Establishment Responses to Populist Challenges: Evidence from Legislative Speech

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Prepared for presentation at the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Danish Political Science Association

This version: November 19, 2018

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In recent years, many political systems have witnessed the rise of right-wing populist parties, sometimes challenging foundational norms of the established political system. In the face of such challenges, establishment actors face an important choice: whether to employ a strategy of disparagement, i.e. seeking to portray the challenger as democratically illegitimate, or engaging with it on par with other parties. Existing research into this choice examines only party system- or party-level variation. This paper revisits an oft-studied case in the literature, responses in the Danish party system to the entry of the right-wing populist Danish People's Party. I take a text as data approach, applying machine learning methods to around 16,000 paragraphs of legislative speech to measure responses at the level of individual speeches. Using this novel approach, which allows for a uniquely granular characterization of responses to right-wing populist parties, I uncover systematic individual-level, within-party variation, unexamined in the existing literature. The results suggest an important role for individual-level factors in explaining establishment responses to populist challenges.

Keywords: populist radical right, representational style, immigration, text as data

Political history is littered with phrases later regretted. Consider three pertinent examples: First, at a fundraiser on September 10, 2016, then-nominee for President Hillary Clinton offered the following assessment of the candidacy of Donald Trump: "you could put half of Trump's supporters into what I call the basket of deplorables. Right? The racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic — you name it." (Chozick, 2016). Second, in an April 2006 interview, UK's Tory party leader David Cameron dismissed the populist radical right UK Independence Party (UKIP) by describing its members as "fruitcakes, loonies, and closet racists" (Ford and Goodwin, 2014, p. 71). Lastly, in a 1999 parliamentary debate, Denmark's social democratic Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, speaking directly to Pia Kjærsgaard, the leader of the then-ascendant populist radical right Danish People's Party, declared that "no matter how much effort you exert, in my eyes you will never be housetrained" (Downs, 2002).

The most immediately apparent common feature of the three statements by Clinton, Cameron, and Rasmussen is the subsequent political success of their targets. Two months after Clinton's speech, Donald Trump had won the election, with the "deplorables" remark having become a rallying cry among his supporters. A decade after Cameron's comment, UKIP led the Leave campaign in the UK's Brexit referendum, setting in motion UK's exit from the European Union and ending Cameron's political career. And in the first election after Rasmussen's dismissal of the DPP as "not housetrained", the DPP surged to 12 percent electoral support, effectively keeping the Social Democrats out of power for a decade.

But the three remarks share an additional, possibly more important feature. They all represent instances of a particular political moment: a populist radical right actor appears on the scene, and established political elites respond by dismissing the newcomer as violating widely shared democratic norms.

In this paper, I study how individual establishment actors choose this response. I build on a rich existing literature dedicated to this question at the party level, but use new tools to characterize response strategies with a previously unseen level of granularity. Focusing on an oft-studied case in this literature, the Danish People's Party (DPP), I uncover considerable within-party variation in response strategies. Specifically, I find that within parties, older members of parliament (MP's) are significantly more likely to disparage the DPP. I also find tentative evidence suggesting that MP's with a university-level educational background are more likely to select a disparagement strategy.

1 Understanding Establishment Responses to Populist Challenges

Several political systems in the Western world have seen the sudden rise of populist movements in recent decades. Among these, arguably the most prominent is a party family often referred to as 'populist radical right' (PRR) (Ivarsflaten, 2008; Mudde, 2010), members of which include France's *Front National*, UK's *United Kingdom Independence Party*, Germany's *Alternative für Deutchland* (Akkerman, de Lange and Rooduijn, 2016). PRR parties are typically defined as parties combining populist, nativist, and authoritarian ideas (Mudde, 2007). This ideational mix has proven to be a strikingly politically popular recipe. In a 2017 tallying of the political performance of PRR parties, they received around 16 percent of the overall vote in the most recent elections across Europe, up from just 5 percent two decades earlier (Tartar, 2017).

Political science has responded to this trend by producing an abundance of research into the causes and consequences of the political success of PRR parties. The bulk of this research has examined the electoral causes of PRR success, with Betz (1993) famously identifying "losers of modernization" as the key PRR constituency, a theme that recurs in contemporary scholarly debates on economic (Colantone and Stanig, 2018) contra cultural (Norris and Inglehart, 2018) causes of PRR support.

Another literature, more directly pertinent to the subject of this paper but also more limited in scope, studies how political systems respond to PRR entry. In an influential early study, Downs (2001) outlines a "fundamental choice" for establishment parties faced with an electorally successful PRR party: *engage* or *disengage* with the newcomer. This broad distinction has recurred in the later literature in varying forms. Reviewing theories of establishment party response, Heinze

(2018) identifies a total of six subtypes of the disengagement strategy and two subtypes of the engagement strategy. Since the literature uses varying labels for some of these subtypes, the total number of terms for party strategies is even greater.

1.1 Party-level effects of PRR success

This conceptual clutter notwithstanding, the literature has settled on some stylized facts about establishment responses to PRR success. First of all, in spite of initial resistance, mainstream parties tend to accommodate the PRR position over time. For example, Meguid (2005) argues that mainstream parties respond to the entry of niche (e.g., PRR) parties either by repositioning or changing the salience or issue ownership of the niche party's key issue. As a result, even in cases where mainstream parties successfully defuse the PRR's support, they do so by elevating its signature political issue, immigration, to the top of the political agenda. Similarly, in a comparative case study of Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and Austria, Bale et al. (2010) argue that from the 1980's to the 2000's, Denmark's Social Democrats went from an initial strategy of holding firm on its initial pro-immigration stance over trying to defuse the issue to eventually adopting an anti-immigration position. Most recently, Abou-Chadi and Krause (2018) use a regression discontinuity design to demonstrate a rightward shift on immigration among mainstream parties in response to PRR parties gaining representation in parliament.

Another stylized fact emerging from the literature is that ostracization of PRR parties generally appears to be an ineffective political strategy. Rather than merely trying to defuse issue conflict with PRR parties (Bale et al., 2010), establishment parties can choose a strategy of *ostracization*, proclaiming the PRR party to be "beyond the pale" and hence outside the scope of legitimate political coalition-building (van Spanje, 2010). A typical consequence of ostracization strategies is the erection of a "cordon sanitaire" around PRR parties, excluding their seats from legislative coalition-building (Downs, 2002). Although the cordon sanitaire strategy effectively blocks PRR parties from obtaining legislative influence, the empirical record suggests ostracized parties suffer no electoral costs (Spanje and Brug, 2007; Akkerman and Rooduijn, 2015), although there is some evidence they lose votes when mainstream parties simultaneously mimic their policy positions (van Spanje, 2018).

These stylized facts represent important insights on establishment responses to PRR entry. However, in highlighting these aspects, the literature inevitably brackets others. Specifically, a unifying feature of this literature is that it consistently theorizes responses to PRR entry in terms of party-level strategic concerns. As a consequence, this theoretical focus discounts within-party variation between individual legislators. Here, I argue that there are reasons to believe there is important variation within parties, effectively overlooked in the existing literature.

1.2 Establishment responses as individual, moralized attitudes

The first reason to expect there to be individual-level variation in response strategies is that legislators' representational styles generally tend to vary in meaningful ways. In Mayhew's (1974) famous characterization, legislators are "single-minded seekers of reelection": individual legislators' efforts to cultivate a personal vote demonstrate that they are not merely mindless executors of party strategy. Previous work using text as data methods finds rich variation in representational style in the US Congress (Grimmer, 2010; Grimmer, Messing and Westwood, 2012), and within-party variation in representational styles has also been found in European parliamentary systems (Tavits, 2009).

Secondly, not only is there potentially room to maneuver for individual legislators, deciding how to respond to a PRR party is widely understood to be a profoundly moral choice. Establishment politicians often explicitly define PRR challengers as morally objectionable – a salient recent example being Hillary Clinton's "deplorables" remark referenced above. One indicator of the strong moral dimension in views of PRR actors is that rhetoric attacking PRR parties is infused with cleanliness and contamination metaphors, a highly frequent correlate of moral cognition (Chapman et al., 2009). Consider for example Poul Nyrup Rasmussen's remark that the DPP is not "housetrained", a thinly veiled characterization of the DPP as filthy. In another speech from the data analyzed in this paper, an MP rejects a policy proposal from the DPP as "disgusting". Conversely, distancing oneself from PRR parties is associated with cleanliness: Downs (2001) cites a Belgian city councillor considering whether to cooperate with the PRR party *Vlaams Belang* weighing his the goal of political success against a desire to have "clean hands". Even the scholarly term "cordon sanitaire", used to denote a strategy of excluding PRR parties from influence (Downs, 2002), is itself a metaphor casting the PRR party as a contamination risk to the body politic.

Given this widespread explicit and implicit association of PRR parties with immorality and disgust, the rational-strategic framework employed by the existing literature is all the more paradoxical. Decisions whether to engage or disengage with PRR parties are typically rationalized in terms parties' strategic environments, but moralized political questions are particularly unlikely to be decided in terms of a strategic calculus (Ryan, 2017). As a consequence, compared to non-moralized issues, we should expect legislators who consider a PRR party to be morally objectionable to be more willing to let their individual predispositions dominate party interests in deciding how to respond.

1.3 Using text as data to understand response strategies

One likely reason for this paucity of individual-level perspectives is a lack of methodological tools for studying behavior at the level of individual legislators. In this paper, I tackle this problem by using text data from the parliamentary record combined with machine learning methods to characterize response strategies at the level of individual speeches. This constitutes a far more granular level of measurement than the existing literature, which measures strategies at the level of parties varying by decade (Bale et al., 2010), parties (van Spanje and Weber, 2017) or even entire party systems (Akkerman and Rooduijn, 2015). These previous studies rely on either qualitative case knowledge or expert surveys to assess party strategies. In contrast, the speech-level measurement in this paper allows for flexibly aggregating measurement to the level of arbitrarily granular time periods, parties, or individual legislators.

To be sure, in relying on text data, I also measure a specific type of political behavior, namely speech. The existing literature measures party strategies, a broader and rarely precisely defined concept which plausibly includes speeches, but also formal political acts such as parliamentary voting or coalition formation. Although parliamentary speech broadly speaking reflects party strategy, the former is not a one-to-one expression of the latter (Proksch and Slapin, 2012). Hence, this paper studies establishment responses to populist challenges at the rhetorical level rather than in terms of party strategy writ large. To keep this distinction clear, I use a new set of labels for the strategic options I analyze in this paper. On the one hand, legislators may respond to PRR party challenges with what I call a strategy of *engagement*, i.e. taking issue with the party's proposals as they would with other parties. On the other hand, they may choose a strategy of *disparagement*. I define disparagement here as *rhetoric portraying the party or its proposals as morally unacceptable or otherwise democratically illegitimate*. My measurement strategy, described in the next section, focuses on measuring the probability with which a given speech belongs in the latter category, the rarest of the two.

1.4 Expectations about individual-level correlates of disparagement

One implication of the existing literature's party-centric perspective on responses to PRR challengers is that there is little in the way of theorizing about individual-level variation in the existing literature. As a consequence, in the analysis below I examine how 'standard demographics' – age, gender, and education – are associated with disparagement. This widely used set of variables makes for a useful starting point for characterizing individual-level variation. Precisely because they are so widely used, theoretical expectations about how standard demographics relate to disparagement can draw on known correlations in the existing literature. Moreover, age, gender, and education are often provided in online biographies of elected officials, lowering the cost of obtaining the information. In later versions of this paper, I will extend the analysis to include political variables such as electoral pressure, measured as the vote share gained by the DPP in each MP's home district.

For the first of the three variables, age, I draw on the literature on the role of the antiprejudice norm in evaluations of right-wing populist parties (Ivarsflaten, Blinder and Ford, 2010), specifically the notion that a reputation of a fascist legacy for such parties can function as a contextual trigger of the antiprejudice norm (Blinder, Ford and Ivarsflaten, 2013). This dynamic is relevant in the Danish case, as the DPP initially struggled to dissociate itself from anti-democratic and overtly racist members (Rydgren, 2004). In the context of this study, I conjecture that personal exposure to Nazism will function as a similar type of contextual trigger. Hence, I expect that the older MP's in the data, born before or during Nazi Germany's occupation of Denmark 1940-1945, will be more prone to disparage the DPP.

For the second variable, gender, I rely on Harteveld and Ivarsflaten (2018), who show that compared to men, women have stronger motivations to control prejudice, and that in fact this difference fully explains the gender gap in PRR party support. Because women tend to have more strongly internalized the anti-prejudice norm, I expect women MP's to be more disparaging of the DPP. Lastly, for education, I draw on an abundance of studies finding a strong association between higher levels of education and dislike of PRR parties (for a review, see Arzheimer, 2016). Based on these findings, I expect MP's with higher levels of education to be more disparaging of the DPP.

2 Methods and Data

Measuring disparagement strategies at the speech level requires first obtaining a large data set of relevant political speeches and then a method for classifying speech as reflecting a disparagement vs. an engagement strategy. Here, I describe each of these two steps in that order.

2.1 Obtaining speech data

I obtain speech data from the parliamentary record of *Folketinget*. In contrast to other countries (see Rauh, de Wilde and Schwalbach, 2017), Denmark's parliamentary record is not available as a standalone digital text corpus. However, the texts are individually accessible online. In order to collect the speeches, I write a custom script that accesses and downloads the speeches individually, having obtained prior permission from *Folketinget*'s archive to do so.

The online speech archive contains texts from 1997 to 2004. Before 1997, speeches are not available in digital format. After 2004, speeches are accessible via a separate web interface. As shown below, response strategies converge over time, so there is limited variation after 2004. For this reason, I do not extend data collection beyond 2004. This data collection strategy yields the full text of 113,104 speeches. For each speech, I extract data on date, speaker, and speaker party from the HTML metadata.

2.2 *Selecting the unit of analysis*

Since the text data is obtained in the form a set of speeches, a natural starting point would be to consider speeches the unit of analysis. However, a significant drawback of such a strategy is that speech lengths are highly heterogeneous. The shortest speeches in the corpus are single-word utterances like “yes”, “no”, or “sorry”; the longest speech in the corpus consists of 6,835 words distributed across 206 sentences. Because of this heterogeneity, treating all speeches as comparable units of analysis would be unreasonable.

One way to address this heterogeneity would be to consider individual sentences instead of whole speeches as the unit of analysis. Breaking the corpus down to the sentence level yields a corpus of 1,015,322 sentences. However, standalone sentences are often highly ambiguous outsider their natural context, which makes manual coding difficult.

What is needed, then, is a unit of analysis at an intermediate level between whole speeches and individual sentences. To get such an intermediate level, I construct a corpus of ‘synthetic paragraphs’ consisting of speeches broken down into sequences of 3 to 5 contiguous sentences each. Each speech is broken down into paragraphs the lengths of which depend on which number divides the speech most evenly. The paragraph-level corpus consists of 315,203 paragraphs in total.

2.3 *Identifying relevant texts*

Of the 315,203 paragraphs in the total corpus, only a subset constitute speech directed at the DPP. Other paragraphs represent speech directed at other political actors, or speech from DPP representatives, neither of which are informative of responses to the DPP. In order to focus the data set on speech directed at the DPP, I subset the corpus of paragraphs to paragraphs mentioning the DPP or the name of any of its MP’s, and which are not spoken by a member of the DPP. This focused corpus, consisting of 15,867 paragraphs in total, is thus an approximation of all the political speech directed at the DPP between 1997 and 2004.

Figure 1 shows how the paragraphs are distributed over time. The number of paragraphs increases over time, reflecting incomplete data in the first part of the time interval.

2.4 *Classifying disparaging speech*

Manually assessing whether each of the 15,867 paragraphs is disparaging would be hugely time-consuming. Moreover, since the texts are not in English, distributed crowd-based coding is infea-

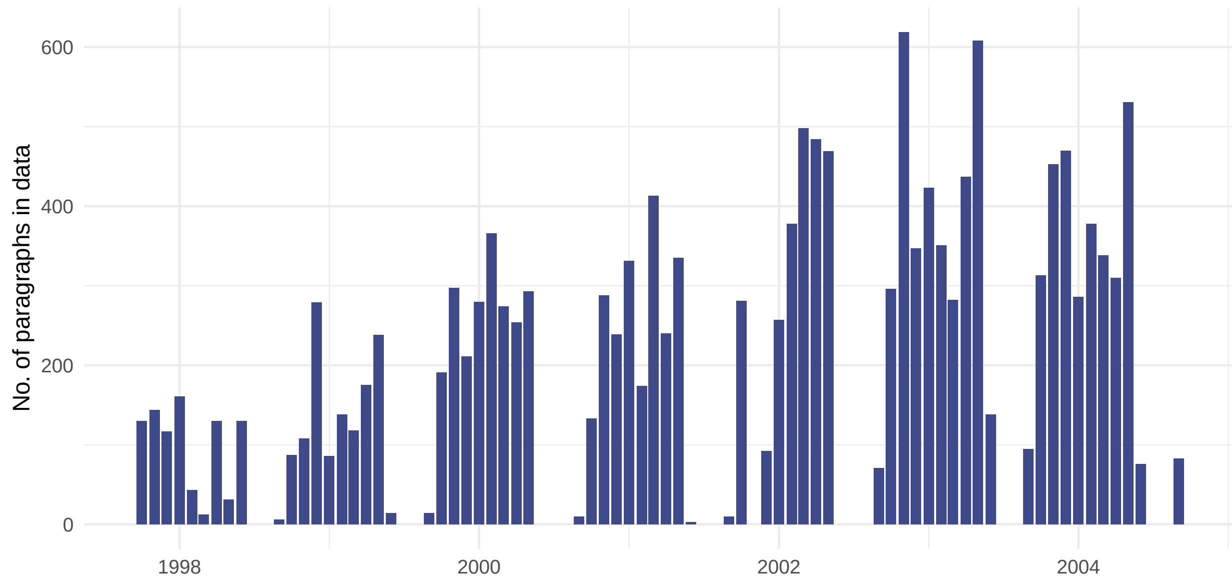

Figure 1: Number of paragraphs in data by month.

sible (though see de Vries, Schoonvelde and Schumacher, 2018). In order to use information from the full data set while keeping coding costs within feasibility, I manually code a random subset of the texts and use methods from the machine learning literature to characterize the content of uncoded texts. I begin by sampling 1,000 paragraphs. Since one of the aims of the analysis is to study trends in disparagement over time, and paragraphs are unevenly distributed across time, I stratify the sample by year. The sample thus draws 125 paragraphs from each of the 8 years in the full data set. I then manually code each of the 1,000 paragraphs according to whether they express disparagement towards the DPP or not.[1] I then use this set of dichotomous classifications of the sampled paragraphs to train a model to classify the remaining texts.

The machine learning literature on supervised learning offers several useful methods for classifying text based on a training set of manually coded texts (Grimmer and Stewart, 2013). Here, I follow the approach in Theocharis et al. (2016) and use regularized regression for classification. One advantage of regularized regression is its simplicity: regularized regression is essentially a standard regression with an penalty for model complexity included in the loss function (Hastie and Tibshirani, 2009). This makes regularized regression far more intelligible than more complicated machine learning methods such as random forests (Montgomery and Olivella, 2018). Moreover,

[1] In the manual coding stage, I assign each paragraph to one of 5 categories, depending on whether the paragraph is not about the DPP (0), engages DPP on the issue at hand (1), characterizes the DPP as morally unacceptable (2), characterizes the DPP as incompetent (3), or is positive towards the DPP (4). In the interest of modeling simplicity, I dichotomize this categorization. I classify paragraphs as disparaging if they are in category 2 (morally unacceptable) and as non-disparaging otherwise. Analyses classifying categories 2 and 3 as disparaging yield similar results, but slightly worse out-of-sample classification accuracy.

regularized regression models allow the researcher to see which specific features (i.e., words) most strongly predict classification into the category of interest, making the mechanics of the model relatively more transparent.

To build the classifier, I first construct a document-feature matrix with the 15,867 paragraphs in the rows and 6,654 word features in the columns. Each cell in the matrix represents a count x_{ij} of how many times paragraph i mentions feature j. To reduce sparsity, I restrict the document-feature matrix to words mentioned at least 5 times across the entire text corpus. I also use a lemmatizer developed for Danish to reduce each word to its base form (Jongejan and Dalianis, 2009). I then fit a regularized regression model (with $\alpha = 0$, i.e. a ridge regression) with the 1,000 hand-coded values as labels and the 6,654 word features as predictors. Table 1 shows the 20 features from this model most predictive of assignment to the 'disparagement' category along with English translations.

Table 1: Top 20 most predictive features of 'Disparagement'

Feature	English translation
pigtråd, forstemme | forstemt, sult, modersmålsundervisning, synge, dør, vindue, løgn, elegant, forurolige, iblandt, kølvand, kategori, jørgens, qvis, annoncere, anstændighed, sandholmlejr, øre, skam	barbed wire, apalled, hunger, mother tongue teaching, sing, dies, window, lie, elegant, disturb, among, aftermath, categori, Jørgen (name), Qvist (name), announce, decency, Sandholmlejr (refugee camp), ear, shame

Table 1 offers some initial face validation of the classifier. Most of the highly predictive features are meaningfully semantically associated with disparagement. For example, several of the features reference DPP's signature issue, immigration and refugee policy, in strongly moralized terms (*barbed wire*, *hunger*, *mother tongue teaching*, and *Sandholmlejren*, a Danish refugee camp). Others explicitly refer to moral condemnation (*apalled*, *disturb*, *decency*, *shame*). This set of features suggests the classifier captures the category of interest.

A frequent concern in machine learning applications is the risk of overfitting, i.e. the classifier relying on arbitrary features in the hand coded sample which are not informative of out-of-sample relationships. To evaluate the out-of-sample accuracy of the classifier, I designate a random subset of 80 pct. of the hand coded paragraphs as a training set and the remaining 20 pct. as the test set. By fitting a model only to the training set data, I can use the model's ability to predict the hand coded values in the held-out test set to assess how well the full model classifies uncoded text. Model predictions come in the form of predicted probabilities (i.e., the probability that a given paragraph belongs in the 'disparagement' category).

To visualize how well these predicted probabilities predict the binary outcome measure, I create 'separation plots' based on the approach presented in Greenhill, Ward and Sacks (2011). Figure 2 shows separation plots for the training set and test sets. In each plot, paragraphs are ordered from lowest to highest predicted probability. Paragraphs manually coded as disparaging are shown in dark color (green), and paragraphs coded as non-disparaging are shown in light color (yellow). Hence, the separation plot visualizes the predictive power of the model by showing how neatly predicted probabilities separate non-disparaging paragraphs in the leftmost part of each plot from disparaging paragraphs in the rightmost part.

(a)

(b)

Figure 2: Separation plots of predicted probabilities vs. true values in training set (panel a) and test set (b). The model nearly perfectly separates categories using within the texts used to fit the model, but has much weaker accuracy on out-of-sample texts. Still, predicted probabilities are significantly associated with true values in the test set ($p < .05$).

Figure 2 shows clear evidence of overfitting: in the top panel, showing a separation plot for the training set, predicted probabilities nearly perfectly separate disparaging and non-disparaging paragraphs. In contrast, as shown in the bottom panel, predicted probabilities are only weakly associated with true instances of disparaging speech in the test set. The pattern suggests that the out-of-sample classification accuracy of the model is limited. Future versions of this paper will try to improve the model's performance. Still, predicted probabilities are significantly associated with true instances of disparaging speech in the test set (logit $\beta = 7.28$, $p < .05$), indicating that the model does predict out-of-sample variation in disparaging speech. The consequence of this limited out-of-sample classification accuracy is that in paragraphs not included in the manually coded sample, disparagement is observed with more measurement error. Since this measurement error is on the dependent variable, it does not lead to attenuation bias, but does lead to larger standard errors.

In the analyses to follow, I examine how disparagement varies over time and across individual MP's by aggregating paragraphs up to the relevant units of analysis. One potential pitfall of this approach is that units of analysis with very few observations (e.g., MP's with very few speeches in the data) will have very high variance, masking the meaningful variation in the data. As Monroe, Colaresi and Quinn (2008) note, one way to solve this overfitting problem is through *shrinkage*, i.e. imposing a conservative prior on the model, thereby pulling averages based on very few observations toward the grand mean. Here, I follow Park, Gelman and Bafumi (2004) and apply shrinkage by fitting intercept-only random effects models and using the group-level predictions as measurements.

2.5 Obtaining covariates for individual MPs

One way to examine whether individual MP's differ in the extent to which they express disparagement towards the DPP is to directly compare between- and within-party variation in disparagement. However, a natural question given within-party variation between MP's is whether MP's differ in systematic ways. To examine correlates of MP-level variation in disparagement, I obtain on background covariates of all MP's giving one or more speeches in the text data set.

Since no publicly available data set on identifiable Danish MP's exists, I compile a novel data set. I do so by first collecting data from the EveryPolitician API, a service providing basic info on thousands of members of legislatures around the world. The EveryPolitician API includes information about the names and genders of all Danish MP's elected between 1994 and 2001. Crucially, for each of these MP's the API also provides his/her identifier on Wikidata, an online database maintained by the Wikimedia foundation. For each MP in the data, I query the Wikidata API to get his/her date of birth. Lastly, I use the Wikipedia API to obtain the full text of each MP's biography on Wikipedia. Using these biographies, I construct a simple dichotomous measure of each MP's educational background: if an MP's biography contains a mention of a university within the first 2,000 characters, I code him/her as having some university education, and none otherwise. Although this strategy for measuring educational background is very crude, a subsequent check of 10 randomly selected MP's revealed zero misclassifications, suggesting measurement error is minimal.

This automated approach yields complete data on 222 of the 265 unique MP's in the text corpus. For the remaining 43 MP's I manually search for biographical details to get complete data on gender, date of birth, and educational background.

3 Results

I present three sets of results. First, I estimate how the average level of disparagement changes over time. Second, I directly compare between-party variation in disparagement, the dominant perspective in the existing literature, with within-party MP-level variation. Lastly, I examine how age, gender, and educational background are associated with disparagement.

3.1 Trends over time

Figure 3 shows predicted values of disparagement by month, beginning with the first speeches in the data in October 1997 and ending with the last speeches in September 2004.

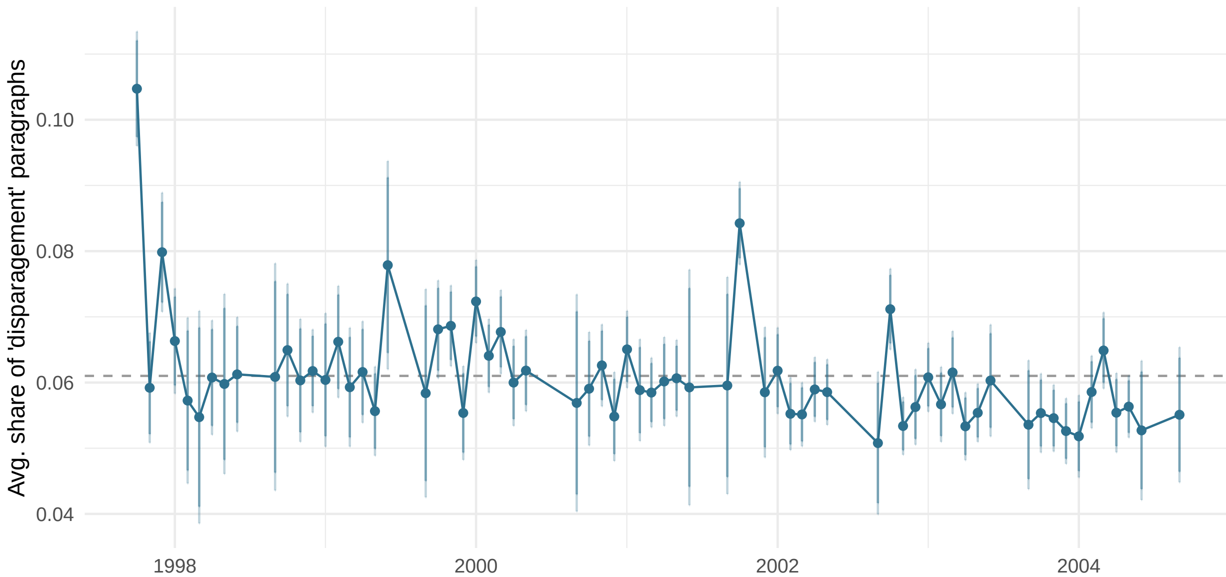

Figure 3: Average predicted paragraph-level probability of 'disparagement' by month. The gray dashed line shows the average level across all months. The linear time trend is negative and statistically significant ($p < .001$). The trend is robust to excluding the first observation. The darker and lighter error bars correspond to 90 and 95 pct. confidence intervals respectively.

Two features of Figure 3 stand out. First of all, there is a clear negative slope, indicating the disparagement becomes less prevalent over time. In a bivariate model with time as the predictor, this negative slope is strongly statistically significant ($p < .001$), a trend that is robust to excluding the first observation. The other notable feature is that the downward trend is interrupted by a few spikes of unusually high levels of disparagement. The spikes correspond meaningfully to political events in which the debate over the legitimacy of the DPP was particularly heated: first, a contentious opening debate in October 1997, then the PM's famous "housetrained" speech in October 1999, and lastly the month of the general election in 2001, where immigration policy dominated the political agenda.

The pattern largely corroborates findings from qualitative studies of the controversy over the DPP. For example, Bale et al. (2010) argue that the Social Democrats adopted gradually more accommodating strategies toward the DPP during the 1990's and early 2000's. Similarly, Rydgren (2004) notes that party internal divisions among Social Democrats caused an initially united front against the DPP to fray. In sum, the observed trends in disparagement over time conform to patterns outlined in the existing literature, but provide a new degree of granularity.

3.2 Within- vs. between-party variation

Figure 4 shows the results from an intercept-only random effects model with varying intercepts for parties and MP's. Since MP's are nested within parties in the data, the MP-level variation represents the residual variation after parsing out between-party variation. Each point in Figure 4 shows the MP or party's deviation from the grand mean (Gelman and Hill, 2006). Table 2 presents a more direct comparison of different types of variation in the data, showing variance and standard deviation at each level as well as residual variation.

Table 2: Within- vs. between-party variance in a random effects model

	Level	Variance	SD
1	MP	0.0004	0.020
2	Party	0.0001	0.011
3	Residual	0.007	0.085

The MP- and party-level estimates provide some additional validation of the measure. The top three most disparaging parties are the Socialist People's Party (SF), the Social Liberals (RV), and the Centre Democrats (CD), all of which were resolutely pro-immigration at the time and thus sharply at odds with the DPP. At the MP level, the MP's with highest estimated levels of disparagement, Margrethe Auken (Socialist People's Party) and Bjørn Elmquist (Social Liberals), were both known at the time as vocal critics of the DPP.

These specific estimates aside, the key insight from Figure 4 and Table 2 is that between-party variation only accounts for a small subset of the total variation. Moreover, variation between MP's – after parsing out party-level variation – is considerably greater than variation between parties. Depending on the measure, the former is around two to four times greater than the latter. The upshot of this is that even in a system characterized by strict party control, individual MP's have enough leeway to select strikingly different rhetorical strategies. In the next section, I explore some predictors of this individual choice.

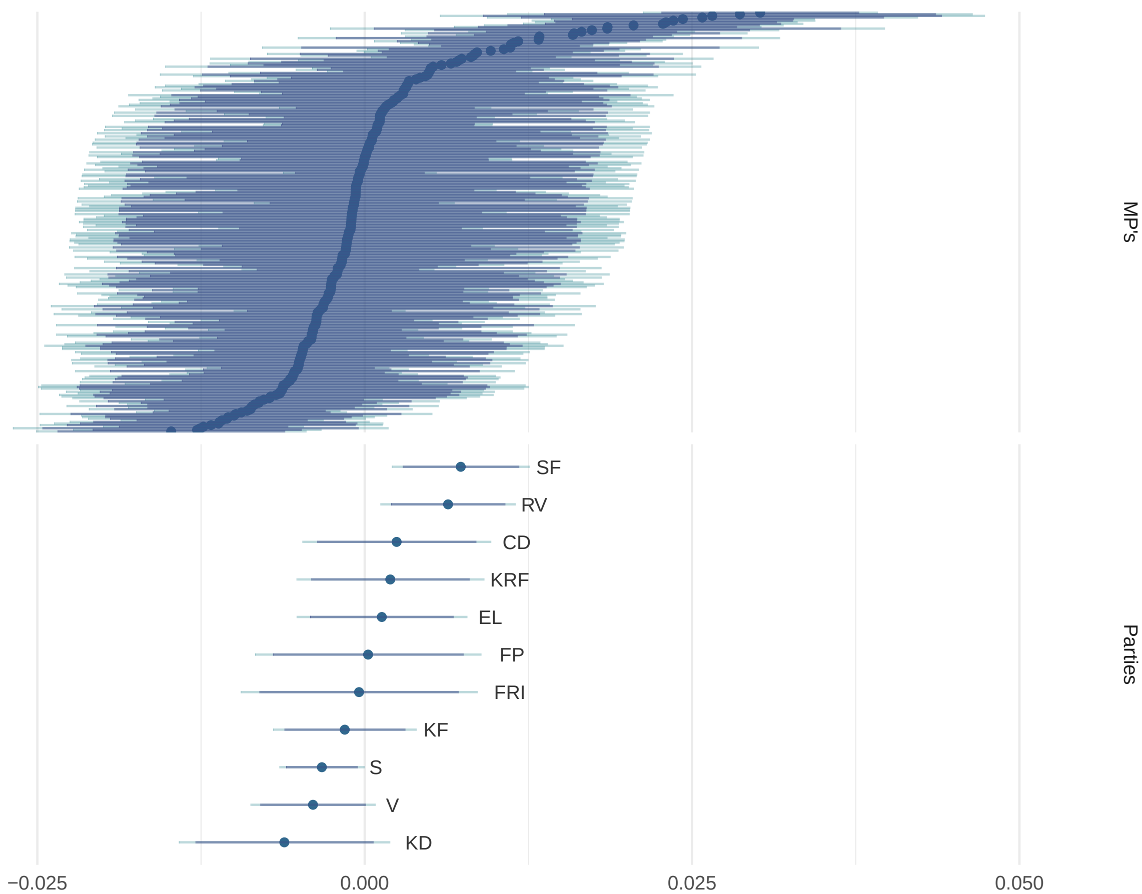

Figure 4: Intercepts from an intercept-only random effects model with MP's nested in parties. The plot shows each MP or party's deviation from the grand mean. The bottom panel presents the abbreviated name of each party. The darker and lighter error bars correspond to 90 and 95 pct. confidence intervals respectively.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept	10.67***	10.83***	10.77***	10.58***	11.19***
	(0.25)	(0.53)	(0.53)	(0.54)	(0.45)
Decade of birth: 1920's	2.04**	2.19**	2.10**	2.27***	
	(0.83)	(0.87)	(0.87)	(0.87)	
– 1930's	0.91**	0.95**	0.90**	0.95**	
	(0.41)	(0.40)	(0.40)	(0.40)	
– 1940's	0.49*	0.63**	0.61**	0.63**	
	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.29)	
– 1950's	0.37	0.41	0.34	0.37	
	(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.33)	
– 1970's+	0.01	0.08	0.08	0.02	
	(0.37)	(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.36)	
Gender: male			0.25	0.28	0.32*
			(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.19)
University education				0.38*	0.32
				(0.20)	(0.20)
Exposure to WW2					0.67***
					(0.20)
Party FE		✓	✓	✓	✓
R^2	0.04	0.17	0.17	0.18	0.17
Adj. R^2	0.02	0.12	0.12	0.13	0.13
Num. obs.	266	265	265	265	265
RMSE	1.58	1.50	1.50	1.49	1.49

$^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$

Table 3: OLS model of disparagement at the MP-level.

3.3 MP-level covariates

Table 3 shows results from a series of OLS models regressing the MP-level estimates of disparagement shown in Figure 4 on demographic characteristics. Figure 5 visualizes the coefficients and associated confidence intervals across models.

Column 1 shows how disparagement is associated with age. I measure age as a categorical variable indicating decade of birth to allow for a more flexible functional form. Column 2 adds party fixed effects, which are included in all subsequent models. As shown, the inclusion of party fixed effects leaves the estimates for age virtually unchanged, indicating that the observed relationship is not merely a product of compositional differences across parties.

The clearest result in Table 3 and Figure 5 is disparagement is distinctly more prevalent among older MP's. Compared to the reference category (1960's), disparagement is around two percentage points more prevalent among MP's born in the 1920's. Disparagement is also significantly more prevalent among MP's born in the 1930's and (in most specifications) the 1940's. As discussed previously, this age differential may reflect exposure to occupation during World War 2. Column 5 presents a model with a dichotomous indicator for whether the MP was born before or during

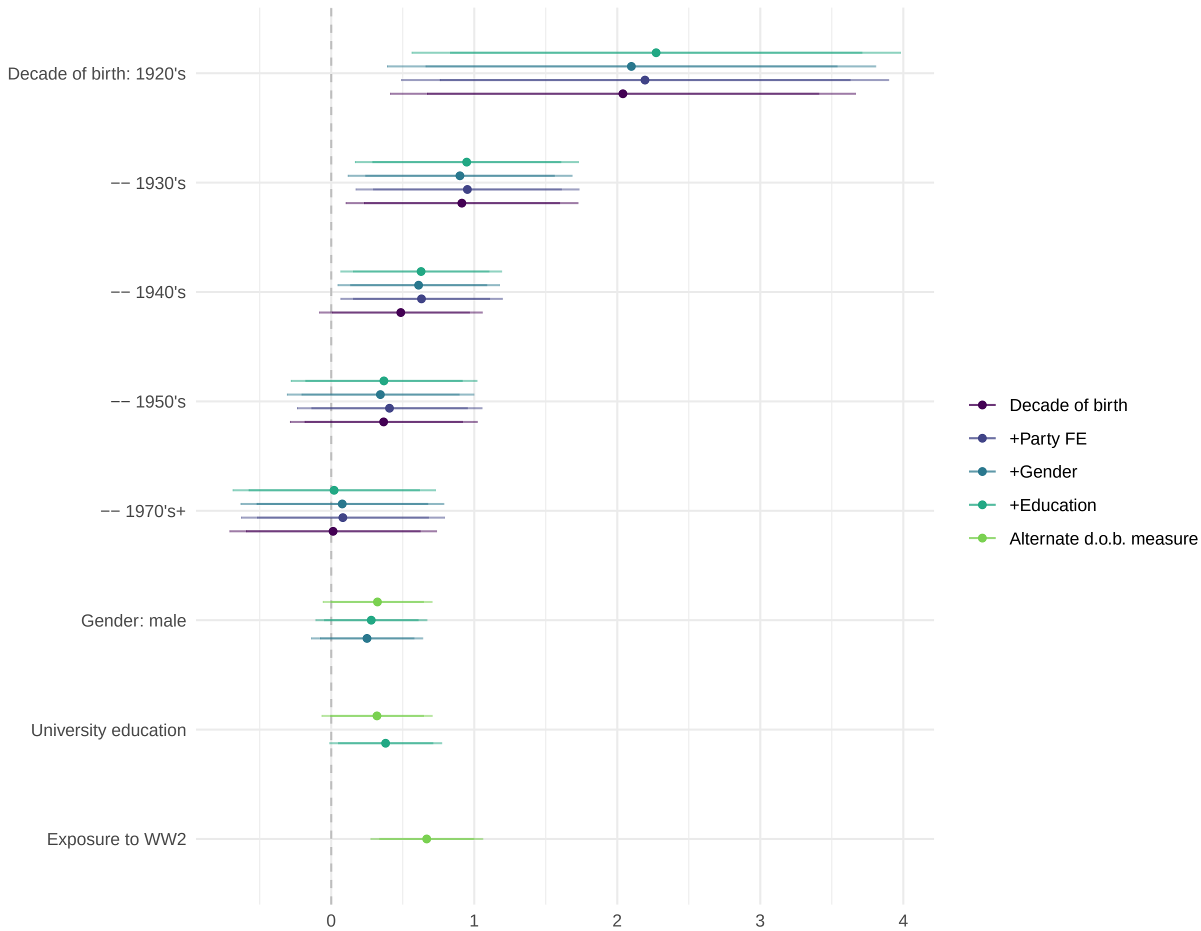

Figure 5: Coefficients for MP-level covariates across model specifications. The dependent variable is an estimate of disparagement as a share (pct.) of all speech. The darker and lighter error bars correspond to 90 and 95 pct. confidence intervals respectively.

World War 2 occupation. This dichotomous variable is also strongly significant. An important caveat here, as with all cross-sectional analyses with age as a correlate, is that the observed association reflects a mix of life cycle and cohort effects. Moreover, the association between age and disparagement could reflect other unobserved differences and so has no meaningful causal interpretation.

Columns 3 and 4 present results from models including gender and educational background. For gender, the sign on the coefficient runs opposite to the theoretical expectation: male MP's are slightly more disparaging, though the difference is not significant. For educational background, the coefficient has the expected sign such that MP's with some university education are more disparaging, but the difference is only significant in one of the two specifications, and only at the .1 level.

4 Conclusion: The Politics of Disparagement

In recent years, many Western democracies have witnessed the rise of right-wing populists challenging the order of the established political system. In many cases they have achieved remarkable political success, either by establishing electorally successful new parties (such as the United Kingdom Independence Party, the Swedish Democrats, or the DPP), or by usurping established right-wing parties from within (as in the case of Donald Trump's takeover of the Republican Party in the US). Faced with such a challenger, establishment actors find themselves having to decide whether to treat the challenger as a legitimate political opponent (what I call a strategy of *engagement*) or to portray the challenger as morally illegitimate (a strategy of *disparagement*). A rich existing literature in comparative party politics studies the determinants and consequences of this choice, but conceptualizes it exclusively as a party-level phenomenon.

In this paper, I have presented an approach using text as data methods to move this research agenda to the individual level. Using supervised machine learning to measure disparagement of the DPP in around 16,000 paragraphs of parliamentary speech, I uncover a wide range of response strategies at the individual level, even after parsing out party-level variation. Focusing on standard demographics as predictors, I find a clear role for age such that older MP's are significantly more likely to disparage the DPP. I also find tentative evidence that disparagement is more common among MP's with some university education. Future versions of this paper will extend this set of individual-level covariates to include a more finely grained measure of educational background as well as political characteristics of MP's.

Some caveats are in order. Most importantly, the single country case nature of this study leaves open the question of whether the findings generalize to other cases of political systems responding to right-wing populist challengers, such as those mentioned above. A natural extension of this paper would be to apply the methodology presented here to those cases. Another important caveat is that the individual-level findings presented here are purely associational. Since individual characteristics of MP's are not randomly assigned, these associations do not credibly identify causal effects. Hence, while this paper uncovers individual-level variation, it makes little headway in explaining it.

Even so, this study has outlined a way for scholars of individual political behavior to study disparagement of populist challenger parties, a topic previously the sole purview of comparative party politics scholars. By the same token, the individual-level variation uncovered here challenges the implicit premise in the existing literature that establishment responses to populist challenges are exclusively – or even predominantly – a party-level phenomenon. This in turn points toward future research centered around the question of when individual-level predispositions can cause representatives to deviate from the party line.

Lastly, for political behavior scholars, a natural extension of this work is to examine how the politics of disparagement operate at the mass level. Simply put, is disparagement of right-wing populist challenger parties an effective way to dissuade or demobilize otherwise likely voters of those parties? Or does disparagement fuel resentment which may further entrench support for right-wing populists? Qualitative evidence provides some support for the latter notion: some Trump supporters report feeling resentful at disparaging elites (Hochschild, 2016), and disparagement may even fuel contrarian political engagement among otherwise apolitical individuals (Nagle, 2017). In an era of political upheaval and intense conflict over the delineation of morally legitimate positions, these should be questions of vital interest to political science.

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