

The Role of Representation in Rebel Appeal: Why Voters Express Support for Parliamentary Dissent

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Abstract

Why do voters express support for rebellious politicians? Dissent could impede the parties that these voters support from attaining their goals and perhaps even undermine representative democracy. In survey experiments on nationally representative samples of the U.K. population, we elicit voters' perceptions of politicians who take on a series of attributes, one of which is voting against their party in parliament. While voters generally support rebels, we find no robust evidence that voters prefer rebels because their actions are congruent with preference of the broader public or the constituents of that rebellious MP, or because voters appreciate dissent where it is cast as protest vote for the sake of "the people." We find, instead, that rebels are appreciated when they share voters' partisan identity, gender, and policy preferences. Rebels are electorally successful if they substantively or descriptively represent voters; not because they are a mavericks in parliament trying to "stick it" to the establishment.

Keywords: Legislative behavior, Representation, Voting behavior, Party politics, Rebels

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1 Introduction

Voters often seem thrilled by politicians who cast themselves as outsiders or mavericks. Knowing this, politicians may portray themselves as rebels for electoral gain. They occasionally buck the party line in political systems that allow for the cultivation of a “personal vote” such as the US and the UK (Carson et al., 2010; Cowley, 2002; Kam, 2009; Slapin et al., 2018; Kirkland and Slapin, 2019).¹ Research has found that MPs’ rebellious behaviour can lead to higher voter support (e.g. Kam, 2009; Campbell et al., 2016; Wagner, Vivyan and Glinitzer, 2019). But why do voters seem drawn to candidates for political office who rebel against their parties? We argue that voters appreciate MPs’ dissent from the party line because they perceive rebellious acts as increasing the quality of political representation. Our study examines which aspect of representation – substantive, descriptive, and symbolic, or a combination thereof – drives voters’ appreciation for dissenters. The abundance of rebel rhetoric during electoral campaigns, on the parliamentary floor, as well as in debates about the legitimacy of the current institutions of representative democracy make these questions of empirical and normative importance.

Using two experimental studies embedded in online surveys of nationally representative samples in the UK, we parse out the effects on voter support of different aspects of representation associated with MPs’ dissent from the party. Within a survey of political behavior and attitudes, we ask respondents to consider a series of choices between two hypothetical representatives (Study 1) or to state approval of one hypothetical representative (Study 2). In both studies, respondents read a scenario in which parliament just voted on a bill. Aspects of the scenario, the content of the bill, as well as characteristics of party and MP(s) vary randomly in each vignette.

We test whether better *substantive representation* lies behind voters’ preference for

¹In the UK, the overall fraction of divisions cast against one’s party is small, less than one percent on average between 1992 and 2015. However, a very substantial number of divisions experience at least one MP crossing the aisle to enter the opposing lobby. The Labour Party, for example, saw at least one of its MPs vote against the party on almost 37% of divisions during the 2005-2010 period. The Conservative Party experienced a similar number of rebels during the 2010-2015 period. Moreover, the vast majority of MPs (between 70% and 95%) cast at least one vote against their party majority during a standard 5-year parliamentary term. Finally, a much smaller number of MPs cast an extraordinary number of votes against their party. Labour MP Kate Hoey voted against the majority of the Labour Party on an incredible 46.6% of all divisions during the 2017-2019 parliament.

rebels by investigating variation in voters' support for dissenters as the policy position of the rebellious MP changes. We juxtapose such instrumentally driven preferences for better representation with desires for *descriptive representation*. Here we contend that rebellion is only viewed favorably when voters and the dissenting MP hold important characteristics in common (i.e., gender and partisanship). Finally, we consider the symbolic quality of rebellion. Voters may appreciate the act of dissent for expressive reasons. In particular, we are interested in whether voters prefer rebel MP(s) even if they have no influence in parliament, their appeal is based on a purely populist agenda, or they violate a norm of party discipline integral to the function in of representative democracy.

Like much of the existing literature, we find that voters reward rebellious behavior. But our findings demonstrate that voter support for rebels is contingent on other factors related to the type of representation voters might desire. We find that rebels are supported if they use rebellion to highlight how they represent voters either substantively or descriptively by supporting policy that individual voters' prefer, especially when the voter and rebel MP share a partisan identity. Additionally, voters tend to prefer rebels over loyal MPs when the rebels share the voters' gender and when the rebel is not particularly influential. These findings offer evidence that voters also support rebels for descriptive and symbolic reasons. We find no robust evidence that voters reward rebels electorally because their actions are congruent with the preference of the majority of the public or the preferences of that rebellious MP's constituents. In other words, voters do not seem to take a socio-tropic evaluation of policy representation. Voters also do not prefer dissent where it is cast as for the sake of "the people".

These findings shed new light on democratic representation by elucidating how voters perceive, reward, and punish MPs' individual decisions to support or rebel from their party. It adds both to the political science literature on representation, parties, and legislatures and the political psychology literature on motivations behind political behavior.

2 Parliamentary rebellion and representation

Many studies, both in the UK and elsewhere, explore partisan dissent on legislative votes by examining the type of MP likely to deviate from the party line and the conditions under which they do so (e.g. Benedetto and Hix, 2007; Kam, 2009; Vivyan and Wagner, 2012; Ceron, 2015; Proksch and Slapin, 2015; Slapin et al., 2018; Bäck and Debus, 2017). In the context of the UK, these studies tend to find that MPs holding ideologically extreme views or who have little chance of serving on the party’s frontbench rebel more frequently. Recent survey research using experimental methods has provided empirical evidence for the notion that voters like these rebels. Literature on the US Congress suggests that legislators who deviate more often from their party can parlay dissent into electoral support (Carson et al., 2010). And building on a sample from the UK, Campbell et al. (2016) find that citizens express support for politicians who engage in rebellious behavior compared with those who toe the party. The study further finds that the act of dissenting may signal valence to voters — that is, that the MP possesses desirable qualities like integrity, honesty, or competence. Other work investigates rebellion across political systems and finds that in countries using proportional electoral systems, where dissent is likely more costly, voters appreciate rebellion even more, again suggesting an element of signaling in rebellion (Wagner, Vivyan and Glinitzer, 2019).

While experimental research generally finds that voters like rebellious activity, uncovering experimental evidence for why voters like this activity has proven more difficult. Campbell et al. (2016) come the closest to examining the causal mechanisms behind voters’ support for rebellion by demonstrating, in a non-experimental setting, that voters value MPs whom they perceive as being independent. Their experimental design tests the delegate versus trustee distinction, but these are only two of many possible mechanisms. Experimentally, they do find that voters are somewhat less supportive of rebellion among MPs with whom they share a strong partisan identity, and they find no support for the hypothesis that voter support for rebels increases when MPs are said to prioritize constituents’ views over their own. Other literature has examined public support for populism and anti-system rhetoric (e.g. De Vries and Edwards, 2009; Barr, 2009), a

potential reason for rebellion, but these findings have not been connected to the findings on political rebellion.

While existing literature posits possible mechanisms behind the electoral success of rebels, we seek to experimentally tease out the relative importance of mechanisms specifically related to different concepts of democratic representation. We hope increase our understanding of voter support for and the implications of rebellious activity. We do not explicitly examine the valence characteristics (e.g. independent-mindedness) examined in previous studies such as Campbell et al. (2016), but rather we try to understand why voters might attribute these normatively desirable characteristics to MP(s). We explore voters' appreciation for rebellious activity rooted in their desired type of representation within the UK's candidate-centered Westminster system.²

Democratic representation can take on a variety of forms (Pitkin, 1967; Mansbridge, 2003; Saward, 2006; Rehfeld, 2009). When evaluating MPs, voters may reflect on the level of representation they perceive their MP to offer, as well as the form it takes. To use Pitkin's (1967) classic distinction, MPs may "act for" or "stand for" voters, i.e. take on the role of a trustee or delegate. When representation is conceived of as a trusteeship, political institutions are seen as giving politicians the formal authority to make decisions on citizens' behalf, acting for them in their best interest, as the politician sees fit. In contrast, MPs can stand for voters and act as their mouthpiece in political system, in other words, act as their delegate. MPs may aggregate the views of all voters or concentrate on particular groups of voters; they may have different aims with respect to whom they represent (Rehfeld, 2009). Regardless, in all of these models of representation, politicians offer substantive representation, or representation with respect to particular policy positions. Voters may value substantive representation because it is instrumentally beneficial to themselves, or because they value norms of representation where MPs reflect the views of a wider constituency.

MPs may offer also representation through means other than substantive policy, for example by serving as symbols and offering descriptive representation (e.g. Mansbridge,

²The hypotheses presented in this section were registered with [omitted for blinded review]

1999). Voters may be more likely to support MPs who share important characteristics with them, as they trust them to better represent their interests (Arnesen and Peters, 2017). They may support actions of MPs who they perceive as belonging to their group, while rejecting the actions of MPs who do not. Voters may also appreciate symbolic, expressive acts of politicians standing up for constituents, regardless of policy content.

Descriptive and symbolic representation may also play a role in signaling to voters whether an MP adequately represents them on matters of substance. No matter how MPs and voters view MPs' role as a trustee or delegate, or how MPs aim to represent views of diverse groups, representatives may simply be better or worse at providing representation. Voters may not be able to adequately assess whether the degree of substantive representation on offer is sufficient or in line with their wishes. Descriptive representation may help signal to voters the degree which a representative shares their views and how likely the representative is to take positions they share (Arnesen, Duell and Johannesson, 2019).

Thus, representation is a highly multidimensional concept, and rebellion can signal information to voters about these dimensions. Additionally, voters may find some dimensions of representation more appealing than others. To complicate matters further, different types of representation are not mutually exclusive, and actions that enhance one type of representation may enhance others simultaneously, as well. This overlap can make it difficult to definitively say that preferences for one type of representation over others drives voters' support for MP behavior. Nevertheless, some MP behavior clearly aligns better with some conceptualizations of representation than others. Here we link specific hypotheses about support for rebels to these concepts of representation, while recognizing that there cannot be a clear one-to-one mapping of hypotheses to concepts.

Rebel appeal due to alignment with voters' policy preferences would be indicative of the importance of *substantive representation*, and suggest the importance of an instrumental rational for preferring rebels, in line with a delegate model. Voters may value rebellion because they believe that the MP, through rebellion, expresses a position that matches their own. In other words, rebellion may reflect policy congruence between the

MP and the voter, and voters may value this increased congruence.

Hypothesis 1 *Voters support rebels when they share policy positions (Policy congruence mechanism).*

But again, we must assess exactly who voters would like their representatives to represent. Perceiving a politician as a dissenter may lead voters to think about norms regarding political representation. Democratic principles require MP(s) to be responsive to public desires beyond petty partisan squabbles. If this norm of responsiveness is violated, the legitimacy of the system of democratic representation may be under threat. Therefore, substantive policy representation could also lead voters to support rebels that they view as more representative of the policy preferences of a constituency or the broader public, also of importance to them. We evaluate whether voters value a constituency-minded, representative MP (as indicated by rebellion) over a MP who is a party soldier.

Hypothesis 2 *Voters appreciate rebellious activity if it suits public or constituency opinion but reject it when it does not (Constituency congruence mechanism).*

While Hypothesis 1 captures substantive, instrumental considerations at the individual level, Hypothesis 2 speaks to voters' substantive motivations that aim for better representation at the constituency or societal level (Rehfeld, 2009).

The appeal of a rebel may also lie in motivations related to *descriptive representation*, as voters' preference for descriptive and substantive representation are certainly related (Arnesen, Duell and Johannesson, 2019). In particular, we posit that voters support rebels only when they are fellow members of social groups important to voters. Voters may be more willing to trust the motivations behind dissident actions when they are taken by an MP belonging to their same group.

Hypothesis 3 *Voters support rebels when they share a group identity (Shared group membership mechanism).*

Being represented by "one of your own" surely correlates with the desire to see particular policy preferences represented in parliament. But independent of such substantive,

instrumental motivations, voters also value the symbolism of representation by fellow group members (Pitkin, 1967; Hayes and Hibbing, 2017). In this way, any evidence supporting Hypothesis 3 is not only an indication of instrumental motivations to support rebels for better descriptive representation, but also an expressive choice for someone who shares characteristics important to the voter.

With respect to such expressive motivations we argue that a call for better substantive representation via representation by group members is often simply a preference for *symbolic representation*. This is particularly true when such symbolic representation is desired with respect to an MP who stands for the rather broad interests of “the people”.

Hypothesis 4 *Voters support a rebellious MP when a rebel is perceived to better represent the people (populism mechanism).*

Hypothesis 4 very much captures the phenomena that often MP(s) claim to represent (Saward, 2006).

This last mechanism is different from the mechanisms that speak to substantive policy representation or descriptive representation. Here, voters do not much care about specific the consequences of their action in terms of policy preferences or implications for intra-party policy debate but appreciate expressively an MP who stands up to the party leadership, in particular, or the political elite, in general. Such expressive motivation may be divided in a direct account of action (expressive utility from doing it, i.e. voting for the rebel) and an indirect account of action (expressive utility from the consequences of the choice, i.e. a rebel in office). The latter may yield consumption benefits (i.e., having a rebel in office and potential instrumental benefits) but also, as argued, have symbolic meaning (i.e., voting for a rebel).

We specifically examine whether voting for a rebel as expressive behavior is motivated by the concern for the symbolic significance of the action, rather than the indirect consequences such as having a particular platform implemented, having an MP in parliament who represents a particular group, or gaining and maintaining political power (Hamlin and Jennings, 2011). In the context of parliamentary dissent, preferences for symbolic representation may be seen as being expressively motivated. Voters choice for a rebel can

then be defined as purely expressively motivated when the rebellious MP is not influential in the parliamentary process.

Hypothesis 5 *Voters support rebels even when they are not influential in parliament (Protest vote mechanism).*

Support for the opposing prediction, that voters support rebels only when they are influential, would provide evidence that instrumental motivations drive support for dissenters as laid out in Hypothesis 1.

Finally, when voters want to express their position against the party leadership, in particular, and not just the political elite in general, they may also support dissent. When support for the rebel is not rooted in instrumental motivations, then the voters' likely value the symbolism of rebellion.

Hypothesis 6 *Voters value rebels as symbols of defiance of the party elite (No party soldier mechanism).*

Taken together, these hypotheses explore the multitude of ways in which voters can view rebellion through the lens of political representation. We investigate hypothesis 1, 2, 5, and 6 in Study 1 and hypotheses 1-5 in Study 2.

We argue that support for the various hypotheses are indicative of the different theoretical mechanisms through which representation can work. Table 1 lists the hypotheses and the nature of representation that support for the hypothesis would be most indicative of. As it is evident, support for a particular hypothesis sometimes speak to more than one simple conceptualization of representation.

Table 1: A mapping of hypotheses to conceptualizations of representation

Hypothesis	Indicates rebellion	
	conceptualized mainly as	but also as
H1 Policy congruence	Substantive	symbolic
H2 Constituency congruence		
H3 Shared group	Descriptive	substantive or symbolic
H4 Populism	Symbolic	not substantive
H5 Protest vote		
H6 No party soldier		

H1-3 focus more on substantive and instrumental concerns, but H3 also on descriptive representation. H4-6, in contrast, focus more on the symbolic elements of representation. Support for H1 or H1 together with H2 and H3 would suggest that substantive, instrumental concerns feature highly in voters' minds. Evidence for H2 and H3 but not H1 would suggest that symbolic and descriptive representation, rather than purely substantive and instrumental concerns, play a role. Substantive, instrumental considerations eluded to in H2 are of socio-tropic, while those referenced in H1 are of ego-tropic nature. Support for H3 but not H1 or H2 would be indicative of the importance of descriptive in combination with substantive concerns. Evidence for H4-6 over H1-3 would indicate that symbolic representation are of greater importance for explaining voter support of rebellion than substantive and instrumental concerns. In particular, support for H5 and H6 would indicate that instrumental concerns are likely weak.

Our results offer the strongest evidence for H3 (Shared group membership) with some support for H1 (Policy congruence) and H5 (Protest vote), and less for H2 (Constituency congruence), H4 (Populism) and H6 (No party soldier). This suggests that descriptive representation, most likely in conjunction with substantive, instrumental representation explains most voter support for rebellion. Overall, there is less evidence that voters conceptualize rebellion as an act of symbolic representation. However, voters are supportive of MPs' who engage in a protest vote, namely those who are not influential.

3 Research design

We approach the complexity of how various conceptualisations of representation may compete in voters' mind when evaluating rebels by providing different contexts and frames for the decision respondents are asked to make. In both studies, we elicit respondents preferences over rebellious MP by asking three difference questions — whether the respondent would vote for the MP, whether the respondent feels warm towards the MP, and whether the respondent is likely to vote for the MP. These questions are embedded in vignettes that experimentally manipulate whether the MP is a rebel and vary MP traits, party traits, and bill context. Additionally, between-respondent treatments vary the frame of

those questions (i.e., whether respondents are primed to think about party discipline), the amount of additional information provided (i.e., whether the MP is said to act for the people, not to have influence in parliament, to share the respondent’s party identity, or to share the respondent’s policy position), and the issue object of the bill in question.

In Study 1 we randomly draw a subset of attributes describing MP and the context in which the MP makes a decision to restrict the amount of information respondents need to digest while still being able to vary enough relevant aspects of MP’s rebellious activity for increasing the potential of external validity (De la Cuesta et al., 2019). In study 2 we move from pairwise MP profiles to single profiles to further reduce decision complexity.³ Second, we introduce further between-respondent treatments to arrive at more precise and properly powered tests of our mechanism. Third, we move from unforced to forced responses on the outcome measure.

Sample In study 1, we embedded our experiment within a longer online survey administered by Delta Poll on a sample representative of the UK electorate. The survey collected observations on 2540 respondent of which 2055 consented to start our experiment and we took outcome measures for 1699 respondents.⁴ In study 2, we collected responses from 822 participants in a survey administered through the online survey firm Prolific. The sample was drawn to be representative of the UK adult population in age, gender, and ethnicity.⁵

Conjoint/Factorial vignette table and experimental treatments In Study 1, we present respondents with six experimental vignettes that describe the hypothetical voting behavior of two MPs on a bill in parliament. The respondents are shown six attributes,

³This step also takes away the need for constraint randomization to avoid unreasonable attribute combinations that is relevant in a pairwise design and removes bounds on the marginal means of our outcome measures as a function of how likely it is that the two MP profiles shown on the same vignette screen are the same (Leeper, Hobolt and Tilley, 2019, 210).

⁴Throughout the screens of the survey that were part of the conjoint experiment in study 1, we did not force responses on our outcome measures. As a consequence, we obtained observations on fewer respondents than 2055 for any of the six hypothetical choices. In particular, the response rate was 65% in the first choice and declined monotonically to 55% in the sixth and last choice.

⁵Participants received £1.5 for taking the study 2 survey. Section B.1 in the appendix assesses the representativeness of our samples. The sample in study 1 is slightly younger, poorer, but better educated than a representative sample of the UK electorate, while the sample in study 2 is indistinguishable.

five of which are selected randomly from a set of 11, the sixth randomly varies whether the MPs are described as rebel. The attributes shown are randomized across vignettes (but the same attributes are shown for both candidates within one vignette) and the exact realization of the attribute levels are randomly assigned. Respondents see the MP’s tenure in parliament, whether the position the MP takes on the bill is moderate or extreme, whether the MP mostly works on constituency or national issues, and, most importantly, whether the MP rebelled against the party in the vote taken. We further give information about whether the MP sits with the Conservative party, the Labour party, or the Liberal Democrats, whether the party leadership supported the bill brought forward in parliament, whether the majority of the public supported the bill, whether the majority of the constituency supported the bill, whether the MP had influence over the final voting outcome, and whether UKIP announced support for the position the MP took.⁶

In study 2, respondents are presented with a series of five hypothetical MPs with randomly varying values of 5 attributes across vignettes. They are given information about the MP’s gender and whether the MP rebelled against the party, the MP’s party membership and whether the bill was passed by parliament, the policy area covered by the bill, whether the majority of the public supported the bill, and whether the MP was pivotal in the vote taken in parliament.⁷

We further randomly assign respondents to treatments in a between-respondent design. In study 1, these treatments vary the subject of the parliamentary vote (*issue treatments*: whether the bill mentioned in the introductory text concerns “taxes and government spending” or “immigration”) and whether the respondent receives a prime to consider voting in parliament as an act where MPs usually vote with their parties (*party discipline treatment*). In study 2, treatments vary information given to respondents about whether the MP has influence in parliament (*no influence*), whether the vote taken by the MP

⁶When randomly assigning attribute values, we impose some constraints to restrict ourselves to reasonable combinations. We show the same values for party leadership’s position and the public support for both MPs.

⁷The exact wording of attribute realisation is shown in Section A of the appendix. Figures A.3 and A.4 are example of what respondents see on their screen in Study 1 and 2, respectively.

aligned or opposed the respondents’ policy position (referencing the policy positions we elicited from respondents pre-experiment, *policy congruence*), whether the MP shares the respondents’ party identity (*shared party identity*), and whether the MP claimed that the vote represents the wishes of the people (*populism*).⁸

Outcome measures and manipulation checks On the same screen where we show the profiles of the hypothetical MPs, we elicit outcome measures. In study 1, we measure two outcomes: vote preference MP 1 vs MP 2 (binary variable *vote preference*) and favorability towards MP 1 and 2 (variable *favorability* on a 0-100 scale). In study 2, we ask how likely respondents are to vote for such an MP in the general election (variable *approval* on a 0-10 scale). For ease of graphical representation in the Figures below, we normalise the favorability and approval measures to range from 0 to 1 while providing statistical hypothesis testing and regression analysis on the raw scale.

We prompt respondents with a manipulation check: we ask to guess how often rebellion happens in the UK Parliament.⁹ We do not find differences in answers across treatment groups except for the shared party identity treatment ($p = .08$). While we want to see balance for most treatments, we may have expected respondents receiving the party discipline prime treatment to submit a higher guess of actual rebel activity. There is, however, a positive and significant relationship between observing an instance of a rebel (a candidate profile that contains an MP that is said to have voted against the party) and the manipulation check question.¹⁰

Empirical strategy We first estimate the marginal means of our outcome measures — vote preference, favorability, and approval — for candidates who have rebelled against

⁸Table A.3 in the appendix lists number of respondents and the number of observations in each condition of these six treatments across the two studies. Treatment assignment in study 1 creates a 2x2 and in study 2 a 2x2x2x2-design. As illustrated below, we exploit treatment variation one by one and do not (primarily) investigate the interaction between treatments.

⁹In study 1, we ask for a guess of how many instances of MPs voting against their party happened in the approximately 250 votes the UK House of Commons casts ever year. The mean answer in study 1 is 85 (sd = 66). In study 2, we ask respondents “How often do you expect a very rebellious MP to vote against his or her party over the course of 100 votes?” The mean answer is 34 out of 100 (sd 23), which is indistinguishable from the mean answer of 85 out of 250 in Study 1.

¹⁰The coefficient estimate of a regression of guessed number of rebel events on a count of observed rebel events in the experiment is 5.43 (se = .86) with an associated $p < .01$. We implemented further manipulation checks in study 2; results are shown in Section A.3 in the appendix.

their party. That is we compute the mean of the outcome measures for a rebel averaging over all possible combinations of attributes and between-respondent treatment information. We then compare that statistic when varying one factor — either an attribute in the conjoint/factorial vignette table or the variation induced by the between-respondent treatments. We refer to these factors we vary as mechanism factors, and we call this measure *rebel support*. For example, we examine whether respondents prefer a rebel who takes a moderate position compared with a rebel who takes an extreme position. The rebel support measure allows us to identify characteristics of rebels that respondents express support for. Whether we can learn about preferences for rebels by exploring rebel support in this way relies on establishing an overall positive rebel bias in the first place (which we see for vote preference and favorability ($p < .01$) as well as for approval ($p = .06$)).¹¹

These characteristics, however, may simply be characteristics that voters support in any MP, rebellious or not. Therefore, we also examine whether voters prefer rebels to non-rebels who otherwise share the same characteristics. We compare the marginal mean of the outcome measure for an MP who rebelled to an MP who did not rebel. We refer to the size of this difference as *rebel bias*, a value which may be positive or negative. Our test for the existence of a particular mechanism becomes the comparison of two controlled direct effects: rebel bias when the mechanism factor is realized at a particular level minus rebel bias when the mechanism factor is at its base level. Thus, for any set of mechanism factors, we can determine whether respondents prefer rebels or non-rebels more.¹² By measuring rebel support and rebel bias, we are able to assess what drives voter preferences for rebels in related, but substantively different ways.

Testing the policy congruence mechanism (hypothesis 1) with data from study 1, we compute rebel support and rebel bias when the MP is described as being moderate over

¹¹We are exclusively testing directional hypotheses resulting in one-sided hypothesis tests and the graphical presentation of 90% (in addition to the standard 95%) confidence intervals for rebel support and rebel bias. Whenever we report a test returning a significant result, we exclusively test difference-in-means or the regression coefficients on treatment or attribute indicators, we reject the null hypothesis at $\alpha = .05$ in a one-tailed test.

¹²Our investigation of rebel bias is similar to identifying a causal interaction (Egami and Imai, 2019) because we estimate the average interaction effect of rebellion and the mechanism factor (VanderWeele, 2015). More specifically, we estimate the difference in average treatment effect of rebellion on outcomes (rebel bias) between the two levels of the mechanism factor.

when s/he is said to be extreme. Even if voter's preferences would be distributed neatly around a moderate position or voters are more likely to consider themselves as moderate than not, the correlation between preferring a moderate policy platform and policies that are close to voters' own preferences may not be high. Study 2 provides another, more precise test of policy congruence as explanation for support for rebels; here we estimate rebel support and rebel bias for respondents who are given the information that the MP shares their policy preferences and compare it to when respondents are not given that information.

To evaluate hypothesis 2 (constituency congruence mechanism), we test whether rebel support and rebel bias is higher when the MPs voting behavior aligns with public and constituency positions on the bill than when it does not. Respondents are told whether the bill the MP may have rebelled against is favored by a majority of the public. In study 1, we additionally vary whether the bill was favored by the MP's constituency. From this information, we define whether (non-)rebellion aligned with public or constituency positions.

We further utilize study 2 to assess hypothesis 3 (shared group membership), comparing when the respondent and MP share a party identity and gender to when they do not.¹³

Study 2 also provides us with the test for the explanatory power of the populism mechanism, hypothesis 4. We find support for that hypothesis when rebel support and rebel bias is larger when respondents are told that "The MP says the vote represents the wishes of the people" than when they are not given such a statement.

The no influence mechanism (hypothesis 5) is tested by looking at rebel support and rebel bias for respondents who were shown the statement that "This MP usually does not have much influence in what the party does" and compare those to respondents who did not see such a statement (study 2); and, by looking at rebel support and rebel bias in outcome measures for profiles where the MP can be inferred to be decisive (pivotal)

¹³Given the set of party labels assigned to MPs in study 2 (i.e. Labour or Conservative), respondents who are told they share their party identity with the MP are either supporters of the Conservative Party or Labor Party.

in the vote on the bill tabled vs when the MP being decisive cannot be inferred (study 1 and 2).

To test hypothesis 6 – voters’ views on rebels change when the dissenting act can be seen ceasing to perceive the MP as party soldier – we compute rebel support and rebel bias across the conditions of the party discipline treatment (study 1). We find evidence for the no party soldier mechanism when rebel support and rebel bias are higher in the treatment condition where party discipline is not primed vs when it is primed.¹⁴ Table 2 lists the mechanism factor levels we look at to investigate the different mechanisms laid out above.

Table 2: Summary of empirical tests for each hypothesis

Hypothesis	Empirical test: <i>rebel support</i> and <i>rebel bias</i> larger	Study
H1 Policy congruence	for moderate vs extreme MPs	1
	for MPs with shared vs different position	2
H2 Constituency congruence	for MPs voting with vs against public	1,2
	for MPs voting with vs against constituents	1
H3 Shared group membership	for MPs with shared vs different party identity	2
	for MPs with shared party identity vs no information	2
	for MPs with shared vs different gender	2
H4 Populism	for MPs who say they represent the people vs no information	2
H5 Protest vote	for MPs who are not pivotal vs pivotal	1,2
	for MPs who are said to have no influence vs no information	2
H6 No party soldier	when party discipline not primed vs primed	1

Evaluating our claims, we need to properly estimate the marginal mean of rebellion, the average effect of rebellion (rebel bias), the average interaction effect of rebellion with the mechanism factor, and the average effect of the mechanism factor on rebel support. With respect to marginal mean and average effect of rebellion, the rebel attribute needs to be randomly assigned such that that respondents’ choices are statistically independent of the vignette assignment (accomplished by randomization within the survey software). Given the nature of the conjoint/factorial vignette experimental element of our design, the order of decision vignettes shown to respondents and the location of the rebel attribute in the order of attributes within displayed profiles can not matter for respondents’ choice. To meet this assumption, we randomize the order of vignettes and attributes

¹⁴The comparison of rebel support and rebel bias between the issue treatment conditions serves as robustness check on all hypothesis tests facilitating Study 1.

placement across respondents.¹⁵ Estimating the interaction effect and the average effect of the mechanism factor on rebel support further needs statistical independence of outcome measures of assignment of factor levels. This is achieved by random assignment of the attributes that operationalizes the mechanism factor (i.e., extreme vs moderate, pivotal vs not pivotal, shared vs different gender, with vs against public/constituency) to vignettes and respondents and of treatment conditions that operationalizes the mechanism factor (i.e., shared vs different position, shared vs different party identity, MP said to represent people vs no information, MP said to have no influence and no information, and no party discipline prime vs party discipline prime) to respondents.

To evaluate the validity of our interpretation and the robustness of our results, we must consider several caveats with respect to our experimental design. In study 1, we implement a partially constrained randomization to avoid unreasonable combinations of MP profiles showing up on the same vignette screen. This implies that, first, we cannot properly build some of the counterfactuals of interest and so cannot get an unbiased estimate of the average effect of the constituency congruence mechanism, as it pertains to public opinion, on rebel support and rebel bias easily. We deal with this issue by sub-setting our estimation of rebel support and rebel bias by level of constituency congruence (with vs against public opinion) for study 1¹⁶ and randomize the values of the public support attribute in an unconstrained way in study 2. A second implication of the partially constraint randomization and the pairwise conjoint design in study 1 is that any estimate of the marginal mean of rebellion is affected by the correlation in responses to the outcome measure within MP profile pair shown on one vignette screen; to deal with this, we compute standard errors clustered at the respondent-vignette-level.¹⁷

¹⁵We also assume that the number of attributes does not change responses; a larger number of attributes per profile should not lead to satisficing, in which respondents use choice heuristics to break down the complexity of too much information. Bansak et al. (2018) find that choice tasks with up to 30 attributes do not lead to meaningful changes in the estimates; our number of attributes is well below that number.

¹⁶See Egami and Imai (2019, 531) suggesting to obtain the corresponding subset of estimates to deal with constraint randomization in factorial experiments.

¹⁷The constraint randomization also implies that the marginal mean of the outcome vote preference for the public support and leadership position attributes would be constraint to be .5 and the marginal mean of the outcome favorability for the public support and leadership position attributes is the average outcome across two profiles. Note that we are not interested in either of these quantities to evaluate our claims.

Separate concerns have been raised in the literature about the robustness of estimating standard quantities of interest from conjoint/factorial vignette experiments with respect to bias induced by heterogeneous preferences (a small subset of respondents with strong preferences may drive results) and violations of the independence of irrelevant alternatives assumption (see Abramson, Koçak and Magazinnik (2019) but also Bansak et al. (2020)). It is exactly as response to the latter concern that we chose to randomly assign not only attribute values but which attributes themselves to be shown on a given vignette. Averaging over all these combinations of attributes shown when computing rebel support and rebel bias should yield more robust estimates. The former concern, however, requires extra care in wording results; any statement that reads “voters prefer MPs characterized by attribute 1 over MPs characterized by attribute 2” should be read as “the outcome measure is higher for MPs with attribute 1 than for MPs with attribute 2, averaging over all other possible attribute values and combinations of attributes.”¹⁸

Finally, the random assignment of attributes (in combination with the constrained randomization of some attributes and the unforced outcome measure) in study 1 generates variation in the number of respondent-vignette observations.¹⁹

4 Results

4.1 Do voters like rebels?

Before we test the main hypotheses, we assess whether voters value rebels in general. We find a higher marginal mean of voter preference and favorability for a rebelling MP in contrast to a MP who does not vote against the party leadership.²⁰ The probability of a

¹⁸In study 1, asking respondents to indicate favorability of MP1 vs MP2 on each vignette, in addition to the binary vote preference, allows us to elicit more precisely the *strength* of voters’ preference for one MP over the other.

¹⁹In particular, the number of respondent-vignette observations ranges from 2154 on vote preference for the “Public supports bill” attribute value to 9191 on favorability for the “Did not rebel” attribute value, and the number of respondents who saw at least one realisation of an attribute value ranges from 1034 for the “Public supports bill” attribute value to 1827 for the “Did not rebel” attribute value. Table B.4 in the appendix gives the full set of number of observations and number of respondents for each attribute value in study 1.

²⁰See Figure B.7 for an illustration of the marginal means for all attributes implemented in the conjoint table.

MP being chosen increases significantly from .49 to .51 (Difference, .02 with $p < .05$) when the MP voted against the party in contrast to when the MP did not rebel. Favorability of an MP also significantly increases when that candidate votes against the party; the difference in marginal means of favorability between a rebelling MP and an MP who votes with the party is 0.78 with $p < .01$. Finally, respondents state a higher likelihood to vote (approval) for a rebel than non-rebels (4.19 vs 4.34, $p = .06$).²¹ In other words, and in line with previous literature albeit to a smaller degree, voters generally prefer rebellious MP(s).

4.2 What drives voters' preference for rebels?

Policy congruence? We can say that voters appreciate dissent for its instrumental value leading to better substantive representation when their preference for and approval of a rebelling MP is higher when that MP is closer to them with regard to policy (hypothesis 1). Rebel support rises significantly for when the MP is moderate instead of extreme in study 1 ($p < .01$).²² Vote preference increases from .48 to .54 and favorability from 53.5 to 55.5. Study 2 shows a significantly and substantially higher approval of a rebel MP when that rebel's action aligns with the voters' policy position than when it does not ($p < .01$). Rebel support, measured by approval, increases between the shared position and different position condition of the policy congruence treatment by 1.42.

We do not find an effect of the policy congruence mechanism variables on rebel bias; although respondents tend to prefer rebels who share their position there is no causal interaction effect between policy congruence and rebel status on vote preference, favorability, or approval.

Result 1 *Voters strongly prefer moderate over extreme rebels and rebels whose actions align with their policy positions over those who act against voters' policy preference, how-*

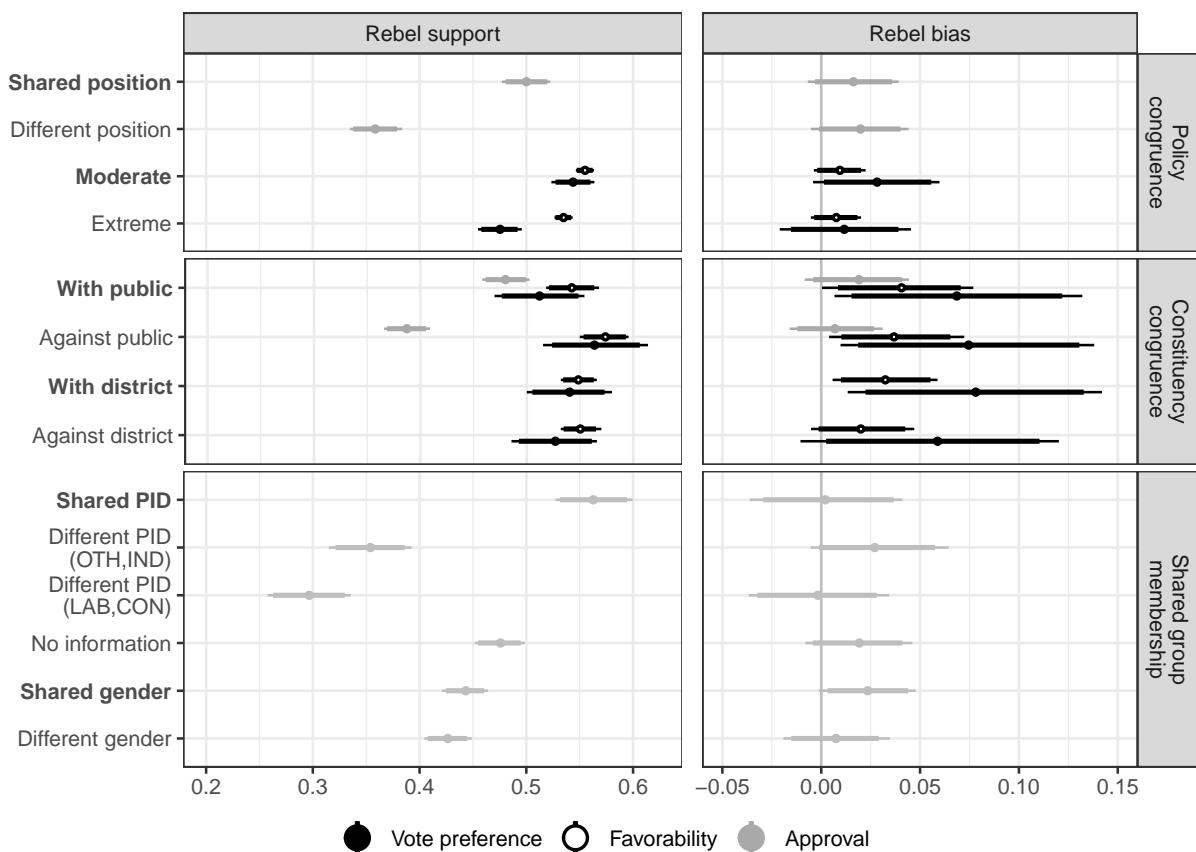
²¹The estimate of the effect of rebel status on outcome measures is the marginal effect of rebel status obtained from a linear regression of the outcome on rebel status and vignette order with standard errors clustered at the respondent-vignette-level shown in Table B.5 in the appendix.

²²The estimate of the effect of being a moderate in contrast to an extreme MP on outcome measures is the marginal effect of being moderate obtained from a linear regression of the outcome on an indicator variable of being moderate vs being extreme and vignette order with standard errors clustered at the respondent-vignette-level.

ever voters show a bias in favor of rebels regardless of policy congruence.

Figure 1 supports the analysis presented here. Specifically, the top left *Policy congruence*-panel shows higher rebel support for moderate rebels (black and hollow black marker) and rebels who are said to share the policy position of the respondent (gray marker).²³ The two right panel illustrates the null result on the effect of policy congruence on rebel bias. While rebel bias is positive for moderates, it moves towards zero and is not statistically significant for extremists. This is particularly interesting because it is often more ideologically extreme MPs who tend to rebel.

Figure 1: Testing for substantive representation mechanisms: rebel support and rebel bias at a given level of the mechanism variables for all outcome measures. We show 95% confidence bounds of the statistics (thicker line) on top of the 90% confidence bounds (thinner line).



Constituency congruence? Although we find a high degree of support for rebels generally, rebel support — measured by vote preference and favorability of the rebellious

²³Table B.6 in the appendix tables all statistics shown in Figure 1.

MP (study 1) — does not show a significant difference between MPs whose behavior is in line with public or constituency opinion and MP(s) who act against public/constituency will. We do find that rebel support, measured as approval in study 2, is larger for those MP(s) who rebelled with public opinion than those rebelled against public opinion (4.8 vs 3.9, $p < .01$).²⁴ Similarly, respondents almost always show a bias in favor of rebels, but we do not find an effect of constituency congruence on rebel bias. That is, respondents do not appear to support rebels more when rebel with the constituency or the public as opposed to against it.

Result 2 *Voters show general support for rebels and prefer rebels who align with public opinion over those who do not. But voters do not show a stronger bias in favor of rebellious MPs whose behavior aligns with the opinion of the constituency than towards rebels who are not aligned.*

Shared group membership? When a rebellious MP shares the identity of a Conservative or Labour partisan, his/her support for the rebel is by 2.63 higher than when the MP is from another party. Comparing in-party rebel support to rebel support among partisans of other parties or independents, approval is by 2.23 higher still; when we juxtapose approval of the rebel among respondents who did not see the MP's party label at all the difference shrinks to .97 while all three comparisons return significantly different from zero ($p < .01$). Rebel bias is not significantly different from zero for any level of the shared party identity treatment and we detect no difference between the treatment conditions. It is interesting that rebel bias when sharing a party identity is not negative. In contrast, Campbell et al. (2016) have found that rebels from within one's party are punished by strong party identifiers. Also, there does seem to be a bias in favor of rebels for other parties (not Labour or Conservative) or independents, although just above the threshold for statistical significance ($p = .08$).

Shared gender identity may facilitate the appeal of a rebel MP in similar ways to

²⁴Recall, our estimate of the effect of the congruence mechanism variable indicating whether MP behavior is in line or against public opinion on rebel support and rebel bias is most valid for study 2 given constraint randomization in study 1.

partisan identity. We find a statistically significant bias in favor of rebels (compared with non-rebels) when the MP and respondent share a gender, but not if they are of different genders.

Thus, evaluating the shared group membership mechanism yields the following findings for partisanship and gender:

Result 3 *Voters strongly prefer rebels who are affiliated with the party with which they identify, and are not biased against these rebels. They have a slight rebel bias when MPs share their gender.*

We can also evaluate the relative effects of sharing a partisan identity and sharing a policy position on support for rebels. The difference between rebel support for shared versus different policy positions is smaller than the difference between rebel support for shared vs different partisan identity (both other/independent and Labour/Conservative). However the difference of these differences is not statistically significant.

Populism and protest vote? We do not find an effect of telling respondents that the MP claims to be acting for the people (hypothesis 4). Figure 2 shows no difference in rebel support and rebel bias between when respondents are told the MP claims to represent “the people” and when such information is not given.²⁵

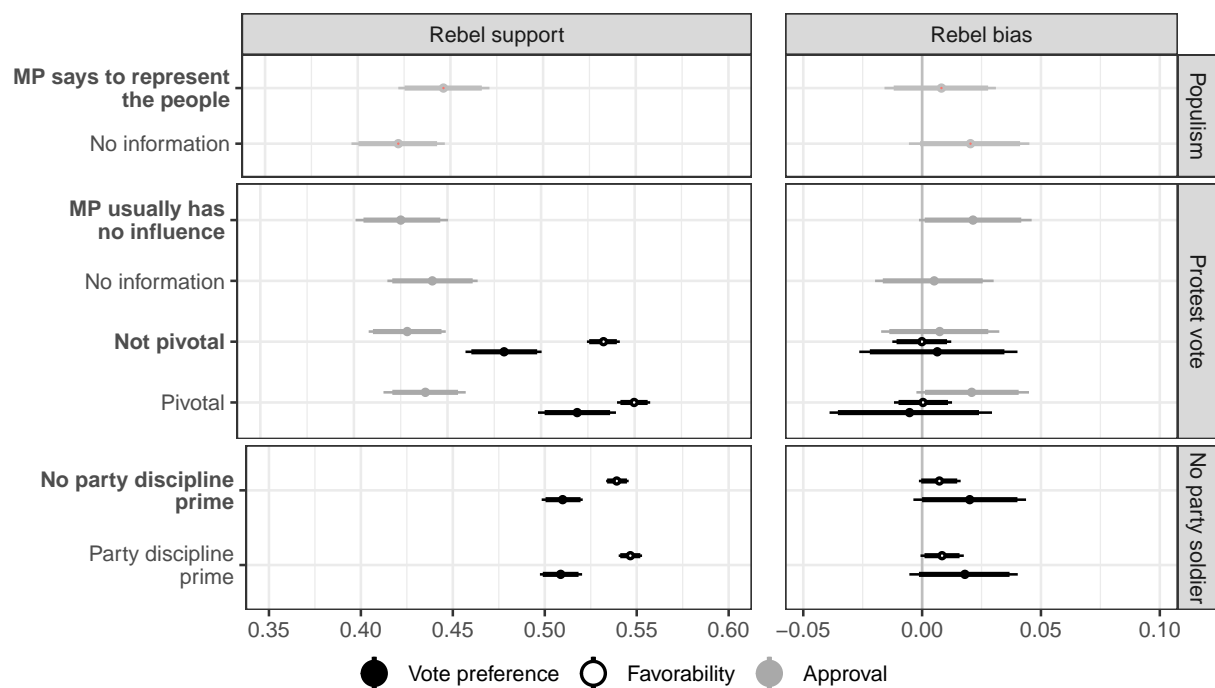
While there is no difference in rebel support between MP(s) who are said to usually have no influence in parliament compared to when no information is given, there is a bias in favor of rebels over non-rebels when the MP is said to have no influence, and this bias is significantly larger than the rebel bias when no information is given (hypothesis 5). This suggests that respondents may support rebellion as a form of protest voting by MP(s). Interestingly, respondents express greater support for rebels who are pivotal (but only in Study 1), and show a bias in favor of rebels (in Study 2). These results seem to contradict the finding that rebellion is supported more among MP(s) with little influence. But the mechanism factors are presented to respondents in very different ways (one is a treatment while the other is a conjoint table attribute, in addition to different wordings).

²⁵Table B.7 in the appendix tables all statistics shown in Figure 2.

It could be that our operationalization of pivotality in the conjoint table is less clear to respondents than directly stating that the MP has no influence, but more research would be required to fully understand the reasons for this inconclusive result.

Result 4 *Voters support for rebels is not motivated as a vote for a populist MP, but there is evidence for preferring rebellion as a protest vote.*

Figure 2: Testing for symbolic representation mechanisms: Rebel support and rebel bias at a given level of the mechanism variables for all outcome measures. We show 95% confidence bounds of the statistics (thicker line) on top of the 90% confidence bounds (thinner line).



No party soldier? We argued that voters may prefer independently minded MP(s) who rebel against the party line, rather than behaving as simple party soldiers (hypothesis 6). We test this by comparing rebel support and rebel bias (Study 1) in the treatment condition containing a prime that tells respondents MP(s) usually vote with the party (party discipline prime treatment) compared to a control condition where respondents do not see the prime.²⁶ We would expect rebel support and rebel bias to be larger in the

²⁶However, we have reasons to believe that the party discipline prime treatment failed to induce differences in whether respondents considered party discipline a salient consideration when making their choice (see results on the manipulation check presented in the previous subsection).

absence of the prime. We find no difference in support and bias when the prime is present compared to when it is not. We might have expected a party discipline prime could have resulted in the opposite effect if respondents would want to “stick it” to party. In other words, when told that the party matters, their response would be to undermine it. That we earlier found neither positive nor negative rebel bias in favor of MP(s) sharing respondents party id, could be indicative of these competing effects. Moreover, because we are already framing dissent as a behavior against the party, it may be difficult to find the effect of an additional party unity prime.

Result 5 *Voters preferences for rebels is not driven by an appreciation of MP behavior defying a party discipline norm.*

Results on all mechanism presented here are robust to variation in the issue tackled in the bill.²⁷

5 Conclusion

Extant literature finds a preference for rebellious MP(s) across Western democracies generally, and the UK particularly, and our study confirms this finding. But we move beyond this literature by offering more thorough tests of the various mechanisms behind voters’ preference for rebellion and linking these mechanisms to theories of representation.

We find that voters support rebels most when the rebel belongs to the voter’s own party, and that voters are biased in favor of rebels over non-rebels when they share the same gender. Additionally, we find that voters support dissent when in line with their own policy positions, but not when congruent with the preference of the majority of the public or the preferences of that rebellious MP’s constituents. We also presented some indication that shared partisan identity explains more of voters’ preference for rebels than policy congruence. Finally, voters do not prefer rebels on account of their vote being for the sake of “the people”.

²⁷See Figures B.8 and B.9 in the appendix. We do not find significant differences in rebel support or rebel bias across issue treatment conditions. It is noteworthy that the immigration issue seems to drive the positive rebel bias in both party discipline prime conditions.

Taken together, we believe that these findings imply that voters particularly favor rebellion when conceptualized as an act of descriptive representation, but that descriptive representation matters most when it can also lead to better substantive representation, evaluated in a ego-tropic, rather than socio-tropic manner. Interestingly, though, voters favor rebels over non-rebels when the MP is not influential, and not when the MP is influential, suggesting a lesser role for purely instrumental motivations. Thus, for MP(s) without other pathways to influence, rebelling to highlight descriptive or substantive representation can be a mechanism for increasing their support among voters. Indeed, this finding is in line with findings in observational literature on rebellion that rebels tend to come from the ideological extremes or who have little chance of serving on the front bench (Benedetto and Hix, 2007; Slapin et al., 2018). It also suggests that MP(s) need not be influential to signal normatively desirable traits, often associated with rebellion such as honesty or independent-mindedness (Campbell et al., 2016), to voters. These rebels may be justified in believing that their actions improve their support in the electorate in the absence of other forms of influence.

Whichever motivations drive voter support for rebels, a significant body literature suggests that presenting a coherent party message helps parties to win elections and govern effectively by cueing voters into a party “brand” (Kiewiet and McCubbins, 1992; Cox and McCubbins, 2005). This unified message is particularly important in party-centered electoral systems (Proksch and Slapin, 2015) in which voters are unwilling to support parties that they consider too divided or incoherent (Greene and Haber, 2015). This literature would suggest that parties ought to do their utmost to prevent rebellion. However, others have suggested that parties can pick up votes through obfuscation, trying to be all things to all voters (Sommer-Topcu, 2015). It is therefore unclear under which conditions rebellion is advantageous to a politician, to the party, and to parliamentary democracy more generally. Short-term gains for individual rebels may be juxtaposed with long-term erosion of parties’ ability to maintain a coherent brand, to govern and ultimately the ability of democratic institutions to function. Given our results that rebels are most successful if they offer voters descriptive, and substantive representation at the

individual level, the appreciation of the electorate for dissent may not boost populism or undermine the ability of democratic institutions to deliver desired policies, as some may fear. But it also raises questions about why politicians so frequently make such appeals when rebelling. This question will need to be investigated in future research.

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Appendix

A Experimental design appendix

A.1 Conjoint and factorial vignette tables

A.1.1 Study 1

Before respondents see the profiles of the two MPs, they are given an introductory text: “Recently, Parliament voted on a bill that would affect the levels of [taxes and government spending/immigration]. People have different opinions about what their Member of Parliament should do[, but usually MPs support the position of their party]. Please compare the two following MPs and answer our three questions. You will be asked to make six comparisons. Please remember there are no right or wrong answers.”

They are then shown a table of attributes for two MPs. The table below gives an example of such profiles.

Figure A.3: Exemplifying profiles of candidates as shown to respondents

MP 1	MP 2
Conservative	Labour
The MP’s party leadership voted in favour of the bill	The MP’s party leadership voted in favour of the bill
The majority of the public opposes the bill	The majority of the public opposes the bill
The majority of the public in the MP’s electoral district supports the bill	The majority of the public in the MP’s electoral district opposes the bill
The MP voted against the MP’s party	The MP voted with the MP’s party
The MP’s party leadership did not condemn the MP’s behaviour	The MP’s party leadership did not condemn the MP’s behaviour

Attributes and the realizations of attribute levels are taken from the following list:

1. *Party*: The MP’s party (e.g. Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat): “Conservative”, “Labour”, “Liberal Democrats”
2. *Leadership position*: Whether the party leadership voted in favour or against the bill: “The MP’s party leadership voted in [favour/against] the bill”
3. *Rebellion*: Whether the MP voted with or against his party: “The MP voted [with/against] the MP’s party”
4. *Public opinion*: Whether the majority of the public supported the bill: “The majority of the public [supports/opposes] the bill”
5. *District opinion*: Whether the majority of the public in the MP’s electoral district supported the bill: “The majority of the public in the MP’s electoral district [supports/opposes] the bill”
6. *Pivotality*: Whether the vote by the MP made a difference to the outcome of the vote: “The MP’s vote [did not change/changed] the final vote tally”

7. *policy position*: Whether MP takes an extreme or moderate position: “The MP takes an [extreme/moderate] position on the bill”
8. *Party competition*: Whether UKIP supports or opposes the MP’s voting behaviour: “UKIP [supports/opposes] the MP’s voting behaviour”
9. *Tenure*: Whether the MP has spent three, ten or twenty-one years in parliament: “The MP has been a member of parliament for [three/ten/twenty-one] years”
10. *Constituency service*: The amount of time that an MP spends in the constituency: “The MP spends [more/less] time working on local constituency issues than national issues.”

Outcome measures elicited below the MP profiles on the same screen:

1. approval of MP 1: “How favourable do you feel towards MP 1 on a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 means very unfavourable and 100 means very favourable.”
2. approval of MP 2: “How favourable do you feel towards MP 2 on a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 means very unfavourable and 100 means very favourable.”
3. Vote intention: “In a hypothetical election, if these two MPs were standing against one another in an election, which MP would you vote for?”

A.1.2 Study 2

Before the experimental vignettes, we collect responses of moderator variables: partisanship identity scale (see Huddy, Mason and Aarøe (2015), p.7), issue positions, ideological self-placement, turnout and vote choice, and standard demographic information.

Attribute levels vary randomly, the realizations of attribute levels are taken from the following list:

Vignette factorial table:

1. *Vote*: Whether the bill was passed by parliament: “adopted”, “voted down”
2. *Bill*: The subject of the bill: “immigration”, “taxes and public spending”, “environmental protection”
3. *Pivotality*: Whether the vote by the MP made a difference to the outcome: “The bill was adopted by a [slim/vast] majority.”
4. *Public opinion*: Whether the majority of the public supports the bill: “for”, “against”
5. *Gender*: Whether the MP is female or male: “his”, “her”
6. *Rebellion*: Whether the MP voted with or against his party: “against the party”, “together with the party”
7. *MPs vote*: Whether the MP voted for or against the bill: “against the bill”, “for the bill”

Between-respondent experimental design:

8. *Influence*: Whether the MP usually has influence in parliament: “This MP usually does not have much influence in what the party does.”, [Empty]
9. *Populism*: “The MP says the vote represents the wishes of the people.”, [Empty]
10. *Party*: “The MP represents the Labour Party”, “The MP represents the Conservative Party”, [Empty]
11. *Policy congruence*: Whether the vote of the MP aligned with the issue position stated by the respondent: “aligned with”, “in opposition to”

Outcome measure elicited below the MP profiles on the same screen: “How likely is it that you would vote for such a MP in a general election?” [Scale 0=“Very unlikely” to 100=“Very likely”]

Figure A.4: Exemplifying screen as shown to respondents

Members of Parliament **adopted** a bill on **taxes and public spending**. The bill was adopted by a **vast** majority. The majority of the public was **against** the bill.

Think about a **Member of Parliament (MP)** who voted **against the bill together with her party**.

The MP says the vote represents the wishes of the people.

With this vote, the MP showed a position on the issue that is in opposition to yours stated above.

This MP usually does not have much influence in what the party does.

How likely is it that you would vote for such a MP in a general election?

Very unlikely Very likely

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

A.2 Between-subject treatments

Table A.3: Number of respondents and number of observations by between-subject treatment conditions. Overall, Study 1 features 14668 observations on 1699 subjects and Study 2 4110 observations on 822 respondents.

Treatment	Condition	Observations	Respondents	Study
Issue	Immigration	5088	848	1
	Taxes and spending	5106	851	
Party discipline	No party discipline prime	5082	847	1
	Party discipline prime	5112	852	
Policy congruence	Shared position	2230	446	2
	Different position	1880	376	
Shared party identity	Shared	640	128	2
	Different (Labour or Conservative partisans)	680	136	
	Different (Other partisans, independents)	870	178	
	No information	1920	384	
Protest vote	MP has no influence	2125	425	2
	No information	1985	397	
Populism	MP said to represent people	1970	394	2
	No information	2140	428	

A.3 Manipulation checks

To more precisely evaluate the effectiveness of our treatment manipulations in study 2 we also asked another set of questions: whether respondents recall the MP’s vote choice and the party he/she represented in the last of the five vignettes shown to each of them. And, we asked whether they thought the MP described in that last vignette is “representing the people” or whether s/he is a “party soldier.” Obviously, respondents are more likely to recall the party of the MP in the last vignette they were shown when that vignette actually featured the party affiliation of the MP ($p < .01$), without any difference between shared vs different party treatment (CON,LAB) conditions. Respondents who were told that the MP claims to represent the people and that the MP holds opposing preferences to their own in opposition to respondents’ preferences were significantly more likely to agree that the MP is a party soldier ($p < .05$). Also, respondents who were told the MP usually has no influence were significantly less likely to agree that the MP is a party soldier ($p < .05$). Finally, respondents who were told that MP shared their preferences or received no information about MP’s shared/different party identity stated significantly more often that they think the MP represents the people.

B Statistical appendix

B.1 Sample characteristics and representativeness

Figure B.5 below compare respondent attributes in study 1 to the characteristics of the British Election Study 2017, a face-to-face survey collecting an address-based random probability sample of eligible voters in England, Scotland, and Wales (BES), and to the full sample collected for study 1 (N=2540) by survey firm Deltapoll. The full sample, from which the sample part of study 1, is drawn is representative of the UK electorate but only 81% of respondents in that sample consented to participate in our study 1. The study 1 sample (N=2055) is indistinguishable from BES and the full study 1 sample in terms of gender. Study 1 (our partial sample) as well as the full sample are slightly poorer and better educated than the BES sample. The study 1 sample is slightly younger than the full sample and the BES sample.

Figures B.6 makes the same comparisons but now between study 2, the BES sample, and the full sample of study 1 (Note, study 1 did not collect information on respondents' ethnicity). The study 2 sample (N=822) is indistinguishable from the BES sample with respect to age, gender, and ethnicity (except for a larger number of 65+ respondents in the BES). It is slightly younger than the full study 1 sample but indistinguishable in age.

Figures report B.5 and B.6 include survey weights when computing relative frequencies.

Figure B.5: Sample characteristics of Study 1 (N=2055) and the 2017 British Election Study (Fieldhouse et al., 2018).

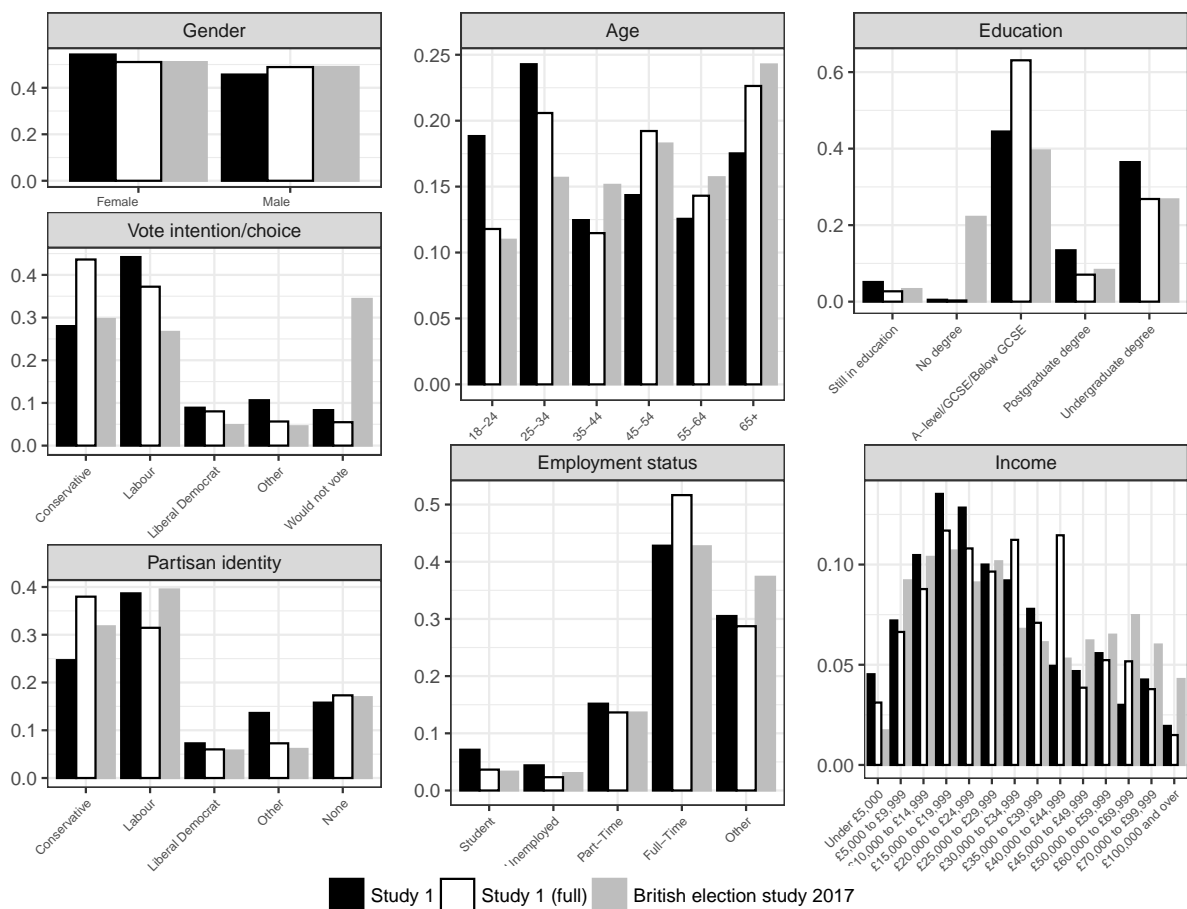
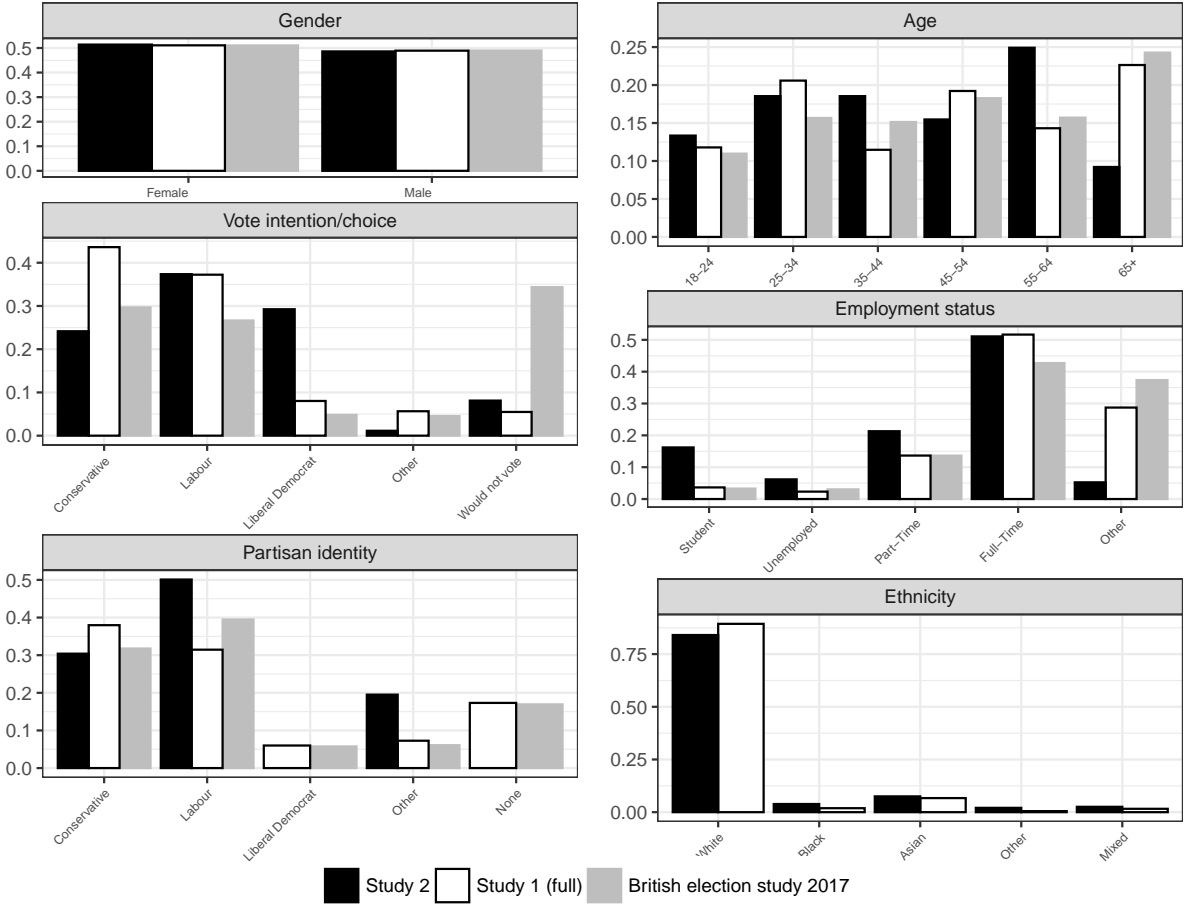


Figure B.6: Sample characteristics of Study 2 (N=822) and the 2017 British Election Study (Fieldhouse et al., 2018).



B.2 Robustness and additional analysis

Table B.4: Number of respondent-vignette non-missing observations on each attribute on *vote preference* and *favorability* and number of respondents who saw at least one realization of the attribute and responded the outcome measures in study 1.

Attribute	# of respondents who saw at least one realisation of the attribute	# of observations	
		on <i>vote preference</i>	on <i>favorability</i>
Rebelled	1824	7382	9318
Did not rebel	1827	7286	9191
MP works more on national issues	1623	3598	4555
MP works more on constituents issues	1637	3740	4674
3 years MP	1449	2433	3085
10 years MP	1426	2294	2913
21 years MP	1464	2475	3097
MP moderate	1607	3628	4505
MP extreme	1618	3586	4579
Labour	1400	2329	2902
Conservative	1400	2320	2885
Liberal democrat	1420	2365	2952
Constituency supports bill	1607	3577	4527
Constituency against bill	1607	3467	4346
UKIP supports rebel	1574	3276	4218
UKIP opposes rebel	1570	3404	4252
MP was pivotal	1628	3620	4580
MP not pivotal	1623	3566	4546
Leadership for bill	1051	2220	2739
Leadership against bill	1061	2338	2990
Public supports bill	1041	2282	2884
Public against bill	1034	2154	2807

Table B.5: Regression of outcome measure on rebel status and vignette order. Standard errors are clustered at the respondent-vignette-level.

	Vote preference	Favorability	Approval
Rebel	0.019** (0.008)	0.781** (0.329)	0.143 (0.090)
Vignette order	0.00003 (0.00005)	0.029 (0.091)	-0.003 (0.023)
Constant	0.491*** (0.004)	53.419*** (0.391)	4.201*** (0.109)
Observations	14,668	18,509	4,110
R ²	0.0003	0.0003	0.001
Adjusted R ²	0.0002	0.0002	0.0002
Residual Std. Error	0.500 (df = 14665)	21.609 (df = 18506)	2.786 (df = 4107)
F Statistic	2.522* (df = 2; 14665)	3.067** (df = 2; 18506)	1.349 (df = 2; 4107)

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

Table B.6: Mean and bootstrapped confidence bounds (95% and 90%) of rebel support and rebel bias by mechanism as in Figure 1. Bootstrap with clustering at the respondent-vignette level.

Mechanism	Outcome measure	Mechanism factor	Rebel support					Rebel bias							
			Mean	Lower	Upper	95%	90%	Mean	Lower	Upper	95%	90%			
Policy congruence	Approval	Shared position	0.50	0.48	0.52	0.48	0.52	0.02	-0.01	0.04	0.02	-0.01	0.04	-0.00	0.04
		Different position	0.36	0.33	0.38	0.34	0.38	0.02	-0.01	0.04	0.02	-0.01	0.04	-0.00	0.04
	Favorability Vote preference	Moderate	0.55	0.55	0.56	0.55	0.56	0.01	-0.00	0.02	0.01	-0.00	0.02	-0.00	0.02
		Extreme	0.54	0.52	0.56	0.53	0.56	0.03	-0.00	0.06	0.03	-0.00	0.06	0.00	0.06
Favorability Vote preference		0.53	0.53	0.54	0.53	0.54	0.01	-0.01	0.02	0.01	-0.01	0.02	-0.00	0.02	
		0.48	0.45	0.50	0.46	0.49	0.01	-0.02	0.05	0.01	-0.02	0.05	-0.02	0.04	
Constituency congruence	Approval	With public	0.48	0.46	0.50	0.46	0.50	0.02	-0.01	0.04	0.02	-0.01	0.04	-0.00	0.04
			0.54	0.52	0.57	0.52	0.56	0.04	0.00	0.08	0.04	0.00	0.08	0.01	0.07
	Favorability Vote preference		0.51	0.47	0.55	0.48	0.55	0.07	0.01	0.13	0.07	0.01	0.13	0.02	0.12
		Against public	0.39	0.37	0.41	0.37	0.41	0.01	-0.02	0.03	0.01	-0.02	0.03	-0.01	0.03
	Favorability Vote preference		0.57	0.55	0.60	0.55	0.59	0.04	0.00	0.07	0.04	0.00	0.07	0.01	0.07
			0.56	0.52	0.61	0.52	0.61	0.07	0.01	0.14	0.07	0.01	0.14	0.02	0.13
Shared group membership	Approval	With district	0.55	0.53	0.57	0.53	0.56	0.03	0.01	0.06	0.03	0.01	0.06	0.01	0.06
			0.54	0.50	0.58	0.51	0.57	0.08	0.01	0.14	0.08	0.01	0.14	0.02	0.13
	Favorability Vote preference	Against district	0.55	0.53	0.57	0.53	0.57	0.02	-0.01	0.05	0.02	-0.01	0.05	-0.00	0.04
			0.53	0.49	0.57	0.49	0.56	0.06	-0.01	0.12	0.06	-0.01	0.12	0.00	0.11
Shared group membership	Approval	Shared PID	0.56	0.53	0.60	0.53	0.59	0.00	-0.04	0.04	0.00	-0.04	0.04	-0.03	0.04
		Different PID (OTH,IND)	0.35	0.32	0.39	0.32	0.39	0.03	-0.01	0.06	0.03	-0.01	0.06	-0.00	0.06
	Favorability Vote preference	Different PID (LAB,CON)	0.30	0.26	0.34	0.26	0.33	-0.00	-0.04	0.03	-0.00	-0.04	0.03	-0.03	0.03
		No information	0.48	0.45	0.50	0.45	0.49	0.02	-0.01	0.05	0.02	-0.01	0.05	-0.00	0.04
Favorability Vote preference	Shared gender	0.44	0.42	0.46	0.42	0.46	0.02	-0.00	0.05	0.02	-0.00	0.05	0.00	0.04	
	Different gender	0.43	0.40	0.45	0.41	0.44	0.01	-0.02	0.03	0.01	-0.02	0.03	-0.02	0.03	

Table B.7: Mean and bootstrapped confidence bounds (95% and 90%) of rebel support and rebel bias by mechanism as in Figure 2. Bootstrap with clustering at the respondent-vignette level.

Mechanism	Outcome measure	Mechanism factor	Rebel support				Rebel bias							
			Mean	Lower	Upper	95%	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper				
Populism	Approval	MP says to represent the people	0.45	0.42	0.47	0.43	0.47	0.43	0.47	0.01	-0.02	0.03	-0.01	0.03
		No information	0.42	0.40	0.45	0.40	0.44	0.40	0.44	0.02	-0.01	0.05	-0.00	0.04
Protest vote	Approval	MP usually has no influence	0.43	0.40	0.45	0.41	0.45	0.41	0.45	0.02	-0.00	0.05	0.00	0.04
		No information	0.44	0.42	0.47	0.42	0.46	0.42	0.46	0.01	-0.02	0.03	-0.02	0.03
	Approval	Not pivotal	0.43	0.41	0.45	0.41	0.45	0.41	0.45	0.01	-0.02	0.03	-0.01	0.03
	Favorability		0.53	0.52	0.54	0.53	0.54	0.53	0.54	-0.00	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01
	Vote preference		0.48	0.46	0.50	0.46	0.50	0.46	0.50	0.01	-0.03	0.04	-0.02	0.03
	Approval	Pivotal	0.44	0.42	0.46	0.42	0.46	0.42	0.46	0.02	-0.00	0.04	0.00	0.04
	Favorability		0.55	0.54	0.56	0.54	0.56	0.54	0.56	0.00	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01
	Vote preference		0.52	0.50	0.54	0.50	0.54	0.50	0.54	-0.01	-0.04	0.03	-0.04	0.02
No party soldier	Favorability	No party	0.54	0.53	0.55	0.53	0.54	0.53	0.54	0.01	-0.00	0.02	-0.00	0.01
	Vote preference	discipline prime	0.51	0.50	0.52	0.50	0.52	0.50	0.52	0.02	-0.00	0.04	-0.00	0.04
	Favorability	Party discipline prime	0.55	0.54	0.55	0.54	0.55	0.54	0.55	0.01	-0.00	0.02	0.00	0.02
	Vote preference		0.51	0.50	0.52	0.50	0.52	0.50	0.52	0.02	-0.01	0.04	-0.00	0.04

Figure B.7: Marginal mean of *vote preference*, *favorability*, and *approval* by MP, party, and context characteristics

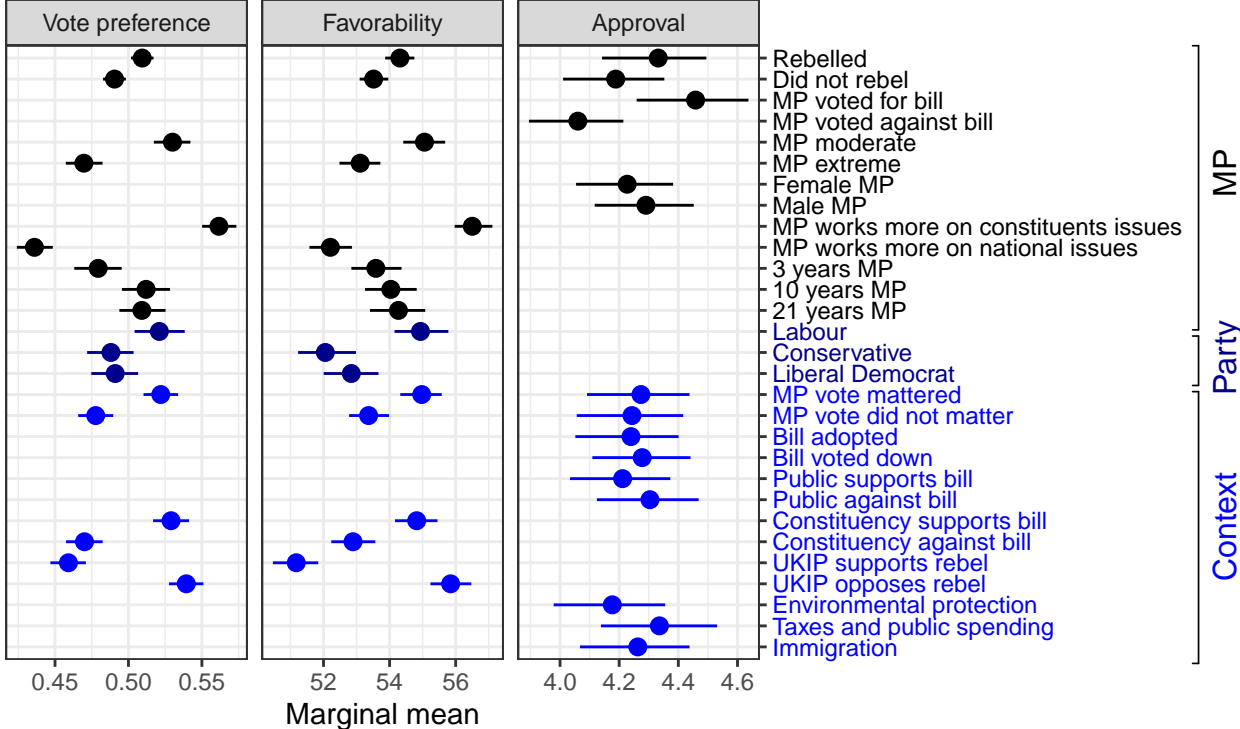


Figure B.8: Testing for substantive representation mechanisms: Rebel support and rebel bias at a given level of the mechanism variables for all outcome measures in study 1 by issue treatment

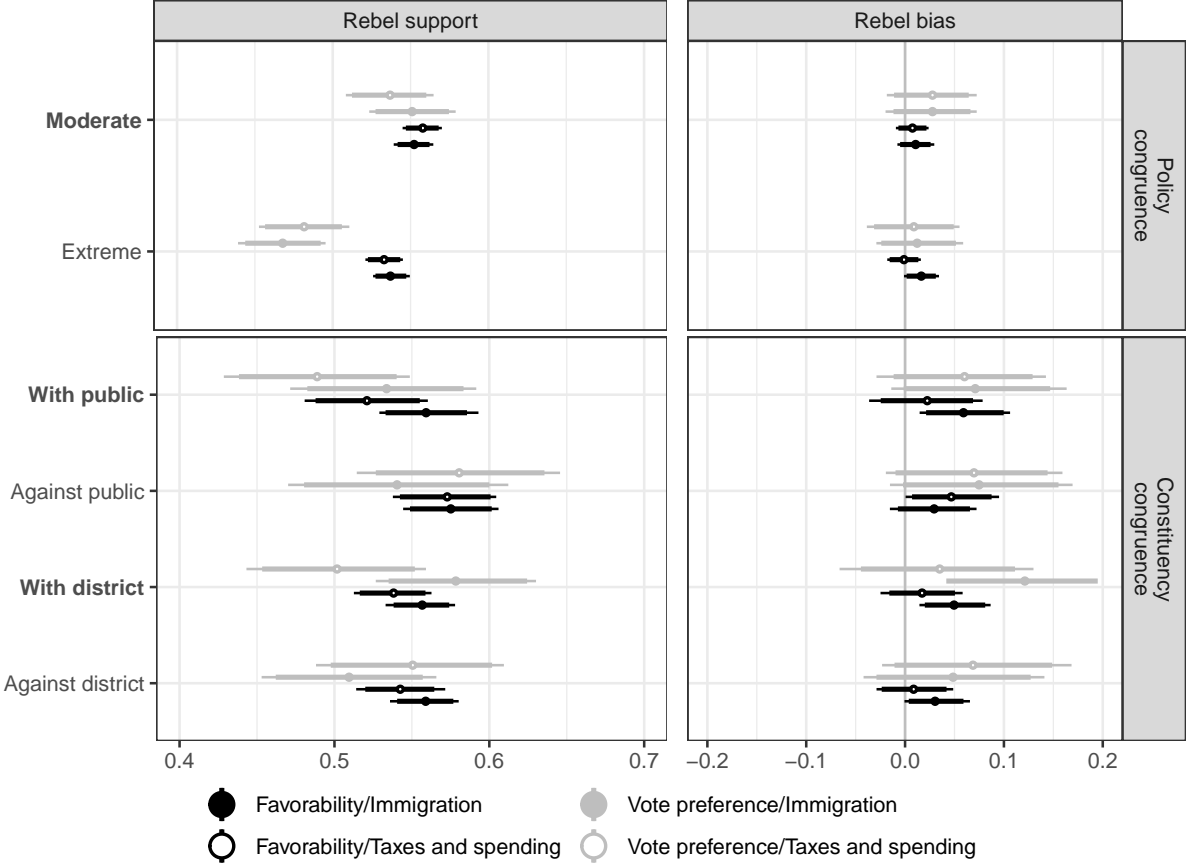
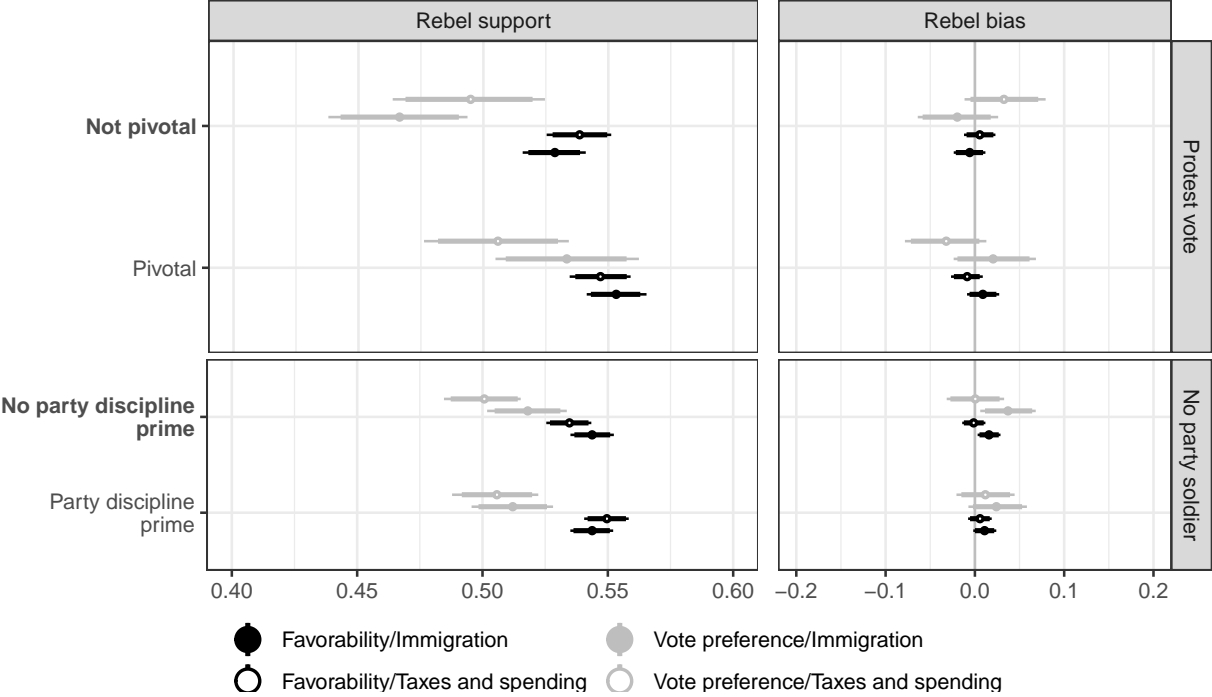


Figure B.9: Testing for substantive representation mechanisms: Rebel support and rebel bias at a given level of the mechanism variables for all outcome measures in study 1 by issue treatment



B.3 Imputed data

We are interested in the realisation of our outcome measures for a given MP attribute. We are mostly interested in what the outcome measure is for rebel or rebel vs non-rebel MPs. Since every conjoint vignette features whether the MP is a rebel, we have as many observations of the rebel vs non-rebel distinction as there are respondent-vignette observations. Because voters only see a random selection of five out of 11 possible MP attributes that are not the rebel status in Study 1, if we are interested in the outcome measure at a given realisation of those attributes, we need to compute statistics reported in the main text based on sub-setting the data. This may lead to a loss of efficiency in estimation given smaller sample sizes. An alternative approach would be to fill in missing values on the attributes not shown on a given vignette by imputation. We are able to generate valid inference from such imputation because the Note, in this crucial missing at random assumption is trivially met by experimental design.

How would such imputation work? We take each observation (a respondent-vignette pair) and randomly assign values on those attributes that are not shown for that particular observation. Then, we compute the statistics of interest and repeat this procedure 10000 times generating sampling distribution. We then report the mean as well as lower and upper bounds of the 90% and 95% confidence bound around the mean of the statistic. We do not find significant differences in the marginal means associated with the other attributes (not rebel vs non-rebel) between computation based on sub-setting vs imputation.

Figure B.10: Marginal mean of *vote preference* and *favorability* (Study 1) by MP, party, and context characteristics based on imputation.

