

Membership Matters: Radical Right Party Composition in Comparative Perspective

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Paper presented at American Political Science Association Annual Conference, Washington DC, September 2010.

Introduction

The rise of radical right parties has profoundly shaped European party systems and political cultures over the last three decades. Initially dismissed as protest movements in the 1980s, these parties now regularly capture upwards of 15% of the vote in national parliamentary elections in several European states and have participated in national governing coalitions. Not only is it now impossible to imagine partisan politics in Europe without radical right parties, but the structural changes that initially gave rise to them—such as the growing heterogeneity of European societies, the backlash against globalization and European Integration, and electoral dealignment— are unlikely to attenuate in the future. If anything, the recent financial crisis and the current Great Recession has provided an even more fertile environment for parties whose defining features are anti-immigration, anti-establishment populism, and anti-liberalism. There are even signs that the functional equivalents of radical right parties—such as elements of the Tea Party Movement in the United States and various parties in Central and Eastern Europe—are spreading across advanced industrial democracies.

Thanks to a large and growing literature on radical right parties, there is now a scholarly consensus on many components of the phenomenon. We know that there is a greater propensity to vote for radical right parties among the following groups: men, young and old voters, those with a low-level of formal education, and semi-skilled and manual workers employed in the private sector (Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Evans 2005; Givens 2004). We also know that radical right voters, not surprisingly, have negative attitudes toward foreigners and a low degree of trust in the political system (Norris 2005). A combination of expert surveys, a raft of case studies, and cross-national comparative work have all confirmed that these parties are all offering the same basic message to their constituency (Mudde 2007; Rydgren 2005; Van Spanje et, al). Those parties that deviate from this message, for example by tying themselves too closely to fascist or biologically racist ideas, have not performed well (Golder 2003; Carter 2005). Yet despite this

cumulation of knowledge, a central puzzle remains unanswered: Why have radical right parties been able to consolidate themselves in some West European countries but failed to in others?

As many scholars have noted, existing answers to this question are unsatisfactory. Despite a plethora of studies focusing on socio-structural variables like immigration and unemployment, many of which contradict one another, their precise effects remain unclear (Arzheimer 2009). Moreover, given the basic similarities in sociostructural developments across European societies, it is difficult to argue that they themselves can account for the enormous variation in the performance of radical right parties (Van der Brug et. al 2005). Differences in electoral institutions also do not seem to matter much (Carter 2005). Finally, the initially plausible notion that radical right parties need to attract a cross-class coalition to succeed (Kitschelt 1995) has been rejected by most specialists.

Given the indeterminacy of structural and institutional explanations, a growing number of scholars have adopted a party-centric perspective (Mudde 2007). In this view, sociostructural conditions may provide favorable opportunities for radical right parties, yet their success—particularly their long-term success—is dependent upon their own behavior. Yet despite a convergence around this position, it is still unclear exactly what type of internal properties are important. There is no support, for example, for the popular thesis that charismatic leadership is necessary for radical right success (Van der Brug and Mughan 2007). Despite many calls for research into the effects of party organization (Betz 1998; Ellinas; Kitschelt 2007; Norris 2005), only Carter (2005) has attempted a cross-national analysis. Although her study indicates that party organization matters, given the basic similarities—at least on paper—in organizational forms, it is still unclear exactly how and why it matters.

This paper takes a new, party-centric approach to address the puzzle of cross-national variation in the long-term trajectories of radical right parties. Our basic insight is that the quality of individual leaders and activists is a crucial, and hitherto overlooked, factor. Simply put, when radical right parties are able to attract individuals that are sophisticated enough to steer clear of

extremism and possess the cognitive skills required for organizational and governing tasks, they are able to translate voter demand into sustained electoral success. When radical right parties are dominated by individuals with blatantly racist views and poor cognitive skills, they are likely to implode even if socio-structural and institutional conditions are favorable. The membership composition of radical right parties is itself a function of the existing opportunities for radical right parties. Where center-right parties refuse to form coalitions with radical right parties or a more formal *cordon sanitaire* blocking engagement exists, radical right parties will tend to become dominated by extremists with low socioeconomic status. In the absence of such sanctions, such parties become more attractive for individuals with higher socioeconomic status or more moderate views, producing more effective, though more moderate, radical right parties.

This paper begins by considering socio-structural, institutional, and policy-based explanations for cross-national variation in radical right party performance, and summarizes existing critiques of these approaches. We then outline a theory, first informally and then formally, linking the qualities of radical right activists to their electoral trajectories. Using a new cross-national data set on radical right candidates for office, we conduct a data analysis to test the causal mechanisms we believe to be important. These mechanisms are then further illustrated using ethnographic data from a paired-comparison of radical right parties in Sweden and Denmark. We conclude by discussing the implications of our findings for theoretical debates about the nature of extremist organizations, the microdynamics of party building, and the role of structure versus agency in the party politics in Western Europe.

Alternative Explanations

The initial wave of literature on the radical right tried to explain why parties that “mobilize resentment” (Betz 1994) emerged at around the same time in some of the world’s wealthiest and best-governed democracies. Most of these studies argued that societal changes were responsible for the regeneration of the postwar far right. Some authors claimed that post-

industrialization had created a reservoir of “modernization losers” who suffered from the status anxieties that Lipset saw as crucial to the rise of fascist parties (Lipset 1960). Others argued that the rise of post-materialist values (Inglehart 1977) had provoked a backlash, or “silent counterrevolution” (Ignazi 1992), among those who disagreed with the ideology of the New Left. The massive increase in immigrant populations and asylum seekers contributed to both these trends; immigrants increased feelings of insecurity among the so-called modernization losers and made the core issues of the radical right more politically salient.

What this literature failed to do, however, was to create any scholarly consensus about the relationship between socio-structural variables and cross-national variation in the radical right’s electoral performance. For example, while some scholars discovered a positive relationship between unemployment and votes for the radical right (Jackman and Volpert 1996), others found that correlation to be negative (Lubbers et al. 2002; Knigge 1998; Arzheimer and Carter 2006). Similarly, while several scholars identified a positive correlation between high levels of immigration and support for radical right parties (Knigge 1998; Gibson 2002; Lubbers et al. 2002), others discovered no relationship whatsoever (Kitschelt 1995; Norris 2005).

Although these disputes were in part the product of different research designs and codings of cases, the more recent literature on the radical right has largely rejected the proposition that “demand side” variables (the factors that shape the electorate’s demand for radical right parties) provide sufficient explanations for cross-national variation. According to Van der Brug et al (2005: 563), “sociostructural developments within the European Union are so similar in all member states that those developments cannot explain the enormous differences in aggregate support for anti-immigrant parties.” Mudde (2007), Norris (2005), Givens (2005), and Carter (2005) reach a similar conclusion. Thus while demand side factors - particularly immigration - appear necessary for the rise of the radical right, they are certainly not sufficient for electoral success. Although most authors have used statistical techniques to demonstrate the insufficiency of demand-side explanations, even a brief survey of the cases suggests that there are simply too

many outliers - given the small number of cases - to make demand-side explanations compelling. For example, if rates of immigration are fundamentally important, how can we explain the lack of a successful radical right party over the long term in high immigration countries like Germany, the Netherlands, or Sweden? If unemployment is crucial, then why have these same countries not produced durable radical right parties, given that each suffered from long periods of high unemployment over the last several decades? And why have radical right parties succeeded in states where unemployment has been quite low since the early 1980s, such as Austria, Norway, and Switzerland? Rather than varying from country to country, it thus appears that there is a persistent demand among voters for radical right parties across Europe, both in states in which they have achieved success and in those where they have not.

Many scholars have turned to electoral institutions to explain cross-national variation in the radical right's success (Jackman and Volpert 1996; Golder 2003). The basic idea is that systems with high effective thresholds make it difficult for small parties to win seats and votes. The clearest difference is obviously between majoritarian systems with single member districts (SMD) and systems that use proportional representation (PR). Not surprisingly, if one defines seats won by radical right parties as the dependent variable, majoritarian systems have a straightforward mechanical effect (Norris, 2005). For example, despite consistently winning around 10% of the vote, the French National Front has only won a couple of seats in the National Assembly since 1988. France's two-round majoritarian system allows other parties to coordinate in the second round to prevent FN candidates from winning seats. However, France's majoritarian system has clearly not prevented the FN from winning a significant percentage of votes. In fact, several studies find that there is no statistically significant relationship between the type of electoral system (SMD or PR) and voteshare for the radical right (Norris 2005; Carter 2005; Van der Brug et. al. 2005).

Comparisons between different PR systems also do not confirm the conventional wisdom that systems with greater disproportionality decrease votes for the radical right (Carter 2002).

Using the cases of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, and Norway in their analysis, Arzheimer and Carter find that the chances of voting for the extreme right actually *increase* as the disproportionality of the electoral system increases (Arzheimer and Carter 2006). Excluding France, and thus including only PR systems, did not change the results. To explain this counterintuitive finding, the authors suggest that either radical right voters are not aware of the consequences of electoral systems or do not care about them.

Finally, it bears emphasizing that political actors can change electoral institutions. There are certainly cases in which politicians have altered the rules of the game and produced the desired effect on radical right parties. The most famous example of this occurred in 1986 when France's Socialist President François Mitterrand, seeking to strengthen the National Front (FN) and thereby damage his conservative competitors, changed the electoral system from two-round majoritarianism to PR. While it is unclear whether this increased the FN's voteshare, it certainly increased their seats, and thereby their presence and legitimacy in the French political system (Schain 1987). A less well-known example of institutional tweaking occurred in the Netherlands when the government raised the number of signatures required to contest districts from 190 to 570. In contrast to the French case, this change was designed to weaken the radical right. The new rules did prevent the Center Democrats (CD) from running in two electoral districts and pushed their voteshare below the 0.67 threshold required for representation in parliament (Van Donselaar 2000: 37-9). In these and other cases, institutional changes reflected the broader strategies of mainstream political actors toward the radical right, either in attempts to deny them power, or alternatively to use them to divide and weaken more moderate conservative electoral competitors.

Rejecting both institutional and socio-structural explanations, Kitschelt (1995) focuses on the policies of radical right parties to explain what looked like emerging patterns of success and failure in the early 1990s. Specifically, Kitschelt argues that electoral success was the result of radical right parties following a "winning formula" that combined xenophobia with economic liberalism. This created a cross-class constituency of anti-immigrant blue-collar workers, and

certain white-collar workers who wanted less state intervention in the economy. Only by mobilizing both groups, Kitschelt argues, could radical right parties be successful. Although it gained wide currency in the field, one problem with this theory soon became apparent as most radical right parties jettisoned their neo-liberal elements in favor of welfare chauvinism (Lubbers 2001; Mudde 2000). It is also questionable whether economics was ever central to these parties' programs, and whether neoliberalism was just one of multiple economic programs - in addition to protectionism and welfare chauvinism - that radical right parties promised to maximize their votes (Mudde 2007).

One could still claim that this neoliberal rhetoric, even if it was less salient than Kitschelt implies, was enough to win the votes of a constituency that favored less state intervention. One group that fits this profile is small business owners, and there is in fact an abundance of empirical evidence showing that this group, along with blue-collar workers, is overrepresented in the radical right electorate. The strong support of blue-collar workers for a party that, according to Kitschelt, supports neo-liberal policies is curious. To explain this unlikely coalition, scholars have argued that workers have become either less connected to (Kitschelt 1994) or disillusioned with (Betz 1998) the Left and their economic views have shifted toward neoliberalism. This economic realignment thesis contends that the economic preferences of workers and small business owners have become aligned in recent years, and this explains the success of radical right parties.

Ivarsflaten (2005) tests this argument on the two cases, Denmark and France, that realignment theorists claim best fit their theory. She finds no support for the economic realignment hypothesis at all. Instead, what unites small business owners and blue collar workers are not economic preferences but agreements on issues regarding law and order and immigration. Since members of both groups tend to not be highly educated, and since education correlates quite strongly with positive attitudes toward immigration, it is similar educational attainment rather than economic alignment that has created this "unlikely coalition." In more recent work, Ivarsflaten (2008) finds that the only grievances that all successful radical right parties mobilize

are those over immigration. In sum, differences in economic policy do not appear to explain patterns of success and failure any better than differences in social structure or electoral institutions. To solve this puzzle, we turn to the microdynamics of radical right party building.

Moderates, Extremists, and Skills

Members of radical right parties are often portrayed as an undifferentiated mass of racists and thugs. Yet as the few existing studies of radical right activists indicate, radical right parties attract individuals with different political attitudes and from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. For the purpose of theory building, we divide radical right activists along two different dimensions: socio-economic status (SES) and a dichotomous ideological spectrum of moderates and extremists. The first dimension is straightforward, but the second requires further explanation.

“Moderate” may seem an oxymoronic designation in the context of radical right parties. But their views on parliamentary democracy and ethnicity are indeed moderate when compared to extremists. Moderates accept the democratic rules of the game, while extremists are hostile toward parliamentary democracy and often believe in the possibility of creating a new authoritarian order. Moderates denounce violence, while extremists oftentimes condone—and participate in—violence against their purported enemies (such as radical leftist groups and immigrants). In terms of ethnicity, moderates normally espouse an “ethnopluralist” doctrine that steers clear of overt racism by highlighting the equality of different ethnic groups while emphasizing that high levels of ethnic heterogeneity inevitably lead to social, economic, and political problems. Extremists, on the other hand, are overtly racist and oftentimes subscribe to pseudo-scientific theories of racial hierarchy. In terms of immigration policy, moderates want to either drastically limit or completely halt immigration, and favor integration policies that demand a high level of conformity. Extremists go further by calling for deportation.

Our key claim in this paper is that radical right parties need a high percentage of both moderates and activists with relatively high SES in order to succeed. To understand why this is the case, it is helpful to consider the negative consequences of extremists and activists with low SES. Beginning with extremists, three effects are particularly important. First, the greater the number of extremists, the more likely that the radical right party will adopt policy positions that are attractive to only a small sliver of the electorate. As we noted earlier, previous studies have demonstrated that radical right parties that adopt these positions have not been successful. Second, the presence of extremists—particularly those who engage in violent activity, make overtly racist statements, and fall afoul of the law—damages the reputation of radical right parties among both voters and potential coalition partners. Political parties that might otherwise have signaled their readiness to enter into a governing coalition with radical right parties will be unable to do so if extremists dominate. Third, a party with a large number of extremists is prone to factionalism, both because the right-wing extremist milieu appears to be congenitally balkanized, and because divisions between moderates and extremists create internal strife that often lead to party splits.

Socio-economic status is important for several reasons. First, if we take SES as a rough indicator of cognitive skill, we can say that radical right activists with higher SES make better campaigners, party organizers, and elected officials than those with lower levels of SES. This is not to suggest that low SES is necessarily a barrier to acquiring political skills: Pia Kjaergaard, the longtime leader of the highly successful Danish People's Party, has no university degree and worked as an aid for the elderly before entering politics. But it is clear, both on the basis of interviews and from an analysis of electoral lists, that radical right parties are especially keen on attracting activists with a university education, in large part because they believe they are more competent than those without. Second, activists with higher SES are less likely to engage in overt racism, either because their views are more sophisticated or because they are better able to mask their xenophobic views. This level of ideological sophistication helps radical right parties appeal

beyond the narrow sliver of the extremist electorate. Third, radical right parties that attract doctors, lawyers, university professors, and other individuals with high SES are more credibly able to distance themselves from charges of extremism and to appear as more legitimate, reliable partners in a potential governing coalition. Extremists and activists with low SES thus damage radical right parties in numerous ways. To overcome hurdles of ideological rigidity, competence, factionalism, and legitimacy, radical right parties need to attract moderates and activists with higher SES. Yet given that every radical right party wants to attract these types of individuals, why are some able to do so and others are not? What are the underlying conditions promoting radical right party success?

We focus on two mechanisms effecting radical right recruitment in this paper: political coalition markets and social sanctions.¹ When all other political parties agree to not cooperate with radical right parties on any political level, a *cordon-sanitaire* is in effect. Several studies have demonstrated that *cordon-sanitaires* decrease voting for radical right parties (Van Spanje), although the mechanism is unclear. Here we suggest that the *cordon-sanitaire* affects the balance of moderates and extremists within radical right parties. Simply put, when other political parties can credibly deny radical right candidates the possibility of affecting policy by refusing to cooperate with them, moderates will be less likely to join while the calculation of extremists will not be affected. Moderates hold views less far to the right than extremists and are thus more likely to join center-right rather than radical right parties if there are institutional costs to doing the latter but not the former. Extremists are, in the first place, less likely to join center-right parties, so this trade-off matters less for them. Thus, a strong *cordon-sanitaire* will tip the internal composition of a radical right party toward extremists. As Van Spanje and Van der Brug (2007) have demonstrated, a strong *cordon-sanitaire* leads to a more extremist ideology among radical right parties, while a weaker or non-existent *cordon-sanitaire* leads to ideological moderation.

¹ A third mechanism is the historical legacies of previous attempts at far right party building. For more on this, see (author).

Social sanctions against radical right activists have received little attention in the literature, but they too affect the balance between moderates and extremists, as well as the socio-economic composition of parties. Social sanctions include legal bans on party membership for certain categories of employees, open or implicit bans on membership for private firms, verbal and physical intimidation by protestors, and strains among friends and family. The degree of social sanctions varies across cases. When they are high, they are likely to shift the balance toward both extremists and individuals of lower SES. Extremists are not deterred by social sanctions because they are most likely already part of an extremist milieu, and because they often derive physic benefits from engaging with protestors. Individuals with lower SES are less affected by economic sanctions than those with higher SES, for two reasons. First, individuals that are not active in the labor force have little to lose economically from working on behalf of radical right parties. Second, workers in semi-skilled blue collar jobs are less likely to attract attention from employers than, say, managers or journalists. We should also expect that social sanctions will produce a radical right activist base in which middle-aged people are underrepresented, while the young and old (who are out of the labor force) are overrepresented.

To summarize, we can divide radical right activists along a moderate/extremist dichotomy and according to their level of SES. Closed coalition markets and strong social sanctions select for extremists and individuals with low SES, which in turn lead to electoral failure. Open coalition markets and the lack of social sanctions decrease the costs and raise the benefits for moderates and activists with high levels of SES. In the next section, we develop these intuitions formally.

Formal Model

In this section we present a simple spatial model that clarifies our argument about the relative roles of extremists and moderates in right-wing parties and how the composition of parties is affected by the existence of cordon sanitaires and social sanctions to radical right party

membership. The model is not intended to reflect every salient dimension of party composition or party structure in determining radical right party success. It does however elucidate some of the most important dynamics and demonstrates, in particular, how party composition is *endogenous* to pre-existing institutions.

The model developed below is spatial in the sense that we define moderates and extremists foremost by their ideological positioning in the left/right, or perhaps more accurately center-right/far-right dimension. We can also think of the institutional factors that help determine party composition –the existence, stringency, or lack thereof a cordon sanitaire – as points along this ideological continuum. The cordon sanitaire can be viewed as a threshold along the ideological spectrum past which any far-right party will be systematically excluded from power and whose members will face social sanction. Thus, here we combine the two mechanisms developed above – the cordon sanitaire and social sanctions – into a simple spatial threshold.

Below we present two examples of ideological positions along the spatial continuum and show the repercussions for party composition. The ideological positions of extremists and moderates are constant in both figures but the location of the cordon sanitaire varies. This institutional feature produces different patterns of party composition, with moderates choosing to join the party in the situation with a weak cordon sanitaire and refraining from joining when the cordon sanitaire is strong.

Figure 1(a): Weak / Absent Cordon Sanitaire – Moderate Radical Right Party

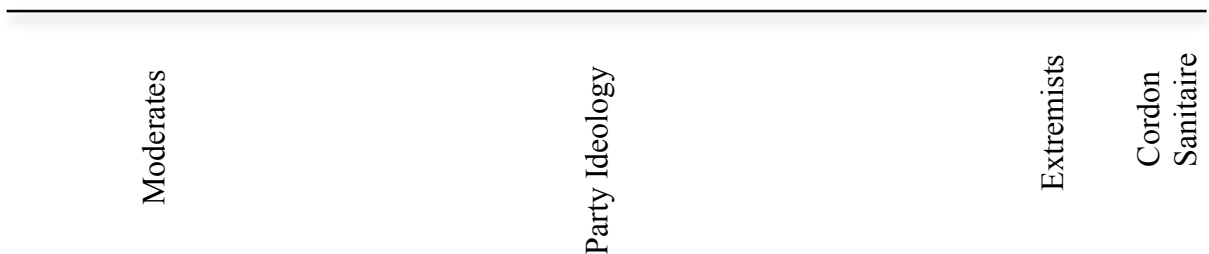
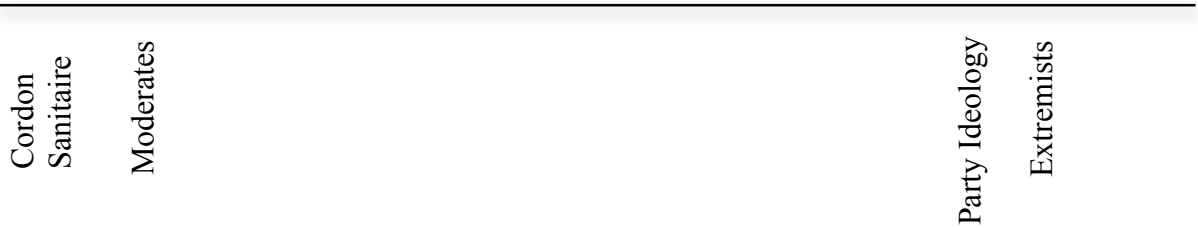


Figure 1(b): Strong Cordon Sanitaire: Extremist Radical Right Wing Party



In the first example, shown in Figure 1(a), there is no effective cordon sanitaire: the position of the cordon sanitaire threshold is *further to the right* than even the ideological position of extremists – meaning that no mix of moderates and extremists could produce a radical right party with an ideological position that violates the cordon sanitaire. In this environment, even though moderates and extremists have quite different ideological positions, the median party ideology is in the middle of the spectrum. The situation in Figure 1(b) is quite different. Here the cordon sanitaire threshold is at the far left of the ideological continuum. Center-right parties will not tolerate any far-right parties, period. Similarly, employers will sanction members of such parties. Even though moderates and extremists are at the same ideological positions as in Figure 1(a), the radical right party’s ideological position is basically that of the extremists since moderates refuse to join a party that violates the cordon sanitaire. Consequently, the party ends up made up only of extremists.

In order to more fully characterize the range of party positions we now turn to a more developed formal modeling of this dynamic. To characterize positions along the ideological spectrum, we use the symbol ϕ which ranges between zero and one (i.e. $\phi \in [0,1]$) and extends along the range of possible ideological positions that members of radical right parties might take, with higher points meaning further right ideologies. We also assume that the cordon sanitaire lies

in this range.² There are four points along the ideological continuum of particular interest, as can be seen in the figures above. First, there is the ideological position of the moderate potential members of the radical right party: ϕ_M . We assume that all moderates share the same ideological position as one another. Second, there is the ideological position of the extremist members of the radical right party ϕ_E , which like that of the moderates is shared among all extremists. Third, there is the ideological position of the radical right party itself ϕ_R , which is determined by the particular composition of the party between extremists and moderates, according to a set of criteria we develop below. Fourth, there is the position of the cordon sanitaire ϕ_{CS} . In the model below, all of these positions *except* that of the radical right party, ϕ_R , are exogenous. Our interest is in examining how the other three positions determine radical right party position and strength.

How is radical right party position determined? The party's position can be thought of simply as a weighted average of that of the extremists and that of the moderates. The particular weighting will depend on how many potential members of moderate ideology join the party. We assume that extremists will always join the radical right party.³ This assumption does not greatly affect the generalizability of the model and allows us to focus on what we consider the key causal force of our theory of radical right party composition (and hence success) – the decision of moderate members of potentially high socioeconomic status to join the party. We assume that only a proportion of moderates - $\gamma \in [0,1]$ - will join the party – this could be considered an individual probability of joining for identical moderates or as a defining a threshold for joining if moderates are heterogeneous in some other dimension (for example, personal time costs to joining). Radical right party position reflects both the proportion of moderates who join *and* their

² A cordon sanitaire that blocks all radical right parties from participation can be viewed as $\phi_{CS} = 0$. The absence of a cordon sanitaire conversely implies that $\phi_{CS} = 1$. Clearly, other cases lie between these two extremes.

³ To rationalize this assumption we could assume that for extremists the psychic utility they get from ideological representation by joining the radical right party outweighs any potential economic cost. The further assumption, built into the model, that extremists have relatively low socioeconomic status, supports this claim since extremists have 'less to lose' from joining the party.

relative political ‘ability’ - β - as compared to extremists, which is a function of their socioeconomic status. Thus, to characterize two extremes, if few moderates join but they are of very high economic status, the party’s ideological position might be the same as the case where many moderates of relatively low economic status join the party.

We now spell out in greater detail the determinants of moderates’ relative *ability* - β - and moderates’ *propensity to join* - γ - and how these combine to determine the radical right party’s ideology ϕ_R . Radical right party ideology is a weighted average of moderates’ and extremists’ own ideology with the ability and propensity to join parameters forming the weights:

$$\phi_R = \beta\gamma\phi_M + (1 - \beta\gamma)\phi_E$$

As shown below, both β and γ are bounded between zero and one, meaning that ϕ_R must lie between ϕ_M and ϕ_E . We assume that, by definition, $\phi_M < \phi_E$ and, hence $\phi_R \in [\phi_M, \phi_E]$. The relative ability term β is determined by the relative socio-economic status of moderates vis-à-vis extremists. As moderates’ status rises compared to that of extremists, they are able to push the resulting party’s ideological position more in their direction, irrespective of the precise composition of the party between moderates and extremists. We assume moderates *always* have socio-economic status at least as high as extremists. We denote relative socio-economic status as:

$$\sigma = \frac{\sigma_M}{\sigma_E} \in [1, \infty)$$

Relative ability, $\beta \in [0.5, 1)$ is a simple weighting function of relative socio-economic status. We presume that if $\sigma = 1$ (moderates have the same socio-economic status as extremists) then, if all moderates join the party, the ideological midpoint will lie halfway between the ideological points of the moderates and the extremists. Hence, β must equal at least one half.⁴ The precise functional form used is:

⁴ This restriction is a function of our assumption that moderates have socio-economic status at least as great as extremists.

$$\beta = \left[\frac{\sigma - 1/2}{\sigma} \right] = \left[1 - \frac{1}{2\sigma} \right] \in [0.5, 1)$$

We now turn to the propensity to join function γ . The propensity of moderates to join a radical right party is determined by two key characteristics: (a) their ideological proximity to extremists, and (b) the economic opportunity cost of joining. The full specification of the propensity to join is:

$$\gamma = \left[1 - \delta(\phi_E - \phi_M) \right] \cdot \left[1 - \max\left\{0, \min\left\{(\sigma - 1)(\phi_E - \phi_{CS}), 1\right\}\right\} \right]$$

The first element $\left[1 - \delta(\phi_E - \phi_M) \right]$ is the ideological component and is straightforward. The symbol $\delta \in [0, 1]$ reflects the relative importance of ideological cohesion to moderates. As extremists become more distant in their ideology from moderates, moderates become less interested in joining.⁵ At the extreme, when $\delta = 1$ and where moderates have an ideology $\phi_M = 0$ and extremists are at the opposite end of the spectrum $\phi_E = 1$, no moderates will join the party since the first element of γ will equal zero. By contrast, where moderates and extremists share the same ideology, the first element will equal one, regardless of the size of δ and the decision to join will depend solely on the second element – the opportunity cost of joining.

This second element appears rather more complex but is actually substantively quite simple. If the cordon sanitaire lies to the right of the extremists' ideological position then we assume that there is no opportunity cost for moderates to joining the radical right party and the second element equals one. We assume that the ideological position of the extremists matters for the cordon sanitaire because other right-wing parties will associate all members of a radical right party with the 'worst' members - a political Gresham's Law. If the cordon sanitaire lies to the left of the extremists' ideological position then there are costs to joining the party which are proportional to (a) the socio-economic status of the moderates (i.e. how much they have to lose)

⁵ We assume that the ideological cost is linear but a quadratic setup produces very similar results, albeit at the expense of substantial additional complexity in the derivations.

and (b) the gap between the extremists' ideological position and the cordon sanitaire. If moderates have the same socio-economic status as extremists we assume that the cordon sanitaire does not affect their behavior – since it does not affect the behavior of extremists. However, as relative socio-economic status rises, the effects of the cordon sanitaire on opportunity costs for moderates become stronger. Similarly, as the gap between the extremists' ideological position and the cordon sanitaire widens, moderates face greater opportunity costs, as the extremism of their party co-members reflects ever more poorly on them.

We can now spell out fully the determinants of the radical right party's ideological position $\phi_R = \beta\gamma\phi_M + (1 - \beta\gamma)\phi_E = (\phi_M - \phi_E)\beta\gamma + \phi_E$ as follows:

$$\phi_R = (\phi_M - \phi_E) \left[1 - \frac{1}{2\sigma} \right] \left[1 - \delta(\phi_E - \phi_M) \right] \left[1 - \max \left\{ 0, \min \left\{ (\sigma - 1)(\phi_E - \phi_{CS}), 1 \right\} \right\} \right] + \phi_E$$

The ideological position of the radical right party is thus determined by the five following exogenous factors: the relative socio-economic status of moderates, the ideological position of the moderates, the ideological position of the extremists, the importance of ideology to the decision of moderates to join, and the position of the cordon sanitaire. To see the effects of each of these variables, we take the first derivatives of ϕ_R , noting that $1 - \max \left\{ 0, \min \left\{ (\sigma - 1)(\phi_E - \phi_{CS}), 1 \right\} \right\}$ - the opportunity cost term – can be more simply expressed as $1 - k(\sigma, \phi_E, \phi_{CS}) = 1 - k^*$.

Effect of Relative Socioeconomic Status on Radical Right Ideology

$$\frac{\partial \phi_R}{\partial \sigma} = (\phi_M - \phi_E) \left[\frac{\gamma}{2\sigma^2} - \left\{ \beta \left[1 - \delta(\phi_E - \phi_M) \right] \left[\phi_E - \phi_{CS} \right] \right\} \right] \begin{matrix} \geq \\ < \end{matrix} 0$$

Effect of Moderates' Ideology on Radical Right Ideology

$$\frac{\partial \phi_R}{\partial \phi_M} = \beta (1 - k^*) \left[1 + 2\delta(\phi_M - \phi_E) \right] \begin{matrix} \geq \\ < \end{matrix} 0$$

Effect of Extremists' Ideology on Radical Right Ideology

$$\frac{\partial \phi_R}{\partial \phi_E} = (1 - \beta\gamma) - \beta(\phi_E - \phi_M) \left[-\delta(1 - k^*) - \left\{ (\sigma - 1)(1 - \delta(\phi_E - \phi_M)) \right\} \right] > 0$$

Effect of Ideological Cohesion on Radical Right Ideology

$$\frac{\partial \phi_R}{\partial \delta} = \beta(\phi_M - \phi_E)^2(1 - k^*) \geq 0$$

Effect of the Cordon Sanitaire on Radical Right Ideology

$$\frac{\partial \phi_R}{\partial \phi_{CS}} = \beta(\phi_M - \phi_E)(1 - \delta(\phi_E - \phi_M))(\sigma - 1) \leq 0$$

The first couple of expressions are rather complicated: an increase in socioeconomic status of the moderates, or a rightward shift in the ideology of moderates have an indeterminate effect on radical right party composition and ideology. The other three expressions are simpler. A rightward shift in extremists' ideology always shifts the radical right party to the right. An increase in the importance of ideological cohesion for moderates always shifts the radical right party to the right. Finally, a weakening of the cordon sanitaire always shifts the ideology of the party to the left.

In order to clarify the substantive implications of these rather complicated expressions, we use simulations to produce a set of figures outlining the results in the order shown above. As a baseline we set the ideological position of moderates to .25, that of extremists to .75, the importance of ideology to moderates to .25, and we begin by examining the effects of changes in socio-economic status in two cases: that with a fully binding cordon sanitaire ($\phi_{CS} = 0$) and with a non-binding cordon sanitaire ($\phi_{CS} = 1$). These two cases clarify the finding above that socioeconomic status can push radical right party ideology in two directions.

Figure 2a: Effect of SocioEconomic Status on Party Ideology: Full Cordon

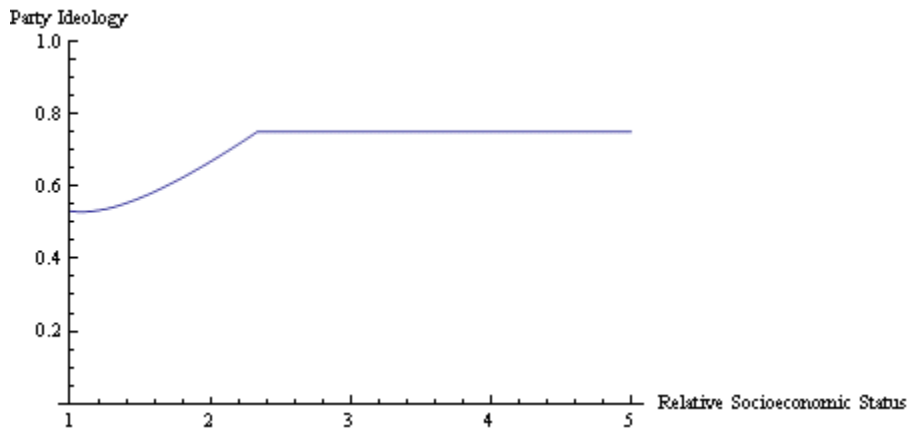
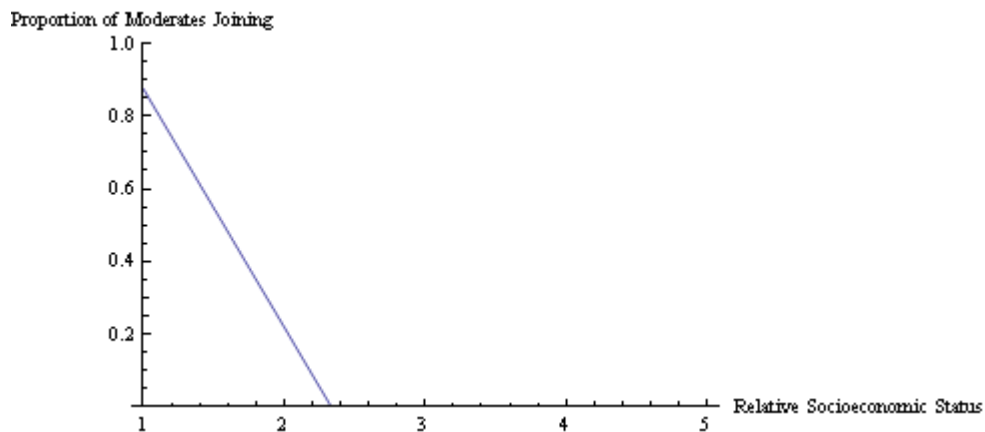


Figure 2b: Effect of SocioEconomic Status on Party Composition: Full Cordon



We begin with Figure 2(a). With a fully binding cordon sanitaire we see that as moderates' relative socioeconomic status increases, radical right party ideology gradually shifts rightwards. This occurs because fewer and fewer moderates join the party since, with higher socioeconomic status, the opportunity cost of doing so becomes ever larger, as can be seen in Figure 2(b). This implies a gradual shift rightward of the party's ideology until no moderates join at which point the party takes the ideological position of the extremists (0.75). Turning to the case of a non-binding cordon sanitaire we see a completely contrasting effect in Figure 2(c): as socioeconomic status increases the party gradually moves to the left towards the ideal point of the moderates. In this case, there is no opportunity cost for moderates to joining and the same

proportion join regardless of socioeconomic status (Figure 2(d)). But because socioeconomic status increases political ability, it means that for a given proportion of moderates in the party, higher status enables them to pull the radical right party as a whole in their ideological direction.

Figure 2c: Effect of SocioEconomic Status on Party Ideology: No Cordon

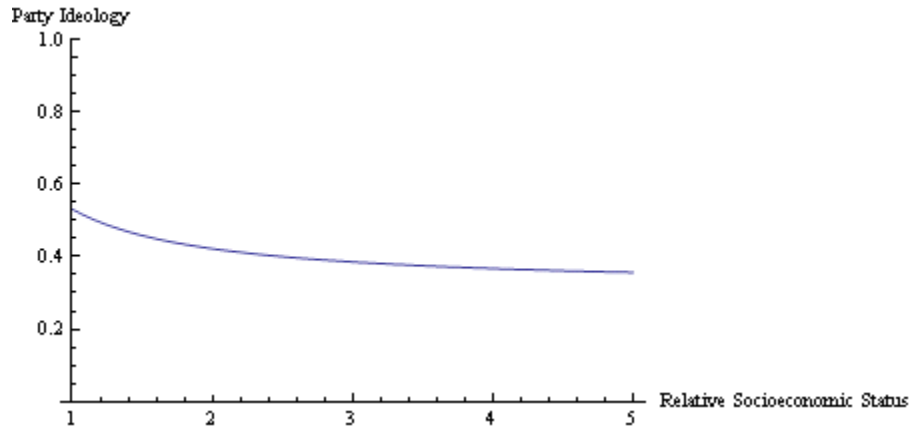
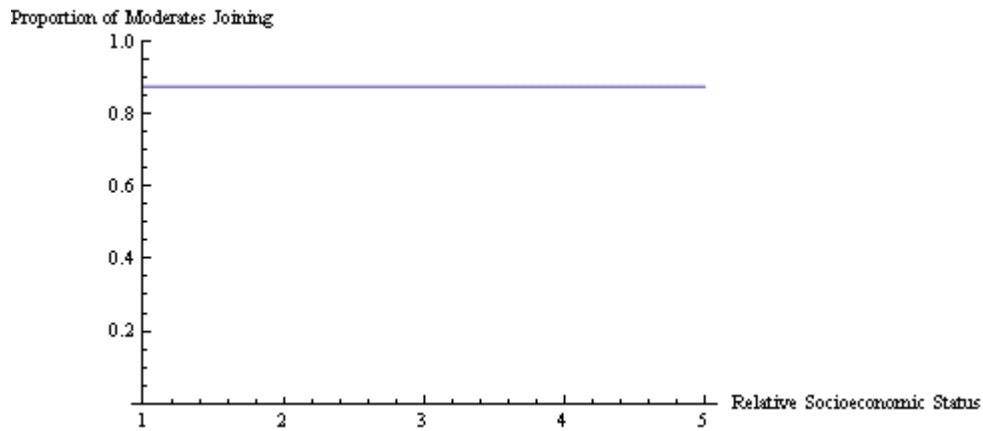


Figure 2d: Effect of SocioEconomic Status on Party Composition: No Cordon



We now turn to examining the effects of changes the position of moderates' and extremists' ideology. We alter the parameter values in order to demonstrate the effects most clearly: we set $\delta=1$ (ideological weighting at the highest level), the cordon sanitaire to 0.625 (i.e. just to the left of the extremists' ideal point), and socioeconomic status to 2.5. We begin by looking at the effects of changes in the moderates' ideology.

Figure 3a: Effect of Moderate Ideology on Party Ideology

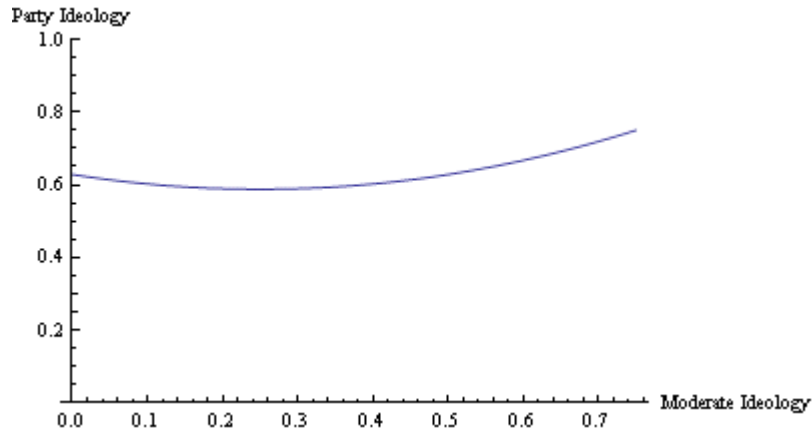


Figure 3b: Effect of Moderate Ideology on Party Composition

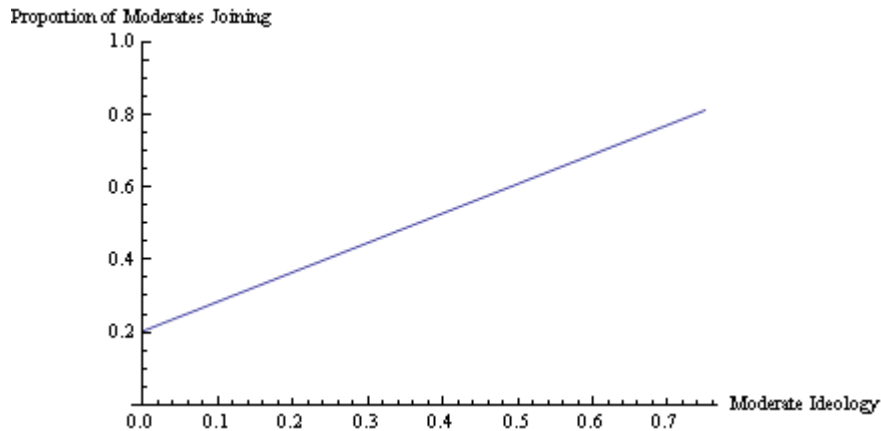


Figure 3(a) shows the nonlinear effect on party ideology of moderate ideology. As moderate ideology increases there is at first a leftward shift of party ideology because more moderates are joining the party and hence ‘moderating’ the aggregate ideology. However as moderate ideology increases further, this compositional effect makes way for a straight-ahead ideological effect and party ideology shifts to the right. Figure 3(b) shows that as moderates move to the right, more and ever more decide to join the party.

Changes in extremist ideology have a clearer effect: as extremists become more extreme so too does the party. This occurs for two reasons. First, because the ideology of the party reflects that of the extremists themselves. Second, because the extremism of the extremists encourages moderates to leave. Of particular note in Figures 4a and 4b is the ‘kink’ in the graphs at an

extremist ideology of 0.625 – the location of the cordon sanitaire. Once extremist ideology moves to the right of the cordon sanitaire, this further encourages moderates to jump ship – sending the party veering to the right. Here we see another important institutional role for the cordon sanitaire – it shapes the degree to which the ideology of the extremists alters the incentives facing moderates.

Figure 4a: Effect of Extremist Ideology on Party Ideology

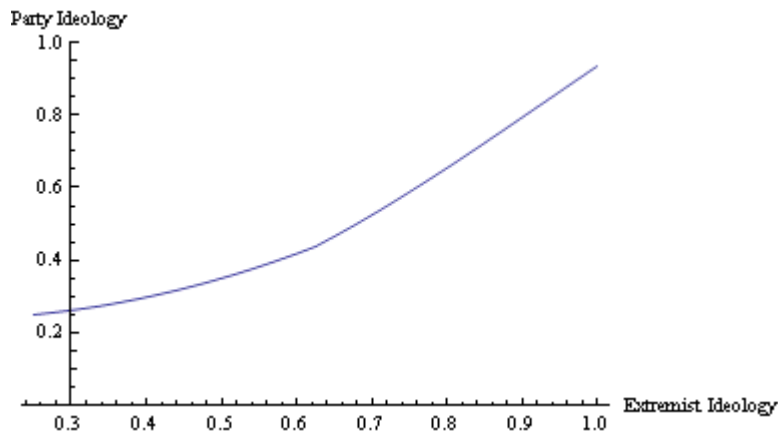
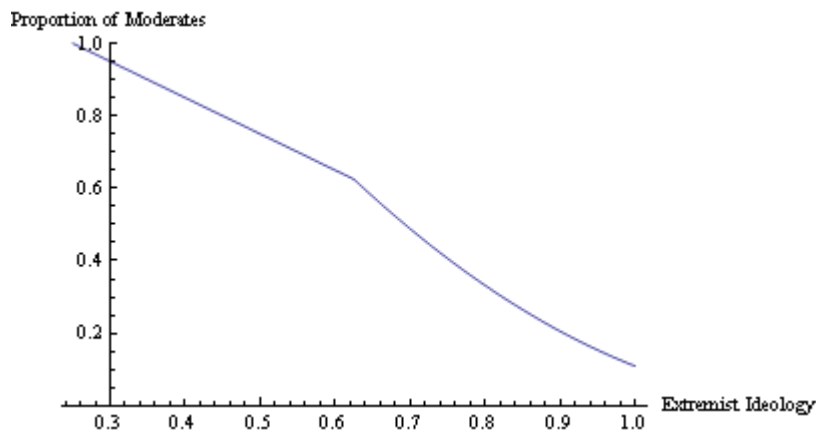


Figure 4b: Effect of Extremist Ideology on Party Composition



The weight that moderates attach to ideological proximity to extremists has a fairly simple effect. An increase in the importance of ideological cohesion to moderates – an increase in δ - will always push the radical right party rightwards as can be seen in Figures 5(a) and 5(b). This happens because as moderates become more ideologically sensitive to the position of extremists, any given gap between their ideologies will make them less willing to join the party.

This effect has interesting implications for considering opportunism among moderates. If moderates are highly opportunistic we would expect a relatively low δ - they do not care about ideology per se - and they will join the party in greater numbers. Opportunism then can mitigate the ideological extremism of the party *despite* the fact that opportunists do not particularly care about ideology.

Figure 5a: Effect of Ideological Weighting on Party Ideology

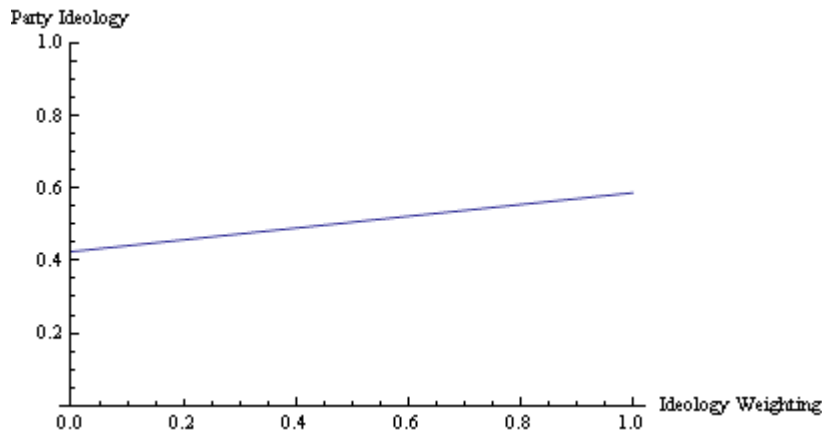
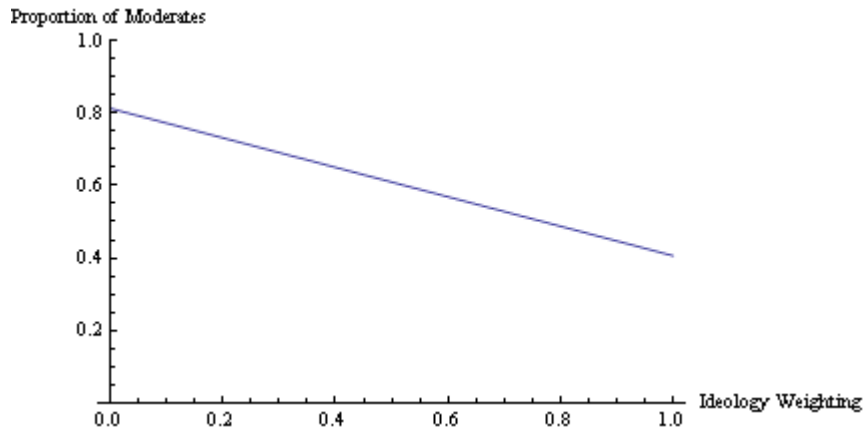


Figure 5b: Effect of Ideological Weighting on Party Composition



Finally we turn to examine the important issue of the *direct* effects of the cordon sanitaire. To do so we set $\delta=0.5$ so that opportunity cost motivations become more important than ideological cohesion. The other parameters remain the same.

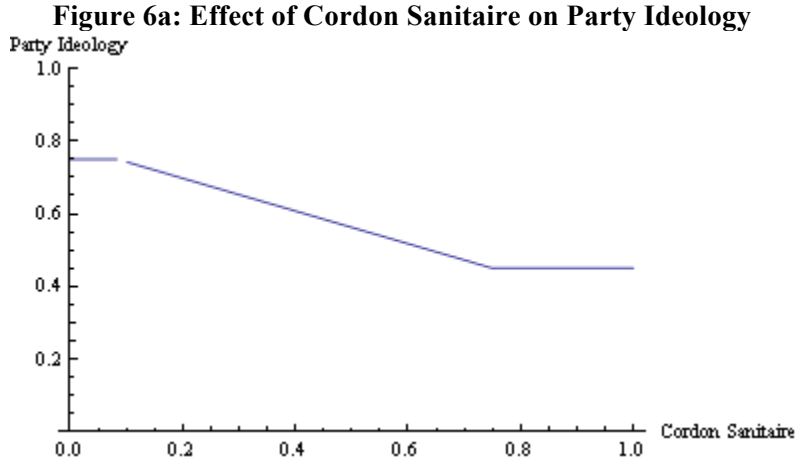
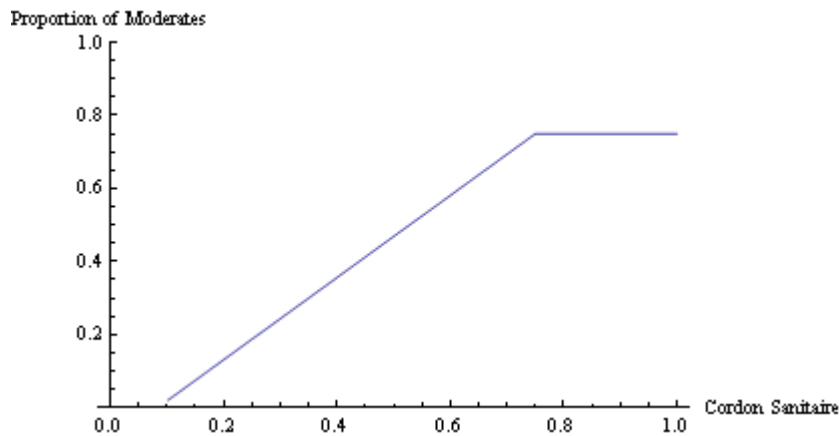


Figure 6b: Effect of Cordon Sanitaire on Party Composition



The effect of moving the cordon sanitaire on both party ideology and party composition is nonlinear as can be seen in Figures 6(a) and 6(b). This discontinuity is explained by the fact that when the cordon fully binds moderates' behavior - or does not bind at all - small changes in its position have no effect on party ideology or composition. When the cordon is to the left of 0.1, the opportunity cost to moderates of joining the party is too high for any moderate to join – hence the party ideology is that of the extremists. Thus under a fully binding cordon sanitaire, radical right parties are dominated by extremists and their ideology reflects this. Furthermore, any slight weakening of the cordon sanitaire in this case has little effect on the behavior of radical right parties – in this sense the cordon sanitaire is a ‘sticky’ institution. Symmetrically, once the cordon sanitaire is to the right of 0.75 – the ideological position of the extremists – there is *no*

opportunity cost for moderates to joining the party. In this case - the essential absence of a cordon sanitaire – radical right parties will have a large number of moderate members and an accordingly moderate ideology. Between these two points the cordon sanitaire produces opportunity costs that at least some moderates are willing to absorb. As the cordon moves to the right, ever more moderates are willing to accept these costs and consequently the party’s ideology will move to the left. This result might seem surprising on the surface – when other parties become more tolerant of the radical right, this moves the radical right parties leftward but once we take into account the joining decision of moderates the mechanism is clear. This also helps to explain the political success of radical right parties in countries without a cordon sanitaire. Such parties are not successful just because other right wing parties will consider forming coalitions with them – they are also successful because they are ideologically more mainstream than their counterparts in countries with strong cordons sanitaires, meaning that they will tend to attract more voters.

Data Analysis

We now turn to the empirics of right-wing party composition, firstly by examining a novel dataset of party members from twelve European right-wing parties and, in the following section, by examining two salient cases: the Swedish Democrats and the Danish People’s Party. Throughout our interest is in teasing out some of the theoretical mechanisms developed above, in particular how do cordons sanitaires affect the composition of radical right parties?

The dataset was compiled from party lists for election between 2005 and 2007 for radical right parties in states that require candidates for public office to list their occupations along with other personal data. The following states have such a requirement: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, Sweden and Switzerland. This gave us a total of eleven party lists, since the Belgian and Austrian lists contained two radical right parties apiece and the German case included three. We chose the party list that would maximize the number of observations for each radical right party. For all parties except the Belgian National Front and the Sweden Democrats,

where the lists for the regional and municipal elections, respectively, contained more candidates, this was the list for the national parliamentary election. Using the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88), a native speaker in the relevant language assigned the corresponding numerical code to the occupation of each candidate. Separate codes were assigned to the following: students, pensioners, homemakers, self-employed (when there was no further specification), and unemployed.

This information allows us to create two key variables. The first – labor market participation – is a simple dummy variable that measures whether the individual is currently employed or is either unemployed or non-employed. The second - occupational skill – is created by imputing a level of skill to the individual as defined by their occupation. There are four levels of occupational skill attributed to ISCO-88 occupations – only primary education needed; basic secondary education; post secondary education that does not result in a university degree; and finally, skills associated with university degrees.

To divide between stigmatized versus non-stigmatized environments, we rely on a combination of an expert survey of the strength of the cordon-sanitaire in 2004, historical accounts of the cordon sanitaire, and ethnographic data. The latter two are reported more fully in Art (2011). Van Spanje et. al's expert survey found cross-national variation in the availability of coalition partners for radical right parties. Five of our parties (the three German parties, the Belgian National Front, and the Sweden Democrats) were marginalized by every other political party, thus receiving a score of 1.0 (proportion of other parties engaging in ostracism). In these five cases, the radical right party has also been ostracized by other parties throughout its entire history and its members have faced social sanctions (Klandermans and Mayer 2005; Art 2011). They all thus clearly qualify as stigmatized parties. Three of our parties were clearly not highly ostracized: the score for the Austrian Freedom Party was .67, the Danish People's Party received a .43, and the Swiss People's Party scored a .15. These scores are hardly surprising, given that all three parties have participated in national coalition governments. Two of our parties received

high ostracism scores on Van Spanje’s scale: the French National Front (.91) and the Vlaams Belang (.8). However, since the members of these parties did not face social sanctions, and since the cordon-sanitaire either did not exist or was much weaker in the decades when these parties engineered their electoral breakthrough, we code them as non-stigmatized parties. This coding scheme yields the following:

<u>Stigmatized Parties</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Country</u>
Belgian National Front	FNb	Belgium (Wallonia)
German National Party	NPD	Germany
German People’s Union	DVU	Germany
Republicans	REP	Germany
Sweden Democrats	SD	Sweden

<u>Non-Stigmatized Parties</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Country</u>
Alliance for the Future of Austria	BZÖ	Austria
Austrian Freedom Party	FPÖ	Austria
Danish People’s Party	DF	Denmark
National Front	FN	France
Swiss People’s Party	SVP	Switzerland
Flemish Interest	VB	Belgium (Flanders)

The first test we conduct is on our eleven parties to examine if the average socioeconomic status of the parties’ members differs in stigmatized versus nonstigmatized environments. Since we only have eleven cases a regression analysis would be using the metaphorical sledgehammer on the figurative tack. Instead, we conduct two t-tests to see if the composition of stigmatized parties differs from non-stigmatized parties in terms of their skill

level and their labor market involvement. Table One demonstrates the averages for each group and the t-score for differences in means.

Table One: Differences in Group Composition

Group	Skill Mean	Skill S.E.	Labor Force Mean	Labor Force S.E.
Non-Stig	3.01 (1216)	.026	0.81 (1500)	0.10
Stig	2.61 (426)	.041	0.83 (513)	0.17
T-Test	$t = 7.880, p < 0.001$		$t = -0.995, p < 0.16$	

Number of observations in parentheses

Two points stand out from the comparison of group means. Firstly, there is a statistically highly robust difference between radical right parties in stigmatizing versus non-stigmatizing party systems. Stigmatized parties have a substantially lower average ISCO skill level among their members – by 0.4 points, which amounts to just under half a standard deviation in this skill variable. This data does not show therefore show that the composition of these parties is completely different – by and large, parties in both types of systems have a broad array of skill types in their membership. But in aggregate there is a clear skewing towards skilled members in non-stigmatized parties. In fact, whereas the median member of a stigmatized radical right party has a median skill level of two out of four, the median member of a non-stigmatized party scores three on this index. These parties differ in the skills they bring to bear. Secondly, this distinction between stigmatized and non-stigmatized parties does not hold up when we turn to labor force participation – in fact, stigmatized parties have a slightly higher mean level of participation (83%) than non-stigmatized parties. The gap however is not statistically significant at any conventional level. Here we see that parties, whether stigmatized or not rely for the most part for their

membership on people already in the labor force – extremist parties are not made up purely of the unemployed, retired, or disaffected.

However, this compositional data only tells us about the aggregate shape of party memberships. We can tease out more interesting implications by looking at individual members and how their labor market status, skills, and demographic characteristics affect their ability to rise up the ranks of radical right parties. Tables Two and Three examine just this issue. Since we have information on the occupation (or lack thereof) of radical right members we can impute the occupational skill level (again ISCO 1 to 4) and, of course, whether they are working or not. Table Two examines, for those in employment, how their skill level affects their party position. Table Three broadens the sample to include those out of employment as well as those in the workforce and examines the dummy workforce participation variable. Each table presents eight models. The first four are simple linear regressions where the dependent variable is the relative position where a member lies on their party's list. This is normalized to range between zero (right at the back of list) to one (at the top of the list). Since this variable is bounded between zero and one, linear regression may not be appropriate since it does not explicitly constrain predicted party list placements to lie between zero and one. Hence the latter four models in each table use tobit estimations that explicitly identify upper and lower bounds (in practice less than a dozen cases produce predicted values outside these bounds). Finally we differentiate among the models by whether they include the full sample of individuals, only those in non-stigmatized parties, or only those in stigmatized parties. We examine skills and labor market participation separately since we have no skill information for those currently not in the labor market (since we derive skill from occupation). It is possible that this could lead to omitted variable bias but it would be rather foolhardy to impute skills from just the age and gender variables for those out of the labor market.

Table Two: Skill Level, Stigmatization, and Party Position

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	LIN	LIN	LIN	LIN	TOBIT	TOBIT	TOBIT	TOBIT
	ALL	ALL	NON	STIG	ALL	ALL	NON	STIG
Age	0.002** (0.000)	0.001* (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001** (0.000)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
Gender	0.036*** (0.012)	0.020 (0.016)	0.023 (0.018)	0.021 (0.037)	0.037*** (0.012)	0.021 (0.016)	0.023 (0.018)	0.022 (0.037)
Skill		0.035*** (0.008)	0.032*** (0.009)	0.064*** (0.016)		0.035*** (0.008)	0.031*** (0.009)	0.064*** (0.016)
Constant	0.616*** (0.020)	0.517*** (0.033)	0.536*** (0.038)	0.439*** (0.061)	0.617*** (0.020)	0.517*** (0.033)	0.536*** (0.038)	0.440*** (0.061)
N	2144	1450	1153	297	2144	1450	1153	297

Robust standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

We begin in Table Two by discussing the role of skills. Model 1 contains the full sample for which we have party list placement data and basic demographics: age and gender. The basic finding here is that women and older people place higher on the list. The former is presumably a function of women's relative scarcity in the party and the need to attract female voters. The positive effect of age potentially represents political experience, though it might also reflect free time to participate. Model 2 introduces the skill variable and here we see a dramatic collapse in the size and statistical significance of the demographic variables and a strong robust effect of skills on party position. This partly reflects changes in the sample composition (in the case of gender) and partly omitted variable bias in Model 1 (in the case of age). Since skill is coded between one and four and the dependent variable lies between zero and one it is simple to think about the substantive effects of skill on party placement: for a given member, moving from having the lowest level of skill to the highest level of skill is estimated to push the member ten

percent of the length of the list, a fairly sizable shift (and much larger than the estimated effects of gender or a twenty year age difference in Model 1).

While the effects of skills on party position are always positive, they vary somewhat across the two types of party. Specifically in non-stigmatized parties the effect of skill is only half that in stigmatized parties. Why does this effect emerge? Table One showed that there is a systematic difference in the overall skill composition of stigmatized versus nonstigmatized parties, with the former having lower levels of skill. Hence skills are scarcer in stigmatized parties and there exists a ‘political skill premium’. To conclude Table Two briefly, the tobit models show near identical results to the linear regressions, suggesting the previous results are not artifacts of misspecified models.

Table Three: Labor Force Participation, Stigmatization, and Party Position

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	LIN	LIN	LIN	LIN	TOBIT	TOBIT	TOBIT	TOBIT
	ALL	ALL	NON	STIG	ALL	ALL	NON	STIG
Age	0.001** (0.000)	0.001 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.002** (0.001)	0.001** (0.000)	0.000 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.001)	0.002** (0.001)
Gender	0.036*** (0.012)	0.013 (0.015)	0.013 (0.016)	0.035 (0.034)	0.037*** (0.012)	0.014 (0.015)	0.014 (0.016)	0.035 (0.034)
Labor Force		0.047*** (0.018)	0.058*** (0.020)	-0.062** (0.031)		0.048*** (0.018)	0.059*** (0.020)	-0.063** (0.031)
Constant	0.616*** (0.020)	0.596*** (0.027)	0.603*** (0.031)	0.654*** (0.050)	0.617*** (0.020)	0.596*** (0.027)	0.603*** (0.031)	0.655*** (0.050)
N	2144	1733	1406	327	2144	1733	1406	327

Robust standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

We now turn in Table Three to the effects of labor market participation. Here we must exclude skills from the analysis but the other controls remain the same. As before there is a sharp

difference between Models 1 and 2 (as well as Models 5 and 6) in that age and gender do not matter for party position once labor market participation is controlled for. The estimated effect of being in the labor force in the full sample is to push a member five percent of the length of the list – about half of the effect we find for moving from low-skilled to high-skilled. So far so similar to Table Two. However, when we split the sample into stigmatized versus non-stigmatized parties we find a surprising effect. Whereas skills helped more in stigmatized parties, labor force participation actually helps less – indeed it has a negative impact on party place. Whereas labor force participation pushes members six percent points up the list in non-stigmatized parties it is associated with a fall six percent points *down* the list in stigmatized parties. Why do we see this result? Here we argue there is no emphasis on a political premium being attached to labor force participation, unlike the case of skills. For one thing, Table One showed us that the aggregate labor force participation of members of stigmatized versus nonstigmatized parties is near identical. Instead, since stigmatized parties are unlikely to hold office and are associated with powerful opportunity costs to joining, they tend to be led by those with little to lose.

Two Illustrative Cases

To further illustrate the causal mechanisms at work on our explanation, we summarize findings from ethnographic research (primarily semi-structured interviews and participant observation) on radical right parties in Denmark and Sweden.⁶ The two countries are often used for paired comparisons, given their similarities in terms of history, social-structure, and political and economic institutions. In this case, the comparison is particularly interesting because the Sweden Democrats (the most important radical right party in Sweden) have explicitly modeled themselves on the radical right Danish People's Party, going so far as to copy the latter's party

⁶ The author conducted 30 semi-structured interviews with radical right politicians in Sweden and Denmark. The first round was conducted in May 2005, and the second in May 2007. Notes are available upon request. The author also attended the party congress of the Sweden Democrats and visited several of their regional offices.

program. Yet while the Danish People's Party has topped 15% in national parliamentary elections and is a *de facto* party of government, the Sweden Democrats have failed to surmount the 4% hurdle for parliamentary representation since their founding in 1988. The extreme variation in coalition markets and social sanctions explains these divergent outcomes.

Sweden

In terms of political coalition markets, the cordon sanitaire against the Sweden Democrats has been as tight as anywhere in Europe. Even though the party polled a mere 1.4% in 2002, the mainstream parties felt it necessary to announce that there would be no cooperation at any level with the radical right. In 2002, the ruling Social Democrats and opposition Liberals issued a joint press release - formalizing a policy that had been in place for years - pledging to work across party lines to prevent anti-immigrant parties from wielding any power in local councils. The Conservatives also received orders from the national level to never approve any proposal emanating from the SD. Most of these proposals, as are most proposals in municipal politics, are not deeply ideological but concern such things as the location of traffic lights. As one SD complains, "no matter what we propose, the proposals are voted down, and no other parties will utter a word."

On several occasions political parties have been forced to abdicate power or form uncommon alliances simply to prevent the Sweden Democrats from wielding influence. For example, in 2002 the Sweden Democrats won one seat in the local council in the town of Ystad. The ruling Conservatives were one seat short of a majority, but chose to go into opposition rather than cooperate with the single Sweden Democrat councilman. In 2006, the Sweden Democrats won 10 out of 149 seats in the regional council of Skåne. Again, rather than enter into an alliance

with them the Conservatives chose to cooperate with the Green party, which in turn agreed to the unlikely coalition because they did not want the Sweden Democrats to become kingmakers.⁷

The cordon sanitaire is one factor that prevents ambitious political entrepreneurs from joining the party. But an equal, if not greater, deterrent, is the credible threat to one's economic livelihood. There have been several high profile cases of Sweden Democrats who have lost their jobs as a result of their politics. All of the Sweden Democrats interviewed were familiar with these cases, and many shared their own fears, or actual experiences, of losing their jobs. Marcus Rosenberg, the local leader in the town of Helsingborg and the party's blogmaster, drove a taxi for the elderly. He joined the party in 1996, but refused to stand for local office or to "become too well known" out of fear he would lose his contract with the city for his services. It was only when he became a regular taxi driver (and thus had no more contracts with the city government) that he became actively engaged with the Sweden Democrats.⁸ LJ Hollgren was working as a salesman in Malmö when the CEO of his company in Stockholm learned of his membership in the Sweden Democrats. He was given the choice of leaving the party or his job. He chose to stay with the party, but admits that he is one of the few people he knows who decided to place their political principles over their economic livelihood.⁹ In the run-up to the elections of 2006, the party had many calls from potential candidates who withdrew because of threats from their employers.

In addition to unemployment, potential members of the Sweden Democrats also must weigh the risks to their physical safety, and to the safety of their families. Left-wing groups like AFA (the antifascist action group) have staged numerous violent protests against the Sweden Democrats. Members of AFA have also gone after individual Sweden Democrats when they encounter them on the street, and vandalized their homes. Most Sweden Democrats who receive any publicity apply for unlisted addresses. Matthias Karlsson installed bullet-proof windows in his apartment to protect himself and his family. Hans-Olaf Andersson, the local party leader in

⁷ Interview with Thomas Lantz (Conservative), Ystad, May 2007.

⁸ Interview with Michael Rosenberg (SD), Karlskrona, May 2007.

⁹ Interview with Hollgren.

Lund who delivers papers for a living, carries defense spray (a legal product, akin to mace, used to ward off attackers) with him at all times.¹⁰ LJ Hollgren tries to avoid large groups of people when he goes out. He has no nameplate outside his apartment, and takes the morning paper as soon as it arrives to prevent someone from setting fire to it. Sweden Democrat politicians claim that the repressive political environment in Sweden “creates a social selection among our cadre.”¹¹ “People know they have to walk over a threshold to become Sweden Democrats,” the local leader of Lund explained, and very few are willing to make the sacrifice.¹² “Most don’t dare,” the longtime party leader in Landskrona, the Sweden Democrat’s bailiwick, admitted.¹³

The strict cordon-sanitaire and strong social sanctions have had predictable effects upon the composition of the Sweden Democrat’s activist base. For the decade of its existence, the party was dominated by extremists. The leader of the party from 1988-1995, Anders Klarström, was a member of a neo-Nazi organization and had been convicted of several crimes, including theft and telephone threats. Another of the party’s founders, Ulf Ranshede, was convicted of inflicting grievous bodily harm after he attacked a fourteen-year-old immigrant. All told, half of the party had a criminal record and a third were directly connected with neo-Nazi organizations (Larsson and Ekman 2001). One member described the party as consisting of “people with crazy ideas, Nazi ideas, and even worse.” Another remembered that “the people there were not my kind, they were very racist and wore bomber jackets and army boots... We had real weirdoes in the party in the 1990s, to be honest.” In the late 1990s, a small number of moderates tried to wrest control of the party from the extremists. They instituted a uniform ban at party meetings and explicitly rejected neo-Nazism. Although they succeeded in wresting control from the extremists, it came at the cost of a party split that cost the Sweden Democrats many of their most committed members and the loss of any organizational presence in Stockholm. The legacy of extremism still haunts

¹⁰ Interview with Hans-Olaf Andersson (SD), Lund, May 2007.

¹¹ Interview with Karlsson.

¹² Interview with Andersson.

¹³ Interview with Lindblom.

the Sweden Democrats, as the media regularly uses old footage of party meetings to brand the party as neo-Nazi.

The social sanctions have also had predictable affects on the SES of the activist base. The Swedish daily *Aftonbladet* published a report in 2007 showing that one third of Sweden Democrat representatives live on state handouts. The article pointed out that while the Sweden Democrats routinely claim that there are twice as many immigrants in state-funded early retirement program than native Swedes, only ten percent of immigrants receive such benefits while twenty percent of the members of the Sweden Democrats do.¹⁴ The leaders of the Sweden Democrats do not hide the social profile of the party cadre. “People in high-paying jobs with large homes and social networks have a lot to lose. The unemployed and retired have a lot less to lose, and they are the people we get.”¹⁵ Although the leaders of the party stress that their elected officials are “honest people” and, as opposed to the situation in the 1990s, “not freaks,” they readily acknowledge the problems associated with having few educated members in the party. “Our problem is not votes,” one local leader explained, “but getting good people to fill the places we win.” By good people, he continued, he meant “people who could get a job anywhere” and people “who could sit down and write an article.” He estimated that there were perhaps 20 such individuals among the party’s 2,800 members.¹⁶

Denmark

The Danish People’s Party (DF) was founded in 1995 by former members of the Danish Progress Party (FrP), an anti-tax populist party that had existed since 1972. The FrP gradually adopted anti-immigrant positions in the 1980s under the leadership of Pia Kjaersgaard, who took over from Mogens Glistrup who was imprisoned for tax fraud in 1985. While Glistrup wanted the

¹⁴ *The Local*, May 17, 2007.

¹⁵ Interview with Karlsson.

¹⁶ Interview with Andersson.

FrP to remain a loose political movement, Kjaergaard was frustrated by the party's perpetual organization chaos and imposed rigid discipline as leader of the DF.

Unlike Sweden, there has never been a strict cordon-sanitaire against radical right (or anti-tax populist) parties in Denmark. Mainstream parties counted on Progress Party votes to form governments in both 1982 and 1987 (Bjørklund and Andersen 2002: 127). Upon founding the DF, Kjaersgaard made it a central goal to become a permanent coalition partner for either the Liberals or the Conservatives. After the 1997 municipal elections, the DF counted 8 vice-mayors, which indicated that the party was not at all marginalized at the municipal level (Karpantschof 2002). Liberal leader Anders Fogh Rasmussen destroyed any trace of the cordon in 1999 when he wrote in the DF's party journal (*Dansk Folkeblad*) that cooperation might be an option (Rydgren 2004). This willingness to enter a coalition with the DF was signaled several times before and during the 2001 national parliamentary elections (Givens 2005: 148). Since then, "the political environment has put practically no constraints on the Danish People's Party (Rydgren 2004)." Indeed, minority governments since X have been openly reliant on the cooperation of the DF. As Pederson and Ringsmosse (2005) argue, "in a parliamentary system that rarely sees a majority government this is as close a party can come to incumbency without actually getting into the ministerial offices."

Danish civil society has not stigmatized nor protested against the DF. According to one specialist, there has been virtually no protest activity against the party and their members are fully accepted socially.¹⁷ This assessment is shared by DF politicians. None of the DF members of parliament interviewed claimed that they suffered as a result of their political affiliation.¹⁸ Unlike in Sweden, none reported any pressure from their employers. Were a DF politician to lose their job as a result of their party membership, one parliamentarian predicts that "there would be a

¹⁷ Interview with Rene Karpantschof, Former Civic Activist, Copenhagen May 2005.

¹⁸ Several claimed that they had heard about "bad experiences," such as harassing phone-calls and physical assaults, but were unable to offer any specifics.

public outrage, and even our political opponents would protest.”¹⁹ According to another, he never faced a hostile social environment even though many of his friends and classmates disagreed with his political views: “One could have a political debate and then go play football after.”²⁰ In sum, there is virtually no evidence to suggest that DF party activists and politicians faced any of the social shunning that members of the radical right encountered elsewhere in Western Europe. Nor have protests disrupted the movement at all. Indeed, since they have become a de-facto party of government, the DF is as “normal as anyone else.”

As a result of open coalition markets and the lack of social sanctions, the DF is dominated by moderates and has successfully prevented extremists from infiltrating its ranks. In contrast to Sweden, the right-wing extremist milieu in Denmark is numerically small. Only the Dansk Front, the Danish National Socialist Party (DNSP), and the Danish Forum are worth mentioning. The former two groups are violent neo-Nazi organizations, while the third is the extremist youth-wing of the Danish Association. In 1999, nineteen members of the DF were excluded because they had links with the Danish Forum (Bjørklund and Andersen 2002: 112). In 2006, the party’s central committee immediately expelled eight local branch chairmen, and one local council member, after an undercover journalist from the newspaper *Ekstrabladet* exposed their deviation from the party’s line. The journalist posed as a potential DF member, and asked if his links with the Dansk Front and the DNSP prevented him from joining the party. Nine out of the eleven local politicians he questioned answered that his right-wing extremist past would not be a problem, so long as he kept quiet about it. Although most of these local politicians had probably never heard of either the Dansk Front or the DNSP (the journalist did not identify them as right-wing extremist organizations), they were ejected from the party without debate. As Peter Skaarup, the DF’s deputy party leader, explained: “There is simply no place for this sort of thing

¹⁹ Interview with Martin Henriksen (DF), Copenhagen, May 2007.

²⁰ Interview with Messerschmidt.

in the Danish People's Party. Racist, extreme, and undemocratic views run counter to everything that is Danish and therefore also [to] the Danish People's Party."²¹

The DF has also attracted activists and candidates with higher levels of SES than the Sweden Democrats. If the DF voters are overwhelmingly less-educated, this is not the case for party activists. In the 2005 parliamentary elections, the DF fielded a total of 86 candidates. Of these, 39 either had a university degree or were studying to get one.²² Of the 16 candidates born after 1970, 12 of them were either students or had an advanced degree, a strong indication that the average level of education for DF party activists will only increase. The DF has built a national youth organization, from which younger candidates are drawn, and which will provide a trained cadre in the future.²³

It is difficult to explain the divergent trajectories of the radical right in Sweden and Denmark without a focus on activist quality. In terms of socio-structural variables, both immigration and unemployment have normally been higher in Sweden than in Denmark over the last several decades. The electoral institutions are so similar—both use the St. Lague formula for distributing seats and set the threshold at 4%—that it would be a stretch to attribute the success of the DF and the failure of the SD to minor differences between them. Finally, since the Sweden Democrats have modeled themselves on their Danish counterparts—indeed going so far as to copy directly elements of the DF's party program—one cannot say that policy differences can explain the variation. During interviews, leading figures in the Sweden Democrats were candid about their problems in finding activists that would help rather than hurt their ability to win votes, to avoid party splits, and to position themselves as a credible coalition partner. In sum, a party composed primarily of people “living on the edge” has been unable to capitalize on what would appear to be favorable structural and institutional opportunities.

²¹ *BBC Monitoring Europe*, August 21, 2006.

²² The educational backgrounds (self-reported) of the candidates for the 2005 parliamentary elections can be found at <http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/sw/frontend/show.asp?parent=1834>.

²³ Interview with Karina Pedersen, University of Copenhagen, May 2005.

Conclusion

Previous studies of radical right party performance have depended largely on either off-the-shelf aggregate electoral data or case studies, most of which are conducted without significant field-work, to test socio-structural, institutional, or policy-based theories. In this paper, we used a new cross-national data set of radical right candidates for office and interviews from field research in two cases to test arguments we outlined first informally and then formally. Our findings supported our basic argument that radical right activists differ along a variety of dimensions, the most important being attitudes and cognitive skills, and that these differences in activist quality affect party performance in numerous ways. The lack of coalition markets and social sanctions produces radical right parties that are dominated by extremists with low levels of SES. The inverse is true when coalition markets are open and the economic and social costs of radical right activism are low or negligible. While we have not explained the origins of the variation in coalition markets and social sanctions across cases, the policy implications are clear. If all other political parties agree to a policy of non-cooperation, if employers shun radical right activists, and if civil society mounts protests when radical right parties are small, they will not be able to consolidate themselves in the party system. While strategies toward the radical right were largely set in Western Europe by the mid 1990s, politicians and ordinary citizens in other democracies still have a large degree of choice in how they respond to extremist parties. And if the analysis presented here is correct, these choices will help determine the trajectories of parties that many people view as a threat to the quality of liberal democracy.

We conclude with a second major implication for the study of party politics in advanced industrial societies. Here is not the place to recapitulate the debate over whether the political cleavages that Lipset and Rokkan (1967) famously described as “frozen” have thawed to the point where they are no longer useful in predicting contemporary voting behavior (see Bornshier 2009 for a review), or whether new cleavages have replaced them (Bornschier 2010; Van der Brug and Van Spanje 2009; Kriesi et. al. 2008). One thing, however, is clear: electoral volatility in Western

democracies has increased over the last several decades (Drummond 2006). Party fortunes and individual electoral behavior have become far less predictable than in the past, and the effective number of parties has increased across advanced industrial societies (Dalton, McAllister and Wattenberg 2002). Radical right parties - particularly those that use populist appeals - may be uniquely positioned to take advantage of this fluid electoral environment, since skillful use of the media and ideological flexibility have become two of their hallmark features (Poguntke 2002). Yet they are clearly not the only type of new party, even if they currently receive more academic than all other types of new parties combined. Green, regionalist, far left, center, liberal, and now even pirate parties have contested elections across Western Europe, and many have won seats in national legislatures.

Most of the literature on new parties is concerned with explaining their emergence (Harmel and Robertson 1985; Hug 2001; Tavits 2006) and, to a lesser extent, their electoral success. Given their novelty, it is not surprising that few scholars have tried to explain why some of them disappear while others persist, nor that their participation in government has thus far received little attention (an exception is Deschouwer 2008). If the argument in this paper is correct, the electoral persistence of new parties will have less to do with socio-structural or institutional factors than with their ability to navigate successive developmental stages in their political life-cycle (Pedersen 1982). Put another way, changes in the basic political cleavages of advanced industrial societies may have given new parties the opportunity to prosper in a more volatile electoral environment, but it is up to them to take advantage of this opportunity. In this less predictable world, agency matters more.

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