Citizens' candidates? Labour market experiences and radical right-wing candidates in the 2014 Swedish municipal elections

Satu Helske
Juta Kawalerowicz

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Abstract

This article uses Swedish register data to study the labour market experiences of radical right-wing candidates. We look at different measures of economic insecurity (labour market participation trajectories, experience of unemployment in social networks, relative decline of men's income and relative growth of jobs for foreign-born workers vis-a-vis natives) and examine whether they are predictors of candidates running for the Sweden Democrats, the main radical right-wing party in Sweden, as opposed to another mainstream political party. We find some confirmation for the notion that radical right-wing candidates are *citizens' candidates* (Bó, Finan, Folke, Persson and Rickne, 2018) as far as labour market experiences of radical right-wing candidates are markedly different from mainstream party candidates. Those with turbulent or out-of-labour market labour market trajectories are much more likely to run for the Sweden Democrats, as opposed to other parties. Additionally, the same is true for candidates embedded in social networks with higher levels of unemployment, while working in high skilled industry markedly lowers probability of running for the Sweden Democrats, especially for male candidates with low educational attainment. We find no confirmation for decline in relative status of men and mixed results for ethnic threat hypothesis.

Keywords: radical right-wing, political candidates, ethnic threat, economic insecurity, labour market participation trajectories

The emergence and success of radical right parties in Western Europe is one of the most significant political developments in a generation. For a long time, Sweden was regarded as a

country where radical right would be excluded from mainstream politics. Starting in the 2010s, Sweden Democrats, a party founded in the 80s and initially limited to extreme right circles, has been gaining voters and as of 2021 it is the third biggest political party in the Swedish parliament. This is surprising because historically Swedish politics has been characterized by a high degree of class alignment where low skilled workers in manual occupations voted for left-wing parties whom they entrusted with representing their economic interests. Like in other Western countries, the Sweden Democrats have become more and more popular among the working-class men. Furthermore, in contrast to established parties in Sweden, the Sweden Democrats have been increasing the number of their party members, reaching segments of the population which have not been active in politics. This led some researchers to argue that Sweden Democratic politicians constitute a new class of citizen candidates (Bó, Finan, Folke, Persson and Rickne, 2018), providing representation to labour market outsiders previously excluded from politics.

Even though a broad agreement exists regarding the proletarianization of its electoral base, researchers disagree whether it is primarily economic grievances or cultural backlash that fuels the rise of radical right parties (Salo and Rydgren, 2021). A popular narrative is the modernization losers thesis, where far right success is a consequence of economic and cultural grievances that arise as a result of the modernization process. One aspect is increased economic insecurity which makes individuals who struggle with societal changes more likely to turn to the radical right for answers (Betz, 1994; Minkenberg, 2000). Another narrative is that the success of the radical right is a consequence of status anxiety or status decline, which has been felt most acutely among the working-class men. In an influential paper, Gidron and Hall (2017) argue that across Europe the relative social status of this group has declined over the past 30

years, and that lower levels of subjective social status are associated with support for the radical right.

In this study we depart from demand side theories of radical right support and adopt them for explaining candidacy. In doing so, we follow the line of inquiry started by Bó and colleagues (2018), who looked at descriptive characteristics of Swedish politicians, and ask whether those who join the ranks of Sweden Democrats are a different class of politicians than those running for established parties¹. We use Swedish register data to look at the experiences of economic anxiety and status decline among the most dedicated radical right supporters - political candidates. We adapt the economic insecurity framework and examine four different channels for economic marginalization: labour market participation trajectories with histories of precarious employment, experience of unemployment in one's social networks (as well as the importance of one's work milieu), status decline of male workers relative to female workers and ethnic threat due to local imbalances in employment opportunities between native- and foreign-born workers.

We contribute to the literature on the radical right in three aspects. First, we take a longitudinal approach to studying the impact of unemployment and underemployment on the probability of standing as a candidate for the radical right. We find that “turbulent” and “out of the labour market” employment trajectories are related to higher probability of running for the radical right as opposed to mainstream parties. Another new finding relates to the impact of work milieu where the same type of worker is predicted to have different probabilities to run depending on whether he works in high or low skilled industries. Third, we find little evidence

¹ The notion that candidates would be reflective of their electorate should not be taken for granted because in general political candidates tend to be positively selected (Norris, 1997). At the same time, in the period under study, the barriers for entry to the pool of candidates for the Sweden Democrats were minimal, especially for municipal level elections.

for relative status decline for men or ethnic threat competition, even when looking at trends in employment opportunities and wage patterns within local industries and local labour markets. Additionally, where we find significant effects, they tend to be for male candidates which provides some support for the notion that other, non-economic factors could be more important for women in politics.

Theory

Across different polities these supporters tend to be male, working class, and working in low-skilled industries and manual occupations, as well as the self-employed and the unemployed (Lubbers et al., 2002; Givens, 2004; Arzheimer and Carter, 2006; Arzheimer, 2009; Lucassen and Lubbers 2012; Stubager and Ivarsflaten, 2013). Taken together these characteristics point to economic explanations - working class workers have been particularly vulnerable to the shifts in the structures of post-industrial economies and economic insecurities that they created. Fifty years ago, low skilled workers enjoyed the “golden age of manufacturing” but as outsourcing accelerated, good jobs in manufacturing industries started to disappear, and many low skilled workers had to resort to less secure forms of employment. In addition, globalization also aggravated existing inequalities and created diverging life experiences for the highly educated mobile workers and manual workers (Betz, 1994; Minkenberg, 2000; Ignazi, 2003). These developments coincided with increasing multiculturalism in many Western societies. Over the last couple of decades, there has been a marked increase in the share of foreign-born residents in Europe, which contributed to the feeling of threat for low skilled workers, either by creating real or perceived labour market competition (Pardos-Prado, 2011; Rydgren, 2013; Bolet, 2020).

Unemployment

The common approach to operationalizing economic insecurity is by looking at unemployment and job insecurity. Radical right parties draw attention to the alleged threat to natives' employment posed by immigrants. Yet, the role of the experience of unemployment on radical right-wing support remains disputed. Although some studies found a correlation between levels of unemployment and votes for radical right parties at the national level (Jackman and Volpert, 1996), later studies either rejected (Lubbers et al., 2002; Swank and Betz, 2003) or qualified the conditions under which unemployment become predictive of radical right success (Arzheimer, 2009; Golder, 2003). In a recent meta-analysis of contextual level unemployment and radical right voting, Sipma and Lubbers review 49 studies and concluded that although there seems to be a small positive overall association between the two, there are no effects for changes in unemployment levels and some evidence that the positive association could be affected by the publication bias (2020). These diverging results led scholars to scrutinise the idea that the growing success of the radical right can be accounted for by increasing numbers of modernisation losers. For example, Rydgren (2013) noted that the radical right-wing parties have been successful in prosperous countries or regions (Switzerland and Northern Italy) with low unemployment levels and in some Nordic countries (Denmark) where workers are more cushioned from economic insecurities associated with unemployment. What is the evidence for the link between small scale unemployment and radical right-wing support in Sweden? In a recent study Rydgren and Tyrberg (2020) report that long-term unemployment is positively correlated with voting for the Sweden Democrats at the district level, yet that it is significant and positive only when controlling for immigration variables, which suggest some role of ethnic competition at a local level. Support for the role of anticipated economic insecurity on electoral support was also provided by Dehdari (2019) who reported that more layoff

notifications among low-skilled native workers was associated with a boost in the share of the electoral district vote going to the Sweden Democrats.

Individual level studies looking at unemployment and radical right voting report that economic insecurity may be associated with likelihood to support the radical right, even though the magnitude of the effects is smaller or statistically insignificant (Arzheimer, 2009; Guiso et al., 2017), although for instance Wiertz and Rodon show that individuals more affected by income loss or unemployment are, in fact, more likely to exhibit left leaning attitudes (2021). Guiso et al. (2017) analyse data from 24 countries between 2002 and 2014 and report that economic insecurity (created out of unemployment in the last 5 years and subjective measure of income and employment in manufacturing) is associated with high probability of voting for radical right parties. Yet, the authors also note that individual level unemployment, when taken alone, has no statistically significant effects on the vote. Additionally, Guiso et al. argue that unemployment is an important determinant of supply of radical right parties, which means that such parties are more likely to emerge when unemployment is high.

Being at risk of unemployment or unemployed is arguably different from being of the working age and out of the labour market for a long time. It is also possible that what matters for engagement with radical right-wing activism is not a trajectory of decline but instead a turbulence throughout the working life. A novel approach which we try in this paper is to look not only at unemployment at one point in time but to use sequence analysis to capture labour market participation trajectories of political candidates. With this classification we can not only capture the current spell of unemployment, but also underemployment, that is periods when individual's earnings were below the poverty line, despite them being employed. The methods we use, sequence analysis, is well equipped at capturing the type of change overtime and

distinguishing between trajectories of stable economic insecurity vs. economic insecurities which increase overtime.

H1: The probability to run as a candidate for the Sweden Democrats is higher for those affected by precarious employment histories.

Sociotropic effects of unemployment

Support for the radical right wing is spatially concentrated, especially in rural and post-industrial areas, which suggest that right wing populism is rooted in regional differences in economic prosperity. Gidron and Hall (2017) note that regional decline seems closely coupled with cultural resentment; and the weakness of support for far-right populism in large metropolitan centres may reflect, not only relative prosperity, but the extent to which the experience of life within big cities promotes distinctive cultural outlook. Consequences of unemployment can be far reaching, not only at the individual level but also at the level of neighbourhoods, households and social milieu. Several studies suggested that people worry more about the impact of immigration and unemployment on society than their individual situation (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Berg 2015) or at impact within their household constellations (Abou-Chadi and Kurer, 2021). The Sweden Democrats mobilized sections of the economic outsiders, among them people with longer spells of unemployment, which is noteworthy because research shows that unemployment is associated with lower political involvement (Bó et al., 2018; Marx and Nhuyen 2016). Losing a job may have less impact on political preferences than the perception that unemployment is worsening as a collective, national problem. Politics can therefore foster support for the radical right among those who have not experienced economic insecurity themselves but who perceive it as a reality among members of their community, either at small or large level. While researchers often used unemployment level in individuals' residential areas (Sipma and Lubbers, 2020) with register

data we can also capture grievances over economic insecurity in social networks such as that of close and extended family members (Abou-Chadi and Kurer, 2021) or middle-sized networks such as the workplace (Andersson and Dehdari, 2021).

H2: The probability to run as a candidate for the Sweden Democrats is higher for those who have higher levels of unemployment in their social networks.

Work milieu

Another way in which social context can impact radical right-wing candidacy is the composition of one's work milieu. Education level continues to be one of the most robust predictors of radical right support and those with lower educational attainment are generally overrepresented among radical right voters, although some disagreements exist regarding which educational levels (basic or medium) have the highest overrepresentation (Lubbers et al., 2002; Rydgren, 2007). According to Bornschier (2018) educational cleavages have been the most important factor for the emergence of the radical right. Education affects further position in the labour market (for those with lower education attainment it means less economic insecurity) or because it is related to characteristics such as openness to change and tolerance, which in turn make individuals more comfortable with multiculturalism and changes brought about by it (Kriesi et al., 2008). Savelkoul and Scheepers (2017) find that in the Netherlands perception of threat mediates the association between education and voting for the radical right. This could be a matter of selection, but Stubager (2008) argues that higher education does in fact instil universalistic values. His analysis of Danish survey data suggests that the association between education and differences in authoritarian-libertarian values is due to socialization and differences in the value sets transferred to individuals in different educational environments. Stubager concludes that the value difference between different educational attainment groups should be seen as arising because of a more fundamental value conflict and not merely arising

due to economic differences. Education is one setting, but if we developed Stubager's idea further it is plausible that different work milieus could be associated with different propensities for endorsing radical right politics. If we divide labour market sectors into low skill and high skilled (based on the educational composition of those who work in them), we expect that being part of a high skilled sector would be associated with individual propensity to support radical right, on top of other characteristics. Workers with higher education have already been exposed to higher educational milieu in the past, so we predict that the effect of being in a highly skilled work milieu would be highest for individuals who differ the most from their work environment - those with a basic level of education.

H3: The probability to run for SD would be lower for those working in high skilled sectors, especially for workers with low educational attainment.

Status decline and gender

Across the board, radical right-wing parties have noticeably higher levels of support among men (Coffé, 2018). The Sweden Democrats stand out in comparison to other established parties with respect to high overrepresentation of men among voters and party activists. This is also true of the candidates, where in the last elections 71.9% were male (compared to 57.9% for all municipal level candidates in the 2018 election). Why are men more attracted to the radical right? Givens (2004) argues that it is because men are more likely to be found in blue collar manufacturing jobs that are most at risk due to the modernization process. Givens also says that women feel less economically threatened because they tend to work in sectors which employ fewer immigrants and even if they employ immigrants, the sectors where they work tend to undergo expansion. Another line of inquiry has to do with changing roles and bargaining power of women. The reason why increases in the status of women may have contributed to decline in the subjective status of men is because status is based on a rank ordering, where

individuals compare their status to that of the status of others. This means that men can see closure of the income gap, where women start to acquire status similar to men, as a threat to their status.

The gender perspective on roots of support for right wing populists is a topic of Kimmel's work (2017) where the author describes how economic anxiety was transformed into political rage. Kimmel studied a group dubbed "angry white men", and concluded that their anger comes from a combination of aggravated entitlement and victimization. Finally, Gidron and Hall (2017) make an explicit connection between status decline and radical right wing voting and describe social status as the key explanatory variable which binds together economic and cultural explanations for radical right support. Social status describes a person's position within the social hierarchy. It is both economic and cultural, because economic changes can affect collective cultural frameworks and social identities. Over the last 30 years, argue Gidron and Hall, we saw shifts in the levels of social status enjoyed by blue collar workers and especially to low skilled men. The analysis conducted by Gidron and Hall is based on self-assessed status, hence it is difficult to determine whether respondents base their grievances on actual or perceived changes in their position in the society.

H4: Relative decline in regional income of men, when compared to women of the same education level, is associated with higher likelihood of running as a candidate for SD.

Ethnic threat

So far we have described the objective and subjective economic insecurities of the workers, but did not mention immigration. Across Western Europe, the emergence of successful radical right parties coincided in time with increasing immigration levels. This led many to suspect that a causal link exists between the two. Responsiveness to demographic changes is the

hallmark of a group threat response (Blalock, 1967; Hopkins, 2010) with the assumption that members of the majority group react with hostility when minority groups challenge their dominant status. One of the proposed mechanisms is the ethnic threat where natives' attitudes towards immigrants are negatively affected by a direct exposure to economic competition from immigrant workers. Although the measures used for capturing immigration differ across studies, results for the effect of local or regional immigration levels on radical right support are less equivocal. Some studies (Rink et al. 2009; Savelkoul et al., 2017; Biggs and Knauss, 2013, Valdez, 2014) report that the radical right is more successful in areas with larger shares of immigrants, but others report the opposite association or add additional conditions for when context becomes important, for instance, when immigration is high in adjacent areas (Van Wijk, Bolt and Johnston, 2019).

Contextual effects are one way to study ethnic competition, but occupation, firms or industries are other important contexts. Those at risk of unemployment or in sectors with high competition from immigrants would be a target for radical right-wing parties. Kunovich (2013) used US data to look at the numbers and shares of immigrants in occupations, wage inequality, unemployment rate, employment growth and entry qualifications. He finds that a higher share of Mexican workers in an occupation is associated with perceived group threat and that workers in growing occupations perceive immigrants as less of a threat. According to Kunovich the association between the share of immigrants in occupation and attitudes is largely spurious and arising because these occupations have higher representation of low educated workers, who also tend to be more affected by threat perceptions. In another study on ethnic threat and the labour market, Pecoraro and Reudin (2020) report that Swiss workers who are more exposed to competition with foreigners in their occupations are more likely to express negative sentiments towards foreigners. But attitudes are also more positive when the share of recent

immigrants is higher, which the authors interpret as a positive reaction to filling labour market shortages. Additionally, they look at occupational unemployment and interact this with the share of foreign-born workers, finding that occupational unemployment rate is associated with more negative attitudes toward immigrants. In Sweden, most intense competition would be felt by workers in low skilled sectors, because these sectors are where immigrants most commonly find employment. Recently, Andersson and Dehdari (2021) looked at the presence of immigrants in workplaces and found that the increasing share of immigrant co-workers makes natives less inclined to vote for the radical right party. The authors also find that this relation is driven by same skills contacts within firms. Yet, because of the secret ballot, they cannot look at individual level use election precincts as their dependent variable, with 1000 voters on average.

In this study we look at the labour market experiences of workers. But instead of looking at occupations, we examine main industry groups and look separately at each labour market area, since economic prospects for an industry may vary across the country (Pecoraro and Reudin, 2020). In most cases firms employ workers with different occupations who interact in their workplaces, so looking at industries and developments in local labour market makes sense when trying to capture overall economic insecurity as well as economic insecurity due to ethnic threat. We make separate categories for different configurations of economic decline and ethnic threat. The sense of ethnic threat arises as a reaction to two factors: employment of immigrant workers as well as the demand for a specific type of jobs. We expect that the perception of group threat will be highest in industries in which there is direct competition between Swedish and foreign-born workers.

H5: The probability to run as a candidate for SD is higher for persons working in an industry where there is more competition from foreign born workers.

Data and methods

Data

Swedish full-population register data provide longitudinal individual-level information about the Swedish population. The registers contain socio-economic variables and information of whether individuals ever run in public elections. Our sample consists of the pool of candidates in the 2014 municipal elections, a total 53,594 individuals. Note that between 2010 and 2014 Sweden Democrats experienced rapid growth in the number of running candidates (and in fact struggled to fill their party lists) which suggests that at this time point internal party screening procedures were less stringent and those who wanted to run as candidates were welcomed to do so. Our independent variable is being a candidate for the Sweden Democrats or not (i.e., being a candidate for another party). We constructed variables for individual-level labour market participation trajectories, job insecurity in social networks, work milieu, and changes in local work opportunities. In addition, we controlled for individual demographic variables: age, sex, marital status, number of children in 2013.

Labour market participation trajectories

To examine if precarious employment labour market participation (LMP) trajectories are associated with higher likelihood to run for the Sweden Democrats, we created LMP statuses for each year from 2002 to 2012, i.e., ten years back from the time when the individuals registered as candidates for the 2014 election (November 2013). Due to our longitudinal approach, we limited our analysis to individuals who were approximately working-aged throughout the 10-year period, i.e., those who turned 19 or more in 2002 (normative age for leaving upper secondary education in Sweden) and at most 60 in 2012 (before the first chance to claim earnings-related pension). This left us with 33,176 candidates. We used the following categories:

1. Employed (including parental leave and sick leave from work)
 - Has income from work, disposable income higher than 60% of the median income in the municipality
 - Ignoring short gaps due to parental leave from work, sick leave from work, or unemployment for less than 3 months in a given year
2. Unemployed or underemployed
 - Unemployed for 3 months or more in a given year or employed but disposable income less than 60% of the median income in the municipality
3. Studies or education
 - Gaining study benefit above the median level in a given year
4. Living abroad
 - Not employed, underemployed, or studying full-time (categories 1, 2, and 3) in a given year and registers showing living abroad for at least 6 months
5. Inactive
 - Retired or not in any other category

Underemployment and mainly unemployment states were combined due to the small number of candidates whose main activity was unemployment (more than 6 months in unemployment in a given year). To study LMP trajectories patterns we used sequence analysis (SA), a method concerned with analysing ordered social processes and a holistic analysis of life course (Ritschard and Studer, 2018). Combined with cluster analysis, the approach is well suited for classification of complex life course trajectories such as LMP patterns as it allows for grouping trajectories based on different characteristics such as timing, duration, and order of labour

market statuses or transitions. For example, we can differentiate between different types of precariousness including earlier and more recent career instability.

In short, using a suitable dissimilarity measure we calculated pairwise dissimilarities between individual LMP trajectories and then used cluster analysis for grouping similar sequences together. Finally, we formed a categorical variable based on cluster memberships. More precisely, we used optimal matching between sequences of spells with an expansion cost of 1 (OMspell, Studer & Ritschard, 2015) as the dissimilarity measure. We chose this measure as it is generally sensitive to sequencing (order) and timing of events and resulted in interpretable clusters.

Table 1: Substitution costs for the OMspell measure for calculating pairwise dissimilarities.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(1) Employment	0	1	3	1	3	2
(2) Self-employment	1	0	3	1	3	2
(3) Un(der)employment	3	3	0	3	1	2
(4) Studying	1	1	3	0	3	2
(5) Inactive	3	3	1	3	0	2
(6) Abroad	2	2	2	2	2	0

The OMspell measure requires setting so-called substitution costs, which should reflect the (dis)similarity of the labour market statuses. These were chosen theoretically, based on being

able to differentiate favourable and precarious LMP states. First, employment and self-employment were regarded as similar to each other but also similar to studies, as studies typically lead to more stable employment careers (substitution costs were set to 1; note that only the relations matter and the specific numbers are not meaningful). Second, un(der)employment and other reasons for being outside the labour market were regarded similarly as both are unfavourable states in terms of stable employment histories (costs set to 1). The cost for comparing any state for being abroad is set to 2, since we have no information on LMP from these years. For clustering we used partitioning around medoids (PAM). For choosing the optimal number of clusters we used various measures of the quality of a clustering solution including average silhouette width and pseudo R squared (Studer 2013) as well as the interpretability of the clustering solution.

Job insecurity in different social contexts

To test the social network hypothesis, we measured experiences of unemployment in different social contexts of the candidates:

Partner. We measure days in unemployment in 2009–2013 for a marital spouse (if married) or a cohabiting partner (if parent to common children – the only case where we can match cohabiting partners using register data).

Relatives. We measure days in unemployment in 2009–2013 among parents, children, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins, and calculate the average.

Neighbourhood. Similarly to relatives, but among the individuals living in the 100 m by 100 m square around candidate's residence in 2013.

Workplace. Similarly to relatives, but among the employees in the candidate's workplace in 2013.

In analyses, we show the results using a month (30 days) as the unit for easier interpretation.

Relative status change

We tested the status decline hypothesis by measuring relative status decline for men as compared to women. Within the same level of education (at most basic education, gymnasium i.e. upper secondary education, and tertiary education) we compared how much the average income of men and women changed in 2002–2012, separately for each of the 21 labour market areas (LMA) in Sweden. Income was measured as annual disposable income in SEK.

Industry skill level and change in local work opportunities

We tested the work milieu hypothesis by comparing the probabilities for candidacy for the Sweden Democrats by industry skill level, education, and gender. Industry skill level was defined as a binary variable that separated between low-skill industries, where less than 30% of employees had tertiary education, and high-skill industries, where more than 30% of employees had tertiary education.

To test the ethnic threat hypothesis, we measured change in local work opportunities by counting annual numbers of employees within 17 industries in each labour market area (LMA, as defined in 2012), separated by skill-level (low/high) and origin (Swedish-/foreign-born). We then calculated the change from 2002 to 2012 in the number of employees in each skill–origin category separately for each industry–LMA pair. Finally, we categorised industry–LMA pairs into four categories where the number of employees (as illustrated in Figure 1):

- grew for the Swedish-born and shrank or grew at a slower pace for the foreign-born
- grew for both groups but faster for the foreign-born
- shrank for both groups
- shrank for the Swedish-born and grew for the foreign-born.

More precisely, we defined an industry “growing” in a specific LMA when the number of employees in that industry within the LMA increased by 5% or more between 2002 and 2012. Similarly, we defined “growing faster” as growth being 5 percentage points (ppts) higher or more.

Figure 1: Change (in %) in the number of employees within an industry–labour market pair categorized into four groups (Swe = Swedish-born, fb = foreign-born).

We matched individuals to their industries in 2012, or if they were not employed in 2012 or the information was missing, to the industry where they had last worked since 2002. We added a separate category for individuals who had no job in 2002–2012 or for whom all industry information was missing. Finally, we coded a separate category for candidates that worked in an industry that had less than five employees in 2002 in their local LMA, because any changes

in such low numbers would be related to huge percentual growth or decline. We studied the change in local work opportunities separately by industry skill level.

Method

Initial analyses showed that candidates for the Sweden Democrats were in many ways distinct from candidates for mainstream parties². For this reason, we focused on a binary outcome of being a candidate for the Sweden Democrats or not (i.e., candidate for any other party). We estimated logistic regression models, presenting the results using average marginal effects (AMEs) that are easy to interpret and allow straightforward comparisons between estimates. We estimated separate models by gender and education level. Due to the small number of foreign-born candidates in the Sweden Democrats, we limited our main analyses to Swedish-born candidates only. We explained the Sweden Democrats candidacy using individual LMP trajectories (more precisely, cluster memberships) and unemployment in different social contexts. We also used the interaction of change in local work opportunities and industry skill level. Finally, we controlled for demographic variables: age, sex, marital status, number of children in 2013. All analyses were done with R (R Core Team 2019), and the SA part was done using the TraMineR package (Gabadinho et al. 2011) and the WeightedCluster package (Studer 2013).

² Mainstream parties in the Swedish context include Social Democrats (S), Moderates (M), Center Party (C), Liberals (L), Green Party (G), Left Party (V) and Christian Democrats (KD).

Results

Descriptive statistics

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics on candidates running in the 2014 Swedish municipal elections. Among women, most of the candidates (57%) have tertiary education and only 5% have at most basic education. Among men, about equal numbers of candidates have gymnasium or tertiary education (45% each) while 9% have at most basic education. The median years of birth in each gender–education group range from 1959 (men with basic education) to 1967 (women with tertiary education). The proportion of the Sweden Democrats candidates is the highest within the least educated groups for both genders (19% among men, 12% among women) and less common within the highest educated group (4% among men, 1% among women).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for the 2014 municipal elections candidates.

Gender	Education	N	% within gender	Median year of birth	SD candidates (%)
Men	Basic	1684	9	1959	19
	Gymnasium	8444	45	1964	13
	Tertiary	8467	45	1965	4
	Missing	43	0.2	1966	26
Women	Basic	665	5	1961	12
	Gymnasium	5529	38	1963	5
	Tertiary	8323	57	1967	1
	Missing	21	0.1	1966	14

Labour market participation

We chose the eight-cluster solution as the most interpretable and suitable. It was successful in distinguishing stable (self-)employment as well as studies-to-work trajectories, long-term absence from the labour market, as well as earlier and later career breaks and “turbulent” employment histories (unemployed, underemployed, or moving between several LMP states). We further combined two clusters of studies followed by full-time employment since the main difference between the sequences in these clusters was the timing of the transition and this distinction was not regarded as important in the context of the study. Figure 2 presents the LMP trajectories in the seven clusters.

Figure 2: Seven clusters of candidates’ labour market participation trajectories. The horizontal axis shows years (2002–2012) and the vertical axis the candidates. One row represents the trajectory of one candidate. The rows are ordered according to the first dimension of multidimensional scaling so that similar sequences are shown close to each other.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for LMP clusters.

	N	Mean number of transitions	Median birth year	Women (%)	Foreign-born (%)	University-educated (%)	SD candidates (%)
Employed	16082	0.2	1962	43	8	48	5
Self-employed	2749	1.8	1961	24	9	33	8
Studies to work	4340	2.4	1976	56	14	83	4
Earlier break	2650	2.6	1965	45	13	47	8
Later break	2717	2.6	1964	46	11	46	9
Turbulent	2876	4.8	1967	46	20	47	12
Out of the LM	1762	1.9	1958	44	13	41	16

Table 3 shows descriptive information by LMP cluster. Continuous employment (disregarding breaks due to parental leave and sick leave from work) was the largest cluster with about half of the candidates and out of the LM was the smallest. The continuously employed group had the smallest average number of transitions between different states (on average 0.2 transitions per trajectory) while the turbulent cluster had the highest number of transitions (4.8 transitions).

Out of the LM cluster had the oldest candidates (median birth year 1958) and studies-to-work cluster the youngest (median birth year 1976). The share of women was lowest in the cluster of self-employed (24%) and highest in the studies-to-work cluster (56%). The share of foreign-born was the lowest in the continuously employed cluster (8%) and highest in the turbulent cluster (20%). The self-employed cluster had the lowest share of university-educated candidates (33%) while the studies-to-work cluster had the highest (83%). The number of the Swedish Democrats candidates was the smallest in the studies-to-work cluster (4%) and highest in the out of LM cluster (16%).

Unemployment in social environments

Table 4 shows percentiles for months in unemployment in different social contexts. The theoretical maximum number of months in unemployment is 60 during the five-year follow-up, but in practice the maxima were between approximately 40 months (3.3 years, among relatives) and 49 months (4.1 years, among co-workers).

Most candidates (87%) had no experience of spouse's unemployment during the five-year follow-up. In other social contexts, the median was close to one month in all cases. The variation was the highest among relatives where the middle 50% of average unemployment is located between 3 days and approximately 2 months. Among co-workers the corresponding figures were between 18 days and 1.8 months and among neighbours, between 0.3 days and 2.2 months.

Table 4: Percentiles of average of months (30 days) in unemployment in each social context. The minimum is 0 for all groups.

	25%	50%	75%	90%	100% (max)
Spouse	0	0	0	1.30	47.33
Relatives	0.07	0.91	2.05	3.44	39.57
Organization	0.59	1.18	1.79	2.58	48.70
Neighbourhood	0.02	1.00	2.20	3.78	44.27

Gender differences in income

Figure 3 shows the change in median income by gender and education level from 2002 to 2012 (adjusted to the 2002 level). The income gap between different education groups increased over the years for both genders, but the widening gap was especially notable between men with basic and higher education levels. There was also much more variation between the LMAs among men than women.

Figure 3: Median income (in SEK) in Sweden from 2002 to 2012 by gender and education level. The thick lines represent country-level medians and the fine lines different labour market areas. Income is adjusted to the 2002 level.

In the whole of Sweden, gender differences in median income remained constant among individuals with basic education, but was decreasing in many LMAs, especially after 2008. Among individuals with gymnasium education, the gender difference was consistently increasing due to men's faster income development in all LMAs. Among tertiary-educated, the gender difference was increasing in the country level but there was considerable variation among different areas and in many LMAs gender differences were constant or even shrinking.

We also observed how the local labour market changed for candidates in different industries and skill levels. Figure 5 shows the distribution of the local work opportunities. Most candidates (52–67% depending on gender and education level) worked for industries that were growing overall but faster for the foreign-born (it is good to keep in mind that the number of foreign-born residents was growing in Sweden overall). The second largest but a much smaller

category was working for an industry where the number of foreign-born employees was growing, and the number of Swedish-born employees was shrinking within their LMA.

Change in local work opportunities

Figure 5: Local work opportunities of candidates' industry within their respective labour market area (Swe = Swedish-born, fb = foreign-born).

Modelling candidacy for the Sweden Democrats

H1: Precarious employment

Figure 6 shows the change in probability for candidacy for the Sweden Democrats by labour market participation cluster, origin, and education level when compared to continuous employment. The figures are based on the full model which accounts for covariates.

Figure 6: Average marginal effects and 95% confidence intervals for an increase in the probability of being a candidate for the Sweden Democrats (as opposed to other mainstream parties) by labour market participation trajectory, separated by gender and education level and accounting for covariates. Reference category: continuous employment.

We observed little variation by labour market participation trajectory among male candidates with tertiary education and no differences among similar women. The highest probabilities for the tertiary-educated were found among male candidates with turbulent histories and long spells of being out of the labour market (4–5 ppts). In general, the differences were small and/or not statistically significant between candidates with continuous employment, continuous self-employment, and studies to work trajectories, irrespective of gender or education. Male candidates with less than tertiary education combined with an early career break had 6–8 ppts

increase in the probability for candidacy for the Sweden Democrats. Regarding later career breaks, we observed a stronger educational gradient: male candidates with tertiary education had an increase of less than 3 ppts and with gymnasium-level education 6 ppts while for the least educated there was an increase of as much as 17 ppts. This suggests that for the least educated men, more recent experiences of unemployment mattered more than more distant ones. Among women with gymnasium education, we observed a small positive increase (about 3 ppts) in the probability for candidacy for the Sweden Democrats for both career break groups as well as the studies to work group. For the least educated, the effects were negative, but not statistically significant. The largest differences were found among the turbulent trajectories and candidates who have been mainly out of the labour market for other reasons than studies or parental leave. For those with turbulent trajectories, the increases in men's probability for candidacy for the Sweden Democrats were 17 ppts for the least educated, 7 ppts for the gymnasium-educated, and 4 ppts for the tertiary-educated. Among women, the only statistically significant difference was observed among the gymnasium educated. For candidates outside of the labour market, the differences were 19 ppts for men with basic education, 17 ppts for men with gymnasium education, and 5 ppts for tertiary education. For women the respective figures were 15 for basic education and 7 for gymnasium education. Highly educated women had no differences in their probability for the Sweden Democrats by labour market participation history. As a conclusion, we found support for H1 in that the candidates with more precarious employment histories were more likely to run for the Sweden Democrats rather than other parties, and the probabilities changed according to gender and education level so that the low-educated male candidates had the highest probabilities.

H2: Social networks

Figure 7 shows results for candidates' experiences of unemployment in different social contexts: partner (immediate family), relatives (extended family), workplace, and immediate neighbourhood.

Figure 7: Average marginal effects and 95% confidence intervals for the increase in probability of being a candidate for Sweden Democrats (as opposed to other parties) per one month's increase in average unemployment in different social contexts by gender and education level. The results are from the full models that adjust for covariates.

All in all, effect sizes were much smaller than for candidates' own experiences of precarious employment. For basic-educated men, we observed statistically significant differences in the probability of candidacy for the Sweden Democrats for longer unemployment spells for partners and relatives (0.6 and 1.3 ppts increase per month, respectively), but not for co-workers or neighbours. For men with gymnasium education, we observed statistically significant differences for partners', relatives', and neighbours' unemployment (0.4, 1.3, and 0.8 ppts per month, respectively). For men with tertiary education, we observed statistically significant but small differences for partners', neighbours', and co-workers' unemployment (0.2, 0.2, and 0.3

ppts per month, respectively). For women, the only statistically significant differences were found for the gymnasium-educated, where we observed an increase of 0.6 ppts per month for relatives' unemployment and 0.3 ppts for unemployment in the neighbourhood. Effect sizes were larger for the least educated women regarding unemployment in the workplace and among relatives, but these were not statistically significant. In conclusion, we found limited support for H2: many of the estimates were statistically significant, but the effect sizes were fairly and there was variation by gender and education level.

H3: Work milieu

Figure 8: Average marginal effects and 95% confidence intervals for the probability of being a candidate for Sweden Democrats (as opposed to other parties) by industry skill level, separated by gender and education. Reference category: Working in a low-skill industry (where less than 30% of employees had tertiary education).

Figure 8 shows the differences between working in a high-skill industry as opposed to a low-skill industry by gender and education. There was a clear educational gradient for men: similarly educated candidates working in high-skill industries had lower probabilities for

candidacy for the Sweden Democrats in comparison to candidates working in industries with mainly low-skilled employees. The difference by industry skill level was the largest among those with the lowest education level themselves: the probabilities of candidacy for the Sweden Democrats decreased by 9 ppt for the basic-educated, 6 ppt for the gymnasium-educated, and 3 ppt for the tertiary-educated in comparison to candidates working in low-skilled industries. For female candidates, the estimates were also negative but small, and the only statistically significant difference was found among the gymnasium-educated (about 2 ppt). In conclusion, we found clear support for H3 for men, but not for women.

H4: Status decline

Figure 9 shows the results for status decline by gender and education.

Figure 9: Average marginal effects and 95% confidence intervals for the increase in the probability of being a candidate for Sweden Democrats (as opposed to other parties) by the change in median gender difference in income in the local labour market area, differentiated by gender (panel) and education (colour).

Regarding changes in median gender difference in income in the local LMA, we observed no statistically significant differences in the probability for candidacy for the Sweden Democrats. The effect sizes were close to zero and non-significant for both genders and all education levels. We found no support for H4 for either gender or any education level.

H5: Ethnic competition

Figure 10 presents results for changes in local work opportunities for Swedish- and foreign-born employees by origin and industry skill level for men. For women, the numbers of candidates for the Sweden Democrats in different education-industry combinations were so small in the 2014 election that unfortunately we were not able to perform reliable analysis.

Figure 10: Average marginal effects and 95% confidence intervals for the increase in probability of being a candidate for Sweden Democrats (as opposed to other parties) by change in local work opportunities in 2002–2012 for Swedish-born men, differentiated by candidates' education (colours) and industry skill level (panels). Low-skill industry refers to working in an industry where less than 30% of the employees had tertiary education. Reference category: The number of Swedish employees grows, and it grows faster than the number of foreign-born employees (Swe = Swedish-born, fb = foreign-born).

Generally, the effect sizes were consistently positive in the low-skill industry group and negative or zero for industries with more high-skilled employees as compared to working in industries where the job opportunities were growing faster for the Swedish-born. However, only two of the differences were statistically significant: an increase of 4 pts in the probability of candidacy for the Sweden Democrats for gymnasium-educated male candidates working in low-skill industries that were growing overall but faster for the foreign-born employees, and a decrease of 9 pts for gymnasium-educated male candidates working in more high-skill industries where the Swedish-born were losing jobs but the foreign-born gaining. As a conclusion, we found no convincing support for H5: the only (barely) statistically significant difference was found among men in upper secondary education, and even there the effect size was relatively small.

Discussion and conclusion

It has been argued that one aspect in which the radical right is different from established parties is that their politicians can be described as citizens candidates, whose life experiences provide a closer match to groups previously underrepresented in politics (Bó et al., 2018). Our study looks at the theories on economic insecurity used to explain demand for radical right parties and applies them to explain the differences between political candidates to see in what ways candidates for the Sweden Democrats differ from mainstream party candidates. Here, we looked at the population of candidates and who runs for the Swedish Democrats. We do it because we want to compare the like with the like, i.e. looking at the characteristics of individual who made the choice to become political candidates. In our study we analyse the supply side (candidates), not demand (voting), although arguably in municipal elections the threshold to becoming a candidate for the radical right was very low given that the Sweden

Democrats had difficulties attracting enough candidates to fill all seats that they gained (Jungar, 2016).

We find confirmation for some of our hypotheses. Candidates for the Sweden Democrats have different labour market participation trajectories than mainstream candidates; their employment histories are to a higher degree marked by experiences of unemployment and underemployment as well as being out of the labour market. These also show by far the largest effect sizes because for some configurations (men with basic education), precarious employment histories were associated with nearly 20 ppts increase in the probability of running for the Sweden Democrats as opposed to running for other mainstream parties. Additionally, candidates running for the Sweden Democrats are embedded in social networks that are more marked by experiences of unemployment. Here, the effect of unemployment is small and most visible for networks of extended family and for lower educational levels. For women the effect sizes were small and mainly statistically insignificant, although it should be noted that the number of female candidates running for the Sweden Democrats was relatively low in the 2014 elections. This finding stands in some contrast to the notion that unemployment necessarily undermines political participation (Marx and Nguen, 2016). Perhaps candidacy for the radical right is a special kind of mobilizing engagement for those with more precarious histories of labour market participation. At the same time, it should be emphasized that we observe almost no long-term unemployment among the candidates. So even though the candidates may be negatively selected within the full population of the candidates, they are still likely to be positively selected among their peer group.

The second largest effect sizes were found for the work milieu hypothesis, where we found a sizable decrease in the probability of a candidate running for the Sweden Democrats, especially

for male candidates with low education level who were working in high skilled industries. What could be happening here is either due to selection or social influence. The social influence could be an extension of that described by Stubager (2008), where industries with different skill levels instil different values among workers. Alternatively, this could be because running for the radical right is a public act, which could be met with sanctions, especially in environments with more highly skilled co-workers. The social ostracism has been documented by Art (2011) in his interviews with members of the Sweden Democrats, who mention fears of losing jobs as one of the obstacles in becoming activists.

For the status decline hypothesis, the gradient of the effect sizes was in line with our expectations, but the effect sizes were small and statistically insignificant. Why do we find no effect on status change for men? This line of inquiry was inspired by Gidron and Hall 2017 paper where they write that between 1980 and 2010 the share of women in gainful employment rose steadily across the OECD and in many countries, women were now taking a growing share of well-paid occupations. We test the status change hypothesis with Swedish register data but find no effect for radical right candidacy. One reason could be that in Sweden there simply was no big increase in the share of employed women in recent decades, the changes which Gidron and Hall described happened earlier. One thing that we did observe however, and which may warrant further investigation, is that even though the status decline may not have been a concerning issue for men as compared to women, a large and widening gap exists in career opportunities between men with different educational levels. We think that in the future researchers should look at the status decline of men as opposed to other men by educational levels.

Lastly, applying the ethnic competition hypothesis to explain candidacy for the Sweden Democrats yielded mixed results. It is possible that what matters more than trends in employment and competition for foreign-born workers is the industrial skill level in which candidates are employed. Indeed, we observe that there are diverging probabilities for radical right candidacy for those employed in low and high skilled industries, the results resemble our findings on the work milieu hypothesis. Additionally, we see that working in a high skilled industry is associated with twice as big reduction in the probability of running for Sweden Democrats when compared to working in low skilled industry.

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