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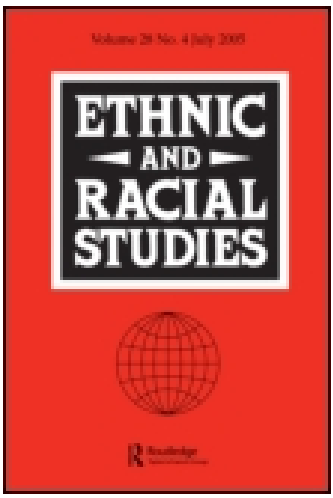

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Contextual explanations of radical right-wing support in Sweden: socioeconomic marginalization, group threat, and the halo effect

Jens Rydgren and Patrick Ruth

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Abstract

This paper provides a thorough test of important contextual explanations of variation in electoral support for radical right-wing parties. It has been proposed that support of the radical right is particularly strong in areas that are socioeconomically poor and/or where the concentration of immigrants is high. A variant of the latter hypothesis, known as the 'halo effect', states that the propensity to vote for the radical right is highest in areas *close* to immigrant-dense areas, but not within these areas. The data analyses are based on the total population of voting districts in Sweden ($N = 5{,}668$), which makes it possible to avoid some of the problems that usually plague studies of contextual effects on voting, such as low numbers of observations. The results demonstrate support for the socioeconomic marginalization hypothesis and, when controlling for socioeconomic factors, the halo effect hypothesis; whereas the support for group threat theory is mixed.

Keywords: Ethnic competition; group threat theory; halo effect; radical right; social marginalization; voting.

Introduction

Radical right-wing populist parties have established themselves in several Western European countries, including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, the Netherlands and–most recently–Sweden. This new family of radical right-wing populist parties shares a fundamental core of ethno-nationalist xenophobia

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(based on the so-called ethnopluralist doctrine) and anti-political-establishment populism (Rydgren 2007), and is thus giving priority to sociocultural issues, in particular to issues related to national identity. This ideological core is usually embedded in a general sociocultural conservatism, stressing themes like law and order and traditional family values (Rydgren 2005).

This paper provides a thorough test of important contextual explanations of variation in electoral support for radical right-wing parties. It focuses on the macro-level characteristics that provide a breeding ground for radical right-wing support. In previous research it has been proposed that support of the radical right is particularly strong in areas that are socioeconomically poor and/or where the concentration of immigrants is high (Coffé, Heydels and Vermeir 2007; for recent reviews see Mudde 2007; Rydgren 2007). A variant of the latter hypothesis, known as the halo effect, states that the propensity to vote for the radical right is highest in areas *close* to immigrant-dense areas, but not within these areas (e.g. Bowyer 2008). We will examine the electoral support of the Sweden Democrats in the 2010 national election, and we will analyse differences between voting districts. We will use the total population of voting districts in Sweden, which yields 5,668 observations. This makes it possible to increase the number of observations dramatically, which will allow for more robust statistical analyses. The main contextual factors investigated in this study, the effect of socioeconomic marginalization and of the perceived threat to majority-group position posed by the number of immigrants, are also analytically more appropriately studied at the level of small geographical areas (voting districts can be equated to city neighbourhoods in urban areas and small villages in rural areas) than the cross-national level, or even the municipality level. Furthermore, containing the analyses within Sweden makes it possible to avoid ideological and programmatic idiosyncrasies between radical right-wing parties in different countries, which is a problem with cross-national analyses, and to keep institutional factors constant (cf. Kestilä and Söderlund 2007). However, we should keep in mind that we lack individual-level data, and that our data only allow us to study contextual factors explaining geographical variation in levels of electoral support for the Sweden Democrats. We are not in a position to analyse voting, which would need individual-level data, but only the aggregated results of voting.

We will distinguish between immigrants from the Nordic countries, those from the European countries, and a third group from non-European countries. Since immigrants of non-European origin are the main target of radical right-wing propaganda, there are good reasons to expect support for such parties to be particularly strong in voting

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districts with a high proportion of immigrants from non-European countries.

Both the socioeconomic marginalization hypothesis and the ethnic conflict/group threat hypothesis have been tested numerous times before, both in cross-national studies (e.g. Lubbers, Gijsberts and Scheepers 2002; Swank and Betz 2003; Arzheimer and Carter 2006) and in studies comparing municipalities (e.g. Coffé, Heydels and Vermeir 2007). The major contribution of this study, as indicated above, is that it is using data that allows much more rigorous testing than is usually the case. Not only are our analyses based on dramatically more observations ($N = 5{,}668$), but because they are much smaller the geographic areas we use are, on average, much more homogeneous than countries or municipalities. If a voting district is characterized as having a high proportion of immigrants, for example, we can safely assume that most people residing within the voting district are living close to immigrants. In countries, or even in municipalities, we cannot make such assumptions. This makes an important difference for how group threat operates in different areas. Also considering socioeconomic factors, voting districts are considerably more homogeneous, which means that the standard deviations on core variables are much smaller, allowing for more accurate analyses. The halo effect hypothesis is considerably less tested than the previous two, and one of the main contributions of this study is to provide a rigorous test of this hypothesis. The rationales for these theories will be further discussed below.

This paper is a sequel to an earlier study using cross-municipality data ($N = 290$) to analyse the electoral support of the Sweden Democrats in the 2010 local and national elections (Rydgren and Ruth 2011). We will frequently compare the results reported here to those in the previous study. This present study uses much more fine-grained geographical areas (voting districts) and is therefore much 'closer' to the voters. It is of some interest whether the results are consistent with those from analysing differences at the municipality level. It did not make much sense to analyse the halo effect at the municipality level, so for that measure we are unable to compare results.

The remaining parts of this paper will be structured in the following way. First, we will provide a brief background of the Swedish case. Second, we will discuss earlier research and the theoretical rationales for assuming that socioeconomic marginalization, ethnic competition/threat to majority group positions posed by immigration, and the halo effect are important for understanding variances in support for radical right-wing parties. Third, we will discuss data and methods. The fourth section will analyse the results of our ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions, and the fifth section will conclude.

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The Swedish case

Radical right-wing populist parties in Sweden

While populist parties emerged in Denmark and Norway in the early 1970s, Swedish populist parties remained electorally marginalized (e.g. Fryklund and Peterson 1981; Andersen and Bjørklund 1990, 2000; Widfeldt 2000) until the early 1990s, when New Democracy obtained 6.7 per cent of the votes in the 1991 parliamentary election. However, this party turned out to be short lived and received only 1.2 per cent of the votes in the 1994 election, and it disappeared shortly thereafter.

The Sweden Democrats party was formed in 1988 as a direct successor to the Sweden Party, which in turn was the outcome of a merger, in 1986, of the Swedish Progress Party and the BBS (Keep Sweden Swedish) (Rydgren 2006). The Sweden Democrats has its roots in Swedish fascism and there were, particularly in the late 1980s and for the first half of the 1990s, distinct overlaps between it and openly anti-democratic, Nazi and fascist groupings (Larsson and Ekman 2001). Since the second half of the 1990s, the party has worked hard to erect a more respectable facade and the Sweden Democrats has continually increased its voter share. In the national election of 2006 it received 2.9 per cent of the votes and 280 mandates in municipal councils. In 2010, Sweden Democrats almost doubled its votes, with 5.7 per cent in the national election–which gave it twenty seats in the Swedish parliament–and 612 mandates in municipal councils.

Electoral system

General elections to the national parliament, regional county councils and local municipal assemblies are held every fourth year in Sweden, on the third Sunday in September. The electoral system is based on proportional representation. The country is divided into twenty counties and 290 municipalities.

In national elections the country is divided into twenty-nine electoral constituencies, to which 310 'fixed' mandates are assigned according to the number of citizens eligible for voting residing therein. These mandates are then distributed according to the modified Sainte-Lague method. In addition to the 310 'fixed' mandates, thirty-nine adjustment mandates are distributed in order to assure a more proportional distribution nationally. The twenty-nine electoral constituencies are subdivided into voting districts, the number and configuration of which varies between election cycles. The configuration of voting districts is decided by the County Administrative Boards of Sweden, in accordance with suggestions given by the municipal assemblies. In the election of 2010, there were 5,668 voting districts. The size of the voting districts varies across Sweden,

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encompassing on average 1,200–1,800 voting citizens. However, there is no fixed limit for the size of the districts and the smallest districts comprise only a few hundred voting citizens, while the largest comprise over 2,000 (Valmyndigheten 2011).

How to explain electoral support for radical right-wing populism

Socioeconomic marginalization

Socioeconomic marginalization has been one of the most common explanations for the emergence of radical right-wing populist parties and, indeed, older forms of right-wing radicalism and extremism. There are several reasons to assume that the breeding ground for radical right-wing populist parties are more favourable in areas that are poor in socioeconomic resources. First, and which will be further discussed below, potential conflict over scarce resources are likely to become more acute, which may intensify conflict between in-groups and out-groups (e.g. Blalock 1967; Olzak 1992; Coffé, Heydels and Vermeir 2007). The message that immigrants are stealing the jobs of natives, offered by radical right-wing populist parties, are likely to find a more receptive audience when unemployment rates are at a high level (Betz 1994; Minkenberg 2003; Rydgren 2003a). Similarly, welfare chauvinist frames, such as that immigration is draining the welfare state of resources needed for the sick and elderly, also offered by radical right-wing parties, are also likely to resonate better in economically poor areas (Kitschelt 1995; Rydgren 2003a, 2007). Second, living in socioeconomically marginalized areas may be related to feelings of having been left behind and let down by established political parties, providing a better breeding ground for the mobilization of political alternatives (and in particular populist ones) (Rydgren 2003b).

However, empirical research indicates that unemployment rates have been shown to be a bad predictor of cross-national variation in the electoral fortunes of the new radical right-wing parties. Several macro-level studies have shown that there is either no significant relationship (Lubbers, Gijsberts and Scheepers 2002) or a negative relationship (Knigge 1998; Arzheimer and Carter 2006) between unemployment rates and differences in the electoral fortunes of radical right-wing populist parties. Swank and Betz (2003) found no significant association between either the unemployment rate, slower economic growth, or inflation rates and the success of radical right-wing parties, although they did find a significant negative association between having a universal welfare state system (including an active labour market programme) and the electoral success of radical right-wing populist parties. Only Jackman and Volpert (1996) have reported a positive relationship for unemployment, whereas Golder (2003) found

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a positive interaction effect: high unemployment rates are favorable to radical right-wing populist parties only in countries with a large (i.e. 6.3 per cent or more) presence of foreign resident populations. Studies comparing electoral support for radical right-wing populist parties across municipalities show mixed support: Coffé, Heydels and Vermeir (2007) report results showing a negative correlation for unemployment rates and electoral support for Vlaams Blok in Belgium, whereas Rydgren and Ruth (2011) show that unemployment rates correlate positively with the electoral support for the Sweden Democrats in Sweden. The purpose of this study is to examine whether this support is strengthened or weakened when looking at much more fine-grained geographical areas. We will measure socioeconomic marginalization by using the average income, aggregated unemployment rates, the percentage of the population on welfare benefit schemes and the rate on the general level of unhealth within the voting district.[1]

Ethnic competition, group position theory and the halo effect

The ideology and discourse of the radical right-wing populist parties are based on ethnonationalism and opposition to immigration and the multicultural/multiethnic society. As indicated above, these parties have framed immigrants as problems in four different ways: (1) as a threat to ethnonational identity; (2) as a major cause of criminality and other kinds of social insecurity; (3) as a cause of unemployment; and (4) as abusers of the generosity of the welfare states of western democracies, which results in fewer state subsidies and the like for 'natives'. The first two of these frames can be treated as a manifestation of the ethnopluralist doctrine–that is, that different ethnicities should not 'mix' lest cultural specificities disappear and insecurity and crime increase–whereas the last two can be treated as part of a welfare chauvinist doctrine in which immigrants and 'natives' are depicted as competing for limited economic resources. In such a conflict situation, immigrants are portrayed as illegitimate competitors, pitted against 'natives', who are *entitled* to keep the entire cake for themselves.

The strong prevalence of ethnic nationalism and anti-immigration politics in the programmes of radical right-wing populist parties has led some scholars to view immigration skepticism, xenophobia and/or racism as the main reasons–and sometimes the sole reasons (e.g. Mitra 1988)–why these parties have emerged and established themselves in a number of Western European countries. To believe that anti-immigration attitudes are a very important factor for explaining the electoral mobilization of radical right-wing parties makes some intuitive sense. Although the anti-immigration nexus is only a part of a wider web of issues (Mudde 1999), it is at the core of the radical right-wing parties' political programmes and dominates the images voters have of these

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parties. Earlier research results were consistent with the hypothesis that anti-immigration attitudes are an important factor in predicting who will vote for radical right-wing populist parties (e.g. Lubbers and Scheepers 2000; Lubbers, Gijsberts and Scheepers 2002; Norris 2005; Rydgren 2008). Even if not all voters who are skeptical of immigration vote for radical right-wing parties, most voters who do vote for those parties have such attitudes.

Immigration-negative sentiments are potentially fomented by several contextual factors. Two highly interrelated strands in the literature suggest that the proportion of immigrants or other ethnic minorities elicit such attitudes. According to the ethnic competition hypothesis, voters turn to the radical right-wing populist parties because they want to reduce competition from immigrants over scarce resources such as in the labour market, housing, welfare benefits and even the marriage market (Pettigrew 1957; Kriesi 1999; Fennema 2005; Koopmans et al. 2005; see also Blalock 1957, 1967; Olzak 1992). Related, the more general group position hypothesis states that xenophobia and prejudice arise from a perceived threat to the in-group position and group identity posed by the increased presence of ethnic out-groups in people's immediate social surroundings (Blumer 1958; Quillian 1995; Bobo and Tuan 2006; see also Hjerm 2007).

This implies that the breeding ground for xenophobia and immigration-negative attitudes will be more favorable in areas with a high proportion of immigrants, and that the xenophobic messages of radical right-wing populist parties are more likely to find resonance within such areas; and that the electoral support for radical right-wing parties will be higher in such areas.

In cross-national studies, Knigge (1998) and Lubbers, Gijsberts and Scheepers (2002) showed that the electoral results of radical right-wing populist parties correlate positively with the number of immigrants in a country, and Swank and Betz (2003) and Van der Brug, Fennema and Tillie (2005) have shown that the same holds true for the number of asylum seekers. However, Golder (2003) showed a positive relationship between the proportion of immigrants in a country and electoral turnout for radical right-wing populist parties only in situations in which the unemployment rates exceeded 1.3 per cent, while the analyses of Norris (2005) failed to show a significant relationship between ethnic heterogeneity and the electoral popularity of radical right-wing parties. Nor did possible interaction effects between such indicators of ethnic heterogeneity and unemployment prove significant. Rydgren (2008) showed that voters living in areas with many immigrants were significantly more likely to vote for the radical right in Denmark and the Netherlands, but not in Austria, Belgium, France or Norway. In studies on variations across municipalities, Coffé, Heydels and Vermeir (2007) find a positive correlation between the

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number of Turkish or Maghrebian immigrants and the electoral support for the Vlaams Blok, but no significant correlations for the general proportion of immigrants within municipalities. Rydgren and Ruth (2011) showed that while the proportion of immigrants from the European Union/European Free Trade Association (EU/EFTA) countries were strongly and positively associated with a stronger electoral support for the Sweden Democrats, the proportion of non-European immigrants was only weakly positively correlated with electoral support for the Sweden Democrats in the municipal elections, and showed negative correlations in the national election. These results were counterintuitive, since there are good reasons to assume that the proportion of non-European immigrants, in particular, will constitute a breeding ground for radical right-wing populist party mobilization. Like other radical right-wing parties, the Sweden Democrats has emphasized that immigration from 'culturally distant' countries is more problematic than immigration from culturally more similar countries, since the cultural threat is seen as greater from such immigration. Immigration from Muslim countries is singled out as especially problematic (Zaslove 2004; Betz and Johnson 2004; Rydgren 2008). Yet, although the municipality level makes some sense as the level of analysis when considering ethnic competition, since the labour market and the housing market tend to be local in character, municipalities as geographical areas may be too large to capture the more generally perceived threat to majority group positions. The purpose of this study is to investigate to what extent these results hold true when analysing much more fine-grained geographical areas.

A variant of the group position theory, which is sometimes called the halo effect hypothesis (e.g. Bon and Cheylan 1988; Rey 1996; Perrineau 1997; Bowyer 2008), states that xenophobia and immigration-negative attitudes are most common in areas *close to* neighbourhoods with a high proportion of immigrants, and not within such neighbourhoods; making such areas even more likely breeding grounds for radical right-wing populist mobilization. There are two proposed reasons for this. First, neighbourhoods bordering immigrant-dense areas are often lower middle-class districts where residents are afraid of losing in social status and economic position (not least concerning housing prices). Second, those living in immigrant-dense neighbourhoods are more likely to interact with immigrants on a friendly basis, which reduces the power of stereotypes (cf. Allport 1954). Miles (1989, p. 15) suggests a distinction between the experienced 'other' and the imagined 'other', and we may assume that the halo effect arises because people living in neighbourhoods bordering on immigration-dense areas meet the imagined others on a daily basis, but less so the experienced other. For each voting district, we have looked at all the voting districts with which it shares a border.

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The measure we use is the total proportion of immigrants in the neighbouring voting district that has the highest proportion of immigrants. We also tried the measure of the proportion of only non-European immigrants, but this did not change the results in any substantial way since these measures overlap to a very high degree.

Data and methods

We have estimated six OLS multiple-regression models, which were tested against the electoral support for the Sweden Democrats in the national election of 2010 (proportion of votes). Sweden's 5,668 voting districts constituted the units of observation. Data came from Statistics Sweden. In Table 1, we list the dependent and independent variables, briefly explain how they were coded (when applicable) and provide some descriptive statistics. All data for the independent variables also come from official administrative registers, provided by Statistics Sweden, and have been aggregated to the voting district level (average income, unemployment rate, proportion of the population on welfare benefit schemes, ill-health and proportions of the population being born abroad). That means that we have detailed contextual data for both the dependent variable and all the independent variables, and that they all are measured at the same level of aggregation (the voting district level).

Model 1 will test the four indicators of socioeconomic marginalization, Model 2 the effects of the proportion of immigrants, and Model 3 the halo effect, that is the proportion of immigrants in neighbouring voting districts. Model 4 will combine variables included in Models 2–3, and Model 5 will combine variables included in Models 1–3, with the purpose of checking the robustness of the findings. In Model 6 we introduce interaction variables.

There are good reasons to assume that the halo effect looks different depending on the proportion of immigrants in the voters' own voting districts, and that the halo effect, if it exists, is particularly strong in voting districts with few immigrants. For that reason, we also ran separate analyses for voting districts in which the proportion of immigrants was 0–9.9 per cent, 10–19.9 per cent, and 20 per cent and above. For these analyses we only look at the halo effect in Model 1; in Model 2 we control for socioeconomic factors, in Model 3 we add an interaction term, and in Model 4 we also control for the proportion of immigrants.

Results

Table 2 shows that we receive fairly strong support for the socioeconomic marginalization hypothesis. As expected, we found a robust

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Table 1. *List of variables and descriptive statistics (mean and standard variation)*

Variables	Description	All voting districts *M* (SD)	Voting districts with low share of immigrants *M* (SD)	Voting districts with medium share of immigrants *M* (SD)	Voting districts with high share of immigrants *M* (SD)
Dependent variable	Proportion of vote for the Sweden Democrats in the general election of 2010	5.84 (3.05)	5.824 (2.95)	5.52 (3.13)	6.45 (3.06)
Average income	Average income (000s) in SEK	227.23 (43.99)	234.46 (32.75)	240.32 (43.12)	182.75 (46.02)
Unemployment	Percentage of the population unemployed according to labour market statistics from the Swedish Public Employment Service (*data from 2010*)	3.43 (1.88)	3.06 (1.44)	3.05 (1.60)	5.20 (2.39)
Welfare	Percentage of the population currently on welfare benefit schemes	3.87 (4.95)	2.07 (1.71)	3.15 (2.92)	10.32 (7.99)
Ill-health	Total number of days on which people are on various forms of sickness benefits, per capita (16.64 years)	31.41 (11.93)	30.51 (10.58)	28.71 (12.08)	38.85 (12.34)
Immigration 1	Percentage of the population born in the Nordic countries (*data from 2009*)	2.85 (2.28)	2.09 (1.07)	3.31 (1.90)	4.20 (4.00)
Immigration 2	Percentage of the population born in the EU/EFTA countries, excluding the Nordic countries (*data from 2009*)	2.71 (1.91)	1.67 (0.91)	3.15 (1.38)	4.92 (2.58)

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Table 1 (*Continued*)

Variables	Description	All voting districts *M* (SD)	Voting districts with low share of immigrants *M* (SD)	Voting districts with medium share of immigrants *M* (SD)	Voting districts with high share of immigrants *M* (SD)
Immigration 3	Percentage of the population born in the rest of the world (*data from 2009*)	8.01 (9.89)	2.56 (1.40)	7.25 (2.90)	25.06 (12.58)
Neighbour	Value of the neighbouring district with the highest amount of immigration	20.70 (14.55)	13.33 (8.75)	22.03 (11.05)	39.47 (15.85)
Unemployment × Immigration 1	Interaction between Unemployment and Immigration 1	15.00 (15.56)			
Unemployment × Immigration 2	Interaction between Unemployment and Immigration 2	14.45 (15.03)			
Unemployment × Immigration 3	Interaction between Unemployment and Immigration 3	53.03 (92.34)			
Unemployment × Neighbour	Interaction between Unemployment and Neighbour	115.03 (121.10)	65.27 (64.93)	106.15 (81.79)	274.08 (163.12)

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Table 2. *Differences in voting results for the Sweden Democrats in the 2010 national election, across voting districts (OLS regression analysis)*

2010 general election	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Income	−.018 (.001)				−.022 (.001)	−.022 (.001)
Unemployment	.134 (.034)				.149 (.033)	.069 (.042)
Welfare	−.124 (.012)				.056 (.015)	.026 (.016)
Ill-health	.050 (.004)				.041 (.004)	.041 (.004)
Immigration 1		.163 (.018)		.170 (.018)	.047 (.017)	.259 (.033)
Immigration 2		.130 (.025)		.140 (.026)	.327 (.025)	.089 (.047)
Immigration 3		−,017 (.005)		−.012 (.006)	−.169 (.009)	−.191 (.013)
Neighbour			.003 (.003)	−.007 (.004)	.031 (.004)	.028 (.007)
Unemployment × Immigration 1						−.034 (.005)
Unemployment × Immigration 2						.041 (.007)
Unemployment × Immigration 3						.004 (.002)
Unemployment × Neighbour						.001 (.001)
Constant	8.431 (.390)	5.159 (.081)	5.771 (.070)	5.212 (.086)	8.507 (.397)	8.841 (.411)
N	5,668	5,668	5,668	5,668	5,668	5,668
Adjusted R^2	**.141**	**.021**	**.000**	**.022**	**.203**	**.217**

Note: Standard error in parentheses

positive correlation between unemployment rates and voter support for the Sweden Democrats; robust negative correlations for average income within the voting district; and robust positive correlations for the general level of ill-health within the voting district (and here standard errors were particularly small). We also found the expected positive correlation between the percentage within the voting district on social welfare and the electoral support of the Sweden Democrats, but only when controlling for additional variables in Models 5 and 6.

Regarding the proportion of immigrants, however, the results are unexpected and ambiguous, and they are in line with differences between municipalities in the 2010 national election (Rydgren and Ruth 2011). Although we found a rather strong and robust positive correlation for the proportion of immigrants from the Nordic countries and the EU/EFTA countries, the proportion of immigrants from non-European countries was shown to correlate negatively with the electoral support for the Sweden Democrats; which is contrary to expectations. This result is also robust. Regarding the halo effect, finally, we do find a substantial positive correlation (with small standard errors) for the value of the neighbouring district with the highest immigration levels, but only when we control for socio-economic factors.

As demonstrated in Tables 3–5, the halo effect looks very different depending on the proportion of immigrants in the voters' own voting district. When controlling for socioeconomic factors, we found a rather strong positive correlation between the values of the neighbouring district with the highest immigration level and electoral support of the Sweden Democrats in voting districts with a low proportion of immigrants (0–9.9 per cent); a positive, but somewhat weaker correlation in voting districts in which the proportion of immigrants is between 10 and 19.9 per cent; and a negative correlation in voting districts with a high proportion of immigrants (20 per cent or more). These results are expected, and are in line with the idea that the halo effect is due to the discrepancy between living close to the 'imagined other' but not the 'experienced other'. This discrepancy is strongest in voting districts in which the percentage of immigrants is low, but which border voting districts with a high proportion of immigrants.

Conclusion

Radical right-wing populist parties have emerged and established themselves in many European countries over the past two and a half decades, including–most recently–Sweden, and there is a burgeoning literature on the variances in voter support for such parties. Several explanations stress contextual factors such as socioeconomic marginalization and the proportion of immigrants, but the large majority of

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Table 3. *The halo effect in municipalities with a low proportion of immigrants (0–9.9 per cent) (OLS regression analysis)*

2010 general election	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Income		−.042 (.002)	−.043 (.002)	−.039 (.002)
Unemployment		−.108 (.051)	−.067 (.054)	−.017 (.053)
Welfare		−.182 (.039)	−.178 (.039)	−.100 (.041)
Ill-health		−.012 (.008)	−.013 (.008)	−.017 (.008)
Neighbour	.002 (.006)	.032 (.006)	.044 (.008)	.027 (.008)
Unemployment × Neighbour			−.002 (.001)	.000 (.001)
Immigration 1				.397 (.048)
Immigration 2				.663 (.057)
Immigration 3				−.142 (.042)
Constant	5.796 (.101)	16.414 (.753)	16.381 (.753)	13.813 (.751)
N	2,864	2,864	2,864	2,864
Adjusted R^2	**.000**	**.138**	**.139**	**.206**

Note: Standard error in parentheses

studies use too few cases to achieve conclusive results. In this paper, we analysed 5,668 voting districts in Sweden, in the 2010 election, to test the hypotheses that electoral support for radical right-wing populist parties (in this case, the Sweden Democrats) is higher in socio-economically poorer areas and in areas with a high percentages of

Table 4. *The halo effect in municipalities with a medium-sized proportion of immigrants (10–19.9 per cent) (OLS regression analysis)*

2010 general election	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Income		−.020 (.002)	−.020 (.002)	−.021 (.002)
Unemployment		.336 (.062)	.317 (.074)	.270 (.073)
Welfare		−.161 (.031)	−.162 (.031)	−.021 (.035)
Ill-health		.074 (.008)	.075 (.008)	.066 (.008)
Neighbour	−.016 (.007)	.014 (.006)	.011 (.008)	.016 (.009)
Unemployment × Neighbour			.001 (.001)	.003 (.001)
Immigration 1				.031 (.039)
Immigration 2				.187 (.049)
Immigration 3				−.193 (.029)
Constant	5.863 (.164)	7.293 (.667)	7.334 (.673)	7.946 (.754)
N	1,807	1,807	1,807	1,807
Adjusted R^2	**.003**	**.293**	**.293**	**.321**

Note: Standard error in parentheses

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Table 5. *The halo effect in municipalities with a high proportion of immigrants (>20 per cent) (OLS regression analysis)*

2010 general election	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Income		.003 (.003)	.003 (.003)	−.011 (.003)
Unemployment		.263 (.066)	.134 (.102)	.396 (.096)
Welfare		−.069 (.020)	−.071 (.020)	.050 (.020)
Ill-health		.055 (.009)	.058 (.009)	.062 (.008)
Neighbour	−.017 (.006)	−.014 (.006)	−.029 (.001)	.039 (.012)
Unemployment × Neighbour			.003 (.002)	−.001 (.002)
Immigration 1				−.110 (.025)
Immigration 2				.249 (.036)
Immigration 3				−.204 (.014)
Constant	7.122 (.259)	3.558 (.715)	4.114 (.790)	6.617 (776)
N	997	997	997	997
Adjusted R^2	**.007**	**.090**	**.091**	**.275**

Note: Standard error in parentheses

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immigrants. This study is an important contribution to the literature on radical right-wing wing voting generally. It draws on a considerably larger number of observations than is used in cross-national studies (which dominate the research field), which means that we can put key hypothesis to more reliable tests. Comparing voting districts within one country also means that ideological and programmatic idiosyncrasies between radical right-wing parties in different countries are avoided, and that institutional factors are kept constant–which means that we can avoid important confounders and mis-specifications that potentially harm the validity of cross-national analyses. In addition, this study puts the halo effect to a rigorous test, something that has not been done before.

The main conclusions are that we found support for the socio-economic marginalization hypothesis. Contrary to the majority of earlier studies (as discussed above), we found a strong and robust negative correlation between unemployment rates and electoral support of radical right-wing populist parties. We also found some support for the hypothesis that electoral support for radical right-wing parties is higher in areas in which the proportion of immigrants is higher. However, these results were partly highly unexpected: although we found positive correlations between the proportion of immigrants from the Nordic countries and for immigrants from the EU/EFTA countries, we found negative correlations between the proportion of non-European immigrants and electoral support of the Sweden

Democrats. When controlling for socioeconomic factors, we obtained support for the halo effect, and this effect was, as expected, strongest in voting districts with a low proportion of immigrants. Overall, our results indicate that socioeconomic factors are potentially very important for understanding macro-level variance in the electoral support for radical right-wing populist parties. The tables indicate that socioeconomic factors tend to explain more of the variance than the number of immigrants within voting districts, so a concluding remark would be not to focus too much on the concentration of immigrants when trying to explain variances in radical right-wing populist voting.

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Note

1. We also tried to include a Gini measure, the average level of education, and housing types (private/public owned houses). None of these measures added anything to our models, and they caused multi-collinearity. For that reason we excluded them from our final models.

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