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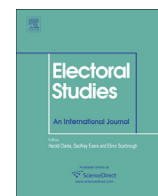
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Winning the ‘losers’ but losing the ‘winners’? The electoral consequences of the radical right moving to the economic left



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ABSTRACT

Voters with lower socio-economic status are now consistently overrepresented among the radical right electorate. According to the ‘new winning formula’, many radical right parties increasingly move to the left on socio-economic issues to cater to these voters. This study tests a crucial assumption underlying this formula: whether radical right parties with socio-economically left-leaning positions actually attract more working class voters. By mapping class characteristics of the electorate of 10 radical right parties at three time points (based on surveys) against these parties’ positions on the economic dimension (according to experts), this study shows that the ‘class gap’ – the extent to which class indicators predict voters’ propensity to vote for the radical right – is significantly larger for socio-economically leftwing parties.

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1. Introduction

In spite of the alleged decline of class-based voting (Clark and Lipset, 2001), a link still exists between citizens’ socio-economic positions and their vote choice. This is no less so for radical right parties, among whose electorates blue collar workers and the lower educated are consistently overrepresented (Kitschelt and McGann, 1995; Lubbers et al., 2002; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Oesch, 2008; Rydgren, 2012). Several reasons have been put forward for the radical right’s success among voters with lower socio-economic status. Among these is the assertion that these voters are ‘losers of globalization’ (Kriesi et al., 2008): they have most to fear of economic competition, cultural diversity, and supranational political integration, and are therefore particularly likely to support parties that seek to reverse trends towards further economic, political and cultural globalization (Oesch, 2012). At the same time, the radical right’s electoral dependence on the working class is by no means universal: some parties have a stronger overrepresentation of working class voters than others (Van der Brug et al., 2012).

The ‘proletarianization’ (Betz, 1994) of the support base of radical right parties has been linked to their ideological development. It has been repeatedly argued that, while often originating as anti-tax parties, many radical right parties have moved to the center (or to the left of that) on economic issues to cater to its electoral base among the working class, or in an attempt to increase

it (Kitschelt, 2004). After all, a sizeable ‘working class authoritarian’ electorate (Lipset, 1959; Lefkofridi et al., 2013; Svallfors, 2005) combines economically left-wing and culturally conservative attitudes. Although a large part of the electorate holds such attitudes, their opinions are generally ill-represented by parties (Lachat and Dolezal, 2008; Van Der Brug and van Spanje, 2009). It would therefore be advantageous for radical right parties to move to the economic left. As a result, a pro-welfare nativist stance has been described as the Radical right’s ‘new winning formula’ (Kitschelt, 2004; De Lange, 2007).

However, no study has to date systematically investigated the core of this assumption: have economically centrist or center-left radical right parties a more clearly ‘proletarianized’ electorate than radical right parties that are more economically liberal? While support for this thesis has been put forward in analyses of individual countries, such as France (Mayer, 2012), no study exists that investigates this assertion on a broader scale. This article aims to fill this void. I test whether the economic position of radical right parties – which ranges from pro-redistributionist ‘welfare chauvinism’ (Goul Andersen, 1992) to anti-statist neoliberalism (see Mudde, 2007) – is empirically associated to electoral success among voters working in precarious jobs and sectors, as well as those with little education. After all, if voters turn out to be indifferent to the radical right’s stance on economic issues, it cannot be part of a ‘winning formula’.

I investigate this question by mapping the class background of 10 West-European radical right parties at three time points (based on surveys) against these parties’ positions on an economic left-

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right dimension (according to experts). Based on this analysis, I show that economically centrist or center-left radical right parties indeed attract significantly more voters with lower socio-economic backgrounds (such as sales and clerical personnel, semi- and unskilled workers, as well as voters with low levels of education). Importantly, the extent to which one's job predicts one's propensity to vote for the radical right is significantly larger for economically left-wing parties: pro-welfare radical right parties gain votes from a more specific part of the electorate, rather than relying on a broader class coalition, as their more liberal counterparts do. This is in line with a second finding: voters in precarious jobs and sectors, as well as the lower educated, are very likely to combine a preference for redistribution with opposition to immigration.

This has implications for the assertion that a 'pro-welfare nativist' position is the 'new winning formula' for the radical right. Indeed, the radical right can attract new voters by catering to the group of pro-redistribution nativist voters, who are strongly concentrated in working class jobs – the 'losers of globalization'. Rather than broadening its electoral scope, however, this means focusing it on an increasingly specific group, as it decreases electoral appeal among highly skilled and well-educated voters. This study therefore suggests that such a strategy might mean winning the 'losers' while losing the 'winners'.

2. Theory

The link between class and voting is complex. While often reduced to the specific phenomenon of workers voting for the left, *class-based voting* refers to any "systematic link between voters' class location and the parties they choose" (Oesch, 2012: 32). Likewise, a 'class vote' is not necessarily or only an expression of *economic* interests, but a generalization of occupational experiences – both material and cultural – to the sphere of politics. Given the importance of jobs and the workplace in many citizens' everyday lives, it is not unreasonable to assume experiences in the workplace to affect citizens' attitudes.

In the case of the radical right, a class-based vote would mean that certain economic roles are more likely than others to involve experiences that foster attitudes and that increase the likelihood of a radical right vote.¹ The attitudes relevant for radical right voting include nativism – in-group preferences (or nationalism) combined with out-group fear (or xenophobia) – and authoritarianism, mirroring these parties' ideology (Mudde, 2007). In this view, contrasting class voting to 'substantive' voting is somewhat of a false dichotomy, as class background and political attitudes occupy different stages in the 'funnel of causality'. However, adherents of the notion of class voting often implicitly suggest that economic indicators are the *most important* determinants of attitudes. This assertion is more controversial.

The social category most strongly overrepresented in the radical right electorate, apart from the smaller category of the *petite bourgeoisie*, consists of the lesser educated and blue collar workers (Ivarsflaten, 2005). It seems that these groups are increasingly present among the radical right's electorate. The case of France's *National Front* (FN) provides a striking example. In the 1980s, the largest groups voting for these parties were the Catholic, well-off bourgeoisie as well as small shopkeepers and artisans – groups over which the FN competed mainly with the

mainstream right (Mayer, 2012: 170). At the 1995 election, the largest group among the party's electorate consisted of skilled and unskilled workers, and rural and farmer voters followed in the 2000s (*ibid*). By now, France's *Socialist Party* experiences strong competition from the FN.

The electoral appeal of radical right parties among the lower social strata is generally recognized since Betz (1994) noted the 'proletarianization' of the radical right. Several explanations exist for this overrepresentation, categorized by Oesch (2008) under economic, cultural and political reasons for the working class to support the radical right. *Economic* conflict theories suggest that workers support the radical right in an attempt to "protect their jobs and wages from competition from labor migration and international trade" (*ibid*, 305). *Cultural* explanations assume that the cultural challenge posed by immigration is most strongly felt by the least educated classes, making them particularly opposed to multiculturalism. Theories of *political alienation*, finally, explain workers' anti-establishment vote for the radical right by the dissatisfaction with traditional (chiefly Social-Democratic) parties, trade unions, or the political system as a whole, all of which have allegedly shown to be incapable of defending their interests.

The notion of 'losers of (accelerating) globalization' (Kriesi et al., 2008; Bornschier and Kriesi, 2012) combines some of these explanations by describing a new social division that is the result of increasing competition in post-industrial societies. The radical right is supported by the group that finds itself at the wrong side of this cleavage, consisting of those suffering decline in either absolute (non-skilled workers) or relative (skilled workers) terms.

Although there is still much debate on the validity of the 'losers of globalization' thesis, there appears to be consensus that through one (or a combination) of the mechanisms described above, the working class is overrepresented in the electorate of radical right parties in most countries. As stated earlier, however, scholars disagree whether this makes class the most important predictor of radical right voters: some have argued that other variables – notably attitudes towards immigration – perform far better in predicting the radical right vote (Van der Brug et al., 2012). Still, the trend of 'proletarianization' seems to be ongoing, but not for all parties, and certainly not for all parties to the same extent. Below, I discuss how this process is linked to parties' ideology.

2.1. Socio-economic policies and radical right ideology

As noted by Mudde (2007: 123), the radical right party family (by now) "spreads a significant part of the whole dimension between the two poles of *laissez-faire* and state economy". Some radical right parties originally had – or were even uniquely founded for – a strong neoliberal position, in which anti-statist and populist arguments were used to criticize high taxes and large governments. Kitschelt argues that a combination of nationalist and neoliberal policies reflected the electoral opportunities for radical right parties in the 1980s, as a sizeable share of voters combined these attitudes (Kitschelt and McGann, 1995; McGann and Kitschelt, 2005). For instance, Jean-Marie Le Pen claimed in the 1980s to have been a 'Reaganite' long before neoliberal policies became fashionable (quoted in Betz and Meret, 2012: 114). His daughter, however, has developed a rather coherent political project aimed at '*demon-dialisation*', shielding France from the influence of banks and big enterprises, stimulating re-industrialization by curtailing global trade, and fiercely protecting France's '*acquis sociaux*' by means of the welfare state – though, often, these services should be limited to French citizens (*ibid*: 118–120; see also Ivaldi, 2015).

This shift towards more left-leaning socio-economic policies is by no means restricted to the National Front. During the nineties, some existing radical right parties moved towards the economic

¹ As this definition shows, class is defined here in a narrow sense, i.e., as deriving from present socio-economic positions. A broader definition of class would also include past experiences such as the occupation and income of one's parents and social context. Such an approach, which is less common in the study of radical right and class, is beyond the scope of this paper.

center as a result of increased competition with social-democratic parties, while new parties were founded with an economically more centrist ideology from the start (McGann and Kitschelt, 2005). This fits the assertion that protection against globalization in both a cultural and economic sense constitutes one pole of the new political cleavage of the early 21st century (Azmanova, 2011; Kriesi et al., 2008). Indeed, scholars agree that most radical right parties' economic stance can often not be described as classically right-wing (Mudde, 2007; Mughan et al., 2003; Rydgren, 2012). On the other hand, others found this move to be half-hearted or non-existent before the 2000s (Van Der Brug and van Spanje, 2009). Importantly, the radical right's socio-economic policy positions are instrumental to achieving other goals. For instance, foreign residents or immigrants are either to be excluded from such services, or to pay higher premiums (Betz and Meret, 2012: 120). Parties in East-Central Europe have been shown to be particularly protectionist, reflecting their ideological "mix of traditional nationalism and state socialism" (Mudde, 2007: 356).

These developments lead to a wide array of stances on socio-economic policies among radical right parties, "depending on the party studied, but also when this party was studied" (Ivarsflaten, 2005: 469). Still, when it comes to this element of their ideology, most contemporary radical right parties can roughly be categorized as belonging to one of the following types. Parties of the first category present themselves as broad-appeal 'protectors against globalization'. These are modernized (or modernizing) radical right parties, with a convincing reputational shield (Ivarsflaten, 2005), of the 'new winning formula' type. Examples are the *Danish People's Party*, the *Party for Freedom* (Netherlands) and increasingly *National Front* (France). Such parties successfully (and increasingly) mobilize on a promise of protection against economic and cultural threats of globalization by proposing welfare chauvinist policies. They often manage to get substantial numbers of votes, being in competition with social-democrats as well as the mainstream right.

Parties of the second type have a convincing reputational shield without fully adopting the 'new winning formula', rather staying relatively close to their *laissez-faire* background. Often, these parties were founded uniquely for anti-tax, regionalist or anti-statist purposes and obtained success with a broad audience at an early stage. Important examples are the *Swiss People's Party* and to some extent *Freedom Party of Austria* (Mudde, 2007: 123), but the *Northern League* (Italy) could also be considered fitting in this category, and to a lesser extent the older *Flemish Interest* (Belgium). Although the programs of these parties will sometimes include protectionist elements, these constitute less of an integral part of their strategy and appeal.

At the same time, some far right parties fit neither school very well. This is especially true in East-Central Europe. While they are usually characterized by a leftist economic program, they failed to adopt the more general modernizing aim of the 'new winning formula' school, being "more antiliberal and protectionist than their brethren in the West" (Mudde, 2007: 129). Their socio-economic profile of course differs per country and is not always coherent, but these parties' abovementioned "mix of traditional nationalism and state socialism" (idem: 356) is different from the (early) West-European radical right tradition. I therefore focus my analysis on Western European parties.

2.2. Socio-economic positions and proletarianization

Many authors have suggested that a socio-economically centrist or left-wing position is the 'new winning formula' for the radical right, given the fact that many of the voters who oppose immigrants are in favor of redistributionist policies (Van Der Brug and van Spanje, 2009). In order to fully mobilize the working class

vote, it follows, radical right parties need to embrace the welfare state (even if only for the "native needy"). However, a crucial assumption underlying the idea of this winning formula has not been tested in a systematic way. Do radical right parties who propose left-leaning policies in the socio-economic domain indeed attract a larger share of working class voters?

The case of the *National Front*, which – as discussed above – experienced both a programmatic move embracing the welfare state and an influx of working class and rural voters, suggests that this could be the case. In this article, I am to test this relation on a broader scale. I hypothesize socio-economically more left-wing parties to have more 'proletarianized' electorates than their neoliberal counterparts. The reason is simple. In most countries, voters with precarious jobs who have 'radical right potential' might also opt for a (mainstream or radical) left alternative. Spies (2013) argues that many working class voters have to choose between their 'right' authoritarian-nativist attitude and their 'left' socio-economic interests. It follows from this that, when confronted with a welfare chauvinist radical right party, this trade-off disappears, creating an especially large electoral potential among working class voters.

'Proletarianization' might in fact be a self-enforcing phenomenon. A vote-maximizing logic would stimulate parties to adapt their economic stance to more accurately reflect the interests of its (potential) electorate (Kitschelt and McGann, 1995). After all, many voters but few parties are 'pro-welfare authoritarian' (Van Der Brug and van Spanje, 2009), and therefore radical right parties have ample reason to downplay neoliberal tendencies and stress their support for welfare benefits and economic security through the state – at least rhetorically. To the extent that most of their potential voters combine economically left-leaning and conservative attitudes, it is rational for radical right parties to move programmatically in this direction. And since relatively many blue-collar workers share such attitudes, this will strengthen further the link between left-leaning socio-economic position taking and proletarianization.

Several studies provide somewhat scattered evidence that appears to support the existence of a link between socio-economic positions of radical right parties and the class base of their support. Betz and Meret (2012) argue that proletarianization is most visible in the electorate of some of the Scandinavian parties. They describe how the *Danish People's Party* (DF) draws more than half of its electorate from skilled and unskilled manual workers – more than any other party in the country, including the Social Democrats. At the same time, DF is a prime example of an economic 'programmatic turnover', moving from the neoliberalism of its predecessor (the *Progress Party*) to a pro-welfare party emphasizing "the sense of community and solidarity linked to the welfare state" (ibid, p. 118). Betz and Meret's (2012) other example of a (more recent) 'programmatic turnover' is the *National Front* (FN) in France, as also shown by Ivaldi (2015). The relatively strong dependence of these two parties on working class votes is supported by other studies. In an study of 19 radical right parties, Van der Brug et al. (2012: 59) show that the variance explained by a 'socio-structural model' ranges between 5% and 26%. The *Danish People's Party* and *National Front* are the ones with the largest explanatory power of socio-structural factors (19% and 26%, respectively). This, again, points to a clear overrepresentation of lower class voters in the electorates of these parties. In a similar vein, parties in CEE countries – who were identified in the previous section as more protectionist – "tend to receive more support from the working class than radical right parties in Western Europe" (Van der Brug et al., 2012: 70).

On the other side of the continuum, the Austrian *Freedom Party* (FPÖ) and the *Swiss People's Party* (SVP) are mentioned as taking a relatively strong economic *laissez-faire* position (Mudde, 2007:

123). This is reflected in their electorates. Compared to their Scandinavian equivalents, the Austrian and Swiss radical right parties draw on a broader societal coalition than workers alone: “both the FPÖ and SVP have appeals that go beyond the core ‘new radical-right’ audience” (McGann and Kitschelt, 2005: 163). This is confirmed by Oesch’s (2008: 357; 2012: 41) study of the occupational base of these parties, as well as in the mere 9% explained variance by socio-structural factors according to Van der Brug et al. (2012: 59). There is thus a theoretical reason as well as empirical evidence to expect a link between economically left-wing attitudes and a clear working class voter base.

2.3. Aims of the paper

All in all, this paper aims to investigate two closely related research problems. The first is to establish the electoral potential for a pro-welfare nativist radical right party in the lower part of the socio-economic spectrum: do voters working in precarious jobs and sectors and with low levels of education correspond to the picture of ‘working class authoritarians’? Secondly, I investigate the core implication of the ‘new winning formula’ thesis by testing to what extent radical right parties attract more working class voters if they have an economically more left-wing economic stance.

2.4. A note on ‘class’

It is important to stress that ‘class’ has a broad range of meanings. The days of a homogeneous industrial proletariat are long over, making class a multifaceted feature. Kitschelt and McGann (1995: 5) argues that voters’ location in the political space depends on “skills and capabilities, their social ties, and their location in a particular economic sector”. Skills and capabilities are individual-level resources that can shield citizens from economic insecurity. Highly skilled and trained workers, such as socio-cultural and technical professionals, have convertible skills that make them capable to adapt to economic changes. Workers with less training lack such capabilities. The latter group includes manual workers, but also those employed in service and clerical jobs. Indeed, Bornschier and Kriesi (2012: 13) call the ‘service proletariat’ – though traditionally considered somewhat more economically secure than manual workers – “the most disadvantaged class in terms of income and promotion chances”. Indeed, in some radical right parties’ electorates, service workers are almost as overrepresented as production workers (Mayer, 2012; Oesch, 2012: 41). I therefore expect the group of service employees, as well as un- and semi-skilled workers, to be most clearly overrepresented in the electorate of economically relatively left-wing parties.

Education is an important source of skills and capabilities, and is indeed negatively correlated with radical right voting (Stubager, 2010; Stubager and Ivarsflaten, 2012). I expect that having a lower education, while increasing the probability to vote for the radical right in general, is especially likely to do so for parties that have a center or center-left economic position. Furthermore, to catch the idea of ‘class’ in a broader and subjective sense, I will compare voters on the basis of self-perceived class.

3. Data and operationalization

To test the expectations, I study the class background of European radical right parties’ voters using data about both parties and voters.

3.1. Party-level data and variables

To measure party positions, the *Chapel Hill Expert Survey* (CHES) is the most extended source in terms of available parties and time points (Bakker et al., 2015; Hooghe et al., 2010; Steenbergen and Marks, 2007). I rely on the 1999, 2004 and 2010 rounds. Because most of the theory discussed above refers to developments in Western European (non-former-communist) societies, the main analysis is restricted to those countries. However, in an additional section I also investigate some Central and Eastern European countries to check to what extent the findings hold in that part of the continent as well. In total, overlap between party and voter data allows me to study 10 West European parties (although not all parties were included in all rounds of the CHES): *Danish People’s Party*, Denmark; *Freedom Party*, Austria; *National Front*, France; *Orthodox Rally*, Greece; *Northern League*, Italy; *Freedom Party*, the Netherlands; *Sweden Democrats*, Sweden; *True Finns*, Finland; *United Kingdom Independence Party*, United Kingdom; and *Flemish Interest*, Belgium. Of these, the *United Kingdom Independence Party* (UKIP) least conforms to the usual definitions of a radical right party (Mudde, 2007), but unfortunately no data was available for the *British National Party* (BNP). Because UKIP and BNP have been argued to attract voters from comparable social groups (Ford et al., 2012), UKIP is included in the present study. However, I repeated each analysis without UKIP to see whether the results are robust to its exclusion – and they are.

The most important party-level variable is the economic position of a party. Experts were asked to locate the parties in their country on an economic left-right continuum, with the following description of what that means: “Parties on the economic left want government to play an active role in the economy. Parties on the economic right emphasize a reduced economic role for government: privatization, lower taxes, less regulation, less government spending, and a leaner welfare state”. The validity of this particular item was confirmed by Bakker et al. (2014: 1100), who conclude that “party experts in Europe view the left/right economic dimension of party competition in largely the same way across countries”.²

Appendix A shows the mean scores of the included parties on the economic left-right dimension, according to the Chapel Hill experts. These scores range from roughly 3 for the Southeast-European parties *Attack* (Bulgaria) and *Greater Romania party* to almost 9 for *Flemish Interest* (Belgium) and *Northern League* (Italy). Other left-wing parties are *Danish People’s Party* and *True Finns*. However, the *Freedom Party* of Austria, although sometimes considered relatively economically right-wing (Mudde, 2007), is assigned a centrist position of 5.

Still, there is enough face validity in the relative scores to allow for comparison. For instance, the ‘programmatic turnover’ towards a left-wing party is clearly visible in the trend of the *National Front*, which moved from an economically right-wing position (8.7) in the 1990s to an increasingly moderate position 2006 (6.6) and 2010 (6.5). As a cross-validation, the smaller selection of parties included in the Benoit and Laver (2007) expert survey draw similar conclusions. *Greater Romania party* is considered the most left-wing, followed by the Nordic parties; *Northern League*, *Flemish Interest* and *Freedom Party* are on the relative right-side.

To disentangle economic policy, I also investigate more specific questions about public services vs reducing taxes, opposition to vs

² A certain level of unreliability (random variation) of the experts’ judgments might exist, but this would make it harder for our tests to confirm the hypothesis – which makes any results I do find conservative.

support for deregulation of markets; and opposition to vs support for redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor.

Finally, in an additional test I include parties' stance on immigration (according to the same expert survey) as a control variable in all models. This yields very similar results in terms of size, direction, and significance. This shows that any effect of parties' economic stance is not confounded by differences in nativism. The main text reports models without this control.

3.2. Individual-level data and variables

Voter-level data are obtained from the *European Election Studies* (EES) of 1999, 2004 and 2009. While this data was collected in the context of European elections, many of the questions explicitly refer to national elections, which enables me to study voters in national contexts in a comparative way. Where the expert survey does not completely overlap with the EES rounds, I rely on the closest survey: 1999 for the 1999 round; 2006 for the 2004 round; 2010 for the 2009 round. To the extent that equivalent indicators at the individual level were available, the 1999, 2004 and 2009 rounds were combined. Some indicators were available in 2004 and 2009 only, and still some others were only available in 2009. Consequently, depending on the indicator, some analyses cover a larger set of cases than others.

The dependent variable is the propensity to vote (PTV) for the radical right party in the country. For each party surveyed, respondents were asked to indicate how likely they would be – on a scale from 0 to 10 – to ever vote for that party. These items are strongly correlated with party sympathy scores (thermometer scores), but the propensity to vote question is more closely linked to the actual vote (Van der Eijk et al., 2006) and has been validated to reflect actual political considerations (De Angelis and Garzia, 2012). As most respondents answered the PTV question, this measure allows more reliable inferences on the basis of a large number of voters with different levels of attraction towards the radical right, instead of on the basis of the – sometimes small – number of respondents who actually voted for a radical right-wing party. Because this propensity to vote was measured on different scales in 2004 and 2009, I rescaled the measure to a 0-to-10 scale in both years.

To measure class, several indicators are used, above all the respondent's *type of occupation* (consisting of 11 categories) and *self-perceived social class* (working class, lower middle class, middle class, and upper middle class; a fifth category, 'upper class', applied to less 1% of the respondents; I therefore combined them with the upper middle class). *Education* is measured by the age at which the respondent stopped having fulltime education. Additionally, I also estimated all models for *sector* (agriculture, state industry, private industry, public services and private services) and present these in the respective appendices.

For the 2009 round, a nativism scale was constructed using attitudinal items about immigration and integration, and a socio-economic scale was constructed using items about private enterprise, state ownership, government intervention in the economy, and redistribution of wealth. See Appendix B for the question wording.

3.3. Model

I modeled the data employing two different strategies. The first strategy entails a *random-effects* model in which I include random intercepts for party-election combinations. The estimates of this model combine variation between parties (in the same year) and within parties (between years). The second strategy is to estimate a *fixed-effects* model in which I include

Table 1
Distribution of respondents over quadrants.

	Pro-welfare	Pro-market
Cosmopolitan	20%	24%
Nativist	30%	27%

dummies for waves as well as individual parties. The results of this model are fully derived from variation *within* a given party and thus captures parallel shifts in party programs and electoral constituencies. Because this second model cannot be estimated for parties or variables that were only included in one wave (most importantly, occupational category), I present the random-effects models in the main text and present the fixed-effects models graphically in Appendix E.

Because of the limited number of higher-level units, I test for influential cases in the Robustness section.

4. Results

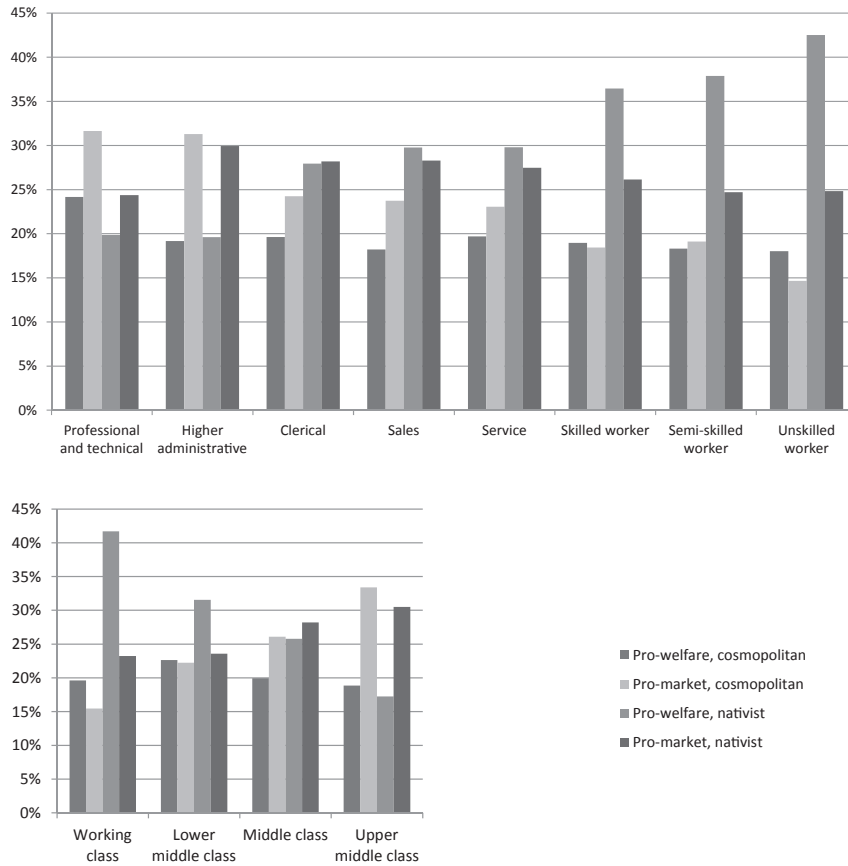
The analyses presented below first shortly zoom in on the electoral potential of the 'new winning formula' among lower class voters. In a second set of analyses test will be provided of the main hypothesis that socio-economic left-leaning positions correlate with a stronger electoral appeal among voters from the 'lower' classes.

4.1. The electoral potential of the 'winning formula'

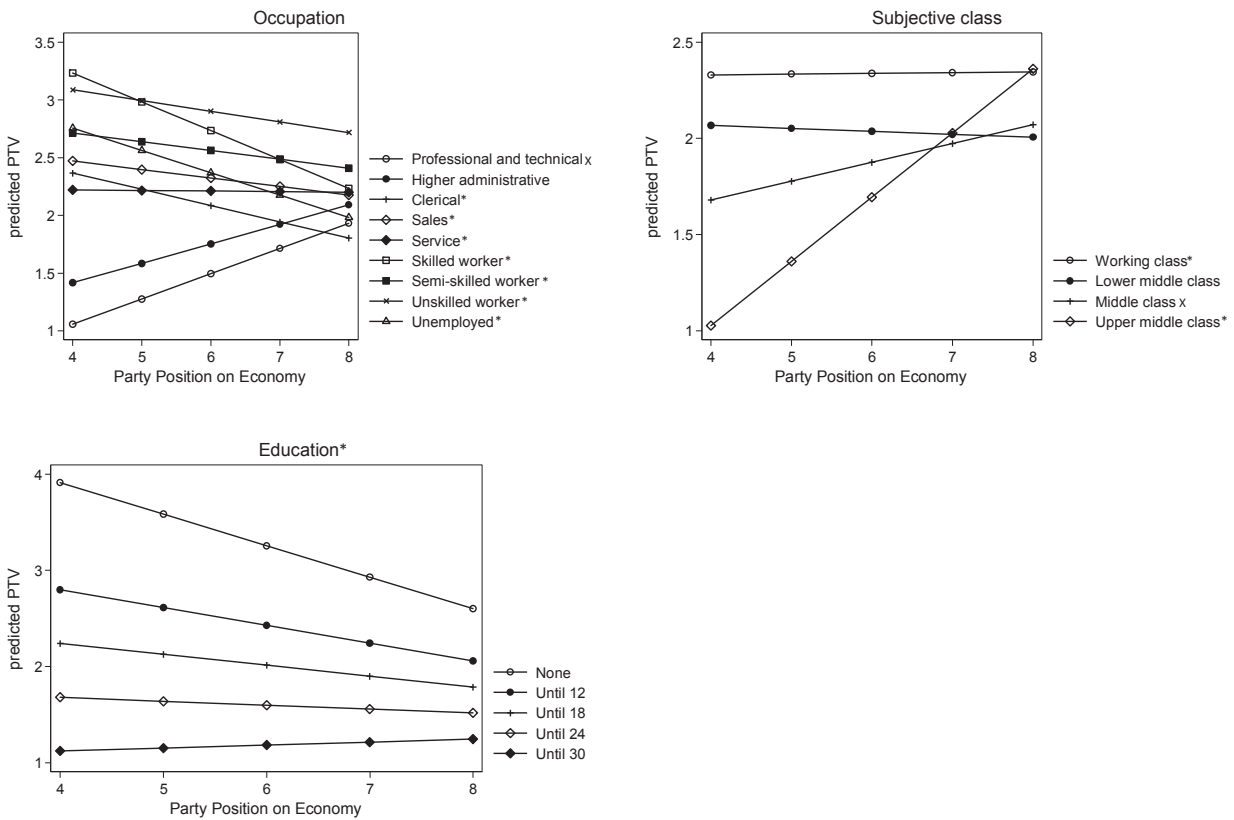
The theoretical expectation that the working class should be especially drawn to the 'new winning formula' is based on the assumption that voters in these classes are most likely to combine an socio-economically left with a culturally right position. After all, for these voters no trade-off exists between their economic and cultural stances (Spies, 2013). To gauge the support for 'pro-welfare nativism' among lower socio-economic classes in the EES 2009, I investigated the respondents' score on both the nativism and economic left-right scale. I assigned each respondent a position in a quadrant, based on whether they scored above or under the mean score on both these dimensions in their respective country.³

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents over these quadrants. It confirms that the relatively pro-welfare nativist voters make up the largest group. This is in line with earlier studies noting the presence of many voters in this quadrant (Van Der Brug and van Spanje, 2009). More relevant for present purposes is how these positions relate to class. Graph 1 shows how these quadrants are distributed over the diverse jobs and self-perceived social class. The pattern is clear. Pro-welfare nativism is very uncommon among professional and technical as well as higher administrative personnel. It is more common among clerical, sales, and service workers, although pro-market nativists can be found in those jobs roughly as much. The workers stand out: no matter their level of skills, the large majority is pro-welfare nativist. The same pattern is visible with respect to self-perceived class: in the working class, the pro-welfare nativist quadrant stands out. Both graphs show that no other quadrant is as class-concentrated as the pro-welfare nativist one; and, reversely, that no economic group is as clearly located in

³ Although taking the national mean as the cut-off point between 'pro-welfare' versus 'pro-market' or 'cosmopolitan' versus 'nativist' is quite rough, it is also the most neutral way: taking another midpoint – say, 5 on the scale of 1–10 – might be problematic because of likely inter-country incomparability of scales. At least, the current solution allows us to investigate how many citizens are *relatively* pro-market, nativist, etcetera.



Graph 1. Distribution of ideological typologies over economic categories of voters.



Graph 2. Predicted propensity to vote for a Radical Right party. Note: in the first three graphs, the reference category is indicated with an 'X', and slopes that differ significantly from this reference category at the 10% or 5% level are marked with an + or a *, respectively. In the last graph, the interaction between party position and education is significant.

one quadrant as the working class is. The lower class thus indeed has excellent potential for a party that is nationalist but also economically protective.

4.2. A larger ‘class gap’ for economically left-wing radical right parties?

We now turn to a test of the main hypothesis by looking at the variation in economic positions of radical right parties. Is this distribution of stances accompanied by differences in ‘proletarianization’? To answer this question, I estimate four random-effects models with the propensity to vote (PTV) score as the dependent variable, in each model including an interaction between a different individual-level economic variable (occupation, class etcetera) and the parties’ economic score according to experts.⁴ To visualize these findings, [Graph 2a–d](#) show the predicted propensity to support radical right (y-axis) for different occupational groups (lines) based on the economic stance of the radical right party (x-axis). To secure comprehensibility, very small categories (<5%) are omitted from the graphs, but can be found in the full regression tables in [Appendix C](#).

In graphs with categorical variables, an asterisk next to a category label indicates a significant interaction between that category and parties’ economic position, compared to the reference category (the largest category, indicated with an ‘X’). For the continuous variable education, an asterisk is added to the graph name to note that the interaction between that variable and parties’ economic position is significant. The main interest is not so much whether or not the lines overlap, but whether their slopes differ, and therefore these asterisks are more relevant than confidence intervals (which would cloud the picture and are therefore omitted). Instead, marginal effects are discussed at the end of this section.

Negative interactions exist among three of the four studied variables: occupation, class, and education. The overarching conclusion is clear: in these three cases, the ‘class gap’ – that is, the extent to which some socio-economic groups are much more likely to vote for the radical right than others – is most clearly present among economically centrist and center-left parties. I will discuss the graphs in turn.

[Graph 2a](#) shows that the ‘occupational gap’, the extent to which a party primarily attracts voters with precarious jobs, is the largest among economically left-wing radical right parties. The economic stance of a party has a significantly different effect among professional, technical and higher administrative personnel⁵ (who seem to be attracted to a neoliberal profile) than it has among voters with more precarious occupations (especially clerical and skilled workers, who seem deterred by a neoliberal profile). Voters without a job, too, are more likely to vote radical right if it has a left-wing economic stance. Surprisingly, the group of service workers, which have earlier been hypothesized to be especially drawn to an economically left-wing program, does not respond as much to the economic stance of the party. Still, ‘proletarianization’ is the most visible at the left part of the economic spectrum.

[Graph 2b](#) shows similar patterns for self-perceived social class. Voters who identify with the upper middle class are more strongly

⁴ I do not control for other usual explanations of radical right voting, such as anti-immigrant attitudes or political trust, because such attitudinal factors can be expected to be (to a large extent) *causally dependent* on socio-structural factors. As such, they will mediate the effect of class indicators. Because I am only interested in the nominal differences in radical right support between classes, controlling for attitudes would distort the picture.

⁵ The slope of higher administrative personnel does not differ significantly from that from professional and technical occupations, so they both seem to be attracted to the same extent.

Table 2

Marginal effects of occupational dummies (compared to reference category) on voting for radical right parties.

	Economic position					
	4	5	6	7	8	9
Professional and technical	<i>(reference category)</i>					
Higher administrative	0.36	0.31	0.26	0.21	0.16	0.11
Clerical	1.30	0.94	0.59	0.23	–0.13	–0.49
Sales	1.42	1.12	0.83	0.54	0.25	–0.05
Service	1.17	0.95	0.72	0.49	0.27	0.04
Skilled worker	2.17	1.71	1.24	0.77	0.30	–0.17
Semi-skilled worker	1.66	1.37	1.07	0.77	0.48	0.18
Unskilled worker	2.03	1.72	1.41	1.10	0.79	0.47
Farm worker	0.96	0.97	0.98	0.98	0.99	1.00
Still in education	1.34	0.95	0.56	0.17	–0.22	–0.61
Unemployed	1.67	1.26	0.86	0.46	0.05	–0.36

Note: coefficients in **bold** are significantly different from zero ($p < 0.05$).

attracted to a radical right party if it has a neoliberal profile, and so are – to a somewhat lesser extent – the middle class voters. For lower and lower middle voters, no such effect exists, but no deterioration either, as would have been expected. Still, the outcome is in line with the analysis of occupation: at the left side of the economic spectrum, occupations and classes are much more differentiated in their propensity to vote for the radical right than they are at the right side.

Education ([Graph 2c](#)), by contrast, does again show the same pattern as the first two figures. The interaction between education and the parties’ position is significant. The figure shows the lines for some lengths of education. Those with very little education are most drawn to the radical right in general, but most strongly so if the party takes an economically left-wing position. The highest educated respondents, by contrast, are somewhat deterred by such stances.⁶

I subsequently estimate *fixed-effects models*, in which only variation *within* parties between time-points is used to estimate the effects. For this reason, parties or variables that were present in only one wave are not included in this model. These models, which are presented in [Appendix E](#), confirm the findings above. Both education and subjective social class are a more important factor in determining the electorate of radical right parties when these parties take more left-wing position. Occupational class was only asked in the 2009 survey and could therefore not be included.

Another way to approach these findings is as follows. In [Table 2](#), marginal effect analysis (of the random-effect models) shows that the effect of most of the occupational dummies (compared to the reference category) on voting for radical right parties becomes steadily lower as parties become more economically liberal, and is *only significant for parties with a score lower than 7* on the economic dimension. In other words: citizens’ type of occupation *only* significantly predicts their radical right support among centrist and center-left radical right parties, and not for the most neoliberal ones. The marginal effects of the other variables can be found in [Appendix D](#). The negative effect of education remains significant for all values of parties’ economic position, but becomes quite unsubstantial for the more neoliberal ones. Apparently, the more left-wing the party, the stronger it rests on particular segments of the population.

In short, the analyses presented here show that if radical right parties move from the right to the left on the socio-economic policy dimension, they are predicted to lose higher and professional employees, the higher educated, and those identifying as upper middle classes – in short, the ‘winners of globalization’. By contrast,

⁶ An analysis of respondents’ *sector* (private or public) presented no discernable pattern: parties’ ideology does not seem to affect the relevance of sector.

they then gain votes from clerical workers, (semi- or un-)skilled workers, the low educated, and those identifying as lower (middle) classes – often the ‘losers of globalization’. Economic centrist or center-left parties attract relatively many voters in the economically vulnerable groups in society. Neoliberal parties draw less, though still many, of such voters, in addition to attracting more ‘winners’; as a result, the electorates of neoliberal parties consist of a broader coalition of classes.

5. Robustness

Are the results the same when looking at *specific measures about redistribution, taxation, and deregulation*, rather than the ‘overall’ socio-economic left-right scale? A replication of the analyses on the specific measures (available on request) shows that the results using the specific measures are highly similar to the ones for the general measure. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the specific measures are highly correlated to the general measure ($r > 0.8$ in all cases). This might either mean that radical right parties take very consistent stances, or that the CHES experts tend to assign similar scores. The single exception is that the effect of education does not interact with socio-economic policy for any of the specific measures. This suggests that the overall measure taps into the economic stance more reliably than the individual measures do.

Secondly, the low number of higher-level cases runs the risk that conclusions are unduly influenced by a party with *higher leverage*. To find out, I employed a jackknife procedure, in which the models are re-estimated several times, each time with a different higher-level case (in this study, a party in a particular year) left out. Subsequently, the standard errors are recalculated. This procedure reveals that the pattern of direction and significance of the effects are robust to the exclusion of individual cases. The only exceptions is the self-perceived class category ‘working class’, which no longer significantly interacts with parties’ economic position. The category ‘lower middle class’ still does at the 10%, and the category ‘upper middle class’ at the 5% level. The interactions identified earlier are robust for the occupation categories, as well as for the education level. I therefore conclude that the conclusions remain generally valid.

6. Conclusions

In this paper, the starting point was that the process of ‘proletarianization’ of the radical right is not universal. While this has been acknowledged before, few researchers have linked this empirically to the variation in the economic stances of parties. Authors have rightly pointed to the pre-eminence of cultural issues (mainly immigration) in the programs of the radical right, and economics has been labeled as secondary (Mudde, 2007). However, given that a sizeable group of voters combines economic left with cultural conservative views (Van Der Brug and van Spanje, 2009; Lachat and Dolezal, 2008), such a ‘pro-welfare nativist’ position is likely to be a ‘new winning formula’ for the radical right (Kitschelt, 2004). Many voters with precarious jobs perceive both cultural and economic threats from globalization, and a party that promises protection regarding both issues can be expected to be especially powerful in attracting voters in vulnerable economic situations.

Combining data on voters and parties, I show that pro-redistributionist ‘welfare chauvinist’ radical right parties rely electorally more heavily on economically vulnerable groups than neoliberal parties do. This is no wonder, as the same data shows that many among the sales and service personnel, and the great majority of the skilled and unskilled workers, are pro-welfare nativists. They neatly fits the description of working class authoritarians (Lipset, 1959). These working class voters, who face relative and absolute decline in economic certainty, form a specific

constituency of the relatively ‘welfare chauvinist’ subfamily of the radical right, such as the *Danish People’s Party*. Other parties, such as the *Northern League* and *Flemish Interest*, which – at least in rhetoric – are located closer to the right side on socio-economic issues, have a slighter ‘class gap’. Classic ‘anti-statist’ radical right parties thus attract a broader coalition of classes and occupations.

This finding warns us that models of radical right voting should be sensitive to parties’ substantive policy positions. The choice of cases will affect the explanatory power of factors such as class or occupation, and possibly others. More fundamentally, these findings have repercussions for our understanding of the radical right and class voting. The ‘proletarianization’ of the radical right is a process that has to be understood in the context of the history of parties as well as national electoral competition. It may or may not lead to most parties adopting the new ‘winning formula’ of pro-welfare nativism. This is not, however, mere ideological window-dressing, as these shifts are accompanied by substantive moves in these parties’ constituencies. Parties that move to this “structural hole in the lower left-hand corner of the political space” (Kriesi et al., 2012: 103), attract more voters in precarious economic positions, while losing some of the well-trained and educated voters.

Such a move might indeed be a net vote-winning strategy, though only if succeeds at convincing voters in this quadrant – who have a higher tendency to stay at home during elections (Dolezal and Hutter, 2008: 84–85) – to vote in the first place.⁷ On the other hand, it means relying on a more narrow constituency rather than a broader societal coalition. This can make radical right parties vulnerable. Several authors have suggested that the ‘winning formula’ has also been discovered by the radical left or even social democrats; some parties of these party families move ‘down’ into this quadrant (Azmanova, 2004, 2011) or can be expected to do so. If the “structural hole” (Kriesi et al., 2012: 103) indeed gets crowded, the radical right might even lose the ‘losers’.

Appendix A. Parties’ economic stance

Party	Score
Attack (B) '09	3.3
Danish People's Party (DK) '04	4.8
Danish People's Party (DK) '09	5.4
Freedom Party (AT) '04	4.8
Freedom Party (AT) '09	5.0
National Front (F) '04	6.6
National Front (F) '09	6.5
Jobbik (HU) '09	3.3
LAOS (GR) '04	5.3
LAOS (GR) '09	5.9
Northern League (IT) '04	8.1
Northern League (IT) '09	7.3
Party for Freedom (NL) '09	5.3
Greater Romania Party (RO) '09	2.2
Slovak National Party (SK) '04	4.2
Slovak National Party (SK) '09	6.0
Slovenian National Party (SV) '04	5.0
Slovenian National Party (SV) '09	4.2
Sweden Democrats (SE) '09	5.5
True Finns (FI) '04	4.8
True Finns (FI) '09	4.3
Flemish Interest (B) '09	7.6

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES).

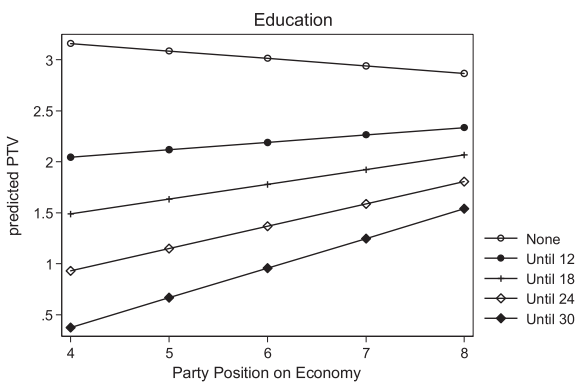
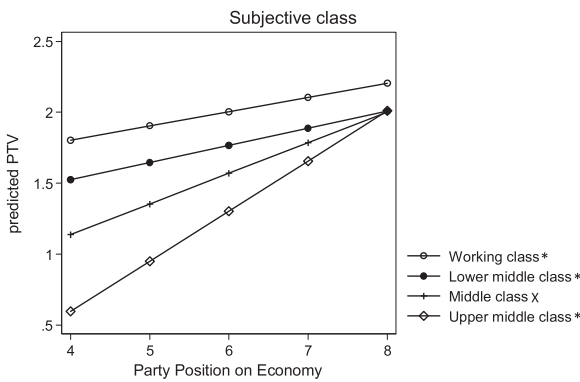
⁷ As such, this development could be argued to improve the quality of democratic representation (Van Der Brug and van Spanje, 2009: 329).

Appendix D. Marginal effects of class dummies (interacted with economic position)

	Economic position					
	4	5	6	7	8	9
Class						
Working class	0.65	0.56	0.46	0.37	0.27	0.18
Lower middle class	0.39	0.28	0.16	0.05	-0.07	-0.18
Middle class	<i>(reference category)</i>					
Upper middle class	-0.65	-0.42	-0.18	0.05	0.29	0.53
Education						
Education in years	-0.09	-0.08	-0.07	-0.05	-0.04	-0.03

Note: coefficients in **bold** are significantly different from zero ($p < 0.05$).

Appendix E. Fixed effects models



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