personal experiences and the shared group ideology (Curran, 2013; Räsänen et al., 2012). Additionally, risk perceptions can be understood as symbols of the political values manifested in different parties. In the third and fifth articles, we discussed the extent to which political values and preferences reflect reactions to different kinds of threats by presenting empirical studies from the US (Bonanno & Jost, 2006; Doty, Peterson, & Winter, 1991; Hatemi, Mcdermott, Eaves, Kendler, & Neale, 2013). It is, however, obvious that sympathetic evaluations of one's own group and hostile evaluations of others may lead to fragmentation, forming risk categories potentially dependent on political preferences. Accordingly, the risk perceptions provided direct and substantive information on opinions regarding the important issues in contemporary Finnish society from the perspectives of party members and supporters.



**Table 3. Overview of research questions**

<b>Research Article</b>	<b>Research Questions</b>
<b>Does party identification associate with consumer preferences? Analysing Finnish consumers in 2009 and 2014.</b>	<p><i>RQ1: How did political party identification associate with perceived consumption expenditure in 2009 and 2014?</i></p> <p><i>RQ2: Was the effect of party identification similar upon different education and income levels when explaining perceived consumption expenditure?</i></p>
<b>Political party preference and social trust in four Nordic countries.</b>	<p><i>RQ1: How does party preference associate with social trust?</i></p> <p><i>RQ2: How does party preference interact with respondents' social networking, institutional trust, and social status when explaining social trust?</i></p> <p><i>RQ3: How can these associations be detected in different Nordic countries?</i></p>
<b>Threat response over time: political compartmentalisation of terrorism risk perception.</b>	<p><i>RQ1: To what extent did Finns rate terrorism as a societal risk in relation to other risk perceptions between 2004 and 2017?</i></p> <p><i>RQ2: To what extent did political compartmentalisation explain temporal changes in terrorism risk perceptions</i></p>
<b>Social and ideological representativeness: a comparison of political party members and supporters in Finland.</b>	<p><i>RQ1: Are party members in a higher socioeconomic position than supporters?</i></p> <p><i>RQ2: Are party members more extreme than supporters when examining crucial policy issues?</i></p> <p><i>RQ3: Are there party differences in these associations across party strata?</i></p>
<b>Risk perceptions across the current political spectrum in Finland: A study of party members.</b>	<p><i>RQ1: Do parties differ in their risk perceptions regarding national, external, lifestyle, and economic risks?</i></p> <p><i>RQ2: How does the length of party membership associate with risk perceptions within and between specific political parties?</i></p>

## 4.2 Method

A scientific method is always used to obtain the most objective results possible from the research subjects. In this respect, the purpose of the original articles was to ascertain the actual descriptions of party members and supporters. In all the articles, the findings were based on surveys that were mainly conducted with randomly sampled respondents. The samples allowed the use of inductive reasoning with regard to the research subjects, in this case, in terms of the supporters and members of the parties. In other words, we could conclude the population characteristics by the characteristics observed within the sample. Overall, we formed conclusions about the differences between the various parties' supporters and members. This is called estimation, which also takes into account the sampling error that is always present in survey studies. In the original articles, the sampling error had been taken into account so that the results were generally calculated at confidence levels of 95%.

The survey research also involved the general problems related to the applications of a scientific method in the social sciences (Bryman, 1984; Marsh, 1979). Firstly, the researcher, in particular, the designer of the survey, always influences the results of the research. Secondly, we cannot be sure whether the questions are universally or uniquely understood at the time of the interview or in filling out the questionnaire. Moreover, we can never be entirely sure about how the estimated results occur within the target population, in this case, the populations of the members and supporters. The last source of possible error is accuracy through the fact that nonresponses to surveys have grown significantly over the past two decades. For example, surveys used in the first and third original articles (RA1, RA3) were affected by declining response rates in the last two waves in 2009 and 2014. The impact of the nonresponse error is always difficult to control and, therefore, it challenges the generalisability of any survey research (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014, p. 19).

In the articles, we made efforts to minimise the impact of the nonresponse error by utilising post-stratification weighting which forces the samples to correspond to the population regarding the available background information. However, weighting involves several problems, in particular, that we do not typically know the population well enough to fully weight the sample to match the population. As a result, the results of the original articles include a sampling error as well as another unobserved error, as the final samples are no longer distributed randomly due to nonresponse error.

Finally, it should be noted that the survey is still the most effective way of obtaining extensive data on people's opinions, attitudes, and behaviours. In order to guarantee the

reliability of the results we used many different datasets in the articles. We considered the effect of the party by taking into account the variation of the year, the country, or the party within the specific contexts, depending on the article. Consequently, we were able to assess the direct or indirect effects of party preference on the phenomena under consideration.

In the following subsections, I more thoroughly present the datasets used, the measurements, and the analytical techniques. This information is also summarised for each article in Table 4.

**Table 4. Summary of the datasets, main variables, and statistical techniques**

Research Article (RA)	Datasets			Variables		Techniques
	Name	Producer	Target population	Final sample sizes (N) and response rate (RR)	Dependent	
RA1	Finland, 2009 , Finland, 2014	Unit of Economic Sociology	Finnish-speakers aged 18-74 years	N = 2,553, RR = 46.9%	Perceived consumption	Party identification
RA2	ESS 5 (2010), ESS 6 (2012), ESS 7 (2014)	European Research Infrastructure	Over 14-year-old population in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden	N = 20,633, RR = 56.0%	Social trust	Party identification
RA3	Finland 2004-2014, Everyday Life and Participation (ELP)	Unit of Economic Sociology	Finnish-speakers aged 18-74 years	N = 7,775, RR = 51.4%	Terrorism risk perception	Party identification
RA4	Members data, ELP	Unit of Economic Sociology	Members of six largest parties (aged 18-84 years) and supporters of the six largest parties (aged 18-84 years)	Members: N = 12,427, RR = 24.4% Supporters: N = 1,398, RR = 41.9%	Socioeconomic index and risk perceptions	Party membership Party identification
RA5	Members data	Unit of Economic Sociology	Members of the six largest parties (aged 16-94 years)	N = 12,427, RR = 24.4%	Risk perceptions	Party membership

#### 4.2.1 *Data*

All of the original articles were based on survey data, with a total of 22 separate cross-sectional samples accounting for 40,835 observations. The samples mainly targeted the Finnish adult population, and the supporters and members of the six largest political parties. Depending on the research question, the data were used as a combined set or independently. However, each original article utilised at least two separate datasets.

The first article focused on the consumer attitudes of Finnish party supporters through two cross-sectional mail surveys, namely ‘Finland—Consumption and Lifestyle [FCL]’. Both of the surveys used were based upon random samples of Finns aged 18 to 74 years. Representative samples were drawn from the Finnish population register database (for details, see Koivula, Räsänen, & Sarpila, 2015; Sarpila, Räsänen, Erola, Kekki, & Pitkänen, 2010). The data of Finland surveys are available for scholars through Finnish Social Science Data Archive ([www.fsd.uta.fi](http://www.fsd.uta.fi)).

The second article utilised three rounds of the ESS. In the analyses, we used the sections from Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, thus collecting a total of 20,633 observations. The observations were collected every two years in 2010-2011, 2012-2013, and 2014-2015 (for details, see European Social Survey, 2012, 2014, 2015). The ESS data are available on an open-access basis ([www.europeansocialsurvey.org](http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org)).

In the third article, we improved the data used in the first article by utilising the ‘Finland Consumption and Lifestyle 2004’ and ‘Everyday Life and Participation’ (ELP) cross-sectional surveys in order to obtain observations from 2004 to 2017. The total data included 7,775 observations from the population aged 18-74 years. The detailed descriptions of the added datasets are also available on the Internet (Erola et al., 2005; Koivula, Sirppiemi, Koironen, & Oksanen, 2017). The ELP data will be made available through Finnish Social Science Data Archive during 2019.

The fourth and the fifth articles focused on party members. Unique member-based survey data were collected from members of the six largest Finnish political parties between April 2016 and September 2016. The data collection was carried out in collaboration with the party offices that were responsible for the sampling method. The surveys reached over 50,000 Finnish party members from a national total of 200,000. The final number of respondents was 12,427 (Keipi et al., 2017; Koironen, Koivula, Saarinen, & Räsänen, 2017). In the fourth article, the party members were compared with the party supporters that were gathered from the ELP data.

The final samples were slightly skewed concerning the population, especially by the respondents’ ages. Thus, the post-stratification weights were used in the analyses. In general, the weights were formed by calibrating the samples to represent the population

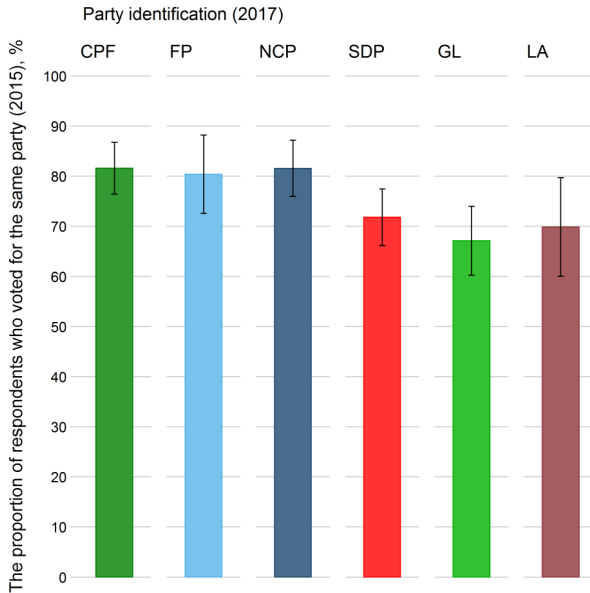
parameter using the available statistics. In RA3, RA4, and RA5 the applied weights also considered the heterogeneity of the sample sizes by balancing the respondents' probability of being part of the final data. In this way, the members of different parties were balanced to correspond with their share at the population level in RA4 and RA5. In RA3, we balanced the annual variation in the sample sizes in order to perform a robustly temporal analysis across the whole dataset from 2004 to 2017. In RA2, the weights were used by utilising pre-formed design weights and population weights. The specific features of weighting are included in the method descriptions of the original articles.

#### **4.2.2 *Independent variables***

Each article is framed so that party preference is the main independent variable, that is, the variable explaining the phenomena. The first three articles include party supporters, the fourth article includes supporters and members, and the fifth article only members.

Research Article 1, RA3, and RA4 contain similar types of party preference variables measuring the closest party that the respondents prefer. The second article uses the corresponding variable of ESS, which is otherwise similar to the FCL and ELP, but the ESS first asks whether there is a particular party to whom the respondent feels closer compared to the other parties, and further information regarding the party is requested only if the respondent prefers a particular party. In both cases, the question of party measures the closest party, rather than a factual identification. However, on the basis of previous research, the closest party correlates very strongly with party identification (Barnes, Jennings, Inglehart, & Farah, 1988). Here, it is also important that previous studies of party formation were principally based on the concept of party identification (Berelson et al., 1954; Campbell et al., 1960).

Party identification is strongly linked to voting decisions (Bartels, 2000; Papageorgiou, 2011). This is also demonstrated in Figure 2, which illustrates Finnish citizens' voting decisions in relation to how they identify themselves with different parties according to the ELP data. The figure provides the estimates for those who continued to prefer the same party in 2017 as they had voted for in the parliamentary elections of 2015. As seen in the figure, there is a strong link between party identification and voting decisions. On average, about 75% of those who identified with one of the six largest parties had also voted for that party in the 2015 parliamentary elections.



**Figure 2 . The proportions of respondents who voted for the same party in the 2015 parliamentary elections with which they continued to identify in 2017 (Weighted distributions of voting respondents from ELP 2017 data).**

In general, the datasets used represented the power relations of parties in the Finnish parliament well, as they captured the changing characteristics in the Finnish political spectrum over recent years, as well as the rise of the FP and the decline of the left-wing parties. The main source of bias was the distributions of the supporters from the GL that seemed to be extremely popular in the surveys when compared to the results of the elections. As previously noted, the data did not include sufficient observations from the supporters of SPP and CD, which is why they were combined with the supporters of minor parties into the category of ‘other’. Relatively small proportions of respondents were omitted from the analyses because they neglected to respond to the party question.

### 4.2.3 *Dependent variables*

The first article compared party supporters' perceived consumption expenditure. The respondents were initially asked to compare their spending on different goods and services with that of an average consumer. Here, it is important to note that, while private consumption may be regarded as an act, reported attitudes and behaviour represent something that is a social condition or even a way of life. In this respect, the respondents' perceived consumption could be understood as a general factor behind the apparent ubiquity of acts of consumption in everyday life (Räsänen, 2003). On the basis of factor solutions, we established two summed variables, namely Hedonistic and Mundane, for further analyses. The hedonistic variable included the services and goods that addressed luxury and selfish consumption, which have been referred to as hedonistic, visible, and unnecessary (e.g., Wilska, 2002). The mundane was constituted by the respondents' perceived spending on unselfish and necessary items by focusing, for example, on spending related to children's items, housing, healthcare, domestic appliances, food, and transportation.

In the second article, we used a summed variable that measured the respondents' social trust according to questions that measured the respondents' generalised level of trust in other people. In other words, it measures trust in other members of society, extended from particularised or personalised trust, which measures trust in family and close friends (Carl & Billari, 2014; Nannestad, 2008). The questions used were initially cited as follows: 'Most people can be trusted or you can't be too careful', 'Most people try to take advantage of you or try to be fair', and 'Most of the time people are helpful or mostly looking out for themselves'. These variables had demonstrated high reliability across different countries. Once combined, social trust provided a multidimensional variable that was easy to analyse using parametric methods.

The RA3 studied Finnish citizens' terrorism risk perceptions during 2004-2017 according to demographic variables and political party preference. The terrorism risk perception was measured as a part of a series of questions that focused on the societal risk perceptions with the question, 'How would you rate the significance of the following factors as sources of societal risks?' Respondents gave their answers using a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*Not at all important*) to 5 (*Very important*). Similar questions were asked in the earlier studies, such as in the evaluation of old and new societal risks (Räsänen et al., 2012). In the final analysis, we regressed the proportion of respondents who perceived different risk items as highly important societal risks by transforming initial options into two categories as follows: 1, 2, or 3 (*Not important or somewhat important*) and 4 or 5 (*Highly important*).

In the fourth article, we were interested in the extent to which the members and supporters of the major Finnish parties differed regarding socioeconomic status and



opinions on politically relevant questions. We began the study by analysing socioeconomic status by using the standard international socioeconomic index of occupational status (ISEI). This index provided a useful status measurement because of its multidimensionality. It is an empirically constructed index based on occupations along with their commanded average income and education levels (Ganzeboom, 2010; Ganzeboom, De Graaf, & Treiman, 1992). Scholars have utilised ISEI scores widely, for example, when estimating intergenerational mobility (Erola, Jalonen, & Lehti, 2016), the formation of personal networks (van Zantvliet, Kalmijn, & Verbakel, 2015), and job satisfaction (Kottwitz, Hünefeld, Frank, & Otto, 2017).

After analysing the socioeconomic index, we turned to ideological measurements including questions concerning the respondents' perceptions of politically relevant societal risks. In this article, we utilised three single risk factors, namely 'Environmental problems', 'Rise of income inequality', and 'Refugees and asylum seekers'. The questions were evaluated from the same angle (as a societal risk) and with the same scale (from 1 to 5) across the samples, which provided us with a valid tool for comparison between the members and supporters of the various parties, as well as within the parties between the members and supporters.

In the last article, we conducted a more fundamental analysis regarding societal risk perceptions as we utilised the whole series of risk items. Here, we concentrated on the party members and their risk perceptions by conducting a factor analysis to find the latent variables which represent unobserved data structures, being correlated with the party affiliation (see more details of the factor analysis in Chapter 4.2.5). We found four independent and mutually uncorrelated factors. The first factor, loaded on 'terrorism' and 'wars and military conflicts', was labelled 'National risks'. The second factor, loaded on 'asylum seekers and refugees' and 'internationalisation', was labelled 'External risks'. The third factor, in contrast, loaded on 'changing values', 'the growing importance of physical appearance', and 'commercialisation', was labelled 'Lifestyle risks'. Finally, the fourth factor loaded high on different kinds of 'Economic risks', such as 'unemployment' and 'income inequality.'

#### **4.2.4 Confounding variables**

In general, we considered a multiple set of background and contextual variables that might potentially have an influential confounding effect on the association between political preference and the variables of interest.

In RA1, our control variables consisted of occupational class, education, gender, residential area, household size, economic activity, income, and age. We also considered temporal effects by analysing temporal changes in perceived consumption.

In RA2, we were especially interested in the confounding effects of the variables that have been indicated to be relevant for social trust as well as political preferences. We analysed the extent to which social activity, societal status, and institutional trust confound the relationships of social trust and party identification. In addition, we utilised country and year as multilevel variables, with a set of individual-level variables, such as gender, age, residence, and occupational status, in the constructing of the regression models.

In the first stage of RA3, we analysed the extent to which terrorism risk perceptions vary according to party identification, age, gender, education, economic activity, and subjective financial situation. In the multivariate analysis, we controlled those variables found to be significant in the first stage.

In RA4, the background variables were controlled for in the second phase of the analysis, as we were interested in the extent to which party members and supporters' risk perceptions are determined by demographic factors. Our main confounder was ISEI which was used as the dependent variable in the first phase of the empirical study (see details in Chapter 5.2.4). In addition, we adjusted the models with a total of four variables, namely age, gender, education, and income situation.

The final analysis (RA5) focused on party members' risk perceptions. Here, it was extremely important to ascertain the models that indicated the direct effect of party affiliation on different risk perceptions. The models were constructed in two phases; first we controlled a total of five independent variables: age, gender, area of residence, education, and occupational status. In the second phase, we were interested in the effects of the joining year. In this case, we controlled the members' ages as continuous.

A more detailed information of coding of variables are presented in the the method descriptions of the original articles.

#### **4.2.5 Analytic techniques**

We utilised multiple statistical techniques throughout the research articles by employing factoring and predicting methods. The choice of final techniques was based on the qualities of the applied variables and the research questions. In addition to the reported techniques, each article included multiple procedures for detailed evaluations that were performed before the selection of the final technique. The analyses were performed using the Stata program (Versions 13-15). The original codes are available from the author on request for replication purposes.

For the factoring method in the first article (A1), we employed a principal component analysis (PCA) to find linear combinations from the variables measuring the respondents' perceived consumption expenditure. With the aid of PCA, it is possible to find those

components, that is, variable combinations, which produce the largest variance (variance) (Bro & Smilde, 2014). Freely calculated solutions proposed four components over the criteria of the eigenvalue but, according to the scree plot, the last two components explained relatively little additional variance when added to the first two. On that account, we forced a factor solution into the two components. After that, we improved the solution by running an orthogonal rotating method, namely Varimax. Finally, we had a simple solution, through which we formed two uncorrelated variables to measure the respondents' perceived consumption expenditure on the Hedonistic and Mundane dimensions.

The fifth article (A5) also utilised the factoring method. Here, we first found that the variables of interest were highly skewed according to the detailed evaluations. On that account, it was reasonable to perform a factor analysis by using a method that provides a reliable instrument for testing the marginal homogeneity between the respondents. By following previous studies (Holgado-Tello, Chacón-Moscoso, Barbero-García, & Vila-Abad, 2009), we performed a factor analysis of skewed variables using a polychoric correlation matrix. From the final solution, we excluded variables with over 0.7 unique variances and those that were loaded less than 0.5 with any established factor.

In the third article (RA3), we performed a correlation analysis to find how terrorism risk perception correlates with other risk perceptions. We focused on assessing how large proportions of the respondents perceived different risk items such as a highly important societal risk. Following this, we dichotomised the initially given options into two categories. In order to conduct the Pearson correlation robustly with binary data, we used the tetrachoric correlation (Bonett & Price, 2005).

In RA1, RA2, and RA5, we estimated the variance of the dependent variables according to party preference by using the ordinary least squares (OLS) method and analysis of variance (ANOVA) (Walker & Maddan, 2013, pp. 173–194). The OLS method is a useful technique when we know that it is practically impossible to place measured points (observations) on a simple and straightforward regression line, making it also impossible to find a straight equation for the slope that would include the observed points. By using OLS, the coefficients are determined through minimising the square-sum of the residuals from which the estimated regression line is formed.

The ANOVA, on the other hand, is a simple *t*-test extension that allows for the comparison of the distributions between the different samples. This method compares the variance of different group variables in order to ascertain whether the between-group variation is higher than the inter-group variation. Unlike OLS and *t*-tests, the ANOVA does not define the *t* values but defines the *F* ratio that indicates the effect of the independent variable on the error variance. In practice, the *F* ratio represents the relationship between two separate variance variables.

Regarding RA1, we ran the OLS models to find the main predictors of the previously generated variables (Hedonistic and Mundane). The OLS models were constructed step-by-step by first modelling the effect of background factors and after that together with the party identification. In this way, we were able to assess whether or not party identification has an individual effect on the consumption dimensions. We were also able to evaluate to what extent party identification mediates the effect of essential background variables.

In the RA2, we used OLS to find the parameter estimates of party preference when predicting social trust. In addition, we fitted interaction models to find how different confounders function among the party supporters. We used a total of twelve different surveys collected in Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark in the years 2010, 2012, and 2014. In order to control the country- and year-level heterogeneity, we included countries and surveyed years as dummies in the models. In this way, we were able to evaluate the effect of party preference and confounders employing year- and country-level dummy variables. This method is purported to perform reasonably well when a small number of groups are to be compared (McNeish & Stapleton, 2016).

The analyses of RA5 were conducted with ANOVA in addition to OLS. Before the multivariate analysis, we also  $z$ -standardised sum variables to normalise the distribution of variables and to make a clearer comparison between the different variables. In the first phase, we examined the variations of risk perceptions at the party level while each party was forming its population, the internal variation of which was analysed by using ANOVA. After that, we conducted an OLS model to ascertain the parameter estimates of party preference at the whole population level. In this case, the population consisted of the members of the six major parties.

Articles RA3 and RA4 were based on non-linear modelling as the dependent variables were categorical or dichotomous. We used logistic regression analysis in RA3 and multinomial logistic regression in RA4. The basic idea in the logistic regressions is practically the same as in the OLS model, that is, predicting the dependent variable through explanatory variables in the population. Unlike the OLS model, however, the logistic model predicts the distribution of the dependent variable to be categorised, which has no location in the regression line. In other words, a logistic model estimates the likelihood of different groups being divided into the classes of the variable being explained.

The articles RA3 and RA4 were constructed on hierarchical set-ups, as we were interested in the temporal variance in RA3 and the party differences across the different levels of party stratum in RA4. Here we did acknowledge that when comparing nested nonlinear models, the changes in the coefficient of the models could not be directly addressed to the effects of confounding variables because of the problem of rescaling related to unobserved heterogeneity (Mood, 2010). In order to avoid this pitfall, we used the KHB method developed by Karlson, Holm, and Breen (2012). The KHB method

enables a robust comparison of nested nonlinear models, while also providing valuable information regarding the mediating or confounding effects of background variables (Karlson, Holm, & Breen, 2012).

By using the KHB method, we formed three separate estimates for the link of interest (Breen, Karlson, & Holm, 2013). With the first one, we showed the direct effect of independent variable ( $x$ ) on the dependent variable ( $y$ ). Another estimate described the total effect of the independent variable with the variable(s) of interest ( $z$ ). Finally, the last estimates described the extent to which  $z$  mediates or confounds the effects of  $x$ . In this way, we were able to evaluate the effect of the variables of interest on the nonlinear models similarly to the mediation tests in linear regression models.

In the analysis of the RA3, we explained the temporal changes according to political compartmentalisation. By utilising the KHB method, we decomposed the year effect by using the residuals in the reduced model to estimate the total year effect and also the indirect effects of the year via political party preference and other mediators. We first estimated the direct effect of the observation year without the interest variable by considering the other background variables as covariates. Subsequently, we focused on the indirect effects of the interest variable by considering the other background variables to be constant in each model.

Research Article 4 focused on both party differences and intra-party congruence. To perform this in a reliable way, we analysed the party members and supporters separately. As an analytic technique, we used multinomial logit models by modelling the likelihood of members and supporters perceiving different issues as an important societal risk. In the analysis, we took into account the effects of background factors, namely age, gender, residence, and education by treating them as covariates. Again, we used the KHB to decompose the total variances of the dependent variables by which we evaluated the effects of the background variables across the party groups at the different levels of party stratum.

## 5 SUMMARY OF THE ORIGINAL ARTICLES

### 5.1 Does party identification associate with consumer preferences? Analysing Finnish consumers in 2009 and 2014.

In the first article, we examined the association between Finnish consumers' party identification and consumer preferences regarding perceived spending on hedonistic and mundane activities. It has been suggested that consumption nowadays is more than just satisfying needs; consumption is related to individuals' lifestyle choices and political participation (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005, p. 33), engagement with societal life (Featherstone, 2007, pp. 13–26), and may also function as a means of differentiation from other social groups (Warde, 2016, pp. 87–89). Accordingly, an analysis of perceived consumption offered an effective way to begin examining the social correlates related to party preference.

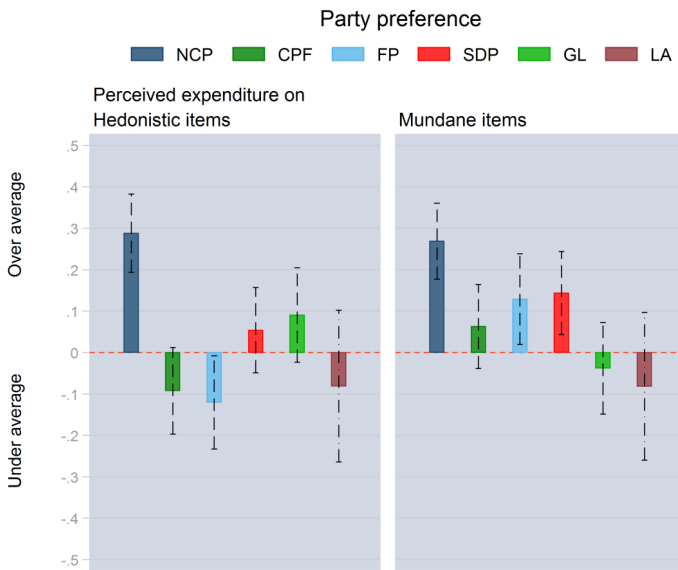
We outlined the analysis by discussing the sociology of consumption in which economic resources and class position, gender, age, type of household, and place of residence have traditionally been stressed as underlying the individuals' attitudes (Nicosia & Mayer, 1976; Warde, 1997). In this line of analysis, the goal is to combine descriptions of consumer preferences with a holistic view of life situations. It is possible to assume that there are always certain underlying principles that both constrain and enable many activities. This idea gains support from more recent studies suggesting that lifestyles, values, and practices are also essential to identifying consumer preferences (Kahle & Kennedy, 1989; Rössel & Schroedter, 2015; Warde, 2016). In order to contribute to the previous studies on consumption preferences, we argued that an individual's political background is an influencing factor that lies behind individual consumer preferences along with other structural factors.

Before testing this assumption, we described the Finnish political spectrum. In addition to its contextualising purposes, the description of the party field led us to identify the possible differences between the parties. Based on the previous studies, we assumed that party differences are, at least partly, associated with the social status of party supporters.

In the empirical section, we utilised two recent rounds of 'Finland— consumption and lifestyle' surveys collected in 2009 ( $n = 1,202$ ) and 2014 ( $n = 1,351$ ). By utilising two datasets, we were able to analyse temporal alterations and the modifying effects of social status as we obtained more observations from each of the parties. The research questions for this article are presented in Table 3 in Chapter 4.1.

We first performed the data reduction and established two components to measure the respondents' perceived consumption expenditure on hedonistic and mundane activities. In contrast to the other articles, in this case we began the modelling by firstly assessing

the effects of the other background variables and then, subsequently, we added the party item to each model. The most striking result here was that political party identification was an appropriate predictor of perceived consumption. In general, the effect of party identification was stronger for hedonistic activities than for mundane activities. As expected, supporters of the NCP considered themselves high-level consumers more often than the supporters of other political parties did. The main results are illustrated in Figure 3.



**Figure 3. Perceived expenditure on hedonistic and mundane items according to party identification. Demographically adjusted, z-standardised and year-fixed estimates with 95% confidence intervals.**

When it came to interaction effects, the general picture remained similar and the supporters of NCP emerged as high consumers across the models. The party differences were similar across income levels. However, there were some interesting interactions regarding education, as the supporters of GL were relatively represented as high consumers among the lowest educated. In contrast, the highly educated supporters of LA reported relatively high expenditure on hedonistic items when compared to the other highly educated groups. The temporal analysis indicated to us that there had been very

few temporal changes in the association between party identification and consumption preferences between the turbulent political years of 2009-2014.

From the viewpoint of the dissertation as a whole, the first article provided the possibility of determining the importance of party choice in the everyday lives of citizens. The results demonstrated that, despite the citizens' financial position, a particular political position distinguishes citizens with regards to perceived consumption. In this case, we could argue that political party identification has a similar impact on an individual's consumer preferences as other lifestyle and social factors. The findings also offered researchers new avenues for further research addressing consumer activities, and also incentive regarding the assessment of other behavioural and attitudinal aspects of political preference.

## **5.2 Political party preference and social trust in four Nordic countries**

In the second article, we focused our attention on one of the most important research topics in the social sciences by examining how the level of social trust varies. Trust among people is, principally in sociology, examined as the foundational building material of social order in many cases. Contracts based on trust also make it possible that not all of the principles and practices of social life need to be codified as law (Räsänen, 2014). Networking between people, meaning both formal and informal contracts, is built upon trust and, traditionally, the general trust in other people has existed on a high level in Finland in comparison to international levels (Kouvo, 2014).

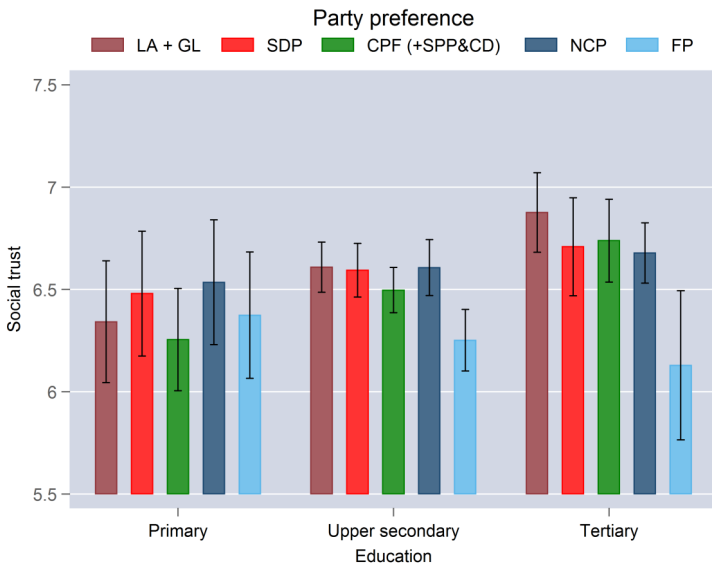
Previous studies have, however, pointed out that the supporters and voters of the populist parties have lower levels of social trust when compared to the supporters of the other parties. In this article, we aimed to offer new interpretations concerning the associations between party preference and social trust by also examining crucial confounding factors, such as social activity, social status, and institutional confidence. In this way, we could contribute to the discussions of social trust, as well as improve the interpretation raised in the first article regarding the explanatory power of political party preference.

Our data were derived from the Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, and Swedish sections of the ESS including three recent rounds with over 20,000 observations. We found that the level of trust among the supporters of populist parties is relatively low in Nordic countries. The differences between the party groups were highly dependent upon the perceived social activity and institutional trust, but they did not completely explain the differences. The most striking result regarding this dissertation was that higher social status did not affect social trust similarly across the party groups. Even though a higher education or



income increased social trust among the supporters of the traditional and red-green parties, they did not promote social trust among the supporters of the populist parties.

Figure 4 is an illustration of this mechanism in Finland. As observed, the educational level generally increases the social trust of citizens, but among the supporters of the FP, the direction is even reversed. In this way, the highly educated supporters of the FP differ significantly from the supporters of other major parties. In the article, we interpreted the results in the light of assumptions about the networking effects of political orientation.



**Figure 4. Party supporters' levels of social trust according to education. Demographically adjusted and year-fixed estimates with 95% confidence intervals.**

The results of this article contributed to the dissertation by clarifying the results of the first original article. The ESS data provided better opportunities to analyse interactions, which demonstrated to us that the socioeconomic factors contributing to the improvement of people's social trust did not have a similar effect on the supporters of the FP. It was also noteworthy that neither institutional trust nor social activity entirely explained the differences between the populists and the other party supporters in the Nordic context. This, in turn, also means that identifying with the right-wing populists is a coherent correlation between distrusting people.

When contributing to the conceptualisation of the current political situation, the article provided interesting information about the similarity of the Nordic political systems. However, it also revealed their differences, especially when examining populist right-wing parties. In Finland, the FP and their supporters were clearly closer to the other parties when compared to the right-wing populists in other Nordic countries.

### **5.3 Threat response over time: the political compartmentalisation of terrorism risk perceptions**

This third article dealt with contemporary societal threats that continue to be a growing concern in European democracies in light of the risks of terrorism. For this reason, there is an increasing need to understand how risk perceptions have changed ideologically and demographically over time. As an ideology can affect how risk is perceived after a traumatic event, a relevant comparison of how a terrorism threat response might evolve over time among various political groups becomes an interesting focus of research. To fill this apparent gap in the research, we provided an investigation into threat responses by examining potential political dimensions of the phenomenon.

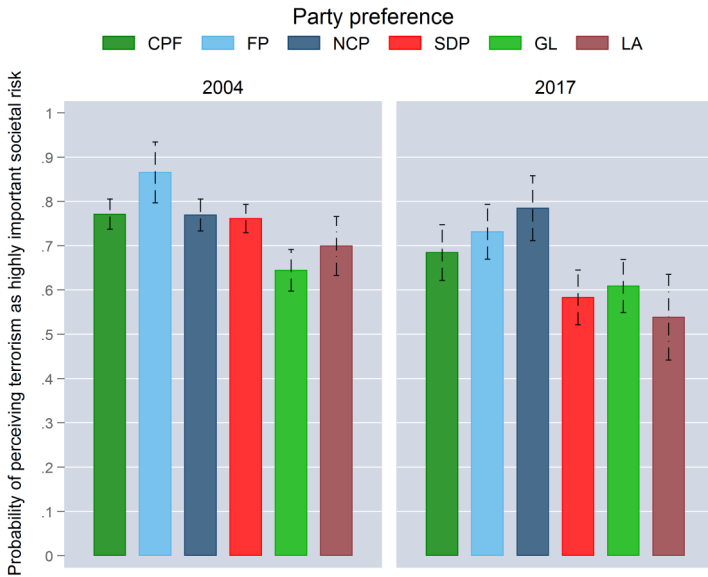
In the theoretical part of the article, we argued that terrorism risk perceptions became increasingly dependent upon the political party preferences of citizens during the 2000s. We justified our point of view by discussing social psychological approaches to threat perceptions and changes in the Finnish political fields. We proposed the theoretical model (Threat response over time [TROT]) in which we placed the parties close to each other when the threat was novel and near. As time has passed, we argued that the differences between the parties have increased and become linked to the parties' ideological bases. For the purpose of this dissertation, this article also provided a basis for understanding the temporal variance manifested in the Finnish political spectrum and the dynamics between the supporters of the different parties.

The analysis was based on four comparable population surveys collected between 2004 and 2017 ( $N = 7,775$ ). The findings disclosed that the terrorism risk perception was highest in the early years beginning in 2004, with fear levels lower in all population groups in 2009. However, 2009 revealed a division in the risk categories among different groups, as this became an increasingly ideologically based issue towards 2014 with the 2017 data presenting delineations of the risk categories based on political preference.

The main result of the analysis is illustrated in Figure 5 which depicts the estimates of high terrorism risk perceptions for the supporters of the major parties in 2004 and 2017. The perceived risk of terrorism has generally decreased from the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but what is noteworthy here is that there has been an increased division especially

between the centre-right parties, namely the CPF and NCP, and the left-wing parties, namely the SDP and LA.

This result is a clear indication of the politicisation of the security threat and the enhancement of post-material values as a dividing factor in the Finnish political spectrum. In this respect, these findings help us to deepen our understanding of the significance of new cleavage elements affecting not only the formation of the new parties but also the realignment of the traditional parties.



**Figure 5. Probability of perceiving terrorism as a highly important societal risk by party preference in 2004 and 2017. Demographically adjusted estimates with 95% confidence intervals.**

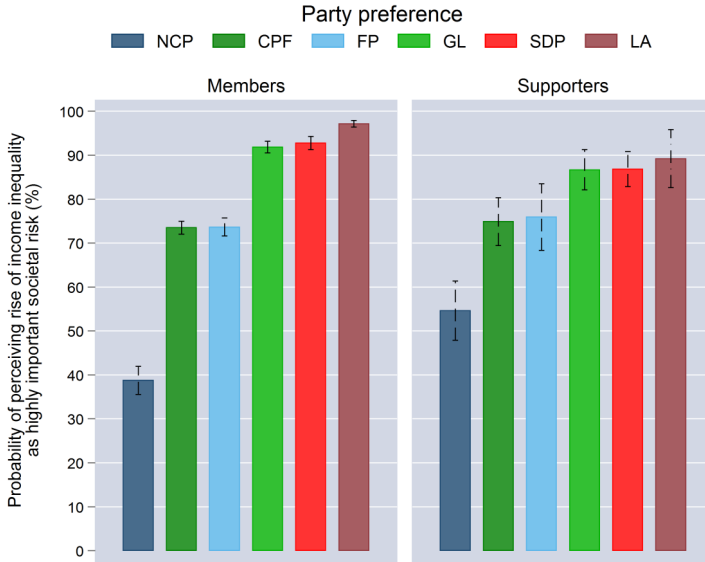
## **5.4 Social and ideological representativeness: a comparison of political party members and supporters in Finland.**

In the fourth original article, we provided a new frame of reference for understanding intra-party dynamics by analysing the representativeness of party members with regard to party supporters at the socioeconomic index and ideological levels. We underlined that political party members are a significant group with regard to driving both party values and future changes. Therefore, the source of party representativeness possesses significance in assessing the party landscape in a national setting.

We framed our article by suggesting that traditional parties are losing their authority to act as a stem between citizens and state decision makers due to the weakening link between the supporters, members, and party elites. By drawing on Hanna Pitkin's (1967) theory of representativeness, we developed the research task on the basis of descriptive and symbolic representativeness. The descriptive representativeness was measured through social status and the symbolic representativeness through opinions on income inequality, environmental problems, and asylum seekers and refugees.

According to the findings, the clearest general differences were found between the social status of the supporters and the members as the members were clearly in higher social positions. As expected, there was a wider gap between the parties when comparing the supporters than the members in terms of social status.

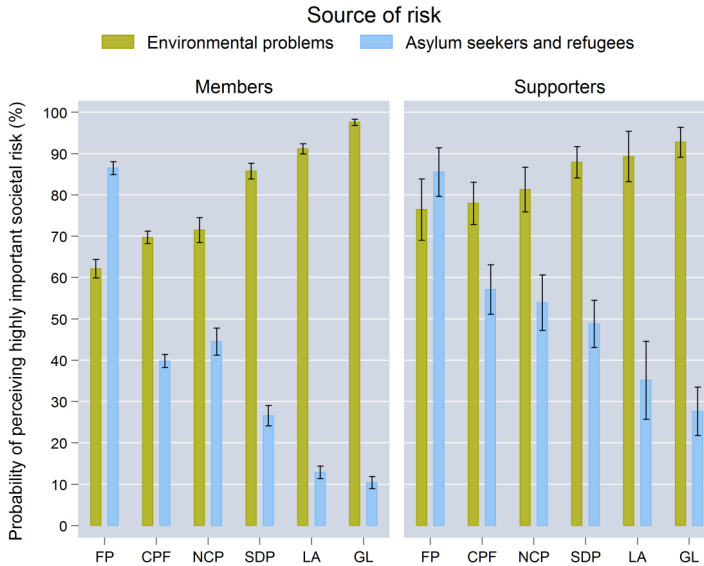
Additionally, the findings indicated that political opinions on income equality still cause significant differences between the left- and right-wing parties at the different levels of party stratum. The contradiction between the LA and the NCP was notable within both sets of data. It was, however, found that the difference was even clearer among the members. This result is illustrated in Figure 6 which describes the probability of the members and supporters perceiving the rise of income inequality as a highly important risk.



**Figure 6. Members and supporters’ risk perceptions of the rise of income inequality. The weighted proportions of those perceiving the concerned risk as highly important with 95% confidence intervals.**

This result is interesting when we consider that the social status of the members is generally higher and also narrower within the parties when compared to that of the supporters. These findings support the hypotheses concerning party members as reinforcing factors regarding the traditional party cleavages in terms of socioeconomic issues.

On moving to post-material issues, we found that members of the newer parties, namely the GL and the FP, represent the core values of their party supporters relatively well in regard to environmental problems and asylum seekers and refugees. Additionally, as seen in Figure 7, the division between the GL and the FP was notable in both issues but more notable among the members. In this respect, these findings also provide an interesting view of the landscape regarding the changes to the Finnish political paradigm in the last decade. The new parties have first of all separated from the traditional socioeconomic cleavage, and in the second place, their members are ideologically close to their supporters when the crucial themes in their policy preferences are analysed.



**Figure 7. Members and supporters' risk perceptions of environmental problems and asylum seekers and refugees. The weighted proportions of those perceiving the concerned risks as highly important with 95% confidence intervals.**

The members constitute their own relevant network, a phenomenon which has been little studied in Finland; a research gap also exists internationally with regards to the comparison of party members and supporters. For the purpose of the dissertation, this article acted as a kind of agent to assist in the transition of the analyses from supporters to members. The aim was also to highlight how significant the members still are within the parties, especially in reinforcing the traditional and new cleavages. In this respect, the results of the empirical analysis were a continuation of the results of the second and third original articles, as it appeared that the most crucial differences between the parties could be found between the new parties, namely the GL and the FP.

## **5.5 Risk perceptions across the current political spectrum in Finland: A study of party members**

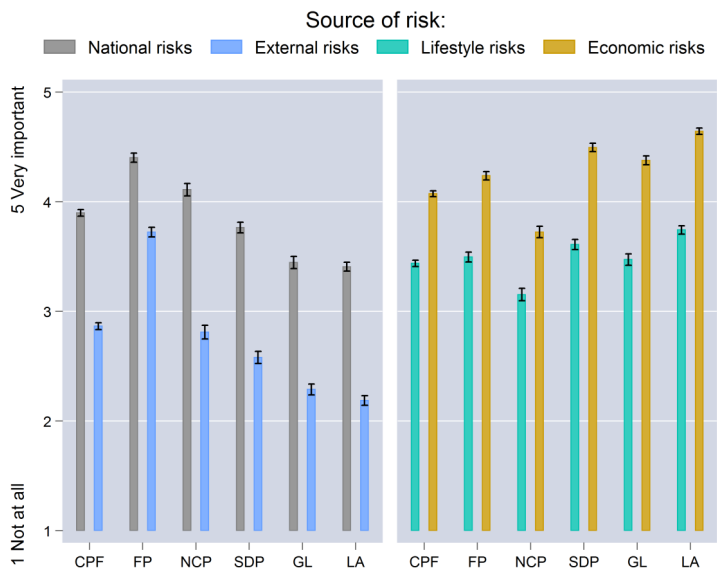
The final article provided a glimpse into the areas of the perceived societal risks presumed by the members of Finland's political parties, in addition to a comparison of inter-party differences and similarities. Here, again, the significance of the members as a social group, which still exercises a great deal of decision-making power in Finland, was emphasised.

Our starting point was to examine how the risk perceptions are linked to the current political cleavages by assuming the political parties are groups that consist of like-minded members who are potentially strengthening their group identity through their risk perceptions (Greene, 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In this way, we considered the dynamic nature of party membership and the multidimensionality of risk perceptions. The risk factors included primary categories dealing with various national, institutional, lifestyle, and economic issues. In order to attain an interpretation of the changing patterns of party membership and party cleavages, we also included the length of party membership in the analysis.

The main results are illustrated in Figure 8. The main effects revealed that national and external risks were more of a concern for the FP, while the members of the LA and the SDP considered economic issues a higher risk than the other parties. Generally, the economic risk was of most concern to the left while external risks were generally viewed in line with the current centre-right administration. The notable differences between the old and new party members were addressed in the changing patterns of the Finnish political spectrum and the increasing polarisation between the populists and the left-green parties.

Firstly, the article confirms earlier perceptions that societal risk perceptions depend on political ideology. The risk perceptions also allowed us to observe the existence of the traditional left-right and conservative-liberal dividing lines in the 2010s in Finland. Economic threats are perceived as significant on the left, while national threats are significant to the centre-right parties. Additionally, the analyses of the effects of membership length also disclosed how the old parties are realigning with the new parties, especially regarding post-materialist values. This was particularly the case for the Social Democrats, as the party has attracted an increasing number of members by fostering post-materialist values along with the social democratic values related to income equality.

Overall, the findings emphasised the importance of understanding how political party members differ in their views of various societal risks while providing new points of comparison between the parties concerning an improved level of clarity in relation to the national political landscape.



**Figure 8. Party members' perceptions of different societal risks. Demographically adjusted and weighted means (1-5) with 95% confidence intervals.**



## 6 DISCUSSION

All of the articles focused at least indirectly on two research questions: firstly, we studied how political party preference explains the reported attitudes and behaviours of citizens. In addition, we examined the context in which this association is created. In other words, we grounded the party differences on the present state of the Finnish political space. The main findings of the articles are presented in Table 5.

In the following, I submit the implications of the results alongside earlier research, separating the discussions into theoretical and practical ones. In the final subchapter, I discuss the limitations of the research as well as future avenues for research on the social mechanisms of party preference.

**Table 5. Summary of the main findings**

Article	Main findings
RA1	Party identification has direct and indirect statistical power when examining individual perceptions of consumption especially in terms of hedonistic consumption. Supporters of NCP seem to be a high-consuming group regardless of income or education level.
RA2	The supporters of populist parties did generally trust people as much as the other party supporters. Both social activity and institutional confidence had a strong effect on party differences but did not fully explain or mediate the observed differences. Societal status did not promote social trust among the supporters of the populists. The differences between the populists and the other supporters were the narrowest in Finland compared to other Nordic countries.
RA3	Terrorism risk perception was more prominent in 2004 than in recent years, while also being highly intercorrelated with other societal risks and less dependent on respondents' political preference. Since that time, terrorism risk perception has decreased at the population level, while also becoming more and more differentiated by political preference.
RA4	Party organisations are types of value clusters composed of high-class members. The party differences on ideological issues are more significant among members than supporters. The opinions on income equality still cause significant differences between the LA and the NCP, while the questions concerning environmental problems as well as refugees and asylum seekers are especially separating the FP and GL.
RA5	Perceptions of economic risks distinguished the members of the SDP, GL, and LA clearly from the NCP. External and national risks were more prominent among the members of the FP, meanwhile the members of the GL and LA seem to be counterforces to these particular risk perceptions.

## 6.1 Theoretical implications

Within the theoretical background of the dissertation, I proposed that party preference should have independent and distinct explanatory power when considering citizens' reported attitudes and behaviours. In Figure 1 (pp. 32), a theoretical outline of the original articles was used to understand the premises and contexts behind the social explanatory power of political party preference. Although the data used did not allow for a direct examination of the causality effect, each article demonstrated that the party preference confers a significant variation in terms of how the members and supporters of the different parties perceive different phenomena, such as societal risks of perceptions, trust in other people, and perceived consumption expenditure. Since all of the articles considered the impact of other crucial background variables, it can be argued that party does indeed have independent explanatory power in explaining social and economic activities and the underlying attitudes, especially in a distinct manner from traditional demographic factors.

In this sense, the results of this research also support the hypothetical statement presented in the title of the work. Even though the original articles did not factually investigate concrete situations of choice, the attitudes and behaviours reported within them have been reflected in concrete activities (Armitage & Christian, 2003; Kaiser, Wölfing, & Fuhrer, 1999; Räsänen, 2003). According to the articles, the supporters of particular parties were distinguished as separate collectives from the supporters of other parties, or at least some of the parties, on several different issues.

The main argument is also supported by previous studies that have shown that party preference is a relatively stable social category that, in fact, also has a shaping effect on the values and opinions of individuals (Goren, 2005; Goren et al., 2009; Greene, 2004; Jacoby, 1988). The results are also supported by other recent studies that were completed during the dissertation project. One of these focused on party supporters' differences regarding consumer preferences similarly to the first article in this dissertation. Regardless of the different categorisation and smaller amount of data, the results were similar to those of the first article in the dissertation (Koivula, Räsänen, & Saarinen, 2016). We also conducted a study on ethical consumer attitudes, which were also clearly divided according to party preference, especially between the GL and others (Koivula, Kukkonen, Sivonen, & Räsänen, 2018). The significance of the party as a social category was also supported by the results concerning the political fragmentation of attitudes towards social sciences (Saarinen, Koivula, & Keipi, 2018) and media (Sivonen & Saarinen, 2018) along with the different ways of participating in social media discussions (Koironen, Koivula, Saarinen, & Keipi, 2017).

It would be an exaggeration to claim that party identification completely determines attitudes and behaviours, such as consumer preferences, social trust, and risk perceptions. However, the political preference of an individual can be perceived as one of the

'structural factors' that reflects behaviour in the same way as, for example, education or professional status. Here, it is important to note that structural factors always involve similar behaviours, habits, and preferences that are common to individuals within the sphere of the same culture (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988).

Overall, the findings indicate that political party preference can be seen as a result not only of direct personal interests but also of adopting different cultural values and views. This can be understood by utilising the theory of embeddedness, in which the central idea is that the social network of people is embedded in their activities. In other words, individuals' attitudes and behaviours are affected by the social network to which they are attached (Granovetter, 1985; 1992). When expanding these politically similar networks, the central assumption is that individuals' social surroundings form a basis for political party preference (Berelson et al., 1954; Campbell et al., 1960; Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954; McPherson et al., 2001). The networks and reference groups with which citizens identify are generating pressure to behave uniformly (Jacoby, 1988). This is also possible because people are supposed to comply with their internal beliefs and norms to some extent (Therborn, 1991). In other words, individuals act according to the roles and expectations of their close social environment. The surrounding environments are politically similar, so it is logical that behaviours and attitudes are also politically tinged.

The tendency of party supporters to report similarly on attitudinal and behavioural questions is also an indication that parties function like networks formed by shared interests, life habits, and, naturally, values. This was framed in the theoretical section of the dissertation through the employment of Granovetter's (1985) theory of social embeddedness and Bourdieu's (1986) idea of resource accumulation. In light of the results provided by the original articles, it may be assumed that the parties have accumulated different kinds of resources that are being embedded into the perceptions of the party supporters. In this idea, the party acts as a kind of agent bringing together similar people who are distinct from other party supporters in the population-level analyses. This would explain why, for example, the supporters of the NCP report consume more than average, despite the standardisation of the socioeconomic factors, and also why the social trust of the FP does not increase according to education, even though this is the case with the other parties.

The supporters of the parties constitute a kind of network with shared attitudes and feelings related to the supporters' social surroundings. For example, when the supporters of the NCP emphasise their consumer expenditure, it could result from party supporters being influenced by their social surroundings. As we know, there is a large share of high-income and highly educated members and supporters among the NCP supporters (Karvonen et al., 2016; Keipi et al., 2017). By comparing themselves to the social environment (Festinger, 1954; Granovetter, 1985), even slightly less affluent supporters perceive themselves to be highly consuming citizens. This is possible because they share

the social environment with a large number of supporters of the same party, or at least are near the same party, who are generally high-consuming citizens.

On the other hand, reflecting on social identity theory and the results based upon it (Goren, 2005; Greene, 2004), it could also be argued that, for example, the supporters of GL can compare themselves directly to the median 'party supporter' (Jacoby, 1988), reporting much more modest consumption habits than supporters of the NCP despite the similar social status. In this case, the question of consumption may be understood as a political one. The theory of social embeddedness also supports the interpretations based on social identity theory. Human perceptions and activities are formed in a social environment, which also inherits a great deal from social status and social surroundings (Granovetter, 1985, 1992).

When we take into account recent studies on the decreasing significance of social class as a driving force of political preference, more can be understood about the connectivity of political preference (Dalton, 2008). In principle, individualisation is a crucial driver enabling us to understand the party as a unifying factor. Previously, this kind of study would have been less meaningful because we would have first estimated a strong dependence between social status and party choice, and then explored the correlation of the social status with the variables to be measured. In this way, we would have reached the same conclusions regarding the parameters of the party's direct association with the measurable variables. However, in light of the original articles, it can be argued that the party also has independent explanatory power irrespective of the social status and, therefore, one cannot draw conclusions from the views of the party supporters according to the socioeconomic factors, such as occupational class or education.

On the other hand, the research results also challenge the notion of an atomised society. The political party seems to be a social category that is still connecting people, which is reasonable when taking into account the development of various issues in society. For example, the politically different levels of social trust, and, in particular, that high social status does not positively promote the level of social trust in all parties, indicates that there are underlying social structures based on political preferences rather than socioeconomic factors. This interpretation also emerged with regard to the temporal variance of terrorism risk perceptions. Even though the average risk experience of terrorism declined in Finland during the study period, the decline was not uniform across the party spectrum. Instead, terrorism risk perception has become a politically tinged issue, which in particular divides the supporters of the centre-right and the left-green parties.

It is obvious, however, that the parties continue to promote the interests of the different population groups, and, therefore, the social status of citizens will continue to determine party choice. Nowadays, various occupational groups and therefore different interest groups are emphasised within different parties (Saarinen, Koivula, Koironen, & Sivonen,

2018b; Sivonen et al., 2018). Recent political changes have, however, revealed that the traditional paradigms based on social class divisions are no longer fully effective. Traditional party hierarchies are breaking up and, for example, the party preferences of high-class professionals should now be considered with more detailed instruments than the traditional social class measurements (Oesch & Rennwald, 2018; Sivonen et al., 2018). These results reinforce, together with the results of the original articles, the idea of the accumulation of different resources in the varying groups of party supporters, which is reciprocally embedded in the attitudes and behaviours of the supporters in a flow of social interactions.

## **6.2 Practical implications**

The temporal context of the data used in the articles mainly covers the two important parliamentary elections in Finland, namely the 2011 and the 2015 elections. In the first elections, the FP achieved a historic election victory, and in the latter, they confirmed their place in the Finnish political system. After the parliamentary elections in the spring of 2015, the constituents of FP turned the discussion towards the notion of a so-called 'red-green bubble', that is, an ideological convergence between individuals from the left and green parties, and the FP (Hamilo, 2015). The 'bubble' itself can be thought of as a distinct type of social network, or in practice, as an interaction-based stable relationship or an association between people.

The results of the original articles indicated that the party field in Finland has been fragmented and that there are significant differences between the parties in the perceptions of their supporters on a number of points and in how they report their behaviour. This is a positive result as we consider that one of the fundamental premises in a democratic society is that different parties serve the interests of different population groups (Aylott, 2014; Manin, 1997).

However, in the recent discussion about the political bubbles, the questions concerned the decline of the social links between the people and networks from different political blocks. The fear, which has already been witnessed, is that groups will turn increasingly inward and this will, among other things, increase distrust between citizens (Mutz, 2002b). This could reduce the possibility of citizen participation in political discussion and, accordingly, make it more difficult to render public decision-making more democratic (Mutz, 2002a; Pattie & Johnston, 2009).

In our articles, the differences between the parties were mainly in line with the expected results. The substance of the differences between the supporters may be addressed on the basis of different social divisions. The rise of the FP into the core of the Finnish political system has clearly changed the previously established divisions.

However, this has not meant that the FP would stand alone, distinct from the other parties, but their increased support may have indirectly influenced the alignment of the supporters of the other parties. This idea is supported, for example, by Goren et al.'s (2009) studies that have demonstrated that supporters of a particular party shape their opinions according to those of their political counterparts. This was particularly apparent when examining societal risk perceptions in RA3 and RA5. The third article, focusing on only one of the risks, terrorism, raised the possibility in which the societal and uniformly perceived problem, namely terrorism, is gradually understood politically. Similar results were found in RA5, in which terrorism was factored in with other military and violence risks.

The segregation of perceived consumption may raise concerns that parties' supporters live their everyday lives in such different worlds that a political consensus and decision-making are thus at risk. The first research article, however, indicated that differences in citizens' consumer perceptions could not be explained by the political changes and the rise of FP that occurred in the early 2010s. A similar result emerged in our recent study, which examined the ethical consumer attitudes of the various party supporters (Koivula et al., 2018). In other words, the supporters of FP do not differ from the other party supporters, at least, in their reported consumption or consumer attitudes.

This indicates that Finland is still, to some extent, a stable society with low income disparities and most citizens in the 'same boat' despite the political upheavals that have also appeared. This interpretation is also partly supported by the results of the second original article in which we analysed social trust. Finland could be distinguished from the other Nordic countries in that the supporters of the FP did not differ from the other parties supporters as much as the supporters of other Nordic right-wing populist parties. It is important to note, however, that the supporters of the FP had the lowest level of social trust in Finland as well, but the gap was not as high as among the supporters of the other populist parties in other Nordic countries.

The original articles also demonstrated that the Finnish party field is divided and blocks formed by different parties can be found depending on the issue. To some extent, these blocks have split apart in recent years, as the analysis of terrorism in RA3 revealed. In this respect, the results also raise questions regarding the extent to which it is possible that the political compartmentalisation of relevant societal issues undermines the likelihood of building public support for necessary policies aimed at solving different relevant societal problems. From this point of view, the bubbling and fragmentation are problematic regarding democracy and decision-making processes.

In this respect, it is essential to acknowledge that the discussion about the bubbles is not, in and of itself, new. The convergence and formation of mutual trust between different population groups and different modes of political thinking have always been discussed on some level. In countries such as Finland, one important theme related to this issue has been the discussion about the differences in the life choices between rural and

urban residents as well the interaction between these two groups. Accordingly, one can assume that the Finnish political field is in a transformed, but not new, state, especially when considering the attitudes and behaviours of the party supporters and members.

The empirical results of the dissertation support recent studies that indicate that values and lifestyles are strongly linked to party choice (Knutsen, 2017). This was also the case when examining the representativeness of the members with the party supporters. In some cases, it may be problematic if the members do not represent the values of the party supporters. For example, Widfeldt (1995) has suggested that this may have consequences for recruitment and also for election campaigning, as members have difficulties in communicating with citizens with whom they do not typically interact. Gauja and Haute (2015) concluded that unrepresentativeness might also weaken parties' abilities to adopt policies that reflect the wishes of different population groups.

In Finland, the FP and the GL in particular have been able to increase their membership in recent years. Even though the starting level of the parties was at a remarkably low level compared to the old parties, the subsequent rise in the number of party members has been considerable. The results presented in the dissertation can partly explain the development. The fact that the images of the FP and the GL are not burdened with the links to traditional interest groups and social cleavages may explain the rising interest in joining them. In that sense, a visible commitment to groups with economic or regional interests may be a burden rather than an advantage for parties. Accordingly, it is not surprising that the parties formed around post-material issues, the FP and the GL, have been active in the recruitment of new members. Here, it should also be kept in mind that these parties have given increasing decision-making power to their members, which has also potentially facilitated the member recruitment.

### **6.3 Limitations and future avenues**

The articles have their limitations. First, the measurement of party identification used did not take into account the intensity of party identification. This may affect the divulged results regarding party supporters because it is possible that those having a stronger identification with the party are also more affected by the party as a reference group when compared to those with only weak identification (Jacoby, 1988).

From the perspective of confounding variables, we did not take into account several factors that would influence both party preference and the studied phenomena. Recent studies have indicated that respondents' health is strongly associated with political engagement (Mattila, Rapeli, Wass, & Söderlund, 2017) as well as party choice (Rapeli, Mattila, & Papageorgiou, 2018). By the same token, we could not control for the

personality characteristics of individuals, such as narcissism, that may be related to both political preferences and the studied phenomena (Hatemi & Fazekas, 2018).

Additionally, we could not consider the socialisation effect of political preference. Recent studies (Rico & Jennings, 2015; Wolak, 2009) encourage the assessment of the significance of cultural factors adopted in adolescence as a driving force that exists behind the correlates of political preference. It is possible that party preference will be a more powerful factor for those who have taken up the party at an early stage of life, and who are, therefore, more likely to be more explicitly identified by the party. On the other hand, it should also be noted that the party choice specified in surveys may be manifested due to a momentary spell that may be generated, for example, by the characteristics of the party leader (Kestilä-Kekkonen & Söderlund, 2013) or by topical political issues (Geers & Bos, 2017).

These factors remain unobserved because we could not test the causal mechanisms of party preference with the applied datasets. Consequently, the conclusions had to heavily rely upon previous studies and theories that provided support, for example, for the socialisation of party choice and political ideology (Zuckerman, 2005), as well as the impact of the social environment on people's attitudes and behaviours (Granovetter, 1985; Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954). According to these notions, further research should take into account temporal changes in individuals' reported attitudes and behaviours by employing high-quality panel datasets.

It is also important to note that the examined issues, such as societal risks, may be highly dependent on the survey period. For example, the number of refugees in Finland increased significantly in late 2015 (Hangartner & Sarvimäki, 2016), which may be reflected differently in the risk perceptions regarding refugees and asylum seekers, especially in the surveys undertaken by the party members in 2016 and the party supporters in 2017. In this respect, the study should be repeated at regular intervals.

Several questions need to be answered concerning the generalisability of the results beyond the research setting, as is the case for most survey studies. The response rates of the applied datasets were moderately low, which raises the question of how well the estimates cover different socially marginal groups, which may also be politically active but do not respond to surveys. In addition, the generalisability of the studies was also limited by the measurements used. Even though societal risks describe people's general prejudices and are linked to political choices, they do not executively predict the values that have, for example, been incorporated into new political cleavages related to migration and environmental issues. By underlining the previously stated limitations, attitudes or perceptions do not tell the whole truth of human behaviour, although they are related to it (Armitage & Christian, 2003).

In future studies, it will be essential to investigate the impact of the research subject's party preference on behaviour through experimental designs. For example, regarding the



consuming situation, it would be interesting to know how much the consumer's political preferences affect the consumer's choices. This could be done, for example, through the vignette method, in which respondents would be presented with different scenarios of consumer choice situations that are being manipulated by political cues.

Finally, it is important to note that the data did not enable us to assess the similarity of the respondents' social networks. The theory of social embeddedness was justified mainly as a theoretical factor that explained why party preference charts different implications that are not explained by demographic or socioeconomic factors. In this respect, the results of this dissertation offer, above all, the opening of new avenues for economic sociology to reflect upon the impact of political preference on social and economic exchanges, for example. Additionally, the results presented in the dissertation are also inspiring with regard to researching ideologically similar and affective social networks that differ from traditional social class-based divisions.

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