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Abstract: Ethnonationalism and anti-immigration sentiments are increasingly influencing voting behavior in Western countries. This study investigated the role of xenophobia in explaining support for right-wing parties and whether xenophobia correlates with the same psychological variables among voters of a radical right-wing party (Sweden Democrats, Sverigedemokraterna, N=2217) and a mainstream right-wing party (Conservative Party, Moderaterna, N=634) in Sweden. In both voter groups, Right-Wing Authoritarianism was the strongest predictor of xenophobia. Also, Social Dominance Orientation, (less) postmaterialist values, sexist attitudes, (low) Agreeableness, and higher age explained variance in xenophobia. As for voter mobility, xenophobia was more common among Sweden Democrat voters than among Conservative Party voters and, in both voter groups, respondents with high (vs. low) xenophobia had more positive views on the Sweden Democrats. Intended Sweden Democrat (vs. the Conservative Party) voting was predicted by less right-leaning socioeconomic attitudes and higher institutional distrust (among voters with both low and high xenophobia), Right-Wing Authoritarianism and sexism (voters with low xenophobia), and/or male gender (voters with high xenophobia). To conclude, the concept of xenophobia still seems to successfully capture anti-immigrant attitudes, correlates with psychological variables as expected in both voter groups, and helps partly explain the contemporary changes in voting behavior.

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Introduction

Ethnonationalism and anti-immigration sentiments are increasingly influencing party politics and voting behavior in Europe (e.g., Rydgren & van der Meiden, 2018). New radical right-wing parties have emerged and become established in several countries over the past three decades, and some mainstream parties have toughened their approach to immigration and multiculturalism in an effort to challenge the growth of the radical right (Rydgren & van der Meiden, 2018; Van Spanje, 2010). These political changes seem to be neither a cause nor a consequence of increased anti-immigration sentiments in society, but rather reflect a shift in the political salience of the immigration issue at the expense of economic issues that used to guide voting behavior during the postwar period (Bohman, 2018; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Mudde, 2010). Yet, it has been suggested that the presence of a successful anti-immigration party may contribute to politicizing the immigration issue, as well as legitimizing and normalizing expressions of xenophobia in society (Jäckle & König, 2017; Rydgren, 2003; Wodak, 2015).

Given the importance of anti-immigration sentiments in the contemporary political landscapes, this study aims to investigate the role of xenophobia in explaining support for right-wing parties and what could explain radical-right support among voters with low and high levels of xenophobia, as well as whether expression of xenophobia is related to the same psychological variables among voters of a radical right-wing party (Sweden Democrats, *Sverigedemokraterna*) and a mainstream right-wing party (Conservative Party, *Moderaterna*) in Sweden.

While much is known about the relation between negative intergroup attitudes and right-wing party preference (e.g., Rydgren, 2008; Van Assche, Van Hiel, & Dhont, 2018), as well as correlates of negative intergroup attitudes in the public in general (e.g., Ekehammar, Akrami, Gylje, & Zakrisson, 2004; Sibley & Duckitt, 2008), to date no studies have investigated what characterizes radical right-

wing voters who express high or low levels of xenophobia and whether these voters differ from mainstream right-wing voters with comparable levels of xenophobia. As expression of anti-immigration attitudes may become more legitimized in the presence of a successful anti-immigration party (Wodak, 2015), it is possible that xenophobia is expressed by voters who may otherwise not express such views, thereby altering the correlations of xenophobia and psychological variables that are usually found in research. As for voter mobility, research on radical-right support tends to include various different measures to capture attitudes toward immigration and immigrants (e.g., ethnic prejudice or immigration skepticism), and sometimes blends different attitudes in the same scale. Also, research in this area commonly focuses on attitudes toward immigration as a societal phenomenon, likely because immigration skepticism has been found to be the most consistent predictor of radical-right support (Rooduijn 2017; Rydgren, 2008). Thus, less is known about the role of xenophobia in explaining support for a radical right-wing party. Moreover, it is still unclear which psychological processes could explain why voters with low levels of xenophobia may start supporting a radical right-wing option with a strong anti-immigration agenda, while many voters with high levels of xenophobia continue supporting a mainstream right-wing option.

The Swedish context

Sweden is a very socially progressive country where liberal, tolerant, and egalitarian norms are so commonly endorsed that they have come to be seen as a central part of the national identity (Moffitt, 2017; Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005; Towns, Karlsson, & Eyre, 2014). Sweden has a long history of immigration, and when including both first- and second-generation immigrants, the proportion of people with foreign background in the country in 2018 was 24.9 (SCB, n.d.). Over the past decades, attitudes toward immigrants have become more positive (Demker & van der Meiden, 2016), with people in Sweden having more positive views on immigration and immigrants compared to almost all

other European countries (Bohman, 2018; van der Linden, Hooghe, de Vroome, & Van Laar, 2017).

However, the discussion around immigration has become politicized and immigration is an increasingly important political issue in Sweden (Rydgren & van der Meiden, 2018).

As a liberal-conservative party, the Conservative Party has traditionally tried to combine market liberalism with relative sociocultural conservatism. Over the past decades, however, the party has focused mainly on socioeconomic issues while being less engaged in sociocultural questions, and the years between 2006 and 2014 marked a change toward more liberal positions on sociocultural issues – maybe most notably regarding immigration and national defense. On average, voters of this party hold more negative attitudes toward immigration when compared to voters from the left side of the political spectrum, but many of the Conservative Party voters hold socially liberal or libertarian values (Jylhä, Rydgren, Strimling, 2019) that are not in conflict with supporting internationalization and generous immigration policies (cf. Dinesen, Klemmensen, & Nørgaard, 2016). Consequently, the Conservative Party has not offered as strong a stance on immigration as some right-wing voters may have desired. A process that may also have distanced some of the more far-right voters from the Conservative Party was the formation of the political coalition between the center-right parties: The Alliance¹ (Rydgren & van der Meiden, 2018). To succeed in collaborations, the involved parties developed common policy statements and proposals that required compromises and pulled them closer to each other.

Due to these circumstances, voters who desired strong stances on immigration from politicians may not have found any obvious voting option among the mainstream parties. The anti-immigration party Sweden Democrats was founded in 1988 but was an unattractive option for many voters due to its fascist past (Rydgren, 2002; Rydgren & van der Meiden, 2018). Since the mid-2000s, the Sweden Democrats strengthened their strivings to gain a more legitimate position in Swedish politics. Although

¹ Alliance consists 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.

there are indicators that at least some of their actions toward this aim were largely cosmetic, such as with the introduction of ‘zero tolerance for racism’² (Widfeldt, 2015), these actions nonetheless likely helped to destigmatize the party in the eyes of many voters. In part due to this legitimization process, and the politization of the immigration issue (Rydgren & van der Meiden, 2018), Sweden Democrats entered the national parliament (*Riksdag*) in the 2010 election (5.7% of the votes) and rapidly grew into one of the largest parties in the country: In the 2014 and 2018 elections, the party gained 12.9% and 17.5% of the votes.

Anti-immigration sentiments and xenophobia

Different types of immigration attitudes should be separated when explaining, for example, voting behavior (Cutts, Ford, & Goodwin, 2011; Rydgren, 2008). To begin with, people can be *immigration skeptics*, meaning that they desire to decrease or stop immigration to their country. This desire is linked to negative perceptions of *immigration as a societal phenomenon* – such as anticipated weakening of the native culture or increased criminality – and does not necessarily reflect any deep-seated antipathies toward *immigrants* (Rydgren, 2008).

As for attitudes relating more specifically toward immigrants, three types of categories can be separated. Firstly, *ethnic prejudice* refers to prejudgments of individuals based on their ethnic memberships. Prejudice includes a cognitive representation (stereotype) and an emotional response (like/dislike) related to a particular group of people (e.g., natives or immigrants) (Stangor, Sullivan, & Ford, 1991). Prejudiced attitudes are widespread in society and do not necessarily imply a desire to change the society to become less ethnically diverse. Thus, it can be suggested that these attitudes do not in and of themselves explain why the radical right is growing. Secondly, *racism* is an ideological view including a belief that some ethnic groups are inherently inferior to others and as a concept,

² Some more centrally placed Sweden Democrats did not face expulsion when expressing racist views.

racism is more closely linked to institutional structures and power relations than prejudice (for a review, see Augoustinos & Every, 2015). Traditional racism is not widespread in contemporary Western societies where differentiations are more commonly drawn based on cultural rather than biological differences (Betz & Johnson 2004; Taguieff, 1988). A more straightforward link with radical-right support can be found for the third category of immigrant-views – *xenophobia* – which signifies feelings of fear, discomfort, or hostility when being in contact with people from foreign groups, and a belief that different groups of people should live separately. Xenophobia can also be considered a form of cultural racism as it includes a perception that cultural background determines personal characteristics and people from different cultures are therefore incompatible to live with each other (Mulinari & Neergaard, 2014; Wieviorka, 1998).

Thus, this paper focuses specifically on xenophobia and also investigates whether this concept is useful when explaining voting behavior in the contemporary cultural context. There is a need for such an investigation when considering the difficulties in separating and measuring anti-immigrant attitudes. For example, even when holding deeply rooted antipathies toward immigrants or ethnic minorities, individuals commonly aim at hiding and denying this because racism and xenophobia are considered irrational and undesirable tendencies in liberal democracies and expressions of such attitudes break the social norms of tolerance (Augoustinos & Every, 2007; van Dijk, 1992). Also, xenophobia may not target all foreign groups alike, as some groups are usually perceived as more different and therefore more threatening than others. Moreover, antipathies toward immigrants can be expressed in different ways depending on the social norms, and it has been suggested that the contemporary discourses regarding the depicted problems of immigration as a societal phenomenon actually serve the same function as expressions of blatant xenophobia and racism (Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Betz & Johnson, 2004).

Right-wing voters and xenophobia

When compared to their left-leaning counterparts, people on the right-wing side of the political spectrum more commonly hold negative attitudes toward immigrants (e.g., Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003). In line with being more extreme in their sociocultural preferences (e.g., immigration skepticism and anti-feminism), radical right-wing voters tend to be more xenophobic than mainstream right-wing voters (Jylhä et al., 2019). This corresponds well with the core ideology of the radical-right – ethnonationalism (or nativism) – which consists of a desire for a homogeneous nation-state exclusively inhabited by natives, as well as a nostalgic emphasis on ancestral values and shared culture (Mudde, 2007; Rydgren, 2007).

However, similar to people in general (van Dijk, 1992), the radical right tends to deny being racist or xenophobic (Hatakka, Niemi, & Välimäki, 2017; Mulinari & Neergaard, 2014; Wodak, 2015), and their support has indeed been shown to be more strongly linked with attitudes toward immigration than immigrants (Rydgren, 2008; Jylhä et al., 2019). At the same time, the radical right habitually express strong antipathies toward certain immigrant groups and ethnic minorities – particularly Muslims – and depicts them as dangers to their country (Hatakka et al., 2017; Stavrakakis, Katsambekis, Nikisianis, Kioupiolis, & Siomos, 2017). Thus, it seems easy to see why voters with high levels of xenophobia might support these parties. However, it is unclear what explains the appeal of the radical right among voters with low levels of xenophobia, and – equally importantly – what factors hinder the xenophobic mainstream-right voters from moving to the more radical right-wing option.

Correlates of xenophobia and right-wing orientation

As discussed in this section, the seemingly diverse issues that characterize the radical right – and to a more moderate degree also the mainstream right (e.g., anti-immigration and anti-minority

attitudes and social conservatism: Rydgren, 2008; Jungar & Jupskås, 2014) – are intercorrelated and fit into a more general conservative worldview. Thus, these psychological characteristics can be expected to explain participants' inclination to support right-wing parties. Although party preferences may be based on various criteria, and vary depending on the societal contexts, voters tend to support political candidates whose messages are congruent with their personality traits, values, and ideological worldviews (Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004; Bakker, Schumacher, & Rooduijn, 2019).

Generalized prejudice and conservative ideology. Negative attitudes toward immigrants and ethnic minorities are commonly linked with other forms of prejudice, such as sexism and homophobia (Akrami, Ekehammar, & Bergh, 2011; Allport, 1954; Ekehammar et al., 2004). Prejudiced attitudes have been consistently found to correlate with two ideological variables (Duckitt & Sibley, 2008; Ekehammar et al., 2004; Hellmer, Stenson, & Jylhä, 2018). The first of these variables, *Right-Wing Authoritarianism*, captures general conventionalism and readiness to support and submit to authorities and punish deviant people that threaten the traditional social structures (e.g., immigrants and activists: Altemeyer, 1998). Authoritarianism is linked to low openness and a perception of the world as a dangerous place where traditions and strong leadership are essential for societal security and stability (Ekehammar et al., 2004; Duckitt, 2001). The second variable, *Social Dominance Orientation*, captures acceptance and promotion of hierarchical and dominant relations between different societal groups (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994), and correlates with low agreeableness and a competitive worldview where it is natural that some groups are at the bottom (Ekehammar et al., 2004; Duckitt, 2001).

These ideological views are often referred to as right-wing or conservative ideologies because they are more commonly expressed by right-leaning and politically conservative individuals in Western countries (e.g., Ho et al., 2015; Jost et al., 2003; Wilson & Sibley, 2013). It is also noteworthy that the political agenda of the radical right is to a high degree characterized by these views, as illustrated for

example in their endorsement of conventional values, promotion of issues of law and order, and opposition against affirmative action (Erlingsson, Vernby, & Öhrvall, 2014; Jungar & Jupskås, 2014). Regarding voters' characteristics, Social Dominance Orientation has been found to predict radical-right voting (Aichholzer & Zandonella, 2016; Van Assche et al., 2018), but research results have been inconclusive regarding Right-Wing Authoritarianism, with some studies showing positive correlations while others show non-significant or even negative correlations (Cornelis & Van Hiel, 2015; Dunn, 2015). Given their inclination to support the status quo, authoritarian individuals could be open to support a radical-right party only if they consider immigration to seriously threaten the society and if they consider the party to be norm-congruent rather than radical (Dunn, 2015). Threat-based anti-immigration discourse has been receiving increasing attention in Sweden (Elgenius & Rydgren, 2017; Strömbäck, 2018), and it has thus been suggested and empirically shown that the Sweden Democrats have successfully mobilized authoritarian voters in this cultural context (Jylhä et al., 2019).

Basic values. Basic values are relatively stable representations of normative and desirable actions and life goals (Rokeach, 1973). Basic values are more abstract and generalized across different contexts than ideological worldviews, and therefore capture distinct psychological processes (Feldman, 2003). When it comes to both intergroup attitudes and contemporary voting behaviors, values denoted as *postmaterialist* have been suggested to play a particularly important role. These values include self-expression, autonomy, and tolerance, and can be contrasted with survival values that include prioritizing security, tradition, thriftiness, and respect for authority (Inglehart, 1977). It has been argued that, during the postwar period both economic and physical security have increased, resulting in a large-scale shift from survival values to postmaterialist values (Inglehart, 1977). Postmaterialist values are more common among people who lean politically to the left and are linked to more concerned and accepting attitudes toward immigrants (Inglehart & Norris, 2017; Schwartz, Caprara, & Vecchione, 2010). Also, being dependent on feelings of security, these values are less common among people who

are experiencing profound scarcity and uncertainty in their lives (Inglehart & Norris 2017).

Distrust and relationship with society. Negative attitudes toward immigrants have been linked to low interpersonal and institutional trust (Halapuu, Paas, Tammaru & Schütz, 2014; Van der Linden, 2017). These relationships could be bidirectional: distrust and cynicism about human nature and societal institutions likely includes distrusting in foreign people, but anti-immigration views can also lead to distrust in governments in cultural contexts with welcoming immigration policies (Citrin, Levy, & Wright, 2014; McLaren, 2017). Also, due to the general societal shift toward more liberal and pluralistic values, ethnonationalist individuals may feel excluded by politicians and the society as a whole (Inglehart & Norris, 2017).

Right-leaning people tend to have a more distrusting view of human nature than left-leaning people, as illustrated in their higher average scores in Social Dominance Orientation (including the competitive-jungle worldview) and Right-Wing Authoritarianism (including the dangerous-world worldview) discussed above (Duckitt, 2001). These tendencies are particularly pronounced among far-right parties and voters, who hold both anti-immigration attitudes and institutional distrust (Mudde, 2007; Rydgren, 2007). Radical right-wing parties may be an attractive option for voters who are generally distrustful and disagreeable, or who feel they are being distanced from the society, and who are therefore drawn to a populist rhetoric (Bakker et al., 2019; van Assche et al. 2018). The causality can also go in the opposite direction: Radical right-wing voters are exposed to the anti-establishment messages from the politicians they support (cf. Rooduijn, van der Brug, de Lange, & Parlevliet, 2017) and they may also identify as societal underdogs who are being stigmatized in politics and social situations (Hellström & Nilsson 2010).

It should be noted that radical right-wing parties are not primarily populist: their populist anti-establishment rhetoric is not promoting a populist agenda *per se* but is used more selectively to gain support for their ethnonationalist agenda or as an ‘amplifier’ of their anti-immigrant message

(Stavrakakis et al. 2017; Rydgren, 2017). Nevertheless, populist rhetoric has likely been an important contributor to the success of these parties in multicultural contexts where ethnonationalist voters have been dissatisfied with the mainstream parties' approach to internationalization (Citrin et al., 2014; McLaren, 2017), which they may feel is depriving them or the social (native) group they belong to (Mols & Jetten, 2016; Urbanska & Guimond, 2019).

It also seems plausible that, based on these rhetorical means, the radical right has also succeeded in attracting voters who are not particularly xenophobic or ethnonationalist, but who hold generally conservative social attitudes and feel worried about the recent societal developments. By using scapegoating rhetoric these parties have evoked a sense that internationalization is to blame for the changes in their nation that some experience as undesirable (Mols & Jetten, 2016; Zaslove, 2004). Indeed, radical right-wing support has been linked to negative views on immigrants, political distrust or cynicism, and conservative ideology (Jylhä et al., 2019; Van Assche et al., 2018; but see Rooduijn 2017; Dunn, 2015).

Summary and aims

The present research explored xenophobia among voters of a radical right-wing party (Sweden Democrats, *Sverigedemokraterna*) and a mainstream right-wing party (Conservative Party, *Moderaterna*) in Sweden.

The *first* aim was to study the correlates of xenophobia in both voter groups. Given that an anti-immigration party may legitimize expressions of xenophobia in society (Wodak, 2015), it is possible that variables that are usually linked to negative views on immigrants (sexism, conservative ideology, less postmaterialist values, (low) openness, and (low) agreeableness: Ekehammar et al., 2014; Sibley & Duckitt, 2008) are not to be found among radical right-wing voters. On the other hand, radical-right wing voters tend to score higher on variables linked to anti-immigrant attitudes (e.g., Van Assche et al.,

2018). Thus, xenophobia may be merely one expression of a coherent worldview that is guiding new patterns of voting behavior – and the correlation patterns could resemble those found in the general population.³

We also investigated the correlations of xenophobia with variables that are less commonly tested in social psychological literature explaining negative intergroup attitudes: socioeconomic attitudes, institutional distrust, and experienced societal exclusion. These variables contribute to right-wing orientation and/or support for an anti-establishment party (e.g., Jylhä et al., 2019), and thus knowledge about their unique contributions to xenophobia increases understanding of the current sociopolitical context.

The *second* aim was to explore the role of xenophobia in explaining voter behavior. Here, we expected that xenophobia is more commonly expressed by Sweden Democrat voters than Conservative Party voters, and correlates strongly with anti-immigration attitudes and distrust in people born in the Middle East, which in their turn are consistent predictors of radical right-wing support in previous research (Jylhä et al., 2019; Rooduijn, 2017; Rydgren, 2008).

We also investigated why voters with low levels of xenophobia support Sweden Democrats and why voters with high levels of xenophobia support the Conservative Party. Here, we reasoned that having right-leaning socioeconomic attitudes – which tend to determine support for a mainstream right-wing party – could predict support for the Conservative Party among voters with high levels of xenophobia. As for voters with low levels of xenophobia, we expected them to be more prone to supporting Sweden Democrats if they experience their relationship with the society and societal institutions to be negative, or if they hold conservative and authoritarian values. These views could entail dissatisfaction with the recent societal developments, making voters more susceptible to the anti-establishment and authoritarian messages of a radical right-wing party.

³ Some correlations may be weaker among Sweden Democrat or Conservative Party voters due to smaller variation in these variables in these voter groups. However, we focus on investigating the patterns in correlations, and comparing the strengths of these correlations is outside the scope of this paper.

Method

Participants

Data were collected during spring 2018 among 2217 supporters of the Sweden Democrats and 634 supporters of the Conservative Party. Also, 548 supporters of the Social Democratic Party participated (included only in the *Preliminary analyses* in the *Method*-section). Party support was indicated by the question, ‘How would you vote if there were an election for *Riksdag* today?’ Additionally, 101 respondents participated but were excluded from the analyses because they indicated having marked a wrong voting option, or had given unrealistic responses to some questions (not included here) thereby signaling an untrustworthy response pattern.

Age ranged between 18 and 79 among Sweden Democrat voters ($M = 55.8$, $SD = 15.3$) and between 18 and 79 among Conservative Party voters ($M = 55.9$, $SD = 17.0$). In both voter groups, most of the respondents were male (72%/65%), had either university (37%/50%) or high school education (50%/42%), lived in urban areas (66%/71%), and had Swedish parents (86%/87%).

Procedure

The first data were collected in January and February 2018 ($N = 2,905$), with a complementary data collection (due to a somewhat high mean age in the first data set: $M = 59.5$, $SD = 13.7$) in April among a younger target population ($N = 494$, $\text{Range}_{\text{age}} = 18-49$, $M_{\text{age}} = 32.6$, $Sd_{\text{age}} = 7.5$).

An independent research company, Novus, administered the survey, at the request of the authors, to panelists from a randomly recruited pool of approximately 40,000 volunteers (the Sweden Panel). An invitation to the survey was sent to a selection of panelists who had indicated in the background questionnaire that they either had voted (in 2014), or would consider voting (in 2018), for one of the parties of focus in the present study. The second data collection also included 239 panelists (only SD supporters) recruited by a market research company, Norstats.

An online survey (median time: 18.5 minutes) included questions about attitudes, values, and personality characteristics. The participants received 10 points as a reward, to 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 to be selected among various options.

Material

If not otherwise stated, participants indicated their agreement with the items in the questionnaire on a scale ranging from 1 (disagree completely) to 5 (agree completely), or 6 (don't know). 'Don't know'-responses were handled as missing values. Full scales not described here are available from the first author upon request.

Immigration and immigrants. *Xenophobia* was measured by a three-item index ('I don't want an immigrant to marry into my family', 'I prefer having native Swedes as neighbors', 'I don't want to have an immigrant as my boss': $\alpha = .85^4$) similar to the Bogardus (1926) Social Distance Scale. In analyses comparing groups with high or low xenophobia, a dichotomous transformation of this index was used: low xenophobia (0) included scores 1-2 and high xenophobia (1) included scores 4-5, and middle scores were excluded from these analyses.

Immigration skepticism was measured by the item 'Immigration to Sweden should be reduced', and negative perception of the *societal consequences of immigration* by a three-item index ($\alpha = .79$, example: 'Immigration costs too many public resources'). Distrust of a foreign group was measured by the item 'To what degree do you *trust in Middle-East born people* that you meet for the first time?' (reversed) (scale ranging from 1 [to very small degree] to 5 [to very high degree]).

Psychological variables.⁵ Three-items scales were used to measure *sexist attitudes* ($\alpha = .71$,

⁴ alpha values calculated excluding Social Democrat voters from the analyses.

⁵ Some of the scales measuring psychological variables yielded a poor reliability, which is common for short measures capturing variables including more than one facet or dimension. Considering the validity problems when using individual items to capture such variables, we formed indexes regardless of the low alpha scores.

example: ‘Women tend to interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist’), *socioeconomic attitudes* ($\alpha = .62$, example: ‘Taxes should be reduced’), *Right-Wing Authoritarianism* ($\alpha = .47$, example: ‘To stop the radical and immoral currents in the society today there is a need for a strong leader’), and *Social Dominance Orientation* ($\alpha = .56$, example: ‘It’s probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom’), as well as personality variables *Openness* ($\alpha = .55$, example: ‘I value artistic, aesthetic experiences’) and *Agreeableness* ($\alpha = .56$, example: ‘I am considerate and kind to almost everyone’).

Postmaterialist values were measured by asking: ‘Here is a list of qualities that children can be encouraged to learn at home. Which, if any, do you consider to be especially important? Please choose up to five’ and each presented quality was dummy coded as 1 (chosen) or 0 (not chosen). To build an index, survival values (‘Obedience’ and ‘Thrift, saving money and things’) were extracted from a sum of postmaterialist values (‘Tolerance and respect for other people’ and ‘Imagination’). Scores ranged between -2 (survival values) and $+2$ (postmaterialist values).

We measured *institutional distrust* by an index capturing low trust in the national parliament, courts of law, and the Swedish national public TV ($\alpha = .76$, example: ‘To what degree do you trust that *Riksdagen* manages its work?’), reversed), and experienced *societal exclusion* with the item ‘I generally feel that I am a part of society’ (reversed).

Mobility between parties and sympathy for the Sweden Democrats. We measured *past mobility* by asking, ‘Have you previously voted for another party than the one you would vote for today?’ and, if yes, ‘Which party, that you would not vote for today, did you vote for last time?’ To assess possible *future mobility*, we asked ‘If your first choice could not be voted for, which party would you vote for?’ In both of these areas, mobility from and to the three biggest parties (Social Democrats, Conservative Party, and Sweden Democrats) was analyzed separately, but smaller parties were

clustered according to the governmental blocks they belong to (center-right or red/green) and parties that are not in the government were clustered as ‘other’.

Sympathy for Sweden Democrats was measured by the questions ‘If Sweden Democrats governed Sweden, how would you see Sweden’s future’ (scale ranging from 0 [very negatively] to 5 [very positively]) and ‘To what degree do you trust news reporting from the following media’: *Samtiden* (an online newspaper published by the Sweden Democrats), *Avpixlat/Samhällsnytt* (a blog with Sweden Democratic focus), and *Sveriges Television* (The Swedish national public TV, criticized by the Sweden Democrats).

Demographics and control variables. *Education level* was selected from three categories that were further dummy coded as 0 (elementary school and high school) and 1 (university education). Personal *income* per month was selected from eight categories: less than 10,000; 10,000–19,999 [...] 60,000–69,999; 70,000 or more. *Gender* was indicated either as woman (0) or man (1). *Ethnicity* was measured by parents’ birth land, coded as 0 (Swedish parents), 1 (one parent immigrant), or 2 (both parents immigrants).

We also included the following macro-level control variables (full descriptions available from the first author upon request): Size of municipality (Cities/Medium towns and Small towns/Rural areas), and proportion of immigrants in one’s living area in year 2017.

Results

Preliminary analyses

To examine the distribution of our dependent variable, we tested prevalence of low, middle, and high xenophobia in all three voting groups. High xenophobia was approximately 2.5 times more common among Sweden Democrat voters (38%) than among Conservative Party voters (15%) (see Figure 1). Among Social Democratic voters, high xenophobia was very uncommon (5%; $N=29$). This would limit conclusions about group differences, which supports our decision to exclude this voter

group from the scope of the present study.

After excluding participants with middle scores in xenophobia, the prevalence of high xenophobia was 70.9% ($N=848$) among Sweden Democrat voters, and 26.9% ($N=94$) among Conservative Party voters, and the prevalence of low xenophobia was 29.1% ($N=348$) among Sweden Democrat voters, and 73.1% ($N=256$) among Conservative Party voters.

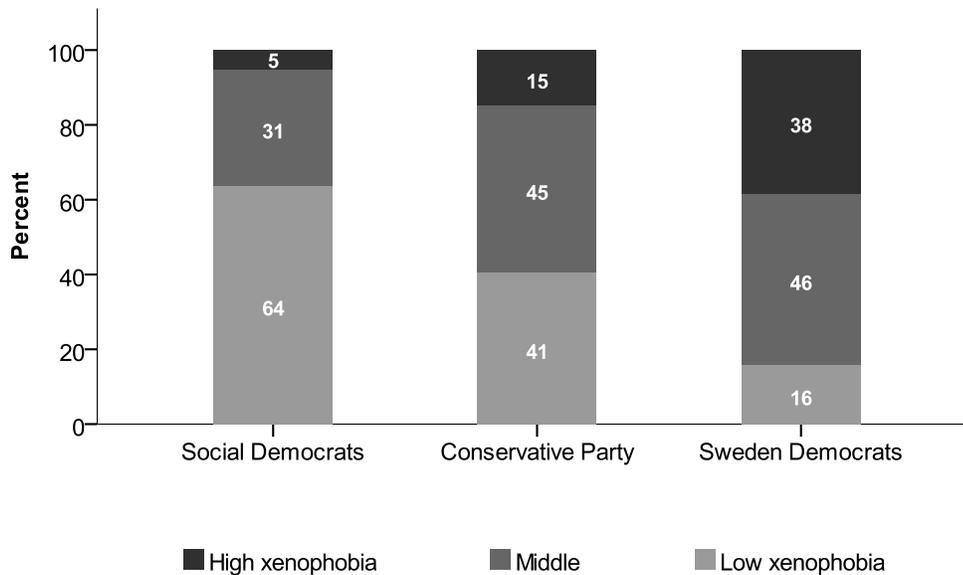


Figure 1. Prevalence (%) of high, middle, and low xenophobia among Social Democrat, Conservative Party, and Sweden Democrat voters.

We then tested mean differences in anti-immigration views between voters with low and high xenophobia. Participants with higher levels of xenophobia expressed more *negative attitudes on immigration* among both Conservative party, $t(348) = -20.03, p < .001, \eta^2 = .35$, and Sweden Democrat voters, $t(377.8) = -15.94, p < .001, \eta^2 = .30$ (see Table 1). Similar but weaker effects were found in *immigration skepticism*, which was higher among voters with higher levels of xenophobia among both Conservative Party voters, $t(335.8) = -14.81, p < .001, \eta^2 = .22$, and Sweden Democrat voters, $t(357.9) = -7.84, p < .001, \eta^2 = .10$. These results confirm that although xenophobia and immigration-negative attitudes are intercorrelated, they are distinct concepts as they only share 10–35% of common variance.

We then tested if our measure for xenophobia differentiates participants who have low or high distrust in people who are born in the Middle East. More xenophobic voters expressed more distrust than less xenophobic voters, among both Conservative Party voters, $t(335) = -13.26, p < .001, \eta^2 = .34$, and Sweden Democrat voters, $t(529.05) = -21.12, p < .001, \eta^2 = .31$.

Table 1.

Mean Values (Standard Deviations) of Psychological Variables per Voting Group and Level of Xenophobia

	Conservative Party,			Sweden Democrats,		
	Level of xenophobia		<i>t</i> -score ^b	Level of xenophobia		<i>t</i> -score ^b
	Low	High		Low	High	
Immigration skepticism	3.5 (1.3)	4.9 (0.4)	-14.8	4.7 (0.7)	5.0 (0.1)	-7.8
Negative perception of immigration	3.1 (1.1)	4.7 (0.4)	-20.0	4.2 (0.7)	4.9 (0.2)	-15.9
Distrust in Middle East born people	2.9 (0.8)	4.2 (0.8)	-13.3	3.3 (0.9)	4.5 (0.7)	-21.1
Sexist attitudes	2.6 (1.0)	3.5 (1.0)	-7.5	3.2 (1.0)	3.8 (0.9)	-9.2
Economic right-wing attitudes	3.7 (0.9)	4.1 (0.7)	-4.7	3.4 (0.9)	3.7 (0.9)	-4.1
Right-Wing Authoritarianism	2.5 (0.8)	3.6 (0.7)	-11.7	3.2 (0.8)	3.9 (0.7)	-13.8
Social Dominance Orientation	2.0 (0.8)	2.6 (0.8)	-6.6	2.0 (0.8)	2.5 (0.8)	-9.6
Postmaterialist values ^a	0.6 (0.8)	-0.0 (0.9)	5.8	0.4 (0.8)	-0.2 (0.9)	10.2
Openness	3.3 (0.8)	3.1 (0.8)	2.6	3.4 (0.8)	3.1 (0.8)	5.7
Agreeableness	4.1 (0.6)	3.6 (0.6)	5.8	3.9 (0.7)	3.7 (0.7)	6.4
Institutional distrust	2.6 (0.8)	3.3 (0.9)	-6.5	3.7 (0.8)	3.9 (0.9)	-4.1
Experienced societal exclusion	1.9 (0.8)	2.4 (1.0)	-4.4	2.3 (1.0)	2.7 (1.1)	-5.4

^a Scale ranging from -2 to +2 and positive score indicates postmaterialist values. Other scales range from 1 to 5.

^b All *t*-scores are statistically significant ($p < .05$)

Underpinnings of xenophobia

Differences between groups with low and high xenophobia. We first tested differences in all proposed variables between voters with high and low xenophobia (group with scores in the middle excluded).

As for the control variables (descriptions of full analyses available from the first author upon request), participants with higher levels of xenophobia were on average older in age in both voter groups. Among Sweden democrat voters, high xenophobia was more common among men and respondents with lower levels of education, Swedish parents, and who live in small towns/rural areas and areas with a lower proportion of immigrants in 2017.⁶ In both voter groups, xenophobia was unrelated to personal income.

Differences were found in all psychological variables in both voter groups: Participants with higher xenophobia scored higher in sexism, economic right-wing attitudes, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Social Dominance Orientation, institutional distrust, and experienced societal exclusion – as well as lower in Openness, Agreeableness, and postmaterialist values ($ps < .05$, see Table 1).

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis. We then tested unique contributions of our independent variables on the xenophobia-index in a hierarchical multiple regression analysis. Building on the above analyses, all variables that were linked to xenophobia in either voting group were included as independent variables: demographic and macro-level variables in step 1 and psychological variables in Step 2 (missing values excluded pairwise).

⁶ Among Sweden Democrat voters, xenophobia was more common in areas where the proportion of people born abroad had increased less between years 2008 and 2017. Stepwise regression revealed that the effect of this variable vanished when added to the same model with current proportion of immigrants.

Table 2

Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Xenophobia Per Voter Group.

	<i>Conservative Party</i>		<i>Sweden Democrats</i>	
	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β
Model 1	.08***		.03***	
Age		.25***		.11***
Male gender		.03		.08**
Immigrant parent(s)		-.07†		-.05†
University education		-.10*		-.03
Small town/Rural area		.02		.05†
Proportion immigrants		.00		-.04†
Model 2	.26***		.21***	
Age		.19***		.12***
Male gender		-.00		.03
Immigrant parent(s)		-.06		-.05*
University education		-.00		-.00
Small town/Rural area		-.04		.02
Proportion immigrants		.01		-.07**
Socioeconomic attitudes		.03		-.01
Sexist attitudes		.12**		.10***
Right-Wing Authoritarianism		.27***		.26***
Social Dominance Orientation		.10**		.13***
Postmaterialist values		-.11**		-.13***
Openness		-.04		-.05*
Agreeableness		-.12**		-.09***
Institutional distrust		.09*		-.02
Experienced societal exclusion		.04		.07**
<i>Total R²</i>		.34		.24
<i>N</i>		591-634		1618-2217

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .10$

In both voter groups, xenophobia was predicted by age, sexist attitudes, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Social Dominance Orientation, (less) postmaterialist values, and (low) Agreeableness (see Table 2). Additional variables that predicted higher xenophobia were institutional distrust among Conservative Party voters, and male gender, *not* having immigrant parent(s), living in an area with low percentage of immigrants, low Openness, and experienced societal exclusion among Sweden Democrat voters. The model explained 34/24% of variance in xenophobia among Conservative Party and Sweden Democrat voters, respectively. No concerns were detected regarding multicollinearity assumptions (Tolerance: .69 – 1.00).

Influence of xenophobia on voter mobility

Past mobility. Past voting did not differ between Sweden Democrat voters who are lower or higher in xenophobia, $\chi^2(5) = 8.26, p = .14$. Among Conservative Party voters, respondents with high xenophobia (23%) had more commonly voted for the Sweden Democrats compared to those low in xenophobia (9%), $\chi^2(5) = 13.89, p < .05$. Conservative Party voters with low xenophobia more commonly stated that they had always been voting for the Conservative Party (42%) as compared to those high in xenophobia (33%). All other differences in previous voting were small (1-4.5%) and thus not presented here.

Future mobility. Investigations into participants' second party choice revealed statistically significant group differences in both voter groups, the Sweden Democrats: $\chi^2(6) = 23.36, p < .01$, the Conservative Party: $\chi^2(6) = 85.06, p < .001$. We focused particularly on mobility between the two parties in focus here. Among Conservative Party voters, respondents with high xenophobia most commonly chose Sweden Democrat (66%), and respondents with low xenophobia most commonly chose other center-to-right parties (67%) and less commonly Sweden Democrats (16%).

Among Sweden Democrat voters, the most notable difference was that voters with high xenophobia expressed almost two times more commonly that they would not vote for any other party than the Sweden Democrats (26%), when compared to voters with low xenophobia (14%). The differences in choosing the Conservative Party as a second option did not differ much (low xenophobia: 47%; high xenophobia: 40%).

Sympathy for Sweden Democrats. In both voter groups respondents with higher xenophobia expressed a more positive view of Sweden's *future if the Sweden Democrats governed*, more trust in a Sweden Democratic blog (*Avpixlat/Samhällsnytt*), and less trust in the national public service TV (*Sveriges Television*, commonly criticized by the SD) (see Table 3). Similar patterns were found in trust toward an online newspaper published by the Sweden Democrats (*Samtiden*) among Sweden Democrat, but not Conservative Party, voters.

Table 3.

Mean Values (Standard Deviations) of Variables measuring sympathy for Sweden Democrats (SD) and for a Media Channel Criticized by SD, per Voting Group and Level of Xenophobia

	Conservative Party,			Sweden Democrats,		
	Level of xenophobia		<i>t</i> -score	Level of xenophobia		<i>t</i> -score
	Low	High		Low	High	
Positive future if SD governed	1.92 (1.1)	3.14 (1.1)	-9.45***	3.91 (0.9)	4.35 (0.8)	-8.17***
Trust in SD online newspaper	2.15 (1.0)	2.45 (1.0)	-1.46	2.69 (1.0)	3.14 (1.1)	-4.58***
Trust in SD positive blog	1.82 (1.0)	2.63 (1.0)	-4.84***	2.59 (1.0)	3.32 (1.1)	-8.67***
Trust in national public TV	3.76 (1.1)	3.20 (1.1)	4.17***	2.72 (1.2)	2.50 (1.3)	2.70**

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$

Table 4.

Summary of Binary Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting Support for Sweden Democrats (vs. the Conservative Party) Among Voters with High and Low Level of Xenophobia.

	Low xenophobia			High xenophobia		
	<i>B</i>	S.E.	Odds ratio	<i>B</i>	S.E.	Odds ratio
(Constant)	-3.63*	(1.12)	0.03	0.96	(1.30)	2.61
Age	0.01†	(0.01)	1.01	-0.02*	(0.01)	0.98
Male gender	-0.24	(0.23)	0.79	0.74**	(0.26)	0.48
University education	-0.38†	(0.22)	0.68	-0.01	(0.25)	1.01
Socioeconomic right-wing attitudes	-0.82***	(0.14)	0.44	-0.97***	(0.17)	0.38
Sexist attitudes	0.33**	(0.11)	1.40	0.09	(0.14)	1.01
Right-Wing Authoritarianism	0.61***	(0.14)	1.84	0.35†	(0.18)	1.41
Postmaterialist values	-0.23†	(0.13)	0.80	-0.14	(0.14)	0.87
Agreeableness	-0.16	(0.19)	0.85	0.21	(0.18)	1.23
Institutional distrust	1.47***	(0.15)	4.33	0.79***	(0.14)	2.20
Experienced societal exclusion	-0.01	(0.13)	1.00	0.16	(0.13)	1.18
	<i>Log prob.</i>		530.42			506.15
	χ^2		277.63			101.18
	<i>Pseudo R</i> ²		.50			.22
	<i>N</i>		593			922

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .10$

Support for the Sweden Democrats among voters with high and low xenophobia. Finally, we tested in a logistic binary regression analysis which variables explain support for Sweden Democrats (vs. the Conservative Party) among respondents with high or low levels of xenophobia. In this analysis, we included only variables that correlated with Sweden Democrat support among voters with either low or high xenophobia (zero-order correlations are available from the first author upon request). As presented in Table 4, voters with *both low and high* xenophobia are more likely to support

Sweden Democrats if they have less right-leaning socioeconomic attitudes and higher levels of institutional distrust. Moreover, voters with *low* xenophobia more likely also support the Sweden Democrats if they have higher levels of sexist attitudes and Right-Wing Authoritarianism, and voters with *high* xenophobia more likely also support the Sweden Democrats if they are male and younger in age (a very weak effect).

Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate xenophobia among voters of a radical right-wing party (the Sweden Democrats) and a mainstream right-wing party (the Conservative Party) in Sweden. The *first* aim was to explore if xenophobia correlates with the same psychological variables in both voter groups and, here, we found no notable difference. Regression analysis revealed that Right-Wing Authoritarianism was the variable with the strongest effect on xenophobia in both voter groups. Also, in line with previous research (e.g., Ekehammar et al., 2004), Social Dominance Orientation had a unique effect on xenophobia, and the effect of (low) Openness vanished in the full model among Sweden Democrat voters and was weakened among Conservative Party voters. However, unexpectedly, the effect of (low) Agreeableness remained statistically significant in both voter groups. One reason for this could be that our measure for Social Dominance Orientation – a variable that usually mediates the effect of Agreeableness on various psychological outcomes (e.g., Ekehammar et al., 2004) – had a low reliability that introduced error variance into measurement. Interestingly, (less) postmaterialist values also had a strong effect on xenophobia above and beyond Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Social Dominance Orientation. These basic values thus seem to influence xenophobia also through some other pathways than the ideological views measured here. Studies tend to focus either on basic values or ideological attitudes, and future studies could more systematically examine how they interplay in predicting intergroup attitudes. Moreover, in line with previous research showing links between antipathies toward different societal groups (e.g., Ekehammar et al., 2004), sexist attitudes predicted

xenophobia. And finally, the effects of macro-level variables were either non-significant or relatively weak, which could indicate that xenophobia is a stable variable that is not easily influenced by social circumstances.

The *second* aim was to explore how the concept of xenophobia may or may not explain voter behavior in the contemporary political context. Xenophobia was found to be more common among Sweden Democrat voters than Conservative Party voters, and – although this was not an aim of our study – pre-analyses revealed that Social Democratic voters very rarely express xenophobia. Moreover, Conservative Party voters who have previously voted for the Sweden Democrats, scored on average higher in xenophobia than other Conservative Party voters. These results support the assumption that although not all radical right-wing voters are xenophobic, xenophobic voters tend to be more inclined to vote for the radical-right than other voters (Rydgren, 2008).

Moreover, we explored if more and less xenophobic voters could have different motivations to support a radical-right party, as well as why xenophobic Conservative Party voters do not support the radical right. The results showed that although participants with higher xenophobia expressed more right-leaning socioeconomic attitudes and distrust toward societal institutions, more left-leaning socioeconomic attitudes and higher institutional distrust predicted support for the Sweden Democrats among voters with both low and high xenophobia. Furthermore, voters with low xenophobia were more prone to supporting the Sweden Democrats if they scored high in Right-Wing Authoritarianism and sexism, which could suggest that social conservatism – one of the core characteristics of radical-right parties (Mudde, 2007; Rydgren, 2007) – predisposes right-wing voters to support a more radical option even if they do not hold antipathies toward immigrants *per se*. Of interest in the contemporary political context, Right-Wing Authoritarianism seems to be a particularly strong correlate of both anti-immigration attitudes and radical-right support in cultural contexts where immigrants are perceived as a societal threat, for example due to allegations of increased crime rates (Cohrs & Stelzl, 2010; Dunn,

2015). Such a threat perception, promoted by the Sweden Democrats, has received a lot of attention during the past few years in Sweden (Strömbäck, 2018), which could explain the strong connection of Right-Wing Authoritarianism with both xenophobia and support for the Sweden Democrats (see also Jylhä et al., 2019). Interestingly, unlike in previous research on far-right support (e.g., Cornelis & Van Hiel, 2015), Social Dominance Orientation did not predict Sweden Democrat support, perhaps because the mean value of this variable was generally low. One reason for this could be that the liberal and egalitarian norms are commonly supported in Sweden, and the Sweden Democrats have aimed to promote their exclusionary and nativist agenda without confronting these norms at a principal level (Moffitt, 2017; Towns et al., 2014). Thus, measures capturing general views on inequality and anti-egalitarianism, such as Social Dominance Orientation, may have somewhat limited predictive power in explaining radical-right support in this cultural context. And finally, we found that even if participants score high in xenophobia, they are *not* likely to support Sweden Democrats if they are female, younger in age (this effect was very weak), support the socioeconomic issues of the Conservative Party, and have trust in the societal institutions.

Regarding conceptual implications of our results, it seems that a general measure of xenophobia can be used when studying and explaining both anti-immigrant attitudes and contemporary voting behavior. This measure successfully differentiates participants with different levels of distrust toward Middle-East born people, who are commonly depicted as a threat to the Western societies by the radical right, and correlates as expected with supporting the Sweden Democrats and the variables that have been connected to negative intergroup attitudes in previous research (e.g., Ekehammar et al., 2004). However, we acknowledge the fact that distinguishing different immigration-related attitudes is complicated. For example, some part of the contemporary discourses regarding the desire to limit immigration may serve the same function as expression of blatant racism and xenophobia (Augoustinos & Every, 2007).

Finally, considering the possible future mobility, Conservative Party voters with a high level of xenophobia were found to be somewhat less trusting of societal institutions, and thus could potentially be mobilized by the Sweden Democrats or other parties that use anti-establishment rhetoric. Among Sweden Democrat voters, however, voters with low and high xenophobia did not differ in terms of distrust. Thus, the anti-establishment messages of the Sweden Democrats may have mobilized voters who are distrusting toward societal institutions and/or decreased trust among their voters (cf. Hellström & Nilsson 2010; Rooduijn et al., 2018), but unfortunately, we could not determine the causality due to our cross-sectional design. We also found that a third of Sweden Democrat voters with high xenophobia would not vote if the Sweden Democrats were not an option and, as compared to Sweden Democrat voters with low xenophobia, they experience being a part of the society to a lesser degree. They also have a more positive view of Sweden's future if the Sweden Democrats were to govern and more trust in Sweden Democratic media. Thus, Sweden Democrat voters with high levels of xenophobia could be particularly difficult for other parties to mobilize at least in the contemporary societal context.

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