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The Surprising Non-Impact of Radical Right-Wing Populist Party Representation on Public Tolerance of Minorities

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ABSTRACT The presence of radical right-wing populist (RRP) parties presents a challenge to liberal democracies, which are inclined to allow the representation of parties that reject their principles of diversity and inclusiveness. Addressing this concern, we use the World Values Survey and other data sources to demonstrate that the representation of RRP parties in parliament, in fact, has no discernible effect on individual levels of intolerance. The anti-outgroup messages of RRP parties are mitigated by the tolerance-boosting effect of the information diversity present in the multiparty systems that allow for their representation. In addition, even those predisposed to be intolerant of outgroups are unaffected by the representation of such parties, as the attitudes of these individuals are least likely to be shaped by new information. Bans on political parties that espouse intolerance, often considered or implemented by modern democracies, are unlikely to achieve their desired effect.

Radical right-wing populist (RRP) parties are largely considered a threat to liberal democracy. Their espoused intolerance of groups which they purport to threaten to dilute the purity of national culture is often held as hostile to modern democracy’s focus on minority rights in tandem with majority rule. While RRP parties are an anathema to liberal democracy, the restriction of such parties also undermines the pluralism fundamental to such a system. Such restrictions are often intended to protect minorities from the potential exacerbation of intolerant attitudes such parties may cause, but it is yet to be determined whether these parties are truly associated with intolerance. This article shows that banning or restricting such parties is unlikely to change the level of intolerance in the public.

The relationship between the representation of RRP parties and intolerance receives a passing examination in recent research investigating the connection between individual levels of tolerance and political institutions. In a recent article

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in this journal, Dunn et al. (2009) find that an increase in the number of parties represented in parliament increases individual levels of social tolerance through exposing individuals to information diversity. The authors note, however, that the presence of a multiparty system boosts the likelihood that RRP parties will gain representation in parliament, which has the potential to advance intolerant attitudes in the public. The authors dismiss this possibility, suggesting that exposure to information diversity leads to heightened tolerance in society overall, but do not adequately examine whether RRP party representation is, in fact, linked to levels of tolerance.

Moreover, Stenner (2005) argues that perceptions of diversity serve to inflame intolerance among one subgroup of the public: authoritarians. The causal mechanisms proposed to explain the findings in the above research, the tolerance-increasing effect of mere exposure to outgroups for Dunn et al. (2009) and the heightened irascibility of authoritarians for Stenner (2005), together predict that parliamentary diversity can both increase tolerance among the general public and increase intolerance among authoritarians. However, attitude formation research indicates that those who already hold strong anti-outgroup attitudes, in this case, authoritarians, are least likely to be affected by new information (Patterson, 1980). As such, we predict that the presence of RRP parties in parliament will not increase intolerance in the public, nor will such a presence exacerbate intolerant attitudes among authoritarians.

Harnessing the 1999–2000 World Values Survey and a host of macro-level resources, we specifically examine whether the proportion of RRP party controlled seats in parliament is linked to a more intolerant public or exacerbates intolerant attitudes among authoritarians. Using multilevel models, we demonstrate that this is not the case. The presence of RRP parties does not decrease individually-held levels of tolerance in a country, and the intolerance commonly expressed by authoritarians is not magnified in countries where RRP parties have substantial legislative representation. This result is surprising on its face, but the literature on comparative politics, tolerance and political psychology provides a clear explanation for such a non-relationship.

Freedom of speech and association are two fundamental principles of liberal democratic society. In such societies, any curtailment of these principles is deemed appropriate only if made to protect others from harm and must, in the language of the United States Supreme Court, be justified by a compelling governmental interest, be narrowly tailored to achieve that goal or interest, and be the least restrictive means for achieving that interest.1 If a ban on RRP parties is due to concern over the promulgation of intolerance, by these standards this study indicates that there is no compelling evidence to support such an infringement of liberal democratic principles.

Party Representation, Information Diversity and Tolerance

Electoral systems establish formal hurdles that parties must overcome to gain representation and thereby affect the number of parties that will emerge in a country
(Duverger, 1954; Lijphart, 1994). As demonstrated by Ordeshook and Shvetsova (1994) and Amorim Neto and Cox (1997), the number of parties that emerge is a product of not only the electoral permissiveness of a country, but also the social heterogeneity of such. In countries with permissive electoral institutions, party systems faithfully reflect social cleavages, rather than merely representing one group’s interests with several different parties (Breuning, 1997). Thus, it is generally the case that multiparty systems are a reflection of a diverse social structure.

Electoral reform in New Zealand – a change in the mid-1990s from a majoritarian system to a relatively proportional compensatory mixed system – demonstrates that more parties in parliament results in a greater diversity of information coverage by the media. Orellana and Monroe (2004), for example, find a post-reform increase in the number of parties receiving significant media coverage, while Hayward and Rudd (2000) find a post-reform increase in news that substantively examines policy discussions. An increase in the number of parties represented in parliament leads to a corresponding increase in the media coverage assigned to those parties. This, in turn, increases the diversity and depth of issue coverage by the media. An increase in the number of parties in parliament, then, results in an increase in the diversity of media coverage of both parties and policies.

The mere exposure effect (Zajonc, 1968) argues that an attitude toward a stimulus in the absence of aversive conditions becomes increasingly positive with repeated exposure, regardless of whether the subject is aware of the exposure; the perception of information in a neutral or positive environment, whether conscious or not, is sufficient to improve an individual’s attitude toward it (e.g. Cacioppo & Petty, 1979; Petty & Wegener, 1998; Fitzsimmons & Osburn, 1968; McGuire, 1969; Rokeach, 1971). As large swaths of the general public do not hold meaningful attitudes on salient issues or are uncertain about those attitudes (Converse, 1964; Alvarez & Brehm, 2002) – conditions necessary for attitude formation or change (Peterson & Thurstone, 1933; Klapper, 1963; McLeod & Reeves, 1980; Roberts & Maccoby, 1985) – mere exposure has the potential to foment conspicuous change in mass attitudes.

The suggested causal pathway, then, flows from the manifestation to the propagation of the awareness of diversity. Political systems that allow the diversity inherent in society to manifest in the party system, express that diversity, via the media, to the individual members of that society. And as Entman concludes, “the mere presence of conflicting views in the news may convey an awareness of the diversity of the country, including its variety of races, economic classes, and viewpoints. Such consciousness may promote tolerance of change, and empathy for positions or groups that challenge the status quo” (1989: 354). However, media exposure need not be the only source of exposure to diversity. Consistent with intergroup contact theory (see, for example, Pettigrew, 1998), McLaren (2003) finds that a personal relationship with an immigrant helps to mediate the effects of high levels of immigration that might otherwise lead one to oppose immigration.

It is the focus on both the non-cognitive aspects of exposure and the condition that this exposure be under non-negative conditions that are central to Dunn et al.’s (2009)
argument and which set them apart from the arguments of previous theories. Such theories argue largely from a cognitive, threat-centered perspective. Realistic group conflict theory proposes that a threat to resources from an outgroup, perceived or real, will provoke opposition to this group. Empirically, income and optimistic evaluations of one’s economic situation are related to positive attitudes toward immigration (Kehrberg, 2007), and country level wealth and individual level income are positively associated with tolerant attitudes in numerous studies (Shamir & Sagiv-Schifter, 2006; Florida et al., 2008; Andersen & Fetner, 2008; Scheepers et al., 2002). Moreover, in countries where generous welfare benefits lessen concerns that immigrant groups will prosper to the detriment of the majority group, tolerance of immigrants is relatively high (Crepaz & Damron, 2009).

As with realistic group conflict theory, ethnic competition theory argues that intolerant attitudes can spawn from competition, but focuses on cultural, rather than economic, threat. A large outgroup can potentially pose a threat to the cultural status quo, introducing competition over customs, values and identity (Ivarsflaten, 2005; Schneider, 2008; Huntington, 2004; Zolberg & Woon, 1999). Whether threat from outgroups is perceived in terms of an economic or cultural perspective, a central component of these theories is cognition; one must think about, or at least consciously acknowledge, the information for it to result in threat. The framework Dunn et al. (2009) set up considers that the public at large pay little attention to political matters (Converse, 1964, 2000) and are therefore unlikely to receive political messages and even less likely to be influenced by them (Patterson 1980). We therefore follow Dunn et al. (2009) and argue that, in general, diversity of information will not serve to decrease tolerance levels, even if part of that diversity is due to RRP party representation.

However, realistic group conflict theory and ethnic competition theory both indicate that perceptions of diversity can boost threat levels, and this has particular relevance for those with authoritarian predispositions. Authoritarians are predisposed to express intolerant attitudes when there is a perceived threat to group homogeneity and/or a portrayal of difference (Stenner, 2005). In fact, authoritarians are likely to be ethnocentric, racially prejudiced, and inherently averse to diversity (Duckitt & Farre, 1994; Stenner, 2005). As such, authoritarians are likely to respond to increased parliamentary diversity by expressing higher than normal levels of intolerance.

In short, parliamentary representation of an increasing number of parties portrays an image of a divided society. While this may, in general, promote tolerance of difference, for authoritarians the exact opposite will be achieved; the portrayal of difference and division that manifests in the representation of numerous parties may, in fact, exacerbate intolerant attitudes among authoritarians.

Perception, Cognition and Radical Right Populist Party Rhetoric

Dunn et al. (2009) argue that it is the mere exposure effect that translates party diversity in parliament into more tolerant individuals. Party diversity is argued to lead to an increase in the diversity of media coverage, which in turn leads members of society
exposed to that media to become more tolerant of diversity. As noted above, their argument relies on non-cognitive processes as the means of the perception of diversity as most individuals are largely inattentive to and uninterested in politics. This non-cognitive process of reception rules out the possibility of perceiving any specific details regarding the diversity of media coverage, such as which specific groups are being discussed and whether those groups are referenced in a positive or negative light. Therefore, the mere exposure effect cannot account for anything more than the recognition and positive acceptance by the public at large that society is or is not diverse.

The awareness of division that accompanies increased parliamentary diversity, then, is not via a direct message stating that one group or another is a threat to group unity and homogeneity; rather, it is the simple recognition that society is fractionalized. Exposure to constant debate and criticism between parties cannot help but expose a fractionalized and diverse society. The common assertion is that RRP parties promote and instigate intolerance in the public by villainizing specific groups, or outgroups in general. For example, in India, Shukla (1998) reports that “Rajkot and the surrounding Gujrat state are becoming known for what Christian leaders say is growing intolerance linked to the rise to power of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party”. The direct implication if this news article is that the Bharatiya Janata Party is causing an increase in public intolerance of Christians. In 2002, the chief minister of the same state, also of the Bharatiya Janata Party, was accused of standing by idly while Hindu mobs killed hundreds of Muslims in response to an attack on a train. While the causal direction between such violence and intolerance and RRP party representation is debatable, the association is certainly understandable.

RRP parties, either explicitly or implicitly, argue that it is the duty of each member of the ingroup to create and/or maintain a sovereign state ruled by that specific ethnic-national group and to strictly abide by the culture of that group. Simplistically, RRP parties are the institutional equivalent of authoritarian individuals; as a group, they are markedly more intolerant and punitive toward outgroups than other party families. As Rydgren (2005, 2007) notes, radical right-wing populist parties stress authoritarian policy stances on issues such as immigration, law and order, and “family values” and rigorously oppose difference and dissent. Looking at the British National Party (BNP) as an example, their manifesto states:

At current immigration and birth rates, indigenous British people are set to become a minority well within 50 years. This will result in the extinction of the British people, culture, heritage and identity. The BNP will take all steps necessary to halt and reverse this process. These steps will include a halt to all further immigration, the deportation of all illegal immigrants, a halt to the “asylum” swindle and the promotion of the already existing voluntary repatriation scheme . . . The BNP will deport all foreigners convicted of crimes in Britain, regardless of their immigration status . . . The BNP will halt the handout of benefits, housing, education and pensions to foreigners who have
not paid into the system. The BNP will ensure that the National Health Service is used to serve British people and not used as an International Health Service.²

This brief excerpt strongly indicates a focus on ingroup solidarity and the intolerant attitudes they hold toward outgroups which they believe to threaten that solidarity.

RRP parties, which have a relatively easy time gaining representation in multiparty systems (Norris, 2005), often espouse anti-outgroup policy positions and messages that demonstrate intolerance of such groups. These messages are directly stated and require cognitive processing. Yet, to alter an individual’s attitudes in this fashion is a matter first of message reception, and then of message acceptance (Zaller, 1991). And, as noted by Converse (1964, 2000) and others, most individuals pay very little attention to political messages.

Even if this first hurdle of message reception is overcome, the matter of persuading an individual with a differing viewpoint is unlikely. While previous research suggests that the mass media is capable of both creating new attitudes (Peterson & Thurstone, 1933) and crystallizing weak attitudes (Klapper, 1963; McLeod & Reeves, 1980; Roberts & Maccoby, 1985), it is not proficient at altering moderate or strong attitudes (Patterson, 1980).

As most individuals who pay attention to politics are likely to already possess at least moderate attitudes on issues regarding outgroups, the only people who are likely to pay attention to such messages are those with preexisting strong attitudes. Thus, authoritarians, who already hold robust attitudes toward outgroups, are unlikely to be affected by anti-outgroup messages. As such, anti-outgroup messages espoused by RRP parties are not expected to increase overall levels of individual intolerance.

Based on this reasoning, we hypothesize that the representation of RRP parties in parliament will have no discernible association with individual levels of intolerance, even among authoritarians. Prima facie, this is a counterintuitive expectation, as common perception is that the rhetoric of RRP parties should rile up the public and heighten anti-outgroup sentiment, especially among those who are predisposed to intolerance toward outgroups. However, a closer look at the psychological mechanisms behind attitude formation and intolerance clearly support our expectation. The anti-outgroup messages of RRP parties will not necessarily increase intolerance, as information diversity as a whole actually works to boost tolerance and acceptance among individuals via mere exposure. Those possessing an authoritarian predisposition are also unlikely to express heightened intolerance due to the representation of RRP parties, as the diversity of a multiparty system is already likely to have inflamed any intolerance they are likely to express; further, their preexisting intolerance toward outgroups is unlikely to be affected by any information provided by RRP parties.

There is a competing rationale for this non-relationship. Even if intolerance levels are stable across countries, differences in RRP party representation could exist because intolerant individuals simply elect such parties where they are present. The main empirical prediction of this rationale – the absence of a relationship between RRP representation and intolerance – is the same as ours. However, if we are able to show that authoritarianism and information diversity, via multipartism,
affect intolerance levels, credence will be given to our more detailed explanation for this non-relationship.

**Data and Measurement**

To test these expectations, we gather data from 29 countries. As meaningful representation in parliament and effective media reporting occur only in democratic regimes, we restrict the dataset to democratic countries. Whether a country is democratic is determined using Freedom House’s Freedom in the World Data. Those countries which are deemed “free” are retained, while all others were removed from the dataset.

The second restriction to the dataset is imposed by the availability of data. First, the necessary individual-level measures must be available in the 1999–2000 World/European Values Surveys (WVS99). Second, macro-level data regarding the representation of RRP parties must be available from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) (Klingemann et al., 2006).

The dependent variable, social intolerance, is defined as a negative orientation toward groups outside of one’s own. The social intolerance measure is created from ten questions drawn from the WVS99, which are ideal for this study. Each question is a binary measure of rejection or acceptance of a distinct group as neighbours: criminals, people of a different race, heavy drinkers, emotionally unstable people, Muslims, immigrants/foreign workers, people with AIDS, drug users, homosexuals, and Jews. These groups are chosen to yield as wide a variety of groups as possible. While some of these groups are unlikely to be debated by political parties, our theoretical expectations do not require reference to any specific group. Rather, it is the portrayal of diversity that generates tolerance toward difference in general. Further, each of these items taps an underlying construct of social tolerance that echoes RRP parties’ “ethno-nationalist xenophobia and antiestablishment populism” whose “ideological core is embedded in a sociocultural authoritarianism that stresses themes such as law and order and family values” (Rydgren, 2007: 242–243).

This scale produces a Cronbach’s alpha score of 0.79 and higher values indicate a higher level of social intolerance. The mean value on the scale for each country in the dataset is depicted in Figure 1. Note that we also reconceptualized this measure to include a smaller array of outgroups most likely to be targeted by RRP parties. Results of our analyses with this reconceptualization are provided in the appendix.

The primary independent variable is a measure of the proportion of seats held by RRP parties in parliament. To correspond with the WVS, party data is from the closest election previous to 1999. Party-family classifications are derived directly from the CMP and result from the expert judgment of the research group. The proportion of RRP party-held seats in parliament, also derived from the CMP, is calculated by dividing the absolute number of seats won by RRP parties by the total number of seats in parliament.

To validate that RRP parties are more punitive and intolerant of outgroups than parties belonging to other family classifications, we use the CMP to create an authoritarianism scale for all parties. This scale is created from seven items which indicate
libertarian policy statements in a party’s manifesto and seven items which indicate authoritarian policy statements. The libertarian items are summed and subtracted from the summed authoritarian items. The authoritarian items consist of positive statements regarding the military, political authority, a national way of life, traditional morality, law and order, and social harmony; and a negative orientation toward multiculturalism. The libertarian items consist of positive statements regarding freedom.
and human rights, social justice, multiculturalism, and underprivileged minority groups; and a negative orientation toward the military, a national way of life, and traditional morality. A higher value on the authoritarianism scale indicates a higher level of intolerance and punitiveness for each party.

Table 1 lists the mean authoritarianism scores for each party family. The RRP, or nationalist as it is labelled by the CMP, party family has the highest level of authoritarianism of any party family. The differences between the scores of the RRP party family and each other group are statistically significant with the exception of the Christian Democrat ($p = 0.228$) and agrarian ($p = 0.126$) party families. However, given the low number of observations, we are satisfied that the substantial size of the differences indicates a difference in the level of authoritarianism between the RRP party family and all others.

To measure authoritarian predisposition we follow Feldman and Stenner (1997), who propose a measurement strategy for authoritarianism that separates a predisposition to intolerance (i.e. an authoritarian predisposition) from intolerant attitudes. This measure of an individual’s authoritarian predisposition is composed of questions inquiring into an individual’s childrearing values. Feldman and Stenner argue that these questions unobtrusively, without invoking authoritarian attitudes, measure an individual’s predisposition to express intolerant attitudes under conditions of normative threat (see also Stenner, 2005).

The authoritarian predisposition scale is composed of four questions asking the respondent’s view of desirable qualities to instill in children: independence, imagination and tolerance, all reverse coded, and obedience. Similar to the scale reliabilities reported by Stenner (2005), our authoritarian predisposition scale has an alpha of 0.25 across all countries and, when constructed country by country, ranges from a low of 0.10 in the Czech Republic to a high of 0.43 in Austria. As cautioned by Stenner (2005), we avoid dismissing this scale due solely to low scale reliability. While the internal consistency of the scale is considerably less than we would prefer, the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Family</th>
<th>Obs.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communist</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-4.299</td>
<td>11.228</td>
<td>-21.951</td>
<td>25.758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3.839</td>
<td>14.702</td>
<td>-25.49</td>
<td>33.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8.503</td>
<td>11.181</td>
<td>-7.945</td>
<td>34.286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Democrat</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15.305</td>
<td>10.511</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>40.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10.169</td>
<td>11.307</td>
<td>-11.475</td>
<td>27.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalist</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20.289</td>
<td>15.106</td>
<td>3.623</td>
<td>52.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrarian</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.138</td>
<td>10.125</td>
<td>-2.041</td>
<td>27.083</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
scale is face valid and certainly provides leverage over the concept we intend to measure, i.e. an individual’s authoritarian predisposition.

To account for the mere exposure finding of Dunn et al. (2009), we include a measure of party system fragmentation. We quantify the number of parties in parliament using Laakso and Taagepera’s (1979) effective number of parliamentary parties index (ENPP). This measure accounts for each party in the country with parliamentary representation, and each party’s contribution to the index is weighted by its share of seats. We take the logarithm of this measure under the assumption that a shift from two to three parties should have a greater effect than a shift from seven to eight parties. We use data from the World Bank Database of Political Institutions to calculate this measure.

We include age, education, gender, ideology and religiosity, which are generally associated with tolerance, as individual-level control variables. Age is simply the respondent’s age measured in years, gender is a dichotomous variable coded 0 for females and 1 for males, and education is divided into six categories, with higher values indicating a higher level of formal schooling. Ideology is a self-reported measure of Left–Right identification, with higher values indicating right-wing tendency. To gauge religiosity, we create a scale based on four questions, which yields a reliability of 0.83. Each of these variables is available in the WVS.

At the macro-level, we control for ethnic fractionalization using the popular index developed by Alesina et al. (2003), in which higher values indicate more diversity. Under the assumption that the expression of intolerant attitudes is more likely to surface when there is heterogeneity among societal groups, this variable should be positively related to intolerance. Alternatively, as social diversity increases, individuals are more likely to have contact with a member of an outgroup. This interaction may increase one’s acceptance of such groups (Hodson et al., 1994; Tuch, 1987; Wilson, 1991; Stouffer, 1955; McLaren, 2003), perhaps via the mere exposure effect. As such, we have no a priori expectations regarding this variable.

We also control for the country’s level of modernization, expected to be negatively related to intolerance (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005), using GDP per capita. The variable captures average individual wealth in thousands of dollars, adjusted for purchasing power. Data is from the World Bank’s World Development Indicators. Each variable is summarized across our sample in Table 2.

Model and Analyses

Data on each variable is available across 29 countries and 29,981 individuals, with an average of 1,034 individuals per country, a low of 610, and a high of 1,881. Our first task is to simply examine if, at the bivariate level, social intolerance is more pronounced among individuals who are subject to party systems with a RRP party presence. In this simple preliminary test, we depict, in Figure 2, the distribution and median of social intolerance across individuals in countries with one or more seats held by a RRP party and in countries where no seats are held by a RRP party. As is clear from the figure, these distributions are very similar and there is no apparent
tendency for social intolerance to be more pronounced where RRP parties have legislative representation.

To more fully test the expectations derived above and control for necessary factors, we switch to a multivariate setting. We model our dependent variable, social

Table 2. Summary statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual-level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social intolerance</td>
<td>0.296</td>
<td>0.243</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian predisposition</td>
<td>1.767</td>
<td>1.002</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>4.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>45.314</td>
<td>16.980</td>
<td>15.000</td>
<td>98.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3.581</td>
<td>1.374</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>6.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (male)</td>
<td>0.487</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>5.506</td>
<td>2.025</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>10.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.848</td>
<td>-2.706</td>
<td>1.414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country-level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RRP representation</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.091</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of parties (logged)</td>
<td>1.241</td>
<td>0.363</td>
<td>0.687</td>
<td>2.218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic fractionalization</td>
<td>0.266</td>
<td>0.197</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita</td>
<td>17.638</td>
<td>7.379</td>
<td>3.900</td>
<td>32.700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. The conditional distribution of social intolerance.
intolerance, as a function of each of the theoretically important covariates and the control variables. The data is observed at two levels, with individuals (level-1) clustered within countries (level-2). To avoid false inflation of the significance levels of the macro-level coefficient estimates (see Steenbergen & Jones, 2002), we estimate a multilevel model, fitting a unique intercept to each country. This model is illustrated with the following equation:

\[ y_{ij} = \alpha_j + x_{ij} \beta + e_{ij}, \]

where \( \alpha_j = \gamma_j \Psi + \zeta_j \).

Each individual’s (i) intolerance level in a given country (j) is denoted as \( y_{ij} \). Individual-level variables are contained in \( x_{ij} \) and country-level variables are contained in \( \gamma_j \). The coefficients associated with \( x_{ij} \) are contained in vector \( \beta \), and coefficients associated with \( \gamma_j \) are contained in vector \( \Psi \). The \( \zeta_j \) term captures variation around the country-specific intercepts, \( \alpha_j \), and \( e_{ij} \) captures the random error for each individual. The estimation of this equation also provides a measure of \( \rho = \frac{\text{var}(\zeta_j)}{\text{var}(\zeta_j) + \text{var}(e_{ij})} \), which is the proportion of unmodelled individually-held intolerance due to unobserved country-level effects.

Table 3 depicts the estimation of three models. Model 1 is simply a test of the bivariate relationship between the proportion of RRP party-held seats and social intolerance. As expected, this relationship is not statistically different from zero.

In Model 2 we add in each additional covariate. RRP representation is again insignificant, and we see that authoritarian predisposition and multipartism also behave as expected. All else equal, individuals with an authoritarian predisposition are more likely to be socially intolerant, while individuals living in countries with several viable political parties are less likely to be intolerant; exposure to the information diversity associated with multipartism works to boost tolerance in the public.

In Model 3 we include an interaction between the proportion of seats held by RRP parties and authoritarian predisposition to test the main theses of this article. The coefficient on the interaction term is not statistically different from zero and the coefficient estimates for the un-interacted covariates remain remarkably similar. The insignificant interaction effect indicates that, as expected, the intolerance commonly expressed by authoritarians is not magnified in countries where RRP parties have substantial legislative representation. Figure 3 provides a graphical interpretation of the effect of authoritarianism across the range of the RRP representation variable, confirming that its magnitude is essentially unchanged. If anything, authoritarianism has a weaker relationship with intolerance in countries where RRP parties enjoy substantial representation.

Regarding the control variables, intolerance decreases with education and tends to be lower in countries that have modernized economically. On the other hand, older individuals, religious individuals, and individuals with a right-leaning ideology tend to be less tolerant of outgroups. Finally, there is some evidence that intolerance is higher in countries that are more ethnically fractionalized – though the relationship is only marginally significant. This finding reflects the simple idea that intolerance is more likely when there are outgroups to be intolerant of.
In Model 1 the \( \rho \) (“rho”) value is 0.149, and in Models 2 and 3, where more country-level factors are modelled, \( \rho \) is between 0.04 and 0.05. Even for the more complete Models 2 and 3, this indicates that about 4.5% of unexplained variation in social tolerance is due to unobserved country-level considerations, which is captured with the random intercepts. Thus, estimating a simple pooled linear regression would have ignored important country-level variation; the random intercepts approach is useful.

### Discussion

Our findings suggest that, all else equal, individuals in countries in which RRP parties are represented in parliament do not express higher levels of social intolerance. In
fact, these parties do little to shape tolerance levels, even among those who are predisposed to intolerance toward outgroups. Some countries have responded to the emergence of RRP parties by calling for their official removal from the electoral process. For example, in Germany there exists a recent movement to ban the National Democratic Party, an openly racist and anti-Semitic party. In the Czech Republic, the far-right Czech Workers’ Party was recently banned by the country’s highest court for its explicitly anti-outgroup principles. These bans (or attempted bans) stem in part from a fear of anti-outgroup attitudes spreading through the populace. However, our empirical findings indicate that these fears are unfounded.

For a large segment of the public, the portrayal of diversity in society breeds tolerance of difference regardless of how that diversity is portrayed by political parties. In societies with diverse representation, the media exposes the public to a diverse discourse. This discourse conditions the public to accept diversity as a facet of society and results in a public more tolerant of difference.

It is the non-cognitive component of this discourse that generates these results. It is not necessary for the media to explicitly portray this diversity; rather, it is simply the diversity of the discourse, as opposed to its content, that portrays the image of a diverse society. It is for this reason that the intolerant discourse of RRP parties does not result in an increase in intolerance.

**Figure 3.** Authoritarianism, social intolerance, and RRP party representation.
We emphasize that our conclusions support only our contention that the proportion of RRP parliamentary party representation does not increase intolerance of outgroups in the public at large or among authoritarians. This does not reject the idea that intolerance is a necessary factor for RRP parties to gain representation in parliament. As Rydgren (2005) notes, intolerance is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the electoral success of RPP parties. In empirical terms, this thesis predicts some form of conditional effect, interacting intolerance in the public with a “political opportunity structure” (Rydgren, 2005).

We also note that we cannot attest to the effect of RRP parties on policy or the stability of democracy. However, Minkenberg (2001) finds that parliamentary presence alone does not have any significant impact on policy (see also Heinisch, 2003), though an RRP party holding an executive office can have effects on socio-cultural policies; and Schain (2006) concludes that RRP parties that gain either national or sub-national representation may be able to constrain or otherwise influence policy development.

Historically speaking, when extreme right-wing parties gain substantial power in liberal democratic countries, they often destroy the very system that elected them and replace it with an authoritarian system that is inimical to principles of liberal democracy. However, as conceptualized by the German Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Eatwell, 2000), there is a substantial difference between “extreme” and merely “radical” right-wing parties, the former being fundamentally anti-democratic while the latter implicitly agree to work within the democratic system. Moreover, those parties which are completely anti-democratic are unlikely to be accepted in established democratic societies (Schedler, 1996) and pose little if any threat to the system itself. Whether a ban on the latter of these party categories is due to system threat alone or in conjunction with the possibility of policy hostile to minorities is reason to ban such parties is a normative question outside the consideration of this article. However, we would suggest that as a matter of fact, those established liberal democracies that do allow RRP parties have yet to be overthrown and it does not appear that they are likely to be anytime in the immediate future. Perhaps a ban on both extreme and radical right-wing parties may be appropriate for new and/or unstable democracies, but such a ban appears unnecessary in established democracies.

Notes
1. These standards fall under the rhetoric of the “strict scrutiny” test first referred to in United States v. Carolene Products Company, 304 U.S. 144 (1938) and applied in Korematsu v. United States, 323 U.S. 214 (1944).
5. Items per105, per201, per503, per602, per604, per607 and per705.
6. Items per104, per305, per601, per603, per605, per606 and per608.
7. This variable is measured as $\sum_{j=1}^{m} \frac{v_j}{n}$, where $v_j$ is the proportion of votes for party $j$ in a given election.
9. The questions are: (1) For each of the following aspects, indicate how important it is in your life: religion; (2) Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days? (3) Independently of whether you go to church or not, would you say you are: a religious person, not a religious person, a convinced atheist? (4) How important is God in your life?
10. This figure was created with code provided as an accompaniment to work by Brambor et al. (2006), available at: <http://homepages.nyu.edu/~mrg217/interaction.html>.

References


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**Appendix: A Reconceptualization of Social Intolerance**

In our conceptualization of social intolerance, we aimed to capture a negative general orientation toward groups outside of one’s own. As such, we created a scale of ten binary questions, which inquired whether a particular survey respondent would accept each of the following groups as a neighbour: criminals, people of a different race, heavy drinkers, emotionally unstable people, Muslims, immigrants/foreign workers, people with AIDS, drug users, homosexuals, and Jews.

Some of these groups are unlikely to be targeted by RRP parties, meaning that our scale may be overly encompassing, therefore skewing our results. Thus, we created a second social intolerance measure which only includes people of a different race, Muslims, immigrants/foreign workers, homosexuals, and Jews. This scale correlates with the original at \( r = 0.835 \). We re-estimated Models 1–3 from Table 3 using this new intolerance measure as the dependent variable. Results are provided in Table A1.

The results depicted in Table A1 are very similar to those in Table 3, which indicates that the coding of the social intolerance variable is not driving findings. When we employ the conceptualization of social intolerance that excludes groups unlikely to be targeted by RRP parties, any association between RRP representation and social intolerance remains absent.
Note that we further parsed down the measure to include only people of a different race, Muslims, and immigrants/foreign workers, the three groups most likely to be targeted by RRP parties. This measure correlates with our original at $r = 0.727$. The re-estimation of Models 1–3 with this measure, which we exclude in the interest of space, again does not alter our substantive findings.

Table A1. Reanalysis with narrower social intolerance measure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model A1</th>
<th>Model A2</th>
<th>Model A3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual-level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authoritarian predisposition</td>
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<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.021</td>
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<td>-0.019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender (male)</td>
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<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
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<td>0.008</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
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<td>Country-level</td>
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<tr>
<td>RRP representation</td>
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<td>Number of parties (logged)</td>
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<td>-0.024</td>
<td>-0.024</td>
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<td>Ethnic fractionalization</td>
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<td>0.047</td>
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<td>GDP per capita</td>
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<td>-0.006</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian predisposition $\times$ RRP representation</td>
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<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.153</td>
<td>0.195</td>
<td>0.196</td>
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Model Statistics

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<th>Model A2</th>
<th>Model A3</th>
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<td>$\rho$</td>
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<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
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<td>Number of observations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of countries</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>