ANNUAL REVIEWS

Fascism and Populism: Are They Useful Categories for Comparative Sociological Analysis?

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Keywords

Abstract

Political developments in the United States and Europe have generated a
resurgence in the use of the terms fascism and populism across multiple me-
dia. Fascism is a historically specific term that Benito Mussolini coined in
Italy to define his regime. Over time, political analysts erased the histori-
cal specificity of fascism and deployed it as an analytic category. In contrast,
populism is an analytic category that, depending on context, includes vary-
ing aggregates of popular preferences that often lack a coherent and unifying
ideology. This review draws upon interdisciplinary scholarship and empiri-
cal cases to revisit the terms fascism and populism, focusing on institution-
alized politics. Contemporary fascist and populist politics are increasingly
global. This review argues that comparative political and historical sociol-
ogists need to develop an analytically cogent approach to researching this
encroaching political phenomenon. The review suggests a research agenda
that treats fascism and populism as more than conceptual categories.

THE FASCIST-POPULIST MOMENT

Discovery and Rediscovery

During the 1920s, the historian Benedetto Croce famously described Italian fascism as a parenthesis in his nation's history. The 22 years of the Italian fascist regime may represent a blip in the history of modern Italy, but it would be difficult to argue that it was a blip without consequence. The election of Donald Trump in the United States and the electoral success of right-wing parties in Europe suggest an inflection point that bears a family resemblance to Croce's parenthesis. At a minimum, the use of the terms fascism and populism has surged in traditional and social media as well as in academic writing. At a maximum, current events in the United States and abroad signal the erosion of democratic institutions and the attenuation of democratic practices pointing toward a new age of illiberalism and authoritarianism.

The Google Books Ngram Viewer (**Figure 1**) shows the percentages of books indexed by Google that mention fascism, capitalism, socialism, and populism from 1840 until 2008. Books mentioning fascism spiked in the interwar period and declined precipitously in the postwar period. In contrast, books that mention capitalism spiked in the 1930s, declined in the 1950s, and spiked again in the 1960s. Populism as a topic garnered little interest in any time period. A search of Google Trends (**Figure 2**) shows the relative interest in these topics from 2004 to 2018. Interest in fascism and populism spiked around 2016, corresponding to the US presidential election. Interest in socialism and capitalism both spiked during the 2008 financial crisis, and socialism spiked again around 2016.

The current political moment in the United States and abroad has generated a mini-industry in newly minted writers on fascism and populism. Many of these authors are academics; some are journalists. All write or have written on politics in the past. Their current writings display a breathlessness that suggests that these authors have discovered a new political phenomenon.
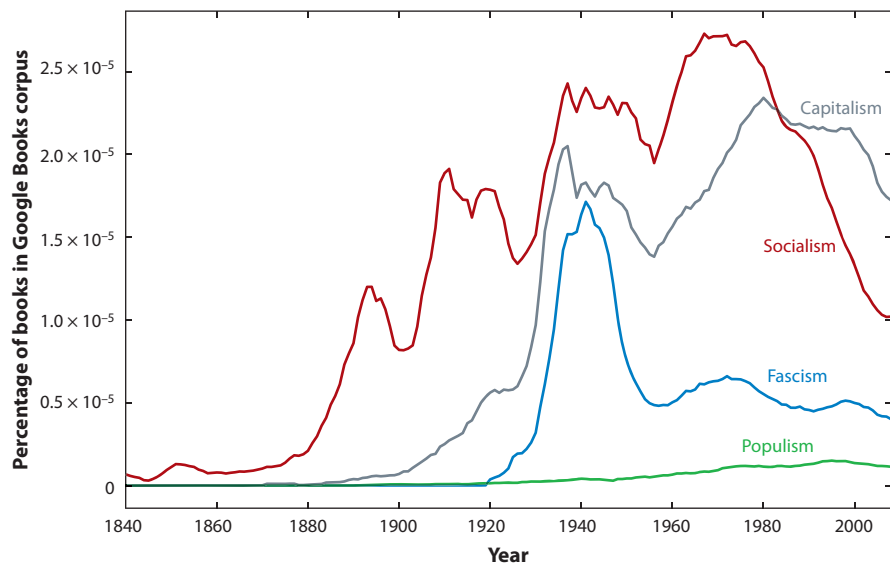

Figure 1

Books mentioning capitalism (*gray line*), socialism (*red line*), fascism (*blue line*), and populism (*green line*) from 1840 to 2008. Data from the past decade are unavailable. Data obtained from Google Books Ngram Viewer (**https://books.google.com/ngrams**); case-insensitive mentions of each term were used.
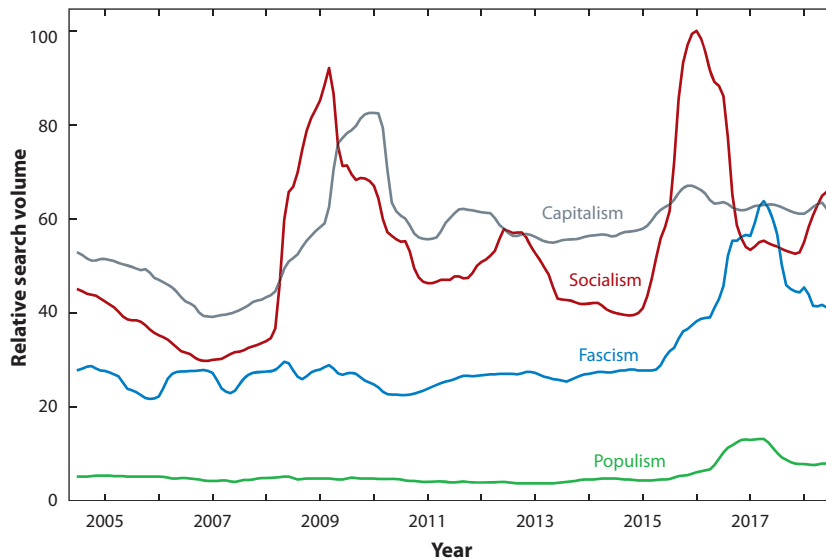
Figure 2

Google search volume for capitalism (*gray line*), socialism (*red line*), fascism (*blue line*), and populism (*green line*) from 2004 to 2018 in the United States. The vertical axis indicates relative volume of searches over the period, where the highest volume is 100, as Google does not release data on the raw number of searches. Monthly seasonality and residual components have been removed and they have been rescaled to highlight the overall trends. Data obtained from Google Trends (**https://trends.google.com/trends/**).

Notable members of this group include Madeline Albright (2018), who warns of the return of fascism based on her childhood experiences in central Europe. Fukuyama (2018) points to the revalorization of history and the salience of identity as constitutive of populist politics. Stanley (2018), a philosopher who studies political propaganda, shifts his gaze to how fascism is experienced. Mounk (2018), a political theorist with an expertise in welfare state policy, warns of how the people are endangering democracy. Connolly (2017) coins the term aspirational fascism. Galston (2018), a student of pluralism, has shifted to antipluralism as a threat to liberal democracy. Economic historian Eichengreen (2018) summarizes the economic dimension behind the surge of populist politics. In an early entry to this arena, Judis (2016), a progressive journalist, warns of a populist explosion.

These contributions have current salience and broad appeal even if they sometimes lack analytic and empirical rigor. Fascism and, to a lesser extent, populism (in the United States and Latin America) as political phenomena are not new. The contemporary political moment in the United States and Europe demands that we revisit the terms fascism and populism. This review selectively examines the voluminous literature on fascism and populism and asks what additive analytic power these terms might bring to political and comparative historical sociology.

The Problem of Nomenclature

In previous work (Berezin 2009), I identified the problem of nomenclature, by which I meant that definitions of populism often specified multiple dimensions, lacked parsimony, and were confounded by historical particularities that made concise concept formulation difficult. Fascism shares the same conceptual ambiguity as populism, with an important difference. In contrast to

populism, a term that political scientists have imposed on certain types of movements and regimes, fascism is a historically specific term that was first described by Benito Mussolini and his academic philosopher, Giovanni Gentile (1928). Over time, political analysts erased the historical specificity of the term and made fascism an analytic category.

In *Making the Fascist Self* (Berezin 1997), I conceptualize fascism based upon political characteristics of the Italian fascist state. My definition argues that fascism, in contrast to liberalism, which draws a sharp boundary between public and private spheres, demands a fusion of the two spheres in the fascist or corporate state. To think about fascism is to think about history. In contrast, populism is a purely analytic category. Populism defies definition because it typically represents a shifting aggregate of popular preferences without a clear ideology that unites them. In today's political milieu, populism operates as a residual category that unites disparate persons such as Donald Trump and Marine Le Pen.

Outline of the Review

This review is a clarification modeled on the seminal article by Schmitter & Karl (1991) that attempts to define what democracy is and is not. This article takes a similar approach to the terms fascism and populism and parses what they are and are not. Drawing upon a range of interdisciplinary scholarship, the review proceeds in three ways. First, it lays out various approaches to the term fascism over time. Second, it takes the same approach to populism, although the temporal trajectory is shorter. Third, it specifies how these terms might be useful to comparative political and historical sociology as well as discusses future research directions. This review focuses upon institutionalized forms of fascist and populist politics. It excludes the extremism and violence that are sometimes constitutive of fascist and populist politics, but which demand individual reviews of their own. The review draws a distinction between social movements, or extraparliamentary groups, and political parties and regimes. Extremist movements are often on the fringes of institutionalized politics and often remain there (see, for example, Klandermans & Mayer 2006). There are instances in which right-wing movements and political parties interact, but this process also requires a review of its own (Davidson & Berezin 2018). Rydgren (2018) surveys the multiple dimensions of radical-right politics. This review focuses on studies that draw upon European and US cases with some glances at Latin America because, with some exceptions (de la Torre 2018a,b; Roberts 2007), Europe and the United States have been the focus of much of the research. But contemporary populism is global in its reach. There will be new research on places as different as Brazil and India where authoritarian figures are in charge of the state.

FASCISM

Following Somers (1995), this section submits the term fascism to a "historical sociology of concept formation." It discusses the history of the term's usage and traces its evolution in the period after the fall of the fascist regimes in postwar Europe. The current electoral success of European right-wing populist parties that began in the early 1990s, coupled with a resurgence of neo-Nazi violence and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, has reawakened social science interest in fascism.

History

Fascism as a historical and political entity began in 1922 with Benito Mussolini's coming to power in Italy. Movements and parties in post–World War I Europe from the British Union of Fascists to the Romanian Iron Guard exhibit characteristics of fascism as a political style. Yet, it is important not to confuse style with substance.

Fascism is a historically specific term that developed into an analytic concept over time. Fascism could have simply remained a characteristic of a historically specific political formation, but the term developed a life of its own. Today, fascism serves as what Alexander (2003) describes as a bridging metaphor, that is, a term used independently of historical or definitional context to describe arbitrary violence or authoritarianism in political and, in some instances, social life. Aside from its occasional use as an epithet, particularly in the late 1960s, scholars viewed fascism as a term that drove events primarily during the interwar period in Europe. In the 1990s, the events of 1989 in Europe that generated research on transitions to democracy combined with the cultural turn in historical studies contributed to a revival of academic interest in historical fascism.

The history of the term fascism is essential to thinking through its analytic utility. Benito Mussolini, who ruled Italy from 1922 to 1943, coined the term to describe both the ideological underpinnings and the form of government that he was installing in interwar Italy (Gentile 1928). Fascism began to assert itself as ideology and political practice in the 1920s. Nazism quickly overtook fascism as an area of interest when Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933. Nonetheless, in addition to a series of journalistic books on Italy and European politics written at the time, an array of American and European intellectuals offered early assessments (Parsons 1942, Polanyi 1935, Pound 1936).

Since the 1930s, the confounding of Nazism and fascism has contributed to the difficulty in developing a cogent conceptualization of fascism. Attempts to theorize fascism have mined specific historical instances for generalities and yielded catalogs of characteristics (Payne 1995). Even a cursory reading of this scholarship suggests that it is difficult to generalize across cases. Historian Gilbert Allardyce's (1979) frequently cited analysis argues that fascism had no meaning outside of Italy and that it was neither an ideology nor a mental category. Comparing fascism to romanticism, he states that both terms mean virtually nothing. Allardyce (1979, p. 388) argues that "Placing [fascism] within historical boundaries at least provides a measure of control, restricting the proliferation of the word in all directions, past and present, and preventing it from distorting political rhetoric in our own time. Fascism must become a foreign word again, untranslatable outside a limited period in history." But fascism did not cease to be deployed in either the real world of political practice or the cloistered world of academic discourse (Eatwell 1994, Laqueur 1996, Levy 1999).

Fascism as an Analytic Category

Studies of fascism fall into two schools. The first tries to answer the "what" or definitional question. Scholars articulate this in a discussion of whether fascism is a generic concept or a national variation of historically specific political instances. For example, Griffin (1991) begins where earlier studies left off. He argues that the term fascism has undergone an "unacceptable loss of precision" and proposes a new ideal type of fascism based on the following definition: "Fascism is a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultranationalism" (Griffin 1991, p. 26). With the exception of Griffin, most scholars who approach the question of definition argue that it is impossible. For example, Payne (1980, pp. 4–5) argues for a "fascist minimum" while also stating that fascism is the "vaguest of political terms." Mosse (1979, p. 1) claims that "a general theory of fascism must be no more than a hypothesis which fits most of the facts."

The second approach bypasses definition and tries to establish the characteristics of regimes (Gleason 1995, Linz 2000) and constituencies. Seymour Martin Lipset's (1981) classic account of the class composition of fascist movements attributes fascism's success to the political disaffection of the middle classes. Juan Linz's (1976, pp. 12–13) approach to constituency formation starts

from the premise that an independent phenomenon of fascism existed that is "hypernationalist, often pan-nationalist, antiparliamentary, antiliberal, anticommunist, populist and…antiproletarian, partly anticapitalist and antibourgeois, [and] anticlerical…with the aim of national social integration through a single party and corporative representation not always equally emphasized."

Linz's definition rests on his assumption that fascism occupies a residual political field. As a latecomer to the political scene, fascism had to capture whatever political space, in the form of ideological doctrine and political constituencies, was available to it. His argument depends upon analyzing the social bases of fascism's political competitors (Linz 1980). Linz recognizes the importance of national case studies, and the characteristics that he outlines are applicable in various combinations to a broad range of fascist movements and regimes. In general, studies of institutions and constituencies display greater degrees of analytic precision than those that wrestle with definition.

A central weakness in much of the writing on fascism, past and present, is the failure to draw a sharp distinction between fascist movements and regimes, between fascism as ideology and fascism as state, and between political impulse and political institution. In general, analysts elide the question of culture and ideology or simply deal with it in a descriptive manner. The forces that enable a political movement to assume state power are different from, but connected to, the forces that define a new regime. During the 1920s and 1930s, virtually every country in Europe had a fascist movement or political movements that displayed the characteristics of the fascist impulse, but relatively few of these movements progressed to political regimes, that is, took control of the state (Merkl 1980). Culture and ideology figure differently at both stages. In the movement phase, they act as powerful mobilizing devices that frame the political beliefs of committed cadres of supporters. In the regime phase, they serve as conversion mechanisms to assure the consent of a broad public constituency.

Fascism: Stages of Interpretation

There are four identifiable stages in the career of fascism as a concept: (*a*) the post–World War II period, when the classic analyses were written, spanning roughly from 1950 to the early 1970s; (*b*) the social interpretations phase; (*c*) the cultural-institutional turn; and, most recently, (*d*) the return to political explanations.

Social interpretations of fascism began to reemerge in the 1980s (Baldwin 1990). Heirs to Lipset's mode of analysis, these studies were less deterministic and grounded in a nuanced notion of class and political action (Koshar 1990). De Grazia's (1981) study of the fascist leisure organization the *Dopolavoro* examines how fascism coopted the Italian working classes through the regime's colonization of its leisure time. De Grazia focuses upon how workers pursued political projects that, on the face of it, were against their interests instead of locating the charisma of fascism in the collective psychology of class groupings.

Social interpretations have occupied more historians of Nazi Germany than of fascist Italy. Two central and contrasting works in this genre are Browning's (1992) history of a German police battalion in Poland and Goldhagen's (1996) study of how ordinary Germans were not only complicit but actively engaged in the murder of the Jews. Browning provides a measured analysis of how ordinary citizens became involved in the Nazi genocide. Goldhagen argues that ordinary Germans became killers because they were inherently anti-Semitic and enjoyed hunting down their Jewish neighbors and engaging in acts of violence against them. Brustein (1996) argues that membership in the Nazi party was a rational and not an emotional decision. Career advancement demanded party membership, and German citizens who wanted to feed and clothe their families fell in line.

In the mid-1990s, the social approach to the study of fascism shaded into an approach that focused on political culture (Luzzatto 1999). Influenced by Mosse's (1991) seminal work on the nationalization of the masses in Germany, Gentile's (1998) study of the symbols of Italian fascism concludes that fascism was a form of political religion that sacralized politics. Fritzsche's (1990, 1998) twin studies of Weimar and Nazi Germany illustrate how the social interpretation flows into cultural analysis. Another thread of the cultural analysis is the focus upon how cultural institutions intersected with political regimes. Stone's (1998) study of fascist art patronage illustrates this approach. Berezin's (1997) study of public political events links the study of fascist ritual to comparative political analysis. Ben-Ghiat (2004) studies the effect of fascism on modernist literature and, more recently, the relationship between Italian colonialism and the visual culture of film (Ben-Ghiat 2015).

Beginning in 2000, there was a resurgence of interest in fascism within the social sciences. Linz's classic 1975 essay on totalitarian and authoritarian regimes was reissued as a monograph (Linz 2000). Paxton's (2004) book *The Anatomy of Fascism* begins where earlier generations of studies left off. Paxton sets himself the task of trying to define the parameters of fascism as a political phenomenon, and he astutely chooses the term anatomy to characterize his project. A focus upon political process and historical case studies characterizes the newest wave of studies of fascism. As his title, *Fascists*, suggests, Mann (2004) reinvigorates the class approach to fascism. Mann analyzes six cases of interwar European fascism and identifies the presence of paramilitarism combined with the usual array of antistatism and nationalist ideology as a distinguishing feature of fascism. Mann and Paxton conclude that fascism was an interwar European phenomenon that is not likely to repeat itself in its early twentieth century form.

Political scientist Nancy Bermeo's (2003) *Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times* is not exclusively a study of fascism, and it has the advantage of including Latin America in the analysis. Bermeo views transitions to and from democracy as a series of choices made by ordinary people as they try to get on with their lives. This book taps into the attraction of individuals to political groups who offer solutions to practical problems. The attraction is based on potential efficacy rather than any prior moral assessment of ideology—whether that ideology is democratic or not. Bermeo offers a first step in demarcating the experience of the varieties of popular political choice. Riley (2010) and Berman (1997) engage theories of social capital and explore neo-Tocquevillian theories of political association to analyze interwar right-wing politics. Riley compares Italy, Romania, and Spain on the level of party and political association, while Berman looks to the collapse of Weimar Germany. Both scholars find that the level and type of political association are correlated with the tendency toward antidemocratic or illiberal politics.

The current political climate will no doubt give rise to new studies of the historical fascist experience. Studies that focus on what it is like to live under conditions of nondemocratic governance as well as the attraction of the populace to these fascist ideas are already beginning to appear. So far, these studies focus on Nazi Germany (Sunstein 2018), with exceptions such as the study by Duggan (2013).

POPULISM

In contrast to fascism, populism is less connected to national histories, and attempts to conceptualize it tend toward the analytical. The use of the term has accelerated since the 2016 presidential election in the United States. Populism is used to describe diverse political entities such as the Brexit vote, Marine Le Pen, and other right nationalist politicians and political parties in Europe. In short, populism has become a bridging metaphor for political parties, politicians, and ideas that academics, journalists, and public intellectuals find unacceptable. Populism as a political phenomenon did not emerge overnight in Europe—or in the United States, for that matter. In three

parts, this section examines the prehistory of the current moment: first, classic ideas of the people; second, postwar iterations of populism; and lastly, current varieties of populist interpretations.

The People: Classic Approaches

In the current political moment, it is easy to forget that the idea of the people was a distinctly eighteenth-century ideal embedded in documents such as the US Constitution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man. A romantic view of the people coexisted alongside Enlightenment conceptions. Williams (1983) dates the popular concept of the people to sixteenth-century Anglo-Saxon political culture. From William Wordsworth to the continental writings of Jules Michelet (1973), the notion of the people dominated political and social thought in the nineteenth century. In Germany, the people were the *Volk*. In France, the people were a legal and emotional category. Original iterations of the people were compatible with ethnonationalism and constitutive social, cultural, and political exclusion. Smith (2015) argues that a progressive theory of peoplehood could serve as the basis of a fully realized form of inclusive political membership.

In a seminal article in political science, Canovan (1999) addresses populism from a historical and theoretical standpoint. She argues that populists tend to pit the people against elites who, they claim, are out of touch with ordinary people. While this part of Canovan's argument is not novel, her discussion of the process of contestation is. She argues that the people and elites enter into a political struggle to determine who has the better claim to represent the people and who has the more authentic voice. The contenders are technocratic politicians who rely on various forms of expertise versus politicians who are more in tune with the soul of the collective populace. Canovan's formulation anticipates many of the tropes found in populist politics in the United States and beyond. Canovan lists the appeal to the ordinary person in a unique, folksy political style; the tapping into a political mood—often anger; and lastly, the relationship between populism and democracy, which is important because it has dominated contemporary discussions of populism and evades the fact that populism can exist in left and right variants (Kazin 2017).

Canovan points out that democracy, in theory and practice, has a redemptive side and a pragmatic side. We think of the pragmatic side when we think of democratic politics—consensus, discussion, and voting. Scholars, as well as politicians, have done less well in articulating democracy's redemptive side—the passion or belief in the virtues and values of democracy and the voice and will of the people. Canovan argues that redemption or belief is an important part of political cohesion and collective obligation. In the postwar period, the pragmatic side developed at the expense of the redemptive side. Globalization has widened the fissure between the pragmatic and the redemptive. Right-wing populists have seized the political opening that this fissure presents. They deploy a well-articulated discourse of nationalism to own the redemptive side of politics.

Canovan's argument underscores a paradox. The democratic institutions (e.g., voting, parliaments), which are constitutive of democracy, are by their nature not publicly redemptive. Urbinati (1998) underscores the relationship between democratic institutions and populism. Using Europe as her case study, Urbinati argues that right-wing populist movements tend to emerge within democratic institutional frameworks as a protest against the system, whereas left-wing populist movements tend to emerge outside of democratic institutions as a plea for inclusion.

The Radical Right Before Populism

Many of the political phenomena that are labeled as expressions of populism today were formerly labeled radical-right parties (Rydgren 2007). In general, radical-right parties are considered marginal or inconsequential actors in national politics. Scholars, mostly political scientists,

who study these parties occupy a niche space. The dominant theme of these studies is supply and demand—supply describes available right-wing parties and demand indicates the socially marginal voter.

A closer look at this literature reveals that it has an institutional and cultural side that falls into six explanatory categories, some of which have resonance today (Berezin 2009, p. 41). Institutional categories include organizational strength, which explains why parties would do well locally but does little to explain national success and failure, and agenda setting, which constantly emerges as a theme and describes the pressure placed on center-right parties to move to the right. Analysts invoke agenda setting most frequently when they describe the tightening of immigration policies in various national venues. The central weakness of this analytic category is that it does not take into account the failure of mainstream parties to identify political and social problems and ignores popular perceptions of social reality. Labor market failure bears a relationship to globalization arguments (Kitschelt 1995, Berezin 2015). The problem with economic explanations is that they do not explain why classic left-wing, rather than right-wing, political movements have not captured this space. On the cultural side, the first issue is the *ressentiment* that has a relationship to labor market failure theories. Norris & Inglehart (2018) develop the cultural argument in a new monograph on cultural backlash that explores the current situation in Europe and the United States. Reviewing these prior explanatory theories has merit, since they have been somewhat overlooked as cadres of scholars rush to explain the so-called new populism.

Varieties of Reiteration

Until the recent wave of elections in Europe and the United States that began in 2016, Art's (2011) historical and conceptual analysis of European radical-right parties seemed to be the last monograph on the subject. However, recent political events have sparked a revival of interest in populism that takes three forms: (*a*) new efforts to define and conceptualize the phenomenon, (*b*) attempts to trace populism's historical roots, (*c*) and empirical work that focuses on a range of topics.

A question that analysts should ask of new theories of populism is to what extent they extend Canovan's initial conceptualization in useful ways. Within political science, the two leading figures on populism are Cas Mudde and the political theorist Jan-Werner Müller. Since their writings dominate the field, I turn to them first. Mudde has written multiple books and articles (Mudde 2004, 2007; Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017), including "The Populist Zeitgeist" (Mudde 2004) and a more recent piece on studying populism (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2018) that outline Mudde's core arguments. According to Mudde (2004, p. 562), populism is "an ideology that considers society to be separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups—the 'pure people' versus the 'corrupt elite.'" Populists argue that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people. Mudde's widely cited definition underscores the issue that populism can be a legitimate response if citizens/people do not feel represented. Mudde's early work was party-centric and definitional. In recent work, he tries to branch out and point to the necessity of linking studies of populism to other subdisciplinary areas, specifying economics, culture, responsibility, representation, and political polarization (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2018).

Müller (2016) takes a nuanced approach to populism and relates it explicitly to theories of democracy. Working within a liberal political tradition is what separates Müller's work from, for example, that of Ranciere (2016) and Laclau (2007). In *What Is Populism?*, Müller (2016) asks how one distinguishes populism from other political ideologies and how populism as a concept might account for all sorts of politics on the left and right in Europe and beyond. Müller makes the point that populism generally displays three characteristics: (*a*) It is antielite, (*b*) it tends to be

antipluralist, (*c*) and it may also be conceived of as a form of identity politics. Yet, these characteristics can emerge in other forms of politics. What sets Müller's argument apart is his theory that populism represents a degradation of democracy because it emerges within democracy's deepest mandate—popular sovereignty. Müller sees populism as representing a "moralistic imagination in politics" because it identifies a small cadre of potential leaders capable of representing the true people, whoever they are. In this sense, populism creates a crisis of representative democracy because, by definition, it is exclusionary. For politics, the question remains as to who is likely to be attracted to populism and how populism attracts a broad constituency that does not have a necessary core.

Müller (2016, p. 23) deploys the term producerism to identify people who are more colloquially described as hardworking—but this is a more profound observation than Müller gives himself credit for. Producers are those who make things that people can see—a car versus a derivative. Producerism was a theme in the 1930s when fascists and would-be fascists in the United States and Europe pointed to parasite purveyors of finance capital—individuals who would be referred to as global elites today. The emphasis upon those who make and those who push ideas around speaks to the anti–European Union bias in European populism and the protectionist bias that has made Trump's anti–free trade positions so resonant. While in the realm of political theory, Müller's elucidation suggests a direction where comparative sociological analysis could contribute.

Sociologists have begun to contribute to the discussion of populism. In contrast to political theorists, who often seek to define, sociologists view populism as a particular type of political action. Robert Jansen (2011, 2017) has done extensive research on populism in Latin America, which led him to develop a theory of populism. The core of Jansen's argument is that populism is a modular form of political practice that occurs most frequently in times of political mobilization caused by other reasons. Jansen (2011, p. 82) frames populism as a project that is "a sustained, large-scale political project that mobilizes ordinarily marginalized social sectors into publicly visible and contentious political action, while articulating an antielite, nationalist rhetoric that valorizes ordinary people."

Jansen's theory explains the Latin American cases that he studies where there is a constant struggle around democracy and redemocratization. Yet, his theory has the advantage of lending dynamism to the idea of populism. Jansen's work speaks to Bonikowski's (2016) work on nationalism as well as his work on populism in the United States. Using data from US presidential campaigns, Bonikowski & Gidron (2016) show that populism operates as a rhetorical repertoire that is mobilized in different combinations of themes depending upon the issues at hand. In a similar vein, Moffitt (2016) develops the notion of populist performance in an analysis of the mobilization styles of 28 populist leaders. Recently, Bonikowski and colleagues (2019) have entered into a full-scale exchange on the merits of distinguishing between nationalism and populism.

Brubaker (2017a,b) develops a comparative historical and conceptual argument as his entry into the sociological discussion of populism. His historical argument is that contemporary populism has shifted its discourse from the nation to the civilization (Brubaker 2017b). Focusing upon the integration of Islam into European societies, he argues that religion (i.e., Christianity) has succeeded the nation as the core of European political identities. As evidence, Brubaker points to the fact that European populist parties rely heavily on civilizational threat claims. In a conceptual argument, Brubaker (2017a) lays out a series of contrasts. Arguing that populism must be approached seriously so as not to run the risk of slipping into a so-called garbage can theory, he attempts to add coherence to what often appears as a bricolage of discontents. Drawing upon the concept of a repertoire, Brubaker argues that multiple discourses and styles combine in different ways within certain structural conjunctures. The mixture of styles and discourses creates a family resemblance rather than a particular conceptual type. Key to Brubaker's argument are the horizontal and

vertical dimensions; the vertical dimension is the people versus the elites, and the horizontal dimension includes the boundaries that the people draw against others—in the European case, immigrants.

In general, the sociological contribution attempts to introduce a dynamic quality to the study of populism and avoid the danger of reification that some of the theoretically oriented arguments do not. The question remains as to whether ideological exegesis is useful for understanding social and political outcomes that move in a populist direction.

A Historical Approach

Federico Finchelstein offers a compelling historical analysis of the relationship between fascism and populism (Finchelstein 2017, Finchelstein & Urbinati 2018). Finchelstein is a seasoned historian of Latin America and Mediterranean Europe, and he makes the case that scholars need to return fascism and populism to history. Finchelstein is not the only one who has melded fascism, populism, and history (e.g., Camus & Lebourg 2017, Mammone 2015). What distinguishes Finchelstein's analysis from others is his attempt to link fascism to populism both conceptually and empirically; he also insists on a global dimension. Finchelstein argues that continuity exists between 1930s' fascism and contemporary populism. He argues that what we label as fascism (and he appears to include Nazism) is a type of ideology that only emerges after a certain stage of political development, and he misses the role that underdeveloped nationalism plays in fascism. Yet, Finchelstein's general point is that in the postwar period, when the reconstitution of democracy in Europe was the principle political goal, fascism and fascist regimes became less likely.

Finchelstein (2017, p. 12) declares,

> Fascism and populism are different chapters in the same transnational history of illiberal resistance to modern constitutional democracy…. Fascist regimes were part of the past, but populist regimes thrived after the defeat of fascism. While there are important links between fascism and populism, one historical experience cannot be subsumed under another.

Beginning in the early twentieth century and moving to the present day, Finchelstein meticulously documents the mutating trajectories of fascism and populism within Europe and Latin America. He makes the point that fascism came out of democracy and was a reaction to it. In contrast, populist impulses have appeared in multiple governments and political movements going back to the nineteenth century. What unites fascism and populism is the triad of people, leader, and nation, which translates into a social community of the nation. The Latin American case is instructive for distinguishing between fascism and populism. In Latin America, populism is an expression of the role of the people in the state rather than the creation of a state (which fascism would do). We have fascist regimes; we do not have populist regimes.

The contemporary fascist-populist moment has generated a range of empirical studies, and many more are in the works. Scholars are writing new histories and ethnographies of historical and contemporary right-wing politics. The European context provides numerous examples. Miller-Idriss (2018) writes about the marketing of extremism through clothing design; Geva (2018) produces an ethnography of women and their attraction to the French National Front; Molnar (2016) writes about mythic nationalism in Hungary. Blee & Creasap's (2010) study suggests that the United States has not escaped the attention of the scholars of the right. Recent work supports this observation, and notable examples include Skocpol & Williamson's (2016) study of the Tea Party, Hochschild's (2016) study of white working-class resentment in Louisiana, Cramer's (2016) study of voting patterns in Wisconsin, and Gest's (2016) comparison of the British and US white working class.

CHANGING THE TERMS: A PATH FORWARD FOR COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS?

Fascism and populism have become ubiquitous terms in academic and media writing on politics. This resurgence of interest is arguably a response to a nondemocratic or illiberal turn in the United States and Europe—although the reach of illiberal politics is global. The October 2018 presidential election in Brazil and the right-wing government in India are two non-Eurocentric examples of global reach.

The events to which scholars and public intellectuals are responding signal a new era in national and global political development. The challenges fueling political change are well known but worth enumerating: the massive restructuring of economic life around global rather than national and local markets, the vast displacement of peoples creating refugee crises, and the revival of global fundamentalist beliefs. Existing social and political arrangements appear obsolete or inadequate in the face of these challenges. For this reason, it is important for comparative sociologists to enter the discussion around fascism and populism (Berezin 2017). However, comparative sociologists should approach this discussion unencumbered by conceptual frameworks that were not useful in the past. The theme of this review's last section is changing the terms of the academic discussion of populism and fascism as well as identifying what the contributions of comparative political, economic, and cultural sociology might be.

In an influential monograph, Hall & Soskice (2001) identify varieties of capitalism, by which they mean that capitalism is not one thing but an amalgam of processes and practices that occur in different configurations in different historical periods and geographical spaces. The same could be said of fascism and populism. Variety underlies the Brubaker (2017b) and Jansen (2011) conceptualizations; incorporating multiplicity is a conceptual advance, yet it does not escape many of the weaknesses of the purely definitional approach (e.g., Mudde 2004). Definition assumes that populism, and to some extent fascism, is a noun—and sometimes a verb. This semantic maneuver does not evade the process of naming that often leads in the direction of, to borrow from Payne (1980), a fascist minimum or, in contemporary parlance, a populist minimum.

This review takes the position that fascism is best conceived of as a historical event, whereas populism is an analytic category. Yet, as noted in the opening paragraphs, populism typically represents a shifting aggregate of popular preferences without a clear ideology that unites them. What this means for comparative sociologists is that we need new ways to approach fascism and populism, as they clearly represent real political phenomena. This review argues that it is more analytically useful to think of fascism and populism as adjectives rather than as nouns or verbs. This grammatical shift points in a methodological direction, asking social analysts to pay attention to the institutional context in which configurations of qualities typically associated with fascism or populism arise in different historical moments. This means that analysts need to pay attention to the strength of democratic institutions and practices in a given historical moment. Fascism as a concept is more temporally bound than populism, as there is wide agreement that fascism is a 1930s phenomenon. In the 1930s, fascism arose in the context of weak or developing democratic institutions. In the instances where scholars talk of fascistic practices and processes today—Hungary, Poland, and Turkey—one can argue that democracy is relatively new, a residual from communism after the democratic transitions of the 1990s. Historical particularity makes it difficult to talk of a return to the 1930s (Funke et al. 2018).

Turning to populism, the common definitional trope of people versus elites lacks precision, as it could also describe the French Revolution (Berman 2019). National versus global is also a relatively meaningless descriptor, as democracies were forged in national spaces, and there is no reason to assume that global spaces would be intrinsically more democratic than national or even

local ones. What the current populist moment is signaling is not necessarily a weakness in democracy or its institutions—would anyone label Sweden, where a right nationalist party in September 2018 came in third place in a parliamentary election, a weak democracy?—but a moment where there is an evident disjuncture between democratic procedures and what political theorists think of as democratic sentiments or values. For this reason, Canovan's (1999) distinction between the redemptive and pragmatic dimensions of democracy is especially salient and analytically useful. But changing the terms is not enough. We should view the terms fascism and populism as heuristic devices that are good to think with and clarify our expectations of what we think a viable and inclusive democracy would be. This is a normative injunction that suggests particular analytic paths.

This review concludes with four distinct research areas that would enable sociologists across a range of subfields to move the study of fascism and populism forward in analytic and pragmatic (i.e., policy-oriented) ways.

The first research area is the strength and character of democratic institutions. This type of analysis would necessarily be comparative and historical, depending upon the question. If we were talking about fascism, it would be necessary to go back to the 1930s and try to identify where the past might repeat. It certainly would not be linear, because nation-states of all stripes have moved beyond the social, political, and economic arrangements as well as technological capacities of that period. In short, a world with new political actors requires that we look for analogies, not necessarily direct contrasts. The historian Harold James (2016) argues that the nineteenth century might be a better inflection point to understand our present moment. Political scientists have begun work on political institutions and democracy, past and present (Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018). Comparative historical sociologists might join this group.

The second area includes economic arrangements and their cultural meanings. It is simply not enough to talk about the winners and losers of globalization. It is important to examine what that precisely means in terms of life outcomes and how such outcomes effect political dispositions and choices (Holmes 2000), and scholars have made moves in this direction (Bonikowski 2017, Gidron & Hall 2017, Hochschild 2016). As economic and cultural sociologists have already shown, economics is not simply a question of redistribution but also a question of changing lifestyles and the degradation of community. In the European context, research would entail a more serious look at the inclusion and incorporation of immigrants and what incorporation might mean for xenophobic reactions against them.

The third issue is the institutional renewal of democratic civil space. Analysts need to parse the meaning of civic space in a pragmatic way (Alexander 2006). In practical terms, the development of education systems where civic virtue has been taught during the modern period (Durkheim 2013) would be an important component of this research. A historical look at the development of civic incorporation that is not politicized would also enable political and cultural sociologists to rethink the meaning of ethnicity in plural societies as well as the concept of nationalism.

Lastly, social analysts need to look more closely at the groups that are attracted to populism and the forces that drive them. Despite much talk of the people in discussions of populism, they often figure in current research only as demographics. Studies of populism (and even fascism) tend to look at the people as moral failures. Social scientists have tended to follow Marx's famous metaphor from the *Eighteenth Brumaire* that peasants are nothing more than sacks of potatoes, but even potatoes need a sack if they are not to spill all over the ground. Lamont et al. (2016) point to the importance of respect in understanding the behavior of social groups. Eatwell & Goodwin (2018) marshal an array of economic, electoral, and demographic data to make the case that contemporary European populism is a result of longstanding social and cultural dealignments as well as feelings, if not realities, of deprivation on the part of voters. Their conclusion is that

populism will not be a temporary phenomenon unless ruling elites institute meaningful changes that do not disregard the needs of groups attracted to populism. In short, social science needs to engage analytically with the moral responsibility of governance and social arrangements.

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