The Sociology of the Radical Right

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Abstract

During the past two decades, the radical right has reemerged as
an electoral force in Western Europe, as well as in other stable
democracies such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Aside
from discussing the ideology of this party family and how it re-
lates to older forms of right-wing radicalism and extremism, such as
fascism, this review deals with the question of how the emergence
of radical right-wing parties can be explained and why such par-
ties have been considerably more successful among voters in some
countries than in others. Possible explanations are grouped into two
parts: The first consists of so-called demand-centered explanations,
that is, explanations that focus on changing preferences, beliefs, and
attitudes among voters. The second consists of so-called supply-side
explanations, that is, explanations that focus on political opportunity
structures and party organizational factors.

INTRODUCTION

During the past two decades, the radical right has reemerged as an electoral force in Western Europe, as well as in other stable democracies such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Since the early 1980s, parties such as the French Front National, the Belgian Vlaams Blok, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), the Italian Lega Nord, and the Danish People's Party, among several others, have established themselves in their respective party systems, sometimes with voter shares exceeding 20%. Austria (2000) and Italy (1994 and 2001) have formed governments involving the Freedom Party and the Lega Nord, respectively. Hence, for the first time since World War II, the radical right constitutes a significant force in West European democracies (Betz 2001, p. 407).

This development has revived the interests of social scientists in the radical and/or extreme right. Much like the social scientists in the 1950s and 1960s, who tried to understand the rise of interwar fascism in Europe (e.g., Arendt 1951, Lipset 1981) and early postwar right-wing radicalism in the United States (Bell 2002b, Shils 1956), contemporary social scientists have been intrigued by the question of why millions of voters living in liberal democracies give support to radical right-wing parties that promote xenophobia (and sometimes racism), ethno-nationalism, sociocultural authoritarianism, and antisystem populism. Moreover, the reemergence of a strong radical right has provoked sociologically significant questions because it contradicts several of the core hypotheses of postwar political sociology, such as Lipset & Rokkan's (1967) freezing hypothesis (which failed to predict the emergence of new party families) and Inglehart's (1977) postmaterialist theory (which predicted only new left-liberal parties and movements) (cf. Veugelers 1999).

This review consists of three parts. The first part deals with how the party family of new radical right-wing parties can be defined. What are its characteristic ideological and programmatic features? How does it re-

late to older forms of right-wing radicalism and extremism, such as fascism? The remaining two parts deal with how the emergence of radical right-wing parties can be explained and why such parties have been considerably more successful among the voters in some countries than in others. The first of these parts reviews so-called demand-centered explanations: explanations that focus on changing preferences, beliefs, and attitudes among the voters. The last section discusses supply-side explanations: political opportunity structures and party organizational factors.

WHAT IS RADICAL RIGHT-WING POPULISM?

The literature on the new radical right lacks consensus on core definitions and ideological characteristics of this new party family (cf. Fennema 1997, Mudde 1996a), despite the near consensus on which parties should be included in the party family. This is certainly not a satisfying situation; thus, I devote this section to the ideology of the new radical right and to definitions of this party family. This is not a question merely of semantics; it is an important step in understanding the parties and explaining their emergence.

The new radical right-wing parties share an emphasis on ethno-nationalism rooted in myths about the distant past. Their program is directed toward strengthening the nation by making it more ethnically homogeneous and by returning to traditional values. They generally view individual rights as secondary to the goals of the nation. They also tend to be populists in accusing elites of putting internationalism ahead of the nation and of putting their own narrow self-interests and various special interests ahead of the interest of the people. Hence, the new radical right-wing parties share a core of ethno-nationalist xenophobia and antiestablishment populism. In their political platforms this ideological core is embedded in a general sociocultural authoritarianism that stresses themes such as

law and order and family values (Rydgren 2005a; see also Minkenberg 2001). Below, I account for these ideological core themes, but first I discuss the two constituting concepts of the definition—"radical" (or extreme) and "right-wing"—as well as how this new party family differs from other (and older) forms of right-wing extremism, such as fascism.

Radical

In what manner are the new radical right parties radical, or even extremist (as many scholars would have it; see, e.g., Mudde 2000, Eatwell 1994)? According to Powell (1986, p. 359), an extremist party "represents a demand for major transformation of the society, either towards some future vision or back to an idealized past. Such demands diverge from the general, current policy consensus." According to this definition, the new radical right can in most instances be considered examples of extremist parties. However, it may also be useful to consider Lipset & Raab's (1970) more specific definition of political extremism as antipluralism or monism. The "operational heart of extremism," to follow the argument of Lipset & Raab (1970, p. 6), "is the repression of difference and dissent, the closing down of the market place of ideas. More precisely, the operational essence of extremism, or monism, is the tendency to treat cleavage and ambivalence as *illegitimate*."

Political monism of the extreme right is expressed in two ways: as a rejection of the democratic political system and/or a rejection of universalistic and egalitarian, sometimes called democratic, values. We should here distinguish between two different subtypes of right-wing extremism, namely the parliamentary and the nonparliamentary. Whereas the latter is opposed to the constitution, the former is only hostile toward the constitution (see Mudde 2000, p. 12). It is common to reserve the use of the term right-wing extremism exclusively for the nonparliamentary type, which has chosen to take action outside the parliamentary arena, whereas the parlia-

mentary type, which participates in public elections and aspires to win representation within democratic political institutions, is referred to as radical right (see, e.g., Eatwell 2000, pp. 410–411; Zaslove 2004b, p. 66). Furthermore, the new radical right does not usually oppose democracy per se (as an idea), although they typically are hostile to representative democracy and the way existing democratic institutions actually work. In fact, these parties argue that they represent true democracy (in contrast to the sham democracy characterizing contemporary Western Europe).

Hence, although the radical right-wing parties reject cleavages and division lines within "the people"—they are typically antiparty parties (Ignazi 1996, Mudde 1996b)— they are extremists primarily because they reject pluralist values. Despite the radical right's acceptance of procedural democracy, its ideal society is ethnocracy, which in many ways runs counter to the pluralistic values of liberal democracy (Betz 2005, Minkenberg 2000).

Right

One common way to distinguish between left and right is to view the former as egalitarian and the latter as nonegalitarian (Bobbio 1996) or the left as universalistic and the right as particularistic (see, e.g., Eatwell 2004). Two problems with this distinction, of course, are that it is unclear on what policies parties should be judged and that parties can, for instance, be nonegalitarian and universalistic at the same time. More specifically, we may define a party as left or right according to its position on socioeconomic politics, which concerns the degree of state involvement in the economy (i.e., economic socialism versus economic liberalism), or on its positions on sociocultural politics, which relates to value-laden issues such as national identity, law and order, immigration policy, abortion, and so on (i.e., sociocultural liberalism versus authoritarianism). The new radical right is right-wing primarily in the sociocultural sense of the term.

The new radical right gives priority to sociocultural issues, in particular to issues related to national identity, and its central political program can be understood as "a response to the erosion of the system of 'ethno-national dominance', which characterized much of the history of modern nation states" (Betz & Johnson 2004, p. 323). More specifically, the new radical right builds on the idea of ethno-pluralism, an idea that is in line with right-wing ideas going back to Herder (Berlin 1976, Holmes 2000) and that in modern times was elaborated by the French *Nouvelle Droite*. *Nouvelle Droite* was a composite term for intellectual groups that, inspired by Gramsci's notion of cultural hegemony, formed in France during the late 1960s and 1970s to counter the intellectual and cultural dominance of the left. For the *Nouvelle Droite*, as for related groups in Italy and Germany, the principal aim was *Kulturkampf*, and not party politics (Minkenberg 2000). Departing from the left's notion of *différence*—on which the doctrine of multiculturalism (that is, the idea that migrants should have the right to preserve habits and traditions of their home countries) is largely based—the notion of ethno-pluralism states that, to preserve the unique national characters of different peoples, they have to be kept separated. Mixing of different ethnicities only leads to cultural extinction (see Griffin 2000, Minkenberg 1997, Taguieff 1988). Moreover, in this doctrine, which claims the right to difference, culture and ethnicity are deterministic and monolithic; chances for individual change and ingroup variation are believed to be slight. Yet, contrary to the traditional conception of racism, the doctrine of ethno-pluralism, as such, is not hierarchical: Different ethnicities are not necessarily superior or inferior, only different, incompatible, and incommensurable (Betz & Johnson 2004, Taguieff 1988). Hence, whereas old racism, common in colonial settings, aimed at subordination, the ethno-pluralist doctrine basically aims at expulsion (Fennema 2005).

The French Front National adopted this notion from the *Nouvelle Droite* and made it the core of the party's political program and rhetorical profile (see Rydgren 2003b). Today it is the most distinguishing ideological characteristic of the new radical right party family (Rydgren 2005a; see also Betz 2005). By using the ethno-pluralist ideology, the radical right-wing parties claim the right of European national cultures to protect their cultural identity. According to the new radical right, there are several threats against their national identity, of which the alleged invasion of immigrants is the most important. Immigrants from Muslim countries are singled out as particularly threatening to European values, allegedly because they are the least commensurable and the least inclined to assimilation (see, e.g., Zaslove 2004b). Other threats are supranational entities such as the European Union and, increasingly, multinational corporations and economic globalization, as well as cosmopolitan elites, and other processes believed to foster universalization and homogenization (Betz & Johnson 2004, Griffin 2000, Zaslove 2004a).

Also, more generally, anti-immigration issues are the core message of the new radical right.[1] These parties have used four arguments to frame immigrants as national/cultural threats: First, as implied above, for the radical right, immigrants are a threat to ethno-national identity; second, they are a major cause of criminality and other kinds of social insecurity; third, they are a cause of unemployment; and fourth, they are abusers of the generosity of the welfare states of Western democracies, which results in fewer state subsidies, etc., for natives (see, e.g., Rydgren

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[1]Hence, scholars such as Kitschelt (1995), Knigge (1998), and Taggart (1996) are incorrect in claiming that the new radical right only uses the immigration issue as a catalyst for their discontent with contemporary, parliamentary politics as a whole. There are several reasons for this misunderstanding, the most important being that they have not analyzed the ideology and rhetorical strategies of these parties, but rather have looked at the reasons voters gave for voting for them.

2003a). Using the third and fourth frames, the new radical right-wing parties have promoted the idea of national preference, that is, giving natives priority when it comes to jobs, housing, health care, and so on. Their proposals can be characterized as a sort of reversed affirmative action (e.g., Zaslove 2004a, Rydgren 2003b). For all these reasons, radical right-wing parties promote an ethnic view of citizenship (*jus sanguinis*) and oppose models of residential citizenship (*jus soli*) (cf. Brubaker 1992).

The picture is more ambiguous as far as economic policies are concerned. Most of the radical right-wing parties backed neoliberal economics of one sort or another during the 1980s, often manifested in campaigns for radical tax cuts. However, during the 1990s, most of the new radical right parties changed positions and have become more economically protectionist, which implies a more centrist position on economic policies. As a result, many radical right-wing parties today support the capitalist system nationally, while at the same time strongly opposing globalization (Zaslove 2004b). In this vein, for example, Bruno Mégret, then member of the French Front National, launched the idea of national capitalism (see Rydgren 2003b). Simultaneously, however, welfare chauvinism became increasingly important to the new radical right-wing parties and led some of them to present themselves as ardent supporters of the welfare state (Betz & Johnson 2004, Evans et al. 2001).

Building on data from 1990, Kitschelt (1995) argued that radical right-wing parties had to present a winning formula of market (neo-)liberalism and right-wing authoritarianism to become electorally successful, a view that he still defends a decade later (McGann & Kitschelt 2005). This view has several failings. First, Kitschelt does not support his argument with an analysis of the program and propaganda of the radical right-wing parties, but on the attitudes of their voters. It is untenable to infer the former from the latter: That a segment of their voters are promarket

does not necessary imply that the parties promote promarket politics. Second, Kitschelt is conflating neoliberalism and populism. As Eatwell (2000) has argued, the radical right-wing parties' attacks on "the big state" have been more populist than (neo-)liberal. In fact, the radical right is opposed to liberal values: "[T]here is no fundamental commitment to markets in the sense of liberal values (individualism, economic nonegalitarianism, internationalism, and so on). The underlying extremist Weltanschauung is based more on features such as family, religion and distrust of outsiders" (Eatwell 2000, p. 413).

Populism

Some scholars (e.g., Betz 1993, 1994; Taggart 1996, 2000) have argued that populism is a defining characteristic of the new radical right. This is true insofar as these parties tend to view society as "ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, the 'pure' people versus 'the corrupt elite'"— a worldview that, according to Cas Mudde (2004, p. 543), is characteristic of populism— and that the populist antiestablishment strategy has been crucial to the success of the new radical right-wing parties. In the case of the new radical right-wing parties, not only elites but other groups as well (immigrants, ethnic minorities) are excluded from the "pure people." A party that uses the antiestablishment strategy tries to construct an image of itself as in opposition to the political class, while trying actively not to appear antidemocratic. A party that is viewed as antidemocratic will be stigmatized and marginalized as long as the overwhelming majority of the electorate is in favor of democracy per se (Schedler 1996; see also Van der Brug et al. 2005).

To create distance between themselves and the established political parties (i.e., both the government and the anti-incumbent opposition), populist parties aim at recoding the political space, with its diversity of parties, into one single, homogeneous political class. One way of achieving this goal is to argue

that the differences between government and established opposition parties are irrelevant surface phenomena. According to the new radical right-wing parties, in reality the established parties do not compete but collude [Schedler (1996); cf. Abedi (2002); see also Sartori's (1976) conception of antisystem parties]. Part of this strategy is often also to criticize the established parties for focusing on obsolete issues, while at the same time suppressing political issues associated with the real conflict between national identity and multiculturalism.

The populist antiestablishment strategy makes it possible for the new radical right-wing parties to present themselves as the real champions of true democracy—as a new kind of party—which takes the worries and interests of the common man into account (see, e.g., Betz & Johnson 2004, Mudde 2004). Yet, the Manichean worldview of the new radical right-wing parties makes the politics of compromise and bargaining of liberal democracy difficult. Thus, the new radical right-wing parties commonly demand more referenda, which encourage clear yes or no answers, while discouraging compromise (Eatwell 2004).

Yet one can argue that populism is a characteristic but not a distinctive feature of the new radical right. Other parties use the populist antiestablishment strategy as well, and several parties of other political shades in Western Europe can be said to be populist in some way or another.

Fascism

By examining the three mythic components that, according to Griffin (1991, p. 201), constitute the fascist minimum—populist ultranationalism, the myth of decadence, and the rebirth myth—we find similarities as well as differences between fascism and the new radical right-wing parties. First, although the populist ultranationalism (i.e., organic ethnonationalism) of the new radical right is less aggressive and expansive, and rather turned inwards, it still constitutes the ideological core of these parties. The new radical right's longing for ethnic purity, homogeneity, and organic order places them in the same tradition as fascism. Second, decadence has been a recurrent ideological and rhetorical theme of some of the new radical right-wing parties (e.g., the French Front National), but less so in others (e.g., Lega Nord). In any case, the ideological differences between fascism and the radical right-wing parties mainly concern the third point, the rebirth myth. According to Griffin (1991), the fascist myth of rebirth, what he calls the palingenetic myth, refers "to the sense of a new start or of regeneration after a phase of crisis or decline . . . . At the heart of palingenetic political myth lies the belief that contemporaries are living through or about to live through a 'sea-change,' or 'water-shed' or 'turning-point' in the historical process" (Griffin 1991, pp. 33, 35). Although such a myth also exists among the new radical right-wing parties, it is much weaker, and it does not aim at replacing the democratic system with a new order (Griffin 2000). Equally important, whereas fascism was oriented toward the future (Sternhell 1986), these parties are rather oriented toward the past (or, in fact, toward an idealized idea of the past). Rather than create a new society, rising "phoenix-like after a period of encroaching decadence" (Griffin 1991, p. 38), the new radical right-wing parties wish to restore the status quo ante (see von Beyme 1988).[2]

Yet, although the new radical right-wing parties are not fascist, there are affinities to fascism. In conducting interviews with representatives of the new radical right-wing parties in the European Parliament, Fennema & Pollman (1998) showed that representatives of these parties (the Italian MSI, the Belgian Vlaams Blok, and the French Front National) made quite explicit references to

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[2]Using slightly different defining criteria of fascism, Michael Mann (2004, p. 370) came to a similar conclusion, claiming that the new radical right-wing parties are "not seriously fascist under the terms of my definition."

prewar fascist intellectuals and cited them as their ideological inspiration. However, although they also displayed other fascist ideas, such as ethnic nationalism, antimaterialism, and conspiracy theory, there were few signs of the antidemocratic elements of fascism (see also Fennema 2005, p. 8).

EXPLAINING THE EMERGENCE OF NEW RADICAL RIGHT-WING PARTIES

Most research on the new radical right-wing parties has focused on singular national cases (see, e.g., Hainsworth 1992, 2000; Betz & Immerfall 1998; Merkl & Weinberg 1993, 1997, 2003). Because this research takes a large variety of factors into account, it often provides important insights. Sometimes, however, it is also highly problematic: By ignoring research done on similar parties in other countries, it often leads to ad hoc theorizing. Owing to limited space in this review, however, I mainly examine research that is comparative in scope.

In discussing different explanations of the emergence and electoral fortunes of the new radical right, it is useful to distinguish among different types of explanations. The most common family of explanations focuses on the demand-side of politics: factors that have changed the interests, emotions, attitudes, and preferences of West European voters. These explanations often depart from macrostructural processes. Another important group of explanations focuses on supply-side factors: the political program that the new radical right-wing parties offer, their party organization, and a number of so-called political opportunity structures, such as electoral systems, elite responses, and the media.

Demand-Side Factors

The most common demand-centered explanations have been the anomie/social breakdown thesis, the relative deprivation thesis, the modernization losers thesis (which is based on both the social breakdown thesis and the relative deprivation thesis), the ethnic competition thesis, as well as other explanations focusing on popular xenophobia and political discontent. Most of these explanations have in common that they are based in different ways on grievance theory, in focusing on the objective—mostly macrostructurally shaped—conditions that have increased grievances and discontent among the people (De Witte & Klandermans 2000, Koopmans et al. 2005).

Anomie/social breakdown. The use of the anomie or social breakdown thesis within the literature on the new radical right—which argues that isolated individuals living in atomized, socially disintegrated societies are particularly likely to support ethno-nationalist and populist politics—is a remnant from mass society theory (Arendt 1951, Kornhauser 1959), which was one of the dominant theories for explaining the rise of interwar fascism and Nazism. This theory lost influence after new empirical research (e.g., Hamilton 1982) demonstrated that interwar fascism was often strongest in communities that remained strong, rather than in weak communities, and that support for Hitler was not overrepresented among socially isolated voters (Eatwell 2005, Fennema 2005), yet it still lingers. However, in its original form the anomie/social breakdown thesis has received little support in the empirically oriented literature: Voters of the new radical right-wing parties are not the isolated, asocial individuals that would be predicted from this theory (see, e.g., Eatwell 2003).

The relative deprivation/modernization losers thesis. Relative deprivation theory focuses on the frustration arising from feelings of relative deprivation. Feelings of relative deprivation, in turn, are caused by disappointing comparisons with one's own past (that is, when the trajectory of one's life suddenly deviates from the expected) or with social reference groups (that is, when one's ingroup is

negatively evaluated in comparison with significant outgroups) (see, e.g., Gurr 1970, Runciman 1966). In practical terms, much research that builds on the relative deprivation thesis has been operationalized in economic terms as declining market situations for individuals or groups, or fear of economic decline in the near future. This has occurred despite the early emphasis by Bell (2002a), Lipset (1959), and others that loss of status (or fear of loss of status) may be at least as important—and possibly more important—in explaining support for the radical right.

The modernization losers thesis, in turn, has been one of the central tenets in the literature on the new radical right-wing parties. It is basically a combination of the social breakdown thesis and the relative deprivation thesis. Minkenberg (2003, p. 151), for instance, argues that the rise of new radical right-wing parties can be understood as "the radical effort to undo" social change associated with modernization, that is, "a growing autonomy of the individual (status mobility and role flexibility) and ongoing functional differentiation of the society (segmentation and growing autonomy of societal subsystems)." The ethnonationalistically defined, homogeneous community and the virtue of traditional roles stressed by the new radical right constitute appealing counterweights for people who do not feel at home in a modernizing society.

Betz (1994, pp. 26–27) proposed a similar explanation in arguing that the emergence of the new radical right-wing parties is largely "a consequence of a profound transformation of the socioeconomic and sociocultural structure of advanced Western European democracies," and more specifically from an industrial to a postindustrial economy. According to Betz, this transition is largely characterized by dissolution, fragmentation, and differentiation, which are the result of increased individualization. These processes also have implications for the cultures of contemporary Western societies, in which, according to Betz (1994, p. 29), "established subcultures, milieus, and institutions, which tra-

ditionally provided and sustained collective identities, are getting eroded and/or are being destroyed . . . , and are giving way to a 'flux of contextualized identities'." Taken together, these developments increase the importance of cultural capital, flexibility, and individual entrepreneurship for people's efforts to adapt to the rapidly changing circumstances of contemporary Western societies. Hence, those who possess these characteristics can be expected to be among the winners in the postindustrial societies (Betz 1994, pp. 29–30). However, the losers, those who are unable to cope with the "acceleration of economic, social, and cultural modernization" and/or are stuck in full or partial unemployment, run the risk of falling into the new underclass and of becoming "superfluous and useless for society" (Betz 1994, p. 32). This situation may favor the emergence of radical right-wing parties in three ways, according to Betz. First, the losers in the postindustrialization processes may be supposed to become anxious, bewildered, insecure, and resentful, sentiments that may be channeled into support for policy proposals that stress the need to return to the traditional values of the status quo ante. Second, as a response to the established political parties' inability to cope with the (at least perceived) perverted effects of rampant economic and cultural transformation processes, many have become increasingly discontented and disenchanted, which has opened up a niche for parties ready to exploit popular political discontent to win protest votes. Third, the fragmentation and individualization of postindustrial societies lead to a decline in cleavage politics, i.e., to a decreased salience of the economic cleavage dimension, which may open up a space for parties that address new issues, such as the immigration question (Betz 1994, pp. 34–35).[3]

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[3]See also Bell (2002a, p. 42), who has described the politics of the radical right as the politics of frustration, based on "the sour impotence of those who find themselves unable to understand, let alone command, the complex mass society that is the polity today."

In practical terms, "modernization losers" has usually come to refer to unemployed people and unskilled workers threatened by unemployment in the near future (see, e.g., Betz 1994, 1998). However, others, such as Minkenberg (2000), have argued that modernization losers should be defined more broadly to include "the second-to-last fifth" stratum of society, a stratum that is "rather secure but objectively can still lose something" (Minkenberg 2000, p. 187). One may complain that this definition makes for poor predictions of which voter groups will turn to the new radical right-wing parties, but it largely agrees with Lipset's (1981, p. 489) well-known argument that the interwar fascist parties were disproportionately supported by sections of the old middle class (such as self-employed craftsmen and small shop owners) that were "displaced or threatened by the emergence of centralized, large-scale industry and the growing power and status of organized labor." Empirical research clearly shows that workers and the old middle classes are indeed overrepresented among new radical right voters (Ivarsflaten 2005, p. 465; Lubbers et al. 2002, p. 364; Norris 2005, p. 139). When considering voters' education, however, empirical findings seem to support the relative deprivation theory better than the modernization losers thesis (or at least Betz's version of it). Although support for the new radical right-wing parties varies inversely with the level of education—lower-educated voters are overrepresented and highly educated voters are underrepresented (Lubbers et al. 2002)—the relationship seems to be curvilinear: The new radical right receives its strongest support from the mid-school stratum (Arzheimer & Carter 2006, Evans 2005). [Moreover, male voters tend to be highly overrepresented among the voters of the new radical right-wing populist parties (Givens 2004).]

However, for the unemployed we find a more ambiguous picture. Although there is support for the claim that the unemployed are overrepresented among the voters of the new radical right (see, e.g., Lubbers et al. 2002,

p. 134), 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 macrolevel studies have shown that there is either no significant relationship (Lubbers et al. 2002) or a negative relationship (Arzheimer & Carter 2006, Knigge 1998) between unemployment rates and differences in the electoral fortunes of radical right-wing parties. Swank & Betz (2003) find no significant association between either the unemployment rate, slower economic growth, or inflation rates and the success of radical right-wing parties, although they do find a significant negative association between having a universal welfare state system (including an active labor market program) and electoral success of new radical right parties.[4] Only Jackman & Volpert (1996) have reported a positive relationship for unemployment, whereas Golder (2003) found a positive interaction effect: high unemployment rates are favorable to new radical right-wing parties only in countries with a large (i.e., 6.3% or more) presence of foreign resident populations. I return to Golder's finding when discussing the ethnic competition thesis, below.

Yet, although the class profile of the radical right-wing parties is in line with the predictions of the modernization losers thesis, it would be premature to conclude that it has been supported. These groups may support the new radical right for a variety of other reasons. Research findings are needed that show that the voters feel relatively deprived, or that they are afraid of becoming so in the future. Moreover, the common assumption that the political establishment is rewarded when the economy is good, whereas nonestablished contenders such as the new radical right-wing parties are successful in times of economic crisis, is open to question. As already implied by

[4]However, I am unsure that these results would hold today. Swank & Betz's data are from 1998, and since then new radical right-wing populist parties have grown considerably stronger in Denmark and Norway.

Hofstadter (2002a,b), a good economic situation may increase the salience of political "issues of affluence," such as status politics and identity politics, and the radical right is likely to be more successful when such sociocultural politics is salient and socioeconomic politics plays a secondary role. "Times of depression and economic discontent," according to Hofstadter (2002b, p. 84), are likely to be dominated by socioeconomic interest politics. Such issues are less salient in times of economic prosperity and well-being. I discuss this further below.

Ethnic competition thesis. In contrast to the three explanations so far discussed, which focus on more diffuse changes in political demand, the ethnic competition thesis focuses specifically on the immigration issue as the reason for the emergence of the new radical right-wing parties. This makes some sense. Although not the only attitudinal factor for predicting which voters will support a radical right-wing party, anti-immigration is a very important one, arguably the most important (Lubbers & Scheepers 2000, Lubbers et al. 2002, Norris 2005). Even if not all voters who hold anti-immigration attitudes vote for a new radical right-wing party, most voters who do vote for such parties hold such attitudes.

According to the ethnic competition thesis, voters turn to the new radical right because they want to reduce competition from immigrants over scarce resources such as the labor market, housing, welfare state benefits, or even the marriage market. From this follow two hypotheses: that radical right-wing parties will be more successful in areas with many immigrants, where this kind of competition is more manifest; and that the new radical right-wing parties will be supported foremost by voters who are more likely to be confronted by competition from immigrants, that is, by lower-educated, unskilled, male voters who aspire to the same jobs and consumption as most immigrant groups in Western Europe (Fennema 2005, Koopmans et al. 2005, Kriesi 1999; see also Olzak 1992).

Several studies have presented findings that support the first hypothesis, that the electoral turnouts of new radical right-wing parties are positively correlated to the number of immigrants in a country (Knigge 1998, Lubbers et al. 2002) or to the number of asylum seekers (Swank & Betz 2003, Van der Brug et al. 2005). Golder's (2003) analysis showed a positive relationship between the proportion of immigrants in a country and electoral turnout for the new radical right in situations in which the unemployment rates exceeded 1.3%. In contrast, the analysis of Norris (2005) failed to show a significant relationship between ethnic heterogeneity (number of refugees, number of asylum seekers, or proportion of noncitizens and people born abroad) and the electoral fortunes of the new radical right-wing parties. Nor did possible interaction effects between such indicators of ethnic heterogeneity and unemployment prove significant. Yet, despite the positive associations found in several studies, I argue that research results present only weak support for the ethnic competition thesis. Although some competition is due to the national proportion of foreign-borns (i.e., competition over welfare state benefits), most competition is more local in character. It is an ecological fallacy to conclude from country-level data that voters living in ethnically heterogeneous countries also live in ethnically heterogeneous local settings. Some of them probably do, but many others do not, and we do not know from these studies whether those who vote for the new radical right-wing parties belong to the former or the latter category. To test this hypothesis more thoroughly, more fine-grained analysis (and data) is warranted. A first step in this direction was taken by Bon & Cheylan (1988), who in their study of Toulouse and Marseille showed that the vote for the French Front National was higher among voters living close to areas with a high concentration of non-European immigrants than for those living within these areas. Moreover, using individual-level data, Rydgren (2006b) 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.

Popular xenophobia. The fact that voters who hold anti-immigrant attitudes are heavily overrepresented among the new radical right voters is not necessarily associated with economic trends and market competition. It may also be identified as popular xenophobia, ethnocentrism, and defense of a national and cultural identity that is perceived to be under threat. Congruent with the modernization losers thesis, Knigge (1998, p. 271) has suggested that popular xenophobia and ethnocentrism have grown more common and/or important as a result of "a crisis of national identity among the postindustrial democracies brought about by the transformation into a multicultural society." As Koopmans et al. (2005, p. 5) have argued, for instance, many people experience a loss of identity as a result of globalization, and, because there "is nothing beyond the nation-state that can serve as a new anchor for collective identities and can renew the sense of control," people turn to nationalism as a way to find such an anchorage.

It has also been suggested that the rise of the new radical right can be explained by the expansion of the European Union and its stronger role as a supranational actor after the Maastricht Treaty. This expansion may have benefited political parties of both the right and left that opposed the EU; in the case of the new radical right, leaders claimed that the EU eroded national supremacy, and they decried elites and multinationalism. This is a plausible suggestion, but it fails to explain why similar parties have emerged outside of Europe (e.g., in Canada, Australia, New Zealand) during the same period (cf. Norris 2005, pp. 67–68).

Political discontent. Finally, one strand within the literature on the new radical right claims that the growing political alienation and discontent in Western European countries (see, e.g., Putnam et al. 2000, p. 14) have created an audience receptive to antisystem and antiestablishment messages, and thus provided an opportunity for the new radical right-wing parties to mobilize protest voters. This explanation hinges on the populist character of the new radical right. Several studies have demonstrated that voters who are dissatisfied with the way democracy works, as well as voters who express lower trust and confidence in politicians and in democratic institutions, are more likely to vote for new radical right-wing parties (Lubbers et al. 2002; Norris 2005, pp. 157–159). However, Van der Brug et al. (2000) found no evidence that the new radical right-wing party voters are more motivated by alienation and protest than other voters.

Furthermore, it is reasonable to suspect that political protest plays a more important role in breakthrough elections of new radical right-wing parties than in subsequent elections. As protest voters tend to move back to their old parties after one or two deviant elections, voters who find themselves in ideological agreement with the new radical right-wing party or in other ways identify with the party tend to stay. Rydgren (2003b) indicated this tendency in France, where the Front National benefited from protest votes in particular before 1988, but further research is needed to elaborate and generalize these findings.

Yet, one problem with this hypothesis is that it remains rather unclear why voters who are dissatisfied with the government should turn to a new radical right-wing party instead of to any other opposition party (in particular to some other nonestablished one). Moreover, as Norris (2005, p. 164), among others, has emphasized, political discontent does not account for the substantial variation in the electoral results of new radical right-wing parties. Mistrust of politicians and political institutions has increased in most West European countries, but new radical right-wing parties have only been electorally successful in some of them. This is the case, to a somewhat varying degree, with most of the demand-centered explanations discussed above. Grievances, postindustrialism,

increased cultural heterogeneity, and so on, are phenomena that most West European countries have experienced over the past two decades and are therefore bad predictors of cross-national variation in electoral support for the new radical right. Moreover, demand-side explanations may overestimate the importance of attitudinal change. As Eatwell (1994, p. 318), among others, has observed, the "relationship between belief and action is complex," and the increased disposition among voters to vote for the xenophobic and populist new radical right-wing parties is not necessarily associated with a change at the level of xenophobic and populist attitudes. There may be very little change in attitudes at all, or the change may be in salience and relative rank between different political issues, rather than in the attitudes themselves. As Ivarsflaten (2005, p. 467) has argued, the way voters trade off political issues against each other "changes more frequently and less predictably than issue preferences" as such.

These limitations of the demand-centered approach are increasingly recognized. As a result, a growing number of researchers have turned to so-called supply-side factors. As will be clear from the next section, demand-side explanations and supply-side explanations do not necessary contradict one another and can be quite successfully combined.

Supply-Side Factors

Among the supply-centered explanations, we can distinguish three subgroups, those that focus on (*a*) different political opportunity structures; (*b*) party organizations; and (*c*) the message of the radical right-wing parties, that is, their ideology and discourse. The latter was discussed above; here, I focus on *a* and *b*.

Political opportunity structures. Political opportunity structures are commonly defined as "consistent—but not necessary formal, permanent, or national" resources that are external to the party or movement in question (Tarrow 1998, pp. 19–20). The following po-

litical opportunity structures have been discussed in relation to the new radical right: realignment processes; convergence between established parties in political space; electoral systems and thresholds; the presence or absence of elite allies or, more specifically, the relationship with the established political parties within the party system; and the structure of mass media.[5]

However, few of these political opportunities distinctively benefit radical right-wing parties. Opportunities associated with electoral systems and thresholds and with convergence processes are likely to benefit all kinds of new parties; realignment processes may present opportunities not only for the radical right, but also for new left-wing parties that promote identity politics based on sociocultural liberal values (focusing on feminism, multiculturalism, etc.). In addition, opportunities related to the structure of mass media and the presence or absence of elite allies may benefit all kinds of parties, particularly populist parties. This indicates that political opportunity structures, in isolation or combined, may be necessary but not sufficient explanatory factors. To be effective they should be combined with demand-centered explanations.

Realignment processes. It has been suggested that dealignment and realignment processes may present favorable political opportunities for new radical right-wing parties (see, e.g., Kriesi et al. 1995; Rydgren 2003b, 2005a, 2006a; Diani 1996). Several cleavage dimensions always exist simultaneously (Lipset & Rokkan 1967, Rokkan 1970), most of them ultimately based on social identity or interests. Although these cleavage dimensions exist side by side, either manifest or latent, their salience

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[5]Hence, I will not deal explicitly with political opportunities created by the demise of established parties. The situation in Italy, for instance, where the largest non-Socialist party, the Christian Democrats, almost disappeared because of the corruption scandals of the early 1990s, naturally presented huge opportunities for other right-wing parties such as the Lega Nord.

increases or declines during certain periods (Hout et al. 1996, pp. 55–56). Contemporary Western European democracies are characterized by two major cleavage dimensions: the economic cleavage dimension, which pits workers against capital and concerns the degree of state involvement in the economy; and the sociocultural cleavage dimension, which is a cleavage over values and concerns issues such as immigration, law and order, abortion, and so on (see Cole 2005, p. 206).

Although issues belonging to the sociocultural cleavage dimension have existed at an attitudinal level throughout the twentieth century (Hofstadter 2002a), the economic cleavage dimension has structured most political behavior in the postwar era (Bartolini 2000, Bell 2002a, Budge & Robertson 1987). However, there are certain indications that the salience of the sociocultural cleavage dimension has increased at the expense of the economic cleavage dimension during the past few decades, not least because of the politicization of identity politics, and in particular issues such as immigration, multiculturalism, and feminism, as well as then environment (for discussion and empirical indications, see, e.g., Betz 1994; Clark & Lipset 2001; Ignazi 1996, 2003; Inglehart 1997; Kitschelt 1995, Rydgren 2003b). It is plausible that this development has created expanding political opportunities for the new radical right-wing parties.

More specifically, we may expect that the relative strength or salience of old cleavages influence the potential for mobilization on issues and frames connecting to new cleavages (Kriesi et al. 1995), and the crosscutting sociocultural dimension is considerably more important than socioeconomic politics for the new radical right-wing parties' voter mobilization. As Kriesi et al. (1995, p. 4) have stressed, old cleavages may provide "a shield against the framing attempts of rising collective actors." For instance, although xenophobic attitudes may be at least as common in countries that are strongly dominated by the socioeconomic dimension, voters sharing

these attitudes are less likely to base their voting decisions on these particular attitudes because there are other issues (and attitudes) deemed to be more important (partly, this is also a result of the fact that other issues are likely to dominate the media). As was established above, a defining characteristic of the new radical right-wing parties during the 1990s has been their ability to mobilize working-class voters. This ability has not necessarily been the effect of increased xenophobia and authoritarianism among workers; an alternative plausible interpretation is that it depends on the increased salience of immigration matters, and of sociocultural issues generally, vis-à-vis socioeconomic issues. As Lipset (1959, 1981) has argued, although manual workers have traditionally been at odds with the left parties' positions on sociocultural issues—by being considerably more authoritarian, on average—this did not have any practical effect on their voting patterns as long as they identified with the socialist parties' economic positions. In such a situation, they voted for the left despite their conflicting opinions on sociocultural issues. However, in political systems in which the economic cleavage dimension has lost salience—and the sociocultural cleavage dimension has gained salience—this has started to change (cf. Ivarsflaten 2005). Hence, it has been argued that support for new radical right-wing parties is likely to be weaker in countries in which old social institutions of the left (e.g., trade unions, left mass parties) have retained a relatively strong hold over working-class voters (Eatwell 2000, Rydgren 2002).

Convergence between established parties in political space. Many have argued that convergence in political space presents expanding political opportunities for new radical right-wing parties (Kitschelt 1995). A convergence may result in a feeling that the established parties "are all the same." This, in turn, may fuel popular distrust and discontent in politicians and political parties and create an audience receptive to parties ready to

mobilize protest votes. A convergence may also have direct effects in that it facilitates the emergence of niches within the political space (Kriesi 1999). Finally, a convergence within the dominant cleavage dimension (i.e., the economic dimension) may contribute to a depoliticization of this cleavage by making it less engaging and vivid for the voters and the media (Schattschneider 1975), which may favor new contenders mobilizing on alternative cleavage dimensions, such as the sociocultural dimension.

The convergence hypothesis has been tested a number of times. However, one problem with these studies is that they have mostly used a one-dimensional scale for measuring convergence. It is often unclear exactly what a position to the left or to the right on the scale signifies (whether the scale is constructed from expert interviews, the voters' perceptions of the parties' positions, or—too uncommonly—the programs of the parties themselves). There are reasons to suspect that these scales mainly measure left-right positions on socioeconomic politics. At the same time, we may assume that if the new radical right-wing parties were to benefit at all, they would benefit directly only from convergence in the sociocultural dimension and indirectly only from convergence in the socioeconomic dimension.

Nevertheless, keeping these shortcomings in mind, Norris (2005) found no support for the convergence thesis, whereas Van der Brug et al. (2005) found that the new radical right-wing parties tend to be more electorally successful in situations in which the largest mainstream competitor occupies a centrist position than when it is more right leaning. Abedi (2002) also found support for the convergence hypothesis. In the same vein, Arzheimer & Carter (2006) found that support of the radical right almost doubled when there was a grand coalition government before the election.

Electoral systems and thresholds. Scholars have suggested that the relative openness or closedness of the institutionalized political systems (cf. McAdam 1996) influences the new radical right-wing parties' potential to mobilize voters. The idea that the majority voting system places constraints on the emergence of new parties is an idea that goes back to Duverger (1954). According to Duverger, there are two reasons for this constraint on new parties. First, there is a mechanical effect in that the third and fourth parties in an election held within a majority voting system will receive a much smaller share of legislative seats compared with the votes they received. Second, there is a psychological effect in that many voters will feel that a vote for a small party is a wasted vote, which makes them vote for one of the two major parties instead. In such a situation, the emergence of new political parties is less likely. Similarly, whether a political system has an entrance threshold of 2% or 4%, for instance, is believed to make a difference for the emergence of new parties. The same psychological effect identified by Duverger is likely to be operative here, as well.

This hypothesis receives mixed support in the literature. Van der Brug et al. (2005) and Carter (2002) found no evidence that radical right-wing parties are more electorally successful under proportional electoral systems. Norris (2005) found that the main effect of proportional systems is that radical right-wing parties receive more parliamentary seats in relation to their voter shares than they do in majority electoral systems, but proportional systems had no strong effect on how many votes the parties received. Yet Swank & Betz (2003), Jackman & Volpert (1996), Golder (2003), and Veugelers & Magnan (2005) concluded from their studies that voter support for the new radical right-wing parties tended to be higher in countries with proportional electoral systems.

Media. Several researchers have suggested that the mass media play a pivotal role in the emergence of new radical right-wing parties. As Koopmans (2004, p. 8) has argued, for instance, the "action of gatekeepers [within

the mass media] produce the first and most basic selection mechanism . . . *visibility*." The media also play a role in their own right, by taking part in agenda-setting and framing of political issues. There also seems to be a growing tendency to personalize issues within the media, which may benefit parties like the new radical right-wing parties that give the party leader a pronounced central role (Eatwell 2003, 2005). With the increasing struggle for readers and viewers that has resulted from new technologies and from the growing privatization of mass media in many countries, the media have exhibited a stronger tendency to focus on the most scandalous aspects of politics, which may contribute to anti-establishment sentiments (Mudde 2004).

To date, there has been no systematic study of the role of the mass media in the rise of new radical right-wing parties. Yet there are scattered indications that important changes in mass media over time, as well as rather large differences between different countries, may play a role in the electoral fortunes of new radical right-wing parties. Rydgren (2006a), for instance, argued that the development in Sweden from only two public service TV channels in the early 1980s to a variety of commercial channels in the 1990s increased the opportunities for visibility of emerging new political contenders in the media, which benefited the right-wing populist party New Democracy, which emerged in the early 1990s. Moreover, Eatwell (2005) has pointed to the fact that the French Front National reached its electoral breakthrough shortly after Le Pen was given access to state television. The fact that the newspaper with the highest per capita readership within any country, the *Neue Kronen Zeitung* in Austria, supported Jörg Haider probably also partly explains the FPÖ's electoral success in the 1990s (Art 2006, Eatwell 2005). That the Danish media have generously published articles by representatives and supporters of the Danish People's Party, whereas the Swedish media have largely put up a *cordon sanitaire* to keep the Sweden Democrats out partly explains why the former

has been electoral successful, while the latter is still highly marginalized (Rydgren 2004).

The presence or absence of elite allies. There seems to be a consensus in the literature that the relationship between the established parties and the new radical right-wing parties matters for the latter's chances of success in voter mobilization (on the cooperation between radical right-wing parties and mainstream parties generally, see Downs 2001). However, there are two opposing hypotheses regarding the effect this relationship may have.

The first hypothesis claims that when the established parties choose to collaborate with emerging new radical right-wing parties or associated actors, this collaboration lends legitimacy to the emerging parties and lessens their stigma in the eyes of the voters (e.g., Minkenberg 2003, Eatwell 2003, Jackman & Volpert 1996). By being controversial, such events are also likely to arouse the interest of the mass media and hence give radical right-wing parties increased coverage. Similarly, the propensity of mainstream parties and other political actors to approach policy positions originally taken by new radical right-wing parties or to adopt similar frames—a not uncommon phenomenon according to Bale (2003)—may provide the radical right with expanding political opportunities by giving increased legitimacy to the radical right-wing parties and the issues they pursue. These issues also tend to become more salient as mainstream parties talk about them. Hence, this hypothesis claims that cooperation between the established parties and new radical right-wing parties results in more attractive, and thus successful, radical right-wing parties.

The second hypothesis claims that the radical right tends to lose voters when they cooperate too closely with established parties. The reason is that cooperation between mainstream parties and radical right-wing parties may also result in shrinking niches for further electoral mobilization. Under certain conditions, a situation in which mainstream

parties occupy the same ideological space as the radical right-wing parties has a preemptive effect (see, e.g., Koopmans & Kriesi 1997), as the mainstream parties are likely to win (back) some of the voters that otherwise would have voted for the radical right. Cooperation may also make it more difficult for radical right-wing parties to use the antiestablishment strategy, that is, to present themselves as in opposition to the political class, whereas a radical right-wing party may be seen as the only real opposition in the face of a *cordon sanitaire*, especially if the mainstream parties are forced to form grand coalitions to keep the radical right out.

Unfortunately, there are no conclusive comparative studies that demonstrate which of the hypotheses fits reality best, although a study by Van der Brug & Fennema (2003) has concluded that *cordon sanitaire* has no effect on electoral turnouts for radical right-wing parties.

Party organization. Whether new radical right-wing parties emerge and attract voters not only hinges on the presence of beneficial political opportunity structures; it is also a matter of how well the parties themselves manage to exploit the opportunities that present themselves. However, their ideological/rhetorical profiles are not the only critical issues here; the structure of their internal organizations and the available internal resources are critical as well, and these issues have become increasingly noticed within the field.

Political parties have to act in a way that does not undermine the cohesion of the party organization and its members' willingness to do vital yet unpaid party work. Without a critical mass of loyal volunteers on hand to distribute leaflets, put up posters, or give out voting slips during elections, most political parties would find themselves in difficulties (cf. Gamson 1975, p. 60). The political parties still require a member organization. However, because party members identify with the party ideology, with different policies,

or with particular party leaders, any attempt by the party executive to modify certain aspects of the political program can potentially meet with resistance from the party organization. Proposed changes may generally not depart too radically from the party line already embarked upon without a great deal of hard, time-consuming work to win acceptance and approval in the organization. Otherwise party unity is jeopardized or may even disintegrate into opposing factions. This trade-off may help us understand why emerging radical right-wing parties sometimes fail to capitalize on what would otherwise seem a favorable political opportunity structure for voter mobilization.

As mentioned above, the populist antiestablishment strategy is one of the most important tools for emerging radical right-wing parties. In using this strategy, a party must be able to neutralize, in a credible way, radical members of the organization who push for an uncompromising, radical party line that may seem overly extreme and/or antidemocratic to voters. Such members are not uncommon: As Klandermans & Mayer's (2005) research shows, activists of these parties are often more radical than the radical right-wing voters, and the activists also usually have a long history of continued affinity with the radical right. In fact, their parents were often supporters of older forms of right-wing radicalism or extremism. Hence, this is a difficult task for many parties, particularly for those that have their roots in extraparliamentary right-wing extremism and those that have scant access to alternative resources such as governmental party support, external sponsors, and the media and are therefore more dependent on volunteers.

If a new radical right-wing party succeeds in winning representation in the legislature, it is likely to be forced to transform, in which case the new party develops a broad and relatively coherent political platform and a more extensive party organization. These problems are likely to be exacerbated when a radical right-wing party is included in a governing

coalition (Heinisch 2003) in which it may be considerably more difficult to pursue the populist antiestablishment strategy in a credible way, and in which the party may be forced into compromises that alienate core activists.[6]

However, there has been conspicuously little research on the nonparty sector of the new radical right: the think tanks and more informal circles of intellectuals, the party press and radio stations, and civil society organizations (youth organizations, women's organizations, veteran organizations, circles for professional groups, etc.) associated with the new radical right (Minkenberg 2003). In the 1990s, for instance, the French Front National had 24 associated organizations (DeClair 1999, p. 168). Such groups and organizations often play an important role in ideology production and the transnational diffusion of ideas, as well as in grassroots socialization (see, e.g., Betz 1999). Moreover, no systematic research has been done on the dynamics between different radical right-wing or extreme right organizations within a country. In countries with two or more radical right-wing organizations, we are likely to see more competition over potential activists, which we may assume decreases the chances for any of them to grow large. As Veugelers (1999) has suggested, population ecology models would be well suited for comparative analysis of this sort.

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[6]Several scholars have argued that the charismatic party leaders of the new radical right-wing parties are a major reason for their emergence and electoral successes (see in particular Eatwell 2003, 2005). However, as Van der Brug et al. (2005, p. 542), among others, have argued the "usefulness of the term 'charisma' to explain electoral success is . . . doubtful." The reasoning easily becomes circular in that successful politicians "are easily called charismatic, and an unsuccessful politician will never be called charismatic."

CONCLUSIONS

The political landscape of Western Europe has undergone rather radical changes over the past two decades, and here the emergence of the new radical right stands out as a principal event, along with the emergence of the new social movements and related political parties (i.e., green parties and new left parties). However, with some important exceptions there has been a rather strict division of labor between scholars studying the new social movements and scholars studying the new radical right. Granted, a certain measure of specialization is necessary, but the literature on the new radical right would benefit from better integrating theoretical mechanisms and research findings from the social movement field, as well as from related sociological areas such as organizational studies, network analysis, and the sociology of ethnic relations. More systematic comparative historical studies are warranted to answer questions about how a history of past radical right-wing mobilization, or a colonial past, for instance, influences cross-national variation in the electoral fortunes of the new radical right-wing parties.

Still, I am fairly optimistic about developments within the field. Much of the earlier theorizing about the new radical right overfocused on singular, national cases, and in comparative studies there was a tendency to sample from the dependent variable in including only countries in which the radical right had been successful (see, e.g., Knigge 1998). During the past several years, studies have become more theoretically and methodologically sophisticated and increasingly comparative in scope.

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