

Sample Proposal for MRP

Research question and relevance

While many countries in Western Europe have recently seen increasing success of anti-immigrant parties, the way the political mainstream has responded to this success has been very different. Some anti-immigrant parties, such as the Belgian VB, the French RN, and the Swedish SD, have received a dismissive and hostile treatment from existing political parties. Others, such as the Austrian FPÖ, the Norwegian FRP, and the Dutch PVV have been treated little different than any other party and have at times even been included in government. Which of these approaches is most effective at limiting the success of anti-immigrant parties has been the subject of much controversy. The project I propose asks the question: “What can we conclude from the existing academic literature on the relative effectiveness of accommodating and hostile approaches to the success of anti-immigrant parties?”

Note the proposal clearly identifies a genuine research question

Existing literature

There is a large literature detailing the variety of strategies both state and non-state actors can adopt in response to radical or extremist parties (Downs, 2002; Husbands, 2002; Meguid, 2005; Szócs, 1998). Scholars have investigated the consequences of these strategies in at least four areas. Some have explored whether exclusionary strategies prevent anti-immigrant parties from exerting influence on policy (Albertazzi, 2009; Fallend, 2004; Heinisch, 2003; Zaslove, 2004); others have investigated to what extent they effect the electoral success of anti-immigrant parties (Rummens & Abts, 2010; Van Spanje & Van der Brug, 2009); yet others have been more interested in the consequences of exclusion for the organizational strength of anti-immigrant parties (Art, 2007; Luther, 2011; Minkenberg, 2006); and a fourth area of investigation has focused on the effects of

Note the proposal refers to relevant literature, noting what already has been done and how the proposed research would contribute to existing insight.

exclusionary strategies on the ideological extremism of anti-immigrant parties (Akkerman and Rooduijn, 2014; Bale, 2007; Minkenberg, 2013). While there is thus a wealth of academic research on this subject, so far there has been little attempt to synthesize this information and systematically investigate what the literature as a whole seems to suggest what happens when the political mainstream responds to successful anti-immigrant parties with hostility.

Tentative methodology

I propose to conduct a systematic literature review of all recent peer-reviewed academic journal articles that focus on the consequences of the approach by which the political mainstream responds to the success of anti-immigrant parties. For each study, I will document what type of consequences it focuses on, which cases and time period it investigates, and which methods of data collection and analysis it employs. The goal of this review is to identify which conclusions are widely shared in the literature, which conclusions garner more controversy, and which subjects require more attention in future research.

Note the proposal identifies methods that are appropriate given the research question and feasible in light of the program's intended duration.

Fit with department

The Department of Political Science at the University of Guelph offers an excellent environment for me to conduct this research. Dr. David MacDonald has published widely on populism, and Dr. Edward Koning has done research on anti-immigrant parties in particular. Working with these scholars would help this project immensely. More generally, the MA program's emphasis on issues of identity and citizenship will offer me the necessary background before embarking on this MRP project.

Note the clear justification for applying to the MA in Political Science at the University of Guelph.

References

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