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### Citation

Wijnen, P. van. (2000). Candidates and Voting Behaviour. *Acta Politica*, 35: 2000(4), 430-458.  
Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3450723>

Version: Publisher's Version  
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**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

## Candidates and Voting Behaviour

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### Abstract

For the period 1986-1998, Dutch voting behaviour is explained to a decreasing extent by social class and religious adherence. Differences between the major Dutch parties on a general left-right dimension and on structural issues decreased substantially within this period. The expectation is tested that due to these developments candidate characteristics have become more important for voting behaviour in the period from 1986 onwards. Empirical analyses support this expectation. Sympathy for party leaders, and especially trust in party leaders, has had a larger effect on voting behaviour since 1986. Additionally, there has been a substantial rise in the degree to which these two candidate characteristics can explain variations in voting patterns. Party specific analyses reveal substantial differences across parties regarding the electoral importance of trust and sympathy. In each of the election years investigated, the electoral position of the PvdA appears to be influenced substantially by evaluations of their leader. The electoral strength of the VVD seems to be relatively unaffected by candidate evaluations. Candidate evaluations played an important role in the electoral fate of the CDA in the 1980s and of D66 in the late 1980s and early 1990s

### 1 Introduction

Little is known about the importance of candidate characteristics for the voting decision of Dutch citizens and the electoral strength of parties. This is remarkable since many scholars have expected that the decline in social cleavage voting in the past four decades in Western democracies has made short-term factors like candidate evaluations more important for voting behaviour (e.g., Dalton 1996; Rose & McAllister 1986). Research on longitudinal changes in candidate-oriented voting behaviour has been conducted mainly for elections in the United States. For the Netherlands, Wattenberg (1991, 1994) reported that candidate evaluation was having a growing impact on vote choice.

In the Netherlands, past research on the electoral impact of candidate characteristics has either focused on one or two specific elections or has only

examined the vote effect of candidate evaluations in a partial model of voting behaviour (Hillebrand et al. 1987; Anker et al. 1992; Irwin et al. 1987; Aarts 1987; Irwin & Van Holsteyn 1992; Anker 1992; Anker 1995; Irwin and Van Holsteyn 1997; Irwin & Van Holsteyn 1998; Irwin & Van Holsteyn 1999). Exceptions are Van Holsteyn (2000) and Aarts (2000). Van Holsteyn examined longitudinal developments in the importance of candidate-oriented voting behaviour on the basis of open-ended survey questions about the reasons for party choice. His analyses did not reveal a clear trend in the importance of candidate assessments for voting behaviour. Investigating the period 1986-1998, Aarts found that the impact of sympathy for party leaders on vote choice had increased moderately. Aarts's research remains inconclusive as it is based on a model that does not take into account voters' policy preferences and other types of candidate evaluations.

This article examines some expectations concerning factors that determine the importance of candidate-oriented voting behaviour. These expectations are tested with empirical analyses of data from the Dutch National Election Studies in the period 1986-1998. Two central research questions are addressed. First, has candidate voting grown in importance as a result of an observed decline in cleavage voting and because parties have less distinctive policy profiles? Second, does the extent to which voters evaluate parties on the basis of their candidates' characteristics differ substantially from one party to the next? The remainder of this article is structured in the following way. Section 2 discusses theoretical approaches in research on candidate-oriented voting behaviour. Expectations with respect to the importance of candidate-oriented voting behaviour are presented in section 3. Section 4 addresses an empirical model of voting behaviour and its operationalization with available data. Empirical analyses of voting behaviour are presented in sections 5, 6 and 7. A summary and discussion of the research findings is given in section 8.

### 2 Theoretical approaches in research on candidate voting

In the literature, the term candidate-oriented voting behaviour has been used to describe the influence of voter-perceived characteristics of party leaders on voters' party preferences. Candidate-oriented voting has usually been demarcated from issue-oriented voting in the following way. The term issue-oriented voting behaviour has typically been used to describe the influence on vote choice of specific party positions on issues and ideological dimensions. Candidate-oriented voting behaviour either refers to voters' assessments of candidate characteristics that are totally void of policy considerations or to voters' judgements of a diffuse policy-competence of party candidates.

Candidate assessments clearly not related to policy positions are, for

example, assessments concerning whether the candidate is physically attractive, sociable and sympathetic. Assessments more related to diffuse policy competence are, for example, assessments concerning the candidate's trustworthiness, leadership qualities, integrity and whether public interests will prevail above personal interests.

Until the 1980s, the dominant strands in electoral research described the electoral impact of candidate assessments as irrational voting behaviour that is totally void of policy content (e.g., Converse 1964; Page 1978). More recently, scholars have argued that candidate-oriented voting behaviour is an example of behaviour determined by bounded rationality (Kinder et al. 1980; Kinder 1986; Miller et al. 1986; Rahn et al. 1990; Popkin 1991). When the degree of party emphasis on issues or ideology is low in election campaigns or when the costs to obtain information about the parties' policy platforms are high, voters will resort to candidate assessments as cues to infer the policy competence of candidates and parties.

If candidate traits are to have an effect on voting behaviour a number of conditions have to be fulfilled. Voters must know the candidates, know which parties they represent, have a judgement about relevant traits of the candidates, evaluate the candidates differently on these traits, and develop a higher vote preference for a certain party because the candidate of this party is given the most positive evaluation (Irwin 1983).

Funk (1994), analysing data on assessments of American presidential candidates, was able to distinguish four dimensions of candidate traits; *competence*, as indicated by 'knowledgeable' and 'intelligent'; *effectiveness*, as measured by 'provides strong leadership', 'inspiring' and 'gets things done'; *integrity*, represented by 'moral' and 'honest', and *empathy*, measured by 'compassionate' and 'cares about people like you'. Anker (1995) has shown for Dutch voters that candidate assessments on competence are strongly correlated with assessments on effectiveness. Evaluations on integrity appear to be highly correlated with evaluations on empathy. Of the four dimensions, candidate evaluations on effectiveness are most strongly related to the candidate's competence in making policies. This is followed by candidate evaluations on competence, then integrity, and lastly empathy.

In line with previous research, in this article the terms candidate-oriented voting behaviour and candidate voting refer to voting behaviour determined by candidate assessments. These assessments can either refer to candidate characteristics void of any policy content or to candidates' wide-ranging competence in policy-making.

### 3 Expectations of candidate voting

Before discussing expectations of candidate-oriented voting behaviour, it is useful to give a concise description of the main characteristics of the Dutch political system. The party system emerged at the end of the nineteenth century on the basis of a religious and social class cleavage. Since the introduction of an electoral system of pure proportional and nationwide representation in 1917, none of the parties has ever succeeded in winning a majority of the votes. In the past three decades the party system has consisted of four major parties that have captured the vote of about 80 to 90 per cent of the electorate in national elections. These parties are the Christian democratic CDA (since 1977 a merger of KVP, ARP and CHU), the social democratic PvdA, the market-oriented liberal VVD and the social liberal D66. Cabinets have always been coalition governments. Until 1994 the Christian democrats had always participated as a major party, either with the PvdA or the VVD.

Scholars analysing Dutch elections have devoted their attention mainly to the impact of social class, religion or ideology.

From the 1920s until the mid 1960s elections were mainly an expression of the then prevailing system of pillarization. The voting decision of a large majority of the electorate could be correctly predicted on the basis of social class position and religious adherence. In the 1970s and 1980s the positions of parties and voters on a general left-right dimension appeared to be an increasingly important explanatory factor in the voting decision, besides social class and religion (Van der Eijk & Niemoller 1992; Van Wijnen 2000a).

This predominance of social cleavages and ideology in the past decades did not lead, however, to electoral campaigns in which the characteristics of party leaders were downplayed. In the period of pillarization, party-leaders like Colijn, Romme and Drees greatly emphasized their apparent leadership qualities and charismatic appeal in election campaigns (Van Praag 1991).

More recent election campaigns with a high degree of ideological polarization between the major parties (e.g., 1977 and 1986) were also highly centred on the leaders of these parties (Van Praag 1991; Van der Eijk & Van Praag 1986). Given the absence of survey data, only speculations can be made on the importance of candidate-oriented voting behaviour in the period before the 1980s. It is expected that, despite the strong emphasis on party leaders, candidate characteristics did not have a direct effect on the voting decision.

In the era of pillarization, the candidates' images were apparently mainly used in election campaigns as an instrument to mobilize the voters of a socially defined grass roots support. It is highly unlikely that the portrayal of Colijn as a strong leader in harsh times led many Catholics to vote for the protestant *Anti Revolutionary Party* in the 1930s. It is likely that, as far as candidate characteristics had any effect on voting behaviour, this became apparent in the

strengthening of existing party loyalties of certain social segments. The same reasoning can be applied to ideological voting in the 1970s and early 1980s. The alleged charismatic appeal of PvdA leader Den Uyl and of VVD leader Wiegel must have been mainly effective in mobilizing the electoral support of voters with leftist and rightist opinions, respectively, on socio-economic and materialist/post-materialist issues.

Some scholars have contended that candidate-oriented voting behaviour would become more important because of the increase in public usage of electronic mass media (Dalton 1996) or more specifically because of the growing public viewing of commercial television networks (Aarts 2000). It is argued that compared to radio and the printed media television has an inherently greater potential to display character traits of politicians, indicated by, for example, non-verbal expressions. Research in the Netherlands has shown that the commercial television networks report about politics in a more personalized fashion than public networks (De Vries & Van Praag Jr. 1995). These developments could be an impetus for election campaigns in which the personal characteristics of party leaders play a more important role. However, it is doubtful whether the rise in (commercial) electronic mass media has a direct impact on the importance of candidate voting. We have already mentioned that parties also regularly put great emphasis on the personal qualities of their leaders before the introduction of television to the mass publics. Furthermore, the medium of television does not prevent parties from taking clear and polarized stances on issues and ideologies. Especially in the 1970s and early 1980s, television debates between the leaders of the main Dutch parties prior to the election day were characterized by sharp controversies on issues like income levelling, abortion, nuclear energy and nuclear weapons. One can expect that these debates gave the audience a strong impetus to cast their vote on the basis of policy considerations.

Certain other developments have given rise to the expectation that candidates' characteristics became more important in the explanation of voting preferences in the period 1986-1998.

National Election Studies in the period 1971-1998 have shown a marked structural decline in the degree to which voting behaviour can be explained by 'pillarization' variables of social class and religious adherence (Andeweg 1995; Van der Kolk 2000). Furthermore, from 1986 onwards there has been a substantial decline in the polarization of the four major parties on a general ideological left-right dimension and on socio-economic, religious/ethical and materialist/post-materialist issues (Aarts & Semetko 1999). Additionally, in this period the four parties have taken more ambiguous positions on the three mentioned types of issues (Van Wijnen 2000 b). The decrease in polarization, and the reduced clarity with respect to parties' positions on the left-right ideology and issues have been accompanied by a structural decline in the vote

explanatory power of ideology and issues (Van Wijnen 2000 c). It can be expected that an observed depillarization of voting behaviour and less distinctive party profiles on issues and the left-right dimension will lead to an increased importance of candidate characteristics for voting behaviour.

Electoral depillarization will enhance the ability of parties to win the votes of social groups that are not part of the traditional cleavage-defined grass roots support. At the same time, parties cannot rely any more on the stable support of this traditional cleavage-defined group of voters. The party positions on issues and ideology, and candidate images are the instruments with which parties engage in an open competition for the same groups of voters. However, parties have taken increasingly less distinctive positions on policy dimensions. As a result, in the electoral competition parties can be expected to put less emphasis on specific policy positions and to resort to the creation of more diffuse images of the party and their leader. Citizens are persuaded, for example, to vote for the party that is 'oriented to the future' and provides 'competent leadership' and will bring the country 'prosperity and justice'. In a depolarizing party system, voters can be expected to increasingly resort to perceived candidate characteristics as cues in deciding which of the parties deserves electoral support.

A second expectation is that parties will differ in the extent to which they are evaluated by voters on the basis of candidate evaluations. This difference can be the result of a host of interrelated factors. It is to be expected that a party will be evaluated on the basis of characteristics of their candidate to a larger extent when this party has more seats in parliament; when the public is more familiar with its candidate; when the candidate is more visible in the media; when the candidate has a more influential position within the party; when the candidate is expected to continue the leadership of the party in the forthcoming incumbent period; and when the candidate is more likely to become the next prime minister.

The number of parties and election years for which data are available does not permit a rigorous empirical testing of these hypothetical influences on the importance of candidate voting. Therefore, analyses will be confined to the assessment of differences between parties regarding the electoral importance of their candidates without addressing the causes of these differences.

## 4 Data and model

### 4.1 Data

DNES studies in the period 1986-1998 provide data that enable the testing of the two expectations on candidate-oriented voting behaviour as stated in section

3. These studies have two survey items on candidate evaluation that are comparable across election years.

Respondents were asked about their *trust in party leaders as future prime ministers*. Scores on this trust item can be viewed as an indicator of evaluations on integrity that mainly refer to a wide-ranging policy competence. Respondents were asked the following question: "Can you tell me ... what your opinion is of different people that might become the leader of a new government ... how much trust would you have in them as prime minister?" Respondents were asked to indicate their trust in the leaders of PvdA, CDA, VVD and D66 on a 1-7 rating scale, ranging from 1 (no trust at all) to 7 (very great trust). In the DNES studies of 1986 and 1989 the question on trust was not asked for the leader of D66.

Additionally, respondents were asked to express their *sympathy for party leaders* on a feeling thermometer scale ranging from 0 (very unsympathetic) to 100 (very sympathetic). This survey item can be regarded as an indicator of candidate evaluation on empathy that is mainly devoid of policy connotations. In election years from 1986 onwards, the question on sympathy was asked for the leaders of all parties with seats in parliament. To compare the vote effects of candidate sympathy and candidate trust, candidate sympathy scores are linearly transformed to scores on a 1-7 rating scale.

For reasons of data availability, empirical analyses in this article will be confined to the voters of PvdA, VVD, CDA and D66.

#### 4.2 An empirical model of voting behaviour

How can the impact of candidate evaluations on the voting decision of Dutch citizens be measured? Using the Michigan Schools' funnel of causality as analytical framework (Campbell et al. 1960; Miller & Shanks 1996), evaluations of candidates' characteristics are assumed to be determined by the voters' social background, opinions on issues and ideologies, and retrospective evaluations of the policies of the incumbent government.

For a proper assessment of the importance of candidate-oriented voting behaviour, the relationship between candidate evaluations and voting behaviour has to be controlled for these variables.<sup>1</sup> The main social structural variables relevant for explaining Dutch voting behaviour are social class, church membership and church attendance (Andeweg 1995; Van der Kolk 2000). Party identification, a pivotal variable in the Michigan model of voting behaviour, is not a useful concept for explaining vote preferences of Dutch citizens (Thomassen 1976). Instead, research indicates that the most important political predisposition affecting the vote is identification with a position on a general left-right dimension (Van der Eijk 1983). The influence of position

issues and the left-right dimension will be modelled according to the spatial theory of proximity voting. According to this theory, party preferences are negatively determined by the distance between parties and voters on policy dimensions. The variables for left-right and position issues are operationalized as the absolute value of the difference between a party's position and a voters position.<sup>2</sup> Position issues included in the analyses are the acceptable level of income differences in society (all election years), the usage of nuclear energy (all election years), abortion (1986) and euthanasia (1989, 1994, 1998). Party and voter positions on the income difference issue are assumed to be indicative of issues in the socio-economic realm. Positions on the abortion and euthanasia issues are expected to represent stances on religious/ethical issues. It is assumed that positions on nuclear energy indicate positions on post-materialist issues. The influence of retrospective evaluations is measured by a survey item in which the respondent is asked to indicate his or her general satisfaction with the policies of the incumbent government. Further details on the measurement of independent variables are presented in Appendix A.

#### 5 Trust and sympathy ratings for party leaders

As mentioned before, a necessary condition for candidate-oriented voting behaviour is that voters are familiar with candidates, that they are able to evaluate the candidates, and that they evaluate the candidates differently. To what extent are these conditions met? For the period 1986-1998, Tables 1 and 2 present aggregate measures of candidate evaluations among the electorate. In all election years the vast majority of voters were familiar with the leaders of the four big parties. This finding is indicated by the number of DNES respondents who were able to place these leaders on a feeling thermometer for perceived sympathy. For most election years and parties, less than 5 per cent was not able to place a certain candidate on the thermometer scale. Apparently relatively unknown candidates were D66-leader Van Mierlo in 1986 (10 per cent made no placement), VVD-leader Bolkestein in 1994 (11 per cent) and CDA-leader De Hoop Scheffer in 1998 (21 per cent).

Table I gives an indication of how sympathetic leaders of the four main parties were in the perception of the electorate. Cell entries in the table are the mean sympathy scores for the various party leaders. In each of the four election years there are substantial differences between the party leaders regarding perceived sympathy. Differences between the most and least sympathetic party leader range from about 1.5 to 2.0. Party leaders who were perceived as least sympathetic are Nijpels (VVD) in 1986, Voorhoeve (VVD) in 1989, Brinkman (CDA) and Bolkestein (VVD) in 1994 and Bolkestein (VVD) in 1998. Candidates with the highest sympathy scores are Lubbers (CDA) in 1986 and 1989, and Kok

Table 1 Average sympathy ratings for candidates

Sympathy of candidate		1986	1989	1994	1998
PvdA	Den Uyl	4.2			
	Kok		4.8	4.9	5.4
VVD	Nijpels	3.6			
	Voorhoeve		3.6		
	Bolkestein			3.8	4.0
D66	Van Mierlo	4.2	4.9	4.7	
	Borst				4.3
CDA	Lubbers	5.1	5.2		
	Brinkman			3.8	
	De Hoop Scheffer				4.1

Table 2 Average trust ratings for candidates

Trust in candidate		1986	1989	1994	1998
PvdA	Den Uyl	3.5			
	Kok		4.3	5.0	6.1
VVD	Nijpels	2.7			
	Voorhoeve		2.9		
	Bolkestein			3.8	4.0
D66	Van Mierlo	-	-	4.6	
	Borst				4.0
CDA	Lubbers	5.4	5.4		
	Brinkman			3.4	
	De Hoop Scheffer				3.6

(PvdA) in 1994 and 1998. In every election year, the party leader of the VVD is regarded as the one of the least sympathetic leaders. A possible explanation for this finding is that of the four parties, the issue and ideological position of the VVD has the largest distance from the position of a majority of voters. These voters seemingly build a negative evaluation of the VVD party leaders largely based on disagreement with the party's policies. Another striking observation is that the incumbent prime minister is always perceived as the most

sympathetic party leader. This finding indicates that citizens have a tendency to develop positive evaluations of the person who is perceived to be 'in charge of the country'.

The mean trust scores for party leaders are shown in Table 2. The difference in mean scores between the least and most trustworthy party leaders varies between about 2.0 and 2.5. Party leaders who were perceived as least trustworthy as potential prime ministers are Nijpels (VVD) in 1986, Voorhoeve (VVD) in 1989, Brinkman (CDA) in 1994, and De Hoop Scheffer (CDA) in 1998. The most trustworthy candidates are Lubbers (CDA) in 1986 and 1989, and Kok (PvdA) in 1994 and 1998. Being a prime minister apparently increases public trust in being a prime minister for a second term. Incumbent prime ministers have always been perceived as the most trustworthy party leaders in this respect.

## 6 The bivariate relationship between candidate evaluations and voting behaviour

Do trust and sympathy for party-leaders affect the decision for which party a vote will be cast? Research on the influence of candidate assessments on voting behaviour is potentially plagued by problems of causality. Do respondents report having voted for a party because they have a positive evaluation of that party's candidate? Or do respondents report a positive evaluation of a candidate because they prefer that candidate's party, for reasons unrelated to candidate assessments?<sup>23</sup>

Because it can be expected that candidate assessments are substantially determined by party assessments, analyses of survey data will most likely always lead to an overestimation of the effect of candidate evaluations on voting behaviour. Given the research focus of this article this problem is not insurmountable. We are not focussed on absolute levels of candidate vote effects. Instead, we are interested in comparing vote effects of candidate evaluations across parties and across election years. In order to arrive at meaningful conclusions about longitudinal trends in candidate-vote effects and about differences in candidate-vote effects between parties, two plausible assumptions are made. First, the extent to which respondents evaluate party leaders on the basis of evaluations of their respective parties is constant across election years. Second, the extent to which respondents make candidate evaluations on the basis of party evaluations is constant across voters of different parties. There is no research evidence to suggest that this behavioural mechanism changes over time, nor that this mechanism is different for voters of different parties.

A first impression of the influence of candidate evaluations on voting behaviour is obtained by looking at bivariate relationships between candidate

Table 3 Average sympathy ratings for candidates. Differences between party voters and non-party voters.

Sympathy of candidate		1986	1989	1994	1998
PvdA	Den Uyl	1.85			
	Kok		1.65	.91	.65
VVD	Nijpels	1.52			
	Voorhoeve		1.41		
	Bolkestein			1.28	1.50
D66	Van Mierlo	1.27	1.19	.83	
	Borst				.80
CDA	Lubbers	1.34	1.46		
	Brinkman			1.34	
	De Hoop Scheffer				1.28

Table 4 Average trust ratings for candidates. Differences between party voters and non-party voters

Trust in candidate		1986	1989	1994	1998
PvdA	Den Uyl	2.74			
	Kok		1.99	1.19	.68
VVD	Nijpels	1.30			
	Voorhoeve		1.44		
	Bolkestein			1.49	1.97
D66	Van Mierlo	-	-	1.31	
	Borst				1.04
CDA	Lubbers	1.51	1.57		
	Brinkman			1.88	
	De Hoop Scheffer				1.61

sympathy, candidate trust and voting behaviour. Table 3 gives a presentation of differences in mean scores for candidate sympathy between voters of the candidate's party and other voters. Not surprisingly, all cell entries are positive, indicating that voters always have a more favourable perception of the candidate of the party of their choice than voters of other parties do. Substantial differences can be observed between parties regarding the

relationship between perceived sympathy and voting behaviour. Leaders of the pvdA in the 1980s and vvd leaders have been perceived as much more sympathetic by voters of their own party than by voters of other parties. pvdA leaders in the 1990s and d66 leaders have been perceived as only slightly more sympathetic by voters of their own party than by other voters. This finding is an indication of the dependence of candidate evaluations on the party profiles on issues and ideology. Candidates are given far more negative evaluations by voters of other parties when the parties they represent have a clear policy profile that is distinct from other parties. This is much less the case for candidates of more centrist parties.<sup>4</sup>

A comparison across election years shows that the bivariate relationship between candidate sympathy and voting for the pvdA and d66 became less strong in the period 1986-1998. For the cda and vvd this relationship has not changed systematically.

Table 4 shows the differences in trust in a candidate as prime minister between party voters and other voters. Especially the pvdA candidates in the 1980s, and cda and vvd candidates in the 1990s were perceived as much more trustworthy by voters of their own party than by other voters. For pvdA candidates in the 1990s and d66 leaders the difference in the level of trust shown by party voters and other voters has been relatively small. These findings suggest that voters of other parties evaluate candidates of parties with distinct policy positions more negatively with respect to trust than candidates of more centrist parties. Thus, similar to candidate sympathy, the level of trust attributed to a candidate seems to be substantially dependent on the degree to which voters agree with the policy positions of the candidate's party. The bivariate relationships presented in Table 4 indicate that the importance of candidate trust for voting pvdA declined in the period 1986-1998 whereas it increased for the vvd. No systematic changes have occurred in the bivariate relationship between candidate trust and voting for cda.

## 7 The multivariate relationship between candidate evaluations and voting behaviour

Results presented so far have not yet given a complete picture of the influence of candidate evaluations on voting behaviour. The relationships between candidate evaluation and party preference, presented in Tables 3 and 4, could be partially spurious. A positive assessment of a candidate and a vote preference for the party of this candidate could be the result of agreement between the party and voter on policy dimensions, satisfaction with policies of the incumbent government (policy voting) or the result of the fact that the specific party represents the social group to which the voter belongs (cleavage voting).

To get a more valid indication of the importance of candidate assessments for voting behaviour, a multivariate model is estimated with vote choice as a dependent variable at nominal measurement level and candidate sympathy, candidate trust, policy satisfaction, party-voter agreement on left-right ideology and issues, social class and religious adherence as independent variables (see sections 4.1 and 4.2 for more details on the specification of this model). Initially it will be assumed that voters evaluate the different parties to an equal extent on the basis of the characteristics of their leaders. Hence the vote effects of both candidate trust and candidate sympathy are estimated with one coefficient.

An appropriate method for analysing the multivariate relationship between a nominal dependent variable (vote choice), choice specific variables (candidate evaluations and party evaluations on issues and left-right), and individual specific variables (policy satisfaction, social class and religion) is the estimation of a conditional logit (CL) model. See Appendix B for more details on the conditional logit model. The CL model is estimated on the basis of a stacked data matrix. When there are  $n$  voters and  $p$  parties, the matrix consists of  $n \times p$  cases. Each row in the matrix refers to one case that represents a combination of one specific party and one specific voter. Across the  $p$  rows that refer to one specific voter, the choice specific variables vary and the individual specific variables are constant. In the stacked matrix, the dependent variable vote choice is a dummy variable with values 0 or 1, indicating whether or not a specific respondent voted for a specific party.<sup>5</sup>

CL analyses have been performed for the separate election years 1986, 1989, 1994 and 1998. Table 5 shows for the period 1986-1998 the trends with respect to the effect of candidate sympathy and candidate trust on vote choice when controlling for policy satisfaction, position issues, left-right, social class and religion. The effects presented are logistic regression coefficients. They can be interpreted as the change in log odds ratio in voting for a party relative to voting for another party due to a one-unit increase in trust or sympathy for the candidate representing this party. In every election year, coefficients for the effect of candidate trust and candidate sympathy on the vote are positive and significant in a one-tailed test at the .05 level.<sup>6</sup>

The effect of sympathy for candidates on vote choice increases in the period 1986-1989 from 0.54 to 1.03. After 1989 it decreases again, to 0.68 in 1998. There appears to be a systematic increase in the effect of trust in a candidate as future prime minister on the decision whether to vote for the party of this candidate. In the period 1986-1998 the effect on vote choice of candidate trust increased from 0.36 to 0.64.

Table 5 also gives an impression of longitudinal developments in the degree to which candidate evaluations can explain variations in voting patterns. For each election year, an assessment is made of the contribution to the model fit

Table 5 Vote effect and vote explanatory power of trust and sympathy for candidates. Effects are logistic regression coefficients.

	1986	1989	1994	1998
Effect of trust	.36 (.05)	.39 (.06)	.59 (.05)	.64 (.06)
Effect of sympathy	.54 (.08)	1.03 (.09)	.85 (.08)	.68 (.07)
Explained variance trust and sympathy	.09	.18	.21	.18
N	836	1118	901	978

Numbers in brackets are standard errors of regression coefficients.

when trust in candidates and sympathy for candidates are added to a model with policy satisfaction, issues, left-right, social class and religious adherence as independent variables. For separate election years, the table presents increments in adjusted Rho square, which is a goodness of fit measure for logit models. Rho square is defined as  $1 - (\log \text{likelihood of a constants only model} / \log \text{likelihood of the estimated model})$ . Adjusted Rho square values have been corrected for the sample size and the number of estimated parameters. In the 1986 election year, trust in candidates and sympathy for candidates jointly explain a modest 9 per cent of the variance in vote choice in addition to policy preferences and social background variables. After 1986 the contribution of candidate evaluations to the explained variance in vote choice is at a structurally higher level, fluctuating between 18 and 21 per cent. In sum, the available data suggest that in accordance with expectations candidate evaluations have become more important for voting behaviour since 1986, both in terms of vote effects and vote explanatory power.

In the real world of politics one can expect that different parties will be evaluated to a different extent on the characteristics of their leaders. Section 3 discussed a number of factors that are likely to determine these differences between parties.

Table 6 presents coefficients of an estimated model that is based on the more realistic assumption of differences between parties regarding the vote effect of candidate evaluations. This model contains parameters for candidate evaluations for each separate party.<sup>7</sup> All coefficients reported in the table are positive and significant in a one-tailed test at the .05 level.

The elections of 1986 have often been described in the media as a battle

Table 6 Sympathy and trust effects on voting behaviour. Effects are logistic coefficients of party-specific variables.

Effect of sympathy and trust on vote choice		1986	1989	1994	1998
Den Uyl (PvdA)	sympathy	.28 (.10)			
	trust	.51 (.13)			
Kok (PvdA)	sympathy		1.50 (.09)	.95 (.14)	.60 (.13)
	trust		.48 (.11)	.42 (.12)	.88 (.16)
Nijpels (VVD)	sympathy	.66 (.10)			
	trust	.21 (.16)			
Voorhoeve (VVD)	sympathy		.79 (.15)		
	trust		.31 (.10)		
Bolkestein (VVD)	sympathy			.86 (.13)	.53 (.11)
	trust			.64 (.12)	.75 (.10)
Van Mierlo (D66)	sympathy	1.36 (.11)	1.79 (.13)	.80 (.10)	
	trust	-	-	.72 (.12)	
Borst (D66)	sympathy				.61 (.12)
	trust				.48 (.09)
Lubbers (CDA)	sympathy	.51 (.08)	.81 (.14)		
	trust	.24 (.12)	.34 (.11)		
Brinkman (CDA)	sympathy			.68 (.09)	
	trust			.67 (.11)	
De Hoop Scheffer (CDA)	sympathy				1.06 (.14)
	trust				.73 (.11)

Numbers in parentheses are standard errors of regression coefficients.

between the charismatic leaders Den Uyl (PvdA) and Lubbers (CDA). Yet the vote effects of sympathy for Lubbers and trust in Lubbers as prime minister appear to be relatively small. This finding indicates that positive evaluations of Lubbers with respect to trust and sympathy are largely determined by satisfaction with the policies of the Lubbers I cabinet, agreement with the CDA's policy platform or the social background of the voters. The effects suggest that

among voters with a high degree of policy satisfaction, policy agreement with the CDA or adherence to a Christian church, the evaluation of Lubbers' personality traits apparently played only a relatively minor role in the decision whether or not to vote for the CDA. The same conclusion holds for the importance of trust in Den Uyl and sympathy for Den Uyl with regard to the decision whether to vote for the PvdA in 1986. Party preferences in 1986 for the VVD and for D66 in particular were more dependent on the sympathy for the party leader.

At the 1989 elections sympathy for Van Mierlo and the new party leader Kok played a relatively important role in the decision whether to vote for these candidates' parties. Compared with the CDA and VVD party leaders, trust in Kok as future prime minister had a somewhat greater effect on vote preferences for the PvdA. During the 1994 elections, sympathy for Kok again had a substantial effect on a vote preference for the PvdA. Trust in Van Mierlo as future prime minister was relatively important in the decision whether to vote for D66.

In 1998, perceived sympathy for the new CDA leader De Hoop Scheffer proved to be an important factor in determining a vote preference for the CDA, whereas vote preferences for the PvdA, VVD and D66 were only minimally dependent on the sympathy for the party leaders. Trust in Kok, Bolkestein and De Hoop Scheffer highly influenced vote preferences for the parties of these candidates; this applies in particular for trust in Kok.

A comparison of the results of Table 6 with Tables 3 and 4 shows clearly that bivariate analyses lead to substantially distorted perceptions of the following relationships:

1. Bivariate analyses underestimate the vote effect of sympathy for Van Mierlo in 1986 and 1989, Kok in 1994 and Brinkman in 1994. In addition, these analyses underestimate the vote effect of trust in Kok in 1998;
2. Bivariate relationships between candidate-assessments and voting behaviour overestimate the vote effect of sympathy for Den Uyl in 1986, Lubbers in 1989 and Bolkestein in 1998. Furthermore, these relationships overestimate the vote effect of trust in Brinkman in 1994 and in Bolkestein in 1998.

A comparison across election years shows that after 1986 the effect of candidate sympathy on voting for PvdA and CDA increased. Since 1989 this effect has decreased for D66. No systematic changes have occurred in the effect of sympathy on voting for the VVD. From 1986 onwards, the effect on vote choice of trust has structurally increased for the party leaders of PvdA, CDA and VVD. So far, analyses have indicated the effect of candidate evaluations on individual voting behaviour. How important have these evaluations been for the number of votes obtained by parties in elections? This question can be addressed by assessing model-predicted party vote shares under varying conditions on the

Table 7 Sympathy and trust effects on party vote shares. Model-predicted vote shares for an electorate with a neutral perception of a candidate (score = 4) and an electorate with the actual average perceived perception of a candidate.

Effect of sympathy and trust on predicted party vote share		1986	1989	1994	1998
Den Uyl (PvdA)	sympathy	.38-.41			
	trust		.47-.41		
Kok (PvdA)	sympathy		.10-.27	.14-.29	.32-.42
	trust		.24-.27	.21-.29	.09-.42
Nijpels (VVD)	sympathy	.15-.12			
	trust	.15-.12			
Voorhoeve (VVD)	sympathy		.19-.15	.32-.31	
	trust		.20-.15	.32-.31	
Bolkestein (VVD)	sympathy				.28-.30
	trust				.26-.30
Van Mierlo (D66)	sympathy	.04-.06	.02-.10	.13-.21	
	trust			.14-.21	
Borst (D66)	sympathy				.12-.14
	trust				.14-.14
Lubbers (CDA)	sympathy	.29-.41	.25-.48		
	trust	.33-.41	.36-.48		
Brinkman (CDA)	sympathy			.20-.19	
	trust			.24-.19	
De Hoop Scheffer (CDA)	sympathy				.12-.14
	trust				.18-.14

evaluation of candidates. Plugging the sample mean values of independent variables in the estimated logit model gives, for the so-called mean voter, the estimated probabilities of voting for each of the parties. These vote probabilities for the mean voter are at the same time the model-predicted vote shares obtained by the parties. For candidate trust and candidate sympathy Table 7 gives a presentation of model predicted party vote shares for an electorate with an average candidate evaluation equal to the actual sample mean value and for

an electorate with an average candidate evaluation equal to the neutral score on the seven-point scale (score 4).<sup>8</sup>

From 1989 onwards, the number of seats obtained by the pvdA was relatively highly dependent on the evaluation of their party leader. This is partly explained by high levels of sympathy and trust for Kok among electorates in the 1990s. For example, the estimated model predicts that the pvdA would win 27 per cent of the votes in 1989. Had the voters had on average a neutral evaluation of Kok on sympathy (score 4), then the model predicts that the pvdA would have got only 10 per cent of the votes. After 1989, the effect of sympathy on the vote share of the pvdA declines, but to a still substantial 10 per cent difference in 1998 between the actual electorate and an electorate with a neutral evaluation of Kok. Had voters given a neutral evaluation of Kok on trust in 1989, the model predicts that the pvdA would have won 24 per cent instead of 27 per cent of the votes. The effect of trust in Kok on the electoral position of the pvdA appears to increase in the period 1989-1998. At the 1998 elections, only 9 per cent of an electorate with a neutral evaluation of Kok on trust would have voted for the pvdA, instead of the model predicted 42 per cent for the actual electorate.<sup>9</sup>

The electoral strength of the vvd appears to be relatively unaffected by evaluations of their party leader. For each of the election years, the difference in model predicted vote share of the vvd between the actual and a neutral evaluation is not greater than 5 per cent. High levels of perceived sympathy and trust in Van Mierlo had a substantial positive influence on the electoral position of D66 in 1989 and 1994. For the 1989 elections, the model predicts that with an electorate with a neutral evaluation of Van Mierlo on sympathy, D66 would have got only 2 per cent of the votes instead of the 10 per cent for the actual electorate. Also in 1994, D66 would have won remarkably fewer votes if the electorate had had less positive evaluations of Van Mierlo on trust and sympathy. The positive evaluation of Lubbers appears to be an important explanation for the electoral gains of the CDA in 1986 and 1989. For the 1986 election the model predicts that an electorate with a neutral evaluation of Lubbers on sympathy and trust would have given the CDA 12 and 8 per cent fewer votes, respectively, than was actually the case. At the 1989 elections the electoral fate of the CDA appears to have been even more dependent on the evaluation of their leader on trust and sympathy. If Lubbers had had a neutral evaluation on sympathy and trust, the CDA would have won only one quarter and one third of the votes, respectively.

## 8 Summary and conclusions

The research question of this article has been twofold. First, has the decline in cleavage voting and less distinctive party profiles on policy dimensions led to an increasing importance of candidate-oriented voting behaviour in the period 1986-1998? Second, are parties evaluated to a different extent on the basis of candidate evaluations?

Available data allowed the examination of these questions regarding sympathy for candidates and trust in candidates as future prime minister. Trust in a candidate and sympathy for a candidate have indeed become more important for voting behaviour, both in terms of vote effects and vote explanatory power. Especially trust in the candidates of the PVDA, VVD and CDA seems to have become more important for an explanation of Dutch voting behaviour in the past two decades.

In elections, parties appear to differ substantially in the degree to which they are evaluated on the basis of sympathy for their candidates and trust in their candidates. Data on more elections and parties are needed to explain these differences satisfactorily.

Results of multivariate analyses of candidate-oriented voting behaviour differ substantially from results of bivariate analyses of the relationship between candidate evaluations and vote choice. This finding indicates that evaluations of candidates are to a large extent moulded by social background, satisfaction with policies of the incumbent government, and agreement with parties on ideology and issues.

For each of the investigated election years, the model predicted party vote shares have shown that the electoral position of the PVDA has been substantially influenced by either perceived sympathy or trust in the party leader. The electoral fate of the VVD appears to be relatively unaffected by evaluations of their candidates. Sympathy for and trust in Van Mierlo have proven to be important explanatory factors for the number of seats obtained by D66 in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the 1980s, the electoral position of the CDA was highly dependent on evaluations of their party leader Lubbers.

Findings presented in this article support the expectation that a further decline in cleavage voting and less distinctive party profiles on policy dimensions in the near future will lead to an increased importance of candidate evaluations for Dutch voting behaviour. To the extent that party elites are aware of a rise in candidate voting, an interactive process between parties and voters is likely to occur. In election campaigns parties will put even greater emphasis on their leaders, which in turn gives voters a stronger impetus to evaluate parties on the basis of candidate characteristics.

In the period 1986-1998, the variance in vote choice jointly explained by social class, religion, policy orientations and candidate evaluations declined in

each successive election year. This finding thus indicates that the decline in vote explanatory power of social background and policy orientations has not been fully compensated by a rise in the importance of candidate evaluations for explaining the vote decision. The decrease in vote explanation of the 'complete' model supports the expectation of a particularization of the vote choice (cf. Van der Eijk et al. 1992). According to this expectation the growing number of individualized and politically sophisticated voters in advanced industrial democracies would be less inclined to use their social background, ideological orientations or party identification as cues to develop preferences for parties. Instead they would make up their own minds and base their voting decision on an idiosyncratic combination of highly personal considerations.

The observed decline of policy voting and rise in candidate voting raises questions on the consequences for political representation. According to normative democratic theories, political elites can only represent the policy preferences of the mass public if citizens vote primarily on the basis of policy orientations in elections. Voting for a party because its leader is assessed positively does not necessarily imply congruence between the policy positions of the voter and this party. Thus, an increased importance of candidate voting might lead to a growing disparity between the parties' policy positions and the opinions of its voters.

Analyses for the period 1986-1998 indicate that such a development has not taken place in the Dutch political system. For this period, no systematic changes have occurred in the degree to which parties misrepresent their voters on policy dimensions (Van Wijnen 2000d).<sup>10</sup> The absence of an increasing level of misrepresentation can be explained partly by a declining level of polarization on policy dimensions of parties and the mass public as well. Since 1986 both voters and parties have taken increasingly centrist positions on position issues and the left-right dimension (Van Wijnen 2000a, b, c).

In section 2 it was argued that candidate-oriented voting behaviour of citizens is not necessarily devoid of policy considerations. If parties take increasingly similar stances on position issues and ideology voters are likely to resort to other policy criteria in deciding which parties should run the country. If consensus on policy goals to solve major societal problems increases, one can expect that citizens will increasingly vote on the basis of the perceived general competence of party leaders in handling these problems. Empirical analyses have shown that from 1986 onwards the vote effect of candidate sympathy has not increased systematically. However, there has been a structural increase in the vote effect of trust in leaders of the three largest parties as future prime minister. One can expect that trust in party leaders as prime minister to a large extent refers to an assessment of general policy competence. Thus, the observed trends in candidate voting for the Dutch electorate do not support

the expectation that a rise in candidate voting implies that citizens' voting choices are becoming increasingly devoid of policy considerations.

An increase in the vote effect of trust in candidates can be conducive to election outcomes in which political elites better represent the preferences of the electorate on the aspect of general policy competence.

### Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to two anonymous reviewers of *Acta Politica* for their constructive and valuable comments.

## Appendix 1: Variables

### *Position issues and left-right ideology*

In DNES studies respondents were asked to indicate their own position and the perceived position of PvdA, CDA, VVD and D66 for at least three position issues and a general left-right dimension on seven-point left-right scales (ten-point for left-right ideology). The poles of these dimensions are presented underneath:

*Euthanasia* should be forbidden (1) – a doctor should always be allowed to conduct euthanasia at the patient's request (7).

*Abortion* should be forbidden in all circumstances (1) – every woman should have the right to decide for herself (7).

*Differences in income* should become larger in our country (1) – differences in income should become smaller (7).

*New nuclear reactors* should be built in the Netherlands (1) – no new nuclear reactors should be built at all (7).

For each of the policy dimensions, agreement between a party and a voter has been measured as the absolute value of the difference between the voters position and the 'objective' (average respondent-perceived) party position.

### *Satisfaction with government policy*

'Can you tell me using this show card how satisfied or unsatisfied you are generally with what the government has done for you over the past four years?'

Response options are: very unsatisfied, unsatisfied, neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, satisfied, very satisfied. Satisfaction with government is included in the analyses as a metric variable ranging from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

### *Social background variables*

*Social class* position is measured on the basis of a respondent's self-image. Response options in the survey item are lower working class, upper working class, lower middle class, upper middle class and upper class. The variable social class in empirical analyses is at a metric measurement level, ranging from 1 (lower working class) to 5 (upper class).

*Religious adherence* is measured by an index, capturing both church membership and church attendance. The index has been constructed with the following formula: dummy variable for denomination (membership of either a Protestant or Catholic Church is score 1; otherwise score 0) multiplied by an indicator for frequency of church attendance. The indicator for church attendance can take the values: 1 (never), 2 (seldom/sometimes), 3 (2 or 3 times a month) and 4 (every week).

## Appendix 2: The conditional logit model

The CL model is based on discrete choice theory. Confronted with a choice situation, individuals are expected to choose the alternative that provides them the highest level of utility.

The conditional logit model is defined as:

$$P_{ij} = \exp(U_{ij}) / \sum_{k=1}^J \exp(U_{ik}) \quad (1)$$

$P_{ij}$  is the probability of individual  $i$  choosing alternative  $j$  from the choice set  $[1, \dots, J]$ .  $U_{ij}$  is defined as:

$$U_{ij} = \beta X_{ij} + \gamma_j A_i + e_{ij} \quad (2)$$

$U_{ij}$  is the level of utility attached to alternative  $j$  by individual  $i$ . In analyses in this article the parties are the alternatives. The symbol  $\beta$  is a vector of coefficients representing the effect on utility of alternative-specific variables ( $X_{ij}$ ). The  $X_{ij}$ -variables in performed analyses are sympathy and trust in a leader of a specific party. Furthermore,  $X_{ij}$ -variables refer to distances between parties and voters on policy dimensions. The symbol  $\gamma_j$  is a vector of coefficients representing the effect on utility of individual-specific variables ( $A_i$ ). In analyses of voting behaviour,  $A_i$ -variables are the respondents' satisfaction with government policy, social class position and religious adherence.  $e_{ij}$  is the error term, representing unmeasured determinants of utility. It is assumed that these errors are identically and independently distributed with a Gumbel distribution.

Given the assumption of utility maximizing individuals, the assumed utility functions (equation 2) and the assumed error distribution, McFadden (1974) has derived equation (1). This equation states the probability of individual  $i$  choosing alternative  $j$ .

In order to identify the model,  $\gamma$ -coefficients for the CDA have been set to zero. For each of the alternatives, the CL model can be expressed in terms of log odds ratios.

$$\ln(P_{ij} / P_{ik}) = \beta(X_{ij} - X_{ik}) + (\gamma_j - \gamma_k) A_i \quad (3)$$

Whereby alternative  $k$  represents the reference alternative.

The effects on vote choice of candidate evaluations, presented in Tables 6 and 7, can be interpreted as the  $\beta$ -coefficients in equation (3). A one unit increase in the evaluation of the candidate of party  $J$  is expected to lead to a  $\beta$  change in the log odds ratio of choosing party  $J$  versus choosing any other party.

Maximum likelihood estimates of the parameters are obtained with the Newton-Raphson algorithm. Analyses in this article were performed with the programme LIMDEP 7.

## Notes

1. Some scholars (e.g., Aarts 2000) have contended that party evaluations should be taken into account when analysing the influence of candidate evaluations on vote choice. The argument is that when citizens decide for which party they will cast their vote, they make separate evaluations of the parties and their candidates. It is assumed that party evaluations and candidate evaluations are conceptually distinct phenomena that independently influence the vote decision. However, analysing candidate-oriented voting behaviour with a model including party evaluations is problematic for two reasons. Although conceptually distinct, it can be expected that the two variables are strongly dependent on each other. Dutch National Election Studies show that the variables are indeed strongly correlated. A non-recursive causal model of voting behaviour with reciprocal relationships between candidate and party evaluations would be needed to assess this mutual dependency. However, the absence of panel data does not permit the estimation of such a model. Including the strongly correlated variables in a single regression model will yield a relatively high level of multicollinearity with corresponding unreliable estimates of the vote effects of the two variables. This problem might be solved by creating a new variable that simultaneously captures the effect of party and candidate evaluations. This variable can be operationalized as the difference between the score for leader evaluations and the score for party evaluations. The idea behind this operationalization is that candidate evaluations only have a positive effect on voting behaviour if the candidate is evaluated more positively than his or her party. However, this solution of the multicollinearity problem does not solve the problem of interdependence of the two factors. A highly positive party evaluation can be the result of a highly positive candidate evaluation. In this situation, respondents with a very positive evaluation of a candidate will be assigned a relatively low score on the difference variable.

An example can further illustrate this potential problem. Suppose there are voters who give party X a sympathy score of 6 and their candidate a sympathy score of 8. These voters have a score of 2 on the difference variable. Suppose there is another group of voters who give party X a sympathy score of 9 and their candidate a sympathy score of 9. These voters have a score of 0 on the difference variable. Further, assume that the high sympathy score given by this group to party X is mainly determined by their high level of sympathy for the leader of this party.

This fictitious example illustrates that because of the mutual dependence of candidate and party evaluations the difference-variable is likely to lead to invalid estimates of the independent impact of candidate evaluations on vote choice.

2. In order to avoid cognitive dissonance respondents tend to exaggerate the degree of similarity between their own opinions and the positions of their favoured party on policy matters. In case of so-called projection effects individuals adjust their *perception* of the policy positions of their favoured party to their own attitudes. As a consequence they will have distorted perceptions of the 'objective' policy positions of this party. Using individual perceived party positions would entail the risk of measuring these projection effects and thus overestimating the importance of policy-oriented voting behaviour. Therefore, party-voter distances used in the analyses are based on 'objective' party positions. 'Objective' party positions are defined as the mean respondent-

perceived party positions on policy dimensions. Research by Van der Brug (1996) has shown that aggregate perceptions of party positions among the mass public closely resemble the 'real' party positions derived from analyses of party manifestos and legislative behaviour.

3. The problem of causality is also present when examining the influence on voting behaviour of other types of attitudes, e.g., voters' policy preferences. In note 2 the problem of measuring projection effects was mentioned when analysing proximity voting on the basis of subjective party placements. A second problem regarding causality is the measurement of persuasion effects. An example of a persuasion effect is the following phenomenon. Citizens can vote for a party primarily because it represents their religion. Then on the basis of a positive party evaluation they will tend (are 'persuaded') to develop a positive evaluation of the candidate leading this party. In the absence of panel data it is not possible to distinguish persuasion effects from 'genuine' candidate voting. Analyses of candidate-oriented voting behaviour in this article are not plagued by the occurrence of projection effects. There are no 'objective' positions of candidates on sympathy and trust.

4. The pvda in the 1980s and the vvd have taken relatively distinct positions on the left-right dimension and the issues of income differences and nuclear energy. On these policy dimensions the pvda in the 1990s and D66 have taken more centrist positions (Aarts & Semetko 1999: 121).

5. The structure of a stacked data matrix for the mentioned types of variables can be presented visually with the following example. Suppose respondent *i* votes for party A and gives candidates of the parties A, B, C and D the respective scores  $S_{Ai}$ ,  $S_{Bi}$ ,  $S_{Ci}$  and  $S_{Di}$  on the variable for sympathy (S). When parties are assumed to be equal regarding the degree to which they are evaluated on the basis of candidate evaluations, the vote effect of candidate sympathy is estimated with variable S. In the data matrix for this variable, the scores  $S_{Ai}$ ,  $S_{Bi}$ ,  $S_{Ci}$  and  $S_{Di}$  are stacked across the parties. The dummy variable V indicates the party voted for and has score 1 on the row that refers to the party voted for, otherwise it has a score of 0. The variable SC indicates the individual-specific variable respondents social class. For respondent *i*, this variable has the score  $SC_i$  and is constant across the rows referring to the different parties.

	Party	S	V	SC
Respondent <i>i</i>	Party a	$S_{Ai}$	1	$SC_i$
	Party b	$S_{Bi}$	0	$SC_i$
	Party c	$S_{Ci}$	0	$SC_i$
	Party d	$S_{Di}$	0	$SC_i$

6. As mentioned before, DNES studies of 1986 and 1989 do not have data on trust in D66 leader Van Mierlo as future prime minister. For these election years the sympathy score given to Van Mierlo is used as an approximation of the level of trust put in Van Mierlo as future prime minister. This artificially boosts the sample correlation between sympathy and trust. Besides, the correlation between candidate trust and candidate sympathy is also strong for voters of pvda, vvd and cda. The low standard errors of

coefficients show that in spite of this multicollinearity, it is possible to get reliable estimates of the vote effects of trust and sympathy.

7. Party-specific vote effects of candidate evaluations are estimated with party-specific variables in the stacked data matrix. Example for candidate trust: for each of the parties A, B, C and D a variable for candidate trust is defined with respective labels  $S_A$ ,  $S_B$ ,  $S_C$  and  $S_D$ . Suppose respondent *i* gives candidates of the parties A, B, C and D the respective trust scores  $S_{Ai}$ ,  $S_{Bi}$ ,  $S_{Ci}$  and  $S_{Di}$ .

In order to estimate the party-specific vote effects of candidate trust the stacked data matrix for respondent *i* should have the following structure:

	Party	$S_A$	$S_B$	$S_C$	$S_D$
Respondent <i>i</i>	Party a	$S_{Ai}$	0	0	0
	Party b	0	$S_{Bi}$	0	0
	Party c	0	0	$S_{Ci}$	0
	Party d	0	0	0	$S_{Di}$

Party-specific variables are assigned a score of 0 when the case does not refer to the specific party.

8. The model predicted vote probabilities do not exactly equal the actual number of votes obtained by pvda, vvd, D66 or cda as a proportion of the total number of valid votes cast. The model predicted party vote shares in Table 7 also give – to a certain extent – inaccurate estimates of predicted party vote shares under hypothetical conditions. Three factors explain these phenomena. 1) Voters of small parties are not included in the analyses. Thus, predicted party vote shares in this article only refer to the number of votes obtained by a party as a proportion of the number of votes jointly obtained by pvda, cda, vvd and D66. 2) On the dependent and independent variables, the samples analysed are probably not fully representative of the entire electorate. 3) The fit of the estimated models to the data is not perfect.

Given that the estimated vote effects of independent variables are reasonably valid the occurrence of slightly inaccurate predicted vote shares is not problematic. The research focus is not on the absolute values of predicted party vote shares. Instead, we are interested in the *magnitude of change* in predicted party vote shares when either candidate trust or candidate sympathy changes among the electorate.

Another problem with model simulation deserves attention. In hypothetical conditions there would have been different samples that could (although not necessarily) have resulted in substantially different estimates of vote effects of independent variables. Therefore, the results presented in Table 7 should be interpreted with caution.

9. The validity of the estimated vote shares of 10 per cent for the pvda in case of a neutral evaluation of Kok on sympathy in 1989 and 9 per cent for the pvda in case of a neutral evaluation of Kok on trust in 1998 can be seriously questioned. Note 8 discussed a number of factors that might lead to invalid estimates of predicted party vote shares. However, the findings of a large effect of trust and sympathy for Kok on the number of votes obtained by the pvda in these years remains reasonably valid. The ranges of predicted party vote shares across the conditions as presented in Table 7 are determined

by the actual levels of candidate evaluations among the electorate and the size of the vote effects of candidate evaluations. Table 2 showed that Kok got a high trust rating from the electorate in 1998 (average score of 6.1). Furthermore, Table 5 showed a large effect of sympathy for Kok on voting for the pvda in 1989 (effect is 1.50) and a large effect of trust in Kok on voting for the pvda (effect is .88).

10. For the general left-right dimension and three position issues (euthanasia, income differences and nuclear energy) in the period 1986-1998 the position of parties have been compared with the average self-placement of voters of these parties. Positions of parties have been calculated as the mean respondent-perceived placements of parties. For a specific party and policy dimension, the degree of misrepresentation has been defined as the absolute value of the difference between the party position and the average self placement of the voters of this party.

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## Book Reviews

Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone. The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster 2000. ISBN 0-684-83283-6, USD 26.00.

In 1995, Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam caused something of a stir in American public opinion with his article 'Bowling Alone' (*Journal of Democracy* 6(1), pp. 65-78). In this article, Putnam observed that although bowling alleys do remain very popular in the United States, fewer people are joining formally organized bowling leagues. Instead, bowlers prefer to gather on an informal basis, with friends or family members. This decline of organized bowling is, according to Putnam, just one indication of an overall erosion of social and civic life in the United States. While Alexis de Tocqueville, in the first half of the 19th century, described America as a 'nation of joiners', Putnam argued that, at the end of the 20th century, American citizens are increasingly disconnecting from their communities. Later on, he acknowledged that the title 'Bowling Alone' was not really an apt metaphor: very few people go out to bowl on their own. The real change is that they increasingly prefer informal groups to formal bowling leagues.

But the title stuck, and since 1995 Putnam has become something of an academic superstar in the United States, even receiving an invitation to the White House. His message of the erosion of social cohesion and the growth of individualism was well received, given the prevailing climate of cultural pessimism. Putnam's increased status also implied access to a flood of research funds and assistants, and thanks to this huge research effort, the 1995 article has now been turned into a major new book. *Bowling Alone* (the book) is, more than anything else, an impressive collection of facts and figures, demonstrating that social cohesion in the United States is indeed diminishing. After the publication of his article, several authors had questioned the validity of Putnam's pessimistic observations, and although their names are seldom mentioned in this new volume, the facts and figures were clearly gathered as a reply to this criticism. To document the long-term trend of decline in civic engagement, Putnam not only relies on the usual data from the General Social Survey and the National Election Studies, but also on two series of commercial surveys about life style and consumption patterns. Although the inclusion of these surveys offers a lot of innovative information, the question about their reliability is treated but cursorily. For example, it is not