RELIGIOUS AND CLASS VOTING IN THE NETHERLANDS
1990-1991: A REVIEW OF RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS TESTED

PEER SCHEEPERS, JAN LAMMERS and JAN PETERS

Introduction

The Dutch pillarized political system up to the mid-sixties has been described as a consociational democracy with stable relations between political parties and their electorates (Lijphart, 1968). Voters were thought to vote on the basis of religion or social class for politicians representing their pillar’s interests.

Dutch researchers seem to agree on the extent to which this system has eroded over the years in a process labelled de-alignment. They state that traditional religion-related or class-related factors have lost their dominancy for political voting. And indeed, recent empirical findings show, that a growing number of people have left or are leaving the church (Peters, Felling and Scheepers, 1993; SCP, 1994) and that the association between both social class and religion with voting has decreased over the years (cf. Ultee, Flap and Arts, 1991; Eisinga, Felling and Lammers, 1994). Next, it is argued that new political cleavages and issues have become more important to explain voting behaviour. Van der Eijk and Niemöller suppose that ‘...another structuring factor has emerged: left-right ideology...’ (1987, 17). Van Deth and Geurts (1989, 17) emphasize the importance of new political priorities clustered in the concept of post-materialism derived from Inglehart (1977, 1990). Middendorp states that ideological stands and political attitudes have become crucial to understanding contemporary voting in the Netherlands. He summarizes the process that has taken place in the past decades as ‘the ideologization of vote’ (1991, 287).

The questions we would like to address in this study are related to these recent insights. Do social class and religion no longer directly affect political voting? Have the ‘old political issues’ been replaced by these ‘new political issues’? And more specifically: to what extent are the effects of religious and class voting intermediated by political attitudes? These questions have only been addressed partially in recent studies. That is why we feel a more extensive synthesis of hypotheses on these issues is called for.
Theories on voting

In virtually all the previous research, theoretical models were postulated in which the effects of social class and religion on voting are considered to be intermediated by political attitudes. Virtually all the studies conclude that political attitudes are more important to explain voting than social class and religion. That is why we will start with the relations between political attitudes and voting, followed by the relations between social positions and political attitudes.

Political attitudes and voting

One of the classic studies on political attitudes is the one by Lipset (1981). He focussed on two political attitudes, economic liberalism and cultural conservatism. He described economic liberalism as a complex of consistent political opinions regarding a more equal distribution of income, status and power and regarding governmental intervention to establish this distribution. And he described cultural conservatism as a complex of consistent political opinions regarding the restriction of civil liberties and regarding pro-nationalistic and anti-internationalistic governmental policies. Lipset suggested that these political attitudes were important for voting. His explanation of voting may be summarized by the notion that voters take political stands in line with their interests and consequently vote for political parties that claim to take the same stands on these issues and thus serve the interests of these particular voters.

This theory has been replicated (at least partially) many times. But very few researchers (like Middendorp, 1978, 1989, 1991; Felling and Peters, 1986; Lammers and Peters, 1988) have tested the extent to which these two political attitudes affect political voting in the Netherlands. This evidence indicates that these political attitudes, referring to political issues that are still of contemporary concern, do affect political voting. Adapting Lipset’s theory to the Dutch context, it is plausible to hypothesize that:

1 adherence to economic liberalism might lead one to vote for left-wing parties that claim to redistribute scarce socio-economic resources more equally

2 adherence to cultural conservatism might lead one to vote for right-wing parties that claim to preserve traditional cultural norms and values.

In some of the recent studies on voting in the Netherlands, these political attitudes have been neglected, probably on the assumption that these stands have lost their relevance. These studies focus on other factors thought to affect political voting like post-materialism and/or left-right placement.

The importance of post-materialism as a factor affecting political voting
has been strongly emphasized by Van Deth (1984; Van Deth and Geurts, 1989). The idea behind this approach is that some old political issues have gradually lost their relevance, partly due to the fact that ‘...post-war generations in particular tend to emphasize self-fulfilment, independence and emancipation...’ (Van Deth and Geurts, 1989, 17), paying more attention to the environment and the quality of life and paying less attention to material matters that are taken for granted. This ‘new ideology’ has generally been labelled post-materialism, following Inglehart (1977, 1990). People who subscribe to these political ideas feel that social change is necessary to realize these postmaterial goals and hence vote for political parties on the left that advocate such radical societal changes. The hypothesis derivable from this approach may be summarized as:

3 adherence to post-materialism may lead one to vote for political parties on the (far) left that claim to promote radical societal changes.

Next, especially Niemöller and Van der Eijk have promoted left-right placement as a decisive factor regarding voting, ‘...which accounts for a great deal of voter behaviour, party behaviour and issue formation...’ (1986, 17). The idea behind this firm statement is that voters place themselves on an abstract continuum ranging from far left to far right and then decide to vote for a party they perceive as being close to this left-right position. That is why this notion is known as ‘the smallest distance hypothesis’. This approach has been severely criticized for its lack of a clear substantial meaning attributable to the abstract continuum (cf. Middendorp, 1989), for its lack of predictive power (Van Holsteyn, 1989; Maas et al., 1991), and for its lack of theoretical relevance and for its triviality (Van Deth and de Graaf, 1991; Schmeets and Molin, 1992). But there is empirical evidence that this factor is significant in predicting voting. The hypothesis derivable from this approach, previously summarized by Van Deth (1986), is simply:

4 self-placement on the left-right dimension affects political voting, i.e.

people on the left side of the continuum vote for left-wing parties and people on the right side vote for right-wing parties.

Now that we have distinguished four hypotheses on the direct effects of political attitudes on political voting, the question arises as to how political attitudes are related to social positions that are also considered significant for voting.

**Social positions and political attitudes**

There appears to be some consensus on the effects of social positions on political attitudes.

Previous research on economic liberalism has shown that social class is important, even after controlling for educational level and other predictors
considered significant (cf. Scheepers et al., 1992). It appeared that the working class favours economic liberalism, which is explained in line with Lipset by the notion that its economic interests would be served and its social position would be improved by a policy implementing these political ideas. Hence, from previous research it follows that:

5 economic liberalism is strongly subscribed to by the working class.

Previous researchers were somewhat puzzled by the fairly consistent finding that the working class also subscribes to cultural conservatism (for overviews: De Witte, 1990; Scheepers et al., 1992). It was considered paradoxical that the working class was liberal on economic issues and simultaneously conservative on cultural matters, regarding issues like civil liberties, but also regarding traditional sex roles, abortion and euthanasia. In these studies, it was not taken into account that at least part of the working class was and still is religious (cf. Felling et al., 1986), meaning that they might also be true to the norms and values propagated by religiously oriented institutions. Hence, the finding that the working class subscribes to cultural conservatism might be partially due to its religious background. This might also apply to the class of self-employed persons and farmers that have also been shown to subscribe to cultural conservatism (cf Scheepers et al., 1992): these political attitudes might also be due to their religious background, as might more generally hold true for religious segments of other social classes. This may be explained in line with Lipset by the notion that the cultural interests of religious people would be served by maintaining these traditional norms which are strongly associated with their world views. From these insights may be derived that:

6 cultural conservatism is strongly subscribed to by the religious working class (6a) but also by the class of religious self-employed persons (6b).

Taking into account our previously postulated hypotheses on economic liberalism and cultural conservatism, we suspect that religious people belonging to the working class might find themselves in a particularly nasty position, i.e. under cross-pressures (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1944). On the one hand, it is in their economic interest to subscribe to economic liberalism and hence vote for a left-wing party. On the other hand, it is in their cultural interest to be loyal to religiously inspired norms and values, i.e. subscribe to cultural conservatism, and hence vote for a party that claims to preserve these norms and values, which in the Dutch context would lead them to vote for a more confessional party. In order to see how they resolve these cross-pressures, one would need to conduct research on the effects of belonging to the working class and simultaneously belonging to some denomination. More in general, we consider it more in line with the findings and conclusions put forward by Lijphart (1968, 1974) to specify the effects of belonging to a social class on voting combined with the effects of belonging to a denomination.

Next, belonging to a specific generation (as indicated by age) and educa-
tional level appear to contribute to the explanation of post-materialism (Van Deth and Geurts, 1989). The finding that post-materialism is especially prevalent among the younger generations is explained by the theory that they grew up in conditions where material scarcity was no longer prevalent, leading them to devote more attention to post-materialistic options. The effect of education was interpreted by the notion that highly educated people put less emphasis on material matters. These ideas lead us, in line with previous research, to hypothesize that:

7 post-materialism is affected by age (7a) and by educational level (7b).

Empirical evidence regarding left-right placement has shown that social class, religion, educational level, and income contribute to the explanation of this dimension (cf. Niemöller and Van der Eijk, 1986; Middendorp, 1989, 1991). If we elaborate further on the argument on the cross-pressures developed for hypothesis 6, we would suggest, however, less straightforward hypotheses. Like in hypothesis 6, we would expect divergent left-right placements within at least some social classes according to religion: we would expect the religious working class to perceive itself as more right-wing and the non-religious working class as more left-wing. Derivable hypotheses are:

8 left-right placement is affected by social class in combination with religion (8a), by educational level (8b) and by income level (8c).

Now, we are left with some problems related to specific causal relations between political attitudes. When people decide on their political vote, they can be assumed to take all four stands into account to some extent. Van Deth and Geurts (1989) describe this as the complement hypothesis: several political motives contribute to the eventual decision to vote for one particular party. By contrast, Van der Eijk and Niemöller (1987) subscribe to the rejection hypothesis according to Van Deth and Geurts (1989): Van der Eijk and Niemöller state for instance that post-materialism does not contribute to the explanation of voting, once left-right placement has been controlled for. But there are valid grounds to specify the causal relations between the (intermediate) political attitudes by means of the interpretation hypothesis that assumes that left-right placement may interpret the link between political attitudes on the one hand and voting on the other. Van Deth and Geurts (1989) have empirically shown that left-right placement, regarded as the interpretative link between post-materialism and voting, results in the best fitting (LISREL) model. The implication of these studies is that left-right placement is considered to be the result of preceding political attitudes, interpreting the relationship between political attitudes and voting. Taking this empirical evidence into account, we hypothesize that:

9 left-right placement is induced by political attitudes: economic liberalism (9a), cultural conservatism (9b) and post-materialism (9c).

Next, there appear to be inconsistent findings on whether social positions,
like social class and religion, (still) have direct effects on voting. Niemöller and Van der Eijk (1986) first found these effects to be insignificant. But in a later study they found a direct effect of religion on voting (Van der Eijk and Niemöller, 1987). Van Deth and Geurts (1989) assumed and found that the direct effects of social positions are insignificant: they concluded that social positions are only related to voting via post-materialism. On the other hand, Middendorp (1989, 1991) and Schmeets and Molin (1992) found that the direct effects of social class and religion are moderate, yet significant. These inconsistencies may be due to the fact that previous studies merely tested partial voting models, i.e. models in which some predictors of voting were not included. In this study, we have tried to incorporate all the factors considered theoretically relevant and statistically significant to explain voting in the nineties in the Netherlands. Hence, if we find that the effects of (the combination of) social class and religion on voting, not of all other ‘new’ predictors, have become indirect, then the process of dealignment has reached its end and the process of the ideologization of voting (Middendorp, 1991) is at stake. But if the direct effects of (the combination of) social class and religion are still present, they may be interpreted as relics of the pillarized political system. Related to our central question and to put it sharply, we hypothesize that these direct effects are non-significant:

10 social positions, like social class (10a) and religion (10b) do not affect voting directly, separately nor in combination; instead the effects of social class and religion are fully mediated by political attitudes.

Finally we are left with some matters related to the specific causal relations between social positions. Social positions are obviously intertwined in social reality. This social fact is usually conceptualized by status-attainment models, in which income and social class are dependent on educational level (and age). However, this specification is not important for the questions addressed in this study: a status-attainment specification does not affect the estimates related to social class and/or religion on voting. For the sake of simplicity, we conceptualize the relations between the social positions as being associated, hence without specifying causal relationships between them. This leaves the possibility to specify interactive effects between social class and religion on intermediate and dependent variables. We will set out to test these synthesized hypotheses below.

Data

Data were derived from a national survey, entitled ‘Social and Cultural Developments in the Netherlands 1990’. For this survey, a two-stage random sample of the Dutch population was constructed. In the first stage, a number of municipalities was selected in such a way that the distribution of respond-
ents over regions as well as over the degrees of urbanization would be represented proportionately to the national distribution. In the second stage, people aged 18 to 69 were randomly selected from the registers of the municipalities previously selected. This sample (N=2384) turned out to be representative of the Dutch population regarding sex, age, and marital status (cf. Eisinga, Felling, Peters, Scheepers and Schreuder, 1992).

**Measurements**

Let us first turn to the operationalization of independent variables in the model.

Social class was constructed using the operationalization designed by Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero (1983) for comparative purposes (cf. Ganzeboom, Treiman and Luijkx, 1989). Originally it consisted of ten nominal categories that, for reasons of surveyability, were reduced to five categories, more or less in line with the recommendation made by the original constructors. Each category contains a sufficient number of respondents for statistical analyses. This operationalization was developed to identify each respondent’s objective class position based on a number of criteria. Hence, it is different from the operationalizations used in previous studies on voting where subjective class identification was used (cf. Niemöller and Van der Eijk, 1986; Van der Eijk and Niemöller, 1987; Middendorp, 1989, 1991). However, we executed an extra analysis with the subjective class identification as independent variable in order to ascertain the extent to which substantially different results appeared.

Religion was measured according to a typology derived from Felling et al. (1991), referred to as church involvement. It is based on questions on church membership, and attendance and participation in church activities. Felling et al. distinguished six categories of church involvement. But we had to reduce this number of categories severely because we suspected an interaction effect of social class with religion. To specify this interaction, we would need to include an unsurveyable number of nominal categories and end up with an equally unsurveyable number of parameters. Hence this extensive typology was reduced to two categories. The first category contains non-members: people from a second generation of non-members, a first generation of non-members and former members. The second category contains members: marginal, modal and core members.

Education was measured by the highest educational level the respondents completed. This variable has seven categories considered metric, varying from primary school to university.

Income was measured by the monthly income after taxes of the household
the respondent belonged to, with six categories considered metric. Age was ascertained by the respondent’s year of birth.

Now let us turn to the operationalization of the intermediate variables in the model.

To cover economic liberalism, three measurements were used, highly similar to previous studies (Felling and Peters, 1986; Lammers and Peters, 1988). The first refers to items on the desirability of reducing status and income inequalities, constructed by means of probabilistic scalogram analysis (H=.52, rho=.72). There is further one additive scale dealing with items on the desirability of tougher trade union policies (Cronbach’s alpha=.49), and one item on the desirability of government intervention to reduce income inequalities.

To cover cultural conservatism, we used three scales used in previous research (Felling and Peters, 1986; Lammers and Peters, 1988) but slightly different than in a more recent study (Scheepers et al., 1992) where Lipset’s conceptualization was conscientiously followed. The first scale has six items on a traditional view of women (Cronbach’s alpha=.71). The second contains six items on the restriction of civil liberties, constructed by means of probabilistic scalogram analysis (H=.47, rho=.75). The third deals with the acceptability of human intervention in matters of life and death, i.e. abortion, suicide and euthanasia, constructed by means of probabilistic scalogram analysis (H=.51, rho=.71).

Economic liberalism and cultural conservatism repeatedly appeared to constitute two separate highly consistent scales that are statistically independent (Scheepers et al., 1992). By means of factor analysis, for each scale factor scores were calculated that are usable for further analysis. These dimensions show a substantial overlap with two dimensions previously distinguished by Middendorp (1978, 1991), who operationalized these dimensions more elaborately. He referred to economic liberalism as socio-economic left-right, and to cultural conservatism as libertarianism-authoritarianism. For the sake of simplicity we will continue to use the terms economic liberalism and cultural conservatism that we perceive of as expressing more directly their substantial content.

Post-materialism was measured with four items described as political goals, derived from the original study by Inglehart (1977). Two of them refer to the materialistic dimension, the other two to the post-materialistic dimension. Respondents were requested to rank order these items. With this measurement, a typology was constructed containing: pure materialists, pure post-materialists and a mixed type of materialists and post-materialists. Although this typology is based on fewer items than used by previous
researchers (van Eijk and Niemöller, 1987; Van Deth and Geurts, 1989), it contains the same substantial categories.

And the last of the intermediate variables, left-right self-placement, was ascertained by the straightforward measurement of the respondents' self-placement on a ten-point scale ranging from left (1) to right (10).

Lastly, let us turn to the dependent variable of intended voting.

This variable is quite complex in the Netherlands because of the large number of political parties with a wide range of ideological stances. Because this variable is obviously of a nominal measurement level, it is often turned into a metric variable in order to use it in multivariate regression analyses where metricity is one of the assumptions. Van der Eijk and Niemöller (1983, 1987; Niemöller and Van der Eijk, 1986) used the mean rating on the left-right scale to rank order political parties on a one-dimensional metric continuum. Much the same procedure was followed by others (Middendorp, 1989; Hendriks Vettehen, 1990; Schmeets and Molin, 1992) as well as by Van Deth and Geurts (1989), who used an extended version of this type of procedure. But this research problem has not yet been approached by means of a more appropriate procedure that does not assume metricity like logistic regression, probably due to the difficulties that arise with the interpretation of the parameters. Recently a procedure to overcome such difficulties has been introduced: regression analysis with nominal variables (RENOVA: cf. Lamers and Pelzer, 1991, 1992). We will describe some of the possibilities of this programme in the next section.

**Analyses**

We used RENOVA to test our hypotheses. This statistical programme provides possibilities to explore and estimate the causal relations between exogeneous, intermediate and endogeneous variables just like conventional multiple regression analysis. And just like in conventional regression analysis, nominal predictors can be included as dummy variables and entered in equations next to metric predictors. The main difference with conventional regression analysis is that nominal dependent variables may also be included in RENOVA.

Prior to the analysis, all the metric variables were standardized in order to transform their general mean to zero and their standard deviation to one. Social class and religion were combined into ten categories for the combination of objective social class with religion (see Table 1) and into eight categories for the combination of subjective social class with religion (see Table 2). Next we specified two recursive models: one containing the objective social class position combined with religion, and one containing
the subjective class identification combined with religion. Finally, we consecutively eliminated the predictors with the lowest non-significant t-value from each of these models in order to obtain more accurate estimates of the parameters of the restricted models.

Let us first explain the interpretation of the parameters presented in Tables 1 and 2 in general before we give the results of the analyses in greater detail (cf. Lammers and Pelzer, 1991, 1992). All the figures in the tables are multiple regression effects and have hence been controlled for other predictors in the equations. The effects in each column have been derived from one regression equation for the dependent variable mentioned at the top of that column. The last six columns pertain to party preferences. The first cells of these columns contain the intercepts that reflect the percentages of people who vote for a particular party. They are the same in both tables and serve as references in interpreting the parameters in the column cells. For instance, the effect of belonging to the religious working class (RWC) on voting for the Labour Party (-5.72 in Table 1) means that the percentage of voters for the Labour Party is 5.72% lower in this category than the general percentage of 25.46%. Or to put it in terms of probability: belonging to the religious working class decreases the probability of voting for the Labour Party by 0.0572 from the general probability of 0.2546. For the interpretation of an effect of a metric predictor on the voting alternatives, no reference to the general percentage is needed. For instance, the effect of education of -6.20 in the same column means that an increase of one unit on the standardized variable of education decreases the percentage of voters for the Labour Party by 6.20% or the probability to vote for this party by 0.0620. The effects in the first four columns of the tables pertain to metric standardized dependent variables and should be interpreted according to the status of the predictor variable, whether nominal or metric. The effect of belonging to the religious working class on cultural conservatism (0.44) represents the difference of predicted scores on this standardized variable between somebody who belongs to the religious working class and somebody who does not. And the effect of -0.21 of the metric variable education refers to the difference in predicted score on cultural conservatism by changing one unit on the standardized scale of education. The interpretation of the latter effect (of a standardized predictor on a standardized dependent) is similar to the normal standardized regression effect. Now let us turn to the results of the analyses in greater detail.

Results

The results of the analyses are presented in Table 1 (with categories of the objective social class position and religion) and Table 2 (with categories of
Table 1 RENOVA parameter estimates of the restricted regression model with interaction effects of social class (based on objective criteria) with religion (n=1600), only significant parameters included (p<.05)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independents:</th>
<th>ECLI</th>
<th>CULC</th>
<th>PMT</th>
<th>LERI</th>
<th>GRL</th>
<th>PVDA</th>
<th>D’66</th>
<th>CDA</th>
<th>VVD</th>
<th>KLR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRWC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRSE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRNM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRLM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRHM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECLI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMAT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LERI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adj. R2</td>
<td>8.27</td>
<td>24.40</td>
<td>10.64</td>
<td>30.84</td>
<td>13.19</td>
<td>22.86</td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>26.52</td>
<td>19.26</td>
<td>14.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abbreviations:
- GM = general mean
- RWC = religious working class
- NRWC = non-religious working class
- RSE = religious self-employed people
- NRSE = non-religious self-employed people
- RNM = religious non-manuals
- NRNM = non-religious non-manuals
- RLM = religious lower managers
- NRLM = non-religious lower managers
- RHM = religious higher managers
- NRHM = non-religious higher managers
- EDU = highest level of education
- INC = monthly income
- AGE = age
- ECLI = economic liberalism
- CULC = cultural conservatism
- PMAT = post-materialism
- adj. R2 = adjusted amount of explained variance
the subjective class identification and religion). We will only pay attention to significant effects in these tables.

Hypothesis 1 claims that subscribing to economic liberalism leads people to vote for left-wing parties that want to redistribute scarce socio-economic resources more equally. Table 1 shows that the stronger one subscribes to economic liberalism, the greater the chance is of voting for the Green Party (1.70) or for the Labour Party (6.56), which means that hypothesis 1 is not refuted.

Hypothesis 2, claiming that cultural conservatism leads people to vote for right-wing parties, is also not refuted: it appears that the stronger one subscribes to cultural conservatism, the greater one’s chance is of voting for the Christian Democrats (3.16) or for the small confessional parties (6.23). But subscribing to cultural conservatism does not increase one’s chance of voting for the Classic Liberals.

Hypothesis 3, claiming that subscribing to post-materialism leads one to vote for radical left-wing parties is also not refuted: the more one adheres to post-materialism, the greater one’s chance of voting for the Green Party (2.04). But post-materialism leads other people to vote for right-wing parties, i.e. the small confessional parties. We will try to explain this rather unusual finding below.

Hypothesis 4, claiming that left-right placement is a decisive factor leading people who place themselves on the left end of the continuum to vote for left-wing parties and people who place themselves on the right end of the continuum to vote for right-wing parties, is not refuted. All the parameters have the right sign. Yet, we find some irregularities. After controlling for other relevant predictors, an extreme left-wing self-placement increases one’s chance of voting for the Labour Party whereas a less extreme left-wing placement increases one’s chance of voting for the Green Party, and it appears that an extreme right-wing self-placement increases one’s chance of voting for the Christian Democrats, whereas a less extreme right-wing self-placement increases one’s chance of voting for the small confessional parties.

Hypothesis 5, claiming that economic liberalism is strongly subscribed to by the working class, is partially refuted because this only holds true for the non-religious working class (with a coefficient of .19); the religious working class does not differ significantly from the general mean, controlling for other relevant factors.

Hypothesis 6a is not refuted because the religious working class strongly subscribes to cultural conservatism (.44) whereas the non-religious working class rejects this complex of political opinions (-.16). This also applies to hypothesis 6b: religious self-employed people subscribe significantly more to cultural conservatism (.42) but non-religious self-employed people do not
differ from the general mean. Moreover, this pattern repeats itself within each social class: religious people subscribe to cultural conservatism irrespective of their social class.

Hypothesis 7a, claiming that younger generations, as indicated by age, are more inclined to post-materialism (-.12), is not refuted. This also applies to hypothesis 7b, claiming that the inclination to subscribe to post-materialism increases with the level of education (.19).

Hypothesis 8a, claiming that left-right placement is affected directly by a combination of social class and religion, is not refuted: in virtually all the social classes, people belonging to the religious sub-category view themselves as being more right-wing (indicated by a positive parameter) whereas people belonging to the non-religious category view themselves as being more left-wing (indicated by a negative parameter). Hypothesis 8b, claiming that left-right placement is induced directly by educational level is refuted by the fact that this parameter does not reach significance. And hypothesis 8c, claiming that the higher one’s income, the more inclined one is to place oneself at the right end of the continuum, appears to be not refuted (.10).

Hypothesis 9a, 9b and 9c are not refuted because left-right placement is directly induced by economic liberalism (-.30), cultural conservatism (.26) and post-materialism (-.11).

Finally we turn to the last hypotheses, claiming that voting is not or is no longer directly affected by (a combination of) social class and religion. Having included all the political attitudes that were considered theoretically relevant and statistically significant in previous research, we might interpret the direct effects of the combination of social class and religion on voting as traditional pillar voting, i.e. voting for the political party that is thought to serve one’s economic or cultural interests best. Such traditional voting still existed in the Netherlands in the winter of 1990-1991, and fairly predictably so, one might conclude.

First, it appeared that participating in a religion, regardless of one’s social class, increased the chance that one would vote for a religious party and decreased the chance that one would vote for any non-religious party. Second, within the category of non-religious voters there appeared to be a wide variety of political preferences, but there were also still some ‘old’ regularities. For instance, belonging to the working class appeared to increase the chance of voting for the Labour Party, but also for the Social Liberals (D’66). And belonging to the class of self-employed people or belonging to the class of higher managers increased the chance of voting for the Classic Liberals (VVD). Between these extremes, we found some variety in voting: belonging to the routine non-manuals increased the chance of voting for the Social Liberals and belonging to the lower managers increased the chance of voting for the Green Party.
Table 2 RENOVA parameter estimates of the restricted regression model with interaction effects of social class (based on subjective criteria) with religion (n=1689), only significant parameters included (p<.05)

Independents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependents</th>
<th>ECLI</th>
<th>CULC</th>
<th>PMT</th>
<th>LERI</th>
<th>GRL</th>
<th>PVDA</th>
<th>D’66</th>
<th>CDA</th>
<th>VVD</th>
<th>KLR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GM</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>25.46</td>
<td>19.72</td>
<td>31.85</td>
<td>12.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWC</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-8.93</td>
<td>12.20</td>
<td>-7.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRWC</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>-.25</td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td>17.36</td>
<td>-17.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLM</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td></td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>-6.39</td>
<td>-7.23</td>
<td>20.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLM</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-2.74</td>
<td>12.88</td>
<td>-13.33</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>-2.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUM</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>-5.50</td>
<td>-5.58</td>
<td>16.05</td>
<td>-5.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRUM</td>
<td>-.35</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>-13.06</td>
<td>7.31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUC</td>
<td>-.69</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRUC</td>
<td>-.31</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-11.06</td>
<td>12.45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INC</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-1.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECLI</td>
<td>-.31</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-7.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULC</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>-2.86</td>
<td>-5.73</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>-2.18</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMAT</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LERI</td>
<td>-.46</td>
<td>-15.93</td>
<td>11.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adj. R2</td>
<td>6.86</td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>10.25</td>
<td>31.31</td>
<td>13.06</td>
<td>25.45</td>
<td>8.50</td>
<td>26.91</td>
<td>18.89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abbreviations:

- GM = general mean
- RWC = religious working class
- NRWC = non-religious working class
- RLM = religious lower middle class
- NRLM = non-religious lower middle class
- RUM = religious upper middle class
- NRUM = non-religious upper middle class
- RUC = religious upper class
- NRUC = non-religious upper class
- EDU = highest level of education
- INC = monthly income
- AGE = age
- ECLI = economic liberalism
- CULC = cultural conservatism
- PMT = post-materialism
- LERI = left-right self-placement
- adj. R2 = adjusted amount of explained variance

- GRL = Green Party
- PVDA = Labour Party
- D’66 = Social Liberals
- CDA = Christian Democrats
- VVD = Classic Liberals
- KLR = small confessional parties
These findings can be supported by a different operationalization of social class. That is why we turn to Table 2, containing the analysis with subjective class identification, i.e. the operationalization of social class frequently used in this line of research.

We will only mention the results that differ substantially from the ones described above in Table 1. It appeared that, net of the effects of other relevant predictors, there are still direct effects of the combination of social class and religion: participating in a religion, regardless of one’s social class, increased the chance of voting for a religious party and decreased the chance of voting for any non-religious party. Within the category of non-religious people, we found that perceiving oneself as belonging to the working class increased the chance of voting for the Labour Party; and perceiving oneself as belonging to the upper class increased the chance of voting for the Classic Liberals. Between these extremes, we found some variety. People who felt they belonged to the lower or upper middle class appeared to have greater chances of voting for the Social Liberals or for the Classic Liberals.

Although we have not specified any hypotheses on the effects of the cross-pressures in the religious working class, we would like to pay some attention to this matter. We ascertained that belonging to the religious working class increased the chance of voting for the Christian Democrats and decreased the chance of voting for any non-religious party. This voting behaviour may be interpreted by the political attitudes of this specific category (see Table 1). The religious working class appears to subscribe strongly to cultural conservatism and views itself as being right-wing, whereas they do not differ from the general mean regarding economic liberalism and they reject post-materialism. Hence, it may be concluded that the cross-pressures we suspected do not exist strongly in this category, since the religious working class does not subscribe to the political attitudes that might increase the chance of voting for a more left-wing party, according to the non-refuted hypotheses 3 and 5. Yet, there is another possibility, i.e. that the people in this category who do subscribe to economic liberalism and post-materialism as well as to cultural conservatism delay their political choices or refrain from voting, as was initially suspected by Lazarsfeld et al. (1944). But this possibility can not be tested within the scope of this study.

In the final section we will summarize the most important results from the perspective of the central questions stated in the introduction.

Conclusions and discussion

We started our study with the provocative theses formulated in recent studies
that social class and religion, or more in general that class-related matters as well as religion-related matters had become irrelevant and insignificant for the explanation of political voting. But our results indicate that these assumptions are quite premature, as will be elaborately explained.

In order to test these theses, we developed a number of explicit hypotheses on the relations between social positions (i.e. combinations of social class and religion next to age, educational level and income), political attitudes (i.e. economic liberalism, cultural conservatism, post-materialism and left-right self-placement) and voting. These hypotheses were derived from crucial theoretical insights as well as from empirical findings. The resulting hypotheses may be synthesized in an interpretation model: the association between social positions and voting are intermediated by political attitudes. It was argued that if this model showed that the relations between social positions and voting had become indirect, then the process of de-alignment had approached its end and the process of ideologization was at stake.

We found that the combination of social class and religion still explained much of the voting behaviour of the Dutch in the beginning of the nineties, net of the most crucial political attitudes, whether old or new ones. First, it appeared that participating in a religion, irrespective of one’s social class and net of political attitudes, increased the chance of voting for a religious party and decreased the chance of voting for any of the non-religious parties. Second, for non-religious people, it appeared that belonging to the working class increased the chance of voting for the Labour Party whereas belonging to the middle or upper classes increased the chance of voting for the Classic Liberals.

It may be argued that this voting pattern resembles the situation previously described by Lijphart (1974) to some extent. Hence, the hypothesis that the process of de-alignment had approached its end by the beginning of the nineties, may be rejected. And our data show, concerning the process of ideologization, that this process is on its way but is by no means completed. We predominantly observed ‘old’ and well-known voting patterns. Relatively new are the findings that belonging to the non-religious working class increased the chance of voting for the Social Liberals. This also held true for the non-religious class of non-manuals, which is not really ‘new’. Nor is it ‘new’ that belonging to the non-religious class of lower managers increased the chance of voting for the Green Party. Of course we also found voting patterns that deviate from the ones described, but they turned out to be statistically non-significant.

Having emphasized the importance of the ‘old’ cleavages, let us turn to the religion-related and class-related matters. We explained that subscribing to economic liberalism is in line with the economic interests of the working class, which is why at least the non-religious working class votes for left-wing
parties. And we explained that cultural conservatism is in line with the cultural interests of religious people which is why they vote for religious parties. These ‘old’ political attitudes appeared to be still important predictors of voting, more important than post-materialism. This empirical evidence implies that the impact of post-materialism as a ‘new political theme’ is quite marginal, however popular it seems to be among highly educated and among younger people. Post-materialism also seems to be popular in the class of non-religious lower managers, that might be considered the ‘New Class’ referred to by Inglehart (1981) as the carriers of this new ideology. Post-materialism appeared to increase the chance of voting for the Green Party, but surprisingly also increased the chance of voting for the small confessional parties. The latter effect may be explained by the age effect present in these parties: there appears to be an influx of young voters.

Left-right self-placement appeared to be strongly induced by economic liberalism, cultural conservatism and less so by post-materialism. Its effect on voting is statistically significant. We have to emphasize, however, that we concur with the critical theoretical and empirical remarks on this concept made in previous studies.

We would like to make some methodological remarks. In this line of Dutch research, voting models have been developed incorporating the political parties as metric variables, which is open to methodological criticism. This may be the reason why researchers have put forward quite inconsistent findings regarding the effects of social class and religion on voting. At any rate, it now turns out that they have somewhat underestimated the effects of social class and religion. This may also be due to the neglect of the fact that the interactive effect of social class and religion contributes to the explanation of voting. Applying more appropriate procedures has turned out to reveal that the more traditional voting patterns were still in existence at the beginning of the nineties.

In concluding, we would like to speculate somewhat on the extent to which these voting patterns will remain stable. Opinion polls show that both the Labour Party and the Christian Democrats will lose many of their voters in the coming national elections (May 1994). This seems to be mainly due to the policies on social security. Apparently, many former Labour voters, i.e. the non-religious working class, felt that these policies were not in line with the traditional views of economic liberalism. Many of these traditional Labour voters might (have) turn(ed) to the Social Liberals. Our data show that this tendency had already started in the winter of 1990-1991. Other traditional Labour voters may (have) turn(ed) to the extreme right-wing party (the Centrum Democraten): it was shown that belonging to the working class also increased the chance of voting for this party (Scheepers, Eisinga and Lammers, 1993). This tendency was already present by the end of the
eighties. But being religious decreased the chance of voting for this party. If these tendencies hold true, it seems improbable that former voters for the Christian Democrats will turn to the extreme right-wing party. Then the question remains of which political parties these voters will turn to. Considering these de-alignments, the electoral landscape will undergo changes, urging researchers to describe and explain ‘new’ alignments.

NOTES

1. Van der Eijk and Niemoller quote Irwin and Dittrich in this context: ‘Old bonds were loosened and not replaced ... For the moment no end seems in sight... Dutch elections may become even more unpredictable than they have been in recent years’ (1987, 17).
2. Some authors suppose that religion has lost its relevance for voting altogether, as is implied by an elimination of this factor from theoretical considerations as well as empirical findings (Niemoller and Van der Eijk, 1986). However, in a later study they include religion in their model (Van der Eijk and Niemoller, 1987). Other authors state that the desirability of greater equality in society, associated with left-wing policies and serving working-class interests, has gradually lost its relevance (Van Deth and Geurts, 1989).
3. There is a substantial overlap between the political attitudes mentioned by Lipset and those mentioned by Middendorp (1991). Middendorp re-labelled economic liberalism as ‘economic left-right’ and cultural conservatism as ‘authoritarianism-libertarianism’.
5. There are some references in the studies of Inglehart (1977, 1981) that mention the significance of a ‘New Class’ in which post-materialism was supposed to be rooted. But these references do not point to a certain social class as being strongly post-materialistic.
6. Although the position of income is not very clear: in a 1987 study this variable appears to be non-significant (cf van der Eijk and Niemoller, 1987).
7. There is yet another argument to incorporate all of the factors affecting voting in a model. Middendorp, in his latest major contribution to this field (1991, 290), indicated the need for a more elaborate model including all relevant predictors to assess, for instance the effect of post-materialism as compared to other political attitudes.
8. We have not specified causal relations between some of the intermediate variables, (i.e. between economic liberalism, cultural conservatism and post-materialism) because we found no strong arguments for such relations. These causally non-specified relations may induce incorrect results. Therefore we checked the partial correlations between these variables. As they appeared to be quite modest, we expect no serious disturbances from these non-specified relations.

REFERENCES

De Witte, H. (1990) Conformisme, radicalisme en machteloosheid (Conformism, radicalism and powerlessness), Leuven: HIVA.


Felling, A., J. Peters, O. Schreuder (1991) Dutch religion, the religious consciousness of the Netherlands after the cultural revolution, Nijmegen: I.T.S.

Ganzeboom, H., R. Luykx, D. Treiman (1989) Intergenerational class mobility in comparative perspective, Research on Social Stratification and Mobility, 8, 3-84.


stemgedrag (The meaning of left-right self-placement and its effects on voting), *Mens en Maatschappij*, 64, 1, 66-79.


