Do Humble Beginnings Help? How Politician Class Roots Shape Voter Evaluations

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Abstract

Motivated partly by descriptive representation concerns, political scientists have become increasingly interested in voters' preferences over the social class of their representatives. Whereas existing research focuses mainly on preferences concerning politicians' own immediate class markers, we argue that voters may also care about politician class roots - the social class of the household in which a politician grew up. Drawing on conjoint experiments fielded in Austria, Germany, and Britain, we show that in the latter two cases voters do care about class roots, displaying an average preference for politicians with more humble class roots. In follow-up experiments testing different explanations for this preference we find little evidence that voters treat humble roots as a signal of social mobility and therefore politician quality. Rather, preferences over class roots appear to be driven by class affinity biases. Our findings have implications for debates concerning the descriptive underrepresentation of the working classes.

1. Introduction

Parliaments fail in the descriptive representation of voters in many ways: parliamentarians are more educated than voters, more likely to be male and less likely to be from an immigrant background. Lack of descriptive representation is particularly striking in terms of social class (Carnes and Lupu, 2016; Allen, 2018; Lamprinakou et al., 2016; Carnes, 2013, 2012; O'Grady, 2019). In Britain, for example, the number of manual workers serving as Members of Parliament 'has declined to almost zero in the past forty years' (Allen, 2018, p.25). This under-representation would be of little concern if, as some have argued, clear class distinctions were a thing of the past (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) and no longer meaningfully influenced vote choice (Clark and Lipset, 1991; Clarke et al., 2004; Franklin, Mackie and Valen, 1992). However, occupation-based divides in society are still large, with inequality and economic insecurity growing in many countries. Individuals also continue to place themselves and others in social class groupings based on markers such as occupation and education (Curtis, 2016; Stubager et al., 2018; Hout, 2008; Robison and Stubager, 2018) and voter class continues to be predictive of electoral behaviour (Evans and Tilley, 2017; Oesch and Rennwald, 2018; Kriesi et al., 2008). If class remains important in society, it is thus crucial to understand whether the lack of politicians with working-class backgrounds reflects voters' preferences, or runs counter to these preferences, potentially exacerbating popular dissatisfaction with politics.

Accordingly, scholars have begun to examine voters' preferences concerning the social class of the politicians who represent them. A particular focus of this research is to analyse whether voters exhibit class biases when making choices between politicians - or groups of politicians - who vary in terms of their class markers, such as occupation prior to entering politics, income prior to entering politics, or education level. A number of these studies suggest that the descriptive under-representation of the working classes is indeed

inconsistent with voter preferences. Carnes and Lupu (2016) find that voters in the US, Argentina and Britain have no clear preference over politician class as indicated by occupation prior to entering politics (for the US, see also Carnes, 2013). Other studies of British voters have found that they actively dislike politicians with higher-income prior occupations (Campbell and Cowley, 2014a). In many countries, including Britain, working-class voters are by some accounts now less likely to vote for centre-left parties and turn out at all (Evans and Tilley, 2017; Heath, 2018). Part of the reason for this may lie in the decline in the proportion of Labour Party politicians who have working-class prior occupations (Heath, 2015, 2018). Only in the Swiss case is there evidence that voters may disprefer politicians with working-class prior occupations, although voters there also seem to dislike politicians with upper-middle-class prior occupations (Wüest and Pontussen, 2018).

While this existing research tends to focus on voters' preferences concerning politicians' own immediate class markers, in this paper we study voters' preferences concerning politician class roots - the social class of the household in which they grew up. Because politician class roots may be distinct from the social class implied by their own immediate class markers, voters' preferences for politician class roots can have distinct implications for debates surrounding descriptive (under)representation. For example, the number of legislators who have working-class occupations prior to entering politics has declined in many Western democracies (Heath, 2015, 2018; Evans and Tilley, 2017; Carnes, 2012; Best and Cotta, 2000), while many MPs may have never gained extensive work experience outside of politics (O'Grady, 2019). Yet, the massive increase in education and income that occurred in many countries in post-war decades makes it likely that a reasonable number of contemporary legislators nevertheless hail from working-class households. For example, at least 152 of the 783 legislators who served in the US Congress between 1999 and 2008 grew up with working-class parents (Carnes and Sadin, 2015, 291). And recent

evidence suggests that while most Spanish MPs are highly-educated, half of them were born into a working-class or lower-middle-class family (Serrano and Bermúdez, 2018). To the extent that descriptive representation is less deficient with respect to class roots than it is with respect to immediate class markers, then if voters do value class roots as a descriptive characteristic this may serve to partially mitigate dissatisfaction concerning class representation.

Furthermore, there are good reasons to suspect that voters care about class roots. First, media portraits of politicians often refer to their family background and upbringing (Heath, 2018), while candidates themselves like to emphasize humble, working-class roots if they have them (Carnes and Sadin, 2015). Second, parental class markers such as occupation are often a key influence on someone's own class identity (Curtis, 2016), and can therefore be expected to influence assessments of others' class positions. Third, there is evidence that voters use politician class roots to make inferences about their ideology (Carnes and Sadin, 2015). Given politician behaviour once elected, this inference may be appropriate (O'Grady, 2019). In this paper, we go beyond Carnes and Sadin (2015) and examine whether politician class roots matter for voters' overall evaluations of a politician. We also try to exclude ideological inferences drawn from politician class roots as a mechanism that explains these preferences. To our knowledge, there is no extant empirical test of the effect of politician class roots on voter preferences.

To empirically examine the effects of politician class roots, we draw on evidence from survey experiments fielded across three countries. The first set (Study 1) is designed to establish whether politician class roots matter on average for voter evaluations. We conduct our experiments on representative samples of voters in Austria, Germany and Great Britain, allowing us to also examine whether the importance of class roots varies by context. Our conjoint experiments ask respondents to state their preferences concerning pairs of

hypothetical MPs who vary, among other attributes, in whether they were brought up by parents who had working, lower-middle, or upper-middle-class occupations. Compared to Carnes and Sadin (2015) and Carnes and Lupu (2016), we use various levels of class roots and operationalise them with multiple occupations.

We find that, while class roots appear to have little effect on voter evaluations in Austria, they do appear to matter for voters in Germany and Britain, who display a clear average preference for politicians with more humble class roots. Because our experiments include multiple exemplar occupations for each level of the class roots treatment and explicit information about politicians' ideological positions, we can demonstrate that any effects we observe are not an artefact of voters' reactions to particular occupations nor of voters simply using class roots to infer politician ideology.

Our second set of experiments (Study 2) focuses on explaining British and German voters' average preference for politicians with humble class roots. Specifically, we examine three possible explanations. The first posits that voters in these countries share a relatively homogeneous baseline class bias (Sanbonmatsu, 2002): voters may, for example, have an anti-elite political bias that is partly fed by a general dislike for well-o_ individuals (Fiske et al., 1999; Carnes and Lupu, 2016). The second explanation draws on ideas of 'group affinity' (e.g., Dolan, 2008) and in-group bias (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), positing a class affinity bias, whereby voters have a preference for politicians whose class roots are more similar to their own class identity. The third explanation posits that, in a context where politicians predominantly had upper-middle-class occupations prior to entering politics, voters view working-class roots as a signal of the politician's ability to climb the class ladder, and therefore of their superior quality (Carnes and Sadin, 2015). This social mobility signal explanation suggests that class roots may affect voters' choices between politicians without

voters having direct preferences concerning this attribute. To our knowledge, no test of this signal has so far been carried out.

We distinguish between these accounts in Study 2 and draw three key findings. First, we find little evidence that voters treat politician class roots as a social mobility signal. In Britain and Germany, candidates who have moved from working to upper-middle class are not evaluated more positively that working-class candidates who have not moved up the class ladder. Second, voter reactions to politician class markers are strongly conditional on voters' own class identities, suggesting that class roots effects are driven more by affinity bias than by baseline bias.

Overall, our results suggest that, at least in Britain and Germany, voters do care about the class roots of their politicians and prefer more humble class roots. Moreover, these are more likely to be intrinsic preferences resulting from voters' class biases rather than indirect preferences that result from voters using class roots to infer politician quality or ideology. Thus, when evaluating descriptive representation of class, we should pay attention to politician class roots as well as their more immediate class markers. Crucially, even though there are few politicians whose own immediate class markers are working class, there may still be a reasonable number who hail from more humble households and thereby possess at least one class-related descriptive characteristic that many voters desire. As a result, descriptive representation by class may be less of an issue, at least as long as intergenerational class mobility - in general and among MPs in particular - is substantial.

2. The political relevance of class roots

Why would voters care about politician class roots? In this section we draw on existing literature to discuss different mechanisms which might lead voters to develop preferences over the class roots of their representatives. There are two reasons why the class roots of

politicians may matter for voters. For one, class can have a direct effect on preferences because people feel warmly towards one class or another: voters may prefer politicians from certain class or who are from the same class as them. In addition, class can have an indirect effect on preferences: voters may use class as a cue for other characteristics and be biased in favour of one class or other based on these cues. Based on these two mechanisms, we discuss three possible patterns of reactions to class roots: baseline class bias, class affinity, and cues based on social mobility.

2.1 Baseline class bias

If voters then generally prefer one class over another, then voters may have a baseline class bias, i.e., a preference for politicians from one particular social class rather than another, all else being equal. Such a baseline class bias could plausibly be created by knowing about a politician's class roots. There is evidence of such baseline biases for other politician characteristics such as gender (Sanbonmatsu, 2002).

Both mechanisms (affect and cue-based inferences) apply here. For one, pure affect for one group may result in a bias towards that group. But, an additional reason for differential reactions to class may also lie in the cues that social class contains. Voters infer politician characteristics from their class background. Hence, voters may form preferences over politician class roots not because they care directly about these roots, but because they use them as a cue for other politician attributes about which they do care.

Given existing evidence, it seems most likely that voters have a baseline preference for politicians who have more humble class roots. Two candidate biography survey experiments in Campbell and Cowley (2014a) provide strong evidence of an anti-rich bias among British voters, whereby such voters dislike candidates with high incomes compared to average incomes. Research in social psychology also suggests that people tend to see

'underdogs' as harder-working, more deserving, and more likeable; hence, class generates cue-based inferences among respondents. This bias is complemented by prejudice against the well-o_, who may often be seen as out-of-touch, cold, and aloof (Fiske et al., 1999; Carnes and Lupu, 2016). In contrast, politicians from working-class or poor families may be seen as more likely to understand the needs of everyday voters. This view is at least partly supported by political campaigns during which politicians often refer to their childhood experiences in working-class families (Carnes and Sadin, 2015). For example, current Labour MP Matthew Pennycook notes on his website that he was raised by a single mum and became 'first person in my family to go to university'.[1] This account would predict that voters have an average bias toward politicians with working-class roots. It would also suggest that the bias should be relatively consistent across different types of voters.

Of course, it is also possible that voters instead have a baseline bias for more privileged class roots. Generalized prejudice against people from poor, working-class backgrounds is common (Tablante and Fiske, 2015; Horwitz and Dovidio, 2015). Individuals tend to give preferential treatment to wealthy people: Horwitz, Shutts and Olson (2014) show that even 4-5-year-old children already have a preference for wealthy groups. The empirical studies we present below will allow us to test for this possibility.

2.2 Class affinity bias

Voters may also possess preferences over politician class roots due to class affinity bias, i.e. the phenomenon that citizens prefer politicians they see as belonging to the same social group as themselves. Affinity effects exists for gender, race and ethnicity (Sigelman and Sigelman, 1982), and may therefore exist for class as well (Roßteutscher et al., 2017). It may be driven,

[1] See matthewpennycook.com/who-is-matt/ , accessed 4 September 2019.

for example, by a general desire to increase the descriptive representation of their own class group (Dolan, 2008). It may also be driven by voters having general positive affect towards 'in-group' individuals (Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Cutler, 2002; Dolan, 2008; Goodyear-Grant and Croskill, 2011).[2] Note that these two explanations require a certain level of group identification or even group consciousness among voters (Conover, 1984). For example, recent US evidence shows that there is little political cohesion and gender consciousness among women, while that among African-Americans is much stronger (Cassese and Barnes, 2019).

Existing research finds evidence consistent with affinity-based preferences with respect to politicians' own immediate class markers. The results of Heath (2015) and Heath (2018) suggest that British working-class voters prefer to be represented by working-class politicians. The anti-rich bias identified by Campbell and Cowley (2014a) appears to be driven particularly by working-class (and Labour) voters. Finally, recent experimental work by Wüest and Pontussen (2018) shows that Swiss voters are biased against high-income candidates, in particular if voters themselves have a low income and low education.[3]

If class affinity drives voters' preferences over politician class roots, we should observe that voters have an average bias toward politicians whose class roots are more similar to their own class identity. Note also, however, that when this mechanism is aggregated across voters with different class identities, it may manifest in a baseline class bias, the

[2] More generally, another possibility is that people simply register interpersonal similarity between themselves and a politician and view that politician more positively as a result (Heath, 2015).

[3] Note, however, that the experimental study by Wüest and Pontussen (2018) also find a bias against low-skilled working-class politicians.

direction of which depends on the distribution of class identities in a society and on how the relative strength of affinity bias varies with class identity.

2.3 Social mobility cue

Finally, an additional way in which voters might also use class roots as a cue is if they see it as a social mobility signal, inferring that politicians who grew up in working-class households but have 'climbed the class ladder' to take on middle- or upper-middle-class occupations are more competent and harder-working than politicians who inherited their middle- or upper-middle-class social status. This is plausible because it is difficult for voters to directly observe the quality of a politician. It is therefore tempting for voters to make use of simpler short-cuts relating to a politician's personal background (Cutler, 2002; Popkin, 1994).

Crucially, according to this account class roots matter for voters as a component of a social mobility signal. The effects of politician class roots are thus conditional on the politician's own current class markers. The resulting expectation is that voters have an average preference for politicians whose combination of class roots and current class markers indicate social mobility. Although Carnes and Sadin (2015) note this possibility, to our knowledge there is no existing empirical evidence concerning this mechanism in the political realm. One reason for this is that observational studies in many contemporary Western democracies would have difficulty distinguishing whether voters react to class roots because of class biases or because such roots offer a signal of social mobility: in settings where politicians are predominantly drawn from upper-middle-class prior occupations, the possession of working-class roots almost always implies social mobility, so both the baseline bias and social mobility accounts could explain an average preference 8

for politicians with working-class roots. In Study 2 below we attempt to distinguish these mechanisms by fielding experiments where we ask voters to rate electoral candidates who vary in both their class roots and their current occupational class.

3. Research design

All of the above accounts suggest that voters care about the class roots of politicians, whether directly or indirectly. In Study 1, we seek to establish whether or not this common expectation holds, before turning in Study 2 to examine which of the above accounts better explains voters' preferences over politician class roots. We employ an experimental approach because it allows us to better identify the effect of politician class roots on voter evaluations. While an observational study of how voter support varies across politicians with different class roots would have undoubted external validity advantages, it would also suffer from confounding. For example, those candidates who do not have electorally advantageous class roots may only run for office because they possess other electorally beneficial attributes which offset this disadvantage but which are hard to measure and control for.[4] Observational comparisons of support across politicians would, in this example, under-estimate any effect of class roots. In contrast, in an experimental setting we can ensure that class roots are exogenous by design, allowing us to better assess their effect independent of the influence of confounders.

As well as treating politician class roots as a social mobility signal, voters could use them to infer other politician attributes. Voters might, for example, rightly or wrongly, infer that politicians from a certain social class hold certain ideological positions (Carnes and

[4] Carnes and Lupu (2016, 834) offer a similar argument concerning observational evidence on the electoral effects of candidates' own occupational class.

Lupu, 2015; Carnes, 2012; Arnesen, Duell and Johannesson, 2019), just as they do with sex and gender (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993; McDermott, 1997). Indeed, the only extant experimental study of voter reactions to politician class roots provides evidence that voters infer that politicians with more working-class roots are likely to be more ideologically left-wing (Carnes and Sadin, 2015). In the experiments below, we 'control' for this by explicitly stating the ideological position of the politicians we ask respondents to rate. By removing the need for respondents to guess politicians' political orientation based on class roots, we try to isolate as much as possible alternative remaining effects of class roots on voter evaluations. While there is more to ideology and MP preferences than a simply labelling as moderate or left/right-wing and respondents may still make some inferences about these based on class roots, providing explicit information on political ideology should go a long way to reducing these effects.

We test for effects of class roots in three countries: Austria, Germany and Great Britain. This allows us to begin to gauge the generalizabilty of any effects of class roots. This is important because there are reasons to believe that the existence and effect of class biases differ between countries. The most likely pattern is that class affinity will be larger where class identities are deeper and stronger. Social identities vary in the extent to which they are relevant, salient and accessible to voters, and historical as well as contextual factors are important in determining this (Conover, 1984; Huddy, 2001). Research on class identification has shown that self-perceived class is responsive to personal income and wealth (Curtis, 2016; Andersen and Curtis, 2012). However, national context matters as well, as class has a greater meaning to people in countries with higher levels of inequality; specifically, the association between income and class is higher in unequal societies (Andersen and Curtis, 2012), and the average self-perceived social position is lower where economic inequality is high (Lindemann and Saar, 2014).

The cases we consider in this study - Austria, Germany and Britain - are all wealthy, post-industrial European economies that have historically had strong centre-left parties associated with the working class. Despite these similarities, there are important differences between the countries, particularly with respect to inequality, which is higher in Britain than in Germany and Austria. For example, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development measures the Gini coefficient for disposable income at 0.35 for Britain, but only 0.29 and 0.28 in Germany and Austria, respectively. Recent research also underlines the continuing importance of working-class identities in Britain (Surridge, 2007; Evans and Tilley, 2017). Hence, if class roots effects are driven by baseline class preferences or class affinity, we would broadly expect these effects to be stronger in Great Britain than in Germany or Austria.

4. Study 1: Do voters care about politician class roots?

In our first study we provide cross-national, experimental evidence as to whether voters have preferences over politician class roots. To do so we draw on conjoint survey experiments fielded in Austria, Germany and Britain by Survey Sampling International in March 2017 (Austria N=2,142; Germany N=1,982; Great Britain N=1,992). These quota samples were chosen from the non-probability online access panels run by SSI or its international partners. Quotas were implemented so that respondents would be representative of the population in terms of age, sex and region. For more information, see Appendix E.

4.1 Experimental design

Conjoint analysis experiments present participants with two or more choice alternatives whose attributes vary randomly and ask participants to rate or choose between these alternatives. In this Study we asked respondents to rate five pairs of hypothetical Members of

Parliament (MPs) whose political and social characteristics vary randomly. The key experimental treatment concerns an MP's class roots, operationalised in terms of the occupations of the MP's mother and father.

An extant experiment which focuses on politician class roots is Carnes and Sadin (2015), where respondents are asked to consider a hypothetical candidate whose fathers' occupation is described as either a 'surgeon' (upper-middle-class roots) or a 'factory worker'. Our experimental design differs from this one in important respects. Whereas Carnes and Sadin (2015) focus on how politician class roots affect the inferences respondents make about a politician's ideology, we focus on how they affect respondents' overall evaluation of a politician. Also, because we provide respondents with explicit information about the ideology of each hypothetical MP (see below) we estimate the effects of class roots excluding as much as possible the effect of ideological inferences.

A further key difference with our experimental design is that whereas Carnes and Sadin (2015) - and other experiments examining the effects of politicians' own occupation prior to entering politics (Carnes and Lupu, 2016) - operationalised each level of the class roots treatment with a single (paternal) occupation, in this study we operationalise each level of class roots with multiple potential pairs of (paternal and maternal) occupations. So, for example, a hypothetical politician with 'working-class roots' could be characterised by any of six possible pairs of specific occupations. One advantage of using multiple exemplar occupations for each social class is that it allows us to check that we are estimating class effects rather than occupation effects. If there is only one exemplar occupation for each class, there is a risk that any estimated effects are due to the way respondents react to the particular occupation used to exemplify each class, rather than class-related mechanisms. Another advantage is that using multiple exemplar occupations makes the conjoint tasks more varied and realistic for respondents, especially when they have to rate several pairs of profiles.

The class roots of each hypothetical MP in our experiments were either (a) working class, (b) lower-middle class, or (c) upper-middle class. We used a simplified version of five-class schema developed by Oesch (2006) and chose (ISCO-coded) 'exemplar' parental occupations from the following three sub-categories (see also Häusermann, Kurer and Schwander, 2016; Schwander and Häusermann, 2013): (a) skilled and unskilled workers (as a measure of working-class background), (b) small business owners and lower-grade service class (as a measure of lower-middle-class background), and (c) higher grade service class (as a measure of upper-middle-class background).[5] For each of these three categories, we selected three potential paternal occupations and two potential maternal occupations, meaning there were 3 x 2 = 6 possible pairs of parental occupations for each category.[6] We also restricted maternal and paternal occupations to be of the same occupational class, meaning there were a total of 6 _ 3 = 18 possible pairs of parental occupations across all three

[5] From the 16-class scheme developed by Oesch (2006), these five categories comprise the following sub-categories: (a) Skilled manual, low-skilled manual, skilled clerks, unskilled clerks, skilled service, low-skilled service; (b) technicians, lower-grade managers and administrators, socio-cultural semi-professionals, small business owners with employees, small business owners without employees; (c) large employers, self-employed professionals, technical experts, higher-grade managers and administrators, socio-cultural professionals.

[6] We decided to assign different jobs to the MPs' fathers and mothers given the gendered distribution of jobs, even today. It would have been less credible to present respondents with MPs whose mothers and fathers had unlikely jobs. Additional analyses do not indicate that female and male MPs are evaluated differently based on their class roots: the effect of working-class roots does not differ systematically for male and female MPs or male and female voters.

MP class roots treatment levels. Each hypothetical MP in the experiment was randomly assigned to one of these 18 pairs of parental occupations. Note that our experimental design thus allows us to examine the effect of information about different class backgrounds, but does not enable us to say anything about whether the presence of such information is helpful compared to no information about class roots.

The exemplary paternal and maternal occupations for each class were as follows:

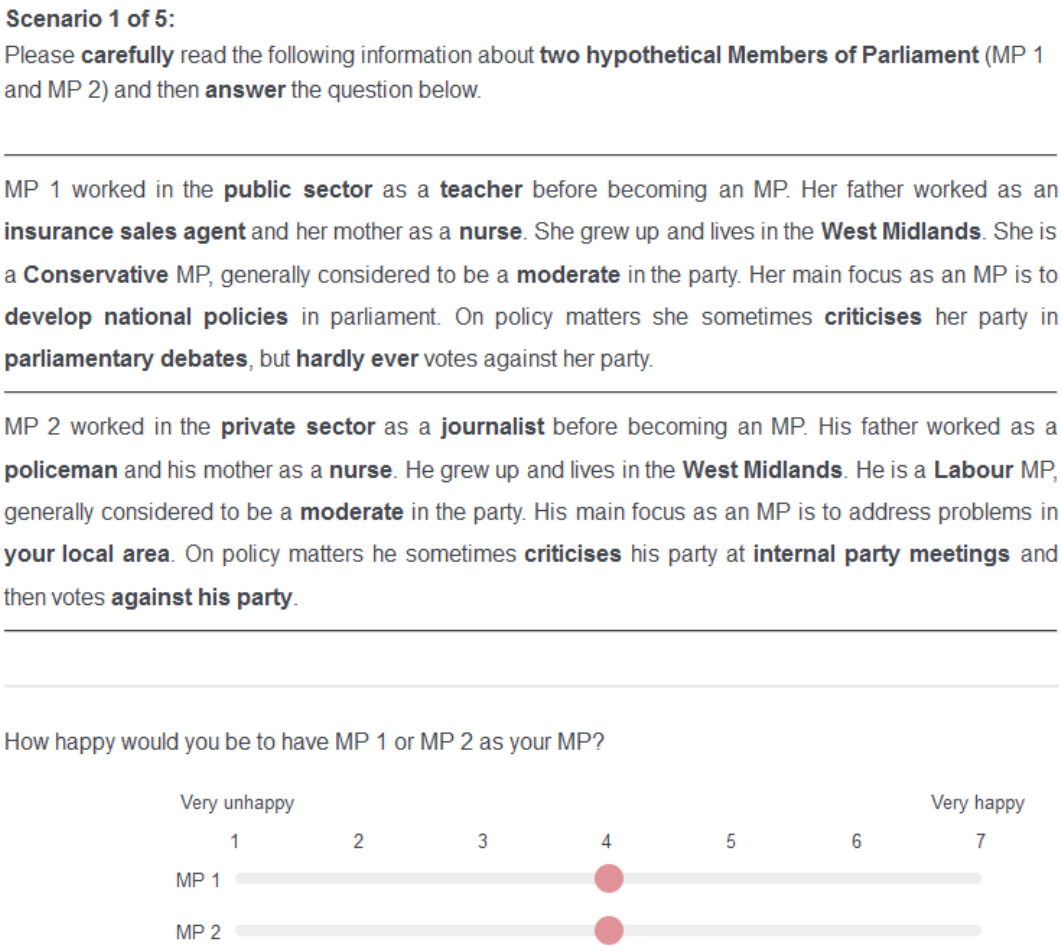
(1) Working class: Factory worker, plumber, or bricklayer (father) and shop assistant or hairdresser (mother).

(2) Lower-middle class: Insurance sales agent, small businessman, or policeman (father) and secretary or nurse (mother).

(3) Upper-middle class. University professor, business owner, or politician (father) and judge or general practitioner (mother).

Figure 1 shows a screen-shot of the British version of the experiment. In this example, both MPs presented to the respondent happened to have lower-middle-class roots, but differ in terms of the particular lower-middle-class occupations their parents had. Note that the descriptions contain information only about parents' occupations and make no explicit reference to their class status. Of course, it is an important question whether occupational descriptions contain class signals. The balance of existing evidence suggests that they do (Lindemann and Saar, 2014; Kelley and Evans, 1995; Evans and Mills, 1998; Evans and Tilley, 2017). Furthermore, in Appendix C we provide new evidence from a pretest conducted on the MTurk-like CrowdFlower platform that respondents do largely give the parental occupations used in our experiment the class labels that we assume.

Figure 1: Screen-shot of example conjoint task for Study 1 (in Great Britain)



In addition to class roots, MPs were characterised by six other attributes whose values varied randomly. Some of these attributes are important because they may often themselves be cued by politician class roots. First, we provided respondents with explicit information about each MPs' own occupational class prior to entering parliament. In the absence of such information respondents might make inferences about a politicians' own occupational class based on that of their parents, and these inferences may drive any effects of class roots that we observe. Occupations were selected from two classes of the Oesch (2006) scheme: (a) from the 'lower-grade service class' we selected teacher, hotel manager, local council employee, and accountant; (b) from the higher-grade service class we used GP, senior manager, journalist, and bank manager. We also included a third group of politicians who

previously worked in the party as a press officer (i.e., a career politician). We restricted politician occupations to be middle- to upper-middle-class because in this experiment we are interested in the effects of politician class roots in situations where politicians have an own occupational class that is typical of contemporary parliamentarians in Western Europe. (This means we cannot fully test the social mobility cue hypothesis, which we instead assess in Study 2.) We also stated which sector politicians worked in by describing their prior occupation as (for example, '[He,She] worked in the private sector as a bank manager before becoming an MP').

Second, we randomly and explicitly varied an MP's political orientation, giving information on the MPs' party (SPÖ, ÖVP, or FPÖ in Austria; SPD or CDU/CSU in Germany; Labour or Conservative in Britain)[7] and the ideological position of the MP within that party (moderate or extreme).[8] In the absence of explicit information about MP political orientation voters might make inferences about this based on class roots (Carnes and Sadin, 2015) and evaluate MPs based on such inferences (Arnesen, Duell and Johannesson, 2019).

The remaining MP attributes were included because they have been shown to affect voter evaluations and/or answer other research questions discussed elsewhere. Because voters value having representatives with local roots (Campbell et al., 2019b), we varied MPs' regional background, with MPs either growing up in the same region as the respondent or having moved to the region before the last election.[9] Because it matters to voters (Vivyan and Wagner, 2016), we include the local focus of each MP (whether they focus predominantly on developing national policies or on addressing local problems). Because Campbell et al.

[7] We include the radical-right FPÖ in Austria because it was leading in the polls at the time of the survey. Hence, we include parties at over 20 per cent in the polls.
[8] For the Conservative Party, the CDU and the ÖVP and FPÖ, MPs could either be right-wing or moderate; for Labour, SPD and the SPÖ the MPs could either be left-wing or moderate.
[9] We asked respondents to state their region before the experiment and then used this information to explicitly name their region in the conjoint vignettes.

(2019a) show that legislative rebellion is a powerful signal of MP valence for voters, we varied whether an MP tends to criticize and vote against his or her party.[10] Finally, we varied the MP sex between male and female.

Including and randomizing other attributes in the vignettes was an important design choice. Ideology in particular is an important cue taken from politician class (Carnes and Sadin, 2015). By including these additional attributes, we try to largely reduce their impact as a potential indirect assessment in our experiment. We chose to reduce ideological and other inferences as we are interested in preferences for class backgrounds net of aspects such as party affiliation, ideology or local rootedness. However, this means the effects detected by our experiment might be comparatively conservative since some key attributes cued by class background are weakened by design choices. Instead, our focus is on direct preferences for classes (class affinity) and character cues generated by class membership and social mobility.

In each country we stated at the beginning of the experiment that all MPs were elected at the last election. In Germany and Austria, respondents were also told that MPs were elected via the constituency vote (Germany) or the lowest electoral tier (Austria).

After reading each pair of vignettes respondents were asked to rate the two hypothetical MPs on a 1-7 feeling scale, indicating their general evaluation of each one.[11] Respondents had to perform five comparisons in total. We opted for a rating task, following the validation analysis of Hainmueller, Hangartner and Yamamoto (2015). We presented MP pRoßles as vignettes rather than as tables (similar to Campbell and Cowley, 2014a). A pretest in Great Britain and Germany revealed only small (and non-significant) differences in effect sizes across these two versions. On average, respondents needed as much time to perform the

[10] This was phrased as (1) either criticising or not criticising the party, (2) among those who did criticise the party, they could do so at internal party meetings, in parliamentary debates or in the media, and (3) either hardly ever vote against the party or vote against the party.
[11] In a pretest we also tried an additional question on the perceived competence of each MP. Several respondents indicated that separating these dimensions proved to be too difficult.

fivechoice tasks in the paragraph version as in a table format. To avoid primacy or recency effects, we randomised the order of groups of attributes: party affiliation and ideology; class background, regional background and social involvement.

Our conjoint analysis yields ten observations per survey respondent (5 choice tasks with 2 MPs rated in each one). We estimate the average marginal component effect (AMCE) of each MP attribute by regressing respondent ratings on a series of indicator variables for each level of each MP attribute (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto, 2014). Standard errors are clustered by respondent. We provide conjoint analysis diagnostics recommended by Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto (2014) in the Appendix.

4.2 Results

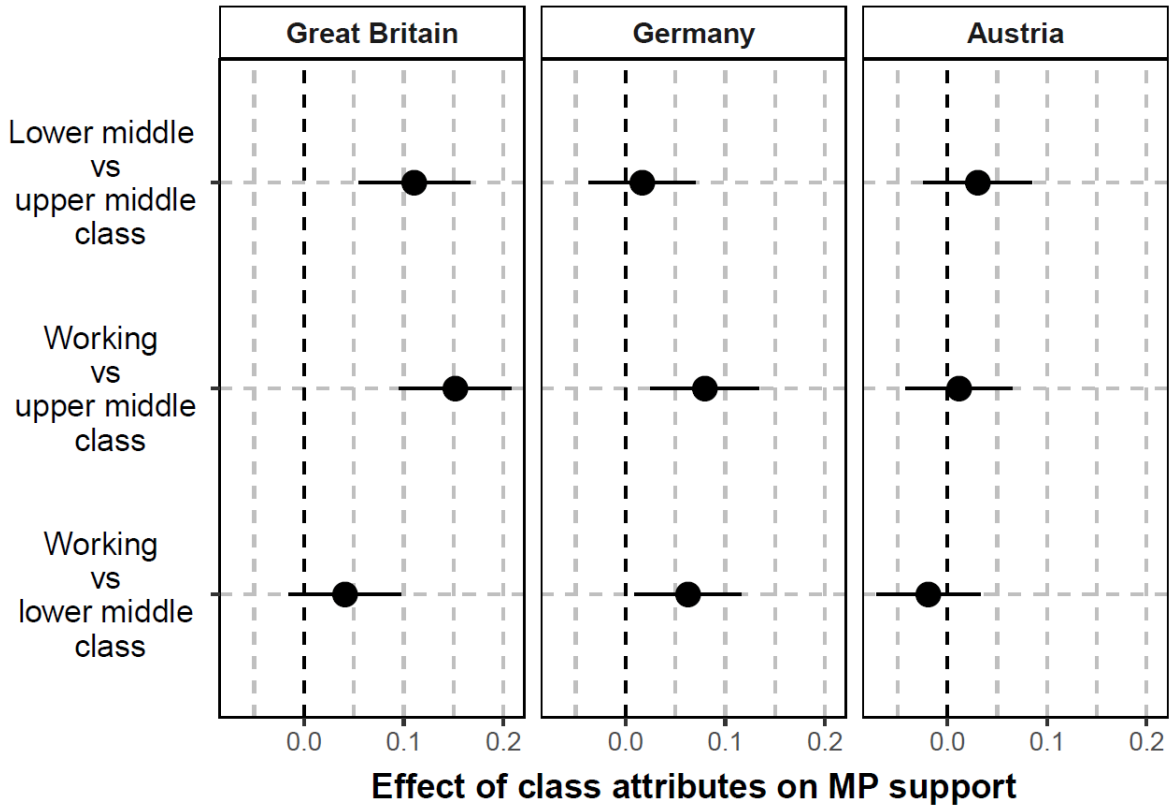
To assess whether voters in Britain, Germany and Austria care about politician class roots, we first examine the AMCE of the MP class roots treatments in each country. We then provide evidence that class roots treatment effects are not artefacts of respondent reactions to particular exemplar parental occupations.

Figure 2 shows the estimated AMCEs of MP class roots in Great Britain, Germany, and Austria (estimates for all remaining MP attributes are shown in Appendix Table A.1).

Among British voters (left panel) we find evidence that class roots do affect voter evaluations of MPs, with voters preferring humble roots. Average ratings for MPs with lower-middle-class or working-class roots are significantly higher than for MPs with upper-middle-class roots. Given the types of jobs we class as ‘lower-middle’ occupations - secretaries, nurses, policeman, insurance sales agent - these are also clearly more ‘humble’ professions than those in the upper-middle category (professors, judges, GPs). The difference in average preference for MPs with lower-middle-class and working-class roots is smaller and non-significant.

These effects are also substantively important. While a 0.15 effect is small relative to 1-7 scale and relative to the standard deviation (1.6), various attributes have effects of a comparable size to that of humble roots, i.e. between about .1 and .2 (see Appendix Table A.1). Specifically, working-class roots has a similar effect as having moved to the voters' region rather than growing up there (0.11). Working-class roots also have a similar effect as dissenting against the party line (Campbell et al., 2019a) or being a moderate. National versus local policy focus and ideology also have similar, if slightly larger effects. Importantly, class background has a similar effect on preferences as MP occupation (Table A.2); however, we note that this varies less strongly in terms of class background, as most prior jobs we list are solidly middle class.

Figure 2: Effects of MP class roots in Study 1



Note: This plot shows estimated AMCEs of the randomly assigned MP class roots attribute on MP ratings for Great Britain (N=1,988), Germany (N=1,992), and Austria (N=2,164). MP ratings are measured on a 7-point scale (from 1 ('very unhappy') to 7 ('very happy')). Estimates are based on an OLS regression with clustered standard errors. Horizontal bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Surveys were carried out by SSI in March 2017.

German voters (middle panel) are also found to prefer MPs with more humble class roots. The AMCE of an MP having working- as opposed to upper-middle-class roots is again positive and significant, but is roughly halved in terms of magnitude compared to that in the Britain. The effect of working- compared to upper-middle-class is 0.08 (compared to a standard deviation of about 1.6). The effect is smaller than that of voting against the party line (.6), but similar to that of having been born in the region (0.10) and of having a local policy focus (0.07). As in Britain, the effects of class background are similar to those of MP occupation. Unlike in Britain, the AMCE of an MP having lower-middle as opposed to

upper-middle-class roots is non-significant. However, the AMCE of an MP having working-class as opposed to lower-middle-class roots is significant and positive.

In contrast, we find little evidence that Austrian voters (right panel) distinguish between politicians based on class roots. The estimated AMCES for all MP class roots treatments are small in magnitude and non-significant.

The analysis so far collapses the various parental occupation treatments into the three occupational class categories. Does this mask substantial heterogeneity in the way voters respond to particular parental occupations? Figure 3 shows on the x-axis the estimated AMCE for each of the 18 possible pairs of parental occupations that respondents' saw in the experiments (see Appendix Table A.2 for full results). The reference category are parents who worked as politician and GP. The shading of each dot indicates our class coding of the occupations: working, lower-middle, or upper-middle class. Figure 3 shows some variation between occupations within each class, yet provides little indication that any specific pair of occupations is particularly influential in determining the class effects observed above.

In sum, we find that British and German voters do care about politician class roots, - operationalised in terms of their parents' occupations - and tend to prefer politicians with more humble roots. In contrast, we find little evidence that Austrian voters evaluate a politician differently depending on their class roots. The finding that preferences for politicians with working-class roots are present in Britain accord with the idea that class-based judgements are prevalent in more unequal societies. However, the differences between German and Austrian voters' preferences for class roots is harder to explain as a function of differences in social and economic inequality, as both societies exhibit relatively similar levels of inequalities. We are, however, confident that the null finding in Austria is not an artefact of differences in the extent to which Austrian respondents engaged with the experiment, since the AMCE estimates obtained from the Austrian sample for other MP

attributes are comparable to those from the German and British samples (see Appendix Table A.1).[12]

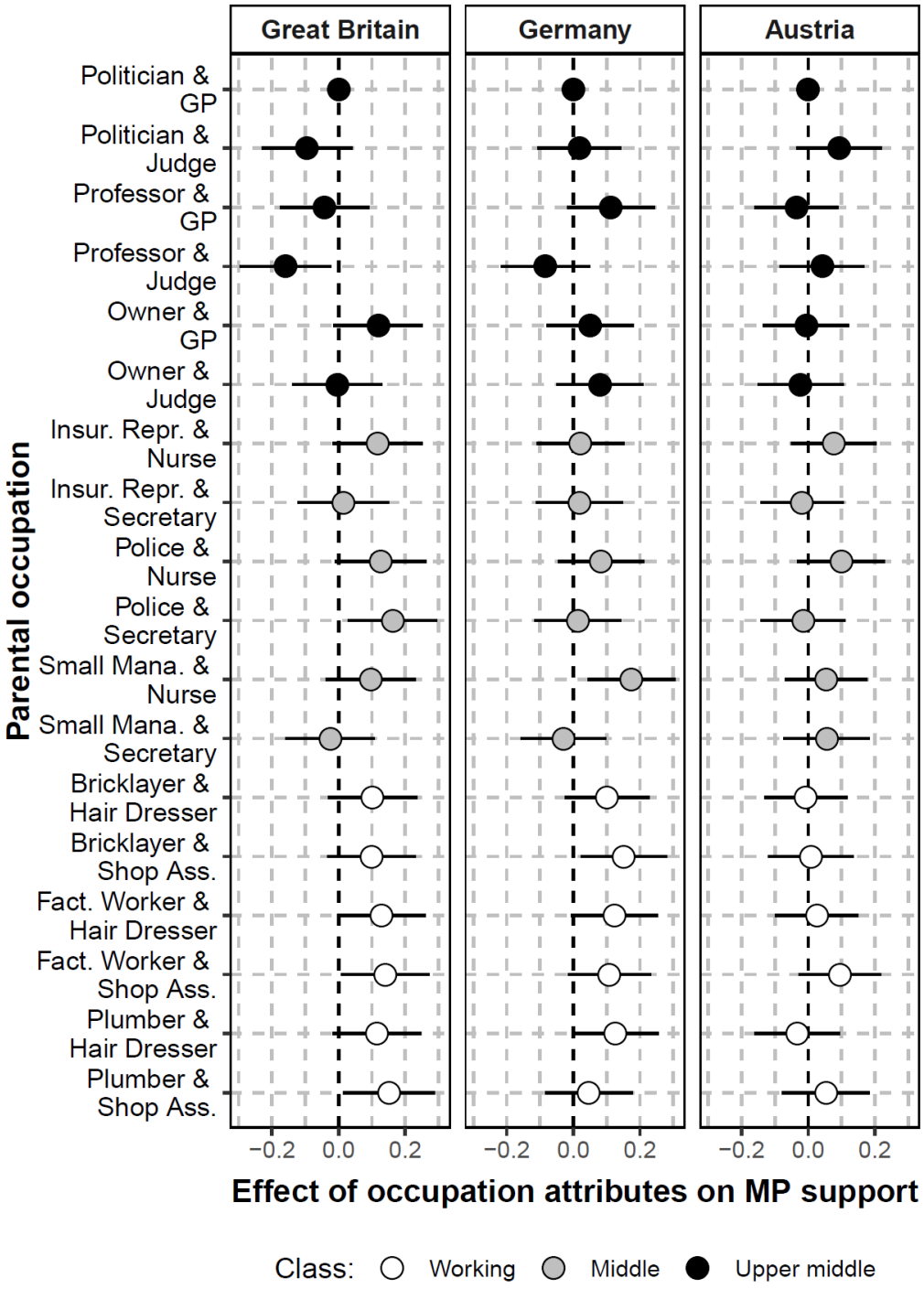
5. Study 2: Why do voters care about class roots?

In our second study we focus on explaining British and German voters' average preference for more humble class roots. Specifically, we report on additional conjoint experiments fielded in both countries and designed to discriminate between the 'baseline class bias', 'class affinity bias' and 'social mobility signal' accounts. These follow-up experiments were fielded in YouGov non-probability, quota-based omnibus surveys to 2,017 British and 2,000 in German respondents in March 2018. More details on the YouGov samples can be found in Appendix E. Respondents completed five conjoint tasks. In each one they were again asked to rate pairs of hypothetical politicians whose attributes varied randomly.

To discriminate between the social mobility mechanism and class bias explanations for voters' preferences over class roots, we must compare voters' evaluations of politicians who vary in terms of class trajectory - their combination of class roots and current own occupational class. The experimental design in Study 1 was not suited for this because in that design a politician's class roots effectively determines their class trajectory: all hypothetical MPs were assigned own occupations prior to becoming an MP that were either middle- or upper-middle-class, and by virtue of being incumbent MPs, all arguably had an upper-middle-class current occupation anyway; thus any politician with workingclass roots in Study 1 had by definition climbed the class ladder. In contrast, our Study 2 design asks respondents to rate politicians who vary meaningfully in terms of their class trajectory. To do so, we ask

[12] We also checked whether this finding results from the inclusion of the populist-right FPÖ. A regression without the FPÖ (and without any pair including the FPÖ) shows however the same insignificant effect of class roots.

Figure 3: Effects of parental occupation in Study 1



Note: This plot shows estimated AMCEs of the randomly assigned MP class roots attribute on MP ratings for Great Britain (N=1,988), Germany (N=1,992), and Austria (N=2,164). MP ratings are measured on a 7-point scale (from 1 ('very unhappy') to 7 ('very happy')). Estimates are based on an OLS regression with clustered standard errors. Horizontal bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Surveys were carried out by SSI in March 2017.

Table 1: Politician class trajectory treatment as a function of class roots and own class combinations in Study 2

	Candidate's current own occupation	
Candidate class roots	Working	Upper-middle
Working	Working-class stayer (observed)	Class climber (observed)
Upper-middle	Class faller (not observed)	Upper-middle stayer (observed)

about candidates rather than MPs since sitting MPs have arguably already climbed the class ladder.

Table 1 summarises the class trajectory treatment. So that we could meaningfully vary their current occupational class, politicians were characterised as candidates standing for election rather than - as in Study 1 - incumbent MPs. A candidate's own occupational class (columns) could be either working or upper-middle, as could a candidate's class roots (rows). This yields four logically feasible class trajectories, denoted in each cell. Those trajectories on the main diagonal involve no class transition across generations: in the upper-left cell, 'working-class stayers' whose parents had working-class jobs and who now themselves hold a working-class occupation; in the lower-right cell, 'upper middle stayers' whose parents had upper-middle-class jobs and who now themselves hold upper-middleclass jobs. Trajectories in o_-diagonal cells do involve a class transition: in the upper-right cell, 'class climber' candidates whose parents had working-class occupations but who now themselves have upper-middle-class jobs; in the lower-left cell, 'class fallers' whose parents had upper-middle-class jobs but who now themselves have working-class jobs. In the experiments a hypothetical candidate could have one of the first three of these four class trajectories:

'working-class stayer', 'upper-middle stayer' and 'class climber'. We omitted 'social fallers' as such a combination risked appearing unrealistic to respondents.[13]

The crucial comparison for distinguishing between the social mobility and class bias accounts is that between the two candidate types listed along the top row of Table 1 (working-class stayers vs class climbers). If voters care mainly about class roots as a signal of social mobility, then in the experiment they should rate class climber candidates higher than working-class stayers: both candidate types have working-class roots but only the class climbers have shown themselves to be socially mobile.

Comparison of outcomes across the bottom-right and top-left cells of Table 1 (working-class stayers vs upper-middle stayers) yields additional evidence to distinguish the social mobility and remaining class bias accounts. If voters care mainly about class roots as a signal of social mobility, they would have no reason to distinguish between upper-middle stayers and working-class stayers: neither candidate type has displayed more ability to climb the class ladder.

Comparing outcomes for cells down the right column of Table 1 (class climbers vs upper middle stayers) holds constant the current occupational class of the candidate as upper-middle class while varying the class roots of the candidate between working and upper-middle-class. This comparison serves as a form of replication check for the Study 1 comparison between an MP with working class origins and an MP with upper-middle class origins if one assumes that Study 1 respondents perceived all hypothetical politicians presented to them as having upper-middle class current occupations because those politicians were all serving MPs: if the assumption holds, then in both cases we are looking at the difference between politicians who, on the one hand, have working class parents and upper-

[13] It is likely that such candidates might be seen as incompetent or lacking ambition; such inferences might be usefully tested in future work.

middle class current occupations and, on the other, have upper-middle class parents and upper-middle class current occupations. If respondents in Study 2 rate class climbers higher than upper middle stayers, this would accord with the effects found in Study 1 for MPs with working class origins versus MPs with upper-middle class origins.

In addition to testing whether voters' preferences over politician class roots arise because of social mobility inferences, Study 2 is also designed to test whether these preferences arise due to a baseline class bias in society or due to class affinity biases. To discriminate between the latter two accounts, we examine whether the effects of the politician class trajectory treatment vary according to respondents' own class self-identities.

As discussed earlier, class identity rather than objective social class is likely to be key for affinity biases. If baseline biases dominate, we should observe relatively homogeneous treatment effects. If affinity biases dominate we should observe that treatment effects are strongly conditional on respondents' own class identity.

5.1 Experimental design

As in Study 1, class information was conveyed to respondents solely via mention of the occupation of the candidate and their parents and we used multiple occupational exemplars for each class. Specifically, a candidate's class trajectory was operationalised with the following possible sentences:

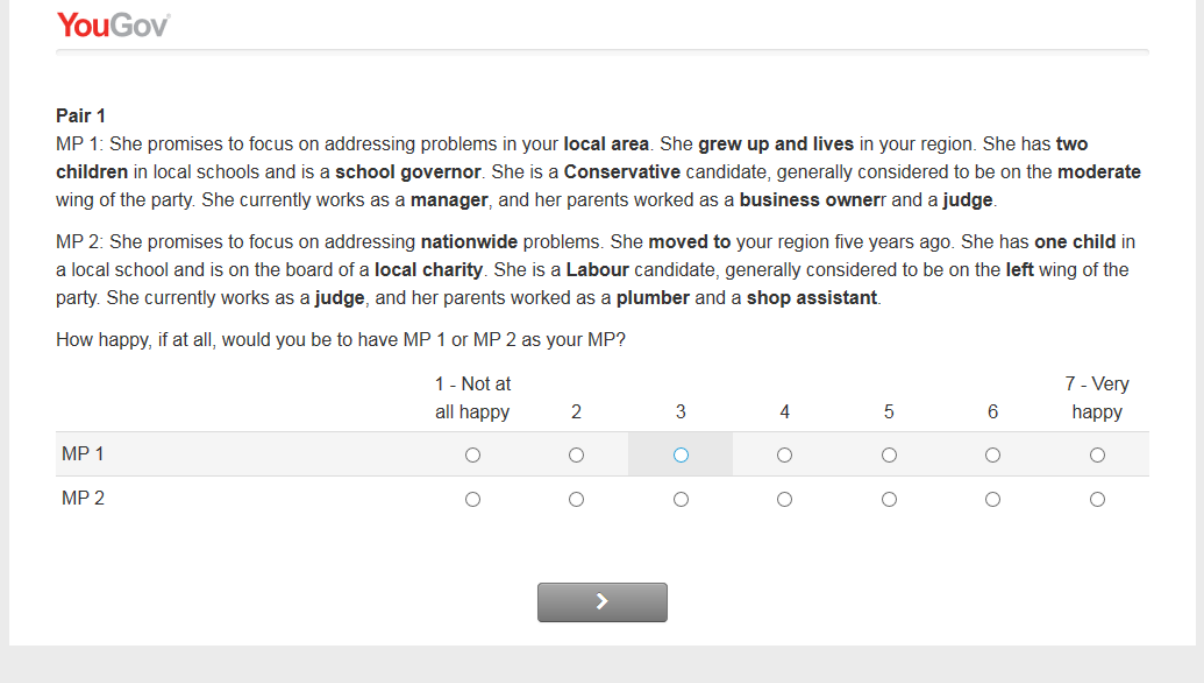
- Working-class stayer: '...currently works as a [factory worker/shop assistant], and [his/her] parents worked as [bricklayer/plumber] and a [shop assistant/hair dresser].'
- Class climber: '...currently works as a [manager/judge/GP], and [his/her] parents worked as [bricklayer/plumber] and a [shop assistant/hair dresser].'
- Upper-middle stayer: '...currently works as a [manager/judge/GP], and [his/her] parents worked as a [manager/business owner] and a [judge/GP].'

Candidates were randomly assigned to one of these three treatments. Within each set of brackets, each occupation was drawn with equal probability.

In addition to candidates' class trajectory, the Study 2 experiment also varied several attributes also included in Study 1: sex, political orientation, regional background and local focus.[14] Because respondents were presented with candidates rather than incumbent MPs in this experiment, local focus is worded in prospective terms (candidates either 'promises to focus on addressing problems in your local area' or 'on addressing nationwide problems'). For regional background, candidates either grew up and live in the respondents' own region, or moved their five years ago. We also included two additional attributes: local activity, operationalised as whether a candidate is locally active as school governor, in a local charity or on the local council; and number of children which varied between one and two. These were included in order to flesh out the candidate biographies as other aspects included in Study 1, particularly dissent, only apply to sitting MPs.

[14] The party loyalty attribute from Study 1 was dropped as first-time candidates are unlikely to have publicly criticized their party and cannot have voted against them.

Figure 4: Screenshot of Study 2 conjoint design (in Great Britain)



After reading the candidate descriptions, respondents were asked to record their overall evaluation of each candidate on a 1-7 scale. Figure 4 shows a screenshot of an example choice task from the British version of the experiment.

We measured respondent class identity after respondents completed the conjoint tasks. Of course, asking about class identity post-experiment introduces the possibility that reported class identities may be influenced by the experimental treatments, and therefore of posttreatment biases in the part of the analysis where we condition on the resulting measure. However, we opted to do so because asking about a respondents' class identity before the conjoints would have risked priming respondents to think about class (and class affinity in particular) when rating hypothetical candidates, which would risk the validity of the entire experiment. We sought to ameliorate any effects of the experimental treatments on the class identity measure by placing a number of unrelated 'buffer' questions from other YouGov clients (five in Germany, eight in Britain) in between the conjoint tasks and the class identity question. Furthermore, in the Appendix we show that the candidate class trajectory treatments

have no significant effect on respondent class identity. Finally, for the British sample YouGov also provided a measure of respondent social grade taken pre-survey, and we are able to show that whether we interact our candidate class treatments with this this pre-treatment proxy measure of respondent objective occupational class or with our post-treatment measure of respondent class identity, we obtain similar substantive results.

The respondent class identity question was: 'Today there is a lot of talk about social classes. Which class do you think you belong to?' Answer categories were (a) Working class, (b) Lower-middle class, (c) Middle class, (d) Upper-middle class, (e) Upper class. Due to the small number of responses who class themselves as upper-middle or upper class, we create a merged category containing all respondents identifying as middle class or above.

5.2 Results

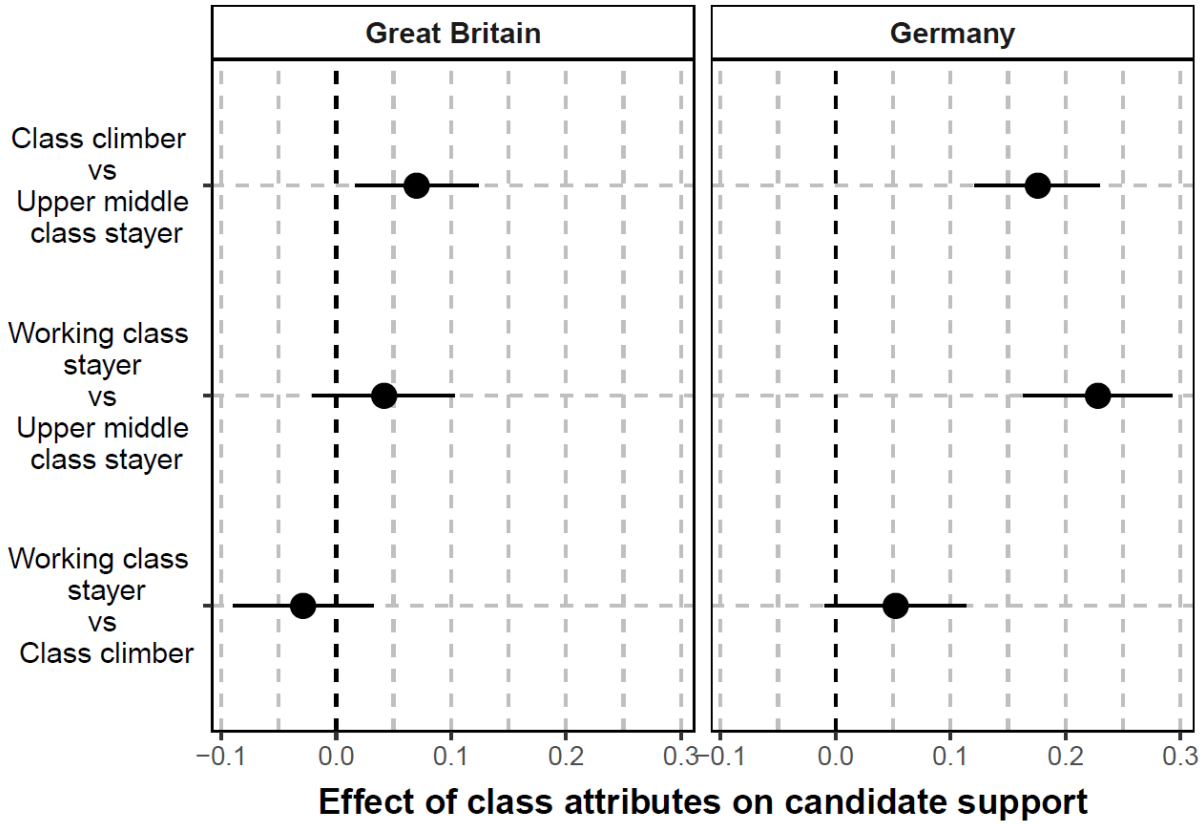
We again estimate AMCEs of candidate attributes by regressing respondent ratings of candidates on indicators for attribute levels, clustering standard errors by respondent.

Main class trajectory effects. Figure 5 shows the estimated AMCEs of the candidate class trajectory attributes for Britain (left panel) and Germany (right panel). (We show in Figure B.2 in the Appendix that, as in Study 1, the estimated effects of these occupational class treatments are not an artefact of the way respondents reacted to particular exemplar occupations used in the experiment.) The top estimate gives the average effect on voter evaluations of a candidate being a class climber (parental occupation working-class, current occupation upper-middle-class) rather than an upper-middle stayer (parental and current occupation both upper-middle-class). This is similar to the findings in Study 1, which used MPs rather than candidates. Consistent with our results there, we find here that voters in both Britain and Germany significantly prefer class climbers to upper-middle stayers: holding

politicians' own occupational class constant as upper-middle class, voters on average evaluate those with working-class roots significantly more favourably than those with upper-middle-class roots. Given that these results emerge from an altered experimental design run on different samples using a different survey company, our confidence in the main findings of Study 1 are enhanced.[15]

[15] The comparison between Study 1 and Study 2 results here assumes that respondents in Study 1 effectively perceive all hypothetical politicians in that experiment as having upper-middle class current occupations because they were all characterised as serving MPs. If the assumption is wring and instead Study 1 respondents perceived current poiltician occupational class based on the stated job they did immediately before entering parliament, it is more appropriate to subset Study 1 observations to those where the MP has an upper-middle class occupation prior to entering parliament and then compare the effect of an MP having working class origins vs upper-middle class origins for this subset to the Study 2 effect of a candidate being a class climber vs upper-middle class stayer (estimated across all Study 2 observations). When we subset Study 1 observations in this way the estimated effect of working class origins versus upper-middle class origins is 0.12 (CI:0.1-0.14) for the UK and 0.11 (CI:0.09 0.13) for Germany. These results are identical in direction and similar in magnitude to the Study 2 effect of being a class climber versus an upper-middle class stayer.

Figure 5: Effects of candidate class trajectory in Study 2



Note: This plot shows estimated AMCEs of the randomly assigned MP class roots attribute on MP ratings for Great Britain (N = 2017), Germany (N = 2000). MP ratings are measured on a 7-point scale (from 1 ('very unhappy') to 7 ('very happy')). Estimates are based on an OLS regression with clustered standard errors. Horizontal bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Surveys were carried out by YouGov in March 2018.

The bottom AMCE estimate in Figure 5 is key for testing the social mobility explanation for British and German voters' preferences over class roots. It shows the estimated effect of a candidate being a working-class stayer (parental and current occupation both working-class) versus a class climber (parental occupation working-class, current occupation upper-middle-class). In both the British and German cases this estimated effect is non-signi_cant. This provides little evidence that the social mobility explanation is dominant, since across candidates' with working-class roots, voters do not clearly prefer those candidates who had climbed the class ladder to take an upper-middle-class job.

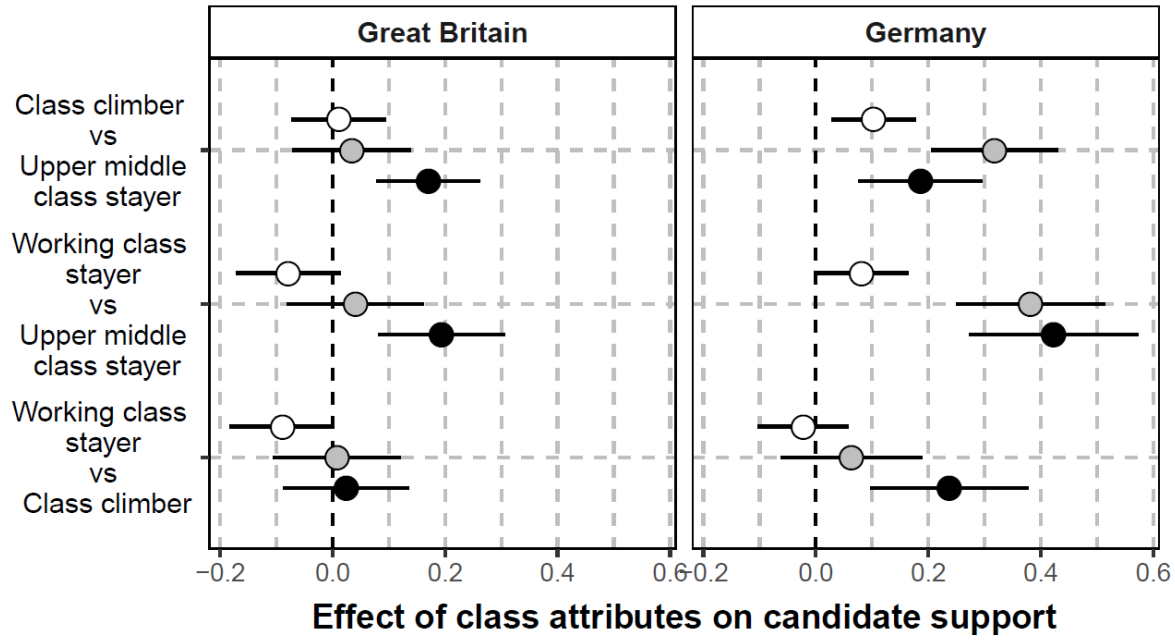
Although in Britain the middle AMCE estimate in Figure 5 is non-significant, in Germany it is significant and suggests that voters prefer candidates who are working-class stayers to those who are upper-middle-class stayers. This is hard for the social mobility account to explain, as candidates whose current and parental occupations are both working-class are no more socially mobile than candidates whose current and parental occupations are both upper-middle-class.

Heterogeneity by respondent class identity. To distinguish between the class affinity and baseline class bias accounts, we interact the candidate class trajectory treatment with our measure of respondent class identity. F-tests indicate that these interactions are signi_cant in both Britain ($F = 4:14$, $p < 0:01$) and Germany ($F = 6:65$, $p < 0:01$), indicating that respondents with different class identities do react differently to candidate class background. Figure 6 summarises the nature of these differences, and provides support for the class affinity account.[16] In Britain, the effect of a candidate having working-class roots rather than upper-middle- class roots while holding candidate own occupational class constant (the class climber vs upper-middle stayer comparison) is significantly greater among voters who identify as working class rather than middle class or above. The effect of simultaneously switching a candidate's class roots and own occupational class from upper-middle to working class (working-class stayer vs upper-middle stayer) is also significantly greater among working-class voters, although the effect of switching only candidate's own occupational class from upper-middle to working (working-class stayer vs class climber) does not differ significantly by respondent class. In Germany, the pattern of differences in point estimates is similar, although the effect of switching candidate class roots from upper-middle to working-class (class climber vs upper-middle stayer) does not differ significantly across respondents

[16] Figure 6 is based on Table B.2 in the Appendix.

who are working or middle class and above, and the effect of switching only candidate's own occupational class from upper-middle to working (working-class stayer vs class climber) does. In both countries, estimated effects for respondents who identity as lower-middle-class generally lie in between the estimated effects for respondents who identify as working and middle class or above.

Figure 6: Effects of candidate class trajectory by respondent class identity



Note: This plot shows estimated AMCEs of the randomly assigned MP class roots attribute on MP ratings for Great Britain (N=2017), Germany (N=2000). MP ratings are measured on a 7-point scale (from 1 ('very unhappy') to 7 ('very happy')). Estimates are based on an OLS regression with clustered standard errors. Horizontal bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Surveys were carried out by YouGov in March 2018.

In general, these patterns of heterogeneity in effects support the class affinity account: more working-class voters tend react more positively when a candidate has more working-class markers, whether in terms of their class roots or their own immediate occupational class. However, class affinity is primarily a working-class phenomenon, with little evidence

that middle-class respondents favour in-group candidates. However, this could of course be driven by the fact that most respondents are middle class rather than upper-middle class, so it is not easy to get a perfect test of this with the data here. In addition, it should be noted that in Germany, the estimates for the class climber vs upper-middle stayer suggest that even voters who self-identify as middle class or above still display significant preference for upper-middle-class candidates who have working-class roots over those who have upper-middle-class roots. This suggests that there may be some residual mobility bias or a more pervasive baseline pro-working-class bias that stretches to this group of voters in Germany.

In the appendix (Figure B.1) we show that in Britain, the estimated heterogeneity in effects is substantively similar when we use objective proxies for respondent class (social grade) measured pretreatment, rather than post-treatment measures of respondent class identification. This allays concerns that these effects are driven by post-treatment biases. We also present results conditional on voter party identification in Appendix B. These show that centre-left voters respond positively to working-class politicians and centre-right voters to upper-middle-class politicians, perhaps due to remaining ideological signals or due to group affinity with politicians that are typical of the party brand.

6. Conclusion

Motivated by concerns about the descriptive representation of different social classes and its potential consequences, a growing literature examines voters' preferences concerning the social class of their political representatives (Carnes and Lupu, 2016; Carnes, 2013; Campbell and Cowley, 2014a,b; Wüest and Pontussen, 2018). This research has focused primarily on preferences concerning politicians' own immediate class markers (such as occupation prior to entering politics). In this paper we have shown that voters also care about politician class roots and have provided evidence as to why they do so. In Study 1 we drew on conjoint

survey experiments fielded in three West European democracies and for two of those democracies - Britain and Germany - found clear evidence voters do care about politician class roots and prefer more humble roots. Follow-up experiments within Britain and Germany (Study 2) suggested that these preferences are driven more by class biases - and, in particular, affinity biases among working-class voters - rather than being indirect preferences that result from inferences about politician quality or ideology.

By providing evidence that voters in two large European democracies care directly about the class roots of their politicians, we document another way in which social class considerations continue to matter for modern voters. In this sense, our findings provide further support for those who argue that social class in general is still highly relevant for politics in Western democracies (Evans and Tilley, 2017; Oesch and Rennwald, 2018).

However, compared to existing evidence concerning voters' preferences for politicians' immediate class markers, our findings regarding preferences for politician class roots have distinct and important implications for debates about descriptive representation. In particular, there is a strong case that descriptive representation should be evaluated with respect to both the immediate class markers of political elites and their class roots. This is because - as we have shown is the case in Britain and Germany - voters may care about class roots as well as immediate class markers, and because the distribution of class roots among legislators in a parliament can plausibly differ quite markedly from 31 the distribution of the same legislators' own immediate class markers. If the class roots of modern political elites are more varied than is the social class implied by their more immediate class markers, this may help to mitigate any popular dissatisfaction arising from poor descriptive representation with respect to the latter characteristic. Indeed, as long as intergenerational class mobility remains substantial, particularly among MPs, then descriptive representation by class may be less of a problem than hitherto assumed.

However, class roots may also be a misleading guide to MP behaviour and substantive representation. As Carnes and Sadin (2015) show, class climbers often fail to act in the interest of working-class voters, at least in the US. In contrast, O'Grady (2019) shows that British MPs who themselves come from humbler backgrounds do substantively represent working-class interests. Our findings also imply that we need more data. Political scientists in many countries have collected good measures of the immediate class markers of parliamentarians, meaning that descriptive representation with respect to this characteristic is well documented. However, apart from a few notable exceptions (Carnes and Sadin, 2015; Serrano and Berúdez, 2018), there is, for most countries, much less systematic data on parliamentarians' class roots. Our findings emphasise the need for future efforts to gather such data.

The cross-country differences in average class roots preferences that we uncovered in Study 1 also raise important questions concerning how national context shapes popular preferences over politician class roots - and potentially politician social class more generally. In particular, existing research would suggest that variations in class considerations across countries should be a function of socio-structural features of a society. Yet we find that, despite ostensible similarities in the characteristics of both societies, the effects of politician class roots are quite different in Germany and Austria: in the former, voters display an average preference for humble class roots, whereas in the latter there is little evidence of any average preference. These findings highlight the need for further research, drawing on additional country case studies, into how broader social contexts shape voters' attitudes toward politician social class. For those engaging in such endeavours our particular experimental approach provides a reasonably portable template.

Future research could also assess the robustness of our findings when politician class roots are operationalised with different indicators - such as type of schooling or parental

income - and, where resources permit, a panel design could be used to obtain pretreatment measures of respondent class identity in a pre-experimental wave. Moreover, it is important also to explore intersections between class, sex and ethnicity among both voters and representatives and how these influence voter evaluations (Barnes and Holman, 2018; Cassese and Barnes, 2019; Junn, 2017).

Additional studies should also vary the information provided to respondents. For example, future work could examine whether providing information about being from a humble background is helpful compared to no information about class background. Our study compares working-class to higher-class backgrounds, but in many cases voters may have no such information, and this comparison is also important if we are to assess whether humble backgrounds are helpful. Moreover, our study tried to minimize inferences about ideology by explicitly including this attribute. Yet, ideology may be a key cue taken from class background (Carnes and Sadin, 2015). Hence, our design is conservative since one key inference voters take from class is reduced. Future work should examine how class roots shape preferences by creating ideological cues.

Moreover, as with all experiments, we have bought cleaner identification of the effects of our treatment of interest but at the price of sacrificing a degree of external validity. That price has, we would argue, been mitigated by our use of conjoint experiments, which ask respondents to evaluate more realistic, multi-faceted politicians. But carefully designed observational studies examining voter evaluations of - or electoral support for - real politicians who vary in their class roots are still an important complement to the type of experimental evidence presented here.

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