Populism as a Problem of Social Integration

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Abstract

We contend that contemporary support for populist parties, especially among their core voters in developed democracies, stems from a set of economic and cultural developments that have severed the connections that usually bind people to their society, leaving many feeling 'left behind'. Building on an important ethnographic literature, we assess whether populism can be seen as a problem of social integration through an examination of political attitudes and electoral behavior in 26 developed democracies. Using subjective social status as an indicator for the social integration of individuals, we find that people who feel more marginal to society, because they lack social engagement or a sense of social respect, are more likely to be alienated from mainstream politics and to not vote or vote for parties of the populist right or radical left. Using multi-level models, we find that people with relatively low levels of income or education are more likely to feel marginalized when national levels of income inequality or enrollments in tertiary education are high. The implication is that support for parties of the populist right and radical left has both economic and cultural roots and should be addressed, not only as an issue of economic deprivation requiring redistribution, but also as an issue of social integration requiring efforts to expand social recognition.

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The recent surge in support for populist parties of the radical right and left in the developed democracies is one of the most important political phenomena of our time. Support for populist causes and candidates has recently changed the course of history in the US, UK, Hungary and Poland. But, even where they do not win elections, populist parties are taking a much larger share of the vote than they did two decades ago – precipitating changes in the policy positions of mainstream parties and making it more difficult for countries to assemble cohesive governing coalitions capable of coping with contemporary challenges.[1]

For analysts of electoral behavior, however, support for populism is a puzzling phenomenon. Theories that expect citizens to vote their material interest have difficulty explaining why so many working-class voters support candidates and parties of the populist right when there are grounds for thinking that center-left parties are more likely to advance their material interests. Analyses that expect voters to swing between the mainstream left or right based on a diffuse policy mood are ill-equipped to explain why so many voters move beyond the mainstream to the fringes of the political spectrum.

Some analysts suggest that the rise of populism is primarily a revolt against globalization by voters whose economic situation has deteriorated, often in the face of international competition or technological change (Rodrik 2017; Iversen, Soskice and Xu 2017; Mayer *et al*. 2016; Autor *et al*. 2016; Colantone and Stanig 2017). However, the evidence for this contention is inconclusive. Although some studies find an association between import competition or household financial distress and support for populism, others do not (Guiso *et al*. 2017; Inglehart and Norris 2017; Antonucci *et al*. 2017).

Populism is also sometimes said to be a cultural reaction against increases in immigration and the prominence of post-materialist values in popular discourse by those who cling to more traditional, if not racist, views (Ivarsflaten 2008; Inglehart and Norris 2017; Kaufmann 2017; McElwee and McDaniel 2017). But, while right populism is sometimes stronger in regions with recent increases in immigration, many studies find little or no relationship between levels of immigration and populist support (Golder 2016); and those who attribute votes for right populism to a conflict over values have difficulty explaining why that conflict should be surfacing now, since many voters have held traditional views for decades and the popularity of post-materialist values has been rising at least since the 1970s (Bartels 2017).

In this paper, we develop an alternative perspective based on the contention that populist politics reflects fundamental problems of social integration, suggesting that studies of comparative political behavior should take issues of social integration more seriously. This perspective is grounded in our observation that populism is not politics as usual. Populist parties do not simply seek seats at the legislative table, but typically challenge the political system as a whole, labeling it corrupt or incompetent, in the name of a virtuous people said to be forgotten or ignored by existing political elites (Mudde 2007; Müller 2016; Bonikowski and Gidron 2016a, b). In this respect, populist parties bear some resemblance to those Sartori (1976) once called 'anti-system parties'. Similarly, the basis on which populist parties rally electoral support, while multi-faceted, is often deeply emotional, playing on feelings of anger, resentment or nostalgia that reflect alienation from conventional politics. In many cases, populist parties mobilize people who would otherwise not vote on the basis of appeals that are anathema to mainstream political elites. There is something new going on here, reflecting profound shifts in the social order, and new approaches are needed to comprehend it.

Our principal contention is that contemporary support for populist parties, especially among their core voters in developed democracies, stems from a set of economic and cultural developments that have severed the connections which usually bind people to their society, creating rifts between individuals in the mainstream of society and others who feel 'left behind'. In this respect, the social contract that underpins flourishing democracy is fraying at the edges. Political protest of the sort manifest in populism has its origins in failures of social integration.

The inspiration for this approach comes from an ethnographic literature that delves deeply into the attitudes and life situations of some of the social groups most likely to support populist parties (Eribon 2013; Cramer 2016; Hochschild 2016; Gest 2016). Across a diverse range of settings, this literature reports remarkably similar findings. Important segments of the white working class are said to be alienated from societies whose main currents seem to have left them behind. They feel as if they are 'strangers in their own land' whose value goes unrecognized by the affluent elites (Hochschild 2016; Spruyt *et al*. 2016).[2] Thus, one of the key empirical questions we address is whether people who feel 'left behind' are more inclined than others to support populist parties.

Although there is significant ethnographic evidence that this may be the case, the drawback of such studies is that it is hard to know how representative they are of wider populations. The contribution of this paper is to explore these issues with survey data that provides evidence for representative samples of the population across a wide range of developed democracies. To be sure, there are disadvantages to such data: the restricted range of questions they ask provides only limited insight into how people think. But, when considered in tandem with ethnographic studies, we think this analysis is an important way of assessing the extent to which support for populist parties reflects problems of social integration.

We proceed as follows. In the next section, we elaborate the underpinnings for an approach that associates support for populism with issues of social integration. In the following section, we outline an empirical strategy for assessing it that turns on the concept of subjective social status and explore whether that is a good indicator for social integration. We then examine the relationship between social integration, political alienation and support for populist parties and causes. In the penultimate section, we leverage cross-national variation to assess whether some prominent social and economic developments over recent decades have threatened social integration in the developed democracies. We conclude by considering the implications of this analysis for how rising support for populism might be addressed.

Populism as a problem of social integration

Social integration refers to the ways in which people relate to one another in a society. Social scientists have been concerned about such issues for more than a century. In the sense in which we use it, the concept reflects the extent to which people have congenial connections to others and feel that they are recognized as full members of that society. As such, social integration is a multi-dimensional concept.

The *locus classicus* for studies of social integration is in the writings of Émile Durkheim (1984 [1892]) who saw social integration in modern societies initially as a product of the division of labor in market economies, which generates 'organic solidarity' by rendering people interdependent. However, Durkheim argued that this division of labor would yield solidarity only if it provided people with occupations they deemed appropriate; and he also associated social integration with participation in a collective consciousness composed of shared norms,

values and beliefs. Absent such shared norms, society would not be integrated and in a state of anomie.

Several dimensions of social integration were already apparent in this early work. One turns on the character of the social interactions a person has with others. The second emphasizes the extent to which social norms are widely-shared. Subsequent analysts have often focused on one of these dimensions. In influential papers, Blau (1960: 545) highlights processes of interaction, foreshadowing later work on social networks as vehicles for social connectedness (Berkman *et al*. 2000; Putnam 2000). He sees these processes as ones whereby people are attracted to one another and acquire "acceptance as peers" thereby associating the social integration of the individual with the attainment of a certain social status. Others put more stress on the ways in which engagement with family, friends and the community encourages the acceptance of common normative frameworks, seen as the fulcrum for social integration (Bellah *et al*. 1996; Etzioni 1996).

In this research, we are especially interested in the extent to which individuals are integrated into society, although this can also be taken as a reflection of how well society as a whole is integrated.[3] Building on this literature, we will focus on three dimensions of social integration. The first is the level of *social contact* people have with others. The second is the degree to which people see themselves as part of a *shared normative order*; and the third is the extent to which people feel they are respected or *recognized* by others.

Factors of social disintegration

Our premise is that, over the past three decades, several social and economic developments have combined to shift the character of social integration in the developed democracies along all of

these dimensions, leading significant segments of the population to feel that they are no longer fully-recognized as valued members of society – and we think that support for populist parties arises, to some extent, from the resentments these failures of social integration engender. The forces that lie behind this process of social disintegration are familiar ones, frequently cited as potential causes of rising support for populism. In some instances, the material discontents to which they give rise may translate directly into self-interested support for populist parties. However, we are interested in the extent to which these developments operate through alternative mechanisms, namely, by alienating some people from mainstream society sufficiently to sustain oppositional political cultures and draw support to populist parties.

In our view, these mechanisms are ones marked by the interaction of economic and cultural factors.[4] In the simplest case, economic disadvantage may erode people's social attachments. Unemployment or a drop in household income can reduce people's engagement with the community. In other instances, economic developments that put some people into economically-disadvantaged positions may simultaneously shift cultural frameworks in directions that tend to depreciate the social value associated with those positions. The rising wage premium to tertiary education offers a classic case example. It puts workers without such an education at an economic disadvantage, and at the same time shifts the cultural value associated with a college education in terms that lower the social esteem accorded people who lack it (Gidron and Hall 2017). Thus, economic and cultural forces can interact to reduce the social status of people with modest skill levels.

Few would contest the fact that recent economic developments in the advanced democracies have engendered social dislocation. In broad terms, three sets of developments have generated such dislocation, namely, technological change, the out-sourcing and import

competition associated with globalization, and the expansion of services at the expense of manufacturing. Together, these developments have led to profound shifts in the occupational structure and in the distribution of individuals over those occupations (for overviews see: Autor and Dorn 2013; Goos, Manning and Salomons 2014). They have also contributed to declining levels of job security and rising levels of income inequality, although those outcomes are also significantly conditioned by the trajectory of public policy (cf. Hacker and Pierson 2012).

Like most economic developments, these ones have created winners and losers. Our concern here is with people who have been disadvantaged and hence rendered vulnerable to the kinds of dislocation that reduce social integration. Most prominent among them are men without a college education, who might once have found secure and well-paid employment in manufacturing, but whose skill levels no longer match the occupational categories in which employment is growing (Oesch 2013; Roos and Stevens 2017). Across the OECD, the unemployment rate for adults in the workforce with less than secondary education is more than 12%, while it is less than 5% for those with tertiary education. Low-skilled women are also vulnerable, but some of the disadvantageous effects of these developments have been offset for them by the expansion of services, which has brought many more women into the labor force. In the OECD countries, the share of women between the ages of 25 and 54 in gainful employment rose from 54 per cent to 71 per cent between 1980 and 2010. This matters because people in employment are generally more socially-integrated than those outside it (Sonnenberg 2013).

There is also a spatial dimension to these economic developments. As analysts of the 'knowledge economy' observe, technological change has been accompanied by the movement of manufacturing toward emerging economies and of well-paid jobs, notably in high technology sectors, to large urban centers (Moretti 2012; Storper *et al*. 2015). In general, these

developments have improved the economic prospects of people living in big cities, while reducing the prospects of those living in smaller cities or towns that were once prominent sites for manufacturing. There is some evidence that these growing regional disparities have inspired a sense of social marginalization among people living outside large urban centers, tantamount to a cultural shock after years in which people in small towns or the countryside were celebrated as quintessential Americans or the epitome of *la France profonde* (cf. Eribon 2013; Cramer 2016). At the same time, the concentration of high-technology and financial firms within large cities has increased income inequality there, potentially fostering cultural tensions between affluent urban residents and the low-skilled workers who provide services to them (Florida 2017).

However, economic developments are not the only factors affecting social integration. Shifts in cultural frameworks may be equally important. We use the term 'cultural frameworks' to refer to the repertoire of collective representations that people use to interpret society and their place within it. While some elements in that repertoire are durable, others shift over time with changes in the values, collective narratives and symbols that are prominent in public discourse and endorsed by social organizations, political elites or the media (cf. Schudson 1994; Swidler 1995).

Most observers would agree that the past thirty years have been decades of not only economic but also cultural change. Although there is some cross-national variation, of particular importance has been the growing prominence in Europe and North America of cultural frameworks promoting gender equality, multiculturalism, secular values and LGBTQ rights. Inglehart and Wetzel (2005) find that a majority of citizens now espouse post-materialist values in seven of nine European countries where materialists outnumbered post-materialists in 1970. Banting and Kymlicka (2013) report that multicultural policies are now stronger than they were

in 1980 in fourteen of the sixteen European countries they examined and have continued to become stronger since 2000 in many of them. Bromley (2009) finds that school textbooks in North America and Europe now emphasize the appreciation of diversity to a much greater extent than they did in the 1970s.

As a result of these cultural developments, most western societies are now more inclusive than they were three decades ago in terms that are advantageous for women, ethnic minorities and people with diverse gender identities. In principle, cultural shifts of this sort should foster social integration. However, steps toward inclusion can also be double-sided; they can lead some people who hold older sets of values to feel marginalized vis-à-vis mainstream society. Margaret Mead (1970:56) captured such effects well when she observed that rapid cultural change can turn people into immigrants in their own land. Because inter-generational replacement is one of the principal vehicles for this type of cultural change, older people are especially likely to feel out of step with the dominant cultural trends in their society.

In principle, shifts in cultural frameworks that enhance the social status and respect accorded some groups, such as women and ethnic minorities, need not reduce the social standing of others. However, a substantial literature suggests that social groups sometimes underpin their social standing by erecting sharp social boundaries between themselves and others whom they deem subordinate (Lamont and Molnar 2002; Kefalas 2003). Such boundaries are likely to be especially meaningful for people whose social standing is not otherwise secured by the standard markers of education or high-status occupations (Lamont 2000). Some scholars have argued, for instance, that white working-class men have historically based their sense of where they stand in society on beliefs about their superiority vis-à-vis women or people of other races (Pateman 1988; Mills 1999). To the extent that this is true, changes in contemporary discourse and

practices that enhance the social status of women and racial minorities may lead such men to feel that their own social standing has been depreciated.

Significant gaps in social connectedness, another key dimension of social integration, also seem to be opening up along class lines. The American data is especially striking. If about 70 percent of American adults were in intact first marriages during the 1970s and a majority of college-educated adults still are, barely 45% of adults with a high school education and 39% of those with less than high school currently are. Two-thirds of American children aged seven or less born to a parent with only high-school education are living in single-parent families, compared to less than ten percent of those born to college educated parents (Putnam 2016). Compared to three-quarters of those with a college education, barely half of Americans with a high-school diploma and less than a quarter of those without one belong to even a single non-religious civic organization (National Marriage Project 2010). However, equivalent trends are visible in Europe. Pintelon *et al*. (2013) find that social risks are stratified by social class; and Pichler and Wallace (2009) find that the gap in social connectedness between social classes increases in tandem with national levels of income inequality. The point is, not that social connectedness in general is declining, although it may be, but that deep disparities in social connectedness, which reflect failures of social integration, are opening up (cf. Hall 1999).

In sum, a number of economic and cultural developments over the past thirty years have rewoven the social fabric in terms that are likely to lead some groups to feel more fully integrated into society and others to feel that they have been pushed to its fringes. Those most vulnerable to believing that they no longer enjoy the social respect they deserve include older people, white men with modest levels of skill, and the residents of smaller cities and towns.

Social integration and populism

Multiple ethnographic studies of the white working class suggest that their political discontents derive, not simply from economic distress, but from anxiety about social recognition, a key dimension of social integration.[5] That is exemplified by the observation that many of these people feel 'left behind' by developments in contemporary society. As Gest (2016: 15) puts it, "across the postindustrial regions of Western Europe and North America – white working class people sense that they have been demoted from the center of their country's consciousness to its fringe." Of the Louisiana residents she interviewed, Hochschild (2016: 144) says "You are a stranger in your own land. You do not recognize yourself in how others see you. It is a struggle to feel seen and honored…through no fault of your own, and in ways that are hidden, you are slipping backward" (see also Eribon 2013; Cramer 2016).

The prominence of concerns about the direction of society as a whole among supporters of populist causes is another indication that issues of social integration may be central to that support. If personal economic distress were the only relevant factor, we should expect the main concerns expressed by voters for populist parties to be about their household's economic situation. But, when people lose their social connections and sense of social respect, they are more likely to blame the direction of society for those losses. Therefore, it is telling that supporters of populist parties often evince such sociotropic concerns. Gest *et al*. (2017) find that support for the populist right rests on a sense of 'nostalgic deprivation' rooted in the belief that social conditions were much better for everyone in the past; and supporters of populist causes often express a corresponding pessimism about the future of their societies (Elchardus and Spruyt 2016). In the exit polls conducted by Lord Ashcroft (2016), for example, 58% of Britons who voted to leave the European Union in June 2016 thought that life in Britain is worse today

than it was thirty years ago (compared to only 27% of those voting to remain in the EU), and 61% of them said that life in Britain would be worse for their children than for their parents (compared to less than half of those voting to remain).

Of course, the campaigns of populist politicians are specifically designed to appeal to such sentiments, evident in the slogan of the Brexit campaign – 'take back control' – and in Donald Trump's promises to 'make America great again'. These appeals hit home. Based on her field research, Hochschild (2016: 225) observes that Trump "supporters have been in mourning for a lost way of life…Their land no longer feels their own" but, in the presence of the candidate "…they now feel hopeful, joyous, elated" (see also Spruyt *et al*. 2016; Steenvoorden and Harteveld 2017; Cox *et al*. 2017).

These points apply to support for parties on the populist right, and there are only a few European parties on the left of the political spectrum, such as *Die Linke* in Germany and the Dutch Socialists, who can clearly be classified as populist (Rooduijn 2017). However, there are some reasons for thinking that issues of social integration may also condition support for radical left parties. Many of them level charges of corruption and incompetence against established elites similar to those of the populist right and claim to speak for 'working people' if not for all people against those elites.[6] Thus, radical left parties too should have some appeal for people who feel that their own social and economic positions are insecure and believe that society is moving in the wrong directions. What these parties generally lack are the strong nativist appeals of the populist right; hence, they are more likely to attract people with more, rather than less, education and with social positions that are well enough established that they do not need to draw sharp social boundaries against minority groups.

What, then, might drive some voters toward parties of the populist right and others to the radical left? In keeping with a social integration perspective, we think that this choice turns, to some extent, on the balance in the voter's concerns between recognition and redistribution. By claiming to speak for the 'people' or 'working people' these parties all offer recognition to those who believe they are being denied it. Alongside recognition, however, parties on the radical left also promise redistribution – generally in larger measure than parties on the populist right (Rovny 2012; cf. Fraser and Honneth 2004). Thus, people with more intense concerns about redistribution should be drawn to the radical left, while those whose concerns are primarily with recognition should gravitate toward the populist right. To some extent, this corresponds to the findings of Rooduijn *et al*. (2017) that voters choose between radical parties based on which issues they consider most important, but we see this as more than a matter of ideology. It should also be a function of social position. Compared to other voters, for instance, trade unionists are more likely to be drawn to the radical left than the populist right, not only because their views about redistribution may be conditioned by the union, but because union membership renders them more socially-connected and thus less anxious about recognition.

This framework suggests that different socioeconomic groups are more likely to support the populist right than the radical left. Because they lack social recognition, support for the populist right is likely to be high among people in occupational or education categories with relatively low levels of social status. However, it is likely to be highest, not at the very bottom of the income distribution, but among people at several rungs up from it, whose social standing is threatened by contemporary developments but who have some social status they want to defend (see also Bornschier 2010; Kurer 2017). People in these pivotal social positions are especially susceptible to 'last place aversion', namely, the fear that they will fall to the bottom of a

hierarchy, and they are more likely than others to pin their social standing on the defense of social boundaries with groups they consider socially subordinate (Ehrenreich 1990; Lamont 2000; Kuziemko *et al*. 2014). As a result, they will be especially open to the anti-immigrant or racist appeals of the populist right. Because they are several steps above the bottom of the income distribution, the concerns of this group about redistribution are likely to be secondary to concerns about recognition. Indeed, some will see redistributive policies as ones that deliver benefits unfairly to groups whom they deem socially undeserving (cf. Hochschild 2016).

By contrast, support for the radical left is likely to be higher among the social groups on either side of this pivotal one. People at the bottom of the status hierarchy, in the most disadvantaged income or occupational groups, may well support the radical left because they have the most intense interests in redistribution (Rovny and Rovny 2017). At the other end of the social spectrum, socio-economic professionals who think that their own status is threatened or the country is moving in the wrong direction are also more likely to vote for the radical left than the populist right. Even if they do not think they have the income or status they deserve, their occupational and position gives them enough status to tilt the balance of their concerns over recognition and redistribution toward the latter, and higher levels of education should render them less tolerant of the authoritarian values espoused by the populist right.

The spatial patterns associated with recent economic developments may also be relevant here. As prosperity moves toward large urban centers, we expect people living in the countryside to be increasingly concerned about issues of recognition, more or less in line with ethnographic findings (Cramer 2016; Gest 2016), and hence more supportive of the populist right than the radical left. By comparison, people living in big cities should be somewhat less concerned about recognition, because they live in what are now widely-seen as the cultural

centers of the nation, and thus relatively more concerned about redistribution. These considerations will incline them toward the radical left rather than the populist right; and, because many big cities are cultural melting-pots, urban residents should be more resistant to the anti-immigrant appeals of the populist right.

In sum, we have argued that the recent surge in support for right populism and the radical left is not only an economic revolt or a cultural reaction against immigration, but a response to problems of social integration that arise when economic and cultural changes render the social standing of many groups more precarious. This approach builds on the observation that many of the people who support populist causes and candidates feel 'left behind' by contemporary economic and cultural developments. We are not claiming that this sense of social marginalization is the only factor behind rising support for populism, but we think it worthwhile to see whether it figures in that rise; and we now turn to that empirical task.

Empirical analysis

The data for this analysis are drawn from Round 6 of the European Social Survey based on hour-long in-person interviews conducted on representative samples of all adults over the age of 15 in 26 European countries during 2012-13.[7] This is widely recognized as a high-quality survey and it is the only cross-national survey we have found containing the variables needed for this analysis. The sample includes approximately 35,000 respondents.

As an indicator for the degree to which people feel integrated into or left relatively behind by society, we use their subjective social status. We define subjective social status as the level of social respect or esteem people believe is accorded them within the social order. It is a relational variable, embodying a person's sense of where she stands in relation to others in

society and, as such, it is an appropriate indicator for an individual's social integration. Our premise is that people who assign themselves relatively high social status feel reasonably well-recognized by society, while those who assign themselves a relatively low level of social status feel less recognized or valued by society. Subjective social status is generally measured by the rank that people assign themselves when asked to position themselves within a social hierarchy in which some people are said to be on the bottom and others are on the top.

There is a small literature on the determinants of subjective social status on which we build, but to our knowledge no one has yet looked at its relationship to electoral behavior (Poppitz 2016; Lindemann and Saar 2014). The most closely-related literature in political sociology assigns subjective social status on the basis of whether a respondent self-defines as upper/lower, middle/working class (Jackman and Jackman 1973; Sosnaud, Brady and Frenk 2013). However, those measures do not capture a person's sense of social belonging in the same fine-grained way and, by focusing on social class, they tap into quite different effects associated with class politics. Two older literatures are relevant here. The first examines the effects of 'status inconsistency' on political attitudes, but it focuses on the impact of incongruities in objective status rather than on the effects of subjective social status (Lenski 1954; cf. Runciman and Bagley 1969). The other is pioneering work by Lipset (1955. 1959), which is an important antecedent to ours in that it sees social isolation and status anxiety as factors behind support for the radical right, although Lipset also attributes that support to many other features of working-class life.

To measure subjective social status, we use responses to a question in which people are told 'There are people who tend to be towards the top of our society and people who tend to be towards the bottom' and asked to place themselves on an 11-point ladder to indicate where they

would place themselves on this scale. This type of question is widely accepted as a valid measure of subjective social status with good test-retest reliability (Operario, Adler and Williams 2004; Evans and Kelley 2004; Lindemann and Saar 2014). Studies show that lower scores on it are associated with higher levels of negative social emotions, such as anger and resentment, consistent with our view that it taps into how socially respected a person feels (Adler and Stewart 2007).

Subjective social status as a measure of social integration

We begin by assessing whether subjective social status is a good indicator for social integration. Note that we are focusing here on 'subjective' social status, namely, people's own views about how much status they have in society, i.e. whether they see themselves as central or marginal members of society, rather than on their 'objective' social status, understood as the level of social status a person is assigned by others. However, the former is almost always affected by the latter. In particular, we expect people's subjective social status to be conditioned by the social esteem that society as a whole assigns to the social roles they occupy. A substantial sociological literature suggests that the most important sources of objective social status in western societies lie in people's levels of education, income and occupation. Higher levels of educational attainment, higher incomes and some types of occupations are typically said to confer higher levels of status (Blau and Duncan 1967; Marmot 2004).

Model 1 in Table One confirms that subjective social status is associated with these familiar features of an individual's social roles. In these estimations, people with some tertiary education are described as more educated and respondents have been assigned to the influential occupational categories devised by Oesch (2006) to reflect the contemporary class structure.[8]

However, although subjective social status is conditioned by these classic social roles, it is not fully determined by them; and there are indications in these results that subjective social status also reflects other features of individuals' situations that would lead them to feel more or less integrated into society. Model 2 shows that immigrants and people who are unemployed see themselves as having lower levels of subjective social status, as do people living in the countryside compared to residents of big cities (cf. Cramer 2016). People who are socially engaged as members of trade unions or regular participants in religious services report higher levels of subjective social status, while model 3 indicates that the more difficulty people have living on their current household income, the lower their subjective social status.

To establish whether subjective social status is a good indicator for social integration, however, we also examine its relationship to some other key features of integration. We have defined social integration as a multi-dimensional phenomenon based on i. the amount of social contact people have with others; ii. the degree to which they see themselves as part of a shared normative order; and iii. the extent to which they feel respected or recognized by others. Accordingly, we examine the association between subjective social status and indicators for how often a person meets or engages in social activities with others, as measures of social contact, the extent to which the individual trusts others in society, as a measure of participation in a shared normative order, and responses to a question that asks to what extent the person feels that others treat him with respect.[9] Figure One shows that, even when conditioning on other factors affecting subjective social status, all of these indicators for social integration are significantly associated with subjective social status; and the dimension that explains the most additional variance is the individual's feelings about whether others treat him with respect (Table A1 in

Appendix Two). These findings are supportive of our contention that subjective social status is a good indicator for the extent to which a person is integrated into society.

Social disintegration and political alienation

We have argued that support for populist candidates and causes is based on a profound discontent with the operation of existing political systems and that much of this discontent arises from economic and cultural developments that have left some people feeling marginalized by their societies. In other words, social disintegration gives rise to political alienation.

To assess this contention, we explore the relationship between people's subjective social status and their attitudes to the existing political system, based on questions that ask respondents to indicate on 11 point scales how satisfied they are with the operation of democracy in their country and how much trust they have in politicians and their parliament. Since these attitudes can also be influenced by other features of a person's life situation, we use ordinary least squares estimations with fixed country effects and condition these estimations on a variety of controls (see Table A2).

Figure Two shows that the lower a person's subjective social status, the more likely she is to be dissatisfied with the operation of democracy in the country and more distrustful of politicians and parliament. The relationship is remarkably consistent across all three of measures of political alienation. People who feel more marginalized by society are also more likely to be alienated from its political system. As such, they provide a potential reservoir of support for political parties seen as highly critical of that system.

Social integration and support for populist parties

Are people who feel they have been pushed toward the lower margins of society more inclined to vote for parties of the populist right and radical left? We explore this issue in estimations with linear probability models, country fixed effects, and standard errors corrected for heteroskadisticity, where the dependent variable indicates which party the respondent voted for in the last national election (excluding those who did not vote). Although there is debate about which parties should be defined as populist, we employ the categories used in a standard literature to identify parties as 'right populist'.[10] We compare support for the populist right to support for radical left parties, defined as ones substantially to the left of social democratic parties on economic issues, which are also generally highly-critical of the existing political system, following the categories used by Rooduijn and Burgoon (2017).

Tables Two and Three report the results of these estimations. Model 1 in these Tables indicate that voters with lower levels of subjective social status who are less socially-integrated are more likely to vote for parties of the populist right or radical left than for other parties. These results hold even when conditioning on many other factors likely to affect a person's vote. We take this as support for our contention that support for right populism and the radical left is, to some extent, a reflection of failures of social integration. Some have argued that populist parties are mobilizing people so socially marginal that they would not normally vote, and model 0 in Table Two provides some support for that view (Guiso et al. 2017). Low levels of subjective social status are even more strongly associated with not voting in the most recent election than they are with voting for a party of the populist right or radical left.

The results of these estimations are illuminating about why some people vote for the populist right, while others support the radical left. We have argued that this choice will turn on the balance between an individual's concerns about recognition and redistribution. To assess this contention, we compare the association between voting for parties of the populist right and radical left with (i) a measure for concern about redistribution (namely, the extent to which the individual agrees that governments should take measures to reduce differences in income levels) and (ii) a measure for concern about recognition (namely, the extent to which the individual feels others treat him with respect), while conditioning on the other variables that may influence a person's vote. The results reported in model 2 in these Tables are broadly consistent with our contention. Feeling that one is not treated with respect is associated with voting for both the populist right and the radical left; but concerns about redistribution are significantly associated with voting for the radical left but not for the populist right. Our finding that rural residence is associated with voting for the populist right, while people living in big cities are more likely to vote for the radical left, is also congruent with the observation that people living in the countryside have greater concerns about recognition (Cramer 2016).

These results are revealing about which social groups vote for the populist right and radical left. To assess the extent to which economic distress animates support for these parties, we employ a question that asks how much difficulty people are having living on their household income (model 3 Tables Two and Three). As expected, the more difficulty people report living on their current income, the more likely they are to vote for the populist right or radical left. But the people who report the most difficulty tend to vote for the radical left, while support for the populist right is highest among those who report some difficulty but insignificant among those reporting the most difficulty. These findings conform to our expectation that, while the poor

tend to vote for the radical left, support for the populist right is strongest among voters who are several rungs above them on the social ladder.[11]

By the same token, while support for the populist right is strongest among routine manual workers and people employed in low-skill services, political support for the radical left is strongest among socio-economic professionals. To some extent, this corresponds to the familiar finding that people with lower levels of education tend to support the populist right, while those with higher education endorse the universalist values often espoused by the radical left. Across all of these social groups, however, the more socially-marginalized people feel, the more likely they are to gravitate toward the fringes of the political system; and their votes reflect sociotropic as well as personal concerns. People who express greater dissatisfaction with the performance of the economy as a whole are more likely to vote for either the populist right or radical left than for other parties (model 4 in these Tables).

Factors of social disintegration

We have argued, not only that people who feel socially marginalized are more likely to vote for the populist right and radical left, but also that a number of economic and cultural developments taking place over the past thirty years have tended to marginalize various social groups, thereby increasing the reservoir of support for parties of the populist right and radical left. Without longitudinal data, we cannot test this proposition directly, but we can leverage the cross-national variation in this dataset to assess it indirectly. If economic developments, such as increases in income inequality, have led some groups to feel more socially marginal, the subjective social status of those groups should be lower in countries where such developments have proceeded the farthest. In principle, similar results should be seen for relevant cultural developments.

To assess such effects, we use hierarchical linear models with random intercepts in which observations at the lower (individual) level are nested in higher order units (countries).[12] In estimations where the dependent variable is subjective social status, we begin by estimating the null model where the intra-class correlation shows that about 10 percent of the variance in subjective social status occurs between countries, a figure that rises only slightly when we include the individual-level variables known to affect subjective status. We then turn to the question of whether cross-national variation indicative of the developments that might lead some people to feel more socially marginalized is associated, as we suspect, with lower levels of subjective social status both in general and, in particular, among the sub-groups of the population most susceptible to marginalization.

One of the developments of the past three decades most likely to have had such effects is an increase in levels of income inequality. On average among the OECD countries, the Gini index for income inequality increased by 10 percent between the mid-1980s and the early-2000s. A large literature notes that, when evaluating their own social position, people typically compare themselves to the situation of others.[13] Thus, people may feel that their own social position has been eroded when income inequality rises in terms that make significant segments of society considerably richer (Frank 2007; Andersen and Curtis 2012; Lindemann and Saar 2014). Accordingly, we compare countries based on the proportion of income going to the most affluent ten percent of income earners. In Table Four, model 1 indicates that, in each country, average subjective status declines considerably as the share of income going to the top ten percent of earners increases; and, even more important, the interaction term in model 2 indicates that subjective social status declines the most among people with lower incomes (see Table A3 for full estimation results).[14]

Model 3 shows that these results are robust when the estimation is conditioned on GDP per capita, which often affects average subjective social status, and models 5-7 in Table A3 indicate that using the top 20 percent of income as the measure for income inequality yields similar results (Lindemann and Saar 2014; Poppitz 2016). Holding other attributes of individuals at their means, Figure Three (a) compares the decline in subjective social status of people at the third and eighth deciles of the income distribution, as income inequality increases. In other words, to the extent that this cross-national variation can be extrapolated to variation over time, rising levels of income inequality are likely to depress everyone's subjective social status, but they are especially likely to lead people on lower incomes to feel more socially marginal.

We have argued that, although feelings of social marginalization can stem from economic deprivation, there are also important cultural dimensions to this dynamic. In particular, as economic developments increase the demand for skills, people with lower levels of skills can suffer both from lower demand for their labor and from associated shifts in cultural frameworks toward ones that raise the social prestige attached to the possession of skills or tertiary education and lower the esteem accorded people without those qualifications. To assess such effects, we compare the prevalence of tertiary education across countries, measured as the number of students in tertiary education as a percent of the country's population that is between 20 and 24 years of age. Our expectation is that, in countries where tertiary education is more prevalent, people without such an education will feel more socially marginal.

Model 4 in Table Four indicates that the prevalence of tertiary education in a country has no effect on average levels of subjective social status, but the interaction term in model 5 shows that, as the prevalence of tertiary education increases, the subjective social status of people with only a secondary education falls precipitously. This is evident in Figure Three (b) which

compares the effects of increasing tertiary enrollments on the subjective social status of people with and without higher education, when other attributes of those individuals are held at the means for the entire sample. Once again, it requires a leap of inference to extrapolate this cross-national variation to the effects that follow over time; but these results are consistent with the view that, when tertiary enrollments increase, as they have in many countries over the past twenty-five years in tandem with the demands of a changing economy, people without higher education come to see themselves as more and more socially marginalized.

Conclusion

Building on an evocative ethnographic literature, we have taken seriously the observation that many of the supporters of populist causes and candidates feel 'left behind' by their societies, and we have assessed that contention in a cross-national comparison of twenty-five developed democracies. The results suggest that increased support for populism is to some extent a reflection of failures of social integration. We have found that people who feel more marginal to contemporary society, often because they are less engaged in its activities or sense that they are not treated with respect, are more likely to be alienated from mainstream politics and more likely to vote for parties of the populist right or radical left on the extremes of the political spectrum. Moreover, we have generated some evidence consistent with the proposition that, as income inequality and tertiary enrollments rise, people with relatively low levels of income or education are more likely to feel marginalized. The implication is that growing support for populism and radical parties is rooted in a dynamic that has both economic and cultural dimensions.

These findings also bear on the question of how those who see populism as a threat to contemporary democracy might address it (cf. Müller 2016). One prominent view, which sees

populism as a revolt against globalization, associates rising support for it with a past failure to provide adequate levels of compensation to people on whom the expansion of international trade has imposed concentrated losses (Asatryan *et al*., 2014; Roubini 2016; Obstfeld 2016). There is probably some truth in this: support for right populism is especially strong among people in regions and occupational classes most exposed to the strains of globalization. However, our analysis suggests that 'compensation' is not what these people are looking for.[15] Voters for right populist parties are not especially strong supporters of redistribution. What distinguishes them from other voters is a feeling that they have not been treated with respect – a sense that they are not fully valued members of society. They care as much, or even more, about recognition as about redistribution.

Thus, this analysis suggests that one of the principal political challenges populism poses to contemporary democracies is how to ensure that all people feel themselves to be fully-valued and recognized members of their societies. To some extent, that is an economic challenge, although one better met by providing people with decent jobs that are well-paid and more secure than with social benefits. Supporters of right populist and radical left parties are more likely than voters for other parties to report difficulty living on their current income. Of course, it is not easy to create such jobs in the context of technological change, but this should not blind us to the magnitude of the challenge; and there may be various ways in which governments can ensure that the pay and employment-conditions of existing jobs are improved.

However, these findings indicate that support for populism poses cultural, as well as economic, challenges. People from all walks of life want to feel recognized and respected by their political leaders, the media and other cultural authorities in their society. This does not mean that racist or authoritarian attitudes have to be accommodated. More inclusive societies

are not created by shifting the groups that are excluded. But secular movements in cultural frames can lead some groups to feel underappreciated, as the low-skilled do when tertiary enrollments increase; and the leaders of democratic societies ignore such shifts are their peril. As shapers of the collective imaginaries composed of the symbolic repertoires and collective representations that tell people what is valued in their society, they can influence conceptions of self-worth in terms that offset the tendencies of some groups to feel socially devalued (Hall and Lamont 2009; Bouchard 2017). Politics is a symbolic as well as a material enterprise (Edelman 1985).

Of course, these are formidable challenges. In some respects, they call for renewed attention to the social contract and how it is expressed, in symbolic and material terms. However, we think that one of the first steps along the path toward an effective response to populism is to recognize that support for it reflects issues of social integration that must be addressed as such.

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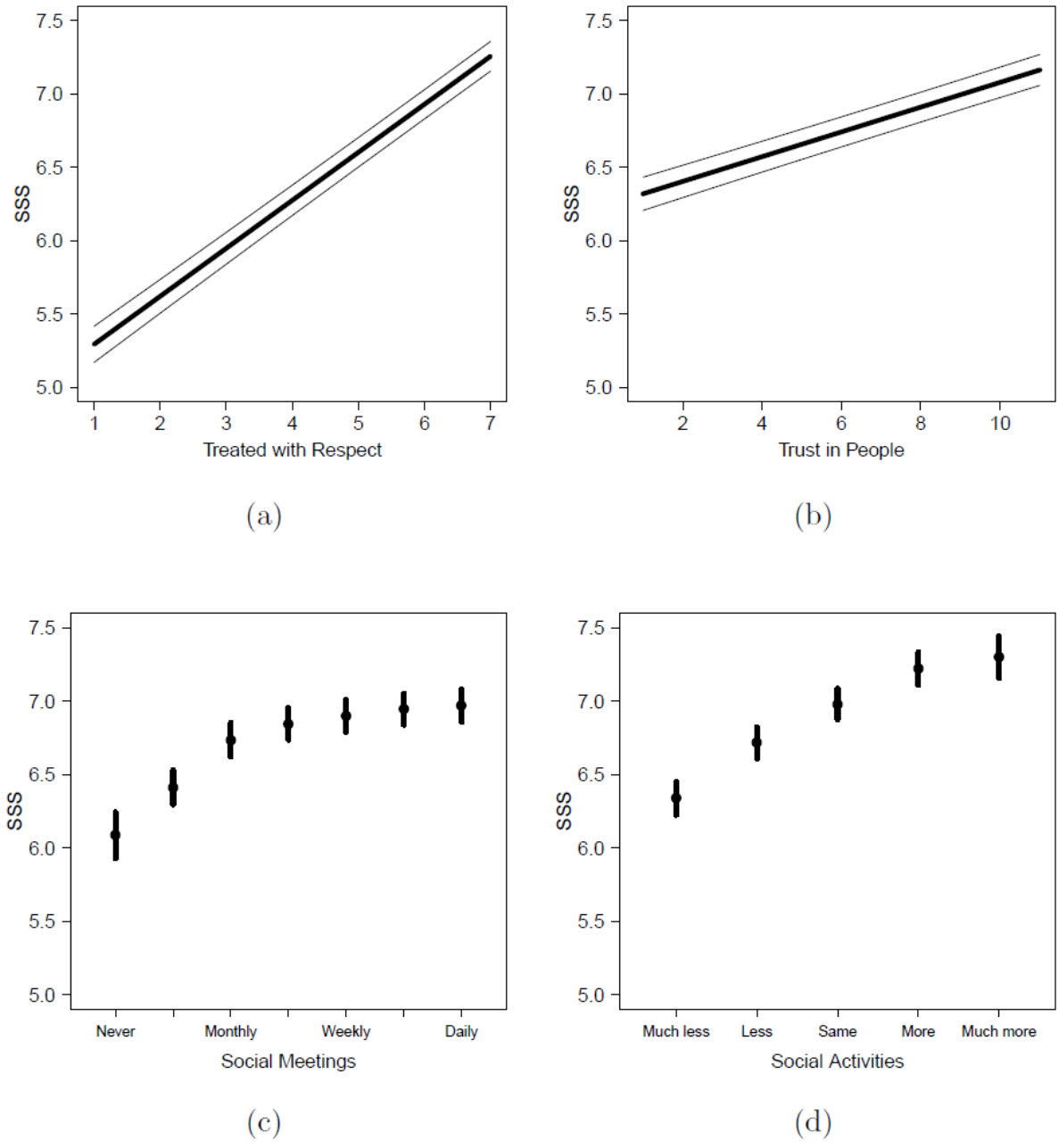
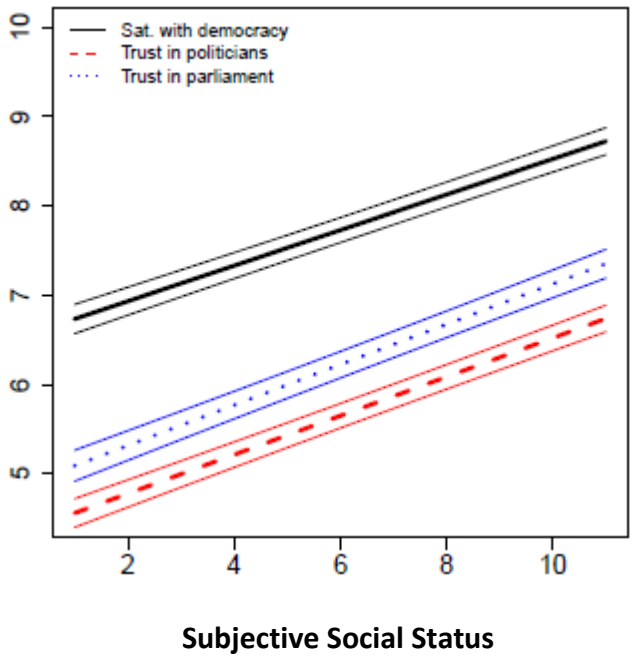
Figure One: The relationship between subjective social status and indicators for social integration



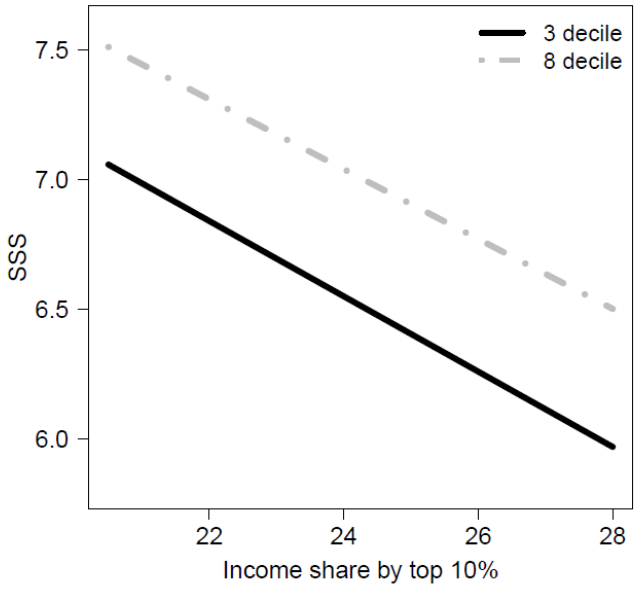
Source: ESS Wave 6. *Source*: ESS Wave 6. Based on the estimations in Table A1 with other variables held at their sample means and country held constant on 'Denmark'.

Figure Two: The relationship between subjective social status and indicators for political alienation

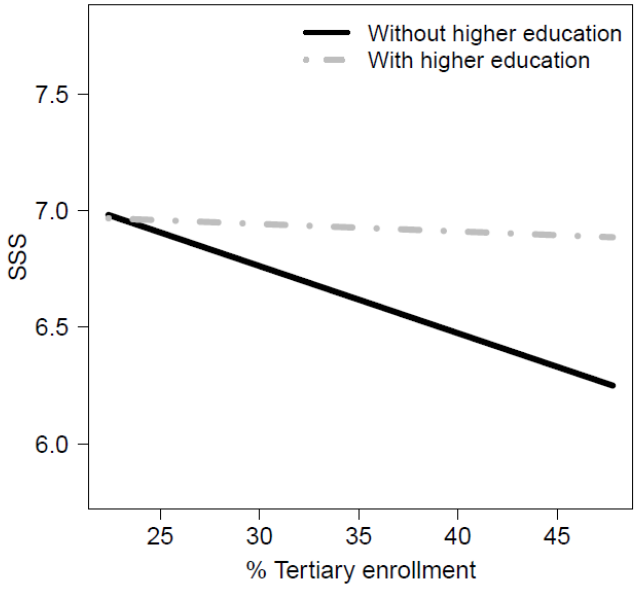


Source: ESS Wave 6. Based on the estimations in Table A2 with other variables held at their sample means.

Figure Three: How subjective social status changes as income inequality and tertiary enrollments increase at the national level



(a)



(b)

Source: ESS Wave 6.
Note: Multilevel interactions based on models 2 and 8 in Table A3 with other attributes of individuals at their means.

Table One: Predictors of subjective social status

	Dependent variable: SSS		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Income decile	0.163***	0.158***	0.089***
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Income: Coping			−0.458***
			(0.023)
Income: Difficult			−0.933***
			(0.030)
Income: Very difficult			−1.715***
			(0.041)
Occupation: Managers	0.026	0.038	0.038
	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.033)
Occupation: Technicians	−0.160***	−0.171***	−0.163***
	(0.039)	(0.040)	(0.039)
Occupation: Clerks	−0.242***	−0.216***	−0.196***
	(0.038)	(0.039)	(0.038)
Occupation: Low skill services	−0.422***	−0.394***	−0.326***
	(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.031)
Occupation: Routine workers	−0.508***	−0.503***	−0.424***
	(0.031)	(0.034)	(0.033)
Female=1		−0.072***	−0.046**
		(0.019)	(0.018)
Age		−0.0004*	−0.001***
		(0.0002)	(0.0002)
Union membership=1		0.057**	0.071***
		(0.024)	(0.024)
Church attendance=1		0.185***	0.173***
		(0.028)	(0.027)
Higher education=1	0.207***	0.217***	0.190***
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Unemployed=1		−0.325***	−0.081**
		(0.038)	(0.037)
Rural-urban: Suburbs		−0.036	−0.023
		(0.032)	(0.032)
Rural-urban: Small city		−0.037	−0.039
		(0.025)	(0.024)
Rural-urban: Country village		−0.038	−0.046*
		(0.026)	(0.025)
Rural-urban: Farm and countryside		−0.038	−0.057
		(0.041)	(0.040)
Foreign born=1		−0.188***	−0.130***
		(0.030)	(0.030)
Constant	6.896***	6.996***	8.111***
	(0.063)	(0.069)	(0.073)
Observations	35,143	33,564	33,520
R^2	0.241	0.249	0.290

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Source: ESS Wave 6. *Note*: OLS regressions with country fixed effects. Reference group for occupation is socioeconomic professionals. Reference group for rural-urban is big cities. Reference group for income is "living comfortably on present income".

Table Two: Factors associated with non-voting and with voting for populist right parties

	Dependent variable:				
	(0) No-vote	(1) PR	(2) PR	(3) PR	(4) PR
SSS	−0.013***	−0.006***		−0.005***	
	(0.002)	(0.002)		(0.002)	
Treated with respect			−0.005*		
			(0.003)		
Support redistribution			0.002		
			(0.003)		
Income decile	−0.008***	−0.002	−0.002*		
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)		
Income: Coping				0.013**	0.010*
				(0.006)	(0.006)
Income: Difficult				0.038***	0.029***
				(0.010)	(0.010)
Income: Very difficult				0.024*	0.014
				(0.015)	(0.014)
Satisfaction with the economy					−0.011***
					(0.002)
Occupation: Managers	−0.014*	0.010	0.010	0.004	0.002
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Occupation: Technicians	−0.001	0.023**	0.024**	0.023**	0.024**
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Occupation: Clerks	0.015	0.022**	0.023**	0.018*	0.021**
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Occupation: Low skill services	0.065***	0.043***	0.044***	0.032***	0.033***
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Occupation: Routine workers	0.061***	0.056***	0.058***	0.049***	0.050***
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Female=1	0.002	−0.024***	−0.023***	−0.022***	−0.023***
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Age	−0.001***	−0.0001	−0.0001	0.0001	0.00005
	(0.0002)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)
Union membership=1	−0.050***	0.011*	0.011*	0.010	0.008
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Church attendance=1	−0.072***	0.021**	0.019**	0.026***	0.028***
	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.008)
Higher education=1	−0.042***	−0.035***	−0.037***	−0.033***	−0.035***
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Unemployed=1	0.081***	−0.005	0.0004	−0.006	−0.005
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Rural-urban: Suburbs	−0.029***	0.0004	0.001	0.002	0.001
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Rural-urban: Small city	−0.020***	−0.008	−0.008	−0.008	−0.011
	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Rural-urban: Country village	−0.034***	0.013*	0.015*	0.015**	0.013*
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Rural-urban: Farm and countryside	−0.041***	0.032**	0.034***	0.037***	0.035***
	(0.011)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Foreign born=1	0.155***	−0.058***	−0.056***	−0.063***	−0.057***
	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Constant	0.281***	0.085***	0.065**	0.058***	0.090***
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.027)	(0.022)	(0.018)
Observations	31,899	14,355	14,265	16,100	16,059
R^2	0.099	0.165	0.167	0.177	0.183

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Source: ESS Wave 6. *Note*: Linear probability model with country fixed effects. Standard errors corrected for heteroscedasticity. Reference groups as in Table One.

Table Three: Factors associated with voting for radical left parties

	Dependent variable:			
	(1) RL	(2) RL	(3) RL	(4) RL
SSS	−0.009***		−0.007***	
	(0.002)		(0.002)	
Treated with respect		−0.008***		
		(0.003)		
Support redistribution		0.032***		
		(0.002)		
Income decile	−0.006***	−0.005***		
	(0.001)	(0.001)		
Income: Coping			0.012**	0.012**
			(0.005)	(0.005)
Income: Difficult			0.051***	0.051***
			(0.009)	(0.009)
Income: Very difficult			0.060***	0.058***
			(0.017)	(0.017)
Satisfaction with the economy				−0.008***
				(0.001)
Occupation: Managers	−0.035***	−0.029***	−0.041***	−0.039***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Occupation: Technicians	−0.007	−0.001	−0.010	−0.007
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Occupation: Clerks	−0.027***	−0.022**	−0.030***	−0.027***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Occupation: Low skill services	−0.018**	−0.016*	−0.016*	−0.014*
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Occupation: Routine workers	−0.019**	−0.015	−0.020**	−0.015*
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Female=1	−0.001	−0.007	0.001	−0.001
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Age	−0.0001	−0.0001	0.00003	0.00003
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Union membership=1	0.023***	0.019***	0.021***	0.020***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Church attendance=1	−0.047***	−0.045***	−0.038***	−0.036***
	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Higher education=1	0.011*	0.015**	0.010*	0.010*
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Unemployed=1	0.019	0.022	0.011	0.012
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Rural-urban: Suburbs	−0.019**	−0.017**	−0.016*	−0.016*
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Rural-urban: Small city	−0.005	−0.005	−0.007	−0.007
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Rural-urban: Country village	−0.017**	−0.018**	−0.021***	−0.022***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Rural-urban: Farm and countryside	−0.030***	−0.031***	−0.035***	−0.036***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Foreign born=1	−0.015*	−0.013	−0.022***	−0.015*
	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Constant	0.250***	0.105***	0.166***	0.149***
	(0.023)	(0.024)	(0.021)	(0.018)
Observations	13,389	13,324	15,707	15,807
R^2	0.045	0.059	0.044	0.045
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Source: ESS Wave 6.*Note*: Linear probability model with country fixed effects. Standard errors corrected for heteroskedasticity. Reference groups as in Table One.

Table Four: Estimates from hierarchical linear models predicting subjective social status

	Dependent variable:					
	SSS					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Individual-level covariates	+	+	+	+	+	+
GDP			0.00001***			0.00002***
			(0.00000)			(0.00000)
Income * Top 10		0.004**	0.004**			
		(0.002)	(0.002)			
Top 10	−0.143**	−0.159***	−0.119**			
	(0.051)	(0.052)	(0.047)			
Higher ed. * Tertiary enrollment					0.026***	0.025***
					(0.003)	(0.003)
Tertiary enrollment				−0.017	−0.029	0.004
				(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.015)
Constant	9.234***	9.619***	8.173***	6.266***	6.658***	4.691***
	(1.243)	(1.255)	(1.195)	(0.758)	(0.761)	(0.581)
Observations	29,753	29,753	29,753	30,596	30,596	30,596

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Sources: GDP per capita from ESS Wave 6 dataset; income inequality data from the World Bank; enrollment data from Eurostat.

Appendix One: Countries and classification of parties included in the analysis

Radical left	***Countries***	***Populist right***
	Albania	
	Belgium	Vlaams Belang Front National
	Bulgaria	PP Ataka
	Switzerland	Swiss People's Party Swiss Democrats
	Cyprus	
KSCM	Czech Republic	
Die Linke	Germany	
The Red-Green Alliance Socialist People's Party	Denmark	Danish People's Party
	Estonia	
Izquierda Unida	Spain	
Left Alliance	Finland	True Finns
Lutte Ouvri	France	Front National
	United Kingdom	
	Hungary	Fidesz Jobbik
Sinn Fein	Ireland	
	Israel	
	Iceland	
Movimento 5 Stelle	Italy	
	Lithuania	
Socialist Party	Netherlands	PVV
The Party Red Socialist Left Party	Norway	Progress Party
	Poland	Law and Justice
Bloco de Esquerda	Portugal	
	Sweden	Swedish Democrats
	Slovenia	Slovene National Party
	Slovakia	

Appendix Two: Supplementary results.

Table A1: Subjective social status and social integration

	Dependent variable: SSS			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treated with respect	0.327***			
	(0.008)			
Trust people		0.084***		
		(0.004)		
Social activities: less than most			0.379***	
			(0.030)	
Social activities: About the same			0.644***	
			(0.029)	
Social activities: More than most			0.885***	
			(0.035)	
Social activities: Much more than most			0.963***	
			(0.057)	
Social meetings: Less than once a month				0.328***
				(0.067)
Social meetings: Once a month				0.652***
				(0.067)
Social meetings: Several times a month				0.760***
				(0.065)
Social meetings: Once a week				0.814***
				(0.065)
Social meetings: Several times a week				0.860***
				(0.064)
Social meetings: Every day				0.883***
				(0.066)
Income decile	0.144***	0.152***	0.146***	0.152***
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Occupation: Managers	0.055*	0.052	0.049	0.045
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)
Occupation: Technicians	−0.122***	−0.153***	−0.132***	−0.147***
	(0.039)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.040)
Occupation: Clerks	−0.177***	−0.191***	−0.198***	−0.213***
	(0.038)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.039)
Occupation: Low skill services	−0.330***	−0.350***	−0.359***	−0.385***
	(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.032)
Occupation: Routine workers	−0.435***	−0.462***	−0.449***	−0.484***
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)
Female=1	−0.092***	−0.066***	−0.047**	−0.062***
	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)
Age	−0.001***	−0.001**	−0.0002	−0.0001
	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)
Union membership=1	0.049**	0.056**	0.041*	0.057**
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)
Church attendance=1	0.122***	0.174***	0.156***	0.176***
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.027)
Higher education=1	0.204***	0.188***	0.184***	0.200***
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Unemployed=1	−0.241***	−0.306***	−0.327***	−0.338***
	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.037)
Rural-urban: Suburbs	−0.034	−0.029	−0.046	−0.023
	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.032)
Rural-urban: Small city	−0.046*	−0.025	−0.037	−0.029
	(0.024)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)
Rural-urban: Country village	−0.072***	−0.035	−0.039	−0.033
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.026)
Rural-urban: Farm and countryside	−0.093**	−0.038	−0.021	−0.019
	(0.040)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.041)
Foreign born=1	−0.194***	−0.175***	−0.151***	−0.163***
	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Constant	5.121***	6.654***	6.586***	6.262***
	(0.080)	(0.070)	(0.071)	(0.092)
Observations	33,198	33,495	33,044	33,489
R^2	0.285	0.259	0.265	0.258

Source: ESS Wave 6. *Note*: OLS regressions with country fixed effects. See variable list for reference groups.

Table A2: The relationship between subjective social status and political alienation

	Dependent variable:		
	Sat. with democracy	Trust in politicians	Trust in parliament
	(1)	(2)	(3)
SSS	0.199***	0.218***	0.226***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)
Income decile	0.061***	0.018***	0.039***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Occupation: Managers	−0.098**	−0.125***	−0.113**
	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.048)
Occupation: Technicians	−0.045	−0.182***	−0.188***
	(0.055)	(0.054)	(0.058)
Occupation: Clerks	−0.043	−0.167***	−0.194***
	(0.053)	(0.052)	(0.057)
Occupation: Low skill services	−0.208***	−0.263***	−0.362***
	(0.044)	(0.043)	(0.046)
Occupation: Routine workers	−0.165***	−0.295***	−0.415***
	(0.046)	(0.045)	(0.049)
Female=1	−0.131***	0.062**	−0.114***
	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.027)
Age	0.001***	0.001**	0.001***
	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0004)
Union membership=1	−0.024	−0.048	−0.009
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.035)
Church attendance=1	0.234***	0.373***	0.377***
	(0.038)	(0.037)	(0.040)
Higher education=1	0.088***	0.092***	0.251***
	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.030)
Unemployed=1	−0.164***	−0.171***	−0.166***
	(0.052)	(0.051)	(0.055)
Rural-urban: Suburbs	−0.035	−0.009	0.002
	(0.044)	(0.043)	(0.047)
Rural-urban: Small city	−0.133***	−0.046	−0.106***
	(0.034)	(0.033)	(0.036)
Rural-urban: Country village	−0.078**	−0.071**	−0.147***
	(0.035)	(0.034)	(0.037)
Rural-urban: Farm and countryside	−0.219***	−0.122**	−0.234***
	(0.056)	(0.055)	(0.060)
Foreign born=1	0.388***	0.280***	0.328***
	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.045)
Constant	2.936***	1.356***	2.367***
	(0.107)	(0.106)	(0.115)
Observations	32,847	33,198	33,062
R^2	0.260	0.241	0.263

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Source: ESS Wave 6. *Note*: OLS regressions with country fixed effects. See Table 1 for reference groups.

Table A3: Full multi-level models

	Dependent variable: SSS								
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Income decile	0.164***	0.079**	0.078**	0.164***	0.073	0.071	0.169***	0.169***	0.169***
	(0.004)	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.004)	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Occupation: Managers	0.077**	0.076**	0.076**	0.077**	0.076**	0.076**	0.101***	0.099***	0.099***
	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)
Occupation: Technicians	−0.119***	−0.119***	−0.120***	−0.119***	−0.119***	−0.119***	−0.139***	−0.136***	−0.136***
	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.041)
Occupation: Clerks	−0.146***	−0.147***	−0.147***	−0.146***	−0.147***	−0.147***	−0.187***	−0.187***	−0.186***
	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.040)
Occupation: Low skill services	−0.362***	−0.363***	−0.363***	−0.362***	−0.363***	−0.363***	−0.394***	−0.398***	−0.398***
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.032)
Occupation: Routine workers	−0.393***	−0.393***	−0.393***	−0.393***	−0.393***	−0.393***	−0.433***	−0.429***	−0.428***
	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.034)
Female=1	−0.002	−0.002	−0.002	−0.002	−0.002	−0.002	−0.010	−0.010	−0.010
	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Age	−0.0004*	−0.0004*	−0.0004*	−0.0004*	−0.0004*	−0.0004*	0.0002	0.0002	0.0002
	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)
Union membership=1	0.031	0.032	0.030	0.031	0.031	0.030	0.029	0.033	0.032
	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Church attendance=1	0.114***	0.115***	0.115***	0.114***	0.115***	0.115***	0.136***	0.139***	0.140***
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Higher education=1	0.313***	0.312***	0.312***	0.313***	0.312***	0.312***	0.276***	−0.587***	−0.583***
	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.113)	(0.113)
Unemployed=1	−0.721***	−0.722***	−0.722***	−0.721***	−0.722***	−0.722***	−0.869***	−0.863***	−0.863***
	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.040)
Rural-urban: Suburbs	0.061*	0.062*	0.061*	0.061*	0.062*	0.061*	0.070**	0.077**	0.077**
	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)
Rural-urban: Small city	0.122***	0.123***	0.122***	0.122***	0.123***	0.122***	0.118***	0.125***	0.125***
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)
Rural-urban: Country village	0.034	0.037	0.037	0.034	0.037	0.036	0.057**	0.065**	0.064**
	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Rural-urban: Farm and countryside	0.095**	0.096**	0.094**	0.095**	0.096**	0.094**	0.109**	0.117***	0.115**
	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.045)
Foreign born=1	−0.116***	−0.115***	−0.116***	−0.116***	−0.115***	−0.116***	−0.114***	−0.105***	−0.106***
	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)
GDP			0.00001***			0.00001**			0.00002***
			(0.00000)			(0.00000)			(0.00000)
Income * Top 10		0.004**	0.004**						
		(0.002)	(0.002)						
Top 10	−0.143**	−0.159***	−0.119**						
	(0.051)	(0.052)	(0.047)						
Income * Top 20					0.002*	0.002*			
					(0.001)	(0.001)			
Top 20				−0.128***	−0.139***	−0.103**			
				(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.041)			
Higher education * Tertiary enrollmen								0.026***	0.025***
								(0.003)	(0.003)
Tertiary enrollment							−0.017	−0.029	0.004
							(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.015)
Constant	9.234***	9.619***	8.173***	10.769***	11.185***	9.312***	6.266***	6.658***	4.691***
	(1.243)	(1.255)	(1.195)	(1.736)	(1.753)	(1.660)	(0.758)	(0.761)	(0.581)
Observations	29,753	29,753	29,753	29,753	29,753	29,753	30,596	30,596	30,596
Log Likelihood	−59,245.580	−59,243.050	−59,239.550	−59,245.400	−59,243.900	−59,240.510	−59,843.540	−59,813.040	−59,802.590
Akaike Inf. Crit.	118,533.200	118,530.100	118,525.100	118,532.800	118,531.800	118,527.000	119,729.100	119,670.100	119,651.200
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	118,707.500	118,712.700	118,716.000	118,707.100	118,714.400	118,717.900	119,904.000	119,853.300	119,842.700

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Appendix Three: Measures used in the analysis

Individual-level variables:

- HINCTNTA: income decile
- HINCFEL: coping with income; answers to the question 'which of the descriptions on this card comes closest to describing how you feel about your household's income nowadays?' range across 'living comfortably', 'coping', 'finding it difficult on present income' to 'finding it very difficult on present income'
- ISCO08: occupations are coded using the and based on Oesch 2006 (Table A1)
- GNDR: gender
- AGEA: age
- MBTRU: union membership; equals 1 for respondents who replied "yes, currently".
- RLGATND: church attendance; equals 1 for respondents who replied "every day", "more than once a week" or once a week to the question "Apart from special occasions such as weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend religious services nowadays?"
- EDUYRS: higher education; equals 1 for those with 13-30 years of education
- UEMPLA: unemployed
- DOMICIL: rural-urban
- TRTRSP: treated with respect; answers to the question "please tell me the extent you feel that people treat you with respect?" range from "not at all" (1) and "a great deal" (7)
- GINCDIF: support redistribution; answers to the question "The government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels" range from "disagree strongly" (1) to "agree strongly" (5).
- STFECO: satisfaction with the economy; answers to the question "On the whole how satisfied are you with the present state of the economy in [country]?" range from "extremely dissatisfied" (1) to "extremely satisfied" (11)
- PPLTRST: trust people; answers to the question "would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?" range from "you can't be too careful" (1) to "most people can be trusted" (11).
- SCLACT: social activities; answers to the question "Compared to other people of your age, how often would you say you take part in social activities?" range from "much less than most" to "much more than most".
- SCLMEET: social meetings; answers to the question "how often do you meet socially with friends, relatives or work colleagues" range from "never" to "every day".
- STFDEM: satisfaction with democracy; answers to the question "how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]?" range from "extremely dissatisfied" (1) to "extremely satisfied" (11).
- TRSTPLT: trust in politicians; answers range from "no trust at all" (1) to "complete trust (11).
- PPLTRST: trust in parliament; answers range from "no trust at all" (1) to "complete trust (11).

Country-level variables

- GDP: GDP per capita, based on World Bank data
- Top 10: Income share held by highest 10%, based on World Bank data
- Top 20: Income share held by highest 20%, based on World Bank data
- Tertiary enrollment: Students in tertiary education - as % of 20-24 years old in the population, based on Eurostat data

Notes

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[1] In Europe, the share of the vote taken by right populist parties in parliamentary elections has increased ten-fold since 1980 from less than 2% to more than 12% of the vote (Heino 2017).

[2] For an argument that emphasizes feelings of relative deprivation, somewhat analogous to our concept of social integration, see Elchardus and Spruyt (2012).

[3] Note, however, that this is only one way to interpret the integration of societies, as alternative formulations based on a contrast between social integration and system integration suggest (cf. Lockwood 1964 and Archer 1996).

[4] Therefore, we think it makes little sense to ask, as many contributions to the literature currently do, whether economic or cultural developments are more important to support for populism. See Gidron and Hall (2017).

[5] There is ample evidence that most people care deeply about such recognition (Ridgeway 2014).

[6] On the diversity of radical left parties see March (2011) and Gomez *et al*. (2016).

[7] For a list of the countries included, see Appendix One. In order to confine the survey to stable European democracies, we dropped Russia, Ukraine, and Kosovo from the total number surveyed.

[8] To classify occupations, we use Table A1 in Oesch (2006).

[9] For question wording, see Appendix Three.

[10] For the list of parties, see Appendix One.

[11] The indication that voters for both types of parties are more likely to express dissatisfaction with the current state of the economy than voters for other parties suggests that they are also motivated by sociotropic concerns.

[12] There is considerable debate about the number of country cases required for such estimations. In general, the coefficients they yield should be unbiased but the standard errors, especially on cross-level interaction terms, may be biased downward. Stegmueller (2013) calculates that the 95% confidence intervals generated by most software programs for such interaction terms may be closer to 90% intervals if less than 20 country cases are used; and Bryan and Jenkins (2015) recommend using such models only if there are about 25 cases, where the standard errors should be biased by less than 2%, although Elff *et al*. (2016) question those conclusions and suggest that unbiased estimates are available from considerably fewer country cases. We have an N of 22 to 25 country cases but, in line with these concerns, the results should be treated with caution.

[13] Although people sometimes use local or membership groups for such comparisons, multiple scholars suggest that in modern societies marked by egalitarian values, social mobility and widespread advertising, national frames often provide the relevant reference groups for such social comparisons. See Passas (1997) and Merton (1968: 353-59).

[14] Schneider (2017) finds that higher levels of income inequality reduce life satisfaction along with subjective social status.

[15] Dani Rodrik (2017: 14) makes an analogous point when he observes that "what arouses popular opposition is not inequality per se, but perceived unfairness."