



# Mismatched Preferences for Responsiveness: Danish Voters and Politicians

Helene Helboe Pedersen\* 

Responsiveness is key in democratic systems and can be perceived as a continuous interaction between voters and politicians. However, only limited research has studied the alignment or potential mismatch between voter and politician preferences regarding responsiveness. This article examines how voters' and politicians' preferences for responsiveness differ and suggests reasons for the identified differences. It proposes two factors leading to different preferences: recruitment of highly educated politicians and party-organised elite politics. Using survey data collected among Danish voters, candidates and MPs, the article documents a mismatch between politicians' and voters' preferences for responsiveness: politicians prefer party responsiveness, while voters prefer constituency responsiveness. In line with expectations, voters with a shorter education have stronger preferences for constituency responsiveness, while incumbent MPs are even more party-oriented than challenger candidates. These findings highlight potential troublesome consequences of the increasingly educational-elitist recruitment and continued party organisation of legislative politics for the representative relationship between voters and politicians.

Responsiveness is key in democratic government because it connects voters to decision-making processes, not limiting representation to the mere selection of leaders. Responsiveness can be perceived as a process including decision makers as well as citizens in a continuous feedback relationship (Esaiasson & Wlezien 2017). Citizens may start the process by sending signals to their representatives,<sup>1</sup> who decide whether and how to react to this signal. These reactions are then evaluated by voters resulting in new signals. Crucially, representatives' reactions as well as voters' evaluations are based on their preferences for responsiveness (Lauermann 2014). Voters' evaluations are thus dependent on their expectations regarding responsiveness, while politicians' reactions to citizen requests depend on who they mainly see themselves as representatives for (representative focus) and their perception of the role as a representative (representative style) (Eulau et al.

\* Helene Helboe Pedersen, Department of Political Science, Aarhus University, Bartholins Allé, Aarhus 8000C, Denmark. Email: helene@ps.au.dk.

1959). The more aligned responsiveness preferences are across politicians and voters, the more likely it is – all else equal – that the responsiveness process is guided by mutual understanding and satisfaction. However, only limited research has focused on the alignment or potential mismatch between voter and politician preferences for responsiveness.

One reason for this lack of attention is the strong scholarly tradition for studying responsiveness at the legislator level. Research on legislative responsiveness is thus comprehensive and advanced by innovative research designs illuminating the causal processes of legislators' responsive behaviour (Butler & Nickerson 2011; Butler et al. 2012; Harden 2013; Öhberg & Naurin 2015; Butler & Dynes 2016). Studies of voter preferences and attitudes towards responsiveness is comparatively slim (Carman 2006; Bengtsson & Wass 2010; Vivyan & Wagner 2016).

Another reason for the limited attention towards responsiveness preference congruence is the devotion to policy-congruence as the main indicator of responsiveness (Harden 2013; Esaiasson et al. 2017). Hardly anyone can dispute the importance of policies and policy outcomes aligned with preferences of a majority of voters for democratic government, but there is also a growing awareness of the importance of the democratic processes for voters' satisfaction with democracy (Norris 1999; Hobolt 2012). Voters not only care about outcomes but also about the processes that produce these outcomes.

Still, except for a few early entrepreneurial studies (Miller & Stokes 1963; Converse & Pierce 1986), research dedicated to study the correspondence between voter and elite preferences for responsiveness is limited (Méndez-Lago & Martínez 2002; Andeweg & Thomassen 2005; Campbell & Lovenduski 2015; von Schoultz & Wass 2016; André & Depauw 2017). This is partially due to data limitations as collecting data among elites is particularly troublesome; it is also due to one-sided theoretical interest in voters' reactions to possible mismatches. Even studies that include data from voters as well as politicians are mainly interested in voters' reactions rather than the causes behind the identified differences (Kimball & Patterson 1997; Hibbing et al. 2001; André & Depauw 2017). Separating voters and politicians empirically and theoretically has important negative implications for the study of responsiveness as it becomes impossible to evaluate the crucial voter-politician responsiveness preference congruence and explain possible differences. This article examines how voters' and politicians' preferences regarding responsiveness differ and point to reasons for such differences.

I argue that recruitment patterns and party organisation result in a gap between politicians' and voters' responsiveness preferences. Political recruitment does not result in legislatures that descriptively mirror the public. Elected politicians differ from the electorate in many ways, but a crucial and increasing difference relates to education: more politicians than voters

have a long education (Bovens & Wille 2017). Since education influences views on democracy and understandings of representation (Nie et al. 1996; Stubager 2010), politicians may differ from the public due to different levels of education. Therefore, I expect a general gap between politicians and voters with regard to preferences for responsiveness. However, I also expect this gap to reduce when comparing politicians to highly educated citizens.

Political parties play a crucial role in representative democracies, which influences the process of responsiveness (Öhberg & Naurin 2015; Butler et al. 2017). Political parties select candidates running for office (Rahat & Hazan 2001), and they distribute positions and influence among elected candidates (Martin 2014). Politicians thus serve two principals: their constituents and their party (Zittel 2012). While voters influence the election, parties control the internal promotion, which should make ambitious politicians highly motivated to toe the party line. Therefore, I expect that politicians' responsiveness preferences differ from voters' by being more oriented towards party responsiveness, and incumbents who are familiar with the way parties organise power in parliament are even more oriented towards the party than challenger candidates.

To test these expectations, the article uses survey data on Danish voters, candidates and MPs, including the same question format regarding legislator responsiveness. With a combination of limited geographical distances and differences, multi-member districts and comparatively strong party organisations, Denmark provides a less likely case for detecting differences across politicians and voters with regard to responsiveness preferences as voters should be more likely to prefer party responsiveness in this context (Bøggild & Pedersen 2020).

The analyses show that voters and politicians do hold different preferences for responsiveness: politicians prefer party responsiveness, while more voters prefer constituency responsiveness. Among voters, higher education is associated with preferences for party responsiveness. Among politicians, MPs are even more likely to prefer party responsiveness over constituency responsiveness than challenger candidates. These results offer several important contributions. First, they highlight potential consequences of the increasingly educational-elitist recruitment as variation in education is an important factor behind the identified mismatched preferences for responsiveness. Second, they point to additional consequences of party-organised politics. Especially in a US context, party organisation has been argued to promote political polarisation which is not in congruence with the policy preferences of the voters (Hill & Tausanovitch 2015). This study suggests that party organisation also factors into the politician-voter divergence regarding fundamental preferences for how representative democracy should be enacted. Third, the results provide insights into a Danish tension between district and party representation. Despite electoral institutional incentives,

Danish politicians only give district representation low priority (Skjæveland & Christiansen 2018; Pedersen & vanHeerde-Hudson 2019). Moreover, the number of electoral districts was halved (17 to 10 districts) with the reform in 2007 decreasing the ‘localness’ of candidates presented to the constituency voters in national elections. From an elite and institutional perspective, responsiveness towards the district seems to be of only slim importance, whereas this study shows that Danish voters care about politicians’ responsiveness towards their local constituency, though we need further studies to understand the underlying meaning of such preferences, as I will elaborate on in the concluding discussion.

## Preferences for Responsiveness

Responsiveness can be studied as an outcome and as a process or relationship (Andeweg & Thomassen 2005). Here, focus is on the relationship between politicians and voters in the responsiveness process and specifically the congruence in voters’ and politicians’ expressed preferences for political responsiveness. Norms regarding responsiveness are the centre of the ‘mandate-independency controversy’ (Pitkin 1967), which has fostered the most influential empirical typology of styles of representation including delegates, trustees and politicos (Eulau et al. 1959). This typology initiated a strong research agenda devoted to understanding the representative roles politicians perform (Wahlke et al. 1962; Converse & Pierce 1986; Esaiasson & Holmberg 1996; Katz 1997; Patzelt 1997; Saalfeld & Müller 1997; Blomgren & Rozenberg 2012). The typology has however been criticised for being too simplistic or unrealistic (Andeweg & Thomassen 2005) and for being too ‘American’ by not including political parties as a prominent factor in representative relationships (Converse & Pierce 1986). As a consequence, the typology has been developed to include party responsiveness by the role of a party delegate.

As representatives, politicians may thus act (1) as independent trustees using their own values and attitudes to evaluate and respond to various input, (2) as delegates for their district constituents making efforts to know and promote their preferences<sup>2</sup> or (3) as party delegates striving to promote the party program and respond to party preferences. This typology is still widely used in the study of politicians’ behaviour (Dudzinska et al. 2014; André et al. 2015; Bøggild et al. forthcoming). One of its benefits is that it clearly and directly nails the dilemmas politicians may face when acting as responsive representatives. This article focuses on the dilemma between acting as a district or a party delegate for two reasons. First, while voters may express positive attitudes towards independent trustees,<sup>3</sup> it is unclear what this really means for expectations and preferences regarding

responsiveness. Second, politicians self-select into political parties, and in multi-party systems such as the Danish, they can select a party close to their own preferences making the dilemma less relevant, which was also indicated by more of the surveyed MPs. I therefore focus on the delegate role: To whom should politicians respond if the party position conflicts with the preferences of the district constituency? The survey question used to operationalise this dilemma reads:

'In your view, how should an MP vote when voters in his/her constituency have one opinion and his/her party has a different opinion?

- *The MP should vote according to his/her party's opinion*
- *The MP should vote according to the opinion of the voters in his/her constituency'*

The question format sets up a conflict which forces respondents to express preferences for party or constituency responsiveness. This conflict may be more or less realistic or common depending on the political system (Andeweg & Thomassen 2005) and party, but the answer reveals respondents' underlying evaluations and understandings of responsiveness, which guide the responsiveness reactions of politicians as well as voters.

While the study of politicians' representative styles is widespread, it has only gradually been recognised that voters hold meaningful opinions regarding which type of representative styles they prefer (Méndez-Lago & Martínez 2002; Andeweg & Thomassen 2005; Carman 2006; Bengtsson & Wass 2010) and that these preferences matter for voters' perceptions and support of democracy (André & Depauw 2017), political institutions (Kimball & Patterson 1997), political decisions (Esaiasson et al. 2017) and politicians (Bøggild 2020). Few have therefore tried to connect these two lines of research empirically as well as theoretically.

The limited number of studies that compare voter and elite preferences show that politicians express more party-oriented norms of responsiveness (Miller & Stokes 1963 Converse & Pierce 1986; Campbell & Lovenduski 2015) and stronger preferences for top-down representative relationships (Méndez-Lago & Martínez 2002; Andeweg & Thomassen 2005) than voters.<sup>4</sup> These studies, however, rarely try to explain this variation in systematic ways, even though it is perhaps the most important finding coming out of these studies: 'The most striking difference in the attitudes toward political representation is not between various categories of MPs or of voters, but rather *between* MPs and voters' (Andeweg & Thomassen 2005, 520).

I argue that patterns of recruitment and the organisation of legislative politics through political parties are two key factors behind the voter-politician divide in preferences for responsiveness.

## Recruitment: The Educational Bias

Recruitment has changed across Western democracies leading to different compositions of legislative assemblies (Cotta & Best 2007). One of the most evident trends is the increased recruitment of representatives with higher education since the middle of the twentieth century (Gaxie & Godmer 2007; Bovens & Wille 2017). By 2017, Bovens and Wille (2017, 114–15) show that almost 90 percent of MPs in Belgium, France, Netherlands, Germany, UK and Denmark had a long education, while the share of highly educated in the electorate only reached around a third (*Ibid*, 45–46). After the general election in 2015, 56 percent of the Danish MPs had a university degree compared to 10 percent among the voters (Demokratikommisionen 2020).

Formal education has shown to be strongly related to people's perception of politics and political behaviour (Nie et al. 1996; Stubager 2010). For instance, voters' political sophistication – including education – is important for the criteria they use when deciding how to vote (Stubager et al. 2018), which shows that educational background not only influences voters' political interests and positions but also the standards they use for evaluating politics as such. This may very well include evaluations of political responsiveness. There are multiple and possibly reinforcing reasons for why education influences attitudes towards politics.

First, formal education influences cognitive capacities making people skilful in gathering, organising and processing information (Campbell 2006). Thus, people with higher education may be better capable of understanding the conditions and mechanisms of representative democracy and, in this specific regard, appreciate the need for political parties to hold decision makers accountable and organise decision-making.

Second, having a higher education makes voters more similar to the highly educated politicians. Therefore, they are better represented descriptively, and for that reason they have an easier time identifying with politicians. People are more likely to prefer and trust people more similar to themselves (Heath 2015), and therefore highly educated voters are more likely to accept the responsiveness norms revealed by the behaviour of the highly educated politicians.

Third, having a higher education places voters among the high-status individuals who are more politically active, politically skilful and descriptively represented. Therefore, they have an interest in supporting the existing system, which places them in this favourable position (Magalhães &

Ceka 2014). In a party-centred political system, they should be more likely to prefer the status quo party-oriented responsiveness.

Education is thus consequential for political understanding, political identification and political interest, and I therefore expect that:

H1a: Politicians differ from voters in their preferences for responsiveness

H1b: Highly educated voters differ from voters with shorter educations in their preferences for responsiveness

H1c: Highly educated voters are more similar to politicians in their preferences for responsiveness

### *Party Organisation*

The representative linkage between citizens and politicians is in all steps moderated by political parties (Müller 2000). In particular, political parties' influence on politicians is clear in two stages: candidate selection and parliamentary career promotion.

In the first stage, before politicians are elected for parliament, political parties control which candidates can run on their lists and hereby organise the election for office (Rahat & Hazan 2001). As political representatives, politicians therefore face two principals 'owing' their seat to their party as well as to their voters (Zittel 2012). Most of the selected candidates are engaged in party politics prior to their selection, participating in local politics or organisational work (Fiers & Secker 2007; Ohmura et al. 2018; Binderkrantz et al. 2019). This pre-parliamentary party career intensifies the relationship between politicians and the party which becomes the key political networking node for most politicians and perhaps also their main social group. These relationships increase the political and personal cost of entering into a conflict with the party to represent district voter interests.

In the second stage, after politicians are elected for parliament, political parties organise the legislative work and control the parliamentary careers of the politicians. Parliamentary activities are coordinated 'behind closed doors' in parliamentary party groups (Heidar & Koole 2002). Within the parliamentary groups, labour is divided and collective decision reached or communicated. Without a position in a parliamentary group it is impossible to be informed about the various political matters taking place in parliament and to be influential in decision-making. A strong interdependency therefore exists among members of the group. In addition, party caucuses control the allocation of powerful and prestigious positions – the so-called 'mega-seats' (Carroll et al. 2006; Martin 2014). Legislators motivated to get powerful and prestigious positions (Strøm 1997) depend on the party leadership to reach these goals, which should make them more oriented towards party responsiveness even in candidate-centred electoral systems

(Becher & Sieberer 2008; Martin 2014). In particular, incumbents, whose re-election chances are relatively high and who know the ‘name of the game’ inside parliament, are likely to internalise this party responsiveness even when it potentially conflicts with the interests of the voters in their district. Due to the interference of political parties in elections as well as legislative politics, I expect:

H2a: Politicians have more party-oriented responsiveness preferences than voters

H2b: Incumbent politicians have more party-oriented responsiveness preferences than challenger candidates

### *Research Design*

The hypotheses are tested using survey data among Danish voters, candidates and MPs. The citizen survey data were collected in April 2017 and include answers from 1,026 citizens recruited to match the Danish voter population in terms of education, age, gender and income (YouGov managed the data collection). 991 respondents answered all questions relevant for this study and are similar to the full survey sample with regard to gender, age and education. The candidate survey data were collected in relation to the 2015 general election. The survey was fielded on the day of the election (June 18) to the 799 candidates running for office (response rate 42 percent). The MP survey data were collected in spring 2017 among the 179 members of the *Folketing* (response rate 50 percent). Details of the representativeness of these samples are provided in the appendix (Table A1). All surveys included the question of how an MP should vote in a situation where the position of the party deviates from the preferences of the constituency voters. This measures the dependent variable including two possible outcomes: 1: Vote with the party or 0: Vote according to constituency preferences.

Denmark is a proportional multi-member district electoral system. Political parties structure the election as well as the legislative processes. All candidates – except a few independents (<5) – run on a party list, and parties decide which ballot type to use. Most parties use open lists where preference votes determine which candidates will be elected from the list. Voters can cast a single vote for either a specific candidate or party list. As a consequence, Danish politicians clearly face the dilemma between representing the party or their constituency voters, which may provide them more personal votes (Cain et al. 1987; Carey & Shugart 1995; Skjæveland & Christiansen 2018). Compared to voters in single-member district systems, Danish voters face a challenging task remembering their multiple representatives and assigning blame or credit for constituency representation. Political parties are therefore a relatively stronger accountability actor

in multi-member district systems, which should make Danish voters more likely to express preferences for party responsiveness (Bøggild & Pedersen 2020). Denmark therefore serves as a less likely case for identifying differences in preferences for responsiveness across voters and politicians. In support of this, Danish voters are among those who express the highest levels of trust in political parties (IDEA 2018), party membership density is comparatively high (Rahat & Kenig 2018), and 50 percent of all votes are cast for party lists rather than party candidates (Statistics Denmark 2016).

Among voters, the key independent variable is level of education. Since I theorise that it is the educational similarity to politicians that matters, and the majority of Danish MPs have a long education (5 years at university or more), I group voters into two educational categories: one consisting of citizens with long educations similar to the politicians (9.5 percent), and one consisting of citizens with shorter educations (90.5 percent).<sup>5</sup>

Among politicians, the key independent variable is incumbency, which is coded as 1 if the politician has a seat in parliament and therefore participates in the MP survey (21.5 percent), and as 0 if the politician answered the candidate survey running as a challenger candidate not defending a seat in parliament (78.5 percent).

Besides the key independent variables, I include a list of controls. For voters as well as politicians, I include gender, age, perceived party policy congruence, and party belonging. Gender is included since studies suggest that women are more loyal towards their party (Cowley & Childs 2003) and may thus also be more likely to prefer a party-oriented style of representation. Age is included since younger generations tend to be better educated but also less attached to political parties. Party policy congruence is measured by two survey questions<sup>6</sup>. Voters as well as politicians are first asked to position themselves on an 11-point left-right scale. Next, they are asked to position their (preferred) party on the same scale. The distance between these positions is used as a measure of congruence between party and respondent position. The more aligned these positions are, the more likely respondents are expected to prefer party-oriented representation. The mean distance is 1.3 (SE 0.15) among politicians and 1.2 (SE 0.11) among voters. Party belonging – measured as the party the politician is running for or the party the voter would vote for at the next coming election – is included to take any inter-party differences in preferences for responsiveness into account.

In addition to these control variables included in models for politicians as well as voters, I also include specific controls for voters and politicians, respectively. For voters, I include strength of party identification (1: strong identifier; 0: less than strong identifier),<sup>7</sup> political interest (1: very interested in politics; 0: less than very interested in politics),<sup>8</sup> and an index measuring political knowledge.<sup>9</sup> All of these controls relate to knowledge and identification with politics, which may influence preferences for responsiveness

and relate to education. Among politicians, I include a safe seat variable. This needs to be constructed differently for MPs and candidates. For candidates, the measure is based on a survey question asking how the candidate estimated his own chances for getting elected. Those feeling sure of election, answering 'I definitely thought I would be elected' were coded as running for a safe seat (1); others were coded as running for an insecure seat (0). The MP survey did not include the same question, and I therefore constructed the measure based on electoral results in the 2015 election. First, I calculated the difference between the personal votes of the winner and the personal votes of the first loser on the party list relative to the total votes for the party list as shown in the expression below.

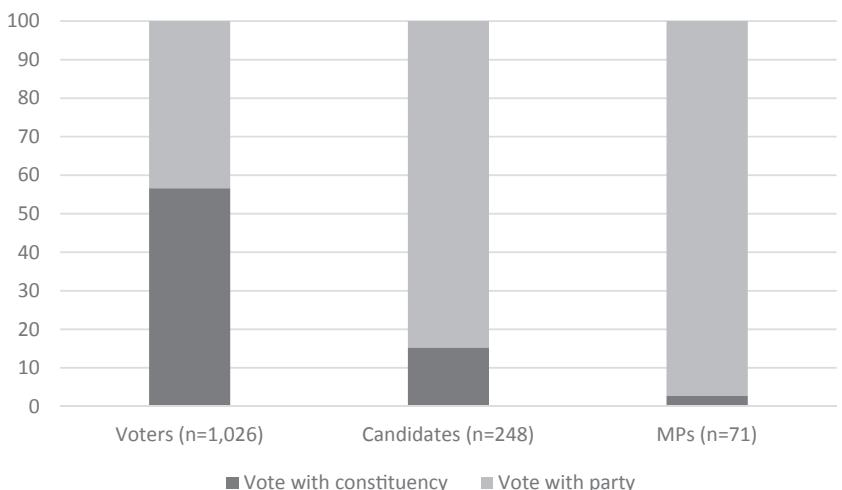
$$\text{Electoral marginality: } \frac{V_{\text{winner}} - V_{\text{firstloser}}}{V_{\text{party}}} \times 100$$

$V_{\text{winner}}$  is the personal votes won by the MP.  $V_{\text{firstloser}}$  is the personal votes won by the candidate getting the most personal votes among candidates not winning a seat – hence the first among losers.  $V_{\text{party}}$  is the total list votes including all votes cast for individual candidates *and* the list. Based on other analyses (Pedersen and vanHeerde-Hudson 2019), I defined a safe seat as a seat with a marginality of 5 percentage points or more. Even though the two measures of safe seat are not fully equivalent, perceptions of electoral safety may influence politicians, making them less responsive towards constituency interest when they try to make their position within the parliamentary party group (Kellermann 2016; Arter 2018). The results of the last election is the best available information for MPs to form their perceptions of security, and I therefore use this alternative measure to be able to take electoral safety into account.

## Results

Figure 1 describes the responsiveness preferences across Danish voters, candidates and MPs. It is evident that preferences across voters and politicians do not align. An overwhelming majority of 97 percent of the responding MPs answer that an MP should vote with his party even in situations where this conflicts with the interest of constituency voters. A smaller, but still substantial, majority of candidates (85 percent) agree with the MPs. However, only a large minority (43 percent) of voters share this preference. In contrast to MPs and candidates, most voters prefer constituency responsiveness over party responsiveness. The difference between the share of voters and the share of politicians (candidates and MPs) preferring party responsiveness is substantial – 43.8 percentage points – and statistically significant (two-sided

Figure 1. Preferences for Responsiveness across Voters, Candidates and MPs, Percent.



*t-test p < 0.001). This is in accordance with H1a and H2a: voters and politicians differ in their preferences for responsiveness as politicians are more party-oriented than voters.*

Table 1 reports results of two logistic regressions, one for voters and one for politicians (MPs and candidates). The dependent variable is preference regarding MP voting behaviour in cases of conflict between party position and constituency interests. Preference for voting with the party is coded 1. Preference for voting in agreement with constituency interests is coded 0.

In the voter model, the most central result is the positive effect of a long education. As expected (H1b and H1c), voters with a long education differ from voters with a shorter education in their preferences for responsiveness, and they are more likely to express preferences for party responsiveness similar to the politicians. The difference between voters with a long education and voters with a shorter education, when all other variables are set at their observed value, is 19 percentage points. As illustrated in Figure 2, the predicted likelihood for a voter with a shorter education to prefer party responsiveness is 41 percent, while it is 60 percent for voters with a long education. Hence, voters with a long education are more similar to politicians, but they are still not as clear-cut in their preference for party responsiveness as the politicians. This may result from the additional effect of party organisation to which politicians are exposed.

For voters, it is remarkable how little of the variation in preferences for responsiveness the model is able to predict. Party identification, political interest and knowledge do not influence preferences for responsiveness. Besides education, only gender is related to responsiveness preferences, with women

Table 1. Varying Preferences for Party Responsiveness among Voters and Politicians

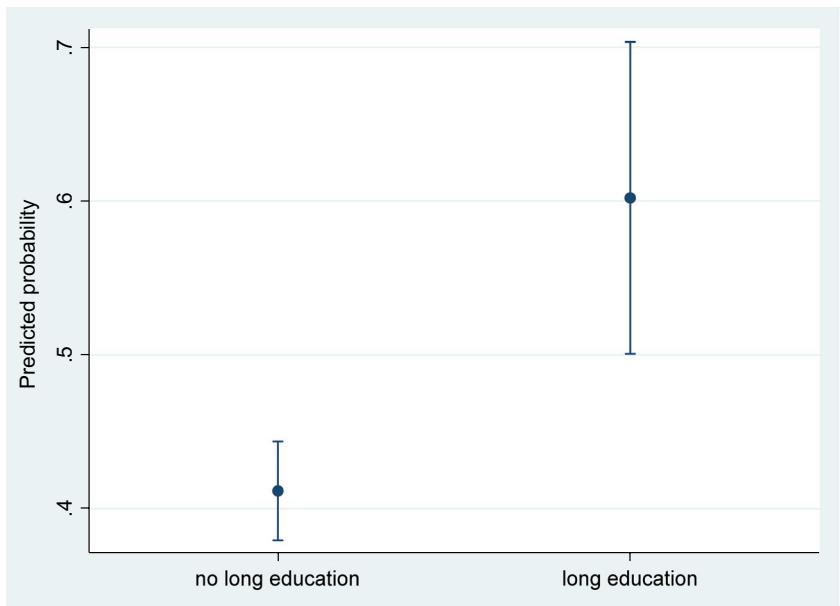
	Voters	Politicians
Gender (Female)	0.31 (0.14)*	0.60 (0.47)
Age	-0.01 (0.04)	0.01 (0.02)
Long education (5 years)	0.78 (0.23)**	0.09 (0.40)
Distance between party and own position on lr-scale	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.13 (0.06)*
Party identification (strong supporter)	0.19 (0.17)	
Political interest (very interested)	-0.03 (0.18)	
Political knowledge	-0.00 (0.05)	
Safe seat		-0.44 (0.69)
MP		1.92 (0.86)*
Party		
Social Democrats	REF	REF
Social Liberals	0.60 (0.41)	-0.67 (0.76)
Conservative Party	0.11 (0.37)	-2.14 (0.80)*
Socialist Peoples' Party	0.43 (0.34)	0.76 (0.92)
Liberal Alliance	-0.20 (0.38)	-0.99 (0.73)
Liberals	0.12 (0.27)	-0.89 (0.72)
Danish Peoples' Party	0.13 (0.23)	1.65 (1.28)
Red-Green Alliance	0.06 (0.25)	1.61 (1.16)
Alternative	-0.24 (0.35)	-1.22 (0.73)
Christian Democrats		(omitted, predicts 0, n = 14)
Other	0.09 (0.41)	(omitted, predicts 0, n = 3)
Do not intend to vote	0.47 (0.40)	
Don't know which party to vote for	0.24 (0.33)	
Adj. $R^2$	0.02	0.20
N	991	299

\* $p < 0.05$  in two-sided tests; \*\* $p < 0.01$  in two-sided tests.

being more likely to prefer party responsiveness. Even if I include factors more directly related to perceptions of politics: trust in politicians, trust in political parties and satisfaction with democracy, the model only accounts for four percent of the variation in voters' preferences for responsiveness, and the impact of education remains statistically significant and substantially the same.

In the politician model, the most central result is the positive association between preferences for party responsiveness and being an MP. As expected ( $H2b$ ), MPs are significantly more likely to prefer party responsiveness than challenger candidates, who have not yet been enrolled in parliamentary party group politics. The difference in predicted likelihood for preferring party responsiveness is 13 percentage points. As illustrated in Figure 3, the likelihood is high for both groups: 84 percent for candidates, and 97 percent for incumbents. Candidates exposed to the first stage party selection control are clearly more in favour of party responsiveness than ordinary voters are.

Figure 2. Predicted Probability for Preferring Party over Constituency Responsiveness (Voters).  
 [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]



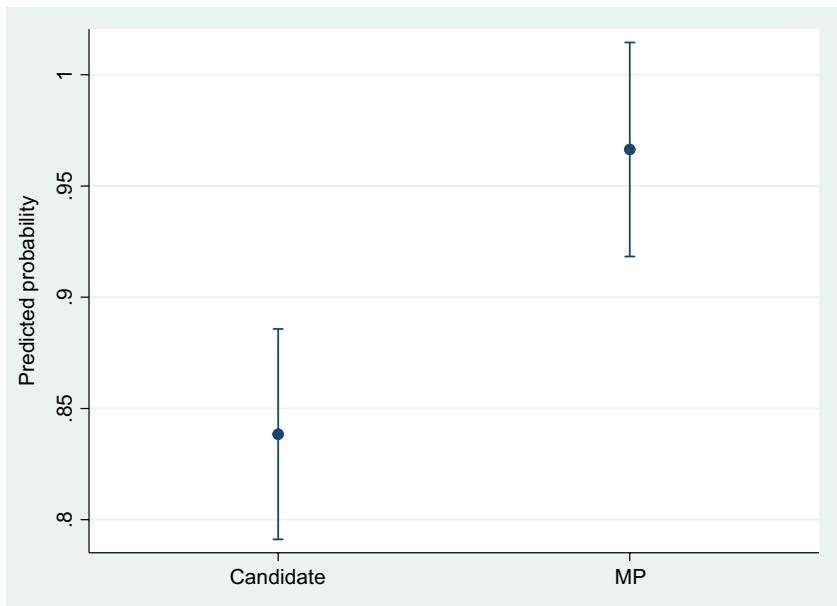
*Note:* Estimates are based on Table 1, Voters and show predicted probability for preferring party responsiveness over constituency responsiveness across voters with or without a MA degree. Estimates are illustrated with 95 percent confidence intervals.

However, MPs who are also exposed to the second stage party promotion control are even more supportive of the party responsiveness norm.

In contrast to voters, party policy congruence is associated with preferences for responsiveness among politicians: the larger the perceived distance between the politician's and the party's position on the left right scale, the less likely the politician is to prefer party responsiveness. This is, however, mainly an outlier effect caused by the least aligned politicians. The politician indicating the largest distance has a predicted likelihood of preferring party responsiveness of 39 percent, while the politician with the smallest distance has a predicted likelihood of 89 percent, yet the politician at the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile has a likelihood of 83. Hence, the main difference is between the extreme misaligned politicians and the rest.

Seventeen observations are omitted from the model because politicians running for the Christian Democrats and a small group of other parties express the exact same preferences for responsiveness. These politicians all prefer constituency responsiveness, which contradicts the dominant preference among politicians. Danish Christian Democrats have a clear

Figure 3. Predicted Probability for Preferring Party over Constituency Responsiveness (Politicians).  
 [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]



*Note:* Estimates are based on Table 1, Politicians and show predicted probability for preferring party responsiveness over constituency responsiveness across politicians holding or running for a seat in the national parliament. Estimates are illustrated with 95 percent confidence intervals.

geographical stronghold in an electoral constituency to the West of the country, which may make them more responsive to local interests in this area. Often the success of the Christian Democrats entering parliament depends crucially on their votes in this specific district. Politicians from the Conservative Party also express preferences significantly different from the Social Democrats by being less likely to prefer party responsiveness. More plausible explanations exist for this association. First, the Danish Conservatives are liberal in the sense that they appreciate the individual initiative and responsibility, which may contradict preferences for political responsiveness anchored in collective units rather than individuals. Second, like the Christian Democrats, the Conservatives have developed a significant geographical stronghold in parts of the capital city, which may make them more responsive to interests in this significant constituency. Third, while all Danish parties are characterised by decentral candidate selection procedures (Bille 2001), the selection procedures are especially decentral in the Conservative party alongside the Liberals, the Social Liberals and the Alternative. For all these parties, the coefficient is negative though not

statistically significant. When including a dummy for candidate selection procedures<sup>10</sup>. (and as a consequence excluding parties as a control), the coefficient is negative (-1.47) and statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). The predicted likelihood of preferring party responsiveness is 93 percent for politicians in parties with less decentral procedures, while it is 76 percent for politicians in parties with the most decentral procedures. This adds to the party organisation explanation offered to understand variation in responsiveness preferences across voters and politicians: the more politicians depend on the party leadership for selection, the more they are oriented towards the party as political representatives. Still, this result should be interpreted with caution as other party specific factors may also influence politicians' responsiveness preferences as discussed above.

## Conclusion

The analyses reveal a clear mismatch between voters' and politicians' preferences for responsiveness. Politicians prefer party responsiveness, while voters have more mixed preferences with a small majority preferring constituency responsiveness. Other studies have shown that voters that perceive such mismatch have lower political trust (Bøggild 2020) and support of democracy (André & Depauw 2017). However, no studies have shown this mismatch in the Danish case or investigated possible reasons behind such mismatch. Rather, it has simply been concluded that the most significant finding in studies of responsiveness preferences is the difference across citizens and politicians (Andeweg & Thomassen 2005).

This article argues that two important mechanisms may explain the lack of responsiveness preference congruence. Recruitment is the first mechanism by which citizens with long educations in particular self-select or are recruited into politics. Education influences perceptions of politics in various ways, and this study has not disentangled these different mechanisms empirically. However, the results imply that identification may be the most important mechanism. First, political knowledge, which should be related to the cognitive capacity obtained through education, has no significant impact. Second, the impact of education is not linear but only identified among those voters having long educations similar to the majority of politicians. Finally, education does not matter for politicians' expressed preferences for responsiveness. Rather the educational background of politicians may influence their style of communication and their symbolic representative value for citizens without long education (Pitkin 1967).

Party organisation is the second mechanism. Politicians depend on their party for selection and for promotions. They have strong incentives to respect the party position in order to build a strong career and gain influence. This illustrates a difficult dilemma. Unified political parties are crucial for

efficient decision-making and democratic accountability (Schattschneider 1960; Kölñn 2015), political parties organise to promote this, and politicians respond to the organisational structures. However, voters do not respond as expected but are rather sceptical towards political parties and express preferences for alternatives to party representation. In the US context, scholars focusing on policy congruence have argued that party politics leads to elite polarisation that does not correspond to the pattern of policy preferences among the electorate (Hill & Tausanovitch 2015). In the European context, scholars focusing on recruitment have argued that educational elitist recruitment is related to the rise of populist parties (Bovens & Wille 2017, 166). This article argues and shows that recruitment processes and the unbroken stronghold of political parties in legislative politics contribute to a fundamental disconnect between voters and politicians in understandings and expectations of representative democracy. Whereas high-status citizens and politicians, in particular, hold on to a party-organised political representation, most citizens are on the search for something different. The alternative to party organisation is, however, unclear.

Danish voters do not express strong and clear preferences for geographically organised representation. The question format does not allow us to explore which type of constituency representation voters may want (Arter 2018). But given the lack of local parties seeking representation in the national parliament, voters do not seem to care enough about local representation to mobilise and organise local representation. Therefore, the mismatch identified in this study does not evidently consist of a conflict between voters asking for one type of representation, which politicians refuse to deliver. Rather, the mismatch seems to reflect a disconnect in the responsiveness process. Voters send no strong signal regarding preferences for responsiveness. Consequently, politicians have no clear signal to adapt to. Some politicians and parties seem to experiment with different forms of representation – may it be a strong leadership or a bottom-up deliberative organisation – to accommodate the signal of undefined dissatisfaction among the electorates. However, the results of this research suggest that the crucial role of political parties in legislative politics tends to moderate such experiments as politicians come to appreciate party responsiveness once they enrol as candidates and get elected to parliament. We therefore need more research on voters' perceptions of political parties as political organisations to understand the tenor of the identified mismatch.

The Danish case has been argued to be a less likely case for identifying differences in responsiveness preferences across politicians and voters because Danish voters are likely to be more party-oriented – and therefore more similar to the politicians – due to the multi-member districts and relatively strong position of political parties in civil society. Accordingly, voters in single member district systems and contexts where civil society

party organisations are weaker should express even stronger dislikes of party responsiveness, and the difference across politicians and voters is expected to be even larger. Still, politicians are also influenced by different contexts making them perhaps less supportive of party responsiveness. For instance, politicians in single member districts may be more oriented towards constituency needs offering representation through allocation and service (Lancaster 1986; Harden 2013; Campbell & Lovenduski 2015). The organisation of the legislature may also moderate the importance of political parties. In the US Congress, committee member – and chairmanship are not only a matter for the political party leaders to decide but also a matter of seniority. However, in most legislatures – including the US Congress – the party caucus is central to promotions and influence, and while politicians may prefer constituency responsiveness to a larger degree than Danish politicians, their representative behaviour in the legislature is most likely guided by party organisation. While more comparative research is needed to settle this discussion, the similarity in recruitment processes across countries (Bovens & Wille 2017) and the strong position of political parties in most legislatures suggest that mismatches between politicians and voters with respect to preferences for responsiveness are not exclusively Danish.

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#### NOTES

1. Signals may be sent directly by citizens or via the media; the important thing is that politicians receive input and requests from citizens. The process may also start by politicians sending signals to the voter. Thus, the responsiveness process is not limited to a bottom-up or top-down understanding of political representation.
2. Constituency representation is not necessarily geographically based. Politicians may also define specific social groups as their core constituency (Esaiasson 2000).
3. 65 percent of the surveyed voters in this study prefer MPs to follow their own convictions rather than the party position in situations of conflict
4. Von Schoultz & Wass (2016) find that preferences of politicians and voters in Finland overlap but that the variables factoring into these preferences vary across politicians and voters.
5. A more fine-grained measure could be used arguing that political understanding and elite identification increase gradually with more education. Using a six-point scale measure of education shows that only voters with long university educations (5 years or more) are more likely to prefer party representation. This indicates that it is the educational similarity not the gradual approximation that matters.
6. These questions were asked after questions measuring preferences for responsiveness to avoid post-treatment bias.
7. Party identification was measured by the item: Would you say that you are a very strong supporter, somewhat strong supporter, or not a strong supporter of this party [the party the respondent indicated to vote for]? Respondents saying that they are strong supporters are coded as strong identifiers.

8. Political interest was measured by the item: How interested are you in politics? Respondents indicating to be very interested are coded as 1; those indicating to be somewhat, not, or not at all interested in politics are coded as 0.
9. Political knowledge was measured by an additive index consisting of five questions regarding Danish and European politics (Is Austria part of the EU? Does the Conservative party take a position to the right or to the left on the left-right scale? Which party does Dan Jørgensen represent? Which parties form the current government coalition? How many members does the Folketing consist of?). For each correct answer, the respondent receives a point. These points are then added so that the maximum score is 5, and the minimum score is 0.
10. Most decentral selection procedures are coded 1 (Liberals, Conservatives, Social Liberals, Alternative), less decentral procedures are coded 0 (Social Democrats, Red-Green Alliance, Socialist People's Party, Danish People's Party, Christian Democrats, Liberal Alliance).

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## APPENDIX A.

Table A1. Representativeness of the Elite Survey Samples

	MPs			Candidates		
	Population	Survey sample	Model sample	Population	Survey sample	Model sample
Female	374	42.70	39.39	31.29	32.63	31.33
Mean age	45.0	47.4	46.7	46.4	46.9	46.7
Education ( $\geq 5$ year)	55.31	53.93	56.06	—	43.78	43.35
Social Democratic Party	26.26	29.21	30.30	11.39	10.18	11.59
Liberal Party	18.99	16.85	16.67	11.64	10.18	9.44
Danish Peoples' Party	20.67	19.10	21.21	11.51	11.38	9.87
Conservative Party	3.35	1.12	1.52	6.89	6.29	5.58
Liberal Alliance	7.3	3.37	3.03	10.01	9.58	9.87
Social Liberals	4.47	3.37	4.55	9.13	9.88	10.73
The Alternative	5.03	10.11	7.58	7.38	749	9.44
Red-Green Alliance	7.82	8.99	10.61	11.1	16.17	18.45
Socialist Peoples' Party	3.91	5.62	4.55	11.64	12.57	15.02
Nordic mandates	2.23	0	0	0	0	0
Christian Democrats	0	0	0	7.26	5.39	0
Other lists	0	0	0	0.02	0.90	0
N	179	89	66	799	334	233