

WHY SOME ANTI-IMMIGRANT PARTIES FAIL AND OTHERS SUCCEED A Two-Step Model of Aggregate Electoral Support

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Over the past 2 decades, some anti-immigrant parties have managed to gain substantial electoral support in various European countries, most notably, Austria (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*) and Flanders (*Vlaams Blok*). However, in other countries, the success of such parties either has been insignificant or did not last. The most popular models of support for anti-immigrant parties focus primarily on the demand side of the electoral process. The authors develop a model to explain differences in aggregate-level support for these parties, which also takes into account the supply side. This model builds upon an explanation provided by Kitschelt. The model is tested empirically for 13 European anti-immigrant parties in the period from 1989 to 1999, altogether yielding 25 party-year combinations. The authors test the sociostructural model and their alternative model at the level of political parties. The sociostructural model explains 3% of the variance in success, whereas the authors' model explains 83%.

Keywords: *anti-immigrant parties; extreme right; populism; elections; voting*

In recent elections in various European countries, right-wing populist parties, or anti-immigrant parties as we prefer to call them, have attracted enormous support, most notably, in Austria, Italy, and Flanders.¹ In other countries, such as Germany and Wallonia, this type of party has attracted

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only marginal support. In this study, we explain differences in the success of these parties² (whose vote shares ranged from 0.5% for the *Centrumdemocraten* in 1998 to 27% for the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* [FPÖ] in 1999)—differences that are socially relevant and scientifically important. Such differences are socially relevant because these parties came to the stage on a platform of anti-immigrant and nationalist sentiments. This brought about a shock to the ruling elites and particularly to the mainstream parties. Moreover, these anti-immigrant parties caused much anxiety among those who feared the threat posed by the nationalist politics advocated by extreme right-wing groups. Disagreements about immigration, and the role of anti-immigrant parties, have given rise to some of the most heated and emotionally loaded debates, as well as to political and social conflicts in many societies. From a scientific perspective, the topic is important because the rise of these new challenger parties marked some of the largest changes in the party systems in these countries in the postwar era.

We define anti-immigrant parties as political parties that employ the immigration issue as the core political concern in political campaigns or that are considered by elites of other parties to do so (Fennema, 1997). 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; Swyngedouw, 2001; van der

1. Belgium is a federal state with two completely separate party systems, which means that a Flemish voter cannot vote for a Wallonian party and vice versa. Because Wallonian parties compete among each other for votes of Wallonians and Flemish parties compete among each other for the votes of Flemish citizens, the electoral opportunity structure is bound to be different in the two parts of Belgium. Moreover, economic conditions (unemployment in particular) are very different. For this reason, we treat the two parts of Belgium as two separate systems (see also, e.g., Ackaert, de Winter, & Swyngedouw, 1996).

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, pp. 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 Eatwell, 1998; Griffin, 1996). However, because 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 AN (see Note 10).

Brug, Fennema, & Tillie, 2000). 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. In addition, there are a number of studies that aim to explain differences in success of anti-immigrant parties. These studies focus primarily upon the demand side of the electoral process: grievances of voters that derive from levels of unemployment or the threat of globalization (e.g., Knigge, 1998; Lubbers, 2002; Swank & Betz, 2003).

Inspired by the social movements literature (Gamson, 1975; Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak, & Giugni, 1995; Tarrow, 1983), various scholars have argued that research on the far right should not only focus on the demand side of the electoral process but also take the supply side into account (Koopmans & Kriesi, 1997; Kriesi, 1999; Minkenberg, 2003a). A focus on the supply side would focus upon characteristics of the anti-immigrant parties themselves, as well as on the *political opportunity structure* in which they compete with other parties for votes (see also Bale, 2003; Kitschelt, 1995). However, no studies exist that have systematically estimated the effects of the characteristics of anti-immigrant parties themselves and the effects of competition from other parties on their electoral success.

In this article, we develop a theoretical model to explain differences in the success of anti-immigrant parties, and we test this model empirically for 13 anti-immigrant parties over the period from 1989 to 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 explanations proposed by others that focus exclusively upon the demand side of elections, and we then demonstrate that our model explains differences in success much better than these alternative approaches. Before discussing our research design, we first discuss the theoretical notions that underpin this study.

EXPLANATIONS OF ANTI-IMMIGRANT PARTY SUPPORT

Different disciplinary approaches tend to emphasize different types of root causes for the rise of the radical right: socioeconomic variables (in the sociostructural 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 sociostructural models of voting (e.g., Betz, 1994, 1998; Knigge, 1998; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2000). 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, which is the reason why Betz (2002) has now abandoned it.

Sociostructural 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, Scheepers, & Billiet, 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 and 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 and Lubbers et al. found that high levels of migration increase the support for anti-immigrant parties, whereas Lubbers and Scheepers 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.⁴ To explain differences in aggregate-level support for anti-immigrant parties, sociostructural 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

4. 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 *Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij* (SGP) and *Centrumpdemocraten* (CD) in the Netherlands and the Belgian *Vlaams Blok* (VB) and the French 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), whereas FN does so poorly (in a region with so many deprived citizens).

these structural 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 (Betz, 1994; Derks & Deschouwer, 1998; Martin, 1996; Mayer & Perrineau, 1992; Mudde & Van Holsteyn, 2000; 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 *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI), the Austrian FPÖ, and the French Front National originate—at least partly—from an antidemocratic (or even Fascist or National Socialist) tradition. Other parties, such as the *Vlaams Blok* and the Dutch Centrumdemocraten, have a cadre that consists partially of people who have been convicted for violent political actions, denying the Holocaust, and so on. Citizens who support extreme-right-wing and antidemocratic 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 (Dalton, 1996; Klingemann, 1999; Thomassen, 1995), an antidemocratic 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 and Scheepers (2000, p. 69) introduce protest votes as follows: “Political attitudes . . . are expected to be of minor importance” (see also, Kitschelt, 1995; Mayer & Perrineau, 1992; 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 & Fennema, 2003; van der Eijk, Franklin, & Marsh, 1996). We have evidence that the political elites in all Western European countries consider anti-immigrant parties as dangerous political outcasts (see Fennema, 2000, 2004; Fennema & Maussen, 2000, 2004; Rydgren, 2004). If, therefore, some voters want to use their vote to punish the elite—that is, 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 as long as 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 such protest voters. Therefore, we consider it highly implausible that an anti-immigrant party would be successful on the basis of protest votes alone.⁵

Notions of protest voting, as well as some sociostructural 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. Yet the concept of protest vote can also be given a rational meaning, under the assumption that a protest voter wants to vote “with the boot” (van der Eijk, Franklin, & Marsh, 1996). This is how we will use it: as an attempt by the voter to scare the political establishment.

A study of Lubbers, Gijsberts, and Scheepers’s (2002) is one of the few that show empirically that charismatic personalities of political leaders are important predictors of the vote for anti-immigrant parties. The 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 Lubbers et al. study 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.

Third, 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

5. 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 becomes impossible—as well as conceptually meaningless—to distinguish between “policy voting” and “protest voting” as two qualitatively different categories.

rationally for what they consider a racist or neofascist 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. Other studies also showed that policy preferences were the strongest predictors of voting for anti-immigrant parties (e.g., Eatwell, 1998; Kitschelt, 1995; Mughan & Paxton, 2003; Ivarsflaten, in press). 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, p. 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 *Fremskridtspartiet* 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, that is, *on whether the propensity to vote for the particular party depends on its ideological positions*.⁶ This will be one of the key elements in the theoretical framework we develop below to explain differences in success of anti-immigrant parties.

6. Kitschelt (1995) 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.

Finally, in the political opportunity structure, the focus shifts from an analysis of the demand side of the electoral process (demands and grievances of voters) to the supply side (characteristics of parties and party competition). Inspired by the social movements literature (Gamson, 1975; Kriesi et al., 1995; Tarrow, 1983), various scholars have suggested that research on the far right should take the political opportunity structure into account (Kitschelt, 1995; Koopmans & Kriesi, 1997; Kriesi, 1999). However, none of these studies have systematically estimated the effects of a political opportunity structure on the success of anti-immigrant parties. In this study, we focus on two aspects of the political opportunity structure: (a) the degree of electoral competition anti-immigrant parties face and (b) the institutional arrangement by which votes are translated into seats (e.g., Andeweg, 2001; Carter, 2002; Lijphart, 2001).⁷

EXPLAINING SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF ANTI-IMMIGRANT PARTIES

A TWO-STEP MODEL OF ELECTORAL SUPPORT FOR ANTI-IMMIGRANT PARTIES

In line with the way Anthony Downs (1957, pp. 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 Western European countries consider more than one party attractive (van der Eijk & 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 consider other parties (slightly) more attractive. To understand why some parties fail and others succeed, we must therefore not only consider the actual votes that parties receive but also their electoral potential (which is the group of voters who consider the party an attractive voting option). The first step in the two-step model of voting is thus a process in which voters determine for each party how attractive it is (how much utility they would derive from a vote for each).

7. Other aspects of the opportunity structure—particularly repression of the Far Right (see, e.g., van der Brug & van Spanje, 2004; Minkenberg, 2003b)—are not considered in this study.

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 his or her vote if there are no other parties that he or she considers more attractive (yield a higher utility). However, if he or she considers Party B even slightly more attractive, he or she will vote for Party B, and his or 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. Because small radical parties are particularly vulnerable to the competition they face from other parties, we can understand their (lack of) electoral success only by taking both stages into account. Below, we spell out the notions of electoral potential and electoral opportunity structure.

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 voting option. If all voters who consider a party attractive also 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 were to 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, whereas all voters who prefer Party B find all parties except Party B unattractive, and so on. This would be a party system without competition. In such a party system, 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, 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 an anti-immigrant party, its electoral potential is small. If a significant group of voters supports 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 elec-

toral potential. This is the case if many voters perceive a party as a repository for protest votes. This is the case if the party is considered as racist or “uncivic” by the political establishment. 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 have a large electoral potential only 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,⁸ so that voters are willing to evaluate it by the same standards as they apply to evaluate other parties (i.e., its policies), *and* if a substantial proportion of the voters agree with its political program, it can generate a large electoral potential. We thus hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1: The electoral potential of an anti-immigrant party depends on the extent to which it is evaluated by its policies. When these parties are evaluated by their policies, the electoral potential will be high; when different standards apply, the electoral potential will be low.

Hypothesis 2: 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.

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 to vote 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 Method section).

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.

8. This argument is similar to the one made by Goulder (2003), who distinguishes between populist and neofascist parties. He shows that different factors affect the fortunes of both kinds of parties. A drawback of his approach is that he deductively categorizes parties as either populist or neofascist, which is somewhat arbitrary. In our approach, we measure inductively the extent to which parties are seen by voters as “normal” parties. Unfortunately, we only became aware of Goulder’s study in the final editing stage of publishing this article, so that it was impossible to refer to his study more prominently. In the future, we will explore whether the insights obtained from his approach help improve upon our model.

Table 1
Electoral Success and Electoral Potential of Anti-Immigrant Parties

	Electoral Success ^a	Electoral Potential ^b	Proportion Mobilized
1989			
Fremskridtspartiet (Denmark)	7.7	24.9	.31
Front National (France)	11.7	17.6	.66
Republikaner	4.6	16.1	.29
EPEN	0.7	4.1	.17
Movimento Sociale Italiano	5.7	11.8	.48
Nationalbewegung	2.9	12.4	.23
1994			
Vlaams Blok	11.7	20.9	.56
Front National (Wallonia)	4.6	16.2	.28
Fremskridtspartiet (Denmark)	6.4	17.0	.38
Front National (France)	10.5	16.3	.64
Republikaner	1.9	11.3	.17
Alleanza Nazionale	13.5	32.5	.42
Lega Nord	8.4	20.6	.41
Nationalbewegung	2.4	6.0	.40
Centrumdemocraten	2.5	5.0	.50
1999			
Vlaams Blok	15.3	38.2	.40
Front National (Wallonia)	4.1	13.5	.30
Dansk Folkeparti	8.9	18.2	.49
Fremskridtspartiet (Denmark)	1.8	11.6	.16
Front National (France)	5.7	9.9	.58
Republikaner	1.5	5.0	.30
Alleanza Nazionale	13.5	32.0	.42
Lega Nord	6.4	11.4	.56
Centrumdemocraten	0.6	4.5	.13
FPÖ	26.9	38.2	.70

a. Estimated percentage of votes, based on national election outcomes in the elections prior to the year of data collection and the elections after the year of data collection (see text for details).

b. Taken from European Elections Studies 1989, 1994, and 1999 (see text for details).

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 Fremskridtspartiet in 1989 with the French Front National in 1989 or with the Flemish Vlaams Blok in 1994 and look at the percentage of voters, we would conclude that the Fremskridtspartiet had less popular support than the other two parties. However, the Fremskridtspartiet had a substantially higher electoral potential. Front National and Vlaams Blok were more successful because they mobilized their electoral potentials 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 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 or her vote to affect public policies, it may not always be rational to vote for the party with which he or she 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 his or her best option (see also Tillie, 1995; van der Eijk & Franklin, 1996). Because 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 on the competition they face from large (right-wing) parties. Particularly when a strong conservative party, such as the Dutch *Volkspartij Voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (VVD), the German Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (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:

Hypothesis 3: The extent to which an anti-immigrant party can mobilize its potential decreases with the size of its mainstream right-wing competitor.

Hypothesis 4: 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.

Hypothesis 5: The extent to which an anti-immigrant party can mobilize its potential increases if its mainstream right-wing competitor moves toward the center of the party space.

The competition anti-immigrant parties face from right-wing competitors will matter most when policy considerations are important for the evaluation of anti-immigrant parties. Conversely, when citizens do not evaluate an anti-immigrant party by its policies, the policy positions of its competitors should not matter much. We thus hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 6: There will be an interaction effect between (a) the extent to which an anti-immigrant party is evaluated by its policies and (b) the ideological position of the mainstream right-wing competitor. The effects of both variables will amplify each other.

Other elements of the electoral opportunity structure are 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 the following:

Hypothesis 7: 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. However, her independent variables are restricted to institutional arrangements (such as the proportional-representation system and the absence of electoral thresholds), so that it is possible that her model is misspecified by not controlling for other variables. We will therefore test Hypothesis 7 in a multivariate model.

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, 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 as follows: left/right positions of parties and of 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. Because the required data are available in the European Elec-

tions Studies 1989, 1994, and 1999 (Marsh & Norris, 1997; Schmitt & Mannheimer, 1991; van der Eijk, Franklin, & Schmitt, 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: *Fremskridts-partiet* 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; *Nationalbewegung* 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. 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 that parties have received in national elections. However, the fieldwork of the European Elections Studies was not done in the context of national elections. In some cases, the fieldwork was done shortly after a national election; in other cases, it was right before one. We therefore estimated the electoral success of anti-immigrant parties (see Table 1) on the

9. When national elections were held in the year of the data collection, we used the results of this national election to indicate the success of a party. In 1989, the German *Republikaner* had not yet participated in any national election. To estimate its success, we took the average of its 1989 result of the European election (7.1%) and its first performance in a national election (2.1% in 1990). The last time the Greek party EPEN ran in a national election was in 1985, when it received only 0.6% of the votes. In 1989, it obtained 0.8% of the votes in the European elections. To estimate its success, we also averaged these two results. Estimating the success of parties in France was the toughest nut to crack because French elections are decided in a single-member district system with two rounds of elections. In the second round, only the most successful candidates participate. If we take the votes from the first round, we would not get a realistic perception of the success of the French FN, because the first round is in most constituencies inconsequential, thus providing all sorts of opportunities for protest voting, and so on. This would not provide a

basis of the national elections preceding and following the European elections survey. As a case in point, the Danish Fremskridtspartiet obtained 9% of the votes in the national elections of 1988, and it obtained 6.4% of the votes in the early-called elections of 1990. In all cases, we assumed that gains or losses were linear over time. So, in this case, the party lost 2.6% of the votes over a two-year period, so that we estimated the loss in the first year to be 1.3%. Consequently, we estimated its success in 1989 at 7.7%.⁹

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

basis for obtaining valid estimate of the effect of proportionality of the vote system on the success of anti-immigrant parties. The percentages of votes obtained in the second round are, on the other hand, not comparable to the percentages of votes obtained by anti-immigrant parties in other countries, because in many electoral districts, the FN does not run in the second round. We therefore decided to use the votes obtained in the European elections as the best (and in this case most comparable) indicators of the electoral success of FN. To test the robustness of our results, we tested our model also by employing a different measure of electoral success: 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. If we employ this dependent variable, the fit of our final model is slightly better than when we test it on the basis of real election outcomes (the adjusted R^2 improves from 83.0% to 86.1% explained variance). The substantive conclusions remain the same.

higher to an anti-immigrant party consider the party an attractive option to vote for.¹⁰

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 show that in each of the countries that we investigate, left/right distances are the strongest determinant of party choice (van der Eijk, Franklin, & Marsh, 1996; van der Eijk, Franklin, & van der Brug, 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 proximity on preferences for this party. The procedure by which we derived our measure is explained in the appendix.

The left/right position of the anti-immigrant parties' primary mainstream electoral competitor. Data come from European Elections Studies 1989, 1994, and 1999. In these surveys, respondents are asked to indicate the positions of a set of prominent parties on a 10-point scale of which the extremes are labeled *left* (1) and *right* (10). To measure this independent variable, we used the median of respondents' perceptions of the position on the left/right scale of the largest mainstream party of the Right.

The proportion of radical right-wing voters. Data come from European Elections Studies 1989, 1994, and 1999. The variable is measured by the percentage of respondents who placed themselves on positions 8, 9, or 10 on the 10-point left/right scale.

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

The extent to which this primary competitor embraces the core issues of anti-immigrant parties. Data are obtained from the “Comparative Studies of Party Manifestos” (Budge et al., 2001).¹¹ 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. This 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. 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 on 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 their 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 of 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, p. 52) who use deviations from the average for all industrialized democracies. According to them, comparative measures of economic performance

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

are better able to capture how economic conditions translate into party evaluations than are absolute measures. In the analyses below, we 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 not available for all EU countries, and to the extent that they are available, the official statistics are not comparable (Knigge, 1998, p. 275, note 8). However, for all EU countries and for the whole period of 1989 to 1999, information is available about the number of refugees applying for asylum (Eurostat, 2001). Because previous research showed that information about asylum seekers and immigration was highly collinear and led to the same substantive conclusions (Knigge, 1998), we will include data on asylum applications in the data set. The variable is 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 is the percentage of respondents who are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works.

ESTIMATION PROCEDURE

All variables are measured at interval levels, so that the models can be estimated with simple OLS regressions. The sample consists of 13 anti-immigrant parties, some of which are included only once, whereas others are included three times. The combination of time and party yields 25 observations. Because 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.

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 seven 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. Sociostructural 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 Method 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.

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 with the past. Defined in this way, there is a significant negative effect of economic growth. So, in countries where economic growth is small compared with the rest of the European Union, citizens tend to give a stronger support to the anti-immigrant party in their country. This is in line with what sociostructural 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 nonsignificant 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 with the EU average). In addition, anti-immigrant parties gain somewhat by relatively low levels of inflation.

The sociostructural model that is tested here was not developed to explain the electoral potential of parties but to explain their actual success. So, per-

Table 2
Tests of Existing Explanations of Anti-Immigrant Party Support^a

	Regression Model 1			Regression Model 2			Regression Model 3		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
Lack of support for democracy	0.12	0.11	0.28	0.26	0.12*	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
<i>N</i>							25		25
<i>R</i> ²							0.332		0.158
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²							-0.066		0.081

Note: One-tailed significance tests (except for the effects of inflation).

a. Dependent variable is electoral potential.

p* < .05. *p* < .01.

haps 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 with the previous year (Model 1), 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. In Model 2, two significant effects were observed (for lack of support for democracy and for relative inflation). However, once the nonsignificant effects are excluded from the model, these effects also turn out to be not significant. So, in our small sample ($n = 25$) the sociostructural conditions explicated in the literature cannot explain the differences in success of anti-immigrant parties.

TESTS OF THE TWO-STEP MODEL OF ANTI-IMMIGRANT PARTY SUPPORT

In our first step toward 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.

On the basis of Table 4, we should conclude that our first two hypotheses are supported by the data because both effects are significant and in the theoretically predicted direction. The effect of policy evaluation is 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 of their 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

Table 3
Tests of Existing Explanations of Anti-Immigrant Party Support^a

	Regression Model 1			Regression Model 2		
	b	SE	β	b	SE	β
Lack of support for democracy	0.06	0.06	0.20	0.14	0.06*	0.51
Number of asylum applications	2.33	14.87	0.04	5.04	15.14	0.09
Change in unemployment (in 1 year)	-1.14	1.32	-0.15			
Change in inflation (in 1 year)	-1.08	1.52	-0.14			
Economic growth	-0.72	0.65	-0.15			
Relative unemployment				-0.68	0.58	-0.40
Relative inflation				-0.93	0.32*	-0.31
Relative economic growth				-1.53	1.17	-0.30
<i>N</i>						25
<i>R</i> ²						0.231
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²						0.028

Note: One-tailed significance tests.

a. Dependent variable is electoral success.

**p* < .05.

Table 4
Tests of Our Explanation of the Electoral Potential of Anti-Immigrant Parties

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
Extent to which a party is evaluated according to its policies	43.08	6.51	0.744***
Percentage of radical right-wing voters in electorate	0.379	0.201	0.215*
<i>N</i>	25		
<i>R</i> ²	0.661		
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	0.631		

Note: One-tailed significance tests.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

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 there exist a substantial group of radical right-wing voters, 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 are some parties 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 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 variables that are indicative of the electoral opportunity structure (see Hypotheses 3-7). Measurement of these variables was explained in detail in the method section. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 5.

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 pre-

Table 5
Tests of Explanation of the Electoral Success of Anti-Immigrant Parties

	Bivariate Correlations With Success		Regression Model 1		Regression Model 2		Regression Model 3	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	β	<i>b</i>	β	<i>b</i>	β
Extent to which party is evaluated according to its policies	0.66**	7.24	22.03	0.67**	20.66	0.63***	21.28	0.65***
Percentage of radical right-wing voters in electorate	0.07	0.28	-0.09	-0.07	0.46	0.35**	0.50	0.38**
Left/right position of main competitor	-0.49*				-4.72	-0.68***	-4.99	-0.72***
Extent to which a party is evaluated according to its policies—left/right position of main competitor	-0.15				-9.39	-0.30***	-9.91	-0.32***
Emphasis of main competitor on core issues of anti-immigrant party	-0.28				-0.03	0.10	-0.03	
Proportional representation	0.02				-1.26	0.45	-0.18*	
Size of largest competitor	-0.39				-10.25	7.42	0.19	
<i>N</i>	25				25	25	25	25
<i>R</i> ²					0.441	0.895	0.858	
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²					0.390	0.852	0.830	

Note: One-tailed significance tests (except for the effect of proportional representation).
 * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

dictors 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 39%. 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 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 very well: 85% of the variance in success can be explained by our model. Moreover, most (but not all) of our hypotheses are empirically supported. The extent to which anti-immigrant parties are evaluated on the basis of their policies is a strong determinant of their electoral success (Hypothesis 1). Also, the magnitude of the group of radical right-wing voters is an important predictor of success (Hypothesis 2). Third, there is a strong negative effect of the left/right position of the largest mainstream competitor. So, if the largest mainstream competitor occupies a centrist position, anti-immigrant parties are more successful than when the ideological position of the competitor is more pronouncedly leaning toward the right (Hypothesis 5). Finally, there is a negative interaction effect between the extent to which an anti-immigrant party is evaluated by its policies and the ideological position of the mainstream right-wing competitor. As predicted, the left/right position of the competitor matters most to voters if they evaluate an anti-immigrant party by its policies (Hypothesis 6).

Not all of our hypotheses are supported by the data, however. The effect of the size of the largest mainstream competitor is in the theoretically expected direction, but it is weak and statistically not significant (Hypothesis 3). This is also the case for the effect of the extent to which a competing party focuses on the core issues of an anti-immigrant party (Hypothesis 4). 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). Finally, the effect of proportional representation is also in the theoretically expected direction, and it is statistically significant in Model 2. However, once the two insignificant effects are excluded from the model, the effect of proportional representation turns out to be not significant. Therefore, the three effects (pertaining to the three hypotheses that are not supported) are excluded from the final and most parsimonious Model 3, which

shows the highly significant effects of three main effects and one interaction effect. These explain 83% of the variance in success.

The predictors of success of anti-immigrant parties pertain to three different types of actors. The extent to which an anti-immigrant party is evaluated on the basis of its policies—that is, according to the same standards by which other parties are evaluated—pertains largely to characteristics of the party itself and to the electoral strategies it pursued. The magnitude of the groups of radical right-wing voters reflects differences among the electorates in each of the member states. The fact that this variable has 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 influence only 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 betas 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.¹²

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 sup-

12. To avoid multicollinearity, we centered the variables in the models around their mean values before computing the interactions (e.g., Aiken & West, 1991; Jaccard, Turrissi, & Wan, 1990). Because the lowest tolerance level for the predictors in Model 3 is 0.648, we may conclude that multicollinearity is not a problem here. We also 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 four independent variables had a significant effect (in the same direction as the model tested for all parties) 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 2.3%, and the mean of the absolute values of the residual is 1.9%. So, on average, the estimated success deviates only 1.9% from the observed success. Moreover, it turned out that in only 2 of the 25 cases, the residual was larger than 3%. The two cases are the German Republikaner in 1994 (where the model predicts the success to be 4.5% higher than its actual success) and the Wallonian Front National in 1999 (where the model predicts the success to be 4.3% higher than its actual success).

port for anti-immigrant parties focuses primarily upon the demand side of elections: grievances of citizens. Much of this research is conducted within the theoretical framework of the sociostructural model (e.g., Betz, 1994, 1998; Knigge, 1998; Lubbers, Gijsberts, & Scheepers, 2002; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2000), often amplified with notions of protest voting (e.g., Betz, 1994; Derks & Deschouwer, 1998; Mudde & Van Holsteyn, 2000; Swyngedouw, 2001). We have argued that the sociostructural developments within the European Union 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 therefore proposed an alternative model to explain aggregate electoral support for anti-immigrant parties that does not focus on only the demand side of elections but also upon the supply side (characteristics of parties and competition between parties). We are not the first to suggest that we ought to focus on party competition (e.g., Kitschelt, 1995; Koopmans & Kriesi, 1997; Kriesi, 1999), but this study is the first attempt to develop a model that explicitly includes the supply side and that lends itself to empirical testing.

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., Eatwell, 1998; Kitschelt, 1995; 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 (a) evaluate it largely on the basis of its policies and (b) 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: (a) the amount of competition from the largest mainstream right-wing party and (b) the extent to which a country has a system of proportional representation.

We tested the sociostructural model as well as our own model by means of a series of analyses at the level of anti-immigrant parties ($n = 25$). The sociostructural model explains 3% of the variance (adjusted R^2) in electoral success of anti-immigrant parties. Our model explains 83% of this variance, with four predictors: (a) the proportion of voters who place themselves at the far right of a left/right continuum, (b) the extent to which preferences for an anti-immigrant party are determined by left/right positions, (c) the position of the largest mainstream right-wing party on the left/right continuum, and

(d) the interaction between the second and third independent variable. 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 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 an 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 1994.¹³ 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 it. By 1999, things had changed. At that time, the Republikaner was no longer evaluated according to its policies. Future research should look into the causes (such as internal party conflicts) that led voters to no longer treat the Republikaner as a normal party.

In Denmark, a relatively large proportion of the electorate places itself at the very right end of the political spectrum.¹⁴ 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 (see Table 1). 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 lose support for whatever reason.

Alleanza Nazionale faces similar competitive conditions, although it faces one strong contestant rather than many small ones. Voters find it very easy to switch between Forza Italia and Alleanza Nazionale. If Forza Italia

13. This information is not presented in the text. The effect of left/right distance on preferences for the Republikaner is $-.468$ in 1989 and $-.454$ in 1994 (unstandardized regression coefficients from multiple regressions). The results of a pooled analysis of preferences for all significant parties in the European Union are reported by van der Eijk and Franklin (1996, p. 357). In those analyses, the effect of left/right distances on party preferences is $-.421$. We may thus conclude that ideological considerations were just as important in determining preferences for the Republikaner in these years as they are in determining preferences for most political parties. In 1999, the effect had dropped to $-.178$.

14. Across the countries that we study here, the average is 17.7%; in Denmark, this number is 28.7% in 1989, 23.3% in 1994, and 21.7% in 1999.

would do poorly—for instance because of the legal problems of its leader Berlusconi—Alleanza Nazionale could easily grow much larger. Lega Nord is a special case. Because 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 (14.6%), 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, the whole right-wing side of the political spectrum in Flanders is open (the median respondent perceived the Liberals at 6.9 on a 10-point left/right scale in 1989, at 6.1 in 1994, and at 5.0 in 1999). 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 (the effect of left/right distance decreased from $-.514$ in 1989, to $-.471$ in 1994, and to $-.302$ in 1999). Internal party conflicts leading to a split in 1998, as well as the fact that 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 party’s 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 Luxembourg—were not only unsuccessful in mobilizing votes but also 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 der Brug, 2003; van Praag, 2003). These latest developments seem not to refute our model.

The Wallonian Front National, then, 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 (see Table 1). We cannot explain why it did so poorly at mobilizing its potential, because its main opponent, the Liberal *Parti Réformateur Libéral–Front Démocratique des Francophones* (PRL-FDF), occupies a rather moderate position on the left/right scale (7.2 in 1994 and 6.0 in 1999).

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 postfascist 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 *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 preexisting 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 preexisting network of right-wing nationalist organizations. This is the case in Italy, France, Austria, and Flanders. The basic challenge of the leaders of these parties is, on one hand, to create an image of a modern democratic radical right-wing organization, while 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 Front National 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, p. 361). Yet it is worth noting that even Marcel Lubbers and Peer Scheepers, traditional advocates of the sociostructural 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 favorable party characteristics . . . are much more successful in national elections” (Lubbers et al., 2002, p. 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 analyses did not generate support for sociostructural models. However, the fact that a model without any sociostructural 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 even 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.

Second, 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 derive the "protest," any vote for an opposition party could be called a protest vote.

Third, 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 looked only 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 (see also Koopmans & Kriesi, 1997; Kriesi, 1999). So far, others have not included measures of the opportunity structure in their models. In this study, we were able to include such measures, and our findings clearly support the notion that the opportunity structure is important for the success of anti-immigrant parties.

APPENDIX

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 1989, 1994, and 1999. In these surveys, respondents are asked to indicate their own position on a 10-point left/right scale, on which only the extremes are labeled (1 = *left* and 10 = *right*). Respondents were also asked to indicate where each of the parties is located on this dimension. Ideological distances (left/right distances) between each voter and an anti-immigrant party are computed by taking the absolute difference

Table A1
Regression to Explain Electoral Preferences for the French Front National in 1999

	Unstandardized Regression Coefficients	Standard Error	β
Left/right distance	-0.302	0.039	-0.356***
Working class	0.377	0.416	0.061
Lower middle class	-0.118	0.473	-0.014
Middle class	0.072	0.362	0.018
Upper middle class	-0.338	0.402	-0.060
Upper class	-0.486	0.496	-0.054
Roman Catholic	-0.268	0.185	-0.064
Protestant	-1.205	0.777	-0.062
Orthodox	-0.433	1.451	-0.012
Jewish	-0.007	0.752	0.000
Muslim	-1.377	0.977	-0.057
Attendance of religious services	-0.182	0.074	-0.105*
Membership of the EU is a good thing	-0.049	0.226	-0.010
Respondent is willing to make a personal sacrifice to help citizens from other EU countries	-0.825	0.360	-0.105*
European unification should be pushed further	0.266	0.179	0.063
Importance of European integration	-0.409	0.140	0.138**
Importance of immigration	0.329	0.146	-0.101*
Importance of economy	0.158	0.191	-0.041
Importance of environment	0.201	0.186	-0.052
Satisfaction with democracy	-0.229	0.115	-0.082*
Constant	3.855	0.666	
Adjusted R^2	0.171		
N	534		

between the position of each voter on the left/right scale and the position if the anti-immigrant party.

In a next step, we conducted 25 regression analyses, one for each of the anti-immigrant parties, 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 (social class, religion, attitudes toward the European Union, a set of issue priorities, and satisfaction with democracy), as well as left/right distances. As an exemplary case, Table A1 presents the results of one of the 25 regression analyses: the one for the French Front National in 1999.

As can be seen in Table A1, the strongest predictor of preferences for Front National is left/right distance. The dependent variable and the independent variable left/right distance are technically speaking ordinal measurements. Because they are measured with 10-point scales, there is no reason to suspect that the regression coefficients are biased, so that we may employ OLS. To measure the extent to which the electorates evaluate each of the 25 anti-immigrant parties according to their policies, we used the unstandardized regression coefficients of the effect of left/right distance on party preference and multiplied these values (which were all negative) by -1 . The value of Front National 1999 is thus 0.302. The values of this variable range from 0.096 (EPEN in 1989) to 0.746 (Fremskridtspartiet in 1989), with a mean of 0.387 and a standard deviation of 0.138. The adjusted R^2 s of the 25 multiple regressions range from 9% (Centrumdemocraten in 1999) to 42.9% (Nationalbewegung in 1989) with an average of 24.1% and a standard deviation of 10.2%. In most countries, the samples consist of 1,000 respondents, but in 1989, the sample from Luxembourg consisted of only 300 respondents and in 1994 of 500 respondents. In 1999, a smaller sample ($n = 500$) was drawn in Belgium (274 in Flanders and 226 in Wallonia).

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