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Pegida: A Movement of Right-Wing Extremists or Simply 'Concerned Citizens'?

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Abstract

The following paper will discuss whether Pegida participants can be accused of having extreme right-wing attitudes or, on the contrary, the movement should be acknowledged as a legitimate form of protest by 'concerned citizens'. To answer this question, the paper will refer to data collected at demonstrations and to general population polls. It transpires, despite other claims (also formulated by experts on Pegida), that Pegida demonstrators indeed lean sharply to the extreme right of the political spectrum. This is indicated both by the party's electoral preferences (after all, a vast majority of the protesters would vote for the AfD) and the worldview of Pegida's supporters that indicates their proximity to the extreme right.

Keywords: Protest Surveys, Right-Wing Extremism, Pegida, Attitude Research.

1. Introduction

The demonstrations organized by *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes* (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident, or Pegida) were among the most controversial and important topics in German public debates in 2015. Especially before the onset of the so-called refugee crisis, these ‘patriotic Europeans’ dominated the German political discourse. At the core of the dispute regarding Pegida was a fundamental question: Are we dealing with Islamophobic agitation, or legitimate criticism of immigration policy? Pegida anticipated the division of German society over the federal government’s September 2015 decision to open Germany’s borders to refugees. This division is of vital relevance to the present moment, and is the central reason for the political rise of *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD).¹ The depth of this division in German society explains why reactions to Pegida’s demonstrations (that take place every Monday in the old town of Dresden) could not have been more polarized. On the one hand, Pegida was accused of being a quasi-Nazi movement (for instance, by the former minister of justice and present minister for foreign affairs, Heiko Maas). On the other hand, local conservative authorities promulgated the view that, despite the Islamophobic appearance of Pegida, its demonstrators were mostly ‘ordinary citizens’, merely ‘concerned’ about immigration, and had nothing to do with extreme right-wing attitudes or racism. The latter interpretation was primarily, but not exclusively advanced by the (now former) director of Saxony’s State Agency for Civic Education, Frank Richter, who regularly organized discussion forums with Pegida’s demonstrators and soon became a prominent expert on Pegida, and who made a sharp division between the organizers and the followers of Pegida, the latter which he defended in public German discourse. He expressed his main understanding of Pegida’s participants in a quite famous statement made in January 2015 on public television: ‘To my perception, 90 per cent of those joining the marches are actually concerned citizens, who are wondering about things.’ By far the most famous scientist working on Pegida, Werner J. Patzelt, offered empirical support for such interpretations, stating that the vast majority of the demonstrators may be cleared of accusations of racism or extremism. In fact, Patzelt’s team entered Pegida events on four occasions and conducted a total of 1332 short on-the-spot interviews. But Patzelt was not the only person to survey Pegida’s participants. Considering the significance for the public discourse and political landscape, along with Pegida’s astonishing mobilization and persistence,² it comes as no surprise that

¹ The political rise of the AfD was associated with continuous radicalization. Starting as a Euro-critical party, today it is discussed whether the AfD can now be categorized as an extremist party. While Alexander Häußler uses the term ‘folkish-authoritarian populism’ to emphasize that the AfD has become a collection of supporters of former extreme right-wing parties which have failed (Häußler, 2018), Armin Pfahle-Traughber argues – on the basis of statements from party members – that the AfD has already reached the point of extremism (of low intensity) (Pfahle-Traughber, 2018). With a specific focus on the Saxon AfD, which is assumed to be one of the most radical German fractions, see also: Steffen Kailitz (2019).

² Despite only having 350 protesters at the first demonstration (20th October, 2014), the number of participants nearly doubled each week – with a peak on 12th January 2015 of 2,500 demonstrators according to police, and 17,000 demonstrators according to a team from the Institute for Social Movement Studies (ipb). Even though the numbers declined, with an intermediate peak for Pegida’s first

Pegida was very frequently surveyed. So far, a total of five different teams have collected data from pro-Pegida demonstrators on eleven occasions:

Table 1: Surveys of Pegida.

Vorländer	ipb	Institute for Democracy Research	Patzelt	Reuband
12 th Jan. 2015	12 th Jan. 2015	12 th Jan. 2015 30 th Nov. 2015	25 th Jan. 2015 27 th Apr. 2015 4 th May 2015 18 th Jan. 2016	14 th Dec. 2015 6 th Feb. 2016 25 th April 2016

On the basis of this data, this article will argue that terms like ‘concerned citizens’ are conscious or unconscious attempts to disguise the proximity of the attitudes of Pegida demonstrators to those of the extreme right wing.

2. The socioeconomic composition of Pegida’s population and its interpretation

Although all of the research teams which surveyed Pegida demonstrations collected similar data, a major dispute has arisen regarding the question of who protests with Pegida, and why. The first important observation is that Pegida participants are not a socioeconomically marginalized group consisting mainly of unemployed people who have been neglected by state and society. On the contrary, they have relatively high incomes and are much better educated than average Germans (being three times more likely to be university graduates than members of the general population, see: Daphi et al., 2015: 13). This finding diverges sharply from the assumption that Pegida is comprised of the ‘concerned public’, which would predict that participants of an Islamophobic movement would be on the social periphery. As Vorländer has emphasized, he was astonished by the ‘striking’ fact that the demonstrators are not recruited ‘from the social and socio-economical [sic] margins’ (Vorländer et al., 2015: 50). Worryingly, this impression of ‘normality’ was also one of the first arguments employed to defend Pegida against accusations that they fall on the extreme right of the political spectrum. We can recall here Richter’s perception of ‘concerned citizens’, or refer to Patzelt’s claim that Pegida demonstrations are attended by ‘normal people’ (Patzelt, 2015: 14) who have ‘worries, but are good-willed citizens’ (ibid., 2015: 22). In reference to this claim, it is noticeable that Patzelt uses the word ‘normal’ 30 times in his 32-page long publication.

Such interpretations are problematic in a multitude of ways. First, there is no reason why people who are better educated and more well-off than the general population cannot adopt problematic worldviews. Racism, antisemitism and xenophobia are not restricted to poor and uneducated people, or to open skinheads or violent hooligans. In the following account we will see that Pegida is an illustrative example of the so-called normalization of extreme right-wing attitudes within German

birthday of 15,000-20,000 participants, Pegida’s persistence is remarkable: Even today, Pegida mobilizes up to several hundred supporters for their events which presently take place each second week.

society. Second, the assumption that having a higher socioeconomic status protects against extremist attitudes is derogatory towards socioeconomically marginalized groups and confirms prejudices. Furthermore, attempts to define societal ‘normality’ are ethically questionable. Third, the description of Pegida’s demonstrators as ‘normal’ or ‘good-willed’ ignores their aggressiveness, which is even more striking in Patzelt’s case, because it was particularly his team that reported aggressive reactions to their attempts to collect data from Pegida. In his last survey in January 2016, around 22 per cent of Patzelt’s interviewers were physically attacked during their time in the field (Patzelt, 2016b: 8).³

3. Why self-declarations must be contextualized

Patzelt does not advocate for releasing Pegida from accusations of extremism merely because of the sociodemographic composition of its attendees. It is especially the self-evaluations of protesters (who locate themselves at the center of a five-point left-right scale) which justifies his sympathetic interpretation. In Patzelt’s first sample, 62.5 per cent of respondents self-identified with the political center, while only 7.9 per cent self-identified as left of center and 26.9 per cent to the right of it (Patzelt, 2015: 7). Patzelt takes this self-evaluation at face value and states that the protesters at Pegida demonstrations are approximately made up of a two-thirds majority of ‘good-willed but worried’ people (=center) and nearly 10 per cent ‘good-willed but indignant’ (=left of the center) citizens. Patzelt only classifies people who *self-reported* being politically right of center as ‘right-nationalist xenophobes’, claiming that this group constitutes one-third of demonstrators (Patzelt, 2015: 27). This equates not only to a total population of Pegida of 110 per cent, but more importantly appears to defend Pegida against accusations of being an extreme right-wing movement – after all, only a minority can be called ‘xenophobic’ while the majority are categorized as ‘good-willed’. Simultaneously, it illustrates an omission of the special context in which Pegida demonstrations occur: one which is full of (mainly verbal) aggression and Islamophobia. This Islamophobia is openly flaunted not only in the name of the movement (referring to the alleged Islamization of Europe) but also in speeches and on banners at demonstrations.⁴

Moreover, it is very easy to work out where Pegida’s political center lies by looking at the protestors’ preferences in national elections. Even though more than 60 per cent of respondents in Patzelt’s samples claim to represent the political center, up to 92.57 per cent of respondents declared that in the next federal elections they intend to vote for the AfD (Patzelt, 2016: 172, 184). The following table, based on the

³ Most teams that surveyed Pegida reported (mainly verbal) aggressive reactions from demonstrators. But there were also physical attacks (here we may recall the above-mentioned experience of Patzelt). However, two female students and a scholar, all from the University of Technology Chemnitz, were also attacked while observing the demonstration to celebrate ‘the first birthday’ of Pegida. The only exception here is Reuband, who claims that the atmosphere was never tense during his research (Reuband, 2016: 53).

⁴ The ipb team found that the largest group of posters, billboards and banners broach the issues of Islam, race, foreigners and migration, and often promote sedition, which in Germany is forbidden by law (Daphi et al., 2015: 44-46). Among speakers at the demonstrations, one could point, for instance, to Jürgen Elsässer, the editor-in-chief of the Querfront magazine Compact, or the internationally known leader of Austria’s Identitarian Movement, Martin Sellner.

findings of a team consisting of members from the Berlin-based Institute for Social Movement Studies (ipb) and from the Chemnitz University of Technology (TUC), shows the rapid radicalization of the already right-leaning party preferences of the demonstrators:

Table 2: Party preferences.

	PEGIDA	Actual results	PEGIDA	Actual results	PEGIDA
AfD	39.8	4.7	59.8	9.7	89
CDU/CSU	25.3	41.5	14.6	39.4	-
Linke	14.5	8.6	6.1	18.9	3
SPD	7.2	25.7	4.9	12.4	2
FDP	4.8	4.8	6.1	3.8	-
NPD	3.6	1.3	4.9	4.9	5
Grüne	1.2	8.4	1.2	5.7	-

A simple comparison of the self-evaluation of Pegida's demonstrators at the political center and their party preferences illustrates clearly that either they give socially appropriate answers, or that the protesters are really of the opinion that they have a moderate worldview. The fact that they share very similar political attitudes and, in political contexts, interact largely only with one another (i.e. in an echo chamber) probably helps to bolster and reinforce their self-perception as moderates.

4. The worldview of Pegida's 'good-willed' demonstrators

Taking a closer look at the attitudes of Pegida's participants shows that they not only have party preferences to the right of the Union Parties (CDU and CSU), but also the corresponding worldview. This is best shown by the ipb survey that included items used in nationwide polls for investigating right-wing extremist attitudes (namely, the *Center-Studies* [Mitte-Studien]). One of the Center-Studies surveys has been conducted every two years since 2002 by a team from the University of Leipzig (Decker et al., 2013). Meanwhile, the second one has been carried out since 2014 by a team from the Institute for Interdisciplinary Conflict and Violence Research (IKG) at Bielefeld University (Zick and Klein, 2014a: 13). Both *Centre-Studies* follow the so-called consensus definition agreed on by several experts in the research field of right-wing extremism during a conference in 2001. This definition includes six dimensions of extreme right-wing attitudes: 1) affinity towards authoritarian regimes, 2) chauvinism, 3) the downplaying or justification of National Socialism, and 4) anti-Semitic, 5) xenophobic and 6) pro-social-Darwinist attitudes. Each of the dimensions includes three statements, making a total of 18 items (Kiess et al., 2016: 15). Due to the scope of the ipb research, which not only broached the issue of right-wing extremism but also looked at the conditions of participation and means of mobilization more generally, the ipb questionnaire adopted nine of the 18 items

included in the consensus definition.⁵ This not only allowed them to collect data on right-wing extremism, but also allowed comparisons of Pegida protestors' attitudes to be made with the German average.⁶ This data shows that the approval of even a moderate segment of Pegida protestors (those willing to cooperate with researchers)⁷ of right-wing extremist statements 'in general lies above the average of the overall population' (Daphi et al., 2015: 29). Looking closer at the specific dimensions of the extreme right-wing worldview (understood by the consensus definition) the following picture emerges.

The ipb sample very clearly indicates the presence of chauvinism. A strikingly high percentage of Pegida demonstrators agreed with the statement that 'We should dare to have strong nationalist feelings again.' At 81 per cent, this number is more than twice as high as the German average of 29.8/35.9 per cent, respectively. Concerning a statement positing that the German national interest should be vigorously fought for, approbation within Pegida is (at 34.5 per cent) much higher than that found by the *Centre-Studies* (21.5 per cent and 17 per cent). Especially notable is the high percentage of respondents who did not express a clear preference: nearly half of the demonstrators (and thus approximately twice as many as the German average) reacted to this statement elusively.⁸

We can observe the same phenomenon of giving elusive answers when it comes to xenophobic items. A total of 53.8 per cent of respondents avoided giving a clear answer to the question whether foreigners only move to Germany to exploit its social systems. In the German-wide poll, less than one-third were not sure about this question. In spite of these responses, the data still show comparatively high approval ratings for statements such as 'Foreigners only come here to abuse the welfare system' (34.2 per cent within Pegida vs. 27.2/17.4 per cent in the *Centre-Studies'* general

⁵ The ipb questionnaire adopted two questions from each dimension with the exception of anti-Semitic attitudes, where only one question was included. Questions about social-Darwinist attitudes were left out.

⁶ From here on, the dataset of the ipb team is mainly used simply due to the fact that none of the other teams systematically queried items that indicate right-wing extremism, racism or islamophobia, even though this was one of the most commonly discussed topics concerning Pegida. Vorländer's questionnaire, for instance, did not include any questions of use in exploring those kinds of attitudes. Patzelt, however, in his last survey from January 2016, introduced one question concerning the dimension 'belittling the crimes of National Socialism.' Reuband, for instance, in one of his surveys, used one question concerning 'support for a right-wing dictatorship' and in two of his questionnaires questions from the chauvinism and antisemitism dimensions were used.

⁷ Except for Reuband's team, all teams reported encountering problematic groups of young males with a specific dress code (Geiges et al., 2015: 36f.; Patzelt, 2015b: 6). Due to security concerns, Vorländer's interviewers were even instructed not to address demonstrators who had an aggressive appearance (Vorländer et al., 2015: 32). However, even his team reported meeting groups of young (aggressive) males who disproportionately refused to cooperate with the interviewers (ibid., 2015: 27).

⁸ This is the reason why the authors of the Bielefeld *Centre-Study* criticize the five-point scale. The undecided category can be indeed a 'hidden approval of the statements [...], because the respondents were potentially aware of the fact that those statements were undesirable.' That was also proven by a group discussion carried out by Decker and his team in 2008. Here it appeared 'that the respondents who chose in the five-point scale the middle category (partially agree/disagree) in fact tended to approve xenophobic statements.' (Groß, 2014: 27f.) If we consider that Pegida demonstrators felt unjustifiably accused of being members of a 'quasi Nazi movement', this presumably had a great influence on their response behavior. This is especially the case if we keep in mind that with the Pegida sample we are dealing with a highly educated group which was aware of the social norms that are expected to be respected.

population polls) or ‘Germany is losing its identity because of the large number of foreigners’ (41.4 per cent within Pegida vs. 27.5/17.7 per cent, respectively, in general population polls).

Table 3: Extreme right-wing attitudes I.

Statement	Pegida ⁱ		<i>Center-Study Leipzig</i> ⁱⁱ		<i>Center-Study Bielefeld</i> ⁱⁱⁱ	
Chauvinism	Approval ^{iv}	Undecided	Approval ^{iv}	Undecided	Approval ^{iv}	Undecided
We should dare to have strong nationalist feelings again.	81	15,5	29,8	28,3	35,9	25,8
Today our country needs to firmly and energetically enforce its interests against other nations.	34,5	46,6	21,5	28,1	17	24,6
Xenophobia						
Foreigners only come here to abuse the welfare system.	34,2	53,8	27,2	31,5	17,4	30,6
Germany is losing its identity because of the large number of foreigners.	41,4	37,1	27,5	25,3	17,7	19,6

ⁱ Daphi et al., 2015: 30

ⁱⁱ Decker et al., 2014: 32

ⁱⁱⁱ Zick and Klein, 2014b: 36 f.

^{iv} Here the statements ‘Mostly agree’ and ‘Completely agree’ are merged.

Aside from these above-average approval ratings, there are also dimensions in which Pegida does not seem to differ so much from the German average. There are no striking differences in approval for an authoritarian right-wing regime, belittling the crimes of National Socialism, and antisemitism. Here, there are even two items where

Pegida demonstrators have lower approval ratings than average; namely, for the statements ‘We should have a leader that rules Germany with a firm hand to the benefit of all’ (4.3 per cent vs. 9.2/11.4 per cent, respectively) and ‘National Socialism also had positive aspects’ (5.2 per cent vs. 9.3/10.1 per cent, respectively). This was interpreted by Vorländer to mean that extreme right-wing attitudes are not more commonly held by participants of Pegida demonstrations than the national average (Vorländer et al., 2016: 102). The characteristics of pro-Pegida individuals may then match what Aribert Heyder and Oliver Decker define as the ethnocentric dimensions of an extreme right-wing syndrome, a dimension including chauvinism and xenophobia (Heyder and Decker, 2011). An illustration of the remaining dimensions is shown in the following table:

Table 4: Extreme right-wing attitudes II.

Statement	Pegida ^I		Center-Study Leipzig ^{II}		Center-Study Bielefeld ^{III}	
Approval of an authoritarian right-wing regime	Approval ^{IV}	Undecided	Approval ^{IV}	Undecided	Approval ^{IV}	Undecided
Under certain circumstances a dictatorship better serves the national interest.	7,8	27	6,7	14,8	6,4	12,4
We should have a leader that rules Germany with a firm hand to the benefit of all.	4,3	12,2	9,2	13,8	11,4	7,3
Trivialisation of the National Socialism						
The crimes of National Socialism have been greatly exaggerated	11,4	15,8	6,9	15,3	7,1	11,4
National Socialism also had positive aspects.	5,2	21,7	9,3	20,5	10,1	16,7
Antisemitism						
The influence of the Jews is still too strong.	14,8	17,4	11,6	21,4	8,6	12,1

^I Daphi et al., 2015: 30

^{II} Decker et al., 2014: 32

^{III} Zick and Klein, 2014b: 36 f.

^{IV} Here the statements ‘Mostly agree’ and ‘Completely agree’ are merged.

Despite this first impression, after a brief look at the table we cannot release Pegida from the claim that they lean to the extreme right wing of the political spectrum. Such interpretations come off badly because they ignore the nature and quality of ipb's sample. A simple comparison of the data collected by the ipb at Pegida demonstrations with that collected by the *Centre-Studies* (which surveyed the general population) is problematic because in the ipb study only 9 of 18 items were applied, and additionally because in each of the studies samples were generated differently.⁹ More importantly, the sociodemographic composition of the Pegida sample differs substantially from the German-wide average. This divergence can be explained not only by the very specific population attracted to demonstrations, but also by the low willingness to respond among Pegida's attendees. What is important here is that these differences have a substantial influence on the approval of items that indicate right-wing extremism.

First and foremost, the education level of the respondents at Pegida demonstrations should be mentioned. In the Leipzig *Centre-Study*, for example, we can read that 'Education is still the most important protection against extreme right-wing attitudes' (Decker et al., 2014: 60). Compared to respondents with an Abitur, non-Abitur respondents endorsed dictatorship more than two times more often, were three times more likely to have chauvinistic, xenophobic and pro-social-Darwinist attitudes, to play down crimes committed by the National Socialists seven times more often, and also seven times more likely to be anti-Semitic (education is of similar influence in the Bielefeld study). At the same time, the ipb sample measured the highest level of education ever at a demonstration in Germany. More than one-third of Pegida respondents had a university degree – three times higher than the German average (Daphi et al., 2015: 13). Respondents with an Abitur make up 19.3 per cent of the sample of the Leipzig *Center-Study* and 27.5 per cent of the Bielefeld *Centre-Study* – in the case of the Pegida sample generated by the ipb, 62 per cent of respondents have an Abitur. This is not only a consequence of the mere fact that better educated individuals are more likely to take part in demonstrations. It can be assumed that – considering the low response rate of 18.4 per cent – better educated Pegida supporters were more open-minded towards researchers and thus more willing to take part in a (quite time-consuming) online survey. After all, Pegida is a highly emotional and aggressive anti-elitist movement that also accuses the social sciences of betraying 'ordinary people'. In consequence, we can assume that less educated Pegida demonstrators are disproportionately frequently underrepresented in the ipb sample.¹⁰

⁹ The phenomenon of social desirability has, depending on the survey procedures, different effects on the datasets. The findings of the Bielefeld study, which was conducted as a telephone survey, will be more strongly influenced by the effect of social desirability than those of the Leipzig study, which was conducted as a questionnaire-based, face-to-face interview (Reuband, 2017: 102). Moreover, in the dataset of the ipb which used an online survey there is a specific 'Pegida bias' that mainly results from the highly emotional reaction of demonstrators to accusations of being a movement of racists and Nazis (Daphi et al., 2015: 8).

¹⁰ This also indicates the date of the Bielefeld *Centre-Study*. Here, those who declared that there was a chance they would take part in an anti-migration protest action are characterized by lower education (Klein and Müller, 2016: 198). It is not possible to directly extrapolate from a general population poll to the sociodemography of a concrete demonstration, but it seems to be another sign that the demonstrators in Dresden were less educated than the biased Pegida sample indicates.

Consideration of the impact of education on the approval of the items in the consensus definition therefore fundamentally influences estimations of the right-wing extremism of Pegida: To begin with, Pegida may be less educated and thus more inclined to right-wing extremism than the ipb sample suggests. However, regardless of such (quite plausible) assumptions, the fact that such a well-educated segment of the population agrees so much more often with chauvinistic and xenophobic statements is alarming. Additionally, that this well-educated group from the Pegida demonstrations shows levels of antisemitism, affinity with authoritarian regimes and downplaying of National Socialism compared to both of the significantly less-educated *Centre-Studies* samples seems to confirm the idea that Pegida demonstrators hold views that are in close proximity to right-wing extremism. To illustrate this, we can compare approval with the dimensions of the consensus definition by Pegida and with general population polls – but only for those respondents with Abitur.¹¹

Table 5: Extreme right-wing attitudes at Pegida and in general polls (only with Abitur).

Statement	Pegida	<i>Center-Study</i> Leipzig ¹¹	<i>Center-Study</i> Bielefeld ¹¹
Approval of an authoritarian right-wing regime	2,8	1,9	0,8
Chauvinism	51,4	4,9	3,9
Trivialisation of the National Socialism	1,4	0,4	0,2
Xenophobia	27,78	6,8	2,4
Antisemitism	15,5	0,9	0,3

¹¹Percentage of respondents who, regardless of the queried items per dimension, on average no less than agreed to a statement (summed index).

¹¹ Decker et al., 2014: 38.

¹¹Zick et al., 2016b: 133; here the numbers from 2016 were used because the 2014 study did not publish the corresponding data.

The differences here are now striking.¹² They also demonstrate, once more, that despite the poor quality of the ipb data, certain important conclusions can be made. The demonstrators trivialize National Socialism 3.5 times more often, display xenophobic attitudes 4 times more often, display chauvinistic attitudes more than 10

¹¹ The following table can only illustrate the differences between Pegida's demonstrators and the general population because the datasets of both *Centre-Studies* are not available to the author. Thus, the numbers in both *Centre-Studies* represent responses to all 18 items whereas the ipb sample represents only half of the items. But looking closer at the responses to all of the items in both *Centre-Studies*, we can assume that the differences would not diverge too much were the nine items queried at Pegida to be used for comparison.

¹² Unlike the Leipzig *Center-Study*, the data from Bielefeld suggest that income also has a significant influence on approval for extreme right-wing statements (Zick et al., 2016b: 134). If we also include income in our comparison between Pegida and the national average, the result would similarly be striking due to the high income of Pegida demonstrators. But because the Leipzig study did not find a statistically significant influence for income, the picture is not clear in this case and hence we forego a comparison that takes income into account.

times more often, and are more than 17 times more likely to be anti-Semitic than the German average (according to the *Centre-Study* from Leipzig). The difference from the Bielefeld *Centre-Study* is even more striking: Those demonstrators with Abitur are 3.5 times more likely to support an authoritarian regime, 7 times more likely to minimize the crimes of National Socialism, 12 times more likely to be xenophobic, 13 times as likely to be chauvinistic, and 51 times more likely to be anti-Semitic than the similarly educated part of the sample of the Bielefeld *Center-Study*. The especially high approval for chauvinistic, xenophobic and anti-Semitic statements of the well-educated demonstrators is remarkable if we consider the presumably high impact of their wish to give socially desirable answers. This is not only due to demonstrators' aforementioned wish to avoid being stigmatized as a 'right-wing mob'.¹³ According to empirical evidence, it is education which makes respondents more likely to answer in a way that fits societal norms (Zick et al., 2016: 62). Whereas in the overall population education is negatively correlated with proximity to right-wing extremist attitudes, this relationship seems not to apply to the demonstrators in Dresden.

However, the data collected using the consensus definitions does not merely allow one to see the tendency of the surveyed group to display anti-Semitic, xenophobic, chauvinistic, etc. attitudes. Using the data, we can also say which individuals within the surveyed group have extreme right-wing attitudes and determine how many of the former the surveyed group contain. A comparison between Pegida and the German average confirms the picture of a protest consisting of more individuals with an extreme right-wing worldview than average.¹⁴ While according to the Leipzig *Centre-Study* in terms of the national average 5.6 per cent of respondents have a 'manifest extreme right-wing world-view', the proportion at Pegida is nearly twice as high (9.6 per cent). According to the dataset of the Bielefeld *Centre-Study*, only 2.4 per cent of respondents could be called right-wing extremists – while at Pegida there were than nearly four times more extremists than in the German average. Thereby, we can speak of a significant discrepancy which should not be underestimated because young males, presumably extremists, refused to take part in the survey. This is why it is highly plausible to assume that at Pegida there are many more individuals with extreme right-wing attitudes than the sample indicates.

¹³ Social desirability plays a central role in the response behaviour of the demonstrators because they feel insulted by an unjustified media image. This finding also confirms that of other researchers of Pegida. Vorländer, for instance, points out: 'As a rule [...] respondents reject insistent[ly] the accusation [of] being a "Nazi" or [...] cooperat[ing] with such. As "completely normal citizens" they feel not only misunderstood by media and publicity but regularly defamed' (Vorländer et al., 2015: 67).

¹⁴ In both *Centre-Studies*, to identify right-wing extremist attitudes, an 'average value' was generated, displaying the percentage of respondents who agreed with all 18 statements in the questionnaire. The possible answers, 1 ("completely disagree") to 5 ("completely agree"), were added up (maximum possible value = 90). Any value above 63 represents average approval of the statements and thus a closed, far-right world view' (Decker et al., 2016: 98). Aware of the critical methodological implications, we assume that regarding the ipb sample, which only used half of the statements of the former, the cut-off limit should be also halved to identify individuals with a closed extreme right-wing worldview. The limit for the Pegida sample lies therefore at 31.5.

5. Counter-argument: Who supports Pegida in Germany-wide polls?

The plausibility of the above-formulated interpretation, that Pegida's demonstrators are more clearly leaning to the extreme right-wing of the political spectrum than it seems at first glance, can be supported by a reverse approach. We can both compare the data generated at Pegida with findings from nationwide polls, and also check for expressions of sympathy for Pegida or willingness to participate in anti-immigration demonstrations in national representative surveys. Even if this approach does not examine the attitudes of Dresden's demonstrators, it shows who supports Pegida. By doing this, the *Centre-Study* team from Leipzig revealed that there are only two correlations in their dataset when it comes to support for Pegida; namely, between Pegida support and right-wing extremism, and between Pegida support and Islamophobia (Yendell et al., 2016: 139f.). But the authors emphasize that 'The strongest explanatory variable was the manifestation of an extreme right-wing attitude: the higher [sic] the extreme right-wing attitude was, the more probable it was that the goals of Pegida were supported (ibid., 2016: 145).'

For this reason, it remains to be pointed out that other explanations for support for Pegida, especially those that emphasize political deprivation as a main motive for sympathizing with the movement from Dresden, are statistically not really of importance. Individuals who are disappointed by their opportunity to influence or participate in the political decision-making processes in Germany are not statistically significantly more likely to support the goals of Pegida. What are significant, however, are Islamophobic and extreme right-wing attitudes.

The authors of the Bielefeld *Centre-Study* arrived at a similar finding. In this survey, the question concerned willingness to participate in anti-immigration demonstrations. The outcome was that respondents who were willing to take part in such protests showed high approval ratings for the items indicating extreme right-wing attitudes and were furthermore ready to use violence (Klein and Müller, 2016: 194). Because of this, the Bielefeld team speaks of a 'bad civil society' (ibid., 2016: 196f.). General population polls therefore clearly show how intertwined Pegida and right-wing extremism are.

6. Conclusion

In 2015, Pegida's emergence hinted at the division of German society, which eventually became visible with the onset of the so-called Refugee Crisis. This division is of fundamental relevance to Germany society and politics. After all, the AfD took quickly to the discourse set up by Pegida, and may now have become the second largest party in Germany – at least this is what election polls indicate in the middle of 2018. In Saxony, the AfD even won the majority of votes in the last federal elections (09/2017). As with the case of the AfD, the German public was (and partially still is) struggling over whether Pegida is a 'quasi-Nazi movement' or the expression of legitimate concerns of conservative but 'normal' and even 'good-willed' citizens.

A look at the 11 surveys conducted at Pegida demonstrations can help to find an answer to this debate. All of them indicate a paradox: while (up to two-thirds of) the demonstrators locate themselves in the political center, their political preferences

are mainly for parties to the right of the Christian-Democratic Party. The AfD can count on the support of around 90 per cent of Pegida's demonstrators, while the NPD is far behind but still the second strongest party preference. This observation indicates that, despite Pegida's self-perception as 'centrist', it is worth taking a closer look at the attitudes of the demonstrators. Here especially, the data collected by ipb allow close comparison between the attitudes of Pegida demonstrators and the German average because the ipb questionnaire was the only one to include items from general population polls about right-wing extremism (following the consensus definition used in the so-called *Centre-Studies*).

Direct comparison of the Pegida sample with both *Centre-Study* samples, however, turns out to be difficult. This is due to the poor quality of the dataset generated from among the demonstrators. First, the ipb sample is not representative because of the high refusal rate (particularly among young and aggressive males). The Pegida sample is thus particularly biased, and mainly represents the moderate segment of the demonstrators. Additionally, we can assume that it was primarily better educated protesters who participated in the survey. If those moderate, well-educated demonstrators 'only' expressed above-average approval for statements relating to the dimensions of chauvinism and xenophobia (see: Table 3) and in the remaining dimensions showed values similar to the general population (see: Table 4), then we should not simply conclude that the demonstrators do not disproportionately often harbor extreme right-wing attitudes. On the contrary: the Pegida sample shows worrying approval ratings for extreme right-wing attitudes because it under-represents open extremists and over-represents well-educated protesters. Here we should recall that general population polls indicate that it is mainly education which helps to defend against extreme right-wing attitudes. In contrast to average general respondents, those demonstrators who took part in the ipb survey constitute a group which – despite their high level of education – lean to the extreme right-wing. This discrepancy between the well-educated segment of the German average and Pegida demonstrators becomes strikingly visible if we compare the segments of both groups who graduated with Abitur (see: Table 5). Additionally, the number of demonstrators who showed a 'manifest extreme right-wing worldview' is, at nearly 10 per cent, two (four) times as high as in the population average, according to the two *Centre-Studies*, respectively. This is especially alarming because open extremists refused to take part in the survey. Moreover, independent from the ipb sample, the two *Centre-Studies* clearly show that it is mainly respondents with extreme right-wing views who support the goals of Pegida. Against other claims, the data collected at Pegida, as well as the data from general population polls, prove that Pegida is attractive primarily to individuals who are at least sympathetic to an extreme right-wing worldview.

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