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Why some anti-immigrant parties fail and others succeed

A two-step model of aggregate electoral support*

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, some anti-immigrant parties have managed to gain substantial electoral support in various European countries, most notably Austria (FPÖ) and Flanders (Vlaams Blok). However, in other countries the success of such parties has either been insignificant or did not last. We argue that the most popular models of support for anti-immigrant parties - the socio-structural model and the protest vote model - cannot explain the huge differences in support for these parties. Instead, we develop a model to explain differences in aggregate level support for these parties, which partially builds upon an explanation provided by Kitschelt (1995). This model is tested empirically for 13 European anti-immigrant parties in the period 1989-1999, altogether yielding 25 party * year combinations. We test the socio-structural model and our alternative model at the level of political parties. The socio-structural model explains 5% of the variance in success, whereas our model explains 76%. In the conclusions we discuss the implications of our findings.

1. Introduction

Since 1980 anti-immigrant parties have presented themselves in national and European elections. Some of these parties, like the French Front National (1972), the Belgian Vlaams Blok (1978) and the Dutch Centriumpartij (1980), have emerged from neo-fascist *groupuscules*. Their genesis fits the continuity thesis implicit in the concept of *extreme right*. But most anti-immigrant parties are *not* the offspring of neo-fascist clubs and cliques. The German Republikaner Party, for example, was founded by members of the Christian Social Union (CSU). The Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) developed from the Verband der Unabhängigen (Association of Independents) founded in 1949 by two liberal journalists who wanted to stay clear of the socialist and Catholic 'Lager'. Other anti-immigrant parties, like the Danish Fremskridtspartiet (Progress Party), founded in 1972, and the Swedish Ny Demokrati (New Democracy), founded in 1991, and more recently de Dutch Lijst Pim Fortuyn, have been created by leaders who had no links whatsoever with fascist groups or extreme-right traditions. Pim Fortuyn even had a political track record that can be traced back to the (extreme) left (Chorus and De Galan 2002; Pels 2003). The founders seemed primarily motivated by anti-establishment sentiments. They may share the latter with extreme right movements, but, as we will argue in this paper, the only *programmatic* issue all radical right parties have in common is their resentment against immigrants and against the immigration policies of their government. To call these parties extreme right is therefore misleading. We will call them anti-immigrant parties instead (Fennema 1997).

In recent elections in various European countries anti-immigrant parties have attracted enormous support, most notably in Austria, Denmark, France, Italy, The Netherlands and Flanders.¹ In other countries, such as Germany and Wallonia, this type of party has only attracted marginal support. In this study we aim to explain why some anti-immigrant parties succeed while others fail in mobilizing electoral support.² For our selection of parties to include in this study we took advantage of information emanating from an expert survey, which is reported by Lubbers (2001).³

Most studies in the field of anti-immigrant party support aim to establish determinants of individual level support for such parties (e.g., Betz & Immerfall 1998; Lubbers & Scheepers 2000; Van der Brug et al. 2000; Swyngedouw 2001). Even though these studies have provided much valuable knowledge of the motivations that underlie decisions to vote for anti-immigrant parties, these studies do not explain the differences in electoral success of such parties in various electoral contexts. To the best of our knowledge four studies exist—two conducted at the individual level and two at the party level—, which aim to explain differences in electoral success of anti-immigrant parties in Western Europe. The first one is a study conducted by Kitschelt (1995) using 1990 data. Kitschelt's analyses consist of separate individual level country studies, so that his explanation for differences in aggregate support between countries is not tested empirically. The second individual level study is by Lubbers et al. (2002) who present a multilevel model that includes country, party and individual level

variables. They are able to demonstrate significant effects of various country and party characteristics on the likelihood that individuals cast a vote for an extreme right-wing party (as they call them). Yet, the authors conclude that a significant part of the inter-party and inter-country variation remains unexplained by their models, and no indication is provided of how well their models explain differences in aggregate level success of these parties.⁴

The third study that explains success of anti-immigrant parties is by Knigge (1998). We will argue that we consider her socio-structural explanation of cross-country differences unconvincing, and we will present an alternative model that explains such differences much better. Finally, Carter (2002) presents various tests of the hypothesis that systems of proportional representation aid right-wing extreme parties. Her work is important because it rejects this hypothesis, which many observers as well as political scientists have taken for granted. She does not, however, offer an alternative explanation for the success of some anti-immigrant parties, and failure of others.

In this article we will develop a theoretical model to explain differences in the success of anti-immigrant parties, and test this model empirically for 13 anti-immigrant parties over the period 1989-1999. Our explanation builds upon the insights of Kitschelt (1995), and improves upon his theoretical and analytical approach. We compare the explanatory power of our model with that proposed by others, and we will demonstrate that it explains differences in success much better than these alternative approaches. Before discussing our research design, we will first discuss the theoretical notions that underpin this study.

2. Explanations of anti-immigrant party support

Different disciplinary approaches tend to emphasize different types of root causes for the rise of the radical right: socio-economic variables (in the socio-structural model), policy variables (the policy preference model), institutional variables (the political opportunity model) and, somewhat more eclectic, the 'protest vote model'.

The most popular explanations of support for radical right parties are based upon *socio-structural* models of voting (e.g., Betz 1994, 1998; Lubbers & Scheepers 2000; Knigge 1998). The crux of these explanations is the suggestion that support for anti-immigrant parties comes from citizens who feel threatened by rapid changes in postindustrial societies. Manual workers with low education tend to lose their jobs as a result of changes in modes of production. Moreover, they are competing with immigrant groups for scarce resources such as jobs and houses. These "losers of modernity" (Betz 1998) feel threatened by rapid social

change and tend to support radical right-wing parties out of general discontent. Research on voting for anti-immigrant parties has failed, however, to provide support for the “losers of modernity-thesis”, reason why Betz (2002) has now abandoned it.

Socio-structural models explain differences in aggregate level radical right party support in terms of three factors: economic conditions, level of immigration, and level of support for the political system (e.g., Knigge 1998; Lubbers et al. 2000; Lubbers & Scheepers 2000). Knigge (1998) and Lubbers et al. (2000) found that unemployment numbers have no effect on voting for radical right parties. Lubbers & Scheepers (2000) found that the German Republikaner benefit significantly from *increasing* unemployment (as expected), whereas they are hurt by *high levels* of unemployment (unexpected). Furthermore, Knigge (1998) and Lubbers et al. (2000) found that high levels of migration increase the support for anti-immigrant parties, whereas Lubbers & Scheepers (2000) found no such effect in Germany. We may thus conclude that the evidence produced so far for the effect of unemployment and migration on support for anti-immigrant parties is still inconclusive.⁵ To explain differences in aggregate level support for anti-immigrant parties, socio-structural models cannot take us very far because structural conditions are so similar across the countries of Western Europe that they do not help us to explain country differences in the success of anti-immigrant parties (see also, Kitschelt 1995). However, given the fact that contextual variables have been shown to sometimes affect the electoral fortunes of anti-immigrant parties, we will include them in our models.

Another popular explanation of support for anti-immigrant parties is the *protest vote* model (Mayer & Perrineau 1992; Martin 1996; Mudde & Van Holsteyn 2000; Betz 1994; Derks & Deschouwer 1998; Swyngedouw 2001). Various observers of anti-immigrant parties assume that their voters have reasons to vote for them that have more to do with deficiencies of mainstream parties than with the attractions of anti-immigrant parties per se. Little conceptual clarity exists, however, in the use of the term *protest vote*. Theoretically, we may distinguish two fundamentally different types of protest votes: regime protest and protest intended to punish established political elites.

Ideological motivations underlie regime protest. Some of these anti-immigrant parties, such as the Greek EPEN, the Italian MSI, the Austrian FPÖ, and the French Front national originate — at least partly — from an anti-democratic (or even Fascist or National-Socialist) tradition. Other parties, such as the Dutch Centrumdemocraten, have a cadre that consists partially of people who have been convicted for violent political actions, denying the

Holocaust, etc. Citizens who support extreme-right wing and anti-democratic ideologies may find these parties attractive for ideological reasons. However, given the massive support for the main values, principles and institutions of democratic states in Western European countries (Thomassen 1995; Klingemann 1999; Dalton 1996), an anti-democratic party cannot realistically be expected to attract many voters.

Ideologically motivated regime protest is not, however, what is normally meant by a *protest vote*. In the relevant literature, "protest votes" are considered to be qualitatively different from "ideological or policy votes". As a case in point, Lubbers & Scheepers (2000:69) introduce protest votes as follows "political attitudes ... are expected to be of minor importance" (see also Mayer & Perrineau 1992; Kitschelt 1995; Mudde & Van Holsteyn 2000). The prime motive of a protest voter is to show discontent with "the" political elite by voting for a party that is an outcast in the political arena (see also: Van der Brug et al. 2000; Van der Brug and Fennema, 2003; Van der Eijk et al. 1996). We have evidence that the political elites in all Western European countries consider anti-immigrant parties as dangerous political outcasts (see Fennema & Maussen 2000; Fennema 2000). If, therefore, some voters want to use their vote to punish the elite - i.e., to cast a protest vote - they will consider a party that is stigmatized by the political elite to be an attractive option.

Protest voters who want to scare the political elite, but who do not agree with the intended policies of an anti-immigrant party, will see little harm in voting for such a party if it is small (and not powerful). Yet, when the party becomes larger (at previous elections or in opinion polls) -and hence more powerful- it becomes less attractive to protest voters who disagree with its policies. Therefore, we consider it highly implausible that an anti-immigrant party would be successful on the basis of protest votes *alone*.⁶

Notions of protest voting, as well as some socio-structural explanations of support for anti-immigrant parties, are sometimes linked to the notion of charismatic leadership. By and large these explanations do not consider voters for anti-immigrant parties to be capable of making a rational choice: the "losers of modernity" have little formal education and they are resentful. Their choice is not policy driven but is a sign of diffuse protest, which is mobilized by charismatic leaders.

A study of Lubbers et al. (2002) is one of the few that shows empirically that charismatic personalities of political leaders are important predictors of the vote for anti-immigrant parties. Their study used surveys among country experts (journalists and social scientists) to measure politicians' charisma. The usefulness of the concept "charisma" to

explain electoral success is, however, doubtful. The reasoning becomes circular, unless we define very strictly what is (and what is *not*) meant by charisma. Successful politicians are easily called charismatic and an unsuccessful politician will *never* be called charismatic. To the extent that the country specialists in the study of Lubbers et al. relate charisma to success, they will tend to give higher charisma ratings to successful than to unsuccessful politicians, irrespective of the personal characteristics of the candidate. Because of the inherent tautological nature of the concept of charisma as an explanation of success, this notion will not be pursued further here.

Thirdly, models of *policy - and ideological voting* are used to explain individual support for anti-immigrant parties. These models are not very popular because many researchers find it difficult to believe that voters would vote rationally for what they consider a racist or neo-fascist party. However, Van der Brug, et al. (2000) concluded that policy considerations were just as important in shaping electoral preferences for anti-immigrant parties as they were in shaping preferences for other parties. Kitschelt (1995) and Eatwell (1998) reached similar conclusions. According to Kitschelt (1995) policy models explain why some anti-immigrant parties – or New Radical Right (NRR) parties, as he calls them – are electorally successful, where others are not. These parties will be electorally successful if they find the "winning formula to attract right-authoritarian support, namely a resolutely market-liberal stance on economic issues and an authoritarian and particularistic stance on political questions of participatory democracy, of individual freedom of lifestyles and cultural expression, and of citizenship status. (...) Rightist parties found the winning formula in Denmark, France and Norway, but not in Britain, Germany, or in Italy (MSI)" (Kitschelt 1995:275).

It is somewhat questionable whether the results of Kitschelt's analysis warrant this conclusion, because he does not study issue positions of parties, but the policy preferences of their voters. His analyses show that voters for the most successful parties in the 1990s (Danish and Norwegian Fremskridtspartit and the French Front national), are motivated by right-authoritarian ideological positions. However, voters for the (unsuccessful) MSI occupy similar right-authoritarian positions. This is also true of the voters for the German Republikaner, although authoritarianism distinguishes them more from voters for other parties than does support for liberal market capitalism. No data are available to test the British case. Given the large similarities among the ideological positions of voters for various (successful as well as unsuccessful) radical right-wing parties, the results of Kitschelt's analyses do *not*

tell us that specific ideological positions of anti-immigrant parties yield "the winning formula". These results tell us that electoral success depends on the extent to which parties are able to mobilize support on the basis of these positions, i.e., *on whether the propensity to vote for the particular party depends on its ideological positions.*⁷ This will be one of the key elements in the theoretical framework we develop below to explain differences in success of anti-immigrant parties.

Finally, in the *political opportunity* structure model support for radical right parties is explained by specific institutional arrangements of the political process such as the type of electoral system, degree of consociationalism in the political process, number of established political parties that compete with the anti-immigrant party, or levels of public persecution of anti-immigrant parties. These factors may explain some of the variance in electoral support for anti-immigrant parties, but even those who favor this model have to admit that their evidence is far from conclusive (Andeweg 2001; see also Lijphart 2001). In fact, a recent study by Carter (2002) shows that the proportion of votes won by extreme right-wing parties is not systematically larger in systems of proportional representation than in majoritarian systems. In this study we will not focus on levels of persecution, but we will focus on two other aspects of the political opportunity structure: (1) the degree of electoral competition anti-immigrant parties face (see also Kitschelt 1995), and (2) the institutional arrangement by which votes are translated into seats.

3. Explaining success and failure of anti-immigrant parties

3.1. A two-step model of electoral support for anti-immigrant parties

In line with the way Anthony Downs (1957:47-50) conceptualized rational voting, we model the causal chain leading to electoral decisions as a process that involves two steps. The first step consists of voters assigning utilities to each party in the party system. Some voters may consider only one party an attractive option to vote for, but research has shown that many voters in all West European countries consider more than one party attractive (Van der Eijk and Oppenhuis, 1991). If a voter considers two or three parties almost equally attractive, second-order considerations may be used as tie-breakers. If an anti-immigrant party receives few votes, this may thus be the result of two things. Either few voters consider it attractive, or many voters do consider it attractive, but the same group considers other parties (slightly) more attractive. In order to understand why some parties fail and others succeed, we must therefore not only consider the actual votes that parties receive, but also its electoral potential

(which is the group of voters who consider the party an attractive option to vote for). The first step in the two-step model of voting is thus a process in which voters determine for each party how attractive these are (how much utility they derive from a vote for each).

The second step (essentially a simple utility maximizing step) involves the final choice. In this step party competition plays an important role. If voting for party A is an attractive option for a voter (yields a high utility), party A will obtain her vote if there are no other parties that she considers more attractive (yield even more utility). However, if she considers party B even slightly more attractive, she will vote for party B, and her potential vote for party A is not mobilized. The fact that few people vote for a small radical party may indicate that nobody prefers this party, but may equally indicate that many voters prefer another party slightly more. Since small radical parties are particularly vulnerable to the competition they face from other parties, we can only understand their (lack of) electoral success by taking both stages into account. Below we will spell out the notions of electoral potential and electoral opportunity structure.

3.2 Electoral potential

The electoral potential of each party refers to the size of the group of voters that considers this party to be an attractive option to vote for. If all voters who consider a party attractive, consider the other parties unattractive, this party faces no competition. The electoral potential of a party is the maximum number of votes it could obtain if it would face no (or hardly any) competition from other parties. Theoretically, we can think of a party system in which all voters have one unique preference for one single party only (2% prefer party A, 10% prefer party B, 30% prefer party C, etc.). In this hypothetical situation, we can imagine that all voters who prefer Party A find all other parties unattractive, while all voters who prefer Party B find all parties except party B unattractive, etceteras. This would be a party system without any competition. In this case the electoral potential of each party would approximately equal the number of votes the party will obtain in an election (Party A will mobilize its potential of 2%, Party B will mobilize its 10%, etc.). In reality, however, all parties compete with other parties for votes, but the extent to which they are subject to competition from other parties varies.

The circumstances in which anti-immigrant parties will have large electoral potentials depend upon the motives people have for voting for a party. In the policy preference model, the electoral potential of an anti-immigrant party depends on the size of the group of citizens that is supportive of the party's policies. When few people agree with the policies of anti-

immigrant parties, its electoral potential is small. If a significant group of voters support the anti-immigrant policy program its electoral potential is large. However, if voters do not evaluate the party by its policies, but by other considerations, agreement with its political program is irrelevant for its electoral potential. This is the case if many voters perceive a party as a repository for protest votes. However, as we argued in the previous section, in the case of protest voting it is very unlikely that anti-immigrant parties will have large electoral potentials.

We thus expect that an anti-immigrant party will only have a large electoral potential if a large group of voters supports its main policies, and if preferences for this party are policy driven. Only if an anti-immigrant party manages to present itself convincingly as a normal (which means democratic and nonviolent) party, so that voters are willing to evaluate it by the same standards as they apply to evaluate other parties, *and* if a substantial proportion of the voters agree with its political program, it can generate a large electoral potential. We thus hypothesize that:

H1: The electoral potential of an anti-immigrant party depends on the extent to which it is evaluated by the same standards by which voters evaluate other parties. When different standards apply, the electoral potential will be low.

And:

H2: The larger the proportion of radical right-wing citizens in an electorate, the higher the electoral potential of an anti-immigrant party in that country.

3.3 Electoral opportunity structure

Table 1 provides information about the success of the parties that will be involved in our study (see below), about their electoral potential, and about the extent to which parties were able to mobilize that potential. Success is measured by the percentage of voters that intend voting for the party, and the electoral potential is the percentage of voters who consider this party electorally attractive (a more detailed discussion of the operationalizations of our variables is provided in the methods section).

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Table 1 shows clearly that even if an anti-immigrant party has a large electoral potential, it will not automatically be successful in elections. That is, a significant number of

voters can prefer a political party but *not* vote for it. Also, it shows how deceptive election results can be for an adequate assessment of the public support for an anti-immigrant party. If we would compare the Danish Fremskridtspartit in 1989 with the Flemish Vlaams Blok in 1994, and look at the percentage of intended voters, we would conclude that Vlaams Blok is the one with the most popular support. However, the Fremskridtspartit had a substantially higher electoral potential. Vlaams Blok was more successful than the Fremskridtspartit, not because it had a larger electoral potential, but because it mobilized its electoral potential much better.

The factors that determine the extent to which a party is able to mobilize its potential support can be perceived of as the *electoral opportunity structure*. The electoral opportunity structure refers to the competition that a radical right party faces from other parties. For instance, an anti-immigrant party may be considered attractive by a large group of voters who want the government to take measures to stop migration. Yet if there are other parties that propose similar policies, these voters will consider these other parties equally attractive. Whether or not these voters will then vote for the anti-immigrant party in question, or for one of its competitors will depend on other considerations.

One of the (strategic) considerations that turn out to be important to voters is political power. If a voter wants to use his/her vote to affect public policies, it may not always be rational to vote for the party with which s/he agrees the most. If the second-most preferred party has more likelihood of affecting public policy, a pragmatic voter may decide that this party is actually her best option (see also: Tillie 1995; Van der Eijk & Franklin 1996). Since larger parties are generally more successful policy-makers than smaller ones, pragmatic voters will prefer a larger party to a smaller one. In the case of anti-immigrant parties this means that their electoral success will depend largely on the competition they face from other (right-wing) parties. Particularly when a strong conservative party (such as the Dutch VVD, the German CDU/CSU, or the British Conservatives) mobilizes support on the issues that are particularly relevant to anti-immigrant parties, the anti-immigrant party in question may not be able to attract many votes, even if it would have a large electoral potential. These considerations allow us to formulate the following hypotheses:

H3: The extent to which an anti-immigrant party can mobilize its potential decreases if its mainstream right wing competitor "embraces" its core issues of nationalism, migration, and crime;

H4: The extent to which an anti-immigrant party can mobilize its potential increases if its mainstream right wing competitor moves towards the center of the party space;

And:

H5: The extent to which an anti-immigrant party can mobilize its potential decreases with the size of its mainstream right wing competitor.

A different element of the electoral opportunity structure is the institutional arrangements by which votes are translated into seats. One of the main arguments against proportional representation is that such an electoral system makes it relatively easy for small extremist parties to gain electoral representation (e.g., Andeweg 2001). If voters estimate that it is unlikely for an anti-immigrant party to obtain seats in parliament, they may not want to waste their vote, using it instead to support a mainstream right-wing party that stands more chance of obtaining seats in parliament. Our last hypothesis is thus:

H6: The extent to which an anti-immigrant party can mobilize its potential is higher in proportional systems than in majoritarian electoral systems.

Carter (2002) tested this hypothesis and had to reject it on the basis of her analyses. Her independent variables are restricted to institutional arrangements (such as the pr-system and the absence of electoral thresholds), so that it is possible that her model is miss-specified by not controlling for other variables. We will therefore test H6 in a multivariate model.

4. Data and research strategy

Our explanation of differences in success of anti-immigrant parties involves two steps. In the first step we want to explain differences in the electoral potential of parties, and in the second step we wish to explain differences in electoral success of anti-immigrant parties (both presented in Table 1). Both models will be specified at the level of political parties. However, in order to measure some of the crucial variables in our model (see below), we require very specific individual level survey questions, which are not available in many national elections studies. The required variables are: left/right positions of parties and voters and measures of the electoral attractiveness of anti-immigrant parties. To analyze the conditions for electoral success of anti-immigrant parties, we need to have such data about successful as well as unsuccessful parties. National elections studies often do not contain such data. Since the required data are available in the European Elections Studies 1989, 1994, and 1999 (Schmitt

& Mannheimer 1991; Marsh & Norris 1997; Van der Eijk et al. 2002), it was decided to use these data.

Even though the data happen to come from studies of European Parliament elections, the variables we employ focus on *national* elections and the support for *national* political parties. European Parliament elections merely provided an opportune moment for collecting data about national political party support in comparable terms across a large number of countries. The surveys contain detailed information about the electoral attractiveness of 13 anti-immigrant parties, operating in 10 different electoral systems: Fremskridtspartit and Dansk Folkeparti in Denmark, Front national in France, Vlaams Blok in Flanders, Front National in Wallonia, Republikaner in Germany, EPEN in Greece, Lega Nord, MSI and Alleanza Nazionale in Italy, National Bewegung in Luxembourg, FPÖ in Austria and Centrumdemocraten in the Netherlands. Not all parties were included in each of the three surveys, but the combination of election year and party yields variation across 22 electoral contexts. In these 22 contexts information was collected on the electoral attractiveness of 25 parties belonging to the group we consider anti-immigrant parties. These 25 parties differ enormously in terms of electoral success, ranging from 0.6% of the votes won by the Dutch Centrumdemocraten in 1998, to 26.9% of the votes obtained by the FPÖ in 1999. In each of the 22 contexts a representative sample of adult citizens was interviewed.

The two dependent variables of this study are measured as follows:

Electoral success. The most obvious measure of electoral success is the percentage of votes parties have received at elections. However, the fieldwork of the European Elections Studies was not done in the context of national elections. Therefore we took the percentage of respondents from the national sub samples who indicated that they would vote for the respective anti-immigrant party if national elections were held at the time the interview was conducted. Naturally, these percentages are not precisely the same as those that parties had actually obtained in the last elections, but they come quite close.

Electoral potential. This is the group of citizens who consider an anti-immigrant party attractive. They are expected to vote for this party if they consider all other parties less attractive. To measure the size of this group, we therefore need a measure of the electoral attractiveness that is *independent* from the attractiveness of other parties, but that is strongly linked to actual vote choice. We measured this concept by way of the following survey question: “*Some people always vote for the same party. Other people make up their mind each time. Please tell me for each of the following how probable it is that you will ever vote for this*

party". In the European Elections Studies this question was asked for each of the 25 anti-immigrant parties in this study. The qualification 'ever' serves to free the respondent from the ballot constraint that only preference for a single party can be expressed, or from other restrictions that the ballot may exert over the expression of relevant preferences at a specific moment in time. Respondents were offered a 10-point scale (of which only the polar extremes were labeled as "certainly never" and "certainly at some time") to express the likelihood of ever voting for each of the parties. Our measure of the electoral potential of parties is the percentage of respondents who give a "probability of a future vote" score for this party of 6 or higher on the 10-point scale. That is, respondents assigning a score of 6 or higher to an anti-immigrant party consider the party an attractive option to vote for.⁸

The independent variables of this study are measured as follows:

The extent to which voters evaluate an anti-immigrant party by the same standards as other parties. Existing studies of party choice in Western Europe shows that in each of the countries that we investigate, left/right distances are the strongest determinant of party choice (van der Eijk et al. 1996; Van der Eijk et al, 1999). In general, voters thus tend to evaluate parties on the basis of a comparison between their own left/right position and the position of each of the parties on this dimension. If voters evaluate an anti-immigrant party by this standard, they will have a low preference if the party is far from their own position, and a high preference if the party is close. In that case there will thus be a strong effect of left/right distance on preferences for this party. If, however, an anti-immigrant party would be judged by other criteria, various other patterns will be possible. If voters see the party mainly as a protest party, potential protest voters could consider it attractive even if they see the ideological position of this party as far from their own. If, on the other hand, voters see the anti-immigrant party as undemocratic or abject, some right-wing voters will consider it unattractive even though they see the party as close. So, we can measure the extent to which voters evaluate an anti-immigrant party by the same standards as other parties, by focusing on the effect of left/right distances on preferences for this party.

To measure the extent to which voters evaluate an anti-immigrant party by the same standards as other parties, we used data from the European Elections Studies. For each of the anti-immigrant parties we conducted a regression analysis in which the dependent variable was the preference for the respective party measured on a 10-point "probability of future vote" scale. Multivariate linear regressions were conducted that included the most important

control variables, besides left/right distances. From these 25 individual level regressions, we saved the unstandardized regression coefficients that indicated the effect of left/right distance on party preference. The respective 25 regression coefficients are our estimates of the extent to which the electorates evaluate each of these parties by the same criteria by which they evaluate the other parties.

The left/right position of the anti-immigrant parties' main mainstream electoral competitor: data come from European Elections Studies 1989, 1994, and 1999. It is measured by the median of respondents' perceptions of the position on the left/right scale of the largest mainstream party of the right.

The extent to which this main competitor embraces the core issues of anti-immigrant parties: data are an updated version of the 'comparative studies of party manifestos" (Budge et al. 2001).⁹ This is measured by the emphasis parties place in their election manifestos on three issues: crime, positive references to the national way of life, and negative references to multiculturalism.

The size of the main competitor: is measured by the proportion of seats in the national parliament at the time of the interviews.

The extent of proportional representation: data are taken from the Appendix of Lijphart (1999). Lijphart distinguishes two dimensions of consensus democracies versus majoritarianism. For our analyses we used each country's position on the first dimension: the parties-executives dimension. A high score on this dimension indicates a more proportional type of representation. The second of Lijphart's dimensions refers to the power of various actors such as the Central Bank and the Supreme Court in decision making processes. In contrast to the first dimension, the second dimension of consensus democracies is rather distant from the electoral processes that we study here.

Economic conditions: Previous research showed that economic conditions affect aggregate electoral support of anti-immigrant parties (Knigge 1998). In research on the effect of economic conditions on voting behavior, three aspects of the economy are normally taken into account: inflation, unemployment and economic growth (e.g., Whitten & Palmer 1999). OECD official statistics were used to collect data for percentages unemployment, inflation and economic growth in the 22 contexts. Two different approaches have been proposed in the literature to estimate the effect of these economic conditions on the vote. In the first one the emphasis is on change in economic conditions (e.g., Lubbers & Scheepers 2000). Following this operationalization, we subtract the percentages of unemployment and inflation in the year

previous to the year in which the surveys were conducted from the percentages unemployment and inflation at that time. For economic growth no such difference is computed, because economic growth is by definition a measure of change. The second approach to measuring the effect of economic conditions, follows Whitten and Palmer (1999:52) who use deviations from the average for all industrialized democracies. They argue that it would of course be unrealistic to assume that voters would be able to compare the economic performance of their country to this cross-country average. However, in the case of sudden shocks, such as an oil crisis, incumbents will often be able to defend economic performance in the light of how the economy develops globally. It may be reasonable to expect that a 5% inflation rate receives a bad press when comparable countries are experiencing 2% inflation, whereas it will receive a much better press when the average rate is 11%. So, Whitten and Palmer argue, comparative measures of economic performance are better able to capture how economic conditions translate into party evaluations than absolute measures. In the analyses below, we will present analyses that use deviation measures as well as analyses that use a change measure for estimating the effects of economic conditions.

Levels of immigration: Official statistics about immigration are either unavailable, or to the extent that they are available, they are non-comparable (Knigge 1998:275,n8). However, for all EU countries and for the whole period of 1989-1999, information is available about the number of refugees applying for asylum (Eurostat 2001). Since previous research showed that information about asylum seekers and immigration was highly collinear and lead to the same substantive conclusions (Knigge 1998), we will include data on asylum applications in the data set. The variable is measured by the number of asylum seekers as a percentage of the total number of citizens in each country.

Lack of support for the political system: This is measured by a survey question asking respondents whether they are generally satisfied with the way democracy works in their country, an item that was included in the European Elections Studies 1989, 1994 and 1999. The measure included are the percentages of respondents who are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works.

Estimation procedure

All variables are measured at interval level, so that the models can be estimated with simple OLS-regressions. The sample consists of 13 anti-immigrant parties, some of which are only included once, whereas others are included three times. The combination of time and party

yields 25 observations. Since these are not 25 independent observations, we computed panel corrected standard errors, and we will report significance on the basis of these tests. To be precise, we did these analyses in STATA, using the robust estimate of variance (known as the Huber/White/Sandwich estimate of variance) and the “cluster” option to adjust for the dependency among observations pertaining to the same party (Rogers 1993; Williams 2000). Each of the 13 parties was defined as a separate cluster.

Significance levels are not reported for the purpose of generalizing our findings to a wider universe (because we do not have a sample from a wider universe), but merely to avoid any capitalization on chance, which could easily result from analyses with a rather limited number of cases.

5. Tests of existing models of anti-immigrant party support

In our theoretical outline, we defined two dependent variables: the electoral potential of anti-immigrant parties and the electoral success of such parties. On the basis of the two-step model that we proposed, we specified 6 hypotheses, which predict how various independent variables affect the two dependent variables. Before putting our own model to a test, we will first assess how well alternative models explain these two dependent variables. Socio-structural models of anti-immigrant party support explain differences in the success of such parties by three contextual variables: number of immigrants, economic conditions and lack of regime support (Knigge 1998). Table 2 presents the effects of these three variables on the electoral potential of anti-immigrant parties. As outlined in the methodological section, we will use two alternative specifications for the economic variables, one based on the change in economic conditions, and one based on the economic conditions relative to other EU countries.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Model 1 does not yield any significant effect of the independent variables. Moreover, the proportion explained variance (R^2) is low and the adjusted- R^2 is even negative, indicating that the model explains somewhat less variance than could be expected on the basis of chance. The difference between Models 1 and 2 is that Model 2 defines the effects of economic circumstances in line with Whitten and Palmer (1999), which is on the basis of deviations from neighboring countries, rather than as compared to the past. Defined in this way, there is

a significant negative effect of economic growth. So, in countries where economic growth is small compared to the rest of the EU, citizens tend to give a stronger support to the anti-immigrant party in their country. This is in line with what sociological models predict. The finding for effects of inflation are different from what one could have expected. If inflation is high, anti-immigrant parties lose support. An important finding is that the number of asylum applications in each country does not affect support for anti-immigrant parties. When controlling for economic circumstances, lack of support for democracy seems to have a significant effect on latent support for anti-immigrant parties. This effect fades, however, when the non-significant effect of unemployment is no longer included. Model 3, finally, is the model with only the significant effects included. This model shows that anti-immigrant parties benefit from slow economic growth (compared to the EU-average). In addition, anti-immigrant parties gain somewhat by relatively low levels of inflation.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

The socio-structural model that is tested here was not developed to explain the electoral potential of parties, but to explain their actual success. So, perhaps it performs better if we test the model with electoral success as the dependent variable? Table 3 shows that this is not the case. The results are generally the same as those in Table 2. When economic conditions are defined in terms of changes compared to the previous year, economic conditions exert no effects. Moreover, the influx of asylum seekers in each of the countries, as well as lack of support for democracy does not explain success of anti-immigrant parties. The strongest effect of socio-structural conditions on success of anti-immigrant parties is the effect of relative economic growth. Even though the proportion explained variance of Model 6 is quite low, the estimated effect of economic growth is quite substantial. The model predicts that each percent less economic growth results in 1.9% increase in vote share of the anti-immigrant parties.

To conclude, most of the socio-structural conditions explicated in the literature, do not exert significant effects on for anti-immigrant party support. The only significant effects are from economic growth (where the effect is, as expected, negative) and from inflation (where the predicted effect is, rather unexpected, also negative). The effect of economic growth is substantial, but given the low explanatory power of these models, their performance is weak at best.

6. Tests of the two step model of anti-immigrant party support

In our first step towards the explanation of success (or failure) of anti-immigrant parties, we next explore influences on their electoral potentials. Our first two hypotheses specify which independent variables are expected theoretically to explain the electoral potential of anti-immigrant parties. We first hypothesized that anti-immigrant voting would be affected by the size of the group of citizens with radical right wing ideological preferences. We next hypothesized that anti-immigrant voting would be affected by the extent to which a party is evaluated by the same standards that apply to other parties. We measure this by the effect of left/right proximity on individual preferences for each of the anti-immigrant parties. The results of the regression analysis explaining the electoral potential of these 25 anti-immigrant parties are presented in Table 4.

[TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

On the basis of Table 4 we should conclude that our first two hypotheses are supported empirically, since both effects are significant and in the theoretically predicted direction. The effect of policy evaluation is clearly by far the stronger of the two predictors of the electoral potential, which implies that for an anti-immigrant party to be successful it is essential that voters evaluate it on the basis of its ideology. This means that successful anti-immigrant parties attract much support because of their ideological position. The parties that have failed to generate a large potential are the ones that are to a (much) lesser extent evaluated by their ideologies.

The second effect shown in Table 4 confirms our second hypothesis, which says that the larger the group of radical right wing voters among an electorate, the higher the electoral potential of an anti-immigrant party. The distributions of voters on the ideological dimension are not equal in the various European countries. Hence, the conditions for the development of an anti-immigrant party are quite different. This effect is, however, much weaker than the effect of the other variable, which implies that in each of the European countries there are possibilities for anti-immigrant parties to generate a substantial electoral potential, *if* they manage to present themselves in such a way that they will be evaluated on the basis of their political program.

The analyses in Table 4 showed that *necessary* conditions for the electoral success of anti-immigrant parties are that a substantial group of radical right-wing voters exists, who evaluate the party predominantly by its ideological position. This is not a *sufficient* condition for success, however, because in various cases parties had a large electoral potential without being successful in the elections. Good examples of this are the German Republikaner in 1989 and 1994 and the Wallonian Front National in 1994. Left/right distances were affecting preferences for these parties in the same way as such distances affected preferences for other parties. As a consequence these parties had a rather large electoral potential. Yet, they were very unsuccessful in elections. So the next question is why some parties are successful in mobilizing their potential, whereas others fail to do so? Our explanation is that in some contexts the electoral opportunity structure is more favorable than in others. To explore the effect of the electoral opportunity structure we will perform a series of regression analyses with electoral success as the dependent variable. We start with Model 1, which predicts electoral success by the two variables that explain electoral potential (see Table 4). In Model 2 we add the four variables that are indicative of the electoral opportunity structure (see hypotheses H3 through H6). Measurement of these variables was explained in detail in the methods section. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 5.

[TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE]

The first thing to note about Model 1 in Table 5 is that the two determinants of the electoral potential of anti-immigrant parties, are less strong predictors of their electoral success. The model in Table 4 explains 63% of the variance (adjusted- R^2) in the electoral potential, whereas the explained variance of Model 1 in Table 5 is only 38%. In addition, Model 1 suggests that the size of the group of radical right wing voters in a country would be largely irrelevant to the success of anti-immigrant parties. The poorer performance of Model 1 is in line with our theoretical expectations, because we argued that an additional factor plays an important role in explaining electoral success: the electoral opportunity structure.

Model 2 in Table 5 shows what happens when we add the four variables that represent elements of the opportunity structure. The first thing to note is that Model 2 explains differences in electoral support of anti-immigrant parties extremely well: 80% of the variance in success can be explained by our model. In this model, the magnitude of the group of radical right-wing voters is a very important predictor of success. Particularly if many voters place

themselves at the very right of the ideological spectrum, while the largest mainstream competitor occupies a centrist position, the circumstances are ideal for an anti-immigrant party to become successful. This is the case in, for instance, Flanders.

Not all of our hypotheses are empirically supported in Model 2, however. The findings provide clear support for H1, H2 and H3, which refer to the effects of the three strongest predictors of success. The effect of the extent to which a competing party focuses on the core issues of an anti-immigrant party is weak and statistically not significant. This is to some extent due to the fact that the effect is collinear with the left/right position of the main competitor. But even when the effect of the ideological position of the main competitor is excluded from the analyses, the effect of emphasis on core issues does not reach statistical significance (even though its magnitude increases). The effects of the two remaining variables (proportional representation and the size of the largest competitor) are not statistically significant. Therefore these effects are excluded from the final and most parsimonious model 3, which shows the highly significant effects of three predictors, which together explain 76% of the variance in success.

The three predictors of success of an anti-immigrant party pertain to three different types of actors. The extent to which an anti-immigrant party is evaluated on the basis of its policies – i.e. according to the same standards by which other parties are evaluated – pertains largely to characteristics of the *party itself* and the electoral strategies it pursued. The magnitude of the groups of radical right-wing voters is largely the result of a *political culture* in each of the member states. The fact that this variable has such a strong effect implies that in some countries the breeding ground for the evolution of a radical right wing party is much more fertile than in others. The ideological position of the main competitor is determined by the *strategies of other parties*. At least in the short run, anti-immigrant parties can only influence one of the three factors that determine their success: the extent to which they are evaluated by the same standards as other parties.

When comparing the magnitudes of the beta's in Model 3 with the bivariate correlations in the first column of Table 5, the former tend to be much higher than the latter. The substantive implication of this finding is that each of these factors in isolation will not make an anti-immigrant party electorally successful. Each of these factors is a necessary condition for success. Only when they occur together will an anti-immigrant party become very successful.¹⁰

7. Conclusion and discussion

In this study we developed and tested a model to explain electoral successes (or failures) of anti-immigrant parties (or right-wing populist parties as these are often called) in Western Europe. Most research into electoral support for anti-immigrant parties is conducted within the theoretical framework of the socio-structural model (e.g., Betz 1994, 1998; Lubbers & Scheepers 2000; Knigge 1998; Lubbers et al. 2002), often amplified with notions of protest voting (e.g., Mudde & Van Holsteyn 2000; Betz 1994; Derks & Deschouwer 1998; Swyngedouw 2001). We have argued that the socio-structural developments within the EU are so similar in all member states that those developments cannot explain the enormous differences in aggregate electoral support for anti-immigrant parties. We also argued that it is implausible that anti-immigrant parties would become very successful on the basis of protest voting alone.

We proposed an alternative model to explain aggregate electoral support for anti-immigrant parties. Our explanation of differences in success revolves around two notions. The first notion is that voters—including those who vote for anti-immigrant parties—vote on the basis of policy (or ideological) preferences. Ample evidence exists in support of this notion (e.g., Kitschelt 1995; Eatwell 1998; Van der Brug et al. 2000; Van der Brug & Fennema 2003). The implication is that an anti-immigrant party will have a large *electoral potential* if voters (1) evaluate it largely on the basis of its policies, *and* (2) if a substantial proportion of the voters agree with its political program. The second notion is that the extent to which an electoral potential can be mobilized at actual elections depends upon the competitive environment in which parties operate. We refer to this environment as an *electoral opportunity structure*, and we mainly focus on two aspects: (1) the amount of competition from the largest mainstream right-wing party, and (2) the extent to which a country has a system of proportional representation.

We tested the socio-structural model as well as our model by means of a series of analyses at the level of anti-immigrant parties (N=25). After excluding non-significant effects, the socio-structural model explains 5% of the variance (adjusted-R²) in electoral success of anti-immigrant parties. Our model, based on concepts from political science, explains 76% of this variance, with three predictors: (1) the proportion of voters who place themselves at the extreme right of a left/right continuum, (2) the extent to which preferences for an anti-immigrant party are determined by left/right positions, and (3) the position of the largest

mainstream right-wing party on the left/right continuum. On the basis of our model we can now uncover the causes of the (lack of) success of specific anti-immigrant parties.

Germany has a relatively small proportion of voters who are located at the far extreme on a left/right dimension. An important aspect of German political culture is that its history places a great taboo on right-wing extremism. In that sense the prospects for electoral success of anti-immigrant parties are unfavorable (from the perspective of the anti-immigrant party). However, voters evaluated the Republikaner (a right-wing split from the Bavarian Christian Democrats CSU) mainly by their ideological position in 1989 and 1994. In other words, right-wing voters evaluated the Republikaner as a "normal" party. As a consequence, the party had an intermediate sized electoral potential in those years. The main reason why the Republikaner nevertheless gained almost no electoral support was that its potential voters voted for the larger CDU/CSU. The CDU/CSU was such a strong player at the right side of the political spectrum that the Republikaner could not persuade its latent supporters to vote for them. By 1999 things had changed. At that time the Republikaner were no longer evaluated according to its policies. Future research should look into the causes (such as internal party conflicts) that lead voters to no longer treat the Republikaner as a "normal" party.

In Denmark, a relatively large proportion of the electorate place themselves at the very right end of the political spectrum. In 1989 and 1994 right-wing voters evaluated the Fremskridtspartiet basically by the same standards they used to evaluate other parties. The same thing was true for the Dansk Folkeparti in 1999, which gave those parties a high electoral potential. However, almost all of their potential voters have high preferences for other right-wing parties as well. Because Danish anti-immigrant parties compete with many other parties, they will not benefit much if one of these parties would loose support for whatever reason.

Alleanza Nazionale faces similar competitive conditions, albeit that it mainly faces one strong contestant and not many small ones. Voters find it very easy to switch between Forza Italia and Alleanza Nazionale. If Forza Italia would do poorly - for instance because of legal problems of its leader Berlusconi- Alleanza Nazionale could easily grow much larger. Lega Nord is a special case. Since it is a regionalist party, right-wing voters from the south of Italy consider Alleanza Nazionale a more attractive option for their vote.

Like Germany, Austria does not have very many voters who place themselves at the *extreme* right of the political spectrum, and probably for much the same historical reasons.

But ideological considerations are very strong determinants of preferences for the FPÖ, a reason why this party could generate a very large potential, even though there are not so many radical right-wing voters. In addition, the FPÖ was more successful than any other anti-immigrant party in mobilizing its potential. This is caused by the fact that its main electoral competitor, the Christian Democratic ÖVP is seen as a center party, which implies that the FPÖ basically gathers votes from 'regular' right-wing voters.

Vlaams Blok in Flanders was equally successful in mobilizing its potential for the same reason: it is hardly contested on its own battleground. Because of the fact that the Liberals have moved to the center, and particularly now they have entered a coalition with Socialist and Green parties, the whole right-wing side of the political spectrum in Flanders is open. In 1999 Vlaams Blok was the only party to raise right-wing concerns.

Between 1989 and 1999 the French Front national was less and less evaluated on the basis of its ideology, as a result of which its electoral potential decreased. Internal party conflicts leading to a split in 1998, as well as the fact that the party leader Le Pen was convicted for acts of violence, are plausible causes for the fact that the party was decreasingly evaluated on policy considerations. We can only speculate about the causes of the parties' recovery in 2002, but one of the reasons must have been that the competing Mouvement National of Bruno Megret failed to maintain its electoral support, thus leaving Le Pen as the only anti-immigrant alternative.

Three very unsuccessful parties: the Greek EPEN, the Dutch Centrumdemocraten and the Nationalbewegung from Luxemburg were not only unsuccessful in mobilizing votes, but never had a large potential. Our analyses showed that this is caused by the fact that most voters did not evaluate these parties according to their ideologies. In contrast to other anti-immigrant parties, these parties never managed to become seen by right-wing voters as 'decent' democratic parties. Recent studies of the support of Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF) in 2002 demonstrate that this party attracted mostly policy votes and that general feelings of discontent (expressed by variables such as political cynicism and feelings of political powerlessness) hardly affected the LPF vote (Van Praag 2003; Van der Brug 2003). So these latest developments seem not to refute our model.

The Wallonian Front National, finally, is the only outlier in our analyses. The proportion of Wallonian voters who place themselves at the radical right, is of intermediate size (in a European perspective). In 1994 and 1999 voters evaluated the party to a large extent by its ideology, so that it had a large potential. We cannot explain why it was not able to

mobilize its potential, because its main opponent, the Liberal PRL-FDF, occupies a rather moderate position in the electoral space.

Our study does not tackle the question why some anti-immigrant parties manage to be evaluated by the electorates of their countries as policy parties, whereas others fail to become accepted. In this respect we find important differences between countries as well as within countries over time. Examples of parties for which the basis of evaluation by the electorate has changed dramatically over time are the German Republikaner that has become a *less* accepted party, and the Italian Alleanza Nazionale which became much *more* accepted when it declared itself a post-fascist party and abandoned its previous name MSI; a name that was strongly associated with the Mussolini regime. Case studies probing into party strategy and the counterstrategies of mainstream parties (such as the cordon sanitaire) would be needed to explain such changes over time. To explain the differences among countries in the proportion of voters who place themselves at the radical right would probably also require historical analysis into countries' political cultures, particularly the extent to which pre-existing networks of right-wing and xenophobic organizations provide the opportunities for newly formed anti-immigrant parties to become accepted by the electorate as policy parties. There are large differences in historical experiences and related differences in the political culture of EU countries, which provide more or less fertile breeding grounds for the development of racist or nationalist movements and parties. Future research should shed more light on the origins of the differences in the independent variables of our study.

One important element of the characteristics of anti-immigrant parties is whether these originate from a pre-existing network of right-wing nationalist organizations. This is the case in Italy, France, Austria and Flanders. The basic challenge of leaders of these parties is, on the one hand, to create an image of a modern democratic radical right-wing organization, while at the same time not alienating their more radical nationalist supporters. The leaders of Alleanza Nazionale, FPÖ, and Vlaams Blok have been very successful in doing so, as has the French FN to a lesser extent.

In countries that lack existing networks of right-wing nationalist organizations, such as the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries, the elites of successful anti-immigrant parties tend to be recruited from the *nouveaux riches*. These parties have mobilized support on various populist issues such as anti-tax and, naturally, anti-immigration. Even though such parties may be sometimes successful in the short run, they have difficulties building a

professional party organization. Apart from the causes we have already specified (the size of a right wing electorate, the electoral competition from mainstream right-wing parties), their long term success depends on the availability of political entrepreneurs to build a stable coalition of new layers in society that do not feel represented by the traditional parties. Lubbers et al. (2002) conclude that the availability of a charismatic leader, active cadres and party organization contribute to the electoral success of anti-immigrant parties. However, the way these authors have operationalized the three concepts leaves room for circularity. Especially ‘charismatic leadership’ is a characteristic that is too often derived from electoral success. Likewise, cadres are more often than not attracted by the electoral success of the party. Therefore we find the authors’ construction of the variable ‘extreme-right wing party organizational strength’ from the variables ‘organization’, ‘charisma’ and ‘party strength’ not very convincing (Lubbers et al. 2002: 361). Yet it is worth noticing that even traditional advocates of the socio-structural model now recognize the importance of political variables in explaining extreme-right wing support. “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 (...) are much more successful in national elections.” (Lubbers et al. 2002: 371). Our results strongly support this assertion.

Our findings also have a number of important consequences for the theoretical understanding of anti-immigrant party support. First, our results appear rather devastating to socio-structural models. However, the fact that a model without any socio-structural variables explains the electoral support for anti-immigrant parties so well should not be interpreted to mean that social and economic conditions and developments are irrelevant for the development of these kind of parties. It may be true that such social developments are at the heart of the rise of anti-immigrant parties. Yet, these developments are so *similar* in all EU-countries that they cannot account for the large *differences* in electoral support for anti-immigrant parties that we find in these countries.

Secondly, our results render the protest vote hypothesis implausible as an explanation for the success of anti-immigrant parties. The large anti-immigrant parties attract support largely on the basis of ideological considerations. One could argue of course that ideological considerations could theoretically coincide with desires to protest against the ruling elite in a country. We feel that even though this might well be true, it renders the concept of a protest

vote rather meaningless. Surely, those with right-wing ideological positions will often be critical of a country's policies. If substantive policy-based considerations drive the 'protest', any vote for an opposition party could be called a 'protest vote'.

Thirdly, our analyses generate no evidence that a proportional electoral system helps anti-immigrant parties to obtain popular support, a finding that is consistent with another recent study of Carter (2002). We have to be careful about the political implications of this finding, because our sample of countries could well be biased: it does not include the countries that have no anti-immigrant party successful enough to have been included in our investigation. Also, we have only looked at success in mobilizing public support (i.e., votes). There is no doubt that one member district systems make it virtually impossible for anti-immigrant parties to obtain seats in parliament. However, it is often too easily assumed that systems of proportional representation help anti-immigrant parties (see for instance the interesting discussion between Andeweg (2001) and Lijphart (2001)). The countries in this study vary a lot in terms of proportionality, and within this group of countries there is no evidence that proportionality helps anti-immigrant parties.

Finally, in his important contribution to the field of anti-immigrant parties, Kitschelt (1995) argued that success of anti-immigrant parties depends to a large extent upon the opportunity structure in each country. Because of his research design, he was unable to formally include measures of the opportunity structure in his model. In this study we were able to include such measures, and our findings clearly support Kitschelt on this point.

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TABLES

Table 1: electoral success and electoral potential of anti-immigrant parties

	Electoral success Percentage (N)	Electoral potential	Proportion mobilized
1989 Fremskridtspartit (Denmark)	9.8 (88)	24.9	.39
1989 Front national (France)	6.9 (60)	17.6	.39
1989 Republikaner	5.7 (58)	16.1	.35
1989 EPEN	0.5 (4)	4.1	.12
1989 MSI	3.5 (27)	11.8	.30
1989 Nationalbewegung	1.3 (3)	12.4	.10
1994 Vlaams Blok	13.8 (53)	20.9	.66
1994 Front National (Wallonia)	0.0 (0)	16.2	.00
1994 Fremskridtspartit (Denmark)	3.6 (31)	17.0	.21
1994 Front national (France)	5.9 (47)	16.3	.36
1994 Republikaner	2.6 (20)	11.3	.23
1994 Alleanza Nazionale	12.4 (79)	32.5	.38
1994 Lega Nord	3.7 (24)	20.6	.18
1994 Nationalbewegung	0.4 (2)	6.0	.07
1994 Centrumdemocraten	0.6 (6)	5.0	.12
1999 Vlaams Blok	19.9 (43)	38.2	.52
1999 Front National (Wallonia)	3.3 (6)	13.5	.24
1999 Dansk Folkeparti	5.7 (45)	18.2	.31
1999 Fremskridtspartit (Denmark)	1.7 (13)	11.6	.15
1999 Front national (France)	1.5 (9)	9.9	.15
1999 Republikaner	1.4 (7)	5.0	.28
1999 Alleanza Nazionale	12.7 (374)	32.0	.40
1999 Lega Nord	3.8 (111)	11.4	.33
1999 Centrumdemocraten	0.1 (1)	4.5	.02
1999 FPÖ	26.4 (101)	38.2	.69

Source: European elections Studies 1989, 1994, and 1999.

Table 2: Tests of existing explanations of anti-immigrant party support (dependent variable is electoral potential)

	Regression Model 1			Regression Model 2			Regression Model 3		
	b	SE	Beta	b	SE	Beta	b	SE	Beta
Lack of support for democracy	0.12	0.11	0.28	0.26	.12*	0.60			
Number of asylum applications	9.19	27.59	0.10	7.93	24.67	0.09			
Change in unemployment (in 1 year)	0.03	2.05	0.00						
Change in inflation (in 1 year)	0.69	2.13	0.06						
Economic growth	-1.48	1.13	-0.20						
Relative unemployment				-1.25	0.64	-0.45			
Relative inflation				-1.69	0.42**	-0.35	-1.33	0.39**	-0.28
Relative economic growth				-3.10	1.11**	-0.38	-2.88	1.06**	-0.35
N	25			25			25		
R ²	0.156			0.332			0.158		
Adjusted-R ²	-0.066			0.156			0.081		

One-tailed significance tests (except for the effects of inflation); *: $p < .05$, **: $p < .01$; ***: $p < .001$

Table 3: Tests of existing explanations of anti-immigrant party support (dependent variable is electoral success)

	Regression Model 1			Regression Model 2			Regression Model 3		
	b	SE	Beta	b	SE	Beta	b	SE	Beta
Lack of support for democracy	0.05	0.07	0.17	0.19	0.07*	0.60			
Number of asylum applications	12.13	20.13	0.20	14.23	18.11	0.23			
Change in unemployment (in 1 year)	-0.79	1.50	-0.09						
Change in inflation (in 1 year)	-0.09	1.23	-0.01						
Economic growth	-1.12	0.62*	-0.22						
Relative unemployment				-1.25	0.60	-0.65			
Relative inflation				-0.88	0.36*	-0.27	-0.70	0.28*	-0.21
Relative economic growth				-2.53	1.02*	-0.45	-1.88	0.61**	-0.33
N	25			25			25		
R ²	0.152			0.371			0.126		
Adjusted-R ²	-0.071			0.205			0.047		

One-tailed significance tests (except for the effect of “inflation”); *: p < .05, **: p < .01; ***: p < .001

Table 4: Tests of our explanation of the electoral potential of anti-immigrant parties

	b	SE	Beta
Extent to which a party is evaluated according to its policies	43.08	6.51	.744***
Percentage radical right wing voters in electorate	.379	.201	.215*
N	25		
R ²	0.661		
Adjusted-R ²	0.631		

One-tailed significance tests (except for the effect of “inflation”); *: $p < .05$, **: $p < .01$; ***: $p < .001$

Table 5: Tests of our explanation of the electoral success of anti-immigrant parties

	Bivariate correlations with success	Regression Model 1			Regression Model 2			Regression Model 3		
		b	SE	Beta	b	SE	Beta	b	SE	Beta
Extent to which party is evaluated according to its policies	0.65**	24.41	7.60	0.64**	19.19	5.21	0.51**	17.53	4.83	0.46**
Percentage radical right wing voters in electorate	0.14	0.16	0.20	.106	0.93	0.17	0.63***	0.76	0.13	0.52***
Left/right position of main competitor	-0.56*				-6.44	1.09	-0.84***	-5.74	0.98	-0.75***
Emphasis of main competitor on core issues anti-immigrant party	-0.16				-0.01	.06	-0.02			
Proportional representation	0.13				-1.96	1.21	-0.25			
Size of largest competitor	-0.26				1.98	8.02	0.03			
N	25	25			25			25		
R ²		0.432			0.846			0.789		
Adjusted-R ²	-	0.380			0.795			0.759		

One-tailed significance tests; *: p < .05, **: p < .01; ***: p < .001

Notes

¹ Because two separate party systems exist in Belgium, we treat Flanders and Wallonia separately in this study.

² One could think of various other aspects of success: becoming a government party or obtaining seats in parliament. Our analyses are restricted to an explanation of success and failure in terms of getting *votes*.

³ Lubbers (2001:29-31) asked country experts to indicate the positions of parties on an “immigration restriction” scale, ranging from 0 to 10. The upper extreme 10 was labeled “very restrictive”. The means of the placements by experts was above 9 for all parties included in the analyses, with one notable exception: Alleanza Nazionale (AN). AN was placed at 7.9 on this scale, which is still 1 full point higher than Forza Italia, but not as extremist on immigration as the other parties. It is not certain therefore that it is correct to classify AN as an anti-immigrant party (see also: Griffin 1996; Eatwell 1998). However, since many observers classify AN as a member of the new right-wing populist parties, we decided to include it in our analyses. In the results section we present robustness tests of the analyses, which show that our conclusions do not change if we exclude the AN (see note 10).

⁴ Actually, the authors provide no indication at all of the explanatory power of their models.

⁵ There are other factors that contribute to the inconclusiveness of these findings. Knigge's (1998) study relies on aggregated support for groups of rather incomparable parties, such as the Dutch SGP and Centrumdemocraten (CD) in the Netherlands, and the Belgian Vlaams Blok (VB) and Front National (FN). Even though the Dutch SGP is by all standards a deeply conservative right-wing party, it is in so many important respects different in character from the CD, that the decision to group them together is dubious. Grouping support for the successful VB and the unsuccessful FN together is even more dubious, because a well-specified model should be able to explain why VB is able to attract so much support in Flanders (a very successful economic region), while FN does so poorly (in a region with so many deprived citizens).

⁶ Of course, it is possible (and quite likely) that a substantial portion of those who agree with the policies of anti-immigrant parties *also* feel discontented with the performance of mainstream parties. In that case, an electoral decision that is motivated by ideological or policy preferences may coincide with the desire to punish the political elite. But to the extent that these two motives coincide, it become impossible - as well as conceptually meaningless- to distinguish between "policy voting" and "protest voting" as two qualitatively different categories.

⁷ Kitschelt presents separate logistic regressions for each country to predict the vote for an anti-immigrant party. The parameter estimates cannot really be compared, but close inspection of the results in each country suggests that the effect of ideological positions on the anti-immigrant party vote is stronger for the more successful parties than for the unsuccessful ones.

⁸ We have also used a different estimation of the electoral potentials by means of linear interpolation, which yielded basically the same substantive results. For an in-depth validation of this survey question as an indicator of party utility refer to Tillie, 1995.

⁹ We would like to thank Andrea Volkens of the Berlin Zentrum für Sozialforschung for providing the data for us.

¹⁰ We checked the robustness of Model 3 using a jack-knife procedure, in which each party was removed in turn, and where Model 3 was estimated on the remaining 12 parties. In all 13 estimates the three independent variables

had a significant effect (in the same direction) on the dependent variable success. We may therefore conclude that the effects that we found do not depend upon the inclusion of a specific party.

In addition, we looked for outliers in the analyses. The standard deviation of the residual is 3% and from the 25 cases in the data set, the residuals of 21 cases are within 1 standard deviation. In other words, for these 21 cases, the predicted percentage of votes obtained (predicted by the model) deviate less than 3% from the actual votes it would obtain if elections were held that day. The four largest outliers are: the Wallonian Front National in 1994 and in 1999 (where the model predicts the success to be 5.1% and 8.3% higher than its actual success), FPÖ in 1999 (where the model predicts the success to be 6.7% lower than its actual success), and EPEN in 1989 (where the model predicts the success to be 4.0% lower than its actual success).