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Abstract: Like in many other European countries, the political system has undergone rapid changes in Sweden as a radical right-wing party – The Sweden Democrats (SD) – has grown from a negligible position into one of the country's largest parties. SD has been winning voters from both the right and the left sides of the political spectrum, and particularly from Sweden's two largest parties, the Conservative Party (Moderaterna, M) and the Social Democratic Party (S). The present study investigated the extent to which SD voters that previously voted for one of these two parties differ from each other, as well as compared these SD voters with current Conservative Party and Social Democratic voters. Results showed that 1) economic deprivation offers a better explanation for the past mobility from S, than from M, to the SD; 2) no group differences were found between previous M and S voters in attitudes connected to the appeal of an anti-establishment party; and 3) views on the profile issues espoused by the radical right, most importantly opposition to immigration, did not differ between SD voters who come from M and S. However, SD voters – particularly SD voters who previously voted for the Social Democratic party – differed from the voters of their previous parties in several aspects. It is thus possible that many SD voters will not return to the parties they previously voted for, at least as long as the immigration issue continues to be of high salience in the society.

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Since the 1980s, new radical right-wing parties have emerged and become established in several stable democracies in Europe. In Sweden, the Sweden Democrats (SD) has rapidly grown from a negligible position into the country's third largest party. SD was founded in 1988 but did not enter the national parliament until the 2010 election, in which it gained 5.7% of the votes. In the elections of 2014 and 2018, the party gained 12.9% and 17.5% of the votes, respectively. SD has been winning voters from both the right and the left sides of the political spectrum, and particularly from Sweden's two largest parties, the Social Democratic Party (S) and the Conservative Party (The Moderate Party; M) (Oscarsson 2016). In this paper, we investigate the extent to which SD voters that previously voted for the Social Democrats differ from SD voters that previously voted for the Conservative Party: two parties that tend to attract voters with vastly different sociopolitical preferences. We also compare these SD voters with current Social Democrat and Conservative Party voters. These analyses aim to shed light on the reasons why SD voters have left their previous parties and to assess the likelihood that they might return to the parties they used to vote for before SD.

Re-emergence of the radical right

Radical right-wing parties, SD included, share some central characteristics (Rydgren 2007, 2018; Mudde 2007). First and foremost, they hold a nationalist ideology and their political programs aim at making the nation ethnically more homogeneous. This ethnonationalism is rooted in nostalgic myths about the past, combined with a view of a nation in decline due to immigration and internationalism. These parties also tend to be conventional and authoritarian (endorse traditional values, desire social order and conformity, and promote demands for more law-and-order: Altemeyer 1981) and use populist anti-establishment rhetoric (Rydgren 2007; Mudde 2007). At least four societal factors have been shown to enable the success of the radical right in different cultural contexts (Rydgren 2002):

Firstly, class voting has been declining throughout the Western world, enabling the radical right to mobilize working-class voters who used to vote in accordance with their social class identity

(Oskarson & Demker 2015; Inglehart & Norris 2017).

Secondly, many countries have seen a realignment in which the sociocultural dimension has increased in salience, at the expense of the socioeconomic axis of conflict (Rydgren 2002; Kriesi et al. 2008; Bornschieer 2018). This tends to benefit radical right-wing parties, as their profile issues belong to the sociocultural dimension (Oesch 2008). In Sweden, for example, there has been a marked increase in the degree to which voters consider immigration – SD’s core issue – to be an important political issue. In 2010, only 19% of the Swedish voters considered immigration to be an important political issue; in 2014 this proportion had increased to 27% and in 2015 to 53% (Bergström & Oscarsson 2015; Demker & van der Meiden 2016).

Thirdly, voters are less likely to vote for alternative parties if they can easily find policy alternatives among mainstream parties (Rydgren 2002). Across the Western world parties have been converging across the left-right divide on socioeconomic issues (Kitschelt 2018). In Sweden, this process has further intensified since 2006 when the center-right coalition Alliance¹ was established. Such converging may lead voters to perceive all mainstream parties as being very similar, thereby contributing to a depolitization of the traditional socioeconomic issues and increasing salience of (and voting based on) sociocultural issues (Rydgren & van der Meiden 2018).

Finally, to succeed, the radical right-wing party usually cannot be perceived as being too extreme, because people may be reluctant to vote for explicitly racist or non-democratic parties even if they would support many of their core issues (Rydgren 2002). SD was founded as a successor of racist and fascist groups such as Keep Sweden Swedish (*Bevara Sverige Svenskt*) and, despite some efforts to get rid of these connotations, continued having ambivalent relations with openly racist groups through the 1990s and 2000s (Rydgren & van der Meiden 2018). Partly due to these historical roots, the party failed to reach a legitimate position in Swedish politics for a long time. This has started to change particularly since Jimmie Åkesson became the party leader in 2005. In 2011 the party officially

changed its designation from nationalist to social conservative, and in 2012 the party introduced what it called ‘zero tolerance for racism’, which resulted in numerous expulsions of party members who had publicly expressed opinions deemed too racist (Widfeldt 2015). One may argue that these expulsions were primarily cosmetic and designed to signal to the voters that the party had a serious desire to rid itself of its politically extreme past (obvious violations of this rule by more centrally placed Sweden Democrats did not lead to expulsion), but it likely helped to destigmatize the party in the eyes of many voters.

Sweden Democrat supporters from right and left

To explain electoral mobility, we should first consider how party preferences were traditionally structured. During the postwar period, politics tended to focus on socioeconomic issues (see e.g., Inglehart & Norris 2017). Parties on the left side of the political spectrum promoted high taxation, a large public sector to provide generous welfare services, and policies that aimed at decreasing structural inequalities. Such an agenda tended to attract voters from social classes that benefitted from a strong welfare state (e.g., working-class voters), and/or voters who held liberal values and supported state efforts to decrease inequalities in the society. Parties located on the right side of the spectrum, on the other hand, promoted lower taxation, competitive market economics, and freedom from state control when it comes to, for example, societal services and structural inequalities. As such, they tended to attract voters from social classes that benefitted more from lower taxes and free markets than from a large public sector, valued freedom from state interference more than issues such as decreasing inequalities, and/or held conservative values and opposed attempts to alter the status quo.

Thus, individuals may vote based on their social class, attitudes on specific issues such as taxes or immigration, and/or underlying values and ideological worldviews. Importantly, recent changes in voter behavior seem to reflect an increased prioritization of sociocultural issues in politics, rather than a

shift in the values and attitudes that explain these sociocultural preferences (Ivarsflaten 2008; Mudde 2010; Rydgren & van der Meiden 2018). By being less focused – or even intentionally vague – on socioeconomic issues, radical right-wing parties can attract voters from different positions on the political spectrum, as long as voters agree that their core sociocultural issue, most notably opposition to immigration, needs to be prioritized in politics (Rovny 2013).

Here, we investigate possible explanations for why Social Democratic and Conservative Party voters have decided to leave these respective parties for a radical right-wing party (SD). We will particularly focus on psychological and sociological factors that may influence (1) support for the mainstream political parties: social class, socioeconomic status, and socioeconomic attitudes; (2) support for sociocultural issues driven by the radical right: ethnonationalism and immigration criticism, authoritarianism and conservatism, and nostalgia; and (3) appeal of anti-establishment parties: distrust in societal institutions, political cynicism, and negative views on one's personal situation and relationship with the society. As discussed in more detail below, previous Social Democratic voters can be expected to more often come from the working class, have lower socioeconomic status, be more likely to report a declining personal situation and pessimism, as well as lean more to the left in socioeconomic politics compared to SD supporters who previously voted for the Conservative Party. More importantly, however, we do not expect these two voter groups to differ in their views on the profile issues espoused by the radical right: immigration, social conservatism, authoritarianism, nostalgia, and distrust in societal institutions.

Factors explaining support for different mainstream parties

In terms of social class and socioeconomic positions, radical right-wing parties have been more successful among men, the working class, and individuals with relatively low levels of education (Rydgren 2012; Sannerstedt 2014; Arzheimer 2018). A common denominator for these groups is that

they have tended to lose out, in relative terms, the past few decades. The recent modernization and globalization processes have entailed an increase in, for example, gender and ethnic equality, the average level of education in the population, the importance of cultural capital and abilities to do skilled work (as compared to manual work) as determinants of life chances and status attainment, and international competition over jobs (Kriesi et al 2006; Gidron & Hall 2017). These factors have caused political dissatisfaction and may be a contributing factor to why segments of working-class voters have reacted with decreasing political trust and, indeed, have left the mainstream parties they used to vote for.

Yet, despite the overrepresentation of working-class voters among SD voters, a clear majority of them cannot be described as economically marginalized, and part of this voter group has a high socioeconomic status (Sannerstedt 2014). Most previous studies have been based on representative studies, with relatively low numbers of SD voters, making it difficult to break down the analysis to subcategories. The unique data used in this study, however, makes it possible to address questions such as if SD voters who previously voted for the Social Democrats are more economically marginalized than SD voters who previously voted for the Conservative Party. Analyses based on the group of SD voters as a whole would potentially hide this, thereby also masking different explanations to radical-right mobilization. To investigate this, we test the following hypothesis:

H1a: SD voters who previously voted for the Social Democrats more commonly come from the working class and have lower socioeconomic status than SD voters that previously voted for the Conservative Party and current Conservative Party voters, but do not differ from current Social Democratic voters.

Most radical-right voters have previously voted for one of the mainstream parties (Immerzeel & Pickup 2015; Oscarsson 2016), and it is likely that they, at the time at least, shared these parties' views on

socioeconomic issues. They may still share these views, while downplaying their role for party choice; in the same way as they may have previously voted according to their socioeconomic attitudes regardless of their views on sociocultural issues, they may now vote for the radical right regardless of their views on socioeconomic issues.

However, another possibility is that identification with a new party leads voters to alter their views to be in line with that party, as individuals are inclined to conform to and internalize the views signaled by the social groups they belong to (Festinger 1953). Radical right-wing parties tend to deemphasize socioeconomic issues, but in the parliament, they nonetheless often support right-leaning economic politics and mainstream right-wing parties (Bale 2003). Consequently, previous center-right voters may not experience large conflicts between their socioeconomic preferences and the ones their new (radical right-wing) party expresses. Previous left-wing voters, on the other hand, are likely to experience stronger conflicts and may therefore be inclined to alter their views to better fit with their new party identity. Based on these arguments, we formulated the following hypotheses:

H1b: SD voters who previously voted for the Social Democratic Party express more left-leaning preferences compared to SD voters who previously voted for the Conservative Party.

H1c: SD voters who used to vote for the Social Democrats have more right-leaning preferences than current Social Democrat voters, while SD voters who previously voted for the Conservative Party do not differ from current Conservative Party voters.

Furthermore, new parties may offer alternative ways of interpreting political concepts. For instance, radical right-wing parties do not always oppose the welfare state; quite the contrary. However, their support of the welfare state is not universal but can be described as ‘welfare chauvinism’ (Andersen &

Björklund 1990; Nordensvard, & Ketola 2015). This is the case in Sweden, where SD is consistently emphasizing the value of the Swedish welfare system while blaming segments of the population, most importantly refugees and other non-European immigrants, for eroding and misusing this system (Norocel 2016; Elgenius & Rydgren 2017). It is likely that welfare chauvinism is most common among SD voters who previously voted for a social democratic party, as they can be expected to support the welfare state while also perceiving immigration as a threat:

H1d: SD voters who previously voted for the Social Democrats are more likely to espouse welfare chauvinist attitudes, compared to previous Conservative Party voters as well as current Social Democratic and Conservative voters.

Appeal of the sociocultural agenda of the radical right

The core issue of SD is to strongly limit immigration and almost all SD voters share this view (Sannerstedt 2014). SD's stance on foreign cultures could be described as selective xenophobia, where some cultural groups are more readily accepted (e.g., immigrants from other Nordic countries) while others are rejected (e.g., Muslims) because their lifestyle and/or religion are considered inherently incompatible with Swedish society and a fundamental threat against the Swedish nation and culture (Elgenius & Rydgren 2018). Similar results have been found in other cultural contexts as well, and immigration-negative views unite the radical-right voters across the European countries (Rydgren 2008; Oesch, 2008; Arzheimer 2018).

It is likely that voters who support SD do so mainly because they share this party's core issue: opposition to immigration. Thus, there are no reasons to expect that attitudes toward immigration and immigrants will differ between SD voters who previously voted for the Social Democrats and those who previously voted for the Conservative Party:

H2a: Attitudes toward immigration and immigrants are more negative among SD voters, regardless of their previous party choice, than among Social Democratic and Conservative Party voters.

SD defines itself as a social conservative party. In line with being conservative, they also depict Sweden as a nation in decline since the nation's golden ages, which they commonly place in the 1940s and 1950s (Elgenius & Rydgren 2017, 2018). Thus, one possible explanation for this party's emergence is mobilization among voters who hold conservative values, where immigration-negative attitudes are only one of several manifestations of these values. We know from previous research that negative views on immigration and ethnic minorities are inherently linked to other conservative attitudes (e.g., sexism and anti-vegetarianism) and underpinned by more deeply rooted conservative values and ideologies (e.g., authoritarianism: Ekehammar et al. 2004; Dhont et al. 2016). In line with this, SD voters tend to express conservative views on issues such as feminism and environmentalism (Ohlsson et al. 2016) and hold conservative and authoritarian values and ideological worldviews (Jungar & Jupskås 2014).

However, there is notable cross-cultural variation in research findings in this area: While some studies have found a positive correlation between conservatism, authoritarianism, and radical-right support (e.g., Aichholzer & Zandonella 2016), some other studies have failed to find such a correlation, and in a few countries the correlation has even been negative (Dunn 2015; Tillman 2016). Yet, this inconsistency is not surprising considering that it is not obvious that conservative and authoritarian individuals would prioritize immigration above all other political issues when deciding which party to support. They also tend to dislike societal changes and could therefore prefer a radical right-wing option only if they consider immigration to profoundly threaten the societal structures and cohesion and perceive this party to be norm-congruent rather than radical (Dunn 2015; Tillman 2016). In Sweden,

the alleged threats of immigration, depicted by SD, have received a lot of attention during the past few years even by political parties that were less focused on immigration before (Strömbäck 2018). This situation, in combination with the increased legitimization of SD, may have mobilized authoritarian and conservative voters:

H2b: SD voters, regardless of their previous party choice, express more conservative and authoritarian attitudes, and nostalgia, than Social Democratic and Conservative Party voters.

Mobilization from mainstream to anti-establishment parties

Like many other radical right-wing parties, SD uses populist anti-establishment rhetoric expressing discontent with mainstream parties' approach to immigration and multiculturalism, which they frame as a serious threat to the Swedish welfare system, culture, and security (Elgenius & Rydgren 2017). Populism is commonly defined as a thin-centered ideology including a view of the society being divided into two homogeneous and antagonist groups: the pure and virtuous *people* and the corrupt and self-absorbed *elite* (Mudde 2004). Being a 'thin' ideology, populism alone cannot form a political agenda – it needs to be mixed with a 'host' ideology (e.g., ethnonationalism). In line with this, radical right-wing support correlates both with factors predisposing individuals to accept the host ideology of these parties (e.g., anti-immigration and ethnic prejudice: Rooduijn, 2017; van Assche et al. 2018) and with factors that increase appeal of populist parties (e.g., political cynicism and low agreeableness: van Assche et al. 2018; Bakker et al. 2018).

SD voters tend to have low trust in political and other societal institutions, such as the parliament and media (Holmberg 2007; Andersson et al. 2017), which could explain some part of SD's past voter mobilization (Oskarson 2018). However, identification with SD may have triggered and further intensified distrust and cynicism in this voter group. SD commonly expresses anti-establishment

attitudes, which has likely influenced their voters' attitudes as well (cf. Rooduijn et al. 2017).

Moreover, SD is generally disliked among a majority of Swedes, and up until very recently all other parties have refused to collaborate with them due to their relatively extreme political agenda, which could have triggered political cynicism (Hellström & Nilsson 2010).

However, political distrust does not consistently correlate with radical right-wing support (Söderlund & Kestilä-Kekkonen 2009; Rooduijn 2017). It is thus possible that populist anti-establishment attitudes are not inherently connected to radical right-wing support, or at least that they are expressed by voters of so many different parties that they are not particularly useful when explaining the appeal of the radical right specifically (cf. Rydgren 2017). Yet, SD voters' distrust in political and other societal institutions should be investigated further to explore possible reasons as to why voters have moved from mainstream parties to SD, as well as to estimate the likelihood that they may move back to these parties again in the future. Thus, we tested the following hypothesis:

H3a: SD voters, regardless of their previous party choice, express more political cynicism and are more distrustful of political and other societal institutions than Social Democratic voters and Conservative Party voters.

Parts of the Western electorates have recently been experiencing a declining relative social status and instable economic situation (e.g., Arzheimer 2018) and, at the same time, the rights of several disadvantaged groups, such as LGBT people and racial minorities, have been progressing (Inglehart & Norris 2017). Populist right-wing parties have utilized these circumstances and mobilized voters by accusing the mainstream parties of neglecting the needs of the ordinary (native) people who they portray as the real victims in the contemporary society (Mols & Jetten 2016). Moreover, Western societies are becoming increasingly liberal (Inglehart & Norris 2017), and people who do not share

these new liberal norms could experience less social belonging and bonding with their social environment than before (cf. Stavrova & Luhman 2016). As the shift toward more liberal values has been more common in social classes with higher education and more secure economic positions (Inglehart & Norris 2017), people with lower economic status may experience being ‘left behind’ both in economic and sociocultural processes, thereby increasing the likelihood that they start supporting a radical right-wing option. Based on these arguments, we formulated the following hypotheses and tested voters’ perceptions of their current situation and relationship with the society:

H3b: SD voters have a more negative view on their current and future situation, as well as their relationship with the society, than Social Democratic and Conservative Party voters.

H3c: SD voters who previously voted for the Social Democrats have more negative views on their current and future situation, as well as on their relationship with the society, compared to SD voters who previously voted for the Conservative Party.

Method

Analyses are based on a survey study conducted during spring 2018 among 1,390 supporters of the Sweden Democrats (SD), of which 491 had previouslyⁱⁱ voted for the Social Democrats, and 899 had previously voted for the Conservative Party, as well as 548 supporters of the Social Democratic Party (S) and 634 supporters of the Conservative Party (*Moderaterna*, M). Party support was indicated by an answer to the question ‘How would you vote if there would be an election for the Parliament (*Riksdagen*) today?’

Additionally, 101 participants completed the survey but were excluded from the analyses because they indicated that they had marked a wrong voting option, or because they had given

unrealistic responses to some questionsⁱⁱⁱ which could signal an untrustworthy response pattern.

The majority in all voter groups was male ($SD_{\text{previously S}}: 68.2\%$; $SD_{\text{previously M}}: 76.9\%$; $S: 53.6\%$; $M: 64.5\%$). Age ranged between 22/21 and 79 among SD voters (Previous S voters: $M_{\text{age}} = 55.4$, $Sd_{\text{age}} = 14.5$; Previous M voters: $M_{\text{age}} = 58.0$, $Sd_{\text{age}} = 14.1$), between 19 and 79 among S voters ($M_{\text{age}} = 54.4$, $Sd_{\text{age}} = 17.9$) and between 18 and 79 among M voters ($M_{\text{age}} = 55.9$, $Sd_{\text{age}} = 17.0$).

Procedure

Data was collected during two periods: first between January and February 2018 ($N = 2,193$), and second (complementary data collection due to a somewhat high mean age in the first data set) in April among a younger target population ($Range_{\text{age}} = 19 - 49$; $M_{\text{age}} = 32.6$; $Sd_{\text{age}} = 7.7$, $N = 379$).

The survey was administered by the independent survey research company Novus at the request of the authors. The sample consisted of a selection of panelists from the Sweden Panel, a pool of approximately 40,000 volunteer panelists originally recruited randomly from the Swedish population. An invitation to the survey was sent to 7,711 panelists who had indicated in the background questionnaire that they voted for SD, S, or M in the 2014 election, or had responded that they would consider voting for SD, S, or M in the upcoming election in 2018. Panelists who would vote for other options than SD, S, or M were screened out ($N = 1,601$), and 356 participants did not complete the survey. In combination with the second data collection in April, a smaller complementary data collection was conducted among 239 panelists from a market research company, Norstats, and only SD supporters were included in this data collection.

The participants filled out an online survey questionnaire including questions about their attitudes, values, and personality characteristics. Most participants completed the survey in between 15 and 25 minutes (median = 18.5 minutes). The participants received 10 points as a reward, according to the Novus reward system where participation in one study provides at least 5 points that can be used as

follows: 25 points can be used to give 25 SEK to the Red Cross, and 100 points can be used for a cinema voucher or gift card selected from various options.

Measures

If not otherwise stated, participants indicated their agreement with the items in the questionnaire on a scale including six response options: *disagree completely* (1), *disagree partially* (2), *neither agree nor disagree* (3), *agree partially* (4), *agree completely* (5), or *don't know* (6). Participants who responded 'don't know' were excluded from the analyses and handled as missing values.

Social class and socioeconomic status. *Social class* was measured by asking participants to indicate their occupation from 9 categories (student, worker, office worker, entrepreneur, parental leave, long-term sick leave/early retiree, retiree, unemployed, other). Socioeconomic status was captured by two measures: *Education* level – by selecting one of three categories, which were further transformed into a dummy variable with two categories, 0 (elementary school or high school) and 1 (university education), – and economic situation, by indicating personal *income* per month (see Table 2). Moreover, *subjective socioeconomic status* was measured by the question, 'Imagine that the population of Sweden could be divided on a scale where 10 is the group with highest status in the society, and 0 the group with lowest status in the society. Where would you place yourself on such a scale?' on a scale ranging from 0 ('lowest status - those who have a very bad position, no job or a bad job, and low education') to 10 ('highest status - those who have a very good position, who have very good work, and high education').

Socioeconomic attitudes. Socioeconomic attitudes were measured by four statements. Three of these items yielded a good reliability measure and were combined in an *index* ($\alpha = .75$): 'Taxes should be reduced', 'The public sector is too large', and 'It is good to have profit-driven alternatives in the health

care sector'. The fourth item – 'Income differences should be decreased' (reversely coded) – captured *opposition to reducing structural inequality*. This item was analyzed separately because of its weaker correlation with the other three items. *Welfare chauvinism* was measured by a combination of both disagreement (scores 1 or 2) with the statement 'The public sector is too large' and agreement (scores 4 or 5) with the statement 'Immigration costs too many public resources'. This index was scored as 1 (welfare chauvinism) or 0 (all other combinations).

Sociocultural attitudes. Attitudes toward immigration and immigrants were captured with three measures: *Immigration skepticism* by the item 'Immigration to Sweden should be reduced'; *negative attitudes toward immigration* by a three-item index ('Immigration costs too many public resources', 'Immigration leads to increased criminality in Sweden', and 'It is a problem that immigration weakens the Swedish culture': $\alpha = .90$); and *negative attitudes toward immigrants* by a four-item index ('I don't want an immigrant married into my family', 'I prefer having native Swedes as neighbors', 'I don't want an immigrant as my boss', and 'It is a problem that immigrants take jobs from native Swedes': $\alpha = .88$).

As to attitudes toward other sociocultural issues, focus was on three issues commonly discussed in contemporary politics: opposition to *feminism* ('Feminism has gone too far'), opposition to *vegetarianism* ('It is reasonable that schools have days when they only serve vegetarian food', reversely scored), and views on *political correctness* ('Too much consideration is given to people who feel offended by what others say'). These questions capture distinct attitudes and were therefore analyzed separately.

Social conservatism and nostalgia. Social conservative ideology was measured by a three-item index capturing the three facets of *Right-Wing Authoritarianism* (authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism: Altemeyer, 1981): 'To stop the radical and immoral currents in the soci-

ety today there is a need for a strong leader’, ‘Our society would be best off if we showed tolerance and understanding for non-traditional values and views’, and ‘The best way to live is in accordance with the old-fashioned values’. These items correlated weakly or moderately ($r_s = .21 - .33$) and yielded a poor reliability ($\alpha = .54$), which is common for short measures including distinct components. Individuals who score low in Right-Wing Authoritarianism may agree with some of the statements presented above, but – importantly – those who score high in it express a consistent response pattern by agreeing with all or most of them. Thus, we formed an index despite the low alpha score.

To measure *nostalgic view on the past* participants selected one decade from a list ranging from the 1900s to 2010s as a response to the question, ‘Which of these decades do you think was the best in the history of Sweden?’. To gain a clearer picture of the results, responses were clustered into five categories (≤ 1940 s, 1950s/1960s, 1970s/1980s, 1990s/2000s, and 2010s). A more retrospective choice was interpreted as nostalgia.

Distrust in societal institutions and political cynicism. *Distrust in societal institutions* was measured by an index ($\alpha = .82$) capturing trust in the national parliament (‘To what degree do you trust that *Riksdagen* manages its work?’, reversely scored), trust in the courts of law (‘To what degree do you trust that courts of law manage their work?’, reversely scored), and trust in media measured by an index including five media channels (‘To what degree do you trust news reporting from the following media?: The Swedish national public TV; (the private channel) TV4; (the tabloid paper) *Aftonbladet*; (the morning paper) *Dagens Nyheter*; the local newspaper in the area where you live’, reversely scored, $\alpha = .88$). *Political cynicism* was measured by the statement, ‘A lot of important information is withheld from the public due to politicians’ self-interest’.

Negative views on personal situation and relation with the society. Negative views on one’s personal

situation were captured by measuring experienced *deteriorated situation* ('My situation has gotten worse during the past five years') and *pessimism about one's future* ('I believe I will be doing well in the future', reversely coded). Negative views on one's relation with the society was measured by two statements that capture *societal exclusion* ($\alpha = .66$): 'I generally feel that I am a part of society' (reversely scored) and 'I generally feel that society sees me' (reversely scored).

Results

Social class and socioeconomic status. To gain a clearer picture of *social class* among voters who are currently of working age, we compared voter groups after excluding retirees from the analyses. A chi-squared analysis revealed statistically significant group differences in occupation categories, $\chi^2(21) = 175.45, p < .001$. SD supporters who previously voted for the Social Democrats more commonly come from the working class (50%) as compared to current Social Democrat voters (38%), as well as SD voters who previously voted for the Conservative Party (30%) and current Conservative Party (27%) voters (see Table 1). Also, being unemployed or on a long-term sick leave was more common in this group (12%) compared to SD voters that previously voted for the Conservative Party (9.9%), as well as current Social Democratic (6.9%) and Conservative Party (3.6%) voters.

[Insert Table 1 here]

Regarding *education*, a chi-squared analysis (excluding students) confirmed statistically significant group differences, $\chi^2(3) = 72.35, p < .001$. To have university education was approximately 1.7 times less common among SD voters who previously voted for the Social Democrats (25.1%) compared to SD voters who previously voted for the Conservative Party (41.8%) and current Social Democratic (44.3%) voters, and two times less common compared to current Conservative Party (51.0%) voters.

Concerning *income*, a chi-squared analysis (excluding retirees and students) revealed statistically significant group differences, $\chi^2(21) = 101.29, p < .001$. Low income was more common, and very high income was less common, among previous and current Social Democratic voters than among previous and current Conservative Party voters (see Table 2): 27.7% of current, and 26.5% of previous, Social Democratic voters belonged to the two lowest income groups (< 20,000 SEK/month), which can be contrasted with 15.6% of SD voters that previously voted for the Conservative Party, and 14.7% of current Conservative Party voters. Reversed patterns are observed at the other end of the income distribution: 4.0% of current Social Democratic voters, and 2.8% of SD voters that previously voted for the Social Democrats, belonged to the three highest income groups ($\geq 50,000$ SEK/month), compared to 10.0% of SD voters that previously voted for the Conservative Party, and 14.1% of current Conservative Party voters.

[Insert Table 2 here]

Finally, ANOVA analysis showed statistically significant group differences in *subjective socioeconomic status*, $F(3, 2571) = 55.6, p < .001, \eta^2 = .06$. SD voters who previously voted for the Social Democrats ascribed the lowest status to themselves ($M = 5.82, Sd = 1.7$), followed by current Social Democratic voters ($M = 6.19, Sd = 1.7$), SD voters that previously voted for the Conservative Party ($M = 6.68, Sd = 1.6$), and current Conservative Party voters ($M = 6.92, Sd = 1.4$). Bonferroni post hoc analysis confirmed that all these group differences were statistically significant ($ps < .05$).

In sum, these results support hypothesis *Ia*: SD voters who previously voted for the Social Democratic party had lower socioeconomic status than SD voters who previously voted for the Conservative Party. Also, in terms of income and subjective socioeconomic status, SD voters resembled voters of their previous parties more than other SD voters.

Socioeconomic attitudes. A multivariate ANOVA analysis revealed statistically significant group differences in the *index for socioeconomic right-wing attitudes*, $F(3, 2532) = 512.0, p < .001, \eta^2 = .38$; and *opposition to reducing economic inequalities*, $F(3, 2532) = 186.7, p < .001, \eta^2 = .18$. As illustrated in Table 3, and confirmed in Bonferroni post hoc analysis, SD voters that previously voted for the Social Democrats have more left-leaning attitudes than SD voters that previously voted for the Conservative Party, but more right-leaning attitudes than current Social Democratic voters ($ps < .001$). However, SD voters who previously voted for the Conservative Party do not differ from the current Conservative Party voters ($ps = 1.00$). Results thus provide support for hypotheses *Ib* and *Ic*.

We also found a statistically significant group difference in *welfare chauvinism* in a chi-squared analysis, $\chi^2(3) = 54.71, p < .001$. Supporting hypothesis *Id*, welfare chauvinism was roughly twice as common among SD voters who previously voted for the Social Democrats (22.0%) as compared to current Social Democratic voters (12.9%), as well as SD voters that previously voted for the Conservative Party (10.3%) and current (9.5%) Conservative Party voters.

[Insert Table 3 here]

Attitudes toward immigration and immigrants. A multivariate ANOVA analysis revealed statistically significant group differences in *immigration skepticism*, $F(3, 2546) = 608.3, p < .001, \eta^2 = .42$; *negative attitudes toward immigration*, $F(3, 2546) = 749.0, p < .001, \eta^2 = .47$; and *negative attitudes toward immigrants*, $F(3, 2546) = 270.5, p < .001, \eta^2 = .24$. Bonferroni post hoc analysis provided support for hypothesis *2a*: SD voters scored highest in all indexes – regardless of which party they voted for previously ($p = 1.00$) – followed by current Conservative Party voters and current Social Democratic voters ($ps < .001$).

Other sociocultural attitudes. Multivariate ANOVA revealed statistically significant group differences in negative attitudes toward *feminism*, $F(3, 2426) = 303.1, p < .001, \eta^2 = .27$, *vegetarian food*, $F(3, 2426) = 59.3, p < .001, \eta^2 = .07$, and *political correctness*, $F(3, 2426) = 139.7, p < .001, \eta^2 = .15$. As illustrated in Table 3, and confirmed in Bonferroni post hoc analysis, SD voters had the most negative attitudes related to these issues – regardless of which party they voted for previously ($ps > .14$) – followed by current Conservative Party voters and Current Social Democratic voters ($ps < .001$). Thus, providing support for hypothesis 2b, SD voters express more conservative views on other sociocultural issues besides the issue of immigration as compared to current Social Democratic and Conservative Party voters, and SD voters that previously voted for the Social Democrats and the Conservative Party do not differ from each other.

Social conservatism and nostalgia. ANOVA analysis revealed statistically significant group differences on *Right-Wing Authoritarianism*, $F(3, 2555) = 259.2, p < .001, \eta^2 = .23$. Bonferroni post hoc analysis showed that SD voters score highest in Right-Wing Authoritarianism – regardless of which party they voted for previously ($p = 1.00$) – followed by current Conservative Party voters, and current Social Democratic voters ($ps < .001$) (see Table 3).

As to *nostalgic* views on the past, chi-squared analyses revealed statistically significant group differences, $\chi^2(12) = 166.8, p < .001$. SD voters chose the current decade as the best in Sweden's history 5 to 8 times less often than the current Social Democratic and Conservative Party voters (see Figure 1). Also, around 83% of SD voters, regardless of which party they voted for previously, chose a decade preceding the 1990s, while the percentage choosing some of these earlier centuries was clearly lower among Social Democratic (67.4%) and Conservative Party (63.6%) voters.

In sum, these results further support hypothesis 2b. SD supporters – regardless of which party

they voted for previously – are significantly more socially conservative and nostalgic when compared to current Social Democratic and Conservative Party voters.

Distrust and political cynicism. Multivariate ANOVA analyses revealed statistically significant group differences both in *distrust in societal institutions*, $F(3, 2502) = 461.7, p < .001, \eta^2 = .36$, and *political cynicism*, $F(3, 2502) = 183.2, p < .001, \eta^2 = .18$. As illustrated in Table 3, and confirmed in Bonferroni post hoc analyses, SD voters expressed most distrust and cynicism – regardless of which party they voted for previously ($ps > .13$) – followed by current Conservative Party voters, and Social Democratic voters ($ps < .001$). These results thus provide support for hypothesis 3a.

Negative views of one's personal situation and relation with the society. Multivariate ANOVA analyses revealed statistically significant group differences in experienced *deteriorated situation*, $F(3, 2452) = 32.4, p < .001, \eta^2 = .04$, *pessimism* about one's future, $F(3, 2452) = 49.2, p < .001, \eta^2 = .06$, and experienced *societal exclusion*, $F(3, 2452) = 72.9, p < .001, \eta^2 = .08$. As illustrated in Table 3 and confirmed by Bonferroni post hoc analyses, SD voters experienced a more deteriorated personal situation compared to Social Democratic and Conservative Party voters ($ps < .01$). SD voters that previously voted for the Social Democrats experienced a more deteriorated situation than SD voters that previously voted for the Conservative Party ($p < .01$), but current Social Democratic and Conservative Party voters did not differ from each other ($p = .26$). As to pessimism, SD voters that previously voted for the Social Democrats were most pessimistic, followed by SD voters that previously voted for the Conservative Party, current Social Democratic voters, and current Conservative Party voters – and all these groups' differences were statistically significant ($ps < .05$). Finally, experienced societal exclusion was more common among SD voters than among current Social Democratic and Conservative Party voters ($ps < .001$). SD voters who previously voted for the Social

Democrats or the Conservative Party did not differ from each other ($p = .60$) and neither did current Social Democratic and Conservative Party voters ($p = .18$).

In sum, the results thus support hypotheses 3b and (partly) 3c. SD voters had more negative views on their situation compared to other voter groups included in this study. SD voters who previously voted for the Social Democrats reported most negative views on their personal situation, but did not differ from SD voters who previously voted for the Conservative Party when it comes to experienced societal exclusion.

Interactions with social class. We reran all the above analyses, and additionally included social class as an independent variable to test potential main and interaction effects. In these analyses, we included only participants who are currently participating in working life, and occupation was dummy coded as 0 (office workers and entrepreneurs) or 1 (working-class). We found some weak main effects of social class: working-class voters expressed more left-leaning socioeconomic attitudes ($\eta^2 = .005$), were more supporting to reducing economic inequalities ($\eta^2 = .02$), had more negative views on immigrants ($\eta^2 = .006$), were more opposed to feminism ($\eta^2 = .004$), scored higher in Right-Wing Authoritarianism ($\eta^2 = .008$), were more pessimistic about their future ($\eta^2 = .004$), and experienced more societal exclusion ($\eta^2 = .01$).

Only a few interaction effects were statistically significant. The interaction term explained a small part of the variance (1%) in the index measuring socioeconomic right-wing attitudes: working-class voters differed from other voters only among SD voters who previously voted for the Conservative Party and current Conservative Party voters (differences = 0.30), but not among SD voters that previously voted for the Social Democrats and current Social Democratic voters (differences = 0.04/0.1). An interaction term also explained 1% of variance in opposition to reducing economic inequalities: working-class voters expressed more opposition to reducing inequality among SD voters

that previously voted for the Social Democrats or Conservative Party, and among current Conservative Party voters (differences = .32/0.35/0.70), but not among current Social Democratic voters (difference = .001).

As to welfare chauvinism, statistical significance of interaction term could not be calculated for as the measure is non-parametric. However, we observed that social class had a smaller influence among SD voters (former Social Democratic voters: 1% difference; former Conservative Party voters: 6% difference) than among current Social Democratic and Conservative Party voters (9% and 12% difference, respectively) (see Table 4). Welfare chauvinism was more common among working-class voters, as compared to other classes, in all voting groups except the Social Democrats.

In sum, social class explains only a small part or no part of the variance in the variables measured here, and only a few interaction terms were found to be statistically significant.

Conclusions

The present study aimed to investigate the extent to which SD voters who previously voted for the Social Democrats differ from those who previously voted for the Conservative Party. Our results revealed, firstly, that SD voters that previously voted for the Social Democrats more often come from the working class, have lower socioeconomic status, and experience a more deteriorated personal situation and pessimism about their future than SD voters that previously voted for the Conservative Party. These findings add new perspectives to the ongoing debate about the degree to which economic factors explain the recent growth of radical right-wing parties (see e.g., Mols & Jetten 2016; Dal Bó et al. 2018): Economic instability and deprivation could partially explain the electoral mobility from center-left parties to the radical right, but do not seem to offer particularly powerful explanations for the electoral mobility from center-right parties to the radical right. Future studies should investigate if other processes, such as protection of one's relative privileges (cf. Jetten et al. 2015), could better

explain the electoral mobility from the center-right to the radical right.

As a second area where differences were found, socioeconomic attitudes differed between SD voters who previously voted for the Social Democrats and the Conservative Party. As expected, SD voters that previously voted for the Social Democrats had more left-leaning attitudes than SD voters that previously voted for the Conservative Party, but these voters differed even more from current Social Democratic voters (in being more right-leaning). Moreover, SD voters that previously voted for the Social Democrats were found to hold welfare chauvinist views more commonly than other voting groups. When it comes to current and previous Conservative Party voters, however, no differences were found in any socioeconomic measures. These results could be interpreted in light of that, although radical right-wing parties often aim to tone down and blur their views on socioeconomic issues (Rovny 2013), they nonetheless tend to support right-leaning economic politics and other right-wing parties in the parliament (Bale 2003) and express chauvinist views on the welfare system (i.e., they support the welfare system but think that some groups of people, such as immigrants, should be excluded from receiving the welfare benefits: see e.g., Norocel 2016). Thus, a new party identity has likely caused more identity conflicts among previous Social Democratic voters than among previous Conservative Party voters, and many of these voters may have consequently changed their views to better match their new (radical right) party identity (cf. Festinger 1953).

Importantly, however, we found no differences between SD voters that previously voted for the Social Democrats and SD voters that previously voted for the Conservative Party in the core characteristics of the radical right (anti-immigration, conservatism and authoritarianism, and anti-establishment populism: Rydgren 2007; Mudde 2007). First and foremost, regardless of their previous party choice, almost all SD voters perceived immigration as a societal threat and expressed a desire to decrease immigration. Also, compared to other Social Democratic and Conservative Party voters, SD voters had significantly more xenophobic attitudes on immigrants, although these attitudes were less

common when compared to negative attitudes on immigration as a societal phenomenon (see also Rydgren 2008). Finally, compared to Social Democratic and Conservative Party voters, SD voters were more socially conservative and authoritarian, had more nostalgic views on Sweden's past, were more distrusting and cynical toward societal institutions and politicians, and experienced more exclusion in relation to the society.

Based on these results, and not surprisingly, it can be concluded that support for SD can above all be explained by a negative stance on immigration. Also, SD voters who came from the Social Democrats and the Conservative Party, respectively, were found to differ only in a few aspects, and social class had only a few – and very weak – effects on the outcome variables above the effect of voting group.

Regardless of being the cause or consequence of the identification with their new party, SD voters differ from the voters of their previous parties in several central aspects that are currently determining voter behavior in many Western countries, and this is particularly true among SD voters who previously voted for the Social Democratic party. It is thus possible that many SD voters are not very likely to return to the parties they previously voted for, at least as long as immigration-related issues continue to be of high salience in the society.

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Table 1. Percentage of Participants Across Occupation Categories (Excluding Retirees) Among Current Social Democratic (S) and Conservative Party (*Moderaterna*; M) voters, as well as Sweden Democrat (SD) Voters Who Have Previously Voted for S or M.

	SD				Total
	S	Previously S	Previously M	M	
Worker	38.3	50.2	30.3	27.0	34.9
Office worker	37.7	28.0	35.2	46.0	37.3
Entrepreneur	3.0	5.8	19.2	12.1	11.3
Parental leave	1.2	1.1	0.8	0.8	0.9
Student	9.8	1.5	1.4	8.7	5.2
Unemployed	3.3	2.2	3.4	1.8	2.7
Long-term sick leave/ Early retiree	3.6	9.8	6.5	1.8	5.2
Other	3.3	1.5	3.2	1.8	2.5
<i>N</i>	337	275	505	389	1506

Table 2. Percentage of Participants per Income (SEK/month) and Voter Group (Excluding Retirees and Students).

	S	SD previously S	SD previously M	M
< 10,000	11.5	4.1	3.1	5.6
10,000 – 19,999	16.2	22.4	12.5	9.1
20,000 – 29,999	35.6	40.4	30.8	33.4
30,000 – 39,999	22.7	24.1	31.3	23.1
40,000 – 49,999	10.1	6.1	12.3	14.7
50,000 – 59,999	2.9	2.0	5.6	5.9
60,000 – 69,999	0.7	0	1.1	3.8
≥70,000	0.4	0.8	3.3	4.4
<i>N</i>	278	245	448	320

Table 3. Mean Values (Standard Deviations) Per Voter Group, and Group Differences Between Sweden Democrat Voters Who Have Previously Voted for Social Democratic Party (S) or Conservative Party (*Moderaterna*, M).

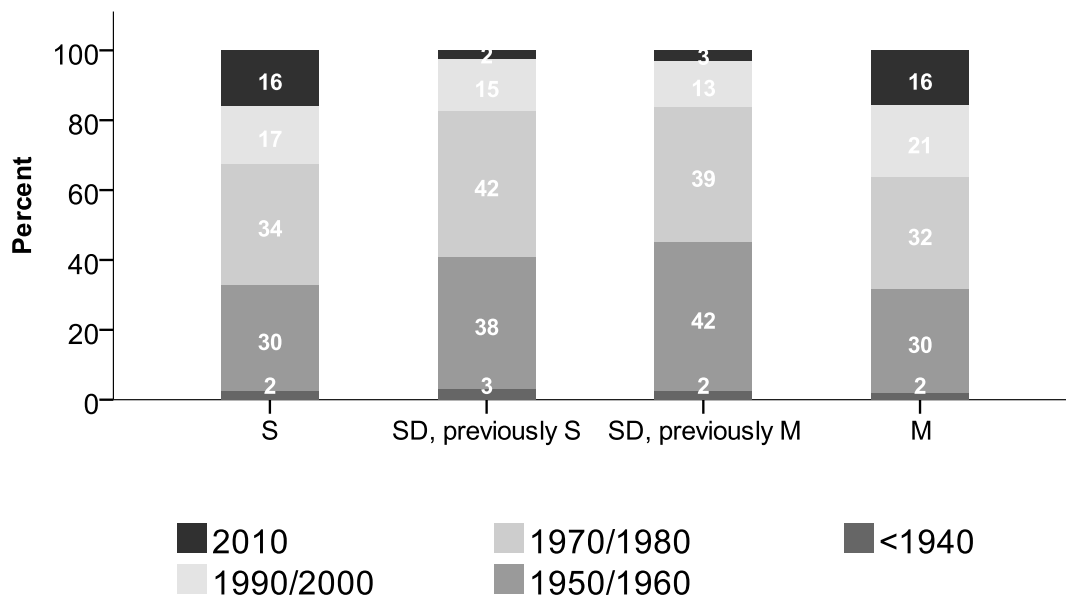
	S	M	SD		F-test (<i>Bonferroni</i>), between SD voters
			Previously S	Previously M	
<i>Socioeconomic issues</i>					
Economic right-wing attitudes	2.14 (0.8)	3.82 (0.9)	3.15 (1.0)	3.85 (0.9)	***
Opposition to reducing inequality	1.61 (0.8)	2.87 (1.2)	2.15 (1.0)	2.82 (1.2)	***
<i>Sociocultural issues of radical right</i>					
Immigration skepticism	2.92 (1.4)	4.12 (1.2)	4.86 (0.4)	4.88 (0.4)	n.s.
Negativity toward immigration	2.64 (1.2)	3.77 (1.0)	4.63 (0.5)	4.66 (0.5)	n.s.
Negativity toward immigrants	1.92 (1.0)	2.42 (1.1)	3.32 (1.0)	3.28 (1.0)	n.s.
Opposition to feminism	2.31 (1.3)	3.44 (1.3)	4.05 (1.1)	4.19 (1.0)	n.s.
Negative view on political correctness	3.18 (1.2)	3.84 (1.1)	4.15 (1.0)	4.29 (0.9)	n.s.
Opposition to vegetarian food	2.59 (1.4)	3.08 (1.5)	3.43 (1.4)	3.57 (1.4)	n.s.
Right-Wing Authoritarianism	2.53 (0.8)	2.97 (0.9)	3.61 (0.7)	3.59 (0.7)	n.s.
<i>Issues of anti-establishment parties</i>					
Distrust of societal institutions	2.42 (0.7)	2.94 (0.8)	3.72 (0.8)	3.83 (0.8)	n.s.
Political cynicism	2.97 (1.1)	3.56 (1.1)	4.09 (0.9)	4.15 (0.9)	n.s.
Societal exclusion	2.36 (0.7)	2.46 (0.8)	2.90 (0.9)	2.85 (0.8)	n.s.
Worsened situation	2.24 (1.2)	2.10 (1.1)	2.76 (1.3)	2.48 (1.3)	***
Pessimism on the future	2.25 (0.9)	2.10 (0.8)	2.76 (1.0)	2.47 (1.0)	***

*** $p < .001$

Table 4. Percentage of Participants with Welfare Chauvinist Views Among Participants in Working Life and Per Voting Group (Social Democratic [S] and Conservative Party (*Moderaterna*, M) voters, as well as Sweden Democrat [SD] Voters Who Have Previously Voted for S or M).

	SD				Total
	S	Previously S	Previously M	M	
Working-class	8.8	25.5	17.1	20.0	17.9
Office workers and entrepreneurs	17.9	24.7	10.9	8.4	13.2
<i>N</i>	259	230	427	331	1247

Figure 1. Percentage of Participants Who Chose Different Decades as the Best in Sweden’s History Per Voting Group (Social Democratic [S] and Conservative Party (*Moderaterna*, M) voters, as well as Sweden Democrat [SD] Voters Who Have Previously Voted for S or M).



ⁱ Alliance is a political coalition in Sweden, consisting of center-right parties the Conservative Party, the Center Party, the Liberals, and Christian Democrats. Alliance was formed to challenge the Social Democratic Party that had dominated Swedish politics almost continuously for over 70 years. The aim of Alliance was to win a majority of seats in *Riksdag* (the national parliament) and form a coalition government. To succeed in this, these parties have developed common policy statements and proposals which has required compromises and pulled them closer to each other.

ⁱⁱ Last time that they voted for some other party than the party they would vote for today, i.e., other than SD

ⁱⁱⁱ Participants who had indicated in three separate questions (not analyzed in the present paper) that over 50% of Swedish population are born abroad, born in Eastern Europe, or born in the Middle East, were excluded from the analyses.

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