Extreme right-wing voting in Western Europe

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Abstract. In this study we explain extreme right-wing voting behaviour in the countries of the European Union and Norway from a micro and macro perspective. Using a multidisciplinary multilevel approach, we take into account individual-level social background characteristics and public opinion alongside country characteristics and characteristics of extreme right-wing parties themselves. By making use of large-scale survey data (N = 49,801) together with country-level statistics and expert survey data, we are able to explain extreme right-wing voting behaviour from this multilevel perspective. Our results show that cross-national differences in support of extreme right-wing parties are particularly due to differences in public opinion on immigration and democracy, the number of non-Western residents in a country and, above all, to party characteristics of the extreme right-wing parties themselves.

Introduction

The question as to why extreme right-wing parties have become so popular in some countries of the European Union, whereas in other countries these parties have only enjoyed modest success or even none at all, has often been raised. In the late 1990s, this question grew in significance as differences between Western European countries as to the level of support for extreme right-wing parties have become larger. In Austria, the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ) attracted a quarter of the votes in 1999 and took part in a coalition government, which resulted in a boycott of Austria by the other 14 Member States of the European Union. The popularity of the Flemish *Vlaams Blok* has also increased steadily to 15 per cent of the votes in the 1999 elections, whereas the Norwegian *Fremskrittspartiet* and the French *Front National* could count on more than 10 per cent of the votes. However, there are other European countries in which the extreme right wing has failed to attract voters. In the United Kingdom, the British National Party could not attract more than one per cent of the vote; in the Netherlands, the *Centrumdemokraten* was wiped out in Parliament after a small upsurge in 1994; and, in Spain, few people have ever even heard of the extreme right-wing splinter group *Democracia Nacional*.

In this article, we will try to explain differences in extreme right-wing voting behaviour between 16 Western European countries. So far, cross-national empirical research on extreme right-wing voting has been scarce, even though in 1988 von Beyme emphasized that 'future studies of right-wing extremism will have to pay more attention to the whole political context of the political movement' (von Beyme 1988: 16). The comparative studies that have been conducted either focused exclusively on the aggregate level or on the individual level. In aggregate-level studies, a variety of country-specific characteristics have been related to voter turnout for extreme right-wing parties at national elections (Baimbridge et al. 1994, 1995; Betz 1994, 1998; Kitschelt 1995; Husbands 1996; Jackman & Volpert 1996; Knigge 1998). However, in studying the context, they neglected individual characteristics related to voting for the extreme right wing. Individual-level studies, on the other hand, did take into account individual voter characteristics. In these studies, however, cross-country comparisons have mostly been limited to comparing a few country case studies (Falter & Schumann 1988; Hainsworth 1992; Kitschelt 1995; Merkl & Weinberg 1997). Van der Brug et al. (2000) improved upon this strand of research by performing individual-level voting analysis in six European countries simultaneously, but they did not take into account country-level explanations.

Husbands (1991, 1998) also criticized the common practice to examine voting from either an individual-level or contextual-level perspective. In his review of previous research, he extracted the important factors to explain variations between countries in levels of extreme right-wing support (see also Kitschelt 1995; Winkler 1996; Betz 1998; Eatwell 1998; Knigge 1998; Minkenberg 1998; Mayer 1999). We propose to categorize these explanations into sociological, economic and political factors. Sociological factors refer to differences between countries in the composition of the population. Two types of composition effects are of relevance in the present study: one is related to the social structure of the country and the other to public opinion within it. The mere fact that one country, for example, harbours more poorly educated people or more people with unfavourable attitudes towards ethnic minorities than another country may explain differences between countries in extreme right-wing voting. From an economic point of view, economic malaise and competition between its majority group and immigrants can be considered to be relevant in explaining differences in extreme right-wing voting in any particular country. From a political perspective, party system and party-specific factors can be considered to be essential too (Husbands 1998).

So far, these factors have been studied in isolation and have not as yet been integrated into an explanatory model of cross-national differences in extreme right-wing voting. This article is among the first to take all these factors into

account for all countries of the European Union and Norway using a multi-level approach. This approach also allows us to examine how the contextual and individual levels are interrelated. It brings together a large amount of individual-level survey data (N = 49,801). Moreover, country characteristics are added from census data as well as data from an expert judgement survey conducted among political scientists in all countries included in the study to trigger information on the opportunity structure for extreme right-wing parties as well as their specific characteristics (Lubbers 2000). To summarize, we answer the question as *to what extent differences between countries in extreme right-wing voting can be explained in terms of (a) composition effects, (b) country conditions, and (c) characteristics of extreme right-wing parties themselves*. Moreover we examine how individual-level effects differ between countries and to what extent these differences are influenced by contextual conditions.

Theories

Differences in social structure

In some contributions it has been argued that social background characteristics are of no (or, at least, of minor) importance in explaining extreme right-wing voting (Kitschelt 1995; van der Brug et al. 2000). Others argue for the so-called 'sociological model' where background characteristics are crucial for extreme right-wing voting (Mayer 1999).[1] Both branches of research, however, emphasize that sociopolitical attitudes mediate effects of social background characteristics on voting for extreme right-wing parties. Previous studies have shown that this is indeed the case (Scheepers et al. 1995; Lubbers & Scheepers 2000, 2001a; Lubbers et al. 2000). Therefore we should take into account both social structure and public opinion, as countries may differ in both respects. Let us focus on differences in social structure first.

Previous research has revealed that, in particular, lower social strata are more likely to vote for extreme right-wing parties. Time and again, it has been shown that poorer educated people are more likely to vote for anti-immigrant parties. Furthermore, manual workers and unemployed people are more likely to do so. There are, however, also some differences between the countries reported. The *Front National* (Lubbers & Scheepers 2001a; Mayer 1998), the FPÖ (Kitschelt 1995) and the *Vlaams Blok* (Lubbers et al. 2000) did not merely attract voters from lower social strata, but also gained support from the middle classes. Nevertheless, the overall picture is quite similar for all countries. Theories of economic interests (Lipset 1960; Falter & Klein 1994)

have proposed that those social categories in social positions similar to immi-
grants are more likely to perceive immigrants as an economic threat and will,
therefore, be more likely to vote for an extreme right-wing party which pro-
claims to protect the interests of the social strata under threat. Furthermore,
non-religious people and younger people turned out to be over-represented
among extreme right-wing electorates. Over-representation of these social cat-
egories among the extreme right-wing electorates has been explained by
theories of social disintegration (Arendt 1951; Kornhauser 1960). These
theories suggest that people who are, to some extent, unintegrated in society
have a need for substitute intermediary structures that extreme right-wing
parties claim to offer through their nationalistic programmes (Kornhauser
1960). In explaining extreme right-wing voting it is crucial to take into account
these social background characteristics.

If a country harbours more people from those categories more likely to
vote for extreme right-wing parties than another country, this alone could
explain cross-national variation in support for extreme right-wing parties.
Neglecting these composition effects is what Husbands (1991, 1998) described
as one of the largest weaknesses in comparative research on extreme right-
wing voting. Thus, our first hypothesis states that *after controlling for dif-
ferences in social structure, differences between Western European countries in
extreme right-wing voting will be reduced*.

Differences in public opinion

Why certain social categories are more likely to vote for extreme right-wing
parties is mostly explained by four clusters of attitudinal positions (Ignazi
1992; Billiet & De Witte 1995; Winkler 1996; Mayer 1999; Mudde 1999; Lubbers
& Scheepers 2000): anti-immigrant attitudes, favourable in-group attitudes,
authoritarian attitudes and political dissatisfaction.[2] In single-country studies,
all these attitudes were shown to play a role in extreme right-wing voting
(Billiet & De Witte 1995; Kitschelt 1995; Mayer 1998, 1999; Van der Brug
et al. 2000). However, anti-immigrant attitudes and political dissatisfaction
turned out to be the most important (Lubbers & Scheepers 2000, 2001a;
Lubbers et al. 2000). People who perceive immigrants as a threat (in line with
theories of economic interests) are more likely to blame these out-groups,
and, as a consequence, are more likely to vote for extreme right-wing parties.
People who are politically dissatisfied are likely to cast a protest vote and,
because extreme right-wing parties position themselves as protest parties,
these parties are an attractive option. If, in countries where extreme right-wing
parties are most successful, people are on average more unfavourable towards
out-groups and more politically dissatisfied, we may speak of attitudinal com-

position effects. Thus, we expect that *after controlling for differences in public opinion, differences between Western European countries in extreme right-wing voting will be reduced*.

Economic country conditions

Economic country characteristics are often taken into account to explain variation in the popularity of right-wing extremism between countries (Quillian 1995; Anderson 1996; Jackman & Volpert 1996; Knigge 1998). Most studies have focused on unemployment levels or on ethnic composition. Results of these studies are based on ecological correlations and give quite different pictures. Some studies have found a positive effect of unemployment (Baimbridge et al. 1994, 1995; Jackman & Volpert 1996), whereas others have found negative effects (Knigge 1998). With respect to ethnic composition, Kitschelt found little association between ecological levels of extreme right-wing party turnouts and the proportion of foreign-born population, whereas Swank and Betz (1996) and Knigge (1998) found strong effects in terms of the number of asylum seekers and the number of immigrants, respectively.

In order to answer the question of why bad economic circumstances (such as high unemployment) and the influx of immigrants may be of importance in explaining extreme right-wing voting, we can build on theories of economic interests (Blalock 1967; Olzak 1992). In countries where competition for scarce resources intensifies due to worsening economic conditions or an increasing number of immigrants, social groups are more likely to perceive stronger competition over these scarce resources. Because people are not very likely to blame their own group (in-group) for these increasingly competitive circumstances (Tajfel & Turner 1979; Tajfel 1981), they blame others (i.e., out-groups). To preserve a positive in-group evaluation, out-groups are blamed and negatively valued characteristics are ascribed to them (Coenders & Scheepers 1998). Thus, increasing competition may result in exclusionary reactions (Olzak 1992; Scheepers et al. 2001). Out-groups could, however, be perceived as a cultural threat too. In this view, out-groups are viewed as a threat to Western values and social cohesion. The cultural and economic threats may however be interwoven. Such threats and the exclusionary reactions towards out-groups are proclaimed in extreme right-wing programmes, and this may increase the likelihood of voting for extreme right-wing parties when competition increases. *In countries where the unemployment level is higher and the number of immigrants is larger, support for extreme right-wing parties is greater.* Note that these hypotheses relate to between-country differences. Previous research has shown that variation in extreme right-wing support within countries was not explained by regional variation in unemployment levels. Obvi-

ously, the intra-country effect of economic conditions can be absent, while inter-country effects can be present at the same time.

Political country conditions

An additional approach to explain extreme right-wing voting is to focus more specifically on political factors. Kitschelt (1995) has stressed the importance of opportunity structures for extreme right-wing parties. He has argued that convergence between the major moderate left-wing and major moderate right-wing parties opens up the possibility for a radical party to position itself successfully on the extreme at either side. His focus on the players in the political arena that may have paved the way for extreme right-wing parties may be crucial, but it is questionable whether convergence would affect voting behaviour as Kitschelt has proposed. A social democrat party moving to the right (and thus narrowing the gap to the major moderate right-wing party) would indeed create space at its left side, but could also (re)attract manual workers considering voting for the extreme right wing. As the left-wing/right-wing scale is not the only dimension Kitschelt (1995) refers to in his spatial analysis, the opportunity structure approach would be more useful if it were not operationalized in such general left and right terms. Therefore, we take into account the positioning of political parties with respect to their immigration policy. If there is one issue with which the extreme right wing has made itself heard, it has been a restrictive position towards immigration. If other players in the political arena have picked up this theme too, we could expect those parties to have stolen a march on the extreme right-wing parties. This has been put forward as an explanation of the failure of the extreme right in Germany (Betz 1994; Kitschelt 1995) and the Netherlands (Powel 1998). From this line of reasoning we expect that *in countries where the political space on the immigration issue for extreme right-wing parties is larger, support for these parties is larger*.

Another political explanation contradicts this line of reasoning. Thraenhardt (1992) argues that a more restrictive immigration climate in general increases support for widespread ethnic exclusion. Thus, an intensification of the public debate on asylum seekers and restrictions on immigration may not keep voters away from the far right, but may instead have the opposite effect. Under conditions of a more restrictive immigration policy, people are more likely to perceive asylum seekers to be a problem or to feel more free to express anti-immigrant stances (a 'de-tabooing process') and are, consequently, more likely to support restrictive immigration policies. Indeed, in Germany, support for the extreme right became more widespread when the debate on asylum seekers between the CDU/CSU and SPD became 'hysteri-

cal' (Lubbers & Scheepers 2001b). Therefore, we expect that *in countries where the political climate for immigration is more restrictive, support for extreme right-wing parties is larger*.

Characteristics of extreme right-wing parties

Finally, we also focus on extreme right-wing parties themselves. Van der Brug et al. (2000) argued that party size matters, to the extent that votes for small extreme right-wing parties are regarded as wasted votes. The disadvantage of party size as a predictor of extreme right-wing voting is that it cannot explain changes in extreme right-wing support over time, since small parties according to this view can never gain electoral success. It seems more illuminating to follow Husbands (1998) who argues that extreme right-wing parties, just like other parties, gain support only when they are well-organized, and to that extent have created a solid basis for electoral success. Therefore, in this article we take such characteristics of extreme right-wing parties into account. De Witte (1998) provides an explanation for differences in success between the extreme right in Flanders and the Netherlands, as the *Vlaams Blok* managed to build a good working organization, whereas the Dutch *Centrumdemokraten* failed to do so. This was due to the presence in Flanders of a range of Flemish-nationalist groups and clubs with which the party could easily connect. The availability at a local and regional level of people actively working for a party creates opportunities to campaign more effectively and attract voters. Kitschelt has pointed to the significance of organizational aspects too. He claimed that a better organizational structure not only has instrumental significance such that better-organized parties are better managers of voter mobilization, but has a programmatic message too (Kitschelt 1995, 71).

Another factor used by Husbands (1998) to explain the success of the right, but also a popular explanation in the media, is the charisma of party leaders. Husbands argues that the extreme right in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom has never had qualified or respected leaders. It is often suggested that Le Pen and Haider 'moved the masses' all by themselves. Charisma theory states that leaders are not charismatic in themselves, but only because of how they relate and interact with society (Lindholm 1990; van Dooren 1994). Weber, whose views have dominated the discourse on charisma for decades, stressed that an individual is considered a 'leader' when he is judged by others to be exceptionally gifted (van Dooren 1994). But according to Durkheim (1965), a leader is the group incarnate – that is, the group finds its common ideal in this leader. Moreover, authority is often bestowed on extreme right-wing leaders as a consequence of the hierarchical organization of the party

(Kitschelt 1995). In terms of the 'authoritarian personality' (Adorno et al. 1982), an authoritarian leader fulfils people's need to subordinate to powerful people in order to relieve experiences of fear (see also Fromm 1942).

Hitler is an example of an authoritative charismatic leader in most studies of charisma theory. It is therefore no surprise that charisma is treated mostly as a bad thing, particularly by social psychologists (Lindholm 1990). Recent analyses of charisma appear to come closer to Durkheim's original views: people are more willing to support candidates who mirror popular values than to support perceived losers. In a media-centred society, a party leader's appearance would be particularly important. An image of the leader as 'provider', 'law-giver' or 'hero' (van Dooren 1994) can meet individuals' needs arising from social or individual crises. Growing political alienation may turn to 'a narcissistic longing to be heard and to be taken care of by those in authority, a revived longing for a provider' (van Dooren 1994) or a nostalgic law-giver or hero of the people. By taking into account party characteristics we may, therefore, expect that *in countries where extreme right-wing parties have more favourable party characteristics, in terms of party organization and leadership, support for these parties is larger*.

Relations between individual and contextual characteristics

So far, attention has focused on explaining differences between countries in the level of extreme right-wing support. However, we may also expect differences between countries in the magnitude of the effects of individual-level social background characteristics and sociopolitical attitudes. According to theories of economic interests, we may expect that social groups in competitive inter-ethnic circumstances are particularly more likely to vote for the extreme right (Blalock 1967; Olzak 1992; Coenders & Scheepers 1998). Since lower social strata are more likely to compete with ethnic minorities for scarce resources, we may expect that people from these strata are especially sensitive to competitive contextual circumstances (i.e., higher unemployment levels and higher numbers of immigrants). Therefore, the extent to which one belongs to the lower social strata increases the likelihood of voting extreme right-wing may vary from one country to another. It can be expected that *lower social strata are more likely to vote for extreme right-wing parties in countries where levels of inter-ethnic competition are higher.*

With respect to public opinion, we may expect similar mechanisms to be at work. Although we expect an unfavourable out-group attitude and dissatisfaction with democracy to increase the likelihood of voting for extreme right-wing parties everywhere, this effect is likely to be stronger in countries with higher levels of competition. Thus, *people with stronger anti-immigrant*

attitudes and people who are more dissatisfied with democracy are more likely to vote for extreme right-wing parties in countries where levels of inter-ethnic competition are higher.

However, we can also expect that an unfavourable attitude towards out-groups and dissatisfaction with democracy will increase still further the likelihood of voting for the extreme right when party organizational conditions are favourable. The idea is that in countries where the extreme right wing is badly organized, people will be less likely to vote for such a party, even if they hold antagonistic attitudes to out-groups or are dissatisfied with democracy. On the other hand, in countries with a well-organised extreme right-wing party and a charismatic party leader, even people with less extreme anti-immigrant attitudes or feelings of dissatisfaction with democracy may cast their vote for the extreme right. The hypothesis would be that *people with stronger anti-immigrant attitudes and people who are more dissatisfied with democracy are more likely to vote for extreme right-wing parties in countries where the organizational characteristics of the party are more favourable.*

The relations between the issues discussed so far may be translated into a funnel of causality (see Figure 1). This figure shows that social structural characteristics of individuals as well individual attitudes affect extreme right-wing voting at an individual level. Variations in extreme right-wing voting *between countries* can be explained by compositional differences in social structure (arrow A in Figure 1) and public opinion (arrow B). After controlling for both differences in social structure and public opinion between countries, variations between countries in levels of extreme right-wing voting will be smaller. In addition to compositional differences, contextual country and party charac-
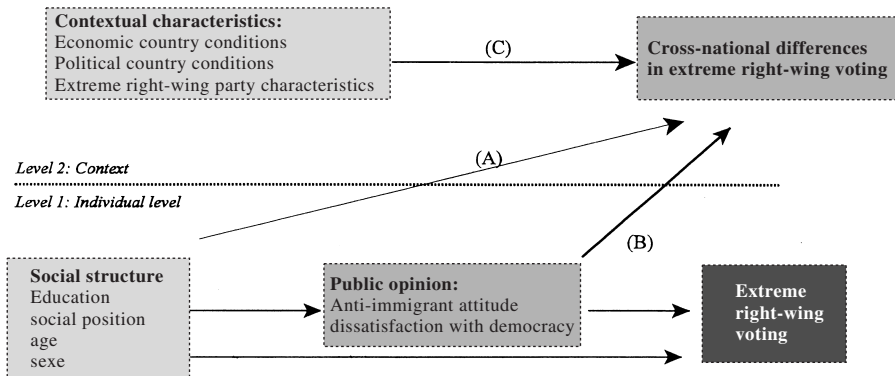

Figure 1. Integrated model of cross-national differences in extreme right-wing voting.

teristics affect differences in extreme right-wing voting between countries (arrow C). Extreme right-wing voting is more likely in countries with high levels of unemployment and immigrants, more space for the extreme right, a more restrictive immigration climate and more favourable party characteristics of the extreme right-wing parties themselves. This model also allows us to examine how the contextual and individual levels are interrelated: the influence of social structure and public opinion may vary with differences in contextual characteristics. Hence, this model integrates both micro and macro explanations of extreme right-wing voting.

Data

Survey data

The hypotheses are tested using data from 16 Western European countries in the 1990s (total N = 49,801).[3] For all these countries, multiple data sets are brought together from three international comparative projects: Eurobarometer 47.1 (Melich 2000), the Eurobarometer European Election Study 1994 (Schmitt et al. 1996) and the ISSP National Identity Module (Zentralarchiv 1998). In addition, several national election surveys are added. Appendix A indicates the sources and timescales of the data used. For detailed documentation of the surveys we refer to the original codebooks (i.e., Melich 2000 for the Eurobarometer 47.1; Schmitt et al. 1996 for the European Election Study 1994; Zentralarchiv 1998 for the National Identity Module of the ISSP; Beerten et al. 1997 for Belgium; Andersen & Borre 1994 for Denmark; CEVIPOF 1995 and 1997 (taken together) for France; Anker & Oppenhuis 1995 for the Netherlands; and Holmberg et al. 1994 for Sweden).

Eurobarometer and the ISSP are international consortia of survey organizations that collect comparable cross-national data on social attitudes and voting behaviour. The data were gathered in most countries using face-to-face interviews with people aged 18 years and over. Each survey is a large representative national sample of adults (of around 1,000 in each survey). The advantage of the Eurobarometer and ISSP for cross-national research is that the modules are fielded using fully comparable question wording, response categories and sequencing in all countries. In addition, we added some national election surveys in order to obtain a representative proportion of extreme-right voters in each country. Only surveys with comparable question wordings were added. Since we are interested in extreme-right voting of native-born people, we only included them in the analyses.

Expert judgement data

To test the hypotheses on opportunity structures for, and party characteristics of, extreme right-wing parties we made use of data collected by means of an expert judgement design (Lubbers 2000). From these data, we used questions in which experts were asked to position (pre-selected) parties in their country with respect to immigration policy, party organization, activity of the cadre of parties and charisma of party leaders. In January 2000, 290 political scientists, political sociologists and survey researchers from all European Union countries and Norway were asked to cooperate in the survey, following the method of Huber & Inglehart (1995). These political experts were chosen randomly from names found on the home pages of university departments in the respective countries who were familiar with research on the extreme right. Belgian experts were divided into Walloon and Flemish experts, as both regions have their own parties contesting national elections, though both groups were asked to fill out questionnaires for the Flemish as well as the Walloon region. The overall response was 51.7 percent, which may be considered good when, for example, compared with the response rate of 41 per cent for Huber and Inglehart (1995). The inter-expert reliability of the scales we used to test our hypotheses may all be considered as good, or even extremely good (for more detailed information, see Lubbers 2000).

Measurements

Extreme right-wing voting

Our dependent variable – 'extreme right-wing voting' – was measured in several ways. In some surveys, respondents were asked to name the political party they would vote for if there were a national election tomorrow, whereas in others they were asked to name the party they voted for at the most recent national election. We dichotomized the political parties into extreme right-wing parties (1) and all other parties (0).[4]

In deciding whether a specific party should be categorized as being on the extreme right, we used the results of the expert judgement survey. Based on this survey only, parties which scored higher than 8.5 on a ten-point anti-immigration scale were included. The highest score on the immigration-restriction scale was 9.8 for the British National Party (UK), whereas the *Partido Socialista Revolucionario* of Portugal received the lowest average score (0.5). Comparisons with classifications of extreme right-wing parties by Kitschelt

(1995), Mudde (1999) and van der Brug et al. (2000) show large similarities. All parties classified as extreme right-wing parties in these studies score 8.5 or higher on our immigration-restriction scale. The Portuguese *Partido de Soldariedade Nacional* (PSN), however, is an exception. The PSN is sometimes considered to be an extreme right-wing party (Mudde 1999) and sometimes not (Ignazi 1992; Jackman & Volpert 1996), but we considered the score of 6.3 on the immigration-restriction scale not high enough to take the party into account as extreme right wing. The Italian 'post-fascist' *Alleanza Nazionale* scored relatively low with 7.9; the German CSU scored even higher with 8.0. Therefore, we left out the Italian *Alleanza Nazionale*. With this decision we followed Kitschelt (1995), Knigge (1998) and van der Brug et al. (2000). Moreover, a recent in-depth study of the *Alleanza Nazionale* by ter Wal (2000) shows indeed that this party cannot simply be classified as extreme right-wing, but more as a nationalist-conservative party.

Table 1 shows the political parties in the 16 countries under investigation that we consider to be extreme right wing. This Table also shows the proportion of votes for the extreme right-wing parties in each country in the data. Overall, this proportion is comparable to national election outcomes in this period (mid-1990s). For most of the countries, however, the results for the extreme right-wing parties in the data are slightly lower than their actual election results.[5]

Individual social background characteristics

To measure social position, several indicators have been used.[6] Educational attainment is operationalized as the years of schooling a person has had. We used information on the age at which the respondent had completed a full-time education.[7] A measure of social class was constructed, using the available information in these secondary data, to resemble the cross-national comparable categorization of Erikson et al. (1983). We distinguished a number of categories based on their actual social position in the labour force: the service class (professionals, proprietors, general managers and junior managers); routine non-manuals (people with an employed position at a desk); self-employed people (farmers, fishermen and shop owners); and manual workers (unskilled and skilled workers, as well as their supervisors). To these classes we added as distinct categories those who were not active in the labour force at the time: unemployed people, retired people, housewives and students.[8]

The religious measure distinguishes between non-religious people, religious people belonging to non-Christian denominations and Christian people. Other important individual characteristics to explain extreme right-wing

Table 1. Extreme right-wing parties and proportion of votes in 16 European countries

Country	Extreme right-wing party	Number and percentage of votes in data	Election results in the 1990s (percentage)	
Austria	FPÖ	250 (18.4)	21.9 (1995)	26.9 (1999)
Belgium:				
Flemish region	VB	313 (10.1)	12.3 (1995)	15.5 (1999)
Walloon region	FN	45 (2.2)	5.2 (1995)	4.0 (1999)
Denmark	FKP, DF	220 (5.2)	6.4 (1994)	9.8 (1998)
Finland	IKL	0	<0.5 (1995)[1]	<0.5 (1999)[1]
France	FN	746 (9.8)	12.4 (1993)	14.9 (1997)
Germany	Rep, DVU, NPD	133 (2.3)	2.0 (1994)	2.9 (1998)
United Kingdom	BNP	0	<0.5 (1992)[1]	<0.5 (1997)[1]
Greece	EM	0	<0.5 (1993)[1]	<0.5 (1996)[1]
Ireland	NPI	0	<0.5 (1993)	<0.5 (1997)
Italy	LN, MSI-T	151 (5.9)	8.4 (1994)	10.1 (1996)
Luxembourg	NB	3 (0.3)	<0.5 (1994)	0 (1999)
Netherlands	CD	58 (1.5)	2.5 (1994)	0.6 (1998)
Norway	FKP	75 (6.7)	6.0 (1993)	15.3 (1997)
Portugal	AN	0	<0.5 (1995)[1]	<0.5 (1999)[1]
Spain	DN, Fal	3 (0.1)	<0.5 (1994)[1]	<0.5 (1998)[1]
Sweden	ND, SD	138 (3.6)	1.2 (1994)	<0.5 (1998)[1]
Total		2135 (4.3)		

[1] <0.5 = less than 0.5 per cent of the votes; these results are mostly subsumed into the category of 'other parties'.

voting (gender and age) are included using conventional measures. The surveys were conducted in 1994, 1995 and 1997 – therefore we also included a 'year' variable to explore possible time effects.

Individual attitudes

The two clusters of attitudinal positions that were found to be most important in explaining extreme right-wing voting (i.e., anti-immigrant attitudes and political dissatisfaction) are both available in all the surveys under considera-tion in this study.[9] To measure anti-immigrant attitudes the following question was asked of respondents: 'Do you think that there are too many immigrants in our country?' Respondents could indicate on a scale to what extent they agreed with this item. To construct comparable units across different surveys,

all categories of the items have been scored into equal intervals between 0 and 100. The higher the score of this variable, the more negative people are about the number of immigrants in their country. 'Dissatisfaction with democracy' is measured by asking respondents: 'Would you say that you are satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in your country?' Again respondents could indicate on a scale to what extent they agreed. Also, for comparability, the items have been scored on equal intervals between 0 and 100. The higher the score on this variable, the more dissatisfied people are with the way democracy works in their country.[10]

Economic country characteristics

Contextual country characteristics are presented in Table 2. The figures for the proportion of non-Western citizens as well as for unemployment rates are derived from international organizations that put a lot of effort into constructing comparable statistics. Figures for the number of non-Western citizens as a percentage of the total population were taken from European social statistics on immigration compiled by the European Commission (1999). We have chosen to use 'non-European Union citizens' as 'data availability is generally better across the Member States for population by citizenship than for flows of international migrants' (EC 1999: 9).[11] Examining the international statistics in Table 2, it becomes clear that substantial differences exist within Western Europe in the size of the non-European Union population. In Germany and Austria, the percentage of non-European Union citizens is highest, whereas in Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Sweden the percentage is lower but still substantial. In countries like Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain the percentage of non-European Union citizens is the lowest.

Figures on unemployment were derived from the *Statistical Yearbook* of the United Nations (1995).[12] In the mid-1990s unemployment levels were particularly high in Spain and Finland. They were less high but still above 10 per cent in Germany, the Walloon region of Belgium, Ireland, France, Italy, Denmark and Greece. Unemployment levels were lower than ten per cent in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Flanders, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Norway and Luxembourg (in declining order).

Political characteristics

To examine opportunity structures for extreme right-wing parties, we took into account the position of all parties on the immigration-restriction scale derived from the expert judgement data. The immigration-restriction scale ranged

Table 2. Economic country characteristics (unemployment rate and percentage of non-European Union citizens), political country characteristics (space for extreme right-wing and immigration-restriction climate) and characteristics of extreme right parties

Country	Unemployment rate	Non EU-citizens (percentage)	Space for extreme right	Immigration-restriction climate	Favourable party characteristics of extreme right
Austria	6.6	6.0	2.4	6.4	7.6
Belgium:					
Flemish region	7.2	3.7	1.5	5.8	7.7
Walloon region	12.5	3.7	2.1	4.0	2.8
Denmark	10.3	2.9	1.7	5.8	4.8
Finland	17.4	1.0	1.8	4.5	2.3
France	11.6	4.0	2.0	5.7	7.5
Germany	12.9	6.4	1.3	5.2	2.7
United Kingdom	8.5	2.1	1.4	5.7	4.2
Greece	10.0	1.1	1.5	5.6	2.2
Ireland	12.2	0.6	2.2	5.7	2.7
Italy	11.1	1.0	1.5	5.6	5.3
Luxembourg	2.7	3.1	1.8	4.3	4.3 (mean)
Netherlands	7.1	3.7	1.3	5.5	2.6
Norway	4.9	2.4	2.5	5.8	6.4
Portugal	5.5	1.2	1.8	3.6	4.3 (mean)
Spain	22.9	0.6	1.8	4.9	3.3
Sweden	7.7	4.1	2.1	5.0	2.4

from 0 'not at all restrictive' to 10 'very restrictive'. The inter-expert reliability of this scale was above 0.90 in each country (Lubbers 2000).

To test our hypothesis with respect to opportunity structures for the extreme right we also have to consider other parties' positions on the immigration issue. To calculate the space for an extreme right-wing party we took into account the most restrictive party in a country not belonging to the extreme right-wing party family. In all Western European countries it turned out to be the major liberal or (Christian)-conservative party (of which the German CSU had the highest average score of 8.0). The space between these liberal or conservative parties and the extreme right-wing parties is the battlefield for votes with respect to the immigration issue. The relative space for the extreme right can then be constructed as 10 minus the average between the score of the extreme right-wing party on the immigration-restriction scale and the score of the next most restrictive party outside the extreme right. This

is presented in Figure 2. For countries with more than one extreme right-wing party, we base our measure on the least restrictive of them. According to this measure, the Netherlands, Germany and the United Kingdom turned out to have least space for the extreme right (see Table 2). This was particularly due to the high scores for the Dutch *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Demokratie* (VVD), the German *Christlich-Soziale Union* (CSU) and the British Conservatives. Norway and Austria, on the other hand, had most space for the extreme right wing, as a result of the relatively lower scores for the Norwegian conservative *Høyre*, and the Austrian conservative *Österreichische Volkspartei* (ÖVP).

To test Thraenhardt's hypothesis (1992) that extreme right-wing parties receive more support in countries with a more conservative climate on immigration (i.e., where parties are overall more restrictive towards immigrants), we constructed a measure based on all parties. The score on the immigration-restriction scale of each party in any country was multiplied by the percentage of voters for the party and divided by the total percentage of votes.[13] This resulted in a measure in which larger parties have a relatively larger impact on the immigration-restriction climate in a country. As can be seen in Table 2, Austria, Flanders and Denmark score highest due to the rather restrictive social-democratic parties in these countries, whereas in the Belgian Walloon region and Portugal the immigration-restriction climate score is lowest.

To measure characteristics of the extreme right-wing parties, the expert judges assigned a number on a scale from 1 to 10 to each party in their respective countries for the organization, membership activism and the charisma of the party leader. Initially, we tried to build a model in which all three party characteristics were included, but as the three variables turned out to be strongly correlated, this caused multicollinearity (Condition Index 68.4). Therefore, we constructed a scale reflecting favourable party characteristics (labelled 'extreme right-wing party organizational strength') from the vari-
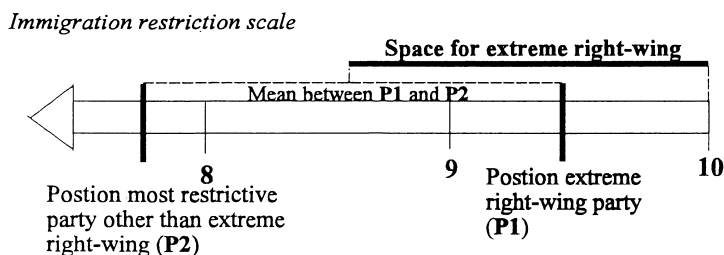

Figure 2. Calculation of the space for the extreme right-wing parties.

ables 'organization', 'charisma' and 'active membership'. The Cronbach's alpha of 0.91 indicates that this is a very reliable scale.[14] The Flemish *Vlaams Blok* and the Austrian *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ) scored highest of all extreme right-wing parties (see Table 2). Moreover, Jörg Haider received the highest charisma score, followed by Blöcher of the *Schweizerisches Volkspartei* and Berlusconi of the Italian *Forza Italia*.

Statistical models

To test our hypotheses we used multilevel analysis. This technique allowed us to test individual characteristics (of respondents) and contextual characteristics (of countries) simultaneously, and gives information on the variance in extreme right-wing voting at the contextual level (Snijders & Bosker 1999). By introducing context characteristics, we can find out whether the variance is explained by characteristics of countries, whereas the introduction of individual-level characteristics makes it possible to control for composition effects at the contextual level (random intercept models). This is particularly interesting since we test theories that make predictions at the individual level as well as at the contextual level. Moreover, multilevel analysis allows us to test whether the individual-level effects (slopes) vary across countries and whether this variation can be explained by cross-level interactions (random slope models). Neglecting the multilevel structure may lead to various errors, for example shift of meaning and ecological fallacy in cases of aggregation and risks of Type I errors in cases of disaggregation (Snijders & Bosker 1999: 13).

As we deal with a binomial dependent response variable (i.e., voting for the extreme right-wing versus any other party) we employed logistic regression analysis (within the program MlwiN; Rasbash et al. 1999: 105). For the interpretation of the models, a positive parameter which is significant at the $\alpha < 0.05$ level denotes that the likelihood of voting for the extreme right is increased, whereas a negative parameter indicates a decreased likelihood.

Results

Table 3 presents parameter estimates and, in the lower portion, variance components of logistic multilevel analyses explaining differences in extreme right-wing voting. The null-model hypothesis represents the percentage of extreme right-wing voters, controlled for variations between countries.

Table 3. Parameter estimates from logistic multilevel models on voting for extreme right-wing parties in Western Europe (Standard errors are within parentheses; for model V, the log-odds (Exp(b)) and Wald statistic are presented) (N = 49,801)

Models	0	I	II	III	IV	V	Exp(b)	Wald
Constant	**−3.21**	**−4.15**	**−4.39**	**−4.50**	**−4.62**	**−5.01**		
	(0.32)	**(0.33)**	**(0.36)**	**(0.34)**	**(0.33)**	**(0.31)**		
Social background characteristics								
Occupation:								
Manual workers		**0.63**	**0.62**	**0.62**	**0.61**	**0.35**	1.42	12.5
		(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)		
Self-employed		**0.70**	**0.71**	**0.70**	**0.69**	**0.39**	1.48	10.1
		(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)		
Routine non-manual workers		**0.41**	**0.41**	**0.40**	**0.40**	**0.32**	1.38	10.5
		(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.10)		
Service class		(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)		
Unemployed		**1.00**	**1.00**	**1.01**	**1.01**	**0.73**	2.08	41.2
		(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)		
Housewives		**0.76**	**0.76**	**0.76**	**0.74**	**0.50**	1.65	18.6
		(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.12)		
Students		0.05	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.09	1.09	0.4
		(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)		
Retired/other		**0.66**	**0.66**	**0.66**	**0.65**	**0.41**	1.51	14.4
		(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.11)		
Education in years		**−0.26**	**−0.26**	**−0.26**	**−0.26**	**−0.14**	0.87	25.4
		(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)		
Religious denomination:								
Christian		(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)		
Other religion		**−0.59**	**−0.59**	**−0.60**	**−0.60**	**−0.50**	0.61	5.4
		(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.21)	(0.19)	(0.21)		
Non-religious		**0.14**	**0.14**	**0.14**	**0.14**	**0.18**	1.20	10.2
		(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)		
Age		**−0.27**	**−0.27**	**−0.27**	**−0.27**	**−0.28**	0.76	59.2
		(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)		

Gender:							
Male	**0.57**	**0.57**	**0.58**	**0.57**	**0.64**	1.89	157.0
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)		
Female	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)		
Year:							
1994	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)		
1995	**0.13**	**0.13**	0.13	0.12	**0.26**	1.30	18.6
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)		
1997	−0.07	−0.08	−0.07	−0.07	−0.07	0.94	1.0
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)		
Country characteristics							
Unemployment rate		−0.53	−0.09	−0.08	−0.10	0.90	0.2
		(0.30)	(0.28)	(0.29)	(0.27)		
Non-EU citizens		**0.76**	**0.72**	**0.84**	**0.89**	2.44	9.1
		(0.35)	(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.30)		
Space for extreme right-wing			0.19	0.01	0.13	1.14	0.2
			(0.29)	(0.30)	(0.27)		
Immigration-restriction climate			**0.77**	0.21	0.39	1.48	2.2
			(0.26)	(0.28)	(0.26)		
Party characteristics							
Extreme right-wing party organizational strength				**0.93**	**0.72**	2.04	3.9
				(0.40)	(0.36)		
Political attitudes							
Anti-immigrant attitude					**0.90**	2.46	789.3
					(0.03)		
Dissatisfaction with democracy					**0.43**	1.54	322.5
					(0.02)		
Variance estimates							
Level 2: country	**1.72**	**1.68**	**1.82**	**1.52**	**1.45**	**1.17**	
	(0.59)	(0.58)	(0.64)	(0.54)	(0.52)	(0.43)	
Level 1: individual	1	1	1	1	1	1	

Note: Bold parameters express significance p < 0.05.

In Model I, individual social background characteristics are taken into account to examine whether people from the lower social strata are more likely to vote for the extreme right. We find that the expected effects on the individual level indeed hold. Manual workers, the self-employed, routine non-manual workers and the unemployed are more likely to vote for extreme right-wing parties (compared to the service class), but this also holds true for housewives and retired people. Less well educated people are more likely to vote for an extreme right-wing party too. Furthermore, it turns out that non-religious voters, men and younger people are over-represented in the extreme right-wing electorate. We also find that in 1995 support for the extreme right wing was a little above that of 1994. However, the effect of year – and hence of different datasets – is rather small. Now, our expectation was that if a country has more people from the categories that were found to be more likely to vote for extreme right-wing parties, this could explain differences between countries in support for the extreme right. However, the variance components in Table 3 show that by including individual social characteristics, the variance between countries hardly decreases. This implies that differences between countries in support for the extreme right cannot be attributed to differences between countries in their social structural composition.

When economic characteristics are added to the model (Model II of Table 3) we would expect support for the extreme right to be higher in countries with a higher level of labour-market competition. We included both proportions of non-European Union citizens and unemployment levels at the country level. As expected, we found that the larger the proportion of non-European Union citizens living in a country, the higher the proportion voting for the extreme right. However, contrary to our hypothesis, differences between levels of unemployment are not significant and the relationship is even negative related to differences in the level of extreme right voting. The variance between countries increases somewhat due to the fact that Italy does not fit the model. (We discuss this finding further below.)

Next we turn to political explanations of variations in extreme right wing support. On the one hand, we expected that in countries where the space for extreme right-wing parties on the immigration issue is larger, the support for these parties would be larger. On the other hand, we expected – following Thraenhardt (1992) – that in countries where the political climate surrounding immigration is more restrictive, support for the extreme right wing would be larger. To test these expectations we included a variable measuring the space for the extreme right wing in a country and a variable measuring the immigration-restriction climate in Table 3 (Model III). The findings show that the space for the extreme right wing does not affect variations between

countries in extreme right wing support, but the immigration-restriction climate does. In countries where the political climate towards immigration is more restrictive, support for extreme right-wing parties is significantly larger.

As well as the political characteristics of a country, we also investigated the characteristics of the extreme right-wing parties themselves. Therefore, we included a variable measuring the extent to which extreme right-wing parties have favourable characteristics (i.e., the party organization, the charisma of the party leader and whether the party has an active cadre – Model IV of Table 3). It turned out that party characteristics are important in explaining the success of the extreme right. In countries where extreme right-wing parties have more favourable party characteristics, support for these parties is larger. This effect, moreover, makes the effect of a restrictive climate towards immigration spurious. The effect of this latter variable becomes non-significant once the organizational strength of the extreme right party is included (see Model IV of Table 3). An interpretation for this finding could be that extreme right-wing parties with greater organizational strength are more influential in the political debate, thereby creating a more restrictive immigration climate.

Finally, Model V in Table 3 includes political attitudes (i.e., anti-immigrant attitudes and feelings of political dissatisfaction). We found that the expected effects on the individual level hold. People who believe that there are too many immigrants in their country, and who are dissatisfied with the way democracy works, are significantly more likely to vote for extreme right-wing parties. We introduced these attitudes in the last step of the model because, theoretically, they can be assumed to mediate the effects of social background and the country characteristics on extreme right-wing voting. Model V reveals that the effects of social class and education on voting for the extreme right wing indeed decrease after controlling for the impact of attitudes. However, this holds neither for the other individual characteristics nor for the effect of non-European Union citizens. Overall, we can conclude that attitudinal differences are in part responsible for the effects of social class and education on extreme right-wing voting, which is in line with previous research (Lubbers & Scheepers 2000; Lubbers et al. 2000) and conventional path analysis (Davis 1985).

Moreover, we expected that after controlling for differences in public opinion, differences between Western European countries in extreme right-wing voting would be reduced. Model V shows that between-country differences in extreme right-wing voting can indeed be explained by differences in public opinion. The variance components in Table 3 show that by including

individual political attitudes, the variance between countries decreases substantively. This means that differences between countries in support for the extreme right wing are partly due to differences between countries in public opinion on immigrants and the way democracy works.

Model V (Table 3) also presents the log-odds (Exp(b)) and the Wald statistics. The log-odds of the noncategorical variables can be compared because the measures are standardized. Odds smaller than one – for example, the effect of education – indicate that the likelihood of voting for the extreme right decreases when education is higher. Odds larger than one – for example, the effect of attitudes towards immigration – indicate that the likelihood of voting for a party of the extreme right compared to voting for other parties increases with stronger anti-immigration attitudes. The Wald statistic is dependent on the effect and its standard error and indicates the contribution of the effect to the overall explanation of extreme right-wing voting. It is clear that anti-immigration attitudes make the largest contribution to explaining extreme right-wing voting.

Explaining the between-country variation

The main question addressed in this article was to what extent cross-national variation in extreme right-wing voting could be explained. Initially, inclusion of political characteristics, relating both to political context and to the characteristics of extreme right-wing parties themselves, decreased the variance between countries. Moreover, variations in the composition of the population, not in social background but in political attitudes, helped account for cross-national differences too. Thus, a considerable part of the original country-level variance was explained. This is illustrated in Figure 3, which displays the residuals for the 16 countries in our five models. By comparing the residuals of the different models, one can ascertain how much is to be gained by including the relevant contextual characteristics of a particular country.

The residuals of Model 0 correspond with the observed differences in extreme right-wing voting between the countries as presented in Table 1. By including all individual social characteristics, the country-level residuals are hardly reduced (Model I). By also including economic context variables (Model II), the residuals are reduced in some countries with high levels of extreme right-wing voting such as Austria and Flanders, but this is countered above all by Italy. Unemployment levels and numbers of non-Western citizens do not explain the high level of right-wing voting in Italy because unemployment is high in Italy (see Table 2) – especially in the south – whereas the percentage of non-European Union citizens is very low (see again Table 2), again especially in the south. If we could have divided Italy between north and

south, the residual for Italy would have been lower, the effect of unemployment even more strongly negative and the effect of the presence of non-European Union citizens probably more strongly positive, since the *Lega Nord* attracts votes almost exclusively in the north.

The residuals of Model III and IV show that by including political characteristics the country-level residuals are considerably reduced (e.g., extreme right-wing voting was high in France and Flanders). In Figure 3, we see that this high average in France is to a large extent the result of political context, whereas in Flanders favourable characteristics of the *Vlaams Blok* explain its success. Finally, by including public opinion, country-level residuals are reduced, especially in Italy. So, high levels of extreme right-wing support in Italy stem to a considerable extent from higher levels of anti-immigrant attitudes and political dissatisfaction. For most countries the models appeared to fit well, but, aside from Italy, the models fit less well in Denmark and Sweden. For these countries, there must be other reasons, which have not been included in the model, to explain why country effects remain.

Cross-level interactions

Finally, we examine whether the effects of individual characteristics vary across countries. Table 4 presents models in which these cross-level interactions are specified. From the social background characteristics, only the effect of education varied between countries. Model VIa presents the cross-national
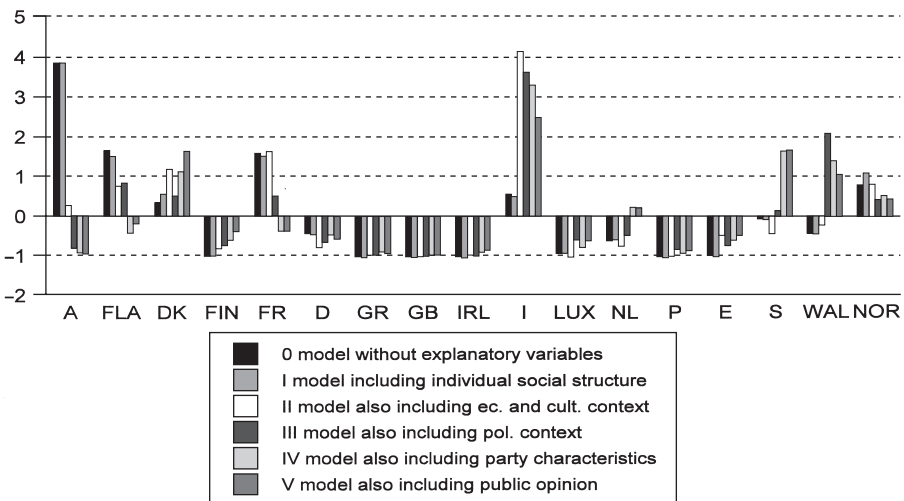

Figure 3. Country-level residuals in extreme right-wing voting.

Table 4. Parameter estimates from logistic random slope models with cross-level interactions on voting for extreme right-wing parties in Western Europe (Standard errors are within parentheses) (N = 49,801)

Random slope models	VIa	VIb	VIIa	VIIb	VIIIa	V
Constant	**−4.95**	**−4.99**	**−5.02**	**−4.98**	**−4.86**	**−5.02**
	(0.31)	**(0.31)**	**(0.33)**	**(0.35)**	**(0.34)**	**(0.35)**
Social background characteristics						
Occupation:						
Manual workers	**0.34**	**0.34**	**0.36**	**0.36**	**0.37**	**0.37**
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.10)
Self-employed	**0.38**	**0.38**	**0.39**	**0.39**	**0.39**	**0.40**
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.12)
Routine non-manual workers	**0.32**	**0.31**	**0.32**	**0.32**	**0.32**	**0.34**
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)
Service class	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)
Unemployed	**0.71**	**0.71**	**0.73**	**0.73**	**0.73**	**0.74**
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Housewives	**0.49**	**0.49**	**0.50**	**0.50**	**0.50**	**0.51**
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Students	0.11	0.11	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Retired/other	**0.40**	**0.40**	**0.40**	**0.40**	**0.42**	**0.43**
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.11)
Education in years	**−0.24**	**−0.21**	**−0.14**	**−0.14**	**−0.14**	**−0.14**
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Religious denomination:						
Christian	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)
Other religion	**−0.49**	**−0.50**	**−0.48**	**−0.47**	**−0.50**	**−0.51**
	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.22)	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.21)
Non-religious	**0.18**	**0.18**	**0.21**	**0.21**	**0.16**	**0.17**
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)
Age	**−0.27**	**−0.27**	**−0.28**	**−0.27**	**−0.27**	**−0.27**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Gender:						
Male	**0.61**	**0.61**	**0.64**	**0.64**	**0.63**	**0.64**
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Female	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)
Year:						
1994	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)	(ref)
1995	**0.28**	**0.28**	**0.29**	**0.28**	**0.26**	**0.27**
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
1997	−0.05	−0.05	−0.05	−0.05	−0.09	−0.09
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Country characteristics						
Unemployment rate	0.03	−0.06	−0.21	0.02	0.03	−0.33
	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.31)	(0.24)	(0.31)
Non-EU citizens	**0.91**	**0.86**	**0.84**	**0.91**	**0.99**	**0.88**
	(0.29)	(0.30)	(0.29)	(0.35)	(0.26)	(0.34)

Table 4. continued

Random slope models	VIa	VIb	VIIa	VIIb	VIIIa	V
Space for extreme right-wing	0.21	0.22	0.08	0.07	−0.08	−0.04
	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.27)	(0.24)	(0.24)
Immigration-restriction climate	0.33	0.34	0.36	0.35	0.18	0.22
	(0.27)	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.24)	(0.24)
Party characteristics						
Extreme right-wing party organizational strength	**0.84**	**0.82**	**0.71**	**0.78**	**0.95**	**0.89**
	(0.36)	(0.35)	(0.36)	(0.41)	(0.32)	(0.40)
Political attitudes						
Anti-immigrant attitude	**0.88**	**0.88**	**0.85**	**0.81**	**0.89**	**0.90**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Dissatisfaction with democracy	**0.42**	**0.42**	**0.42**	**0.42**	**0.38**	**0.45**
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.11)	(0.10)
Cross-level interactions						
Education * unemployment		0.11				
		(0.09)				
Education * non-EU citizens		0.03				
		(0.09)				
Too many immigrants * unemployment				−0.23		
				(0.14)		
Too many immigrants * non-EU citizens				−0.05		
				(0.15)		
Too many immigrants * extreme right wing strength				−0.05		
				(0.15)		
Dissatisfaction with democracy * unemployment						0.21
						(0.11)
Dissatisfaction with democracy * non-EU citizens						0.05
						(0.10)
Dissatisfaction with democracy * extreme right wing strength						0.01
						(0.10)
Variance estimates						
Level 2: country	**1.23**	**1.21**	**1.49**	**1.58**	**1.63**	**1.55**
	(0.44)	(0.44)	(0.55)	(0.58)	(0.60)	(0.56)
Education slope variance	**0.08**	**0.08**				
	(0.04)	(0.04)				
Intercept-education slope covariance	−0.13	−0.13				
	(0.09)	(0.10)				
Too many immigrants slope variance			**0.23**	**0.25**		
			(0.10)	(0.11)		
Intercept-too many immigrants slope covariance			−0.30	−0.34		
			(0.19)	(0.20)		
Dissatisfaction with democracy slope variance					**0.15**	**0.11**
					(0.06)	(0.05)
Intercept-dissatisfaction with democracy slope covariance					**−0.36**	**−0.29**
					(0.16)	(0.14)
Level 1: individual	1	1	1	1	1	1

Note: Bold parameters express significance p < 0.05.

variation in the effect 'education', which is small, but significant (0.08). The co-variance (the correlation between intercept variance and the random slope variance of education) is not significant. Residual analyses (not presented here) show that the effect of education is smaller than average in Austria and Italy, but particularly greater than average in Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway. The hypothesis that effects of education vary across countries because of differences in competitive circumstances has to be rejected. Model VIb shows that interactions between education and unemployment levels as well as the number of non-European Union citizens are not relevant in explaining extreme right-wing voting.

With respect to public opinion, we find similar effects. Both effects of anti-immigrant attitudes and dissatisfaction with democracy vary in their magnitude across countries. This is expressed in the parameters at the bottom of the Models VIIa and VIIIa, respectively. Based on residual analyses, in Norway, the Netherlands and Denmark the anti-immigration effect is larger than on average, whereas in Austria, Italy and Sweden it is much smaller. Again, in Italy and Sweden, but also in Norway, dissatisfaction with democracy is a far weaker predictor of extreme right-wing voting than in the other countries, whereas its effect is larger in the Belgian Walloon region. Nevertheless, these differences between countries can neither be explained in terms of competitive circumstances (unemployment level and non-European Union citizens) nor in terms of favourable party characteristics of the extreme right-wing parties themselves. As can be found in Models VIIb and VIIIb, the interaction estimates turned out to be non-significant.

Conclusions

In this article we set out to explain differences in extreme right-wing voting between all Western European countries from a multidisciplinary and multi-level perspective. To this end, we included a wide variety of sociological, economic and political factors which have been put forward in previous studies as relevant in explaining extreme right-wing voting. We specified individual-level and contextual-level explanations and their interrelationships, which we tested simultaneously with pooled data on almost 50,000 respondents, together with country-level statistics and expert judgement data on extreme right-wing parties.

Regarding the sociological factors, we found that across Western European countries, unemployed people were particularly more likely to vote for an extreme right-wing party. This also holds for the less well educated, non-religious people, younger voters and men. Between-country differences

related to the social-structural composition of the population hardly explained any cross-national differences in voting for extreme right-wing parties. Variation between countries in extreme right-wing support appeared to be explained much better by differences between countries in public opinion. The stronger the popularity of anti-immigrant attitudes and the stronger the dissatisfaction with democracy, the larger the support for the extreme right in a country.

Turning to economic factors, economic malaise and competition with immigrants were suspected of being of relevance in explaining cross-national variation in extreme right-wing support. The number of non-European Union citizens did affect levels of extreme right-wing voting in a country, in line with theories of economic interests. People who perceive immigrants as competitors are more likely to express exclusionary reactions including voting for the extreme right. Unemployment levels did not, however, have the expected effect. The effect of unemployment even tended to be negative, suggesting that in more prosperous countries people are more likely to support extreme right-wing parties – a finding consistent with other research on exclusionary reactions (Scheepers et al. 2001). It could be that people in these circumstances are afraid to lose what they have gained in times of economic prosperity. This could be a reason why in countries like Austria, Norway and Flanders people are more likely to support extreme right-wing policies. Although not addressed in this article, it could also explain why people are more likely to vote for extreme right-wing parties, particularly in richer regions *within* countries, such as northern Italy, southern Germany and the Strasbourg region in France.

One of the most important conclusions of this research is that political factors are of major importance in explaining extreme right-wing support. Extreme right-wing parties that have favourable party characteristics (like a charismatic leader, a well-organized party and an active cadre) are much more successful in national elections than parties which lack these. The Austrian FPÖ, the Flemish *Vlaams Blok*, the French *Front National*, the Italian *Lega Nord* and the Norwegian Progress Party have such characteristics, which increase the likelihood of the electorate voting for these parties. Remarkably, the characteristics of extreme right-wing parties turned out to be more important than other political factors, for example the space in the political spectrum for extreme right-wing platforms on the immigration issue and the general anti-immigrant climate in a country. These effects turned out to be spurious, which we could not have detected without testing for all factors simultaneously.

Between countries, individual-level effects of education and sociopolitical attitudes turned out to vary. Differences in these effects could, however, not

be explained by differences in the national context. Thus, in countries with higher levels of ethnic competition or in countries where the extreme right wing has more favourable party characteristics, voting for these parties was not affected strongly by education, anti-immigrant attitudes and political dissatisfaction. Regarding differences in effects of attitudes, we may propose another cross-level explanation: the effects of attitudes may vary according to the differences of the party programmes. We found that voting for the FPÖ, the *Lega Nord* and *Ny Demokrati* is less well predicted by an anti-immigration attitude. The reason for this may be that these parties are also the extreme right-wing parties least explicitly ventilating these attitudes.

In our analyses, a large portion of the variation in extreme right-wing voting between countries has been explained, implying that we have included most relevant factors (Husbands 1998). However, some variation remains unexplained. First, we have to underline that Italy is a special case. The *Lega Nord* is a separatist party and, thus, a party of northern Italians only. If we could have split Italy into north and south, Italy would have fitted the models much better, thus allowing them to explain a larger part of the cross-national variation in extreme right-wing voting. Furthermore, Husbands (1998) also distinguished an historical factor. In some countries the 'breeding-ground' for extreme right-wing parties is more favourable since numerous organizations dating from the fascist era persist and because of traditions of support for the extreme right. This is possibly reflected in our measurement of party characteristics. Indeed, in Austria, France and Flanders this could provide an additional explanation. In these countries there are now strong exclusionary parties as there were in the interwar period. On the other hand, the meagre results for Germany may speak against such a general explanation. Moreover, comparison between the fascist parties of the 1930s and contemporary right-wing extremism is highly problematic, as both movements are considerably different (Kitschelt 1995).

Other possible explanations for variations between countries in extreme right-wing success might be that the activities of anti-racist groups and active interventionist roles on the part of law enforcement authorities and governments might have stopped the rise of right-wing extremism in some countries. These explanations are however hard to test, and have an ad hoc character. All in all, this article has shown that with multilevel modelling differences *and* similarities between European countries in predicting extreme right-wing voting could be found, whereas at the same time, these differences could be explained in a systematic way. Moreover, by building on a more extensive dataset than in previous research and taking into account more comprehensive sets of explanatory factors, this article has revealed the importance of studying right-wing extremism in its context.

Appendix A: Data sources and nett number of cases for 16 countries[1]

Country	EES 1994	Eurobarometer 1997	ISSP 1995	National election surveys 1994–1997[2]	Total
Austria		694	662		1356
Belgium:					
Flemish region	797	338		1977	3112
Walloon region	562	254		1234	2050
Denmark	1738	725		1803	4266
Finland		688			688
France	1521	691		5382	7594
United Kingdom	1732	772	850		3354
Germany	2996	1265	1621		5882
Greece	1456	642			2098
Ireland	1397	629	366		2392
Italy	1271	528	752		2551
Luxembourg	677	341			1018
Netherlands	1769	777		1228	3774
Norway			1114		1114
Portugal	1269	586			1855
Spain	1378	625	844		2847
Sweden		727	814	2309	3850
Total	18,563	10,282	7023	13,933	49,801

[1] The nett number of cases excludes the category of non-voters.
[2] For Belgium: General Election Study 1995; for Denmark: Danish Election Survey 1994; for France: Post-election Survey of 1995 and 1997 (taken together); for the Netherlands: NKO 1994; and for Sweden: Election Study 1994.

Notes

1. This can be linked to theories of the relationship between social class and left-right voting: the economic interest theory of voting behaviour (Downs 1957). Its basic idea is that voters are rational and self-interested, they vote for the party whose policies will bring them the greatest utility. The general notion that people in different positions vote differently because they have different interests can be applied to explain extreme right-wing voting as well.
2. Although some researchers also take into account the attitudinal left-right self-placement as a proxy for a set of attitudes to explain extreme right-wing voting (van der Brug et al. 2000), we prefer to take into account a more content-related set of atti-

tudes. With this we follow the work of Billiet and De Witte (1995), Kitschelt (1995) and Mayer (1999). Moreover, Ignazi (1992) and Mayer and Perrineau (1992) argued that the placement of extreme right-wing voters on the left-right scale is rather diffuse.

3. The Belgian Flemish and Walloon regions are studied separately because these regions have separate extreme right-wing parties contesting elections and both regions have their own parliamentary representatives.

4. Unfortunately, we were not able to follow a multinomial approach since the cross-national comparison makes it impossible to distinguish the same party families in each country without too many empty cells.

5. Note that the dates of survey collection do not exactly correspond the dates of national elections. Nevertheless, for Germany and the Netherlands the results are comparable to the outcomes in general elections, whereas for Sweden there is even some over-representation in the survey data. For Austria, Flanders, France and Italy the under-representation is approximately 3 per cent and for the Belgian Walloon region it is some-what lower. The situation for Norway and Denmark is harder to judge. The results in the data (which are from 1995) for the Norwegian Progress Party (6.7 per cent) resem-ble the 1993 election outcomes of 6 per cent, but are much lower than those of 1997 when the party gained 15 per cent of the votes. For Denmark, the survey data contain-ing 5.4 per cent of votes for the extreme right wing, which is probably quite close to real outcomes. In 1994, the Progress Party scored 6.4 per cent, but its support declined strongly. The newly founded Danish People's Party gained strongly in the 1998 general elections, taking the total extreme right-wing support above 9 per cent. However, the survey data we use are collected in a period in which this latter extreme right-wing party was still non-existent. Finally, in countries where extreme right-wing support was almost absent, we found similar results in the data.

6. Unfortunately we were not able to include income, because this variable was missing in part of the European election study of 1994.

7. To compute the number of years the respondent had enjoyed educational training we subtracted 6 years (i.e., the age at which formal education starts in most European countries).

8. In the Eurobarometer data this variable was measured in its present form. In the ISSP data, however, it had to be constructed from several variables. First, a variable indicat-ing whether respondents are currently employed or not. Among the non-employed a further distinction was made between unemployed, students, retired and housekeepers. Second, respondents currently employed were coded into EGP classes on the basis of data on their occupation, self-employment and supervisory status. The occupation codes were translated into EGP (classification made by Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero, 1983) scores through the Ganzeboom et al. (1989) re-coding scheme.

9. We are, however, not able to measure nationalistic and authoritarian attitudes in all surveys under consideration.

10. We acknowledge that in some of our data the question wording of both attitudinal dimensions was slightly different (for example, in the Eurobarometer the question was: 'Speaking about people from minority groups in terms of race, religion and culture, do you think there are not many, a lot but not too many, or too many of them living in your country?', whereas in the ISSP data this question was measured on a 5-point scale: 'Do you think that the number of immigrants to [country] should be increased a lot (1) or reduced a lot (5)?' and, in the French election surveys, a 3-point scale was used: 'There are too many immigrants in France'). We can consider the scales to be functionally

equivalent. This is validated by additional analyses in which the effects of the attitudes were estimated for each country in each dataset separately. The results showed that within countries the effects were highly similar. Moreover, analyses on Eurobarometer (1994, 1997) data only, in which the attitudes were measured identically, provided similar results and led to the same substantive conclusion regarding the public opinion composition effect. Results of these additional analyses can be requested from the authors.

11. We acknowledge that even in this definition some problems occur which refer to differences in naturalization and acceptance of double citizenship or not. Nevertheless, this will not severely disturb the ranking of the countries with respect to number of immigrants.

12. In the international standard definition of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the 'unemployed' category consists of all persons above a specific age who are not in paid employment or self-employed, but are available for work and have taken steps to seek paid work.

13. This did not add up to 100 per cent because not all of the small parties in each country have been taken into account.

14. Since the extreme right-wing splinter groups in Luxembourg and Portugal are not considered in the expert judgement survey, we assigned the average score to these countries.

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