Personalization of Politics and Electoral Change in Western Europe (*)

Diego Garzia

European University Institute

<Diego.Garzia@eui.eu>

Abstract. The common wisdom that sees popular party leaders as a fundamental electoral asset for their own parties has been fiercely contested by electoral research. Indeed, virtually all the available comparative evidence points to the key role played by party identification in orienting attitudes towards candidates and vote choices in turn. In this paper, I argue that social-psychological models of voting behavior are apt to systematically downsize the relevance of party leader evaluations by conceiving them as mere consequences of causally prior partisan attachments. Yet the validity of this interpretation depends heavily on the effectively exogenous status of party identification. This analysis shows that its assumed exogeneity is, at best, doubtful. Throughout the last decades, voters' assessment of party leaders has apparently become a crucial determinant of their feelings of identification with political parties. In such context, single-equation models of voting are likely to provide seriously biased estimates. To overcome this problem, I employ a classic econometric remedy: instrumental variable estimation. The results show that once the role of party leaders as drivers of party identification is taken into account – and properly modeled within the voting equation – their electoral effect emerges as much stronger than it often appeared in previous scholarly endeavors. More often than not, leader effects can make the difference between victory and defeat in parliamentary elections. In order to strike a balance between needs for comparison and attention to national differences, this study focuses on three established parliamentary democracies in Western Europe: Britain, Germany, and the Netherlands.

(*) Paper prepared for delivery at the Western Political Science Association Annual Meeting, March 28–30, 2013, Loews Hotel, Hollywood, CA

Introduction[1]

This paper is about the determinants of voter choice in Western European parliamentary democracies. Unlike many existing studies, however, it will concentrate on the psychological drivers of voting. The decline of traditional social and ideological cleavages has in fact rendered progressively inadequate a purely sociological understanding of voting behavior (Blondel and Thiébault, 2010). Moreover, the long-term trends of secularization and enfranchisement of the working class in the Western world (Franklin, Mackie and Valen, 1992) have been paralleled by the pervasive mediatization of the political scene and the resulting tendency to portray politics in an incresingly "personal" – rather than "partisan" – fashion (McAllister, 2007; Garzia, 2011). Taken together, these occurrences have all contributed in shaping the conventional wisdom that "election outcomes are now, more than at any time in the past, determined by voters' assessments of party leaders" (Hayes and McAllister, 1997: p. 3).

Although widely shared by journalists, politicians, and commentators – as well as by ordinary citizens – such an argument has been fiercely contested by social and political scientists (for a review, see: King, 2002a; 2002b). Traditional interpretations of voting (on which the wide majority of academic research is grounded) emphasize the role of macro-social factors such as class, region and religion and/or the resulting long-term social-psychological allegiances with parties (i.e., *party identification*). In either case, voters' evaluations of the personality of individual politicians stand as a sort of residual category, as they appear "strongly mediated by such situational factors as the strength as well as the direction of partisan affiliation" (Brettschneider and Gabriel,

[1] This paper summarizes the results of a book-length research project forthcoming as *Personalization of Politics and Electoral Change* with Palgrave Macmillan.

2002: p. 153). Virtually all the available comparative evidence points indeed to the key role played by party identification in orienting voters' short-term attitudes and vote choices in turn (e.g., King, 2002a; 2002b; Curtice and Holmberg, 2005; Karvonen, 2010; Holmberg and Oscarsson, 2011).

This study challenges the "conventional wisdom of electoral research" (Midtbø, 1997: p. 143) moving from the assumption that individuals' relationship with political parties depends largely on the types of parties that are predominant in the party system at each relevant point in time. Arguably, the profound transformations undergone by traditional cleavage parties in the last decades should have exerted an effect on the dynamics of party identification at the individual level. Mass-based parties were characterized by a tight link with their respective social milieu (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). In the case of contemporary catch-all parties, the nature of this link can be expected to differ substantially (Lobo, 2008). By showing that voters' party identification is not anymore based on prior social and ideological identities, but rather on individual attitudes towards more visible partisan objects and *in primis* party leaders, this study highlights an alternative perspective on voters' behavior in parliamentary elections. If the growing role of party leaders as drivers of partisanship is taken into account (and properly modeled within the voting equation) then their electoral effect emerges as much stronger than it usually appeared. Party leaders can gain (or lose) votes due to the way in which their personality profile is perceived by voters – and this *independently* from the electoral effect exerted by voters' partisan and ideological orientations, retrospective economic evaluations and so on. More often than not, voters' evaluation of party leaders can exert a *decisive* effect on the election outcome.

In order to strike a balance between needs for comparison and attention to national differences, this study will focus on three established parliamentary democracies in Western Europe: Britain, Germany, and The Netherlands. The choice of these three countries – connoted by sharp differences in terms of electoral system, size of the party system and structure of political competition – highlights many of the crucial variations in the structure of democratic politics and allows for a broader-based assessment of the major research hypotheses. The time frame under analysis spans the last five decades – that is, between 1961 (when the first national election study was conducted in Germany) and the most recent election for which national election study data is available (i.e., British and Dutch elections of 2010).

From «party identification» to «partisanship»

In its classical formulation, party identification was conceived as "the individual's affective orientation to an important group object in his environment" (Campbell *et al.,* 1960: p. 121). According to the social-psychological reading, such orientation is rooted in early socialization and based on primary group memberships (e.g., race, religion, social class). Among its crucial features, party identification was said to be *stable* – that is, virtually immune from the effect of short-term forces – and it was thus considered being cause (but not consequence) of less stable attitudes and opinions about, i.e., candidates and issues (Johnston, 2006). As explained by the authors of *The American Voter,* "the influence of party identification on perceptions of political objects is so great that only rarely will the individual develop a set of attitude forces that conflicts with this allegiance" (Campbell *et al.,* 1960: p. 141). To put the case more sharply, the social-

psychological approach conceives party identification as "an exogenous variable affecting politics but not being affected by politics" (Holmberg, 2007: p. 563).

However, it did not take much time before severe criticisms arose with respect to the supposed stability of party identification. Making use of richer datasets and increasingly sophisticated statistical techniques, later analyses showed that partisan ties at the individual level were much more unstable than originally thought, and indeed strongly responsive to those short-term forces that they were thought to cause (Page and Jones, 1979; Fiorina, 1981; Franklin and Jackson, 1983). Moreover, sources of scholarly disagreement did not limit to the debate between Michigan scholars and the "revisionists" (Fiorina, 2002). Another serious matter of dispute was related to the applicability of the concept outside the United States (Budge, Crewe and Farlie, 1976).

As a result of the joint endeavor of U.S. and European scholars, the debate has switched the attention from *party identification* to *partisanship.* Many routes can lead voters to think of themselves as "partisans". However, the great majority of the recent literature on partisanship seems to largely converge on an understanding of the concept based on modern attitude theory (Bartle and Bellucci, 2009). According to this perspective, partisanship is best interpreted as a "psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity [the party] with some degree of favor or disfavor" (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993: p. 1). Such attitudinal interpretation of partisanship is especially useful insofar it entails the possibility for voters to simultaneously develop attitudes towards more than one party, thus favoring its applicability to European multi-party systems (Pappi, 1996). Among the possible sources of favorable attitudes towards the parties, the literature assigns a crucial place to issue preferences (Downs, 1957). retrospective evaluations of party performance (Fiorina, 1981) or prospective

competence assessments (Bellucci, 2006). Aggregate partisanship rates have also been shown to respond to the style of electoral competition in a country and the politicization of the respective electorates (Holmberg, 1994; Schmitt and Holmberg, 1995; Berglund *et al.*, 2005; Schmitt, 2009).

Relatively little attention has been devoted by the literature to the role played by personality assessments on the dynamics of partisanship at the individual level. Early research bears witness of the possibility that leader evaluations can shape (or at least affect) voters' party identification. In their seminal contribution, Page and Jones (1979) provide empirical evidence that party loyalties "do not function purely as fixed determinants of the vote; those loyalties can themselves be affected by attitudes toward the current candidates" (Page and Jones, 1979: p. 1088). The lack of further assessments of the role of party leaders as drivers of partisanship in more recent decades is all the most surprising in the light of the progressive personalization of politics in Western democracies, whose beginnings are traced right back to the early 1980s (Bean and Mughan, 1989; McAllister, 1996).

At the core of the personalization hypothesis lies the notion that "individual political actors have become more prominent at the expense of parties and collective identities" (Karvonen, 2010: p. 4). The idea of an increased prominence of individual politicians at the expense of collective identities – on which traditional partisan identifications are supposedly based – has clear theoretical implications for our understanding of partisanship, and it would seem to link well with established theories of party-voters relationships. Building on previous lines of research, it can be assumed that individuals' relationship with political parties depends largely on the types of parties that are predominant in the party system at a given point in time (Richardson,

1991; Gunther and Montero, 2001; Gunther, 2005; Lobo, 2008; Garzia and Viotti, 2011; Garzia, 2013a).

Voters' identification with European mass-based parties was strongly mediated by the formers' belonging to separate social milieus and sub-cultures (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Butler and Stokes, 1969; Thomassen, 1976). This contention, however, does not seem to hold for contemporary *catch-all* parties. Indeed, the paramount relevance acquired by party leaders within patterns of political communication and electoral competition altogether has led some scholars to contend that contemporary political leaders do not only *lead* their parties: to a certain extent, they *personify* them (McAllister, 2007; Barisione 2009; Blondel and Thièbault, 2010; Garzia, 2011). On the basis of the assumption postulating partisanship as a function of party characteristics, it seems plausible to envisage a strong association between individuals' partisanship and their assessment of party leaders. Indeed, this relationship can be hypothesized to have grown stronger throughout time – as the personalization hypothesis would imply.

Personalization has not only affected parties. From a political psychology perspective, one of its crucial consequences lies in the pivotal role achieved by political leaders within voters' cognitive frameworks (Baldassarri, 2013). Empirical research shows that the most diffuse political schema among contemporary voters is that based on leaders (Miller, Wattenberg and Malanchuk, 1986; Sullivan *et al.*, 1990). The reason is clear: ideologies, issues, and performance assessments are inherently political, and thus require more sophistication to implement (Shively, 1979; Pierce, 1993). Party leaders, on the contrary, can be easily evaluated using inferential strategies of person perception that are constantly employed in everyday life (Kinder, 1986; Rahn *et al.*, 1990). Relying on implicit personality assessments, individuals are thus able to

determine new judgments based on an overall character appraisal when more concrete cognitions are required (Greene, 2001). Accordingly, it can be hypothesized that among all possible sources of attitudes towards parties (i.e., leader evaluations, issue proximity, performance assessments) those related to their leaders have by and large gained prevalence.

The rise of «party/leader identification» in Western Europe

Ever since *The American Voter,* empirical analyses of partisanship have by and large resorted to the "classic" seven-point measurement scale (Campbell *et al.*, 1960; Fiorina, 1981; Bartle and Bellucci, 2009). In order to make this operational measure applicable to European multi-party systems, however, one would be forced to narrow down the analysis to the main two parties in each country. As the percentage of identifiers with these parties has tended to decline over time, the "middle" category would be artificially conflated by featuring not only true independents, but also respondents identifying with minor parties – an occurrence that is likely to engender serious bias in the statistical estimates. Against this methodological background, the analysis that follows will employ the so-called "stacked data matrices" in order to obtain a data structure defined at the level stemming from the interaction of individuals and parties (van der Eijk, 2002; van der Eijk *et al.*, 2006). The choice to stack the data allows one to overcome the drawbacks of discrete choice models and, at the same time, permits to focus the analysis on *all* the available alternatives in each political system (van der Brug, Franklin and Toka, 2008). Following the logic of the stacked data matrix, the unit of analysis is represented by *respondent*party* combinations.[2]

[2] A more detailed explanation of the stacking procedure is provided in Appendix.

The dependent variable partisanship is measured through the usual combination of survey questions tapping both the directional and the strength component. Respondents are thus assigned a value ranging from '0' (not identified with the party in the specific combination) to '3' (strongly identified with that party). The resulting partisanship variable in the stacked data matrix no longer refers to a specific party, but to parties in general.

Two sets of independent variables will be subsequently included in the analysis. The first set consists in those items that are supposed to tap the cleavage-based nature of party identification (Bartle and Bellucci, 2009). Respondents' religiousness is measured through their frequency of church attendance, whereas two different indicators are included as proxies for one's placement in the socio-economic structure: trade union membership and subjective social class assessment.

The second set of predictors features items related to individuals' attitudes towards relevant partisan objects, as identified by the relevant literature. Voters' ideological proximity to parties is operationalized through the respondents' self-placement on the left-right scale – an easily comparable and widely available measure of the distance between voters and parties on the left-right "super-issue" throughout countries and time (Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976). As to competence assessments, the set of attitudinal variables include voters' retrospective assessment of the state of the economy. Finally, voters' attitudes towards party leaders are measured through the standard thermometer score on a 10-point scale.

As a preliminary step, the analysis must rule out a possible criticism inherent to the Michigan model itself. In its original conception, party identification acts as a powerful *perceptual screen*. Because of such psychological sense of identification, the

individual "tends to see what is favorable to his partisan orientation" (Campbell *et al.*, 1960: p. 133). Accordingly, partisans are thought to "like a party leader, irrespective of their personal qualities, if that leader were the leader of their own party, and to dislike them if they were leading a different party" (Curtice and Blais, 2001: p. 5). This argument, however, holds only as long as partisan identifications are effectively fixed in time as a result of voters' placement in the social structure, and thus immune from the effect of short-term forces (i.e., party leader evaluations). If this was really the case, then our research hypotheses would be seriously flawed from the outset.

Testing this model is relatively easy. As the Michigan conception postulates party identification as by and large mediated by voters' placement in the socio-economic structure, the predictors included in the statistical model consist in the three identity items (i.e., religiousness, social class, union membership) introduced earlier. Because the dependent variable partisanship is not measured on an equal-interval scale, an ordered maximum likelihood estimation technique such as ordinal probit is preferred to linear regression. Standardized probit estimates are presented in Table 1.

The results would seem to offer almost no support for the enduring validity of an identity-based explanation of partisanship. Admittedly, all estimates are statistically significant ($p < .01$) and signed as expected. However, it must also be noted an unequivocal decline of the coefficients' magnitude throughout time, which signals a progressive delignment between voters' placement in the social structure and their feelings of partisanship. Further evidence for the progressive inability of an identity-based model to "explain" voters' party identification comes from an observation of the various model-fit statistics, whose values decline in an astonishingly monotonic fashion, regardless of the country under analysis and the measure under observation.

Table 1. Social structure and partisanship in three countries

Britain	**1970s**	**1980s**	**1990s**	**2000s**
Social Class	.28 (.01)**	.26 (.01)**	.26 (.01)**	.15 (.01)**
Union Membership	.17 (.01)**	.12 (.01)**	.12 (.01)**	.05 (.01)**
Nagelkerke R^2	.114	.081	.091	.033
McFadden R^2	.056	.040	.045	.016
N	18240	22869	20940	22722
Germany	**1970s**	**1980s**	**1990s**	**2000s**
Religiousness	.26 (.01)**	.20 (.01)**	.13 (.01)**	.16 (.01)**
Union Membership	.11 (.01)**	.09 (.01)**	.09 (.01)**	.08 (.01)**
Nagelkerke R^2	.091	.048	.032	.042
McFadden R^2	.062	.034	.021	.027
N	24890	27575	19800	27905
The Netherlands	**1970s**	**1980s**	**1990s**	**2000s**
Religiousness	.35 (.01)**	.35 (.01)**	.33 (.01)**	.26 (.01)**
Social Class	.30 (.01)**	.24 (.01)**	.19 (.01)**	.18 (.01)**
Union Membership	.07 (.01)**	.10 (.01)**	.10 (.01)**	.07 (.01)**
Nagelkerke R^2	.259	.157	.118	.087
McFadden R^2	.201	.118	.088	.065
N	23814	52470	29177	53388

Note: Dependent variable: Partisanship (4 cat.) on a stacked data matrix. Cell entries are standardized ordered probit estimates. Standard error estimates (in parentheses) are clustered robust at the individual level. ** p < .01, * p <. 05. Intercepts and controls (age, gender, educational level) included, coefficients not shown.

As this analysis suggests, the roots of contemporary Europeans' partisanship have steadily moved away from society. In turn, this occurrence enhances the likelihood for an attitude-based interpretation to provide a more solid account for the dynamics of partisanship in our three countries.

A structurally simple model of attitudinal partisanship can be specified as a function of voters' attitudes towards the most relevant partisan objects identified by the literature: leaders, ideology and performance-related considerations.[3] As the dependent variable is the same one employed in the previous analysis, estimation takes place once again through maximum likelihood estimation. Results are presented in Table 2.[4]

Results from the attitudinal model provide substantial confirmation of the main research hypotheses. An assessment of the model-fit statistics highlights in fact a significant growth in the explanatory power of the attitudinal model of partisanship as compared to the identity-based one. As to the role of leader evaluations in the various models, probit coefficients are always significantly related to partisanship and, consistently with the personalization hypothesis, their magnitude highlights an unequivocal increase throughout time. When it comes to the relative effect of leader evaluation *vis-à-vis* other attitudinal forces considered, their hypothesized dominance is confirmed too. Indeed, retrospective economic assessment seems to play hardly a role. Ideological proximity, on the contrary, starts the time series as a force almost paralleling that of leader evaluations, but fails to match the massive increase on behalf of the leader coefficients throughout time.

[3] Checks both on the correlation matrix of the independent variables (all inter-correlations are less than $r = .40$) and the variance inflation factors (reported values are all below 2) assure that their simultaneous inclusion in the model is safe from problems of multi-collinearity.

[4] For reasons of comparability the models are estimated only with respect to the tree most recent decades (Dutch studies did not ask respondents to evaluate party leaders on the feeling thermometer until 1986).

Table 2. The attitudinal drivers of partisanship in three countries

Britain	**1980s**	**1990s**	**2000s**
Leader Evaluations	**.31 (.01)****	**.60 (.02)****	**.85 (.02)****
Ideological Proximity	.36 (.01)**	.41 (.01)**	.58 (.02)**
Economic Assessment	.23 (.01)**	.06 (.01)**	.16 (.02)**
Nagelkerke R^2	.233	.318	.361
McFadden R^2	.123	.173	.207
N	10338	11598	13568
Germany	**1980s**	**1990s**	**2000s**
Leader Evaluations	**.85 (.03)****	**.90 (.02)****	**.96 (.03)****
Ideological Proximity	.27 (.01)**	.28 (.02)**	.41 (.02)**
Economic Assessment	.01 (.01)	.13 (.02)**	.06 (.01)**
Nagelkerke R^2	.373	.338	.399
McFadden R^2	.226	.240	.272
N	10024	17524	11663
The Netherlands	**1980s**	**1990s**	**2000s**
Leader Evaluations	**.49 (.02)****	**.63 (.02)****	**.70 (.02)****
Ideological Proximity	.31 (.01)**	.29 (.01)**	.31 (.01)**
Economic Assessment	.04 (.01)**	-.01 (.01)	.06 (.01)**
Nagelkerke R^2	.308	.256	.237
McFadden R^2	.197	.174	.173
N	10257	17244	40466

Note: Dependent variable: Partisanship (4 cat.) on a stacked data matrix. Cell entries are standardized ordered probit estimates. Standard error estimates (in parentheses) are clustered robust at the individual level. ** $p < .01$, * $p <. 05$. Intercepts and controls (age, gender, educational level) included, coefficients not shown.

Overall, the findings presented so far link well with the notion of *candidate-centered politics* (Wattenberg, 1991), whereby voters' attention is thought to shift from political parties and ideologies to individual politicians and their personal characteristics. The evidence presented here supports this notion, and elaborates on one of its crucial implications: namely, that different ways of thinking about politics can lead to different ways of relating to politics. If individuals' feelings of partisanship are actually shaped by their evaluation of party leaders' personality, then the possibility for leaders to bear a strong(er) effect on voters' behavior *through* partisanship can be envisaged.

Reassessing leader effects in parliamentary elections

Regrettably, the endogenous relationship between partisanship and leader evaluations has been seldom addressed in the available voting literature. Some works limit themselves to recognize the problem of endogeneity (Crewe and King, 1994a; 1994b; Evans and Andersen, 2005; Dinas, 2008), while in only a bunch of empirical case studies the two-way causal link between party identification and leader/candidate evaluations is addressed empirically (Archer, 1987; Marks, 1993). It is an unfortunate occurrence, for if there is reciprocal causation between party identification and leader evaluations, then these variables become effectively endogenous and their estimated effects biased. In particular, "the effects of partisanship on the vote are likely to be exaggerated" (Marks, 1993, p. 143), with leader effects substantially downsized as a result (Dinas, 2008). To overcome this problem, it is necessary to properly exogenize the offending variable (i.e., partisanship) through the construction of an instrumental variable in a two-stage process. If partisanship is correctly exogenized (that is, *purified* by the

influence of leader evaluations) then it can be safely included in a model of voting without the risk of unjustifiably downsizing the electoral effect of leader evaluations.

The crucial requirement for creating an instrumental variable is that the exogenous variables selected are *effectively* exogenous. If that criterion is not met, the procedure will not overcome the bias problem. To hold exogenous status, these variables must be caused by forces outside the system of equations, and must not be correlated with the model error terms. In addition, each exogenous variable must be (*i*) uncorrelated with the error term in the explanatory equation, but (*ii*) correlated with the endogenous variable they are instrumenting (Kennedy, 2008: Ch. 9). In the case of partisanship, these standards are readily obtainable with safely exogenous socio-economic (SES) variables. Most measures of socioeconomic status conform to this standard, tending to be fixed characteristics the respondent brings to the voting booth. Indeed, party identification itself is conceived as the result of an individual's placement within the social structure (Campbell *et al.,* 1960). At the same time, recent analyses of voting behavior in advanced industrial democracies have shown the progressive inability of these indicators to account for individuals' vote choice (see, most notably, the various country chapters in: Franklin, Mackie, and Valen, 1992). In other words, SES variables meet the necessary conditions for consistent estimation (Sovey and Green, 2010) as their effect on the outcome (vote choice) is transmitted solely through the mediating variable (partisanship). Our instrumental variables for partisanship are thus constructed from a number of SES measures available in each dataset.[5]

[5] Based on data availability, the set of exogenous variables employed in the construction of the instruments varies slightly across datasets. The variables employed are as follows. Britain: age, education, gender, Goldthorpe class, annual household income, region of residence, religious denomination. Germany: age, education, gender, profession, region of residence, religious denomination, unemployment status, urbanization. The Netherlands: age, education, gender, annual household income, religious denomination, unemployment status, urbanization. The instruments arrived at are "good" as their

Estimates from the full voting model are presented in Table 3. Covariates include all the "classic" predictors of electoral research including demographic and socio-structural controls (i.e., religiousness, subjective social class, trade union membership), short-term political factors (party leader evaluations, ideological proximity, economic assessments), as well as our instrumental variable for partisanship. The dependent variable, vote choice, is measured as '1' for respondents having voted for the party in the specific combination of the stacked data matrix, and '0' otherwise. Given the dichotomous operationalization of the dependent variable, binary logistic regression is preferred to ordinary least square estimation.

Table 3. Leader effects on voting in three countries: Instrumental variable estimation

Britain	**1980s**	**1990s**	**2000s**
Social Class	.19 (.03)**	.23 (.03)**	.07 (.04)
Union Membership	.15 (.03)**	.17 (.03)**	.13 (.03)**
Partisanship (exogenous)	.36 (.03)**	.33 (.04)**	.38 (.04)**
Leader Evaluations	**.67 (.03)****	**1.00 (.04)****	**1.50 (.05)****
Ideological Proximity	.59 (.03)**	.57 (.04)**	.82 (.05)**
Economic Assessment	.28 (.03)**	.05 (.03)	.34 (.04)**
Constant	-1.49 (.03)**	-1.70 (.04)**	-1.42 (.03)**
Nagelkerke R^2	.320	.359	.370
N	9670	6834	9173

Pearson's correlation with the original partisanship variable ranges between .17 in the German case and .25 in the British case – these values being substantially comparable to those reported by Lewis-Beck, Nadeau, and Elias (2008, p. 91) in a similar exercise.

Germany	**1980s**	**1990s**	**2000s**
Religiousness	.16 (.03)**	.04 (.03)	.01 (.03)
Union Membership	.12 (.02)**	.10 (.02)**	.02 (.03)
Partisanship (exogenous)	.24 (.03)**	.09 (.03)**	.17 (.04)**
Leader Evaluations	**1.73 (.05)****	**1.64 (.04)****	**1.71 (.05)****
Ideological Proximity	.52 (.03)**	.46 (.03)**	.61 (.03)**
Economic Assessment	-.01 (.02)	.19 (.03)**	.06 (.03)*
Constant	-2.05 (.05)**	-2.20 (.03)**	-2.00 (.04)**
Nagelkerke R^2	.492	.393	.431
N	9836	17174	11112
The Netherlands	**1980s**	**1990s**	**2000s**
Religiousness	.18 (.03)**	.30 (.03)**	.13 (.02)**
Social Class	.22 (.03)**	.30 (.03)**	.26 (.02)**
Union Membership	.11 (.02)**	.11 (.02)**	.09 (.02)**
Partisanship (exogenous)	.23 (.03)**	.30 (.04)**	.34 (.02)**
Leader Evaluations	**1.00 (.04)****	**1.03 (.04)****	**1.37 (.03)****
Ideological Proximity	.55 (.03)**	.44 (.03)**	.53 (.02)**
Economic Assessment	.04 (.02)*	.03 (.02)	.13 (.02)**
Constant	-2.17 (.05)**	-2.39 (.04)**	-2.87 (.03)**
Nagelkerke R^2	.447	.335	.317
N	9217	13882	35632

Note: Dependent variable: Vote choice (dummy) on a stacked data matrix. Cell entries are standardized logistic estimates. Standard error estimates (in parentheses) are clustered robust at the individual level. ** p < .01, * p <. 05. Controls (age, gender, educational level) included, coefficients not shown.

A careful examination of the results from instrumental variable estimation highlights the clearer dominance of leader evaluations over partisanship in terms of impact on vote choice. Indeed, voters' attitudes towards party leaders represent the *most* relevant factors in each and every statistical model, overcoming not only partisanship but also retrospective assessments of the economy and ideological proximity. Socio-structural variables, on the other hand, hardly appear to play a role.[6]

The results stemming from this alternative analytical strategy show that once endogeneity is taken into account, the electoral effect of leader evaluations appears much stronger than often observed. Partisanship, on the contrary, would seem to lose its dominant role within the voting model. It still matters relatively much, but not *as much* as voters' attitudes towards the leader of the parties.

Leader effects and the outcome of parliamentary elections

However valuable to deepen our understanding of individual-level dynamics of voting behavior, the results presented above do not tell much about one of the most crucial aspect of the personalization of politics – namely, the potential impact of leaders' personality on the outcome of democratic elections (King, 2002a). An increasingly employed technique in study of aggregate leader effects is the so-called *counterfactual strategy* (Bean and Mughan, 1989; Jones and Hudson, 1996; Bartels, 2002; Dinas, 2008; Bittner, 2011; Garzia, 2013b). This strategy emphasizes the asking and answering of explicit *«What if?»* questions and it sheds light on the electoral effect of the personality

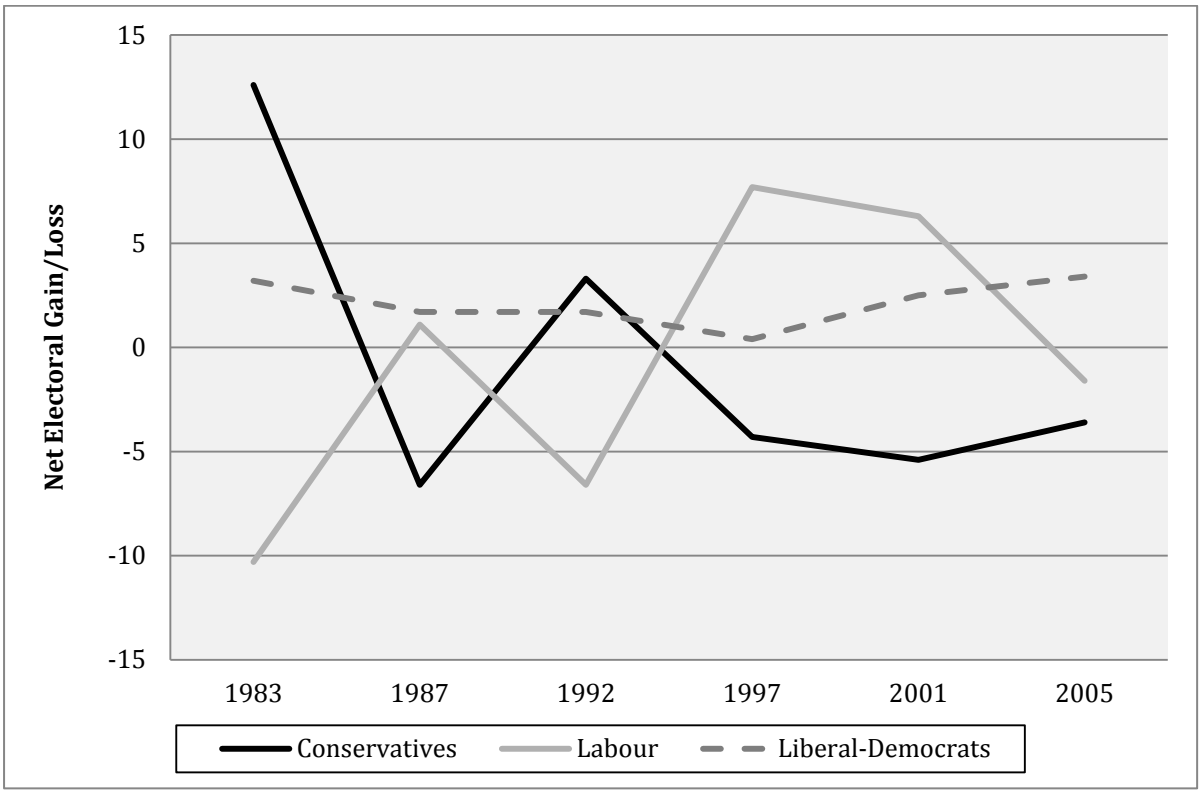
[6] To test the robustness of these findings, a number of jackknife tests have been performed. To evaluate the stability of the instruments, I excluded one exogenous variable at a time from the construction of each instrument, every time re-estimating the model with the new instrument. The model fit remains in every instance practically unchanged, thus assuring that the performance of the models does not rest on the presence or absence of any specific exogenous variable in the construction of the instruments.

profile of a specific candidate by forecasting the extent to which the electoral outcome would have changed had that candidate's personality been perceived differently by voters. As the present literature relies exclusively on case studies of single national elections or, at best, on within-country comparative evidence, this last section provides a substantial contribution through a fully comparative assessment of leader effects on election outcomes throughout countries and across decades.

The thought experiment introduced below involves a comparison of the actual electoral outcome with the (simulated) outcome of an election in which the main party leaders are seen equally favorably (i.e., thermometer scores set at the mean value for all leaders) by voters. From an operational point of view, the reliance on thermometer scores do not allow to simulate manipulations of individual trait characteristics (as it is the case in, e.g., Bean and Mughan, 1989; Bartels, 2002, Bittner, 2011). In order to simulate the outcome of an election fought by *average leaders,* vote probabilities for each of the parties will be re-estimated as if the mean thermometer score for each of the party leaders was equal to the average thermometer score for all leaders in that election. Any discrepancy arising between the real election outcome and the simulated outcome of an election in which all leaders are perceived "neutrally" will thus be attributed to voters' evaluation of the actual leaders. Take as an example the British election of 1983. In that year, Margaret Thatcher's mean thermometer score equals to 8.31. The thermometer for the other main parties' leaders, Michael Foot (Labour) and David Steel (Lib-Dem) is 3.24 and 6.87 respectively. The average value of the leaders' thermometer is thus 6.14 – which represents the score that will be assigned to the fictional *average leader.* On these bases, Thatcher's electoral effect will be assessed on the basis of her 2.17 points of advantage *vis-à-vis* the average leader [8.31 – 6.14 = 2.17].

With respect to the estimation of aggregate leader effects on their own parties' vote shares, the procedure is as follows. Changes in vote share for each party are calculated by comparing the proportion of voters in the sample that actually casted a vote for a given party with the proportion of voters that – keeping all other factors constant – would have voted for that party had they assigned to its leader a thermometer score equal to the mathematically deducted score of the fictional *average leader*. The statistical analysis is performed using the same specification of the empirical model as in Table 3. In order to keep strict comparability of the results, a few elections are not included in the analysis due to the lack of relevant measures in the dataset.[7]

Figure 1. Net gain/losses for main parties, Britain



[7] The British election of 2010 is excluded due to the lack of ideological proximity and economic assessment measures in the dataset. Similarly, the Dutch election of 2003 is excluded because of the lack of economy as well as party identification variables. Two German elections have been excluded: namely, those of 1980 (missing variables on ideological proximity and economic assessment) and 2002 (thermometer measures were only available for the SPD and CDU/CSU leaders).

Figure 2. Net gain/losses for main parties, Germany

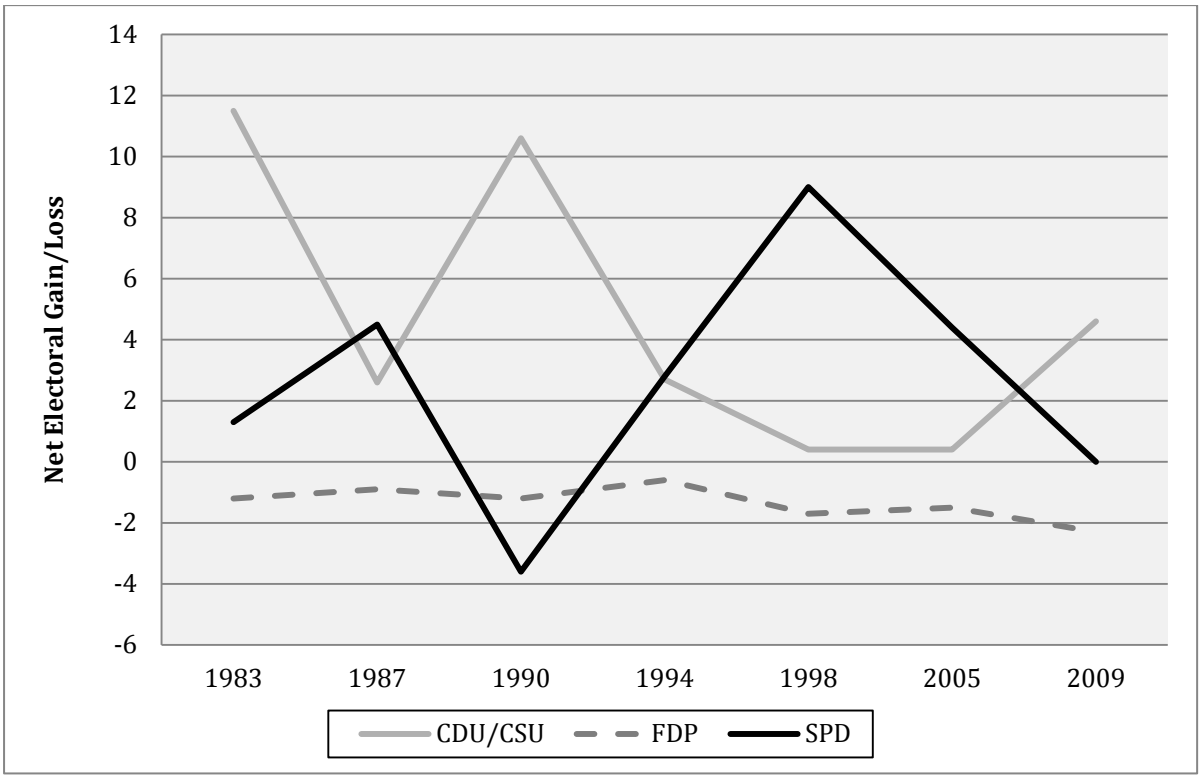
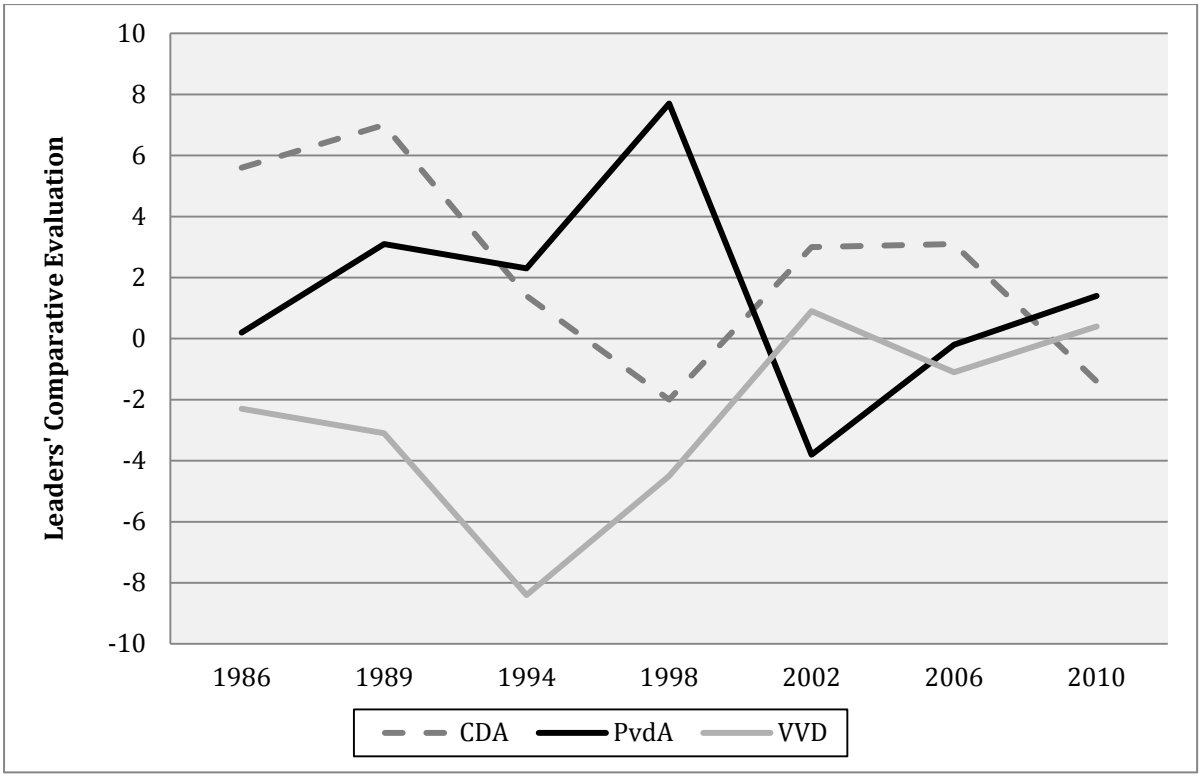


Figure 3. Net gain/losses for main parties, The Netherlands



The results of this counterfactual analysis are presented in Figures 1–3. The values plotted in the figures represent an approximation of the number of percentage points by which the party under analysis would have increased/decreased its vote share had all voters perceived its leader as an *average leader*. In other words, it is a measure of the party leaders' net worth in votes to their own parties. Note that positive sign indicates in every instance an electoral asset for the winning party's leader.

We can now turn to the final, and possibly more relevant section of the analysis – namely, the impact of voters' evaluation of party leaders on aggregate electoral outcomes. Table 4 compares the actual election outcome with the simulated outcome of the election had all leaders been assigned an identical thermometer score (i.e., the *average leader* score) by all voters. The counterfactual is calculated by simply subtracting the estimated value of the leader effect for each party leader and election to the real-world vote share awarded to respective party. The result is presented in the last column of each table (i.e., simulated outcome of an election fought by average leaders).

Let us focus on those instances in which the most voted party in the real election do not match with the "winner" of the counterfactual simulation. We will refer to these as elections that *might have been decided* by voters' evaluation of party leaders.[8] Of twenty elections under analysis, exactly half of them fall in this category.

[8] The use of the conditional is necessary due to a number of complications arising, in the first place, by the disjunction that exists in non-proportional systems between winning votes and winning seats in parliaments. Especially in FPTP systems like the British one, votes do not translate neatly into seats. A further, and to some extent even more severe complication arises from the practice of coalition governments (e.g., Germany, The Netherlands). According to King (2002c), "[c]ountries in which there is a disjunction between vote-winning at elections and the process of government-formation following elections are common…once again, anyone interested in assessing the political impact of party leaders' personal characteristics needs to decide in advance what "victory" means in this kind of contexts" (p. 219).

Table 4. The overall effect of party leaders on electoral outcomes

Britain		Actual Vote Share	Size of Leader Effect	Simulated Outcome with No Leader FX
	Consevatives	**42,4**	12,6	29,8
1983	Labour	27,6	-10,3	**37,9**
	Liberal-Democrats	25,4	3,2	22,2
	Consevatives	**42,3**	-6,6	**48,9**
1987	Labour	30,8	1,1	29,7
	Liberal-Democrats	22,6	1,7	20,9
	Consevatives	**41,9**	3,3	38,6
1992	Labour	34,4	-6,6	**41,0**
	Liberal-Democrats	17,8	1,7	16,1
	Consevatives	30,6	-4,3	34,9
1997	Labour	**43,2**	7,7	**35,5**
	Liberal-Democrats	16,7	0,4	16,3
	Consevatives	31,7	-5,4	**37,1**
2001	Labour	**40,7**	6,3	34,4
	Liberal-Democrats	18,3	2,5	15,8
	Consevatives	32,3	-3,6	35,9
2005	Labour	**35,2**	-1,6	**36,8**
	Liberal-Democrats	22,0	3,4	18,6
Germany				
	CDU/CSU	**38,2**	11,5	26,7
1983	FDP	7,0	-1,2	8,2
	SPD	**38,2**	1,3	**36,9**
	CDU/CSU	34,5	2,6	31,9
1987	FDP	9,1	-0,9	10,0
	SPD	**37,0**	4,5	**32,5**
	CDU/CSU	**36,7**	10,6	26,1
1990	FDP	11,0	-1,2	12,2
	SPD	33,5	-3,6	**37,1**

Germany		Actual Vote Share	Size of Leader Effect	Simulated Outcome with No Leader FX
	CDU/CSU	34,2	2,7	31,5
1994	FDP	6,9	-0,6	7,5
	SPD	**36,4**	2,8	**33,6**
	CDU/CSU	28,4	0,4	28,0
1998	FDP	6,2	-1,7	7,9
	SPD	**40,9**	9,0	**31,9**
	CDU/CSU	27,8	0,4	27,4
2005	FDP	9,8	-1,5	11,3
	SPD	**34,2**	4,4	**29,8**
	CDU/CSU	**27,3**	4,6	22,7
2009	FDP	14,6	-2,3	16,9
	SPD	23,0	0,0	**23,0**
Netherlands				
	CDA	**34,6**	5,6	29,0
1986	PvdA	33,3	0,2	**33,1**
	VVD	17,4	-2,3	19,7
	CDA	**35,3**	7,0	28,3
1989	PvdA	31,9	3,1	**28,8**
	VVD	14,6	-3,1	17,7
	CDA	22,2	1,4	20,8
1994	PvdA	**24,0**	2,3	21,7
	VVD	19,9	-8,4	**28,3**
	CDA	18,4	-2,0	20,4
1998	PvdA	**29,0**	7,7	21,3
	VVD	24,7	-4,5	**29,2**
	CDA	**27,9**	3,0	**24,9**
2002	PvdA	15,1	-3,8	18,9
	VVD	15,4	0,9	14,5

Netherlands		Actual Vote Share	Size of Leader Effect	Simulated Outcome with No Leader FX
2006	CDA	**26,5**	3,1	**23,4**
	PvdA	21,2	-0,2	21,4
	VVD	14,6	-1,1	15,7
2010	CDA	13,7	-1,4	15,1
	PvdA	19,6	1,4	18,2
	VVD	**20,4**	0,4	**20,0**

Note: election winners in **bold.**

The conventional wisdom of electoral research revisited

The increasingly crucial role of party leaders in the political process can hardly be contested. The growing personalization of the political sphere throughout time has resulted in a parallel change in the political supply. In an attempt to adapt to the changing environment, contemporary *catch-all* parties' electoral strategies and organizational structure have in fact become heavily leader-centered. On the basis of the profound changes occurred in the political supply, it has been hypothesized that individual politicians have become more prominent *vis-à-vis* parties and collective identities in the mind of voters. However, past empirical research has fallen short of a consensus on whether party leaders have actually increased their impact on individual voting behavior and aggregate election outcomes in turn. As repeatedly argued, the reason for such uncertainty within the available literature is to be found in the ways in which leader effects have been conceptualized and measured – that is, mainly as a function of temporally and causally prior partisan allegiances.

This study has brought forward an alternative framework for the analysis of voting behavior in parliamentary democracies in the light of the progressive

personalization of democratic politics. It did so by employing a top-down approach that links the changes in the political supply to the changing dynamics of voting behavior at the individual level. The assumption, on which the whole study was based, is that such changes in the political supply *must* have exerted an effect on the dynamics of individual vote choice. The empirical results presented widely corroborate this assumption, and show that the changing structure of political parties and party systems in parliamentary democracies had indeed noticeable effects on the dynamics of partisan attachments and vote preferences at the individual level. Most notably, it has been demonstrated that the roots of partisanship have steadily moved away from society (e.g., early socialization, placement in the social structure) towards the realm of individual attitudes. What was once conceptualized as a mere reflection of long-term allegiances (i.e., party leader evaluations) has nowadays become the crucial determinant of partisan attachments themselves.

The rise of such *«party/leader identification»* (Garzia, 2012) has noteworthy implications for the relative place of partisanship and leader evaluations in the voting calculus of individual voters, and *in primis* on the enduring validity of the Michigan funnel (Campbell *et al.,* 1960) in voting behavior research. To the extent that leader evaluations have increasingly become endogenous to partisan identifications, then simply looking at their residual effect – as it has been done so far – is likely to lead to a substantial underestimation of their actual electoral impact. Reciprocal causation is at work, and in this context single-equation models of voting are apt to provide seriously biased estimates. For this reason, we have resorted to two-stage estimation and instrumental variables. If endogeneity is taken into account, then the effect of leaders on the vote appears just stronger than that exerted by party identification.

When it comes to the effect of leaders' personality on the outcome of parliamentary elections, this study provides strong confirmation of the "common wisdom". Party leaders can gain (or lose) votes due to the way in which their personality profile is perceived by voters – and this *independently* from the electoral effect exerted by voters' partisan and ideological orientations, retrospective economic evaluations and so on. Of the twenty elections under analysis, ten witness indeed a potentially decisive effect on behalf of political leaders.

These findings sharply contradict those from available studies in which the impact of leaders emerges as merely residual. Take once again as an example the British general election of 1983. According to King (2002c), Consevative Party's leader Margaret Thatcher was "…held in higher esteem than either of her successive Labour rivals…but, given the then state of the British Labour Party, the Conservatives would have won those elections under *almost anyone*" (King, 2002c: p. 215, *italics* mine). There is much to agree with King's argument, in the sense that almost every leader would have been able to overcome Michael Foot's extremely low level of popularity in that year and thus bring an electoral advantage to the Conservatives. Yet the results presented above underline the crucial importance of voters' perception of party leaders for the final outcome of that election. Had in fact voters perceived Thatcher and Foot as equally likeable, the Tories would have not ended up being the most voted party.

The lesson to be drawn from this example is simple but crucial: the effect of leaders on the electoral fortunes of their parties depends on voters' comparative assessment of the available alternatives. In other words, the ability of leaders to win votes to their parties do not depend on whether they are *good* – it rather depends on whether voters perceive them as comparative *better* leaders. The higher the advantage

of a specific leader *vis-à-vis* his (or her) political counterparts, the higher his impact on the election outcome. An impact that is often decisive, and indeed much more often than usually argued by electoral researchers.

References list

Archer, K. (1987). A Simultaneous Equation Model of Canadian Voting Behaviour. *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 20: 553-72.

Baldassarri, D. (2013). *The Simple Art of Voting: The Cognitive Shortcuts of Italian Citizens*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Barisione, M. (2009). So what difference do leaders make? Candidates' images and the 'conditionality' of leader effects on voting. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 19: 473-500.

Bartels, L. (2002). The Impact of Candidate Traits in American Presidential Elections. In A. King (ed.), *Leaders' personalities and the outcomes of democratic elections*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bartle, J.; Bellucci, P. (2009). Partisanship, social identity and individual attitudes. In J. Bartle and P. Bellucci (eds.), *Political parties and partisanship. Social identity and individual attitudes*. London and New York: Routledge.

Bean, C.; Mughan, A. (1989). Leadership effects in parliamentary elections in Australia and Britain. *American Political Science Review* 83: 1165-79.

Bellucci, P. (2006). Tracing the cognitive and affective roots of 'party competence': Italy and Britain, 2001. *Electoral Studies* 25: 534-68.

Berglund, F.; Holmberg, S.; Schmitt, H.; Thomassen, J. (2005). Party Identification and Party Choice. In J. Thomassen (ed.), *The European Voter*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bittner, A. (2011). *Platform or Personality? The Role of Party Leaders in Elections.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Blondel, J.; Thiébault, J. (2010). *Political Leadership, Parties and Citizens*. London and New York: Routledge.

Brettschneider, F.; Gabriel, O. (2002). The Nonpersonalization of Voting Behaviour in Germany. In A. King (ed.), *Leaders' Personality and the Outcomes of Democratic Elections*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Budge, I.; Crewe, I.; Farlie, D. (eds.) (1976). *Party identification and beyond*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.

Butler, D.; Stokes, D. (1969). *Political Change in Britain*. London: Macmillan.

Campbell, A.; Converse, P.; Miller, W.; Stokes, D. (1960). *The American Voter.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Crewe, I.; King, A. (1994a). Did Major win? Did Kinnock lose? Leadership effects in the 1992 election. In A. Heath, R. Jowell and. J. Curtice (eds.), *Labour's Last Chance? The 1992 Election and Beyond*. Aldershot: Dartmouth.

Crewe, I.; King, A. (1994b). Are British elections becoming more "presidential"? In M. Jennings and T. Mann (eds.), *Elections at Home and Abroad. Essays in Honor of Warren E. Miller.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Curtice, J.; Blais, A. (2001). Follow my leader? A cross-national analysis of leadership effects in parliamentary democracies. *Working Paper 91. Centre for Research into Elections and Social Trends, Department of Sociology, University of Oxford.*

Curtice, J.; Holmerg, S. (2005). Party leaders and party choice. In J. Thomassen (ed.), *The European Voter*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dinas, E. (2008). Big expectations, small outcomes: The impact of leaders' personal appeal in the 2004 Greek election. *Electoral Studies* 27: 505-17.

Downs, A. (1957). *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper.

Eagly, A.; Chaiken, S. (1993). *The Psychology of Attitudes*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Evans, G.; Andersen, R. (2005). The impact of party leaders: how Blair lost Labour votes. *Parliamentary Affairs* 58: 818-36.

Fiorina, M. (1981). *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Fiorina, M. (2002). "Parties and partisanship: a 40-year retrospective". *Political Behavior* 24: 93-115.

Franklin, C.; Jackson, J. (1983). The dynamics of party identification. *American Political Science Review* 77: 957-73.

Franklin, M.; Mackie, T.; Valen, H. (eds.) (1992). *Electoral change: Responses to evolving social and attitudinal. structures in Western countries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Garzia, D. (2011). The Personalization of Politics in Western Democracies: Causes and Consequences on Leader-Follower Relationships. *The Leadership Quarterly* 22: 697-709.

Garzia, D. (2012). The Rise of Party/Leader Identification in Western Europe. *Political Research Quarterly* (Article first published online: 4 DEC 2012 - DOI: 10.1177/1065912912463122).

Garzia, D. (2013a). Changing Parties, Changing Partisans. The Personalization of Partisan Attachments in Western Europe. *Political Psychology* 34: 67-89.

Garzia, D. (2013b). Can Candidates' Image Win Elections? A Counterfactual Assessment of Leader Effects in the Second Italian Republic. *Journal of Political Marketing*, article in press.

Garzia, D.; Viotti, F. (2011). Leader, identità di partito e voto in Italia, 1990-2008. *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica* 41: 411-32.

Gunther, R. (2005). Parties and Electoral Behavior in Southern Europe. *Comparative Politics* 37: 253-75

Gunther, R.; Montero, J. (2001). The Anchors of Partisanship: A Comparative Analysis of Voting Behavior in Four Southern European Democracies. In N. Diamandouros and R. Gunther (eds), *Parties, Politics, and Democracy in the New Southern Europe*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Hayes, B.; McAllister, I. (1997). Gender, Party Leaders, and Election Outcomes in Australia, Britain, and the United States. *Comparative Political Studies* 30: 3-26.

Holmberg, S. (1994). Party Identification Compared across the Atlantic. In K. Jennings and T. Mann (eds.), *Elections at Home and Abroad. Essays in Honor of Warren Miller*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Holmberg, S. (2007). Partisanship reconsidered. In R. Dalton and H. Klingemann (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Holmberg, S.; Oscarsson, H. (2011). Party Leader Effects on the Vote. In K. Aarts, A. Blais and H. Schmitt (eds.), *Political Leaders and Democratic Elections.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Inglehart, R.; Klingemann, H. (1976). Party Identification, Ideological Preference and the Left-Right Dimensions among Western Mass Publics. In I. Budge, I. Crewe and D. Farlie (eds.), *Party Identification and Beyond*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.

Johnston, R. (2006). Party Identification: Unmoved Mover or Sum of Preferences? *Annual Review of Political Science* 9: 329-51.

Jones, R.; Hudson, J. (1996). The quality of political leadership: a case study of John Major. *British Journal of Political Science* 26: 229-44.

Karvonen, L. (2010). *The personalisation of politics. A study of parliamentary democracies*. Colchester: ECPR Press.

Kennedy, P. (2008). *A Guide to Econometrics, 6th Edition*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Kinder, D. (1986). Presidential character revisited. In R. Lau and D. Sears (eds.), *Political cognition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

King, A. (2002a). *Leaders' personalities and the outcomes of democratic elections.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

King. A (2002b). Do Leaders' Personalities Really Matter? In A. King (ed.), *Leaders' personalities and the outcomes of democratic elections*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

King. A (2002c). Conclusions and Implications. In A. King (ed.), *Leaders' personalities and the outcomes of democratic elections*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lewis-Beck, M.; Nadeau, R.; Elias, A. (2008). Economics, Party, and the Vote: Causality Issues and Panel Data. *American Journal of Political Science* 52: 84-95.

Lipset, S.; Rokkan, S. (1967). *Party systems and voter alignments*. New York: The Free Press.

Lobo, M. (2008). Parties and leader effects. Impact of leaders in the vote for different types of parties. *Party Politics* 14: 281–98.

Marks, G. (1993). Partisanship and the Vote in Australia: Changes over Time 1967-1990. *Political Behavior* 15: 137-66.

McAllister, I. (1996). Leaders. In L. LeDuc, R. Niemi and P. Norris (eds.), *Comparing democracies. Elections and voting in global perspective*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

McAllister, I. (2007). The personalization of politics. In R. Dalton and H. Klingemann (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Miller, A.; Wattenberg, M.; Malanchuk, O. (1986). Schematic assessments of presidential candidates. *American Political Science Review* 80: 521–40.

Oskarson, M. (2005). Social Structure and Party Choice. In J. Thomassen (ed.), *The European Voter*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Page, B.; Jones, C. (1979). Reciprocal effects of policy preferences, party loyalties and the vote. *American Political Science Review* 73: 1071-90.

Pappi, F. (1996). Political behaviour: reasoning voters and multiparty systems. In R. Goodin and H. Klingemann (eds.), *A New Handbook of Political Science.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pierce, P. (1993). Political sophistication and the use of candidate traits in candidate evaluation. *Political Psychology* 14: 21-36.

Rahn, W.; Aldrich, J.; Borgida, E.; Sullivan, D. (1990). A social-cognitive model of candidate appraisal. In J. Ferejohn and J. Kuklinski (eds.), *Information and Democratic Processes*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Richardson, B. (1991). European party loyalties revisited. *American Political Science Review* 85: 751-75.

Schmitt, H. (2009). Partisanship in Nine Western Democracies: Causes and Consequences. In J. Bartle and P. Bellucci (eds.), *Political parties and partisanship. Social identity and individual attitudes*. London and New York: Routledge.

Schmitt, H.; Holmberg, S. (1995). Political Parties in Decline? In H. Klingemann and D. Fuchs (eds.), *Citizens and the State.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shively, P. (1979). The development of party identification among adults: exploration of a functional model. *American Political Science Review* 73: 1039-54.

Sovey, A.; Green, D. (2010). Instrumental Variables Estimation in Political Science: A Readers' Guide. *American Journal of Political Science* 55: 188-200.

Sullivan, J., Aldrich, J., Borgida, E., Rahn, W. (1990). Candidate appraisal and human nature: Man and Superman in the 1984 election. *Political Psychology* 11: 459–84.

Thomassen, J. (1976). Party Identification as a Cross-National Concept: Its Meaning in The Netherlands. In I. Budge, I. Crewe and D. Farlie (eds.), *Party Identification and Beyond*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.

van der Brug, W.; Franklin, M.; Toka, G. (2008). One electorate or many? Differences in party preference formation between new and established European democracies. *Electoral Studies* 27: 589–600.

van der Eijk, C. (2002). Design issues in electoral research: taking care of (core) business. *Electoral Studies* 21: 189–206.

van der Eijk, C.; van der Brug, W.; Kroh, M.; Franklin, M. (2006). Rethinking the dependent variable in voting behavior: on the measurement and analysis of electoral utilities. *Electoral Studies* 25: 424–47.

Wattenberg, M. (1991). *The Rise of Candidate-Centered Politics*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

APPENDIX

All the statistical analyses presented in this volume are performed on the *Three Nations Pooled Dataset*, assembled in 2012 by the author in collaboration with Andrea De Angelis (European University Institute). The dataset includes all the available national election studies conducted in Britain, Germany and The Netherlands up to 2010 and detailed as follows:

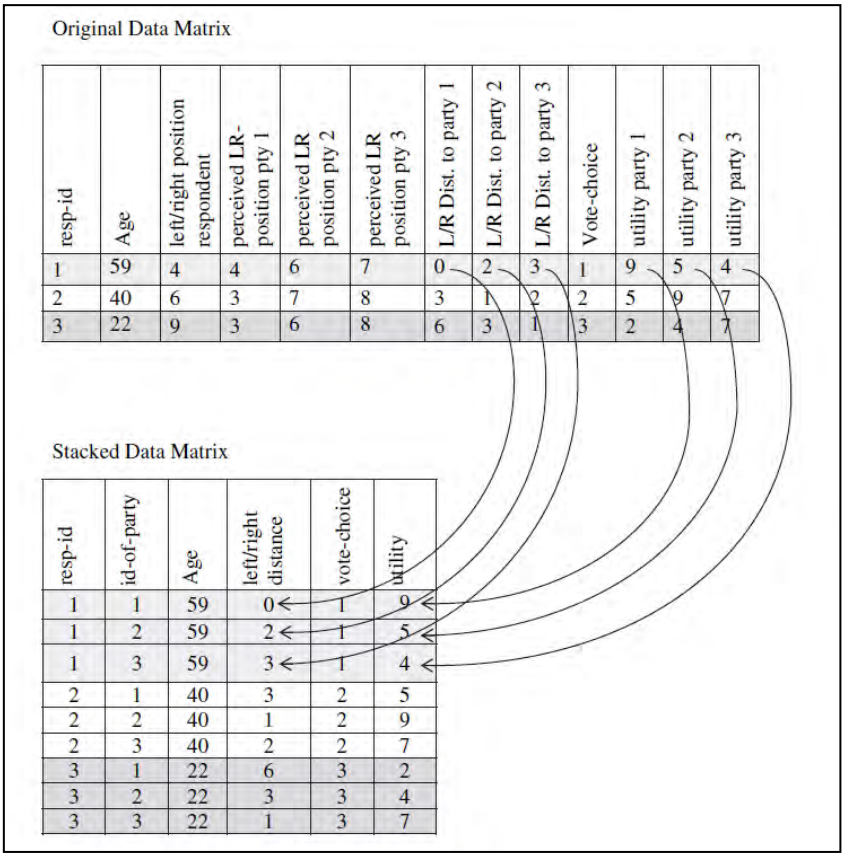
Britain	***Germany***	***The Netherlands***
1964	1961	1971
1966	1965	1972
1970	1969	1977
1974 Feb.	1972	1981
1974 Oct.	1976	1982
1979	1980	1986
1983	1983	1989
1987	1987	1994
1992	1990	1998
1997	1994	2002
2001	1998	2003
2005	2002	2006
2010	2005	2010
	2009	

The studies conducted in the period 1961-2001 were already transformed into a by and large comparable format as a result of the *European Voter* project (Thomassen, 2005). As for the most recent decade, all available studies have been added to the original data source by the authors.

Stacking the data matrix

The major focus of this analysis is on the determinants of partisanship and vote choice – two nominal variables by definition. Generally, electoral researchers face the problem of the nominal nature of their dependent variable in two ways. A possible manner to deal with the operationalization of, i.e., the voting choice is to assign a value of '1' if the individual casted its ballot in favor of the incumbent party, and a value of '0' if the voter opted for an opposing party. This approach is fairly common, for instance, in testing economic voting theories, where the performance of the incumbent is usually among the key predictors, or in two-party systems such as the United States. A different solution, particularly suitable in multi-party political contexts, consists in making use of discrete-choice models such as multinomial logit (MNL) or probit (MNP) regression. Yet this second solution can be problematic for at least three orders of reasons. Firstly, as these methods are often employed when dealing with extreme multiparty systems, they can only rarely provide reliable estimates for small parties, whose voting function is extremely skewed (van der Brug & Mughan, 2007). Secondly, the label "multinomial" includes a variety of discrete-choice models that presents different peculiarities and drawbacks. In particular, both MNL and MNP modeling techniques share a similar structure with the important difference that the distribution of the error term in the former is assumed to be very simple and tractable (the Type-I Extreme Values) while for the latter is assumed to be normal (Long, 1997). Moreover, the MNL allows only the inclusion of explanatory variables varying across the observations and provides a set coefficients (one for each alternative) whose identification is heavily dependent on the "Independence of Irrelevant Alternatives" assumptions, which is unlikely to be satisfied in most political systems.

Figure 4. Stacking the data matrix



Source: van der Eijk *et al.* (2006)

An alternative analytical perspective consists in analyzing the determinants of party choice by "stacking" the data matrix in order to obtain a data structure defined at the level stemming from the interaction of individuals and parties (Tilllie, 1995; van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996; van der Eijk *et al.*, 2006; van der Brug and Mughan, 2007; van der Brug, van der Eijk and Franklin, 2007; van der Brug, Franklin and Toka, 2008; van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009). In the transformed data matrix (which is derived from the "normal" data matrix as illustrated in Figure 4) the unit of analysis is represented by *respondent*party* combinations.

Stacking the data switches simultaneously the level of analysis as well as the level of conceptualization. On the one hand, the level of analysis shifts downwards from the

individual to the intra-individual level, forcing one to reinterpret the independent variables in terms of (*individual*parties*) relationships. On the other hand, the stacked data matrix leads to a broader interpretation of the concept of party preference in cross-national research. If the dependent variable is reinterpreted in terms of the dyadic *individual*party* relationships, then the object of analysis is no longer a specific party, but a generic one (regardless of the specific characteristics of the party system).

The resulting size [N] of the stacked data matrix equals to [R * P] where R is the number of respondents in each dataset and P is the number of parties included as stacks. The total size of the stacked datasets employed in these studies is as follows:

Britain – R=35.550; P=3: Conservatives, Labour, Liberal-Democrats; N=106.650

Germany – R=24.749; P=5: CDU/CSU, FDP, Die Grunen, Linkspartei, SPD; N=123.745

The Netherlands – R=25.625; P=9: CDA, ChristenUnie, D66, GroenLinks, LPF, PvdA, SGP, SP, VVD; N=230.625

Note that not all predictors included in the analyses are interpretable in terms of *respondent*party* combinations. Indeed, only respondents' partisanship and their evaluation of party leaders have a direct counterpart at this peculiar level. For all other variables, it was necessary to produce *y-hats* (that is, predicted values) regressing the dependent variable of the analysis on synthetic indexes of the covariates of interest though OLS, in order to produce a linear projection (at the *respondent*party* level) of previously individual variables (for a more detailed discussion of this method, see: van der Brug, Franklin and Toka, 2008: p. 594).