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Party Identification as a Cross-Cultural Concept: Its Meaning in the Netherlands*

Jacques Thomassen

I. The Concept of Party Identification

In the United States party identification has proven to be one of the most invaluable concepts in political research. It is defined as 'the sense of personal attachment which the individual feels toward the (party) of his choice' (Campbell et al., 1954, p. 88-89).

In the election studies of the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan party identification is measured by the following series of questions: 'Generally speaking do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent or what?' If the respondent answered 'Republican' or 'Democrat', he was further asked: 'Would you call yourself a strong Republican (Democrat) or a not very strong Republican (Democrat)?' If, on the other hand, he had answered 'Independent', he was further asked: 'Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party?'

A seven-point scale emerges from this series of questions: strong and weak Democrats; independents leaning toward the Democrats, independents not leaning toward a party, independents leaning toward the Republicans; weak and strong Republicans.

This variable has two dimensions, the partisan direction of the identification and its intensity. The following properties have made party identification a key variable in much of the pioneering work in political research.

1. Party identification makes it possible to characterize a great number of people as Republicans or as Democrats.
2. It is an attitude that is stable in the long run.
3. Party identification is strongly related to the vote preference in a particular election but can be distinguished from it. In each election there are people whose vote preference deviates from their party identification. For most people this is no reason to change their party identification as well. This makes it possible to distinguish short term factors (candidates and issues) from long term factors (Converse, 1966).

4. Strength of party identification is an excellent predictive variable for many forms of political behavior.

2. The Value of Party Identification in Comparative Research

The first attempts to use party identification in comparative political research were highly successful. In a classic article Converse demonstrated that there is a relationship between the length of time during which a country has had a stable political system and the level of partisanship in that country. This phenomenon can be explained as a function of the experience people have with the party system and of intergenerational transmission processes. (Converse, 1969). The level of partisanship in a specific country is in turn indicative for the stability of its political system. A system where party identification has developed weakly is in danger of political instability because flash parties can easily garner a great number of votes. On the other hand when the great majority of people have developed a lasting attachment to a certain political party, the rise of flash parties is much less likely because party identification functions as a barrier against such changes in the party system (Converse and Dupeux, 1966, p. 269).

However, the concept of party identification can only be meaningful in comparative research if party identification has the same meaning and the same properties in different countries. By definition, the concept refers to a psychological attachment to a party, which is relatively stable over time and which is to a certain extent independent of the actual vote.

There have been only few attempts to validate the concept of party identification outside the United States. Most studies escape from this problem by using only the second dimension of party identification, its intensity. A reason for the concentration on this dimension is probably that most of these studies have been done in Western-European countries with a multiparty system. This makes the construction of a continuum analogous to the American seven-point scale too complicated. In most countries the intensity of party identification appears to have the same analytical value as in the United States. Thus the correlations between strength of party identification and such variables as political participation, involvement and stability of vote preference are of the same size as they are in the United States, or they run at least in the same direction. However, the meaning of these findings would be greatly reduced if the basic conditions of stability over time and of independence are not met.

The only serious attempts known to us to validate the concept of party identification have been done in the Federal Republic of Germany. Max

Kaase found that in December 1967 54% of the adult population identified themselves as convinced or weak adherents of a particular party. In 1969 this percentage was only 29%. (The great difference between the two percentages can at least partly be explained by the fact that the question wording in 1969 was not exactly alike the one in 1967. In 1967 the names of the parties were mentioned in the question, in 1969 they were not). Over these two years only 19% identified themselves consistently with the same party identification and vote preference.

Kaase also found an almost perfect congruence between party identification and vote preference (Kaase, 1970). Apparently party identification in Germany does not meet the two requirements of stability and independence.

Schleth and Weede tried to replicate Goldberg's causal (Goldberg, 1966) model on American voting behavior with German data. In the American setting party identification fits into a model where it is causally prior to vote preference. Schleth and Weede had to reject such a model for the German data (Schleth and Weede, 1971).

In view of such findings, it is of interest to test the validity of the concept of party identification on Dutch data. The Netherlands offer a setting that is different from both the American and the German ones. In Germany the democratic process had been interrupted for a period of almost twenty years as a result of the Nazi-regime. The theory of Converse predicts that party identification should not reach a high level in such a political system.

In this respect the Netherlands is more comparable with the United States. It has known universal adult suffrage for more than fifty years. In this period the basic structure of the party system remained virtually the same. Until the provincial election of 1970 voting was compulsory. (More precisely, one had to appear at the polls.) Most people in a particular age cohort have therefore the same voting experience. Universal suffrage has existed long enough for the establishment of a process of intergenerational transmission of party preference. The only interruption of the democratic process occurred during the German occupation from 1940 to 1945. This interruption was probably too short to have a negative influence on the development of stable partisan attitudes, as becomes evident also from the virtually complete restoration of the pre-war system after 1945. In view of these system properties one would expect that the level of party identification would not be lower than in the United States. However, there are a number of differences between the United States and the Netherlands which make a comparison of interest.

The first and most important difference refers to differences in the linkage between the political parties and the structure of the society. In a twoparty system like that of the United States the two parties are forced to the middle

of the political spectrum to maximize their vote (Downs, 1957, ch. 8). As a result political differences between the two parties become minimal or at least less than in a multiparty system. Therefore the political platforms of parties give the voters insufficient clues over time for deciding for which party they should vote.

Shiveley states that in such a situation voters learn to associate themselves with a particular party to avoid the expensive task of gathering enough political information to make their choice on some other basis.

On the other hand, a voter who is a member of a clear and distinct social or economic group, for which he feels that some party or group of parties is the clear spokesman, may not need a further guide in voting. Since his social and economic position, coupled with the linkage of some party(ies) to that position, provides him with sufficient voting cues, he does not need to identify directly with a party (Shiveley, 1972, p. 1222).

This hypothesis is consistent with the statement of Campbell and Valen that in a party system with a close relationship between the parties and the social classes, it is difficult to isolate the independent influence which party identification by itself has on the electorate (Campbell and Valen, 1966, p. 268).

If these hypotheses are correct party identification should score low as an independent motivational force among Dutch voters. The linkages between the political parties on the one hand and religion and social class on the other hand have traditionally been very strong in the Netherlands. The history of the new parties which are not connected with any religious group or social class has been too short 'to develop a "taught" cadre of supporters' (Jennings, 1972, p. 450).

A second major difference is the electoral system. The United States has a district system. In each election people vote for an individual candidate. Therefore the personal qualities of the candidates play an important role in American elections in addition to political issues and party identification. One of the major heuristic advantages of the concept of party identification is that it offers the opportunity to distinguish short term influences (candidates and issues) from lasting party attachment.

As election specific influences seem to be much weaker in the Netherlands than in the United States, Dutch voters should not normally deviate from their possible party identification. The electoral system de-emphasizes the role of individual candidates. A good description of the Dutch electoral system is presented by Daalder and Rusk:

The electoral law provides for a party-list system of proportional representation, in which votes are aggregated nationally, seats are divided among numerous contesting parties according to the d'Hondt system of the largest average. Technically there are 18 districts which coincide largely with the boundaries of the 11 provinces. Parties

present individual lists across the country for seat allocation purposes. Each voter may mark only one candidate. His vote accrues first to the national party and then to the district list. He can effect the election of a given candidate only if this candidate by himself obtains one-half the district list quotient (which is slightly below 1/150 of the total national vote). But in practice the overwhelming majority of the electorate tends to vote for the top candidate on the party list. The rank-ordering of individual candidates on these lists, therefore, virtually decides a candidate's chance of election to parliament. This system makes parties rather than individual candidates the chief actors in political campaigns (Daalder and Rusk, 1972, p. 146).

In other words candidates – as distinct from parties – play a very marginal role in Dutch politics. There is evidence that most people do not even know the names of the candidates. The impact of issues is probably also very modest in most elections. Therefore the sum total of election specific events has probably much less effect than in the United States. One should therefore expect a very high level of congruence of party identification and vote preference.

3. The Dutch Data

We shall test these hypotheses against Dutch data. These data derived from a three wave panel study that covers three successive elections, the provincial elections in 1970, the parliamentary elections in 1971 and the parliamentary elections in 1972.

A nationwide random sample ($N = 1838$) was interviewed in 1970. Because of panel mortality this number was reduced to 1305 in 1971, and to 972 in 1972. Full panel data are available for 834 respondents. In all three panel waves party identification was measured by this set of questions: 'Many people think of themselves as adherents of a certain party, but there are also people who do not'. 'Do you usually think of yourself as an adherent of a certain party? (If yes:) Which party do you like best?' 'Some people are strongly convinced adherents of their party. Others are not so strongly convinced. Do you belong to the strongly convinced adherents of your party or do you not? (If not an adherent:) Is there any party that you are closer to than the others? (If yes:) Which?' The questions are as similar as possible to the SRC-questions.

Distribution of party identification – In table 1 the distribution of strength of party identification as observed in the three panel waves is presented.

The aggregate distribution is quite stable over these three years. The percentage of people who spontaneously call themselves adherents of a political party is lower than in the United States (Campbell et al., 1960, p. 124), Brit-

Table 1: Distribution of strength of party identification in three successive elections

	1970	1971	1972
strong adherents	18.0	17.1	22.3
weak adherents	26.7	23.7	21.7
leaners	32.2	31.5	33.6
independents	23.1	27.7	22.3
	100% (1838)	100% (1305)	100% (972)

ain (Butler, 1969, p. 38), Norway (Campbell and Valen, 1966, p. 251), Sweden (Särilvik, 1970, p. 259) and Denmark (Borre and Katz, 1973, p. 72) but higher than the percentage Max Kaase found with a similar question in the Federal Republic of Germany (Kaase, 1970, p. 59).

It is hard to draw any direct inferences from the fact that the percentage of spontaneous adherents is lower in the Netherlands than in most of these other countries. There are at least two complications that make a direct comparison somewhat risky.

The Netherlands is involved in a process of political realignment. Especially the religious parties have lost a great number of their adherents. This makes it very likely that the level of partisanship has decreased in the last ten years. A second caveat must be made with respect to the question wording. In the SRC-questions the names of the (two) parties are mentioned. In Holland with its long list of parties this was not possible. The lack of this cue can lead to a lower number of spontaneous adherents. That this is so is suggested strongly by the fact that Max Kaase found 54% adherents in 1967 with a question wording in which the parties were mentioned and only 29% in 1969 when he used a question wording similar to ours. (Kaase, 1970, p. 59). More important than the overall distribution of party identification, however, is the question whether party identification has the same properties in the Netherlands as it has in the United States.

4. The Stability of Party Identification

An essential property of party identification is its long term stability. On the one hand the time between our first and last panel wave is too short to prove long term stability. On the other hand, if we were to find that party identification is not even stable over such a short time, we can be sure that there is no long term stability either.

There is no objective criterion to define how stable party identification

should be, especially not in a time of realignment. However, if party identification is a lasting psychological attitude toward a party that is relatively insensitive to short-term factors and does not completely define the vote, it should be more stable than vote preference. Even in a time of realignment one should expect that party identification changes at a slower pace than vote preference. In table 2 the stability of party identification is compared with the stability of vote preference.

Party identification is clearly less stable than vote preference. In all three combinations of the panel waves the turnover of party identification is higher than the turnover of vote preference. A possible explanation for this surprising finding could be that party identification only indicates a lasting psychological attachment where this attachment is mentioned spontaneously. This applies to the strong and weak adherents. To test this possibility we have controlled the turnover tables for strength of party identification. The results are presented in tables 3 and 4.

Strength of party identification does make a difference: the weaker the identification, the more difference there is between the stability of party

Table 2: Stability of party identification and vote preference

	vote preference	party identification
1970-1971	80.3%*	76.1%
1971-1972	77.7%	74.6%
1970-1972	71.1%	62.6%

* 80.3% of the people who voted both times voted for the same party in both elections.

Table 3: Stability of party identification, controlled for strength of party identification

	strong	weak	leaners
1970-1971	92.2%	76.3%	64.3%
1971-1972	90.6%	74.5%	65.3%
1970-1972	80.4%	63.9%	47.2%

Table 4: Stability of vote preference, controlled for strength of party identification

	strong	weak	leaners	independents
1970-1971	91.8%	80.2%	70.8%	65.1%
1971-1972	90.2%	76.8%	69.7%	58.8%
1970-1972	82.3%	74.8%	56.5%	44.9%

identification and the stability of vote preference. There is hardly any difference between the stability of party identification and the stability of vote preference among strong adherents. Among weak adherents and leaners party identification is less stable than vote preference. These findings make the value of the concept of party identification in the Netherlands very doubtful.

Now that we have found that party identification is less stable than vote preference we should ask the question whether party identification is something more than an expression of volatile positive feelings toward a certain party at a particular moment, which are caused by exactly the same circumstances that determine the vote. If this should prove to be the case it is very likely that party identification and vote preference are measuring one and the same phenomenon: the preference for a particular party at a certain moment.

5. Party Identification and Vote Preference

If party identification and vote preference are measuring the same phenomenon, party identification loses one of its most important functions. In the United States party identification has become such an invaluable analytical concept, precisely because it offers the opportunity to distinguish short-term factors from long-term influences. This made it possible to determine the role of candidates and issues in each election.

A distinction between long-term forces (party identification) and short term forces can only be made when party identification and vote preference are really different concepts. A perfect congruence between party identification and vote preference does not necessarily mean that party identification and vote preference are conceptually the same. It could mean that in a particular election no short term factors are at work and that therefore everybody is voting according to this party identification. The more deviations

Table 5: Party identification and vote preference, controlled for strength of party identification

	1970	1971	1972
strong adherents	98.3%*	98.5%	96.1%
weak adherents	92.3%	92.9%	92.2%
leaners	83.9%	86.5%	86.9%
total	90.9%	91.7%	91.2%

* Of the strong adherents who voted in 1970 98.3% voted for the party they identified with.

there are between party identification and vote preference the greater the role of short term influences would be.

Counter evidence to the hypothesis that there is no conceptual difference between party identification and vote preference is presented in table 5. In all three years about 9% of all voters with a party identification voted for a different party than the one they identified with. This percentage is lower than any comparable figure in the United States.

This is what we expected mainly because of the differences between the two electoral systems. But although the deviations are small, it appears that just as in the United States the relationship between party identification and vote preference varies with strength of party identification (table 5). In 1970 the percentage of strong adherents who voted for the same party as they identified with is 98.3%. Among leaners it is not higher than 84.5%. The traditional explanation for this variation is that people who do not strongly identify with their party are more sensitive to short term influences and are therefore more likely to vote for a different party. However, this explanation is not the only one possible. Our hypothesis that party identification and vote preference are measuring the same attitude – party preference at a particular moment – can explain the different correlations between party identification and vote preference just as well. If we suppose that party identification and vote preference are two indicators for the same attitude, one should expect a certain level of unreliability of measurement. One should also expect that this unreliability is highest among people whose attitude has been developed less strongly, that means among people with a low level of party preference. If this hypothesis is correct the different figures in table 5 are different levels of reliability. There is no way to test this hypothesis directly. But indirect evidence supports our hypothesis very strongly. To test the reliability of questions on voting behavior we repeated in the third wave the questions on voting behavior in 1971 that were asked in the second wave (Thomassen, 1973).

In table 6 the relationship between strength of party identification and the consistency of the answers to both questions about the vote preference in 1971 is presented. The strength of the relationship is surprising. The difference between strong adherents and leaners is about 14 percentage points. This is more than the difference between strong adherents and leaners with respect to the congruence of party identification and vote preference.

If we now suppose that party identification and vote preference are two different indicators for the same concept we have found that the reliability of two different indicators measured at the same time is influenced by the same variable that influences the reliability of one indicator over time. Again, this is no direct evidence for the hypothesis that party identification and vote

Table 6: Strength of party identification 1971 and the consistency of answers to questions on vote preference 1971

		strong	weak	leaners	independ.	total
answers	consistent	95.5	85.7	81.0	76.9	84.7
vote preference	not-consistent	4.5	14.3	19.0	23.1	15.3
1971						
	total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
		(132)	(161)	(205)	(104)	(602)

preference are measuring the same attitude, but at least this hypothesis can explain the observed deviations from party identification just as well.

6. Party Identification and Vote Preference: Causal Sequence

The theory of party identification is very clear on the causal sequence of party identification and vote preference. Party identification is defined as a lasting psychological attachment toward a party, the relationship between party identification and vote preference is described as the relation between 'the psychological state and its behavioral consequences'. (Campbell, 1960, p. 122). Goldberg observes that a causal model in which party identification is causally prior to vote preference fits indeed data on American voting behavior (Goldberg, 1966).

Our findings in the last paragraph suggest that party identification is not conceptually different from vote preference. Another way to formulate this statement is, that party identification is simply a reflection of the vote preference. This implies that in a causal model party identification should be found to be posterior to vote preference.

If party identification really is a lasting psychological attachment to a party a change in vote preference should not immediately be followed by a change of party identification. A change of party identification on the other hand – which should not occur very often – would normally not occur unless vote preference changes as well.

No other country than the United States is likely to have such a high degree of independence between party identification and vote preference. Butler and Stokes have shown that party identification changes more often in Britain than in the United States. Their conclusion is based upon a comparison of the relation between the stability of party identification and the stability of vote preference in Britain and in the United States (Butler and

Table 7: Stability of party identification and vote preference in three American elections

		stable	vote preference not stable	total
party identification	not stable	2	6	18
	stable	76	16	92
	total	78	22	100%

Table 8: Stability of party identification and vote preference in three British elections

		stable	vote preference not stable	total
party identification	stable	75	8	83
	not stable	4	13	17
	total	79	21	100%

Table 9: Stability of party identification and vote preference in three Dutch elections

		stable	vote preference not stable	total
party identification	stable	61	6	67
	not stable	10	23	33
	total	71	29	100%

Stokes, 1969, p. 38).

These relationships are presented in tables 7 and 8. In both countries party identification is more stable than vote preference.

There is a limited number of voters who change their vote as well as their party identification within the period of three successive elections (three panel waves), although in Britain this percentage is twice as high as in the United States. In both countries the percentages of people who change their vote preference but not their party identification is higher than the percentage who change their party identification but not their vote preference.

However, in the United States the difference is more marked than in Britain. In the United States the quotient is 8 : 1, in Britain 2 : 1. So in Britain party identification is much less independent from vote preference than in the United States.

Table 9 presents similar data for the Netherlands. Stable vote preference means that a respondent voted for the same party in 1970, 1971 and 1972. Stable party identification means that a respondent identified with the same party in all three panel waves.

There is a dramatic difference between the Dutch data and the British and the American data. Not less than 23% of all the voters in this table changed their party identification as well as their vote preference at least once. (We did not go into the question whether changes were symmetric.)

The most striking finding in this table is the difference between the upper right-hand and the lower left-hand cells. While only 6% of the respondents change their vote preference without changing their party identification,

Table 10a-c: Stability of party identification and vote preference in three elections controlled for strength of party identification in 1970

Table 10a: Strong adherents

		stable	vote preference not stable	total
party identification	stable	80	3	83
	not stable	5	12	17
Total		85	15	100%

Table 10b: Weak adherents

		stable	vote preference not stable	total
party identification	stable	61	5	66
	not stable	12	22	17
Total		73	27	100%

Table 10c: Leaners

		stable	vote preference not stable	total
party identification	stable	41	9	50
	not stable	13	37	50
Total		54	46	100%

10% change their party identification without changing their vote preference. This finding is the exact opposite of what was found in Britain and in the United States.

Again one could think that our definition of party identification was too broad. One might argue that only when party identification is mentioned spontaneously, one can be sure that it refers to a lasting psychological attachment. This argument is refuted, however, by the evidence of tables 10 a/c. In these tables the relationship of table 9 is controlled for strength of party identification in 1970.

As we already observed the stability of party identification and the stability of vote preference vary with strength of party identification. However, the essential message of table 9 is supported by the three subtables. In all cases the percentage of people who change their party identification but not their vote preference is higher than the percentage to which the reversed process applies.

These findings suggest very strongly, that party identification is not causally prior to the vote, but simply a reflection of the vote and therefore causally posterior to the vote. We will now test this proposition by using a formal causal modelling technique, the Simon-Blalock method (Blalock, 1964). That this technique is very suitable for panel data was demonstrated by Boudon (Boudon, 1968).

The causal model that we will test has six variables, party identification and vote preference, each measured at three different times. To explore the causal relations between these variables we will use the product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson's r). This statistic can only be used for continuous variables or in a two by two table. Neither party identification nor vote preference meets this requirement. However, both variables can be made dichotomous if we restrict the analysis to one party. We will take the P.v.d.A. (Labour Party) as an example.

Party identification then has these two categories:

1. all respondents who identify with the P.v.d.A.;
2. all respondents who do not identify with the P.v.d.A.

Vote preference has these two categories:

1. all people who voted for the P.v.d.A.;
2. all people who voted for a different party.

The analysis has been restricted to those voting in all three elections and to those for whom complete panel data were available. The correlation matrix for the six variables is presented in table 11.

Two different models will be tested. Model 1 represents the traditional theory of party identification. Party identification is stable over time and defines the vote preference at each election. (The impact of other variables is excluded from the model.) The stability of vote preference can be explained

Table 11: Correlation matrix party identification and vote preference, P.v.d.A. 1970-1971-1972

	1	2	3	4	5
2	.56				
3	.49	.60			
4	.77	.65	.61		
5	.59	.86	.67	.71	
6	.52	.67	.80	.66	.75

1 = party identification 1970

2 = party identification 1971

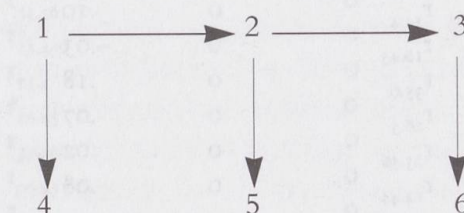
3 = party identification 1972

4 = vote preference 1970

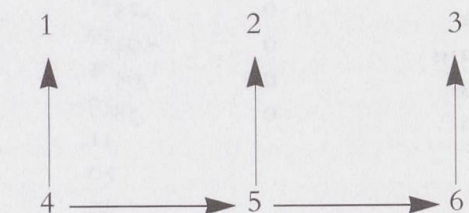
5 = vote preference 1971

6 = vote preference 1972

Model 1



Model 2



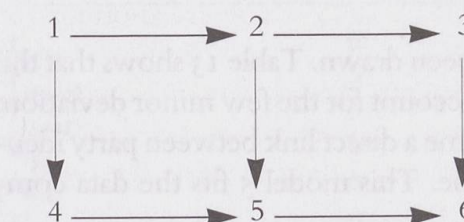
by the fact that party identification is stable. Vote preference has no stability of its own. The alternative model 2 assumes that vote preference is stable (for whatever reason) and that party identification is no more than a reflection of the vote preference. Party identification therefore has a certain degree of stability because vote preference is stable.

By calculating partial correlations we will test which of the two models fits the data best.

The minimal requirements for model 1 are that $r_{45.12}$ and $r_{56.32}$ are equal to zero. In model 2 $r_{12.45}$ and $r_{23.56}$ should be equal to zero. The observed values are $r_{45.12} = .30$, $r_{45.45} = .08$ and $r_{23.56} = .02$.

In model 1 party identification cannot fully explain the stability of vote preference. So the first revision that has to be made in model 1 is a direct link

Model 3



between the vote preference of the successive elections. This has been done in model 3.

A complete test of model 2 and model 3 is presented in table 12. It is clear that model 3 does not fit the data at all. Only three of the partial correlations that should not significantly differ from zero, are less than the critical value of

Table 12

model 3 partial correlation	expected value	observed value	model 2 partial correlation	expected value	observed value
$r_{42.1}$	0	.41	$r_{42.5}$	0	.11
$r_{15.24}$	0	.01	$r_{43.56}$	0	.12
$r_{43.12}$	0	.29	$r_{46.5}$	0	.27
$r_{46.1235}$	0	.14	$r_{13.456}$	0	.02
$r_{13.2}$	0	.23	$r_{15.4}$	0	.10
$r_{16.2345}$	0	-.04	$r_{16.45}$	0	-.03
$r_{26.53}$	0	.05	$r_{35.6}$	0	.18
$r_{35.2}$	0	.38	$r_{26.5}$	0	.07
			$r_{23.56}$	0	.02
			$r_{12.45}$	0	.08

.10 (with the number of cases in our analysis (± 620) partial correlations of $\pm .10$ are significant when $\alpha = 1\%$).

Model 2 on the other hand fits much better. Not more than 4 of the partial correlations are higher than .10. The highest partial is between vote preference in 1970 and vote preference in 1972. This would suggest that people who change their vote at time 2 tend to return to their preference of time 1 at time 3. However, one should be cautious with this interpretation, because in the second category of vote preference all parties but the P.v.d.A. are included. But if this interpretation is correct, it fits very well in the theory of voting behavior. The problem is that this 'homing' tendency is normally explained by the fact that people now and then change their vote preference, but are inclined to return to their traditional choice, because they have developed lasting feelings of attachment to this party. This explanation cannot be correct in this case, because in the model no causal impact of party identification on vote preference is assumed. Therefore an explanation should be found outside the model.

In model 4 the arrow from 4 to 6 has been drawn. Table 13 shows that this model fits the data almost perfectly. To account for the few minor deviations from the model in the data we must assume a direct link between party identification at each successive point in time. This model 5 fits the data completely as is shown by table 14.

Model 4

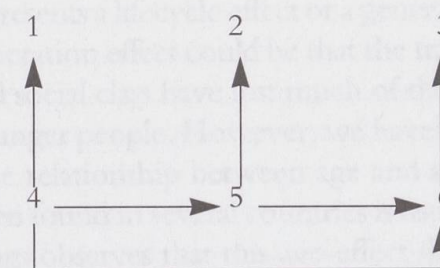


Table 13: model 4

partial correlation	expected value	observed value
$r_{24.6}$	0	.11
$r_{34.56}$	0	.12
$r_{13.456}$	0	.02
$r_{15.4}$	0	.10
$r_{16.45}$	0	-.03
$r_{35.46}$	0	.11
$r_{26.45}$	0	.05
$r_{12.45}$	0	.08
$r_{23.456}$	0	.01

Model 5

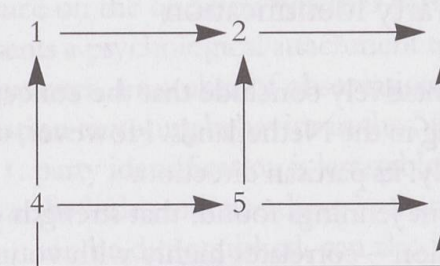
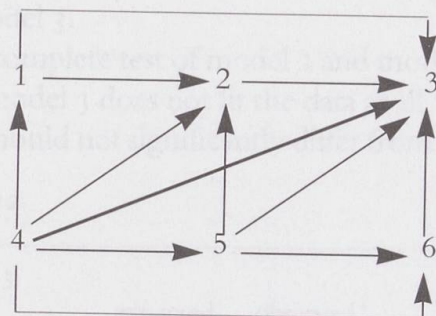


Table 14: model 5

partial correlation	expected value	observed value
$r_{24.15}$	0	.04
$r_{34.1256}$	0	.08
$r_{13.2456}$	0	.02
$r_{15.4}$	0	.10
$r_{16.45}$	0	-.03
$r_{35.1246}$	0	.08
$r_{26.145}$	0	.04

Model 6



A revision of model 3 such that the final model fits the data is quite complicated. Model 6 does fit the data, but leaves only three partials to predict. ($r_{15.24} = .01$; $r_{16.2345} = .04$; $r_{26.1345} = .02$)

The problem now is that we have no criterion to decide which model is the correct one, model 5 or model 6. The technique of causal modelling does not enable us to prove whether a certain model is correct. Both models do fit the data. However, model 5 is more parsimonious than model 6. We feel that this information, in addition to the evidence that we have presented before is a sufficient argument to draw the tentative inference that party identification is not causally prior to vote preference.

7. The Two Dimensions of Party Identification

On the basis of this analysis we might tentatively conclude that the concept of party identification has no real meaning in the Netherlands. However, on one dimension of party identification only: its partisan direction.

Using the same data we are using Kent Jennings found, that strength of party identification – the second dimension – correlates highly with voting turnout and other forms of electoral participation in the Netherlands. The correlations are even higher than in the United States. The same is true for consistency of voting, decisiveness of making electoral choices, correctness of fit between self-image and party profile. (Jennings, 1972, p. 468-469). How to account for these findings? If party identification is not a psychological attachment, but simply a reflection of the vote preference, one might advance the hypothesis that the intensity of party identification really refers to the motivational strength of the vote preference at a particular moment. That the strength of the motivation to vote for a particular party is correlated with the variables we have just mentioned can easily be explained.

More confusing is the fact that there is a correlation between age and

strength of party identification. The classic issue is whether this relationship represents a lifecycle effect or a generation effect. A possible explanation for a generation effect could be that the traditional motivational forces of religion and social class have lost much of their impact on political behavior among younger people. However, we have no evidence to support this hypothesis. The relationship between age and strength of party identification that has been found in several countries is usually explained as a life cycle-effect. Jennings observes that this age-effect should not be interpreted as an effect of growing older, but as an effect of experience.

The more often the voter reaffirms his conviction by supporting the party at the polls, and the more accustomed his perceptual and coding devices become to handling information about the parties in a standard fashion, the more entrenched becomes his attachment to the party (Jennings, 1972, p. 450).

If this conclusion is correct, it is not inconsistent with the results of our analysis per se. It would mean that there is a certain psychological attachment to political parties. However, party identification is certainly not a strong attitude, when even among strong identifiers this attitude cannot resist a change in vote preference.

8. Conclusion

Let us now summarize the essential conclusions of our analysis. The evidence on the question whether party identification in the Netherlands represents a psychological attachment to a political party or not is inconclusive. However, a number of observations make the use of party identification in relation to voting behavior in the Netherlands very doubtful:

1. party identification is less stable than vote preference;
2. the little evidence there is, that party identification and vote preference can be distinguished, can also be explained as unreliability of measurement;
3. there is strong evidence that party identification is not causally prior to vote preference.

These results leave us with two intriguing questions: Why have lasting psychological attachments to the political parties – as distinct from consistent voting records – developed in the United States but not – or less so – in the Netherlands? And, secondly, if Dutch people did not develop strong and lasting attachments to their political parties, how could the party system remain relatively stable for such a long time?

The – speculative – answer to both questions is to be found in the Dutch system of *verzuiling* or segmentation. Definitions of *verzuiling* have tended to

differ and the number of *zuilen* or pillars one chooses to use in analysis depends on the definition chosen.

Catholics and protestants have organized themselves separately at almost every level of the society. Lijphart mentions the 'algemene' or general *zuil* as a third pillar. (Lijphart, 1968, ch. 2). This really means lumping the remainder together. Within this group social class is an important dividing line. Especially the socialists have constructed their own network of organizations, in a way that was very similar to the way catholics and protestants had organized themselves. Therefore the socialist subculture is sometimes called a *pseudo-zuil*. (Thurlings, 1971, p. 15). Each pillar traditionally has its own political party (or parties). The catholics were politically organized in the K.V.P., the socialists in the P.v.d.A. The political organization of the protestant pillar was more complicated. The A.R.P. had its clientele mainly among the orthodox calvinists, the C.H.U. among the Dutch reformed, G.V.P. and S.G.P. are two conservative splinter parties with an orthodox calvinist background. The V.V.D. is the fifth traditional party. It is the antipole of the P.v.d.A on the social class line and is supported mainly by the upper-middle class. So the traditional political parties are deeply rooted in the social structure of Dutch society. For a long time politics provided set alternatives to a great number of Dutchmen. Belonging to a certain pillar one voted almost automatically for the party that was associated with it. This rigid relationship of the political parties to the different subcultures can explain why there was weak psychological attachment to political parties as such and why yet the political system could remain very stable. The identification with the political parties was for most people only indirect. Voting for the catholic party was for a catholic part of his role behavior. As far as group identification was important in this process, the identification was probably more with the catholic subculture and much less the identification with the associated political party per se. An analogous process applied to calvinists and socialists. At the same time the system could remain stable as long as the relative strength of the different subcultures remained the same and as long as the relationship between religion and social class on the one hand and political behavior on the other hand did not change. The rapid changes in the Dutch party system of the last decennium can to a great extent be explained by two processes. First a great number of people lost their religious attachment and therefore indirectly their attachment to the associated political party. Secondly, a number of people no longer allowed their political choice to be determined by their religious attachment.

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