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Introduction

In an article on confessional attachment and electoral behaviour in the Netherlands, Miller and Stouthard concluded in 1975 that "... a continued decline in confessional attachment appears to forecast a continued decline in confessional party vote" (Miller & Stouthard 1975, 219). However, contrary to this prediction, after 1967 the support for the religious political parties did not decline. Instead it remained rather stable until the 1994 elections, when it rapidly dropped to only 27% (CBS 1994). In the same period, more and more people abandoned religion (Becker & Vink 1994; Need & De Graaf 1996), and the number of people who attended religious services at least once a week dropped dramatically (Becker & Vink 1994).

Figure 1 clearly illustrates that the decline in support for confessional parties and in confessional attachment exhibited a parallel pattern until 1971. Afterwards, a more or less stable popularity of the confessional political parties was noted from 1971 to 1989. Only at the most recent election was there a substantial drop in confessional voting. Need & de Graaf (1994) showed that religious socialization, in particular being brought up in a certain denomination, explains part of the stable support for the confessional political parties until 1989. In this paper, we examine the impact of religious and political socialization more thoroughly by means of a dynamic approach. We model political mobility over the life-course using socialization indicators as well as changes in religious behaviour. Additionally, we will investigate to what extent ex-members of the first and second generation increasingly support the confessional parties, which might partly explain the relative flat line of confessional voters between 1971 and 1989 in Figure 1.

Research questions

The usual way to establish a relation between church membership and attendance on the one hand and religious voting on the other is to ask people in surveys how they voted, whether they are church members, and whether they regularly attend
religious services. Subsequently, it can be investigated whether church members and regular church-goers vote for confessional parties to a greater extent than non-members and irregular church-goers. If these questions are posed at several points in time, inferences can be drawn about changes in the relation between church membership and religious voting over time.

However, neither church membership nor church attendance are stable over the life-course. More and more people abandon religion (Becker & Vink 1994; Need & De Graaf 1996), and the number of people who attend religious services at least once a week has dropped dramatically (Becker & Vink 1994). Hence, if we interviewed the same people on different occasions, we could answer questions about the effects of changes in church membership and other factors on confessional voting. This type of panel data is available, but generally not for a considerable period of time. Another disadvantage is the inevitable panel attrition. This is why we prefer to use retrospective data. In the Dutch SSCW/Tele-Panel survey, individuals have been asked to report their previous voting behaviour since they first became eligible to vote. These respondents also reported on whether they are or have ever been a church member, whether or not they abandoned religion and if so, at what age, and how often they attended religious services in different periods of their lives. The advantage is that we can see to what extent changes in voting behaviour over the life-course depend on other changes over the life-course, and to what extent the influence of socialization declines or persists.

Figure 1: % Religious and % voting confessional.
How changes in church membership might affect voting behaviour can be approached in two different ways. Firstly, one can consider differences between parents and their offspring. These intergenerational differences might affect the individual vote. Previous research has shown that parental religious denomination (Need & De Graaf 1994) and parental political preferences (Need 1995; Nieuwbeerta & Wittebrood 1995) substantially influence voting behaviour.

Second, one could focus on changes in religious behaviour over the life-course. These intragenerational religious changes might affect voting behaviour as well. If religious denomination (one's own as well as that of the parents) and parental political preferences influence voting behaviour, we can see whether these effects are stable over the life-course of individuals. Here, we can distinguish two aspects. Firstly, an individual can become more or less religious over the life-course, change denominations or abandon religion altogether. Secondly, and this relates to the intergenerational effects, the influence of parental characteristics can decrease or increase as an individual ages.

In this paper, we improve upon earlier studies in three ways. First, by using retrospective voting behaviour we have been able to test hypotheses from the 1956 elections onwards. Due to a lack of data, up to now political science has hardly studied the period before the 1970s. Second, we not only take an individual's attributes into account in the explanation of voting behaviour, we also take parental attributes such as parental denomination and parental party preference into account. Third, we not only investigate the effect of an individual's own denomination and church attendance on voting behaviour, but also that of his or her previous denomination and church attendance. The first question we focus on is whether a change in religious behaviour also leads to a change in confessional voting.

1. To what extent do changes in church membership over the life-course lead to changes in voting behaviour?

A second question on religious voting pertains to the diminishing effect of parental influences on voting behaviour. From sibling research, we know that voting behaviour is influenced 30% by parental characteristics, and 70% by individual characteristics (Need 1995). We also know that religious socialization partly explains the stable support for the confessional political parties (Need & de Graaf 1994). But we do not know whether these parental influences decline as an individual grows older. After all, parental influence on voting behaviour can be temporary, and only effective until a certain age. Our second question is:

2. To what extent does the relation between parental attributes and voting behaviour alter as one grows older?

Our last question concerns the explanation for the relatively large popularity of confessional parties in the 1971-1989 period. We assume that there were differ-
ent processes at work. First, confessional parties might be more likely to attract votes from non-religious voters than they used to do. Second, confessional parties might not be more likely to attract secular votes, but might get a larger percentage of the votes from this group just because this group increased over time. Hence, our last question:

3. *To what extent can the relatively stable support for the confessional parties in the 1971-1989 period be explained by (a) an increasing proportion of secular votes for confessional parties and (b) the increasing group size of the secular voters?*

In the next section, hypotheses on confessional voting and the changes it exhibits will be derived. Before we present the data and operationalization, we then discuss the reliability of this type of recall data. We explain in detail how the retrospective data on the voting behaviour over the life-course has been obtained. We also describe the data and the operationalization. The method we use to test our hypotheses is described in the next section. The results of the multilevel analysis of voting behaviour will be presented. The next section answers the question on the changing support for confessional parties. Then these results are briefly discussed.

Hypotheses on religious voting

In the field of political sociology, two theoretical perspectives are generally distinguished for understanding voting behaviour, an instrumental and an expressive approach (Butler & Stokes 1969; Heath, Jowell & Curtis 1985). Voters often combine the expressive and the instrumental element of voting. People can vote for the same party because of their mutual interests and because they are influenced by each other (Heath et al. 1985). It is very likely that a person will be especially influenced by people who are in similar structural circumstances and thus have similar interests (Burt 1987). Moreover, associating with others from the same social class can make people more conscious of their common interests and the political party that serves their interests best. Hence, we do not see these approaches as leading to different hypotheses, but as two sides of the same coin. According to both the approaches, (1) *church members are more likely to vote for a confessional party than non-members.*

Besides the fact that people belong to different denominations, it is also relevant to know how strongly integrated they are in these religious groups. Durkheim (1960) stated that the compliance to norms in a society depended on the level of integration within social groups. Applying this view to norms regarding voting, we predict that the more strongly people are integrated into their religious group, the more likely they are to vote for a religious political party. Assuming that regular church-goers are more integrated into their religious
group than people who do not regularly attend services, we can expect that (2) people who regularly attend services are more likely to vote for a confessional party than people who do not. This hypothesis has been corroborated in previous research (Pijnenburg 1994), though it has also been noted that there is a diminishing relation between church attendance and religious voting over time (Middendorp 1991). Hence, we test whether the effects of church membership and church attendance decrease over time.

The expressive approach states that people are socialized within a social context into a specific political environment, and this will have an effect on their present voting behaviour. If the socialization process is that important, it implies that besides the parents’ denomination, the political climate in the family would also have an impact on a person’s present voting behaviour. Another prediction is therefore that (3) people whose parents voted for a confessional party will be more likely to vote for a confessional party than those whose parents did not. This hypothesis has been corroborated in studies on voting behaviour in the Netherlands. Nieuwbeerta and Wittebrood (1995) showed that there was a direct influence of parental political preferences, even if parental social class and denomination were controlled for. However, in this study, only children between the age of 15 and 17 were questioned. That young children are influenced by their parents is not surprising. Furthermore, these children did not yet have their own social class position, nor a denomination that could be measured independently from their parents’. Need (1995) showed that of all the parental influences on the adult individual vote, parental political preference had the strongest effect.

In some instances, we can expect religious socialization to be less successful in integrating people into their religious group. For instance, the children of parents who belong to two different denominations will be less integrated into their denominational group. Hence, we can expect (4) people with religiously homogeneous parents to be more likely to vote for a confessional party than those with religiously heterogeneous parents. In the United States, this hypothesis has been supported (Niemi, Newman & Weimer 1992).

Besides the family, there are other socialization agents that influence how people vote. One of the primary socialization agents with respect to politics is the school (Jennings & Niemi 1968). We can expect (5) people who went to a parochial school at a child to be more likely to vote for a confessional political party than those who went to state schools. Wittebrood (1995) found no effect of the kind of the school on several political attitudes of high school children, but political preferences were not included in her analyses.

Until now, the hypothesized effects have been on whether or not people with certain characteristics were more likely to vote for a confessional political party than people with other characteristics. We would like to formulate a prediction
on why people change their voting behaviour. Previously, we assumed that all
the hypothesized socialization effects were equally strong over the life-course.
However, there is little evidence that this is the case (Himmelweit, Humphreys,
Jaeger & Katz 1981). We expect the socialization effects to diminish, but remain
in evidence as one grows older. The influence of parents on the political
preferences of their offspring is likely to be strongest when these children are
relatively young. Therefore, our hypothesis is that (6) there is an effect of being
brought up religiously on confessional voting, but this effect decreases the longer
ago it was that one abandoned religion.

Linked to this and irrespective of whether one leaves the church, the effect of
the socializing environment during adolescence might not be permanent. Need
(1995) showed that voting behaviour is 30% influenced by parental attributes.
However, it is likely that, as one grows older, the influences of one’s parents and
school will diminish, while the individual influences on the vote will get stronger.
We predict that (7) the older one becomes, (a) the smaller the effect of being
raised religiously (b) the smaller the effect of parental vote (c) the smaller the
effect of parental religious homogamy and (d) the smaller the effect of having
attended a parochial school in childhood. Himmelweit and her colleagues (1981)
found that the influence of the parental vote decreased as people grew older, but
continued to have an impact on voting behaviour. In this study, however, no
parental characteristics other than the parental vote were taken into account. In
line with this result, we nonetheless predict that the other socialization effects
also diminish as one grows older.

Finally, we examine all the effects controlling for election year, age, social
class position and gender. Before we test our hypotheses, we first discuss the
accuracy of recall data, and the data and operationalizations we use.

Quality of recall data

In 1979, Van der Eijk and Niemöller published an influential article on the
accuracy of recall data. On the basis of panel data on 509 individuals from the
Dutch Election Surveys of 1971, 1972 and 1977, they checked whether the recall
of a vote at a previous election was the same as the answer to the same question
posed immediately after that specific election. They concluded that “...the use of
recall data is at best hazardous. Of the cases considered here, we find at best 70%
and at worst 53% in agreement with their original report of voting behaviour.
Only a small proportion of the remaining cases consist of ‘don’t knows’ etc.,
most of them are per se faulty” (Van der Eijk & Niemöller 1979, 295). After
these disappointing results, not many Dutch researchers made use of recall data
on voting behaviour. The reason we nonetheless use recall data on voting is
twofold. First, it is important to gain insight into switches in voting behaviour
over a considerable time interval. This is even more important in light of the fact
that party affiliation is no longer something people have for life. The second reason for using recall data is that we developed a technique to improve recall accuracy. The way we asked respondents for retrospective information will be discussed extensively in the next section.

If, however, there is still some bias in the use of retrospective data, it is not immediately clear what the consequences are for our results. In a comparison of panel data and recall data, Van der Eijk and Niemöller (1983) showed that even though there was a substantial number of inconsistent recalls, this did not lead to substantially different conclusions with respect to the characteristics of different kinds of voters.

It has been found that errors are not random but tend toward consistency with the behaviour at the time of recall (Himmelweit, Jeager and Stockdale 1978). The election results have shown that the support for confessional parties decreased significantly at the 1994 elections (CBS 1994). Therefore, it is plausible that in our 1994 survey, we underestimate the number of votes for confessional parties in the past. Hence, we probably underestimate rather than overestimate the relation between religion or church attendance and confessional voting. However, if we draw conclusions on the basis of these data, we should bear in mind that they are based on retrospective data.

In the next section, we discuss in greater detail our improved method to accurately measure retrospective voting behaviour, church membership and church attendance.

Life history data and a description of the procedure to measure retrospective voting behaviour

The data were obtained from the Dutch SSCW/TelePanel survey. This survey, held at the end of 1994, is a life history survey of individuals above the age of 18. In this survey, retrospective data on several life-events, including religious and political careers and demographic characteristics, were collected for 2748 respondents. We asked the respondents to report on the frequency with which they attended religious services in different periods of their lives, and the age when they abandoned religion (if relevant). Finally, the political parties the respondents voted for at each general election when they were eligible to vote was asked for. The respondents were selected who had a valid score on all the relevant variables, and were aged between 18 and 64. Hence, we have information on the respondents’ voting behaviour at all the elections since 1956. After these selections, 1836 respondents remained.

The precise procedure to obtain the vote choice over the life-course is as follows. The respondents were interviewed using a personal computer. First, they were asked whether they have always voted for the same political party at general elections. If they said yes, they were asked to specify the political party they
voted for at the 1994 elections. For all the previous elections the respondents were eligible to vote at, the 1994 party preference was used. If the respondents indicated having either switched parties, or abstaining at one or more previous elections, they were asked to specify the party they voted for at all the elections they were eligible to vote at. Based on their age, the respondents were only prompted to answer questions about the elections they were eligible to vote at. From 1946 to 1967, the minimum voting age was 23. In 1967, it was reduced to 21, and since 1972 it has been 18.

The respondents were helped in several ways to make it easier for them to answer the questions on their voting history. First, we introduced the questions with the following statement: “The next question concerns your voting behaviour in the PAST. We would like to know for ALL the preceding GENERAL elections what political party you voted for. For each election, more information can be obtained by pressing the F3 key.”

The information behind the F3 key, and the way the questions were asked, will be illustrated on the basis of the 1986 elections. The question was: “The next question concerns the 1986 elections. What political party did you vote for in 1986? One of the possible answers was “I do not recall.” Respondents who could not recall what party they voted for in 1986 were subsequently asked: “Could you perhaps indicate what GROUP of political parties you voted for?” Next, the political parties at the 1986 elections were listed as follows:

1. Left wing: CPN, PvdA, PSP, D66, PPR
2. Right wing: VVD
3. Extreme right wing: CD
4. Confessional: CDA, SGP, GPV, RPF, EVP.

It was also possible to answer “did not vote” and “don’t know.” The F3 key caused a help-screen to pop up, with the following message: “After this election, the Lubbers II Cabinet was formed, a coalition of CDA and VVD. The following political parties participated in this election:

1. Left wing: CPN, PvdA, PSP, D66, PPR
2. Right wing: VVD
3. Extreme right wing: CD
4. Confessional: CDA, SGP, GPV, RPF, EVP.

For each elections, we tried to refresh the respondents’ memory with this kind of information. This information, of course, was adjusted to the various elections accordingly.

Another way to avoid erroneous classifications is by distinguishing only two groups of political parties: non-confessional and confessional. To illustrate the advantage of this procedure, we analyzed the responses of the same 509 individuals as Van der Eijk and Niemöller (1979) used. This way, we could calculate what the misreports on previous voting behaviour would have been if we had
only distinguished between confessional and non-confessional political parties. This time, of the valid cases considered, we found at best 85% and at worst 77% in agreement with their original report of voting behaviour. It is of interest to note that these percentages are in accordance with the accuracy of recall data on occupation, and this kind of data is frequently used (Blossfeld 1987).

A second advantage of combining parties in one category is that it circumvents the problem of new parties (such as D'66 in 1966), or ones that disappear (such as DS’70 in 1982), or merge (such as the ARP, CHU, KVP into the CDA in 1977). When one distinguishes separate parties, some of the voters are considered floating voters, but in fact the party they want to vote for no longer exists. This is another reason to only consider switches between confessional and non-confessional parties.

Third, if respondents did not know what political party they voted for, they were asked whether they remembered which bloc of parties they voted for. The parties in that specific election were grouped together into three different blocs. Hence, the number of missings was lower than if we analyzed votes for specific parties.

We will now briefly discuss the operationalization of the other variables. Church membership was measured over the life course of individuals. First, respondents were asked whether they considered themselves members of a religious group. If they did, we assumed they stuck to the church of their childhood. This is a likely assumption, since people rarely switch denominations in the Netherlands (Need & De Graaf 1996). If people did not consider themselves members of a religious group, we asked them what religion they were raised in. The respondents who said that they were not presently church members, but had been raised as a church member, were asked at what age they abandoned their religion. On the basis of these three questions, we were able to find out what denomination they had belonged to in each year of their lives. Logically, for each elections we knew what denomination each respondent belonged to. Denomination at each election was subsequently coded into two categories: not religious versus religious. We also added a variable that indicated how many years ago it was that the respondent abandoned religion. If the respondent was still a church member, this variable was given the value 0.

In addition to their own church membership, the respondents were asked what denomination their father and mother belonged to when they grew up. If each of their parents belonged to a different denomination, we considered them religiously heterogeneous, otherwise they were considered religiously homogeneous.

The frequency with which respondents attended services was asked for different periods in their lives. The questions we asked are: “How often did you attend religious services when you were between 10 and 15 years old?” This question was asked for the ages 10-15, 16-20, 21-30, 31-50, and above 50. On the basis
of the answers to these questions, we estimated for all the respondents and for each elections, the frequency with which they attended religious services. We divided the answers into two categories: once a month or more, and less than once a month.

Parental political preferences were obtained from the respondents and divided into the categories confessional and non-confessional. The political preferences of the parents pertained to the period when the respondents were about 15 years old. This variable has two categories: both parents voted confessional and both parents did not vote confessional.

Whether or not the respondents attended parochial schools was measured by asking whether they attended a state or a parochial school when they were about 15 years old. Two categories of schools were distinguished: state schools and parochial schools.

Finally, we included the variables year of elections, age and gender in our analysis.

In our analysis, we look at the factors that make people vote for confessional political parties. Therefore, the unit of analysis is not the individual, but the election years of the individuals. For example, a respondent eligible to vote in three elections produces three cases to be analyzed. Hence, the number of cases included in our analysis is 10,983 elections cases.

**Method: Controlling for intra-individual correlations with multilevel analysis**

Since we have data on one or more elections per respondent, we have to take the hierarchical structure of the data into account. If we overlooked the fact that we have multiple observations for respondents, the standard errors of the coefficients would be underestimated, and we might thus conclude that certain factors have an effect on confessional voting, whereas in fact these effects can be ascribed to chance. In educational research, models have been developed to analyze data with a hierarchical structure (Bryk & Raudenbush 1992). In political sociology, these multilevel models have been used to analyze data on voters in constituencies in regions (Jones, Johnston & Pattie 1992), surveys in different years in various countries (Nieuwbeerta 1995), and siblings in families (Need 1995). In this paper, we use a multilevel model in which elections are nested within respondents.

In the model we use, we measure an intercept, i.e. the average percentage voting confessional, and allow the intercept to vary between and within individuals, i.e. between elections. This variance between and within individuals can then be explained with explanatory variables that differ between individuals such as their gender or whether they attended a parochial school in childhood, and explanatory variables that differ within individuals and between elections, such
as the age of the respondents, how often they attended religious services at a certain period in their lives, and the number of years since they abandoned religion.

The general model we use is a logistic multilevel model that can be summarized with the following two equations:

\[
\log\left(\frac{p_{ij}}{1-p_{ij}}\right) = \beta_0j + \beta_1X_{ij} + \epsilon_{ij} \tag{1}
\]

In equation 1, \(p_{ij}\) is the probability that individual \(j\) will vote confessional at election \(i\). The logit of \(p_{ij}\), \(\log(p_{ij}/(1-p_{ij}))\) is then estimated as a function of the intercept for individual \(j\), his or her score on the independent variables \(X_{ij}\), and some random error, \(\epsilon_{ij}\). In this model, the variation of the random term \(\epsilon_{ij}\) can be summarized by \(\sigma^2\epsilon\), the variance of the random variation at the elections level. The \(\epsilon_{ij}\) are assumed to have a binomial distribution.

In equation 2, we allow the intercept terms, \(\beta_0j\), to vary between individuals. In this equation, the \(\mu_j\) terms are the individual level random terms, and similar to the \(\epsilon_{ij}\) terms, they can be summarized with a single variance term, \(\sigma^2\mu\)

\[
\beta_{0j} = \beta_0 + \mu_j \tag{2}
\]

We can think of this model as allowing for intra-individual correlation, with elections within one individual more alike than elections between individuals.

To estimate this multilevel model, we use the interactive package MLN (Rasbash & Woodhouse 1995).

Results

Before we present the results of our analysis of confessional voting, we briefly describe the bivariate relation between our independent variables and confessional voting. In Figure 2, we present the relation over time between the individual characteristics church membership and church attendance on the one hand, and religious voting on the other. Since these are bivariate relations, it means we have not controlled for other factors. To give a fair comparison of these bivariate relations over time, we should use a measure that will not be influenced by the changing popularity of the confessional parties over time, or by the decreasing number of religious persons and church-goers in the Netherlands. A measure that is insensitive to the changes in the overall popularity of religious parties, and to the changes in the distributions of the independent variables is the odds ratio. The odds ratio of a two-by-two table of religion against vote is the odds of religious people voting for a confessional party divided by the odds of non-religious people doing the same. If religious voting is independent of religion, the odds ratio has the value 1. In the figures here, we have
taken the log of the odds ratio. Hence, if religious voting is independent of
religion, the log odds has the value of zero. The higher the log odds is, the higher
the level of religious voting. A log odds below zero indicates that religious people
are less likely to vote confessional than non-religious people.

![Log odds of voting for a confessional party.](image)

Figure 2: Log odds of voting for a confessional party.

Figure 2 shows a strong, though diminishing relation over time for religion and
church attendance. Even though there has been a sharp decline in both of these
relations, in 1994 religious people are still much more likely to vote confessional
than non-religious people, and regular church-goers are more likely to vote
confessional than irregular church-goers.

Eisinga, Lammers & Pelzer (1995) published a trend for the relation between
religion and confessional voting from 1964 onwards, using time-series of annual
cross-sectional surveys. This trend looks similar to the trend (given that we have
taken the log odds instead of the odds ratio in their article) in Figure 2. This
suggests that our retrospective data allows us to draw the same conclusions on
the relation between religion and voting over time as cross-sectional data would.

Figure 3 displays the bivariate relation between confessional voting and
parental characteristics. The parental characteristics are whether both parents
voted confessional when the respondent was 15 and whether both parents
belonged to the same denomination. We also noted the relation with whether the
respondent attended a parochial high school.
In Figure 3, there is a clear relation, though no apparent declining trend, between parental religious homogeneity and confessional voting. The effects on confessional voting of attending a parochial high school and of whether one’s parents both voted confessional, seemed to be strongest in the early 60s, and declined slightly afterwards.

In Figures 2 and 3, the relation is demonstrated between individual and parental characteristics and confessional voting over time. In the next two figures, we show how these relations differ by age.

Figure 4 shows that the relation between church membership and church attendance is stronger for older than for younger people. In Figure 5, the effect of parental voting and parental religious homogeneity on confessional voting is stronger, though not so much for older as it is for younger people. This also seems to be case for the relation with attending a parochial school in childhood.

Until now, we have concentrated on bivariate relations between individual and parental characteristics and confessional voting. The question is whether these relations remain the same if we control for other relevant factors. For instance, there might not be a relation with age if we control for the year of the survey. The results of our multilevel analysis are shown in Table 1. The upper part of this table contains the parameter estimates and their standard errors. The last column indicates whether a parameter significantly differs from 0. The lower part of Table 1 presents the variance distribution between individuals and elections.

Figure 3: Log odds of voting for a confessional party.
Figure 4: Log odds of voting for a confessional party.

Figure 5: Log odds of voting for a confessional party.
Table 1: Parameter estimates from multilevel model (N₁=10983, N₂=1836; χ² compared to model with only a constant= 4783, with 17 degrees of freedom)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>s.e. (β)</th>
<th>Sign.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-3.39</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Church membership</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>0.29</td>
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</tr>
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<td>interaction * age</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interaction * year</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church attendance</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interaction * age</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interaction * year</td>
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<td>0.01</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>0.17</td>
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<td>Parental characteristics</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interaction * age</td>
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<td>Both parents voted confessional</td>
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<td>*</td>
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<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election Year</td>
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</table>

* significant at 5% level

Table 1 shows, not unexpectedly, that church members and regular church-goers are more likely to vote for a confessional party than non-members and persons who do not regularly attend services. If we include the interaction of church membership and attendance with age and year, we can conclude that there is no significant interaction with age, but that the effect of church membership and attendance decreases over time.

Most of our hypotheses are supported by the data. People whose parents both voted for a confessional party when they were about 15 have a higher chance of voting for a confessional party than people whose parents did not. This effect diminishes as one grows older, since there is a significant interaction with age. Apparently, an acculturation process makes it less strong. There is also a
significant effect of having attended a parochial school in childhood: people who did are more likely to vote for a confessional party than people who didn’t. Interestingly, there is another religious acculturation effect, since there is a significant effect of the number of years that have passed since one abandoned the church. The longer ago it was, the less likely they are to vote for a confessional party.

We found no significant effects of gender or age. The effect of having attended a parochial school in childhood does not differ for older and younger persons. Contrary to what was expected, the effect of parental religious homogeneity is stronger for older than younger persons.

Table 2: Percentage of votes for confessional parties obtained from each group (probability that each group will vote for a confessional party is between brackets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Church member(^a)</th>
<th>Ex-member(^b)</th>
<th>Non-member(^c)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>94.8 (0.86)</td>
<td>3.9 (0.21)</td>
<td>1.3 (0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>93.8 (0.84)</td>
<td>4.7 (0.21)</td>
<td>1.5 (0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>92.4 (0.82)</td>
<td>5.8 (0.22)</td>
<td>1.9 (0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>92.3 (0.82)</td>
<td>5.9 (0.22)</td>
<td>1.9 (0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>91.1 (0.79)</td>
<td>6.7 (0.23)</td>
<td>2.2 (0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>88.3 (0.77)</td>
<td>8.6 (0.24)</td>
<td>3.1 (0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>88.1 (0.76)</td>
<td>8.7 (0.25)</td>
<td>3.2 (0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>86.6 (0.74)</td>
<td>9.4 (0.25)</td>
<td>4.0 (0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>84.2 (0.71)</td>
<td>11.3 (0.25)</td>
<td>4.5 (0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>80.6 (0.68)</td>
<td>13.7 (0.26)</td>
<td>5.7 (0.05)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Male, aged 40, religious, regular church-goer, both parents voted confessional, parents religiously homogeneous, attended parochial school.

\(^b\) Male, aged 40, religious until age 32, regular church-goer until age 32, both parents voted confessional, parents religiously homogeneous, attended parochial school.

\(^c\) Male, aged 40, not religious, non-attender, parents did not vote confessional, parents not religious, did not attend parochial school.

The changing support of confessional parties

To get a better understanding of the magnitude of the effects with respect to the changing support for the confessional parties, we calculated on the basis of the estimates the probability of voting for a confessional party for three groups. The first group consists of 40-year-old males who are religious, regular church-goers, whose parents both voted for confessional parties and were religiously homogeneous, and who attended a parochial school in childhood. We refer to this group as church members. The second group is basically the same, only they abandoned religion when they were 32 and stopped attending religious services.
We refer to this group as ex-members of the first generation. Finally, the third group consists of 40-year-old males who are not religious, and do not attend religious services (ex-members of the second generation), whose parents did not vote for a confessional party and were not religious, and who did not attend a parochial school in childhood. We refer to this group as non-members. Table 2 shows to what extent each group is responsible for the support of the confessional political parties and how likely it is for group members to vote for a confessional party (these figures are shown between brackets). We calculated the percentages of support the confessional parties received from each of the groups by multiplying the group’s size by the probability each group member voted for a confessional party. The probabilities are based upon the estimates from Table 1, the group sizes are from Becker and Vink (1994, appendices to Chapter 3). The total support for the confessional parties in a given year is calculated as follows:

\[
\text{Total support} = (\text{support from confessional voters} \times \text{group size confessional voters}) + (\text{support from 1st generation ex-members} \times \text{group size 1st generation ex-members}) + (\text{support from 2nd generation ex-members} \times \text{group size 2nd generation ex-members})
\]

We assume that our three groups represent the electorate as a whole. To calculate each group’s contribution to the total received by the confessional parties, we divided each of the three sums by the total support. From Table 2, we can draw the following conclusions. The probabilities in the figures between brackets in the first column show a decline in religious loyalty. Religious people become less likely to vote for a confessional party. The column for church members also shows the relative support from church members by taking into account the decline in the groups size. The results clearly show a decline in the number of votes the confessional parties received from the religious group (see also Andeweg 1995). The total confessional support came 95% from church members in 1963 compared to only 81% in 1994.

The probability that ex-members will vote for a confessional party increased from 21% in 1963 to 26% in 1994. Given the increasing size of the group, it is not surprising to see that the percentage of votes confessional parties received from the ex-members increased from 4% to 14%. This might partly explain the relatively stable support for the confessional parties in the 1971-1989 period.

The probability that non-members will vote confessional hardly increases over time. But given the increasing size of the group, the total support for the confessional parties became more dependent on non-members.

These findings suggest that even when the confessional parties made an attempt to attract more voters from the centre, they were not altogether success-
ful. The fact some scholars concluded that the confessional parties were successful in attracting non-religious voters was because of the increase in group size and not because non-religious voters started to vote to a greater extent for a confessional party.

Discussion

In this paper, we tried to gain more insight into the changing socialization effects over the life-course for confessional voting. Furthermore, we examined the impact of abandoning religion and how long it takes till it affects the chance of voting for a confessional party. For this purpose, we applied a dynamic approach. The main results are the following.

In general, religious voting has declined over time. Church members and regular church-goers are more likely to vote for a confessional party than non-members and people who do not regularly attend services. These effects diminish over time. With respect to the effects of a religious socialization, we found that people whose parents voted for a confessional party when they were about 15 are more likely to vote for a confessional party than people whose parents did not. This effect diminishes as one grows older. There is also a socialization effect of having attended a parochial school in childhood: people who did are more likely to vote for a confessional party than people who did not. Another socialization effect is that of being brought up as a church member, though the longer ago one abandoned religion, the less likely one is to vote for a confessional party.

The results of our use of recall data on religious voting seem promising. We find trends similar to what researchers found who made use of a time-series of cross-sectional data. The bias in the recall of respondents does not seem to have affected our conclusions to a great extent. By using recall data, we were able to test the effects of abandoning religion, and the trends in the socialization effects on confessional voting over a considerable period of time, and thus gained insight into the dynamics of change. We showed that religious socialization, even if one abandons religion later in life, still makes one vote for confessional parties. The fact that a religious socialization still affects the confessional vote in later life might partly explain the fact that from the late sixties onward, the support for the confessional parties did not decline but remained rather stable, while in the same period, more and more persons abandoned religion. Yet the 'delay' effect of leaving the church causes us to reconsider Miller and Stouthard's prediction that "..the newly deconfessionalized turn away from the parties of tradition and seek out the parties of change (Miller & Stouthard 1975, 255). Although this prediction does seem to hold water, it is not so much the newly deconfessionalized but the people who have long been deconfessionalized who turn away from the parties of tradition. Moreover, the explanation for the increasing number of
secular voters who cast a confessional vote can not be found in the fact that non-religious voters started to vote for confessional parties to a greater extent, but in the fact that the non-religious group grew in size.

NOTES


REFERENCES


Need, A. (1995) 'De overeenkomst in politieke voorkeuren van siblings: De invloed van individuele


