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# Do Poor Citizens Vote for Redistribution, Against Immigration or Against the Establishment? A Conjoint Experiment in Denmark

Paul Marx\* and Gijs Schumacher† 

What is the link between socioeconomic disadvantage and vote choice? The literature on this question is fragmented and points to motivations based on welfare policy, immigration policy or anti-establishment sentiments. To test which of these motives explains differences in voting behaviour between classes, a conjoint experiment in which fictitious candidates present randomly assigned positions was designed. The experiment evaluated the relative importance of the position on welfare, immigration and anti-establishment as well as candidates' occupational background. By splitting the analyses into lower, middle- and upper class voters, it was found that lower class voters are most distinct from other voters in their preferences for anti-establishment candidates. Strikingly, lower class voters even support welfare retrenchment, as long as it is an anti-establishment candidate proposing it. The experiment also found a general tendency to vote against career politicians across classes and remarkably few differences regarding immigration preferences.

## Introduction

The years following the Great Recession of the late 2000s have witnessed growing interest in how personal economic difficulties affect political behaviour (Werts et al. 2013; Golder 2016; Gomez et al. 2016; Grasso & Giugni 2016; Hochschild 2016; Evans 2017; Rooduijn & Burgooon 2017). However, there is an unfortunate fragmentation in this literature. On the one hand, political economists study the link between socioeconomic disadvantage and preferences for redistribution. These contributions argue that the disadvantaged primarily engage in politics with the motive to support the welfare state (Cusack et al. 2006; Rehm 2009; Iversen & Soskice 2015; Walter 2017). But it has also been emphasized that, particularly in times of

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growing inequality, the poor do not feel represented by mainstream political parties and develop negative attitudes towards the political establishment. Rather than supporting the left, economically disadvantaged citizens in this view are motivated to express their dissatisfaction and anger by voting for radical parties (Arzheimer 2009; Lindvall & Rueda 2014; Emmenegger et al. 2015).

Adding further complexity, some contributions suggest anti-immigration attitudes as a third motive linking socioeconomic disadvantage and vote choice. For instance, poor citizens perceive themselves to be in competition with immigrants for jobs, social benefits and other scarce resources (Kriesi 1999; Scheve & Slaughter 2016; Fennema 2005; Rydgren 2008; Rydgren & Ruth 2011). Poverty and other social problems then might trigger anti-migration preferences that translate into support for the radical right (Golder 2003).

Hence, theoretically, socioeconomic disadvantage, such as poverty, unemployment or insecurity, is linked to vote choice through (at least) three distinct motives: to support redistribution; to express dissatisfaction with political elites; and to limit immigration. While the first motive dictates voting for pro-welfare parties, the second dictates voting for populist parties (or abstaining) and the third dictates voting for the subset of populist parties that combines anti-elite and anti-immigration messages. A problem in the existing literature is that these theoretical perspectives usually do not speak to each other so we know little about their relative explanatory power.

Against this background, the goal of this contribution is to find out whether and how poor citizens differ from the rest of the electorate in the determinants of their political preferences. In particular, we ask which of the theoretically identified motives explains best differences in candidate choices between poor and non-poor citizens.

In observational data, the different motives are difficult to disentangle. There are four reasons for this. First, the motives can have overlapping behavioral implications. The anti-immigration and the expressive motive could both underlie support for the populist radical right. The redistribution motive and the expressive motive could both underlie support for the populist radical left. All three motives could underlie support for a welfare chauvinist party. Second, in real elections citizens face limited choices regarding the combination of policies that parties offer. Third, cognitive dissonance reduction mechanisms may motivate survey respondents to claim that they agree with their party of choice on all policies. Fourth, many poor citizens do not vote at all (Solt 2008; Erikson 2015), which makes it difficult to analyse the influence of the discussed motives. For these reasons, we use a conjoint experiment to compare the causal influence of competing determinants of party choice in a fictitious election.

We conduct the experiment in Denmark. Like many other European countries, Denmark has witnessed economic problems since the onset of the Great Recession and strong anti-immigrant sentiment in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Also, the 2015 elections saw an increase in popularity of left-wing and right-wing populists, and a further splintering of the party system.

## Poverty and Political Preferences

We generally expect voters with low and medium-to-high income to choose different parties or candidates, but what are the underlying reasons for these differences? The literature suggests at least three motives that can explain why poor citizens vote differently – the *redistribution motive*, the *expressive motive* and the *anti-immigration motive*. We briefly discuss these motives below without the ambition of providing complete accounts of the relevant literatures.

### *Redistribution Motive*

The more the state intervenes in the free market to redistribute from high to low incomes, the better off are poor citizens. It is therefore economically instrumental for poor voters to support pro-redistribution parties, while the opposite is true for rich voters (although some better-off citizens might support welfare states out of a social insurance motive, as argued by Moene & Wallerstein 2016). The redistribution motive underlies classical accounts of class politics (Korpi 1983; Evans 2017) as well as most political economy theories of political behavior (Cusack et al. 2006; Rehm 2009; Iversen & Soskice 2015; Walter 2017). Although it is often argued that values and social identity trump economic self-interest (e.g., Marx & Schumacher 2016), recent evidence based on panel data shows that the experience of economic hardship does increase support for redistribution (Margalit 2013; Owens & Pedulla 2013; Naumann et al. 2016).

### *Expressive Motive*

There is growing evidence that voters with low incomes, weak labour market attachment and other social problems are poorly represented in politics (Rueda 2007; Hacker & Pierson 2010; Rosset et al. 2013; Erikson 2015). As a consequence of politicians' unresponsiveness, voters with low socio-economic status might become alienated from politics and develop negative attitudes, such as low external efficacy or cynicism (Lindvall & Rueda 2014; Emmenegger et al. 2015). This view is supported by accounts that see economically disadvantaged voters as 'outsiders' or a new 'precariat'. The latter group is described, for instance, by Standing (2011, 24) as 'alienated,

anomic, anxious and prone to anger' and '[t]he warning sign is political disengagement'. King and Rueda (2008, 293; emphasis in original) worry about a '*political alienation problem* posed by the expansion of nonstandard cheap labor'. Another option for these voters is to support parties that play into these feelings of resentment against the political elite (Werts et al. 2013; Ramiro 2016; Rooduijn & Akkerman 2017). This is what defines populist parties. Populism – a combination of anti-establishment appeals and claims that the people's interests should be more central in decision making (Mudde 2004) – is a strategy that has been successfully applied in many different European polities (and, more recently, in the United States). Economic hardship is associated with its success: research on political trust has shown that dissatisfaction with political elites (or democracy in general) is stronger among citizens exposed to socioeconomic disadvantage (Catterberg & Moreno 2005; Norris 2011; Polavieja 2013; Torcal 2014). It has to be added, however, that frustration with elites among the lower classes extends beyond socioeconomic issues and often includes cultural aspects as well (Kitschelt 1994; Cramer 2016; Hochschild 2016).

If economic strain leads to resentment of political elites, we would not expect poor voters to unambiguously support the political left. One possibility, of course, is that they will simply abstain. Another possibility is that they choose parties that express their frustration with the political and economic elite of their country (or the European Union, for that matter). This choice for anti-establishment parties (on the right or the left) arguably may be driven to a large extent by emotions (anger) or even personality (Bakker et al. 2016). But instrumental calculations could also play a role if poor voters consciously cast a 'protest' vote to signal mainstream parties that they reject their policies (Kselman & Niou 2011).

### *Anti-immigration Motive*

The ethnic competition hypothesis (Scheve & Slaughter 2016) predicts that native citizens will be particularly opposed to immigration if they have reason to expect that it will lead to tougher competition for jobs. It is also often mentioned that citizens who rely on the welfare state might worry that immigration will overburden social policies. In this view, low-income voters can be expected to oppose immigration and to support radical right-wing parties more than better-off citizens because of their economic standing (Lubbers et al. 2002). However, it is often objected that cultural determinants are more important than economic ones to predict support for the radical right (Oesch 2008; Hainmueller & Hopkins 2014). If immigration is rejected for cultural reasons, class could still matter. Lacking material resources should generally make it harder for the lower classes to cope with a situation in which immigration is perceived as a cultural

threat – for instance, by moving into another neighbourhood (Rydgren 2013). Moreover, cultural views of immigration are strongly related to educational attainment. Poor citizens, on average, have lower education and their political discourses probably often take place in milieus, workplaces and neighbourhoods in which university graduates are under-represented. If this is true, poor voters could also, for cultural reasons, be predisposed to support the right (Hainmueller & Hiscox 2007).<sup>1</sup>

In sum, the literature on the political behaviour implications of socio-economic disadvantage consists of three separate strands that all emphasize different motives but usually do not speak to each other. As a consequence, there is little empirical knowledge about the relative explanatory power of the different predictions (Emmenegger et al. 2015). Therefore, the two questions we address in the remainder of the article are: Do poor voters really differ with regard to the three motives from citizens with higher income? And which of the three motives is the most important determinant of voting among the poor?

## Study Design

To fill the lacuna in the existing literature on the voting behaviour of the poor, we conduct an experiment in which participants choose between two political candidates. The analytical challenge in disentangling the factors that motivate political choices is multidimensionality. In reality, parties and candidates differ on a number of dimensions, which makes it difficult to isolate specific factors. In an experimental setting, we can deal with multidimensionality by making the different dimension orthogonal to each other through randomization. A suitable tool for this is conjoint experiments, which have recently become popular in political science (Bechtel & Scheve 2013; Hainmueller et al. 2014; Gallego & Marx 2017).

Conjoint experiments can be embedded in surveys. Respondents are asked to make a choice between two alternatives and their choice is the dependent variable (see Figure A1 in the Online Appendix for a screenshot of the experiment). What makes this setup useful for causal inference is that the choice is based on descriptions consisting of randomly assigned elements. More precisely, researchers choose several dimensions on which the alternatives are characterized. On each dimension, the alternatives (candidates in our example) are described by different attributes, which we vary randomly. The multidimensional treatment allows comparing the influence of different attributes on candidate choice on a common scale. To this end, the choice variable simply has to be regressed on a set of dummy variables taking the value of 1 if the attribute was included in the description of a candidate.

We conduct the experiment in Denmark, a country that has recently experienced intense debates about the welfare state and immigration policies. Moreover, both left-wing and right-wing populists play a role in the Danish party system. Hence, all of our theoretical dimensions have real-world relevance in the Danish case. Closely following this general conjoint design described above, we asked respondents the following question:

Imagine there is an upcoming election. You need to make a choice between two MPs. The two MPs have the following political views and background characteristics. Please make a choice between these two MPs.

The reason why we focus on anonymous candidates rather than parties is that we want to extract as much as possible from the real Danish party system to avoid respondents simply trying to act in accordance with previous voting behaviour (cognitive dissonance reduction).<sup>2</sup> One possible objection to our design is that candidate comparisons are not very salient in the Danish electoral system, which could make our experiment less realistic and externally valid. However, Denmark has an open-list proportional representation system in which candidate choices do matter. In any case, we believe the choice we ask respondents to make is fairly intuitive and hence a way to tap meaningful preferences.

Again, a major advantage of the conjoint design is that we can explicitly model multidimensionality and thereby allow a comparative assessment of motives. Based on our literature review, we let our candidates differ (randomly) on four dimensions that could make them more or less attractive to poor voters: position on welfare; orientation to mainstream politics; position on immigration; and occupational background. We do not impose any restrictions on how the attributes on these dimensions are combined. A summary of all dimensions and statements is provided in Table 1.

### *Position on Welfare*

Based on the (economically instrumental) redistribution motive, we expect the poor to favor candidates with a pro-welfare position. To measure this we randomly expose participants to four possible statements, ranging from welfare expansion to welfare cutbacks. To make the statements realistic and to avoid inflated support for the welfare state, we mention trade-offs in the form of budget deficits. In principle, we should also add the possibility of raising taxes as another form of this trade-off, but we omit this aspect because it is not at the centre of our study and because additional attributes reduce statistical power.

Table 1. Dimensions and Attributes of the Conjoint Experiment

Dimensions	Attributes
Position on welfare	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Wants to expand welfare benefits even if this leads to a budget deficit.</li> <li>2. Wants to sustain the current level of welfare benefits even if this leads to a budget deficit.</li> <li>3. Prioritizes balancing the budget even though this may lead to cuts in welfare programs.</li> <li>4. Wants to substantially cut welfare benefits to achieve a balanced budget.</li> </ol>
Orientation to mainstream	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supports the current government.</li> <li>2. Opposes the current government.</li> <li>3. Believes that politicians are a corrupt elite that does not listen to ordinary people.</li> </ol>
Position on immigration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. States that Denmark should accept more immigrants from countries with humanitarian crises.</li> <li>2. States that Denmark should accept more immigrants, because immigration has economic and cultural benefits.</li> <li>3. States that Denmark should accept less immigrants because they are too much of a pressure on our welfare state.</li> <li>4. States that Denmark should accept no more immigrants because these people do not belong here.</li> </ol>
Occupation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Has been in politics for entire career.</li> <li>2. Has been a social worker before entering politics.</li> <li>3. Has worked in the banking sector before entering politics.</li> <li>4. Has been a civil servant before entering politics.</li> <li>5. Has been a construction worker before entering politics.</li> </ol>

### *Orientation to Mainstream Politics*

This dimension captures the motive to express discontent with political actors. We let candidates vary between supporters of the current government and opponents of the current government. This distinction is interesting in itself because some contributions have argued that economically disadvantaged voters are more likely to vote against the incumbent (Mutz & Mondak 1997; Marx 2016). However, the two conditions also serve as a baseline for the third statement that indicates clear populist resentment of the mainstream by speaking of a ‘corrupt elite that does not listen to ordinary people’. Hence, we expect that poor voters are more likely to choose opponents (rather than supporters) of the current government and that they are more likely to choose populist than the first two options.



### *Position on Immigration*

With this dimension, we want to find out whether migration preferences influence vote choice of the poor. But we also want to find out whether they do so for economic rather than cultural reasons. We therefore randomly expose participants to one of four statements. The first two statements are favourable to immigrants: more immigrants should be accepted (1) especially if they are caught up in humanitarian crises or (2) because they benefit Danish society and economy. Given that poor voters are more exposed to economic fluctuation, they might be more easily convinced if economic benefits of migration are referred to. The other two statements are critical of migration. One points to an overburdened welfare state as an economic reason, and the other argues that immigrants do not belong here. Theoretically, poor voters should be particularly susceptible to the economic argument because they have a strong interest in a functioning welfare state.

### *Occupational Background*

Whereas the first three dimensions directly tap the theoretically relevant motives, we also want to assess whether more subtle characteristics of candidates affect poor workers differently. So far, we have implicitly prioritized a model in which (the lack of) representation of poor citizens' interests is a key determinant of vote choice. However, it could also be that 'descriptive representation' is important for lower classes. This would mean that it is not (only) the policy position, but also similarity in socio-demographic background that motivates voters to support candidates (Huddy & Terkildsen 1993; Cutler 2002). As Heath (2015, 177) puts it: 'To a working-class voter, it may ... be more credible when a politician from a strong working-class background says that he or she will stand up for the underprivileged than when a multimillionaire member of the aristocracy says the same thing.'

We therefore include the occupational background of candidates as an additional dimension. Occupation is of course a direct class marker, but it also relates to some of the motives we study in this article. Candidates' occupation could trigger inferences about their orientation to the mainstream. A career politician is arguably more easily associated with an unresponsive elite, whereas blue-collar workers tend to be trusted to sing in tune with the *vox populi*. In addition to these two groups, we also include social workers and bankers as professional backgrounds. Particularly after the Great Recessions, bankers are often portrayed as a detached and cynical elite whose greed deprives society of important resources. Social workers, on the other hand, represent the welfare state as well as multiculturalism (after all,

many social workers deal with immigrants or problems that are over-represented among immigrants).

Hence, occupational background is not totally independent of our other dimensions. Theoretically, it might merely provide a shortcut voters use to make inferences about probable policy positions (Cutler 2002). Nonetheless, including occupation has the advantage that we can contribute to the debate about whether substantive or descriptive representation is more relevant for disadvantaged voters (Heath 2015; Evans 2017). In addition, the congruence of occupation with the findings for the other dimensions serves as a plausibility probe, in the sense that voters should choose a candidate with an occupation that makes substantive representation of their key interests more credible. If poor voters prioritize redistribution, they should also prefer blue-collar workers and particularly social workers, who are traditional supporters of the welfare state, as representatives. If they prioritize the expressive motive, they should prefer blue-collar workers as representatives of the ‘little guy on Main Street’. If they prioritize anti-immigration positions, they should avoid social workers. And in no case should poor voters show stronger support for bankers or career politicians.

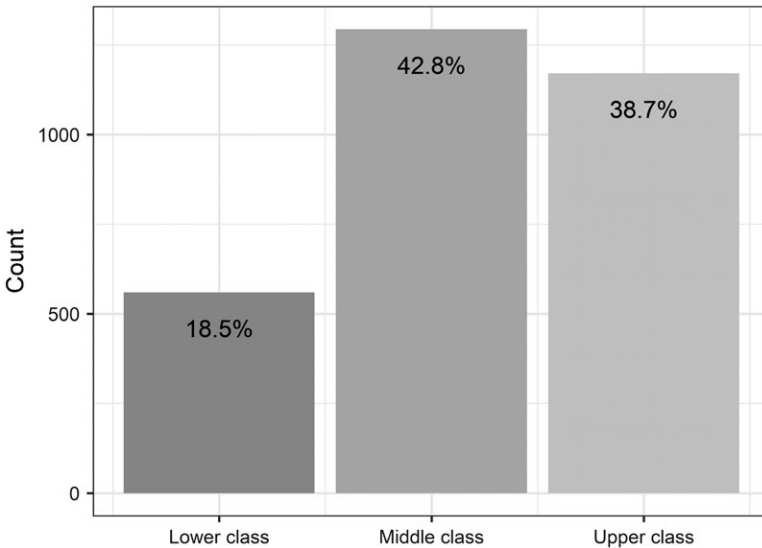
Our experiment is embedded in an online survey that is representative of the Danish working-age population. The survey was fielded in the end of 2015. Denmark had an election that summer in which the Social Democrats (a left-wing party) became the largest party and the Danish People’s Party (a populist anti-immigrant party) the second largest. Somewhat unusual, the third largest party – the Liberal Party (a right-wing party) – formed a government, supported in parliament by the Danish People’s Party. A total of 3,025 respondents participated in our survey. Because each respondent made a choice between two candidates in four rounds, we obtain 24,200 choices. The dataset is organized in a long format so that the unit of analysis is the respondent candidate evaluation. In the analyses, we cluster standard errors by respondents to reflect that the evaluations are not independent. Moreover, we include round fixed effect to account for the fact that respondents might choose differently in later rounds (e.g., because of fatigue). The treatment takes the form of a table in which dimensions are organized in rows and the two candidates in columns (see Table 1 for treatments, and an example in the Online Appendix). Importantly, we randomized the order of the rows in which the dimension labels are presented across respondents. We did not change the order of rows across rounds within respondents, however, to avoid confusion. Hence, the relative impact of dimensions on candidate choice cannot be a function of the order in which they appear in the treatment table.

Our dependent variable is binary and takes the value of 1 if a candidate is chosen, and 0 if a candidate is not chosen. Following the recommendations in the literature, we estimate linear probability models (Hainmueller et al. 2014). We are particularly interested in how the predictive power of

the dimensions differs between respondents with and without socioeconomic disadvantage. Again following the literature, we do so by estimating our models split along class lines rather than introducing a multiplicative interaction term (Figure 1).<sup>3</sup> The crucial question is how to operationalize socioeconomic disadvantage. The political science literature has provided a plethora of possible answers. Disadvantage can be operationalized, for instance, based on current labour market status (Lindvall & Rueda 2014), occupational risk patterns (Cusack et al. 2006), objective or subjective income (Lawless & Fox 2001; Solt 2008), perceived insecurity (Anderson & Pontusson 2007) or cumulative indicators (Emmenegger et al. 2015).

In this article, we focus on subjective class location. Having a low/high income arguably is the most straightforward summary measure of being economically dis-/advantaged. At least to some extent, we would expect income to be correlated with other aspects of socioeconomic disadvantage, such as labour market risk (Gallie et al. 2003; Rehm et al. 2012). However, it can be argued that simply relying on income is too reductive. Reporting income is also associated with some problems: some people do not know what to count as income and therefore misreport it and other people refuse to report their income in surveys. Indeed, approximately 20 percent of the people in our survey refused to report income. For these reasons we take subjective class location instead as our variable to operationalize class. We

Figure 1. Distribution of Subjective Class Location (Reduced to Three Categories).



*Note:* Bars display percentage and count of respondent in each of the three subjective class categories.

asked respondents to place themselves on a scale from 1 (bottom of society) to 10 (top of society). This subjective class location can tap into finer-grained differences that might be disguised by income patterns. For instance, if citizens perceive themselves as anything coming close to the notions of ‘outsiders’, ‘precariat’ or ‘losers of modernization’, this would probably lead to a self-description of being close to the bottom of society. Based on subjective class, we separate respondents in three groups: lower (answer categories 1–4), middle (answer categories 5–6) and upper (answer categories 7–10).<sup>4</sup>

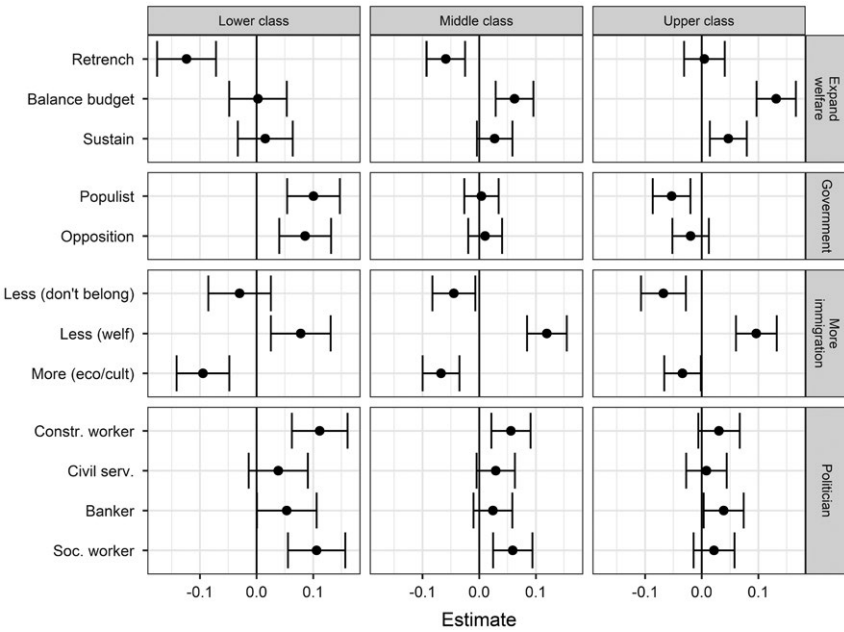
We present our results by these three subjective classes, but the findings do not change substantively if we split samples along income differences (see Table A2 in the Online Appendix). However, as noted on the income variable, 20 percent of the data is missing – possibly not missing at random. The subjective class location variable has no missing values.

## Which Candidate Characteristics Explain Support?

Each column in Figure 2 displays the results from one of a total of three regression analyses: one for lower class, one for middle class and one for upper class. The dependent variable indicates whether the participant voted for or against the candidate. The independent variables are the different candidate descriptions that respondents received (each row represents an independent variable in Figure 2).<sup>5</sup> We discuss the results per independent variable across the three regression models and start with the first variable: the candidate’s position on welfare. The reported effects are comparisons to candidates that supported an expansion of the welfare state (the reference category). The negative point estimate of the ‘Retrench’ category in the lower class column (top left) indicates that lower class respondents are less likely to support candidates that support retrenchment than candidates that support expansion (a difference of about 12.5 percent). Middle-class respondents also support retrenchment less than expansion; upper class respondents do not have this preference. Expansion is not the most popular position for a candidate to have. Lower class respondents are equally likely to support candidates with a balanced-budget agenda or a sustain-the-welfare-state agenda. Middle- and upper class respondents were more likely to support these agendas in comparison to an expansion agenda. In conclusion and as expected, the lower the socioeconomic profile, the less support there is for the retrenchment agenda. However, unexpectedly, expansion is not the most favoured option either.

The second variable describes the position of the candidate *vis-à-vis* the government: do they support the government or the opposition or do they oppose the entire party system (populist). Here we find clear differences between the lower and upper classes. Lower class respondents are more likely to support populist candidates. Conversely, upper class respondents

Figure 2. Three Ordinary Least Squares Regressions of Candidate Traits (Rows) for Three Different Classes (Columns).



Note: Dots are unstandardized regression effects; bars represent the 95 percent confidence intervals. Figure is based on three different regressions, with each column presenting one regression. The labels on the four rows are the reference categories of each of the four candidate traits respondents were exposed to. We used robust standard errors (by respondent).

are more likely to support government candidates. Middle-class respondents have no preferences. These are strong findings, but a word of caution is in order. We deliberately refrain from using party labels in our experiment to avoid existing party attachments dominating all other effects. It is of course possible that, based on our treatments, respondents try to infer which party the fictitious candidates belong to. Hence, it is not clear whether disadvantaged voters have a general tendency to be dissatisfied with the incumbent government (as argued by Mutz & Mondak 1997) or whether we simply pick up vote propensity for the government at the time of our survey.

We replicated the models three times, each time excluding voters from one of the three largest parties (Danish People’s Party, Social Democrats and the Liberal Party). If effects are driven by inferring parties from our description and then deciding based on identification, we should find that (1) the effect of a populist candidate should disappear once we omit the Danish People’s Party voters and (2) that a government candidate becomes even less popular when we omit the Liberal Party voter as they are the

ruling party. A summary of these results are reported in Table A3 in the Online Appendix. The effects are in the same direction as in the main analyses, regardless of which group of voters we exclude from the sample. There are minor but statistically insignificant differences between effect sizes. This pattern indicates that respondents decide based on the positions we present them in the experiment, and not based on speculations about which party the fictitious candidates might represent. In sum, there is more to anti-government sentiment than just party labels.

The third variable describes the candidate's position on immigration. The reference category here is support for more immigration because of humanitarian reasons. This position is generally favoured over the position more immigration because of economic or cultural reasons and less immigration because immigrants do not belong here. The position that the country should have fewer immigrants because they are a burden on welfare is the most popular position. There are no differences between the lower and middle class. For the upper class, the 'immigrants do not belong here' position has a stronger negative effect than in the other classes; and the negative effect of the argument 'we need more immigrants because of economic and cultural reasons' is weaker. However, the ordering of the popularity of the four options is the same across the three classes.

The fourth variable is the condition that describes the profession of the candidate. The reference category is 'has been a life-long politician'. This is clearly a very unpopular occupation for a candidate. All other options are generally preferred. Civil servant is a slightly more popular occupation, but the difference is small. Social worker, banker and construction worker are the most popular options. Also, here the differences between classes are small. Among upper class respondents, life-long politicians are slightly more popular and social workers are less popular than among middle- and lower class respondents.

Now that we have discussed the regression effects, what vote share is predicted by the regressions given specific combinations of a candidate's policy positions and occupational background? Figure 3 plots the predicted vote share for candidates with four different characteristics. The predicted vote share is calculated for both lower and upper class respondents. We have selected these scenarios because they highlight the most important class differences in our analysis. We ignore middle-class respondents here because predictions for this group are simply in-between lower and upper class. The four bars in the left panel of Figure 3 show the support for politicians who favour welfare state retrenchment, support fewer immigrants because of the burden to the welfare state and whose previous occupation was construction worker. The only difference is that the two black-and-white bars on the right give the predicted vote share for a candidate who claims that mainstream parties are corrupt and unresponsive (i.e., the populist party). To the left of that we have a candidate who supports a government party. Our results

suggest that 58 percent of the lower class respondents support a candidate who favours welfare retrenchment and is a populist (the third bar). This support drops by 10 percentage points if that candidate is from a government party (the first bar). Upper class voters generally support retrenchment: 54 percent does so when the candidate is a populist (the fourth bar) and 59 percent does so when the candidate is from a government party (the second bar).

The right panel of Figure 3 describes the same scenarios as the left panel only this time the candidate is described as a politician. This generally reduces support, but more so for the lower class voters than for upper class ones. Only 36.7 percent of the lower class voters support a government politician with a retrenchment agenda (first bar). Support of upper class respondent is about 3 percent lower for both options if the candidate is a politician rather than a construction worker (second and fourth bar). Figure 3 illustrates two important points: (1) retrenchment is accepted by respondents under certain conditions, and (2) generally, voters prefer construction workers over career politicians.

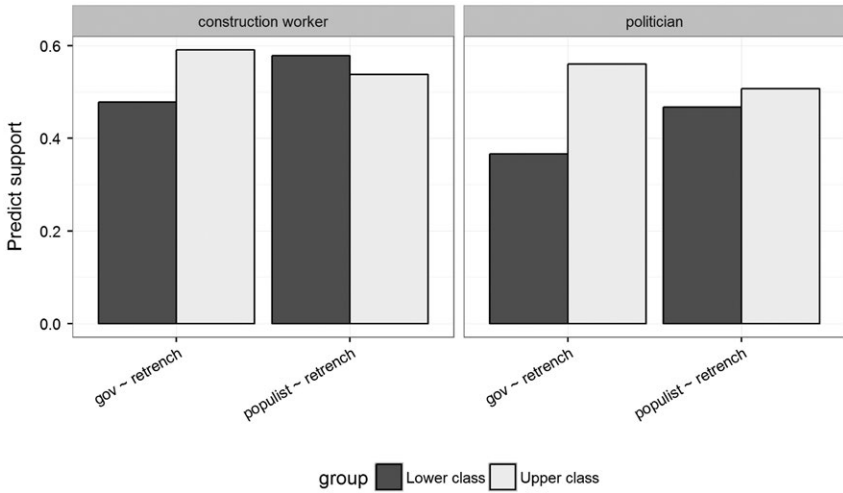
Figure 4 is similar to Figure 3. The only difference is that in this case the candidates support balancing the budget. Balancing the budget is, on average, a more popular policy choice than retrenchment. The mean difference between the scenarios of Figure 4 and those of Figure 3 is 14 percent. For the remainder, the differences between lower and upper class voters are similar to Figure 3. Lower class respondents favour the construction worker from a populist party. Upper class respondents favour a politician or a construction worker from a government party.

What our analyses demonstrate is that it not only matters *what* is offered in terms of policy, but also *who* is offering it. Retrenchment – generally considered unpopular – is accepted by lower class voters if it is suggested by a candidate who is a construction worker and from a populist party (58 percent). This drops to 36.7 percent of the voters if the candidate is a government politician. It seems that retrenchment is only electoral suicide if mainstream parties do it. For upper class voters, the differences are less stark. They generally favor politicians from government parties, but they also seem fine with construction workers.

## Discussion

Our point of departure was: how do the poor vote? We considered three motivations, including voting for policies such as welfare and immigration and more expressive anti-establishment voting. We compared how important these motivations were in contrast to middle- and upper class voters. Our results suggest that the poor (in Denmark) have rather modest expectations regarding welfare: they supported both status quo candidates as well as welfare state expansion candidates. Only retrenchment was significantly

Figure 3. Predicted Vote Shares for Politicians Supporting Retrenchment.



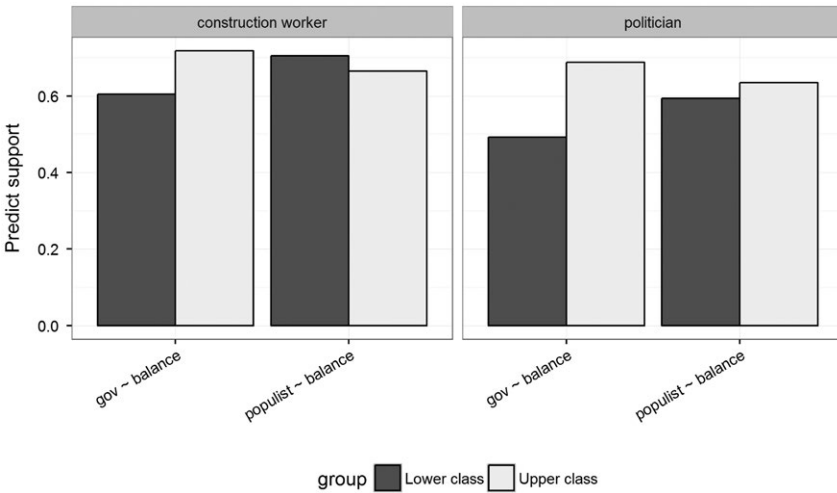
*Note:* Predicted vote share is based on the regression analyses presented in Figure 1. These predictions are based on candidates supporting retrenchment and a restriction on immigration because of the welfare burden. We vary the type of party the candidate belongs to (government party or populist party) and the previous occupation of the politician (construction worker [left panel] or politician [right panel]).

less popular. Context could matter here because Denmark is a comparatively generous welfare state. Our results are rather mixed regarding immigration: both pro- and anti-immigration positions fared well, depending on the exact argument made. Our results are straightforward concerning the candidate's party affiliation: government parties' candidates were always more unpopular than candidates of general opposition parties or populist parties. These results suggest that, while each of the motivations has some influence, the expressive anti-establishment motive is the most important factor to distinguish the voting behaviour of the poor.

In addition to these main findings, our results suggest three more interesting conclusions. First, candidates that propose similar economic measures are much more likely to get elected in our experiment if they have a non-political background. Politicians, and to a lesser extent civil servants, are distrusted by our respondents. Bankers, social workers and especially construction workers fared much better. But there are class differences and an obvious explanation is that respondents vote for candidates from the same class. Does descriptive representation play an important role in determining our results? If this were the case we should see lower class voters supporting lower class occupations (construction worker) and opposing upper class ones (banker, politician), and vice versa. Also we should see



Figure 4. Predicted Vote Shares for Politicians Supporting Balanced Budgets.



*Note:* Predicted vote share is based on the regression analyses presented in Figure 1. These predictions are based on candidates supporting a balanced budget and a restriction on immigration because of the welfare burden. We vary the type of party the candidate belongs to (government party or populist party) and the previous occupation of the politician (construction worker [left panel] or politician [right panel]).

middle-class respondents rooting for social workers and civil servants. Our results do not speak overwhelmingly in favour of this reading: bankers are in fact evaluated even better by lower class respondents than upper class ones. Upper class voters do not think less of construction workers turned candidates. Rather than a motivation to vote for one's class representative, our results suggest a motivation – across classes – to vote against career politicians. However, this result would be stronger if we also evaluated a more positive framing of career politicians – for example, by describing a candidate as highly experienced.

An interesting, but expected result is that lower class voters are much more likely to support an economic measure if it is proposed by a populist rather than a government party. This throws an interesting light on claims that some parties found a winning formula by combining anti-immigrant sentiment with either a neoliberal, welfare state retrenchment agenda (Kitschelt & McGann 1995; Afonso 2015) or with a welfare chauvinist agenda (De Koster et al. 2013). Our results suggest that populist parties can do one or the other and get away with it. Both options are winning formulas. This suggests that it might not matter so much what populist parties' economic agendas consist of. Much more important is their anti-establishment stance.

A third and somewhat unexpected result stems from the effects of the different positions on immigration that candidates were assigned to in our

experiment. First, the direction of the effects was similar across classes. Our results do not suggest a separation of society into an anti-immigrant lower class and a cosmopolitan upper class. Second, the reasons we gave for the immigrant positions seem to be more important than the question of whether more or less immigrants should be admitted. In other words, the order of popularity items was: (1) fewer immigrants because they are a burden on the welfare state, (2) more immigrants because of humanitarian reasons, (3) less immigrants because they do not belong here and (4) more immigrants because they enrich economic and cultural life. Surveys that measure immigration attitudes generally display a tendency towards anti-immigration sentiment. But stressing humanitarian reasons is sufficient to make people support more immigration.

Our experiment is a rather stylized representation of democratic choice. This has some advantages – namely we get to explore variation that does not exist in ‘nature’. For example, in the current political context we know of no populist party that proposes welfare state retrenchment.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, with observational data it can be difficult to disentangle the different voting motivations. Experiments allow for a further exploration of what would be the ‘winning formula’ for populist parties, as well as the ‘winning antidote’. This article directly contributes to this by demonstrating that it not only matters what is offered in terms of policy, but also who is offering it.

## NOTES

1. Controlling for education does not affect our main results (Table A5, columns 1–3, in the Online Appendix).
2. It is of course difficult to control which parties participants associate with our fictitious candidates, but below we present robustness checks that address this concern.
3. We also specified models in which candidate descriptions are interacted with class. The results are similar to those presented here (available from the authors upon request).
4. The subjective assessments do seem to mirror objective differences in material resources and life chances. The median annual income category in our three classes is DKK200,000–299,000 (low), DKK400,000–499,000 (middle) and DKK600,000–699,000 (high). The probability of being in unemployment is at 21 (low), 5 (middle) and 3 (high) percent.
5. The independent variables are modelled as direct effects only. The combination of different candidate descriptions can be evaluated by adding the effects of the relevant independent variables. However, the effect of a specific profile may be larger than the additive components – put differently, there may be an interaction effect. To evaluate this we ran a regression model in which all candidate descriptions were interacted so that we can evaluate the effect of a single profile. Comparing this full-interaction model to our basic model, we find few significant differences. We report the profiles that produce markedly different results in Table A4 in the Online Appendix. These should be treated with caution, though, since some profiles have only been exposed to 15–20 respondents per class.
6. Some of them have certainly supported welfare state retrenchment measures in parliament, but this is not part of their discourse. Also, some populist parties certainly have a more anti-taxation and anti-welfare past (Schumacher & Van Kersbergen 2014).

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## Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's web-site:

**Table A1.** General regression model.

**Table A2.** OLS regression with income as definition of class.

**Table A3.** OLS regressions with various samples.

**Table A4.** Popularity of profiles in basic and full regression models.

**Table A5.** OLS regression with education variables.

**Figure A1.** Screenshot of conjoint experiment.