

*Citation for published version:*

Mondon, A & Winter, A 2020, From demonization to normalisation: Reflecting on far right research. in S Ashe, JB, G Macklin & A Winter (eds), *Researching the Far Right: Theory, Method and Practice*. Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315304670-23>

*DOI:*

[10.4324/9781315304670-23](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315304670-23)

*Publication date:*

2020

*Document Version*

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication](#)

This is an Accepted Manuscript of a book chapter published by Routledge/CRC Press in *Researching the Far Right Theory, Method and Practice* on 18/11/2020, available online: <https://www.routledge.com/Researching-the-Far-Right-Theory-Method-and-Practice/Ashe-Busher-Macklin-Winter/p/book/9781138219342>

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## Chapter 23 FROM DEMONIZATION TO NORMALIZATION: Reflecting on far right research

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To Cite: Mondon, Aurelien and Aaron Winter. 2020. 'From demonization to normalization: Reflecting on far right research'. *Researching the Far Right: Theory, Method and Practice*, eds. S. Ashe, J. Busher, G. Macklin, and A. Winter. Abingdon: Routledge. Chapter 23.

As much of the west is witnessing a resurgence of the far right and its main-streaming (how once marginalized ideas creep, or are ushered, back into public discourse), the role played by researchers in the field is ever more vital to understand the phenomenon and inform wider society. Researching the far right and its performance and impact is essential as its resurgence has had very real consequences for the lives of millions, particularly those at the sharp end of their racism. However, while academic research goes on (or should) regardless of the status of such movements, it attracts greater attention and urgency when it is in the headlines and spotlight. This is made evident by the proliferation of media and academic publications on the far right that have come out in recent years. While these publications satisfy demand and a genuine urgency to address the phenomenon, they also participate, willingly or not, in shining a powerful light on the very issue: this creates both a degree of responsibility and risk.

In this context, researchers of the far right are often faced with two familiar criticisms. The first is that by focusing on and warning of the threat of extreme political movements and forces to society and democracy, researchers may be amplifying or 'hyping' their presence and significance and thereby ignoring, distracting from or legitimizing the more structural, institutional or mainstream forms of hate, inequality and scapegoating. The second, is that by focusing on such movements, researchers are giving them a platform through which these actors can express, explain and even legitimize and normalize their ideas. These are challenges which we have encountered and had to grapple with numerous times in our own research on the far right. Our work focuses primarily on far right and elite discourse (media, politicians and academics) and how racist ideas travel from the margins to the mainstream (having previously been marginalized) at particular historical junctures and through specific discursive processes and practices. This includes the ways in which the far right distances itself from or aligns with the mainstream, and vice versa, as well as how academic, political and media discourses facilitate these processes of mainstreaming and radicalization.

It is with this in mind that this chapter reflects on the challenges which arise from researching the far right. Our first section turns to the current media landscape which we believe has become an unavoidable part of research on such a polemical and extensively covered topic. To ensure that, as researchers, we avoid the many traps which come with such context, we then explore four interlinked areas which we believe are essential to consider before undertaking reflective and critical research on the far right. As way of concluding, we ask a series of questions, informed by our own experience and critique, for researchers to reflect on. Our intention is not to undertake an exhaustive study of the problems identified or negate different approaches, but think through and critically reflect on the politics of engaging with and analyzing the far right in research, the media and general public discourse.

Before we move to our analysis, it is worth noting that, while we use the term far right here, we do not claim that it is perfect, or that other terms could not be used to describe similar movements, parties and politics (for terminological discussions and debates see Mudde, 1997; 2007; Hainsworth, 2008; Mondon and Winter, 2020). Attempting to group different actors under a same name is a difficult and problematic exercise if it is not based on a clear and precise explanation as to what exactly these actors have in common. Yet, it is something

we commonly see in the scholarship and even more so in the media, where terms are used interchangeably, regardless of the impact they may have. For the purpose of this chapter, we use 'far right' as it is broader and less loaded a term than 'extreme', 'radical' or 'populist' to cite but a few possibilities. Occasionally, we refer to the more violent and extreme sections of the broader movement and ideology as 'extreme right'. Our use of the terms encompasses both movements and parties, as well as ideas, found on the right of the mainstream right, something which we believe is well suited for the task at hand. It is also worth noting here that we do not consider the mainstream and far right as tangible and definite categories, and instead see them as contingent, evolving and with fuzzy borders: Today's mainstream could be tomorrow's far right and vice versa.

## **Researching the far right in the current media context**

The current media landscape and the clickbait nature of news related to the far right have made it an inescapable element to any research in the field, whether as an object of study, an unavoidable actor or an external tool for dissemination of findings. It provides greater opportunities for researchers whose work may attract attention, but its uneven access can also shape the political agenda, both legitimizing and marginalizing certain ideas.

Unsurprisingly, most of the coverage of the far right tends to be negative. The more extreme right groups such as the white supremacists in the USA or the EDL (English Defence League) in the UK receive almost unanimous condemnation across platforms. However, this does not prevent their figureheads such as Richard Spencer, Andrew Anglin or Tommy Robinson from receiving media attention and, in some cases, platforms. Similarly, and even though the attitude has changed over recent years and the more right-wing media have become increasingly less cautious, savvy far right politicians who have cultivated a more moderate image such as Nigel Farage or Marine Le Pen remain treated with a degree of suspicion or scorn by some sections of the media, despite again being given countless platforms and having their positions and ideas legitimized. This allows the media to use the far right for various purposes: appeal to a constituency or market the media believe shares or supports these ideas, appear politically balanced, and use them as foils and figures of mockery for the assertion of the rationality of the moderate, establishment parties.

While this coverage can provide an opportunity to expose both actors to criticism, scrutiny and even ridicule, it also lends them an incredibly powerful way to publicize their ideas, which until recently had been relegated to the margins of public discourse. In the US for example, it can be argued that the media platforming of the 'alt-right' played a role in their prominence and emboldening leading up to the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, which led to the murder of anti-fascist Heather Hoyer, and injuries to many more counter-protesters. Despite potential media blowbacks, it is also well known on the far right that any coverage is better than no coverage at all. For example, Jean-Marie Le Pen, the former leader of the French Front National, used to rely on damaging polemics about the Holocaust to stay prominent in the media between elections. While these revisionist comments led to prosecution and widespread condemnation even within the ranks of his party, they allowed him to appear in the media and provided him with a platform to share his broader politics. In the UK, the demise of the BNP (British National Party) and its clear association with the most extreme right opened the door to more polished far right politicians and facilitated the disproportionate presence of someone like Nigel Farage on the BBC and in the media in general as he was able to navigate the milieu better. As a result, and regardless of their treatment, it has become increasingly common for far right figures to occupy a prominent place on mainstream TV, and the media in general.

To cite but a few examples, Marine Le Pen was the first guest on the key political show on French television in the run-up to the 2017 presidential election. She was also given the possibility to write opinion pieces for the *New York Times* twice, something no other candidates were able to do. In recent years, Farage was one of the most invited guests on BBC's flagship political programme Question Time in recent years (Bennett, 2018), despite no longer being the leader of UKIP and failing to win a seat in the general election. He has since been given a radio show on LBC, as well as countless possibilities to access the print media through inter-views or columns. Tommy Robinson was given a platform by various news outlets, including GMTV and Sky, following the Finsbury Park attack by fan Darren Osborne and the London Bridge attack by alleged IS terrorists (Mondon and Winter, 2017). Despite his role in stirring up and leading anti-Muslim hate and racism, he has become commonly referred to, euphemistically, as an 'anti-Islam activist' in *The Guardian*, as if it is a religion as opposed to people and communities, he and his followers target.

In the USA, one of the most frequent targets of such a criticism has been the *New York Times*. For Blake Seitz, the fact that the paper published two dozen articles on the alt-right and wider white nationalist movement between the November 2016 election and December 2016 gave 'an invaluable signal boost for the tiny coalition of racists' (Seitz, 2016). The newspaper also came in for a great deal of criticism for a profile of Tony Hovater, a white nationalist and Nazi sympathizer (Fausset, 2017). Many were critical of the focus on Hovater as a sympathetic figure, the guy next door, pictured doing his shopping like any other American. The NYT's defence of the charge of normalization was that it had become normal: 'The point of the story was not to normalise anything but to describe the degree to which hate and extremism have become far more normal in American life than many of us want to think' (Lacey, 2017). While we are not denying that these ideas deserve coverage, we are criticizing here the lack of reflection on the part of the NYT and their refusal to acknowledge their role in the process and responsibility in setting the agenda.

There has been a great deal of criticism about the media (including social media platforms), as well as politicians, providing a platform and 'normalizing' and legitimizing white nationalism, the far right and fascism, including by other journalists, representatives of monitoring organisations and academics (e.g. Dejene, 2018; Mondon and Winter, 2017; 2019; Liddle, 2018; Mudde, 2018; Pitcavage, 2017; Winter, 2019). Beyond issues of platforming described above, many have also denounced a type of analysis which legitimizes far right ideas about white victimization, nativism, the alleged threat from immigration and Muslims. In some cases, the latter also legitimizes the more mainstream far right, even when it is critical of the more extreme right seen as too illiberal and racist. Criticism is also directed at the construction of an 'objective' and 'balanced' two-sides argument or false equivalence (fascists vs anti-fascists and racists vs anti-racists) as if both are equal in their legitimacy, power and threat posed.

It is in this context of media hype around the far right, that the growing role of academics and representatives of monitoring groups in feeding the media expert analysis should make us reflect on how the far right is represented, researched, engaged with and analyzed by those seeking not just opinions and representation in news and editorial items, but wider research, knowledge and understanding.

### **The need for a critical appraisal of our standpoint as researchers of the far right**

Publications on the far right (and related fields) have always been far more numerous than those on other parties or movements, and this, even before the recent resurgence. It is not surprising that they have increased dramatically in recent years, with many academics also

switching their research interests to this fashionable hot topic. It is for this reason, we believe we must engage in serious reflective practice: despite the self-deprecation common amongst academics, our work matters and can have an impact, both good and bad.

We are not the first to engage in such a process and there have already been a number of reflective academic accounts of researching the far right, most notably James Aho's *This Thing of Darkness: A Sociology of the Enemy* (1994), Abby Ferber's *White Man Falling: Race, Gender, and White Supremacy* (1998), and more recently, contributor Kathleen Blee's *Understanding Racist Activism: Theory, Methods, and Research* (2018), as well as this book and its various contributions. Usually, this also occurs in introductions to studies and methodologies, and focuses on the rationale for the study and method chosen, and issues of access, ethics, power, trust, objectivity and politics when engaging with 'the enemy'. It has also appeared in work on methods in terms of politics and reflexivity (Lumsden and Winter, 2014). Responding and building on this, we think it is important to highlight and challenge researchers in terms of traps that are as much political as they are methodological and analytical, and beg the question, why are we researching this topic and how can we best avoid the pitfalls and risks associated with it?

To help navigate these issues, we outline below four interlinked areas which we believe are essential to consider before undertaking reflective and critical research on the far right: amplification, hype and legitimization; distraction and deflection; access, risk and representation; and bandwaggoning.

### *Amplification, hype and legitimization*

Historically, there has been a good deal of criticisms of work on the far right for demonizing and pathologizing them, representing them as deviants and monsters (Berlet, 1996; Diamond, 1995; Ribuffo, 1983). The effect of which has been to distract from their overlap with the mainstream right, the existence of racism throughout society, and the wider structural factors for far right recruitment, mobilization and support. We argue against demonization and pathologizing of the far right that serves to separate them (and analysis) from the mainstream and wider structures and institutions of power, particularly in term of race and racism. However, we must also be aware that the representation of the far right in a legitimate analytical research context (i.e. journalistic or academic) can also serve to legitimize and normalize them and their ideas as part of the social-political discussion and worthy of mainstream representation as well as empathy or sympathy.

The issue of legitimization cannot be separated from that of amplification and hype, both fed by the current media and political landscape. These are issues that everyone researching the far right faces, and yet can be easily ignored under claims of objectivity and the belief, whether conscious or cynical that a researcher in social sciences stands above and beyond their topic of study. The very focus on the far right requires one to set out a particular category of the extreme and exceptional, which separates it from the mainstream and 'normal' and marks it out as an issue of specific concern. Increased focus on the far right is often a natural response to wider developments and concern such as electoral performance, but careless study in terms of framing and failure to consider the implications can amplify or hype its significance as a social phenomenon and threat beyond its real and practical impact. It can make them part of the social and political dialogue, or present them as a force, alternative and constituency whose prominence in public discourse can surpass its actual strength and reach. Such amplification can lead to better scrutiny of the far right due to a heightened sense of threat and to potential state repression of their activism. However, it may also facilitate the appropriation of their ideas by mainstream politicians and act as a

distraction from problems elsewhere such as the limits or failures of liberal democracy, economic inequalities and institutional racism. An exaggerated focus on the far right in opposition to a rational and righteous centre may also lead to assuming that the centre is politically neutral and tangible, rather than its own form of politics and ideology, constructed and contingent, both historically and in comparison, to the 'extremes'. One of the other implications of this is that researchers may fail to account for their own standpoint and ideologically-loaded approach as their position is simply seen as objective rather than based in a hegemonic and thus contingent understanding of politics. This problem has been particularly well explored by Yannis Stavrakakis in the field of populism, where anti-populism has become a default position despite its clear ideological grounding (Stavrakakis, 2018).

Therefore, it is essential that the way the far right is researched, presented and understood addresses these issues, starting from the positionality of the researcher themselves, to how movements are represented, compared to what, under which hegemonic assumptions and for what impact. We argue that we must therefore always question our own approach and position, remain reflexive about our research and keep in mind that there is no such thing as pure objectivity in social sciences and that impartiality requires us to both acknowledge and challenge our own ideological pre-dispositions. In this sense, we are aligned with those proposing critical, reflexive and standpoint analysis in various fields and disciplines. Some questions can act as a useful starting point: Where do we stand regarding the far right? What do we think is the political centre or norm? What are the numbers we use in terms of vote or opinion data and how are they selected, what is omitted or obscured? What is the threat we discuss? Does the phenomenon deserve such attention? How does it relate to the mainstream? What is its function in discourse? How does the framing and analysis support or challenge representations and myths about the phenomenon?

In the field of political science in particular, the increased focus on psephology and the over- or mis-use of opinion polling to understand politics and society has played a key part in the misunderstanding and potential hyping of the far right in recent years. While most of the research conducted in the field is essential to provide us with a more fine-grained understanding of this crucial issue, we argue that some of the less critical kind has in fact contributed, whether consciously or not, to the legitimization of the far right. We have argued in our research that the reification of electoral and opinion data has obscured or ignored key parameters to understanding the current state of play in our political landscape (Mondon and Winter, 2019; 2020; Mondon 2015; 2017; Glynos and Mondon, 2016). The uncritical use of survey data provides only a limited and potentially biased understanding of the situation if it often ignores issues of agenda-setting and wider problems with sampling, accuracy and whether in fact there is such a thing as public opinion, and, if there is such a thing, how much it is shaped by the elite rather than the other way around. In recent years, we have also witnessed a tendency to rely overly on surveys at the expense of context, be it historical or political, and thus failing to account for structural and systemic issues. It is in this setting that disillusionment with liberal democracy, politicians, the media and experts has often been advertised as fueling the rise of the far right – the so-called revolt of the left-behind. However, a more careful analysis taking into account the role of abstention in particular, as well as the situation of other parties and the state of liberal democracy more generally, demonstrates that the rise of the far right is only a symptom of the crisis of our democracies.

This can be explored with even more precision with the oft-assumed role played by the working class in the rise of the far right (Mondon and Winter, 2019). While there is no denying that reconstructed far right parties have managed to appeal to a portion of this particular social category, we have argued that the inclusion of abstention, extremely widespread within lower social categories, the size of this section of the population and the

oft-ignored diversity of the working class point again to a more complicated picture. Let's illustrate this with an example built loosely from existing data: imagine a headline stating uncritically that 30 per cent of the working class vote for a particular far right party. This claim may not be incorrect in terms of vote, and certainly worthy of note. However, should it be left at that, it would suggest to most readers/viewers/listeners that a third of the working class supports the far right. This would not only be incorrect, but in fact misleading. In our hypothetical case, if, as is can indeed be the case, two thirds of the working class abstain, then this would mean that 'only' 10 per cent of the working class actually voted for the far right – a very different headline. Of course, this is not to say that abstainers would not vote for the far right if they were forced to, but the simple fact is they did not.

These narratives, and their reflection in the media, also often ignore the size of the working class and the difficulties in defining it properly and precisely. For example, research has shown that in the case of the FN, UKIP and Trump, it is not the poorest sections of the working class which turn to the far right, but rather the wealthier ones, which could be seen as closer to the lower middle class typically attracted to fascism in the interwar period. Furthermore, even if in terms of proportions, the working class that votes provides a high percentage of far right voters, the size of this section of the population compared to others often leads to a much more nuanced picture where the actual number of voters comes predominantly from better-off classes (for more detail, see Mondon and Winter, 2019; 2020).

Such careless misreading of data, often added to a lack of historical knowledge of the topic, has led to a dual process where the far right has seen itself legitimized as the voice of the downtrodden, representing the symbolic working class, while the working class, and by extension the people, has become demonized and racialized in the process. This racialization took place on the assumption that the working class is essentially white despite being far more diverse than other classes.

### *Distraction and deflection*

As scholars in the social sciences, our main duty is to research, analyze and explain social phenomena. While our research can focus on more precise fields such as the far right and racism, it is essential to remember that these develop, thrive and/or recede in a wider context and that their popularity or ignominy is dictated as much by their proponents than by their opponents, and perhaps more importantly by the social, economic and political contexts in which they exist. Power relationships and hegemony are thus essential aspects to take into account. Looking at the far right in a vacuum, out of historical and political context, or through a post-race lens that sees them as a historical monstrosity, fringe phenomenon and the sole site of racism, can deflect from mainstream, structural and institutional racisms (Mondon and Winter, 2020; Winter, 2018). This is not always intentional, and can be an effect or product of defining the boundaries of one's topic or research focus. It is also implicit in the label, construction or recognition of the 'extreme' or 'far' as distant or distinct, out of place and a threat to the mainstream in post war liberal democracies. By acknowledging the wider context, systemic trends appear and the far right becomes only one cog in a vast system of oppression, discrimination and insecurities, a symptom rather than the disease (or cure) itself.

As already discussed, much work has been dedicated recently to the so-called 'left behind' and 'white working class' turning to the far right (see Mondon and Winter, 2019). This has not only allowed some scholars to find an easy explanation for the resurgence of the far right, but it has also served as a reassuring mechanism to middle and upper-class liberals, inasmuch as they were not to blame for the rise of racism since the poor were (Glynos and Mondon,

2016; Mondon and Winter, 2020). This has ignored the reality of the far right vote which is spread across socio-economic boundaries contrary to what prominent narratives would suggest. It has also allowed for the issue to become about skewed socio-economic and class concerns as opposed to racism, which is not only limited to the far right, but also rendered a symptom as opposed to a part of the structuring of society intersecting with class. Related to this false race–class divide, it has ignored that the ‘white working class’ is a social construct which has largely served this analytical and political purpose, and that, if anything, the working class should be seen as the most diverse section of our society. Yet, these simplistic narratives have thrown blame upon less privileged, and less audible, sections of our population or rendered them invisible (ethnic and racial minority working class), while legitimizing the far right as the voice of ‘the people’ qua downtrodden rather than the defenders of the elite-run, anti-egalitarian and reactionary order it is. It is thus essential that researchers of the far right remain conscious of what is at play beyond the far right itself, and do not fail to see the forest for the trees. While the far right is certainly worthy of study, it must be placed into a context, taking into account social, economic and historical elements.

Focus on and amplification of the far right can help distract our attention from the mainstream, be it political parties, ideologies and more insidious structural and institutional racisms that can fuel the far right or be rendered more acceptable, legitimate or invisible by being opposed to them. In terms of party politics, the far right can be useful to deflect attention away from the racism and xenophobia present within mainstream parties as they are able to point to a more extreme version. Coupled with the amplification of the far right, this can also force the mainstream right (and sometimes left) to address this ‘rise’ as an electoral threat to contend with and popular demands to respond to (Brown, Mondon, and Winter, forthcoming). This in turn may lead to a rightward turn and the legitimization of certain discourses and policies by mainstream politicians, leading in turn to the normalization of the far right (see Mondon, 2013).

There is also the question of whether journalists and scholars working on the far right may themselves feed into this hegemonic frame that amplifies and exposes the far right to affirm the hegemony of liberal democracy by demonizing those outside the system as ‘extremists’, as exemplified by the work of Lipset (1955) and Lipset and Raab (1970; see critiques by Berlet, 1996; Glynos and Mondon, 2016; Mondon and Winter, 2020; Ribuffo, 1983). In Lipset’s (1955) original work on the ‘radical right’, where he coined the term, the very conceptualization, definition and positioning of the phenomenon or ‘problem’ serves by intention or effect as a reification and defence of the rational centre or moderates against the ‘radicals’ on the right who are defined as such and pose a threat not because of their ideas, which they may share with the mainstream (e.g. racism), but adherence to established democratic procedures (see Berlet, 1996; Mondon and Winter, 2020).

A further distraction can be found regarding the place of racism in research on the far right. On the one hand, work on the far right can treat racism as a characteristic in a taxonomy and see liberal democracy, as opposed to racialized people, as the main target and threat. On the other hand, work on the far right can too easily feed the so-called ‘post-racial’ narrative (Goldberg, 2016; Lentin, 2012; Mondon and Winter, 2020; Winter, 2018) that constructs such movements as the primary site of racism that can be denounced as marginal and unacceptable and rejected from polite, tolerant, mainstream society and politics. An effect of this is both a false separation between the far right and the mainstream, and a distraction from less overt, structural and institutionalized racisms, what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2006) refers to as ‘racism without racists’. Moreover, by making extremists the issue, it can be seen to sit too comfortably with terrorism and countering violent extremism (CVE) studies, which have played a role in exacerbating Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism (Winter, 2015; 2018).



### *Access, risk and representation*

It is unavoidable that research and analysis on the far right presents their words, ideas and stories, as well as explanations, justifications and defences. However, this necessitates researchers to face some difficult questions: What are the potential risks of giving such ideas air? When should individuals be given a platform? And how are these framed and who will they be read by?

It is often assumed that the reader will be another researcher who may, at worst, be offended by the ideas and politics, which may lead to ignoring that it might in fact reach potential or actual targets. This has been exacerbated in recent years with the increased emphasis on engagement and empathetic work in ethnography as well as quantitative and more theoretical research. In some cases, it is a response to demonization by the mainstream and calls for them to be heard. It may also be because it is assumed that such movements are not only marginalized as a movement, but made up of marginalized peoples (the so-called 'left behind') who are socio- economically disenfranchised or cut off from the mainstream, but speak to issues and phenomena we need to hear, thus framing and representing far right ideas as politically and sociologically legitimate, even if only as a symptom, and/or enabling that reception or use by the media and the political class by effect. It is also important to note how this may affect researchers and readers, as well as wider communities on the sharp end. To be clear, many of such studies have shed essential light on the ideas and practices of the far right. However, there remains a real risk that unreflective practice may not only amplify and distract, but obscure the harm done to those targeted by the far right as a personalized focus is placed on the actors rather than their victims or actions as part of structural issues. There is an added dimension to consider when dealing with ethnographic research and its representation: researchers who belong to target groups and do not share a privileged identity with the activists may not get the same access and, if they do, may experience added risk. It is thus essential to carefully consider how much space voices of hate are given, what the purpose is and what the impact may be.

### *Bandwaggonism*

With the neoliberalization of higher education and research, fads have played an increasingly important role in academia as researchers battle for citations, impact and research funding. Most recently, Kaltwasser et al. (2017) have shown in their *Oxford Handbook of Populism* how much research has grown in this particular subfield. Researching the far right has always been a popular field, particularly when considering that their electoral standing remained marginal until recently. Obviously, we are not arguing here that it should not be researched or that colleagues and prospective PhD candidates should be put off from studying it. We simply warn against falling for buzzwords without proper engagement with the wider field and clear intent to advance knowledge. Any reviewer in the field will have come across articles submitted whereby the authors demonstrate a very limited knowledge of the field, despite the wealth of literature on the topic. In the most egregious cases, buzzwords such as 'populism' are added to the title of articles to generate attention, while the concept is hardly discussed or even nowhere to be found in the entire body of the article.

Again, we are not arguing against newcomers, but against poor academic practice, often undertaken by senior colleagues, which not only does no due diligence to the field but also crowds it with poor research, risking obscuring better research by junior scholars as gatekeeping mechanisms make it easier for bad research from senior academics to be

published, cited and shared. Building on a previous point, this has been somewhat reinforced by the advent of psephology and the multiplication of articles based on surveys with little to no regard for context, discourse and politics. To be clear and to reiterate, we are certainly not against newcomers to the field or deny that psephology has a place in providing different ways to understand the phenomenon and sharpen our analysis. However, we argue that this must be done thoroughly, through a careful literature review and in-depth engagement with the field and issues, including racism, across disciplines and methods and with real intent to advance knowledge.

## **Concluding reflections: Going forward**

This chapter is very much based on our own subjective practice and experience of our field and it may not match that of colleagues. However, we believe that our demands for a critical and scholarly approach to the field are hardly radical and in fact in line with much of the literature on methods in the field, and on reflective practice in particular. We believe that these have helped us throughout our careers, and while we are certainly not immune from traps, careful consideration of power relationships and the impact of our research has led us to weigh more carefully not only our methods and findings but also the way we go about doing research more generally. Therefore, we hope that academic researchers, monitoring groups and journalists will be motivated to reflect upon their practice, weigh the impact of their research and carefully engage with the dangers of mainstreaming, legitimizing and normalizing the far right. As such, the following considerations should be core to any prospective research in the field: Does our research take into account the historical, geographical and political context? Does it examine the far right and mainstream as contingent categories/phenomena, whose meaning, strategies and political positioning are fluid and adaptable to context and circumstances? Does our research promote or platform the far right, and if so, does it legitimize or mainstream racist discourses and parties rather than illuminate the situation and help combat these politics? And finally, does our research focus on individuals without dealing with issues, on racists without engaging with racism, and can this be at the expense of more structural, systemic analysis?

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