

Populist Radical Right Parties' Novel Approach to Social Policy and its Impact on Voter Dynamics

FPÖ's social policy developments from 1994-2019 and voting behavior in Austria

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the impact of social policy on the electorate of populist radical right parties (PRRPs) by the example of Austria's FPÖ. It is argued that the shift of European PRRPs away from a minimal, neo-liberal understanding of welfare towards a more generous but restricted social policy positioning has changed their electorate to include more working-class and female voters. It is hypothesized that these sub-groups, who are traditionally more left-leaning and typically support comprehensive redistributive efforts, should be more attracted to PRRPs when they are placing increased emphasis on social policy. By combining a qualitative content analysis of FPÖ's electoral programs from 1994-2019 with correlation calculations on FPÖ's salience of welfare issues in electoral programs and respective electoral results, a comprehensive interpretation of FPÖ's shift in the framing of social policy and change in voting behavior for FPÖ can be made. Even though a significant shift towards a more generous welfare understanding of FPÖ and changes in the framing of welfare in line with their core ideology of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism can be demonstrated, this research finds no empirical results that this shift impacted electoral support for FPÖ. It has been found that electoral support of women and working-class voters does not significantly correlate to an increased welfare emphasis. While there are some limitations in the methodology, these findings suggest that socio-economic considerations and a comprehensive social policy positioning may be of less importance than socio-cultural issues, such as immigration and security, to voters of FPÖ and other PRRPs. Considering these results, this research addresses a notable gap in the existing literature concerning the impact of the prominent social policy shift of European PRRPs on their electoral performance.

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List of Abbreviations

PRRP: populist radical right party

PRRPs: populist radical right parties

PRR: populist radical right

FPÖ: Freiheitliche Partei Österreich / Freedom Party Austria

Introduction

Europe's populist radical-right parties (PRRPs) have shifted strongly in their social policy approach over the last 20 years. Far-right parties have changed their policy positioning on welfare benefits from a standpoint of strong retrenchment and neoliberal pro-market positions in the late 90s towards an emphasis on socio-economic issues and a generous but restricted welfare state, focusing on welfare entitlement and who "deserves" social aid (Abts et al. 2021). This "welfare chauvinist" development can also be analyzed for Austria's far-right populist party FPÖ, Freedom Party Austria. Over the last 20 years, FPÖ abandoned its neoliberal socio-economic understandings and has developed a comprehensive social policy approach, assuring generous support for Austrians while cutting support for non-natives (Chueri 2022; Ennsner-Jedenastik 2018, 2020). However, existing research has not yet connected this shift in socio-economic positions of the radical right to potentially altering the voting dynamics of PRRPs' electorate. This thesis analyzes whether the shift in social policy has considerably impacted the electoral support of PRRPs by looking at the example of FPÖ in Austria for the timeframe of 1994-2019.

While the populist and xenophobic party profile of PRRPs has been analyzed extensively over recent years, scholars have given less attention to investigating the socio-economic positions of PRRPs (Mudde 2010). Some academics even contend that PRRPs intentionally seek to "blur" their positions on economic policy or that socio-economic issues are only of secondary importance to them, focusing primarily on socio-cultural topics, such as immigration and security (Mudde 2010; Rovny 2013). However, it has been shown that over the last 20 years, European PRRPs have largely converged around a position of "natives first" when framing welfare policy and have based their social policy approaches on ideological considerations,

proposing welfare standpoints in line with their central ideological claims of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Abts et al. 2021; Ennser-Jedenastik 2018; Mudde 2007).

This thesis investigates this general research question: *How has the change in social policy positioning by FPÖ impacted voting behavior and the demographics of its electorate?* The reason behind choosing this research question is to understand the contemporary great electoral support for PRRPs all over Europe. By analyzing the implications of the social policy shift observed over the last twenty years in PRRPs throughout Europe, research on its potential impacts on the electorate is highly significant as it can inform on the general direction of far-right populist welfare agenda for a future in which growing economic disparities and higher numbers of migration in Europe can be expected.

I hypothesize that the shift in social policy has changed the composition of FPÖ's electorate to include new sub-groups of voters and could be one of the reasons that PRRPs are currently so popular in Europe. I expect to find that a more generous approach to social welfare has had an impact on broadening the composition of FPÖ's electorate from a traditionally more male bourgeois voter profile towards now also including "traditionally left-leaning" working-class voters, and secondly, more women voters (Ennser-Jedenastik 2022; Morgan 2013; Oesch 2008). Existing literature points to vote-shifting behavior of lower and middle-income classes, who are traditionally more left-leaning due to their social standing (Afonso and Rennwald 2018). I hypothesize that working-class voters increasingly support the populist radical right based on its growing emphasis on social policy. Furthermore, I assume that the new generous approach to women's and family policy also led to an increase in women voting for FPÖ. I, therefore, expect to find a positive correlation between a higher focus on working-class and women's and family-related issues and the percentage of workers and women voting for FPÖ.

To answer my research question, this thesis draws on existing secondary literature for its theoretical basis on the shift in PRRPs' social policy approach and ideological underpinnings (Abts et al. 2021; Ennser-Jedenastik 2016, 2020). It conducts a qualitative content analysis of FPÖ's party manifestos from 1994 to 2019, focusing on shifts in the framing of socio-economic policy positioning. Insights into the change of welfare positioning of FPÖ is complemented with data on the development of salience differences of socio-economic issues in FPÖ's electoral programs. Additionally, an analysis of FPÖ's willingness to spend social benefits on different welfare recipient groups over time is conducted. To analyze a possible change in the voting dynamics of FPÖ's electorate, the empirical analysis of welfare salience in FPÖ's electoral programs is coupled with post-election survey data on FPÖ voter profiles from Austria's national elections, focusing on social class and gender. By correlating the insights on welfare salience and spending attitude with total electoral success of FPÖ and, more precisely, with support by women and the working class, I demonstrate the impact of welfare issues on voter support.

This research finds that a significant shift can be observed in FPÖ's framing of welfare over time. The qualitative content analysis shows a clear shift away from a neo-liberal understanding of the welfare state towards a generous but restricted welfare state. It is found that FPÖ bases their social policy on core ideological claims of nationalism, authoritarianism, and populism. However, the quantitative data shows no significant positive correlation between higher welfare salience in electoral programs and increased electoral results. Similarly, an augmented spending attitude has no impact on significantly attracting voters. Thus, it can be concluded that FPÖ's shift towards a more generous social policy did not impact the voting behavior of working-class and women voters. Contrary to the proposed theoretical considerations, these findings might support this paper's counter hypothesis that for PRRPs and their voters, socio-

economic considerations are only to be placed secondary to socio-cultural issues (Mudde 2007; Rovny 2013).

This thesis is structured in five chapters. The first chapter gives insight into the current state of research into the PRR's socio-economic policy positioning and framing thereof. The second chapter discusses the theoretical framework, which is grounded in the broader theoretical and empirical body of scholarship of Ennsner-Jedenastik (2016) and Abts et al. (2021) concerning the framing of welfare issues by the radical right by using their core ideology as well as theoretical considerations of the potential impact of increased welfare emphasis on electoral support. Thirdly, the methodology for this research, the case selection process, and some historical background of FPÖ will be presented. In the fourth chapter, the findings of this research are discussed, highlighting the discrepancy between qualitative and quantitative results, including unexpected negative correlations of welfare emphasis on FPÖ's electoral support. In the concluding chapter, the main findings and contributions to the literature are summarized and limitations and possible avenues for further research are deliberated shortly.

1. Literature Review

In this section, I give an overview of the current literature on the connection between the welfare state and PRRPs and the overarching trends toward a comprehensive socio-economic positioning of the populist radical right. Over the last three decades, Europe has experienced a growing “mainstreaming” and strengthening of PRRPs within European party politics (Kitschelt 2007; Mudde 2007; Röth, Afonso, and Spies 2017). While research into the PRR has placed considerable emphasis on the ideological party profile and socio-cultural policy positionings as well as electoral performance of PRRPs, it has produced comparatively few insights into the socio-economic positioning of the European radical right, which has only caught on in recent years (Ennser-Jedenastik 2016). Existing literature has argued that the socio-economic policy positioning of the PRR has proven challenging to characterize as it displayed substantial variations and inconsistencies over time (Afonso and Rennwald 2018; Ivarsflaten 2008) and across countries compared to other European party families’ social policy positionings (Ennser 2012). Rovny (2013) even argued that PRRPs are intentionally “blurring” their position on socio-economic issues not to deter potential voters and so appeal to a broader category of the electorate on the right and left. Similarly, Mudde (2007) and Cornelis and Van Hiel (2015) have argued that PRRPs mainly focus on socio-cultural and nativist issues (what Mudde (2010, 1179) calls the “trinity of corruption, immigration, and security”) to build their political agenda and that, therefore, socio-economic issues only play a secondary role in their policy positioning.

Nonetheless, even though it is the case that security, immigration, and law and order remain most prominent in the political agenda of PRRPs (Afonso and Rennwald 2018; Mudde 2010), their socio-economic positioning has still attracted scholarly attention. In one of the earliest substantial accounts on the socio-economic positioning of PRRPs, Kitschelt and McGann

(1995) have argued that during the 1990s, the radical right found its “winning formula” for socio-economic issues by coupling a neo-liberal, non-interventionist approach to the welfare state and calls for welfare limitations with an authoritarian appeal of restricted immigration. It is argued that the former aspect helped the radical right to appeal to (small) business owners while the latter attracted traditional working-class voters, resulting in broad electoral support across social classes (Ennsner-Jedenastik 2016; Kitschelt 2007).

However, in recent years, the positioning of the radical right on socio-economic issues has shifted drastically from pushing a neo-liberal, minimal welfare approach towards an emphasis on a strong but chauvinistic welfare state (Abts et al. 2021; Chueri 2022; Ennsner-Jedenastik 2016; de Lange 2007; Rathgeb 2020). In contrast to Kitschelt and McGann’s (1995) findings on the neo-liberal socio-economic positioning in the 90s, PRRPs across Europe are now converging on exhibiting a great willingness towards a comprehensive welfare system (Abts et al. 2021). Yet, PRRPs firmly oppose a universal approach to welfare and stress distinct requirements to access the welfare state that align with the PRR’s fundamental ideological convictions (Abts et al. 2021; Ennsner-Jedenastik 2016). For PRRPs, the welfare state is primarily restricted to groups that are considered “deserving” (Abts et al. 2021; Chueri 2022; Ennsner-Jedenastik 2016, 2018) under narratives influenced by ideological core elements of the PRR (Chueri 2022; de Koster, Achterberg, and van der Waal 2013; Mudde 2007; Otjes 2019). Chueri (2022) shows that through this frame of “deservingness”, PRRPs are promoting a “dualistic” welfare state, supporting protectionism and expansion of welfare measures for the “deserving”, while effectively pursuing austerity and workfare measures when it comes to social policies targeting the “undeserving”. Similarly, Ennsner-Jedenastik also argues that “the socio-economic views of PRRPs are shaped by the core elements of their ideology” (Ennsner-Jedenastik 2016, 412) that determine which parts of the population are deemed “deserving” of welfare measures.

In the literature, three ideological frames can be distinguished that shape the social policy position of PRRPs: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Abts et al. 2021; Ennsner-Jedenastik 2016; Mudde 2010). Nativist values focus primarily on the “deservingness criterion of [national] identity” (Abts et al. 2021, 25) and can be found under the PRR’s intention to primarily restrict welfare entitlements to nationals while excluding non-nationals (Ennsner-Jedenastik 2016). In the literature, this nativist frame constitutes the fundamentals of welfare chauvinism, which aims to exclude non-deserving non-nationals (immigrants or refugees) from entering the national welfare system by closely tying welfare claims to citizenship (Abts et al. 2021; Ennsner-Jedenastik 2016). Authoritarian values primarily concern “willingness to work” and issues of reciprocity in the welfare state and can be perceived in the PRR’s aim of establishing a distinction between “the hard-working” and “the lazy or free riders” (Abts et al. 2021; Ennsner-Jedenastik 2016; Otjes 2019). In light of this, Abts et al. (2021) and Rathgeb (2020) introduce the distinct ideological frame of “welfare producerism”, arguing “that taxpaying ‘makers’ (employees, employers) need to be liberated from the economic burden imposed by self-serving ‘takers’ (immigrants, ‘corrupt elite’)” (Rathgeb 2020, 635). Relatedly, populist values, in turn, shape the PRR’s social policy frames by pitting the “pure people” against a “corrupt elite” and entails a more fundamental critique of the institution of the welfare state itself by arguing that it “is no longer capable of delivering help to the truly needy, but has become a self-serving tool in the hands of bureaucrats” (Ennsner-Jedenastik 2016, 414). These ideological frames will also be discussed in greater detail in the theoretical section of this paper. Considering the PRR’s shift towards calling for a strong welfare state through these ideological frames, research has identified differences in the underlying principles of the PRR to the political left, which traditionally stands for such comprehensive welfare support (Derks 2006; Lefkofridi and Michel 2017; Otjes 2019). Instead of advocating for a (leftist) egalitarian notion of universal equality, PRRPs have based their notion of socio-economic equality on specific

markers of identity and reciprocity (Abts et al. 2021; Bale et al. 2010; Otjes 2019). Furthermore, it has been shown that PRRPs are not overwhelmingly calling for broad expansion and augmentation of welfare benefits to all, but rather a “recalibration” of the welfare state that is conditional and highly selective with a focus on redistributive efforts, cutting aid from the “undeserving” in favor to those who “truly need it” and who have contributed to society (Abts et al. 2021; Ennsner-Jedenastik 2018). Ennsner-Jedenastik (2018, 2020, 2022) has also shown that PRRPs are consequently mainly using welfare chauvinist appeals to attack and call for limitations to welfare measures that are based on universal and means-tested schemes of redistribution, that are based on the notions of equality and need. Examples of this would be minimum income schemes or in-kind benefits that act as social safety nets (Ennsner-Jedenastik 2018). At the same time, insurance-based programs, such as pension schemes, are not as heavily confronted with welfare chauvinist arguments as they are grounded in ideas of equity and reciprocity and, thus, highlight the importance given to the notion of contribution in order to receive social benefits (Enggist and Pinggera 2022; Ennsner-Jedenastik 2018). By doing so, the PRR has repositioned itself as protector of the welfare state while framing immigrants as potential threats to welfare and can therefore be classified “as “left authoritarian” – that is, left on economic issues, but right on socio-cultural issues” (Lefkofridi and Michel 2017, 233).

In this way, the radical right is trying to appeal to traditionally left-leaning working-class voters who typically support a strong welfare state (Afonso and Rennwald 2018; Oesch 2008). Some scholars have analyzed the impact of the demonstrated shift in the radical right’s socio-economical attitudes regarding social class and have shown that PRRPs have been quite successful in answering working class’ demands of comprehensive welfare benefits and have correspondingly “proletarized” over Europe (Arzheimer 2012; Oesch 2008; Rathgeb 2020).

However, it has also been argued that this shift towards “left authoritarianism” could cause conflicts with mainstream right-wing conservative parties that present as the traditional (and to date the only past) coalition partner for PRRPs in Europe (Afonso 2015; Chueri 2021). Mainstream conservative parties conventionally emphasize economic performance as one of their primary goals and, thus, generally support retrenchment of the welfare state and call for limitation of social benefits (Afonso 2015; Chueri 2021), which could present challenging for coalition governments between conservative and radical right parties. According to Afonso (2015), conflicts could arise as such coalitions might force PRRPs to “betray” either their conservative coalition partner when insisting on implementing its “leftist” social agenda and risking the loss of office or “betray” their largely blue-collar electorate and risking the loss of votes when compromising to conservative welfare retrenchment demands. However, Han (2015) and Schumacher (2016) have also shown that coalitions between right-wing conservatives and PRRPs can lead conservatives to adopt a more radical welfare chauvinist approach and rhetoric to socio-economic issues. Moreover, it has been shown that whenever PRRPs have had the chance to govern with a conservative party, they tend to hold ministerial positions responsible for social and health-related affairs, again highlighting the importance of socio-economic issues in their policy portfolio (Chueri 2022).

When looking at the existing literature on the Austrian Freedom Party’s social policy positioning over time, Ennser-Jedenastik (2016, 2020) has found consistent results on FPÖ’s shift away from a neo-liberal welfare position towards a comprehensive but chauvinist social security system in line with the ideological frames of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism. Over the last 20 years, FPÖ has abandoned neoliberal socio-economic understandings of the 1990s and has developed a “dualistic” social policy approach, assuring generous support for Austrians while cutting support for non-natives (Chueri 2022; Ennser-Jedenastik 2016, 2020).

Afonso and Rennwald (2018) and Oesch (2008) have also found that FPÖ has become increasingly working class from the late 1990s to 2013. However, the existing literature is missing a more detailed analysis of the changing policy positioning and framing in Austria that goes beyond Ennser-Jedenastik's (2016) findings on who is deemed "deserving" of welfare in Austria but also includes questions regarding agency and scope of the social security system and respective redistribution designs proposed by the PRR.¹ Furthermore, few insights exist in the literature to date into the possible impact of the observed shift in welfare positioning on a potential change of the base electorate of PRRPs. Even though some studies confirm a growing "proletarianization" of PRRPs (Afonso and Rennwald 2018; Oesch 2008; Rathgeb 2020), only limited research has been conducted into changing demographics concerning the issue of gender, potentially shifting women's vote in the electorate of PRRPs that have long been understood as "men's parties" (Campbell and Erzeel 2018; Chueri and Damerow 2023; Hofinger and Ogris 1995; Morgan 2013). Although Morgan (2013) has shown that welfare states across Europe have become more accommodating towards implementing women's and family issues, and Chueri and Damerow (2023) and Erzeel and Rashkova (2017) have found developments of a slowly closing gender gap in the electorate of PRRPs, findings on potentially growing female electoral support for FPÖ is missing in the literature. Therefore, this paper's contribution to the literature is twofold. First, it will conduct a more detailed analysis of FPÖ's social policy shift towards a comprehensive welfare state and framing thereof, which has been missing in the literature so far. Secondly, it will analyze FPÖ's most recent national electoral outcomes concerning social class and gender. By examining the voting behavior of the working class and female voters, this paper will add new insights into the impact a more generous social

¹ Also see Abts et al.'s (2021) reasoning on why a more comprehensive analytical framework is needed, expanding on Ennser-Jedenastik's (2016) findings and see the methodological chapter of this paper for detailed reasoning.

policy approach had on these groups and give insights into a possible gender shift in the electoral support of FPÖ in Austria over the last years.

2. Theoretical Framework on PRRPs social policy shift and changes in voter dynamics

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical frameworks underlying PRRPs' shift towards a comprehensive but “dualistic” welfare state (Chueri 2022), as well as theoretical considerations supporting possible shifts in PRRPs electoral support by social class and gender. Therefore, the presented theoretical framework is twofold: first, it will elaborate on the emerging dualistic framing of welfare issues of the PRR by using its core ideology of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Abts et al. 2021; Ennser-Jedenastik 2016). I then propose theoretical foundations based on the radical right's adoption of “left-wing” policy positioning to explain growing working-class support and reasons for increasing female electoral support for PRRPs (Afonso and Rennwald 2018; Hansen 2019). The two theoretical approaches will provide an analytical framework for this paper's proposed research question, which can respectively be divided into two parts: *How has the change in social policy positioning by FPÖ (part one) impacted voting behavior and the demographics of its electorate (part two)?*

2.1 Towards a Dualistic Welfare State

Generally, the welfare state is defined as a set of institutions primarily concerned with producing and distributing social welfare (Abts et al. 2021). According to Flora (1986, 15), the essence of the welfare state, thus, is to ensure the “basic [social] rights of individuals to state-provided benefits as principle elements of their *life chances*” in order to distribute them more fairly and provide social security and more equality between all members of the population. Accordingly, for Esping-Andersen (1990, 23), the main objective of the welfare state is the “de-commodification” of individuals' labor performance through the introduction of social rights to welfare benefits provided by the state that ensure that citizens can “freely, and without potential loss of job, income, or general welfare, opt out of work when they consider it

necessary”. In this sense, the term “de-commodification” explains the development away from individuals’ reliance on their sale of labor power to survive, which was previously understood as a necessary commodity to upholding and “acquiring” wellbeing (Gosta Esping-Andersen 1990). De-commodification, therefore, “occurs when a service is rendered as a matter of right, and when a person can maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market” (Esping-Andersen 1990, 22). Unsurprisingly, the original responsibilities of the welfare state have been to cover the “classic social risks” of unemployment, sickness, and old age and to ensure job, income, and pension security of a primarily male workforce and their family (Flora 1986). Over time, the welfare state has been confronted with a new set of challenges. It has expanded to cover a plurality of social risks, including gender inequality, youth unemployment, child care, education, and a growing stratification and rising inequality between social classes (Esping-Andersen 2002).

Three different types of welfare state models with different outcomes on the level of de-commodification can be distinguished, which, in turn, lead to three differential types of welfare state regimes that vary in their arrangements between the state and the market when it comes to the provision of welfare measure (Esping-Andersen 1990; Flora 1986). First, the “residual” welfare state model describes a welfare scheme in which state institutions only come into play after the breakdown of market-based means of fulfilling social needs (Flora 1986). This translates to what Esping-Andersen (1990) characterizes as “liberal” welfare state regime, in which social measures are closely linked to demonstrated need. Benefits are mainly provided for low-income individuals who cannot support their welfare through employment in the form of modest means-tested social assistance. In order not to deter most individuals from working and relying too much on the state, “liberal” welfare state regimes actively encourage individuals to work and contract private-sector welfare by providing only modest social assistance to the lowest in society that is also often connected to social stigma, minimizing the

effect of welfare de-commodification (Esping-Andersen 1990). This kind of welfare state regime can be exemplified by the United States, Canada, or Australia (Esping-Andersen 1990). Second, in the “industrial achievement-performance” model, welfare measures are meant to complement individuals’ work performance, merit, and productivity in the economy (Flora 1986) and can be classified under the “corporatist” welfare state regimes, which are found in Germany, Austria, or France (Esping-Andersen 1990). In this welfare state regime, social benefits are highly dependent on contribution to the welfare state through compulsory state-led insurance systems and tax payments. They are, therefore, closely connected to active employment and participation in the economy, which in turn lessens the impact of de-commodification of labor (Esping-Andersen 1990). Third, in the “institutional redistributive” model, the institutions of the welfare state are understood as a fundamental part of society by providing universalistic social benefits on the basis of need without considerations of market performance (Flora 1986), encouraging the de-commodification of labor performance (Esping-Andersen 1990). This results in what Esping-Andersen (1990, 28) calls the “social democratic” welfare state regime that promotes equality between all social classes and intervenes not only when market measures are exhausted but preemptively supports all on a solidaristic basis and results in a “mix of highly de-commodifying and universalistic programs” and can be found in the Scandinavian countries (Esping-Andersen 1990).

What connects all three welfare state regimes is the concept of so-called “institutionalized solidarity” (Abts et al. 2021, 25) that is responsible for the underlying state-led redistributive efforts of European welfare systems and is founded on a “double social contract”. This “double social contract” describes the “idea of a cohesive community sharing special ties of reciprocity among its members, but also between these members and the state” (Abts et al. 2021, 25). This establishes the possibility of analyzing the welfare state on three major dimensions: agency and scope, redistribution design, and implementation and outcomes (Abts et al. 2021). Along these

measures, not only welfare state regimes but also party families can be differentiated when allocating what role the welfare state should play. In short, the dimension of agency and scope involves questions of who should take care of socio-economic redistribution and how much should be redistributed; the dimension of redistribution design analyzes who should get how much and which actor should pay for the redistribution; while implementation and outcome-oriented inquiries shed light on whether existing welfare arrangements are delivered effectively and efficiently (Abts et al. 2021).

When looking at the PRR's socio-economic positioning, it has been shown that over the last twenty years, European PRRPs have broadly shifted away from earlier socio-economic stances that supported a neo-liberal approach to social welfare and have overarchingly adopted a "protectionist welfare paradigm" (Abts et al. 2021; Chueri 2022; Ennsner-Jedenastik 2018). This means that, in contrast to the "social investment paradigm" of the social democratic party family, which aims to mitigate social life course risks by providing (universalistic) welfare measures in advance, PRRPs focus on only providing social protection through welfare measures to those who "truly deserve it" (Chueri 2022; Enggist and Pinggera 2022). Chueri (2022) has shown that in this way, PRRPs are calling for an actively protectionist welfare state for the ones they deem "deserving" while calling for a strong neo-liberal framework and "welfare state provision for the "undeserving" [that] focus on individual responsibility for social risk and incentives to labor market participation" (Chueri 2022, 388). Chueri also argues that PRRPs also stand for high penalties for labor market fraud and "workfare elements as central aspects for preventing undeserving groups from exploiting the common resources" (Chueri 2022, 388). Thus, it is argued that PRRPs are calling for a "dualistic" welfare state, aiming to provide comprehensive welfare measures to the "deserving" while negating unconditional welfare access to the "undeserving" (Chueri 2022).

It has also been shown that in order to communicate to their electorate and frame who is part of the ones “deserving” and “undeserving”, as well as inform on what the dimensions of agency and scope, redistribution design, and implementation and outcome of the welfare state should look like, PRRPs have been using their core ideological frameworks of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Abts et al. 2021; Chueri 2022; Ennser-Jedenastik 2016; Mudde 2007; Rathgeb 2020). In the following, I analyze these ideological frames in greater detail.

2.1.1 Nativism and Welfare Chauvinism

The concept of nativism describes a “xenophobic version of nationalism” (Ennser-Jedenastik 2016, 412) and supports the notion that the nation-state should be only inhabited by its “native population” that is usually defined by ethnic determinations entails hostility towards non-native inhabitants of the nation-state. (Ennser-Jedenastik 2016). Nativism’s implications to the welfare state are primarily based on restricting access to welfare measures to the national population while, in its most comprehensive version, entirely excluding non-nationals inhabitants (mainly refugees and immigrants) from welfare entitlements² (Ennser-Jedenastik 2016; Van Der Waal, De Koster, and Van Oorschot 2013). In the welfare state literature, this position of tying welfare measures to citizenship has been termed “welfare chauvinism” (Ennser-Jedenastik 2018; de Koster, Achterberg, and van der Waal 2013; Van Der Waal, De Koster, and Van Oorschot 2013). However, welfare chauvinism must not entail a complete exclusion of non-nationals from welfare benefits but can also result in “welfare favoritism”, which describes situations in which the national population receives more benefits or higher quality state support than non-nationals (Abts et al. 2021; Van Der Waal, De Koster, and Van

² It must be mentioned here that practically all political parties must somewhere draw a line restricting welfare benefits to a specific part of the population, which typically corresponds to holding the citizenship of the respective state. However, the strong focus of xenophobic exclusion of welfare measures by the PRRPs, that in some cases informs the totality of socio-economic policy positioning, differentiates the PRR from other mainstream parties.

Oorschot 2013). Welfare chauvinism can also take the shape of “welfare conditionality,” in which non-nationals must provide proof of admissibility in order to receive welfare entitlements that are often conditional on labor market participation, contributions, period of residency, or cultural assimilation such as language proficiency (Abts et al. 2021). Thus, nativism informs on who is deemed “deserving” based on van Oorschot’s deservingness criterium of (national) identity (Abts et al. 2021; van Oorschot 2006). In other words, distributing welfare measures is justified by having the “right” identity of being a citizen of the nation-state. PRRPs have been shown to use the frame of nativism by emphasizing “identity as a key criterion of deservingness, demanding to preserve and/or prioritize welfare for “our own kind of people” [in contrast to immigrants, since it] pertains to the fundamental question of who belongs to the community of potential legitimate [welfare] recipients” (Abts et al. 2021, 30).

When looking at the different levels of analyzing the welfare state, the concept of nativism informs on how PRRPs aim to shape the welfare on the dimension of redistribution design, which relates to the questions of “who should get what and who should pay for it” (Abts et al. 2021, 26). PRRPs call for a nativist redistribution of socio-economic entitlements by cutting support for non-nationals (immigrants and refugees), who, in this sense, should “pay” in favor of higher welfare possibilities for the national population.

2.1.2 Authoritarianism and Welfare Producerism

Authoritarianism constitutes the second core component of the populist radical right’s ideology (Mudde 2007). The concept of authoritarianism “describes an emphasis on the maintenance of traditional values, strong law-and-order policies to deter and punish crime, and on the acceptance of a hierarchical society” (Tillman 2021, 118). Furthermore, authoritarianism is typically connected to a “strong conception of what constitutes morally acceptable behavior” in this hierarchical society (Enns-Jedenastik 2016, 413). Based on this, welfare measures are

not to be distributed universally but on the grounds of conformity to society's values and expectations, primarily the expectation of willingness to work and contribute to society (Ennsler-Jedenastik 2016). This means that PRRPs base considerations of who is deemed "deserving" on the willingness to partake in the economy through paid labor but simultaneously recognize that specific groups cannot take up paid employment yet are highly "deserving" of social assistance, including the elderly, the traditional family, as well as the sick and disabled (Ennsler-Jedenastik 2016). While the elderly are understood as "deserving" because they have contributed and conformed to society's expectations throughout their lifetime, the sick and disabled are included among the "deserving" as they are generally not considered responsible for their conditions (Abts et al. 2021). For PRRPs, the traditional family is also to be placed in the group of "deserving" as it "is viewed as the nucleus of society and reproductive activities are therefore considered as a legitimate reason not to work in paid employment" (Ennsler-Jedenastik 2016, 414).

Conversely, authoritarianism also informs on framing other specific groups that are understood as "undeserving" of welfare measures, apart from non-native immigrants. These are primarily free riders of the welfare system, meaning individuals who mainly rely on welfare state benefits even though they could actively take up paid employment (Ennsler-Jedenastik 2016). Correspondingly, another group typically viewed as "less deserving" by PRRPs is the unemployed, precisely those who are argued to be "partially responsible" for their unemployment status and are not actively looking for re-employment³ (Ennsler-Jedenastik 2016).

Abts et al. (2021) refine the role of authoritarianism by introducing the notion of "welfare producerism", which is based on the deservingness criteria of control, attitude, and reciprocity.

³ It is important to mention that it is not only PRRPs, but a multitude of other political parties and politicians view the elderly, the family, and the sick and disabled as "deserving" of state support and condemn free riding and disapprove help for the "responsibly" unemployed (Ennsler-Jedenastik 2016). These expectations, thus, should be understood as somewhat less demanding and also less empirically informative.

While the criterion control refers to the ones who are “personally responsible for their state of neediness” (Abts et al. 2021, 26) and therefore in control of their socio-economic situation, the criteria of attitude and reciprocity play a crucial role in allocating the level of “deservingness” based on the behavior of welfare recipients. The deservingness criteria of attitude and reciprocity include the notion of equity to those who have already contributed to the welfare state. It is argued that in line with conforming to society’s values, “gratefulness and good moral” (Abts et al. 2021, 26) towards receiving welfare benefits increases the degree of deservingness, just as those who have already contributed to the welfare system are understood as more deserving (van Oorschot 2000, 2006). Furthermore, as authoritarianism is “typically motivated by a concern [of] preventing crime and social disorder, which PRR parties often link to immigration” (Tillman 2021, 118), the authoritarian framework is often combined with nativist appeals of welfare chauvinism under the argument that cultural outsiders are “naturally” more prone to cheat the welfare system (Abts et al. 2021; van Oorschot 2008).

Through this frame of authoritarianism, the radical right shapes the welfare state dimension of redistribution design (regarding the question of who should get what) and the dimension of agency and scope by focusing on who should take care of redistribution and how much should be redistributed to whom (Abts et al. 2021). PRRPs argue that the state should take up the redistribution towards the “deserving” who have either conformed to society’s expectations by working and contributing or are not responsible for being unable to do so in the case of the elderly, sick, and disabled.

2.1.3 Welfare Populism

Populism presents another core ideological feature of the PRR and understands politics as a struggle between the “pure people” and a “corrupt elite” (Ennsner-Jedenastik 2016; Mudde 2007). In connection to the welfare system, PRRPs are using the frame of populism to argue that the welfare state as an institution itself is inherently flawed, arguing that the “political

elite” is to be blamed for a malfunctioning redistributive system (Ennsner-Jedenastik 2016). It is argued that current social support arrangements are not delivering necessary social support to those “truly in need” and has primarily become a tool to distribute tax revenues towards a “self-serving elite” (Abts et al. 2021; Ennsner-Jedenastik 2016; de Koster, Achterberg, and van der Waal 2013). In the literature, this connection of populism to the socio-economic realm is labeled “welfare populism” (Abts et al. 2021; Derks 2006; Ennsner-Jedenastik 2016; de Koster, Achterberg, and van der Waal 2013). While “welfare chauvinism” and “welfare producerism” concentrate on the “horizontal social contract between contributors and [beneficiaries]” (Abts et al. 2021, 35), “welfare populism” criticizes “the vertical social contract between citizens and the state” (Abts et al. 2021, 35). It is argued that the PRR uses the frame of “welfare populism” to establish an inherent antagonism between “the establishment” and the “common citizen” in relation to the redistributive processes, contending that the welfare establishment focuses too much on remunerating “elitist, political insiders”, such as politicians and bureaucrats and should instead emphasize social benefits to the “taxpaying, common man” (Ennsner-Jedenastik 2016).

Abts et al. (2021) have argued that through the frame of “welfare populism”, PRRPs have been mainly attacking the welfare state dimension of implementation process and outcome, which deals with whether social benefits are delivered efficiently and effectively. By arguing that the “common man” and those “truly in need” are not the prime recipients of state-led redistributive efforts, the PRR contends that implementation and outcomes of the welfare state are ineffective (Abts et al. 2021). Simultaneously, “welfare populism” also refers to the dimension of agency and scope, as it is argued that the political establishment favors a “wrong” kind of recipients (i.e., immigrants and political insiders) as prime recipients of social benefits that should be directed to taxpaying citizens (Ennsner-Jedenastik 2016).

Considering these three ideological frames of the PRR, this paper argues that a combination of “welfare chauvinism”, “welfare authoritarianism”, and “welfare populism” aids PRRPs to establish “an apparently “egalitarian”, but in fact selective critique of the welfare state” (Abts et al. 2021, 36). In blaming the “establishment” for not sufficiently delivering social support to those that are deemed “deserving” (i.e., the contributing native population or those in genuine need), the PRR sets the baseline for a highly “dualistic” welfare state, limited to nationals and even allows for the argument to expand on welfare measures in areas such as family provisions and pensions (Abts et al. 2021). In answering the first part of my research question, I expect similar “dualistic” developments for FPÖ’s social policy positioning, promoting the expansion of welfare support for the “deserving”. This paper’s analysis will go beyond investigating FPÖ’s welfare chauvinism⁴ as the fundamental influence on its social policy positioning but argues that also “welfare producerist” considerations of recipients’ behavior and a “welfare populist” critique of the welfare state as an institution are driving factors in shaping FPÖ’s social policy.

Therefore, I hypothesize that FPÖ is not only using its core ideological elements of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism to frame who is seen as “deserving” and “undeserving”, but that these elements also shape the framing of the dimensions of the welfare state pertaining to agency and scope, redistribution design, and implementation and outcomes. My hypotheses connected to part one of the research question regarding the change in FPÖ’s social policy positioning towards a comprehensive but restricted welfare state are:

H1: FPÖ proposes a “dualistic” welfare state, calling for socio-economic expansion and protectionism for the “deserving”, while promoting a market-based, neo-liberal approach for the “undeserving”.

⁴ For a detailed analysis covering this topic, see Ennsner-Jedenastik’s (2016) paper „A Welfare State for Whom?”.

H2: FPÖ uses elements of their core ideology (i.e., nativism, authoritarianism, populism) to frame and determine the welfare state dimensions of agency and scope, redistribution design, and implementation process and outcome.

2.2 Shifting the Demographics: Social Class and Gender

To answer part two of the proposed research question, it is hypothesized that the shift in social policy positioning I have just outlined has changed voting behavior and the composition of FPÖ's electorate to include new sub-groups of voters regarding class composition and gender. I expect the move towards a more generous but “dualistic” welfare approach has shifted FPÖ's core voter dynamics from a traditionally male bourgeois voter profile (Ennsner-Jedenastik 2020) towards now attracting more female and working-class voters.

Looking first at the aspect of a potential shift in class composition, existing literature has shown that by changing their socio-economic policy positioning to supporting a strong welfare state over the last twenty years, the radical right now appeals to traditionally left-leaning working-class voters that typically support a comprehensive welfare system due to their socio-economic standing (Afonso and Rennwald 2018; Arzheimer 2012; Oesch 2008; Otjes 2019). By implementing a “left authoritarian” policy agenda, that means left on socio-economic issues and right on socio-cultural matters, it is argued the PRR has been able to expand their electoral support from both the political right to now include traditionally left-leaning voters (Abts et al. 2021; Lefkofridi and Michel 2017). It has also been shown that using the “protectionist welfare paradigm” mentioned above has primarily impacted growing working-class support for PRRPs, which have correspondingly “proletarized” across Europe (Afonso and Rennwald 2018; Chueri 2022). Contrarily, left-leaning middle-class class voters are argued instead to support the “social investment paradigm” connected to universal welfare approaches of the social democratic party family (Chueri 2022).

Literature also shows that a majority of members of the working class feel “left behind” and underrepresented by political mainstream parties and, while standing for broad socio-economic redistribution, share relatively strong chauvinist and populist sentiments regarding a welfare state that has seemingly “forgotten” them (Afonso and Rennwald 2018; Oesch 2008). Therefore, I expect that a high number of working-class voters have been drawn to PRRPs because of their connection of an extensive, traditionally leftist social policy to the frames of welfare chauvinism, producerism, and populism, prompting feelings of “deservingness”. I assume that by using their core ideological frames, the PRR has successfully reached out to the working class by challenging the current welfare system for not providing sufficient support to the common working citizen and has placed the wrong emphasis on aiding immigrants, free-riders, and bureaucrats, that have not contributed enough to society – sentiments broadly shared by the working class (Oesch 2008).

When investigating the aspect of gender, it is crucial to look at PRRPs newly established strong focus on protecting and supporting the family and single mothers, which, in the literature, are understood as “traditionally female” political issues (Campbell and Erzeel 2018; Chueri and Damerow 2023; Ennser-Jedenastik 2022; Erzeel and Rashkova 2017). It can also be shown that in electoral programs of the PRR, women are mainly addressed in their role as mothers, strengthening the connection between family and women’s issues (Ennser-Jedenastik 2016; Morgan 2013). As mentioned above, PRRPs place considerable emphasis on framing the “traditional” family⁵ as one of the main constituents “deserving” of social support, presenting it as the foundation of the national society’s prosperity connected to pro-nativist arguments (Chueri and Damerow 2023; Ennser-Jedenastik 2022). However, the radical right does not

⁵ The term „traditional“ family refers to familial structures that corresponds to the conservative, heteronormative image of the family. This means that the family is normally seen as consisting of father, mother, and child. Simultaneously, proposals for supporting LGBTQ+ families by establishing institutional support by legalizing marriage or adoption or supporting through financial benefits are normally opposed by the PRR to different degrees (Chueri and Damerow 2023; Ennser-Jedenastik 2022).

focus on establishing comprehensive gender equality and does not challenge the “traditional intra-family division of labor [between men responsible for providing income and women as primary caregivers]” (Ennser-Jedenastik 2022, 154) but aims to support the “institution of the family” overall (Ennser-Jedenastik 2022). While PRRPs have long been understood as traditionally male parties, recent studies have shown that the radical right has developed to exhibit higher female voter counts and slowly close the gender gap in the electorate (Akkerman 2015; Campbell and Erzeel 2018; Chueri and Damerow 2023; Coffé 2019; Erzeel and Rashkova 2017; Hansen 2019). Chueri and Damerow (2023) argue that this happens by implementing a more descriptive representation of women in politics (i.e., by instigating female leadership) or by adopting substantive female representation through the implementation of gender equality and family issues in their political agenda. While FPÖ has never had a female party leader and is lacking in establishing true gender equality, such as breaking with the traditional image of women as the primary caregivers, the focus relating to gender in this paper lies on FPÖ’s proposed family policy and the framing thereof. In line with recent research, it has been shown that over the last twenty years, FPÖ has adopted strong sentiments of supporting Austrian families and single mothers (Ennser-Jedenastik 2020, 2022). I, therefore, expect a growing ratio of female voters in the electorate of FPÖ over time in relation to an increasing focus on “female” issues.

Based on these considerations of social class and gender, I expect that the shift in social policy positioning has changed the dynamics of FPÖ’s voter base and has expanded from consisting of a traditionally male, upper-middle-class voter profile to now attracting more women and voters from the working class. Therefore, my hypotheses relating to part two of the research question on a potential change in the voting behavior of FPÖ’s electorate are:

H3: FPÖ's social policy positioning has developed to attract more working-class voters by promoting a generous but "protectionist" welfare system (using the frames of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism).

H4: FPÖ's social policy positioning has developed to attract more female voters by emphasizing extensive social support for the "traditional" family in their political agenda.

3. Methodology and Case Selection

In this chapter, I outline the methodological framework employed to answer my research question: *How has the change in social policy positioning by FPÖ (part one) impacted voting behavior and the demographics of its electorate (part two)?* that can be divided into two parts in line with the dual theoretical basis outlined in the previous chapter. Hence, the methodological framework follows a two-step process. Firstly, I am analyzing how FPÖ has shifted in its social policy positioning and framing. Secondly, I investigate the impact of this shift on FPÖ's electorate regarding social class and gender. In this chapter, I also outline the case selection process and provide some historical background of FPÖ to situate this research.

To determine the shift in FPÖ's welfare approach and its framing according to hypotheses H1 and H2, this paper relies on Abts et al.'s (2021) proposed framework for performing a qualitative content analysis of party documents and manifestos of PRRPs on their welfare framing over time.⁶ This paper will qualitatively analyze the content of FPÖ's party manifestos dating from 1994 to 2019 regarding the three dimensions of the welfare state, allowing for a comparative evaluation of FPÖ's social policy positioning over time.⁷ Following Abts et al.'s (2021) framework, this paper structures the coding of welfare statements in the party manifestos of FPÖ along the three welfare dimensions: agency and scope, redistribution design, and implementation process and outcome, which are summarized by Abts et al. (2021, 28) in their Table 1, also shown below. This research aims to analyze the core arguments used by FPÖ over time to frame welfare issues.

⁶ Abts et al. (2021) have analyzed PRRPs social policy developments looking at the case studies of Belgium, France, Italy, and the Netherlands. My analysis will provide a detailed analysis of FPÖ using this framework, closing the gap in the existing literature, and testing its generalizability.

⁷ Please see appendix A.1 for a bibliographic list of the analyzed electoral manifestos.

Table 1: *The Multi-Dimensionality of Welfare* from Abts et al. (2021, 28)

Dimension	Issue	Sub-dimensions⁸
Agency and scope	Who should take care of welfare and how much should be redistributed?	Welfare mix Range Degree
Redistribution design	Who should get what? Who should pay for it?	Deservingness Burden
Implementation and outcomes	Are welfare arrangements delivered efficiently and effectively? Do they reach their goal?	Efficiency and effectiveness (Un)intended Outcomes

The insights into the shift in welfare positioning of FPÖ from the qualitative content analysis of electoral programs are complemented with quantitative data by the “Manifesto Project Database”, showcasing salience differences of socio-economic topics in FPÖ’s party programs over time (Lehman et al. 2023). According to the Manifesto Project Database, the numbers “constitute the relative share of statements for each category in relation to all statements in the manifesto” (Lehman 2024, 2) and, therefore, show the percentual salience of specific welfare issues.⁹ I include salience measurements of the variables welfare state expansion, welfare state limitation, a positive view of labor groups, and salience of noneconomic demographic groups, which includes women, pensioners, and students. Analyzing these variables provides insights into FPÖ’s conception of the welfare state’s role towards workers and women. Additionally, to provide a more general analysis and overview of the salience of welfare issues, I coded welfare issues into five major sub-dimensions and looked at the page space dedicated to each sub-dimension in the electoral programs over time. I then converted page space into percentual salience by looking at the page space of sub-dimensions in relation to the total page count of the respective electoral programs. As a comparative element and

⁸ Please refer to appendix A.2 for detailed explanation of sub-dimensions that were analyzed.

⁹ See the appendix A.3 for a detailed description of which identification variables were used in the salience analysis.

indicator for socio-cultural topics in FPÖ's electoral programs, I included the salience of immigration issues as a separate sub-dimension that is not to be counted as a welfare sub-dimension. In this analysis, the page count dedicated to specific welfare topics can, thus, give insights into the importance accredited to these welfare topics as I assume that higher salience and emphasis dedicated to an electoral topic represents increased importance. On the one hand, this allows for a salience comparison of welfare topics in relation to non-welfare issues as well as an analysis of space given to each sub-dimension over time. The identified welfare sub-dimensions are:

- 1) Labor, Employees, Economy, Budget
- 2) Family and Women
- 3) Pensions
- 4) Healthcare
- 5) Social Justice and Redistribution¹⁰

To analyze a possible change in the voting behavior of FPÖ's electorate according to hypotheses H3 and H4, I correlate this salience-based quantitative data of welfare issues in FPÖ's party programs with overall election results in national elections. Secondly, I determine the changing support of working-class and female voters.¹¹ To do this, I correlate data on the welfare salience of sub-dimensions 1) Labor, Employees, Economy, Budget, and 2) Family and Women with post-election survey data on FPÖ voter profiles, focusing on the percentage of working-class voters and women voters. Through this approach, longitudinal trends concerning changing overall electoral support for FPÖ, as well as more specific insights into

¹⁰ This sub-dimension refers to redistributive issues including the role of the state in supporting the very poor and the disabled and references to an "unequal duality of the state" in preferring the rich, elites, and political insiders, while ignoring the "real needy". In this sense, this sub-dimension focused on all arguments outlining the alleged "unfair" welfare system and all proposals to redistribute more effectively away from the elite.

¹¹ In this analysis, following the definition by the SORA Institute for Social Research and Analysis (SORA 2019), the sub-group of "workers" are defined as "blue-collar" workers, distinct from "white collar" employees and the self-employed. For classifying voters into these categories related to employment status, SORA relies on self-declaration of national election survey respondents.

changing voter profiles on social class and gender, can be analyzed in light of its shift in welfare positioning.

Another aspect I aim to examine is FPÖ’s spending attitude and its willingness to distribute welfare provisions to the aforementioned welfare sub-dimensions, allowing for an assessment of which policy areas and welfare recipients FPÖ deems most deserving of social support. I coded spending attitude into three categories, as shown in Table 2. This coding also allows for an analysis of overall spending attitude and the determination of years in which FPÖ proposes especially generous welfare provisions. Correlation calculations are performed for FPÖ’s total spending attitude and overall electoral support. To test whether increased welfare spending attitude impacts attracting female or working-class voters, the spending attitude for the sub-dimensions 1) Labor, Employees, Economy, Budget, and 2) Family and Women are also correlated with respective voter data on these sub-groups’ electoral support.

Table 2: Coding of Spending Attitude

<i>Spending Willingness</i>	<i>Coding Level</i>
<i>Minimal state support/focus on low tax rates</i>	1
<i>Moderate welfare support</i>	2
<i>Generous state support</i>	3

This research assumes that proposed electoral programs are significantly responsible for shaping voter choice. In other words, I presume that voters are either attracted or disinclined to vote for a party based on the party’s presented policy positioning. As outlined in the theoretical chapter, I assume that more female and working-class individuals will be attracted to FPÖ because of changing social policy positioning in FPÖ electoral programs. However, it is possible and likely that political parties also coordinate their policy proposals to cohere with the interests of their already established voter base (Afonso and Rennwald 2018). This means FPÖ potentially adapts its social policy proposals towards more pro-welfare positions

considering its changing working-class composition and gender ratio of its electorate (Afonso and Rennwald 2018). To test whether FPÖ significantly shapes their social policy positioning to align with their voter base's interests, I analyze whether increased gender ratios in FPÖ's electorate correlate to a corresponding increase in proposed welfare provisions. This is done by correlating the proportion of women in FPÖ's electorate in one election year on the salience level of welfare issues in the respective next electoral program. These results inform if the FPÖ significantly adapts its social welfare program to fit the demographics of its voter base established in previous elections. I focus on FPÖ's gender ratio, as data on the ratio of working class in comparison to other occupational statuses is not publicly available and could not be gathered due to time constraints.¹² Data on the gender ratio of FPÖ's electorate was directly provided by Dr. Peter Hajek from the Peter Hajek Public Opinion Strategies Institute (Hajek and Peter Hajek Public Opinion Strategies 2024).¹³ These insights additionally inform on whether significant changes in the demographic composition of FPÖ's electorate by gender are observable and provide data on the developments of the gender gap in FPÖ's electorate from 1994 to 2019.

Regarding the case selection of this thesis, according to Ennsner-Jedenastik (2020), FPÖ is to be understood as one of the most successful European PRRP and distinctly represents the ideology and voter profile of the radical right. FPÖ was founded in the 1950s and played a minor role in Austrian politics compared to the traditionally established Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the Christian-conservative Austrian Peoples Party (ÖVP). From its outset, the party was split between a nationalist and a more neo-liberal, pragmatic faction

¹² Please refer to Afonso and Rennwald's (2018) paper "Social class and the changing welfare state agenda of radical right parties in Europe" for an assessment of changing working-class composition of European PRRPs from 1980 to the early 2010s.

¹³ Please refer to appendix A.4 for the complete data on FPÖ's electoral performance and gender ratio. Unfortunately, the data on the female proportion of FPÖ voters for the year 2008 is missing in this analysis.

(Ennser-Jedenastik 2020). Internal party conflicts peaked in 1986, after the party entered its first coalition with the social democrats in 1983, led by the economically liberal faction, when nationalist faction leader, Jörg Haider, took over party leadership, successfully challenging the sitting party leader of the liberal wing (Ennser-Jedenastik 2016). Under Haider, FPÖ experienced a populist shift and slowly turned away from its neo-liberal pro-market positions during the 1990s, marking the beginning of increasing electoral success. While in the 1950s and 1960s, FPÖ's electorate consisted mainly of male individuals from the petit-bourgeoisie, during Haider's leadership, FPÖ's electorate became increasingly working class (Afonso and Rennwald 2018). By the late 1990s, up to 65% of FPÖ voters were working class, while in the early 1970s, only around 45% of FPÖ voters were workers. (Afonso and Rennwald 2018). In 1999, FPÖ reached their best result to date of 27% of the popular vote in Austria's national elections and entered into a coalition government with ÖVP (Ennser-Jedenastik 2020). Internal conflicts among FPÖ politicians led to early elections in 2002 and dramatic electoral losses for the party. In 2005, FPÖ leadership split again, with Jörg Haider leaving the ranks and founding the new party "Alliance Future of Austria" (BZÖ) while Vienna's party chairman Heinz-Christian Strache took up party leadership (Ennser-Jedenastik 2020). Under Strache, FPÖ could rebuild electoral gains, focused on immigration as its core issue, and rebranded itself as the "social homeland party", establishing a strong pro-welfare but chauvinist social policy position (Ennser-Jedenastik 2016). After the 2017 elections, FPÖ, once more, partnered with ÖVP as junior partner in a coalition government, which was dramatically terminated in 2019 by the Ibiza affair, uncovering major corruption propositions by Strache and other leading FPÖ officials (Ennser-Jedenastik 2020). At the time of writing, FPÖ is projected to reach up to 29% in the next parliamentary elections in the fall of 2024 (Der Standard 2024; Der Standard and Seidl 2024). This paper analyzes data from 1994 to 2019. This timeframe was chosen as it allows for an effective analysis of the overarching shift in social policy of European PRRPs,

with FPÖ abandoning its neoliberal position on socio-economic issues in the early 2000s and the subsequent establishment of considerable emphasis on welfare issues throughout the 2010s.

4. Findings and Discussion

In this section, I present my findings of the collected qualitative data based on content analysis of FPÖ's electoral programs from 1994 to 2019 and the collected quantitative data. The quantitative data is presented in sub-chapters dedicated to electoral statistics, salience measures of welfare topics, spending attitudes, and data on the development of voter demographics by gender within FPÖ's electorate. In the second part of this chapter, an interpretation and discussion of the data follows. In presenting the data, this paper's main research focus on workers' support and family and women's policy will be emphasized.

4.1 Qualitative content analysis of FPÖ's electoral programs

Looking at the qualitative data collected from FPÖ electoral programs, some significant developments can be highlighted to have changed in the framing of welfare by the party over time in the areas of agency and scope, redistribution design, and implementation process and outcome.¹⁴

Firstly, when looking at the dimension of agency and scope, a clear trend away from neo-liberal arguments focusing on strengthening national economic performance by curtailing welfare spending and emphasizing beneficiary tax cuts for the working class, small and medium-sized enterprises, and the family as well as a focus on active labor market policies can be analyzed (FPÖ 1994, 1999). In the 1990s, FPÖ argued for a minimal perception of the welfare state, highlighting personal responsibility, and only providing social support in cases of existential hardship that can arise due to old age, disability, illness, accident, unemployment, or severe strokes of fate. FPÖ also strongly argued against the state's involvement in the free market, arguing for "full privatization of the nationalized economy and sale of all public shares in private companies" (FPÖ 1994, 53) and holds past socialist governments responsible for

¹⁴ Please refer to appendix A.5 for the coding and detailed results of the qualitative content analysis.

inefficient public spending (FPÖ 1994, 1999). By the early 2000s, a greater willingness for generous state support to alleviate the situation of workers, families, and pensioners can be analyzed by FPÖ's appeal for establishing and expanding minimum wages, minimum pensions, and more significant childcare subsidies (FPÖ 2006, 2013, 2017). Regarding the range of social domains covered by welfare provisions, FPÖ has greatly emphasized pensions, family assistance, and enhancing the conditions of workers, introducing tax breaks for workers and families, bonuses for single mothers and low-income families, as well as calling for an increase and yearly adjustment of pensions, minimum wages, and family allowances to inflation levels (FPÖ 2002, 2013, 2017). Interestingly, these developments are often combined with low, business-friendly tax schemes (FPÖ 2002, 2006).

However, even though welfare issues have become a central topic in FPÖ's electoral programs and a clear shift away from neo-liberal policies can be observed, FPÖ has not adopted an overwhelming "leftist" perception of welfare support and has, for instance, remained highly critical toward the introduction of a basic income scheme, arguing that "any financial incentive which - like the basic income - serves as a lure must be stopped" (FPÖ 2017, 3). Furthermore, instead of more "leftist" calls for the expansion of welfare payments to citizens, FPÖ called for comprehensive recalibration of the welfare state to cut costs and improve equality and efficiency in favor of those who "really need it". Accordingly, FPÖ has argued that "redistribution does not bring real relief in the long term. We need structural reforms" (FPÖ 2008, 10) and that "potential savings can be made by optimizing social spending, the subsidy system, federalism, and general administration, but also by merging social security institutions" (FPÖ 2017, 22). This approach is exemplified by FPÖ's intention to consolidate and streamline the national social security scheme and the national pension systems (FPÖ 2006, 2008, 2013). They successfully implemented reforms in this area as they held the ministry for social affairs

and welfare during their periods in government (FPÖ 2013, 2017).¹⁵ At the same time, FPÖ has called for a separate insurance scheme for non-nationals and refugees (FPÖ 2006) and has promoted a neo-liberal approach and work-fare policies for non-nationals, emphasizing essential contributions to the Austrian state and willingness to work in order to receive minimal social support.

Secondly, when analyzing the dimension of redistribution design, it can be shown that FPÖ clearly determines families, workers, and pensioners as the primary recipients of welfare provisions, emphasizing the frames of contribution and identity as key criteria for deservingness of social support (FPÖ 2006, 2013, 2019). Since the early 2000s, FPÖ consistently argued for generous welfare payments to families, understood as the “nucleus [...] for a functioning society” (FPÖ 2011, 8) that must be supported by the state for their central contributions of building the foundation of the national society’s prosperity. Similarly, pensioners who “have given a lifetime of service” (FPÖ 2013, 5) must be fairly imbursed for their lifelong contribution to establish national welfare. On the other hand, the frame of identity, pertaining to who belongs to potential welfare recipients, clearly outlines a shift towards “welfare chauvinism”, understanding foreigners and immigrants as strictly undeserving of welfare benefits and tying welfare provisions to Austrian citizenship. This frame of identity and subsequent arguments for “welfare chauvinism” have drastically increased and are especially salient in the FPÖ electoral programs of 2013 and 2017. In these programs, virtually all welfare aspects are framed using welfare chauvinist arguments and closely tying welfare support to nationality. This includes comparing the amount of social benefits provided for Austrians with state support supplied for immigrants or refugees (FPÖ 2013, 2017, 2019). By doing this, refugees and non-natives are presented as an apparent burden to the welfare state,

¹⁵ In these consolidations, FPÖ centralized the pension schemes by unifying differing payment-schemes for occupational groups and undertook one of the biggest changes in the realm of social policy by restructuring of Austria’s social security system, merging 21 insurance carriers into only five insurance companies (Parlament Republik Österreich 2018).

undeserving of social support that instead should primarily go to “hard-working”, tax-paying Austrian citizens. Furthermore, it can be analyzed that whenever state support is to be given to non-nationals, it is closely connected to the frame of and willingness to work, as well as language proficiency and integration and assimilation into Austrian society (FPÖ 1994, 2008, 2017). In this way, welfare behavior and conformity to society’s expectations for welfare recipients are front and center in the decision of who is deemed “deserving”.

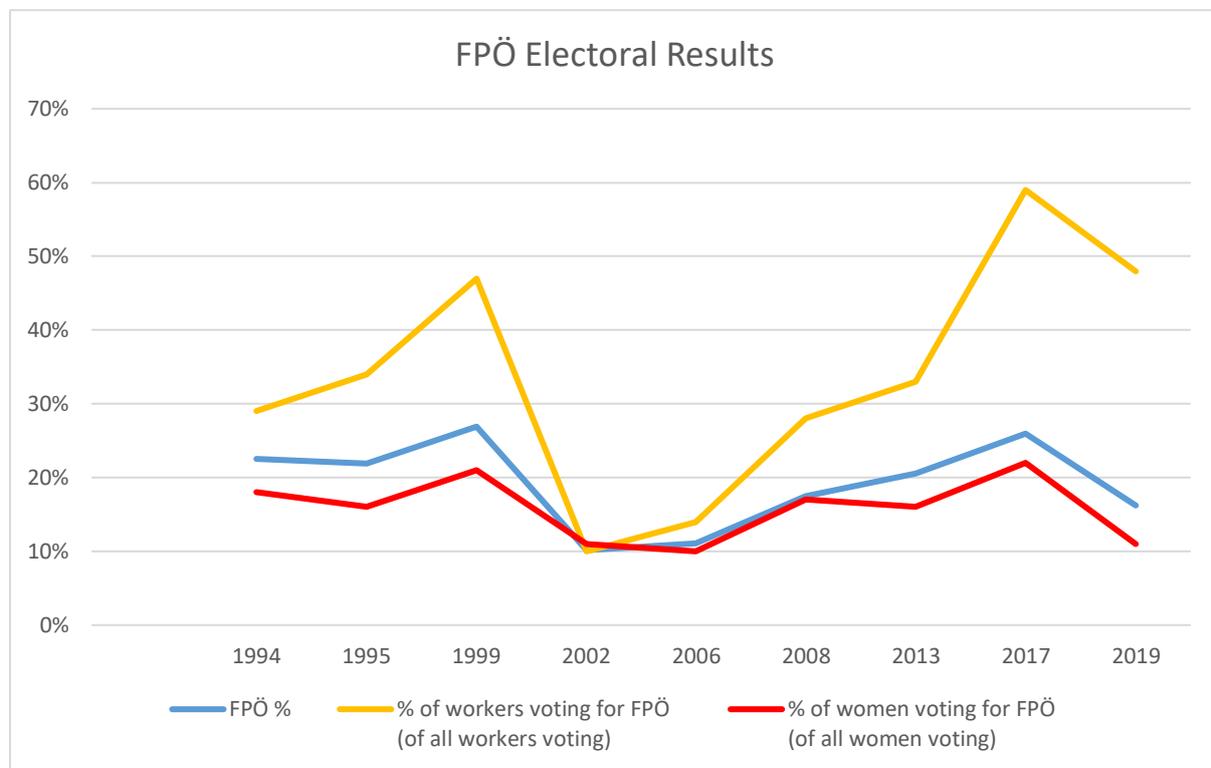
Thirdly, looking at the framing of the dimension of implementation process and outcomes, FPÖ fundamentally critiques the institution of the welfare state itself by questioning its ability to efficiently deliver social support to the “deserving” and “truly needy” (FPÖ 2013, 2017, 2019). It can be demonstrated that FPÖ has consistently understood political elites (such as the more mainstream parties, ÖVP and SPÖ) as the main actors to blame for an inefficient if not “corrupted” system arguing for the “abolition of politicians' pensions and double remuneration from several public functions” (FPÖ 1994, 67). FPÖ, thus, presents itself as the protector of the “common citizen by arguing that “SPÖ and ÖVP devalue the mass of wages with far too high taxes and make life more expensive with excessive fees. The middle classes are left to fend for themselves with maximum taxes” (FPÖ 2013, 3). Similarly, it has been argued that FPÖ has “seen it as its task to make every effort to make people as such the actual beneficiaries of the Austrian social system and to reshape the previous unjust and inefficient socialist system, which focused on institutions rather than people” (FPÖ 2002, 82). According to the FPÖ, immigrants are also to blame for economic and social inequalities, arguing that “economic refugees”, i.e., refugees who immigrated not because of persecution or war, but because of economic prospects (and are therefore not entitled to social support based on need), undermine and abuse the Austrian welfare state, while the mainstream parties are watching inactively. (FPÖ 2013, 2017, 2019).

4.2 Quantitative analysis of electoral data, salience measurements, and spending attitude

I will now present the results of the quantitative analysis, comprising data on general electoral support of FPÖ, the development of welfare salience in FPÖ electoral programs, as well as analyzing the spending attitude of FPÖ towards different welfare sub-dimensions over time, and data on the gender gap of FPÖ's electorate.¹⁶ All electoral data was collected from the SORA Institute for Social Research and Analysis, also responsible for evaluating the results of Austria's national elections (Neuwirth 2016; Ogris et al. 2002, 2006; Ogris and Hofinger 2008; SORA 2024; Zandonella and Perlot 2013, 2017, 2019). Data on women's and workers' support for 1994 to 1999 were collected from Plasser and Ulram (2000).

4.2.1 Overview of Electoral Support

Figure 1: FPÖ electoral results over time, including workers' and women's vote



¹⁶ Please refer to appendix A.4, A.6, A.7, and A.8 for the underlying data sets and references upon which the presented graphs are based.

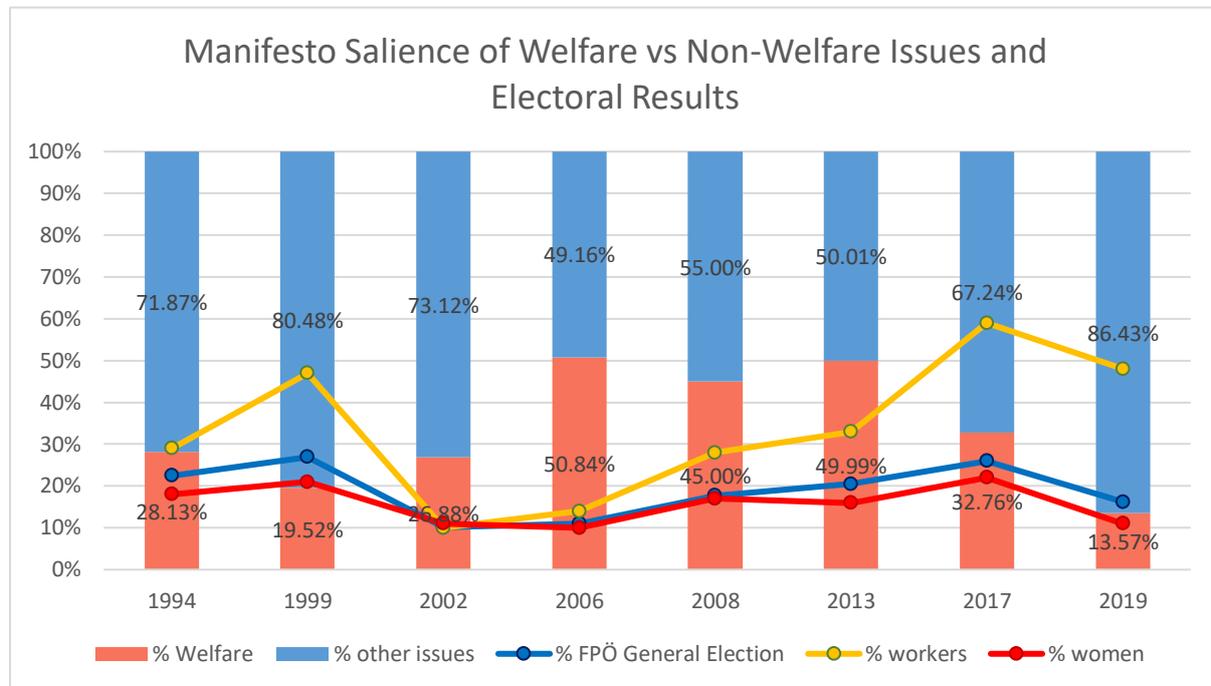
Figure 1 shows the collected quantitative data on electoral support over time. In 1999 and 2017, FPÖ reached their respective best electoral result of 26%. Looking at total electoral support for FPÖ, a sharp drop in support after the 1999 elections and subsequent slow increase from the early 2000s can be analyzed, declining slightly again in 2019. This drop in electoral support in 2002 is very likely to be accredited to FPÖ internal struggles and a change of party leadership, while the decrease in support in 2019 can most likely be attributable to the Ibiza affair, mentioned in the methodological chapter. Analyzing support by working-class voters, a similar considerable drop from 50% of overall worker's support to around 10% can be observed for the 2002 elections. However, from 2006 to 2017, working-class voters increasingly supported FPÖ, reaching a considerable 60% of total workers' support in 2017, with a slight decline in workers' support again for the 2019 elections. Contrastingly, women's support can be demonstrated not to fluctuate significantly over the analyzed timeframe, staying relatively constant between 10 and 20 percent, reaching its maximum of 22% of the women's vote in 2017.

4.2.2 Salience of Welfare Issues

Figure 2 displays the salience of welfare issues in electoral programs in contrast to salience of non-welfare-related policy areas. It compares the electoral results with the salience percentage of welfare subjects in respective FPÖ electoral programs and reveals a notable increase in the space dedicated to social issues between 2006 and 2013. While welfare issues accounted for less than one-third of the content in the 1990s, by 2006, the electoral programs dedicated around half of their content to social issues. This trend was reversed for the 2017 elections, with welfare issues again making up approximately a third of the total program text and, surprisingly, taking up only 14% of program space in 2019. When looking at voters' support

for FPÖ, it can be shown that in highly welfare salient years, support by the working class and women slightly increased.

Figure 2: Salience of welfare issues in FPÖ electoral programs



Figures 3 and 4 provide a more detailed analysis of the development of welfare salience, differentiating distinct welfare sub-dimensions over time. It can be identified that the sub-dimensions of 1) Labor, Employment, Economy, and Budget, as well as the dimension of 2) Family and Women, consistently take up a considerable amount of electoral program space dedicated to welfare. The dimension of labor even constituted one-fourth of the total program content in 2006 and 2013. Similar to the findings shown in Figure 2, a notable increase in the salience of these two sub-dimensions can be analyzed from 2006 to 2013. Figure 4 also shows that the rise in overall salience of welfare issues between 2006 and 2013 in Figure 2 can be primarily attributed to an increase in salience of the two sub-dimensions 1) Labor, Employment, Economy, and Budget, as well as 2) Family and Women. Furthermore, we can see that the topic of immigration has gained significant importance over time, starting in 2006 and being especially salient in the electoral agendas of 2006 and 2019.

Figure 3: Welfare sub-dimensions vs non-welfare issues in FPÖ electoral programs

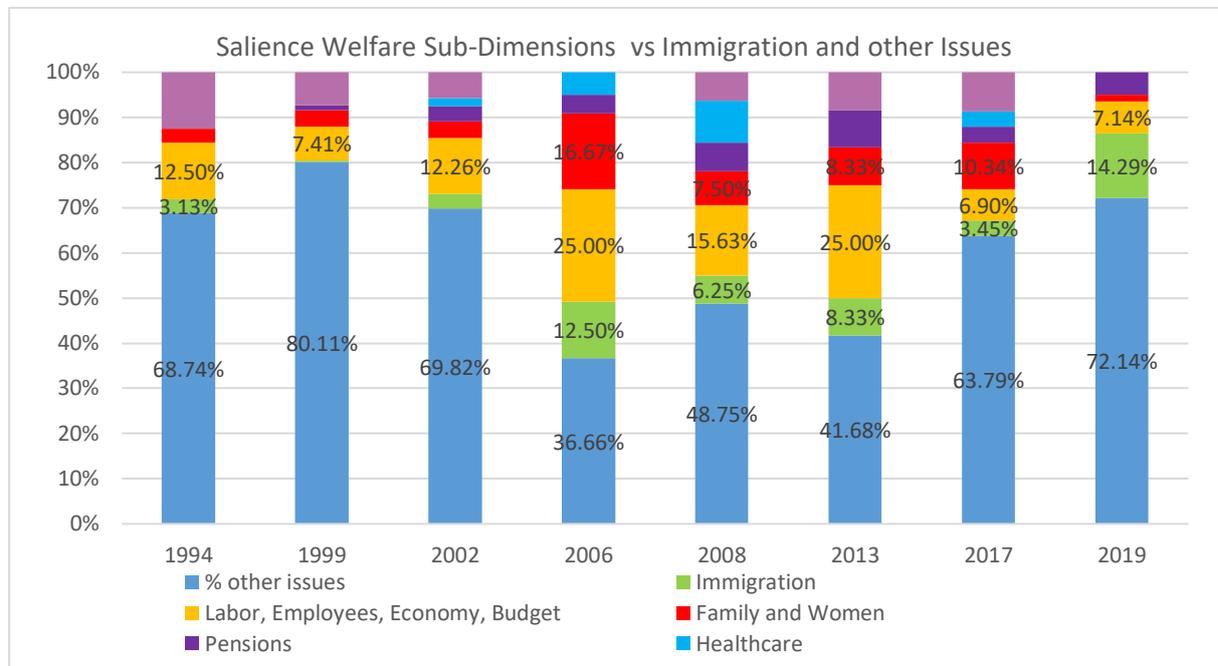


Figure 4: Salience of welfare sub-dimensions in FPÖ electoral programs

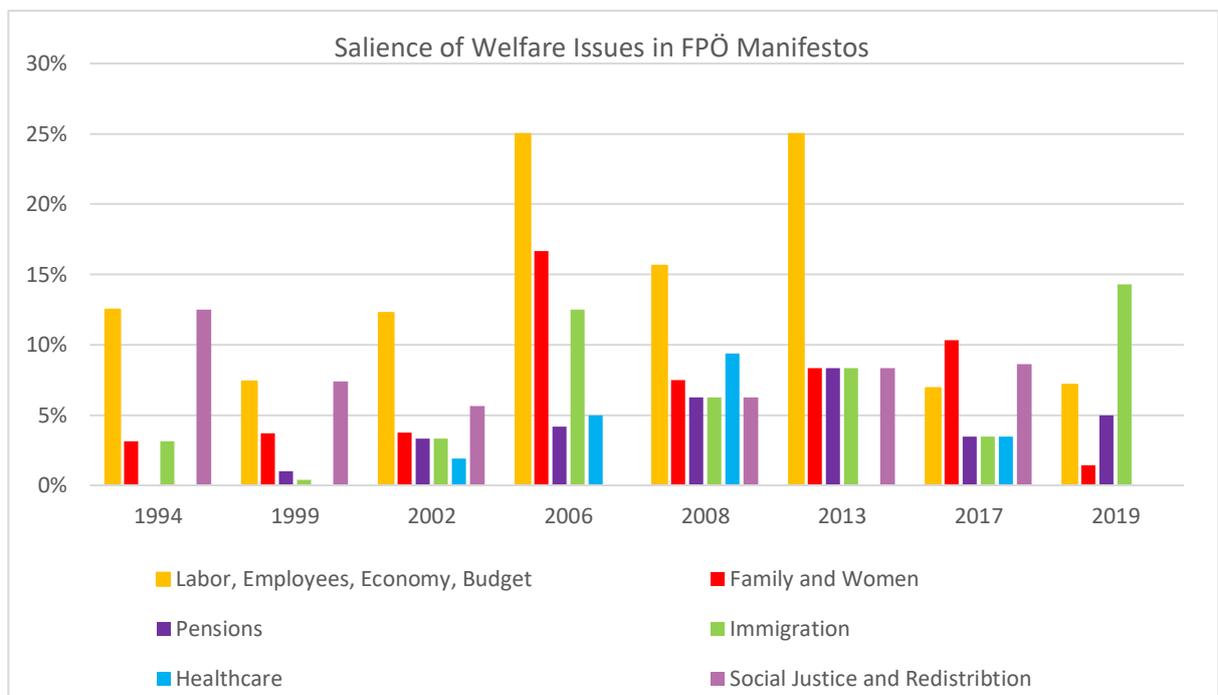


Table 3: Correlation Calculations Saliency and Electoral Results

Correlation Results on Saliency of Welfare Issues in FPÖ's Electoral Programs and Electoral Results

Saliency of welfare issues overall in electoral programs and FPÖ total % reached	-0,240
Saliency of welfare issues overall in electoral programs and % workers' vote	-0,435
Saliency of welfare issues overall in electoral programs and % women's vote	-0,099
Saliency of labor issues in electoral programs and % workers' vote	-0,618
Saliency of family and women's issues in electoral programs and % women's vote	-0,110
Saliency of immigration in electoral programs and FPÖ total % reached	-0,554
Saliency of immigration in electoral programs and % workers' vote	-0,126
Saliency of immigration in electoral programs and % women's vote	-0,719

Interestingly, slightly negative correlations are observed when correlating the saliency of welfare issues with general voters' support for FPÖ. Similarly, I find negative correlation results for the saliency of the sub-dimensions of labor and family issues in electoral programs and the workers' and women's vote, as shown in Table 3. In other words, for working-class and female voters, other electoral issues seem more important than welfare, suggesting that socio-economic topics may not resonate strongly with FPÖ's voter base. This development is somewhat surprising as it could mean that higher saliency of welfare issues in electoral programs might harm FPÖ's chances of electoral success overall. Increased saliency of worker's and women's issues might also negatively impact the electoral results of female and working-class voters. At the same time, it can be shown that the saliency of immigration issues in electoral programs is also negatively correlated with electoral support, especially with female support.

Table 4: Correlation Results of Welfare mentions and selected Welfare dimensions from the Party Manifesto Project, Lehman (2023)

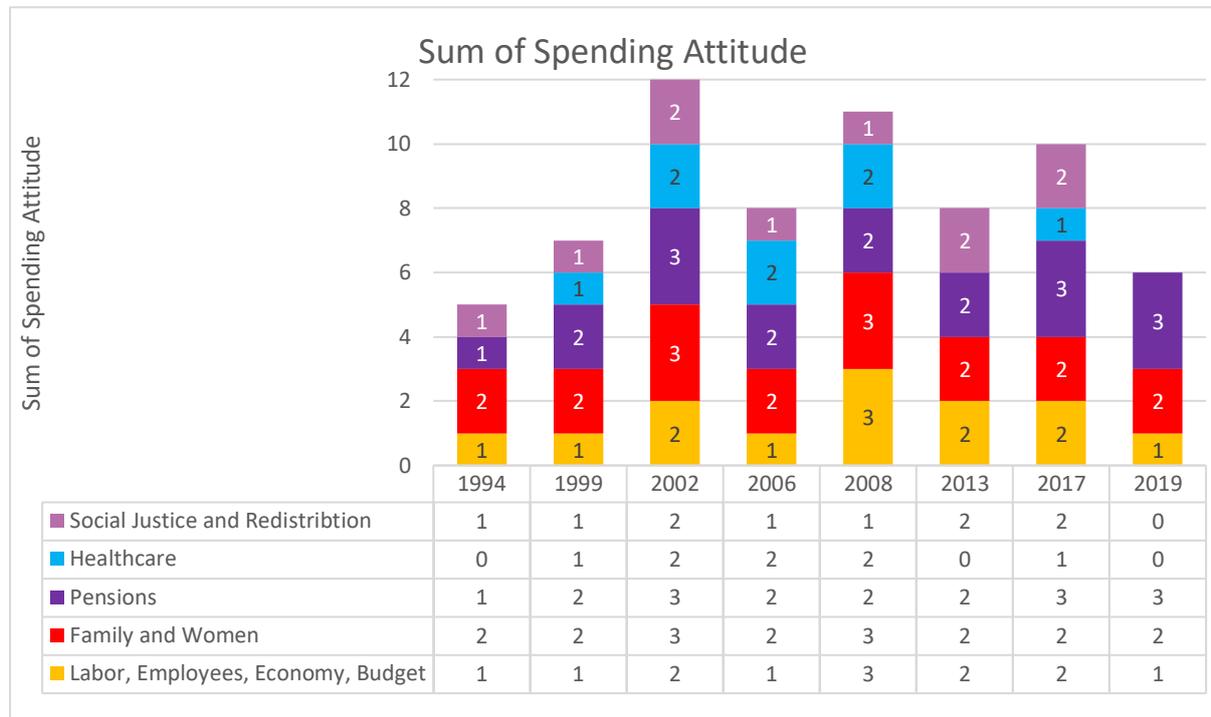
Correlation Results of Welfare Salience overall and selected Welfare dimensions

Saliency Welfare and Saliency Welfare State Expansion	0,760
Correlation Saliency Welfare and Saliency Welfare State Limitation	0,091
Correlation Saliency Welfare and Saliency Positive Understanding of Labor Groups	0,745
Correlation Welfare and Saliency of Non-economic Groups (Women, Pensioners, Students)	0,584

Table 4 shows correlation results from saliency data by the Party Manifesto Project, including more refined saliency measurements that can inform FPÖ’s general understanding of what role the welfare state should play (Lehman 2023). Fairly strong positive correlations can be shown between welfare saliency in electoral programs and the saliency of talking about welfare state expansions (0,7), the saliency of a positive assessment of labor groups (0,7), and the saliency of “non-economic groups,” including women and pensioners (0,5). This means that whenever FPÖ dedicates more saliency to welfare issues in their electoral programs, they are also talking more about labor groups, women, and pensioners and about the expansion of the welfare state measures. Contrastingly, only a minimal positive correlation (0,09) can be analyzed between the saliency of welfare mentions and welfare state limitation, indicating that for the analyzed timespan, FPÖ has put no significant effort into calling for cutting back on welfare state provisions.

4.2.3 Spending Attitude

Figure 5: FPÖ Spending Attitude over time, Sum



An analysis of the willingness of FPÖ to distribute social benefits, as illustrated in Figure 5, provides insight into the general trend of generosity over time. It also allows for identifying the groups of welfare recipients the party deems most deserving. A review of the data reveals that FPÖ has become considerably more generous, starting in the early 2000s until 2017. Notably, the party's spending attitude declined again in its most recent electoral manifesto of 2019. It can also clearly be shown that FPÖ favors pensioners and families as primary recipients of generous social provisions.¹⁷ At the same time, spending attitude towards the working class indicates continuous moderate social support for this group of recipients. To analyze the impact of spending attitude on electoral support of women and workers, the data on FPÖ's willingness to allocate welfare benefits to the sub-dimensions of 1) Labor, Employees, Economy, Budget and 2) Family and Women is connected to electoral support of women and working-class

¹⁷ The data on spending attitude does not include spending attitude towards migrants, as according to my qualitative data, FPÖ does not change their understanding of providing only minimal social support.

voters, as shown in Figure 6. Interestingly, while the “high spending” year of 2008 shows an upward trend in workers’ and women’s support, similar developments cannot be found for another “high spending” year, 2002, in which both groups’ electoral results declined drastically. This development is highly likely to be explained by FPÖ’s internal frictions and leadership change. Furthermore, there seems to be no direct connection between total electoral support for FPÖ and varying spending attitudes on 1) Labor, Employees, Economy, and Budget and 2) Family and Women. However, it can be shown that increasing spending attitude towards the working class from 2006 to 2019 goes somewhat hand in hand with electoral support from this voter group.

Figure 6: Spending Attitude for Labor and Family Issues, Electoral Results

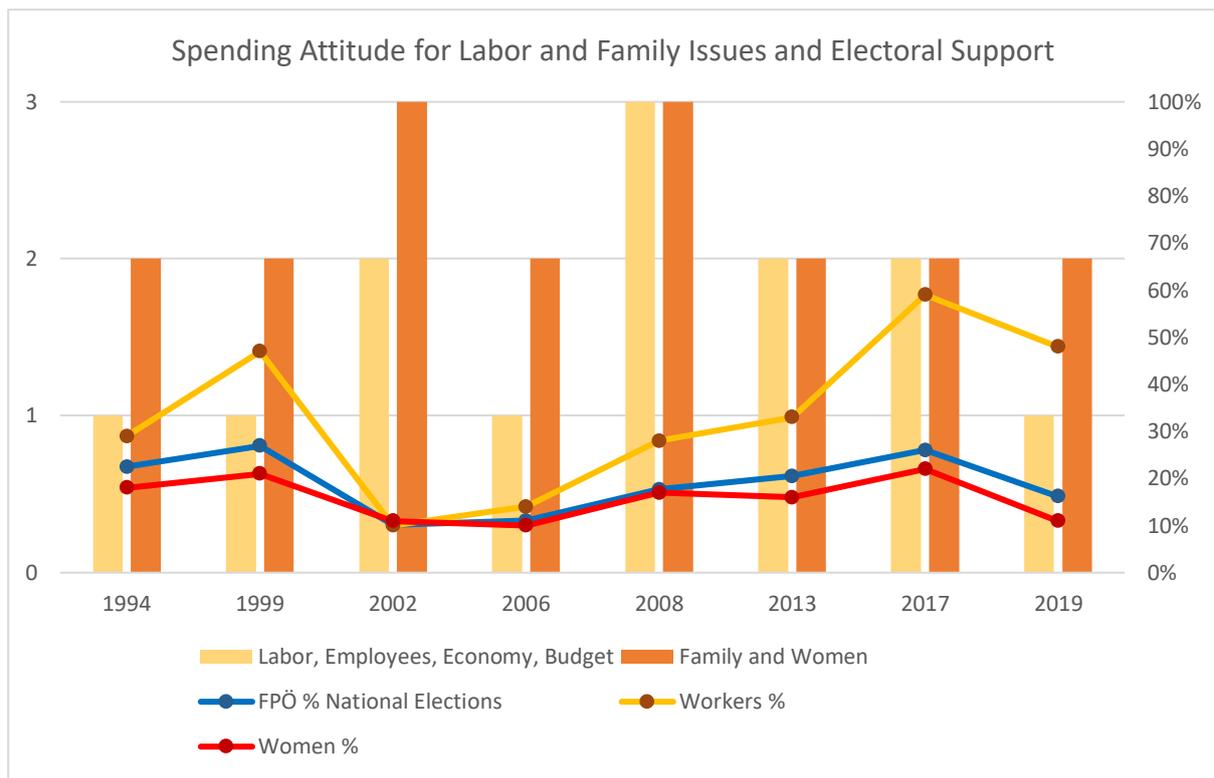


Table 5 shows the results of correlating the data on spending attitude with electoral results. I find negative correlations between spending attitudes and electoral results, suggesting that increased public spending may not necessarily result in electoral gains for the FPÖ. It can be

observed that a negative correlation (-0,35) exists between higher spending attitudes and the overall electoral success of FPÖ. Slightly negative correlations are found for FPÖ's spending attitude on labor issues and respective workers' support (-0,1), as well as willingness to spend on family and women's issues and female voter support (-0,2).

Table 5: Correlation Calculations Spending Attitude on Electoral Results

Correlation Results on Spending Attitude and Electoral Results

Spending attitude overall and FPÖ total % reached in general elections	-0,350
Spending attitude labor, employees, economy, budget and % workers' vote	-0,107
Spending attitude family and women's issues and % women's vote	-0,232

4.2.4 Adapting Electoral Program to Voter Base and FPÖ's Gender Gap

Figure 7: Gender Proportion of FPÖ voters over time

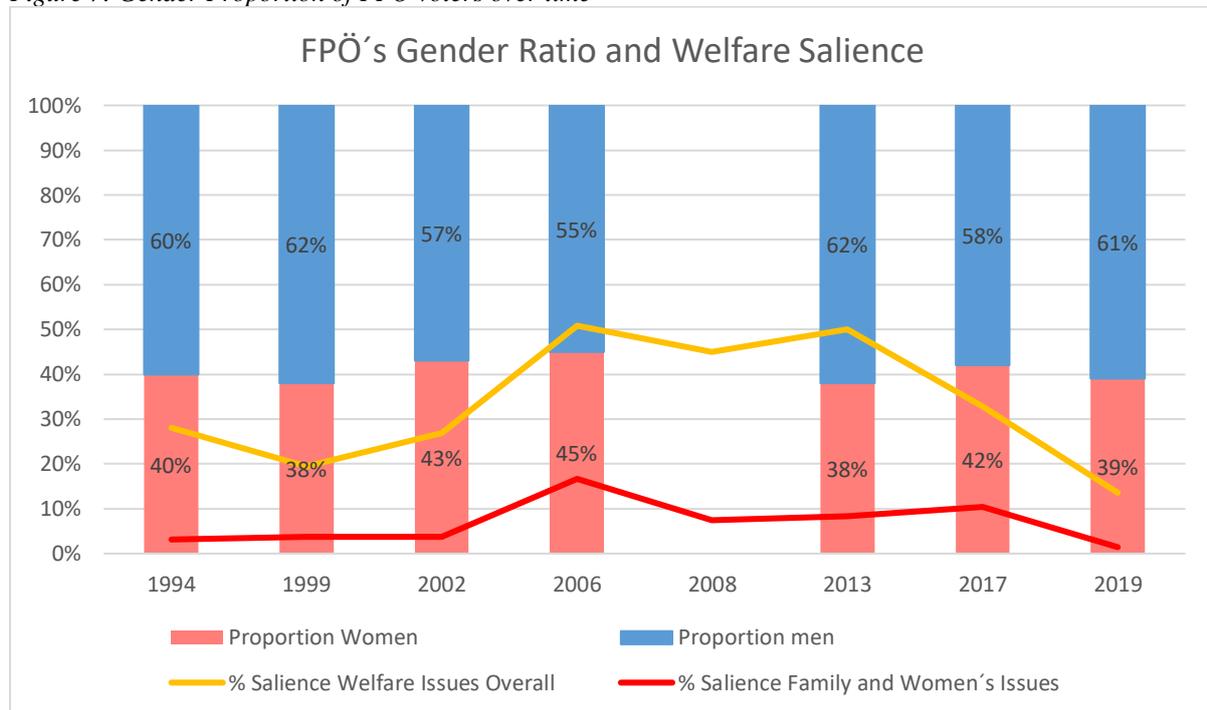


Figure 7 presents the gender ratio in FPÖ voters over time and the respective percentual salience of welfare and family and women's issues in the respective electoral program. It can be demonstrated that the gender gap of FPÖ has not significantly changed over time, remaining

at a rate of approximately 40% of FPÖ voters. Thus, it can be concluded that FPÖ consistently upheld a male-dominated voter base. The salience of family and women's issues plays virtually no role in the quantitative salience data. In 2006, the salience of family and women's issues reached its peak of 16%, while in 2019, this sub-dimension received only around 1,5% of page space.

Table 6: Correlation Women's ratio and Welfare Salience in following electoral program

Correlation Results

Women's ratio with following years salience of welfare overall	0,473
Women's ratio with following year's salience of family and women's issues	0,645

To analyze whether FPÖ has significantly shifted its salience of welfare in line with changed women's proportion, it is necessary to interpret women's ratio of one year with the welfare salience in respective following election's program. For example, it can be shown that FPÖ, having reached a comparatively higher women's ratio of 43% in 2002, also exhibits an increase in the salience of welfare (from 27% to 50%) and family and women's issues (from 4% to 17%) for the electoral program of 2006. Yet, looking at the graph, it can be shown that this is not true for all years. In 2017, for instance, FPÖ experienced an increased female ratio in its electorate but did not increase the salience of welfare and women's issues in the 2019 electoral program. Table 6 shows the results of correlating the ratio of women in FPÖ's electorate over time with the changing salience level of welfare issues and family and women's topics in the subsequent electoral programs. The positive correlations indicate that, overall, FPÖ seems to align its social policy positioning to its changing voter base, while it should be kept in mind that some outliers exist in the timeline.

4.3 Interpretation and Discussion of Results

Looking at the collected data, it is possible to make some critical connections and give answers to the tested hypotheses outlined in the theoretical chapter. When analyzing the qualitative text data, a change in the framing of welfare issues pertaining to hypotheses H1 and H2 can be observed.

H1: FPÖ proposes a “dualistic” welfare state, calling for socio-economic expansion and protectionism for the “deserving”, while promoting a market-based, neo-liberal approach for the “undeserving”.

H2: FPÖ uses elements of their core ideology (i.e., nativism, authoritarianism, populism) to frame and determine the welfare state dimensions of agency and scope, redistribution design, and implementation process and outcome.

As mentioned above, FPÖ shifted away from a neo-liberal conception of the welfare state, focusing on minimal state support in the 1990s, to now supporting a generous welfare state system. While calls for cutting welfare expenses can be analyzed in the early 1990s, FPÖ has increasingly promoted welfare state expansion. However, this development shows clear trends toward a dualistic understanding of the welfare state, dividing possible recipients into “deserving” and “undeserving” of state support. Furthermore, it can be demonstrated that FPÖ does not promote a “leftist” universal expansion of social support but calls for a complex recalibration of the welfare state, cutting social support from the “undeserving” in favor of those deemed “deserving”.

Examining who is understood to be part of the “deserving”, the qualitative text analysis finds that, in line with the underlying theory, FPÖ has adopted three ideological frames that inform on “welfare deservingness”: welfare nativism, welfare authoritarianism, and welfare populism. The qualitative data clearly shows FPÖ’s utilizing the frame of welfare nativism, focusing on

the deservingness criterion of identity. Over the analyzed time frame, FPÖ strengthened its stance of providing welfare provisions primarily to native Austrians while blaming non-nationals, and especially refugees, for undermining and abusing the Austrian social system, aiming to cut social support for these groups. Using this frame, FPÖ advocates for “welfare chauvinism” and “welfare favoritism” concerning the distribution of social support. It can also be analyzed that “deservingness” is closely connected to welfare authoritarianism, primarily regarding “willingness to work” and concerns of reciprocity in the welfare system. FPÖ argues that only those who contribute to society should be able to receive social support. This is also shown by their increased focus on the family, pensioners, and the working class in the electoral programs, groups understood as fundamental builders of national prosperity. This also includes the extensive use of frames concerning “welfare producerism”, arguing that taxpaying ‘makers’ (employees, employers) need to be unshackled from the economic burden that comes from self-serving ‘takers’ (immigrants, ‘corrupt elite’). My findings show that FPÖ strongly focuses on “welfare behavior”, such as gratefulness and good moral of welfare recipients and their conformity to society’s expectations in the decision of who is deemed “deserving”.

Lastly, it can be analyzed that FPÖ has consistently used welfare populist frames when framing welfare issues. The qualitative data finds that over the analyzed time frame, FPÖ has continuously criticized the welfare state as being inefficient towards those in “real need”, while favoring political elites and “undeserving” refugees. By pitting the “common citizen” against a “corrupt elite”, FPÖ inherently criticizes the functioning and effectiveness of redistributive measures and, in this way, also condemns the institution of the welfare state itself. At the same time, this allows FPÖ to propose welfare expansions to their preferred recipients, such as Austrian pensioners and families.

These findings provide valuable results in favor of hypotheses H1 and H2. In accordance with H1, FPÖ argues for a dualistic welfare state and promotes generous redistribution toward

workers, families, and pensioners who are deemed “most deserving” of welfare provisions. At the same time, FPÖ strictly aims to cut aid towards refugees and immigrants, proposing a more neo-liberal and workfare-based approach, referring to the personal responsibility of employment in order to receive social support. Furthermore, in line with H2, FPÖ has adopted the frames of welfare nativism, welfare authoritarianism, and welfare populism to significantly shape their social policy stance.

The collected quantitative data allows for the testing of hypotheses H3 and H4 concerning a possible shift in the electoral support of workers and women in response to a change in the FPÖ's social policy stance.

H3: FPÖ's social policy positioning has developed to attract more working-class voters by promoting a generous but “protectionist” welfare system (using the frames of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism).

H4: FPÖ's social policy positioning has developed to attract more female voters by emphasizing extensive social support for the “traditional” family in their political agenda.

Looking at longitudinal trends of electoral support of women and workers, it is found that FPÖ's successes in national elections are closely tied to the level of support by female and working-class voters. These results seem only logical, as whenever FPÖ successfully mobilizes these two voter groups, they are performing better in general elections. Even though developments towards a higher emphasis on welfare in FPÖ's electoral programs can be shown in the qualitative content analysis, no significant impact of this shift is found when correlating welfare salience and spending attitude with electoral support. My data shows that over time, support for FPÖ by working-class voters has significantly increased from 2002 to 60% of the working-class vote in 2017. However, my correlation results show that this is not due to an

increased emphasis on social policy or declared increased support for workers by FPÖ. Simultaneously, the data validates that overall women's support for FPÖ, as well as the gender composition of FPÖ's voter base, has not changed significantly over time and has not been positively impacted by increased salience emphasis and spending attitude of welfare topics and of family and women's issues. Strikingly, while FPÖ has considerably increased its percentage salience of welfare issues, as well as labor and family and women's, especially in electoral programs between 2006 and 2013, negative correlations are found in connection to the electoral support of women and workers. This means that welfare issues seem not to be as impactful on the voter choice of women and workers. Similar negative correlations are also demonstrated for spending attitude and electoral outcomes for both female and working-class voters. This would mean that devoting more social support to these voter groups does not significantly impact FPÖ's electoral support but inconsistently impacts voter support slightly negatively. Furthermore, this research shows that the gender gap in FPÖ's electorate does not vary substantially over time. It can be concluded that FPÖ has consistently stayed a male-dominated party. Considering whether FPÖ significantly adapts its social policy agenda to align with the interests of its voter base, it is shown that FPÖ increases the salience of welfare following a more significant female voter proportion. While this is not continuously observable for all analyzed years, it can be concluded that FPÖ most likely considers the demographics of their established electorate when developing their social policy positioning.

These results show that hypotheses H3 and H4 cannot be proven right and that changes in socio-economic policy stances do not significantly impact working-class and female voters. The findings show that social policy positioning is not significantly responsible for shifting voting behavior for FPÖ. Against the proposed hypotheses emphasizing social policy in electoral programs does not increase electoral support of workers and women. Contrarily, these

results might support this paper's counterhypothesis, arguing that it is primarily socio-cultural issues, such as immigration, security, and corruption, that significantly impact PRRPs' voter decisions. It seems that socio-economic and welfare issues are not primarily influencing vote choice for PRRs and that overall electoral success could instead be attributed to other electoral topics. At the same time, it can be demonstrated that salience of immigration issues in electoral programs also negatively correlates with electoral support. These results are somewhat surprising as they would provide support in favor of socio-cultural issues being crucial in mobilizing electoral results. However, I argue that even though these negative results for immigration can be observed, broader conclusions on the importance of socio-cultural issues should not be drawn as this analysis, due to time constraints, did not include a comprehensive analysis of all socio-cultural sub-dimensions, including security and corruption.

Another potential explanation for these results could be found in the socio-economic structure of Austria and its inhabitants, as well as the long-established, comprehensive social security system. Austria's wealth is more evenly distributed than in many other countries, meaning that social welfare issues are not a primary concern for a significant proportion of voters. Moreover, most individuals who would significantly benefit from a dedicated social policy and an improved social safety net are not eligible to vote in Austria (Altzinger et al. 2013). This is due to the fact that a significant proportion of the population consists of individuals with migratory backgrounds who are not entitled to vote in Austria. Of the approximately 9 million inhabitants, only around 6 million are entitled to vote (Bundesministerium für Inneres 2024).

The conclusions drawn from the presented quantitative data must be carefully interpreted and understood with caution as some shortcomings in methodology exist. Because of time and space constraints, the presented salience data focuses on the page count of welfare issues in FPÖ's electoral programs, which does not inform of the value of content or strength of

argument but speaks only on spatial percentage dedicated to welfare issues in the program. Consequently, this research does not consider the possibility that voters may be more inclined to prioritize specific issues that have received less attention and less page space in the respective programs. Furthermore, because of time limitations, this paper's methodology could not control for external impacts such as FPÖ's party leadership changes, party scandals, the welfare developments of other Austrian parties, or external socio-economically relevant occurrences such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these shortcomings in methodological approach and the fact that the quantitative analysis must be interpreted with caution, the presented findings remain of considerable interest, disproving the expected positive results between social policy and workers' and women's vote. Moreover, the presented qualitative data on FPÖ's shift in welfare framing provides significant insights into the developments of FPÖ's framing of social policy positioning.

Conclusion

This thesis has analyzed the impact of social policy on electoral results of populist radical right parties by the example of FPÖ in Austria from 1994 to 2019. While existing research into the topic of the radical right has primarily focused on party profiles of PRRPs, insights into their social policy positioning remain scarce. Furthermore, the literature has notably lacked a comprehensive examination of the potential demographic shifts among PRR voters because of new social policy positionings and subsequent electoral implications. To close this gap in the literature, I have analyzed a change in the framing of welfare issues by FPÖ from 1994 to 2019 and looked into the implications this shift had on female and working-class voters, answering the research question of this paper: *How has the change in social policy positioning by FPÖ impacted voting behavior and the demographics of its electorate?*

The theoretical foundation of this thesis proposes that an increased emphasis on social policy in the electoral programs of FPÖ should also result in an augmented share of the working-class and female electorate, who are traditionally more inclined to support “left-leaning” policies of increased social support and redistributive efforts. To answer the research question, a qualitative content analysis of FPÖ’s electoral programs was performed to analyze the expected shift in welfare policy positioning over time. Additionally, to determine the impact of this shift on electoral support of women and workers, I examined the salience dedicated to welfare issues in FPÖ’s electoral programs as well as FPÖ’s declared spending willingness of differing welfare recipients over time, focusing on families and women and the working-class.

My research concludes that FPÖ has turned away from its neo-liberal pro-market social policy positioning in the 1990s and increasingly adopted frames of “welfare nativism”, “welfare

authoritarianism”, and “welfare populism” in the discourse surrounding social policy. By focusing on the native Austrian population as the primary recipients of welfare provisions through the frame of “welfare nativism”, FPÖ has increasingly re-shaped their social policy positioning towards a generous but dualistic and chauvinist welfare state, arguing that non-natives and refugees are to be understood as “undeserving” of social support and should be excluded from the national welfare system. Simultaneously, FPÖ argues for increasing social support to families, workers, and pensioners. These groups are deemed most “deserving”, based on the frame of “welfare authoritarianism” connected to concerns of reciprocity. FPÖ argues that these groups are especially deserving of state support for being the fundamental contributors to Austrian society and its prosperity. I also find that FPÖ utilizes the frame of “welfare producerism”, contending that the “welfare behavior” of recipients matters in the considerations of deservingness, focusing strongly on “willingness to work” and including deliberations of recipients’ gratefulness and their conformity to society’s expectations. FPÖ has also consistently used “welfare populist” arguments when framing social policy by arguing that the welfare state has deteriorated into a highly inefficient system that neglects the “truly needy” and “ordinary citizens” and has become a self-serving tool for “political elites” who are claimed to be the main beneficiaries of state support. In this way, FPÖ promotes an inherent antagonism between “just citizens” and a “corrupt elite”, establishing itself as the “only protector” of the Austrian population when it comes to socio-economic issues. However, by using these three frames, FPÖ has not argued for a “leftist”, egalitarian expansion of welfare subsidies to all but has argued for an extensive recalibration of the welfare state, away from those deemed “undeserving” (political elites and refugees), towards the ones deemed most “deserving” (families, pensioners, workers).

Even though it can be demonstrated that FPÖ has considerably changed its social policy positioning and welfare framing from 1994 to 2029, I find no empirical support that this shift has had a significant impact on changing FPÖ's electorate or decreasing the male-to-female gender gap in FPÖ voters. The empirical analysis finds that the ratio of women in FPÖ voters stayed relatively constant at around 40% female voters and was not significantly impacted by changing welfare emphasis. Against my proposed theoretical expectations, the data shows that higher salience and spending attitude of welfare issues in FPÖ's electoral programs surprisingly indicates a negative correlation with general voter support, as well as support from women and the working class. Similarly, I have found that an increased willingness to spend social support towards families, women, and the working class has negatively correlated to the electoral support from these sub-groups. In other words, FPÖ's change in social policy positioning has had no impact on changing their electorate's demographics to include more women and workers. Instead, the data suggest a complex and sometimes inverse relationship between welfare policy emphasis and voter support within these demographics. My results might be indicators in favor of this paper's counterhypothesis, arguing that socio-economic issues are only secondary to PRRPs' policy positioning and that the populist radical right rightfully focuses on socio-cultural and nativist issues such as corruption, immigration, and security to build their political agenda, as welfare related issues seem not to be significant to attract voters (Cornelis and Van Hiel 2015; Mudde 2007).

However, the results on electoral impact should be interpreted with some caution as this research exhibits some constraints limiting this research's internal validity. Further studies should include cross-party comparisons, including the social policy positioning of other Austrian parties and controlling for external variables such as party leadership changes, party scandals, or other reasons for varying salience of non-welfare related issues in FPÖ's respective

election campaigns, i.e., immigration wave Europe experienced in 2015. Furthermore, future studies should check this study's external validity, analyzing whether these findings can be applied to other European PRRPs, simultaneously allowing for cross-country comparisons of the European populist radical right. Another avenue for further research could be investigating whether different results can be observed for the differing European welfare state regimes. As this paper's findings have focused on the Austrian "corporatist" welfare state model, other insights might be won from the Nordic "social democratic" or the Anglo-Saxon "liberal" welfare state regimes that differ fundamentally from the Austrian system.

This thesis adds significant insights to the literature on populist radical right parties' conception of social policy by connecting the shift in social policy positioning of PRRPs that has been observed for the PRR throughout Europe to electoral data and voter support from the female and working-class electorate. My research contributes substantial insights into electoral behavior connected to the observed social policy shift of the PRR, which has been missing in the existing literature. My outcomes inform on the missing impact of social policy positioning of the far right on voters and could provide a better understanding of PRRPs' varying thematic emphasis and different focus on socio-economic versus socio-cultural topics in electoral campaigns. This paper's insights are especially salient as current national election surveys project FPÖ to reach their highest electoral percentage to date of 29% in the upcoming 2024 Austrian parliamentary elections (Der Standard 2024; Der Standard and Seidl 2024). An official electoral program for this election has yet to be released by FPÖ, which could provide further understanding of FPÖ's current emphasis on social policy and the welfare state. The forthcoming 2024 European Union elections will deliver the youngest results for an assessment of the importance of welfare issues and provide a contemporary picture of the overall electoral success of the European populist radical right.

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Appendices

Appendix A.1: List of primary sources / electoral programs analyzed

- Fourth Party program FPÖ 2005 - "The party program of the Austrian Freedom Party, FPÖ
Echt freiheitlich"
- Fifth Party program FPÖ 2011 - "Parteiprogramm der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs (FPÖ)"
- Electoral program FPÖ 1994 - "Weil das Land sich ändern muss"
- Electoral program FPÖ 1999 - "Das Programm der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs"
- Electoral program FPÖ 2002 - "Wir gestalten Österreich mit Sicherheit"
- Electoral program FPÖ 2006 - "Wahlprogramm der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs FPÖ"
- Electoral program FPÖ 2008 - "Österreich im Wort"
- Electoral program FPÖ 2013 - "Liebe deine Nächsten, für mich sind das unsere Österreicher"
- Electoral program FPÖ 2017 - "Österreicher verdienen Fairness"
- Electoral program FPÖ 2019 - "Mit Sicherheit für Österreich: Fair. Sozial. Heimmattreu."

Appendix A.2: Information on sub-dimensions used in the coding of party manifestos regarding welfare framing: Abts et al. (2021, 28)

These sub-dimensions informed the gathering of qualitative data from electoral programs to analyze the three main dimensions.

1. Agency and Scope:

1.a. Welfare Mix: which actor in the welfare system is preferred: free market importance, state importance, family support, community support.

1.b. Range: In what way should beneficiaries receive welfare provisions: general welfare, social benefits, through active labor market policies

1.c. Scope: How much should be redistributed to what end: welfare spending, saving, reducing labor costs, control fraud, activation, expansion, keep status quo

2. Redistribution Design:

2.a. Identity: focus on foreigners, national preference or welfare chauvinism

2.b. Control: Focus on individual responsibility for personal wellbeing

2.c. Reciprocity: Focus of contributing to the state in order to receive welfare (pensioners have worked and are now eligible of state support), focus on productive vs welfare scroungers

2.d. Attitude: focus on work and producerism, voluntary work, useful social tasks, contribution to the community

2.e. Need: Focus on individuals in "real need" of social assistance, including the very poor, the sick and disabled

2.f. Who should pay: How should redistributive efforts be financially supported (through liberal approach or taxation?)

3. Implementation Process and Outcome:

- 3.a. Efficiency/Effectiveness:** focus on costs, “pure people” vs “corrupt elite”, overuse of welfare, underuse of welfare, abuse of welfare provisions
- 3.b. Outcome:** Economic outcomes, social outcomes, no poverty, freedoms to take risks
- 3.c. Blame Attribution:** State, Elites, migrants, native welfare scroungers, EU, trade unions

Appendix A.3: Detailed Information on the Manifesto Project Salience Variables used in salience analysis

Coding descriptions for selected salience variables taken directly from the section “Content Analytical Data” from the Manifesto Project Codebook (Lehmann 2024):

Table 7: Manifesto Project Coding Explanations for Selected Salience Variables from Lehmann (2024).

Variable	Coding descriptions
Welfare	per503 Equality positive + per504 Welfare State Expansion
per504 Welfare State Expansion	Favourable mentions of need to introduce, maintain or expand any public social service or social security scheme. This includes, for example, government funding of: Health care, Child care, Elder care and pensions, Social housing. Note: This category excludes education.
per505 Welfare State Limitation	Limiting state expenditures on social services or social security. Favourable mentions of the social subsidiary principle (i.e. private care before state care);
per701 Labour Groups: Positive	Favourable references to all labour groups, the working class, and unemployed workers in general. Support for trade unions and calls for the good treatment of all employees, including: • More jobs; • Good working conditions; • Fair wages; • Pension provisions etc.
per706 Non-economic Demographic Groups	Non-economic Demographic Groups General favourable mentions of demographically defined special interest groups of all kinds. They may include: • Women; • University students; • Old, young, or middle aged people. Might include references to assistance to these groups, but only if these do not fall under other categories (e.g. 503 or 504).
per503 Equality: Positive	Concept of social justice and the need for fair treatment of all people. This may include: • Special protection for underprivileged social groups; • Removal of class barriers; • Need for fair distribution of resources; • The end of discrimination (e.g. racial or sexual discrimination).

Appendix A.4: Electoral Results

Table 8: FPÖ Electoral Results

Austrian National Elections / Year	FPÖ Total %	% of workers voting for FPÖ (of all workers who voted)	% of women voting for FPÖ (of all women who voted)	Proportion of female FPÖ voters
1994	22,50%	29,00%	18,00%	40%
1999	26,91%	47,00%	21,00%	38,00%
2002	10,16%	10,00%	11,00%	43,00%
2006	11,04%	14,00%	10,00%	45,00%
2008	17,50%	28,00%	17,00%	No data
2013	20,51%	33,00%	16,00%	38,00%
2017	26,00%	59,00%	22,00%	42,00%
2019	16,20%	48,00%	11,00%	39,00%

Appendix A.5: Qualitative content analysis of FPÖ's electoral programs 1994-2019

This table, continuing on the next pages, shows the results of the qualitative coding of all FPÖ party and electoral programs from 1994-2019. Due to space constraints this table has been compressed to its size but is tested to be readable in electronic format by zooming in. The author of this paper will also gladly provide all tables in Excel folders upon request.

Table 9: Qualitative Content Analysis

Year	Party	Program	Code	Content														
1994	FPÖ	1994	1	...	2	...	3	...	4	...	5	...	6	...	7	...	8	...
1999	FPÖ	1999	1	...	2	...	3	...	4	...	5	...	6	...	7	...	8	...
2004	FPÖ	2004	1	...	2	...	3	...	4	...	5	...	6	...	7	...	8	...
2009	FPÖ	2009	1	...	2	...	3	...	4	...	5	...	6	...	7	...	8	...
2014	FPÖ	2014	1	...	2	...	3	...	4	...	5	...	6	...	7	...	8	...
2019	FPÖ	2019	1	...	2	...	3	...	4	...	5	...	6	...	7	...	8	...

Appendix A.6: Saliency Data

Table 10: Saliency of Sub-Dimensions

Subcategories	Year	Saliency / % of pages of whole program	Pages dedicated to Subcategory	Total Nr. Of Pages of electoral Program
<i>Labor, Employees, Economy, Budget</i>	1994	12,50%	2	16
	1999	7,41%	4	54
	2002	12,26%	13	106
	2006	25,00%	3	12
	2008	15,63%	2,5	16
	2013	25,00%	3	12
	2017	6,90%	2	29
<i>Family and Women</i>	1994	3,13%	0,5	16
	1999	3,70%	2	54
	2002	3,77%	4	106
	2006	16,67%	2	12
	2008	7,50%	1,2	16
	2013	8,33%	1	12
	2017	10,34%	3	29
<i>Pensions</i>	1994	0,00%	0	16
	1999	1,00%	0,5	54
	2002	3,30%	3,5	106
	2006	4,17%	0,5	12
	2008	6,25%	1	16
	2013	8,33%	1	12
	2017	3,45%	1	29
<i>Healthcare</i>	1994	0,00%	0	16
	1999	0,00%	0	54
	2002	1,89%	2	106
	2006	5,00%	0,6	12
	2008	9,37%	1,5	16
	2013	0,00%	0	12
	2017	3,45%	1	29
<i>Social Justice and Redistribution</i>	1994	12,50%	2	16
	1999	7,41%	4	54
	2002	5,66%	6	106
	2006	0,00%	0	12

	2008	6,25%	1	16
	2013	8,33%	1	12
	2017	8,62%	2,5	29
	2019	0,00%	0	14
<i>Sum of Welfare Sub-Dimensions for all analyzed years / Salience of Overall Welfare Issues</i>	1994	28,13%	4,5	16
	1999	19,52%	10,5	54
	2002	26,88%	28,5	106
	2006	50,84%	6,1	12
	2008	45,00%	7,2	16
	2013	49,99%	6	12
	2017	32,76%	9,5	29
	2019	13,57%	1,9	14
<i>Salience of Party Manifesto Project Varibale "Welfare"</i>	1994	3,287%		
	1999	4,087%		
	2002	13,343%		
	2006	11,692%		
	2008	17,965%		
	2013	16,522%		
	2017	11,283%		
	2019	7,658%		
<i>Salience of Party Manifesto Project Varibale "Welfare State Expansion"</i>	1994	0,000%		
	1999	2,284%		
	2002	6,672%		
	2006	7,385%		
	2008	7,143%		
	2013	10,435%		
	2017	0,740%		
	2019	5,405%		
<i>Salience of Party Manifesto Project Varibale "Welfare State Limitation"</i>	1994	1,264%		
	1999	0,841%		
	2002	0,450%		
	2006	0,923%		
	2008	0,216%		
	2013	4,348%		
	2017	2,434%		
	2019	2,252%		
<i>Salience of Party Manifesto Project Varibale "Labor Groups Positive"</i>	1994	0,506%		
	1999	0,721%		
	2002	6,559%		
	2006	4,923%		
	2008	5,628%		
	2013	4,348%		
	2017	4,867%		
	2019	5,405%		
<i>Salience of Party Manifesto Project Varibale "Noneconomic Demographic Groups"</i>	1994	1,643%		

1999	1,202%
2002	6,784%
2006	0,308%
2008	6,710%
2013	1,739%
2017	1,549%
2019	0,901%

Appendix A.7: Complete Spending Data

Table 11: Spending Attitude Data

Welfare Sub-Dimensions	Year	Spending Level 1,2,3
		1: low state support / focus on taxcuts
		2: some state support
		3: generous state support
<i>Labor, Employees, Economy, Budget</i>	1994	1
	1999	1
	2002	2
	2006	1
	2008	3
	2013	2
	2017	2
	2019	1
	<i>Family and Women</i>	1994
1999		2
2002		3
2006		2
2008		3
2013		2
2017		2
2019		2
<i>Pensions</i>		1994
	1999	2
	2002	3
	2006	2
	2008	2
	2013	2
	2017	3
	2019	3
	<i>Healthcare</i>	1994
1999		1
2002		2
2006		2
2008		2
2013		0
2017		1
2019		0
<i>Social Justice and Redistribution</i>		1994
	1999	1
	2002	2
	2006	1

2008	1
2013	2
2017	2
2019	0

Appendix A.8: Correlation Calculations

Table 12: Overview of Correlation Calculations Results

Overview	Correlation variables	Correlation Results	
<i>Electoral Results</i>	Correlation FPÖ % and % workers	0,733	
	Correlation FPÖ % and % women	0,923	
	Correlation % workers and % women	0,657	
<i>Correlation Welfare Saliency and Electoral Results</i>	Saliency of Welfare issues and % FPÖ	-0,240	
	Saliency of Welfare issues and % workers	-0,435	
	Saliency of Welfare Issues and % women	-0,099	
<i>Correlation of Saliency of Welfare Sub-dimensions and overall electoral support for FPÖ</i>	Labor, Employees and FPÖ General	-0,442	
	Family and Women and FPÖ General	-0,218	
	Pensions and FPÖ General	-0,304	
	Immigration and FPÖ General	-0,554	
	Healthcare and FPÖ General	-0,283	
	Social Justics and FPÖ General	0,652	
	<i>Correlation of Saliency of Welfare Sub-dimensions and workers' electoral support</i>	% Workers and Labor Saliency	-0,618
		% Workers and Family and women Saliency	-0,233
		% Workers and Pensions Saliency	-0,073
		% Workers and Immigration Saliency	-0,126
% Workers and Healthcare Saliency		-0,262	
<i>Correlation of Saliency of Welfare Sub-dimensions and women's electoral support</i>	% Workers and Social Justice Saliency	0,180	
	% Women and Labor Saliency	-0,410	
	% Women and family and women Saliency	-0,110	
	% Women and Pensions Saliency	-0,304	
	% Women and Immigration Saliency	-0,719	
<i>Correlation of Sum Spending Attitude and electoral support in general and by sub-dimensiont</i>	% Women and Healthcare Saliency	-0,040	
	% Women and Social Justice Saliency	0,744	
	FPÖ % and Welfare Spending Overall	-0,350	
	Sum Welfare Spending and workers' support	-0,304	
	Sum Welfare Spending and women's support	-0,066	
	FPÖ % and Labor Spending	-0,071	
	FPÖ % and Family and Women Spending	-0,485	
	FPÖ % and Pensions Spending	-0,254	
	FPÖ % and Healthcare Spending	-0,498	
	FPÖ % and Social Justice Spending	0,087	
	% Workers' support and Labor Spending	-0,107	
	% Workers' support and % Women and Family Spending	-0,526	
	% Workers' support and Pensions Spending	0,249	

*Saliency Correlations Party
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% Workers' support and Healthcare Spending	-0,526
% Workers' support and Social Justice Spending	-0,154
% Women and Labor Spending	0,175
% Women and Family Spending	-0,232
% Women and Pensions Spending	-0,239
% Women and Healthcare Spending	-0,232
% Women and Social Justice Spending	0,282
Saliency welfare and welfare state expansion	0,776383349
Saliency welfare and welfare state limitation	0,091082065
Saliency welfare and labor groups positive	0,745782407
Saliency welfare and Noneconomic Demographic Groups	0,584711454
Saliency welfare and equality positive	0,627649007