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Abstract

Students of social movements have long struggled with the question how relatively abstract political opportunities, such as elite divisions, affect unorganized activists without much knowledge of politics. We argue that the relationship between institutional opportunities and decisions to mobilize may take the form of trickle-down politics. In this view activists are affected by political opportunities indirectly through the changes that political developments bring about in the immediate social setting in which they protest. The overall political climate determines the distance between general public opinion and activists' view on society. The smaller this distance the more likely it becomes that activists receive positive feedback from their immediate environment, which in turn results in further mobilization. In particular, we investigate how extreme right activists are influenced by bystander responses that are evoked by the wider political context. Time-series analysis and event history models indeed indicate that spatio-temporal fluctuations in political opportunities and public sentiments are translated into mobilization after activists receive feedback from local bystanders. This suggests that bystander responses, a research topic that has only received scant scholarly attention, play a crucial role in linking political opportunities to mobilization.

Zusammenfassung

Die soziale Bewegungsforschung setzt sich seit langem mit der Frage auseinander, auf welche Weise sich relativ abstrakte politische Gelegenheiten, wie Meinungsdivergenzen innerhalb von Eliten auf unorganisierte Aktivisten mit begrenzten Politikkenntnissen auswirken. Die Autoren vertreten die Ansicht, dass sich politische Gelegenheiten über einen Trickle-Down-Effekt in Mobilisierungsentscheidungen umsetzen können, indem sie von oben nach unten in das unmittelbare soziale Umfeld der Aktivisten "durchsickern" und diese somit indirekt beeinflussen. Das politische Klima insgesamt bestimmt die Distanz zwischen der allgemeinen öffentlichen Meinung und der Sicht der Aktivisten auf die Gesellschaft. Je geringer die Distanz ist, um so wahrscheinlicher wird es, dass Aktivisten positives Feedback aus ihrem unmittelbaren Umfeld erhalten, was sich in weiterer Mobilisierung niederschlägt. In dem vorliegenden Paper wird untersucht, wie rechtsextreme Aktivisten durch das Echo von bei ausländerfeindlichen Gewaltaktionen anwesendem Publikum ("bystanders") beeinflusst werden, das sich aus einem größeren politischen Kontext ableitet. Mittels Zeitreihenanalysen und Ereignisdatenmodellen zeigen die Analysen, dass zeitliche und räumliche Schwankungen von politischen Gelegenheiten und öffentlicher Meinung in Mobilisierung umschlagen, nachdem Aktivisten vom Publikum aus ihrem lokalen Umfeld Feedback erhalten.

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INTRODUCTION

Following its reunification, Germany witnessed a strong upsurge in extreme right violence targeting asylum seekers and other immigrant groups. This wave of violence resulted in about one hundred casualties, thousands of injuries and extensive material damage, making it the most serious series of attacks against ethnic minorities in postwar Western Europe (Kurthen, Bergmann & Erb, 1997). Above all, the violent protests fundamentally altered the landscape of immigration politics in the reunified republic by fueling a fierce public debate on immigration and creating a momentum for more restrictive immigration policies that subsequently lowered the influx of new immigrants (Koopmans, 1996a).

Early explanations of protest waves, mainly put forward by scholars who represented the establishment or wrote with the rise of fascism in the back of their heads, conceptualized outbursts of violence as spontaneous (Feierabend & Feierabend, 1966), dysfunctional and irrational (Le Bon, 1897). Participants in riots were depicted as unorganized individuals that were disconnected from mainstream society (Kornhauser, 1959). The last thirty years this perspective has lost its popularity. Instead scholars of social movements emphasize that collective action in general and collective violence in particular is not markedly different from other forms of institutionalized behavior. In this latter view, organizational structures play a central role in orchestrating violent protests by recruiting and encouraging individuals to take part (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). These social movement organizations are in turn embedded in wider political opportunity structures (McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 1994). These theories hold that mobilization patterns are shaped by political opportunities that reveal themselves either directly or indirectly through the mass media (Gamson & Meyer, 1996; Koopmans & Olzak, 2004).

Interestingly, the German case provides evidence for both the classical and more recent views on social movements. On the one hand, several empirical studies have demonstrated that extreme right violence was partly produced by an intense conflict within the German political elite on the ways in which to respond to the large increase in the number of immigrants from war-torn Yugoslavia, the former Soviet Union and various other parts of the world (Ohlemacher, 1994; Koopmans, 1996a). On the other hand, profiles of arrested perpetrators suggest that the people involved in the attacks were mainly lower-educated, unemployed youngsters who had few, if any, links with extreme right organizations and little interest in politics more generally (Willems & Hill, 1993).

These contrasting findings pose an interesting puzzle. How are youths who are hardly reached by right-wing movement leaders and express no interest in institutional politics themselves influenced by political opportunities for mobilization? We conceptualize the relationship between movements and the

state as a form of trickle-down politics. Mobilization and participation decisions are to a large extent influenced by the immediate social setting in which protest takes place. If this social setting provides positive feedback, activists are encouraged to undertake more acts of mobilization. The immediate social setting, however, is itself shaped by the wider structure of political opportunities. Political debates and decisions create pools of sentiments (McCarthy & Zald, 1977) that draw general public opinion closer to the opinion of activists, making direct positive feedback more likely. As a result, changes in the political climate trickle down through interactions between activists and their immediate environment, even if the former do not themselves follow political developments closely.

In this paper we will explore this process by zeroing in on the relationship between protesters and bystander audiences, i.e. non-participating audiences present at protest events, a topic that has received only scant scholarly attention (Favre, 1990; Turner & Killian, 1987; Lofland, 1996; Schweingruber & McPhail, 1999). The central argument of this paper is that bystanders' responses can stimulate violence by emboldening local activists. Since bystander responses themselves are shaped by the political environment they establish a link between political opportunities and mobilization

This process is nicely illustrated by riots that broke out in the East German cities of Hoyerswerda and Rostock. While a political conflict about the rights of asylum seekers divided political elites in German parliament, riots in these cities were greeted by both disapproving and supportive reactions of bystander publics (Karapin, 2007). These responses sparked new waves of violence. This suggests that political conflicts that normally were confined to the parliamentary arena spilled over into the streets and inspired activists to engage in more violent attacks.

To test the general validity of this argument we conduct two statistical analyses. In the first analysis we model overtime fluctuations in political opportunities, bystander responses and right-wing violence in Germany for the period, 1990-1999. In line with existing arguments political debates and decision-making processes have an important impact on the intensity of racist attacks in a first step of the analysis. However, these effects turn out to be mediated by bystander responses. This provides evidence for the notion that information about the political arena trickles down through interactions with local spectators.

In the second analysis we model the outbreak of ethnic violence and responses by bystanders in all German Kreise, a geographical unit roughly comparable with a U.S. county and the most fine-grained unit for which statistical data are available in Germany. Event history models (Blossfeld and Rohwer, 2002; Olzak, 1992) are deployed to analyze data on the exact timing of xenophobic violence for the period, 1990-1995. The analysis again supports the bystander argument. A further escalation of violence was much more likely in counties where bystanders responded supportively to anti-immigrant violence in the previous

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month. This suggests that bystander responses not only determine when political opportunities trickle down but also where and to whom.

The remainder of this paper will proceed as follows. In the first section we will outline how interactions in general and interactions with bystanders in particular reveal information about political opportunities. In the second section, we will illustrate this argument with a detailed description of the riots that took place in Hoyerswerda and Rostock. In the third section we discuss the methods and data sources used. Section four describes the results of the analyses. In the concluding section we discuss some limitations and possible future extensions of the analyses.

FROM STRUCTURE TO ACTION: TRICKLE-DOWN POLITICS

Political opportunity structure (POS) theories hold that mobilization depends on opportunities offered by the political context. Early applications of POS theories have mainly tried to explain the intensity of mobilization (Jenkins & Perrow, 1977) and the outcomes of movement activities (Gamson, 1975; Guigni, 2004). Although what constitutes a political opportunity is not set in stone, most scholars include a state's capacity to repress, government composition, electoral competition and elite divisions (McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 1994;).

A question that has occupied both POS-theorists (Gamson & Meyer, 1996) and their critics (Goodwin & Jasper, 1999) for many years is how political opportunities get translated into collective action (McAdam et al., 2001). This question is particularly relevant for the case at hand since much of the right wing activists were low-educated youths and skinheads employed in lower segments of the labor market (Willems & Hill, 1993, 116-119), most of whom did not express any interest in institutional politics (Wahl, 2001, 46).

Some have asserted that a core of more sophisticated political entrepreneurs or professional activists lead mobilizations of uninformed activists by appealing to local sentiments (Wilkinson, 2006). This is not likely in case of the German extreme right. Perpetrator profiles suggest that most attackers were not involved in supra-local organizations but operated mostly in informal networks or local gangs (Wahl, 2001: 54). In addition, statistical analyses have demonstrated that rates of right-wing violence are lower in regions where the parliamentary right and extreme-right organizations are stronger (Braun and Koopmans, 2010).

More recently scholars have argued that the missing link between institutional politics and activists' decisions is provided by the mass media (Gamson & Meyer, 1996; Koopmans & Olzak, 2004). Although this is a fruitful idea, which has inspired a large body of research (e.g., Vliegenthart et al., 2005) we embark upon

a somewhat different route. Given that low-educated people are not likely to consume political news attentively (Price & Zaller, 1993) and most right-wing activists are not interested in institutional politics, it seems unrealistic to assume that they closely follow political news coverage on television and in newspapers. Instead, we believe that most of these youths and skinheads are more attuned to the immediate social setting in which they protest and will seek confirmation from actors they interact with directly.

In this paper we focus on how interactions between activists and bystanders reinforce perceptions of mobilization effectiveness. In as far as bystanders have received scholarly attention by social movement scholars they have been portrayed as passive actors who consider protests an annoying interruption of their daily rhythm and as such do not play an important role (Turner & Killian, 1987; Lofland, 1996) or whose role is not specified at all (Favre, 1990). Turner and Killian for instance argue that bystanders only care about the collateral damage that collective action causes and "do not want to hear about" (1987: 217) the issues that movements raise. In a similar vein, Lofland defines bystanders as "that portion of the public primarily concerned with the risks and inconvenience an SMO may be creating for them and who demand that authorities do something to end their risk and inconvenience" (1996: 307).

Contrary to Lofland, who defines bystanders based on their actual stance towards activists, we define bystanders as the section of a general public that is physically present at the site of a protest event but does neither actively participate in it, nor has gathered to mobilize against it. We follow Schattschneider's (1960: 3) classical recommendation: "If a fight starts, watch the crowd, because the crowd plays the decisive role." Bystanders are relevant for social movements because their responses provide feedback which inspires or discourages activists to engage in more attacks. During protest waves uncertainty is high because existing norms are contested and new ones get established (Tarrow, 1998). A guiding principle in social psychology is that under conditions of uncertainty the perception of reality is shaped by social influence and comparisons with opinions expressed by actors in the immediate environment. Experimental work that demonstrates the powerful influence other actors' opinions have on an individuals own behavior abounds in research literatures on conformity, attitude change and social identification (e.g. Asch, 1952; Festinger, 1954).

Of particular relevance for this paper is experimental work on inter-ethnic relations. Classic theories of inter-ethnic relations are predicated on the notion that consensuality is a key feature of out-group hostility (Pettigrew, 1998). Individuals tend to hold negative views of other groups if they perceive that others in their direct environment hold those same beliefs (Tajfel, 1982). More recently, research has demonstrated that people become more extreme and convinced of the value of their own beliefs if information about congruent beliefs of others is provided (Wittenbrink and Henly, 1996).

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Responses by bystanders suggest that acts of violence resonate with public sentiments that live among people in the immediate environment. These sentiments in turn are shaped by the wider political context. Although lower-educated activists might not follow politics this is certainly not true for the entire population. Therefore issues that people consider salient are partly put on the agenda by political structures and media discussions (Vliegenthart, 2007). When the political climate about immigration is negative the general public opinion and the opinion of activists converge making positive feedback from bystanders more likely. If we conceptualize political opportunities and bystander responses in this way, it follows that political opportunities trickle down to activists on the ground through bystander responses. To use McAdam et al.'s (2001) terminology, we blend cognitive and relational mechanisms that link structures to outcomes. Interactions between bystanders and activists shape how the latter group perceives anti-immigrant sentiments in their direct environment.[1]

In the next section we will illustrate how this trickle-down process shaped the evolution of extreme right violence in reunified Germany. We will zero in on how riots in Hoyerswerda and Rostock revealed information about elite divisions in German politics. These two cases are chosen because they are relatively well researched and a considerable amount of secondary literature is available (Koopmans, 2004; Karapin, 2007).

EXTREME RIGHT VIOLENCE IN GERMANY

Political opportunities in general and elite divisions in particular were present in the German context. After its reunification, the new republic was struck by a huge increase in immigration. Due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the protracted civil conflicts in Africa, Asia, and the former Yugoslavia millions of individuals sought refuge in Western European countries. A disproportional amount of these immigrants entered Germany that was well known for its liberal asylum policies. These developments sparked an intense political debate about the rights of immigrants. This debate centered on the question whether or not a constitutional restriction of asylum rights was required. In order to implement such a reform, however, a two third majority was necessary, which turned out to be difficult to achieve. Elite divisions guaranteed that debates about immigration problems dominated the political agenda, while a straightforward resolution of elite conflicts was out of reach. It was not until July, 1993, when a constitutional amendment was introduced that restricted the inflow of new asylum seekers, that tensions were resolved (Koopmans, 1996a). In addition, the governmental authorities, the judiciary and internal security agencies introduced several

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1 This mechanism comes close to what they call certification. The key difference being that activism is not validated by authorities but by citizens.

repressive measures, such as organization and demonstration bans that damaged the legitimacy of the extreme right movement.

The fact that the immigration issue occupied center stage on the parliamentary agenda also affected public opinion on immigration. From January, 1990 onwards there was a steady increase in the number of Germans who considered asylum seekers and other immigrants the most important problem that the government should deal with (Ohlemacher, 1994). This public discontent with immigration policies came to the surface rather suddenly during the 1991 riots in Hoyerswerda (Karapin, 2007). Attacks on homes of foreign workers lasted for almost four days. Bottles, chains, baseball bats and Molotov cocktails were used to scare immigrants out of their hostels. Their attempts were successful and several Mozambican immigrants fled their homes. After four days the groups shifted their focus to an asylum seeker shelter at three kilometres distance. This second wave of attacks lasted until the police interfered and removed the asylum seekers to a safe location somewhere else in the German state of Saxony (Heitmeyer, 1993).

What made these riots so special was that large groups of bystanders actively responded to the attacks. Attackers were joined in their racist chants by hundreds of individuals. Moreover, bystanders tried to hinder police officers that tried to intervene and commanded them to act tougher against immigrants. Some even fought against the police while encouraging the skinheads to burn down houses (Karapin, 2007). Eyewitnesses reported that the atmosphere during the riots at times had the character of a *Volksfest*, a local popular festival. Schwartz and Barsky's observations on the meaning of home support at sports events prove to be remarkably well-applicable to these macabre scenes: "... home support is a celebration of the local community in presence of alien communities ... the strength that men draw from their local communities is not always spent in celebration of itself, but is often put to use in the domination of other men" (1977: 658-659).

A similar, but even more severe incident happened about a year later in Rostock. In August, 1992, 500 youths attacked an asylum seeker shelter in the Lichtenhagen neighborhood. On the third night the shelter was set to fire and hundreds of asylum seekers had to run for their lives. Again, these extremists' actions received approval from spectators. Over three thousand locals watched and chanted "foreigners out" and cheered every time a bottle or stone was thrown through the windows of the shelter.

The debate that haunted German politics had spilled over into the streets where bystanders who either supported or, as happened in several other instances, denounced the attacks in the streets reflected elite divisions. After these incidents, both Hoyerswerda and Rostock experienced an upsurge in right-wing activity. Encouraged by feedback they got from bystanders, activists believed they were pursuing an important agenda that was worth fighting for. Interestingly, both counties had experienced violent attacks on foreigners before. In May and

July, 1990 very similar attacks had occurred. However, these attacks did not evoke any responses from bystanders and remained isolated and irrelevant events that did not ignite any further conflict. The fact that bystanders did not respond to these earlier attacks might be caused by the fact that the immigration issue was not yet very salient on the public agenda, as Germany was still busy arranging the monetary and institutional reunification (Koopmans, 2004). To see whether the two step relationship between political debates, bystander responses and violence also holds in a larger set of cases we will now move over to statistical analyses.

DATA AND METHODS

Two separate analyses are presented below. First we analyze the monthly development of extreme right violence, political opportunity structures and bystander responses at the national level, to see whether the latter mediates the relationship between the other two sets of variables. Second, we conduct an analysis of the outbreak of violence in all German counties for the period, 1990-1995 to see whether bystander responses also make certain localities more violence-prone than others.

NATIONAL-LEVEL TIME SERIES: DEPENDENT VARIABLE

We analyze the monthly development of extreme right violence, political opportunity structures and bystander responses at the national level, to see whether the latter mediate the relationship between the other two sets of variables. The choice for this level of analysis is made because of data availability. Our focus on short-term dynamics implies that we look at monthly fluctuations instead of yearly developments.

The dependent variable in the time series analysis is the monthly level of extreme right violence for the period from January, 1990 until December, 1999. Information on xenophobic violence was retrieved from newspaper reports coded in the context of the MERCI-project (Koopmans et al., 2005). These data contain information on violent incidents and strategic public statements in the political field of immigration and integration that are covered in Monday, Wednesday, and Friday issues of the German national newspaper *Frankfurter Rundschau* (*FR*). This database includes the date, geographic location, casualties, arrests, targets and numbers of participants of, as well as responses to 692 instances of anti-foreigner violence for the time period, 1990-1999.

As with all sources of event data it is possible that newspaper data contain selection and description biases in their coverage of violent incidents. Therefore the file's yearly aggregates were correlated with official police statistics obtained

from the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution) to see whether the present data indeed grasp changes in extreme right violence over time correctly. The high correlation of .82 between the two sources gives confidence that the data reflects real fluctuations in xenophobic violence. For the period from January, 1990 until August, 1994 police statistics are available on a monthly basis. Our data correlates .87 with these monthly police statistics. In order to check the robustness of our results we also estimated a model using the monthly police statistics for the, 1990-1994 period. Results were in line with the ones presented below and can be obtained from the authors upon request. The only notable difference was that the effect of ethnic competition became a bit weaker.

In addition, the data file was compared with coverage on extreme right violence in the *Bild-Zeitung* for the, 1991-1992 period and three East German newspapers for the four months between June and September, 1991. Weekly aggregates of the integrated file used in this paper correlated highly with all these sources (between .89 and .99). Moreover, the MERCI data file gave the most inclusive picture of extreme right violence compared to the other media sources. This suggests that our data adequately reflects temporal fluctuations in xenophobic violence.

NATIONAL-LEVEL TIME SERIES ANALYSIS: ESTIMATION

In this paper we try to explain the level of right wing violence, a continuous process, by measuring discrete events, i.e. the number of violent attacks. Linear regression is inappropriate to analyze this data since it assumes that continuous processes generate continuous events (King, 1989). Therefore often a generalization of the Poisson regression model is used as a technique to analyze continuous processes based on event counts (Long, 1997). The idea underlying the use of this technique is that social processes produce events randomly during a fixed time period. This assumption implies independency among events within the unit of observation, something that is quite problematic in the current field of study. Collective action in general and collective violence in particular tends to cluster non-randomly in time due to imitation processes (Tarrow, 1994). The statistical name for this phenomenon is over-dispersion (King, 1989). Inspection of the dependent variable indeed indicated that over-dispersion was present in the data.

Another thorny issue in time series analysis is autocorrelation, i.e. a correlation between the residuals of different observations. The presence of autocorrelation inhibits conventional statistical estimation because it violates the assumption that observations are independent. In order to solve this problem one needs to include measures that model away autocorrelation. Inspection of the autocorrelation and partial autocorrelation functions indicated that the intensity of

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xenophobic violence depended on violence in the previous month (McCleary et al. , 1980).

Hence, we need a technique to model autoregressive count data with over-dispersion. Following Brandt & Williams (2001) and studies in epidemiology (Schwartz et al., 1996; Katsouyanni et al., 1996) we employ a Poisson auto-regressive model. The main advantage of this model is that, contrary to negative binominal and conventional Poisson models, it allows one to simultaneously model over dispersion and autocorrelation (see Mitchell & Moore, 2002 for an insightful application). After experimenting with several specifications we opted for a first-order autoregressive term. After inclusion of this term the residuals were white noise, which indicates that they no longer correlate with each other across time. A first order auto-regressive term also produced a lower Akaike's info criterion than other specifications, suggesting that it fits the data relatively well (Enders, 2004). Analyses were conducted in STATA, using the ARPOIS procedure developed by Tobias (Tobias et al., 2001).

Following our ideas about trickle-down politics we expect that effects of bystander responses mediate the effects of other environmental variables. We deploy a four-step strategy to test this idea (Baron and Kenny, 1986). In step one, we model the effects of all political and media context variables on mobilization. In step two, we add our bystander measures and assess whether they influence mobilization. In step three, we determine whether the effects of the political context variables become weaker after the bystander responses are included. Fourth, we regress bystander responses on the other independent variables to determine whether bystander responses are actually evoked by political and non-political opportunity structures. In this last step we determine the proportion and significance of bystander mediation through Sobel mediation tests in combination with bootstrapped standard errors (Preacher and Hayes, 2008).[2]

NATIONAL-LEVEL TIME SERIES: INDEPENDENT VARIABLES AND CONTROLS

The following independent and control variables were included in the analysis. All measures are lagged one month to establish causal order. Unless indicated otherwise all variables were stationary.

Bystander responses. Information on bystander responses is obtained from the MERCI-file described above. For each extreme right attack it was coded whether bystander publics openly responded to the attacks or not. In line with our above definition of bystander publics, this variable includes spontaneous approval or

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2 We conducted 500 bootstrap replications.

disapproval by spectators, but not organized counter-mobilization.[3] Cases in which bystanders merely watched were also excluded, even though one could argue that from a moral point of view merely watching an asylum seeker center being attacked is a form of tacit support. In total 81 bystander responses could be tracked. A fourth of these responses were supportive of right-wing mobilization. Supportive reactions include "applauding," obstructing the police and joining in racist chants. Disapproving responses were, however, more prevalent. The most common form was bystanders helping attacked foreigners or booing the rioting youngsters. Based on this information we constructed three measures: an approving bystander response (BRSUPPORT), a disapproving bystander response (BRDISAPR), and a general response count (BRGEN). The first two measures are dichotomized to deal with their skewness. We expect that bystander responses in general signal the political salience of social problems and intensify subsequent protest. In addition we expect that approving responses have a stronger effect than negative responses.

Political Opportunity structures. Three measures are used to gauge political opportunity structures. All these measures are retrieved from the MERCI dataset. First, we grasp the political decision making process by counting the number of decisions made by state authorities that are relevant to the politics of immigration. Decisions by non-political actors such as churches and unions are not included in this measure. A distinction is made between decisions restricting the rights of immigrants, asylum seekers and foreign residents (DECISNEG) and decisions improving or sustaining the rights of immigrants, asylum seekers and foreign residents (DECISPOS). In addition, we look at the effects of repressive measures. Following Koopmans (1997) we zero in on formal institutional repression, which includes acts instigated by governmental authorities (such as bans), the judiciary (trials and court rulings against the extreme right), and security agencies (large scale police actions) to combat the extreme right movement. A monthly count of repressive acts was used (REPRESSION). We expect that negative political decisions ended the immigration debate that sparked political violence and took away much of the popular discontent. Moreover, we expect that institutional repression dampened violence by damaging the legitimacy and mobilizing capacity of the extreme right movement.

The bystander argument outlined above suggests that effects of political opportunity structures are mediated by bystander responses. Activists learn about structural opportunities through their interactions with bystander publics. This implies that the effects of the opportunity structure variables should weaken or disappear after the bystander measures are included in the analysis.

Opinion climate. As the riots in Hoyerswerda and Rostock illustrated, outbreaks of violence were accompanied by shifts in public debate and public opinion.

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3 In an additional analysis we included counter-mobilization as a further control variable. This did not alter the results.

Immigration issues became more salient in the mass media and among the general population, which fueled right-wing sentiments and subsequently resulted in more xenophobic mobilization. In order to see whether this relation also holds in general we add measures that tap the intensity of immigration debates and anti-immigrant attitudes among the general population.

We measure the intensity of immigration debates by counting the number of verbal statements in the MERCI dataset, irrespective of the actor, referring to the politics of immigration (DEBATE). We expect that intense debates lead to more violence. We also modeled the valence of the debate by including positive and negative statements separately and by modeling negative and positive statements as a proportion of all statements. The analysis suggested that valance did not affect mobilization.

We make use of the *Politbarometer* survey to capture the general opinion climate. In monthly polls representative samples of the population were asked what was in their opinion the most important problem in Germany. Three answer categories were used to construct our anti-immigrant opinion measure (ATTITUDE). For each month in the, 1990-1999 time period we took the percentage of respondents that reported asylum seekers or foreigners as either the most or the second-most important problem. From this score we subtracted the percentage of respondents that reported the extreme right as the most or the second-most important problem. Some have argued that most-important-problem-questions are problematic for tapping sentiments because they pick up two distinct issue characteristics: the extent to which things are considered a problem and the extent to which an issue is considered important (Wlezien, 2005). Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart (2009), however, demonstrate that the problem measures of the *Politbarometer* are highly correlated with negative attitudes. Therefore we can be fairly confident that our measure taps anti-immigrant sentiments. During some years fewer polls were conducted in the Summer. Moreover for the, 1990 period no data are available for the Eastern part of Germany. Missing months are imputed by means of linear interpolation. Missing values for the Eastern part are imputed based on values for the Western region, using the relationship between the East and West scores in the subsequent nine years to estimate the value for, 1990. To see whether these imputations affected our results we also estimated a model in which we added a dummy that marked imputed observations. This did not alter the results. Again, we expect that bystander responses mediate the relationship between opinion climate and mobilization. This implies that effects of anti-immigrant sentiment and media debates should weaken after we include the bystander measures.

Ethnic competition. Ethnic competition theorists have mainly focused on labor market competition, holding that economic contraction and the presence of immigrants spark violent ethnic mobilization (Bélanger & Pinard, 1991). Previous studies have found a moderate relationship between ethnic competition and right-wing violence in the German context (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2000; Braun &

Koopmans, 2010). We model the monthly change in the number of asylum seekers (ASYLUM) and fluctuations in the unemployment rate (UNEMPLOY) as measures of ethnic competition. To reduce the number of digits we divide the asylumseerkers measure by 100. We take difference scores because the trend component in the absolute measures would distort the results of the time series analysis. We also model an interaction term of both variables (AS*ASYLUM) since this taps the concept of ethnic competition better (Olzak, 1992). Although asylum seekers were the most prominent immigrant group in this time period we also modeled changes in overall immigration and immigration from non-western countries. Results were identical to the ones presented below. Data on asylum seekers were obtained from the *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* while unemployment figures are provided by the *Statistisches Bundesamt*.

COUNTY-LEVEL ANALYSIS: DEPENDENT VARIABLE

To explore the effect of bystander responses on the geographical spread of right-wing violence, data for all 444 German *Kreise* are analyzed for the period, 1990-1995. In order to get enough information on local differences we tracked all incidents in two independently collected databases. The first dataset was collected as part of a large project covering European protest and coercion in twenty-eight European countries (Francisco, 1996). The data were collected from the *Reuters textline library*, which can be accessed through *LEXIS NEXIS*. The *Reuters textline library* covers over 400 international, national and regional wire services, newspapers and magazines. For each instance of contention, the date, geographical location, number of arrests, number of participants, initiating group and target were coded. This data set includes a total of 253 violent incidents targeting foreigners in Germany for the time period, 1990-1995. The second file utilized is again the MERCI dataset (Koopmans et al., 2005). Monthly aggregates of both files correlated highly (.91) indicating the comparability and reliability of the measurements. After removal of doubles the final analysis included 687 events that took place in 220 of the 444 *Kreise*.

COUNTY-LEVEL ANALYSIS: ESTIMATION

Event history models, focusing on the duration of time between violent events in each of the individual counties ,are employed to test the hypotheses formulated above. This type of analysis is preferred over time series designs based on aggregate data since it enables us to exploit all available information on the exact dates of violent events (Olzak, 1992). Moreover, event history models have proven to be very successful in simultaneously explaining where incidents happen and how they diffuse from one place to another (Strang and Tuma, 1993).

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We make use of Partial likelihood estimation as developed by Cox (Cox and Oakes, 1984). Cox regression, as opposed to other event history techniques, has the advantage that one does not need to specify the baseline hazard. Although some tools are available in current statistical packages to evaluate the parameterization of the baseline hazard, final choices for a parametric model should always be based on strong theoretical assumptions (Blossfeld and Rohwer, 2002), which are not always present in current social inquiry (but see Olzak, 1992).

In specifying a Cox model two considerations should be taken into account. First, it posits that variables included in the model shift the baseline hazard multiplicatively and that these shifts are constant over time: the proportional hazard assumption. This assumption can be tested by means of a Schoenfeld residual test.[4] Inspection of the Schoenfeld residuals indicated that the proportional hazard assumption of the models was not significantly violated. Second, the baseline hazard for event occurrence might vary across entities facing different structural settings. In this study it is likely that the baseline hazard varies between East and West Germany since so short after Germany's unification there was still a high degree of social and economic divergence between the two regions. According to Heitmeyer (1993), it would not go too far to view East and West Germany during this period as two completely separate societies only connected by institutional processes.[5] Therefore all observations are stratified by East/West region. Stratified models allow the baseline hazard to vary over groups but at the same time estimate coefficients that are constrained to be homogeneous and therefore allow for the inference of general causal relations for both regions.[6]

The analysis starts on 1 January, 1990 and ends on 31 December, 1995. This end date was chosen because the Francisco data set only runs until the end of, 1995, but it also makes sense substantively. The data as well as police statistics and historical records (Kurthen, Bergmann and Erb, 1997) indicate that the wave of extreme right violence in Germany had subsided by the beginning of, 1996. In total, 1,131 subjects are analyzed: 687 that end in racist violence and 444 spells that are right censored.

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4 Schoenfeld residuals can be retrieved for each covariate by calculating the difference between the covariate value for a failed observation and the mean covariate value of all subjects at risk when the failure took place. Accordingly, one has to fit a function of time to them and test whether there is a relationship. If the slope of the time effect does not significantly differ from zero, the proportional hazards assumption is met (Gould and Cleves, 2004).

5 Whether the xenophobic mobilization studied in this paper indeed took place in two completely different social settings can be checked by inspecting how the hazard of xenophobic violence evolved over time in the two regions separately. The estimated cumulative baseline hazard functions for East and West Germany show that xenophobic violence indeed evolved differently in both regions.

6 As a robustness check, a non-stratified model with an East-West dummy was estimated. Results were very similar.

Another major methodological concern here involves unobserved heterogeneity. Since 130 counties in the data experience more than one event, the durations we analyze are partly nested in counties and therefore not completely independent from each other, violating one of the basic assumptions of regression analysis. This violation is likely to introduce a downward bias in our standard errors. We follow Myers (2000) in solving this problem by including a variable that taps the history of racist violence for every *Kreis* by counting the number of previous attacks (RIOT HISTORY). In addition we estimate standard errors without considering durations in the same county as independent from each other.[7]

COUNTY-LEVEL ANALYSIS: INDEPENDENT VARIABLES
AND CONTOLS

We use the same data as in the previous analysis to tap bystander responses but instead of taking year-month counts we count the number of positive, negative and overall bystander responses that took place in a specific Kreis during the previous thirty days (BRGEN, BRDISAPR, BRSUP). We dichotomized these variables to deal with skewedness. In line with the central argument we expect to find a positive relationship between violence and bystander responses, especially when these responses are positive.

To make sure that the relationship between bystander responses and subsequent waves of violence is not spurious we control for several other factors that have proven to make local communities more conducive to the outbreak of racist violence. The controls are listed in Table 1. All data, unless indicated otherwise are collected from the 1994 Statistical Yearbook for Germany (*Statistisches Bundesamt*, 1994).[8] A more detailed description of these variables can be obtained from the authors' website. Two control variables that tap local political opportunity structures however deserve some explicit attention.

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7 Using the cluster option in STATA 9.
8 Statistics for East German *Kreise* were not immediately available after reunification in October 1990. In addition, in the years immediately after reunification many borders of East German Kreise were redrawn. We were therefore constrained to measure many independent variables time invariant, for the first year for which data are available after the redrawing of Kreis boundaries, i.e. 1994. For some variables of potential interest – such as the local gross domestic product – data are incomplete for the entire period of the study. We therefore had to exclude these variables from the analysis.

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Table 1: Control variables county-level analysis

Variable	Description	Predicted effect
UNEMPLOY	Unemployment rate	+
FOREIGNER	% Foreigners[9]	+
DISLOCATION	Population dislocation: Sum migration in- and out-flow	+
EMIG	Emigration surplus	+
LIFEEX	Average life expectancy	-
EXRIGHT	% votes for the extreme right *Republikaner* party	-
PROMIN	% votes*pro-minority statements	+
DIF	Diffusion: Number of attacks previous month	+
DIF/DIS	Diffusion (geographically weighted): Number of attacks previous month/inversed distance	+
POPULATION	Logged population size in thousands	+
CAPITAL	Capital city	+
SUMMER	Summer month	+
WEEKEND	Weekend day	+

In addition to making predictions about the relationship between decision making and protest, POS theories also posit that a strong local representation of the anti-immigrant agenda of the extreme right in the parliamentary arena will dampen the rate of extra-parliamentary violence against immigrants (Koopmans, 1996b; Guigni & Passy, 2004). We therefore hypothesize that the rate of extreme right violence will be lower in *Kreise* where the parliamentary extreme right is strong, and higher in *Kreise* where parties with a pro-minority program are strong. The percentage of votes in the, 1994 elections for the main extreme right party, the *Republikaner*, is used to tap the strength of the parliamentary extreme right (EXRIGHT). The strength of the pro-minority agenda is measured by multiplying the separate percentages of votes for all non-extreme right parties (*CDU, SPD, PDS, FDP* and *Grüne*) times their individual stance on multiculturalism and minorities (PROMIN). The data on percentages of votes has been collected from the election atlas.[10] The separate party stances on multiculturalism have been retrieved from the party manifesto file (Klingeman et al., 2006; Budge et al., 2001).[11] It straightforwardly follows from POS theory that xenophobic violence

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9 Unfortunately no local information about asylum seekers is available. However, they are very evenly spread across the country because by law regions are obliged to take up asylum seekers in proportion to their population sizes. We also modeled an interaction term between proportion of foreigners and unemployment (Olzak 1992). This had no effect and did not alter the other results.

10 www.wahlatlas.de, data retrieved on September 7, 2004.

11 The stance is calculated by subtracting all negative quasi-sentences on multiculturalism from the sum of all positive quasi-sentences on multiculturalism plus all positive quasi-sentences on minorities in the specific party programs.

should be more intense in *Kreise* where the *Republikaner* score low and pro-minority parties score high.

In addition to models with control variables we also estimated models with fixed effects for Kreise to make sure we capture all unobserved variable bias at the local level. In these models we excluded all variables that vary between Kreise but not over time.

SELECTION EFFECTS

There is a possibility that the relationship between violence intensity and bystander responses is caused by selection effects. Newspaper sources are likely to include more information on acts of violence that are unprecedented, extremely severe or have some other form of symbolic value. This might affect the likelihood that a bystander response is recorded in the news story of such events. To control for this, we also estimate models including measures that grasp the level of media attention (MEDIA ATT) for violent events during the preceding month in the data sources we relied on. In the time series analysis this measure consists of a visibility scale (alpha=.73) constructed out of six items:

- the number of times a violent event got covered in the *Franfurter Rundschau* in the previous month
- the number of times a violent event appeared on the front page during the previous month
- the number of times an incident was accompanied by a photo during the previous month
- the number of casualties due to extreme right violence during the previous month
- the number of injuries due to extreme right violence during the previous month
- the number of arrests due to extreme right violence during the previous month

The visibility scale (alpha=.87) for the Kreis-level analysis is constructed from the same six items. The only difference is that it measures the visibility of violent events in the previous thirty days for each Kreis separately. If some violent incidents are more important than others it is likely that this gets reflected in the coverage of all their characteristics. Controlling for this information therefore partly deals with selection effects.

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RESULTS

As a starting point, Figure 1 plots the monthly evolution of right-wing violence and bystander responses between, 1990 and, 1999. As we can see most peaks in violence were preceded by an upsurge in bystander responses. This suggests that these responses indeed triggered the outbreak of violence.

Figure 1: *The monthly evolution of xenophobic violence and bystander responses in Germany 1990-1999*
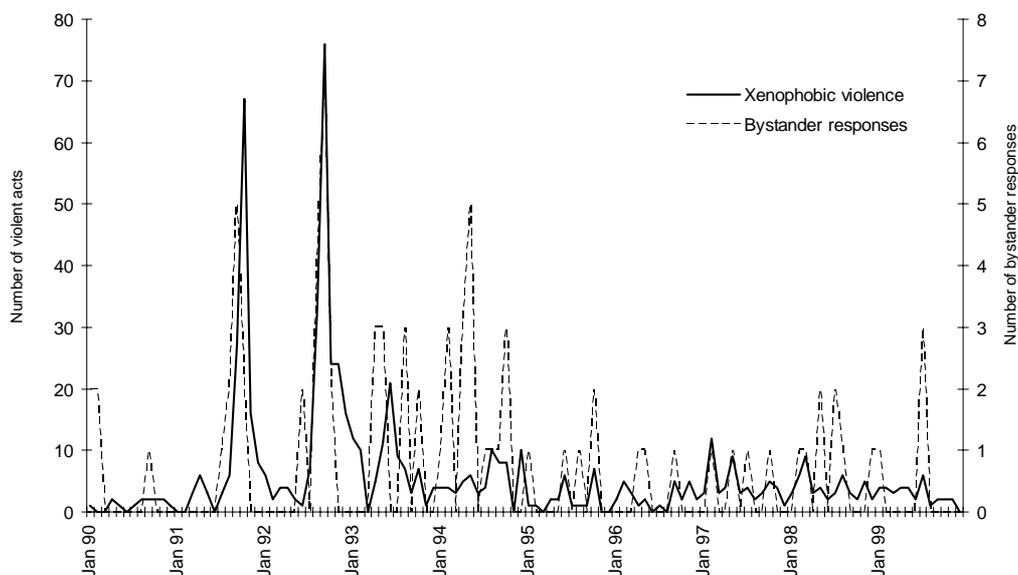
To see whether bystander responses link political opportunities to violence we first model in Table 2 ethnic competition, opportunity structure and anti-immigrant attitude measures without bystander responses. Model 1 in the table confirms existing evidence that suggests that the elite conflict about constitutional immigration reforms shaped the evolution of right-wing violence. While political debates about immigration fuelled ethnic violence, decisions resolving contentious issues had the opposite effect. In particular, decisions that restricted the rights of immigrants mitigated violence. This suggests that political reforms took away much of the frustrations and sentiments in which right-wing mobilization was rooted. Debates on the other hand made immigration issues more salient and sparked violence. Anti-immigrant sentiments among the population also affected the outbreak of violence. Violence targeting immigrants was more likely in time periods in which the general population considered immigrants a problem. Support is also found for ethnic competition theory. When combined, high unemployment rates and a large influx of asylum seekers promoted violence. Independently of each other the two measures do not have an effect.

Table 2: *Poisson autoregressive model of xenophobic violence in Germany 1990-1999*

	MODEL 1		MODEL 2		MODEL 3		MODEL 4		MODEL 5	
	B	**S.E.**	**B**	**S.E.**	**B**	**S.E.**	**B**	**S.E.**	**B**	**S.E.**
BRGEN			.265***	.086			.191*	.105		
BRSUP					.815***	.277			.628*	.342
BRDISAPR					.331	.211			.289	.216
ASYLUM	-.002	.002	.000	.002	.000	.002	.001	.002	.000	.002
UNEMPLOY	-.2581	.309	-.078	.245	-.763	.248	-.359	.243	.152	.247
AS*UNEM	.011*	.006	.010*	.005	.010*	.005	.009*	.005	.009*	.005
POSDEC	-.019	.045	-.023	.037	-.007	.036	-.010	.037	-.002	.036
NEGDEC	-.084*	.049	-.008	.042	.001	.043	-.008	.041	-.002	.043
REPRESSION	-.042*	.021	-.027*	.016	-.021	.016	-.017	.017	-.014	.018
DEBATE	.012**	.005	.006	.004	.006	.004	.004	.004	.004	.004
ATTITUDE	2.907**	1.260	2.338**	1.016	2.497**	.999	1.932*	1.078	2.092*	1.083
MEDIA ATT.							.151	.129	.140	.127
INTERCEPT	1.130***	.255	1.041***	.186	.894***	.186	1.147***	.199	1.020***	.205
AR	.282***	.102	.371***	.112	.344***	.109	.374***	.109	.333***	.107
N	118		118		118		118		118	
ADJ R²	.422		.632		.667		.632		.681	

+ p < .1 (one tailed), * p < .05 (one tailed), ** p < .01 (one tailed), *** p < .001 (one tailed).

The question now becomes how political opportunities trickled down to largely uninformed extremists. To investigate what role bystander responses play in transmitting information about the wider political context we include the general bystander measure in the second model. The model provides suggestive evidence for the notion that bystander responses form conduits through which abstract political opportunities trickle down. First of all the model shows that bystander responses are positively associated with the number of right-wing attacks. More important, however, is the fact that after inclusion of the bystander measure, the effects of the opinion and repression variable decrease while the effects of negative political decisions and the political debate disappear altogether. This indicates that bystander responses indeed mediate between abstract opportunity structures and decision-making processes of activists. In the third model we see that the tone of the responses also plays a crucial role. Responses supportive of right-wing activists have a strong positive effect on the rate of violence while such an effect is absent for disapproving responses. Next to political decisions and debate, the effect of repression now also becomes insignificant.

Together models 2 and 3 provide support for our notion of trickle-down movement politics. Debates in parliament created awareness of the immigrant problem among the general population, which got translated into bystander activities, which in turn encouraged activists to conduct more attacks. In a similar vein, the mitigating effect of restrictive immigration measures disappears when we introduce bystander reactions, suggesting that supportive bystander respon-ses became rarer as a result of these decisions, resulting in less xenophobic

mobilization. Repression lowered the legitimacy of extreme right mobilization, but this effect too seems to have been mediated by a decrease in supportive bystander responses. In models 4 and 5 we include the media attention measure to control for selection effects. Although inclusion of this measure, which itself does not attain statistical significance, decreases the size of the bystander effects, they remain significant at the .05 level, which is considerable given the small sample size. All the other relationships remain intact.

To get further purchase on whether bystander responses indeed mediate the effects of political opportunities we conducted an analysis in which we model bystander responses as a function of the environmental measures that were associated with the outbreak of violence in the earlier models before the bystander measures were included. If bystander responses operate as a trickle-down mechanism one would expect that their intensity is shaped by these other environmental factors. We also conducted a mediation analysis to see whether the mediated pathways of these opportunity structure variables through bystander responses are statistically significant.

Table 3: *Poisson model of general bystander responses (model 6), Logit model (model 7) of supportive responses and corresponding Sobel mediation analysis*

	MODEL 6				MODEL 7			
	B	**S.E.**	**MEDIATED EFFECT**	**S.E. (ME)**	**B**	**S.E.**	**MEDIATED EFFECT**	**S.E. (ME)**
NEGDEC	-.022	.058	-.259	.257	-.645*	.365	-.365+	.247
REPRESSION	.002	.029	-.008	.093	-.067	.122	-.101	.395
DEBATE	.022**	.008	.066**	.026	.104*	.051	.435*	.229
ATTITUDE	2.445+	1.900	12.744*	6.867	6.471	9.698	.159	.370
OTHER CONTROLS	Y				Y			
INTERCEPT	-2.506***	.381			-8.315***	2.674		
N	119				119			
PSEUDO R²	.151				.286			

+ p < .1 (one tailed), * p < .05 (one tailed), ** p < .01 (one tailed), *** p < .001 (one tailed).

Table 3 presents the results of these analyses. Models 6 and 7 show the relationship between political context variables and bystander responses. Both negative decision-making and intense public debate affected the likelihood of supportive bystander responses. Whereas decision-making dampens these responses, the opposite is true for media debates, which made the immigration issue more salient and problematic in the eyes of the general public. In line with this idea, we see that public opinion also shaped the overall intensity of bystander responses, although it does not directly affect the probability of supportive responses. Repression, however, had no effect on bystander respon-ses, suggesting that the effects of repression do not trickle down through bystander interactions. In a way this makes sense since repressive state

activities are likely to be picked up by activists directly since they have an immediate impact on their lives.

Since bystander responses in turn intensified mobilization this provides evidence that bystander responses mediated the effects of political decision-making, public opinion and media debates. The mediated effects, based on Sobel tests with bootstrapped standard errors, displayed in Table 3, represent the degree to which specific political context variables affected violence via bystander responses. They indeed confirm that the effects of public opinion, decision making and debate shaped violence via bystander reactions.

We now move to the second part of our analysis, where we ask whether bystander responses also determine *where* violence spreads. We do this by regressing the local outbreak of violence on local bystander responses. Table 4 presents the results of the stratified Cox regression. The coefficients represent hazard ratios, the hazard of a particular case divided by the hazard of a case that scores one point lower on the relevant covariate. Hazard ratios are preferred over regular coefficients because they allow for a more straightforward interpretation: a hazard ratio of 1.100 indicates that a one point increase in the independent variable increases the violence hazard with 10 percent. In the first model we include the measure that counts the number of bystander responses in a specific Kreis during the previous month, while controlling for other factors that tap the conduciveness of Kreise to violence. In line with our earlier results, model 8 in Table 4 shows that the likelihood that a violent incident occurs is higher in counties in which bystander publics have openly responded to previous acts of violence. A bystander response in the previous month increases the violence risk by almost 28 percent. This provides evidence for the notion that bystander responses not only determine when political opportunities are revealed but also *where* these opportunities become manifest to activists.

In model 9 of Table 4 we investigate the separate effects of supportive and disapproving bystander responses. Disapproving responses have a negative but insignificant effect on violence. Supportive responses have a very strong positive effect on the outbreak of violence. The hazard rate is almost five times higher in Kreise where in the previous month bystanders responded supportively to racist attacks.

The model also sheds light on other local-level predictors of violence. We find no support for ethnic competition theories. There is however considerable support for social disorganization theories. In line with this branch of theory, population instability in the form of high migration flows and net population losses due to emigration increased the violence rate, whereas areas with a higher life ex-pectancy experienced fewer xenophobic events. Additionally, strong support is found for local political opportunity structure effects, as xenophobes in *Kreise* where the extreme right has a stronger electoral position were less inclined to revert to violent tactics. In a *Kreis* with one percent more votes for extreme right

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parties the intensity of extreme right violence was 16 percent lower. Support is also found for the notion that the strength of the pro-immigrant agenda in local politics makes it more likely that xenophobes rebel.

Table 4: Cox regression of instances of anti-foreigner violence in Germany 1990-1995

	MODEL 8		MODEL 9		MODEL 10		MODEL 11	
	HAZARD RATIO	CLUSTERED S.E.	HAZARD RATIO	CLUSTERED S.E.	HAZARD RATIO	CLUSTERED S.E.	HAZARD RATIO	CLUSTERED S.E.
BRGEN	2.281**	.713			2.198**	.597		
BRSUP			4.790***	1.730			5.486***	3.161
BRDISAPR			.909	.409			.929	.399
UNEMPLOY	1.014	.018	1.013	.017				
FOREIGNER	.985	.022	.985	.022				
DISLOCATION	1.602***	.209	1.617***	.222				
EMIG	4.436**	2.479	3.769**	2.147				
LIFEEX	.864**	.043	.868**	.042				
EXRIGHT	.862*	.075	.858*	.075				
PROMIN	1.055**	.020	1.055**	.020				
DIF	1.021***	.002	1.020***	.002	1.023***	.002	1.022***	.002
DIF/DIS	1.000	.000	1.000	.000	1.000	.000	1.000	.000
POPULATION	1.848***	.205	1.837***	.199				
CAPITAL	1.266	.191	1.307*	.199				
SUMMER	1.333**	.136	1.307**	.135	1.154	.107	1.155	.107
WEEKEND	2.220***	.209	2.217***	.208	2.166***	.184	2.158***	.184
RIOT HISTORY	1.008	.014	1.010	.013				
MEDIA ATT					1.034	.096	1.069	.108
FIXED EFFECTS					Y		Y	
LOG-PSEUDO-LIKELIHOOD	-3471.375		-3468.118		-3510.051		-3518.345	
SPELLS	1131		1131		1131		1131	
FAILURES	687		687		687		687	

* p<.05 (one tailed), ** p < .01 (one tailed), *** p < .001 (one tailed).

Beyond the precipitating conditions in particular *Kreise* the models also include two general diffusion measures, the effect of previous events in other *Kreise*, and a geographical diffusion term. The coefficients indicate that decisions to engage in collective violence are not taken in local isolation but are inspired by acts elsewhere. The number of violent events during the previous thirty days in the rest of Germany, which taps general diffusion processes, has a strong and positive influence on subsequent rates of anti-foreigner violence in a particular *Kreis*. Each preceding incident results in two percent more violence. This diffusion process is not clustered in space since the geographically conditioned diffusion term has no separate effect on violence. Finally, the model demonstrates that capital cities, populous Kreise, Summer months and weekend days were more likely to see violence.

In models 10 and 11 in Table 4 we include the visibility measure and Kreis-level fixed effects to deal with selection effects and unobserved variable bias. The results remain remarkably similar. Most importantly, the positive and significant coefficients of the bystander parameters remain intact. Therefore we can be more confident that unobserved variable bias or selection effects do not cause our findings.

CONCLUSIONS

Students of social movements have long struggled with the question how abstract political opportunities, such as elite division or electoral competition, influence activists. We have argued in this paper that the relationship between institutional opportunities and mobilization may take the form of trickle-down politics. In this view activists are affected by political opportunities indirectly through the changes that political developments bring about in the immediate social setting in which they protest. To investigate this idea we focused on the ways in which local bystander publics transmit information about the wider political context to unorganized extreme right activists without much awareness of national politics. The empirical analysis indicated that temporal fluctuations in opportunity structures and public sentiments affected youths and skinheads after they received positive feedback from local bystanders. This suggests that bystander responses play a crucial role in how political opportunities become manifest.

Interestingly, while the movement studied here reacts strongly to favorable reactions from its social environment, it seemed to be relatively immune to negative reactions. Disapproving reactions of bystanders did not lead to significant decreases in extreme right mobilization. A possible explanation for this phenomenon, which would require further investigation, can be taken from the psychological theory of cognitive dissonance, which states that people's perceptions tend to be biased towards that part of social reality that is consonant with their prior views (Festinger, 1954).

Some of the components of the argument outlined above might be specific to the case at hand. Not all movements in the world are constituted by low-educated and weakly organized groups that lack profound knowledge of political affairs. One should, however, not draw the opposite conclusion that the extreme right movement in Germany is an exceptional case. Research on recent waves of anti-Muslim violence in Western Europe also suggests that perpetrators have little interest in, and knowledge of institutional politics (Van Donselaar & Rodriquez, 2006). Moreover, local interactions are likely to play a role in more "sophisticated" movements as well. Although a large part of the interaction between these social movements and political institutions consists of mediated encounters in the mass media, the importance of direct physical encounters with local audiences should

not be underestimated. Several studies on political communication suggest that media content only matters if it resonates with information retrieved from extra-media sources (Robinson, 1976). Media coverage on political opportunities is therefore more likely to have an effect if direct audience feedback during demonstrations confirms its central message. Our results provide strong evidence that social movement activists follow Schattschneider's advice to "watch the crowd." Scholars of contentious politics will get a better understanding of the mechanisms linking institutional politics, public opinion, and social movements if they do the same.

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