

# Banners, Barricades, and Bombs: The Tactical Choices of Social Movements and Public Opinion\*

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## Abstract

In this paper we use an experimental survey design to explore how the tactical choices of social movements affect public opinion about whether the government should negotiate with the movement and the bargains that should be struck once negotiations begin. In doing so we test competing theories about how we should expect the use of tactics with varying degrees of extremeness—including demonstrations, occupations, and bombings—to influence public opinion. Combining an experimental design with novel tools in text analysis allows us to make an empirical contribution to a literature that has so far relied mainly on observational and qualitative data. Throughout this paper we provide a theoretical and empirical framework that demonstrates how researchers can utilize experimental designs to contribute to the vast literature on the links between social movements, government actions, and public opinion.

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# 1 Introduction

Some of the most prominent examples of contentious political activity in recent years—over five hundred thousand Catalan demonstrators marching through Barcelona dressed in their region’s red and yellow, pro-Russian protesters occupying government buildings in Donetsk, Ukraine, and renewed bombing efforts by the New IRA in Northern Ireland—capture public attention not only because of their political goals, but also because of the tactics the movements choose to employ in pursuit of these goals.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the combination of the goals of a movement with the tactics it employed has played an important role in determining whether some of the most iconic social movements in history succeeded or failed. For example, innovations in repertoires of contention such as civil rights sit-ins and revolutionary barricades in France have been argued to have shaped the success of the movements that chose to employ them.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, social movements are cognizant of the impact their tactical choices have on both potential government action and public opinion. For instance, in 1980 in Poland during Solidarity’s protest in the Lenin Shipyard, the Strike Committee imposed a strict ban on alcohol to ensure discipline and peacefulness of protest.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Spanish indignados occupying Puerta del Sol in Madrid patrolled the tent city with the goal of preventing violence and vandalism. These actions were taken with the understanding that protest forms incompatible with the movement’s non-violent strategy could negatively impact the public image of the movement and jeopardize future success in achieving its preferred political outcome.

There are two main channels through which public opinion about the tactical choices of

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<sup>1</sup>This view has been pervasive throughout the academic literature. For example, sociologists Verta Taylor and Nella Van Dyke state that “The tactics of protest used by social movements are so integral to popular views of social movements that sometimes a movement is remembered more for its tactics than for its goals” (Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004, p. 263).

<sup>2</sup>For an account of how factors within the control of a movement affect the probability of success see Gamson (1975). For a discussion of the impact of revolutionary barricades in the Age of Revolution in France see Traugott (1993, 2010). For a discussion of the importance of tactical innovation in increasing the bargaining leverage of the civil rights movement see McAdam (1983).

<sup>3</sup>For a discussion of the decision to ban alcohol and a more thorough accounting of events during Solidarity, see Ash (1999).

social movements can affect whether a movement succeeds or fails. First, public perception of a movement determines how much support it is able to attract. For example, the use of tactics that potential supporters deem unwarranted or unethical can have a negative effect on the ability of an organization to garner support.<sup>4</sup> Second, public opinion has an effect on the strategic behavior of governments in response to protest (Giugni, 1998).<sup>5</sup> Governments facing a social movement are forced to make a number of decisions including whether to repress the movement, whether to negotiate, and how much to concede if they do bargain. While we recognize that public opinion does not always directly translate into a specific government action, in democratic settings governments must be cognizant of how these decisions will be received by the public and the impact they will have on their future electoral prospects (Giugni, 1998).<sup>6,7</sup>

In this paper, we use an experimental survey design to explore how the tactical choices of social movements affect public opinion about whether the government should negotiate with the movement as well as what bargain should be struck once negotiations begin. Since both the decision to negotiate and the outcome of bargaining are publicly observable, the decisions that governments make at each of these stages can have long-term electoral ramifications. This makes democratic governments uniquely susceptible to the influence of public opinion at each of these decision-making stages. Using an experimental design also provides the benefit of allowing us to directly measure the effect of different tactical choices on public opinion while holding constant the goals of the movement and the government they are facing. By doing so, we attempt to address one of the primary concerns about empirical tests in the social movements literature: that the effect of the choice of tactics on public opinion is

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<sup>4</sup>This was clearly demonstrated when public support swung dramatically against the Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA) after the bombing of Omagh in Northern Ireland. The bombing caused outrage and shock throughout both Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland and reaffirmed their commitment to peace negotiations. For a detailed discussion of the impact of the Omagh bombing see Dingley (2001).

<sup>5</sup>For how domestic politics constrains government actions in international diplomacy see Putnam (1988).

<sup>6</sup>A number of authors have shown how public opinion impacts legislative change. See, for example, (Burstein, 1979; Burstein & Freudenburg, 1978; Page et al., 1987).

<sup>7</sup>Weeks (2008) argues that even nondemocratic leaders can be held accountable to domestic audience. An interesting area of further research would be to explore how the tactical choices of social movements affect public opinion in nondemocratic regimes.

confounded by attributes specific to a particular organization such as the identity of the movement, sympathy for its goals, or the movement’s institutional alliances. Throughout the experiment we also ask respondents to explain their answers. We intend to analyze these open-ended responses using a Structural Topic Model—a cutting edge text-analysis tool—to provide descriptive statistics exploring potential mechanisms through which the tactics chosen by protest movements affect public opinion.<sup>8</sup> Doing so will allow us to explore the extent to which the theoretical logic driving the hypotheses presented in the following sections permeates the thinking of respondents about the tactical choices of social movements and government action.

In designing the experiment and selecting our location we take care to avoid situations in which respondents rely on easily accessible frames about prominent tactics or issue areas which might lead respondents to attribute the tactic they are assigned through treatment to a familiar organization. If this occurs systematically, we are no longer able to isolate a tactic-specific effect but instead are measuring a combination of a tactic with respondent frames about the goals of organizations. Given this concern, we vary the movement presented in the vignette between a movement pursuing independence and a movement whose goals are not specified. In addition, we administer our survey experiment in Poland. Doing so allows us to conduct our experiment in a democratic political system in which the government is accountable to the electorate and responsive to public opinion but where respondents are unlikely to rely on easily accessible frames about either the tactic or secession. This is in contrast to places such as the United States, with the recent Occupy movement, and the United Kingdom, with the long history of bombing by the Provisional IRA and currently the New IRA, where respondents likely have strong opinions about what the government should do about organizations adopting the tactics of occupation and bombing respectively. While both the issue area and the tactical choices are realistic within Polish and European

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<sup>8</sup>As we detail more thoroughly in Section 3, if respondents do not generate a sufficient amount of text to make informative and meaningful inferences then we will be unable to use a Structural Topic Model and will rely upon human coders instead.

politics, Poland provides a low salience context which mitigates concerns that respondents might systematically associate particular tactics or goals with a specific organization.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, we present a theoretical framework that allows us to directly test competing arguments about how we should expect the tactical choices of movements engaging in contentious politics to affect public opinion. We use this framework to derive empirically testable hypotheses. In Section 3, we present an experimental design that we use to identify how the tactics chosen by social movements affect public opinion. We focus on two critical junctures in the strategic decision-making of governments—whether to negotiate and how much to concede in bargaining—during which public opinion is likely to be particularly salient to the leaders of democratic governments. In Section 4, we discuss how our findings will allow us to evaluate the competing theories and adjudicate between them. In Section 5 we discuss the theoretical and practical considerations that led to our selection of Poland as the location for our experiment as well as how we can expect the results presented in this paper to generalize to other locations and issue areas. In Section 6 we conclude.

## 2 Tactical Choice, Public Opinion, and Government Bargaining

Prior research has identified a number of factors influencing the strategic decision of social movements to select a particular tactic. A range of work has demonstrated how the character of the political and social structure in which movements operate, and availability of resources, plays an important role in determining the tactical repertoires of social movements (McAdam et al., 2001; Kitschelt, 1986; Gamson, 1975). In contrast, others emphasize cultural over material factors. These authors highlight the importance of congruence between forms of action and the identity of the organization (Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004), as well as the ability of movement leaders to draw on symbols and discursive frames from the culture

of the community in which they are embedded (Swidler, 1986). Finally, another strand of scholarship emphasizes the role of internal organizational structures (Polletta, 2012) and the influence of the process of professionalization and organization-building on the choice of tactics (Piven & Cloward, 1979; Staggenborg, 1988).

While the internal and external factors influencing the movement’s tactical decision have been studied extensively, the effects of these choices on public opinion remains under-explored. In this paper, we shift the focus away from the motivations behind the adoption of particular strategies to the impact that they have on whether the public supports the decision to negotiate with the movement and the extent of concessions the government should make once negotiations begin. Building directly on three types of theories explaining how the strategic choices of non-state actors should affect public opinion during conflict processes, we derive a number of hypotheses which are tested directly in our experiment.

## 2.1 The Benefits of Extremism

The first theory, explored primarily through the study of strikes and urban riots, posits that disruptive and violent tactics increase public support for a movement. This occurs because the use of violent tactics facilitates recognition of a movement as a legitimate claimant to an issue and increases its perceived ability to obtain concessions from the government (Gamson, 1975; Astin et al., 1975; Giugni, 1998; McAdam, 1983; Tarrow & Tollefson, 1994; Shorter & Tilly, 1974; Bueno de Mesquita & Dickson, 2007; Pape, 2003). In doing so, the movement is able to garner more support and increases its probability of success. Similarly, research on civil wars argues that rebel groups that execute more terrorist attacks impose extreme costs on the state and undermine its ability to win the conflict. These costs have been shown to increase the likelihood that the rebel group will be invited to participate in negotiations and will obtain concessions in the bargaining process (Thomas, 2014). A parallel argument holds that the adoption of violent tactics acts as a costly signal of a commitment to the political cause which improves the organization’s ability to attract recruits and new sources

of funding (Pape, 2003; Bueno de Mesquita & Dickson, 2007; Bloom, 2004). This reasoning has been used to explain spikes in public support following the incidence of both suicide bombings and terrorist attacks more broadly. While these arguments are drawn from studies of conflict processes across a wide range of organizations and movements, the logic driving them is clear: the public has a preference for more extreme tactics. We derive our first two hypotheses directly from this core intuition.

**Hypothesis 1A ( $H_{1A}$ ):** The more extreme the tactic, the more respondents believe that the government should negotiate with the movement.

**Hypothesis 1B ( $H_{1B}$ ):** The more extreme the tactic, the more respondents believe that the government should concede to the movement during negotiations.

## 2.2 The Benefits of Moderation

In contrast, a second theory about the relationship between the tactics of non-state actors and public opinion asserts that moderation and nonviolence increase public support for the movement. There are a number of reasons this might occur. Shaykhutdinov (2010) asserts that nonviolence provides a moral advantage for the organization and allows the group to garner support without provoking the animosity or distrust fueled by violent conflict. This means that adopting more extreme tactics causes individuals that might otherwise be willing to support the movement to now oppose it. A related argument asserts that nonviolence can be both a moral and pragmatic choice (Sharp, 1973). That is, movements choose nonviolence because they realize that violence can have negative consequences including diverting attention from grievances, polarizing public opinion, and providing justification for governmental repression. The benefits of nonviolence have also been demonstrated by Stephan & Chenoweth (2008) in an analysis of aggregate data on major nonviolent and violent conflicts between non-state and state actors. They show that nonviolent campaigns tend to be more

successful and posit two explanations for this finding.<sup>9</sup> First, nonviolent methods strengthen domestic and international legitimacy. Second, the public perceives violent groups as extremists “beyond accommodation.” Thus, moderate strategies work in the group’s favor, “enhancing their appeal and facilitating the extraction of concessions through bargaining” (Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008, p. 9). Another argument for why more moderate tactics might increase public support for a movement is presented by Abrahms (2012) who shows that the demands of terrorist organizations are not effectively communicated through their violent strategies. Instead, respondents infer radical political ends from extreme tactics which closes the bargaining space even where one could exist (Abrahms, 2012). In addition, the use of extreme tactics decreases the credibility of the terrorist organization’s promise to demobilize if concessions are granted (Abrahms, 2013) which would likely decrease public support for negotiations. Based on these theories we derive a set of alternative hypotheses in direct contrast to Hypotheses 1A and 1B.

**Hypothesis 2A ( $H_{2A}$ ):** The more extreme the tactic, the less respondents believe that the government should negotiate with the movement.

**Hypothesis 2B ( $H_{2B}$ ):** The more extreme the tactic, the less respondents believe that the government should concede to the movement during negotiations.

### 2.3 The No Concessions Policy

The third theory about how the tactics chosen by non-state actors affect public opinion builds on the idea that governments should adopt a strict policy of “no concessions” when negotiating with terrorist organizations. This theory is driven by the claim that giving in to the demands of groups that adopt the most extreme tactics proves this type of violence to be effective and encourages its use in the future (Netanyahu, 1986; Clutterbuck, 1992; Chellaney, 2006). In this paper, we explore whether this idea, pervasive throughout the

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<sup>9</sup>This issue is explored in even greater detail in their book length project Chenoweth & Stephan (2011).

academic and policy worlds, is also supported by public opinion about social movements that adopt extreme tactics often associated with terrorist organizations.<sup>10</sup>

**Hypothesis 3A ( $H_{3A}$ ):** When organizations adopt bombing as a tactic, respondents are less likely to believe that the government should negotiate with the movement relative to other possible tactics.

**Hypothesis 3B ( $H_{3B}$ ):** When organizations adopt bombing as a tactic, respondents are less likely to believe that the government should make concessions to the movement during negotiation relative to other possible tactics.

### 3 Experimental Design

In this section we present an experimental survey design that will provide a direct test of the hypotheses presented in Section 2. This design has been submitted to our institution’s Internal Review Board (IRB) for approval.<sup>11</sup> In the experiment, respondents are asked to read a vignette describing a social movement that is either pursuing regional independence or does not have a specified goal.<sup>12</sup> We manipulate two factors separately, giving us a 2x3 fully factorial design. In the vignette we randomize: (1) whether the goals of the organization (regional independence) are specified; and (2) the tactics employed by the organization. Strategies appearing in the vignette are a demonstration, an occupation, and a bombing.

We chose social movements pursuing regional independence for the following reasons. First, independence movements are active in democratic settings. Unlike revolutionary movements whose goals are often to overthrow a non-democratic regime, the success of independence movements often hinges on their ability to pressure the government by attracting

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<sup>10</sup>It is important to note that throughout this paper we focus on the use of the tactic of bombing rather than whether a given movement is deemed a “terrorist organization.” For a discussion of the evolution of the definition of terrorism see Schmid & Jongman (1984).

<sup>11</sup>Our original design has been approved and modified design is now being reviewed.

<sup>12</sup>Before being presented with the experimental portion of the survey respondents are asked a number of questions about their background. These questions are listed in the Appendix.

public support. Indeed, the importance of public support is embodied in the referendum processes—such as the vote following the negotiation of the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland—that are often used to approve the bargains struck in negotiations between the movement and government. Second, independence movements use a wide range of tactics. This means that our treatment categories, from demonstrating in the streets to bombings, could all plausibly be employed in pursuit of the objectives of the organization. This is important as it allows us to hold constant the issue area for which the movement is fighting while ensuring that the scenario specified in the vignette is plausible. Third, unlike in cases of civil rights or abortion policy, independence is an issue for which individuals are unlikely to hold strong prior beliefs about the policy that should be implemented. This creates greater space for treatment effects to emerge since the bargains that can be struck, such as full independence or regional autonomy, are not as strongly shaped by the stances respondents already have on the issue. This occurs because the outcomes of independence movements, while topical and salient, are neither a partisan issue nor considered a basic human right in contemporary society. To summarize, in selecting the type of movement to use in our experiment we searched for a movement that: (1) operates in democratic settings; (2) could plausibly employ a variety of tactics in pursuit of its objectives; and (3) advocates for an issue that is salient but about which respondents are unlikely to hold strong beliefs prior to observing the organization’s tactical choice.

While our main interest throughout this paper is in tactical variation, randomizing between a vignette that specifies an organization pursuing independence and a more general vignette allows us to address two important potential concerns with our design. First, the inclusion of a condition with an organization with a specific goal is intended to assuage the concern that a more generalized vignette invites personal associations beyond researchers’ control. In other words, when presented with a generalized vignette, respondents might rely on easily accessible frames and attribute the tactic they are assigned through treatment to a familiar organization that is fighting within a particular issue area. If this occurs system-

atically, we are no longer able to isolate a tactic-specific effect but instead are measuring a combination of a tactic with respondent frames about the goals of organizations. Indeed, our selection of Poland as the country in which to conduct the experiment is driven in part by our efforts to address this potential problem. The second concern is that the decision to focus on separatist movements limits the external validity of our experiment. While we still face the limitations on external validity common to most experimental studies,<sup>13</sup> presenting a generalized vignette allows us to make inferences more broadly than for only organizations pursuing independence. By randomizing between a general vignette and one that specifies an organization pursuing independence we are able to address both these concerns in a way that directly tests the robustness of our findings.

In our randomization scheme we allocate three quarters (approximately 1,500 respondents) to the vignette discussing a separatist organization and the other quarter (approximately 500 respondents) to the general vignette. We do this for two reasons. First, in the general vignette we are only able to ask the question about whether the government should negotiate with the movement. Since defining the goals of the organization is essential in asking about whether the government should make more or less concessions during negotiations we are unable to ask these types of questions without providing additional information about the goals of the movement. Thus, respondents in the general movement category will only be asked whether or not they think the government should be willing to negotiate with the organization. The second reason we divide the sample in this way is to increase power in the treatment category with the movement pursuing independence creating a larger space to allow treatment effects to emerge. The power analyses for both the movement pursuing independence and the generalized movement are presented in the Appendix.

We chose the tactics of demonstration, occupation, and bombing for the following reasons. First, each of these tactics has been used in recent years by movements actively pursuing independence. Indeed, in 2014 there were marches and rallies for independence in Scot-

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<sup>13</sup>These concerns generally focus on whether and how respondents in the sample generalize to other populations.

land and Spain, occupations of government buildings by pro-Russian separatists in Donetsk, Ukraine, and attempted bombings by the New IRA in Northern Ireland. Second, each of these tactics involves a premeditated strategic choice by a movement rather than an action that arose spontaneously as a situation escalated. For this reason we chose not to explore a range of violent activities, such as throwing Molotov cocktails, damaging property, and rioting. This allows us to directly explore our primary interest in how the tactical choices made by social movements affect public opinion. Third, demonstrations are used as a baseline tactic. Demonstrations are one of the most common forms of contentious political activity in democracies and, if registered with the authorities, they are legal. This provides a useful baseline that allows us to directly compare a common choice of movements against the more extreme tactics of occupation and bombing. Finally, the three tactics form a clear scale of extremeness,<sup>14</sup> allowing us to adjudicate between hypotheses about benefits of extremeness, benefits of moderation, and no concessions.<sup>15</sup>

In order to prevent idiosyncratic features of the vignette from driving the results we will also randomly vary the contextual variable of whether the movement's activity takes place in a foreign country.<sup>16</sup> This is intended to address concerns that respondents' perceptions about whether the experiment is occurring in Poland might vary with treatment status. For example, respondents might be more likely to believe that the experiment is occurring in Poland if they receive the treatment with the tactic of demonstration than the treatment of bombing. This becomes a problem if differential association about whether the movement is operating in Poland also sparks feelings of domestic pride or nationalism that also affect the

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<sup>14</sup>Readers will note that there is a potential discontinuity in the extremeness of tactics when moving from occupation to bombing. That is, the extremeness of tactics is not increasing in a strictly linear fashion. As demonstrated in the Power Analysis conducted in the Appendix, this is only a problem if the treatment effect is small. If the effect is medium or large all that matters for testing our hypotheses is that the ordinal ranking of tactics is correct.

<sup>15</sup>Rather than creating a scale of extremeness as we do in this paper, further research could explore how the tactical choice between violent and non-violent tactics affects public opinion. Pursuing this question would involve increasing the number of treatment categories by including both more violent and more non-violent tactics.

<sup>16</sup>The approach used in this paper is consistent with how prior research deals with potentially idiosyncratic features of vignettes. See, for example, Tomz (2007).

willingness of respondents to think the government should negotiate or make concessions. Thus, we randomly inform half the participants that the movement is in a foreign country and for the other half do not specify the location.

Another possible concern about the vignette is that we do not directly specify how the tactic that is chosen relates to prior interaction between the government and social movement. For example, a movement might have tried a range of institutionalized and legal tactics and only resorted to bombing after failing to achieve its outcome through alternative means. We view an exploration of the influence of context and timing of the protest activity on public opinion as an exciting opportunity for future research. The vignette and experimental design presented here are intended to provide a foundation for exploring the links between tactical choices of social movements and public opinion and thus provide the most concise and direct test of the specified hypotheses as possible.

To summarize, the vignette provides details about a movement pursuing independence and a generalized group with no details about their goals. Fixing the goals of the movement allows us to focus on groups operating in a democratic setting that could plausibly employ a variety of tactics in pursuit of their objectives. Moreover, the use of the goal of independence allows us to focus on a salient issue for which public opinion clearly matters but where respondents likely do not hold a strong prior belief about what the government should do. Finally, we randomize between three tactical choices that have each been employed in recent years including demonstrations, occupations, and bombings. The vignette is:

*Please consider the following hypothetical scenario. Some parts of the description may strike you as important; other parts may seem unimportant. Please read the details very carefully. After describing the situation, we will ask your opinion.*

*[A separatist movement//A social movement] [demonstrated in front of a government building//occupied a government building//bombed a government building] in the capital city [of a foreign country] today. [The stated goal of the movement*

*is regional independence including the establishment of a new democratic government that would be responsible for overseeing the regions security and economic affairs. The region has its own language and culture.]*

After reading the vignette, respondents are asked several questions designed to test the hypotheses presented in this paper. In the questions we make a distinction between the two major decisions governments are forced to make when faced with a challenging social movement: whether to negotiate and what concessions should be made once negotiations begin. This distinction mirrors the two stages of the bargaining process that governments and social movements could plausibly engage in. The first question, which focuses on whether respondents think the government should negotiate, is a direct test of Hypotheses 1A, 2A, and 3A. These hypotheses present competing claims about how the tactical choices of social movements affects whether respondents should be more or less likely to think the government should negotiate with the movement. Respondents are asked:

*Do you think that the government should negotiate with the movement?*

- *Yes*
- *No*

The results of the first question will be analyzed by comparing each tactic against the less extreme category. That is, we will compare the tactic of demonstrating against occupying, and occupying against bombing. This will yield two difference-in-proportions estimates with standard errors where positive values indicate that the more extreme tactic caused an increase in the belief that the government should negotiate with the organization.

Following the first question, we utilize a conditional branching format to measure how strongly respondents feel about whether the government should negotiate with the movement. This will provide us with a more fine-grain measure of how the tactical choices of the

movement affect the strength of opinion about whether respondents think the government should negotiate with the movement. The follow up question asks:

*You stated that you think the government [should // should not]<sup>17</sup> negotiate with the movement. Do you feel very strongly about this, or not very strongly?*

- *Not very strongly*
- *Very strongly*

We will use the results of this question to create a four point scale varying from respondents feeling very strongly that the government should negotiate to feeling very strongly that the government should not negotiate with the movement. The results of the second question will once again be analyzed by comparing each tactic against the less extreme category. These estimates will be computed using regression where positive values indicate that the more extreme tactic caused an increase in the strength of the belief that the government should negotiate with the movement.

After answering these two questions, respondents are asked an open-ended follow-up in which they are requested to explain their response. This question is intended to provide the opportunity for an exploration of possible mechanisms through which treatment of a particular tactic affects variation in the outcomes. The open-ended question is:

*You stated that the government [should/should not] negotiate with the movement. Could you please type a few sentences telling us why you think the government [should/should not] negotiate with the movement?<sup>18</sup>*

**[Open text box here].**

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<sup>17</sup>Whether this sentence says “should” or “should not” will vary to match the respondent’s answer to the previous question.

<sup>18</sup>The wording used to ask respondents to explain their answer in a few sentences is consistent with prior research exploring potential mechanisms through open ended survey questions (Tomz, 2007, p. 834).

The results of this question will be analyzed in one of two ways depending on the amount of text data generated by respondents.<sup>19</sup> Ideally we will conduct our analysis using a Structural Topic Model.<sup>20</sup> A Structural Topic Model is an unsupervised topic model that builds directly on the Latent Dirichlet Allocation model.<sup>21</sup> In these types of unsupervised learning models, topics are inferred by the model rather than assumed before the analysis.<sup>22</sup> The STM innovates on previous unsupervised topic models by allowing for the inclusion of covariates of interest into the priors for the document-topic proportions and topic-word distributions. Analysts can subsequently examine differences across included covariates. In the context of a survey experiment, the STM can be used to estimate the effect of a treatment embedded within the survey on text written by survey subjects. A more detailed explanation of the STM is presented in the Appendix. If respondents do not generate a sufficient amount of text to make informative and meaningful inferences then we will be unable to use a Structural Topic Model and will instead rely upon human coders. Following standard procedures, we will define the dimensions on which open-ended data will be coded by reading a small sample of the open-ended responses. The human coders will then classify the open-ended responses into the different categories for each of the treatment categories. The use of either a Structural Topic Model or human coders will allow us to explore the extent to which the theoretical logic driving the hypotheses presented in Section 2 is prevalent across each of our different treatment categories.

The fourth and fifth questions directly test Hypothesis 1B, 2B, and 3B. In both of them, we explore how variation in the extremeness of the tactic employed by the social movement affects public opinion about the extent of concessions the government should make to the

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<sup>19</sup>We attempt to encourage respondents to generate a sufficient amount of text data by asking them to explain their answers in a few sentences.

<sup>20</sup>For an overview of the application of Structural Topic Models to political science see [Lucas et al. \(n.d.\)](#) and [Roberts et al. \(2014\)](#).

<sup>21</sup>Latent Dirichlet Allocation is a mixed-membership model where each document is represented as a mixture over a set of topics ([Blei et al., 2003](#); [Blei, 2012](#)). Each topic is a distribution over the words in the vocabulary which is learned, rather than assumed, in the model.

<sup>22</sup>In contrast, when using “supervised” methods the researcher defines the topics before analysis by hand-coding a set of documents into predefined categories. For a prominent introduction to supervised learning in political science see ([Hopkins & King, 2010](#)).

movement once negotiations have begun. The fourth question asks what the government should be willing to concede to the movement during negotiations with the options being either independence for the region, regional autonomy, or no concessions. For each of options we provide a brief description alongside the answer detailing what each outcome entails. We chose regional autonomy and independence for the region because these are some of the most common outcomes of separatist movements. Examples of regional autonomy following negotiations have occurred in Northern Ireland and Bangsamoro in the southern Philippines.<sup>23</sup> Examples of independence following separatist movements have occurred in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, each voting for the establishment of a democratic republic independent of the Soviet Union. Finally, we allow for the option of no regional autonomy because even if this is not a feasible bargain for the government to strike within negotiations, it is possible that respondents still support solutions outside of the bargaining range. Incorporating the option of no regional autonomy gives participants the option of disagreeing with the government, and thus either pressuring the government not to concede or shifting the bargains that the government is able to accept. The results of this question will be analyzed using a difference in means where each tactic will be compared to the less extreme tactic. In order to assess how variation in tactical extremeness affects public opinion about the concessions the government should make during negotiations we ask respondents the following question:

*The government and the separatist movement have entered into negotiations. Which of the following do you think the government should be willing to concede to the movement?*

- *No regional autonomy. The central government will maintain full control over the region.*
- *Regional autonomy. The regional government will control its own economic affairs but the region will remain part of the country.*

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<sup>23</sup>The Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro is a peace agreement signed in March 2014 between the government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. The agreement establishes an autonomous Bangsamoro.

- *Independence for the region. The region will establish a new democratic government that will be responsible for overseeing the regions security and economic affairs.*

While the above question is motivated by some of the most frequent resolutions to separatist movements it is a relatively coarse measure. The structure of the dependent variable might not allow enough space for treatment effects to emerge since respondents are forced into one of the three categories. This means that we might be unable to detect more subtle but nonetheless important differences between the tactical choices of a movement and their effect on public opinion about what the government should be willing to concede during negotiations. For example, it might be that respondents think that the government should be willing to concede more or less during bargaining but these concessions should all be made within the framework of a regional autonomy agreement. In order to address this possibility we present respondents with an additional vignette and then ask a question that utilizes a continuous dependent variable.

In particular, the vignette provides information that the government and movement have settled on regional autonomy for the area under dispute. However, as part of the settlement the two sides must still determine the extent of regional fiscal autonomy. We focus on fiscal autonomy for the continuous outcome since it is both a contentious and important component of negotiations over the devolution of power in Europe. The extent of fiscal autonomy a region should be granted has featured in debates in a diverse range of regions including Catalonia, Northern Italy, Bavaria, and Flanders. Financial themes also feature prominently in the politics of regional autonomy movements. In Belgium, the Flemish movement perceives the financial transfers between regions as draining its resources. Similarly, in Spain, Catalonia wants to reduce its contribution to a national system that redistributes portions of tax revenue to poorer regions of Spain.

The vignette used in our experiment builds directly on the negotiations between the Spanish government and regional representatives in Spain and focuses on the proportion of

shared taxes that should be granted to the regions.<sup>24</sup> In particular, in the vignette we present a simplified version of the negotiations that occurred in Spain in which the movement proposes that 100% of regional income taxes stay in the region while the government proposes that 50% should stay in the region and 50% should go to the central government.<sup>25</sup> The government's proposal of 50% mirrors the actual bargain struck by the Spanish government with the autonomous regions in Spain, while the movement's preferred outcome is full fiscal autonomy. This bargaining range has important advantages in that it is continuous and respondents are unlikely to hold strong prior beliefs about what types of fiscal autonomy arrangements should be struck during negotiations. As in the previous question, while the government proposes 50%, we allow respondents to enter any response from 0-100% in order to allow respondents to disagree with the government's decision to negotiate with the movement. The structure of the dependent variable allow us to construct a finer measure of how the tactical choices of movements affect the concessions respondents think the government should be willing to make during bargaining with the movement using a dependent variable that is both plausible and salient throughout Europe. Respondents are presented with the following additional information:

*The government and the separatist movement have settled on regional autonomy for the area under dispute. As part of the settlement they must determine the extent of regional fiscal autonomy. The movement is proposing that 100% of regional income taxes stay in the region while the government is proposing that 50% should stay in the region and 50% should go to the central government.*

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<sup>24</sup>In particular, we model the structure of the bargaining process for the extent of fiscal tax autonomy after the 2009 Spanish arrangement with the autonomous communities, which increased the share of the national pool of personal income tax revenues assigned to the regions from 33% to 50%, (Blöchliger & Vammalle, 2012; *Boletín Oficial del Estado. Ley 22/2009.*, 2009).

<sup>25</sup>In Spain, taxes levied in all regions are collected into a common pool and then shared between the central government and the autonomous communities. The recent agreement is a result of negotiations over a range of fiscal and financial matters, but for the purposes of the experiment we focus on the aspect most useful for our theoretical question of interest and simplify it to mimic political rhetoric surrounding comparable issues throughout Europe.

After being presented with this additional information, respondents are asked the following question:

*What percentage of regional income tax revenues do you think should stay in the region?*

[Sliding scale from 0% to 100% here].

## 4 Experimental Results

In order for Hypotheses 1, 2, or 3 to be confirmed we must observe one of the following results. In order for  $H_{1A}$  and  $H_{1B}$  (the benefits of extremism) to be confirmed, we would have to observe a statistically significant<sup>26</sup> positive difference in proportions between the tactical choices of: (1) a demonstration and an occupation; and (2) an occupation and a bombing. For  $H_{2A}$  and  $H_{2B}$  (the benefits of moderation) to be confirmed, we would have to observe a statistically significant negative difference in proportions between the tactical choices of: (1) a demonstration and an occupation; and (2) an occupation and a bombing. Finally, a finding of either an insignificant (tactical choice does not matter as long as it is not bombing) or significantly positive (more radical tactics are more effective unless they cross a threshold of acceptability) difference in proportions between a demonstration and an occupation together with a significantly negative difference in proportions between an occupation and a bombing would support  $H_{3A}$  and  $H_{3B}$  (no concessions).

It is important to note that a null finding would also have interesting theoretical implications. As demonstrated in Section 2, a wide range of theories predict how we might expect the tactical choices of social movements to affect public opinion. However, regardless of the direction, all these theories assert that the tactical choices matter. A finding that public

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<sup>26</sup>All significance tests will be conducted at the  $\alpha = 0.05$  level.

opinion does not respond to variation in the tactics of movements would contradict many of the assumptions made in research on contentious politics about the importance of the repertoires of contention chosen by movements. Indeed, this would suggest that factors such as issue area and goals of social movements are more salient in shaping public opinion than strategic choices of tactics that movements employ in pursuit of their goals.

We took concrete steps in this research design to minimize the risk of a null finding due to low power. In practical terms, we plan to field the survey to a nationally representative sample of 2,000 to increase the probability of detecting the effect.<sup>27</sup> As is presented in the Appendix, for the treatment category specifying a separatist movement the power analysis demonstrates that if there is a small, medium, or large effect of the treatment there is a high probability we will be able to detect it. In addition, if we do have a null finding, our research design allows for exploring the reasons why this occurred. By using open text boxes requesting that respondents explain their answers we will be able to directly examine the logic behind the survey responses.

## 5 Case Selection

We used the following criteria in determining that our experiment should be conducted in Poland. The ideal country is one in which respondents do not systematically associate a particular tactic with a specific movement which has already obtained concessions from the government. Since we seek to avoid situations in which respondents rely on easily accessible frames and attribute the tactic they are assigned through treatment to a familiar organization, it is important that in the selected country, there are no prominent movements currently using that tactic. This means that places such as the United States, with the recent Occupy movement, and the United Kingdom, with the long history of bombing by the Provisional IRA and currently the New IRA, would not be ideal since respondents would likely have strong opinions about what the government should do about movements

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<sup>27</sup>This will double the sample size from the previous draft of the manuscript.

adopting the tactics of occupation and bombing respectively. In these cases we are no longer able to isolate a tactic-specific effect but instead are measuring a combination of a tactic with respondent opinions about the particular movement or organization with which they associate the tactic. For the same reason we avoid conducting our experiment in places with a long history of separatist activity. This means that places such as Spain, with the prominent Basque National Liberation Movement, would also not be an ideal location. This is not to say that the tactics chosen by organizations within these countries do not affect public opinion. Indeed, we contend that they almost certainly do. Rather, in selecting the country in which to conduct the experiment we are seeking a location in which the emergence of movements employing a range of tactics is plausible but respondents are unlikely to systematically associate a particular tactic with a specific movement.

In contrast to the United States, United Kingdom, and Spain, respondents in Poland are unlikely to hold strong associations of tactics with a particular organization. The population has also not been polarized over the issue area through highly contentious referenda like it has in the UK over Scotland or in Spain over Catalonia and is unlikely to have preconceived notions of the extent of autonomy that should be granted to regions with distinct cultural and linguistic heritage. Similarly, unlike countries in Southern Europe, Poland has not experienced the recent wave of anti-austerity protests or occupy movements, which alleviates the concern that fresh awareness of a massive mobilization incorporating a sizable proportion of the population and a large number of organizations with wide-ranging goals would strongly shape the beliefs of respondents about what the government should do. Though mostly ethnically homogeneous, Poland does have two minor autonomy movements: a Silesian Autonomy Movement and Kaszebsko Jednota. Both of these movements are small<sup>28</sup> and minor

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<sup>28</sup>Only about 2% of population identified itself as Silesian and 0.6% as Kashub in 2011 according to Central Statistical Office of Poland (2011). The German minority, about 0.6% of the Polish population, is exempt from the electoral threshold of 5% in order to facilitate electoral representation. Upper Silesia enjoyed brief autonomy in the interwar period (Dembinska, 2012), including the collection of taxes and public fees, with only a share (determined based on a formula) of taxes going to the central government for national services (Bialasiewicz, 2002) but no similar arrangements were made in post-war period for any region.

in the political scene.<sup>29</sup> Given this, we argue that most Poles are unlikely to hold strong prior beliefs about governmental policies towards secessionist movements.

Despite the fact that respondents in Poland are unlikely to hold strong associations between a particular tactic and a specific organization, Poland contains a population cognizant of protest activity. Contentious politics in Poland has been characterized by large variation in the tactics employed by protest groups as well as the types of political and economic goals pursued. For example, the massive Solidarity protest wave, which swept through the country in the 1980s mobilized millions of Poles, exposing them to a range of protest strategies (Ash, 1999). In the years following the transition to democracy, many Poles chose to articulate their concerns and express their opposition to policy decisions through disruptive actions in the streets (Ekiert & Kubik, 2001). Large protest waves engulfed the country again in the late 1990s during the implementation of reforms of the budget sector and leading up to the accession to the EU in 2004. More recent protests have surrounded legislative and social debates, including the role of religious and ideological symbols in public space, abortion, and environmental issues. Demonstrations take place frequently and trade unions have remained active as organizers of strikes and other contentious activities next to new social movement organizations and single-issue groups. Historical and contemporary forms of protest have ranged from petitions, demonstrations, strikes, occupations, road and rails blockades to destroying property and clashes with the police.

Additionally, we took into account practical considerations and the feasibility of conducting the experiment when selecting the location. The availability of partner organizations, relative costs of fielding the survey, and language skills of the authors facilitating the analysis of data from open-ended responses and supervision of survey implementation also makes Poland an excellent case. We will be partnering with the Polish branch of TNS Global, a company, which merged with OBOP, one of the oldest public opinion survey groups in

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<sup>29</sup>The Silesian Autonomy Movement has run candidates in local elections, organizes an annual Autonomy March, and initiated a petition gathering approximately 124,000 signatures for the recognition of Silesians as an ethnic group. The Kashub claims are mostly centered on cultural issues.

Poland and in the region. A consultation with the research firm’s representatives estimated the costs of fielding our survey to a nationally representative sample of 2,000 Polish adults<sup>30</sup> at approximately \$4,000 at the current exchange rate. Respondents will be sampled using random-quota sampling.<sup>31</sup> The interviews are Computer Assisted Personal Interviews, conducted in person by TNS interviewers with the use of mobile computers instead of pen and paper questionnaires. The estimated timeline from question submission to receiving the data is about three weeks. Research funding has already been secured for this project and we are ready to begin implementing the experiment immediately.

The structure of the experiment in conjunction with the selection of Poland has important implications for external validity. Throughout the design of the project we have attempted to focus on an issue area that is important but has relatively low salience in Poland. This was done in an effort to prevent respondents from associating the tactic they read about in the vignette with a particular organization which could then influence their opinion about the bargaining process with the government. However, this decision also has important implications for the generalizability of our experiment. Since we designed our experiment to be in a location, where an issue is important but respondents do not have a strong prior about the movement type or its goals, we should be able to generalize to equivalent contexts for a host of different social movements. This means that our findings are likely to be most relevant when we observe either nascent organizations or issue areas on which the public does not have consolidated views. Given that a wide range of social movements emerging around the world are making similar tactical choices, we hope to provide a framework from which researchers can continue to explore how the tactical choices of both violent and nonviolent movements affect public opinion about their organization and goals.

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<sup>30</sup>In the Appendix we present a Power Analysis based on our 2x3 fully factorial design and sample size of 2,000 respondents which gives the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis given that the null hypothesis is false.

<sup>31</sup>Quota sampling is a widely used sampling technique which requires interviews to fill a quota of respondent specific attitudes by certain classifying variables. For more on random-quota sampling see (Smith, 1983). TNS Global uses random-quota sampling based on geographic location. Due to the high correlation in Poland between geography and other potential moderating variables such as income and political ideology this sampling technique will help ensure balance on these important covariates of interest.

## 6 Conclusion

In this paper we explore how the tactical choices of social movements affect public opinion about whether a government should negotiate with a movement as well as the bargain that should be struck once negotiations begin. The findings have implications for a number of competing theories that propose different ways in which we should expect the tactical choices of social movements, rebel groups, and terrorist organizations, to affect public opinion. Moreover, the use of an experimental design, the first to our knowledge to explore the causal relationship between protest strategies and public opinion, makes an empirical contribution to a field that has relied mainly on observational and qualitative data. This provides a framework that will allow for the continued exploration of the links between social movements, government actions, and public opinion.

# Appendix A: Power Analyses

The power analyses shows the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis given that the null is false for varying levels of the treatment. The lines indicate the power for varying sizes of the treatment effect from small, medium, and large which correspond to 0.2, 0.5, and 0.8, respectively. These values are standard statistical conventions (Cohen, 2013, p. 198). Figure 1 presents the power analysis for our treatment condition specifying a separatist movement. Since we have a larger sample size in each of our treatment classes within this category, the power analysis demonstrates that if there is a small, medium, or large effect of the treatment there is a high probability we will be able to find it. Similarly, Figure 2 demonstrates that if there is a medium or large effect of the treatment in the general category there is a high probability we will be able to find it.

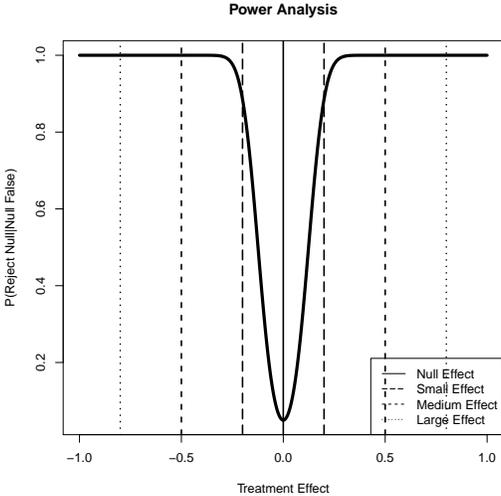


Figure 1: The probability of rejecting the null hypothesis given that the null is false for varying levels of the treatment for the condition in which respondents are exposed to a separatist organization. The results show that that if there is a small, medium, or large effect of the treatment there is a high probability we will be able to find it.

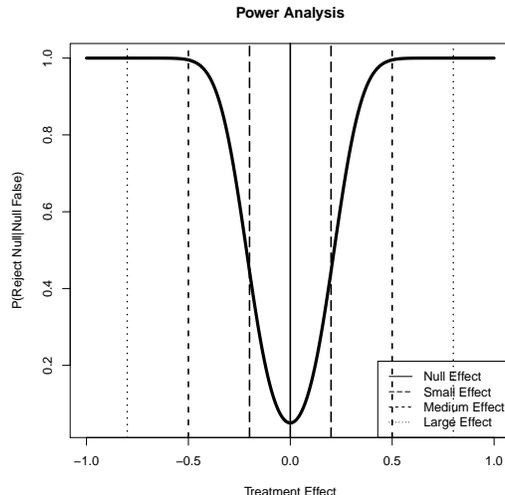


Figure 2: The probability of rejecting the null hypothesis given that the null is false for varying levels of the treatment for the condition in which respondents are exposed to a generalized organization with no mention of their goals. The results show that that if there is a medium or large effect of the treatment there is a high probability we will be able to find it.

## Appendix B: Structural Topic Model Summary

The Structural Topic Model (STM) is a mixed-membership model that builds directly on latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA). In Structural Topic Model, a document is represented as a mixture of topics where each word within a given document belongs exactly to one topic. Each document can then be represented as a vector of proportions that denote the fraction of words in that document that belong to each topic. Structural Topic Models allow the researcher to include covariates into the prior distributions for document-topic proportions and topic-word distributions. Each open-ended response is a mixture of topics where the researcher can incorporate relevant covariates where we might expect there to be variation in the proportion of topics.

Unlike prior models, in the Structural Topic Model topic proportions ( $\theta$ ) can be correlated. The prevalence of the topics can be influenced by some set of covariates  $X$  through a standard regression model with covariates where  $\theta \sim \text{LogisticNormal}(X_\gamma, \Sigma)$ . In this paper

these covariates will include the treatment status to which respondents were assigned, either a demonstration, occupation, or bombing, and we will use the STM to explore how responses change for each of the relevant treatment classes. For each word ( $w$ ) in the open-ended response, a topic ( $z$ ) is drawn from the response-specific distribution. Conditional on that topic, a word is chosen from a multinomial distribution over words parameterized by  $\beta$ .  $\beta$  is formed by deviations from the baseline word frequencies ( $m$ ) in log space ( $\beta_k \propto \exp(m + \kappa_k)$ ).

To summarize, the Structural Topic Model allows each document to have its own prior distribution over topics defined by relevant covariates of interest to the researcher. This is in contrast to other mixed-membership models, such as LDA, which do not incorporate relevant covariates and instead share a global mean. The use of these covariates allows researchers to build relevant covariates directly into the model and make better inferences about relevant quantities of interest.

## Appendix C: Background Questions

Each respondent will be asked the following list of background questions prior to taking the survey experiment. The list includes a number of potential moderating variables such as gender, age, and political ideology. Given that the question of interest throughout this paper and the hypotheses concern how tactical choices affect public opinion throughout an entire domestic population, we leave theorizing and analyzing the heterogeneous effect treatment may have conditional on moderating variables to future research.

### Gender

Are you male or female?

male (1)

female (2)

## **Age**

Please state your date of birth.

## **Education**

What is your level of education, i.e. what type of school have you graduated from the most recently?

elementary or incomplete elementary education (1)

middle school (2)

basic vocational education (3)

secondary school (general, technical) (4)

post-secondary education (5)

Bachelor's Degree/engineering studies (1st degree) (6)

Master's Degree, postgraduate studies, PhD (8)

## **Household Contribution**

Who makes the highest contribution to your household budget?

me (1)

someone else (2)

## **Occupation**

Which of the following sentences describes your current professional status the most adequately?

sole trader, self-employed (1)

top level management (2)

mid and low level management; general manager, manager (3)

specialist, an individual and highly qualified employee, university-level education, freelance profession (4)

white collar/office/administrations worker, civil service, commerce and services professional (5)

farmer - runs own farm/owns or co-owns farm/assists spouse in farm work (6)

certified laborer (7)

general laborer/farm laborer (8)

pupil/student (9)

pensioner (10)

annuitant (11)

I run the household/bring up the children (12)

I am currently unemployed (13)

### **Education for Primary Household Contributor**

elementary or incomplete elementary education (1)

middle school (2)

basic vocational education (3)

secondary school (general, technical) (4)

post-secondary education (5)

Bachelor's Degree/engineering studies (1st degree) (6)

Master's Degree, postgraduate studies, PhD (8)

### **Occupation for Primary Household Contributor**

Which of the following statements describes the professional status of the person making the highest contribution to the household's budget the most adequately?

Which of the following sentences describes your current professional status the most adequately?

sole trader, self-employed (1)

top level management (2)

mid and low level management; general manager, manager (3)

specialist, an individual and highly qualified employee, university-level education, freelance profession (4)

white collar/office/administrations worker, civil service, commerce and services professional (5)

farmer - runs own farm/owns or co-owns farm/assists spouse in farm work (6)

certified laborer (7)

general laborer/farm laborer (8)

pupil/student (9)

pensioner (10)

annuitant (11)

runs the household/bring up the children (12)

currently unemployed (13)

### **Past Occupation**

What was your professional status in the past? / past professional status of the person making the highest contribution to the household's budget?

sole trader, self-employed (1)

top level management (2)

mid and low level management; general manager, manager (3)

specialist, an individual and highly qualified employee, university-level education, freelance profession (4)

white collar/office/administrations worker, civil service, commerce and services professional (5)

farmer - runs own farm/owns or co-owns farm/assists spouse in farm work (6)

certified laborer (7)

general laborer/farm laborer (8)

I have never worked before (9)

### **Company size**

How many employees does(did) the company/ enterprise have?

none (self-employment) (1)

between 1 and 5 employees (2)

more than five employees (3)

### **Household Product Decisions**

Who decides which brands of food products and personal hygiene product are purchased for your household?

me only (1)

mainly me, sometimes someone else as well (2)

me and someone else on equal terms (3)

mainly someone else, sometimes me as well (4)

always someone else (5)

### **Financial standing**

How would you describe your (your family's) financial standing?

I do very well (1)

I do fairly well (2)

I do acceptably, averagely (3)

I do rather badly (4)

I do very badly, Im experiencing a difficult financial situation (5)

### **Total Monthly Household Income (Net)**

Please calculate the total NET income of all the members of your household. Please add

the remuneration, premiums, rewards, overtime payment, scholarships, pensions, annuities, commission work, and farm income from the previous month and tell me which group your household income belongs to.

up to PLN 500 (1) between PLN 501 and PLN 1000 (2)

between PLN 1001 and PLN 1500 (3)

between PLN 1501 and PLN 2000 (4)

between PLN 2001 and PLN 2500 (5)

between PLN 2501 and PLN 3000 (6)

between PLN 3001 and PLN 4000 (7)

between PLN 4001 and PLN 5000 (8)

between PLN 5001 and PLN 7500 (9)

between PLN 7501 and PLN 10 000 (10)

between PLN 10 001 and PLN 15 000 (11)

more than PLN 15 000 (12)

I refuse to answer/ I don't know (98)

### **Personal Monthly Income (Net)**

Please tell me what your monthly NET income is.

up to PLN 500 (1) between PLN 501 and PLN 1000 (2)

between PLN 1001 and PLN 1500 (3)

between PLN 1501 and PLN 2000 (4)

between PLN 2001 and PLN 2500 (5)

between PLN 2501 and PLN 3000 (6)

between PLN 3001 and PLN 4000 (7)

between PLN 4001 and PLN 5000 (8)

between PLN 5001 and PLN 7500 (9)

between PLN 7501 and PLN 10 000 (10)

between PLN 10 001 and PLN 15 000 (11)

more than PLN 15 000 (12)

I refuse to answer/ I don't know (98)

### **Ideology**

In general, how would you describe your own political viewpoint?

Very liberal (1)

Liberal (2)

Moderate (3)

Conservative (4)

Very Conservative (5)

Not Sure (6)

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