

Changing Working Life and the Appeal of the Extreme Right

Edited by

JÖRG FLECKER

Forschungs- und Beratungsstelle Arbeitswelt (FORBA), Austria

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Chapter 3

Perceived Socio-Economic Change and Right-Wing Extremism: Results of the SIREN-Survey among European Workers

Yves De Weerd, Patrizia Catellani, Hans De Witte and Patrizia Milesi

Introduction

In this chapter we report and discuss the results of the third phase of the SIREN project: the survey on subjective perceptions of socio-economic change and right-wing extremism in eight countries. In this introduction, we first of all discuss the core concepts and main research questions. Next, the design of the survey is presented.

Main research questions

The core concepts of the survey (and main research questions of this chapter) are shown in Figure 3.1.

Our *first* research question relates to the *perceptions of socio-economic change* (SEC). Had the respondents experienced (positive or negative) socio-economic change during the previous few years? An analysis of the possible impact of SEC on political attitudes obviously needs to start by charting this ‘independent’ variable. Figure 3.1 shows that we will be analysing two components. First, we will report on the perception of socio-economic change as such. Next, we will also report on some additional variables, related to the current situation of the respondents (e.g. the evaluation of their current income). Answering this research question will also include reporting on differences according to background variables (such as age, gender, and occupation): which category experiences more (or less) SEC?

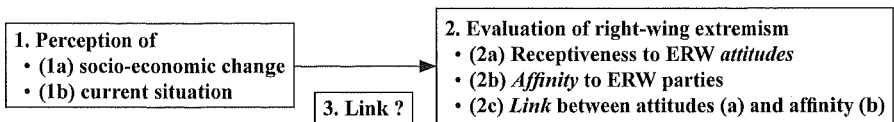


Figure 3.1 Overview of core concepts and main research questions

The *second* research question refers to our 'dependent' variable: the *evaluation of right-wing extremism* (ERW). Here too, two components are distinguished. First, we will report on the '*receptiveness*' of our respondents to extreme right-wing *attitudes*. On the basis of a literature review (sustained by the results of the qualitative interviews), five attitudes that seem to be relevant in predicting an extreme right-wing party preference are identified. We will analyse whether our respondents endorse these attitudes and will examine differences according to background characteristics. Second, we will analyse the *affinity* of our respondents to *extreme right-wing parties*: are they in favour or against the local extreme right-wing party in their country and how had this affinity evolved over the past five years? Again, we will examine differences according to background characteristics. Finally, we will also analyse whether the various receptiveness attitudes are indeed associated with an affinity to an extreme right-wing party.

Our *third* and final research question relates to the *link* between the *perceptions of socio-economic change* and the *evaluation of right-wing extremism*. Is it true that respondents who experienced socio-economic change are more attracted to extreme right-wing attitudes and similar parties? In analysing this link, the role of social identification processes will be highlighted. We will also examine the presence of different psychological routes leading to a preference for a right-wing extremist party (e.g. a 'winners' versus 'losers' route), and identify the characteristics of workers who are more likely to follow these routes.

In answering these research questions, we will report the results regarding the global sample, without much reference to the separate countries involved. Readers who are interested in the results of a specific country can check them in the original report (De Weerd et al. 2004).

Survey design

Starting from the results of the qualitative research and the review of the literature on socio-economic change and right-wing extremism, a structured questionnaire was developed aimed at interviewing a representative sample of workers in the eight different European countries: Austria, Belgium (Flanders only), Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, and (the three regions of) Switzerland. The questionnaire consisted of 71 questions covering seven different areas. When available, reliable questions and scales developed in previous cross-national surveys were employed. The basic questionnaire was written in English and translated into the local languages afterwards. The way in which the various concepts were operationalized will be illustrated later when discussing the results.

Data collection was carried out by private survey institutes in each country, coordinated by the Eurisko institute in Milan. The telephone survey (CATI: Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) was carried out between mid May and early July 2003. The duration of an average interview was 15 minutes. Filter questions ensured that only employed respondents born in the country and having performed paid work for at least five years were included in the sample. Quotas were set on regions, town size and gender.

A total sample of 5,812 workers was interviewed. Except for the Swiss sample, which included 893 respondents, the other country samples consisted of about 700 respondents each. In each country, samples closely matched the working population, even though a slight under-representation of blue-collar workers, low educated respondents, and extreme right-wing voters was noted, as it is often the case in survey research. The country samples were weighted in terms of key demographics (region, town size, gender and age) in order to increase representativeness.

Perceptions of socio-economic change

Socio-economic change during the last five years

All respondents were asked whether they had experienced socio-economic change in their work situation during the last five years. The question was: *'Compared to five years ago, would you say that the amount of work you have to do has clearly increased, increased, stayed about the same, decreased, or clearly decreased?'* A similar question was asked regarding job autonomy (*'the possibility to make your own decisions at work'*), the social atmosphere at work (*'how well people interact'*; answering categories: *'got worse'* versus *'improved'*), job security, and the financial situation of the family. The last variable is the only one that goes beyond the work situation of the respondent, since it refers to their family as a whole. Table 3.1 contains the answers to these questions (percentages and means).

The results in Table 3.1 show no uniform trend. Some aspects of the work situation have improved during the last five years, whereas others have got worse. On average, job autonomy has increased (44.7 per cent reported an increase, whereas only 10.2 per cent reported a decrease). This suggests a positive evolution, since job autonomy is associated with an increase in well-being (e.g. Karasek and Theorell 1990). The financial situation of the family has also improved (39.8 per cent reported an increase, whereas 23.5 per cent reported a decrease). However, these positive trends are counterbalanced by some negative ones. Most striking is the increase in the amount of work. No less than 60.6 per cent of the respondents reported an increase in workload, whereas only 14.0 per cent reported a decrease. This evolution seems to be a negative one, since an increase in workload is consistently associated with a decrease in well-being (e.g. Karasek and Theorell 1990). On average, the job security of our respondents had also decreased slightly: for 27 per cent job security had decreased, whereas only 18.1 per cent reported an increase. Finally, the results regarding social atmosphere are remarkable too, as on average no change is noted. The group reporting an improvement of the atmosphere at work is exactly the same size as the group reporting that the atmosphere had got worse (in both cases about 26 per cent).

Evaluation of the current situation

Information on experienced change in the past five years was completed by asking some questions about the current situation of the respondents. First, respondents were asked the following question: *'In your opinion, how large is the probability*

Table 3.1 Perceptions of socio-economic change during the previous five years (percentage of respondents and mean perceived change for each dimension)

	Amount of work	Job autonomy	Social atmosphere	Job security	Family finance
1. Clearly decreased/got worse	2.8	1.8	4.1	5.4	3.4
2. Decreased/got worse	11.2	8.4	21.9	21.6	20.1
3. Stayed about the same	25.3	45.1	48.4	54.9	36.7
4. Increased/improved	37.7	32.2	19.7	13.3	32.5
5. Clearly increased/improved	22.9	12.5	6.0	4.8	7.3
Mean perceived change	3.67	3.45	3.00	2.90	3.20

Note: For 'social atmosphere', the answering categories ranged from 1 ('clearly got worse') to 5 ('clearly improved'). For all other variables, the answering categories ranged from 1 ('clearly decreased') to 5 ('clearly increased').

Source: SIREN survey.

that you will become unemployed in the near future?' (see De Witte 1999a). For self-employed respondents only, the question was formulated as follows: *'In your opinion, how large is the probability that you will have to close down your business in the near future?'*. Respondents could rate this probability on a five-point scale, ranging from 'very small or impossible' (1) to 'very large' (5). While about 10 per cent of the wage earners (9.6 per cent) rated this probability as very or rather large, 76.5 per cent of them rated it as rather or very small. The percentages were similar for the self-employed (12.1 per cent very/rather large; 74.2 per cent very/rather small). So, on average, job insecurity was felt to be relatively low.

In order to measure the evaluation of their current income, respondents were asked to rate the question *'How would you evaluate the total amount of the income of your household?'* on a four-point scale, ranging from 1 ('We do not have enough, and have huge difficulties to get by') to 4 ('We have more than enough, we can even save money'). On average, respondents indicated that they had enough income to get by without difficulties (score: 3.26). About 38.2 per cent reported that they could even save money. Only 10.8 per cent indicated that they did not have enough, and experienced some (or huge) difficulties getting by.

Finally, respondents' perceptions of injustice were operationalized as their member group being treated unfairly as compared to other groups, and measured through the concept of collective (relative) deprivation (De Weerd and De Witte 2004). Respondents had to rate three items on a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A principal components analysis showed the presence of a single factor. A factor score was therefore calculated for the entire dataset.¹ The results show that the respondents felt somewhat deprived. About 57 per cent stated that they did not get the appreciation they deserve and only 40.5 per cent felt that they had the power needed to defend their interests. Finally, only 40 per cent of respondents reported being sufficiently rewarded for the work they do.

Do certain categories experience more (or less) socio-economic change?

In order to find out whether there were differences within our sample regarding the experience of socio-economic change, a series of univariate analyses of variance were performed, taking into account the main background variables. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 3.4 at the end of this chapter.

Gender differences were rather limited, with men scoring slightly better concerning the current income of the household. They also experienced a slight increase in income compared to women and felt slightly more deprived.

Age turned out to be the most relevant variable affecting changes in autonomy, social atmosphere and job security. Older workers reported a decrease in job autonomy, job security and family income, as well as a worsening of the social atmosphere at work. The evaluation of the current situation was affected by age,

1 Factor scores express a deviation from the overall mean of the sample. This mean is transformed into zero. As a consequence, factor scores are relative scores (expressing the position of the respondent compared to all others), rather than absolute scores, indicating the absolute level of e.g. collective deprivation.

however, indicating that age was especially important in the experience of change in socio-economic conditions during the last five years. Our results thus suggest a negative evolution of the labour-market position of older workers. This is in line with the conclusions of a recent study of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2003).

The *level of education* of our respondents affected almost all variables, but especially those related to the income of the family. A higher educational level was associated with a more positive evaluation of the current income and with a positive change in family income. However, the amount of workload also increased among the highly educated. The occupational position revealed similar differences: senior managers and high-rank civil servants especially expressed a positive evaluation of their income and had experienced a positive evolution in family income over the last five years. Additionally, this category (and the professionals) had also experienced an increase in job autonomy. The latter was also associated with an increase in workload, however. Blue-collar workers had experienced more job insecurity, a finding not uncommon across Europe (Näswall and De Witte 2003). Taken together, these findings suggest rather classic 'social class' cleavages, with blue-collar workers occupying a less privileged position, reflected in their higher levels of collective (relative) deprivation.

The *sector* in which the respondents worked also proved relevant to a certain degree. Two findings were most striking. Respondents from the public sector had experienced the strongest increase in workload over the last five years. However, the perception of job insecurity was lower among the respondents from the public sector compared to those working in other sectors (and especially the secondary sector).

Evaluation of right-wing extremism

Receptiveness to right-wing extremism

In relevant research literature, five main attitudes are reported as describing 'receptiveness' to right-wing extremism: prejudice against immigrants, nationalism, authoritarianism, social dominance orientation and political powerlessness (for overviews see Billiet and De Witte 1995; Lubbers 2001; Pratto 1999). These attitudes increase the propensity to sympathise with (or vote for) right-wing extremist or populist parties. As such, these attitudes may be considered as indicators of respondents' 'receptiveness' to right-wing extremism.

The five attitudes were measured using existing attitude scales, consisting of several (from three to five) items each. All items were scored on a five-point scale, ranging from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 5 ('strongly agree'). A principal component analysis demonstrated that the five attitudes can indeed be distinguished among our respondents.² For each attitudinal dimension, factor scores were computed, which will be used in the analyses presented below. In this section we will start by

2 Note that the amount of items for some dimensions needed to be reduced somewhat, in order to obtain a similar structure in each country. Further on in this text, the exact amount of items is mentioned that was used to measure each component.

illustrating the five receptiveness attitudes, presenting respondents' answers to some of the items measuring them.

Prejudice against immigrants or 'everyday racism' (De Witte 1999b) refers to negative attitudes towards foreigners because they are perceived as an economic or cultural threat. These negative attitudes play a crucial role in ethnic competition theory (Coenders 2001). This theory combines realistic conflict theory (Campbell 1967) and social-identification theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Realistic-conflict theory states that social groups have conflicting interests because relevant material goods (employment, housing, social security) are scarce. This scarcity promotes competition. Consequently, autochthonous respondents lacking essential resources develop negative attitudes towards immigrants, which make them susceptible to the appeal of extreme right-wing parties. Social-identification theory adds to this view. This theory highlights identification processes through which people build a positive ingroup identity by contrasting their identity to a negative outgroup.

The five items used in this survey to measure this attitude were taken from previous research (Cambré, De Witte and Billiet 2001). On average, our respondents showed a rather positive attitude towards immigrants. This is witnessed by the rather low agreement with items such as '*Immigrants take away our jobs*' (16.9 per cent agree) and '*Immigrants are a threat to our culture and customs*' (14.9 per cent agree). The attitude of our respondents became less positive, however, when crime was discussed. About 42.3 per cent agreed with the statement '*Immigrants increase crime rates in our country*'.

A positive attitude towards the autochthonous group ('ingroup') refers to *nationalism*. Nationalism plays a crucial role in the theory of social disintegration, stressing the effects of disintegration caused by processes such as modernization and social exclusion (e.g. Falter and Klein 1994). This theory assumes that individuals who – because of the important and rapid socio-economic changes of the last ten years – feel they are experiencing social disintegration are more likely to be receptive to nationalism, because nationalism constitutes a substitute for social integration. Nationalism offers new group bounds and an identity, and thereby offers a substitute form of (social) integration. Because this integration is highly symbolic, this theory is sometimes referred to as the theory of *symbolic interests* (e.g. Lubbers and Scheepers 2000).

Nationalism can be measured in different ways. In this study, the concept of '*chauvinism*' was chosen, with three items taken from Coenders (2001). Chauvinism refers to general national pride, a view of uniqueness and superiority of one's own country and national ingroup to which one is (uncritically) attached. Chauvinism also implies a downward comparison of other countries and national groups. Our respondents, on average, showed a moderate level of chauvinism. About 40 per cent agreed that '*Generally speaking, my country is a better country than most other countries*'. One item was rather strongly endorsed: 65.5 per cent agreed with '*I would rather be citizen of my country than of any other country in the world*'. Chauvinist feelings were not extreme, however, as witnessed by the fact that 'only' 22.7 per cent agreed with the statement '*The world would be a better place if people from other countries were more like the citizens of my country*'.

The *theory of psychological interests*, stemming from the psychological tradition of the Frankfurt School, highlights the importance of *authoritarianism* (Adorno et al. 1950). Adorno et al. considered authoritarianism as a personality trait, predicting ethnocentric attitudes and increasing the susceptibility of the individual to right-wing extremism. At present, authoritarianism is conceived of as an attitude dimension with three basic components (Altemeyer 1988): conventionalism (rigid conformism to conventional norms and strict moral codes), authoritarian submission (uncritical and full submission to ingroup authorities) and authoritarian aggression (fierce rejection and punishment of violators of conventional norms).

In this study, authoritarian attitudes were measured with five items (see Meloen, van der Linden and De Witte 1994; Altemeyer 1998). On average, our respondents showed a moderate level of authoritarianism. 57.2 per cent agreed with the statement '*Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn*' and even 62.3 per cent endorsed the item '*What we need most, more than laws and political programmes, is a few courageous and devoted leaders in whom the people can put their faith*'. Agreement was lower for other statements, however. About 43.1 per cent agreed that '*Sex crimes such as rape and abuse of children deserve more than just imprisonment, such criminals ought to be publicly whipped or worse*', and 'only' 32.1 per cent endorsed the statement '*We need strong leaders who tell us what to do*'.

Next to authoritarianism, a rather recent theoretical approach was included as well: the concept of *social dominance orientation* (SDO). SDO is 'a general attitudinal orientation toward intergroup relations, reflecting whether one generally prefers such relations to be equal versus hierarchical' (Pratto et al. 1994). SDO thus reflects an individual tendency to classify social groups along a superiority versus inferiority dimension, stressing ingroup superiority and favouring policies that maintain social inequality. This motivation to dominate over others was originally conceived as part of the concept of authoritarianism. Recent research, however, has shown these concepts to be virtually unrelated (Altemeyer 1998; Duriez and Van Hiel 2002). SDO independently contributes to the prediction of attitudes such as ethnic prejudice, nationalism and the support of punitive policies, and to the preference for extreme right-wing parties (Pratto et al. 1994; Pratto 1999). Therefore, it is sometimes referred to as a new (and modern) form of authoritarianism (Duriez and Van Hiel 2002).

Social dominance orientation was measured with three items, adopted from Pratto et al. (1994). On average, our respondents showed a moderate level of SDO. About 58 per cent endorsed the item '*I find it normal that some people have more of a chance in life than others*', and 49.5 per cent agreed with the idea that '*Some people are just inferior to others*'. Finally, 41.4 per cent approved the item '*To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on others*'.

Finally, also the *theory of political dissatisfaction and protest voting* was included in our research design. This theory suggests that people who are adversely affected by socio-economic change become dissatisfied with politics. They experience political powerlessness and develop distrust in politics and politicians as a response to these changes. Consequently, they vote for an extreme right-wing party, as an expression of protest against the political 'establishment' ('protest vote', see e.g. Billiet and De

Witte 1995; Van den Brug, Fennema and Tillie 2000). *Political powerlessness* refers to a feeling of lack of both political efficacy and political trust. Political efficacy concerns an individual's sense of personal competence in influencing the political system. Political trust includes the perception that the political system and authorities are responsive to the public's interests and demands.

Political powerlessness was measured with three items, based on Campbell, Gurin and Miller (1954), Olsen (1969) and Watts (1973). On average, our respondents exhibited a rather high level of powerlessness and dissatisfaction. About 59.7 per cent of the respondents agreed with the statement '*It seems that whatever party people vote for, things go on pretty much the same*', and 57.6 per cent endorsed the statement '*People like me have no influence on what the government does*'. The most pronounced negative view is witnessed by 71.4 per cent agreeing with '*The people we elect as members of parliament very quickly lose touch with their voters*'.

Affinity to extreme right-wing parties

The respondents were finally asked to evaluate the most representative extreme right-wing party in their country (including its political stands), on a scale ranging from +2 ('I am strongly in favour of it') to -2 ('I am strongly against it'). Respondents were also asked to compare their current evaluation of that party with the one they had five years before and to state whether they were more in favour of it, less in favour of it, or whether they had the same evaluation. Representative extreme right-wing parties chosen in each country were the following: Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs for Austria; Vlaams Blok for Belgium; Dansk Folkeparti for Denmark; Front National for France; MIÉP (Hungarian Justice and Life Party) for Hungary; Alleanza Nazionale for Italy; Union Democratique du Centre, Schweizerische Volkspartei, and Unione Democratica di Centro for Switzerland. In Germany, no data were gathered on party affinity, due to the lack of a nationwide and well-known extreme right-wing party. This means that Germany is never included in the following analyses of extreme right-wing party affinity.

The results showed that extreme right-wing parties do indeed have a following. About 18.6 per cent of the interviewees supported the local extreme right-wing party (of which 2.4 per cent were strongly in favour). About half of the respondents (47.4 per cent) were against, of which 23.3 per cent were strongly against. The proportion of those strongly against an extreme right-wing party is therefore roughly ten times larger than those strongly in favour. Note that 34.1 per cent of the respondents were 'neither in favour, nor against'. When comparing the current evaluation with the evaluation one had five years previously, 18.2 per cent said that they were more in favour nowadays than five years before, whereas 18 per cent indicated that they had become less in favour. The rest of the sample (63.8 per cent) had not changed their evaluation during this period. The results on the evolution thus suggest that adherence to an extreme right-wing party seems to be somewhat variable.

Table 3.2 Association of background variables with receptiveness and affinity (results of a regression analysis, standardized regression coefficients)

	Prejudice against immigrants	Chauvinism	Authoritarianism	Social dominance orientation	Political powerlessness	Extreme right-wing party affinity
Gender (> female)	0.06***	-0.03 ^{ns}	-0.02 ^{ns}	-0.04**	0.06***	-0.04*
Age	0.05***	0.07***	0.03*	-0.00 ^{ns}	-0.01 ^{ns}	-0.02 ^{ns}
Educational level	-0.13***	-0.05**	-0.19***	-0.09***	-0.17***	-0.21***
Occupational position						
Blue-collar or farm worker	0.13***	0.06*	0.16***	0.01 ^{ns}	0.09***	0.05 ^{ns}
White-collar worker, low-ranking civil servant	0.06*	0.01 ^{ns}	0.07**	-0.03 ^{ns}	0.06**	0.03 ^{ns}
Middle manager, teacher, middle-ranking civil servant	0.05*	0.03 ^{ns}	0.02 ^{ns}	-0.02 ^{ns}	0.02 ^{ns}	-0.01 ^{ns}
Senior manager, executive staff, high-ranking civil servant	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Entrepreneur	0.06**	-0.00 ^{ns}	0.05**	0.04**	0.06***	0.00 ^{ns}
Professional (doctor, lawyer, etc.)	-0.01 ^{ns}	-0.01 ^{ns}	-0.01 ^{ns}	0.04**	-0.02 ^{ns}	0.03 ^{ns}
Trader, farmer, craftsman	0.03*	0.04*	0.05**	0.09***	0.02 ^{ns}	0.06***
Sector						
Primary/secondary	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Tertiary	0.01 ^{ns}	0.01 ^{ns}	0.03 ^{ns}	0.03 ^{ns}	-0.01 ^{ns}	0.04*
Public	-0.05**	-0.02 ^{ns}	-0.03 ^{ns}	-0.03 ^{ns}	-0.03 ^{ns}	-0.06**
Other	-0.01 ^{ns}	-0.01 ^{ns}	-0.03 ^{ns}	0.02 ^{ns}	0.02 ^{ns}	-0.01 ^{ns}
DF	(12,4727)	(12,4727)	(12,4727)	(12,4727)	(12,4727)	(12,4629)
F	20.21***	5.90***	36.84***	17.06***	23.72***	33.20***
R	0.22	0.11	0.29	0.18	0.23	0.28
R ²	0.05	0.01	0.09	0.04	0.06	0.08

Note: ns = not significant; *p<0.05, **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

Source: SIREN survey.

Are certain categories more receptive to and more attracted by right-wing extremism?

In order to analyse the differences in receptiveness and affinity, a series of multiple regression analyses was performed with the various receptiveness attitudes and the affinity variable as dependent variables and five background characteristics as independent variables. Table 3.2 contains the results of these analyses. First, standardized regression coefficients are shown, expressing the unique association of a given background characteristic on the dependent variable after controlling for all other variables. At the bottom of the table, the R and R^2 are shown, indicating the explanatory power of the analysis. R^2 is particularly relevant, expressing the proportion of variance of the dependent variable explained by the analysis.

The analyses in Table 3.2 show that gender, age, and sector are far less important than occupational position and the level of education in determining the five receptiveness attitudes. Women show a bit more prejudice against immigrants and slightly more political powerlessness than men do, whereas men are slightly more in favour of SDO. However, these differences are very small. Age also contributes to the explanation of the receptiveness attitudes, with older respondents expressing slightly more prejudice, authoritarianism and chauvinism. Again, however, these differences are very limited. The impact of the sector is even more restricted: the only significant effect is a somewhat lower level of prejudice against immigrants in the public sector.

The effect of the educational level and the occupational position are generally more pronounced. A higher level of education is especially associated with lower authoritarian attitudes, lower political powerlessness and less prejudice against immigrants. Blue-collar workers (and to a lesser extent low-ranking white-collar workers) are more authoritarian, more prejudiced and feel more political powerlessness. A small effect on prejudice, authoritarianism and powerlessness is also noted for the entrepreneurs and the self-employed (traders, craftsmen, etc). The latter also seem to stress SDO slightly more than all other categories. The explanatory power of the analyses, however, is rather limited, as witnessed by the low proportions of variance explained by the five background variables (see R^2 below Table 3.2).

The analysis of extreme right-wing party affinity (column 6 of Table 3.2) shows that the level of education exerts the most important influence: a higher level is associated with a less favourable evaluation of the local extreme right-wing party. Here again, the explanatory power of the analysis is rather limited: only 8 per cent of all differences can be explained by introducing the five background characteristics.

Does receptiveness lead to affinity?

As a final step in our analysis, we examine whether the five receptiveness attitudes are indeed associated with an affinity to an extreme right-wing party: do people vote for an extreme right-wing party because of prejudice, chauvinism, authoritarianism, SDO or political powerlessness? We analysed this link by performing a regression analysis with affinity as dependent variable and the five background characteristics together with the five receptiveness attitudes as independent variables. Results are

reported in Table 3.3 (the coefficients of the background variables are not shown in this table).

The first column of Table 3.3 shows that all five receptiveness attitudes are indeed associated with an affinity to an extreme right-wing party. Not all attitudes are of equal importance, however. Prejudice against immigrants clearly stands out as the most important factor leading to a preference for an extreme right-wing party (beta: .30, $p < .001$). Secondly, authoritarian attitudes play an additional moderate role (beta: .14, $p < .001$). All other attitudes only play a minor role: chauvinism (beta: .07, $p < .001$), SDO (beta: .07, $p < .001$) and political powerlessness (beta: .05, $p < .01$). Note that the coefficients of the last three attitudes are rather small.

Together, these five attitudes explain about a fifth of the variance in right-wing affinity, which clearly is an improvement on the analysis in which only the background variables were included (see Table 3.2). Interestingly, the coefficient of education (not shown in Table 3.2) drops strikingly after the introduction of the five receptiveness attitudes (beta drops from -.21 to -.12), suggesting that an important part of the impact of education on affinity is due to the attitudes related to the level of education.

Table 3.3 contains additional information. All regression analyses were also performed for each country separately (with the exception of Germany). This allows us to verify whether the general trend is present in each separate country. The general trend that prejudice against foreigners is the dominant motive, with authoritarianism as second important factor, is also found in four out of seven countries (Denmark, France, Switzerland and Belgium). In these four countries, between 29 and 36 per cent of the variance in extreme right-wing affinity can be explained with the attitudes and background variables included in the analysis. Austria and Italy show a slightly different profile, since prejudice and authoritarianism seem equally important, with SDO as an additional important factor in Italy (and more so than in other countries) and political powerlessness in Austria (and Belgium). Chauvinism is also more important in Belgium (Flanders) and Switzerland than in most other countries. Finally, this separate analysis reveals Hungary to be an 'outlier'. In Hungary, only 10 per cent of the variance in extreme right-wing affinity can be explained. Here, only two attitudes play a (rather reduced) role: prejudice against immigrants and chauvinism. All other attitudes seem irrelevant in this country. This suggests that the motives for voting for an extreme right-wing party may be different in this eastern-European country than they are in western-European countries.

Socio-economic change and right-wing extremism: The mediating role of social identity

The final aim of our research was to analyse the link between perceptions of change within the job domain and affinity with extreme right-wing parties, highlighting the psychosocial processes that may underlie this link.

We moved from the assumption that, under given conditions, experiencing change at work may mean experiencing uncertainty and threat. People need to feel certain about their world and their place within it (e.g. Hogg 2000). Contextual

Table 3.3 Association of receptiveness attitudes with extreme right-wing party affinity, overall and per country (results of a regression analysis, standardized regression coefficients)

	Overall (1)	Austria	Belgium	Denmark	France	Hungary	Italy	Switzerland
Prejudice against immigrants	0.30***	0.17***	0.48***	0.51***	0.37***	0.15**	0.21***	0.36***
Chauvinism	0.07***	0.02 ^{ns}	0.14***	0.03 ^{ns}	-0.02 ^{ns}	0.11*	0.09*	0.16***
Authoritarianism	0.14***	0.19***	0.21***	0.24***	0.25***	0.07 ^{ns}	0.22***	0.25***
Social dominance orientation	0.07***	0.07 ^{ns}	0.01 ^{ns}	-0.01 ^{ns}	0.05 ^{ns}	-0.02 ^{ns}	0.16***	0.07*
Political powerlessness	0.05**	0.16***	0.20***	0.06 ^{ns}	0.12**	-0.07 ^{ns}	0.03 ^{ns}	0.10**
DF	(17,3774)	(17,522)	(17,513)	(17,532)	(17,501)	(17,439)	(17,508)	(16,652)
F	52.65***	5.26***	18.77***	14.50***	16.56***	3.86***	6.37***	21.10***
R	0.44	0.34	0.60	0.54	0.58	0.31	0.38	0.57
R ²	0.19	0.12	0.36	0.29	0.34	0.10	0.15	0.33

Note: ns = not significant; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

All background characteristics are kept under control. The coefficients of these variables are not shown in this table, however.

Source: SIREN survey.

factors, for example socio-economic crises and rapid changes, may reduce people's certainty about their cognitions, perceptions, feelings, and behaviours. In particular, rapid changes may induce people to believe that their personal identity is threatened. They may experience fragmentation, lack of control over themselves and their future. Unpleasant feelings of uncertainty may be enhanced if people feel that their social identity (Tajfel 1969; Turner et al. 1987) is also threatened, if they do not have a psychologically salient and stable group (e.g. in the work context, a group of colleagues) to identify with. The need for belonging and being committed to a group or a social category plays a relevant role in making people feel that they have a safe place in the world (e.g. Brewer 1995).

To reduce uncertainty, people usually look for clear-cut (i.e. secure) categories of social belongingness (for example, the nation). They tend to stress similarities between members of the same social category and differences between members of their social category and members of other categories. This leads to a strong favouritism towards the ingroup and a strong discrimination towards the outgroup (Jetten, Hogg and Mullin 2000; McGregor et al. 2001). Several psychosocial studies have actually shown that people in uncertainty conditions are especially likely to develop chauvinist and ethnocentric attitudes on the one hand, and prejudicial and xenophobic attitudes on the other (inter alia Sales 1972; Feldman and Stenner 1997).

Interestingly, ingroup favouritism and outgroup discrimination due to uncertainty may be found both in people who belong to high-status, powerful social categories and in people who belong to low-status, powerless social categories (Ellemers et al. 1992; Ellemers and Bos 1998; Doosje, Ellemers and Spears 1995). On the one hand, people in a high-status but uncertain condition tend to be afraid of the outgroup threatening their privileged position, and defend their position through stating that it is fully fair and legitimate. They are likely to develop supremacy ideologies, rationalizing their ingroup superiority and the outgroup inferiority. On the other hand, people in a low-status and uncertain condition tend to perceive the outgroup as depriving them of what they deserve. They are inclined to state that their position is deeply unfair and illegitimate. Thus, both categories of people may become receptive to fundamentalism, ethnocentrism and, more generally, the kind of issues dealt with by right-wing extremist or anti-system political groups.

Consistently, in the present study we expected that both participants who had experienced a positive change in their work conditions – who may be grouped with people in a high-status and uncertain condition – and participants who had experienced a negative change in their work conditions – who may be grouped with people in a low-status and uncertain condition – might develop affinity with extreme right-wing parties.

We speculated that the link between socio-economic change and right-wing affinity would be more likely to happen when people, in addition to experiencing change at work, experience a crisis in their identification with meaningful social categories at work. For this reason, measures of social identification at work were introduced in the questionnaire, including both identifications with a limited and very concrete social category such as the workgroup, and identifications with wider and more abstract social categories such as the organization or the professional

category (inter alia Jetten, O'Brien and Trindall 2002; Ashforth and Johnson 2001; Van Knippenberg et al. 2002). We hypothesized that a lack of social identifications at work, but also an enhanced tendency to identify with a clear-cut and somewhat abstract category such as the organization, would be among the factors favouring transformation of perception of change at work into increased receptiveness towards right-wing extremism. We therefore envisaged the existence of a causal chain developing from perception of change in one's job conditions to identification at work, and from identification at work to attitudinal antecedents of right-wing party affinity.

In order to test our model, we carried out a path analysis,³ that is, a series of multiple regression analyses involving all the relevant variables. For most variables, factor scores were employed derived from principal component analyses on the different measures of each variable included in the questionnaire (see details in De Weerd et al. 2004). The list of variables follows below:

- *Perceived change in job conditions*. Factor score based on a one-factor solution saturated by three items regarding perceived change in social atmosphere at work, job autonomy, and job security.
- *Identification with the workgroup or the colleagues* the person works with.
- *Identification with the organization, company or institution* the person works in.
- *Identification with the occupational or professional category*.
- *Social dominance orientation*. Factor score. Measures are described above.
- *Collective relative deprivation*. Factor score. Measures are described above.
- *Chauvinism*. Factor score. Measures are described above.
- *Prejudice against immigrants*. Factor score. Measures are described above.
- *Authoritarianism*. Factor score. Measures are described above.
- *Political powerlessness*. Factor score. Measures are described above.
- *Right-wing party affinity*. Evaluation of the most representative extreme right-wing party in one's country (see above).

As a first step, a multiple regression analysis was carried out, with right-wing party affinity as the criterion and all the other psychological variables as predictors. Then each variable shown to be a significant predictor in the first analysis was employed as criterion in subsequent regression analyses, and so on until all significant predictors of endogenous variables were identified. Except for the 'identification with the organization' and 'identification with the occupational category' variables, all the other variables turned out to play a significant role in the path analysis. Most significant paths ($p < .001$) emerged from the whole series of multiple regression analyses are shown in the causal model depicted in Figure 3.2. In the model, the partial correlations coefficients on the paths show the relative effects of the predictor variables on the endogenous variables, with all other variables that have paths influencing them (directly or indirectly) held statistically constant.

3 The analysis sample was made up by 3,559 people and did not include Germany.

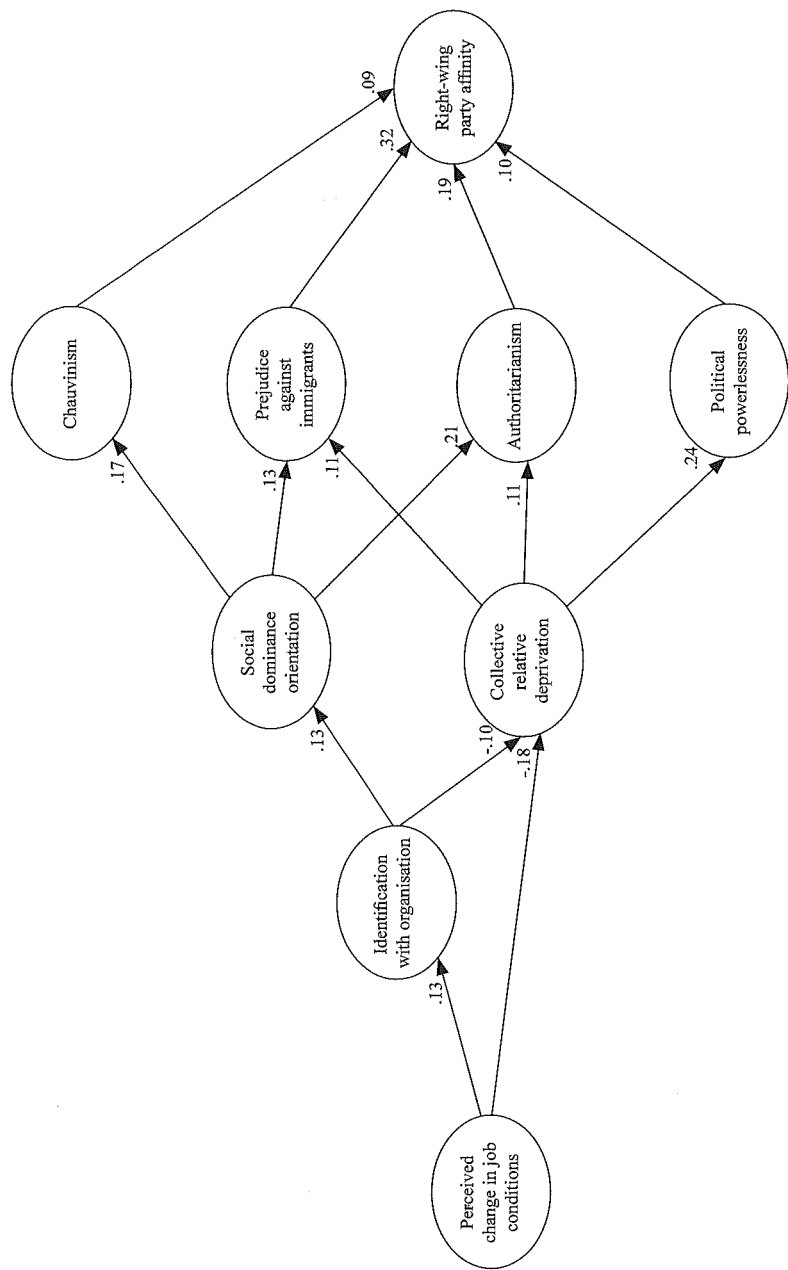


Figure 3.2 Path analytic model on the relationships between perceived change in the job domain, social identity, receptiveness attitudes, and right-wing party affinity

Note: Only most significant path coefficients ($p < .001$) are reported.

The analysis showed the presence of two different pathways leading from perception of change in job conditions to extreme right-wing party affinity. In both pathways, identification with one's own organization played a significant mediating role.

We might label the first pathway as the '*winners*' pathway. Perceived changes in one's own working conditions are positively related to identification with one's own organization (beta: .13, $p < .001$). Given that a *high* score in the 'perceived change variable' corresponds to a perceived *positive* change in working conditions, we may say that people perceiving an improvement at work are also more inclined to identify with their organization. This identification may in turn favour a social dominance orientation (beta: .13, $p < .001$), that is, an orientation of these people to legitimate inequality and dominance of some groups over others. The same people will be more likely to express chauvinism (beta: .17, $p < .001$), prejudice against immigrants (beta: .13, $p < .001$), and authoritarian attitudes (beta: .21, $p < .001$) and, ultimately, to favour extreme right-wing parties. Thus, the belief that the individual may successfully face any change and that people who may be an obstacle to this process should be brushed aside seems to prevail in this first psychological route to right-wing extremism.

We might label the second pathway as the '*losers*' pathway. Perceived change in working conditions is negatively related to collective relative deprivation, both directly (beta: -.18, $p < .001$) and through the mediation of identification with one's organization (beta: -.10, $p < .001$). This means that people perceiving negative changes in their job condition, and who are weakly identified with the organization they work in, are more likely to perceive that they are treated in an unfair way compared to others. Collective relative deprivation, in turn, may foster prejudice against immigrants (beta: .11, $p < .001$) and authoritarian attitudes (beta: .11, $p < .001$). People following this path may also develop political powerlessness (beta: .24, $p < .001$), that is, the perception that any collective reaction to injustice may be ineffective, because politics is not reliable, too far from real citizen's needs and difficult to deal with. The outcome is attraction towards the extreme right, very likely attraction towards a strong leader, someone to whom individuals may delegate the solution of their own problems.

As already mentioned, neither identification with one's workgroup nor identification with the occupational category played a role in either pathway. Actually, identification with one's workgroup was positively related to perceived change in job conditions (beta: .11, $p < .001$), but not to the other variables included in the model. This result suggests that identification with relatively small groups within the job domain, unlike an exclusive identification with a higher-order and abstract entity such as one's organization, may be a way of coping with change in job conditions without developing attitudes that may lead to affinity towards the extreme right.

Which categories of people are most likely to follow either route to right-wing extremism? A first answer to this question may be found by looking back at the tables commented on in previous sections of this chapter, in which the links between background characteristics of our sample and each psychosocial variable investigated in the questionnaire are shown, including variables featuring the two

pathways described above.⁴ However, this data has the limit of referring to one single variable of either route at a time. A further analysis was therefore carried out aimed at investigating the most frequent background characteristics of two extreme subgroups of the sample, made up of the individuals scoring high on all the variables typical of either the 'winners' or the 'losers' pathway (see details in De Weerd et al. 2004).

According to this analysis, the categories of people who are more inclined to follow the 'winners' pathway are young people (i.e. under 35) with secondary education, self-employed, and working in sectors such as commerce, professional services, or consultancy. The categories of people who are instead more likely to follow the 'losers' pathway are middle-age (between 35 and 54 years old) blue-collar workers with secondary education working in the sectors of industry or social services.

Conclusion

The main results of our survey on socio-economic change and right-wing extremism in eight European countries are discussed below, focusing first on each of the two dimensions and then on the observed link between the two.

Socio-economic change?

The results on the perception of socio-economic change were rather mixed. On average, the workloads of our respondents had increased over the last five years and their job security had decreased somewhat. Feelings of deprivation seem to prevail among a (small) majority of our interviewees. These negative aspects are counterbalanced, however, by an increase in job autonomy and in the financial situation of the household. When the survey was carried out, a large majority was not experiencing financial hardship, and only a minority felt insecure about their jobs. No clear trend was apparent regarding the social atmosphere at work.

Gender differences in socio-economic change were rather limited. Older workers in particular reported negative changes (e.g. in job autonomy, job security, family income, and social atmosphere). The findings regarding occupational position and level of education suggest rather classic 'social class' cleavages, with blue-collar workers occupying a less privileged position (e.g. a lower income, less autonomy, and more job insecurity), leading to higher levels of feelings of collective (relative) deprivation. Respondents from the public sector had experienced the strongest increase in workload over the last five years but reported the lowest level of job insecurity.

4 Analyses regarding socio-economic change were carried out on the whole sample, including Germany. However, when the same analyses were carried out without Germany the significant effects described here were still present, and are therefore also relevant for the present analysis.

Receptiveness and affinity towards right-wing extremism?

In the research literature, five attitudes are reported that are relevant in the description of 'receptiveness' to right-wing extremism: prejudice against immigrants, nationalism, authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, and political powerlessness. The results of our survey show that these five attitudes are clearly present among our respondents, though in varying magnitude. Our results also showed that extreme right-wing parties do have a following: about 18.6 per cent of the interviewees were in favour of the local extreme right-wing party, whereas 47.4 per cent were against (party affinity). When comparing the current evaluation with the evaluation one had five years ago, 18.2 per cent said they were now more in favour than five years ago, whereas 18 per cent indicated they had become less in favour. The results on the evolution thus suggest that the adherence to an extreme right-wing party seems to be somewhat variable.

Gender, age, and sector were not very important as determinants of receptiveness or affinity. The effect of the educational level and the occupational position were generally more pronounced. A higher level of education is especially associated with lower authoritarian attitudes, lower political powerlessness, less prejudice against immigrants and a less favourable evaluation of the local extreme right-wing party. Blue-collar workers (and to a lesser extent low-ranking white-collar workers) are more authoritarian, more prejudiced and feel more political powerlessness. A small effect on prejudice, authoritarianism and powerlessness is also noted for entrepreneurs and self-employed (traders, craftsmen, etc.).

A final analysis showed that all five receptiveness attitudes are indeed associated with an affinity to an extreme right-wing party. Prejudice against immigrants clearly stands out as the most important factor leading to a preference for an extreme right-wing party, and authoritarian attitudes played an additional moderate role. All other attitudes (chauvinism, social dominance orientation, and political powerlessness) only played a minor role.

On the link between change and affinity: Two psychological routes to extreme right-wing affinity

Our analysis showed the presence of two different psychological routes leading from perceived change in job conditions to right-wing extremism (see also above). In what we have called the 'winners' route, people tend to believe that people who may be an obstacle to the process of change at work should be brushed aside. The same people are also likely to fully share the typical organizational goal of keeping competitive on the socio-economic market and defeating as many competitors as possible. In what we have defined as the 'losers' route, people are deeply aware of their discomfort due to negative change at work, but also believe they are not competent or strong enough to cope with it. The outcome is attraction towards the extreme right, very likely attraction towards a strong leader, someone to whom individuals may delegate the solution of their own problems.

Our results thus suggest that both positive and negative change at work may increase perceived uncertainty. A dominant principle in the current working

environment is change and the opportunity for all workers to adapt to the ever-changing requirements of working life. But to what extent can people cope with continuous change, which also implies strong uncertainty and lack of control on the world around them? Two opposite reactions seem likely to arise, and they both seem somewhat 'pathological'. The first is the one we have found in the winners' group. This is sort of a *manic* reaction. Workers tend to feel that they are omnipotent, that they can 'run the wave', practically without limits. The second is the one we have found in the losers' group. It is sort of a *depressive* reaction. People lose self-esteem, feel powerless in the face of a working reality that appears completely out of control.

Prejudice against immigrants has been shown to play a highly significant role in both psychological routes from perceived change at work to affinity with right-wing extremism, suggesting that uncertain workers may easily focus on a clear-cut and easy to identify outgroup, such as the one made up of foreigners, in order to reduce uncertainty. Foreigners may be taken as scapegoats, held as responsible of what is wrong in the working environment, and the process of uncertainty ends up leading to misplaced aggressiveness.

Even if our research was mainly focused on highlighting conditions that may favour attraction towards extreme right, our data offers some insights into the conditions under which people may cope with positive or negative changes at work without developing extreme right-wing attitudes. For example, we have observed that a strong identification with the workgroup may be positively related with perception of change at work, without leading to extreme right-wing attitudes. Identification with a lower-order category, such as the workgroup, is the most likely to adequately fulfil people's basic need for belonging (Ashforth and Johnson 2001). In a context of change, such a need may become very urgent, because people may look for psychological protection as well as for models of how to think and behave under conditions they have never coped with before (Hogg 2000). Hence it is conceivable that workers who may count on a strong identification with a lower-order group may be more psychologically equipped to face uncertainty related to change, and thus be less likely to develop ethnocentric and authoritarian attitudes.

Future research might explicitly address the issue of which psychological processes may be more effective in helping people to cope with change at work. What the present research has already clearly demonstrated is the presence of a meaningful link between psychological reactions to change in job conditions and right-wing extremism. Although the existence of such a link has been often hypothesized in the past, an empirical demonstration of it through a large scale European survey had been so far lacking.

Table 3.4 Do certain categories experience more (or less) socio-economic change?

	Change in amount of work	Change in job autonomy	Change in social atmosphere	Change in job security	Change in financial situation family	Actual job insecurity	Evaluation of actual income	Collective deprivation
Mean ⁽¹⁾	3.67	3.45	3.00	2.90	3.20	1.91	3.26	0.00
Gender ⁽²⁾	0.03**	ns	0.03*	ns	0.07***	ns	0.05***	0.08***
Age ⁽²⁾	ns	-0.17***	-0.12***	-0.08***	-0.12***	-0.04***	ns	0.00 ^{ns}
Educational level ⁽²⁾	0.12***	0.07***	ns	-0.03*	0.16***	-0.09***	0.20***	-0.04**
Occupational position ⁽²⁾	0.19***	0.11***	0.06**	0.06**	0.14***	0.16***	0.22***	0.14***
Blue-collar or farm worker	3.46	3.32	3.02	2.95	3.04	2.12	3.05	0.15
White-collar worker, low-rank civil servant	3.67	3.47	3.05	2.87	3.16	1.96	3.22	-0.03
Middle manager, teacher, middle-rank civil servant	3.91	3.47	2.96	2.92	3.33	1.72	3.36	0.08
Senior manager, exec. staff, high-rank civil servant	3.82	3.65	2.98	2.87	3.42	1.67	3.55	-0.33
Entrepreneur	3.39	3.44	3.21	2.74	3.17	1.96	3.29	0.05
Professional (doctor, lawyer, etc.)	3.44	3.51	3.01	2.97	3.24	1.78	3.37	-0.10
Trader, farmer, craftsman	3.23	3.35	3.08	2.98	2.99	2.20	3.16	-0.02
Sector ⁽²⁾	0.12***	0.05***	0.05**	0.05**	0.06***	0.16***	0.05***	0.09***
Primary/secondary	3.54	3.45	3.01	2.86	3.12	2.08	3.20	0.01
Tertiary	3.60	3.52	3.08	2.89	3.28	2.00	3.29	-0.13
Public	3.83	3.40	2.97	2.96	3.20	1.68	3.27	0.10
Other	3.59	3.46	3.03	2.89	3.22	1.99	3.26	-0.04

(1) Change in amount of work, job autonomy, job security and financial situation of the family: 1=clearly decreased, 3=same, 5=clearly increased. Change in social atmosphere: 1=much worse, 3=same, 5=much improved. Job insecurity: 1= very small, 3= neither large nor small, 5=very large.

Evaluation of actual income: 1= not enough, huge difficulties to get by, 4=more than enough, can even save money. Collective deprivation: factor score.

(2) The magnitude of the association is illustrated by a (Pearson) correlation coefficient. These coefficients are printed in bold.

Note: ns = not significant; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

Source: SIREN survey.