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Political Leaders and Democratic Elections

edited by
Kees Aarts, André Blais,
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POLITICAL LEADERS AND DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

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Preface

The origins of this book go back to a conference in Montreal, late 1999. The team of the Canadian Election Study (Blais, Gidengil, Nadeau, Nevitte) invited a few colleagues from Europe (Aardal, Aarts, Schmitt) in order to identify and discuss important topics and trends in electoral research. Soon, we found ourselves discussing the apparent lack of comparative research on the importance of political leaders in elections. Political leaders – the persons leading their party in the election, who often also aim at winning government office – seemed to become ever more important in popular discourse as well as in subfields like political communication. At the same time, we realized that there has not been a lot of empirical research into the weight of political leaders in the vote decision, and that there was little comparative research.

A draft outline of topics was listed, potential contributors invited, and a new conference was planned at the University of Twente in Enschede, in May 2000. Papers were presented, and the construction of a common dataset of relevant electoral surveys prepared. A panel at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association later that year, in Washington, provided a forum for several contributors. Meetings in Bilbao and Mannheim followed; a book contract with Oxford University Press was secured; chapters were revised, edited, and revised once more; and by 2003 most of the work had been done. We were only two chapters short from a complete manuscript.

That was seven years ago. It took some time before we finally came to the conclusion that the missing chapters would simply remain just that. In the meantime, we faced an increasingly important dilemma between publishing the chapters as they were, and asking the authors to update their chapters with the latest figures available. In the end, we let the contributors decide. Chapters using our integrated dataset therefore 'stop' by 2000, whereas chapters using separate surveys extend to more recent years. In all cases, the authors have revised their theoretical groundwork in order to acknowledge the quickly growing body of literature on leaders in democratic elections.

The book could not have been finished without lots of patience – the patience of our contributors, in the first place. Quite some time after handing in their revised chapters, they were willing to go through their work once more, adding new analyses and theoretical viewpoints. We are grateful for their continued support for the project despite periods of silence on the part of the editors. Secondly, the patience of Oxford University Press has been very helpful for not losing faith in this book – Dominic Byatt and Elizabeth Suffling.

We want to extend our gratitude to Edurne Uriarte at the University of Bilbao for hosting our conference in 2001, and to the Social Sciences and Humanities

Research Council of Canada and the Dutch Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) for funding our meetings in Montreal and Enschede. In the final stages, invaluable support was provided by Christophe Chowanietz at Montreal for copy-editing. Justyna Rakowska, Inge Hurenkamp, and Marloes Nannings provided assistance in putting together different parts. Last but certainly not least, Janine van der Woude at Twente pulled us through the final stages of manuscript submission.

Enschede, Montreal, Mannheim
July 2010

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List of Contributors

Bernt Aardal, Senior researcher at the Institute for Social Research, Oslo

Kees Aarts, Professor of Political Science at the University of Twente and Scientific Director of the Institute of Innovation and Governance Studies

Tanja Binder, formerly doctoral candidate in the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin, research unit Democracy: Structures, Performance, Challenges

André Blais, Canada Research Chair in Electoral Studies, Department of Political Science, University of Montreal

John Curtice, Professor of Politics University of Strathclyde

Elisabeth Gidengil, Professor of Political Science at McGill University and Director of the Centre for the Study of Democratic Citizenship

Sören Holmberg, Professor of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg

Sarinder Hunjan, formerly Research Assistant, Social Statistics Laboratory, University of Strathclyde

Ian McAllister, Professor of Political Science in the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University

Richard Nadeau, Professor of Political Science, Department of Political Science, University of Montreal

Neil Nevitte, Professor of Political Science, University of Toronto

Dieter Ohr, Professor of Methods of Empirical Social Research, Free University Berlin

Henrik Oscarsson, Professor of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg

Hermann Schmitt, Professor of Political Science at the Universities of Manchester and Mannheim and Research Fellow at MZES

Martin P. Wattenberg, Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Irvine

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Political Leaders and Democratic Elections

André Blais

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The outcome of a legislative election is typically reported in terms of *party* support. The information indicates how many votes and seats were obtained by each party. But in fact voters are faced with multiple choices which must be folded into one (Johnston 1961). They must decide which party they prefer. However, in choosing between the parties, they also choose among the policies that these parties advocate and their leaders. In a parliamentary system, one of these leaders will become the Prime Minister, and, if there is to be a coalition government, others may well become ministers. In a presidential election, voters must obviously choose among political leaders, that is, among the candidates running for office. But these candidates are almost always associated with parties and advocate a particular political agenda, and voters must therefore also think about which party and which agenda they like best.

This simple and basic fact raises the question of the relative importance of leaders. We would expect the vast literature on voting behaviour to have addressed this most basic question. Yet, surprisingly enough, the question has been largely neglected until recently.

Take *The American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960). The book acknowledges, at the very end, that, at least in the 1956 presidential election, 'the popular appeal of Eisenhower was unquestionably of paramount importance' (Campbell et al. 1960: 527). But it devotes very little space and analysis to candidate evaluations. One half chapter deals with that topic (chapter 3: Perceptions of the Parties and Candidates), while two full chapters are concerned with party identification.

Another classic, *Political Change in Britain* (Butler and Stokes 1969), devoted one chapter out of twenty (and 25 pages out of 448) to leaders. Butler and Stokes conclude that leaders have demonstrable effects but that they are only one factor among many, and a less important one than the economy and various other issues. And the topic is completely absent in *Electoral Behavior: A Comparative Handbook* (Rose 1974).

Things have changed and the question of leadership gets more coverage. *The New American Voter* (Miller and Shanks 1996) has a chapter on candidates'

personal qualities and another on candidate and party performances. *Political Choice in Britain* (Clarke et al. 2004) puts forward a valence voting model in which perceptions of leaders play a central role.

Despite this increasing recognition, there is little systematic comparative analysis of the impact of leaders across countries. The *Rise of Candidate-Centered Politics* (Wattenberg 1991) remains the most thorough examination of the changing role of party leaders in elections, but it deals with one specific country (the United States) with a presidential system.

More recently, two edited books have focused on the impact of leaders' personalities (King 2002*b*) and the concentration of power around leaders (Poguntke and Webb 2005). Both books provide rich and valuable information about the role of political leaders in democratic elections, but all the analyses are country-specific, except for the introduction and conclusion where the editors attempt to draw 'general' lessons.

We intend to fill what we believe to be a huge (and unjustified) gap in the literature with this book. The objective is of course to evaluate how much impact leaders have on the vote. But we assume that the leader effect varies over time, across systems, parties, and voters. We formulate hypotheses about the sources of these variations, and we use a comparative data set that allows us to systematically test these hypotheses.

1.2 WHY SHOULD LEADERS MATTER?

The short answer is that they are one component of the decision matrix. Voters choose simultaneously among the parties, the leaders, and the policies on offer.[1] Sometimes who is the leader of a given party becomes a crucial consideration.

Political leaders do not play a central role in the two main traditions in voting behaviour. The Michigan school, which goes back to *The American Voter*, focuses on political parties and particularly on voters' 'party identification'. While political leaders have a place in the Michigan analytical model, they do not receive much attention. The second school, inspired by *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (Downs 1957), emphasizes issues. It is closely linked to the spatial model of voting and party competition in which voters are assumed to vote for the party that best defends their interests and/or values. Downs asserts (1957: 27) that there are 'only three types of political decision-makers in our model: political parties, individual citizens, and interest groups'. From this perspective, all that voters need to know when making up their mind about how to vote is parties' overall ideology.

The questions, then, are: What would voters want to know about the leaders and how and why would that information help them make a 'rational' choice? The

literature points to two kinds of information. First, leaders' own personal views on the issues. These may differ from those of their parties. Of course, leaders play a crucial role in defining and then defending party policies, and we would expect little hiatus, in general, between the issue orientations[2] of the leader and those of the party. There are, however, instances where voters perceive the leader to be more concerned about a problem than the party in general, or more moderate or extreme on a particular issue than the party. When such differences occur, we would expect voters to react on the basis of their perceptions of both the leader's and the party's issue orientations.[3] How often substantial deviations between perceived issue orientations of party and leader occur is an empirical question about which we still have little empirical evidence.

The second type of information concerns the personal qualities of the leaders. Why should voters care about these personal characteristics? There may be two sets of reasons. First, knowing about the personal characteristics of the leaders may be useful whenever the issue orientations of parties and/or leaders are vague or ambiguous. In those cases, personal characteristics may serve as cues about the probable action that the party (and leader) will take after the election (Cutler 2002). For instance, if a party is evasive about abortion, knowing that the leader is a devout catholic may lead the voter to infer that the leader is likely to make it difficult for women to have abortions. Second, the personal characteristics of the leaders may provide the most important piece of information about how they would behave with respect to *unforeseen* problems that are not part of the political debate at the time of the election. The point has been made forcefully by Page (1978: 232–3): 'it may be that, in an age of nuclear weapons, no aspect of electoral outcomes is more important than the personality of the president, which might well determine how the United States would react in an international confrontation'. For instance, if the voter favours a hawkish position in foreign policy, he/she may have greater confidence in a candidate who generally appears to be strong and firm. The person then infers that the leader with the 'right' set of characteristics is likely to react 'correctly' in most situations.

What are these personal characteristics that voters may care about? We may distinguish three kinds of characteristics. The first is the *socio-demographic* profile of the candidates. Even the Michigan school paid close attention to the impact of Kennedy's religious denomination (catholic) in the 1960 American presidential election (Converse 1966). There is a vast literature on the impact of the gender of candidates on vote choice (see Hayes and McAllister 1997; McDermott 1997; Banducci and Karp 2000; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Herrson et al. 2003; Koch 2008). The question raised here is whether voters tend to vote for candidates who share their own socio-demographic profile, possibly because they believe that those candidates are likely to address problems in the same way as they would personally.

Some personal characteristics are of an 'objective' nature: one's gender, occupation, region, or religion. Others are of a more subjective nature. They have been

labelled traits (see Miller et al. 1986; Bean and Mughan 1989). Kinder et al. (1980) have argued that voters evaluate candidates on two basic dimensions: competence and trustworthiness (sometimes called character). The former can be decomposed into intellectual and leadership ability, and the latter into integrity and empathy (Kinder 1986; Johnston et al. 1992).[4] While these two traits, competence and trustworthiness, are personal characteristics of individual candidates, it could be argued that the latter is more personal than the former. The reason is that competence is very much associated in the public mind with experience. The implication is that incumbent candidates, who obviously have greater experience with the job of being a prime minister or a president, usually have an edge with respect to competence (Page 1978: 235; Johnston et al. 1992: 178). Because incumbents are more likely to be perceived as competent (which is an important reason why incumbents tend to be re-elected), it could be argued that competence is not a 'purely' personal characteristic.

These distinctions raise additional questions. The first concerns the relative weight of competence and trustworthiness in voters' overall evaluations of leaders. Their import may well vary across systems, parties, and voters. The second question concerns the link between the socio-demographic profile of leaders and their perceived traits. There is a substantial literature, for instance, on the nature and amount of stereotyping of male and female candidates (Sigelman and Sigelman 1982; Sanbonmatsu 2002).

There are thus good reasons why voters may make up their mind how to vote on the basis of perceptions not only about parties and issues but also about the political leaders. How much actual weight feelings about the leaders have on vote choice is the central question that is addressed in this book. That weight, of course, is likely to vary depending on the context of the vote and the kind of voters. Our inquiry thus consists in specifying the contextual factors that make leaders a more or less powerful variable in vote choice.

1.3 WHEN, WHERE, AND FOR WHOM DO LEADERS MATTER?

The first issue to be tackled is whether leaders are becoming more important over time. The main hypothesis is that 'election outcomes are now, more than at any time in the past, determined by voters' assessments of party leaders' (Hayes and McAllister 1997: 3).

Why should we expect such an evolution? Two interrelated factors are usually invoked: the personalization of politics and party dealignment. The greater personalization of politics is typically linked to the growing importance, over the last half-century, of television for political communication. Two arguments are made in this respect. First, more and more people rely on television as their main

source of information about the election. Second, television focuses to a larger extent on the leaders and their personal qualities than radio and newspapers do.[5]

The second reason why many analysts believe that political leaders have become more important is the decline of partisan loyalties. The decline of party identification has been largely documented in the United States (see, especially, Wattenberg 1998).[6] In Europe, the situation is more ambiguous. Schmitt and Holmberg (1995) report no smooth and uniform decline across Western Europe. They indicate, however, that even though there are substantial variations in the pattern observed across countries, the findings 'generally point to a decline in partisanship across Western Europe' (Schmitt and Holmberg 1995: 101).

The reasoning is that if the number of partisans tends to decline, there is greater room for other factors, most especially political leaders, to affect vote choice. Partisans tend to support the same party at every election, whatever the issues or the leaders. Those without partisan ties are more likely to consider all the options, and to look especially at how they feel about the various leaders.

Whether leaders have or have not become more important over time, we should also expect systematic differences between countries. Following the reasoning elaborated above, we would predict leader evaluations to count more in those countries where television plays a prominent role and less where newspapers, in particular, are still very important. Likewise, the weight of leaders should hinge on the overall strength of partisan loyalties: the weaker these loyalties, the greater the expected effect of leaders.

This is not all. Theoretically at least, the relative importance that voters attach to political leaders in making up their minds how to vote should depend on the relative personal power that these leaders can exercise. Voters should care about leaders most especially in those countries where these leaders enjoy considerable leeway in tilting policymaking in certain directions.

This raises the question about which institutional setting is likely to increase the personal power of political leaders. We would argue that it is in parliamentary systems with one-party majority governments that political leaders, that is, prime ministers, are the most powerful. Where power has to be shared between two or more parties, in a parliamentary system with coalition or one-party minority governments, political leaders are unlikely to have as much political clout. As for presidential systems, power is divided between the president and the legislature. Hence, the most powerful political figures to be found are the prime ministers of countries such as Australia, Britain, and Canada.[7]

From that perspective, leader evaluations should play a greater role in Westminster-style countries than in presidential systems such as the United States. However, there is a countervailing factor in presidential systems: voters are allowed at least two votes, one for the president and one for the legislature. It is thus possible for voters to express different preferences with their two votes. People can focus on the parties for the legislative election and on the individual candidates for the presidential election. And on the ballot they are explicitly

invited to indicate which *candidate* they support. As a consequence, even though presidents may be less powerful, in relative terms, than prime ministers of Westminster-style countries, leadership considerations may well matter as much (if not more) in presidential systems. The real important difference should therefore be between countries with minority or coalition governments, which are typical in continental Europe, on the one hand, and presidential and Westminster-style systems, which are typical in Anglo-American countries, on the other hand. We should observe stronger leader effects in the latter group.[8]

Should we also expect systematic differences across parties within the same country? Do leaders matter more for some parties than for others? We think so. At the same time, we expect leader effects to vary more across countries than across parties. The reason is that we believe that the relative import of leaders depends first and foremost on institutional variables, such as whether there is a presidential or parliamentary system, which tend to be country-specific. That being said, the impact of leaders should also vary across parties.

The first distinction that comes to mind is that between *new* and *established* parties. We would expect leaders to matter more for the former than for the latter. The reason is that it takes time for supporters of a party to develop stable loyalties towards that party (Converse 1969). As a consequence, party identification is likely to be weaker among supporters of new parties, which leaves more room for other considerations such as leader evaluations.

A related question is whether leader effects are more pronounced for smaller parties. We do not see any reason why size, as such, should make a difference. Of course, new parties tend to be small, so that we might well observe that leader effects are more important among new and small parties. In our view, however, it should be the age of the party that matters, not its size.[9]

Another potentially relevant contrast is between 'governing' and 'non-governing' parties. A 'governing' party is one that has the potential to be part of the government after the election. In a parliamentary election, it is a party that could either form a single party government or be one of the partners in a coalition government. The leaders of the governing parties have a real chance of exercising power, and voters may well want to take into account how they feel about them when they decide how to vote. Leaders of non-governing parties will not exercise power, and it should matter less whether they are competent and trustworthy or not.

If we make a final distinction between 'ideological' and 'non-ideological' parties, we would predict leader effects to be stronger among the latter. Ideological parties should attract or repel voters on the basis of the specific set of ideas that they promote. The individual qualities of the leader should count more for parties with more ambiguous issue orientations.

It is important to point out that a party may well have different characteristics with contradictory implications. A new party, for instance, may be unlikely to participate in government and may tend to be ideologically oriented. Its young age

may heighten leader effects, but its ideological orientation and its non-governing nature may depress them. It is thus crucial to take into account these characteristics simultaneously.

Leader effects may vary across parties but also across leaders. We have chosen to focus on two important questions in this regard. The first is whether leader effects are symmetrical or not. More concretely, are voters equally attracted to popular leaders and repelled by unpopular ones?

The asymmetry hypothesis has been examined particularly in the economic voting literature. Bloom and Price (1975), especially, have argued that the incumbent party is punished in economic downturns but is not rewarded when the economy is doing well. However, the hypothesis has been shown not to hold at the individual level (Kiewiet 1983; Lewis-Beck 1988). The asymmetry hypothesis is directly related to the 'negativity' thesis, according to which people are more affected by what they dislike than by what they like (Jordan 1965; Lau 1985) and are thus essentially making up their mind 'negatively', through a process of eliminating all the parties that they do not want. Surprisingly, the negativity or asymmetry hypothesis has not yet been tested with regard to leader effects. We believe this is an important gap in the literature.

The second question is whether new leaders, those who run (as party leaders) for the first time, are evaluated differently from old ones. In fact, there are two questions to be addressed here. The first is whether being a new leader is a bonus or a handicap. It could be a bonus if it is the case that the more voters get to know a leader the more critical they become because the exercise of power tends to create more enemies than friends (Riker 1982) and/or because media coverage of politicians is typically negative (Patterson 1993). Then again, being a new leader could be a handicap if voters believe that it is crucial for leaders to have some experience and are inclined to have less trust in inexperienced leaders. For instance, it would seem that in Canada each leader's popularity declines from one election to the next (Clarke et al. 1991), which suggests that newness is an advantage.

Newness could matter in a different, indirect, way. Voters are likely to feel less informed about new leaders than about old ones, who have been around for some time. Because they feel more informed about them and are thus more confident about their judgements, voters could attach greater weight to their evaluations of established leaders (Alvarez 1996; Blais et al. 2001).

Finally, and perhaps more fundamentally, it may well be that some kinds of voters pay greater attention to leader characteristics than others. The conventional wisdom is that leader evaluations carry the most weight among voters who are politically uninformed and unsophisticated. That conventional wisdom has been aptly summarized by Carmines and Stimson (1980: 79): 'The common – indeed universal – view has been that voting choices based on policy concerns are superior to those based on party loyalty or candidate images. Only the former represent clearly sophisticated behavior'.

In the United States that assumption has not been supported by empirical evidence. Miller et al. (1986) show that college-educated voters volunteer more personal comments about the candidates than do less-educated voters.[10] Similarly, Glass (1983) demonstrates that the candidates' personal attributes have as much impact on the vote of the highest educated as that of the least educated. This being said, the hypothesis has not been systematically examined outside the US context.

Another important voter characteristic that could condition the magnitude of leader effects is media consumption. The growing personalization of electoral politics is typically attributed to the growing prominence of television. From that perspective, we would expect voters who are more exposed to television to be more sensitive to leaders' personal qualities. There is some evidence to support that hypothesis, but only in the North American context. In the United States, Keeter (1987) found that the candidates' personal qualities have a greater weight on vote choice among those for whom television news is the main source of information about the election. In Canada, those who are more exposed to media coverage of the election tend to attach greater importance to leader evaluations, especially as the campaign progresses (Mendelsohn 1996; Gidengil et al. 2001).

In the same vein, it would seem logical to assume that the leaders' personal qualities matter much more for those without long-term attachment to any party. To the best of our knowledge, that conventional wisdom has never been put to empirical test.

1.4 OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

The book is the product of a vast collaborative research effort involving colleagues from nine countries – Australia, Britain, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the United States – where national election studies have been collected over an extended period of time. Because these data sets cover a long period of time, it is possible to put to systematic test the conventional wisdom that leaders have progressively become more important. These countries also offer a rich variety of characteristics in terms of media structure and political institutions, which enable us to examine the hypotheses elaborated above about the contextual factors that could increase or depress the relative importance of leaders.

Throughout the book, the emphasis is put on the comparative analysis of leader effects on the vote. We believe that leaders are an important component of vote choice and that this component has been neglected in the literature. But we are also convinced that leaders are not always important and that it is our task to specify when, where, and for whom they matter more and less.

This is why we have decided to pool together election studies from nine different countries and over an extended period of time. This gives us a total of sixty-eight different elections and a total of forty-two different parties and leaders for which we can estimate leader effects on vote choice. Each case is inherently interesting but the focus in this book is on variations across cases and on the analysis of systematic patterns about the conditions that increase or decrease the import of leaders on the vote.

Our main and common source of data is thus the pooled data set covering sixty-eight different elections in nine different countries. We also use, whenever possible and useful, the merged data set of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, whose common module I contained a specific question about leader evaluations. That second data set provides additional information to estimate leader effects.

We are thus covering a great variety of cases, which allows us to offer a broader perspective than previous studies. Our analyses deal with established Western democracies, roughly in the period 1970–2000. Only future research will establish whether the patterns unravelled here hold more generally across time and space.

The standard assumption in the literature is that political leaders are becoming more important because of the growing role of television, which contributes to the personalization of politics. Chapter 2 takes a close look at this evolution. Ohr ascertains the pattern and magnitude of that evolution. Has television become the prominent source of information everywhere? If so, at what point in time did it become prominent? And how important are the differences among the countries? The chapter also examines and assesses the empirical evidence as to whether media coverage of elections has become more personalized and as to whether coverage is more personalized on television than in the print media.

We then move to an overall examination of party leader effects on the vote. Chapter 3 compares the relative impact of party and leader ratings on the vote in different countries and over time. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the set of countries where we expect party leaders to matter most, that is, in the Westminster systems and the United States. McAllister and then Wattenberg assess the relative weight of the leaders in vote choice across numerous elections, determine whether their importance increases over time, and highlight the most striking findings about the nature of the party leader vote in Anglo-American democracies.

In chapters 6–9, we examine under what conditions leader effects tend to be the greatest or the smallest. In chapter 6, Curtice and Hunjan identify in what kinds of systems party evaluations matter most and least. Aardal and Binder (chapter 7) then look at variations across parties to determine if there are some types of parties where leader effects are most apparent. This is followed by Nadeau and Nevitte (chapter 8), who focus on variations across leaders; Nadeau and Nevitte enquire how leader characteristics such as their gender and age affect their overall ratings as well as the relationship between these ratings and vote choice. Finally, in chapter 9, Gidengil ascertains which types of voters, if any, are more susceptible to vote on the basis of how they feel about the leaders.

Chapters 10 and 11 seek to advance our understanding of how leader effects take place. In chapter 10, Aarts and Blais put to the test the 'negativity' thesis according to which negative leader evaluations matter more than positive ones, that is, people vote more against the leaders they dislike than for those they like. Finally, Ohr and Oscarsson take a closer look at the kinds of traits and images that shape voters' overall impressions of the leaders.

NOTES

1. In all electoral systems, except closed list proportional representation (PR), local (constituency) candidates are another component of the decision matrix.
2. Issue orientations include both issue positions and issue emphases (see Stokes 1966*b* for this crucial distinction).
3. We would expect the relative importance attached to the leader's issue orientations to hinge on the perceived personal power of the leader in cabinet or parliament.
4. From a more intuitive perspective, Page (1978) had earlier suggested four dimensions: competence (including knowledge and experience), warmth, activity, and strength. The last two correspond to leadership abilities, while warmth resembles empathy. Page also had honesty among a variety of other personality traits.
5. It is also sometimes argued that television sets the overall tone of election coverage, that radio and newspapers have come to follow the trend imposed by television.
6. For a contrary perspective, see Bartels (2000).
7. For an account of the considerable power of the prime minister in Canada, see Savoie (1999). We are not arguing, of course, that the prime minister of Australia or Canada is more powerful, in absolute terms, than the president of the United States. Our point is rather that the prime minister has greater relative influence, compared with other political actors in the same country, than that of the president.
8. This distinction overlaps to a good extent with that between proportional representation and non-PR systems, since the former very rarely produces one-party majority government (see Blais and Carty 1987). I would argue, however, that what really matters is the type of government and not the electoral system as such.
9. However, larger parties tend to be more powerful than smaller ones. Thus, their political leaders are likely to play a more important and visible role which – indirectly – might render their characteristics and qualities more consequential for vote choices.
10. A similar pattern is observed in Canada by Brown et al. (1988).

2

Changing Patterns in Political Communication

Dieter Ohr

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Political communication has undergone dramatic changes during the last decades. Western democracies are seen as moving towards a 'media-centred democracy' (Swanson and Mancini 1996*a*: 247) and election campaigns more and more come close to the modern model of campaigning. Its key attributes encompass an expanding reliance on technical experts and professional advisers, a growing detachment of political parties from citizens, the development of autonomous structures of communication, and an enhanced personalization of politics (Swanson and Mancini 1996*a*: 249; Schmitt-Beck and Farrell 2002). Regarding this scenario, which is often viewed as a process of Americanization,[1] the claim of a *personalization of politics* is probably the most controversially discussed facet. Have political leaders in fact become more important in media-centred democracies and do they really play a more prominent role in the modern model of campaigning than formerly? In a presidential system like that of the United States, personalization is more or less the natural state of affairs, with 'candidate-centred' election campaigns, a highly personalized media coverage of politics, and an electorate for whom the candidates' personal qualities play a significant role when casting the ballot. It has also been shown that US presidential candidates have attained an even greater relevance in American politics and for American voters during the last decades (Wattenberg 1991; see also Keeter 1987).

It is less clear, however, whether and to what degree the personalization of politics or a state of 'candidate-centred politics', which is established for the presidential system of the United States, can and will also be reached in parliamentary democracies. Whereas in presidential systems institutional arrangements clearly turn the citizens' focus towards the candidates' personal qualities, parliamentary systems direct the voters' attention more to the 'whole package of party policies, platforms, and candidates, rather than personalities' (McAllister 1996: 286). In fact, there are a number of contextual variables, such as the nature of the electoral system, the structure of party competition, the regulation of campaign activities, the national political culture, and last but not least the national media system, which might affect the dynamics of the postulated development in the direction of a greater importance of political leaders in parliamentary democracies. But it has been argued

that transnational trends towards a media-centred society have been so massive and sufficiently uniform across most countries that even in parliamentary and party-dominated democracies political leaders would have gained importance to some degree – with respect to their coverage in the mass media, their role in election campaigns, and, consequently, in the voting calculus of the citizens. According to this view, political leaders in parliamentary democracies would have acquired a position similar to the leaders in a presidential system, which is, in essence, what the *presidentialization thesis* is about (cf. Mughan 2000).[2]

As changes in political communication are assumed to be one central cause for the postulated personalization and presidentialization of voting behaviour, it is imperative to characterize these changes in detail.[3] Therefore, the focus in this chapter will be on *the empirical basis of hypotheses on personalization and presidentialization with respect to election campaigns and the media coverage of politics*. As a first step, we begin by presenting some of the main arguments behind the notion that political communication has become more personalized in the advanced democracies in general and more presidentialized in the parliamentary, party-dominated democracies in particular. We then consider whether and why a more 'candidate- or leader-centred' presentation of politics should have an impact on the political judgements of voters.

In a second step, empirical evidence will be presented which should shed some light on the degree of personalized and presidentialized political communication in advanced democracies. First, the focus will be on the structural changes in the media systems of Western democracies that have occurred during the last decades, such as the spread of television, and which are likely to have fundamentally altered the rules of the game for the mass media coverage of politics. Second, we will assess to what extent the main communication media, that is, television and the press, have changed their coverage of politics in terms of personalization and/or presidentialization.

2.2 CHANGES IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND LEADER EFFECTS ON ELECTORAL CHOICE

The long-term changes of the mass media systems and of election campaigns are closely related to a number of other secular changes over time. Complexity in advanced societies is said to have risen dramatically, partly as a consequence of functional differentiation processes (Mancini and Swanson 1996). Seen from this perspective, to follow and to comprehend politics has become increasingly difficult for many citizens. As a result, there is more than ever a need for institutions such as the media to reduce this complexity. Assuming that such powerful mass media exist and assuming further that personalizing the coverage of politics is a

suitable means to reduce this complexity, political complexity in advanced societies may eventually, through a rather indirect process, contribute to stronger personalization in the media coverage of politics.

The development towards the 'media democracy' comprises a wide variety of subdevelopments (cf. Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999; Schulz et al. 2000; Schulz 2008; see also Asp and Esaiasson 1996). A tremendous expansion in the supply of political information has been observed, starting with the spread of television (see Figure 2.1) and proliferation of commercial TV channels throughout most advanced democracies (see Table 2.1), leading to a state of multichannel competition in each of these systems and, recently, the development of the Internet. As a result of this mass media expansion, media consumption has also increased, though not quite proportionally. With respect to political information seeking, the number of recipients using television as the preferred medium has clearly risen and has by far surpassed the press at the end of this process (see Figure 2.2).

It is expected in general that political broadcasting in a competitive media system increasingly follows news values such as conflict, negativism, and personalization. If there is in fact a change in political journalists' coverage of politics and politicians towards *negativism* and *conflict* (for Germany see Kepplinger 1998; Reinemann and Wilke 2007: 107; for the United States and the press in particular see Patterson 1993, 2002; for the United Kingdom see Mughan 2000: 69), it may have an impact on the public perception of political leaders. An increase in negative evaluations may thus well be an important factor in accounting for the decrease in leader popularity during the last decades, since charges concerning a candidate's reputation may have become more credible in part because 'they are now reported through a largely nonpartisan press' (Wattenberg 1991: 81). Declining leader popularity has in fact been observed not only for the United States (Wattenberg 1991: 66; see also Patterson 2002) but also for Germany (Schmitt and Ohr 2000).

Personalization is a likely development not only due to the constraints of intense competition in the media system. It corresponds perfectly to the 'logic' of the medium of television. Since television is by definition a medium for which pictures are indispensable, personalizing the coverage of politics has a structural advantage compared with the coverage of political programmes or political institutions such as the political parties. Visualization is the most important format criterion of television. This constraint furthers personalization in television broadcasting of politics at the expense of more abstract issues and institutions. Moreover, in addition to the visualization requirement, keeping matters simple and lively simultaneously is more important in a media system with enhanced competition. Again, personalizing the television coverage of politics may be one appropriate strategy in this respect.

It is one thing to account for the relationship between changes in political communication, such as the spread of television in general and commercial television in particular, and the *personalization* of the media coverage of politics.

It is another matter, however, to explain why television should have furthered in addition the *presidentialization of election campaigns and the media coverage of politics in parliamentary systems*. Probably the most important aspect is the centralizing and nationalizing effect of television: 'More than anything else, television has contributed to a nationalization of campaigning, in the sense that everything is focused on one leader, one party, one set of common themes' (Farrell 1996: 173; see also Butler and Stokes 1974: 351). Party leaders have certainly always been the most important actors in election campaigns since the early decades of mass democracy. But they 'have come even more to the forefront during the past decades. It is the party leader's responsibility to handle the demands of the new media situation during campaigns' (Esaiasson 1992: 214). The news value of a horse race competition between two political leaders could be another important factor which might promote presidentialization in a parliamentary system. In an already personalized media environment, the news and entertainment value might be still higher if the election campaign can be conceived and portrayed as a close race between the top two political leaders.[4]

In sum, television and the communication changes related to the development of this medium are probably the main causes not only for the personalization of politics in advanced democracies but also for presidentialization in parliamentary systems. This being said, in addition to a media based explanation one should not neglect institutional aspects such as the electoral system. Mughan assumes that particularly in a parliamentary system in the Westminster tradition, such as the United Kingdom or Australia, presidentialization is encouraged by 'the unusually majoritarian character of its parliamentary institutions' (Mughan 2000: 16).

If personalization and the focus on the top two candidates increasingly characterize the portrayal of politics in the media, party strategies are under pressure to adapt accordingly and put the party leaders more and more into the centre of election campaigns. Furthermore, in the long term, parties will select leaders who, in addition to their core political qualities, are able to meet the standards set by the media democracy. In the end, the long-term political communication strategies as well as the short-term activities of the parties thus will become 'medialized' or 'mediatized': 'It is no more than a truism to observe that political parties have to adapt to the prevailing mode of communication in society if their messages are to reach the mass public, mobilize their own loyalists and, hopefully, convert waverers to their cause . . . political parties in democracies worldwide . . . are increasingly thrown back onto television to get their messages across' (Mughan 2000: 121; cf. Kepplinger 2002; Schulz 2004; Schulz et al. 2005). If the political actors' communication efforts have had to adjust to the logic of the mass media, this also implies that the parties' campaign communications have generally become more professionalized during the last decades, with the deliberate use of spin doctors (for a comparison between Germany and the United Kingdom, see Esser et al. 2000) as one of the most conspicuous facets. Professionalization certainly has many causes, but at least in part it is also due to the role television plays in

advanced democracies: 'According to those scholars who argue that campaigns have changed, it is television, more than any other factor, that has marked that change' (Farrell 1996: 172; see also Negrine and Lilleker 2002). It is an essential ingredient of professionalized campaigns that 'politicians . . . credit television with a new-found importance in the politics of election campaigning' (Mughan 2000: 87).

It is still not clear in which ways the Internet will affect political communication and election campaigns in general and the development towards personalization and/or presidentialization in particular (for comparative empirical studies, see Kluver et al. 2007). Without doubt, the medium's relevance for the political communication of parties and politicians has steadily increased. As it is possible to precisely address the smallest groups in the electorate through the Internet, one might view the medium as a technological answer to the problem that 'political leaders face greater difficulties in connecting with voters in a news system characterized by increasing fragmentation' (Norris 2000: 171). Moreover, the Internet provides a valuable source of information for highly motivated citizens; it can be used to mobilize party members and to support the campaign organization of political parties (Schulz 2008: 243). It is more uncertain, though, whether the Internet can substitute for the mass media to a relevant degree as far as political communication is concerned. Taking into account that the Internet is a pull medium (Schulz 2008: 242), which presupposes a certain level of interest and motivation to get informed, it seems not very probable that the Internet will change political communication fundamentally. When it comes to personalization in the Internet, political actors are likely to use new instruments such as the social networks in order to 'personalize' political communication. But the constraints and incentives, which have been conducive to personalization in the mass media in the past, will not be wholly different for the Internet. Seen from this angle, personalization will be important within Internet political communication, but probably not to a greater extent than in the press or in the television coverage of politics.

All these changes in political communication are commonly seen as increasing the weight of political leaders in the voting decision, and the personalization and presidentialization of media coverage will only reinforce this trend.[5] What is the theoretical mechanism that underlies this relationship? For many citizens politics is not a central part of their daily lives. In addition, politics in modern media society can only be experienced through mass media like the press and television. The way politics is presented in the mass media will then shape citizens' conceptions of political processes and what is conceived as important in the political arena: 'for most citizens, the real world of politics is synonymous with the world of politics they are shown in the media, and . . . the true election campaign is the same for them as the campaign presented in the media' (Asp and Esaiasson 1996: 84). If political leaders have in fact moved more to the centre of media coverage, then the political and personal qualities of political leaders will

increasingly appear as the 'natural' frame for the voting decision (for priming and framing approaches, see Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Zaller 1992; Schmitt-Beck 2000; Gidengil et al. 2002). This is not to say that an immediate and direct transfer from leaders' prominence in the media and in election campaigns to an equivalent importance for the electoral decision takes place. It is, rather, hypothesized that with an ongoing change in the informational input citizens receive from the media's coverage of politics their political belief systems will gradually adjust accordingly.

Further arguments underline the possible effect of television's coverage of politics on the voters. Television is a medium upon which a large part of the voters depends heavily and from which political information can be drawn at low cost. It is, moreover, a medium that is used several hours each day and which is seen as the most important, credible, and trusted source of political news and information (Mughan 2000: 87). Finally, it has been argued that visual stimuli are able to exert greater effects than spoken or written messages (see Frey 1999 for theoretical arguments and empirical evidence; cf. also Rosenberg et al. 1986; Rosenberg and McCafferty 1987). In this perspective, television as the visual medium par excellence would augment in the electorate the importance of leaders' personal qualities, of their outer appearance for instance, at the expense of political content and political issues.

As a consequence, these changes in the media coverage of politics and election campaigns are likely to gradually alter the criteria citizens use when forming their voting decisions. If media politics has become more personalized and presidentialized, voters' political outlooks may be expected to have moved in the same direction.[6]

However, even if a more personalized and presidentialized media coverage of politics can be demonstrated empirically and if, in addition, an impact on the criteria voters use in their decision to cast the ballot seems fairly plausible, this 'does not necessarily mean that leaders have therefore become more important than parties or issues in voters' choices' (McAllister 1996: 281).[7] There can be no doubt that the coverage of politics in the 'media society' has increased in absolute terms because of the mass media systems' tremendous growth, which makes it possible for each citizen to get politically informed throughout the day. Yet, even though the overall supply of political information has in fact grown, the supply of entertainment opportunities in the media has risen to an even larger degree. Citizens now can choose amongst a wide variety of TV channels and programmes. All this makes it much easier for the recipients than, say, three or four decades ago to evade politics on television and to seek entertainment instead. The same probably applies when it comes to the Internet.

Politics thus has to face an uphill struggle for public attention amongst various societal spheres. It may well be, then, that this state of affairs could lead to a more marginal importance of politics for a large part of the population. Therefore, even if the presentation of politics has in fact become livelier, entertaining, and more

focused on political leaders' personalities, it cannot be excluded that citizens who prefer to seek entertainment when following the media have only scarcely perceived these developments. In the end, political communication changes such as personalization and presidentialization in the media coverage of politics are likely to exert an influence on voters' decisions only if they have not been counteracted by countervailing changes in the media system and in the patterns of media reception in the electorate. This qualification should be kept in mind when changes in the media systems and in the focus of political coverage are discussed in the two following sections.

2.3 STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE MEDIA SYSTEMS

Before considering the emphasis political leaders receive in mass media coverage, a look at the essential changes in the structural part of the mass media system is necessary. Since it has been argued that the *spread of television* – in part at the expense of other media like the press – represents an important determinant of the personalization of politics, it should be instructive to determine to what degree the medium is available in the societies under scrutiny. A first, admittedly rather rough, indicator, which gives an overall impression of the medium's spread and importance, is the number of television receivers in a society per 1,000 inhabitants.

The overall pattern in Figure 2.1 is one of a clear and steady spread of television in the nine countries. In the early 1950s, television played, apart from in the United States, no role in these societies. But within the next four decades television has made its way and has in the end become a mass medium omnipresent in the modern Western societies. In comparison with the steady growth of television in all nine countries, the differences with respect to the levels of the medium's spread between the nine countries appear of only secondary importance. To be sure, the United States still has by far the highest TV density of all countries depicted. But, for instance, TV density in Canada, which was already fairly high in the 1980s, has risen steadily and has moved gradually towards the exceptionally high level of the United States. A similar change, although on a far lower level, can be observed in Spain, which in the mid-1990s reached the TV density of Australia and the (other) European countries.[8] Eventually, at the beginning of the new millennium almost every household in the advanced democracies of the Western world owned at least one television set. This is notably the case for countries like Germany where already in the 1960s almost 100 per cent of German households had at least one TV set, and this applies as well to the Scandinavian countries.[9]

Of course, high availability and access to a mass medium is not quite equivalent to its factual importance. It is, therefore, necessary to determine as well the *relative importance of television* in terms of its usage, and whether and how television

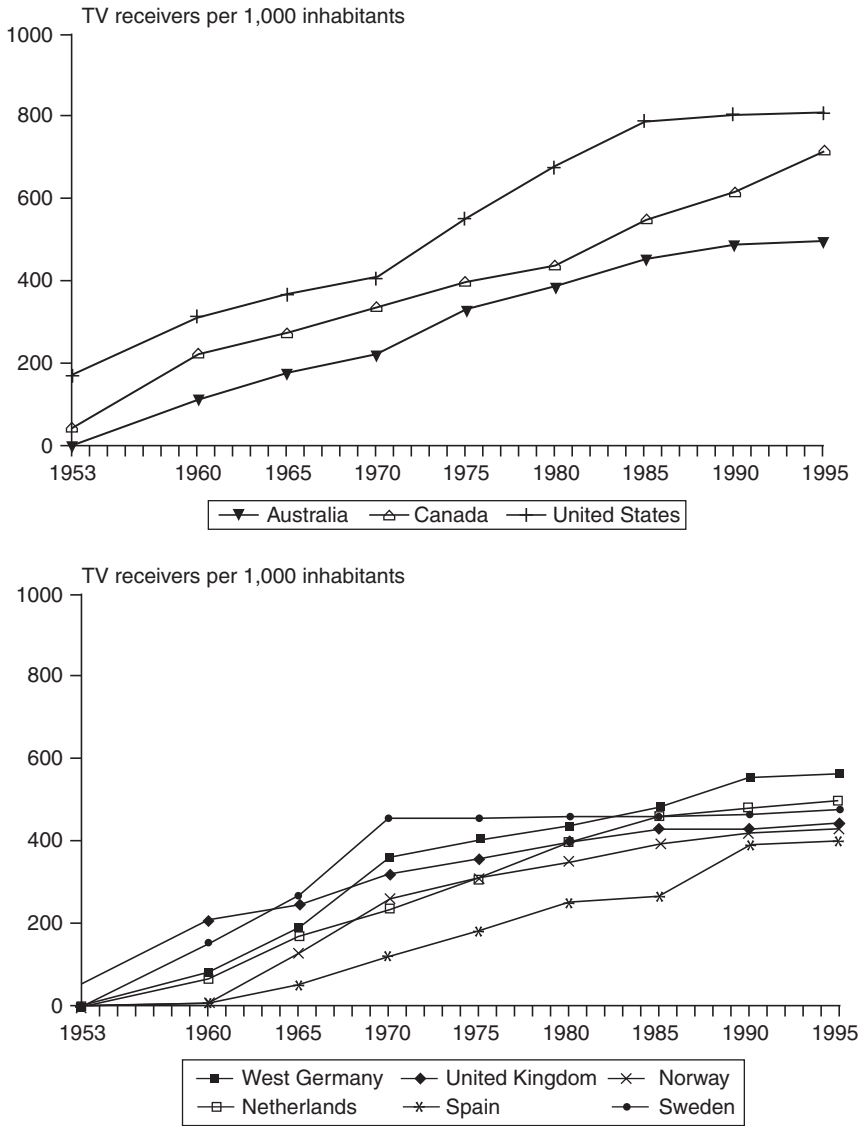

FIGURE 2.1 Number of TV sets per 1,000 inhabitants for the nine countries

Source: UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1968, Tab. 10.2; 1999, Tab. IV.14.

usage has developed over the last decades compared with other mass media. Figure 2.2 shows how the usage of television has evolved in comparison with the press during the last two decades for (West)Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

It should be noted that in Figure 2.2 the focus is not simply on usage per se of television or newspapers but on the specific motive to seek political information. Bearing this qualification in mind, the time series of Figure 2.2 reveal that since the beginning of the 1980s, television clearly surpasses newspapers as the most important information source in Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom.[10] In these four societies, television has a clear lead over newspapers when it comes to political information seeking. This lead is especially striking in Spain where the difference (in percentage points) between TV and newspaper percentages for regular use amounts to almost 50 (for an explanation for Spain, cf. Gunther et al. 2000). The two Scandinavian countries are exceptions from the general pattern. In Norway and Sweden, both media are almost equally important, although even here television gradually seems to gain some ground against the press.

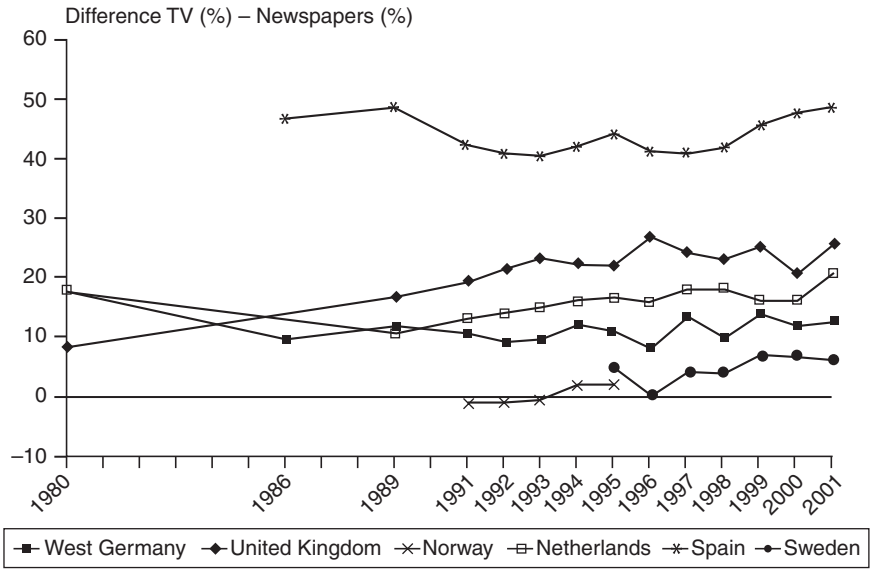

FIGURE 2.2 Relative importance of television and newspapers for political information in (West) Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom

Source: Eurobarometer 1980–2001, own calculations. For both media, 'importance' for political information seeking has been operationalized with the two categories 'every day' and 'several times a week'.

Overall, however, no further changes occurred between 1980 and 2001 with respect to the relative importance of both media for political information seeking. Television has a marked and stable lead over the newspapers as far as political information seeking is concerned.[11]

Therefore, assuming that television gives a more personalized coverage of politics, the political information citizens receive could have become more personalized, at least to some degree, through the increase in the importance of television relative to the press. This shift from media such as the press towards television constitutes a development in the area of political communication, which could have gradually increased the weight of political leaders for democratic elections. It should be noted, though, that the effect this shift could have exerted on how personalized is the media coverage of politics will not be easy to determine quantitatively as comparing both media proves to be difficult in methodological terms.

The shift from newspapers to television is one possible structural reason for an increase in personalization and presidentialization. In addition, the coverage of politics *within* both media could have moved towards a greater weight for political leaders in part because of the enhanced competition in the electronic sector of the media system. The transformation of a pure public service system into a mixed system with publicly and privately owned TV networks might have played a role. This transformation has brought intense competition to the television market and has fundamentally changed the rules of the game for television broadcasting of politics. Table 2.1 illustrates the proliferation of television channels for six European countries between 1980 and 1994.

The overall picture is fairly similar for all six countries. Although some differences exist with respect to the absolute number of national television channels – setting Germany, in particular, apart from the other five countries – the development over time in the television market is similar across these advanced democracies. During the 1980s, the television system gradually transformed into a market system, thus putting each individual TV network under pressure of intense competition. Whereas in the United States, commercial television and the competitive nature of the market have been a feature from the start, in most of the European democracies commercial television entered the stage during the 1980s (for a comparison of the United States, Britain, and Germany see Semetko 1996*a*; for Canada see Lorimer and McNulty 1996).

As commercial television must be more responsive to the information interests and entertainment needs of its recipients than public service television, it seems likely that 'infotainment' (Brants and Neijens 1998) is of greater importance in the commercial sector, taking into account that the fact politics for most citizens is not at the centre of their interest. As a consequence, with more commercial competition within the television market, news coverage of politics and elections is likely to change in the public service sector as well (cf. Pfetsch 1996; Bruns and Marcinkowski 1997 for Germany; Goddard et al. 1998 for the United Kingdom).

TABLE 2.1 *Diversity of the television market from 1980 to 1994*

	Germany	Netherlands	Norway	Spain	Sweden	United Kingdom
1980	2	2	1	2	2	3
1981	2	2	1	2	2	3
1982	2	2	1	2	2	4
1983	2	2	1	2	2	4
1984	2	2	1	2	2	4
1985	2	2	1	2	2	4
1986	2	2	1	2	2	4
1987	2	2	1	2	2	4
1988	2	3	1	2	2	4
1989	8	3	2	5	2	4
1990	10	3	2	5	2	4
1991	11	3	2	5	3	4
1992	11	4	3	5	4	4
1993	16	4	4	5	5	4
1994	17	5	4	5	5	4

Source: Eurostat, p. 49. The number of 'national origin nationwide TV channels (or programme services)' comprises private and public TV channels, which have a representative nationwide reception coverage (more than 40 per cent of the national potential audience). Mode of transmission includes land-based, hertzian, cable, and satellite (Eurostat, p. 48). Eurostat has not continued its time series on TV channels after 1994; since it is not quite clear how 'nationwide' has been defined in operational terms, the time series could not be completed.

Taking together the spread of television, in part at the expense of the press, and the heightened competition of public and commercial TV networks and channels, it appears reasonable to expect that the television coverage of politics will fundamentally change in character – in the direction of more entertainment and a more personalized portrayal of politics. And it is unlikely that the press will not be affected by the changes in the way politics is presented on television, that is, greater emphasis on personalization. Whether and to what degree these expectations have received empirical support will be discussed in the next section.

2.4 MEDIA COVERAGE OF POLITICAL LEADERS OVER TIME

The expectation is that over time the media coverage of politics will become more personalized. In addition, in parliamentary and party-dominated systems political communication should have attained a higher degree of presidentialization. As far as the *levels* of personalization and presidentialization are concerned, differences should still exist between more presidentially oriented systems and more party-dominated systems.[12] However, if the processes discussed above are in fact at

work, these differences should have gradually become smaller during the last decades. Clearly, hypotheses such as these on personalization and presidentialization are dynamic and refer to longer periods of time. Thus, only longitudinal data will be suitable in a direct sense when it comes to evaluating empirical evidence.[13]

A second aspect deserves to be mentioned when changes in political communication are empirically analysed. The two concepts of personalization and presidentialization are closely related but they are not quite synonymous. Media coverage of politics could, in principle, have become more personalized but not more presidentialized if politicians in general received more emphasis in the media at the expense of, say, the political parties or political issues. Conversely, media coverage of politics could have become more presidentialized but not necessarily more personalized if politicians of the second and third rank were displaced by the top political leaders. Before discussing empirical findings on the coverage of politics and election campaigns in the press and on television, it appears sensible, then, to take a look at the differences between both concepts and their subdimensions (Table 2.2).

Hypotheses on personalization and presidentialization are mostly formulated and tested in a *global* sense where the focus is simply on the quantity of media coverage for political leaders. In taking into account as well a *specific* understanding which refers to individual leader traits and to more qualitative changes in the media picture of politics, further hypotheses appear plausible as well. For instance, non-political qualities of political leaders could have become more important in the media coverage of politics (for Sweden see Asp and Esaiasson 1996: 84), at the expense of the leaders' politically relevant attributes. Consequently, the criteria individual voters utilize might shift in this direction, leaving the overall impact of leader evaluations on the vote unchanged. Finally, as a possibility one should also consider qualitative changes in the way media report on politics and political

TABLE 2.2 *Dimensions of personalization and presidentialization in the presentation of politics*

Personalization, global	Political leaders receive more media coverage – relative to political parties and political issues
Personalization, specific	Strictly personal, non-political leader attributes such as physical attractiveness or family life receive greater media attention
	Political leaders appear more often independently of their parties, for example media coverage of politicians increasingly focuses on a leader's qualities apart from his party, such as his personal integrity
	Personal qualities of leaders appear more frequently in combination with their political qualities
Presidentialization, global	Leaders in parliamentary democracies receive more media coverage – relative to political parties and political issues *as well as* relative to other politicians
	Political candidates in parliamentary democracies move to the centre of election campaigns
Presidentialization, specific	Analogous to specific personalization

leaders. Besides an increase in the sheer number of appearances in the media, political leaders may have been described more often as actors independent of their parties. And even if leaders' personal qualities had not been mentioned more often than previously, they could have appeared more frequently in combination with the political abilities of leaders (Kepplinger and Reinemann 1999). In both cases, the criteria with which citizens form their judgements would gradually receive a different frame of reference.

Bearing these conceptual distinctions in mind, let us first take a look at longitudinal findings for the *press*. Dalton et al. (2000) present evidence on the relative emphasis on political candidates and parties in press campaign articles for the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada (Figure 2.3).[14]

Figure 2.3 shows a huge difference in the levels of candidate-centring between the United States on the one hand and the two parliamentary democracies on the other hand. The ratio of candidate mentions to party mentions for each year is at least twice as high in the presidential system of the United States (in fact this difference is increasing over time). In the *United States*, the ratio of mentions of candidates compared with parties rose from 1.7 to 5.6 during the period from 1952 to 1996. In comparison with the large – and still increasing – gap between the *levels* of candidate-centring in the presidential system of the United States and the two parliamentary systems of the United Kingdom and Canada, the changes over time in the two latter systems appear to be of only secondary importance. Changes

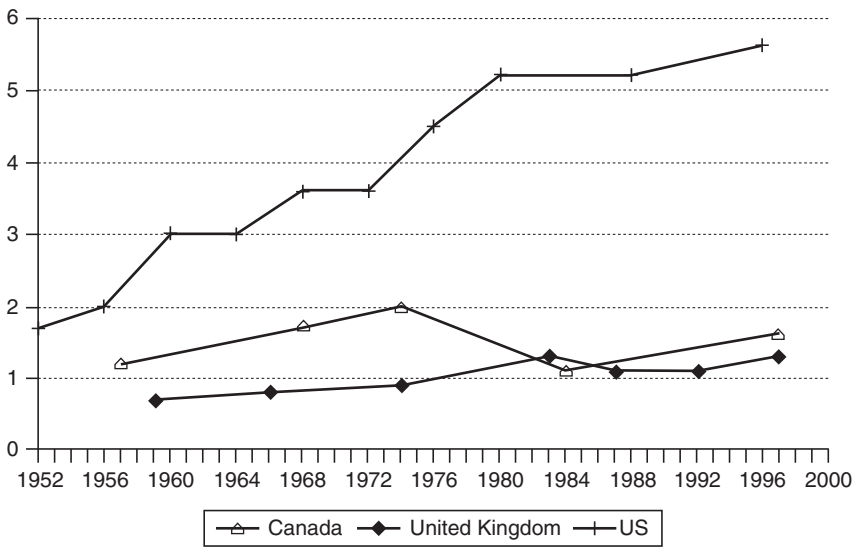

FIGURE 2.3 Ratio of candidate and party mentions in election stories

Source: Dalton et al. (2000: 52, Table 3.6).

over time have occurred, however. Though on a clearly lower level than in the United States, a mild increase of the number of candidate mentions can be discerned for the *United Kingdom* where the figure rises from 0.7 to 1.3 between 1959 and 1997. Content-analysing *The Times* for the period between 1951 and 1997, Mughan (2000: 35–40) presents for the *United Kingdom* fairly similar patterns to those depicted in Figure 2.3 (see his figures 2.1 and 2.2, pp. 37, 39 in particular): for both the prime minister and the opposition leader the absolute number of newspaper mentions increases over time. This increase over time is especially clear for the prime minister with respect to the ratio of leader mentions to party and cabinet (or shadow cabinet) mentions.[15]

For *Canada*, the picture seems to be less clear-cut: the maximum ratio (2.0) is reached in 1974, then decreases to 1.1 in 1984, and again rises somewhat to a value of 1.6 in 1997, showing that the frequency with which candidates are mentioned may not only be due to secular, long-term developments but also to more idiosyncratic factors such as the candidates' personalities.[16]

Apart from these purely quantitative indicators there is also some empirical evidence for the United States pointing to the *frame* according to which political leaders are presented in the American press. Referring especially to 'the number of substantive linkages between parties and candidates in the content of the stories' (Wattenberg 1998: 92), Wattenberg is able to demonstrate that the total number of linkages per year in each news source has markedly decreased between 1952 and 1980. 'Candidates and other political figures are being quoted less often as making partisan statements and reporters are not invoking the theme of linkage between party and candidate as often as in the past' (Wattenberg 1998: 96, cf. his figure 6.3, p. 97).

In taking into account these changes in the press coverage of politics over time, the differences between the presidential system of the United States and the two parliamentary systems have in fact become greater and not smaller. Although slight increases of candidate-centring could be observed at least for the United Kingdom, the press data shown in Figure 2.3 clearly indicate that one should not equate weak signs of a gradual personalization and/or presidentialization in parliamentary systems with a trend towards convergence of presidential and parliamentary systems, at least as far as the visibility of political leaders is concerned.

Turning to Germany, longitudinal content analyses have been conducted for the major quality newspapers.[17] It has been examined to what extent the two German chancellor candidates were mentioned in articles of the four main German quality newspapers during the election campaign (cf. Figure 2.4). As Figure 2.4 demonstrates, coverage of the chancellor candidates has indeed increased over time. Leaving the exceptional national election of 1961 aside, the level of candidate mentions since the 1980s has reached about 70 per cent, whereas in the 1950s and 1970s that figure was around 60 per cent. Therefore, in a global sense, there are indications of a more personalized reporting in the German press.

Personalization in a specific sense refers to the traits according to which political leaders are perceived and evaluated in the media as well as in the

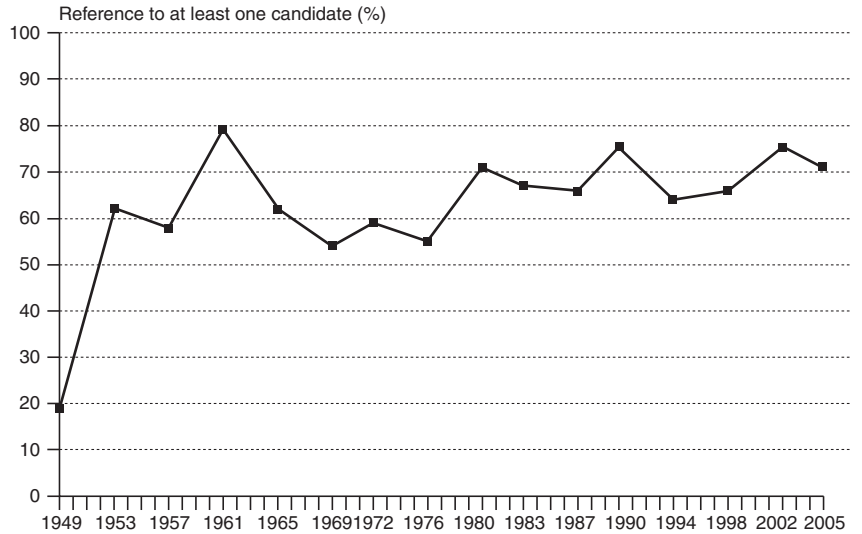

FIGURE 2.4 Coverage of the chancellor candidates in German quality newspapers, 1949–2005

Source: Data from Reinemann and Wilke (2007: 102).

electorate. Figure 2.5 shows for Germany the longitudinal pattern for three evaluative dimensions: competence of the leaders; personality attributes, in particular integrity and credibility; and, finally, appearance. As regards the three dimensions over time, not much of a trend can be discerned. Leaders' professional skills receive broad coverage over more than fifty years, but so do personality attributes such as integrity. But no increase for personality in this sense can be ascertained, as one type of personalization hypotheses would have claimed. The pattern over time is somewhat different for the outer appearance of political leaders in the German quality press. Appearance is mentioned in the German quality press throughout the whole period, though until 1998 with a relatively low frequency. However, since the election campaign of 2002, press coverage of this candidate attribute has markedly increased. This may be due in part to the TV debates between the two chancellor candidates, which started in Germany in 2002 (Reinemann and Wilke 2007: 103).

Another aspect of personalization – not included in Figure 2.5 – refers to such personal, non-political attributes as a *leader's family life*. At least with respect to the German quality press there are no indications of an increase over time until the national election in 1998 (Wilke and Reinemann 2000: 66, 68, 71).

A further conceptualization of personalization in the coverage of politics refers to whether and how *leader evaluations are framed*. Leaders may be portrayed more and more independently of the parties (e.g. the press in the United States). Additionally, evaluations of leaders' professional skills might have become

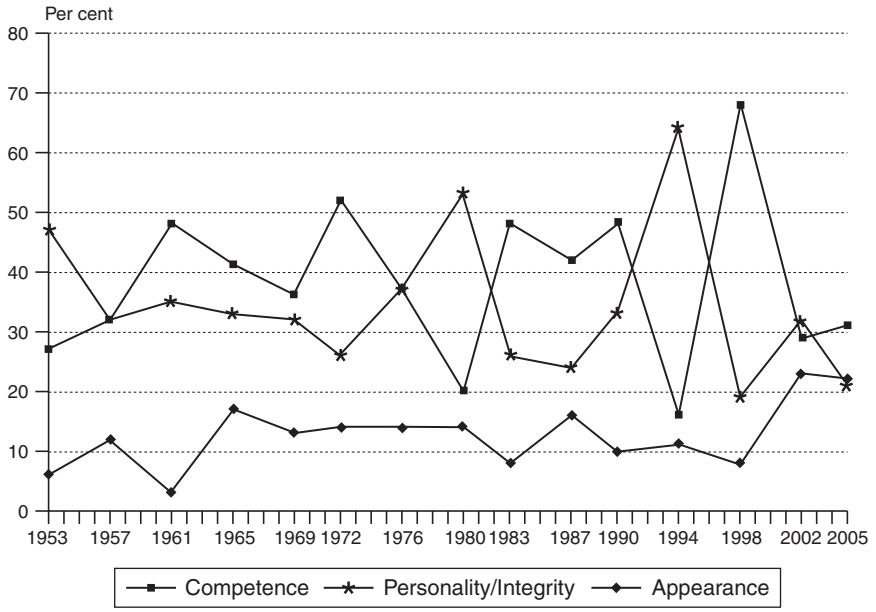

FIGURE 2.5 Coverage of political leaders' traits in German quality newspapers, 1953–2005

Source: Data from Reinemann and Wilke (2007: 104).

'personalized' during the last decades in the sense that they appear more frequently together with evaluations of their personalities. In testing this second assumption, Kepplinger and Reinemann (1999) are able to show for the German quality press that the correlation between (evaluations about) personality and (evaluations about) problem-solving skills is 0.28 for the period from 1981 to 1995, whereas for the periods of 1951–65 and 1966–80 the correlations are virtually zero. The authors thus conclude that the 'personality of politicians has not suspended other aspects as topics of evaluative statements about politicians. Rather the personality of politicians has become the anchor of evaluative statements about other traits and skills of politicians. This means that the personality of politicians might not have become more important for readers because it took up an ever greater share of the portrayal of politicians but because their personality was increasingly linked to traits and skills more essential in politics' (Kepplinger and Reinemann 1999).

A last measure of personalization is the *degree of visualization* in the press coverage of election campaigns. Here, at least some weak indications are found for a more personalized reporting. For Germany, the number of candidate pictures per article is on the rise in the period between 1949 and 1998 and reaches its highest values in 1990 (0.13), 1994 (0.11), and in 1998 (0.11) (Wilke and Reinemann 2000: 99). Since visualization is commonly regarded as one important aspect of

personalization or at least as a variable which could augment the effect of personalized reporting on the voters, the pattern found for the candidate pictures does conform to personalization claims. Similar to the growth of the number of reports on leaders' outer appearance since 2002, there is also a clear increase of visualization in the newspapers' campaign coverage in 2002 and 2005 (Reinemann and Wilke 2007: 99).

In summing up the content analyses of the *press coverage of politics*, personalization hypotheses are clearly supported for the presidential system of the United States. US presidential candidates have gradually received a still greater emphasis in comparison to the political parties. Furthermore, the degree of candidate-centring in the United States is markedly higher than in the parliamentary democracies and has in fact widened the gap between the presidential system and the group of parliamentary democracies. In the group of parliamentary systems where the political parties traditionally have had a stronger position, the overall picture is more complex than in the presidential system of the United States. A slight trend of a gradual, long-term presidentialization seems to emerge for the United Kingdom although the degree of candidate-centring remains on a far lower level than in the United States. For Germany, some indications for a development towards (global) personalization and/or presidentialization have been found. In addition, some specific aspects of a more personalized press coverage have been corroborated. For Canada, however, no apparent trend could be discerned.[18]

In defence of hypotheses on personalization and presidentialization, one could argue that the press, and in particular the quality press, is simply the wrong medium if the trend towards candidate-centring in the media coverage of politics is to be analysed. Mughan states that 'newspaper coverage is a conservative test of the presidentialization of presentation thesis' (Mughan 2000: 39). Although, all in all, both mass media should exhibit similar trends over time – if television is in fact the leading mass medium, trends in the television subsystem should spill over to other media at least in some way – personalization and presidentialization could nonetheless have become more prevalent mainly in the *television broadcasting* of politics, primarily due to the increased competition in the television market.

For the *United Kingdom*, Mughan (2000: 39–41) shows that over the period from 1964 to 1997 the attention paid in British television news to the two prime ministerial candidates is clearly on the rise.[19] 'Overall . . . both leaders are vastly more prominent in television news broadcasts of the 1980s and 1990s than previously' (Mughan 2000: 40; see also Negrine 1999 with similar findings). In comparing the two national elections of 1992 and 1997 in the United Kingdom with respect to leader appearances by length, Goddard et al. also find that television coverage of election campaigns appears to have become somewhat more leader-oriented (Goddard et al. 1998: 166–7). These findings for the United Kingdom, therefore, seem to 'confirm an apparent movement between 1992 and 1997 towards more "presidential" coverage even if it is a relatively small one across all the channels' (Goddard et al. 1998: 167).

For *Germany*, content analyses of television news programmes have been conducted before the last three national elections of 1990, 1994, and 1998 (Table 2.3; cf. Genz 1999).[20] In particular for the candidate of the opposition (i.e. the Social Democrats) the number of 'appearances' during the 1990s clearly rises from election to election, starting relatively low at 10 per cent in 1990 (Oskar Lafontaine), reaching 15 per cent (Rudolf Scharping) in 1994, and finally attaining the maximum value of 28 per cent in 1998 (Gerhard Schroeder). One should, of course, be cautious in interpreting these findings. Three national elections covering a period of only eight years are not that much in order to safely establish a trend.

This being said, the pattern in the first line of Table 2.3 seems to give at least some support to personalization as well as presidentialization claims; personalization because the top two leaders, in particular the candidate of the German social-democrat party (SPD), receive more attention in relation to their party over time; presidentialization because the two chancellor candidates become somewhat more important in relation to the remaining leading politicians of the respective party. In fact, the increase in the percentage for the two chancellor candidates comes only at the expense of the other politicians of the respective party, not at the expense of the party. The party percentages have risen from 1990 to 1998, in particular in the case of the SPD. Apart from their politicians, the Social Democrats as a party had appearances in 26 per cent of all appearances in the election year 1990, 31 per cent in 1994, and 35 per cent in 1998. There is therefore some evidence for German television in the 1990s that the development, which can be observed, is one of presidentialization rather than one of personalization (in a global sense). Presidentialization can be measured more directly if the percentage base is simply the number of appearances of all leading politicians of the respective party, thus excluding party appearances. The second line of Table 2.3 demonstrates that at least for the Social Democratic

TABLE 2.3 *Coverage of the chancellor candidates on German television, 1990–8*

	Candidate CDU/CSU			Candidate SPD		
	1990	1994	1998	1990	1994	1998
Candidate appearances/all appearances of leading politicians and their parties[a]	23	22	28	10	15	28
Candidate appearances/all appearances of leading politicians[b]	29	28	37	14	22	43
Candidates' visual appearances/visual appearances of all leading politicians of the respective party[c]	26	25	29	15	20	33

Source: Percentages (a, b, c) from Genz (1999: 66, 68, 70).

Percentage base:

(a) all appearances of leading politicians and their respective party in the major news of the German TV networks ARD, ZDF, RTL, SAT1 during the last seven weeks before the national election;

(b) all appearances of leading politicians in the major news of the German TV networks;

(c) all visual appearances of leading politicians of the respective party.

candidates the development for German television is perfectly compatible with an assumption of a more presidentialized broadcasting of politics.

It has been argued in the literature that it is not the mere media presence that counts but rather the *visual presence* of politicians in the media, especially in the electronic media. In experimental designs drawing on video clips with 180 politicians from the United States, Germany, and France, Frey (1999) presents impressive findings on the effects that leader attributes such as physical attractiveness and nonverbal signals may exert on voters' perceptions and evaluations of politicians (see also Rosenberg et al. 1986; Rosenberg and McCafferty 1987). It thus appears reasonable to look as well at the visual appearances of the leading German politicians over time (Table 2.3, third line). In comparison to 'media appearances' in general, visualized or not, the pattern for the 'visual appearances' is virtually unchanged: Percentages are increasing over time, in particular for the candidates of the German Social Democrats. To summarize the findings on the *television coverage of politics* in Germany, there is some evidence that a development in the direction of more presidentialization has in fact occurred. However, with only three national elections in the 1990s the empirical basis is presently rather small.

Empirical, longitudinal evidence on the television coverage of politics is also available for *Sweden*. When it comes to expectations on whether television broadcasting in Sweden has evolved into the direction of more personalization and presidentialization, one could on the one hand refer to Sweden's political system of past decades where the parties had maintained a particular strong position, with loyal supporters, a clear and stable pattern of class voting, and political candidates who were only perceived in conjunction with their parties (Asp and Esaiasson 1996: 76). On the other hand, during the last decades Sweden, in similar fashion to other advanced democracies, underwent great changes such as a gradual dealignment of the electorate as well as an enormous growth, diversification, and commercialization of the mass media system. Eventually, the Swedish political parties reached a weaker position than three or four decades ago. Esaiasson (1991) examines in a longitudinal study for Sweden how election campaigns have changed over the last decades. He is able to show in particular how the political parties' direct contacts with their voters have declined over time and how these more traditional efforts have gradually been substituted by campaigning via the mass media. As far as the role of party leaders is concerned, their number of campaign performances is clearly higher after the establishment of television as the predominant mass medium. Not only has the number of party leaders' campaign performances steadily increased but also the percentage of 'campaign performances . . . devoted to press conferences and media events [rather] than to campaign speeches' (Esaiasson 1992: 214–5). It seems plausible, then, to presume that even in Sweden, where political leaders in the past did not have an identity apart from their party, a tendency towards personalization might be observed. At least Swedish party leaders are seen as 'political actors who have not been losers in the media' (Asp and Esaiasson 1996: 84).

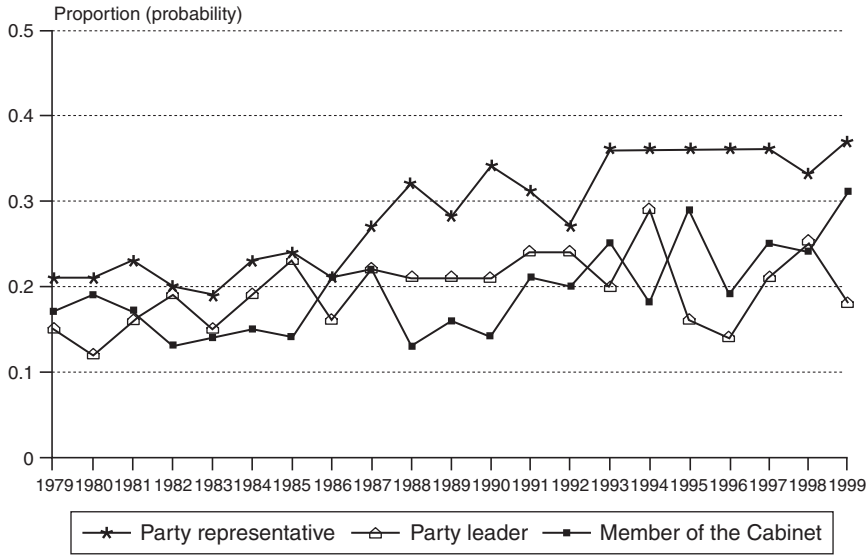

FIGURE 2.6 Coverage of political leaders in Swedish television news, 1979–99

Source: The data on which this figure is based are drawn from television content analyses that were conducted by Kent Asp (University of Gothenburg). I would like to thank Kent Asp for generously sharing his data. The unit of analysis is one 'news', each running up to 5–6 minutes.

Based on a selection of political, domestic, and foreign news included in the 'Rapport' TV news (19.30, daily), Figure 2.6 shows the probability for an interview with either a party representative, a party leader, or a member of the governing cabinet (with the party leaders excluded) in the television news broadcast.

All three time series in Figure 2.6 show relatively large fluctuations, reflecting the particular political circumstances, issues, and personalities of each time period. However, the overall trend unmistakably points to a growing weight in Swedish television news of party representatives and top political leaders. Therefore, even in a parliamentary system like Sweden where the political parties still maintain a fairly strong position, there are some indications in favour of personalization and presidentialization hypotheses.

2.5 CONCLUSION

During the last decades, the 'mass media, and television in particular, have moved to the center stage of social and political life' (Negrine and Papathanassopoulos 1996: 52–3). In a fundamentally changed media landscape, the mass media

have become more competitive, more effective, faster, almost ubiquitous, less partisan, and more closely related to the information and entertainment motives of the citizens than ever before – and without doubt more powerful. It is especially the spread of television – followed by an immense expansion in the number of TV channels, thus rendering television the most important mass medium – which has brought about crucial changes in the way politics is portrayed and the way political campaigns are conceived and staged.

Despite these trends towards personalization and presidentialization in the coverage of politics in the press and on television, a word of caution should be introduced. For *some* countries and *some* indicators, there are slight indications that election campaigns and politics in the mass media have become more candidate-centred, even in the parliamentary democracies where political parties still maintain a strong position. Yet the gap between the presidential system of the United States and the parliamentary democracies is still quite large. Institutional and cultural 'brakes' (Blumler 1990) are important and probably will retain their importance.

We can, of course, only speculate on the durability of those changes in political communication and on whether they will gain further momentum in the foreseeable future. Mughan has argued 'that it is a change that is here to stay, at least as long as communications technologies and political parties' usage of them are not revolutionized in the near future . . .' (Mughan 2000: 127). If we thus assume that personalization and presidentialization will characterize public communication in the future to an extent at least as high as in the present, what does this imply for democratic elections? Should we assume that a 'leader-seeking media system promotes a leader-elevated political system' (Blumler 1990: 106) and that, in the end, voters will increasingly decide for which party to vote by evaluating the candidates? There are, of course, competing arguments to be considered when seeking to answer this question, as has been delineated above. One should be cautious against naïve hypotheses of media effects whereby a direct transfer from the media portrayal of politics to the belief systems of citizens would occur. This being said, it seems extremely unlikely that the gradual change in the way politics and political leaders are framed in public communication will not leave its marks on an electorate with already weaker party attachments.

NOTES

1. There is some controversy in the literature as to whether the development leading to a 'modern model of campaigning' can adequately be described as Americanization; see Negrine and Papathanassopoulos (1996), Plasser (2000), Blumler and Gurevitch (2001), Hallin and Mancini (2003) for this discussion.

2. 'The term presidentialization . . . implies movement over time away from collective to personalized government, movement away from a pattern of governmental and electoral politics dominated by the political party towards one where the party leader becomes a more autonomous political force. It implies, in other words, convergence on the individualist American model' (Mughan 2000: 7). More specifically, presidentialization is understood as 'a personalization of electoral politics that on the one hand occurs within the parameters of an unchanging parliamentary constitution *and* on the other persists over time . . .' (Mughan 2000: 9, emphasis in the original; see also Poguntke and Webb 2005; Webb and Poguntke 2005).
3. Partisan dealignment is another central determinant in explaining the presumed personalization of voting behaviour. If citizens are now less likely than previously to base their voting decision on standing partisan predispositions (Dalton et al. 2000), there is more scope for short-term orientations such as political issues or the images of political candidates. But whereas the empirical evidence does clearly confirm partisan dealignment for most of the advanced democracies (Dalton 2000*a*), the situation is different with respect to personalization and presidentialization of politics and election campaigns in the media coverage. Therefore, the focus in this chapter will be on political communication changes.
4. Kavanagh mentions another aspect which refers to the television coverage of election campaigns in particular: 'there has been a Presidentialism in the sense of television focusing more on the activities of the party leaders in an election campaign' (Kavanagh 1995: 212). This difference in focus between the election campaign and the period apart from the campaign is, then, in part explained with scarce resources as during the campaign journalists would accompany primarily the top political candidates on their campaign tour.
5. Increasing importance of leaders for the vote refers here to *direct leader effects* in the sense that 'party leaders take on an identity at least partly separate from the party they lead and, second, they come to enjoy an electoral effect that accrues to them personally' (Mughan 2000: 11). Apart from such direct leader effects *indirect* effects would include, for instance, the mobilization of party supporters (Mughan 2000: 10; see also King 2002*a*: 6).
6. Even if one concedes that television can have powerful effects through its visual character, it should be noted equally that the verbal part of political coverage has also changed during the last decades. Lengthy or boring interviews with politicians on television are now the exception; short and catchy statements dominate instead. This trend towards sound-bites could be one possible development to transmit political issue messages in a form that is easily understood by most citizens.
7. That things may be more complicated with respect to an effect of personalized TV broadcasting on voting behaviour is shown in Mughan (1995), where leader effects proved to be insignificant for those dependent on television and highly significant for those not dependent (335). However, Keeter (1987) finds the opposite result for the United States for a series of presidential elections.

8. The use of television differs between various cultural backgrounds. Therefore, TV density certainly is no perfect measure for the medium's importance in a society. The more television is used not only privately but also in public places such as pubs, the less TV density can adequately measure how relevant television is in a society.
9. 'At the end of the 1960s television reached the vast majority of the Scandinavian voters (in Denmark and Sweden over 90 per cent, in Finland 80 per cent, and in Norway 75 per cent). By then, the new medium had long confirmed its primacy in electioneering' (Esaiasson 1992: 211).
10. The values for the Netherlands and the United Kingdom for 1986 have been interpolated by calculating the arithmetic mean of the values for 1980 and 1989 in each case.
11. For country-specific characterizations of the media system see Kaase (2000) for Germany, Semetko (2000) for Great Britain, van der Eijk (2000) for the Netherlands, Gunther et al. (2000) for Spain, and Patterson (2000) for the United States.
12. Of course, important differences remain between countries, for instance with respect to the opportunities for political parties to advertise via television. Australia, the United States, and Canada allow paid political advertising on television during election campaigns (Mughan 1995: 329). In Germany and the United Kingdom, the parties have free party election broadcasts in the public TV networks (see Blumler et al. 1996 for the United Kingdom). The latter two systems differ with respect to paid political advertising on television which is allowed in Germany but which is not allowed in the United Kingdom. Sweden does not allot its parties any free broadcasting time in public service television and radio (Asp and Esaiasson 1996: 78).
13. Alternatively, one could analyse in a cross-sectional design whether the media coverage of politics differs, for instance, between public service and commercial TV networks. For Germany, it could be demonstrated that the two main commercial networks, RTL and SAT1, focus more strongly on the chancellor candidates than the public service networks (Genz 1999).
14. The content analyses encompass the *Chicago Tribune* for the United States, *The Times* for the United Kingdom, and *The Toronto Globe and Mail* for Canada.
15. '. . . a presidentialization of presentation has taken place in the way that British newspapers cover election campaigns, and especially in the attention they bestow on prime ministers. The correlation coefficients confirm that over the period as a whole, *The Times* significantly increased the attention it paid to sitting prime ministers relative to their party and did likewise, albeit more mutedly, for opposition leaders relative to theirs' (Mughan 2000: 38; emphasis in the original). Negrine finds also indications which point towards a more 'presidentialized' press reporting in the United Kingdom: '. . . with fewer primary political items in 1996 compared with 1986 *and* no parliamentary page in 1996, the overall number of different MPs making an appearance in the newspapers has decreased. In 1986, a total of 123 MPs were quoted directly or indirectly in *The Guardian* and a total of 120 in the *Telegraph*. By 1996, these figures had declined to 93 and 78 respectively' (Negrine 1999: 342). Similarly, Franklin (1996: 303) observes 'the growing journalistic preoccupation

with the activities of government and senior politicians to the relative neglect of the backbenches and the near wholesale exclusion of minority parties'. Franklin content-analyses *The Guardian*, *The Times*, and *The Mirror* for the years 1990–4.

16. Rahat and Sheafer (2007) analyse personalization in the press coverage of politics. They content-analyse for all elections to the Knesset between 1949 and 2003 articles in the two leading newspapers, Yediot Aharonot and Ha'aretz. Their findings clearly show an increasing focus on the top candidates in press coverage.
17. The content analyses were conducted for the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the *Welt*, and the *Frankfurter Rundschau* during the last four weeks before election day. All articles relating to the election campaign and/or with mentions of at least one of the chancellor candidates were selected (Reinemann and Wilke 2007: 95–6).
18. Asp and Esaiasson (1996: 84) report for the *Swedish* newspapers that during the 1964 Swedish national elections the coverage of party leaders relative to the total coverage of parties increased to 25 per cent from only 15 per cent in the mid-1950s. This focus on Swedish party leaders rose to 35 per cent during the 1976 elections and since then has been on the rise, although more slowly than before.
19. The findings on television news broadcast exposure of British party leaders, which are presented in Mughan (2000: 41, figure 2.3), are originally reported in the Nuffield studies of David Butler and his various co-authors. The figures presented are based on the BBC and ITN nightly campaign news broadcasts (Mughan 2000: 39).
20. These content analyses were part of a research project of Klaus Schönbach and Holli A. Semetko and their research group (at the time at the University of Amsterdam). Within this project the four main German television news programmes were analysed in the weeks before the three German national elections of the nineties. The four main German TV networks are ARD (news programme: Tagesschau), ZDF (heute) – the two German public service networks, RTL (RTL aktuell), and SAT1 (18.30) – the two largest German commercial networks. Programmes were coded during the last seven weeks before the national elections in 1990, 1994, and 1998. The whole content analysis comprises 2125 news stories (1990: 929; 1994: 672; 1998: 524).

3

Party Leader Effects on the Vote

Sören Holmberg and Henrik Oscarsson

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Modernization theory, or Individualization theory as it more properly ought to be called, is the intellectual justification for one of the most popular media myths of our time, namely, that in the age of television and visual images, political leaders have become more powerful and politics has become more personalized. The journalistic mantra is, if you want to explain or understand anything in politics look for the leaders – and try to interview them. To be fair, media are not the only ones to give credence to this popular belief. In fact, it has gained some prominence within academic circles as well (Swanson and Mancini 1996*b*), although it is much more revered among journalists and talk show hosts the world over. The myth essentially claims that party leaders' popularity is an important factor for voters when they decide how to vote. Furthermore, over time, party leader effects on the vote are believed to have increased. Put somewhat differently, leaders mean more today than yesterday.

By talking about a myth we reveal our scepticism. Looking at the literature we find mixed support for the idea that the importance of leaders should be large and growing. Some researchers claim that they have found non-trivial party leader effects on the vote (Esaiasson 1985; Mughan 1993; McAllister 1996, 2007; Poguntke and Webb 2005) or an increase in the impact of leaders across time (Wattenberg 1991, 1998; Lanoue and Headrick 1994; Mughan 2000; Clarke et al. 2004). Other researchers have found less effects and inconclusive or no increase over time (Holmberg 1981, 2000; Crewe and King 1994; Kaase 1994; Aardal and Oscarsson 2000; Bartle and Crewe 2002; Brettschneider and Gabriel 2002; King 2002*b*; Curtice and Holmberg 2005; Oscarsson and Holmberg 2008).

3.2 HYPOTHESES

Given the conflicting messages we get from previous research we will keep an open mind and put the contending points of view to an empirical test. We propose

to test two main hypotheses. First, that party leader popularity has a fairly substantial impact on the vote in most political systems irrespective of electoral procedures. Second, that party leaders over time have become a greater influence on the vote. Both hypotheses can be derived from Individualization theory.

Furthermore, a third contextual hypothesis, which – with a stretch of imagination – can be deduced from Individualization theory, will also be tested. This third hypothesis states that to the extent that we find leader effects on the vote, we expect them to be more pronounced in elections characterized by relatively low degrees of party polarization. In elections where parties have highly profiled and different platforms, leaders will matter less for voters compared with systems where most parties are crowded up in the middle with only minor policy differences between them.

A fourth rather obvious hypothesis is put forth, but will be less stringently tested, since we only have access to a very limited number of cases. This fourth hypothesis claims that party leader effects on the vote are larger in countries employing plurality/majoritarian electoral systems than in countries using proportional systems. The rationale behind the hypothesis is that majoritarian systems put more of an emphasis on individual candidates and presumably on leaders, while proportional systems primarily are designed to promote parties, not individual representatives.

3.3 DATA

The data that we use derive from two sources. First, the *Leadership Project's* stacked data set based on material from *National Election Studies* in nine countries covering in most cases all elections going back to the 1970s – in the case of the United States going all the way back to 1952. Second, data from the international project *The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* (CSES), in cooperation with *National Election Studies*, has collected comparable information on party and party leader popularity in some thirty countries during the period 1996–2002. The Leadership data has the advantage of including results across time. Thus, time series questions can be addressed. A drawback is that comparability between countries and sometimes also within countries is not optimal in many cases in the Leadership data set. Question design differs between countries and occasionally also within countries. Moreover, CSES data has no over time component for the individual countries. With few exceptions, each country is represented by only one election from the period 1996 to 2002. On the other hand, across country comparability is much better in the CSES data set since party as well as party leader popularity were measured with a common instrument, an eleven-point like–dislike scale.

3.4 WHAT DO VOTERS SAY?

If we ask voters themselves, the party leader effects do not seem to be that large. In Sweden, on a completely open-ended question, about 3 per cent of voters mention anything involving party leaders as important reasons for their party choice. The proportion indicating that party leaders are important for their behaviour is somewhat higher among party switchers, around 15 per cent. If we let people subjectively assess their reasons for their party choice, using fixed alternative questions instead of open-ended ones, the proportion of voters indicating that party leaders are of importance to them increases slightly to about 20–25 per cent in the case of Sweden. Between 3 and 25 per cent of voters indicating that party leaders have influenced their voting behaviour are not negligible figures. But, of course, these are subjective assessments and from only one country. Sweden could be a special case and personal statements on what motivates people's voting decisions may underestimate the effects of party leaders. Maybe respondents perceive that it is less politically correct to refer to leaders than to political issues and ideologies! Or, maybe it is the other way around! In today's media climate, talking about individuals and personalities as influences could be more natural than referring to non-visual and distant aspects of politics such as ideologies. The only way to solve this puzzle is to include more countries in our examination, and to look beyond subjective statements on why people behave as they do.

3.5 ALTERNATIVE METHODS

We will do this by first looking at the Leadership data on the popularity of parties as well as of party leaders. Irrespective of how people subjectively motivate their vote, is there an independent effect of party leader popularity on how people vote? The word 'independent' is crucial since we know that party leader popularity as such, and without any controls, has quite a substantial impact on how people vote. But a large part of that impact is spurious and brought about by other relevant factors. The most obvious of these other variables is the party factor. People tend to like leaders of parties they like and since most people tend to vote for parties they like, we have a problem. What we have is a serious case of intertwined causal factors. The average correlation (r) between a leader's and a party's popularity covering some thirty countries and about 180 parties in the CSES data set is around 0.60–0.80.

As a result, on the one hand, if the party popularity factor is not controlled for, party leader effects will be seriously overestimated. On the other hand, if we control for the party variable, leader effects might be somewhat underestimated

since party popularity as a causal factor is located pretty close to the dependent party vote variable making it very difficult for any antecedent variable to show any independent impact whatsoever. Ideally, of course, it would have been advantageous to have had access to panel data giving us an opportunity to trace the interplay between party and leader popularity over time. But without good panel data we will have to do our best with the limited data we have, not forgetting that party and leader popularity in all likelihood go hand in hand, each influencing the other. The fact that we, in the subsequent analyses, have chosen to measure and report only controlled direct leader effects is a conscious choice grounded in the belief that we make less of an error that way, compared with presenting uncontrolled and raw figures on leader effects. Our method of working with controlled figures may underestimate party leader effects to some extent. However, uncontrolled figures would certainly overestimate leaders' effects tremendously. In the end, the simple fact that parties in many cases have been around for 50–100 years, whereas leaders come and go, has influenced our choice. It is more likely that party sympathies colour leader sympathies than the other way around, at least in systems with fairly stable party systems.

3.6 PARTY LEADER EFFECTS CONTROLLING FOR PARTY POPULARITY

A very down-to-earth way of illustrating our difficulties with the strongly interrelated variables of party and leader popularity is presented in Table 3.1. The figures in this table are voting probabilities for combinations of party and party leader ratings on sympathy scales. The results include all countries and elections in the Leadership stacked data set except, for reasons of lack of comparability, Spain and three British elections. Overall the examination includes 375,163 voter-party dyads as units of analysis taken from eight countries and fifty-six elections.

A controlled party leader effect on the vote is revealed if the voting probabilities (percentages) increase when we, row by row in the table, go from left to right; that is, if the probability to vote for a party increases as a function of the party leader becoming more popular, while the degree of party popularity is kept constant. However, a party effect on the vote, controlling for party leader popularity, can be discerned by looking down the columns and seeing, column for column, to what extent the percentages increase as party popularity goes up from 0 to 10.

When we do this, and disregard the very low results for ratings of 5 and below – almost nobody votes for parties or leaders they like so little – it is obvious that party popularity is more strongly related to the vote than party leader popularity. But it is also obvious that party leader popularity has clearly noticeable and independent effects on the vote. For example, rows labelled 6, 7, and 8 indicate

TABLE 3.1 *Voting probabilities for combinations of party and party leader ratings*

		Party leader ratings										
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Party ratings	0	.00	.01	.00	.01	.01	.01	.01	.02	.02	.07	.17
	1	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.02	.02	.03	.08	.17	*
	2	.01	.01	.01	.01	.02	.02	.03	.05	.06	.16	*
	3	.01	.02	.02	.02	.02	.04	.06	.07	.10	.17	.25
	4	.02	.02	.03	.04	.04	.06	.09	.14	.16	.28	.34
	5	.04	.08	.06	.08	.10	.11	.20	.23	.27	.34	.42
	6	.10	.11	.13	.14	.19	.21	.25	.29	.31	.38	.55
	7	.09	.14	.19	.23	.30	.31	.37	.36	.39	.42	.59
	8	.21	.28	.33	.41	.45	.47	.54	.57	.58	.57	.66
	9	*	*	*	*	.53	.60	.72	.72	.73	.73	.76
	10	.45	*	*	*	*	.72	.81	.83	.87	.88	.90

The table shows combined results for eight countries.

Notes: Data include all countries in the Leadership stacked data sets except Spain (leader and party ratings were obtained with different scales) and all elections except Great Britain in 1983, 1987, and 1992. The total number of party and leader ratings included in this analysis is 375,163 (Australia = 31,424; Canada = 57,229; Germany = 47,912; the Netherlands = 23,196; Norway = 68,010; Sweden = 55,185; Great Britain = 47,275; and the United States = 44,932). The results are unweighted. An * indicates less than 100 party/leader ratings. Due to differences in measurement techniques, the standardized 0–10 ratings have been rounded off to the nearest integer.

that for people with this extent of party liking, the probability to vote for their preferred party increases from 0.10–0.21 to 0.55–0.66 when the popularity of the relevant party leader increases from a low of 0 to a high of 10.

The comparable results for the party effect can be seen if we look at columns number 6, 7, and 8 and notice that for people with these degrees of leader liking, the probability to vote for the party goes up from 0.01–0.02 to 0.81–0.87 as the popularity of the party grows from 0 to 10. Hence, party effects are clearly stronger than party leader effects, but there is a non-trivial effect of party leader popularity as well.

The results reported in Table 3.1 are, however, somewhat artificial. For no other good reason than data availability, unweighted results from eight countries and fifty-six elections have been lumped together. It would be much more reasonable to look at the results broken down by country. In doing that we can examine leader effects in different political systems and see whether or not our results travel across systems, and have a first look at whether the impact of leaders on the vote has anything to do with how the electoral system is designed. The country-by-country voting probabilities for combinations of party and leader ratings are presented in Table 3.2.

A close inspection of the results in each country reveals some differences. For example, party leader effects are clearly much stronger in the United States than in any other country. Voting probabilities increase at about the same rate in the rows (= leader effects) as in the columns (= party effects). For the other seven countries,

TABLE 3.2 *Country-by-country voting probabilities for combinations of party and party leader ratings*

Australia 1993–2001

		Party leader ratings										
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Party ratings	0	.01	.02	.01	.02	.01	.00	*	*	*	*	*
	1	.02	.02	.03	.01	.00	.02	*	*	*	*	*
	2	.02	.01	.01	.02	.03	.01	.04	*	*	*	*
	3	.02	.01	.03	.03	.03	.03	.02	.08	*	*	*
	4	.02	.02	.06	.04	.04	.03	.04	.04	.13	*	*
	5	.06	.08	.08	.08	.09	.08	.12	.15	.19	.19	.29
	6	*	*	.16	.16	.16	.14	.28	.27	.28	.33	.45
	7	*	*	*	.24	.36	.25	.39	.43	.49	.42	.54
	8	*	*	*	*	.55	.35	.55	.59	.68	.67	.70
	9	*	*	*	*	*	.46	.60	.64	.74	.71	.70
	10	*	*	*	*	*	.64	.79	.81	.85	.81	.86

Notes: $n = 31{,}424$. An * indicates less than fifty party/leader ratings.

Canada 1968–97:

		Party leader ratings										
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Party ratings	0	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.02	*	*	*	*	*
	1	.03	.03	.01	.01	.01	.04	.03	*	*	*	*
	2	.02	.02	.02	.02	.03	.04	.06	.05	.09	*	*
	3	.03	.03	.03	.04	.02	.05	.05	.04	.08	*	*
	4	.05	.04	.07	.06	.05	.07	.07	.07	.12	*	*
	5	.06	.16	.07	.13	.09	.12	.15	.18	.26	.32	.39
	6	.13	.19	.20	.23	.26	.23	.28	.34	.39	.46	.52
	7	*	*	*	.43	.42	.42	.47	.49	.59	.66	.78
	8	*	*	*	.58	.58	.62	.68	.70	.74	.79	.88
	9	*	*	*	*	*	.72	.86	.78	.82	.87	.93
	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	.83	.93	.89	.93

Notes: $n = 57{,}229$. An * indicates less than fifty party/leader ratings.

Germany 1961–98:

		Party leader ratings										
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Party ratings	0	.00	.01	.00	.01	.01	.02	.02	.01	.02	*	*
	1	.02	.00	.02	.02	.01	.00	.00	.04	*	*	*
	2	.02	.02	.04	.01	.03	.02	.05	.04	.12	*	*
	3	.01	.02	.02	.01	.02	.02	.03	.03	.09	*	*
	4	.01	.04	.01	.04	.05	.02	.04	.08	.05	.24	*
	5	.04	.04	.04	.03	.03	.04	.05	.07	.12	.16	.29
	6	.07	.05	.10	.08	.10	.12	.10	.14	.15	.23	.38
	7	.04	.09	.13	.18	.22	.23	.25	.26	.28	.35	.43
	8	.18	.24	.31	.36	.26	.41	.41	.45	.48	.53	.61
	9	*	*	*	*	.48	.52	.66	.66	.67	.75	.81
	10	*	*	*	*	*	.76	.84	.79	.86	.87	.92

Notes: $n = 47{,}912$. An * indicates less than fifty party/leader ratings.

Netherlands 1986–98:

		Party leader ratings										
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Party ratings	0	.00	.00	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	1	.00	.01	.01	.00	.00	.02	*	*	*	*	*
	2	.00	.02	.01	.00	.01	.03	.02	.02	*	*	*
	3	.00	.01	.02	.02	.01	.02	.03	.04	*	*	*
	4	*	.01	.03	.03	.03	.02	.04	.02	.08	*	*
	5	*	.09	.09	.08	.05	.07	.08	.07	.09	.13	*
	6	*	*	*	.12	.10	.12	.11	.12	.14	.17	.24
	7	*	*	*	.16	.17	.27	.25	.24	.25	.29	*
	8	*	*	*	*	*	.50	.45	.52	.52	.51	.52
	9	*	*	*	*	*	.61	.61	.67	.67	.67	.67
	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	.81	.92	.85

Notes: n = 23,196. An * indicates less than fifty party/leader ratings.

Norway 1981–97:

		Party leader ratings										
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Party ratings	0	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.01	.01	.02	*	*
	1	.00	.01	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.01	.04	*	*
	2	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.01	.00	*	*
	3	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.02	.01	.02	.00
	4	.00	.00	.00	.01	.00	.01	.00	.01	.02	.00	*
	5	.02	.02	.02	.01	.02	.02	.02	.03	.05	.04	.09
	6	*	.07	.07	.06	.08	.06	.07	.07	.09	.08	.15
	7	*	*	.11	.15	.21	.19	.21	.22	.21	.20	.27
	8	*	*	.31	.37	.37	.40	.47	.51	.45	.47	.49
	9	*	*	*	*	*	.62	.63	.68	.74	.69	.69
	10	.38	.57	.60	.67	.73	.84	.92	.85	.88	.89	.91

Notes: n = 68,010. An * indicates less than fifty party/leader ratings.

Sweden 1979–98:

		Party leader ratings										
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Party ratings	0	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.03	*
	1	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00	.01	*	*
	2	.00	.00	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00	.00	.01	*	*
	3	.01	.00	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00	.00	.02	.02	*
	4	.01	.00	.01	.01	.01	.00	.00	.02	.01	.02	*
	5	.00	.02	.01	.02	.03	.02	.02	.02	.04	.02	.05
	6	.02	.00	.01	.01	.03	.05	.05	.05	.03	.05	.13
	7	*	*	.06	.05	.10	.12	.17	.13	.10	.08	.15
	8	*	*	*	.32	.30	.30	.34	.39	.33	.30	.35
	9	*	*	*	*	*	.57	.66	.71	.66	.61	.61
	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	.82	.85	.90	.89

Notes: n = 55,185. An * indicates less than fifty party/leader ratings.

Great Britain 1964–2001 (1983, 1987, and 1992 excluded from analysis):

		Party leader ratings										
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Party ratings	0	.01	.01	.00	.01	.01	.01	.02	*	*	*	*
	1	.00	.03	.04	.02	.03	.02	.07	*	*	*	*
	2	.02	.03	.03	.03	.01	.04	.03	.07	.10	*	*
	3	.01	.05	.03	.04	.04	.06	.11	.12	.11	*	*
	4	.03	.02	.03	.06	.05	.09	.14	.21	.16	*	*
	5	.05	.10	.08	.12	.16	.20	.33	.34	.26	.28	.36
	6	.14	*	.23	.23	.37	.43	.48	.49	.45	.42	.48
	7	*	*	*	.48	.49	.54	.59	.59	.59	.54	.63
	8	*	*	*	*	.56	.61	.71	.74	.73	.75	.78
	9	*	*	*	*	*	.67	.85	.84	.83	.83	.86
	10	*	*	*	*	*	.79	.81	.90	.89	.90	.92

Notes: n = 47,275. An * indicates less than fifty party/leader ratings.

United States 1952–2000:

		Candidate ratings										
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Party ratings	0	.00	.03	.04	.04	.06	*	*	*	*	*	*
	1	.02	.00	.01	.05	.04	.12	*	*	*	*	*
	2	.01	.00	.02	.04	.07	.15	.19	*	*	*	*
	3	.01	.04	.03	.05	.08	.16	.34	.47	.55	*	*
	4	.01	.03	.05	.08	.09	.25	.47	.63	.73	.85	*
	5	.05	.08	.08	.13	.19	.38	.66	.78	.85	.88	.93
	6	.12	.17	.21	.25	.41	.62	.80	.89	.90	.91	.96
	7	*	*	.20	.35	.48	.67	.85	.90	.96	.96	.99
	8	*	*	*	*	.75	.78	.87	.93	.95	.97	.99
	9	*	*	*	*	*	.82	.93	.94	.97	.95	.98
	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	.94	.99	.98	1.00

Notes: n = 44,932. An * indicates less than fifty party/candidate ratings.

however, party effects on the vote are visibly stronger than leader effects. In Germany, for example, rating a party leader at 9 increases the probability to vote for his/her party from 0.16 to 0.87 (= party effect +0.71) when the party rating goes up from 5 to 10. The comparable figures for Germans rating a party at 9 is an increase in the tendency to vote for the party from 0.52 to 0.81 (= leader effect +0.29) when the leader sympathies rise from 5 to 10. There is a party as well as a leader effect, but the party effect is clearly stronger. If we do exactly the same calculations for the Dutch results, we get a party effect of +0.79 and a leader effect of +0.06, that is, a weaker party leader impact on the vote than in the German case.

The comparable results for the Scandinavian countries look very much the same as for the Netherlands, while the results in Britain, Canada, and Australia indicate, as in Germany, somewhat stronger leader effects.[1] Thus, the pattern of leader effects across countries hints at a relationship between the impact of party leaders and the design of the electoral system. Leader effects are a bit stronger in plurality/majoritarian systems than in proportional systems.

One way of making our cross-country comparisons more stringent, and at the same time improving the possibilities of assessing how strong leader effects are vis-à-vis party effects, is to run regression analyses with party choice as the dependent variable and party as well as leader ratings as independent variables. The figures in Table 3.3 report the results from a series of such regression analyses, performed on the combined Leadership stacked data set and in all nine countries separately. This time Spain has been included, even if the leader and party scales used in the Spanish election studies are not strictly comparable.

Overall, in the artificially combined Leadership data set, party effects exceed leader effects by 0.57 versus 0.23 – a sizeable difference but also a clear indication that independent leader effects are not inconsequential. The outcome, with stronger party effects than leader effects, looks very much the same in the separate countries, with the United States as a notable exception. In American presidential elections, candidate popularity has a stronger impact on the vote than party popularity, which is not surprising. The size of the leader coefficients in Table 3.3 ranges from a high of 0.72 for the United States; to 0.38 in Spain; 0.21 to 0.18 in Australia, Canada, Germany, and Britain; and 0.10 to 0.05 in Norway, the Netherlands, and Sweden.

However, if we compute the difference between the magnitude of the party coefficient minus the magnitude of the leader coefficient, we get a less sensitive measure that says something about the relative impact of leaders across systems. Through this approach, we can get a rank ordering, starting with countries with relatively strong leader effects on the vote and ending with countries with relatively weak leader effects. High positive differences indicate strong party effects, while low, and for the United States negative, differences indicate relatively strong leader effects. Here is the ordering: the United States 0.15, Britain +0.32, Australia +0.38, Canada +0.48, Germany +0.48, the Netherlands +0.70, Norway +0.96, Spain +0.98, and Sweden +1.06. An interesting result, with four countries using plurality/majoritarian electoral systems topping the list, followed by a country relying on a mixed plurality and proportional system (Germany), and ending with four countries using proportional list systems. Our fourth hypothesis has clearly not been disproved. Evidently, there is a relationship between leader impact and electoral system design. Party leaders matter more in countries that use plurality/majoritarian electoral systems. However, in countries where proportional list systems are used, party leaders matter less.

TABLE 3.3 *Party leader and party rating correlations (Pearson's r), logistic effects of party leader and party ratings on the vote (b)*

		Logistic regression model					
	Correlation party leader × party rating	Constant	b_{Party}	b_{Leader}	Nagelkerke's R^2	*n*	Per cent accurately predicted
All countries	.67	−5.89 (.02)	+0.57 (.00)	+0.23 (.00)	.48	376,726	87
Australia	.76	−6.02 (.07)	+0.59 (.01)	+0.21 (.01)	.50	30,126	88
Canada	.75	−6.27 (.06)	+0.69 (.01)	+0.21 (.01)	.48	47,845	86
Germany	.75	−7.12 (.08)	+0.69 (.01)	+0.21 (.01)	.56	40,562	90
Netherlands	.69	−6.99 (.11)	+0.78 (.02)	+0.08 (.01)	.40	18,519	84
Norway	.72	−9.47 (.09)	+1.06 (.01)	+0.10 (.01)	.58	57,376	93
Spain	.59	−9.48 (.11)	+1.36 (.02)	+0.38 (.01)	.79	36,185	97
Sweden	.74	−9.94 (.11)	+1.11 (.02)	+0.05 (.01)	.56	50,997	92
Britain	.71	−5.20 (.05)	+0.60 (.01)	+0.18 (.01)	.46	38,292	85
United States	.52	−6.78 (.08)	+0.57 (.00)	+0.72 (.00)	.58	29,182	89

Notes: The analyses were performed on stacked data sets. The unit of analysis is voter-party dyads. Each stack consists of the individual voter's responses to relevant parties and their leaders. The dependent variable is binary (0 = did not vote for the party, 1 = voted for the party). Coefficients in parenthesis are standard errors of the logistic regression coefficients. All Countries, All Elections, All Respondents are included in the analysis, except for Britain 1983, 1987, and 1992. Nagelkerke's R^2 is 'maximum rescaled *R*-squared'.

3.7 MORE CASES

The hypothesis can also be tested using data from the CSES project. The results in Table 3.4 report on such a test involving altogether twenty-four countries and 109 parties and party leaders. The analysis has not been done on stacked data. Instead, we have run logistic regressions for all 109 parties, with binary dependent variables coded '1' if respondents voted for the party and '0' if respondents did not vote for the party. The figures in the table are the average difference between logistic effects of party and leader popularity on the vote for each country. Presidential elections are excluded. We are only dealing with parliamentary elections, or elections to the House of Representatives in the case of the United States.

A quick look at the rank-ordered results in Table 3.4 reveals that the CSES results confirm the Leadership results. There is, indeed, a relationship between impact of leaders and the design of the electoral system. Countries using plurality systems tend to be located towards the top or in the middle of the rank-ordered list (e.g. the United States, Canada, Britain, and Australia), while most countries using proportional list systems are found at the bottom (e.g. the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands).[2] And a high position on the list means a relatively strong influence of party leaders on the vote, while a low rank means less of an impact of leaders. On average, our difference measure is 0.34 in systems with plurality voting, 0.35 in mixed plurality and proportional systems, and 0.53 in countries using proportional list systems, with low figures indicating a stronger impact of leaders.

3.8 PARTY LEADERS AS VOTE-GETTERS

We cannot talk about the impact of leaders without mentioning any results for individual party leaders. The results in Table 3.5 are supposed to satisfy some of our curiosity as to who the successful and less successful party leaders are. Based on the answers to the eleven-point like–dislike scales, we have computed the proportion of each party's voters who like the leader better than the party and vice versa. The first figure is of great interest since it says something about how successful different leaders have been in winning votes for their parties. The assumption being that people who appreciate the leader of a party they vote for more than the party, could potentially have been influenced by the leader when picking the party.

In Table 3.5, the five potentially most successful vote-getters among our 109 examined party leaders are listed together with the five least successful. And the

TABLE 3.4 *Party leader effects on the vote in twenty-four countries*

Country	Average difference between logistic effects of party and leader popularity on the vote	Electoral system
Portugal	.21	PR-list
Germany	.21	PR-mix
United States	.22	Plurality
Russia	.26	Semi-PR
Poland	.28	PR-list
Mexico	.28	PR-mix
South Korea	.29	Semi-PR
Slovenia	.30	PR-list
Israel	.31	PR-list
Spain	.33	PR-list
Canada	.33	Plurality
Britain	.34	Plurality
New Zealand	.35	PR-mix
Australia	.45	Majority
Switzerland	.48	PR-list
Ukraine	.50	PR-mix
Japan	.57	Semi-PR
Hungary	.61	PR-list
Czech Republic	.65	PR-list
Iceland	.65	PR-list
Denmark	.68	PR-list
Netherlands	.69	PR-list
Norway	.79	PR-list
Sweden	.86	PR-list

Notes: The data come from The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). The classification of electoral systems is done by International IDEA in a Handbook on Electoral System Design (1997). The vote variable has been defined as vote in the elections to the House of Representatives in the case of the United States. The averages have not been weighted for party size.

winner was Kim Dae Jung from South Korea. Almost half of his party's voters liked him better than his party. Mimi Jakobsen from Denmark came in as a close second. Among her party's voters, 46 per cent appreciated her more than the party. The least successful potential vote-getter was a Swede, the Liberal party leader Lars Leijonborg. Only 2 per cent of the Liberal voters in the election of 1998 liked him more than the party. Almost everybody (81 per cent) liked the party better than him.[3]

Comparable results for some more internationally well-known party leaders who did not make it to the list are the following: Bill Clinton, for example, was liked more than his party among 28 per cent of Democratic voters in House races. Tony Blair got the exact same result among Labour voters in Britain. Gerhard

TABLE 3.5 *Party leaders as potential vote-getters for their parties (per cent)*

	Leader; party, country, election year	Like leader more than party	Like leader less than party	Difference
Top five				
1	Dae Jung; Millenium Democratic Party, South Korea, 2000	47	22	+25
2	Jakobsen; Center Democrats, Denmark, 1998	46	24	+22
3	Agrimsson; Progressive Party, Iceland, 1999	44	24	+20
4	Gysi; PDS, Germany, 1998	42	16	+26
5	Kan; Democratic Party, Japan, 1996	42	16	+26
Bottom five				
105	Lee; Christian Coalition, New Zealand, 1996	5	60	−55
106	Persson, Social Democrats, Sweden, 1998	5	67	−62
107	Petersen; Conservatives, Norway, 1997	5	77	−72
108	Duceppe; Bloc Québécois, Canada, 1997	4	65	−61
109	Leijonborg, Liberals, Sweden, 1998	2	81	−79

Notes: The data come from the CSES project. Party and party leader popularity have been measured on the same eleven-point like–dislike scale across some thirty countries, including, in this analysis, 109 party leaders and parties competing in parliamentary elections during the years 1996–2002. The figures show percentage of respondents among a party's voters who either like the party leader more or less than the party. The results have been rank-ordered according to the proportion of a party's voters who like the party leader better than the party (= voters potentially drawn to the party by the popularity of the leader).

Schröder in Germany was somewhat more successful, with 31 per cent among Social Democratic voters being more fond of him than of the party.[4] Even more successful, however, was Wim Kok in the Netherlands. Among PvdA-voters, 38 per cent liked him better than the party. Another potential vote-getter is Simon Peres. Among his party's voters in Israel, 33 per cent appreciated him more than the party. In comparison, Benjamin Netanyahu only scored 18 per cent. The average figure for all our 109 party leaders is 22 per cent. Thus, many of the well-known names beat the average result.

In conclusion, there is not one but two, maybe three, conclusions that have to be drawn concerning our first hypothesis – that is, on whether leader effects are strong or weak. First, in the United States, leader effects are strong; in presidential elections even stronger than party effects. Second, more generally, in countries using plurality/majoritarian electoral systems, leader effects are less strong than party effects, but leader effects tend nevertheless to be sizeable and non-trivial. Third, in countries that use proportional list systems, party effects are much stronger than leader effects, which does not mean that leader effects are not non-existent in these countries, but that they are in most cases close to trivial.

3.9 INCREASED PARTY LEADER IMPACT OVER TIME?

The question of whether party leader impact on how people vote has increased or not can only be examined in a very limited number of countries. We simply lack appropriate and comparable time series data. However, the hypothesis that leaders mean more today can be tested in six countries. The outcome is depicted in a set of graphs in Figure 3.1. We return to the stacked data sets from the Leadership project we used previously. The results are logistic *b*-values for the party leader variable in regression analyses where the party factor was also included, and with vote as the dependent variable.

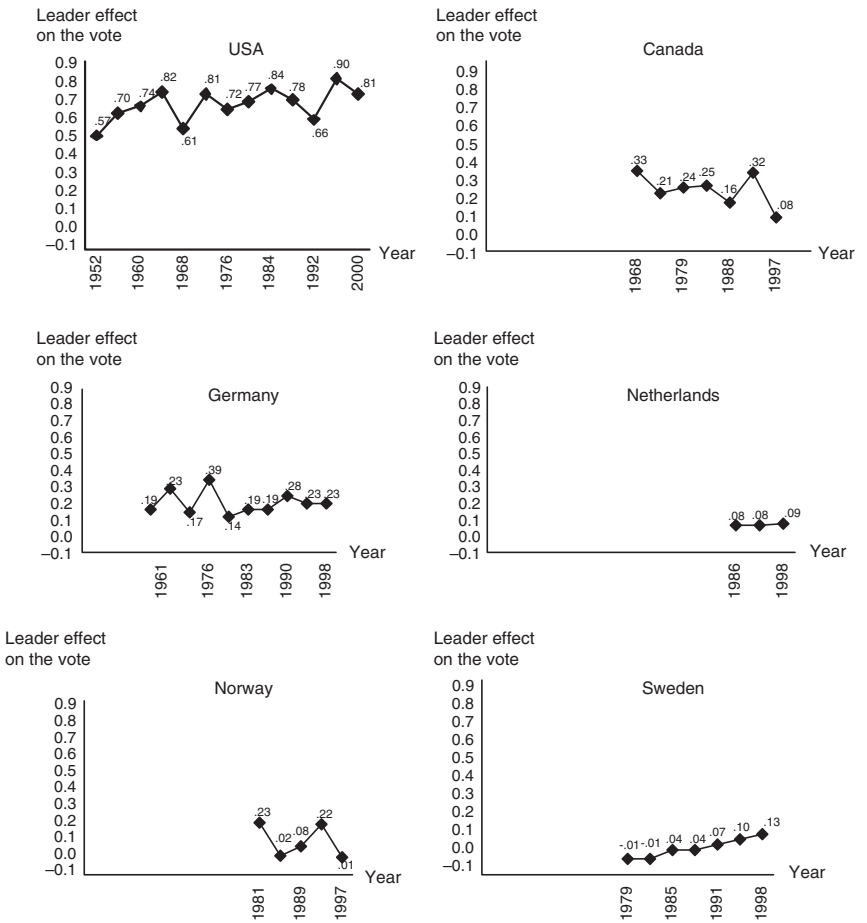

FIGURE 3.1 Party leader effects on the vote (*b*-values)

The trend for party leader effects is increasing somewhat in two countries, decreasing somewhat in one country, shows trendless fluctuations in two countries, and remains the same over time in one country. The conclusion is not obvious, and we do not have any clear confirmation of the hypothesis that the influence of party leaders is generally on the rise. The countries where we see some long-term increase are the United States and Sweden.[5] Canadian results fluctuate a lot between elections, but there is a small trend downward for party leader effects. The German and Norwegian results fluctuate as well across elections, but no trend can be noticed. The Dutch time series is quite short, covering only three elections, but the results are very stable and show no trend in any direction.

3.10 LESS PARTY LEADER EFFECTS IN POLARIZED SYSTEMS

The relationship is not impressive, but it goes in the direction of the hypothesis – party leader effects tend to be a bit smaller in polarized party systems than in non-polarized systems. The generalization possibilities are extremely restricted, however, since the test is limited to only four countries and twenty-five elections. The countries are Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden. Party platform data collected by the Manifesto Project have been used to construct the polarization measure. The creator of the measure is Hans-Dieter Klingemann.[6]

The scatter plot in Figure 3.2 reveals a weak relationship, but in the expected direction. The correlation (*r*) between degrees of party polarization in the examined elections and the impact of party leader popularity on the vote is 0.26, which means

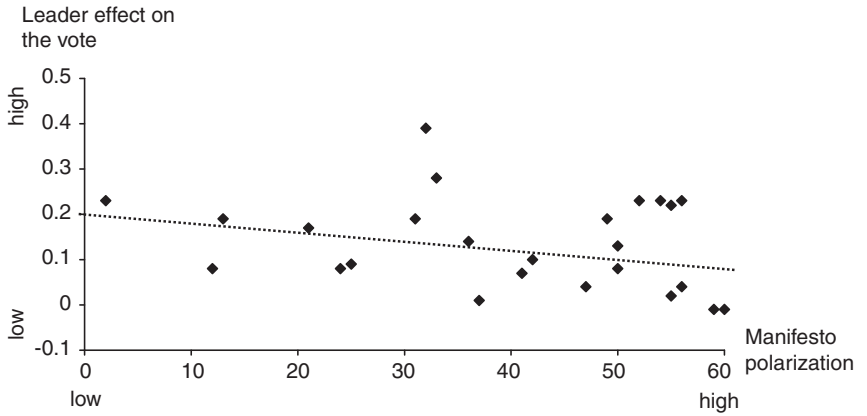

FIGURE 3.2 The relationship between manifesto polarization and leader effects on the vote across 25 elections in 4 countries (*b*-values)

that leader influence tends to be somewhat stronger in elections where parties are less polarized. In other words, when parties do not compete with different platforms, they can compete with attractive and trustworthy leaders. The prediction, then, would be that if party polarization keeps on going down like it has in some countries, there should be increased possibilities in the future for stronger party leader effects on the vote. If parties abdicate, leaders may take over. However, if party polarization increases in the future, we would expect to see decreasing effects of party leader popularity on the vote. If parties present clear alternatives, leaders may not take over.

3.11 A MYTH WITH SOME SUBSTANCE

Revisiting Modernization theory and the deduced hypotheses, we have to make some amends. There are some leader effects on the vote in most political systems. Consequently, it is exaggerated to talk of a myth and argue that there are no leader effects, particularly when it comes to countries where plurality/majoritarian election procedures are used. Party leader effects are visible in all systems but most clearly in countries using first-past-the-post voting rules. Leader effects are much less prominent in political systems using proportional election rules.

However, concerning the hypothesis that leader effects are on the rise in Western democracies, the myth metaphor is more justified. In most cases we find no increase, or only minor ones. The argument that leaders, over time, have become a greater influence on the vote is simply not substantiated.

Myth or no myth, our third hypothesis recognizes that what leader effects there are can be conditioned by contextual factors. Leader effects should be stronger in systems and elections where party policies differ little. And that is exactly what we find. Although, as always, the relationship is not particularly strong. Elections where party manifesto data indicate less party competition tend to be characterized by somewhat stronger party leader effects on the vote.

Hence, our conclusion can be formulated very succinctly. Where parties matter less, leaders tend to matter more.

NOTES

1. Computed exactly as in the text, the leader and party effects are the following: Australia +0.24 and +0.62; Canada +0.21 and +0.57; Britain +0.19 and +0.62; Norway +0.07 and +0.85; Sweden +0.04 and +0.88. The US results are not really comparable since the distributions of probabilities differ dramatically from the other countries, but the results are +0.16 and +0.10, that is, a larger leader effect than a party effect.

2. The US result is −0.46 if we analyse the presidential election instead of the house elections. That is, American leaders/candidates have a much stronger influence on how people vote in presidential than in congressional elections.
3. In fairness, it should be noted that Leijonborg did somewhat better in the Swedish elections of 2002. In that election, 7 per cent of Liberal voters in the post-election survey liked him better than the party, while only 57 per cent liked the party better than him.
4. Helmut Kohl scored 29 per cent.
5. The slight upward trend in the Swedish case is only found in the post-election surveys. If we add data from the pre-election studies, no upward trend is discernible. See Aardal and Oscarsson (2000) and Holmberg (2000). Note also that the American results are based on data derived from open-ended interview questions about what the respondents like and dislike about the parties and the candidates.
6. Hans-Dieter Klingemann's polarization measure is based on the Party Manifesto data (for even more details, see Budge et al. 2001). Parties' left–right positions are calculated by subtracting the relative frequency of rightist statements (POL1 'Freedom and Human Rights', ECO1 'Market Economy', SOC1 'Traditional Morality, Law and Order', SOC3 'Welfare State, Limitation', FOR1 'Military Strength') from the relative frequency of leftist statements (POL2 'Democracy', ECO2 'Planned or Mixed Economy', SOC2 'Cultural Liberalism', SOC4 'Welfare State, Expansion', FOR2 'Peace and Détente'). The left–right scores are standardized and range from −100 (left) to +100 (right). The simple party system polarization measure we use for our analyses is the absolute distance between the most leftist and the most rightist party in the respective system and the respective year. In theory, this polarization measure ranges from 0 to 200 (Klingemann 2002).

4

Political Leaders in Westminster Systems

Ian McAllister

4.1 INTRODUCTION

There is little doubt that political leaders have gained considerable power over the past half-century, although the extent to which their electoral influence may have increased remains a matter of debate. This fundamental change in the role of political leaders has been especially pronounced in parliamentary systems based on the Westminster model where the promotion of leader images during national election campaigns is now as prominent – perhaps even more prominent – than party symbols, leading some to argue that the Westminster system is converging with its presidential counterpart (Mughan 2000; Poguntke and Webb 2005). Reflecting this change, governments and sometimes even oppositions are routinely labelled after their leader by the media and by the public, rather than after the party they lead (McAllister 1996).

The defining moment in this change is often traced to Margaret Thatcher's accession to office in Britain as the first 'conviction politician' of the post-war years. However, it is often forgotten that Pierre Elliott Trudeau's election as Canadian prime minister in 1968 led to the 'Trudeaumania' phenomenon, which is perhaps the earliest manifestation of a prime minister's popularity surpassing that of his or her party. Since the 1990s, it has become more commonplace for governments or parties to be named after their leaders. In Germany, the popularity of Helmut Kohl and more recently Angela Merkel has at various times easily eclipsed the parties they lead, as has the popularity of Silvio Berlusconi in Italy and Tony Blair in Britain.

Along with this newfound popularity, prime ministers have become more influential with regard to policymaking. Post-war prime ministers in Westminster systems have accumulated considerably greater power and authority when compared with their pre-war counterparts (King 1994; Rhodes 1995). In many Westminster systems, it is often argued that cabinet government based on collective responsibility has been undermined, in part by the increased complexity of modern decision-making, but also by a conscious effort to centralize prime ministerial authority. Moreover, in majoritarian systems such as those of Australia and Britain, the prime minister now exercises unprecedented power in shaping ministerial careers, a crucial tool in ensuring compliance and centralizing authority.

The prima facie evidence suggests, then, that prime ministers and opposition leaders have replaced many of the roles historically played by political parties in ensuring the efficient operation of the parliamentary system. This chapter examines the evidence to support this observation in Australia, Britain, and Canada, focusing especially on the presidentialization hypothesis. However, a major task of the chapter is also to outline some of the factors that have led to a greater focus on prime ministers, and these factors are divided between exogenous factors, such as the changing role of television, and institutional changes, such as the increasing complexity of public policy.

Australia, Britain, and Canada are particularly appropriate case studies to test the presidentialization hypothesis. Although all three operate political systems with a common origin in the Westminster model, they vary considerably in how they have evolved to cope with their differing circumstances. Both Australia and Canada adopted federal systems, although there the similarity ends. In Australia, the power of the majority party is tempered by the influence of the Senate, an upper house with strong constitutional powers. Originally conceived as the 'states' house – a house of review in which the states' aims would balance those of the parties – in recent years the control of the Senate by the opposition parties has effectively meant that the government must either drop or radically alter its more controversial legislation if it wishes to see it implemented (Sharman 1999; Bach 2003).[1]

In neither Britain nor Canada is there such an institutional impediment to majority rule. In Britain, the governing party can count on implementing its legislative programme provided it keeps its majority in the House of Commons. The House of Lords represents no major impediment to the government in putting its policies into law, and on the rare occasions when its lower house majority has been so small as to place its legislative programme in jeopardy, an election has been called.[2] In Canada, the federal government is effectively independent of the provinces in the areas in which it has jurisdiction; when negotiations take place, it is generally in the areas of provincial jurisdiction when the provinces are seeking federal financial support. In both Australia and Canada, then, the prime ministerial authority must take account of federalism in order to reach its policy goals, and in the former, this means the constraint placed on such authority by the upper house.

4.2 PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEMS AND POLITICAL LEADERS

Institutional arrangements influence many aspects of the operation and functioning of political systems, but what has been less well recognized is the influence that institutional arrangements have on the style and content of political leadership. Some institutional structures are clearly more conducive to political leaders

gaining greater prominence than others. The major distinction in executive leadership is, of course, between its presidential and parliamentary forms, or what Lijphart (1994) characterizes as majoritarian versus consensus democracy. Both systems have specific consequences for the ways in which their respective political leaders operate, and for their profile and image with the electorate. There are also major variations between parliamentary systems which impact on political leaders, five of which are discussed below.

4.2.1 No conflict between the legislature and the executive

Perhaps the most noteworthy difference between parliamentary and presidential systems is that while the executive is elected by and responsible to the electorate in a presidential system, in a parliamentary system the executive is formed from, and depends for its continuing survival upon, the legislature.[3] Indeed, in most cases the prime minister is selected by the legislature, although in practice he or she will normally be the leader of the majority party or, in coalition governments, the leader of the party with the most seats. The executive can therefore be removed at any time by the legislature, usually after a vote of no confidence.

Thus, a prime minister must make it a priority to retain the confidence of his or her party colleagues and to refine carefully his or her performance in office, since the date when the government will be judged by the electorate at the polls is less certain. Faced with a constant threat of having his or her position undermined by the legislature, the prime minister has to exercise strong leadership over the party to ensure discipline and loyalty. One way to maintain discipline is through the party whips who secure the attendance of members for votes; another is by performing well during prime minister's question time (or question period in Canada), which helps to rally backbench support for the leadership (Rose 2001).

4.2.2 Majoritarian

A second characteristic of parliamentary systems, notably those based on the Westminster model, is that they usually have majoritarian arrangements (Lijphart 1994), although a significant number of European democracies maintain coalition forms of government (Laver and Schofield 1990). Majoritarian arrangements lead most directly to providing the prime minister with an appropriate public forum from which to gain prominence, while the high turnover in coalition-based systems inevitably reduces the power of the leader and his public profile. An extreme case of the latter is Italy, where the institutional structures are explicitly designed to reduce the power of the leader through high rates of government turnover. Moreover, in coalition governments, the leader may have difficulty in securing the loyalty of a diverse range of parties, as has been the case in Israel (Hazan 1997; Arian and Shamir 2001).

4.2.3 Responsible government

The notion of responsible government lies at the heart of the Westminster model of government. Collectively, responsible government means that ministers must take responsibility for the performance of the government; individually, ministers must answer for the conduct of the departments they represent in parliament. While responsible government also operates in the presidential model, this takes place through individual responsibility, so that one person forms the executive for a fixed period of time; even members of the president's own party may vote against whatever measures he or she proposes without undermining the day-to-day operation of the system or risking a split within the incumbent party (Lijphart 1994).

The notion of responsible government has undergone considerable change in the Westminster democracies during the course of the past century. Collective cabinet responsibility has often been weakened and dissent tolerated on specific issues, such as entry into the European Union in Britain, or separatism in Canada. Moreover, as public policy has become more complex and direct responsibility for policies more diffuse, individual responsibility has now been expanded in most Westminster systems to include senior public servants as well as ministers (Woodhouse 1994).

The patterns of ministerial resignations since 1945 in Australia, Britain, and Canada shed some light on the operation of responsible government. The results in Figure 4.1 suggest that, if anything, ministers are becoming more prone to resigning, although many of these resignations involve some form of personal impropriety, rather than ministerial incompetence or maladministration. What the patterns do show is the predominant influence of the prime minister in the operation of responsible government. In Britain, for example, both Harold Wilson during his first mandate (between 1964 and 1970) and John Major (between 1990 and 1997) were less minded to tolerate impropriety than other prime ministers, and therefore did not protect their ministers if they became the subject of allegations. Similarly, in Australia, the large number of resignations during Gough Whitlam's term in office (1972–5) reflects the character of the prime minister and his relationship with his ministers. And in Canada, the large number of resignations during the Mulroney ministry was a consequence of the government's aggregative privatization policies and the often disorderly way in which they were pursued.

The role of the prime minister is therefore central in how responsibly the government operates; he or she may choose to include or exclude particular actions under the doctrine, thereby determining the minister's fate. The fact that there is general agreement about the weakening of the doctrine in recent years tends to support the argument that prime ministerial power has increased, and that it is the prime minister, rather than the parliament, which determines how the doctrine is implemented (Kam 2000). In addition, the mass media plays a crucial role. As Figure 4.1 shows, ministerial resignations have increased considerably since 1945 despite the apparent weakening of the doctrine. Dowding and Kang suggest that this 'is certainly a function of closer press scrutiny of government

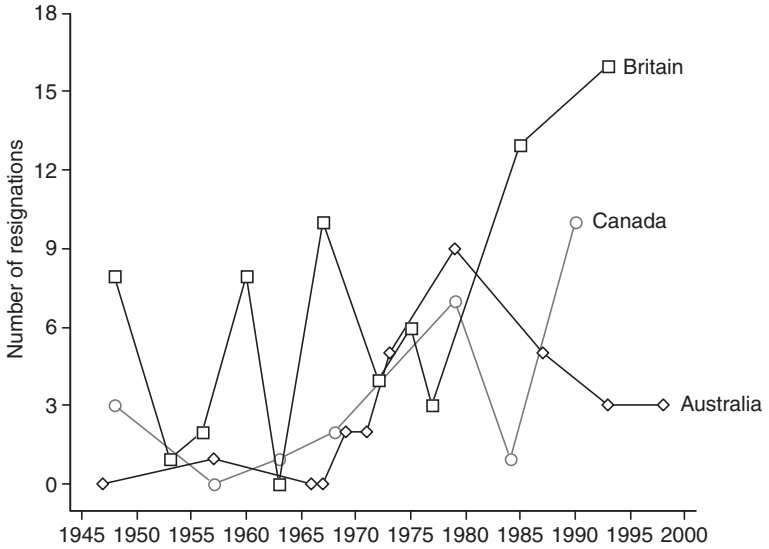

FIGURE 4.1 Ministerial resignations since 1945

Note: Only resignations that involved some form of impropriety or political conflict are included.
Sources: Sutherland (1991), McAllister et al. (1997), and Dowding and Kang (1998).

ministers as people, if not a closer scrutiny of their policies' (Dowding and Kang 1998: 425; see also Dewan and Dowding 2005).[4]

4.2.4 Party discipline

Studies of party cohesion generally assume that political parties in parliamentary democracies are more cohesive and programmatic than their counterparts in presidential systems (Diermeier and Feddersen 1998). Cohesion is frequently measured by parliamentary dissent, in the form of crossing the floor or roll-call voting (Garner and Letki 2005). In Britain, for example, crossing the floor of the House of Commons is relatively common (Norton 2000). By contrast, in Australia parliamentary dissent is almost unknown, and on those rare occasions when it occurs it often results in a defection to another party, or deselection at the next election. Generally, Australian backbenchers display their opposition to the party's programme in the party room, though invariably these occasions are widely reported in the media.

Party cohesion and discipline is central to the programmatic function of parliamentary parties – the implementation of a legislative programme which forms the basis for voters' evaluations of the government performance, and their prospects for re-election. Cox and McCubbins (1993) argue that legislators establish

structures and procedures to ensure that this occurs with the minimum of dissent or difficulty. For instance, prime ministers allocate rewards and punishments in order to ensure the passage of the legislative programme. In fact, the increasing range and complexity of a government's legislative programme places even greater importance on the ability of the prime minister to deal with dissent. In Britain, for example, strong leaders such as Margaret Thatcher have witnessed less dissent within their own party despite their strong majorities, compared with leaders such as Edward Heath, who experienced considerable dissent during his period as prime minister. Another factor ensuring compliance is the increasing party-related backgrounds of legislators, making them more dependent on the prime minister for career advancement (Riddell 1993).

4.2.5 Maximum terms for the government and the legislature

In contrast to presidential systems, parliamentary systems have maximum periods between elections, with the timing of the election usually residing at the discretion of the prime minister. In most cases, the prime minister may call an election if the government loses a vote of confidence in the legislature, or if the parliamentary term is coming to an end and the prime minister considers the time propitious to dissolve parliament. The result is that the governing party must exercise a strong degree of discipline over its members in order to ensure that they retain office (and, conversely, the opposition party must do the same in order to be seen as a credible alternative). The prime minister's influence is therefore essential in determining the date of the election, and the prerogative of dissolution is often viewed as a major threat that can be used against dissident members.

Various observers have interpreted the power to recommend a dissolution as a major means of ensuring discipline within the prime minister's own party (Huber 1996). Although this power is often regarded as a bluff – a divided government would have more to lose as a result of an election than the opposition – it is also the case that in Australia, Britain, and Canada no post-war government has lost a no confidence motion due to dissent by its own members. The power of dissolution is therefore an important threat, which can be used to quell dissent among members of the governing party who may be seeking to change the government's legislative programme. In any case, dissent can only be taken so far, since at the end of the day the dissenters are dependent on the party for re-election and for career advancement (Carey and Shugart 1995).

The length of the parliamentary term, of course, has implications for the power of the prime minister. A study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 1993 found that all but 17 of 148 democracies have four or five years as their maximum lower house term (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1993). Only thirteen countries have a three-year term, prominent among them Australia, New Zealand, and Sweden, and only one country – the United States – has a two-year term. At the other end of

TABLE 4.1 *Changes in parliamentary terms since 1945*

	Inter-election change (weeks)	Period	(*N*)
Australia	0.351	1946–2007	(24)
Britain	0.637	1945–2005	(16)
Canada	0.021	1945–2008	(20)

Note: The per annum change is the change based on an ordinary least squares regression line.

the scale, only three countries have a six-year term. It might be expected that shorter terms would enhance the role of the prime minister in a parliamentary system, by making the prospect of an election seem ever closer, and the need for unity and discipline ever greater.

Notwithstanding partisan dealignment and increased electoral volatility, which might lead to shorter terms since the governing party would be less likely to hold a secure majority, it would appear that the parliamentary terms in Australia, Canada, and Britain have actually increased over the past half-century (Table 4.1). In Australia, the average parliamentary term has increased by around two days at each successive election, and in Britain by around four days. While the pattern in Canada has been for a marginal increase. In the case of Australia, for example, a parliamentary term in the 2000s could be expected to be over a month longer than a term at the end of the 1940s, in the context of a three-year maximum term. In Britain, the difference is even greater in relative and absolute terms – over three months longer, over a five-year maximum term.

Explanations for this finding must remain speculative, but the comparable trends in two of the three countries suggest some commonality. One possible explanation is the enhanced role of the prime minister, and his or her increased power to determine the date of election. Since it is obviously in the interest of the prime minister to delay an election until the last possible moment – maximizing the period in office and the opportunities to implement the government's legislative agenda – the prime minister will obviously seek to increase the term whenever possible. The data in Table 4.1 are suggestive of this having taken place over the last half-century.

4.3 THE PRESIDENTIALIZATION OF WESTMINSTER SYSTEMS?

The relentless pace of global change has led to the hypothesis that parliamentary systems are becoming more presidential in character, style, and operation, as the environments within which they operate become more uniform. In parliamentary systems, the development of the mass media, the increasing complexity of

government and party policies, weakening social and partisan loyalties, and declining turnout have all contributed to focus more popular attention on the role of the prime minister and, to a lesser extent, the opposition leader. What is occurring is a presidentialization of the role of the prime minister in the Westminster democracies. While it is a trend that could apply to all Westminster systems, it is seen as having progressed farthest in Britain, becoming established under Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s and being reinforced by Tony Blair since 1997 (Mughan 2000; Maddens and Fiers 2004).

Descriptions of this apparent shift in the nature and function of parliamentary systems have attracted a wide variety of terms. Most frequently used is the 'presidentialization' or 'electoral presidentialization' of parliamentary systems (Mughan 2000: 130), but other terms, such as 'semi-presidentialism', 'semi-parliamentarism', 'presidential parliamentarism', and 'prime ministerialism' have appeared (for a review, see Elgie 1997; Poguntke and Webb 2005). Whatever the description that is applied, all share the common theme that parliamentary government – with political power being exercised through collective cabinet responsibility – has now given way to political power which is wielded by a single political figure, namely a president operating within a nominally parliamentary system.

Beyond largely impressionistic evidence to support the presidentialization view – the naming of governments or parties after the leaders, as noted earlier – rigorous tests of the hypothesis using electoral data are rare. Suggestive evidence in support of the hypothesis comes from a study by Lanoue and Headrick (1994), who used aggregate data from 1953 until 1987 to examine the relative importance of prime ministerial popularity, economic evaluations, and specific events on the government's lead in the polls. The authors concluded that there was an incremental increase in the importance of the prime minister, which began in the 1960s, well before the advent of the Thatcher era. This they regarded as important, since Thatcher's steep rise in personal popularity after winning the Falklands War in 1982 tended to obscure longer-term trends. Lanoue and Headrick concluded that 'the 1960s ushered in a new perspective on parties and prime ministers, one in which public opinion towards the governing party and its leader were more closely tied to one another' (Lanoue and Headrick 1994: 202).

The major study of presidentialization in Britain has been conducted by Tony Mughan (2000). In surveying the role of prime ministers in Britain since the 1960s, he draws an important distinction between presentation and impact. Mughan argues that there is little doubt that as public persona, prime ministers are now more prominent than ever before, but that the case for the prime minister having more impact on the vote is less easy to evaluate. After analysing a range of British elections, Mughan concludes that 'prime ministerial candidates are generally a more substantial influence on the vote than campaign issues (. . .) having the right leader can mean the difference between victory and defeat for a party in closely fought contests' (Mughan 2000: 129; see also Bean 1993).

One of the major difficulties in evaluating the presidentialization argument is to distinguish between the effects attributable to the incumbent, and those that are associated with the office. Since a relatively small number of cases are available for analysis, this is a major concern. Margaret Thatcher, for example, had a central presence in the British political system during the 1980s, easily eclipsing that of her successor, John Major, during the early 1990s. Similarly, Tony Blair has had a major impact on British politics. The presidentialization hypothesis assumes that the influence of the leader will increase incrementally with the passage of time, other things being equal, since the prime minister's popularity and influence is being shaped by a wide range of exogenous factors, such as the mass media and administrative change, which give rise to institutional convergence.

By contrast, the incumbency hypothesis suggests that prime ministerial popularity and influence will vary with the characteristics of the leader in question and may go up or down, depending on his or her popular image. In an analysis of prime ministerial approval between 1979 and 1996, Clarke et al. (2000) find support for the incumbency hypothesis, with the impact of prime ministerial approval declining significantly with the replacement of Thatcher by Major. However, Thatcher's popularity may have been affected by the legacy of British success in the Falklands War. Indeed, prior to the Argentine invasion of the Falklands, the Thatcher government was immensely unpopular, and following the war the government's increased popularity carried it to a decisive win in the 1983 general election. However, while Norpoth (1987), Mishler et al. (1989), and Clarke et al. (1990) argue that her increased popularity occurred as a consequence of the Falklands War, Sanders et al. (1987) argue that economic reforms were at the heart of the change.

Events such as the Falklands War, along with terrorist incidents, are idiosyncratic; there are few partisan advantages to be derived from them, other than the advantage conveyed by incumbency. A substantial US literature has emerged to examine the electoral consequences of international crises, suggesting that such events focus attention on the elected leader, enhancing their status and authority in the eyes of the public (Ostrom and Simon 1985). Nickelsburg and Norpoth (2000: 329) conclude that foreign policy is at least as important in determining presidential popularity as economic policy: 'the chief executive must be commander-in-chief and chief economist in nearly equal measure'. The September 11 attacks and the events that have followed endorse that conclusion. It would be reasonable to surmise, by implication, that international crises would affect the role of the prime minister in a parliamentary system in much the same way.

The evidence to support the presidentialization hypothesis is therefore mixed. The central difficulty is distinguishing between idiosyncratic events and personalities from broadly based, long-term institutional trends, which may also play their part in shaping the nature of executive power and bringing about convergence. Moreover, when several of these factors compound one another – as was the case, for example, in the combination of the Falklands War and the personality

of Margaret Thatcher, or 9/11 and George W. Bush – it is difficult to gauge what is a discernible shift in executive power due to the specific circumstances of the time and what is due to long-term patterns of change. Following Elgie (1997), the following two sections distinguish between this range of factors in terms of their exogenous influence on leadership and institutional influences.

4.4 EXOGENOUS INFLUENCES ON LEADERSHIP

The potential range of external influences on executive power – those that fall outside the day-to-day operation of political institutions – is, of course, vast. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify four major external factors that help to shape the context within which power is exercised and have the potential to alter significantly the nature of prime ministerial authority. The most obvious is the role of television and its associated effects on how electoral campaigns are conducted and how major political events are presented to the electorate. Long-term changes within the mass public are also important, and two factors are identified here – partisan dealignment and the decline in electoral participation. Finally, the internal dynamics of parties, and more particularly the decline in party organization, has indirect consequences for the context within which executive power is exercised.

4.4.1 The role of television

Many of the changes that have been observed in the role of the prime minister in Westminster systems have been traced back to the growth of the electronic media, and especially television, in the 1950s and 1960s. In the early years of television's development, the new media gave scant attention to politics, but as its coverage of politics – and especially political leaders – increased, voters began to view their leaders differently.[5] In Britain, for example, political broadcasting on television was introduced in the 1950s, but it was not until the 1964 general election that it came into its own, when the two major parties were allocated 75 minutes each of free television broadcasting (McAllister 1985). Perhaps coincidentally, this general election was the first in Britain where the term 'presidential' was used to describe the character of the campaign (Mughan 2000: 27).

During the period for which election data are available in the three Westminster systems, the proportion of the population with access to television sets increased substantially, most notably in Australia, where the proportion almost quadrupled between the mid-1960s and 2005 (Figure 4.2). The trend for Canada and Britain shows less dramatic growth; nevertheless, in Britain, more than twice as many people had access to a television set in 2005 than was the case in 1965.

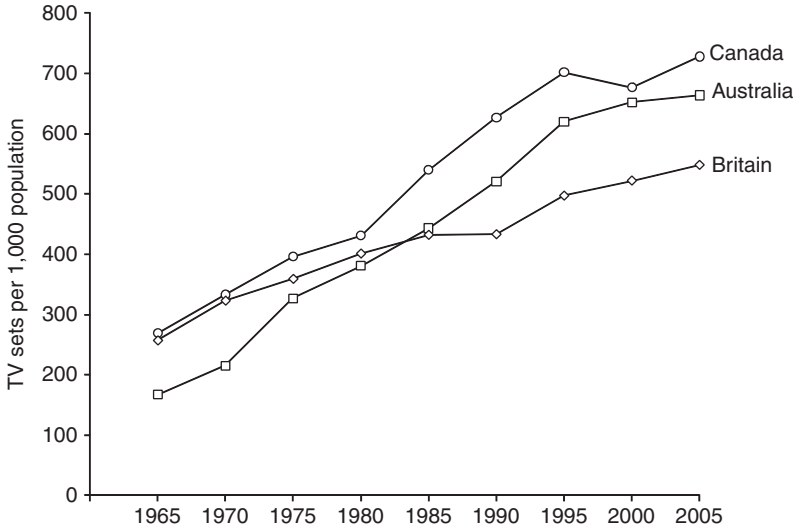

FIGURE 4.2 Television sets per 1,000 population, 1965–2005

Sources: International Telecommunications Union, World Telecommunications Indicators, various dates (Geneva: ITC).

Starting in the 1960s, television rapidly became an indispensable tool for modern election campaigning (Bowler and Farrell 1992; Norris et al. 1999; Farrell 2006). Indicative of this change has been the increasing importance of televised debates between the leaders during election campaigns, starting in the United States with the debate between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon in the 1960 presidential election campaign. Since then, the idea of a leaders' debate has spread across the established democracies. Of forty-five democracies that were examined in the mid-1990s, all but four had a leaders' debate at the immediate past election (LeDuc et al. 1996*a*: 45–8). This represents a substantial increase on the previous survey, which found that in the late 1970s a leaders' debate took place in just seven of twenty-one parliamentary systems (Smith 1981).

Australia and Canada have an established history of mounting leaders' debates, while the major parties in Britain have generally resisted calls to have a formal leaders' debate.[6] In Australia, the first televised debate was held in 1984, but not in the subsequent 1987 election; since 1990, the debate has become an established and formal part of the election campaign, the only point of disagreement between the parties being whether to have one or two debates, with the incumbent wishing to minimize the risks of a live television debate and the challenger wishing to maximize it. In Canada, televised leaders' debates have also become an integral part of the election campaign, starting with the first debate in 1968; by convention, one debate is usually held in English, and one in French (LeDuc 1990, 1994).

The proportion of voters watching the televised leaders' debates in both Australia and Canada has been declining. In Australia, the highpoint occurred in

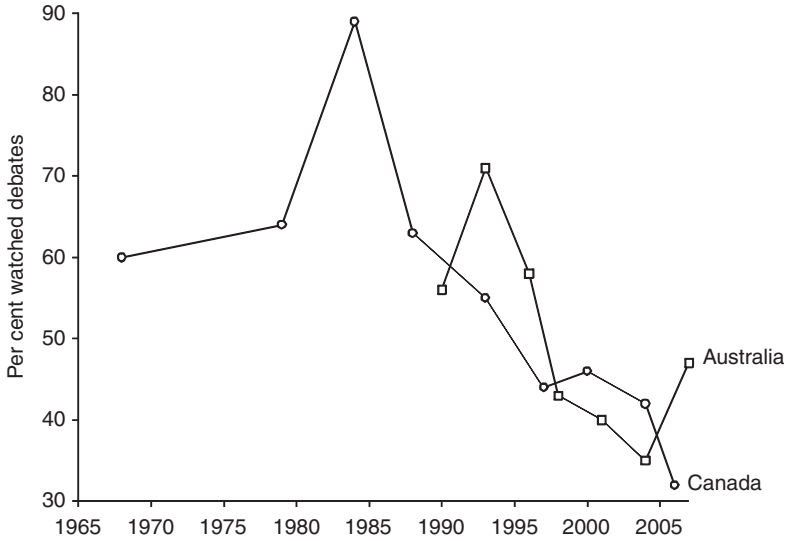

FIGURE 4.3 Voters watching the leaders' debates

Note: The Australian figures for 1990 and 1993 are the proportion of voters who watched at least one of the two debates; the remaining elections had just one debate. The Canadian figures are for watching the English debate.
Sources: Australian Election Studies: 1990–2007; Canadian Election Studies: 1968–2006.

1993, when seven out of ten voters said that they had watched at least one of the two debates held during the election campaign. This declined to 58 per cent in 1996, and in 2004, just one out of every four voters said they watched the debate between John Howard and Kim Beazley (Figure 4.3). Viewing recovered slightly to 47 per cent during the 2007 campaign, when the new Labor leader debated with the longest-serving prime minister John Howard. There is a similar pattern in Canada: the highpoint was the 1984 election, when no less than 89 per cent watched the debate between John Turner and Brian Mulroney, but the proportion watching each debate has declined ever since – to 42 per cent in 2004, and just 32 per cent in 2006.

The media's intense focus on leaders in its political reporting has several explanations. The most obvious is the nature of the electronic media, especially television, and the way in which information is presented to media consumers. In general, the media find it easier to disseminate visual and oral information through a familiar personality rather than through a document or an institution (Glaser and Salmon 1991; see also Ranney 1983). As individuals themselves, viewers are more likely to develop a rapport with the personalities they see in the mass media, and to empathize with them and the goals they espouse. Viewers may place themselves in the role of the personalities they see, or in the role of the interviewers, and as a consequence gain a better understanding of the leaders' views. For the mass media too, party leaders are a convenient visual shortcut to capture and retain the viewer's attention.

Political parties also find it advantageous to draw attention to their political leaders and to ensure that they remain centre-stage. In many ways, parties find it easier to market political choices to voters through an individual who will be far more effective at promoting a particular policy than a press release or the publication of a policy document. For instance, the leader can enhance popular interest for his or her party's policies by publicly debating with an interviewer. Particularly where the party is in government, the promotion of the leader's personality characteristics can enhance the advantages that accrue to incumbency, further benefiting the party's electoral standing among voters.

The ability of voters to hold governments accountable for their actions provides a further explanation for their emphasis on leaders. Voters prefer to hold an individual accountable for government performance (or, occasionally, for the performance of the opposition), rather than an abstract institution or a political ideal (Bean and Mughan 1989). This is more important in a parliamentary system, where collective cabinet responsibility and the fortunes of the government as a whole may blur accountability in the eyes of the public. By focusing attention on the prime minister as the individual who is accountable for the government's collective performance, the public finds it easier to deliver reward or punishment, particularly when compared with an abstract collectivity.

4.4.2 Partisan dealignment

A second general change in the political context within which leaders operate, and one which has direct consequences for them, is the widespread partisan dealignment that has occurred across all of the advanced democracies in the past several decades (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Webb et al. 2002). The extent of partisan dealignment in Australia, Britain, and Canada is illustrated in Figures 4.4 and 4.5. The proportion of respondents eschewing a party identity in all three countries has increased significantly, most dramatically in Canada, where one in four voters fell into this category at the 1997 election (Figure 4.4).[7] In Australia and Britain, the growth is more modest, although in both countries the proportion of non-partisans has more than doubled during the period for which data are available. The decline in the proportion of voters describing themselves as 'very strong' partisans (Figure 4.5) has been very similar across the three countries, at between 10 and 16 per cent of the electorate.

A major consequence of partisan dealignment is heightened electoral volatility. With weaker loyalties to the major political parties, and in the absence of strong bonds anchoring them to specific parties, voters are 'set politically adrift and subject to volatile election swings' (Wattenberg 1991: 2). Weaker voter attachments enhance the role of the leader in both the mobilization and conversion of the vote.[8] In the absence of party cues, voters may rely more heavily on the appeal of the leader's personality in order to shape their vote. For example, during the 2001

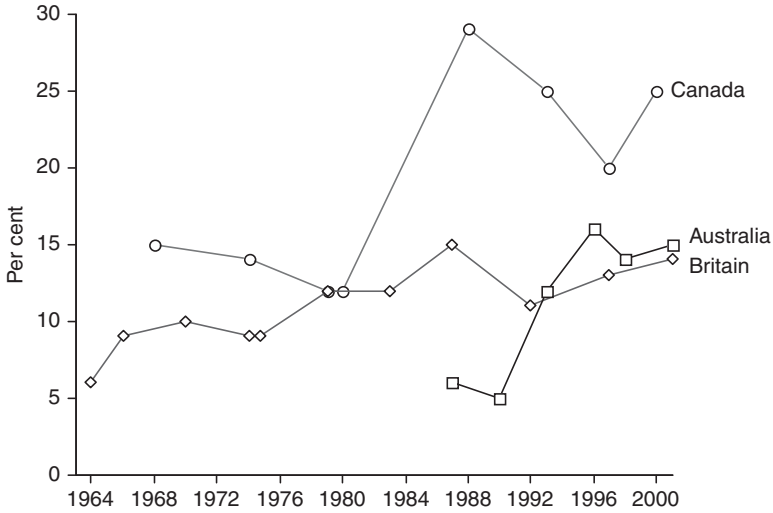

FIGURE 4.4 Non-partisanship in Australia, Britain, and Canada

Source: Combined leaders' stacked data set.

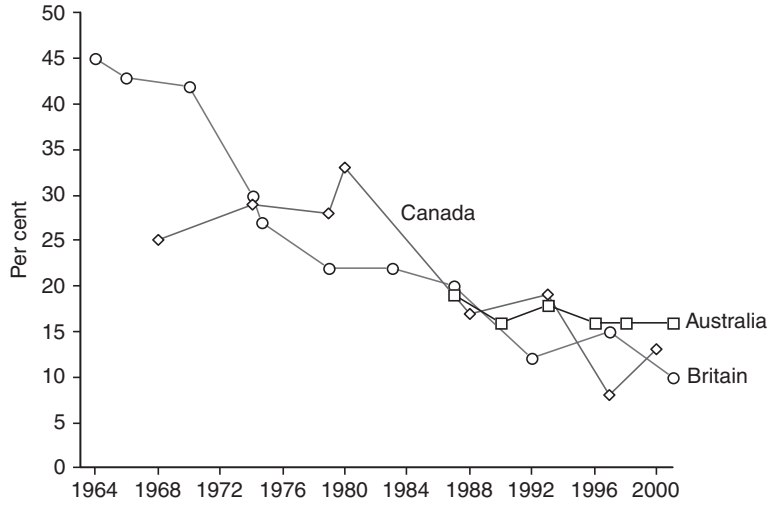

FIGURE 4.5 'Very strong' partisans in Australia, Britain, and Canada

Source: Combined leaders' stacked data set.

British general election, with a historically low turnout in prospect, the Labour leader, Tony Blair, was used extensively to both encourage voters to participate in the election, as well as to cast their vote for Labour.

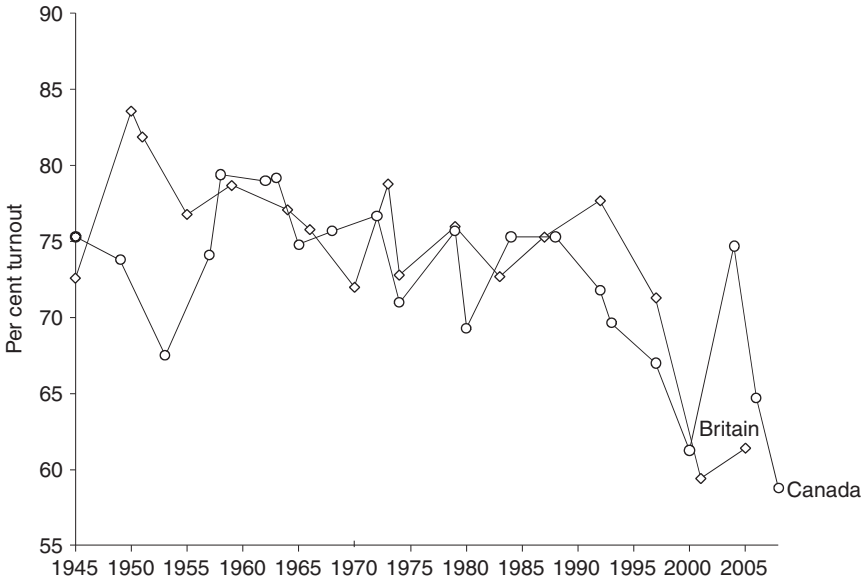

FIGURE 4.6 Turnout in Britain and Canada since 1945

Source: International IDEA.

4.4.3 Declining electoral participation

In line with changes in electoral participation in most of the advanced democracies, turnout has been declining in Britain and Canada (in Australia, the system of compulsory voting means that traditional measures of turnout have little relevance and since 1955 turnout has varied little from a mean of 95 per cent of the electorate). In both countries, the decline in turnout has been especially precipitous in the last decade, following a prolonged period of gradual decline. The turnout of 59.4 per cent in the 2001 British general election, for example, was the lowest since the 'khaki' election of 1918, itself an election marked by post-war adjustment, women's enfranchisement, and an almost threefold increase in the size of the electorate. Turnout recovered slightly to 61.4 per cent in the 2005 election. In Canada, the turnout of 58.8 per cent in the 2008 election was by far the lowest of any post-war federal election, and significantly lower than the 64.7 per cent turnout recorded in the 2006 election (Figure 4.6).

The assumption is that declining turnout will enhance the role of the prime minister, by focusing greater attention on the leader's role in mobilizing the vote, above and beyond party considerations. Those who do turn out to vote in voluntary voting systems, such as Britain and Canada, might be motivated above all by economic self-interest, a contention supported by findings that show that late-deciding voters in Australia, Britain, and the United States are

more likely to be rational and calculating than capricious or disinterested. In such a context, the role of the leader in framing and promoting policies to attract these voters may well become more important over time (McAllister 2002*a*).

4.4.4 The decline of party organizations

In line with many other social and technological changes in the advanced democracies, the traditional concept of the mass party has been in decline for more than half a century, most notably in the Westminster systems where they first originated (Scarrow 2000). The decline of parties as mass organizations and the increasing difficulty that parties encounter in mobilizing the vote has shifted voters' attention away from local election campaigns and towards the national political stage. In parallel with this change, the major parties have often shifted their emphasis from local to national political leaders, in turn elevating to high office those who they believe will exercise the maximum geographical and social appeal to voters. As a result, leaders are selected as much for their popular appeal as for their policy skills or political acumen.

This change means that there is now less emphasis on parties' policies than in the past, and more emphasis on the personalities of the leaders who will have to implement those policies in case of electoral victory. In turn, there is research to indicate that voters evaluate the personal images of the leaders in terms of their capacity to implement policy (Wattenberg 1991: 13–30). In practice, the information that a voter accumulates about a leader is an essential tool that enables the voter to reach a judgement about the capacity of the various candidates to achieve their policy goals. While most of the research on candidate images and their underpinnings comes from the United States (see Mancini and Swanson 1996), there is no reason to suppose that the findings do not also apply to parliamentary systems as well.

While declining organizational capacity may enhance the role of the leader, by enabling him or her to appeal to the broad mass of voters over the heads of their party, there are also dangers. Declining branch memberships can facilitate the takeover of the party by ideologically driven activists. This occurred most dramatically in Britain in the 1980s, when left-wing activists dominated many Labour branches, selecting left-wing election candidates and imposing electorally disastrous policies, most notably unilateral nuclear disarmament. Left-wing 'entrism' within the Labour Party was one of the causes of the Labour split in 1982 and the formation of the Social Democrat Party (Crewe and King 1997). A similar process occurred in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s, where 'branch-stacking' by ethnic groups caused a succession of difficulties for Labor in its policies towards Australia's diverse ethnic electorates.

4.5 INSTITUTIONAL EXPLANATIONS

Institutions shape the operation of prime ministerial authority in various ways – through the rules of electoral competition, or parliamentary procedure, for example. As with the endogenous explanations for executive power, the range of potential effects that could be included in this list is vast. The two main factors focused on here are those which recur most frequently in the literature, and which are closest to the types of executive power exercised by the prime minister, namely the increasing complexity of decision-making, and the role of the public service in the development of public policy.

4.5.1 The complexity of decision-making

Public administration studies have identified some of the factors internal to government that may enhance the role and authority of the prime minister. In a comparative study of the Western democracies, King (1994) underlined in particular the ability to control the careers of other ministers, which is greater in a single governing party with a parliamentary majority than in a coalition, and the public visibility of the leader. On the latter, King argued that if the prime minister's visibility was high, then he or she would have a greater propensity to influence policy: 'if the prime minister is going to be held responsible for what happens, he is likely to want to be responsible' (1994: 158).[9]

In a study focused on Britain, Rhodes (1995) distinguishes between six types of prime ministerial influence within the cabinet, ranging from the lowest, where power is characterized by bureaucratic coordination, to the highest, which he terms monocratic government. The highest level, which equates most closely with presidentialization, is distinguished by 'a general ability to decide policy across all issue areas in which he or she takes an interest; by deciding key issues which subsequently determine most remaining areas of government policy; or by defining a governing ethos or "atmosphere" which generates predictable and hard solutions to most policy problems' (Rhodes 1995: 15).

While it is obvious that the increasing complexity in the range and type of decisions that government must take enhances the power of the prime minister, the institutional context for decision-making also varies as a consequence of leadership style (Elgie 1997). A distinction is often made between leadership that relies on the charismatic appeal of the prime minister over collegial discussion, as opposed to collective decision-making which emphasizes consensus decisions (Kavanagh 1990). Evaluating how leadership styles influence the role of the prime minister over an extended period, net of other factors, is of course difficult. However, if there is a general awareness that decision-making is becoming more

complex, then we might expect that parliamentary parties, which normally select prime ministers, will want to choose leaders who rely more on charisma than on collegial consensus.

4.5.2 The role of the public service

In all three countries under examination here, prime ministerial authority has been enhanced by a compliant and (at least in the case of Australia) a more politicized public service. The Westminster tradition of a career public service in which advice to ministers is 'fearlessly and impartially given' has been replaced by a senior cadre of political appointees. This process has gone furthest in Australia, where it is often argued that the policy agenda of the Liberal–National conservative government elected in 1996 has been assisted by a compliant public service. One view of this compliance, put forward by Pusey (1991), is that a small group of senior bureaucrats with economic rationalist views were prepared to implement the government's agenda against the wishes of the mainstream public service, who possessed more traditional economic views. A contrary view was that generational change within the political and bureaucratic elite resulted in the creation of a shared set of policy goals, which enabled the public service to promote the government's agenda (Dunn 1997).

While there are debates about the level of politicization within the public service, it is clear that the way in which the public service operates, the types of decisions its members must reach, and the advice that they provide to ministers have changed profoundly over the past two decades. Bureaucrats now have an important strategic role in decision-making, and one which increasingly blurs the distinction between party-appointed ministerial advisors and career public servants. In addition, the proliferation of think tanks, often with strong partisan attachments, provides a further source of strategic policy advice (Stone 1996). The ability of the prime minister to derive strategic advice from these sources should, in principle, result in a greater concentration of executive authority.

4.6 RATING THE LEADERS

To what extent has there been a change in voters' ratings of prime ministers in the three countries, during the period for which survey data is available? If the presidential hypothesis were to be confirmed, we would expect a gradual increase in leader ratings, as leaders gain greater prominence and find correspondingly greater support within the electorate. However, the evidence provides little support for the presidentialization hypothesis, at least in so far as voters' ratings of the

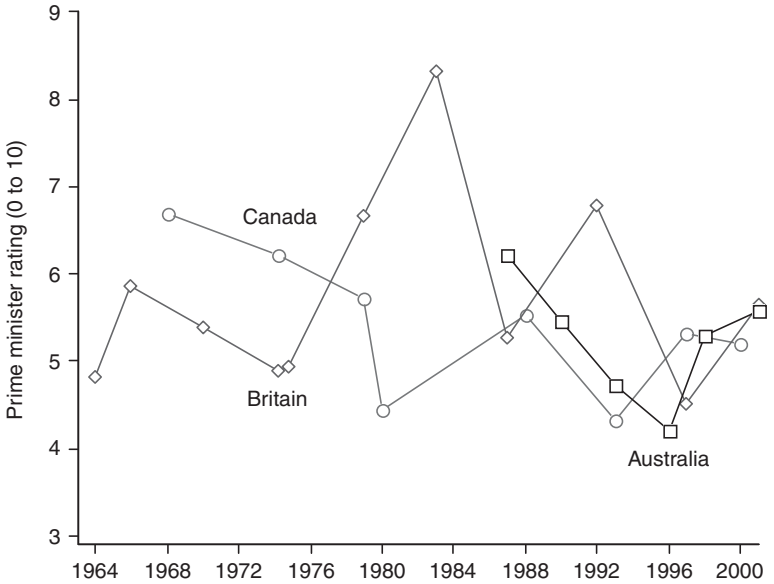

FIGURE 4.7 Voters' ratings of prime ministers

Note: Figures are the mean prime minister ratings on 0–10 scales.
Source: Combined leaders' stacked data set.

leaders are concerned (Figure 4.7). In Britain, where the longest period of data is available, the overall trend between 1964 and 2001 shows two significant peaks: in 1983 for Margaret Thatcher following the Falklands War, and for John Major in 1993, just after he became prime minister. There are also several low points since 1964, notably for Edward Heath in the two 1974 elections, and for John Major in the 1997 election, which he lost to Tony Blair. Overall, there is no discernible trend over the extended period of the surveys.

Canada shows a general decline in the ratings of the prime ministers from 1968, with the exception of Brian Mulroney's 1988 rating, and one of the most recent ratings in the trend, that of Jean Chrétien in 1997. The overall decline in Canadian prime ministers' ratings is just under two points on the 0–10 scale over the twenty-nine-year period. Part of the explanation for the trend is that it begins at the start of the Trudeau period in 1968 and shows the slow decline in his popularity; another explanation points to the unpopularity of three leaders: Joseph Clark in 1980, and Kim Campbell in 1993 who was barely more popular by that time than Brian Mulroney, the unpopular leader she replaced.

In Australia, the trend is much shorter – from 1987 to 2001 – and therefore more difficult to interpret. The period begins in the twilight years of Bob Hawke's Labor government; Hawke has been one of the most popular prime ministers of

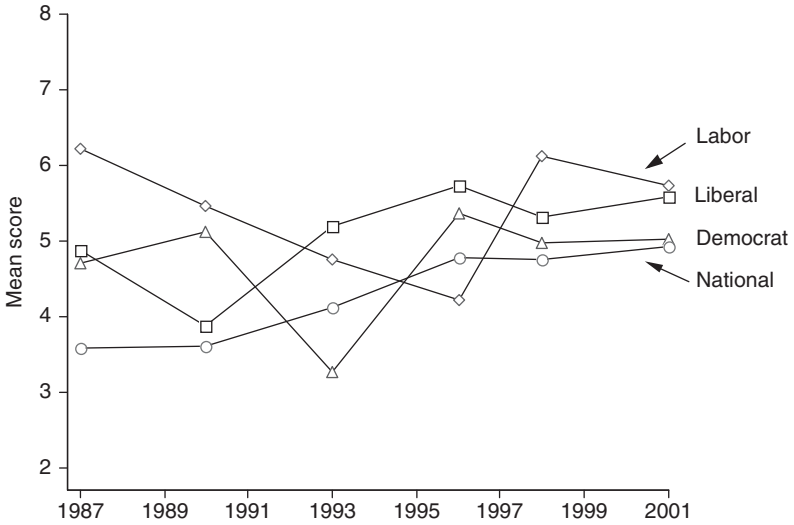

FIGURE 4.8 Party leader ratings in Australia

Note: Figures are the mean leader ratings on 0–10 scales.
Source: Combined leaders' stacked data set.

the post-war era, but by the late 1980s a series of economic difficulties had undermined his popularity which began to decline. His successor, Paul Keating, was one of the most unpopular post-war prime ministers, but he was followed by John Howard, who maintained – and even increased – relatively high popularity ratings for much of his period in office (McAllister 2003). However, the Australian trend is too short to provide any indication of general trends in the ratings of the prime ministers.

One possible explanation for these patterns, of course, is that the leader ratings are strongly related to partisanship, so that the results in Figure 4.7 are a consequence of the shifting support for parties. This possibility is explored in detail in Figures 4.8, 4.9, and 4.10, which show leader ratings for the major parties in each of the three countries. In Australia, the ratings for Labor leaders follow the general pattern shown earlier, with support for Bob Hawke and then Paul Keating in decline during the late 1980s and early 1990s, followed by an increase with the accession of Kim Beazley to the leadership. However, the Liberal and National leaders (the two parties they represent have been in almost permanent coalition since 1923) show a consistent upward trend. The Australian Democrats, a minor party formed in 1977 which has won election only to the upper house and with a high turnover of leaders, shows an inconsistent pattern.

In Britain, Labour leaders have remained consistent in their ratings (Figure 4.9), with the notable (and disastrous) exception of Michael Foot in the 1983 general

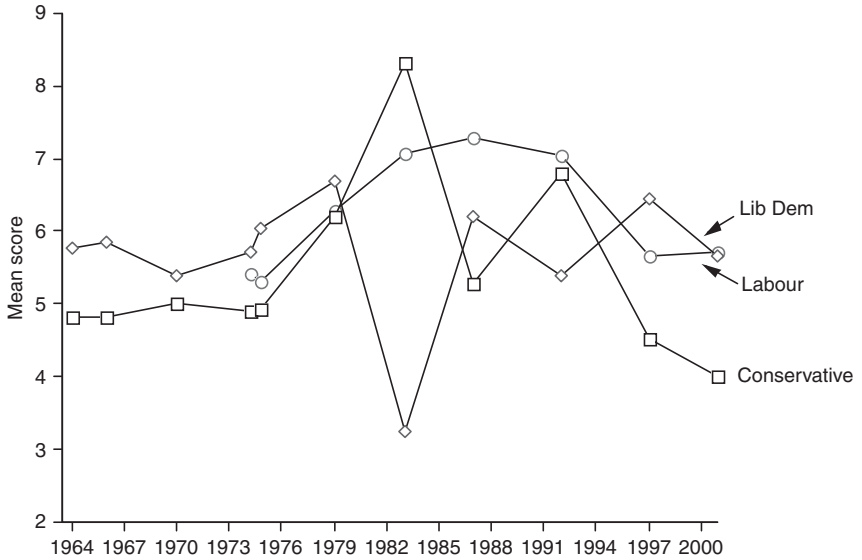

FIGURE 4.9 Party leader ratings in Britain

Note: Figures are the mean leader ratings on 0–10 scales.
Source: Combined leaders' stacked data set.

election; Foot's left-wing policies, particularly on unilateral nuclear disarmament, led the party to its worst electoral defeat since 1931. As we noted earlier, Margaret Thatcher's exceptional popularity following the Falklands War resulted in a dramatic peak in popularity for the Conservatives followed by a decline. By 2001, William Hague emerged as the most unpopular Conservative leader since Sir Alec Douglas-Home in 1964. The Canadian results (Figure 4.10) show the least variance attributable to party. The most popular leader was, of course, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who was prime minister from 1968, when the trend data start. His popularity, however, declined gradually thereafter. The Liberal Party's fortunes also show an improvement in 1993, when Jean Chrétien became prime minister.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The role of the prime minister, and more generally of party leaders, in Westminster systems has changed significantly over the past half-century. In the immediate post-war years, the prime minister's fate was inextricably bound up with that of his or her party; enduring voting patterns, the strength of the party system, and stable

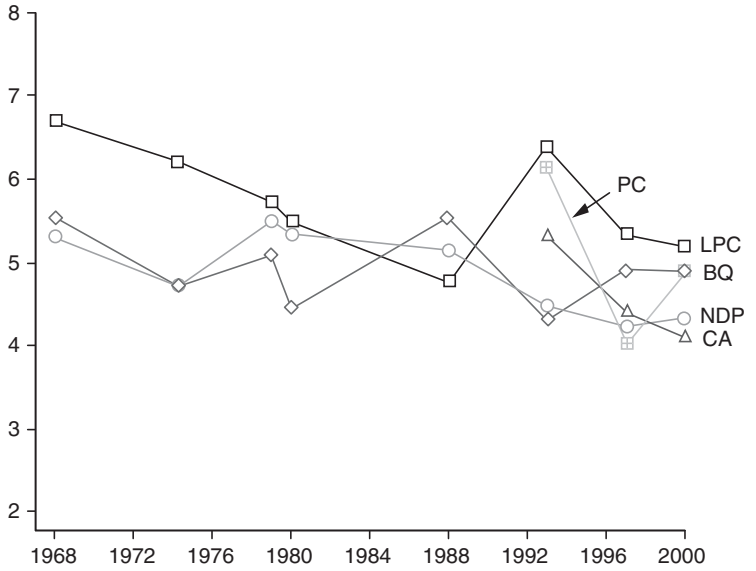

FIGURE 4.10 Party leader ratings in Canada

institutions of government all combined to ensure that the prime minister was the 'first among equals' and nothing more. However, a new pattern of prime ministerial authority emerged with the widespread use of television from the 1960s onwards to cover elections and politics in general. In addition, partisan dealignment and a decline in election participation gave party leaders an even more central position in the political game. Institutional changes, notably in the public service, and the increasing complexity of modern decision-making have further served to concentrate power in the hands of the prime minister.

More than half a century on, the debate is not whether the prime minister remains the 'first among equals', but whether he or she is now a president, with all of the executive power associated with that position. The evidence presented here, rudimentary though it is in terms of the variables used, period covered, and limited number of countries, suggests a complex pattern. The exogenous influences on the role of the prime minister, particularly the growth of television and the effective replacement of the party label by the leader's name in the public's mind, all suggest that there is a much enhanced role for the leader. By contrast, the empirical evidence relating to the operation of responsible government and patterns of ministerial resignations, and voters' ratings of the leaders themselves, suggest a highly variable pattern.

This ambiguous conclusion indicates the difficulties in distinguishing between systemic changes in the Westminster systems and idiosyncratic changes due to the characteristics of a particular leader. This is particularly acute when only three

countries are being analysed, and there is a limited range of elections to examine. Some of the trends uncovered here suggest that systemic changes to the operation of parliamentary democracies based on the Westminster model do promote a centralization of power in the prime minister's hands, but that the change is gradual and in some cases outweighed by the personalities involved. For example, Margaret Thatcher was a strong prime minister with some presidential characteristics, while her successor, John Major, was more traditional in his approach to the role. The personality of the leader is perhaps as important as – or maybe more important than – the duties and responsibilities of the position. In short, the personality of the leader is greater than the strength of the trend.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am particularly grateful to Larry LeDuc who answered many queries, and to Peter Loewen for assistance with the Canadian data.

NOTES

1. This change in the role of the Australian Senate came about in 1949, when the electoral system was changed from the alternative vote to proportional representation. Since the early 1970s, the increasing propensity of governments to call double dissolution elections, in which the whole Senate is up for re-election, and the electoral threshold is correspondingly lower, has aided the election of minor parties and independents (Farrell et al. 1995).
2. The main exception was the Labour government between October 1974 and 1979, when its majority disappeared. In this case, strategic alliances were forged both with the Liberals and the Ulster Unionists, although the eventual outcome was the calling of a general election in 1979.
3. Here, too, there are important caveats. While most presidents are popularly elected through a direct election, as in Austria or Poland, some are indirectly elected through some form of electoral college, as in Argentina, Finland, and the United States. Some countries restrict the right of presidents to stand for re-election, while the terms of office vary considerably; four- or five-year terms are the norm for most countries, but they can last up to seven years in Ireland and in France, although in the latter the presidential mandate has recently been cut to five years.
4. In Australia, there were five ministerial resignations between 1945 and the end of the McMahon ministry in 1972, but twenty-five resignations between the start of the

Whitlam ministry in 1972 and 2001. In Britain, there were twenty-nine resignations between 1945 and the end of the first Wilson ministry in 1970, and forty-two resignations between the Heath ministry and the end of the Major ministry in 1997 (Dowding and Kang 1998: 418). Resignations are defined as those which involved some form of impropriety, rather than resignations upon retirement or as a result of ill health.

5. The empirical evidence that this increase is related to political leadership is limited. In Australia and Britain, the correlation between the prime minister's leader rating and the proportion of TV sets is 0.04 (statistically significant with $p < .000$) and 0.06 ($p < .000$), respectively, but in Canada the same figure is -0.11 ($p < .000$).
6. In defence of not having a formal debate, it is usually argued that scrutiny of party policies and the competence of the leaders is best left to professional media interviewers.
7. The 1988 figure of 29 per cent is the result of a change in the question wording, from 'Do you think of yourself as Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Reform, Bloc Québécois or what?' to 'Do you think of yourself as Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Reform, Bloc Québécois or none of these?' The substantial jump in non-partisans in 1988 is therefore a methodological artefact (Blais et al. 2001).
8. A third possible factor, though difficult to measure and highly variable across countries, is the role of the electoral system. Electoral systems that permit voters to discriminate between candidates have more potential for leaders to influence the vote than, for example, party list systems.
9. Two other factors, which King does not weigh as highly, are the legacy of history and whether the government is based on a single party or on multiple parties.

5

US Party Leaders: Exploring the Meaning of Candidate-Centred Politics

Martin P. Wattenberg

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The role of political leaders in affecting electoral outcomes in the United States has long been recognized to be of great importance. Such a phenomenon in the United States is frequently termed 'candidate-centred politics'. This term reflects the fact that Americans typically vote for many offices all at the same time, some of which are even specified by law to be non-partisan offices. For example, in November 2002, voters throughout California were asked to select people for twelve statewide offices, not to mention a plethora of local offices in most areas. Each of the candidates for these offices, like most office-seekers in the United States, raised most of their campaign funds on their own and assembled their personal campaign organization by themselves. Thus, it can be said that the American electoral system has led to a system of candidates, for candidates, and by candidates.

The development of the American candidate-centred system has its origins in the progressive movement of the early twentieth century. Progressives put into place primary elections to select each party's candidates, thereby denying the party organizations a major role in the crucial nomination function. Although American political parties were immediately weakened by the adoption of primary elections, it was not until the advent of television campaigning that candidate-centred politics was fully realized. Primaries made it possible to obtain a party nomination on one's own, but for decades most candidates still required the support of the party organization to get their message out for the general election. Television, direct mail, and now the Internet have freed candidates from such reliance on the party, thereby allowing campaigns to be run independently of party affiliation. As a result, American candidates have come to stress their own specific issue stands and personal qualities, and citizens naturally came to view the major issues through the perspective of the candidates rather than parties (see Wattenberg 1998: ch. 5).

In the 1960s and 1970s, much of the scholarly work on US candidate-centred politics focused on how presidential candidates ran campaigns diverging from the mainstream appeal of their parties. These campaigns created political identities for the presidential candidates that were quite independent from their party's image. First,

Republican nominee Barry Goldwater ran for the presidency in 1964 on the notion of offering the American people 'a choice, not an echo'. His hard-line conservative positions were out of touch with many in his own party, with the result being that a record 27 per cent of self-identified Republicans defected in the presidential contest. In 1968, Richard Nixon ran an antiseptic campaign for the presidency on the Republican side, which greatly differed from his narrow loss eight years earlier. This time, Nixon largely avoided associations with his party and used carefully controlled TV appearances to appeal directly to the people. Once elected, Nixon continued his practice of going it alone, often ignoring accepted party doctrine in policy formulation. Going to China and temporarily imposing wage and price controls, for example, were two important policies that drew criticism principally from the ranks of conservative Republicans. When he ran for re-election in 1972, Nixon set up an autonomous organization named 'Committee to Reelect the President' (not so fondly known as CREEP by his opponents) to single-mindedly promote him. At the same time, George McGovern ran an insurgency campaign on the Democratic side that was so far to the left of many rank-and-file Democrats that an astounding 42 per cent defected to vote for Nixon. Jimmy Carter succeeded in bringing many Democrats back into the fold when he was elected president in 1976, but nevertheless he did so in a clearly candidate-centred fashion. At his inauguration he proudly proclaimed that he had been elected without promising anything to anyone. And it soon became evident that few Democratic members of Congress felt they owed anything to him either, as one Carter legislative proposal after another was stymied on Capitol Hill in spite of strong Democratic majorities there.

The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 brought forth a new era in American candidate-centred politics in which the presidential candidate has virtually become the embodiment of the political party. For once, a presidential candidate not only promised clear and dramatic changes but accomplished them as well. Reagan campaigned in 1980 on three major planks – cutting taxes, increasing military spending, and decreasing the rate of growth of federal spending on social services – each of which was accomplished within his first year of office. Most important, all of this was achieved with more unified party support than had been seen in Washington in decades. On the two key votes of 1981, for example – the tax cut and the budget resolution – Reagan held all but one Republican in the House of Representatives. Unlike his immediate predecessors, who campaigned and governed largely on their own, staying relatively unencumbered by partisan ties or appeals, Reagan exercised a substantial role as party leader. And on the other side, the Democrats were forced into a far more unified stance than usual, much like Western settlers pulling their wagons into a circle to fend off attacks. When they finally regained control of the White House after a dozen years of Reagan and Bush, President Clinton's economic programme passed the Congress with the *exclusive* support of Democratic members. Like Reagan before him, Clinton reoriented people's perceptions of what his party stood for, in this case moving the party more to the centre.

The post-1980 era of American politics appears to be a more advanced stage of candidate-centred politics. Presidential candidates have now become such dominant figures on the political scene that the political party is seen by the public in the framework of the leader. As Senator Bob Graham put it shortly after the 1988 election, 'The United States is going through the process of the McDonaldization of American politics. People are increasingly forming their partisan identifications by what they see on television. What they see on television is a national party dominated by its presidential candidates or that individual fortunate enough to be elected president' (quoted in Wattenberg 1998: 134). In this view, American political parties have become little more than fast-food franchises, in which it is the presidential candidate who flips the burgers and decides how to garnish them. A somewhat different garnishing by a new candidate will change the party's image, such as when George W. Bush offered 'compassionate conservatism' in an attempt to soften the public's view of the Republican Party.

The rise of candidate-centred politics in the United States does not necessarily mean that presidential candidates are more popular with the public than in the past. In fact, just the opposite is the case. It appears that the more the American public sees of its leaders and prospective leaders, the less they like them. Such a trend is particularly pronounced with respect to evaluations of the personal qualities – integrity, competence, reliability, charisma – of the leaders. And despite commonplace assertions from pundits that the most personally appealing candidate is bound to be victorious, the US National Election Studies (ANES) data show this was not the case in a number of presidential election contests. Furthermore, personal popularity is shown to be a complex phenomenon, with a candidate who does well on one dimension, such as integrity, frequently not doing so well on another dimension, such as competence. In short, candidate-centred politics in the United States is *NOT* simply a personality contest.

Rather, what has become most candidate-centred in American presidential elections have been the issues. Whereas issues formerly dealt with stable images of the parties – which party would be for more government aid to provide jobs or involvement in foreign conflicts – in recent elections the public has come to focus far more on the short-term issues defined by the candidates during the campaign. Because these short-term issues have come to be seen as shaping the party as well, presidential candidates and their parties are now evaluated far more similarly than in the early days of candidate-centred politics, when candidates staked out positions independent of their parties. Whereas once a candidate's chances of winning hinged greatly on the popularity of his party and the issues it stands for, now it is more the other way around in the United States.

5.2 CANDIDATE EVALUATIONS AND THE VOTE

Were this chapter to appear in a book strictly about American politics, it would hardly be necessary to establish that most US voters cast their ballot for the

presidential candidate whom they prefer. Such a pattern is taken for granted by anyone analysing the American political scene. Indeed, I can think of nowhere in the vast literature on presidential elections over many decades where the strength of this pattern has been empirically demonstrated. But for comparative purposes in a book such as this one, it is surely useful to provide a quick look at this topic. And the results are perhaps a bit weaker than most American scholars would expect. Not everyone in the United States votes for their preferred candidate.

Table 5.1 presents the per cent voting consistent with their candidate preference among Democratic and Republican voters. Two methods of candidate evaluation are employed. The first is obtained from the open-ended like/dislike questions. By subtracting the number of dislikes from the number of likes for each candidate a measure of support ranging from −5 to +5 can be easily created. Comparing respondents' ratings of the two major candidates reveals that 80.7 per cent voted for the candidate who they rated higher on this measure, 9.1 per cent voted for the candidate they rated lower, and 10.2 per cent rated both candidates equally. The second measure, employing feeling thermometer ratings ranging from 0 to 100 degrees, reveals somewhat greater consistency between candidate preferences and the vote, with 85.8 per cent ranking one candidate higher than another and voting for that candidate. Because this is a much more direct way of assessing people's evaluations of the candidates than counting likes and dislikes, it should not be surprising that the correspondence between candidate evaluations and the vote is somewhat higher. The like/dislike questions have the advantage of enabling us to know just what is on people's minds, but each response is necessarily counted equally even though some factors will be far more important in the voter's mind.

It should be noted that preferences for the so-called 'third party candidates', such as George Wallace in 1968, John Anderson in 1980, and Ross Perot in 1992 and 1996, are excluded from the analysis. Because this project centres on party leaders, it seems inappropriate to devote any attention to these candidates, as they

TABLE 5.1 *Per cent voting consistent with candidate preference (two-party voters only)*

	% voting consistent with candidate preference	% voting inconsistent with candidate preference	% rating both major candidates equally
Likes/dislikes measure, 1952–2000	80.7	9.1	10.2
Feeling thermometer measure, 1968–2000	85.8	5.1	9.1

Source: US National Election Studies.

were in fact *independent* candidates for president as opposed to candidates of a party. Their amorphous 'parties' hardly met the scholarly criteria for a party. Most notably, these 'parties' clearly did not really seek to control the governing apparatus of the country, as very few candidates for lower level offices ran on the same ticket with the presidential candidate. And yet another complicating factor with regard to independent presidential candidates is the 'wasted vote' factor, by which voters are discouraged from voting for minor candidates due to the winner-takes-all nature of US presidential elections. As Abramson et al. (1998: 119) show, many voters who have preferred independent candidates during elections where they have been prominent have decided not to support them due to strategic reasons. To include independent candidates in this analysis would therefore dilute the strength of the relationship between candidate evaluations and the vote in years such as 1968, 1980, 1992, and 1996. With the focus solely on the Democratic and Republican nominees for president, the results are highly stable from year to year – so much so that the small year-to-year variations are not shown in Table 5.1.

With most American voters expressing a preference for one candidate over another and then casting their ballot for that individual, the most popular party leader is bound to win most of the time. Unlike the situation in parliamentary democracies, where the most popular party leader helps a party's chances but does not necessarily lead that party to victory, in a presidential election the impact of leadership evaluations is much stronger. As Dalton et al. (2000) show, when faced with a dilemma between voting for one's preferred leader versus voting for the opposing but preferred political party, the party dominates decision-making in parliamentary democracies, whereas the candidate factor is dominant in US and French presidential elections.

The most popular candidate has not always won each presidential election for which we have data, however. As shown in Table 5.2, Nixon was clearly more popular than Kennedy in 1960. Writing shortly after this election, Donald Stokes (1966*a*: 22) noted that, 'If the eventual account given by political histories is that Nixon was a weak candidate in 1960, it will be largely myth'. What happened in 1960 is that Kennedy squeaked out the narrowest of victories by relying on appeals to party loyalty. It is doubtful that in today's candidate-centred age a major party nominee could lose in spite of being significantly more popular with the voters. According to the data in Table 5.2, Ford was slightly more popular than Carter in 1976 on the feeling thermometer measure and Gore was slightly more popular than Bush on both measures. But unlike the case of 1960, none of these margins of popularity exceed what might be accounted for by sampling error. And in the case of the 2000 results, it must be noted that Gore's greater popularity does correspond with his winning the popular vote, which unfortunately for him did not translate into an Electoral College victory.

TABLE 5.2 *Presidential candidate popularity among voters, 1952–2000*

	Winning candidate % positive of likes/ dislikes	Losing candidate % positive of likes/ dislikes	Winning candidate mean thermometer rating	Losing candidate mean thermometer rating
1952	70.0	60.7	–	–
1956	71.2	50.5	–	–
1960	59.7	70.2	–	–
1964	67.3	35.4	–	–
1968	59.3	48.3	67.1	61.6
1972	61.8	34.7	66.5	47.6
1976	54.1	52.1	61.3	61.9
1980	46.8	40.6	56.9	54.9
1984	50.4	48.9	62.6	56.0
1988	51.8	48.0	61.2	56.2
1992	57.4	40.0	55.7	51.8
1996	51.1	48.1	58.0	53.7
2000	49.2	52.6	56.8	57.0

Source: US National Election Studies.

5.3 THE DECLINE OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE POPULARITY

Though individual leaders dominate the American electoral scene it should not be assumed that they are popular with the public. Indeed, it is fascinating to note that in an electoral era centred on presidential candidates, the candidates themselves have become less and less popular. With the decline of partisanship in recent years, the influence of candidate evaluations has become less mediated and more direct. No longer are voters likely to support a candidate unequivocally just because he is the nominee of their party. This loss of automatic support has caused candidates for the presidency to be viewed in a far less positive light by the electorate. It seems that the more people come to know about the candidates, the less they like them. Familiarity has thus bred contempt.

One simple way to derive a general assessment of candidate popularity from the ANES data is to calculate the proportion of open-ended comments that were positive. Table 5.2 presents this percentage for all presidential candidates from 1952 to 2000 among those who reported voting (including supporters of independent candidates) in each year. Between 1952 and 1972, it was fairly common for 60 per cent or more of the open-ended comments about a candidate to be positive. Half of the major party candidates for president during this twenty-year period met this criterion of popularity, and two others fell just slightly below this threshold. Since then, however, no presidential candidate has ranked this high in terms of popularity. In particular, winning candidates are clearly not as popular as they used to be. The percentage of positive open-ended comments about the winning

candidate from 1952 to 1972 averaged 65 per cent. From 1976 to 2000, by contrast, the average winner has elicited positive comments just 52 per cent of the time. Most notably, Reagan in 1980 and G. W. Bush in 2000 each captured the presidency even though voters had more to say about why they would not vote for them than why they would.

The feeling thermometer data, which are only available starting in 1968, offer confirmation of this trend towards negativity concerning the presidential candidates. Nixon's mean ratings among voters of 67.1 in 1968 and 66.5 in 1972 have not been approached by any of the presidential candidates who followed him. According to this measure, newly elected presidents Reagan in 1980, Clinton in 1992, and G. W. Bush in 2000 were all rated at least ten points lower than Nixon in 1968 on the 0–100 scale. This decline in popularity cannot be accounted for by closer margins in presidential elections since Nixon's 1972 landslide. Reagan's landslide in 1984 was almost equal in magnitude to Nixon's in 1972, but his mean feeling thermometer rating was four points lower. Furthermore, no losing candidate since 1976 has come close to Gerald Ford's popularity in his losing effort that year. In sum, the evidence is clear from two different ways of assessing political popularity that major party nominees for president are substantially less popular than they used to be.

5.4 PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE CANDIDATES

As the candidates themselves have received more attention during the presidential campaign, their character and ability have been scrutinized more carefully. Because so much power is vested in one person alone – as demonstrated vividly to the world in the 2003 Iraqi War – the personal attributes of the candidate are clearly relevant factors to be discussed in the campaign. Even before presidential actions had immediate worldwide consequences, personal behaviour and characteristics were often an important consideration in electoral campaigns. Scurrilous attacks on candidates' personal lives were commonplace in the nineteenth century. Yet most people took these charges for what they were – partisan gesturing through the partisan press. The dignity of those seeking the office remained high, and candidates did not engage in personal attacks themselves. It is the transition to debating through television commercials that has involved the candidates far more directly in disparaging each other's reputation. This has given such charges greater credibility, as has the fact they are now reported through a largely non-partisan press. Thus, there is good reason to expect that the focus on personal attributes has been a major component of the decline in candidate popularity.

Comments about a candidate's personal attributes can be divided into five general categories – integrity, reliability, competence, charisma, and the candidate's

appearance/demographic characteristics.[1] The first, integrity, deals with the candidate as trustworthy or untrustworthy, and incorporates comments concerning honesty, sincerity, and any reference to corruption in government. The second, reliability, is similar to the first, with some important distinctions: reliability refers to a candidate being dependable, strong, decisive, aggressive, stable, or the converse of these. That these two dimensions are separate is most evident in the 1964 evaluations of Goldwater, in which he received the highest rating on integrity of any candidate except Eisenhower and the lowest reliability rating of any candidate in the forty-eight-year series. Reliability can be seen as a bridge between the integrity and competence attributes. Perhaps the best definition of it would be: trust in the sense of 'capability' rather than in the sense of 'honesty'. Competence itself refers to the candidate's past political experience, ability as a statesman, comprehension of political issues, realism, and intelligence. In contrast, charisma involves less tangible considerations, such as a candidate's leadership abilities, dignity, humbleness, patriotism, and ability to get along and communicate with people. The last attribute has to do with various personal aspects of the candidate, including appearance, age, religion, wealth, former occupation, family, and so on.

Table 5.3 summarizes how each major presidential candidate from 1952 to 2000 was perceived by the public on these five personality dimensions. The trend over time clearly demonstrates a decline in positive evaluations, particularly with regard to candidate competence. Competence has traditionally been the one dimension on which American political leaders could most easily draw positive comments about their personal qualifications. If nothing else, someone who has been nominated by the Democrats or Republicans for the presidency should usually be able to count on people to say that he is experienced, knowledgeable, and capable. From 1952 to 1972, the only leaders who failed to draw more positive than negative comments regarding their competence were the hapless Barry Goldwater in 1964 and George McGovern in 1972. For the remainder of the candidates during this period the average score was +31, indicating that for every 100 respondents there were 31 more positive than negative comments that could be classified under competence. Since 1972, the average score has been a measly +8 for winning candidates and +9 for losing candidates. Several recent candidates have received fewer positive than negative remarks regarding competence, including Jimmy Carter in 1976, Michael Dukakis in 1988, and George W. Bush in 2000. Unlike Goldwater and McGovern it could hardly be said that these were hapless error-prone candidates. Indeed, two of them won the elections in which they were rated negatively on competence. The fact that even victorious candidates are now sometimes receiving lower competence ratings than Barry Goldwater is a striking illustration of just how far regard for party leaders has fallen in the minds of American voters.

Integrity has rarely been a trait that has been commonly associated with US presidential candidates, as cynicism about their honesty and motives has been a

TABLE 5.3 *Personality evaluations of major presidential candidates, 1952–2000*

	Competence	Integrity	Reliability	Charisma	Personal	Total
Eisenhower, 1952	+15	+22	+3	+18	+14	+72
Stevenson, 1952	+33	+6	+1	+4	+1	+45
Eisenhower, 1956	+43	+25	0	+17	+10	+95
Stevenson, 1956	+16	0	−1	−4	−8	+3
Kennedy, 1960	+23	+7	+7	+1	−15	+23
Nixon, 1960	+47	+2	+4	+5	+11	+69
Johnson, 1964	+50	−13	+3	+8	+1	+49
Goldwater, 1964	0	+11	−25	−1	0	−15
Nixon, 1968	+29	−2	−8	−3	+4	+20
Humphrey, 1968	+20	+4	−8	−4	−3	+9
Nixon, 1972	+33	−8	+6	+1	+1	+33
McGovern, 1972	−11	−1	−16	−1	−1	−30
Carter, 1976	−1	0	−9	0	+8	−2
Ford, 1976	+25	+2	−7	−1	+1	+20
Reagan, 1980	+3	−1	−3	0	−18	−19
Carter, 1980	+13	+2	−7	−1	+1	+8
Reagan, 1984	+12	+2	+8	+6	−7	+21
Mondale, 1984	0	0	−5	−3	0	−8
Bush, 1988	+28	−2	0	−2	−11	+25
Dukakis, 1988	−5	0	+1	−2	0	−6
Clinton, 1992	+2	−10	−3	−2	−11	−24
Bush, 1992	+4	−4	0	+1	+4	+5
Clinton, 1996	+14	−23	+2	+3	−10	−14
Dole, 1996	+10	+10	+2	−1	−12	+9
Bush, 2000	−5	+4	0	−2	+3	0
Gore, 2000	+16	−15	+1	−2	+5	+5

Source: US National Election Studies.
Note: Means have been calculated by adding the number of positive responses and subtracting the number of negative responses for each respondent. The result is then multiplied by 100 to remove the decimal point.

tradition ever since George Washington's retirement over two centuries ago. Among all the candidates since the beginning of the American National Election Studies, only war-hero Dwight Eisenhower had a substantially positive image in terms of integrity, with ratings of +22 in 1952 and +25 in 1956. The only other candidates since then to receive a score of +10 or better were Barry Goldwater in 1964 and Bob Dole in 1996. Goldwater stepped into many political minefields by forthrightly saying what was on his mind, but at least he earned a reputation for honesty as he went down to a landslide defeat. Bob Dole's campaign realized that their candidate's edge over Clinton on honesty was one of the few advantages they had in 1996, and thus played this up to the hilt – regularly positioning their candidate behind signs such as 'Integrity Matters'. Though the Dole campaign lost, they did have the widest recorded advantage on the integrity dimension, with their candidate's score of +10 comparing well to Clinton's record low of −23.

Interestingly, the next lowest integrity score to Clinton's 1996 mark was Al Gore's score of −15 in 2000. Given the extraordinary closeness of the 2000 presidential race, it is quite likely that Gore lost the presidency due to the instances during the campaign where he appeared to be stretching the truth or fabricating events. In this case, integrity probably really did matter.

Reliability, however, has never been a very decisive factor. No presidential contender has scored better than a +8 on this dimension. Being reliable is apparently not something that draws a lot of positive responses, as probably most voters think this should be automatically expected of any major presidential nominee. When a candidate fails to meet this standard, though, it does draw a fair amount of negative comments concerning their dependability and stability. Goldwater was widely panned as 'trigger-happy' and 'impulsive' in 1964 and McGovern was frequently seen as indecisive during the 1972 campaign. But these candidates were doomed for many other reasons besides their perceived failings in terms of reliability.

It is often thought that voters cast their ballots for the candidate with the most charisma, that is, the candidate who best establishes an image of inspiring leadership. The like/dislike data provide little support for such considerations actually being something that people really verbalize. Only Dwight Eisenhower established a notably positive image on the charisma dimension. None of the candidates since 1952 had a notably negative image on the charisma dimension. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that charismatic leadership is not a major factor in American voting behaviour. It may be that many people do not feel that such considerations are socially appropriate answers in response to open-ended questions. For example, when voters were asked specifically about strength of leadership in the 1980s, Reagan had clear advantages over his opponents (Wattenberg 1991: 88).

Finally, the personal dimension captures a variety of largely idiosyncratic background factors about the candidates that have caught the public's eye in particular election years. On the positive side, Eisenhower drew favourable comments for his military background in the elections of the 1950s and Nixon received favourable comments for being a Protestant in 1960. On the negative side, Kennedy's youth and Catholicism were clearly liabilities in 1960, as was the advanced age of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s and Bob Dole in 1996. Clinton received negative comments in the 1990s regarding perceptions of his womanizing and dodging the draft. Idiosyncratic topics such as these are not the sort of matters that political scientists typically bring into their analyses of voting behaviour. Yet they do sometimes receive a good deal of media attention during American campaigns, and it is to be expected that a fair number of voters will take such considerations into account when they go to the polls.

The final column of Table 5.3 adds up the individual scores on the five dimensions to provide an overall personality evaluation rating. This summary measure nicely confirms the decline in public regard for American leaders'

personal qualifications for the presidency. Between 1952 and 1972, ten of the twelve major party nominees enjoyed an overall positive rating in terms of personality. Since then, only half of the nominees have received more favourable than negative comments on personality considerations. The more Americans have seen of their top leaders up close and personal, the less they have liked them as individuals.

Recent experience has also disproved the commonly held assumption that the key to winning the American presidency is a candidate's personality. George W. Bush scored slightly lower than Al Gore in 2000 due to concerns about his competence. Bill Clinton was rated substantially below Bob Dole in 1996 and George Bush in 1992 due to concerns about his integrity and the scandals that he had been tarnished by. Ronald Reagan's personal image in 1980 was worse than Jimmy Carter's because of negative comments about his advanced age and doubts about his qualifications for the presidency. Ironically, Carter lost when he was more personally popular than Reagan in 1980 but won when he was less popular than Ford in 1976. And most surprising to students these days is to learn that Kennedy, whose reputation for personal charm has reached legendary proportions in the years since his death, was actually far less personally popular than Nixon during the 1960 campaign. In sum, personal image has been highly overrated as a decisive factor in presidential elections. This is especially true for the period from 1976 to 2000, during which the most personally popular candidate won only two out of seven contests.

5.5 THE INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF CANDIDATE ISSUES AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

The key to understanding the rise of candidate-centred politics in the United States is not personality politics, but rather the increasing importance of candidate-centred issues. When the American National Election Studies were begun in the 1950s, most voters typically conceptualized issues in terms of parties as opposed to candidates. The issues they talked about in response to the open-ended questions were mostly of a long-term nature, that is, comments that could conceivably have easily been offered concerning the campaign of 1936 as of 1956. These comments typically involved which party had been the best for the economy or for keeping the peace in key periods of American history that respondents were familiar with. Candidates for the presidency followed in the footsteps of those who had been nominated by their party before them. The party regulars wrote the platform and then chose a candidate for president to run on it, as exemplified by Adlai Stevenson's acceptance speeches at the Democratic conventions of both 1952 and 1956, which began with 'I accept your nomination and your program'.

Stevenson and other party nominees of his era saw their job as being to lead the party in support of its usual policy directions, catering to the constituency groups that dominated its coalition.

The norm of a party choosing a leader to follow its normal course started to change when Barry Goldwater's 1964 campaign developed a new and innovative strategy for winning his party's presidential nomination. Previously, the typical strategy involved waiting for the delegates to be chosen and then trying to win them over (often by appealing to the state and city bosses who had leverage over them via patronage or other means). Goldwater's strategists realized that many Republican party regulars would not be receptive to his candidacy and instead mounted an extensive effort to have people sympathetic to their cause chosen as delegates. With the sharp increase in the percentage of delegates chosen via primaries after 1968, such a strategy has become the only choice for presidential candidates. Humphrey managed to win the 1968 Democratic nomination without entering a single primary, but today presidential aspirants must enter the primaries in order to have any chance at all. In order to compete for votes in primaries, presidential candidates need to stake out clear issue positions in order to build a personal constituency within their party. Thus, whereas it was initially just insurgent candidates like Goldwater who emphasized issue appeals, it is now a standard practice from day one of all presidential campaigns. For example, before he even received a vote in the nation's first primary in 2000, George W. Bush had already laid out a detailed programme for cutting taxes for all Americans.

Table 5.4 demonstrates the extent to which likes and dislikes concerning presidential candidates have shifted away from personal factors towards issue

TABLE 5.4 *The distribution of personal, policy, and partisan like/dislike comments about major presidential candidates, 1952–2000 (in per cent)*

	Personal	Issues	Party and groups
1952	61	17	22
1956	63	18	19
1960	61	19	20
1964	50	32	18
1968	55	26	19
1972	40	43	17
1976	59	22	19
1980	48	41	11
1984	35	46	19
1988	34	46	20
1992	36	53	11
1996	41	46	13
2000	39	42	19

Source: US National Election Studies.

concerns. In the 1952, 1956, and 1960 ANES surveys, over 60 per cent of the classifiable open-ended comments about the major party nominees were about their personal characteristics. In the last five presidential elections, this figure has ranged between 34 and 41 per cent. On the other hand, responses about issues made up less than 20 per cent of the comments in the 1952–60 period, whereas in the elections between 1984 and 2000 this percentage ranged from 42 to 53 per cent. In sum, personal comments outnumbered issue comments by at least three to one in the early days of the ANES surveys, but in recent years issues have consistently been the most salient factor in evaluating presidential candidates.

This shift from personal to issue concerns has had a couple of very important consequences for how voters in the United States have evaluated major candidates for president. First, because issues are likely to be controversial it has become harder for candidates to be evaluated very positively. Although we have seen that the positivity of personal comments has declined over time, there is still some remnant of the person positivity bias, which is a key concept in the study of person perception. Issues, on the other hand, are inherently controversial, making it highly unlikely that any presidential candidate in a two-party system will ever receive a high ratio of positive to negative comments on such matters. Thus, all else being equal, we should always expect a candidate will be perceived more positively on his personal qualifications than on issues related to his campaign. The changing focus of candidate evaluations from personal characteristics to issues has therefore probably contributed to the decline in the overall popularity of these leaders.

Secondly, because parties are typically judged primarily on their policies and performance, if candidates set policies on their own and are seen as being responsible for performance then there should be a convergence between public ratings of candidates and their parties. Support for this hypothesis can be found in Table 5.5, which compares average ratings of candidates with these of their parties over time. In the early years of the ANES studies (1952–60), a substantial disparity was frequently found between the percentage of likes and dislikes that were positive about a nominee compared with his party. In 1952, 60.7 per cent of the comments about Stevenson were positive compared to just 49.0 per cent concerning the Democratic Party; four years later, 71.2 per cent of comments regarding Eisenhower were likes compared with only 52.1 per cent concerning the Republican Party; and Nixon's popularity outstripped that of the GOP in 1960 by 18.2 per cent. These instances of candidates being substantially more popular than their parties stemmed from candidates being evaluated primarily upon the basis of their personal characteristics, which were far more highly regarded than issue comments are ever likely to be.

By contrast, the first candidates who really emphasized issue stands during their campaigns – Goldwater in 1964 and McGovern in 1972 – were evaluated much more negatively than their respective parties. These two insurgent candidates took stands that many in their own party disagreed with and that did not get incorporated into their party's public image. More recent issue-oriented candidates have taken their parties

TABLE 5.5 *Candidates compared with their parties among voters, 1952–2000*

	Winning candidate compared with his party on likes/dislikes measure	Losing candidate compared with his party on likes/dislikes measure	Winning candidate mean thermometer rating compared with his party	Losing candidate mean thermometer rating compared with his party
1952	+14.4	+11.7	–	–
1956	+19.1	−10.1	–	–
1960	−1.9	+18.2	–	–
1964	+6.9	−9.3	–	–
1968	+9.1	+3.5	+5.0	−3.7
1972	+15.6	−16.0	+3.6	−18.5
1976	+2.6	+8.9	−1.4	+4.5
1980	−3.8	−13.5	+0.1	−5.8
1984	+0.1	−7.8	+4.9	−5.8
1988	+3.5	−7.2	+2.3	−4.9
1992	+1.8	+0.2	−3.1	+0.3
1996	−1.3	+0.2	−0.7	+0.5
2000	+0.5	−4.2	+3.2	−1.7

Source: US National Election Studies.

along for the ride, for better or for worse. There was hardly any difference at all in the percentage of positive comments made concerning Reagan and the GOP in 1984, Clinton and the Democrats in 1992, Dole and the GOP in 1996, or Bush and the GOP in 2000. The findings for the last three elections (1992–2000) on the likes/dislikes measure display the closest correspondence yet between how parties and candidates have been evaluated. The feeling thermometer data shown in the right-hand portion of Table 5.5 clearly confirm this pattern.

5.6 CONCLUSION

Compared with national elections in parliamentary democracies, American presidential elections are distinctly personal contests. Nevertheless, the trends displayed in this chapter may have some relevance for studying electoral change in parliamentary systems. If changes in political communication – principally television – have been responsible for the rise of candidate-centred politics in the United States, then there is reason to expect that other advanced industrialized democracies will eventually be impacted as well. The American political system may be unusual in exacerbating the influence of individual leaders, but everywhere the visual medium is inherently biased towards presenting individuals as opposed to ideas, concepts, and causes. In the telecommunications age, new political ideas,

concepts, and causes will thus probably be transmitted to the public through the vehicle of individual political leaders.

In looking for indications of leader-centred politics in parliamentary democracies, the American case should direct investigators to look for two distinct types of the phenomenon. The first would be instances of a leader creating a *separate* identity from his or her party, with the result being a fair amount of dissent within the party about its direction. In the early years of American candidate-centred politics, leaders like Goldwater, McGovern, and Carter carved out such niches for themselves. But more recently American candidate-centred politics has moved into a second stage in which nominees have become such dominant figures on the political scene that the political party is often seen by the public through the prism of its leader. These leaders have attained this position not by the strength of their personalities, but rather through their dominance of the issue agenda. It is often assumed that candidate-centred politics is synonymous with personality-based politics, but the data examined in this chapter have shown this to be a misconception. The most personally popular candidate does not always win in the United States – indeed, in recent elections the most personally popular candidate has generally lost. And furthermore, American candidates have come to be evaluated less in terms of personality over the last five decades and more on the basis of the issues they address and deal with.

Whether it is creating a new party like Pim Fortuyn did in the Netherlands, changing a party's policy direction like Tony Blair did in the United Kingdom, or performing well on a crucial problem like Gerhard Schroeder did in the instance of dealing with the historic 2002 floods in Germany, leaders throughout the established democracies are clearly playing a crucial role in shaping partisan competition. The American case would lead us to expect that it is this aspect of their leadership activities that is likely to be their key contribution in shaping the electoral environment of the future.

NOTE

1. The collection of these data began as part of a research project on candidate evaluations done in conjunction with Arthur Miller and Oksana Malanchuk. See Miller et al. (1986). The appendix to this article includes the exact codes assigned to each of the five dimensions of personal attributes.

6

Elections as Beauty Contests: Do the Rules Matter?

John Curtice and Sarinder Hunjan

6.1 INTRODUCTION

It has become quite common in discussions of how the electoral process has developed over recent decades to suggest that parliamentary elections have become 'presidentialized' (Clarke et al. 1980, 2004; Graetz and McAllister 1987*b*; Bean and Mughan 1989; Glaser and Salmon 1991; Stewart and Clarke 1992; Mughan 1995, 2000; Poguntke and Webb 2005). Even though such elections are formally contests between parties for seats in a legislature, it is argued that in practice they have become occasions when voters vote for whichever party leader they would prefer to see as prime minister. As a result, parliamentary elections are perceived as increasingly similar to presidential contests.

Two main explanations of why this has happened have surfaced over the years. The first points towards the emergence of television as the principal medium through which politicians reach voters (Butler and Ranney 1992; Swanson and Mancini 1996*b*). Television needs relatively accessible visual images to project messages, and the personality of a politician provides an image that no party manifesto can ever match. At the same time, television stations cannot necessarily afford to have camera crews following a wide range of leading party politicians on the campaign trail and therefore tend to focus on the activities of the leader. Parties themselves respond to these constraints by focusing their campaigns on their leaders. They may even agree to their leader participating in a televised debate with all the other party leaders – debates that are similar in style to those which have now become a fixture of US presidential elections (LeDuc et al. 1996*b*). Meanwhile, this context encourages the print media to focus their election coverage on leaders too (Dalton et al. 2000: 51).

The second reason why parliamentary elections are said to have become presidentialized centres on some well-worn themes about how voters' motivations and behaviour are thought to have changed in recent decades. Modern electorates, it is argued, have experienced a process of dealignment. According to this thesis, voters now largely lack the strong emotional attachment to a political party that many of them once enjoyed and which ensured that they were loyal supporters of

that party in the voting booth (Schmitt and Holmberg 1995; Dalton 2000*a*). At the same time, voters' socio-economic backgrounds have less influence on how they vote than they once did (Franklin et al. 1992). As a result of the decline of these long-term forces, more short-term considerations have come to the fore in voters' decisions, first amongst them their evaluations of the party leaders.

These claims are, however, far from uncontested (Klingemann and Wattenberg 1992; Kaase 1994; King 2002*b*; Curtice and Holmberg 2005; Senior and van Onselen 2008). Even if evaluations of leaders have become more important in parliamentary elections, there still seems good reason to doubt that they have become as important in parliamentary elections as they are in presidential ones. First, the outcome of parliamentary elections does not necessarily directly determine who becomes prime minister; that may depend on the result of coalition negotiations conducted after an election. Second, prime ministers do not have a guaranteed right to remain in office until the next election. Rather, their tenure depends on their ability to retain the confidence of their parliamentary colleagues. Third, prime ministers are not the sole arbiters of government policy; they need at least the acquiescence of cabinet colleagues in order to pursue their ideas. In short, in a parliamentary system, voters cannot be sure that the leader of the party with most votes will become the next prime minister, while even if that does happen, that leader has to continue to take cognisance of the views of both his party and any coalition partner long after the election is over. Thus, a voter in a parliamentary election should still have every reason to take into consideration what he or she thinks of the parties in general, rather than just their leaders in particular.

However, not all parliamentary elections are the same. One potentially important difference is the kind of electoral system being used, and in particular whether a proportional or a majoritarian system is in place. Where the latter is used, the most popular party will very likely secure an overall majority in the legislature, thereby avoiding the need for any post-election coalition bargaining (Lijphart 1999). And even if a majoritarian system is not used, it may still be the case that, in practice, power alternates between two parties or blocs of parties. Therefore, even if not all parliamentary elections resemble a presidential contest, voters might have a strong incentive to take leader evaluations into account where a majoritarian electoral system and/or a two-party system is in place. In contrast, we might anticipate that voters will have a particularly weak incentive to vote on the basis of leader evaluations if the executive is in fact formed and run by a separately elected president rather than by a prime minister.

Not all parliamentary elections are held in the same circumstances either. As we have noted, according to the arguments of those who have claimed that parliamentary elections have been presidentialized, leader evaluations matter more when fewer voters have a strong party identification and when these voters' choices are less strongly connected with their socio-economic background. If these arguments are correct then we might anticipate that parliamentary elections are more likely to resemble presidential contests where relatively few voters have

a strong party identification or where there is a weak relationship between voters' socio-economic backgrounds and their voting behaviour.

There is evidently considerable uncertainty about whether some or all parliamentary elections now resemble presidential contests. The aim of this chapter is to present what hitherto has largely been lacking in this debate, namely a systematic comparative analysis of these competing claims (McAllister 1996). Are parliamentary elections in general primarily beauty contests between party leaders in much the same way that presidential elections are, formally at least, contests designed to choose the most popular candidate? Or is it the case that only some parliamentary elections resemble presidential contests, depending on the electoral system, the party system, or the motivations of voters? Or, on the contrary, do we find that whatever the circumstances, parliamentary elections are still primarily contests between competing parties of politicians rather than personalized battles between the party leaders, indicating that parliamentary and presidential contests are still very different kinds of democratic contest?

6.2 DATA AND METHOD

To test whether leadership evaluations matter as much in parliamentary elections as they do in presidential ones, we need to be able to compare the relationship between leadership evaluations and vote choice across as many different kinds of contemporary presidential and parliamentary contests as possible. The best source of data for this purpose is the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) project.[1] This project is a voluntary collaboration between national election studies across the world. Each study devotes about ten minutes of questionnaire time to asking a module of questions in a common format and also to collecting a range of commonly coded socio-economic background information. In each case the survey is conducted as soon as possible after an election has been held. The data we analyse here were collected by CSES collaborators between 1996 and 2002, that is, the period during which the first round of CSES data collection took place.

This first round provides us with relevant data for no less than thirty-seven elections held in twenty-nine countries.[2] Some of these elections are presidential, some parliamentary. Some of the latter were held using a majoritarian electoral system, others a more proportional one. In addition, some of the parliamentary elections were held in countries where two parties dominate the electoral arena, and others in a multiparty environment. Furthermore, in some of the countries whose parliamentary elections are covered by the project, there exists a relatively strong president who can act autonomously of the legislature, whereas in others the head of state has few powers and the executive always needs the support of the legislature for its actions. We are therefore able to examine systematically whether

the relationship between leader evaluations and vote choice in parliamentary elections matches the equivalent relationship in presidential contests. We can also assess whether this relationship is systematically stronger in certain kinds of parliamentary contests than in others.

The CSES project collected two crucial pieces of information of relevance to our purposes. First, respondents were asked to state, on a scale ranging from 0 to 10, how much they liked or disliked each of the main party leaders. Normally, evaluations of up to six party leaders were collected in each country. These were the leaders whose parties enjoyed significant representation in that country's legislature or else the presidential candidates who were expected to win more than a small share of the vote. The relationship between these evaluations and vote choice provides us with our crucial indicator of the degree to which people vote in conformity with their leadership evaluations.

Second, using exactly the same scale, the CSES project also asked respondents how much they liked or disliked each of the main political parties. The presidentialization thesis implies that people are now more likely to vote in parliamentary elections on the basis of what they think of the party leaders rather than the parties they lead. Ideally, therefore, we should be able to compare the relative importance of the two. Deploying the party like and dislike data in addition to the leader like and dislike data enables us to adopt this approach. It also means that, to some degree at least, we can control for the possibility that people evaluate a party leader positively simply because they have decided to vote for the party he or she leads.

We deploy these data by using a simple two-step approach (Jusko and Shively 2005; Lewis and Linzer 2005). In the first stage we acquire for each party and each leader represented in our data set an estimate of the partial impact of leadership evaluations and party evaluations on vote.[3] This is done by undertaking a multivariate logistic regression of vote, dichotomized as '1' if the respondent voted for the party in question and '0' otherwise, against the relevant leader and party evaluations using the individual-level data for the relevant country.[4] We then exponentiate the resulting coefficients so that they represent the impact of leader and party evaluations on the odds of voting for the party in question versus the odds of not doing so. Altogether, we were able to implement this procedure successfully for 27 parties contesting nine presidential elections and 133 parties contesting 28 parliamentary ones.[5]

The resulting exponentiated coefficients then become the focus of our analysis in the second step.[6] Here we analyse how the exponentiated coefficients vary according to the characteristics of the election in question, that is, whether it is a presidential or a parliamentary contest, and if the latter what kind of parliamentary contest it is. Details of the elections that are included in the analysis, and in the case of the parliamentary elections how we have classified the electoral system that was used, can be found in Table 6.1. Note that by a 'mixed' system we here mean the one in which some seats are allocated according to a majoritarian principle, some by a proportional method, and where the latter, are not allocated

TABLE 6.1 *Elections analysed*

Presidential elections		
Belarus	Peru	
Israel*	Romania	
Lithuania	Taiwan	
Mexico	United States	
Parliamentary elections		
	Electoral system	
Proportional	Mixed	Majoritarian
Czech Republic	Japan	Australia
Denmark	Russia	Canada
Germany	South Korea	Great Britain
Hungary	Taiwan	United States
Iceland	Ukraine	
Israel		
Mexico		
New Zealand		
Netherlands		
Norway		
Peru		
Poland		
Portugal		
Romania		
Slovenia		
Spain		
Sweden		
Switzerland		

* Direct election of Prime Minister.

such as to overcome the disproportionality generated by the outcome in the former.[7]

As described so far, our approach does not take any account of differences in the character of the electorate, in particular their party identification or their social location. Both were, however, measured by the CSES. The direction of respondents' identification was ascertained by asking, 'Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular political party?' In the event that they responded negatively they were then further asked, 'Do you feel yourself a little closer to one of the political parties than the others?'[8] If the respondents named a party in response to either of these questions the strength of that identification was then measured by asking, 'Do you feel very close to this party, somewhat close, or not very close?'[9] Meanwhile, the CSES data set also contains a wide range of

socio-demographic data including social class, religion, language, ethnicity, and urban/rural location.[10]

These data were deployed in two ways. The first was designed to check the robustness of our conclusions. We reran our logistic models of the impact of leader and party evaluations on vote with (*a*) social location together with respondent's left–right orientation,[11] and (*b*) social location, left–right orientation, and direction of party identification included as controls.[12] Doing so enabled us to ensure that failure to take into account the possible influence of these variables on vote choice did not mean that our analyses systematically under- or overestimated the relative importance of leader evaluations in (different kinds of) parliamentary elections as compared with presidential ones.

The second use of the party identification and social location data, in contrast, was designed to assess whether the overall incidence of strong party identification or the strength of the relationship between social location and vote in a country has an impact on the relative importance of leader evaluations. The more respondents in a specific country say they are 'very' or 'somewhat' close to a party, the more this country can be said to exhibit a strong level of partisanship. Equally, the higher the coefficient of determination (i.e. the Nagelkerke R^2) in a nominal logistic regression of vote choice against social background, the more a country can be said to be one whose politics is based on strong social cleavages.[13] By looking at the relationship between these measures and our exponentiated logistic coefficients we can establish whether leadership evaluations matter more in countries with a low level of strong identification or in those with weak social cleavages.[14]

6.3 RESULTS

The first and most important proposition that we have to test is whether leadership evaluations now have just as much influence on the way people vote in parliamentary elections as they do in presidential ones. Table 6.2 provides a simple test of this proposition. The first column shows separately for presidential elections

TABLE 6.2 *The role of leader and party evaluations in presidential and parliamentary elections*

	Mean exponentiated logistic regression coefficient			
	Leader evaluations	Party evaluations	Leader–party	
Presidential elections	1.51	1.32	+0.19	(20)
Parliamentary elections	1.18	1.85	−0.68	(133)

Note: Figures in brackets show the number of parties on which the statistic in that row is based.

TABLE 6.3 *The relative importance of leader and party evaluations in presidential and parliamentary elections after controls*

	Mean exponentiated leader coefficient – party coefficient			
	Controls			
	None	Social location and left–right	Plus party ID	
Presidential elections	+0.19	+0.24	+0.48	(13)
Parliamentary elections	−0.68	−0.63	−0.40	(107)

Note: The figure in brackets is the minimum number of parties on which any figure in that row is based.

and for parliamentary contests the mean partial exponentiated logistic regression coefficient across all parties for the impact of leader evaluations on vote choice. In the second column we show the equivalent statistic for party evaluations, while the third shows the average of the difference between the two.

However we look at the table, there is clearly no support for the claim that leadership evaluations are as important in parliamentary elections as they are in presidential ones. In presidential elections, leader evaluations are on average somewhat more closely related to vote than are party evaluations. Indeed, of the eight countries with presidential elections included in our analysis, only in Mexico are party evaluations more closely related to vote than leadership evaluations. In parliamentary elections, in contrast, party evaluations are clearly more important.

But what if we take into account other possible influences on the way people vote, such as their social background or left–right orientation? Do leader evaluations continue to appear relatively unimportant in parliamentary elections once these other possible influences on vote choice are taken into account? Table 6.3 suggests that in fact they do. True, the introduction of controls – and especially of party identification – suggests that perhaps leader evaluations may be somewhat relatively more important than stated in Table 6.2. Yet this is just as true of presidential as it is of parliamentary elections. As a result, the difference between the two in the relative size of their exponentiated leader and party regression coefficients is much the same after the introduction of controls as it was before.

So by and large parliamentary elections have not come to resemble their presidential counterparts. That being said, certain kinds of parliamentary elections might bear more resemblance to presidential elections still. In Table 6.4 we consider two possibilities. The first is that leadership evaluations matter more where a majoritarian system is in place. The second is that they matter more where the election resembles a two-party contest. We define as a two-party system any polity where the two largest parties each secure at least 30 per cent of the vote while no other party manages to win as much as 20 per cent. This condition is satisfied in all our majoritarian system countries – apart from Canada – as well as in four countries with proportional systems (Germany, Hungary, Portugal, and Spain) and one with a mixed system (South Korea).

TABLE 6.4 *The role of leader and party evaluations in different types of parliamentary election*

	Mean exponentiated logistic regression coefficient			
	Leader evaluations	Party evaluations	Leader–party	
Electoral system				
Majoritarian	1.21	1.72	−0.50	(13)
Mixed	1.15	1.78	−0.64	(23)
Proportional	1.18	1.86	−0.71	(97)
Party system				
Two-party	1.18	1.70	−0.52	(35)
Multiparty	1.17	1.91	−0.74	(98)

The table provides some support for both propositions. The gap between leader and party evaluations is the smallest – that is, least negative – where a majoritarian system is in place and smaller where an election approximates a two-party contest. But in neither case does the relative importance of leader evaluations even approach their status in presidential contests as shown in Table 6.2. Moreover, the relative importance of leader evaluations where a majoritarian system or a two-party system is in place occurs not so much because leadership evaluations are more closely related to vote choice in such contests as because party evaluations are somewhat less so.

The introduction of controls does little to alter this picture. True, they suggest that perhaps the relative importance of leader evaluations may be as great under a mixed electoral system as it is under a majoritarian one, but in both cases they continue to be more important than where a proportional system is in use.[15] Meanwhile, leader evaluations continue to be relatively more important where there is a two-party system than where there is a multiparty one.[16]

Still, we might wonder whether a majoritarian electoral system and a two-party system in the same polity will independently enhance the relative salience of leadership evaluations in parliamentary elections. The two systems are often paired making it particularly difficult to entangle their respective impact. However, amongst those elections held using a proportional system we can compare what happened where a two-party system was in place and what happened where a multiparty environment existed. As Table 6.5 shows, leader evaluations are indeed relatively more important in proportional contests where a two-party system is in place.

In fact the picture in such contests is very similar to that where a majoritarian system is in use.[17] This suggests that having a two-party system does enhance the relative importance of leader evaluations in parliamentary elections, even if a proportional electoral system is in place. Thus, where two parties dominate the electoral landscape, party leaders are relatively more important although they remain no more than a pale shadow of their presidential counterparts.

TABLE 6.5 *How proportional elections differ*

	Mean exponentiated logistic regression coefficient			
Party system	Leader evaluations	Party evaluations	Leader–party	
Two-party	1.19	1.73	−0.54	(21)
Multiparty	1.17	1.93	−0.76	(76)

Note: Table confined to elections held under a proportional electoral system.

TABLE 6.6 *Parliamentary elections in presidential and parliamentary systems*

	Mean exponentiated logistic regression coefficient			
Type of political system	Leader evaluations	Party evaluations	Leader–party	
Presidential	1.15	1.52	−0.37	(33)
Of which simultaneous	*1.17*	*1.33*	*−0.16*	*(13)*
Non-simultaneous	*1.13*	*1.64*	*−0.50*	*(20)*
Semi-presidential	1.30	1.52	−0.22	(17)
Of which simultaneous	*1.44*	*1.43*	*+0.01*	*(6)*
Non-simultaneous	*1.23*	*1.57*	*−0.34*	*(11)*
Parliamentary	1.16	2.05	−0.89	(83)

It might be thought, however, that there is an important flaw in the analysis we have conducted so far. Surely, a far more important distinction than the kind of electoral or party system in place is whether the parliament that is being elected has any influence at all on the political composition of the executive? Why should the electorate take any notice of the party leaders in deciding how to vote in a parliamentary contest if the outcome will have little or no influence on their prospects of wielding power? Indeed, even where the government is accountable to the legislature and where there is also a relatively powerful president, voters might be less likely to take into account what they think of the various party leaders.

In Table 6.6, therefore, we have drawn a distinction between those parliamentary elections, such as elections to the House of Commons in the United Kingdom, which clearly have an unambiguous bearing on who heads and runs the executive, and those where the impact on the composition of the executive is less evident, that is, parliamentary elections taking place in 'presidential' systems. The latter group consists of those political systems that can be classified as either 'presidential' or 'presidential-parliamentary' according to the criteria proposed by Shugart and Carey (1992).[18] Amongst this group, however, we also draw a further distinction, namely between those countries that may be regarded as having 'semi-presidential systems' (Duverger 1980; Elgie 1999) and those that are primarily presidential.[19]

Table 6.6 shows that there is indeed a difference between parliamentary elections held in presidential or semi-presidential political systems and those conducted in predominantly parliamentary ones. But the difference is in the opposite direction to that which we anticipated. Leadership evaluations are relatively more important in parliamentary elections held in presidential and semi-presidential systems than they are in parliamentary ones. The explanation appears to be primarily one of timing. In three of the seven countries with presidential systems and in two of the four with semi-presidential ones, the parliamentary election was held on the same day as a presidential election; on average, leadership evaluations were relatively important in these instances. Indeed, these elections almost resemble presidential elections in character, doubtless because the popularity of a presidential candidate can have a 'coattail' effect on how people vote in a simultaneous parliamentary contest. Nevertheless, even in parliamentary elections held on a different day, leader evaluations appear relatively more important in parliamentary elections held in presidential and semi-presidential systems than in parliamentary elections in general.[20]

Still, we should note that even if we exclude elections held in countries with presidential or semi-presidential political systems, the key finding of Table 6.4 still holds. Leadership evaluations matter relatively more in two-party systems than in multiparty ones. However, it is also possible that this finding is compromised by another limitation, namely that all parties, big and small, have been treated equally. It might be argued that since leaders of larger parties are the only ones likely to become prime minister, evaluations of the leaders of bigger parties should have more impact on how people vote than evaluations of the leaders of smaller parties. Indeed, Table 6.7, which distinguishes between those parties that come first or second and the remainder, provides some support for this proposition. True, the absolute value of the average exponentiated coefficient for leadership evaluations is no higher for larger parties than it is for smaller ones. But as the equivalent statistic for party evaluations is lower, leadership evaluations appear to be relatively more important for larger parties.[21]

Nevertheless, our finding that leader evaluations matter more in countries with two-party systems still appears robust. This we show in Table 6.8 where we compare the role of leadership evaluations in two-party and in multiparty systems – in doing so we confine our attention to those parties that came first or second and, in addition, also exclude parliamentary elections that take place in

TABLE 6.7 *Larger and smaller parties*

	Mean exponentiated logistic regression coefficient			
Type of party	Leader evaluations	Party evaluations	Leader–party	
Top two	1.16	1.72	−0.55	(50)
Other	1.18	1.93	−0.75	(83)

TABLE 6.8 *Party system and larger parties*

Type of party system	Mean exponentiated logistic regression coefficient			
	Leader evaluations	Party evaluations	Leader–party	
Two-party	1.16	1.79	−0.63	(12)
Multiparty	1.18	1.94	−0.76	(16)

Note: Table confined to parliamentary political systems and parties that came first or second.

TABLE 6.9 *Regression model of relative importance of leadership evaluations and type of parliamentary election*

	Coefficient
Majoritarian system	0.231*
Two-party system	0.177*
Presidential/semi-presidential system	0.596**
First or second party	0.009
Constant	−1.004
R^2	32%

* Coefficient significant at 10% level.
** Coefficient significant at 5% level.

presidential or semi-presidential systems. Relatively speaking at least, leadership evaluations still matter more in a two-party system than in a multiparty system.[22] At the same time, however, parliamentary elections in two-party systems still look very different from presidential contests.

Thus far we found that, in general, parliamentary elections are not beauty contests between party leaders to the same extent as presidential elections are. Only when such elections are held in tandem with, and become overshadowed by, a presidential contest do leadership evaluations approach the importance they have in presidential contests. Even so, leadership evaluations appear to be somewhat more important where a two-party system exists and where a majoritarian system is in place.

These latter two points are confirmed in Table 6.9 where we undertake a linear regression analysis of the difference between our exponentiated leader and party coefficients in parliamentary elections. Our model contains four dummy variables, namely whether a majoritarian electoral system was used in the election, whether a two-party system was in place, whether the political system was a presidential one, and finally whether the party in question was placed first or second in the election. Apart from clearly confirming the relative importance of leadership evaluations where a presidential or semi-presidential political system is in place, the table also suggests that these evaluations matter more when a two-party system exists and where a majoritarian electoral system is in place (the coefficients for both are not significant at the 5 per cent level but are at the 10 per cent level).

Up to this point, we have not considered the effects different types of electorate might have, and in particular whether leadership evaluations matter more where electorates are dealigned, that is, where relatively few voters have a strong party identification or vote in accordance with their socio-economic position. Do parliamentary elections even look like presidential contests when those circumstances exist? And do the differences we have identified so far stand up once we take into account variations between electorates in different countries?

First we can consider one of the assumptions behind the expectation that leadership evaluations matter more when relatively few voters have a strong party identification. We can do this by adding to the models for each party in which we controlled for the impact of social location, left–right orientation, and direction of party identification, a term that captures the interaction between the strength of party identification and leadership evaluations. Doing so indicates that leadership evaluations do indeed have more influence on the vote choice of those with either a weak party identification or none at all. Across all parliamentary elections this interaction effect is on average (after exponentiation) no less than −0.86. Indeed, this interaction appears to be much the same across all elections and all parties. The average size of the effect varies little between different kinds of parliamentary elections or different kinds of parties. Meanwhile, the equivalent average interaction effect amongst presidential elections is, at −0.91, almost identical to that for parliamentary ones. This lack of variation suggests that leadership evaluations matter more in presidential elections not because they matter more in such contests to voters with a weak or non-existent party identification, but rather because they matter more to voters across the board.

Nevertheless, these results suggest that we should indeed find that leadership evaluations matter more in countries where there is a relatively low proportion of strong identifiers. Table 6.10 confirms that this is indeed the case.[23] Relatively speaking at least, leadership evaluations matter more in countries with relatively few party identifiers. However, our expectations are not fulfilled when we compare the role of leadership evaluations in those countries where the pattern of voting behaviour reveals the existence of one or more strong cleavages with countries where cleavages are comparatively weaker.[24] Surprisingly, leadership evaluations are actually more important where social cleavages are strong. The proposition that a dealigned electorate is one that takes more notice of leaders is thus only partly supported by our analysis.

But does the presence of the relationships between the relative importance of leadership evaluations and both party indentification and the strength of social cleavages uncovered in Table 6.10 require us in any way to modify the generalizations we have made so far? Table 6.11 assesses this possibility by presenting the results of two additional regression models. The first is an analysis of all the elections we have been considering, both presidential and parliamentary. Included in the model are three dummy variables, namely whether the election was a presidential one or not, whether the country has a low proportion of strong party identifiers,

TABLE 6.10 *How the role of leadership evaluations varies by type of electorate*

	Mean exponentiated logistic regression coefficient			
	Leader evaluations	Party evaluations	Leader–party	
Strong party identifiers				
Low	1.20	1.68	−0.48	(59)
High	1.15	2.04	−0.90	(63)
Strength of cleavages				
Weak	1.17	1.96	−0.80	(53)
Strong	1.20	1.77	−0.057	(57)

TABLE 6.11 *Further regression models of relative importance of leadership evaluations*

	All elections coefficient	Parliamentary elections coefficient
Presidential election	0.726*	
Majoritarian system		0.346**
Two-party system		0.375**
Presidential/semi-presidential system		0.563**
First or second party		0.004
Weak strong identifiers	0.295*	0.194**
Weak social cleavage	−0.190*	−0.344**
Constant	−0.628	−1.34
R^2	30%	51%

* Coefficient significant at 10% level.
** Coefficient significant at 5% level.

and whether it has only weak social cleavages. The results confirm that leadership evaluations are relatively more important in presidential elections than in parliamentary ones, independently of the impact of the incidence of strong identifiers or strong cleavages. At the same time, our findings in respect of identifiers and cleavages (including the unexpected result that leadership evaluations are relatively more important in countries with stronger social cleavages) are also confirmed.

Our second model, meanwhile, is an expanded version of the model of parliamentary elections previously presented in Table 6.9. To that model we have simply added our dummy variables for the incidence of strong identifiers and the presence of strong cleavages. These two variables do have an independent effect on the relative importance of leadership evaluations; indeed, their introduction increases by nearly twenty points the percentage of the variance for which we are able to account. At the same time, we still find that leadership evaluations are relatively more important in parliamentary elections held in presidential or semi-presidential political systems and in those that take place in two-party systems or under a majoritarian electoral system.

6.4 CONCLUSION

We have found no evidence to support the claim that nowadays parliamentary elections resemble presidential contests. Leader evaluations clearly have far less influence on the way people vote in parliamentary elections than they do in presidential contests. Although leader evaluations are relatively more important when a two-party system is in use and/or when a majoritarian electoral system is in place, they still do not approach the level of importance they typically have in presidential elections (see also Curtice and Holmberg 2005). Only when a parliamentary election takes place alongside a presidential contest does it approach the characteristics of the latter. It appears that we should concur with Dalton and Wattenberg (2000*a*) that the institutional form of parliamentary elections severely inhibits the degree to which voters are likely to use leader evaluations as a basis for deciding how to vote.

The formal rules of an election are not the only determinant of the relative importance of leadership evaluations. The presence of a two-party system appears to make leadership evaluations relatively more important in parliamentary elections even in the absence of a majoritarian electoral system. Equally, the incidence of strong party identifiers and of strong cleavages has a considerable impact on the role of leadership evaluations in both presidential and parliamentary elections independently of the character of the party system in place, albeit in the case of strong cleavages not in the manner suggested by the presidentialization thesis. Nevertheless, we should always bear in mind that none of these features is capable of turning a parliamentary election into a presidential contest.

Parliamentary elections continue, then, to be very different from presidential contests, even when they are dominated by two parties. In such elections, voters still primarily make a judgement about the collective merits of the parties as a whole rather than their leaders in particular. On its own, of course, this will not guarantee that executive authority and responsibility is shared amongst a group of ministers rather than concentrated in one person. But at least the way people vote in parliamentary elections helps sustain rather than undermine this distinctive way of running a democratic government.

NOTES

1. See http://www.cses.org
2. This tally of thirty-seven elections includes five instances where both a parliamentary and a presidential election were held on the same day, and details of how respondents voted are available for both.

3. Regional parties that fought in seats in only part of a country (such as the Canadian Bloc Québécois) are excluded from the analysis as the relationship between vote and both leader and party evaluations could be affected by the inability of some voters to vote for that party. Parties that fought in an electoral alliance – such as the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Socialist Union (CSU) in Germany – are analysed as one party, using the party and leader evaluations for the largest partner (or in the case of the German CSU/CDU where there is a clear territorial demarcation between the areas that they contest, the CSU party evaluations for voters in Bavaria, and the CDU party evaluations elsewhere).
4. We have undertaken extensive checks to ensure that party and leader evaluations are not so intercorrelated that our models suffer from collinearity. These checks found that the degree of collinearity did not normally exceed conventionally acceptable levels.
5. Note that apart from the five instances where both parliamentary and presidential elections were held on the same day, there are three countries where data for two elections held on different days are available. In two of these three cases the two elections were of the same kind, that is, either both presidential or both parliamentary. Thus, a few parties are represented more than once in our data set and contribute more than one to the tally of parties reported here.
6. An alternative procedure would have been to 'stack' the CSES data set so that each combination of party and respondent was represented as a case (see Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996), and then to ascertain the impact of election characteristic on the relationship between vote and leader evaluations by fitting relevant interaction terms such as the interaction between leader evaluation and a majoritarian electoral systems. However, the range and scale of the interaction terms that would have had to be fitted would have made our data analysis far more complex.
7. Our principle sources of information on the characteristics of each country's electoral system were Reynolds and Reilly (1997) and Blais and Massicote (2002), supplemented where necessary by consultation with a range of appropriate Internet sites. Note that the mixed category does not include those two-tier electoral systems, such as that used in Germany, in which the disproportionalities created by one tier are wholly or largely corrected by the allocation of seats in the other tier. Although such systems may mix different principles for allocating seats in the two tiers, the final allocation of seats reflects the proportionate principle to more or less the same degree as any other proportional system.
8. In a small number of instances, however, direction of party identification is not available for a particular party or alliance.
9. The strength of party identification data are not, however, available for New Zealand.
10. Not all of these data are available for all countries. This meant that in some instances it was not possible to include a country at all in analyses that used such data, while in other instances one or more of these variables could not be included amongst the controls. In a couple of instances, lack of respondents voting for that party made it impossible to produce estimates of the effect of leader and party evaluations after controlling for other variables.

11. Respondents were asked, 'In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?'
12. We included these control variables in two separate stages since it might be argued that including direction of party identification as a control is problematic as it is not always clear that party identification is necessarily causally prior to vote choice (Thomassen 1976). Note that absence of data meant that Denmark, Japan, Lithuania, Peru, and Slovenia had to be excluded entirely from these analyses.
13. Absence of data meant, however, that this calculation could not be made for the following countries: Denmark, Japan, Lithuania, Peru, and Slovenia.
14. Note that we are not simply interested here in demonstrating that those individuals who lack a strong party identification are more likely to take leadership evaluations into account in deciding how to vote but rather that leadership evaluations matter more in societies where relatively few people have a strong party identification. The latter cannot be ascertained by an individual-level analysis of the relationship between leadership evaluations and vote, as it is a function of the number of people with a strong party identification as well as of the individual-level relationship between party identification and vote. However, we can and do test the assumption that weak identifiers are more likely to take leadership evaluations into account in their voting decision by constructing models in which one of the terms is the interaction between leadership evaluations and strength of party identification.
15. After controlling for social location and left–right orientation, the mean difference between the exponentiated leader and party coefficients is −0.57 where a majoritarian system is used, −0.50 where a mixed one is used, and −0.66 where a proportional one exists. If party identification is also introduced as a control, the equivalent figures are −0.33, −0.31 and −0.43, respectively.
16. After controlling for social location and left–right orientation, the mean differences between the exponentiated leader and party coefficients is −0.47 where there is a two-party system, but −0.70 where there is a multiparty one. If party identification is also introduced, the equivalent figures are −0.34 and −0.43, respectively.
17. This statement remains true after the introduction of controls. After the introduction of all controls, including party identification, the mean difference between the exponentiated coefficients in countries with a proportional system and also a two-party system is −0.32, very close to the equivalent figure of −0.31 for all countries with a majoritarian system.
18. Under 'presidential' systems, the president is clearly the head of the executive and neither he/she nor ministers need to maintain the confidence of the legislature to remain in office. Under 'presidential-parliamentary' systems, cabinet ministers do need to maintain the confidence of the legislature, but they are appointed by and can be dismissed by a president who cannot (normally) be removed from office by the legislature but who in turn does have the power to dismiss the legislature. The following countries with parliamentary elections are regarded as presidential systems: Israel, Mexico, Peru, Russia, South Korea, Ukraine, and the United States.

19. The definition of what constitutes a 'semi-presidential' system is much debated. We have followed Siaroff (2003), and included countries where the government needs to maintain the confidence of the legislature and where there is also a separately elected president who has at least some 'corrective' powers. The following countries with parliamentary elections are classified as such: Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Taiwan.
20. These findings all prove to be robust when we add further controls to the models used to calculate our estimates of the impact of party and leader evaluations.
21. This remains the case if we introduce controls into the models on which our estimates are based. Thus, for example, after the introduction of controls for social location, left–right orientation, and party identification, the mean difference between the leader and party coefficient is −0.43 for larger parties and only −0.33 for smaller ones.
22. This finding remains if we use estimates based on controls.
23. Countries with a low proportion of strong identifiers are those where less than 50 per cent say they are 'very' or 'somewhat' close to a political party. Those with more than 50 per cent are countries with a high proportion of strong identifiers.
24. A strong cleavage is said to exist when the Nagelkerke R^2 from a multinomial logistic regression of socio-economic background and vote is greater than 15 per cent.

7

Leader Effects and Party Characteristics

Bernt Aardal and Tanja Binder

7.1 INTRODUCTION

To what extent is the effect of leader popularity on the vote contingent upon characteristics of the parties themselves? Does it matter whether or not the party is in government, or whether it is a small or large party? Or is the leadership impact independent of what type of party the leader is representing? These are the main questions we will address in this chapter. First we will discuss how party characteristics could affect the effect of leader popularity on the vote, and then we will take a look at the correlations between party characteristics and leader evaluations. Finally we will analyse the interaction between leader effects and party type.

The role of political leaders is usually linked to the relative strength of parties in a given polity. Almost by definition leaders will have much more leeway in a system with weak parties than in a system with strong parties. The classic distinction between the *party-centred* (European) and *candidate-centred* (Anglo-American) systems is of particular interest here. It comes as no surprise that the importance of popular leaders has been recognized for a long time in the Anglo-American literature (Graetz and McAllister 1987*a*, 1987*b*; Stewart and Clarke 1992; Harrison and Marsh 1994; Clarke and Stewart 1995; Nadeau et al. 1996; Clarke et al. 2000). Influential students of Western Europe, on the other hand, have not even bothered to include leadership influence in their analytical models (e.g. Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Although this has not precluded an interest in candidate popularity, the general conclusion has been that leader popularity is too closely connected to party popularity to separate the two effects (Bean and Mughan 1989: 1,165; Van Holsteyn and Andeweg 2009).

However, things are changing even in the most party-dominated systems. Political parties are losing members, the emotional ties between voters and parties are waning, and more and more voters change party preference from one election to the next. This development can be traced back to fundamental changes in the bonds between social structure and party allegiance in most of Western Europe (Franklin et al. 1992). In some countries this has been characterized as one of the most important political changes since World War II (Valen and Aardal 1983: 244). The 'thawing' of frozen alignments has resulted in increased interest in political issues (Nie et al. 1976; Niemi and Weisberg 1993; Dalton 2000*b*).

However, the weakening of traditional bonds not only leaves more room for issues but potentially also gives political leaders a more prominent position in the process of persuading voters to vote for their party. Nonetheless, changes in traditional political alignments and economic structure have put pressure on the old party system in many countries. Some parties have split, some have reorganized or reoriented, and new parties have been founded. This process has not followed the same path in all countries, but rather has been flavoured by specific preconditions in each country. Notwithstanding variations both across party systems and across time, political leaders seem to take on a more prominent position in modern politics (McAllister 1996: 297). Dalton (2000*b*: 338) claims that 'there is growing evidence that candidate images are increasing in importance in many parliamentary systems'. McAllister even states that 'the personalization of politics will remain a – and perhaps the – central feature of democratic politics in the twenty-first century' (McAllister 2007: 585; see also Clarke et al. 2009). The search for explanations regarding the importance of political leaders tends to focus on individual factors, either linked to candidates or voters, or on system-specific properties, like party systems and electoral laws. However, characteristics of the parties themselves are often neglected. This is surprising, as the type of party (such as large vs. small), historical and functional characteristics (such as age and governmental experience), organizational structure, and ideological platform (such as party family) may influence the latitude for individual leadership. In this chapter, we will concentrate on those characteristics which are most closely linked to leadership: the relevance of the party, its systemic function, its historical presence, organizational structure, and ideological roots. The linkage to leadership will be elaborated in the next paragraphs.

7.2 CADRE AND MASS PARTIES

Maurice Duverger (1954, 1990) famously distinguished four different types of parties. The *caucus party* was in many ways an archaic forerunner of modern parties. It did not emphasize expansion or recruitment of new members, and was basically an ad hoc arrangement for elections by upper- and middle-class individuals. The *branch*, on the other hand, was a closely knit decentralized unit with three main objectives: to organize the masses, give them a political education, and to recruit working-class leaders. According to Duverger, the branch was a socialist invention, wide open to the masses. The distinction between the two last types of parties – the *cadre party* and the *mass party* – is somewhat more diffuse. First of all, it is more a question of organizational structure than of size. The cadre party represents a grouping of notabilities where the main objective is to prepare and organize electoral campaigns. While the cadre party relies on contributions from wealthy capitalists, the mass party asks for membership fees and other modest

contributions from a large number of people. The cadre party tends to be less ideological and more pragmatic than the more ideologically orthodox mass parties. Thus, the cadre party gives more room for the individual qualities of candidates and party leaders. For mass parties, ideological purity and loyalty is given a more prominent position, emphasizing the correspondence between leaders and rank and file members.[1] However, Duverger acknowledged that although the distinction between cadre and mass parties may be clear in theory, it is not always easy to make in practice. In fact, he admits that there are few pure cadre parties. Nevertheless, he tentatively classifies American parties and the majority of European moderate and conservative parties as cadre parties. Socialist parties, however, are typical mass parties, where the party is the political expression of the class.

Duverger's classification is mainly concerned with the organizational and compositional aspect of political parties. Moreover, it may be more in tune with the party systems of the pre-1960 period than for the post-1960 period. Nevertheless, it may serve as a starting point for a discussion of the role of political leaders. The distinction between caucus and branch parties is less relevant for the present analysis. The first type, to a large extent, belongs to earlier historical periods, at least in a European setting. The second type is more relevant to local politics than to national electoral campaigns. The distinction between cadre and mass parties may, however, be of relevance. Both in terms of organizational structure and political orientation, the cadre party seems to put more emphasis on personal qualities of leaders and candidates than the mass party, where social origin and political congruence between leaders and members are more important. *Accordingly, we expect that people who vote for cadre parties will be more susceptible to individual qualities of candidates and leaders than those who vote for other parties.*[2] Unfortunately, Duverger's distinction between cadre and mass parties is rather simple and leaves a number of (modern) parties unclassified. However, we have chosen to operationalize cadre parties as conservative and liberal parties, while other parties are classified as mass parties. This at least provides us with a rough measure of the original distinction.

7.3 GOVERNING AND NON-GOVERNING PARTIES

Anderson and Guillory (1997) have shown that whether you vote for a party that wins or loses the election, has an impact upon satisfaction with how democracy works. If you vote for a winning party – meaning one that will be part of the new government – you will be more satisfied than if you vote for a losing party.[3] For candidates and leaders, however, incumbency represents a strategic advantage of great proportions in the campaign preceding the election. To represent a party that has been in government obviously gives leaders a greater potential for exposure and

popularity, compared with candidates who strive to gain access to the media. With the waning of traditional loyalties and alignments, media exposure seems to be all the more important (Semetko 1996*b*). For governing parties, in particular parties with a long history of governance, leadership qualities may be blended with performance. A successful record may be attributed to the most prominent leader, either a prime minister or president. In Germany, studies have shown a substantial *visibility bonus* (or *Regierungsbonus*) for the incumbent chancellor and for the parties in government (Semetko and Schoenbach 1994; Semetko 1996*b*). Government responsibility may, however, be a two-edged sword. If government policies are not considered to be a success, the high visibility of government leaders may strike back, giving them all the blame for things that went wrong. In general, however, modern media logic would call for the first effect: that the potential for leadership effects will be greater for leaders who have proven their effectiveness and competence. Moreover, enhanced visibility during the election campaign will prime voters to 'look in their direction' and potentially evaluate the leaders positively and vote for them. This priming effect is consistent with John Zaller's *response axiom*, which states that individuals are prone to activate considerations that are most immediately accessible in memory (Zaller 1992). *All in all, we thus expect that the leadership effect on the vote will be more pronounced for those who vote for a governing party than for those who vote for a non-governing party.* In the analysis we define governing party as a party that has been part of the government in the preceding period.

7.4 SIZE OF PARTIES

The larger the party, the more likely it is that the party either has been part of a government or will be in power in the future. The leader of a large party is also more likely to aspire to the position of prime minister or president than the leader of a small party (see also chapter 6). Moreover, new parties tend to be small, at least in the beginning. However, even old parties have experienced ups and downs over time. Thus, size may not be a stable property for a particular party over time, and it may coincide or interact with a number of other party characteristics. Accordingly, the expectations regarding the size of a party may point in different directions. If size is associated with visibility and governing experience, it may correlate positively with leadership evaluation. The close relationship between size and governmental experience strengthens this expectation. However, it may be easier for leaders of small parties to take the initiative and be independent of the 'party machine', thus making the leader more appealing and visible to the voters. If this is the case, we may expect a negative association between size and leader evaluations. However, previous research suggests that we will expect a stronger leadership effect among those who vote for a large party than for a small party

(Curtice and Blais 2001). *Thus, our expectation is that leadership effects are stronger for large parties than for small ones.* Size is operationalized as percentage of votes in the election.

7.5 OLD AND NEW PARTIES

The age of the party may also affect the inclination to be influenced by leader evaluations. First of all, it takes time for voters to develop stable loyalties towards a party (Converse 1969). Consequently, party identification is likely to be weaker among supporters of new parties, leaving room for other considerations such as leader evaluations. Secondly, age may reflect important properties related to the origin of the parties. The genesis of most political parties in established democracies can be traced back either to pre-modern cultural and social conditions or to classical industrial cleavages. Lipset and Rokkan's famous statement that 'the party systems of the 1960's reflect, with few but significant exceptions, the cleavage structure of the 1920's' (Lipset and Rokkan 1967: 50) illustrates that the party system did not change much until the early 1960s. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, the party systems of most Western democracies were undergoing a fundamental change (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000*a*). Ronald Inglehart (1977, 1984) has described this change as a secular transition from class-based to value-based conflicts. In his terminology we witness a change from *materialist* to post-materialist values where 'old politics' is replaced by 'new politics': 'a New Politics has emerged throughout advanced industrial societies during the late 1960's' (Inglehart 1977: 262). Hildebrandt and Dalton (1978) saw a parallel between the appearance of new political values at the individual level and the emergence of new parties. The new parties differed from the old parties in their emphasis on non-economic issues. The new politics perspective is not only characterized by an increased focus on non-material issues but it also represents a new paradigm for modes of involvement. Although some of the most militant new groups were antagonistic towards the representative system, most of the new, alternative electoral lists and green parties wanted to take part in the electoral competition, although with a qualitative new approach (Müller-Rommel 1989; Poguntke 1992). The genuine new politics parties were distinctly different from the established parties with respect to programme, political style, and electoral profile (Poguntke 1992: 175–94). In terms of both ideology (values) and style (organization) the new parties clearly were more individualistic than the old parties, giving more emphasis to self-realization and freedom of action than to subservience under hierarchical structures and leaders. Hence, the role of candidates and leaders may be very different in new and old parties. While old parties

would demand obedience and loyalty by the rank and file, new parties would give leaders a more independent – and potentially more prominent – role.

A somewhat simplistic inference from the previous discussion would thus be to expect that leadership effects on the vote would be stronger and more pervasive for new parties than for old ones. However, this is not necessarily a convincing argument. Indeed, older parties usually were hierarchically organized. The leader was not only powerful within the party but was also often a prominent public figure admired by many voters. This was particularly the case for party leaders who were also heads of government. However, anti-authoritarian and libertarian values that formed an important part of the ideological basis for the new ecological parties established in the 1970s and 1980s did not necessarily play in favour of strong leaders or allow the emergence of such leaders. In fact, some of the newly established parties rejected the hierarchical structure of the old parties so strongly that they did not even elect a formal chairperson, but rather rotated leadership responsibilities among a collective leadership group. However, this made it extremely difficult for both voters and the media to identify – and identify with – the party leader. *Die Grünen* in Germany and *Miljøpartiet* in Sweden are examples of ecological parties without a traditional party leader. To search for leadership effects in these parties would therefore seem futile. However, some of the ecological parties have moved in the direction of a more traditional leadership structure over time.

The new ideological tides did not materialize in the formation of new parties in all Western countries. In some, among them Norway and Denmark, the new political agenda was channelled into established parties. Consequently the newly established ecological parties did not succeed in picking up the green vote to the same extent as they did for instance in Germany (Aardal 1990; Andersen 1990). Organizationally, the 'reformed' older parties – usually left socialist parties – were different from the new ecological parties in that they kept the traditional organizational structure with formal party leaders.

In line with these arguments we may expect that leadership effects will be somewhat different between the two types of 'new' parties. In all probability, leadership effect will be weaker for the purest and most alternative new politics parties, than for 'reformed' left socialist parties. *Our general expectation concerning the parties' age, however, is that leadership effects are stronger for old parties than for new. Age is operationalized as years since the party was established.*

7.6 PARTY FAMILIES

In addition to size, age, and governmental status, parties may be divided into different party families. However, we find a number of different classifications in the literature. Both names of and number of families vary, as well as the criteria

underlying the classification scheme. We even find examples of party family typologies where the classification criteria are not explicit (Esaiasson and Heidar 2000). Budge et al. (1997: 199) have provided one of the most extensive typologies, based on the parties' ideology, support groups, core values, characteristic policies, and attitudes to governmental intervention. The party families derived from these criteria are grouped into seven types. Lane and Ersson (1987: 97–105) also divide the parties into seven 'families', although with somewhat different criteria. They base their classification on party name, programme, appeal, international relations, organization, and ideology. Interestingly, leadership quality does not seem to be included in the pool of criteria used to define party families. In this respect, party family would seem to be of little relevance in the analysis of leadership effects. However, Lane and Ersson (1987: 103) make a note of the fact that 'discontent' parties tend to be led by charismatic leaders. In the last decades right-wing populist parties have popped up in several European countries. Although these parties represent a new type of party, they have historical roots in old populist movements like the Narodniki in Russia, the agrarian populists in the United States, and the Poujadists in France. We have seen 'discontent' or populist parties emerging in Denmark and Norway in the early 1970s, as well as Ross Perot's Reform Party in the United States and New Democracy (*Ny Demokrati*) in Sweden in the 1990s. One may argue that regional parties like Bloc Québécois in Canada and the National Party in Australia share many of the characteristics of populist protest parties. First of all, there is strong resentment against the national centre of authority. Secondly, a common trait in all protest movements is a penchant for strong, charismatic leaders. Even though leadership quality does not seem to play an important role in the classification of party families, populist and regionalist parties seem to be the exception. But we cannot exclude the possibility that leader popularity may be important also for other party families. *Based on the existing literature, however, we expect to find stronger leader effect for (right-wing) protest parties than for other parties.*

7.7 CHANGES OVER TIME

Underlying most discussions about leadership effects on the vote, we find an implicit assumption not only that these effects are important but also that they have become more important over time. However, a closer scrutiny of the available research reveals an astonishing lack of empirical studies to prove these assumptions. As mentioned in previous chapters in this book, we now have comparable data available to test these assumptions. This will also be done in this chapter. *Consonant with the prevailing 'common knowledge' thinking we expect that the effect of leader popularity on the vote has become stronger over time.*

7.8 SUMMING UP

In the preceding paragraphs we have argued that it is reasonable to expect variations in leadership effects depending on party characteristics. Our hypotheses may be summed up in the following way: we expect that cadre parties, governing parties, large parties, old parties, and right-wing populist and regional parties will demonstrate a greater impact of leadership evaluations on the vote than their counterparts. However, it is important to take into consideration that a party may have characteristics with contradictory implications. Cadre parties may, for instance, be small, but still powerful government participants. New parties may be unlikely to participate in government and may have a political programme and profile which emphasizes collective rather than individual leadership. Thus, their young age may increase leader effects, but their ideological orientation and their non-governing nature may depress them. It is thus crucial to take into account the different characteristics simultaneously. In the following section we will take a closer look at the empirical data, first with a bivariate approach, and later combining the different party characteristics into a multivariate analysis.

7.9 DATA AND METHODS

Similar to the analysis done by Curtice and Blais (2001), the following analysis will be carried out in three steps and on two different levels, according to the units of analysis. First of all the effect of leader evaluations on the vote will be estimated. This is done at the micro level with stacked data sets from nine countries: Australia, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.[4] The leader effect is calculated for each individual party and election by logistic regression.

The coefficient used in the following analyses is 'explained variance' in the form of Nagelkerke's *pseudo-*R^2.[5]

The following steps change the unit of analysis to individual party by election year. The second step shows the relationship between leadership effects and particular party characteristics by way of bivariate correlations. The party characteristics are the size of the party in percentage of votes in the preceding election, governmental status, which distinguishes between governing and non-governing parties, the age of the party in years since its foundation, cadre party (vs. other party), and party family.[6] In the last step we will show how the important party characteristics and leadership effects are related to each other in a cluster analysis.[7] All included variables are z-transformed for better comparability. The measurement is based on squared Euclidean distance and the Ward method is used. This

analysis will be used to see whether or not particular party characteristics tend to combine with respect to the effect leadership evaluations have on the vote.

7.10 LEADERSHIP EFFECTS

Table 7.1 gives an impression of the variation in our dependent variable – that is, the impact of leader evaluations on the vote – which is calculated for each party by election year. The table shows the number of parties by election and the minimum and maximum value of all estimated leader effects. The means and standard deviations show how scattered the distribution is. This is also the case for the within country distributions. Overall, party characteristics explain about 35 per cent of the variance in the effect leadership evaluation has on the vote.

In this chapter we will limit ourselves to leader evaluations, and not include evaluations of parties. The reason for this is the close relationship between evaluations of leaders and their parties, which has been demonstrated in the preceding chapters. Although controlling for party evaluations is important for the overall analysis, it makes it more difficult to see interesting patterns with respect to the relationship between leader evaluations and characteristics of the parties themselves. Our concern is mainly how the effects of leadership evaluations are related to characteristics of the leader's own party.

7.11 CORRELATION OF PARTY CHARACTERISTICS

Party characteristics are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, there may be a systematic relationship between several of these traits. Therefore, it may be pertinent to take a look at the correlation matrix for all the different party

TABLE 7.1 *Explained variance (Nagelkerke's R^2) of leader evaluation on party choice*

	*N**	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Explained variance of leader evaluation on party choice	248	0.043	0.638	0.348	0.148

* The number of cases in Tables 7.1 and 7.4 is different, because in Table 7.1 the cases of parties where no leader evaluation was available have been dropped from the analysis. Meanwhile, in the cluster analysis the mean of leader effect by party over time was used and therefore single missing values have been replaced.

TABLE 7.2 *Correlation matrix for party characteristics (*N = *265); Pearson's* r

	Governmental status	Electoral size	Age of party	Cadre party
Governmental status	1.000			
Electoral size	0.407**	1.000		
Age of party	−0.178*	−0.626**	1.000	
Cadre party	0.094	0.249**	−0.379**	1.000
Ecological parties	−0.177	−0.277**	0.325**	−0.239**
Left socialist party	−0.163**	−0.228**	0.097	−0.220**
(ex-)Communist party	−0.123**	−0.181**	0.249**	−0.167**
Social democratic party	0.141*	0.376**	−0.124*	−0.518**
Liberal party	−0.025	−0.148*	−0.189**	0.581**
Agrarian + religious party	−0.001	−0.269**	0.190**	−0.348**
Conservative party	0.134*	0.438**	−0.247**	0.569**
Right-wing populist party	−0.074	−0.166**	0.211**	−0.167**
Regionalist party	0.006	−0.172**	0.086	−0.178**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

characteristics. Table 7.2 shows Pearson's r for governmental status, size, age, cadre parties, and party families.[8]

The highest correlation in Table 7.2 is found between size and age ($r = -0.626$). Old parties tend to be large parties, while new parties tend to be small. Furthermore, size is strongly correlated with governmental status ($r = 0.407$). In other words, large parties are more often part of the governing elite than small parties. The relationship between particular party families and party characteristics supplements the discussion above. The pattern displayed in Table 7.2 reflects the political history of each polity. However, some of the correlations are a function of the coding procedures. Conservative and liberal parties are, for instance, defined as cadre parties, so it does not come as a surprise that the correlations between cadre and these party families are relatively high.

From the inspection of bivariate correlations between the independent variables we now move on to the question of how these aspects influence the evaluations of leaders.

7.12 PARTY CHARACTERISTICS AND LEADERSHIP EFFECTS

Let us turn to the relationship between party characteristics and the effect of leader evaluation on the vote. In Table 7.3 we show the bivariate relationships between leadership effects and each of the party characteristics.

TABLE 7.3 *Bivariate correlations between leadership effects and party characteristics (*N = *248); Pearson's* r

	Leader effect
Election year	−0.220**
Governmental status	0.195**
Party size	0.655**
Age	−0.305**
Cadre party	0.053
Ecological parties	−0.193**
Left socialist	−0.120
Communist	−0.037
Social democratic	0.217**
Liberal	−0.306**
Agrarian	0.074
Conservative	0.363**
Right-wing populist	0.021
Regionalist parties	−0.189**

First of all, we observe that the correlation between election year and leader evaluation is negative. This means that the effect of leader evaluations on the vote has not increased over time as one may have expected (see also Curtice and Hunjan 2009). On the contrary, leadership effect on the vote has decreased over time. Party size is by far the most important variable. The effect of leader evaluations is much higher among those who vote for large parties than among those who vote for small parties. As mentioned above, this relationship is not an obvious one. Although governmental status is also positively related to high leadership impact, the coefficient is much smaller than for party size. Nevertheless, the added visibility and status of running as an incumbent seems to be conducive to a significant positive effect of leader evaluation on the vote. The party's age also influences leadership effects in a positive way. The older the party, the more important the effect of leader evaluations. With respect to Maurice Duverger's classic taxonomy, we find no significant difference between cadre parties and other parties with regard to the effect of leader evaluations on the vote.

The relationship between party family and leader impact is generally not significant and relevant. It depends to a large extent on the particular party family. The only significant positive correlations are those for conservative and social democratic parties. However, this may be more a result of their size and governmental participation than of their ideological profile (cf. Table 7.2). Significant, but negative associations are displayed for liberal parties and ecological parties. Thus, the impact of leaders on party choice is low for liberal voters. Moreover, we do not find any significant results for right-wing populist parties, and we find a negative correlation for regional parties.

7.13 MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

These simple bivariate correlations have shown some interesting and unexpected results. However, the main task of this chapter is to analyse the effect of the simultaneous interplay of different party characteristics on the vote. In order to accomplish this we have run a cluster analysis with the most important party characteristics and leadership effects. The important characteristics are those which show significant and substantial associations with the effect of leader evaluations on the vote: electoral size, age in years in the particular election year, and governmental status in the preceding legislature. Cadre party and party family are not included in the cluster analysis because of the insignificant and low correlations with the leadership effect. We did not find support for the main hypotheses about the latter characteristics; neither cadre parties nor regionalist or populist parties show the expected associations. To control for the decreasing leadership effect over time the mean of each party over time is used. A five-cluster solution proved to represent the data structure best, as indicated by the different stages of cluster building. The clusters are homogeneous with respect to the cases they include and heterogeneous vis-à-vis other clusters. In Table 7.4, we show the mean leadership effects for each of the five clusters and the means of the particular characteristics by cluster. We see that the effect of leader evaluations on the vote is strongest in the first cluster, and lowest in the fourth cluster. Three of the presented clusters have a considerable lower average leader impact and two of them show a very high impact, compared with the overall average. The same pattern can be observed with regard to the electoral size of parties. All of the clusters with a higher leader impact show as well a considerable higher mean with respect to size than their counterparts with low leader effects. We see that the oldest parties are grouped together in the two clusters with strong leadership impact and electorally successful parties. But governmental status does not fit in with this pattern. Governing parties are placed both in a cluster with high leader impact (cluster 1) and in a cluster with low leader impact (cluster 3). According to changes in governmental status, parties may switch from one cluster to the other; from the first to the second cluster and from the third cluster, where small coalition parties are represented, to the fourth or fifth cluster if they lose their governmental status.[9]

The main objective of the cluster analysis was to trace different combinations of party traits in the data. If we summarize the results in descriptive terms, the first cluster is on average the one with the most influential leaders, the most powerful parties according to their electoral success and governing position, and these parties are, at the same time, very old. In this cluster, sixty-five parties are represented. These are exclusively governing parties, very large parties, and the oldest parties of their party system. The second cluster is distinct from the first because of a slightly lower leader impact and the governing status of the parties.

TABLE 7.4 *Means and standard deviations of leader effect over time, size, age, and governing status by cluster*

Cluster	*N*	Leader impact over time		Size in percentage of votes		Age in years		Governmental status	
		Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
1	65	0.447	0.062	43.2	7.85	101	38.5	1	0
2	63	0.442	0.070	36.2	8.70	105	42.0	0	0
3	30	0.229	0.081	12.7	8.65	46	24.6	1	0
4	42	0.232	0.074	10.1	5.71	89	24.8	0	0
5	65	0.256	0.085	8.6	7.17	17	12.5	0	0
Total	265	0.341	0.125	24.4	16.98	73	48.2	0.358	0.48

Obviously, the sixty-three parties grouped together here are the strongest opposition parties in terms of votes at elections, and they have all lost out in the competition with the parties in the first cluster. The fact that parties in the first cluster switch to the second if they lose their governing position (and vice versa), shows that the governmental status of the parties is the decisive difference between clusters 1 and 2. Consequently, the two first clusters with dominant parties running for government are represented in most of our nine countries. The only exception is the Netherlands. Neither the frequently governing Christian Democrats (CDA) nor their most powerful competitor the Social Democrats (PvdA) are represented in these clusters. They belong to the third cluster, which can be described as the cluster of the small coalition partners. In this smaller group with thirty parties, leaders are not so important for the vote. Their success at the polls is comparatively low, but they are all part of a government. We thus find small coalition partners like the liberal parties of Germany, Norway, and Sweden represented in this group. Consequently, the third cluster is not present in countries where coalition building is not necessary or practised. The last two clusters, four and five, have both weak leaders and less success. They are neither part of a government nor strong in electoral terms. But they are different with regard to age. In the fourth cluster we find parties established before the Second World War, and in cluster five we find parties established after the war. Accordingly, the fourth cluster includes particularly the smaller and older parties from Australia, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, while in all other countries this cluster remains empty. Therefore, all green parties belong to the same cluster as the regionalist or populist parties, because they share key characteristics with regards to their electoral success, their systemic function, and their young age, and, most surprisingly, they share as well a low impact of leader evaluations on the vote. In the last cluster all the younger parties, which have been established during the second wave of democratization or later on, are grouped together. Consequently, in all the countries where 'new' parties emerged after the Second World War or where the existing party system was established later, the fifth cluster is represented. The only countries where no parties belong to this group are the United Kingdom and the United States.

The countries themselves are not that different with regard to the distribution of their parties on the five clusters. How the parties of the investigated countries are scattered over the five clusters depends obviously on the party system, its size, age and coalition structure, and on the equivalent party characteristics. The importance of party competition is illustrated by the Netherlands, where the correlation between coalition structures, competition dynamics, and leadership effect becomes obvious. But as indicated by the correlations in Table 7.3 and confirmed by the cluster structure, the electoral success, their potential role in a government, and therefore the visibility of the party are generally the most important factors behind the effect of leader evaluations on the vote. This means that leader evaluations have the strongest impact on the vote among those who vote for

very large, very old, and governing parties. However, leaders account for much less of the vote among those who vote for small parties, even when the parties are part of the governing power structure. Obviously, the electoral success of a party is the most important characteristic with regard to leadership effects on voting behaviour.

7.14 CONCLUSIONS

Although we have not controlled for all factors that influence voting behaviour in the countries involved in this analysis, we do report some interesting findings. The analysis has not only shown that leadership evaluation has an effect on the propensity to vote for a given party but also that this tendency is not randomly distributed among all kinds of parties. The weakening of traditional bonds between voters and parties, and the increasing influence of person-oriented mass media, would lead us to believe that leadership effects would be stronger now than they were in the 'good old days'. This is not the case. Our analysis shows the opposite. The effect of leader evaluations on the vote is actually weaker now than before. Moreover, established, large parties tend to be looked upon as 'party machines' with little leeway for individual leaders. However, these expectations are not backed by our findings. Obviously, the tendency to let popular leaders influence the vote decision is closely related to the propensity that the leader might take on a prominent and powerful position after the election. The electoral success and therefore the chance to gain power seem to be the main source for strong leadership effects. Not unexpectedly, the *Regierungsbonus* has a positive effect for large parties, but not for small coalition partners. As for the age of parties, it seems to be strongly related to their electoral size, and thus indirectly a predictor of leadership effects.

Other party characteristics such as ideological family and the organizational structure of a cadre party, which are closely connected to each other and to the historical period when the party was established, do not have the expected impact on leader effects. Green parties, in which party leaders are not only less important in terms of party statutes but also in the eyes of their voters, are the only exception. The expected prominent role of leaders of regionalist and populist parties could not generally be confirmed. Finally, the association of conservatism or social democracy and leadership impact is obviously more a function of electoral success than of ideology.

In sum, personalization of politics is not only a function of political systems, changing times, and personalities. The success of political leaders is not the least closely linked to the popularity and success of the parties they represent. In itself this may appear to be stating the obvious. However, our findings represent an

important correction to the widespread assumption that political leaders have become more important for the voters than parties and politics.

NOTES

1. To some extent the distinction between mass and cadre parties follows a distinction between ideological and non-ideological parties. However, it is difficult to categorize parties according to their degree of ideological substance. Hence, we have not included this distinction in the analysis.
2. In this analysis we operationalize cadre parties as conservative and liberal parties, while the other parties are defined as mass parties.
3. The effect, however, is contingent upon the type of political system. The difference between winners and losers is clearer in majoritarian systems than in countries with consensual political institutions.
4. The standardized leader ratings offered in the data set are used and data is weighted as recommended in the documentation.
5. The results of the logistic regression analysis are saved as a variable in the macro file, which is the source for the following analysis. In this analysis leadership effects are not controlled for party evaluations as is done in other chapters' analyses, because party evaluations are strongly correlated and depending on our independent variables, namely the party characteristics. Thus, the control for party evaluation may be considered redundant in this case.
6. The categorization of particular parties is documented in the Appendix (Table 7.A.1).
7. We have chosen cluster analysis because it is an exploratory data analysis tool appropriate for classifications. Although we have formulated hypotheses about how party characteristics may affect leader impact, we are not as certain about how the parties should be classified on all the particular characteristics.
8. Governing parties are coded '1' for governing party, '0' for non-governing. Size is measured in per cent of votes received. Age is measured as the year the party was established. This means that high value on this variable indicates low age of the party. Cadre parties are coded '1' for cadre and '0' for other parties. Party families are coded '1' for voting for a party in this family and '0' for voting for other parties.
9. The distribution of all parties by clusters is displayed in Table 7.A.2 in the Appendix.

Appendix

TABLE 7.A.1 *Party families by cluster*

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5	Total
Ecological parties					14	14
Left socialist parties				7	5	12
(ex-)Communist parties					7	7
Social democratic parties	25	19	2		9	55
Liberal parties	9	11	14	20	14	68
Agrarian + religious parties			10	12	6	14
Nationalist-conservative parties	31	33			2	66
Populist parties			1		6	7
Regional parties			3	3	2	8
Total	65	63	30	42	65	265

TABLE 7.A.2 *Individual parties by cluster*

Cluster	1	2	3	4	5
Description	Large, governing, old parties	Large, non-governing, old parties	Small coalition parties	Small, old, non-governing parties	Small, new, non-governing parties
Australia					
LP	3	3			
ALP	3	3			
NP			3	3	
AD					6
Canada					
LIB	4	3			
PC	3	4			
NDP					7
CA					2
BQ					2
Germany					
SPD	5	6			
CDU/CSU	7	4			
FDP			9		2
B90/Gr					5
PDS					3
The Netherlands					
PvdA			2		2
CDA			4		
VVD			2		2
D66					4
GL					3
Norway					
DNA	4	1			
H	1	4			
KrF			1	4	
SP			1	4	
SV					5
FrP			1		4
V				5	
Spain					
IU					4
PP	1	3			
PSOE	3	1			
Sweden					
V				7	
SAP	4	3			
CP			3	4	

TABLE 7.A.2 Continued

Cluster	1	2	3	4	5
Description	Large, governing, old parties	Large, non-governing, old parties	Small coalition parties	Small, old, non-governing parties	Small, new, non-governing parties
FP			3	4	
MSP	3	4			
KD			1		6
MPG					6
ND					2
United Kingdom					
CON	5	6			
LAB	6	5			
LDP				11	
United States					
DEM	5	8			
REP	8	5			
Total	65	63	30	42	65

8

Leader Effects and the Impact of Leader Characteristics in Nine Countries

Richard Nadeau and Neil Nevitte

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The 'presidentialization' hypothesis suggests that party leaders in parliamentary democracies matter more now than before for a combination of reasons (Poguntke and Webb 2005; McAllister 2007). First, media coverage of elections, and particularly television coverage, focuses increasingly on leaders and their personalities (Mendelsohn 1996). Second, weakening partisan ties mean that voters are more willing to switch parties on the basis of factors such as leadership (Wattenberg 1998; Dalton 2000*a*). Thus, if voters are more exposed to leaders and less constrained by partisan ties, it becomes particularly important to understand what it is about leaders that has the potential to shape voters' evaluations of leaders and voters' electoral choices. This chapter examines what impact such leader characteristics as gender and age have on voters' evaluations of leaders and on their vote choices. It also explores the impact of the length of time leaders have been in office, while also considering such system-level factors as the electoral rules.

Most of the available research evidence concerning these questions comes primarily from single country studies. We begin by drawing on that literature to develop specific hypotheses concerning the range of possible effects of leaders' characteristics. The empirical investigation that follows examines data on leaders competing in national elections in nine countries (Australia, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and across three time periods (Period 1: the 1950s to the 1970s; Period 2: the 1980s; and Period 3: the 1990s to 2001). In all, sixty-six elections across five decades are considered. The elections in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States were conducted under first-past-the-post (FPTP) rules, and the elections in the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and Sweden operated under proportional representation (PR) rules. German elections operated under mixed rules, whereas the Australian elections used an alternative vote system. Since the unit of analysis is each leader at each election, the analysis includes 265 cases (62 in Period 1, 90 in Period 2, and 113 in Period 3).

The empirical results are presented in three parts. The analysis begins with a basic description of the comparative characteristics of leaders. Here, the focus is on cross-national variations in such leader characteristics as age, gender, and time in office, and also on the stability and variation in these characteristics across time. Variations by party are also considered. Part two considers what impact leaders had on vote decision in the nine countries over the three time periods under consideration. It also considers cross-time and cross-national variations in leader evaluations. The last part evaluates the net effects of these factors on citizens' evaluations of leaders, and on their electoral choices.

When considering the impact of leader characteristics on the vote decision, we examine the possibility that there might be interaction effects between leader characteristics and leader evaluations on the vote decision.[1] In order to estimate these interaction effects we follow a two-step procedure. In step one, regressions with the vote as the dependent variable and the leader and party ratings as explanatory variables are performed (for instance, Liberal vote in 1968 in Canada regressed on ratings of Pierre Elliott Trudeau and the Liberal Party). In step two, the dependent variable is based on the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) coefficients derived from step one, with the leader characteristics as the explanatory variables. A significant coefficient for one of the leader characteristics is interpreted as indicating the presence of an interaction effect between leader ratings and leader characteristics.

8.2 LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESES

A variety of scholars have suggested that there is a relationship between relatively easily observable leader or candidate characteristics and vote choice. Enelow and Hinich (1982), for example, propose a model of electoral competition that takes into account such 'nonspatial attributes' as race, religion, or perceptions of a candidate's style or past performance, which they assume enter into a voter's decision. Popkin (1994) further contends that voters use simple demographic characteristics of candidates, including race, ethnicity, religion, and gender, as low-information cues for estimating the policies of candidates. The argument is that voters associate certain human traits with specific behaviours, and in situations where voters have very little information about candidates and their policy positions, these demographic cues provide an 'economical' estimate of candidate behaviour (Popkin 1994: 63–4).

There is also some evidence to indicate that, in making their decision, voters use their socio-demographic similarity to candidates or party leaders as a 'criterion of last resort'. Using data from the 1993 and 1997 Canadian federal elections, Cutler (2002) finds that, after other such factors as partisanship, economic perceptions,

and policy positions are controlled for, voters were more likely to vote for parties whose leaders were more like them.

Not surprisingly, most studies on voting cues focus on aspects of leaders' personalities (see chapter 11, where Ohr and Oscarsson examine in detail the impact of leaders' personalities on vote choice). The assumption is that voters have a predetermined idea or 'schema' about what a leader should be like. For example, in their investigation of open-ended voter assessments of US presidential candidates from 1952 to 1984, Miller et al. (1986) show that voters tended to focus on 'personality' characteristics of the candidates, while partisanship and issue positions turned out to be relatively unimportant. Voters focus on such traits as competence, integrity, reliability, and charisma, but they also rely on leaders' personal characteristics to anticipate how candidates will perform if elected. Personal characteristics 'can be seen as comprising the most purely personal comments', including such observable features as age, health, religion, wealth, and past occupations (Miller et al. 1986: 528). Miller et al. find that personal characteristics (e.g. 'too old', 'wealthy', 'mature', and 'well-known') accounted for roughly 30 per cent of candidate assessments from 1952 to 1960; only 11, 14, and 6 per cent of assessments in 1964, 1968, and 1972, respectively; and 16–19 per cent of assessments from 1976 to 1984. These fairly substantial cross-time variations were attributed to 'the uniqueness of particular candidates'.

Miller et al. also contend that voters who are less informed are more likely to rely on particular personal characteristics because they are easier to ascertain; they amount to 'relatively cost-free information used by many voters when evaluating candidates' (Miller et al. 1986: 531). Their evidence suggests that less-educated voters are significantly more likely than others to draw conclusions about other aspects of candidates' personalities – their competence, integrity, and reliability – on the basis of these personal characteristics (ibid.). But their evidence concerning candidate thermometer ratings and the presidential vote indicates that voter judgements about 'performance-relevant criteria' such as competence and integrity have a greater impact on the vote than do the more easily observable personal characteristics, even among the less educated (Miller et al. 1986: 534).

More recent works have focused almost entirely upon personality characteristics and suggest that the kinds of leader characteristics that influence the vote are consistent across parties and countries. Examining leaders in both Australia and Great Britain, Bean and Mughan (1989), for instance, find substantial variation in how people judged leaders on a series of questions about their qualities. Four of these qualities – effectiveness, caring, listening to reason, and sticking to principles – consistently turned out to be significant predictors of a vote for each leader's party (Bean and Mughan 1989: 1,171). Further research by Bean (1993) on the effect of open-ended party leader assessments in Australia and New Zealand also found that the 'performance-relevant criteria' of competence and integrity had a greater electoral effect across parties and nations than other characteristics. Harold Clarke and his colleagues conclude that leaders' images mattered in recent

elections in the United Kingdom, and that perceptions about their competence and empathy played a central role in the formation of voters' assessments about them (Clarke et al. 2004, 2009). Nadeau and Lewis-Beck (2009) observe similar patterns in their work on French presidential candidates over the last twenty years. And in their revisitation of *The American Voter*, Lewis-Beck et al. (2008: 45) note that President George W. Bush was perceived as 'strong, decisive, honest and with integrity' in the 2004 election, whereas his opponent, John Kerry, was viewed as lacking these qualities (2008: 49).

Sustained empirical investigations of whether, and how, particular socio-demographic characteristics of leaders might affect their evaluations and vote choice are few and far between. Moreover, the evidence derived from these studies remains inconclusive. The earlier research by Bean (1993) did not include measures for such 'personal characteristics' but Bean's subsequent investigation indicates that personal characteristics had some, albeit weak, effects. In chapter 11, Ohr and Oscarsson find that 'non-political' leader traits such as physical attractiveness and a convincing appearance had no discernible impact on vote choice in the 1998 German election.

The two characteristics that have received the most attention from scholars are gender and age. With respect to gender, most investigations have focused on the 'gender identity' hypothesis, which posits that women are more likely than men to vote for parties with female leaders because they identify with such leaders on the basis of gender. Banducci and Karp's analysis (2000) of the gender identity hypothesis in Canada and the United Kingdom finds that even though women tend to evaluate women leaders more favourably, leadership evaluations have an inconsistent effect across nations. O'Neill's study (1998) of the 1993 Canadian federal election shows that the two parties led by women, the New Democratic Party and the Progressive Conservative Party, recruited relatively larger shares of female voters than did the other federal parties.[2] On balance, however, there is no clear indication that the impact of leader evaluations on the vote will be greater for female party leaders.

Despite the fact that the age of political leaders has featured prominently in the media during the course of election campaigns in a variety of countries, to our knowledge there has been no systematic empirical research demonstrating whether the age factor has any influence on the vote.[3] To be sure, some open-ended assessments of US presidential candidates suggest that personal characteristics such as age matter (Miller et al. 1986). And Popkin and others have suggested age could be an important factor in vote choice (Enelow and Hinich 1982; Popkin 1994: 63). In the United States, Ronald Reagan regularly faced questions about his relatively old age in both the 1980 and 1984 presidential elections. More recently, the US media questioned whether 'old' Republican presidential nominees Robert Dole and John McCain had the stamina necessary to be president ('Is Dole Too Old?' asked the New Republic in 1996). One analysis of Dole's declining support in polls during the early stages of the campaign indicated that his age was an

important factor (Sarpolus 1995). Whether Barack Obama's strong showing among younger voters (Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2009) is attributable to McCain's 'age handicap' remains to be established.[4]

Leader's age is an issue elsewhere as well. In Canada, elites in the governing Liberal Party expressed concern not only about the advancing age of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien but also that of his most obvious successor – Paul Martin. And in Britain, Conservative Party members and the media questioned whether leadership candidate Kenneth Clarke's advancing age would hurt the party in elections (Riddell and Lister 2001). If public comments are any indication, then the expectation would be that seniority is a liability: the older a political leader is, the more negatively he or she will be evaluated when compared with younger counterparts.

In addition to age, there are two other time-related considerations that could plausibly affect how citizens evaluate leaders and for whom they decide to vote. The first concerns the distinction between new leaders, those who are new to their office, and those who have been around for some time. Here, the expectation is that leaders with a shorter tenure in their position will receive higher leader evaluations; they bask, however briefly, in a temporary glow of popularity.

There are reasons to believe that both new leaders and new governments enjoy this 'honeymoon' effect, arguably because they have had fewer opportunities to disappoint voters. Goodhart and Bhansali (1970) were among the first to demonstrate that this cycle of party popularity evolves independently of economic factors. In fact, these cycles in the governing party's popularity have been linked to voters' lack of any basis for making comparative judgements about the governing party in the interval between elections. Miller and Mackie (1973) have pointed out that governing parties are generally perceived more favourably around the time of elections because voters are 'keenly aware that a vote against the government would be a vote in favour of some other party'. The implication is that voters have unrealistically high expectations about governing parties immediately after an election, and that they are therefore ultimately disappointed by their government's performance. Stimson's study (1976) of presidential approval in the United States reaches a similar conclusion, namely that 'presidential approval may be almost wholly independent of the President's behaviour in office' (Stimson 1976: 1). Put somewhat differently, a significant portion of the electorate is poorly informed on matters pertaining to politics, and judge presidents on the basis of promised results.[5]

A variation of this argument is proposed by Mueller (1970), who argues that 'coalitions of minorities' emerge during a president's term in office, and these coalitions consist of voters who are alienated by the president's policy choices. In the Canadian setting, both Nadeau (1990) and Johnston (1999) find evidence of inter-election cycles of 'honeymoon, decay, and recovery' for federal governments from 1974 to 1993, governing parties being relatively more popular in the months following an election. And, as in the United Kingdom, the indications

are that this cycle of popularity seems to be independent of economic cycles (Johnston 1999).

Here the expectation is that just as new governments enjoy a honeymoon period following an election, leaders might enjoy a honeymoon period following their selection as leaders by their parties. Newer leaders are less likely to be perceived by electorates as 'disappointments', and because of their shorter tenure in office are less likely to have alienated voters with their choices.

It might also be the case that evaluations of leaders with a longer tenure in office have a greater impact on vote choice than evaluations of newer leaders. This expectation is consistent with research on voting cues; voters are likely to know more about leaders the longer they have been in office, and therefore have more cues on which to base their vote.

In addition to individual-level leader characteristics, it is also possible that system-level variables might matter. Electoral rules, for example, may be important to the extent that they mediate the relationships between voters, parties, and leaders in significantly different ways. Countries with PR rules are more likely to be party-dominated because PR favours the deeper institutionalization of parties. As Aardal and Oscarsson suggest in their study of leader effects on party choice in Norway and Sweden, 'the Scandinavian countries seem to be archetypes of party-dominated systems' (2001: 2). Despite the supposed 'decline' of parties in the Netherlands and the weakening ties of parties to television, print media, and economic organizations, Andeweg and Irwin (2002) argue that Dutch parties actually strengthened their control over candidates. During the period of polarization, candidate selection in the Netherlands was elite-controlled, and cabinet ministers with a short history in the party were often recruited from outside parliament. However, the democratization and decentralization of parties since the 1960s have made the candidate selection process more difficult. Party members attach increasing importance to service to the party, and Andeweg and Irwin conclude that the possibilities for a career in politics are now 'completely in the hands of the parties' (Andeweg and Irwin 2002: 70).

The clear implication is that with strong parties in PR systems, leader evaluations should have less impact on vote choice, as voters are more likely to decide on the basis of party rather than leader. That hypothesis is consistent with the findings of MacDonald et al. (1995: 462–3) and Aardal and Oscarsson (2001).

8.3 HYPOTHESES

The cumulative research, then, suggests that there are at least six hypotheses to explore. The first pair of hypotheses concerns the impact of leader evaluations on the vote, across time and systems:

1. Leader characteristics had a greater impact on the vote in the 1990s than they did in the 1980s (presidentialization hypothesis).
2. Leader evaluations will have less of an impact on vote choice in PR systems than in party systems working under FPTP rules in general and a presidential system in particular.

The second pair of hypotheses concerns the age of leaders and the honeymoon effect:

3. Older leaders will receive lower mean leader evaluations than younger leaders.
4. Voters will evaluate new leaders more positively than those who have held office for a long period of time.

The final pair of hypotheses concerns interaction effects between leader characteristics and the impact of leader evaluations on voting:

5. The impact of leader evaluations on the voters will be greater for leaders who have had a longer tenure in office.
6. Leader effects are not stronger for women leaders than for men.

8.4 FINDINGS

The place to begin is with the basic data concerning cross-time and cross-national variations in the characteristics of those leaders who run for office in national elections. In particular, we must determine whether leaders differ significantly from one country to another when it comes to such socio-demographic attributes as age, gender, and length of time in office, and whether there have been any discernible changes on these dimensions across the two decades for which we have data.

The basic cross-national findings concerning age, time in office, and gender are summarized in Table 8.1, and the cross-national similarities turn out to be more striking than the variations. The average age of leaders is around 52 years; they have been in office for an average of just over six years, and the vast majority (91 per cent) are male. The cases of Norway and Australia come closest to qualifying as outliers. In Norway, leaders running for office tend to be slightly younger (46 years of age) than the norm, and in Australia leaders have been in office for a shorter period of time (3 years). Moreover, in both countries female leaders are more frequent than in the other seven countries.

The most straightforward way to assess whether there have been any significant changes across the three time periods under examination is simply to compare the characteristics of leaders who ran for office in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s

TABLE 8.1 *Leader characteristics by country*

Country	Age	Time in office (years)	Female (%)	(*N*)
Australia	50	3.0	21	(24)
Canada	53	5.0	12	(25)
Germany	55	4.6	0	(38)
The Netherlands	53	7.6	16	(19)
Norway	46	8.2	20	(35)
Spain	51	7.5	0	(12)
Sweden	51	7.8	7	(44)
The United Kingdom	52	5.9	9	(33)
The United States	57	–	0	(26)
Average (total)	52	6.2	9.4	(256)

Source: CSES Macrofile.

(Period 1) with the characteristics of those who ran in the 1980s (Period 2) and the 1990s (Period 3). These data are summarized in Table 8.2. However, the available data for the first time period are limited – there are data for only five of the nine countries under consideration – and therefore variations across time should be interpreted with caution. First, there is very little evidence of much age variation across the three time periods; the leaders' average age was about 52 years in the 1990s and 1980s, a marginal decrease from previous decades (53.6 years of age). Second, time in office varies slightly across the three periods (4.9, 6.6, and 5.4 years), with the sharpest cross-time changes occurring in Canada, particularly from the 1980s to the 1990s, where the two-term Prime Minister Brian Mulroney (Progressive Conservative) was replaced by Jean Chrétien (Liberal). The most striking change across the three periods, perhaps, concerns shifts in the gender composition of the parties' leadership. From the 1950s to the 1970s, less than 2 per cent of the leaders were women. In the 1980s, this figure increased to 9 per cent, and in the 1990s to 12.6 per cent. Only the United Kingdom had a female leader during the first period (Margaret Thatcher), whereas neither Canada nor Sweden had any female party leaders in the 1980s – female party leaders emerged in both countries in the 1990s, though only for a very brief period in Canada. However, the United Kingdom lost its only female party leader during the 1980s, and by the 1990s no German, Spanish, or US political party had yet appointed a female party leader.

A more detailed country-specific breakdown of these data (not shown here) indicates some intriguing cross-national variations. For instance, it is reasonable to suppose that smaller and more leftist parties might be inherently more hospitable to the idea of having female leaders. But there seems to be little support for that line of speculation. The leaders of both the Conservative Party in Britain and the Progressive Conservatives in Canada, for example, were women as were the leaders of the Centrist and conservative parties in Norway. As for time in office,

TABLE 8.2 *Leader characteristics across time and country*

Country	Period 1 (1950s through 1970s)				Period 2 (1980s)				Period 3 (1990 to present)			
	Age	Time in office	Female (%)	(*N*)	Age	Time in office	Female (%)	(*N*)	Age	Time in office	Female (%)	(*N*)
Australia				(0)	52	2.5	25	(4)	50	3.1	20	(20)
Canada	54	4.7	0	(9)	51	7.3	0	(6)	53	3.9	30	(10)
Germany	55	2.9	0	(15)	57	6.7	0	(9)	54	5.1	0	(14)
Netherlands				(0)	50	8.4	11	(9)	55	6.9	20	(10)
Norway				(0)	47	4.4	14	(21)	45	5.7	29	(14)
Spain				(0)	52	8.3	0	(6)	51	6.7	0	(6)
Sweden	51	6.3	0	(6)	49	7.9	0	(18)	52	6.8	15	(20)
United Kingdom	53	5.8	6	(18)	55	7.3	33	(6)	48	5.2	0	(9)
United States	55		0	(14)	62		0	(6)	57		0	(6)
Average (total)	53.6	4.9	1.2	(62)	52.7	6.6	9.2	(85)	51.6	5.4	12.6	(109)

Source: CSES Macrofile.

TABLE 8.3 *Leader impact and evaluation across time and country*

Country	Period 1 (1950s through 1970s)			Period 2 (1980s)			Period 3 (1990 to present)		
	Impact	Evaluation	(*N*)	Impact	Evaluation	(*N*)	Impact	Evaluation	(*N*)
Australia			(0)		0.48	(4)	0.15	0.49	(20)
Canada	0.24	0.55	(9)	0.26	0.51	(6)	0.21	0.50	(10)
Germany	0.26	0.62	(11)	0.22	0.60	(9)	0.22	0.47	(14)
Netherlands			(0)	0.11	0.57	(8)	0.10	0.55	(10)
Norway			(0)	0.20	0.51	(21)	0.14	0.50	(14)
Spain			(0)	0.48	0.49	(6)	0.31	0.52	(6)
Sweden	0.06	0.56	(5)	0.07	0.56	(16)	0.06	0.54	(23)
United Kingdom	0.36	0.55	(15)	0.18	0.62	(6)	0.16	0.57	(9)
United States	0.68	0.53	(14)	0.79	0.49	(6)	0.79	0.50	(6)
Average (total)	0.32	0.56	(54)	0.28	0.54	(82)	0.24	0.51	(112)

Source: CSES Macrofile.

it is positively skewed by the presence of a single leader in nearly every country (Chrétien in Canada, Thatcher in the United Kingdom, Kohl in Germany, as well as leaders of the Dutch PvdA and Norwegian Progress party).

One fundamental research question to explore, of course, concerns the impact of leaders on the vote and particularly the expectation that the impact of leaders will increase as campaigns become more leader-centred. However, Curtice and Hunjan's analysis of elections from 1996 to 2002 in twenty-nine countries (chapter 6) indicates little support for the presidentialization hypothesis: parliamentary elections inhibit leaders' impacts on the vote. Here, we examine nine countries over a longer period of time. In aggregate, as Table 8.3 shows, there is little support for the presidentialization hypothesis; the coefficient indicating the impact of leaders on the vote actually decreased (from a mean OLS coefficient of 0.32 to 0.28, and then to 0.24) across the three time periods. Nevertheless, there is evidence of significant cross-national variation in leader effects. Leader effects declined the most in the United Kingdom from the 1950s through to the 1980s, falling from 0.36 to 0.18, and Spain from the 1980s to 1990s, falling from 0.48 to 0.31. Generally, in those countries where leader effects were greater in the 1980s (Canada, Spain, the United States, and Germany), leader effects also tended to be greater in the 1990s. One plausible interpretation of that finding is that some system-level characteristics are at work. More particularly, leader effects generally seem to be stronger in countries with fewer parties and weaker in those countries with a larger number of parties (Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands). There is some support, then, for our second hypothesis, that leader evaluations have less of an impact on vote choice in PR systems. It should be immediately noted, however, that this cross-national variation may not be attributable to the characteristics of electoral systems alone. Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands all have systems working with PR rules, but in the 1980s leaders in Norway had among the greatest impact on the vote. It is also noteworthy that Spain uses a PR system, but is second only to the United States in leader impacts.

There is no particular reason to suppose that cross-national and cross-time variations in leader evaluations will simply mimic the impact of those evaluations on the vote. In fact on balance, the evidence suggests that they do not. As the results summarized in Table 8.3 show, citizens' evaluations of leaders remained relatively stable across the three time periods for most countries. The decline in leader ratings between the three periods, from 0.56 to 0.54, and then to 0.51, qualifies as modest. More noteworthy, perhaps, is the evidence indicating that leaders had the greatest impact in the United States and Spain even though leader ratings were not high in those countries. In fact, ratings were highest in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Sweden, where leaders had the weakest effect on the vote.

On balance, these initial results seem to indicate relative stability in the cross-national and cross-time findings. But the data need to be unpacked and considered in greater detail. At issue is the question of what effect, if any, leaders'

TABLE 8.4 *Leader characteristics by evaluation, and impact on the vote*

Characteristic	(*N*)	%	Leader evaluation (mean)	Leader impact (mean)
Age				
44 years or younger	(48)	19	0.51	0.17
45–50 years	(72)	28	0.54	0.24
51–59 years	(94)	37	0.54	0.27
60 years or older	(42)	16	0.53	0.31
Time in office				
0–2 years	(76)	33	0.53	0.18
3–6 years	(74)	32	0.52	0.18
7 years or more	(79)	35	0.56	0.20
Gender				
Male	(232)	91	0.54	0.26
Female	(24)	9	0.52	0.15

characteristics such as age, time in office, and gender might have on leader evaluations and the impact of leaders on the vote decision.

Table 8.4 illustrates the effects of leaders' age, length of tenure in office, and gender, respectively, on both leader evaluations and the impact of leader evaluations on the vote. The 'Leader evaluation' column presents the mean 0 to 100 'thermometer' rating (re-scaled to 0 to 1) for leaders in each category of the leader characteristic under analysis. The 'Leader impact' column presents the mean OLS coefficients, measuring the relationship between leader's evaluation and vote choice, for leaders in each category of the characteristic under analysis.

The data in Table 8.4 indicate that, contrary to the expectation outlined in hypothesis 3, leaders' age has no significant influence on voter evaluations of leaders, but age does appear to have some influence on the impact of leader evaluations on the vote. On average, leaders in each category are evaluated at roughly the midpoint of the scale (0.51–0.54). However, leader evaluations have a somewhat greater mean impact on the vote for the oldest age category (0.31) and a weaker impact for the youngest age category (0.17).

If there are dynamics to leader popularity then it is likely that newer leaders might benefit from a 'honeymoon' period, and that voters might give a relatively high approval rating for new leaders (hypothesis 4). Significantly, however, the data in Table 8.4 show that leadership tenure is inconsequential to leader evaluation: our data indicate that leaders receive essentially the same ratings regardless of whether they have held their positions for less than two years or more than seven years. If anything, leaders who have been in office for more than seven years have slightly higher evaluations than others, but the increase is modest (from 0.53 and 0.52 to 0.56).

It is reasonable to suppose that the longer a leader has been in office, the more information voters would have about that leader (hypothesis 5). That being so, we

might expect leader evaluations to have a greater impact the longer a leader has served. However, once again, the data in Table 8.4 show that the length of time each leader has served as leader of his or her party is unrelated to the impact of their evaluation on the vote.

Finally, while there is no indication that gender has a discernible effect on leader evaluations, contrary to expectations (hypothesis 6), it does appear to have an impact on the influence of leader evaluations on the vote. Mean evaluations are essentially the same for male and female leaders at 0.54 and 0.52, respectively. However, evaluations appear to have less of an impact on the vote for female leaders than for males. This suggests that when a female candidate is present, voters are slightly more likely to turn to other factors in determining whether or not to vote for a party. Women leaders do not draw more attention simply because they are women. However, it is also possible that period and spatial effects are at work here; female leaders have been more common in recent decades and in countries where leader impacts on the vote have generally been weaker.

This possibility suggests that it is prudent to turn to an alternative approach. Because it is entirely possible that some of the factors analysed above are highly correlated with one another, a further exploration of the effects of leader characteristics on leader evaluations and on vote choice requires a multivariate setup that allows us to isolate the effects of all these factors by controlling for several different factors simultaneously.

As it turns out, none of the factors under consideration in this analysis have a very substantial impact on voters' evaluations of leaders. Table 8.5 presents the results of an OLS regression of the determinants of leader evaluations and shows that, all other factors being equal, leader evaluations are largely unaffected by the leader's age, length of tenure in office, or gender. Model 1 illustrates the independent effects of age, time in office, and gender. Only time in office has a significant effect on leader evaluations: for every year a leader is in office, his or her evaluation improves by 0.002 on a 0 to 1 scale. Older leaders are no less popular than younger leaders, and male leaders are no more popular than females. Model 2 takes into account period effects; these have no significant independent effects on the impact of leader characteristics on evaluations. Model 3 takes into account system-level (country) variations. Here, the relationship between time in office and leader evaluations loses its statistical significance, but system-level differences have no discernible impact on leader evaluations. Finally, model 4 considers the impact of electoral rules on leader evaluations, measuring the difference between proportional systems (the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and, because it is a mixed corrective system, Germany) and majoritarian systems (Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States). Again, electoral rules have no discernible impact on leader evaluations.

On balance, then, there is no support for the two hypotheses concerning leader evaluations. First, newer leaders do not appear to benefit from honeymoon effects similar to those observed for new governments. In fact, all other factors being

TABLE 8.5 *The determinants of leader evaluations* [1]

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Characteristic				
Age	0.001 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)
Time in office	0.002 (0.001)*	0.003 (0.001)*	0.002 (0.001)	0.003 (0.001)*
Gender (female)	−0.005 (0.020)	0.007 (0.020)	0.009 (0.020)	0.008 (0.020)
Time period[2]				
Period 1		0.023 (0.015)	0.016 (0.017)	0.029 (0.016)
Period 3		−0.024 (0.013)	−0.023 (0.013)	−0.021 (0.013)
Country[3]				
Australia			−0.054 (0.028)	
Canada			−0.043 (0.028)	
Germany			−0.009 (0.026)	
Norway			−0.049 (0.026)	
Spain			−0.050 (0.033)	
Sweden			−0.014 (0.024)	
The United Kingdom			−0.001 (0.027)	
The United States			−0.055 (0.029)	
Electoral system				
Proportional				0.016 (0.012)
Intercept	0.494 (0.039)***	0.511 (0.039)***	0.544 (0.046)***	0.493 (0.041)***
N	265	265	265	265
R^2 (adj.)	0.012	0.042	0.066	0.045

Note: Entries are OLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.
*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$ (one-tailed).
[1] There are no values on the time in office variable for the United States. We have instead substituted mean values for missing ones in order to include US cases in these OLS regressions.
[2] Period 2 is the reference category.
[3] The Netherlands is the reference category.

equal, leaders who have been in office longer receive slightly more positive evaluations than newer leaders. Second, age is not a liability for party leaders; older leaders do not receive lower evaluations than younger ones.

Even so, it is still relevant to ask: do leader characteristics affect the impact of leaders on the vote? Table 8.6 presents the results of an OLS regression of the determinants of leader's impact on the vote. Here, we test the independent effects of age, tenure in office, and gender (accounting for the period, country, and electoral system) on the influence of leader evaluations on the vote.

The hypothesis concerning the impact of leader evaluations on the vote across time is not supported by the data. There is a period effect for leader's impact on the

TABLE 8.6 *The determinants of leader impact on the vote*[1]

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Characteristic				
Age	0.006 (0.002)**	0.005 (0.002)**	0.000 (0.001)	0.003 (0.002)*
Time in office	−0.002 (0.003)	−0.001 (0.003)	0.003 (0.002)	0.000 (0.003)
Gender (female)	−0.084 (0.047)	−0.048 (0.046)	−0.004 (0.030)	−0.062 (0.043)
Time period[2]				
Period 1		0.097 (0.035)**	0.002 (0.025)	0.035 (0.034)
Period 3		−0.055 (0.029)	−0.055 (0.019)**	−0.077 (0.028)**
Country[3]				
Australia			0.068 (0.041)*	
Canada			0.091 (0.041)**	
Germany			0.095 (0.038)**	
Norway			0.036 (0.038)	
Spain			0.249 (0.048)***	
Sweden			−0.057 (0.035)	
The United Kingdom			0.112 (0.040)**	
The United States			0.580 (0.042)***	
Electoral system				
Proportional				−0.160 (0.026)***
Intercept	−0.022 (0.090)	0.024 (0.088)	0.170 (0.067)*	0.199 (0.087)*
N	265	265	265	265
R^2 (adj.)	0.042	0.105	0.643	0.218

Note: Entries are OLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.
*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$ (one-tailed).
[1] There are no values on the time in office variable for the United States. We have instead substituted mean values for missing ones in order to include US cases in these OLS regressions.
[2] Period 2 is the reference category.
[3] The Netherlands is the reference category.

vote, but the direction of that effect contradicts the presidentialization hypothesis. The expectation is that with the declining significance of partisan attachments and the concomitant increasing importance of leader-centred television coverage, leaders are becoming increasingly important in parliamentary elections. If anything, leader evaluations were of slightly less importance to the vote over time: model 2 shows that leader evaluations had a significantly greater impact on the vote in Period 1 (the 1950s through the 1970s) than in later periods, and models 3 and 4 show that evaluations had a significantly weaker impact in the 1990s than in previous decades.

Consistent with our second hypothesis, the impact of leader evaluations on the vote is clearly stronger in majoritarian systems than in PR. The coefficients for the four countries using majoritarian rules (Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States) are all correctly signed and statistically significant. On

average, the relationship between leader evaluations and vote choice in PR systems has OLS coefficients of 0.16 lower than in majoritarian systems. This gap, not surprisingly, is even greater when PR countries are compared with the United States presidential system.

Finally, what about the interaction effects between leader characteristics and the impact of leader evaluations on voting? First, contrary to expectations, the impact of leader evaluations on voters is no greater for leaders that have been in office for longer periods than for relatively newer leaders. Second, the expectation that leader impacts will be no stronger for female leaders than for males is generally supported. The impact of female leader evaluations on the vote is stronger than that of males, but the relationship is not significant. Lastly, it is notable that age does slightly affect the impact of leader evaluations on the vote.

The country variable remains the most significant determinant of the leaders' impact on the vote (model 3). It turns out that leader evaluations matter most in the United States and Spain, and that they also have a significant impact in Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom. However, in every other country the impact of leader evaluations on the vote is relatively weak. These cross-national variations, of course, raise the question: what is it about these national settings that produces the variation? Generally, leader impacts are stronger in systems with majoritarian elections, and weaker in those with PR (see model 4). This finding, then, is broadly consistent with Curtice and Hunjan's conclusions in chapter 6.

The evidence indicating that leaders generally matter less in PR systems may seem counter-intuitive. Indeed, we might expect party leaders to matter more in countries where voters directly choose the party they wish to govern (PR systems) than in countries such as Canada and the United Kingdom (FPTP system) where voters choose individual candidates in geographically based constituencies. In the latter case, evaluations of local candidates represent an additional factor determining the vote and might therefore diminish the impact of leaders.

In important respects, PR institutionalizes parties; parties rather than individuals represent voters in PR systems. While it is possible for candidates in Canada and the United Kingdom to get elected in constituencies in which they are popular regardless of the party they represent, candidates in the Netherlands, Sweden, and Norway operate under list rules; they must get on their party's list in order to be elected. Moreover, parties in PR systems are more easily identified with issues and ideologies than in other systems. For instance, the two dominant parties in Canada in the 1980s and at least until 1993 were pragmatic brokerage parties; winning office entailed capturing broad coalitions of voters (Brodie and Jenson 1996). Likewise, the right of centre Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in Germany has rarely emphasized ideology and has concentrated instead on gaining and maintaining support from voters across religious, geographic, and socio-economic cleavages. According to Marina Costa Lobo (2008: 286): 'In the case of the German Christian Democrat and Social Democratic parties, evidence suggests they maintain a mass-based organization, but their electoral appeal is distinctively catch-all.'

It is possible that voters choosing between brokerage parties might focus more on leaders than on ideology or policies, although in many cases, the differences between ideologies or even policies are hard to discern (see Van Loon 1970).

However, the finding is that PR still accounts for less variation in leader impacts (model 4, adjusted $R^2 = 0.218$) than does country (model 3, adjusted $R^2 = 0.643$). There is one notable exception among the group of nine countries considered for this study, namely Spain.

What about Spain? In some respects, this finding might be regarded as somewhat puzzling. Yet a couple of considerations might explain why leader evaluations have a significant effect on the vote in Spain, despite its PR electoral system. First, when compared with other PR systems (e.g. the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden), Spain's party system is not characterized by fragmentation. Heywood (1995: 176) notes that from 1977 to 1982 the Spanish party system was characterized by 'imperfect two-party' competition, while from 1982 to 1993 the Socialist Party (PSOE) was predominant; and since 1993, Spain has been characterized by a 'two-party plus' system of competition. From 1982 to 2000, two parties captured between 65 and 79 per cent of the vote (Heywood 1995: 177; Alvarez-Rivera 2003). A second consideration to bear in mind is that Spain's transition to democracy is relatively recent and, therefore, Spanish political parties might be somewhat weaker than those found in other advanced industrial states. Heywood notes that the weaknesses of Spanish parties 'are related to the legacy of the Franco regime (. . .) there existed neither the tradition nor the experience of associative mechanisms which are essential to the functioning of a democratic party system' (Heywood 1995: 189). Spain's recent legacy of authoritarianism and relative inexperience with democracy, arguably, could mean that leaders' personalities are still far more important than their parties. Thus, the significant weakening of leader impact on the vote in Spain from the 1980s to the 1990s (from 0.48 to 0.31 – one of the largest declines in leader impact in any of the countries we analyse here) might indicate that with longer experience with democracy, leaders will matter less (see Costa Lobo 2006, 2008 for similar arguments and findings about the impact of leaders in Portugal).[6]

8.5 CONCLUSIONS

We began by arguing that at least six hypotheses might be drawn from the available empirical evidence concerning leader attributes and the presidentialization thesis. The first set of hypotheses concerned the impact of leader evaluations on the vote across time and countries. While the presidentialization hypothesis expects that leader characteristics will become increasingly important, the findings indicate that this does not appear to be the case (see King 2002*b*; Curtice and Holmberg 2005 for

a similar conclusion). For this particular set of countries, and for the time period for which data are available, leader evaluations had a weaker influence on the vote in the 1990s than in the 1980s or previous decades. Second, the expectation that leader evaluations would have less of an impact on vote choice in PR systems than in majoritarian systems was supported.

The second set of hypotheses proposed that specific leader characteristics might influence the evaluation of leaders. Here, the expectation was that old age would be a liability for leaders. It turns out, however, that evaluations of older leaders were no different than those of younger ones. Another hypothesis speculated that new leaders would be evaluated more positively because of the honeymoon effect. Again, the evidence does not support this expectation.

The final set of hypotheses concerned interaction effects between leader characteristics and the impact of leader evaluations on the vote. We expected that leader impact would be no stronger for women than for men. Consistent with this expectation, gender had no discernible impact on the vote. Yet the non-results for the gender variable require further exploration. For instance, it may be that gender exerts an influence on the decision made by individuals to run for elected offices (see Lawless and Fox 2005). Finally, we speculated that evaluations of leaders with a longer tenure in office would have a greater impact on the vote than evaluations of new leaders, because voters will have more information about the former on which to base their vote. However, the evidence does not support that interpretation.

Thus, contrary to the expectations of Enelow and Hinich (1982), Popkin (1994), and others, these findings suggest that such simple demographic attributes as age, gender, and time in office do not matter for the evaluations of leaders, or the impact of those evaluations on vote choice.

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NOTES

1. An interaction effect is present when the strength of the relationship between some independent variable (leader evaluation, in this case) and a dependent variable (vote decision) is contingent upon variation on another independent variable (leader characteristic, such as age, gender, time in office). Individually, the independent variables may have a relatively weak effect – or no effect at all – on the dependent variable, but together they produce a relatively strong effect.
2. Other investigations of gender tend to focus on candidates rather than leaders and the central question is the extent to which women candidates for political office are discriminated against in elections (Rasmussen 1983; Vallance 1984, 1988; Norris et al. 1992).
3. Walker (1960) examined the impact of the age of congressional candidates in the 1958 US congressional elections, finding that winners tended to be older than losers (51.7 years of age compared with 46.5), and that historical voting patterns and economic factors had the greatest influence on the impact of age on the vote decision: younger incumbents, for example, did better in districts with serious economic problems, and in 'swing' districts.
4. The election of Barack Obama has also raised questions about the impact of his race on his level of support. For an earlier study suggesting that the race of politicians is used as a judgemental shortcut by US voters, see Kuklinski and Hurley (1994). For evidence suggesting that Obama was denied a landslide because of race, see Sniderman and Stiglitz (2008) and Lewis-Beck et al. (2010).
5. The evidence suggests that political sophistication (education) is unrelated to cross-time variations in presidential approval (Presser and Converse 1976).
6. Arguably, the Australian case might also seem like an exception. However, we note that even with compulsory voting rules the coefficient for Australia is significant and not so different from that of Canada.

Appendix

TABLE 8.A.1 *Countries and elections in the study*

AUS	CAN	GER	NED	NOR	SPN	SWE	UK	US
1987	1968	1961	1986	1981	1986	1982	1964	1952
1990	1974	1965	1989	1985	1989	1985	1966	1956
1993	1979	1969	1994	1989	1993	1988	1970	1960
1996	1980	1972	1998	1993	2000	1991	1974(1)	1964
1998	1988	1976		1997		1994	1974(2)	1968
2001	1993	1980				1998	1979	1972
	1997	1983					1983	1976
		1987					1987	1980
		1990					1992	1984
		1994					1997	1988
		1998					2001	1992
								1996

Source: CSES Macrofile.

9

Voter Characteristics and Leader Effects

Elisabeth Gidengil

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Leaders clearly matter to vote choice, but their importance is likely to vary from one voter to the next (Bartle 2005). For some voters, leader evaluations will be the main consideration; for other voters, they may be more or less irrelevant. The question is: do leaders *systematically* matter more to certain types of voters and *systematically* less to others? This chapter will explore a number of possibilities. The rise of leader-centred politics thesis, which emphasizes the changing nature of media coverage and the weakening of partisan ties, raises two possibilities, namely that leaders are more important to voters who are more exposed to television news and to voters who lack strong partisan ties. The partisan dealignment thesis suggests another possibility. As voters' ties to political parties have weakened, the number of voters who decide how to vote during the campaign itself has grown, therefore raising the possibility that leaders carry more weight with these 'late-deciders'. Finally, there is the role of political sophistication that raises one last question: do leaders matter more to unsophisticated voters, or are they just as important to the politically sophisticated?

9.2 EXPOSURE TO TELEVISION NEWS

The rise of leader-centred politics thesis (Wattenberg 1991)[1] and the presidentialization thesis (Mughan 2000; Poguntke and Webb 2005) emphasizes the role of television in encouraging the personalization of politics and thereby enhancing the salience of leader evaluations in vote choice. At the individual level, this implies that leaders will matter most to voters who watch the most news on television. The media effects literature would conceptualize this as an example of 'priming'. The concept of priming is borrowed from cognitive psychology (Iyengar and Kinder 1987). In the context of vote choice, it refers to the process whereby extensive media coverage leads voters to attach more importance to a given consideration in deciding how to vote. The underlying theory is that intense media coverage

increases the accessibility of particular bits of information in people's memories.[2] As a result, this information is more likely to come to mind when people are casting about for criteria on which to base their political decisions. If the media focus on the leaders, information about leaders will be more accessible to the voters and leader evaluations will carry more weight when it comes to voting. According to the priming hypothesis, then, the more exposed voters are to television coverage of an election, the more impact leader evaluations will have on their vote.

The evidence in support of this hypothesis has been somewhat mixed. Anthony Mughan (1995) found that the impact of leaders in both the 1987 Australian federal election and the 1984 US House election was actually greatest among voters who were not dependent on television for information about politics and voting cues. However, the hypothesis did find some support in Scott Keeter's study (1987) of the importance of candidate-specific factors in US presidential vote choice. Looking at presidential elections between 1952 and 1980, he found that the weight of candidates' personal qualities increased for television-dependent voters during the 1960s.[3] This was the case even allowing for differences in the educational attainment of television-dependent voters. Outside the United States, Matthew Mendelsohn (1994) has shown that people who were highly exposed to media coverage of the 1988 Canadian election campaign were more likely to base their vote on evaluations of the leaders' relative trustworthiness than voters with low media exposure. Further evidence of priming comes from analyses of campaign dynamics in Canadian elections: the more voters were exposed to media coverage of the campaign, the more likely they were to base their votes on leader evaluations as the campaign progressed (Mendelsohn 1996; Gidengil et al. 2002). However, these same analyses revealed that the extent to which leadership is primed depends on the context of the particular election (see also Rico 2009). When the election is dominated by a dramatic issue (like the Canada–US Free Trade Agreement in 1988), the priming effect is much less evident.

Based on the weight of existing research, then, we could expect to find mixed support for the hypothesis that leader evaluations will have the strongest impact on voters who are exposed to the most news about the campaign on television. While this should be the general pattern, exceptions are likely, depending on the election at hand.

9.3 PARTY IDENTIFICATION

The rise of leader-centred politics has also been attributed to partisan dealignment. Russell Dalton (2000*a*) has provided evidence that party attachments have been weakening in most advanced industrial democracies. One consequence is that

there may be more scope for other factors, like leaders, to affect vote choice: 'As partisanship in the electorate has weakened, it stands to reason that voters would have to substitute other factors in their decision-making process. One such factor that has drawn considerable scholarly attention is the role of the politicians themselves in affecting electoral outcomes' (Dalton et al. 2000: 49).

The assumption that weak partisan ties will increase the electoral salience of party leaders is consistent with the classic Michigan understanding of party identification (Campbell et al. 1960; Brettschneider and Gabriel 2002). According to this social–psychological model, voters who have long-term affective ties to a particular party are predisposed to vote for that party unless powerful short-term forces intervene to sway their vote. The key short-term forces are the personalities of the leaders and the issues. Non-identifiers, meanwhile, can be expected to vote mainly on the basis of these short-term forces. Following the logic of this model, the stronger the sense of party identification, the weaker the impact of leader evaluations on vote choice. The strongest leader effects should thus be found among those who do not identify with any political party. Anthony King (2002*a*) has made a similar argument with respect to the impact of leaders' personalities and personal characteristics, arguing that they will carry the most weight among voters whose ties to a party are weakest. Voters who identify strongly with a party will tend to evaluate party leaders through a partisan filter, or else simply take little account of them.

The finding from campaign studies that the priming of leadership tends to go hand in hand with the muting of partisanship lends credence to this hypothesis about the impact of partisanship (Mendelsohn 1996; Gidengil et al. 2000). So, too, does the conclusion of Harold Clarke and his colleagues (1980, 1991) that party leader effects in Canadian elections are typically stronger for voters with flexible party ties than for those with durable partisan ties.[4]

However, studies that have examined the interaction between party identification and ratings of candidate traits in influencing vote choice challenge the conventional wisdom. When Larry Bartels (2002) examined the six US presidential elections held between 1980 and 2000, models that allowed strong partisans and independents to differ in the weight that they attached to candidate traits provided little improvement in fit.[5] And while Frank Brettschneider and Oscar Gabriel (2002) found that candidate preferences had more influence on the vote choices of non-identifiers in the former West Germany in every election held between 1961 and 1994,[6] they also report that candidate orientations became increasingly salient for party identifiers over the same period. This was not the case for those who lacked party attachments. As a result, by the time of the 1998 election, candidate effects were as strong, if not stronger, among party identifiers. The 1998 election may have been something of an 'outlier' in the sense that one candidate for the chancellorship was so much more popular than the other, but the fact remains that that election simply saw an intensification of an existing trend towards increasingly stronger candidate effects among partisans.

However plausible the assumption that leader evaluations will carry the most weight with voters who are either weak partisans or non-partisans, it is also possible that leaders will matter equally to partisans and non-partisans alike.

9.4 TIME OF VOTE DECISION

Declining partisanship is often accompanied by increasing voter indecision (Dalton et al. 2000). Voters are taking longer to decide how to vote (Fournier et al. 2001; McAllister 2002*c*). In Canadian federal elections, for example, as many as half or more of voters indicate that they made their minds up during the campaign (Gidengil et al. 2002). In US presidential elections, meanwhile, approximately one-third of voters typically say that they decided how to vote after the nominating conventions, only arriving at their final choice in the weeks leading up to the election (Flanagan and Zingale 1994). In Britain, about a quarter of voters report having made their final choice during the campaign (Norris et al. 1999).

There has been very little research until recently on the vote calculus of campaign deciders (see McAllister 2002*c*; Fournier et al. 2004).[7] It seems reasonable to assume that leader effects will be weakest among voters whose minds are made up before the campaign even begins. Presumably, their vote choice will be rooted in more enduring partisan and/or ideological considerations. These are the voters whose choice is most likely to reflect a more or less standing decision to vote for 'their' party. As such, they should be relatively immune to the changing identity of those who lead the parties in any given election. If this reasoning is correct, leader effects should be strongest among those who only decide how to vote once the campaign is under way. Indeed, as McAllister (2002*c*: 22) notes, late decision-making 'has usually implied a superficial voting decision, with random events or political personalities subsuming a rational evaluation of the issues'. However, based on reported time of decision, Bartle (2005) found no evidence that campaign deciders were more likely to categorize themselves as 'leadership voters'. On the contrary, such voters were more likely to be found among the early deciders.

It may be that the distinction between early and late deciders is an oversimplification. As Ian McAllister (2002*c*) has demonstrated, late deciders are not all of a piece. On the contrary, a distinction needs to be made between 'calculating' and 'capricious' late deciders.[8] On the one hand, the 'calculating' late deciders are the cognitively mobilized voters who view the campaign as an opportunity to gather information about the parties and their policies and who carefully weigh that information before deciding their vote. As such, they may be less susceptible to strong leader effects. The 'capricious' late deciders, on the other hand, are likely to be apathetic and disengaged, with little interest in the issues. Their voting decision is likely to be much more superficial and readily swayed by the personalities of the

leaders (or by random events). If the 'calculating' outnumber the 'capricious', it is quite possible that leaders will carry no more weight with late deciders than they do with early deciders.

9.5 POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AND SOPHISTICATION

It used to be assumed that leader evaluations matter most to voters who are politically uninformed and unsophisticated. Edward Carmines and James Stimson (1980: 79) have summarized what was once the conventional wisdom: 'The common – indeed, universal – view has been that voting choices based on policy concerns are superior to those based on party loyalty or candidate images. Only the former represent clearly sophisticated behavior.' However, subsequent research on the nature and impact of leader images has cast doubt on the assumption that voting on the basis of leader evaluations is unsophisticated at best and irrational at worst. Indeed, a recent study of Swiss voters found that leader evaluations carried more weight with 'political experts' than with 'political novices' (Lachat 2009).[9]

It seems that sophisticated voters use leaders' personal qualities as a guide to how they will perform if they gain office. From this perspective, 'upgrading one's assessment in response to positive character information more reasonably should be labeled as behavior that is sophisticated rather than unsophisticated' (Mondak and Huckfeldt 2006: 33). Arthur Miller and his colleagues (1986), for example, showed that US voters seem to have a pre-existing presidential schema, or prototype, that guides their evaluations of the candidates.[10] In other words, presidential candidates were judged according to how well they fit the voter's mental representation of what a president *should* be like. The presidential prototype reflected performance-related criteria like competence, integrity, and reliability. The relative importance of these criteria varied from campaign to campaign, but the criteria themselves proved to be more or less stable across time and they were widely shared. And it was college-educated voters who volunteered the most personal comments about the candidates. This was true even allowing for the fact that the college-educated tended to be more articulate than their less-educated counterparts. Education also affected the *nature* of those personal comments: better-educated voters were more likely to focus on performance-related characteristics. Similarly, David Glass (1983) has demonstrated that the candidates' personal attributes have as much of an impact on the vote of the highest educated as the least educated voters. He concluded that, 'The myth that the better educated are less concerned with the personal attributes of presidential candidates than the less educated is simply that – a myth' (Glass 1983: 523).

Glass (1983) suggested that the way that the US governmental system is structured may explain why it is rational for better-educated voters to focus on

the candidates' personal attributes. However, the reliance on schematic judgements of personal attributes is not peculiar to the United States. In Westminster-style parliamentary systems, too, there is evidence of the application of enduring and widely shared prime ministerial prototypes (Brown et al. 1988; Bean and Mughan 1989; Stewart and Clarke 1992; Bean 1993; LeDuc 1994).[11] And, again, better-educated voters have proved to be more likely than less-educated respondents to cite task-relevant attributes (Brown et al. 1988).

There is, in short, little to suggest that leader evaluations necessarily carry less weight among voters who are better educated or more sophisticated politically. This conclusion is in line with the literature on information short cuts, which shows that educated and/or knowledgeable voters are just as likely to rely on short cuts (even the simplest ones) as other voters (see Sniderman et al. 1991; Johnston et al. 1996; Cutler 2002). Accordingly, it is expected that leader evaluations will matter at least as much for well-educated and/or politically sophisticated voters as they do for their less-educated and less-sophisticated counterparts.

9.6 METHODS

In order to determine whether leaders carry more weight with certain types of voters, survey data were analysed for recent national-level elections in Australia, Britain, Canada (outside Quebec),[12] Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the United States. Given the varying lengths of the available time series on leader evaluations and voter characteristics in these countries, choosing the most recent election in each country enhanced comparability. There is no reason to suspect that the findings are time-bound, but, as a check, the analyses were repeated (depending on the availability of data) for elections held in the early 1990s and in the early 1980s, as well as for the earliest election for which data are available in each country. These results are summarized in the text where pertinent.

The dependent variable was vote choice. The choice among the electoral options in each country was modelled using conditional logit. Conditional logit has two distinct advantages when it comes to examining how voter characteristics condition the electoral salience of leader evaluations. First, in treating electoral choice as a multinomial choice, it allows for the 'multifaceted process of choosing among multiple parties at once' (Whitten and Palmer 1996). Second, and more importantly, it simultaneously allows for both individual-specific and choice-specific effects. This permits the simplifying assumption that the effects of any given leader's evaluations will be the same for all choices. The assumption is a reasonable one: the more positively a leader is rated, the higher the odds of choosing that leader's party over another. At the same time, though, the model allows for the possibility that some leaders may matter more than others. The

electoral salience of leadership is thus viewed as a characteristic of the electoral options. As Michael Alvarez and Jonathan Nagler (1998: 56) put it, 'conditional logit is "conditional on the characteristics of the choices"'.

The models contained three choice-specific variables: leader evaluations and party ratings, both (re-)scaled to run from 0 to 10, and vote probabilities predicted on the basis of country-specific socio-demographic characteristics.[13] The party ratings and vote probabilities were included as controls since the purpose is to assess the *independent* effect of leader evaluations, as conditioned by voter characteristics. The focus of interest in this chapter is the interaction terms that were added to the basic model to capture these conditioning effects. The interactions took the form of multiplicative terms created by interacting leader evaluations with each of the relevant voter characteristics in turn. To avoid collinearity problems, only one interaction term was entered at a time. The main effects of voter characteristics were also included in the models. All of the voter characteristics were re-scaled to run from 0 to 1 to facilitate interpretation. This also enhanced comparability across countries since the original scales varied from country to country (and from characteristic to characteristic). Detailed information on the original survey items for each country can be found in the Appendix.

The coefficients estimated by conditional logit lack a straightforward interpretation. They represent the predicted marginal impact of a given explanatory variable on the log-odds of choosing one party relative to any other party. However, their meaning depends on the values of the other variables included in the model. Accordingly, the results will be presented as odds ratios. These ratios indicate how much the odds of voting for a party over any other party change when the independent variable increases by one unit. In the case of the interaction terms, they can be interpreted as showing how much the impact of leader evaluations on those odds changes for voters who attain the maximum value of '1' on the given characteristic (compared with voters who take the minimum value of '0'). Odds ratios larger than 1.00 indicate that the impact of leader evaluations is enhanced when the given characteristic assumes the maximum value of '1'. Conversely, odds ratios smaller than 1.00 indicate that the impact of leader evaluations is diminished when the characteristic in question takes the maximum value.

9.7 FINDINGS

9.7.1 Exposure to television news

Prior research has provided rather mixed support for the assumption that leader evaluations have the strongest impact on those who watch the most television news. The assumption finds even less support here (see Table 9.1).[14] In every

TABLE 9.1 *Exposure to television and leader effects*

Country/election	Odds ratio	*N*
Australia/2001	0.97 (0.14)	4,182
Britain/2001	0.95 (0.15)	3,225
Canada/2000	0.78 (0.16)	4,806
Germany/1998	n/a	n/a
The Netherlands/1998	0.98 (0.08)	5,952
Norway/1997	n/a	n/a
Spain/2000	1.15 (0.05)***	6,627
Sweden/1998	1.04 (0.18)	4,889
The United States/2000	0.89 (0.19)	1,962

***$p < 0.001$.

Note: The table entries are the odds ratios for the interaction term. Standard errors are shown in parentheses. The models were estimated using conditional logit.

country, the coefficient for the interaction term was dwarfed by its standard error. The lone exception was the 2000 Spanish election. In that election, the more news voters watched on television, the more impact leader evaluations had on their vote choice.[15] However, the effect was modest. Elsewhere, leader evaluations had much the same effect, whether voters had watched a lot of news about the election, a little, or none at all. And, to the extent that any pattern is detectable, leader effects actually seemed to be weaker for voters who had the highest exposure to news about the election on television. This was certainly the case for the 1994 German election, the most recent for which a measure of television exposure is available. Leaders mattered least to those voters with the highest levels of television exposure, and this effect was statistically significant.[16]

There is no indication that the findings are time-bound. Analysing the earlier elections in each country failed to turn up a single instance of leaders carrying more weight with voters who are the most exposed to the news on television. Arguably, though, exposure to television news is not really the most appropriate variable for testing whether leaders matter more to people who are regular viewers of the news. People who watch a lot of election news on television may also be avid readers of news about the election in the press. Given that newspaper accounts tend to give more weight to coverage of the issues, following the campaign in the press could offset the impact of leader-centred television coverage for these viewers (Mughan 1995). Thus, a more appropriate test of the hypothesis would be to focus on voters whose main source of information was television news.

In order to explore this possibility, some supplementary tests were performed using data from the 2000 Canadian election. It turned out that the impact of leader evaluations on vote choice was not significantly different for voters who received most of their information about politics from television.[17] Newspaper dependence, however, did make a difference. Leader evaluations were less consequential in the vote calculus

of voters who relied on newspapers for most of their information about politics (odds ratio = 0.77**).

9.7.2 Party identification

The findings for party identification were more mixed (see Table 9.2). Party identification failed to have a significant effect on the importance attached to leader evaluations in either the 1997 Norwegian election, the 1998 German and Swedish elections, or the 2001 elections in Australia and Britain. However, when party identification did make a difference, the impact of leader evaluations was actually greatest for voters with the strongest party ties. This was the case for the 1998 Dutch election and for the 2000 elections in Canada, Spain, and the United States. Again, these findings are not time-bound. Analyses of earlier elections in each country indicate either that leaders matter as much to partisans as to non-partisans or else that they matter more to the former than to the latter.

Why do leader evaluations not carry the most weight with weak partisans and non-partisans? One possibility is that leader evaluations only come into play if these voters see little else to distinguish the parties in terms of policy or performance. According to this logic, leader evaluations would serve as a sort of 'tie-breaker' (see King 2002*a*). Another possibility is that leader evaluations will only matter to the extent that non-identifiers actually prefer one of the party's leaders to the other(s) (see Brettschneider and Gabriel 2002). As for why leaders may actually matter more for strong partisans, it could be that leader evaluations are serving to reinforce partisan predispositions. And strong partisans will tend to have more intense feelings about party leaders: they really like 'their' party's leader and they really dislike the leaders of the other parties (see Greene 1999).

TABLE 9.2 *Intensity of partisanship and leader effects*

Country/election	Odds ratio	*N*
Australia/2001	1.18 (0.17)	4,404
Britain/2001	1.01 (0.13)	4,314
Canada/2000	1.47 (0.19)**	4,705
Germany/1998	1.12 (0.08)	6,924
The Netherlands/1998	1.47 (0.20)**	5,892
Norway/1997	1.15 (0.12)	9,703
Spain/2000	1.18 (0.07)**	6,504
Sweden/1998	1.08 (0.18)	6,206
The United States/2000	1.43 (0.28)a	1,956

**$p < 0.01$.

Note: The table entries are the odds ratios for the interaction term. Standard errors are shown in parentheses. The models were estimated using conditional logit.

9.7.3 Time of vote decision

The results for time of vote decision also confound expectations. If the vote of early deciders reflects a more or less standing decision, we would expect it to be little affected by leader evaluations. Conversely, leaders could be expected to matter a good deal to those who only make up their minds once the campaign is under way. However, not one single election among the eight for which data were available conformed to this pattern (see Table 9.3). In fact, the observed pattern was the very reverse in five of the eight elections: the 1998 Dutch election, the 2000 Canadian and Spanish elections, and the 2001 Australian and British elections.[18] It was early deciders, not late deciders, who were the most affected by leader evaluations. Meanwhile, time of decision made little difference to the impact of leaders in the 1997 Norwegian election, the 1998 Swedish election, and the 2000 US election. And, with the exception of the Norwegian election, it was the early deciders who tended to take more account of leaders. The very same pattern holds when earlier elections are analysed. There is not a single instance of leaders mattering more for late deciders.

We can only speculate as to why leaders often carry more weight with early deciders. Like late deciders, early deciders are not all of a piece either, but McAllister (2002*c*) found that most of them could be classified as 'partisans'. In contrast to the 'disengaged', these early deciders care about the outcome of the election, and they care, McAllister suggests, because they are loyal to a particular party. This may explain the similarity in the pattern for party identification and time of vote decision in several of the elections under study: leaders tend to matter more to strong partisans and/or early deciders.

Another factor that may explain why leader evaluations are more salient for early deciders in some elections but not in others is incumbency. Where the leader

TABLE 9.3 *Time of vote decision and leader effects*

Country/election	Odds ratio	*N*
Australia/2001	0.83 (0.07)*	4,465
Britain/2001	0.78 (0.05)***	4,354
Canada/2000	0.69 (0.07)***	4,790
Germany/1998	n/a	n/a
The Netherlands/1998	0.66 (0.05)***	5,952
Norway/1997	0.95 (0.07)	9,710
Spain/2000	0.89 (.04)*	6,615
Sweden/1998	0.88 (0.11)	6,199
The United States/2000	0.59 (0.28)	1,952

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$; [a]$p < 0.10$.

Note: The table entries are the odds ratios for the interaction term (with early deciders coded '0' and late deciders coded '1'). Standard errors are shown in parentheses. The models were estimated using conditional logit.

of the governing party is contesting a second or third election as incumbent, he or she may be so familiar to voters that leader evaluations no longer function as a short-term factor in vote choice.

9.7.4 Political engagement and sophistication

The conventional wisdom used to be that leaders matter most to voters who are politically apathetic and unsophisticated. However, more recent research suggests that leader evaluations carry just as much weight among voters who are politically engaged. Using political interest as an indicator, only one of the nine elections examined here offers any support at all for the former view (see Table 9.4). In the 2000 US presidential election, voters who were more interested in the election were less likely to weigh the leaders in their vote choice.[19] However, the interaction term failed to achieve statistical significance. In six of the nine elections, leaders mattered as much to voters who were very interested in politics as they did to those with little or no interest. This was the case in the 1997 Norwegian election, the 1998 German election, the 2000 Spanish election, and the 2001 Australian and British elections. Meanwhile, in the 1998 Dutch election and the 2000 Canadian election, leader evaluations actually carried the most weight with voters who were the most interested in politics. Going back to some of the earlier elections, in the vast majority of cases, leaders had much the same impact, regardless of voters' interest in politics. There were only two exceptions. In the 1980 Canadian election, leader evaluations carried the most weight with voters

TABLE 9.4 *Political engagement and leader effects*

	Political interest		Political discussion	
Country/election	Odds ratio	*N*	Odds ratio	*N*
Australia/2001	0.93 (0.15)	4,457	1.18 (0.18)	4,450
Britain/2001	1.05 (0.09)	3,209	n/a	n/a
Canada/2000	1.57 (0.30)*	4,793	1.00 (0.19)	4,825
Germany/1998	1.14 (0.10)	6,953	n/a	n/a
Netherlands/1998	1.50 (0.24)**	5,952	n/a	n/a
Norway/1997	1.17 (0.12)	9,710	1.06 (0.10)	9,710
Spain/2000	1.07 (0.08)	6,627	1.13 (0.07)*	6,625
Sweden/1998	0.97 (0.19)	6,206	n/a	n/a
United States/2000	0.73 (0.15)	1,962	n/a	n/a

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$; [a]$p < 0.10$.

Note: The table entries are the odds ratios for the interaction term. Standard errors are shown in parentheses. The models were estimated using conditional logit.

who were very interested in politics. In the 1979 British election, the pattern was reversed.

Another way of representing political engagement is to ask how often voters discuss politics in general or the election in particular. Building on the work of Huckfeldt and Sprague (1987) and MacKuen and Brown (1987), Mendelsohn (1996) has argued that political discussion will have the effect of priming issues. This is because people will typically talk about aspects of the election that touch most deeply on their daily lives. As a result, Mendelsohn suggests, interpersonal communication may serve to offset the influence of leader-centred coverage on television by focusing people's attention on the issues that affect them. This was true of the 1988 Canadian federal election, but that was an unusual election in that it amounted to a virtual referendum on the issue of the Canada–US Free Trade Agreement. There was little sign of a similar effect in the 1993 and 1997 Canadian federal elections (Gidengil et al. 2002). Political discussion did not diminish the salience of leader evaluations in either election. Indeed, in 1993, if anything, political discussion seemed to enhance the electoral salience of leaders. This appears to have been true of the 2000 Spanish election as well (see Table 9.4). Recall that this was the only case where high levels of television news consumption served to reinforce the impact of leader evaluations. This lends credence to the notion that discussions about politics may well reflect what has been on the nightly news.

Education is an important indicator of voters' cognitive capacities and their ability to deal with the complexities of politics. However, it seems to make little difference to the weight that leader evaluations carry when it comes to vote choice. Leaders appear to matter as much to the electoral calculus of university graduates as they do to those with only a primary school education (see Table 9.5). There are only two exceptions. In the 2000 Canadian election, leader evaluations carried much more weight with voters who had only a primary school education. However, in the 1998 German election, leaders actually seemed to be a little less salient for voters with only a primary education. Going back to earlier elections, the typical finding was that education did not have a significant effect on the salience of leader evaluations, and when it did, the findings were equally contradictory.

Interest, discussion, and education are all rather indirect measures of political engagement and sophistication. The most direct measure is arguably voters' knowledge of basic political facts (Zaller 1992). Rather than relying on people's subjective assessments, it captures how much political information they have actually managed to absorb. The 2000 Canadian Election Study provides three different measures of factual knowledge about politics: how many federal party leaders voters could name, how many election promises voters could associate with the correct political party, and voters' general political knowledge.[20] When these measures were interacted with leader evaluations, the pattern was clear: whichever measure was used, leader evaluations carried the least weight with those who knew the most. The effect was strongest for knowledge of the leaders

TABLE 9.5 *Education and leader effects*

	University		Primary	
Country/election	Odds ratio	*N*	Odds ratio	*N*
Australia/2001	0.95 (0.08)	4,477	n/a	n/a
Britain/2001	0.99 (0.08)	4,362	n/a	n/a
Canada/2000	0.97 (0.11)	4,825	1.45 (0.17)**	4,825
Germany/1998	1.02 (0.05)	6,945	0.90 (0.05)*	6,945
The Netherlands/1998	1.07 (0.13)	5,952	0.93 (0.10)	5,952
Norway/1997	1.03 (0.08)	9,710	0.92 (0.08)	9,710
Spain/2000	1.03 (0.06)	6,635	0.97 (0.04)	6,635
Sweden/1998	0.90 (0.09)	6,200	1.09 (0.12)	6,200
The United States/2000	0.87 (0.11)	1,962	n/a	1,962

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$; [a]$p < 0.10$.

Note: The table entries are the odds ratios for the interaction term. Standard errors are shown in parentheses. The models were estimated using conditional logit.

themselves (odds ratio = 0.37***) and weakest for knowledge of party promises (odds ratio = 0.69*).[21] These findings strongly suggest that it may be premature to reject the notion that unsophisticated voters are the most likely to base their vote on how they feel about the leaders (see Bartle 2005; Clarke et al. 2009).[22]

9.8 CONCLUSIONS

Leaders clearly do matter more to some voters than to others. However, the results of this analysis of the conditioning effects of voter characteristics were neither consistent nor very supportive of much of the conventional wisdom. There was only one instance in which leaders mattered most to voters who watched the most news on television. And far from mattering least to strong partisans, in four of the nine elections examined here, leader evaluations actually seemed to carry the most weight with voters who identified the most strongly with a political party. In the other five elections, the impact of leaders was much the same for strong partisans and non-partisans alike. Similarly, the findings for time of vote decision contradicted the conventional wisdom that leaders should matter most to voters who were undecided when the campaign began. Time of vote decision either made no difference or else leader evaluations actually mattered less to late deciders.

The conventional wisdom, or rather the new conventional wisdom, fared better when it came to the conditioning effect of political engagement and sophistication. More often than not, neither interest in politics nor education made much

difference to the impact of leader evaluations on vote choice. However, when measures of factual knowledge were used, the results for the 2000 Canadian election offered strong support for the original conventional wisdom that leader evaluations may serve as an information shortcut for voters who typically pay little attention to politics.

To the extent that any general patterns emerge, leaders seem to matter most to voters who have strong attachments to a political party and who have decided how to vote even before the election campaign begins. Or, at least, this seems to be the pattern when the leader of the governing party is seeking a second or third term in office. This suggests that we may need to reconceptualize the role that leaders play in vote choice. Traditionally, leaders, like election issues, have been considered short-term factors, but in some elections leadership may actually function as a long-term factor in the electoral calculus of many voters.

The conventional wisdom has proved more often wrong than right in this chapter. Voter characteristics do condition the electoral impact of leader evaluations, but not necessarily in ways that the literature would predict. If this is one lesson, the other lesson is that these conditioning effects are complex. How they play out in any given election may well be a function of both the electoral context and the personalities and relative popularity of the leaders.

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NOTES

1. Wattenberg himself is cautious about generalizing this thesis to parliamentary systems (Dalton et al. 2000; see also McAllister 1996): the mere fact that the party leaders' names do not appear on the ballot helps to ensure that the political parties themselves remain more salient in parliamentary systems.
2. However, recent research by Miller and Krosnick (2000) has cast some doubt on the notion that priming is necessarily mediated by accessibility.

3. Keeter's data came from responses to a series of open-ended questions in the American National Election Studies asking respondents: 'Is there anything in particular about [candidate] that might make you want to vote for [against] him?'
4. Flexible partisans were either unstable in their party identification across time, identified only weakly with a party or lacked a party identification altogether, or were inconsistent in their party identification between the federal and provincial levels. Durable partisans identified 'very strongly' or 'fairly strongly' with their party, maintained that identification across time, and identified with the same party at both levels of government.
5. Bartels also estimated models that allowed Republican and Democratic partisans to differ in the weights that they attached to each trait in each election. These models produced only very modest improvements in fit over models with no interaction terms.
6. Similarly, Roy Pierce (2002) found that evaluations of executive job performance in the 1988 French presidential runoff ballot had the most impact on both genuine centrists and the so-called 'Marais' who were either unable to place themselves on a left–right scale or described themselves as being centrist while having little or no interest in politics.
7. The lack of research may reflect doubts about the validity of time of voting decision recall questions (Plumb 1986; Chaffee and Rimal 1996). However, recent research suggests that time-of-decision recall can be quite reliable, especially in parliamentary systems where the campaign period is fairly short and well defined (see Fournier et al. 2001).
8. Operationally, the distinction is based on whether or not the voter cares about the outcome of the election, but from a theoretical perspective, interest in the campaign also provides an appropriate criterion.
9. Rico (2009) reports more mixed results for Spanish elections: whether leaders mattered most to the least sophisticated or to the most sophisticated varied from election to election.
10. Miller and his colleagues based this conclusion on analysis of responses to the open-ended candidate evaluation questions in the American National Election Studies from 1952 to 1984.
11. Brown et al. (1988), Bean (1993), and LeDuc (1994) all used responses to open-ended leader like and dislike questions, while Bean and Mughan (1989) and Stewart and Clarke (1992) used trait rating batteries.
12. Given the difference in the party systems between Quebec and the rest of Canada, and the overwhelming importance of the sovereignty issue in Quebec (see Nevitte et al. 2000; Blais et al. 2002), it is preferable to restrict the analysis to Canada outside Quebec. The Bloc Québécois does not run candidates outside Quebec and so only Quebec voters were asked to rate the party and its leader. There are too few Quebec respondents for reliable analysis of the Quebec electorate for present purposes.
13. For details of these controls, see the country-specific chapters.
14. Since conditional logit requires a stacked data matrix, the number of cases is much larger than the actual number of survey respondents.

15. Rico (2009) reports a similar result for television-dependent voters in the 2004 Spanish election.
16. The odds ratio was 0.76 ($p < 0.05$).
17. The odds ratio was 0.87, but did not even approach statistical significance ($p = 0.209$).
18. Bartle (2005) reaches a similar conclusion for the 2001 British election based on voters' self-categorization as leadership voters.
19. It is unlikely that this is simply an artefact of a difference in measures. With the exception of the 2001 Australian election, all of the other results are based on a measure of general political interest, whereas the US result relates to interest in the election itself. However, when the Canadian analysis is rerun using a measure of interest in the election, as opposed to interest in politics generally, the conditioning effect of interest on the impact of leader evaluations is similar to the result presented in Table 9.4, save for the fact that the effect is weaker (odds ratio = 1.44[a]).
20. The general political knowledge scale measured voters' knowledge of the capital of the United States, the premier of their province, the federal finance minister, and the prime minister at the time of the Canada–US Free Trade Agreement. All of the knowledge scales were rescaled to run from 0 to 1.
21. The odds ratio for general knowledge about politics was 0.57**.
22. John Bartle (2005) found that self-described leadership voters in the 2001 British election tended to be less politically aware, while Harold Clarke and his colleagues (2009) found modest evidence that leader effects varied with political sophistication in the 2005 British election.

Appendix: Measures of Voter Characteristics

All measures have been rescaled to run from 0 to 1.

Television News Exposure (1 = highest)

Australia: TV news attention, measured on a 4-point scale running from 'not at all' to 'a good deal'

Britain: followed election broadcasts on TV/radio, measured on an 8-point scale with 'not at all' as the minimum value

Canada: attention paid to news about the election on TV, measured on an 11-point scale running from 'no attention at all' to 'a great deal of attention'

The Netherlands: frequency of watching electoral debates on TV, dichotomized as 'never', 'almost always'

Spain: TV news consumption, dichotomized as 'not every day or almost', 'every day or almost'

Sweden: frequency of TV consumption, measured on a 5-point scale running from 'never' to '6–7 days a week'

The United States: frequency of television consumption, dichotomized as 'not every day or almost' and 'every day or almost'

Not available for Germany and Norway.

Party Identification (1 = strongest)

Australia: measured on a 4-point scale as 'no identification', 'not very strong', 'fairly strong', and 'very strong'

Britain: measured on a 4-point scale as 'no party identification', 'somewhat close', 'strong', and 'very strong'

Canada: measured on a 4-point scale as 'none', 'not very strong', 'fairly strong', and 'very strong'

Germany: measured on a 4-point scale with 'none' as the minimum

The Netherlands: measured on a 4-point scale as 'no party identification', 'not very close', 'somewhat close', and 'very close'

Norway: measured on a 4-point scale as 'none', 'not very close', 'fairly close', and 'very close'

Spain: measured on a 4-point scale as 'no party identification', 'not very close', 'somewhat close', and 'very close'

Sweden: measured on a 4-point scale as 'no', 'some', 'adherent', and 'strongly convinced adherent'

The United States: measured on a 4-point scale as 'no party identification', 'not very strong', 'somewhat strong', and 'very strong'

Time-of-Vote Decision (1 = campaign decider)

A dichotomous variable for all available countries/elections, separating those who decided during the campaign from those who decided before the campaign began.

Political Interest (1 = highest)

Australia: political interest, measured on a 4-point scale running from 'no interest' to 'high interest'

Britain: interest in the election, dichotomized as 'did not care' and 'a great deal'

Canada: interest in politics generally, measured on an 11-point scale running from 'no interest at all' to 'extremely interested'

Germany: political interest, measured on a 4-point scale with 'not interested' as the minimum value

The Netherlands: political interest, measured on a 5-point scale from 'low' to 'high'

Norway: political interest, measured on a 4-point scale running from 'not at all' to 'very interested'

Spain: political interest, measured on a 4-point scale, with a minimum value of 'not at all'

Sweden: political interest, measured on a 4-point scale as 'not at all', 'not very much', 'fairly', and 'very'.

The United States: interest in the election, measured on a 3-point scale running from 'not at all' to 'strong interest'

Frequency of Political Discussion (1 = most frequent)

Australia: frequency of political discussion measured on a 4-point scale, running from 'never' to 'often'

Canada: frequency of discussion about the election, measured on a 3-point scale as 'not at all', 'occasionally', and 'often'

Norway: frequency of political discussion, measured on a 4-point scale as 'never', 'more seldom', 'some times a week', and 'daily'

Spain: measured on a 4-point scale running from 'never' to 'often'

Not available for Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United States.

Education

Two dummy variables were created for each country/election, coded '1' for those with only a primary school education and those with a university education, respectively.

10

Pull or Push?

The Relative Impact of Positive and Negative Leader Evaluations on Vote Choice

Kees Aarts and André Blais

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Do voters vote for or against political leaders? This question is important for understanding the psychology of voting as well as the effectiveness of election campaigns. In this chapter we explore the empirical evidence for the so-called 'negativity hypothesis' in voting research. Briefly summarized, this hypothesis states that negative feelings about parties and candidates have a greater impact on vote choice than positive feelings. In other words, voters tend to vote *against*, rather than *for* parties and candidates.

The negativity hypothesis is grounded in macro-politics and in psychology. In the next section, these origins are outlined and the relevant literature is briefly reviewed. We then discuss our own approach to testing the hypothesis.

The empirical data used here cover a broader set of elections than previous work. In fact, this chapter is the first one that we are aware of that analyses the negativity hypothesis on non-US data.[1] We use survey data from Canada (1968–2000), Germany (1961–98), the Netherlands (1986–98), Norway (1981–97), Sweden (1979–98), Spain (1986–2000), and Australia (1993–2001), as well as US data (1980–2000), or a total of forty-four elections in a time span of forty years.

10.2 THE NEGATIVITY HYPOTHESIS

In their concluding discussion of electoral behaviour and the party system, the authors of *The American Voter* focus on determinants of the electoral cycle, namely 'the tendency of the division of the vote, having favored one party, to swing back to the advantage of the other party' (Campbell et al. 1960: 554). In their analytical framework, it is relatively easy to see how electoral movements are

moderated. This is accomplished by voters' identification with one of the parties. Voters who think of themselves as Democrats or Republicans tend to stick with 'their' party.

Party identification cannot account, of course, for electoral swings. *The American Voter* introduced a hypothesis that might account for these swings observed in the United States – without providing empirical tests – namely that 'the party division of the vote is most likely to be changed by a negative public reaction to the party in power' (Campbell et al. 1960: 554). Campbell and his colleagues argued as follows:

> The crux of our theory is that changes in the party balance are induced primarily by negative rather than positive attitudes toward the party controlling the executive branch of federal government. Yet unfavorable feeling toward a party that is being turned out of power may well be coupled with favorable feeling toward the party that follows it in office if the latter copes successfully with problems the public feels were mishandled by the preceding administration. This sort of public attitude may well play an important role in fixing or augmenting a change in party strength resulting from the public's negative reaction to the record of the other party. But new positive attitudes, unrelated to the issues that brought a turnover of party control, are not likely to initiate a shift in the party balance. (Ibidem: 554–5)

Next, the motives that voters may have for their inclination to punishing rather than rewarding those holding executive power are addressed. The key factor, according to *The American Voter*, lies in the low salience of politics for the mass public. If all goes well, people will not easily connect the political state of affairs with those holding office. But negative developments – political problems, scandals, calamities – will be noticed by the public, and they will lead voters to revisit their evaluations of office holders (ibidem: 556).

It is important to distinguish, at the outset, two variants of the negativity hypothesis that are already visible in the argument just presented. The first variant takes political evaluations as the *dependent variable* and predicts that negative pieces of information have a greater impact on political evaluations than positive pieces. The second variant takes evaluations as the *independent variable* and predicts that negative evaluations have a greater impact on vote choice than positive ones. The literature on both hypotheses is briefly reviewed but the empirical analysis of this chapter focuses entirely on the second hypothesis.

10.2.1 Negativity in the formation of evaluations

Lau (1985) discusses and tests two explanations of why negative pieces of information might have a greater impact on evaluations than positive pieces of information. The first of these, the Figure-Ground hypothesis, derives from Gestalt psychology and states that (new) information matters more when it contrasts with

its background. If the background is predominantly positive, negative information stands out – both perceptually (it is different from the dominant mode of information) and in terms of credibility (it comes unexpectedly and is therefore more credible than affirming information).

As an explanation of negativity bias, the Figure-Ground hypothesis presupposes that the background against which evaluations are made is predominantly positive. This is a dubious assumption. Voters' principal sources of information are the media and the latter are often accused of focusing on 'negative' news and of nourishing widespread political cynicism (Patterson 1993; Lau and Brown Rovner 2009).[2]

The second explanation as to why negative information matters more is the Cost Orientation hypothesis (Lau 1982: 122). According to this hypothesis, people are more strongly motivated to avoid losses than to acquire gains. A cost orientation is related to a lack of control over outcomes (Thibaut and Kelly, quoted by Lau 1985: 122). People generally tend to be risk-averse, and prefer avoiding losses over acquiring gains (Kahneman and Tversky 1979; cf. Cobb and Kuklinski 1997).

Lau (1982, 1985) finds that negative information, measured as the number of reasons respondents provided as to why they might vote against a candidate, is a much better predictor of presidential candidate evaluations than positive information (the number of positive reasons). Lau also finds support for each of the two hypotheses, Figure-Ground and Cost Orientation, that could account for the negativity bias. Klein (1991, 1996) presents additional evidence that negative assessments of presidential candidate traits are better predictors of their overall evaluations than positive assessments. The formation of candidate evaluations is disproportionately affected by negative impressions.[3]

10.2.2 Negativity in the impact of evaluations on vote choice

The effects of negative evaluations on vote choice are much more contested than the effects of negative information on evaluations (Lau et al. 2007). Kernell (1977) and Lau (1982, 1985) have examined the asymmetrical effect of positive and negative evaluations in US midterm Congressional elections. They show, especially, that partisans of the presidential party who disapprove of the job the president is doing are more likely to defect to the other party than partisans of the other party who approve of his job performance, thus suggesting that disapproval has greater leverage than approval.

However, these results are not as compelling as they may seem. First, the authors do *not* compare the relative impact of positive and negative evaluations on the *same group* of voters. Second, they look at a very special set of elections, midterm Congressional elections. Third, they assess the impact of approval or disapproval of the *president* on voting behaviour in *Congressional* elections.

The logical test of the negativity bias would be to determine whether negative evaluations of the presidential candidates have a greater impact on vote choice in presidential elections. Below, such a test is provided.

Wattenberg has examined the relationship between the number of likes and dislikes for each candidate and party choice in presidential elections. In this analysis, the two 'negativity' hypotheses, about the formation of evaluations on the one hand and on their impact on vote choice on the other, are condensed into one about the link between positive and negative pieces of information and the vote. Wattenberg finds that, 'contrary to popular wisdom the like/dislike data provide excellent evidence that American voters cast their ballots with a focus more on the positive than on the negative' (1991: 150). Wattenberg suggests a simple explanation for this 'positivity' bias, namely that voters are asked to vote *for* one candidate and are thus looking for 'positive' reasons for supporting someone.[4]

There is thus very little empirical support for the hypothesis that negative evaluations matter more than positive ones in the vote decision. The empirical evidence that has been provided is convoluted, as it concerns the apparent asymmetrical effect of approval and disapproval of the president among two different groups of voters in American midterm Congressional elections. And Wattenberg's findings go in the opposite direction: likes seem to matter more than dislikes in presidential vote choice.

The findings discussed so far have been obtained on American data. However, in the American setting there are usually only two parties and candidates, and two-party systems are rare in contemporary democracies. This raises the question of how voters are assumed to reason under the negativity hypothesis in a typical multiparty system, with six or seven parties and party leaders. In its original formulation, the negativity hypothesis predicted more switchers from the incumbent party to the other party when government policy evaluations were negative. This prediction cannot be directly translated to a multiparty setting. Do voters 'eliminate' the parties and leaders they dislike and then choose more or less randomly among those they like? Would it not be simpler just to decide which one they like the most?

The negativity hypothesis has also been applied in two related research streams: the impact of political advertising and economic voting. The conventional wisdom is that, in the United States at least, political advertising has become more and more negative over time for the very simple reason that, even though people dislike negative ads, they 'work', that is, they are more persuasive than positive ads. The reasoning here is the same: negative information is more likely to be noticed in a context where predominant information is positive and negative information is considered to be more important because people are risk-averse and are more concerned with not making the worst choice than with making the best one.

Two subsequent meta-analytic assessments of the literature contradict this expectation. Lau et al. (1999: 857) are clear on this point: 'In sum, across these multiple criteria, there is simply no evidence in the research literature that negative political advertisements are any more effective than positive political ads.'[5] In a follow-up on this earlier meta-analysis, Lau et al. (2007: 1,185) again find 'no consistent evidence ... that negative political campaigning "works" in achieving the electoral results that attackers desire'. Significantly, almost all 111 published studies on which they base themselves have been conducted in the United States.

The other research stream where the 'negativity' hypothesis has been explored is the economic voting literature. The 'asymmetry' hypothesis is that voters punish the party in power for economic downturns but do not reward it for good performance. That hypothesis has not fared well either. Kiewiet (1983) has shown that positive perceptions of the economy help as much as negative ones hurt in American elections. And Lewis-Beck's analysis of vote choice in five European countries leads to a crystal clear conclusion: 'Western European voters "reward" governments for "good" economic actions (past or anticipated) to at least as great an extent as they "punish" them for "bad" economic actions' (Lewis-Beck 1988: 79).

In short, the political advertising and the economic voting literatures have tended to disconfirm analogous 'negativity' hypotheses that had been formulated in these domains. All in all, then, there is precious little empirical support for the assertion that voters vote against, rather than for, parties and leaders. At the same time, no study has directly tested the very simple but basic proposition that negative evaluations matter more than positive ones in the vote decision. We propose to fill that gap here.

10.3 DATA AND METHODS

Two points have been argued above. First, insofar as there is a single hypothesis that underlies the literature discussed here, this hypothesis has so far almost exclusively been tested on US ground. It is not self-evident that it also holds in other political settings. Multiparty elections, party-centred competition, and the need for coalition partners are likely to affect electoral campaigns and voters' evaluations. Second, a great variety of data and methods have been used by the various authors in order to test for negativity effects. It is possible that methods that are not well suited to the research problem have resulted in spurious results.

The goals in this chapter are therefore twofold. First, the negativity hypothesis is investigated in a number of different spatio-temporal settings, including the United States, so that a more accurate picture of the evidence for and against may be obtained. Second, a model is employed with party and leader evaluations as explanatory variables, and vote choice as the dependent variable. The data and the model are briefly explained below.

10.3.1 Data

We use data from the national election studies in the United States, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Australia, Sweden, and Norway.

The time span covered by the studies from the above-mentioned countries shows considerable variation. German data are available for the 1961–98 period, and cover the longest period. Next comes Canada, with data for most of the elections since 1968. For the United States, the appropriate data are available from 1980 until 2000. For Sweden, the 1979–98 period has been analysed, and for Norway the elections from 1981 until 1997. The data from Spain (1986–2000), Australia (1993–2001), and the Netherlands (1986–98) cover relatively short periods of time.

The data include three types of measures. First, information about the vote cast is needed: which party or candidate did the voter vote for, or did he or she abstain from voting? Second, a measure is employed of how the voter evaluates the various parties: positively or negatively; and exactly how positively or negatively? Third, and most essentially, a comparable evaluation measure is used for the political leaders.

Voting behaviour is taken directly from the post-election surveys. The evaluation measures come in several formats. Most commonly, respondents are asked how they feel about a given party or candidate on a 0–100 scale, where '0' means very coldly, or very unsympathetic; '100' means very warmly, or very sympathetic; and '50' means neither cold nor warm, or neither sympathetic nor unsympathetic. Other ranges are used as well. These scales contain a clear and unambiguous cut-off point, which allows us to distinguish positive (most commonly above 50) and negative (below 50) feelings for a party or candidate. We have chosen to use these thermometer scales throughout. As a result, comparable data are available for a number of countries, but Britain had to be excluded completely, and the United States in the 1952–76 period because in these cases the appropriate data are missing.[6]

All evaluation scales have been recoded to the −5 to +5 interval. On such a scale, the most positive evaluation equals +5, the most negative equals −5, and a neutral evaluation equals 0. This makes international comparisons straightforward. It should be noted, however, that the original scales were different and that this may have affected the responses.

For each object (party, candidate), two new variables have been constructed. The first variable indicates the *negativity* of ratings, and the second variable indicates the *positivity*. In the negativity variable, all positive ratings are given a score of 0 (to reflect the absence of negativity) while the neutral and negative ratings are left intact, so that the variable ranges from −5 (very negative) to 0 (not negative at all; neutral or positive). In the same fashion, in the positivity variable, all negative ratings take the value of 0 to indicate the absence of positivity while the neutral and positive ratings remain intact, so that the variable ranges from

0 (not positive at all; neutral or negative) to +5 (very positive). The negativity variable indicates by how much the inclination to vote for a party decreases when one moves from a neutral rating to a more negative rating, and the positivity variable indicates how much that inclination increases when one moves to a more positive rating. The negativity hypothesis predicts that it makes more difference to become negative than to become positive. Thus, the negativity variable should have a stronger effect than the positivity one.

10.3.2 Model

We are interested in the effects of variation in negative and in positive evaluations on the vote choice, and the negativity hypothesis states that this effect is larger for negative than for positive evaluations. For each election analysed, the model thus consists of one dependent variable and four explanatory variables, the conceptualization of which is now discussed.

The dependent variable is electoral choice. This is the choice that voters make among a set of alternative options. In the real world, these options include all parties and/or candidates on the ballot, plus the option of not voting or casting a blank or illegal vote. Details vary, of course, over the countries according to their electoral system, and also over time within a given country.

The survey data used here include reported voting behaviour. For practical reasons some of the options that exist in real life had to be excluded from the analysis of survey data. First, all non-voters are excluded, because the appropriate explanatory variables for the people who chose this option are not in the model tested here. Second, and for similar reasons, voters for smaller parties are excluded. The reason here is that appropriate data are often missing, and the number of respondents reporting to have voted for these parties is too small to warrant reliable conclusions.

Electoral choice is thus operationalized as the choice from a limited set of electoral options, by the survey respondents who actually report one of these options. Each option has a specific utility for each respondent: the model assumes that the respondent picks the option that yields the highest utility, that is, votes for the party/candidate that he or she prefers over the others.

The four explanatory variables are the negative and positive evaluations of the party of the candidate and the negative and positive evaluations of the candidate himself. These explanatory variables are characteristics of the electoral *options*, rather than characteristics of the *respondents*.[7] Therefore, when the effect of evaluation measures on electoral choice is modelled, it is expected that the effect of any particular evaluation will be the same for all options. For example, negative evaluations of a party leader are assumed to affect similarly the propensity to vote for each of the four parties in the 1998 Australian election.

The logic of choosing just outlined underlies the conditional logit model (for an introduction, refer to Greene 2000: ch. 19).[8] In the model used here, for each election there are in principle four regression coefficients to be estimated, indicating the impact of positive and negative evaluations of parties and of leaders on the probability of voting for a party. The estimated coefficients do not have a straightforward interpretation. It is therefore more useful to present the effects as *odds ratios*. The odds ratios indicate the change in the odds of voting for a party when the independent variable changes by one unit. To take again the 1998 Australian election, results indicate for this particular case that the odds of voting for a given party increase by almost 50 per cent when one moves one unit on the scale measuring positive leader evaluations. Similarly, the odds of voting for a party increase by 30 per cent when one moves up one unit on the scale measuring negative leader evaluations. Of course, the odds of voting for a party are expected to increase as evaluations become more positive or less negative, and odds ratios should thus be greater than 1, which is true in almost all instances (the exceptions are statistically insignificant).

The most interesting question is whether the probability of voting increases more as one becomes more positive about a leader or as one becomes less negative. The negativity hypothesis predicts that the latter matters more. As a consequence, the odds ratios associated with the negativity variable should be stronger than those associated with the positivity variable.

10.4 RESULTS

Results are presented in two steps. First, the percentages of respondents evaluating the leaders negatively and positively are presented per country and per election. This information enables us to see whether one of the preconditions for negative voting is fulfilled. According to the Figure-Ground hypothesis, negative voting will occur when the leaders (or their parties) are generally evaluated positively. Second, the effects of negative and positive leader evaluations on the vote are shown. This information provides the core test of the negativity hypothesis. The hypothesis predicts that negative evaluations have a stronger impact on vote choice than positive ones.

The results of these steps are presented in graphs, per country and over time. The graphs provide the direct evidence. However, the graphs can be misleading because the standard errors of the impact estimates are missing, and the size of leader evaluations relative to party evaluations is missing. This more detailed information is summarized in the Appendix (Tables 10.A.1–10.A.8).

10.4.1 Negative and positive evaluations

Figures 10.1a and 10.1b show the percentages of negative and positive leader evaluations for each election and each country in our analysis. Since these evaluations can also be neutral (neither sympathetic nor unsympathetic), the percentages shown do not add up to 100 per cent.

The message from Figures 10.1a and 10.1b is unambiguous: with only few exceptions, political leaders tend to be evaluated positively, in the upper half of the thermometer scales. Also, there is no clear international trend towards more negative evaluations, even though in Canada and in Germany the percentage of negative evaluations has increased over the more recent years included in this study.[9] Looked at in another way, Figures 10.1a and 10.1b show that one of the preconditions for the negativity hypothesis, namely that the leaders are generally evaluated positively (the Figure-Ground hypothesis), appears to hold in almost all elections in the analysis.

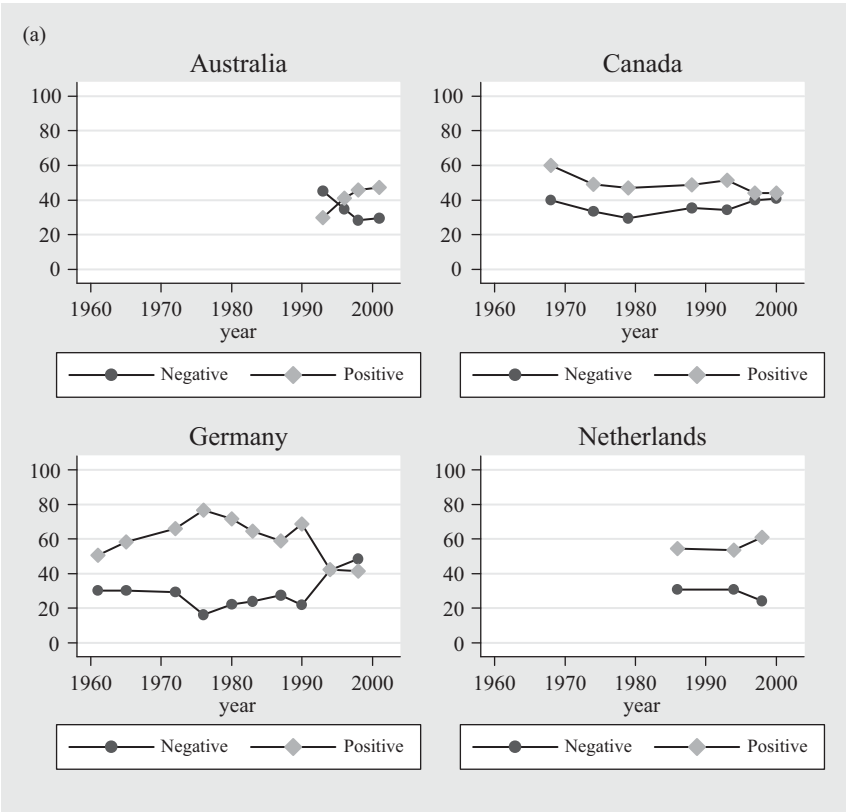

FIGURE 10.1a Percentage of negative and positive leader ratings per election and per country

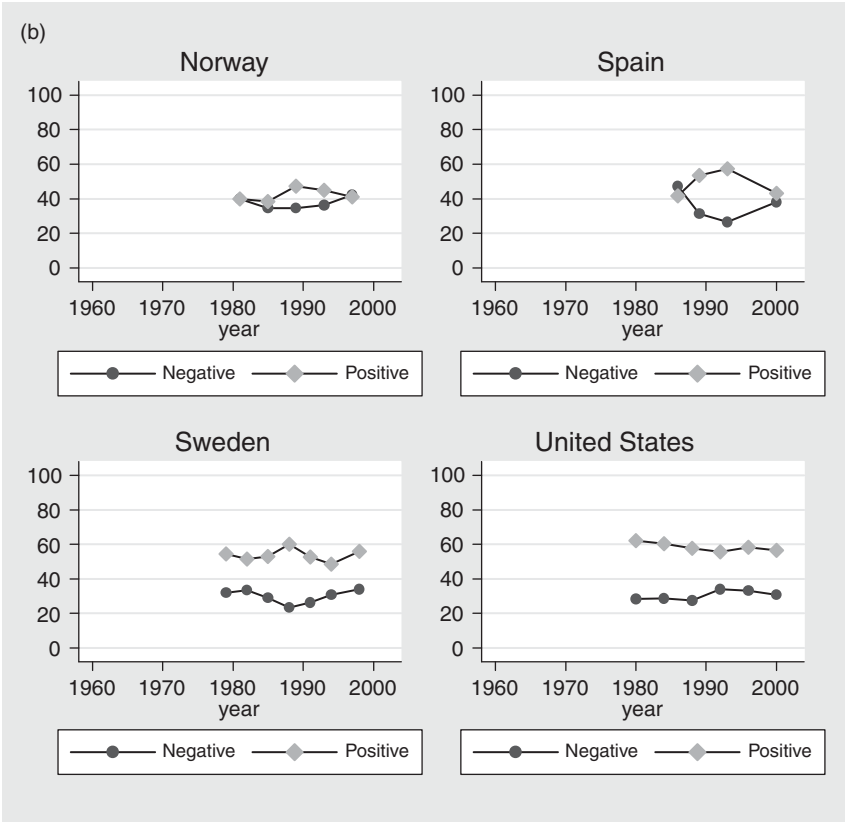

FIGURE 10.1b Percentage of negative and positive leader ratings per election and per country (continued)

10.4.2 Effects on vote choice

We now move on to the impact of negative and positive leader evaluations on vote choice. Figures 10.2a and 10.2b depict the effects of negative and positive leader evaluations on the odds of voting for a given party, by country and election.

The negativity hypothesis states that the effects of negative leader evaluations should exceed those of positive evaluations. But in almost all cases, the reverse is true. Positive evaluations have a greater impact on vote choice than negative evaluations. In other words, it is the pulls, rather than the pushes, in the images of political leaders that guide vote choice.

Overall, thirty-five out of forty-four elections analysed show a larger effect for positive leader evaluations than for negative evaluations. The negativity hypothesis, which predicts a stronger impact for negative evaluations, is borne out in only

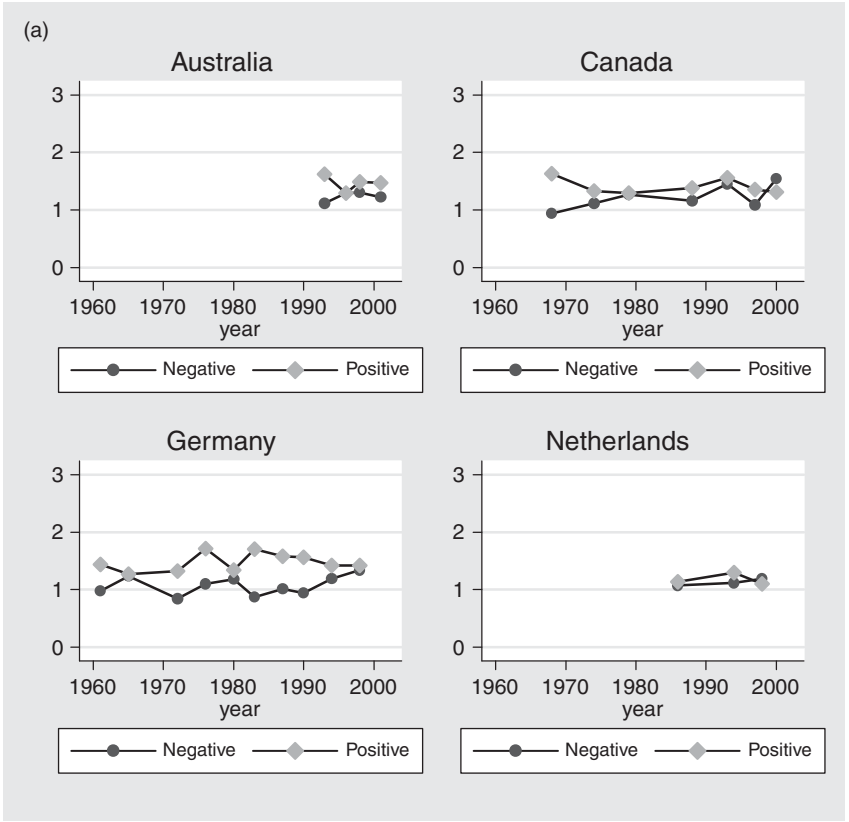

FIGURE 10.2a Impact of negative and positive leader ratings on vote choice, per election and per country

nine cases. Furthermore, in three of these nine cases, the negative leader evaluations appear to be statistically insignificant (the Netherlands 1998; Norway 1985 and 1997). In only six cases – the 2000 parliamentary election in Canada, the 1989 Storting election in Norway, the 1989 election in Spain, the 1982 and 1985 elections in Sweden, and the 1988 US presidential election – is there a sign of negative voting being more important than positive voting. Thus, a clear and consistent *positivity* bias emerges, which is exactly the reverse of the negativity hypothesis. The vote decision is more strongly affected by how positive people feel towards the leaders than by how negative they are. Voters vote *for* the leader that they like rather than against the leader they dislike.

It is also interesting to note that this positivity bias emerges with respect to party evaluations as well. The effect of positive party evaluations is stronger than that of negative evaluations in almost all countries analysed here, with the exception of

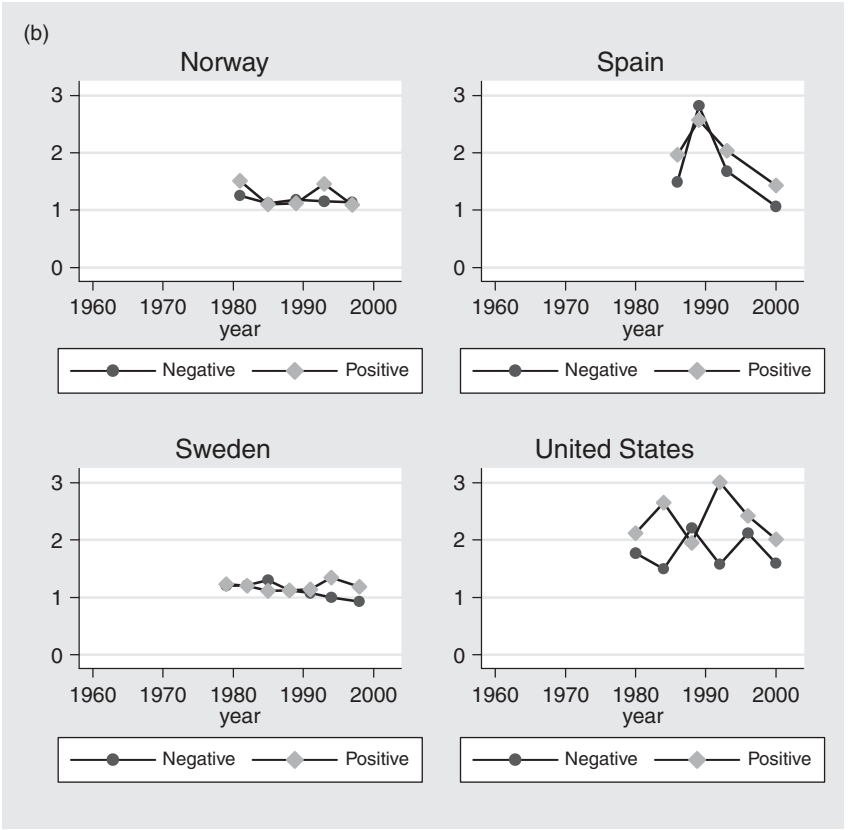

FIGURE 10.2b Impact of negative and positive leader ratings on vote choice, per election and per country (continued)

Spain. Apart from Spain, there is only one case in which the effect of negative party evaluations outweighs that of positive evaluations, and that is the United States 1988 election. The positivity bias thus holds for party as well as for leader evaluations.

This positivity bias seems quite consistent. It can be observed in seven of the eight countries examined here. It is true that there are some instances of negativity voting, but these are clearly exceptions. Each of the three elections held in the United States since 1988 yielded a stronger effect for positive evaluations. The two elections preceding the 2000 Canadian elections gave statistically insignificant effects for negative evaluations. And in no country is there a clear trend for either positive (or negative) evaluations to matter less (or more) over time. Perhaps the most telling findings concern the American case, where, it is often thought, political campaigns have become more and more negative. In that country, as

much as in all the others, voters seem to attach greater weight to their positive than to their negative evaluations of the leaders, and the pattern in 2000 is strikingly similar to that in 1980.

10.4.3 'What if . . .'

The importance of the positivity bias can be illustrated by means of a simulation. For this purpose the case of the 1998 Australian election has been selected. This election is fairly typical, as it shows the dominance of party effects on the vote as well as the dominance of positive over negative evaluations.

In order to assess the impact of changes in leader evaluations on voting behaviour, three 'states of the world' have been simulated and compared with the actual findings from the 1998 Australian election study. In the first simulation, all leaders are evaluated neutrally or positively, that is, there are no negative evaluations. This implies that all negative leader evaluations are set at the neutral point, 0. The second simulation is the opposite: all leaders are evaluated neutrally or negatively, so that there are no positive feelings towards any of the leaders. The third simulation investigates the consequences of complete indifference towards leaders (all leader evaluations are set to 0) for the vote. Both the actual findings reported in the Appendix and the simulated models result in utility estimates of each of the four parties in the analysis (Australian Liberal Party, National Party, Australian Labor Party, and Australian Democrats) for each voter.[10,11] It is assumed that voters vote for the party that yields them the highest utility. The predicted votes in the actual world can thus be compared with those in the simulated situations.

If there is a positivity bias, the difference between predicted votes in the actual model and in the model without negative leader evaluations should be smaller than the difference between the predictions in the actual model and those had there been no positive leader evaluations. In other words: if there is a positivity bias, neutralizing the positive leader evaluations should make a greater difference for the vote choice than neutralizing the negative leader evaluations. The results are summarized in Table 10.1.

In summarizing the main results of these first three simulations, we focus on the percentages of changes in the model predicted vote. What would be the change in voting behaviour if the four leaders evoked neither positive nor negative feelings among the voters? In that case, 5.7 per cent of the voters would have voted differently – which summarizes the impact of leaders on the vote in this particular election. What if there were no negative, only neutral or positive leader evaluations? The answer is that a meagre per cent of the voters would have changed their vote choice. Finally, if there were no positive leader evaluations, the percentage voting differently would amount to 5.1. Thus, the impact of the positive leader evaluations on vote choice is much larger than the impact of negative

TABLE 10.1 *The impact of indifference, negativity, and positivity in the 1998 Australian election*

Predicted vote (ties excluded)	(1) Actual prediction	(2) With indifference towards leaders	(3) Without negative leader evaluations	(4) Without positive leader evaluations
Australian Liberal Party	35.9	34.4	36.0	34.4
Australian Labor Party	47.8	48.2	47.5	47.7
National Party	5.4	4.2	5.5	4.4
Australian Democrats	11.0	13.1	11.0	13.5
n =	1,269	1,106	1,258	1,132
Total % changers	–	5.7	1.0	5.1

evaluations.[12] This finding is in line with the positivity bias found in almost all elections analysed here.

In an adapted format, this research strategy is also well suited for pointing out the impact of specific political leaders. We again focus on the 1998 Australian election. This election was characterized by a decline in support for the liberal–national government headed by the Liberal Howard, which nevertheless kept a majority in the House, and a marginally small gain in the popular vote for the Labor party headed by Beazley. What would have happened if Prime Minister Howard had been less popular, or if opposition leader Beazley had been more popular? Table 10.2 shows the results.[13] First, had Howard not been evaluated positively at all, our model suggests that 4.6 per cent of the voters would have turned away from the Liberals, and most of them (3.2 per cent) would have voted Labor instead. Second, had Beazley been so popular that his evaluations were never negative, this would have made far less difference for the vote: only 0.8 per cent of the respondents would have voted differently. Once more, the positivity bias working for Howard is observed, but no offsetting negativity bias in the case of Beazley. Finally, if Howard had not been evaluated positively at all *and* Beazley not negatively, 5.5 per cent of the respondents would have made a different choice, according to our model. Most of these (3.8 per cent) would have voted Labor rather than Liberal. In this particular election it might have been a decisive shift in the political balance, but the preconditions are of course not very realistic.

The above considerations lead to a final cautionary note: simulation is a risky business. The validity of conclusions like those just presented depends on the validity of the model used. It should be kept in mind that the simple model of electoral choice employed here works well in the real world, but probably less well when counterfactual situations are analysed. This is because in the real world, party evaluations and leader evaluations vary not independently from each other

TABLE 10.2 *The impact of negative and positive evaluations of some leaders in the 1998 Australian election*

Predicted vote (ties excluded)	(1) Actual prediction	(2) Without positive evaluations of Howard	(3) Without negative evaluations of Beazley	(4) Combined effect of (2) and (3)
Australian Liberal Party	46.9	42.0	46.4	41.4
Australian Labor Party	46.3	49.7	47.1	50.1
National Party	2.2	3.2	2.0	3.0
Australian Democrats	4.7	5.1	4.5	4.8
n =	1,370	1,364	1,368	1,361
Total % changers	–	4.6	0.8	5.5

but together. It is highly unlikely that a (simulated) change in the evaluation of political leaders could go without a parallel change in party evaluation.

10.5 CONCLUSION

The idea that voters vote against, rather than for, parties and candidates is an appealing one. However, that very simple proposition does not have much empirical support. On closer analysis, the studies by Kernell (1977) and Lau (1982, 1985) do not prove to be compelling, as they deal only with Congressional midterm elections and as they test the negativity hypothesis in a most indirect way. And their findings are contradicted by those of Wattenberg (1991) who reports that the vote in presidential elections is more strongly affected by likes for each candidate than dislikes.

We have proposed here a direct test of the negativity hypothesis. We have assessed and compared the relative impact of positive and negative evaluations of party leaders on vote choice. And we have examined that impact in forty-four different elections in eight different countries over a period of forty years.

Our findings are crystal clear. The negativity hypothesis is systematically disconfirmed. There is simply no support for the idea that voters vote more against than for parties and leaders. In fact, we have uncovered strong evidence that it is exactly the opposite. Positive evaluations have a greater impact on vote choice than negative ones. There is a positivity bias in the vote decision.

We should acknowledge an important limitation of our study. We have confined ourselves to one variant of the negativity hypothesis, concerning the impact of evaluations on vote choice. Another variant argues that there is a negativity bias in the formation of evaluations. That other variant has not been tested in this study. Only when both variants will have been systematically assessed will it be possible to come to a firm conclusion about the negativity hypothesis.

That being said, the empirical support for the negativity thesis appears thin. Not only do we find exactly the opposite pattern in this research but work on related streams has also been unkind to the hypothesis. There is no evidence that negative advertising or campaigning is more effective than positive advertising and/or that voters punish governments for bad economic times but do not reward them for good times.

Our findings are particularly unkind for the Figure-Ground hypothesis. In almost every election, positive evaluations outnumber negative ones, and so the background is predominantly positive. Yet, the 'contrasting' negative evaluations matter less, not more.

These results raise yet another question: Why do positive evaluations matter more than negative ones? We believe that the answer lies more in politics than in psychology. The point is that, as Wattenberg (1991) has argued, voters are asked to vote *for* a party or candidate. It is the very nature of the task that induces people to focus on which party or candidate they prefer. The implication is that under other electoral systems, such as negative plurality or last-place punishing systems (Cox 1997: 145), voters would focus on the task of identifying the candidate they dislike the most. If that reasoning is correct, there is a positivity bias in vote choice, not for 'deep' psychological reasons but simply because voters are asked to indicate a 'positive' evaluation in the ballot box.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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NOTES

1. Lau et al. (2007) present a meta-analysis of studies of negative political campaigning. It is telling that only 2 of the 111 studies they identify are based on data collected outside the United States. These two exceptions employ British data.
2. Lau (1985: 125) notes that most political leaders are evaluated positively but what should matter for the first hypothesis is the predominance of positive or negative pieces of information.

3. Goren (2002) also argues that the negativity bias is more pronounced among supporters of the challenging party in a presidential election, who attach greater weight to the weakest character dimension of the incumbent candidate. Goren does not actually show, however, that negative trait assessments systematically matter more than positive ones.
4. As Johnston et al. (1992: 251) put it, 'parties ... must provide reasons for voting for them'.
5. More recently, Lau and Pomper (2002) have investigated the tone of US senate election campaigns and have found that positive campaigns are more efficient for incumbents and negative ones for challengers. The overall conclusion is the same: 'we find little support for the conventional wisdom that negative campaigning is inordinately effective' (Lau and Pomper 2002: 62).
6. For the US case, analyses of the so-called effect scores have been performed for the 1952–2000 period. The effect scores are counts of the number of positive and negative effects that people associate with candidates and parties. These analyses would lead to different conclusions about negative voting, setting the United States more apart from the other countries in the analysis. The results can be obtained from the authors.
7. It is a matter of taste, and perhaps of systemic context, whether the evaluation measures are called properties of the parties and their candidates, or properties of the candidates and their parties. We tried to avoid this terminological mist by referring as often as possible to 'electoral choice' as the dependent variable.
8. For an application of the conditional logit model to the analysis of voting behaviour, see Alvarez and Nagler (1998).
9. In both Canada and Germany, a simple explanation may account for these seemingly upward trends in negative evaluations: the party system has become more complex in the more recent years included in the present analyses. In Canada, the Reform/Canadian Alliance entered the political arena and the election studies in 1993; in Germany, the Greens and the PDS have been fully included in the surveys since 1990 (the Greens were successful in earlier elections in the 1980s, but did not then campaign with one political leader at the time). More small parties generally evoke a larger percentage of negative evaluations.
10. The simulation procedure is slightly more complex than is suggested here. It involves four steps. First, for each case in the stacked data matrix, the utility for that respondent–party combination is computed from the estimated model, and the resulting value is added to the data matrix. Also, the utilities for the simulations (e.g. when the variable measuring positive leader evaluations is set to zero) are computed and added to the data. Second, the data matrix is 'unstacked' so that each case now represents a respondent, with the utilities of the various electoral options, both in the actual model and in the simulations, being variables in the same row. Third, the probabilities of voting for each party, according to the actual model and according to the simulations, are computed using the formula for Prob (choice = j). The predicted vote choice is the choice that has the highest estimated probability. Fourth and finally, the predicted vote choices in the actual model and in the simulations are compared with each other in a

cross-tabulation. Because of ties, some respondents will not be assigned a predicted vote choice – these respondents appear as missing cases in the results.

11. Evaluation data of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party, which obtained more than 8 per cent of the vote in this election without securing parliamentary seats, are not available.
12. The difference between the impact of negative (1 per cent change in predicted vote choice) and positive (5.1 per cent change in vote choice) leader evaluations is partly caused by the different numbers of respondents evaluating the leaders negatively and positively. Twenty-nine per cent of the respondents in the 1998 Australian study give negative leader evaluations (i.e. <0), whereas 54 per cent provide positive evaluations (i.e. >0). The difference in impact is, however, much larger than can be accounted for by the different numbers of respondents.
13. The 'actual prediction' column in Table 10.2 shows different figures than the corresponding column in Table 10.1. This is a result of the different null model underlying these tables. The actual election result is somewhere in the middle. Counting first preferences, the Liberals secured 34.2 per cent of the vote, Labor 40.1 per cent, the National Party 5.3 per cent, and the Democrats 5.1 per cent. Other parties received 15.3 per cent. Setting the 84.7 per cent to 100 (we only look at respondents who voted for one of these four parties), we expect the following distribution of votes: Liberal: 40.4 per cent; Labor: 47.3 per cent; National: 6.3 per cent; Democrats: 6.0 per cent.

Appendix

TABLE 10.A.1 *Effects of positive and negative party and leader evaluations on vote choice: Australia*

	Party: negative	Party: positive	Leader: negative	Leader: positive
Australia 1993	1.59 (0.11)	2.79 (0.15)	1.12 (0.05)	1.62 (0.07)
Null model LL	−2416.44	Model LL	−947.70	n = 2,286
Australia 1996	1.21 (0.10)	3.01 (0.18)	1.29 (0.08)	1.29 (0.06)
Null model LL	−1647.95	Model LL	−796.36	n = 1,467
Australia 1998	1.62 (0.18)	2.52 (0.14)	1.30 (0.12)	1.49 (0.08)
Null model LL	−1611.54	Model LL	−820.01	n = 1,408
Australia 2001	1.25 (0.10)	2.93 (0.19)	1.22 (0.10)	1.47 (0.07)
Null model LL	−1604.68	Model LL	−760.12	n = 1,430

Note: In Australia, in all election years analysed the choice set consists of Liberal Party, Australian Labor Party, National Party, and Australian Democrats.

TABLE 10.A.2 *Effects of positive and negative party and leader evaluations on vote choice: Canada*

	Party: negative	Party: positive	Leader: negative	Leader: positive
Canada 1968[§]	1.70 (0.16)	2.48 (0.14)	0.94^{ns} (0.06)	1.63 (0.07)
Null model LL	−1507.29	Model LL	−777.34	n = 1,758
Canada 1974[§]	2.03 (0.24)	2.74 (0.17)	1.12^{ns} (0.07)	1.33 (0.07)
Null model LL	−1308.83	Model LL	−608.28	n = 1,563
Canada 1979[§]	1.54 (0.13)	2.87 (0.16)	1.27 (0.08)	1.29 (0.05)
Null model LL	−1545.37	Model LL	−759.43	n = 1,836
Canada 1988[§]	2.24 (0.20)	2.82 (0.17)	1.16 (0.08)	1.38 (0.08)
Null model LL	−1672.16	Model LL	−924.13	n = 1,876
Canada 1993*	1.76 (0.16)	2.48 (0.16)	1.45 (0.14)	1.56 (0.10)
Null model LL	−1756.31	Model LL	−967.61	n = 1,520
Canada 1997*	2.48 (0.25)	3.07 (0.22)	1.09^{ns} (0.08)	1.36 (0.08)
Null model LL	−1596.59	Model LL	−755.00	n = 1,397
Canada 2000*	1.85 (0.17)	2.78 (0.18)	1.54 (0.15)	1.31 (0.09)
Null model LL	−1298.78	Model LL	−605.12	n = 1,165

Explanation of symbols:

[§] Choice set consists of Liberals, PC, NDP.

* Choice set consists of Liberals, PC, NDP, Reform (2000: Canadian Alliance); respondents in Quebec are excluded.

TABLE 10.A.3 *Effects of positive and negative party and leader evaluations on vote choice: Germany*

	Party: negative	Party: positive	Leader: negative	Leader: positive
Germany 1961*	1.02[ns] (0.08)	1.97 (0.10)	0.98[ns] (0.06)	1.44 (0.07)
Null model LL	−840.27	Model LL	−493.79	n = 979
Germany 1965*	0.83[ns] (0.09)	2.87 (0.20)	1.23 (0.10)	1.27 (0.07)
Null model LL	−768.12	Model LL	−328.61	n = 971
Germany 1972*	0.80[ns] (0.10)	3.00 (0.30)	0.84[ns] (0.09)	1.32 (0.12)
Null model LL	−708.09	Model LL	−227.28	n = 999
Germany 1976*	0.75[ns] (0.13)	4.12 (0.42)	1.10 (0.22)	1.71 (0.14)
Null model LL	−884.25	Model LL	−308.19	n = 1,064
Germany 1980*	0.84[ns] (0.14)	3.93 (0.36)	1.18[ns] (0.14)	1.34 (0.09)
Null model LL	−736.87	Model LL	−305.52	n = 866
Germany 1983*	0.99[ns] (0.19)	3.89 (0.41)	0.87[ns] (0.13)	1.70 (0.15)
Null model LL	−913.71	Model LL	−239.92	n = 1,192
Germany 1987*	1.14[ns] (0.14)	5.27 (0.45)	1.01[ns] (0.09)	1.58 (0.10)
Null model LL	−1569.65	Model LL	−390.89	n = 2,021
Germany 1990*	1.06[ns] (0.19)	3.19 (0.27)	0.94[ns] (0.11)	1.56 (0.10)
Null model LL	−937.12	Model LL	−360.61	n = 1,215
Germany 1994[‡]	1.79 (0.21)	3.26 (0.21)	1.19 (0.09)	1.42 (0.07)
Null model LL	−1701.77	Model LL	−564.04	n = 1,366
Germany 1998[‡]	1.36 (0.08)	1.88 (0.09)	1.34 (0.09)	1.42 (0.06)
Null model LL	−1414.54	Model LL	−734.33	n = 1,056

Explanation of symbols:
* Choice set consists of SPD, CDU/CSU, FDP.
[‡] Choice set consists of SPD, CDU/CSU, FDP, Greens, PDS.

TABLE 10.A.4 *Effects of positive and negative party and leader evaluations on vote choice: the Netherlands*

	Party: negative	Party: positive	Leader: negative	Leader: positive
The Netherlands 1986*	1.37 (0.15)	2.94 (0.18)	1.07[ns] (0.09)	1.14 (0.06)
Null model LL	−1059.89	Model LL	−540.19	n = 973
The Netherlands 1994[§]	1.91 (0.26)	3.00 (0.17)	1.12[ns] (0.11)	1.30 (0.06)
Null model LL	−1301.62	Model LL	−729.06	n = 925
The Netherlands 1998[§]	2.22 (0.35)	2.97 (0.16)	1.19[ns] (0.11)	1.10 (0.04)
Null model LL	−1620.48	Model LL	−1003.54	n = 1,136

Explanation of symbols:
* Choice set consists of PvdA, CDA, VVD, D66.
[§] Choice set consists of PvdA, CDA, VVD, D66, Green Left.

TABLE 10.A.5 *Effects of positive and negative party and leader evaluations on vote choice: Norway*

	Party: negative	Party: positive	Leader: negative	Leader: positive
Norway 1981	2.38 (0.58)	5.04 (0.42)	1.25^{ns} (0.16)	1.51 (0.10)
Null model LL	−1909.46	Model LL	−446.28	n = 1,245
Norway 1985	3.14 (0.76)	6.25 (0.45)	1.12^{ns} (0.14)	1.10 (0.05)
Null model LL	−2655.63	Model LL	−655.08	n = 1,715
Norway 1989	2.48 (0.44)	5.46 (0.34)	1.18 (0.09)	1.12 (0.04)
Null model LL	−2772.60	Model LL	−949.33	n = 1,722
Norway 1993	1.55 (0.18)	4.77 (0.29)	1.16^{ns} (0.11)	1.46 (0.06)
Null model LL	−2480.98	Model LL	−823.36	n = 1,548
Norway 1997	1.77 (0.20)	4.17 (0.22)	1.14^{ns} (0.09)	1.09 (0.04)
Null model LL	−2453.98	Model LL	−962.55	n = 1,513

Note: In Norway, in all election years analysed the choice set consists of Labor (DNA), Conservative (Høre), Christian People's Party (KrF), Agrarian (Senterpartiet), Social Left (SV), Progress (FP), Liberal (Venstre).

TABLE 10.A.6 *Effects of positive and negative party and leader evaluations on vote choice: Spain*

	Party: negative	Party: positive	Leader: negative	Leader: positive
Spain 1986	4.39 (0.69)	1.65 (0.39)	1.49(0.12)	1.97 (0.12)
Null model LL	−2265.84	Model LL	−347.55	n = 3,331
Spain 1989	3.88 (1.01)	1.90^{ns} (0.72)	2.82 (0.82)	2.57 (0.29)
Null model LL	−786.35	Model LL	−156.03	n = 1,098
Spain 1993	3.60 (0.48)	1.23^{ns} (0.22)	1.68 (0.20)	2.04 (0.11)
Null model LL	−1832.11	Model LL	−583.83	n = 2,465
Spain 2000	1.84 (0.13)	1.34 (0.12)	1.07^{ns} (0.05)	1.43 (0.07)
Null model LL	−1474.17	Model LL	−863.52	n = 1,831

Note: In Spain, in all election years analysed the choice set consists of IU, PP, PSOE.

TABLE 10.A.7 *Effects of positive and negative party and leader evaluations on vote choice: Sweden*

	Party: negative	Party: positive	Leader: negative	Leader: positive
Sweden 1979*	1.13^{ns} (0.11)	5.61 (0.38)	1.20 (0.11)	1.23 (0.06)
Null model LL	−2818.75	Model LL	−851.02	n = 2,236
Sweden 1982*	1.16^{ns} (0.09)	4.24 (0.24)	1.21 (0.10)	1.20 (0.05)
Null model LL	−2789.14	Model LL	−931.95	n = 2,236
Sweden 1985§	1.26 (0.14)	4.62 (0.25)	1.30 (0.13)	1.11 (0.04)
Null model LL	−3179.20	Model LL	−1097.57	n = 2,185
Sweden 1988*	1.29^{ns} (0.19)	6.28 (0.47)	1.12^{ns} (0.13)	1.12 (0.06)
Null model LL	−2330.63	Model LL	−728.72	n = 1,827
Sweden 1991†	1.37 (0.19)	5.17 (0.29)	1.08^{ns} (0.10)	1.14 (0.04)
Null model LL	−3057.52	Model LL	−1173.00	n = 1,697
Sweden 1994	1.49 (0.21)	4.86 (0.27)	1.00^{ns} (0.09)	1.34 (0.05)
Null model LL	−3239.09	Model LL	−1087.62	n = 1,843
Sweden 1998‡	2.13 (0.46)	5.24 (0.34)	0.93^{ns} (0.09)	1.18 (0.05)
Null model LL	−2396.46	Model LL	−858.06	n = 1,462

Explanation of symbols:
* Choice set consists of Venstre, SAP, CP, FP, MSP.
§ Choice set consists of Venstre, SAP, CP, FP, MSP, KD.
‡ Choice set consists of Venstre, SAP, CP, FP, MSP, KD, MPG.
† Choice set consists of Venstre, SAP, CP, FP, MSP, KD, MPG, ND.

TABLE 10.A.8 *Effects of positive and negative party and leader evaluations on vote choice: the United States*

	Party: negative	Party: positive	Leader: negative	Leader: positive
The United States 1980	1.04^{ns} (0.15)	1.40 (0.13)	1.77 (0.23)	2.12 (0.20)
Null model LL	−417.63	Model LL	−224.76	n = 806
The United States 1984	1.24^{ns} (0.24)	1.46 (0.12)	1.50 (0.20)	2.65 (0.22)
Null model LL	−620.39	Model LL	−259.93	n = 1,319
The United States 1988	1.81 (0.37)	1.30 (0.09)	2.21 (0.41)	1.95 (0.15)
Null model LL	−574.75	Model LL	−275.01	n = 1,150
The United States 1992	1.69 (0.29)	1.71 (0.20)	1.58 (0.20)	3.01 (0.34)
Null model LL	−635.57	Model LL	−224.64	n = 1,322
The United States 1996	1.24^{ns} (0.25)	1.56 (0.19)	2.12 (0.41)	2.42 (0.29)
Null model LL	−474.57	Model LL	−170.08	n = 1,019
The United States 2000	1.34 (0.19)	1.86 (0.18)	1.59 (0.20)	2.01 (0.17)
Null model LL	−533.30	Model LL	−239.77	n = 1,093

Note: In the United States, in all election years the choice set consists of the Republican and the Democratic presidential candidate.

11

Leader Traits, Leader Image, and Vote Choice

Dieter Ohr and Henrik Oscarsson

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Secular changes are taking place in the way election campaigns are conducted (Mancini and Swanson 1996) and in the way politics is portrayed in the mass media of advanced democracies. Political communication is said to have become more personalized during the past years – at the expense of abstract institutions such as political parties. In parliamentary democracies, the coverage of politics in the major mass media in particular appears to have moved towards a more presidentialized approach (Mughan 2000). If such changes are in fact occurring, it seems likely that gradually the criteria voters utilize in arriving at their voting decision will shift towards the characteristics of political candidates. Whether voters decide to base their voting decision on a superficial image of political candidates or instead on more rational criteria such as leaders' competence to solve a nation's urgent political problems will be crucial for the recruitment of political leaders and the quality of democratic government.

For the presidential system of the United States, it could be demonstrated that *politically relevant*, *performance-oriented criteria* play an important role in the overall judgement of political candidates and in vote choice. Conversely, strictly personal, non-political candidate characteristics are of only minor importance (Miller et al. 1986). In analysing the impact of individual leader traits on overall leader evaluations, it emerged for the United States that politically relevant criteria had a much greater impact than the more superficial and apparent leader characteristics (Miller et al. 1986: 534). Competence, reliability, and honesty proved to be more important for a leader's overall assessment than his appearance, with competence as the primary dimension used by citizens throughout the 1952–84 period (Miller et al. 1986: 535). Bean arrived at a similar conclusion with regard to the weight of politically relevant criteria such as competence and integrity, and suggested that findings such as these apply 'across both national and temporal boundaries, for parliamentary as well as presidential political systems and for many different individual political leaders, whether they have stronger or weaker images and whether they be incumbents or nonincumbents' (Bean 1993: 129).

In this chapter, we will ask whether the role of leader characteristics in parliamentary systems, where political parties are traditionally stronger, is similar to the

one in a presidential system. Do, for instance, politically related criteria such as a leader's competence or his or her integrity inform the overall judgement of a political leader in a parliamentary democracy in the same way as in a presidential system? And which of these leader attributes exert, in the end, the greatest influence on the voting decision itself?

In order to find empirical evidence and address these questions, the content of political leaders' images and their potential impact on voters' judgements of leaders and on the final vote will be analysed. First, we will ask how leaders' global evaluations in the general public are constituted. In following this perspective, we will explore to what extent a leader's *overall*, *global evaluation* in the electorate depends on how his or her individual traits are perceived. Second, with regard to the relationship between leaders' evaluations in the public and the eventual vote choice, we will examine which of the individual traits are most closely related to the *vote decision*. When analysing the impact of leader traits, we will focus on 'direct' effects, that is 'the influence that a leader or candidate exerts on voters by virtue of who he or she is, how he or she appears and how he or she publicly comports him or herself' (King 2002*a*: 6).[1]

Since our aim is to determine in which way the character of the political system affects the criteria voters use in reaching their political judgements, it is essential, first, that there be enough variation of the type of the political system. Secondly, comparing across systems presupposes that the set of leader attributes is more or less the same and that the indicators used to tap these attribute dimensions are similar to a sufficient degree. In combining both the criteria of system variation as well as data availability, we decided to focus our empirical analyses on three countries and three fairly different political systems, namely the presidential system of the United States (Foster and Muste 1992; Nimmo 1996) and the two parliamentary systems of Australia (Hughes 1992; McAllister 1992, 2002*b*; Simms 1996) and Sweden (Esaiasson 1992). Australia and Sweden are both parliamentary democracies. These two democracies are similar to the extent that in both systems the political parties still hold a very strong position (for Australia see McAllister 2002*b*, 2003). Class structure is another variable which differentiates Australia and Sweden from the United States, but presumably also Sweden from Australia since at least until the end of the 1960s Sweden outstripped most other countries in terms of the strength of class voting (Oskarson 1992; Asp and Esaiasson 1996: 76). The Australian political system differs from the Swedish system as it is in the Westminster tradition with majority representation. Australia might come fairly close to a presidential system as a majoritarian system implies a tendency towards a greater weight of the top two leaders (Mughan 2000: 16). Moreover, the United States, Australia, and Sweden might be different with respect to how election campaigns are conducted. Tendencies towards an 'Americanization' and candidate-centring of election campaigns seem to be quite weak in Sweden (Asp and Esaiasson 1996: 76; Petersson et al. 2006). In taking these criteria together, the United States without doubt is the ideal type of a presidential,

candidate-centred system and Sweden is the ideal type of a still party-dominated system (for differences between presidential and parliamentary systems, see McAllister 1996; Mughan 2000). All in all, these three countries selected for comparison should be sufficiently distinct on a number of criteria which are likely to affect the content as well as the impact of political leaders' images on voters' judgements and decisions. Besides, only for these three nations – among the nine nations analysed in this book – are comparable leader trait measures available.

In addition to the main task of this chapter, which is the comparative analysis of leader traits, we will also touch upon the question of whether strictly *non-political* leader attributes such as outer appearance or family life are in fact relevant determinants of leader evaluations as it is sometimes suggested in the context of hypotheses on the personalization of politics. Since non-political leader qualities are not commonly measured in election studies, this part of the empirical analysis will be confined to Germany.

11.2 LEADER EVALUATIONS: TRAITS AND DIMENSIONS IN THE LITERATURE

When it comes to analysing how leader images are constituted,[2] image perception of political leaders by the electorate is often conceived in a dichotomous way. Leader traits are thus commonly distinguished into *politically relevant* and *performance-related* attributes on the one hand and *personal*, *non-political* attributes on the other hand. Politically relevant or performance-related attributes comprise traits such as a leader's competence, leadership qualities, knowledge, or political integrity. Personal attributes subsume a leader's looks, or his or her family life.[3] The politically relevant attributes have clearly received the most intensive treatment in past research, with differentiated measurements, whereas the non-political dimension is either not measured at all or only very roughly.

Miller et al. (1986) use for their analysis of leader traits the open-ended statements of respondents of the American National Election Studies (ANES) and they distinguish five dimensions (Miller et al. 1986: 528). As a first dimension, competence encompasses a candidate's intelligence, his or her comprehension of political issues, the ability as a statesman, or political experience. Integrity, for its part, refers to the trustworthiness of a politician, his or her sincerity and honesty, whereas reliability relates to a leader's capacity to credibly realize his or her political programme. Therefore, to be reliable (or credible), a candidate has to appear as 'dependable', 'hardworking', or 'decisive'. Reliability here is understood as '. . . trust in terms of capability rather than honesty' (Miller et al. 1986: 528). Charisma is a fourth category, which includes a candidate's leadership qualities

or the ability to communicate with people. A fifth category involves entirely personal, more or less non-political qualities of a candidate such as his or her age or outward appearance.

Funk (1996) argues that three separable dimensions are important to cover the extent of leader evaluations, namely competence, trustworthiness (or integrity), and warmth (or sociability). In another analysis, Funk (1999) uses the closed format trait statements of the ANES, which, essentially, only contain measurements for political attributes. These trait statements were developed by Kinder (1986) and they are intended to measure four broad dimensions of leader evaluation, which are fairly similar to those of Miller et al. (1986), namely *competence*, *leadership*, *trustworthiness*, and *empathy* (Shanks and Miller 1990: 201).[4] It would be possible, of course, to differentiate further or to consider still other attributes, but we believe that these four dimensions cover the main politically relevant and performance-related aspects of leader evaluation and we will therefore use this classification of leader traits as the frame of reference in our own empirical analyses. For the comparative part of our analysis, the focus will thus be on competence, leadership, trustworthiness, and empathy. In addition, in the last part of the empirical analyses we will also concentrate on the distinction between performance-related criteria and personal, non-political criteria.[5]

11.3 A FEW CONSIDERATIONS ON THE ROLE OF LEADER TRAITS

If we assume politically rational voters (Downs 1957), *performance-related criteria* such as a leader's competence and/or his or her leadership qualities and integrity generally should be the principal criteria according to which political leaders are evaluated. The political utility income citizens expect to receive will be the higher the more a leader is competent to tackle and solve a nation's urgent problems. It is equally important for citizens' political benefits that leaders can be trusted, in the sense that they keep their promises and also in the sense that leaders can be depended and relied upon if sudden crises should arise.[6] Finally, leaders are also expected to care for the particular needs of citizens. Therefore, these performance-related trait dimensions should prove empirically to be as substantial, if not more so, as the most important determinants of a leader's image. And they should have a noticeable effect on the vote decision as well – *quite independently from the type of political system*. In taking this general expectation as our baseline hypothesis, some differences in the role of leader traits between political systems could nonetheless be possible. We will therefore examine whether leaders' traits play different roles in a presidential system such as that of the United States' and in parliamentary systems like those in Australia or Sweden.

While it is not difficult to give an explanation as to why and how the *overall effect of leader evaluations* on vote choice should depend on the type of political system, this is by no means as obvious when it comes to assessing the role of *individual leader traits* in different political systems. With respect to overall leader effects, conventional wisdom would suggest that leader evaluations are most important in a presidential system, as there the candidates can act more independently from their parties than their counterparts in parliamentary systems. Moreover, presidential candidates receive more attention in the mass media's coverage of politics, which may in part be due to the fact that political parties in a presidential system are generally weaker than their counterparts in parliamentary systems. Conversely, the weight of political leaders for voters' choice should be the smallest in parliamentary systems, in particular if political parties still maintain a strong position. Having said this, one would expect greater leader effects on the vote in the United States and rather smaller effects for party-dominated political systems such as Sweden or Australia – although a majoritarian system of the Westminster type, as in Australia, might come fairly close to a presidential system.

It is quite another question, however, whether the type of political system – presidential system vs. parliamentary system, and further differentiating the latter according to party dominance or the electoral system – should also affect the weight with which individual leader traits inform the global evaluation of candidates by the public or whether particular traits make a difference to the eventual voting decision. Is, for instance, the individual character or the personal style of leaders more important in presidential than in parliamentary systems (McAllister 1996: 283)? Does a candidate's empathy or emotional warmth count more than his or her competence to solve the country's political problems in a candidate-centred system such as that of the United States than in a party-dominated system such as in Sweden? And if so, how could this be accounted for?

Bean suggests that the role of leader qualities in a presidential system is intimately related to political programmes and political issues: 'Whereas in parliamentary systems, policies are typically associated with parties rather than party leaders, presidential contenders in the American political system have a rather different role. In some senses they themselves virtually act as surrogates for political parties, personally espousing a full program of policies' (Bean 1993: 117–8). Therefore, in a presidential system the candidates would be evaluated across the whole range of criteria: their positions on political issues, their competence to solve the nation's important problems, and their traits as a person. By contrast, in a parliamentary, party-dominated democracy, some of these criteria might be ascribed to the domain of political parties, for instance political issue positions or the competence to solve urgent problems. Leaders in party-dominated systems might thus primarily be evaluated in terms of their integrity or their empathy, traits which can plausibly only be related to a leader as a person and not to political issues or to the party domain.

Another consideration refers to the president's specific role and tasks in a presidential system in comparison with those of a prime minister in a parliamentary democracy (cf. McAllister 2007). Whereas in a parliamentary democracy a weak leader may be simply *primus inter pares* within a cooperative government, and thus not be able to cause much damage, in a presidential system strong leadership is virtually indispensable. Therefore, leadership qualities may be the crucial yardstick for the candidates in a presidential system.

As far as the potential electoral impact of non-political leader traits such as a candidate's looks or his or her family life is concerned, it should mainly be dependent, first, on the 'uniqueness of particular candidates' (Miller et al. 1986: 529) and, secondly, on the degree with which non-political leader attributes receive emphasis in mass media coverage. In this perspective no systematic difference between a presidential and a parliamentary system would be expected concerning the weight of non-political traits. But to the extent that personalization of media coverage has already progressed more in presidential systems, one would assume that non-political attributes receive greater emphasis there. As a result, these personal candidate traits could, then, count more for the vote decision in presidential systems.

11.4 DATA

For the *United States*, we draw on the ANES for the six presidential elections between 1988 and 2008. In order to measure leader traits, the open-ended questions of the ANES could have been used. However, since open-ended questions for the two other countries selected for this study are only available for a few elections during the 1980s (Australia) or not at all (Sweden), closed format was chosen instead in order to render the country analyses comparable. With only minor changes over time, the ANES has measured a set of leader traits such as 'intelligent', 'knowledgeable', 'inspiring', 'provides strong leadership', 'moral', 'compassionate', or 'really cares about people like you', which should constitute 'a fair sampling from the broader range of personal qualities that might conceivably be relevant to prospective voters' (Bartels 2002: 47).[7] These traits closely resemble those categories used by Miller et al. (1986) on the basis of the open-ended candidate questions of the ANES (for further information on the traits, such as the question wording, see the Appendix). Unfortunately, since the closed format statements we utilize do not explicitly contain strictly personal, non-political candidate characteristics, the distinction between political and non-political attributes cannot be analysed for the United States when using these data.

The *Australian* National Election Studies pertaining to the six elections to the House of Representatives between 1993 and 2007 include measures for leader

traits, which are virtually identical to the US measures. In addition to the US studies, there are also trait measures available for the 'reliability' of the Australian political leaders (see the Appendix).

In the *Swedish* National Election Studies (SNES), the leader trait measures for the six national elections between 1988 and 2006 are very similar to the measures employed in the US and the Australian election studies. Four traits have been identified as comparable, namely 'knowledgeable', 'inspiring', 'reliable', and 'knows the thoughts and opinions of ordinary people'. Since in the 1994 SNES trait measures are not available, the SOM survey, which is a post-election mail survey, has been drawn on instead for that year. The trait items in the SOM survey come fairly close to those of the SNES. To check whether this decision might influence the results, for the election year 1991 we have used both the SOM survey and the national election study (see the Appendix).

For *Germany*, the availability of measures on leader traits is not quite as good as it is for the United States or Australia. Only in the recent past have leader traits been taken into account for a series of German state elections (Ohr and Klein 2001; Klein and Ohr 2002), and also for national elections to the German national parliament, the Bundestag (Klein and Ohr 2000, 2001; Brettschneider and Gabriel 2002). Differentiated candidate items are now available for the national elections of 1998, 2002, and 2005. Interestingly, these data make it possible to examine simultaneously the relative importance of role-relevant leader traits on the one hand and personal, non-political traits, such as a leader's looks, on the other hand. With respect to non-political traits in the German part of the CSES study of 1998, there are several indicators available which tap such non-political candidate qualities as outward appearance or a candidate's family life. On these grounds we have chosen this study to analyse the potential effect of personal candidate attributes.

11.5 EMPIRICAL ANALYSES ON THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL LEADER TRAITS

Starting with the six *US presidential elections* between 1988 and 2008 in Table 11.1, the average evaluation for each individual trait dimension is depicted for each presidential candidate of the two major American parties. For each election year, the third column shows the difference in the arithmetic means of both presidential candidates. The overall impression appears to be that the image of US presidential candidates is fairly good. By and large, the candidates are viewed as competent, as capable to lead the nation, and as trustworthy. There are only a few exceptions to this overall pattern, for instance the evaluation of Bill Clinton's trustworthiness, which is considered as rather low.

TABLE 11.1 *Evaluation of political leaders' traits (arithmetic means, trait variables scaled from 0 to 1)*
US presidential elections, 1988–2008

	1988			1992			1996		
	Dukakis (Dem.)	Bush sen. (Rep.)	Diff.	Clinton (Dem.)	Bush sen. (Rep.)	Diff.	Clinton (Dem.)	Dole (Rep.)	Diff.
Cognitive competence	0.68	0.67	0.01	0.69	0.68	0.01	0.72	0.71	0.01
Leadership	0.50	0.47	0.03**	0.56	0.49	0.07**	0.53	0.51	0.02
Trustworthiness	0.64	0.64	0.00	0.48	0.62	−0.14**	0.40	0.68	−0.28**
Empathy	0.60	0.53	0.07**	0.61	0.48	0.13**	0.54	0.47	0.07**
n_{max}/n_{min}	1,165/1,133	1,185/1,162		1,326/1,294	1,353/1,348		1,032/1,025	1,022/1,003	
	2000			2004			2008		
	Gore (Dem.)	Bush (Rep.)	Diff.	Kerry (Dem.)	Bush (Rep.)	Diff.	Obama (Dem.)	McCain (Rep.)	Diff.
Cognitive competence	0.70	0.61	0.09**	0.69	0.54	0.15**	0.74	0.67	0.07**
Leadership	0.53	0.58	−0.05**	0.49	0.60	−0.11**	0.60	0.61	−0.01
Trustworthiness	0.65	0.65	0.00	0.58	0.64	−0.06**	0.59	0.61	−0.02
Empathy	0.54	0.46	0.08**	0.53	0.46	0.07**	0.59	0.46	0.13**
n_{max}/n_{min}	1,110/1,070	1,098/1,033		798/757	809/803		760/748	756/745	

Australian elections to the House of Representatives, 1993–2007

	1993			1996			1998		
	Keating (Lab.)	Hewson (Lib.)	Diff.	Keating (Lab.)	Howard (Lib.)	Diff.	Beazley (Lab.)	Howard (Lib.)	Diff.
Cognitive competence	0.74	0.72	0.02*	0.76	0.69	0.07**	0.69	0.67	0.02*
Leadership	0.58	0.47	0.11**	0.61	0.47	0.14**	0.55	0.41	0.14**
Trustworthiness	0.50	0.59	−0.09**	0.46	0.69	−0.23**	0.64	0.61	0.03**
Reliability	0.43	0.52	−0.09**	0.45	0.62	−0.17**	0.58	0.51	0.07**
Empathy	0.48	0.54	−0.06**	0.47	0.64	−0.17**	0.65	0.57	0.08**
n_{max}/n_{min}	2,496/2,436	2,486/2,435		1,362/1,344	1,369/1,349		1,350/1,336	1,369/1,344	

	2001			2004			2007		
	Beazley (Lab.)	Howard (Lib.)	Diff.	Latham (Lab.)	Howard (Lib.)	Diff.	Rudd (Lab.)	Howard (Lib.)	Diff.
Cognitive competence	0.68	0.69	−0.01	0.58	0.75	−0.17**	0.74	0.74	0.00
Leadership	0.46	0.53	−0.07**	0.44	0.61	−0.17**	0.62	0.58	0.04**
Trustworthiness	0.57	0.52	0.05**	0.48	0.45	0.03	0.61	0.43	0.18**
Reliability	–	–		–	–		–	–	
Empathy	0.63	0.59	0.04**	0.53	0.60	−0.07**	0.67	0.57	0.10**
n_{max}/n_{min}	1,435/1,402	1,434/1,408		1,311/1,289	1,319/1,300		1,449/1,410	1,448/1,433	

(Continued)

TABLE 11.1 Continued

Swedish elections to the Riksdag, 1988–2006

	1988			1991			1994		
	Ingvar Carlsson (Soc. Dem.)	Carl Bildt (Con.)	Diff.	Ingvar Carlsson (Soc. Dem.)	Carl Bildt (Con.)	Diff.	Ingvar Carlsson (Soc. Dem.)	Carl Bildt (Con.)	Diff.
Cognitive competence	0.81	0.69	0.12**	0.78	0.77	0.01			
Leadership	0.51	0.36	0.15**	0.40	0.46	−0.06**			
Reliability	0.66	0.48	0.18**	0.61	0.55	0.06**			
Empathy	0.66	0.33	0.33**	0.57	0.39	0.18**			
n_{max}/n_{min}	600/574	568/547		586/564	575/557				
Cognitive				0.74	0.76	−0.02	0.72	0.76	−0.04**
Leadership				0.43	0.55	−0.12**	0.49	0.58	−0.09**
Trustworthiness				0.65	0.55	0.10**	0.67	0.55	0.12**
Reliability				0.60	0.51	0.09**	0.64	0.53	0.11**
n_{max}/n_{min}				713/696	709/694		901/873	888/867	

	1998			2002			2006		
	Göran Persson (Soc. Dem.)	Carl Bildt (Con.)	Diff.	Göran Persson (Soc. Dem.)	Bo Lundgren (Con.)	Diff.	Göran Persson (Soc. Dem.)	Fredrik Reinfeldt (Con.)	Diff.
Cognitive competence	0.72	0.85	−0.13**	0.81	0.69	0.12**	0.78	0.76	0.03*
Leadership	0.35	0.55	−0.20**	0.82	0.41	0.41**	0.79	0.75	0.04*
Reliability	0.50	0.63	−0.13**	0.65	0.53	0.12**	0.58	0.65	−0.07**
Empathy	0.44	0.36	0.08**	0.55	0.35	0.20**	0.50	0.50	0.00
n_{max}/n_{min}	482/467	478/464		460/433	417/397		497/477	468/444	

Note: ** ≤0.01;
* ≤0.05 (two-tailed).
Only those respondents who voted for either the presidential candidate of the Democratic Party or for the Republican candidate (the United States), for the Labor Party or for the Liberal Party (Australia), and for the Social Democratic Party or the Conservative Party (Sweden) are included in the analysis. For question wordings and operationalizations, see the Appendix.
Data: The United States: American National Election Studies (ICPSR Study Nos 9196, 6067, 6896, 3131, 4245, 25383); Australia: Australian Election Study (SSDA Study Nos 763, 943, 1001, 1048, 1079, 1120; all studies are post-election mail surveys); Sweden: Swedish National Electsion Study 1988, 1991, 2006 (pre-election interviews, except vote choice which was measured after the election); SOM surveys 1991 and 1994 (post-election mail surveys); Swedish National Election Study 1998, 2002 (post-election interviews). When using the US election studies, leader traits were taken from the pre-election surveys, vote choice from the post-election surveys.

Relatively large differences between the presidential candidates can be found in 1992, 1996, 2004, and 2008. In 1992, the incumbent George Bush sen. (Rep.) lost the presidential election against his contender Bill Clinton (Dem.). The trait pattern in Table 11.1 gives a first clue to the potential reasoning in the American electorate. In comparison with the incumbent, Clinton appeared as the more capable leader and, in particular, as having more empathy, that is, as a leader who really cared about his fellow citizens to a clearly higher degree than Bush. Conversely, as far as the trustworthiness of both candidates is concerned, Clinton's public assessment was markedly worse than that of the incumbent Bush, thus probably reflecting the continuous media coverage of the former's past. A similar pattern comes into view for the presidential election in 1996. Again, Clinton was evaluated as a political leader who cared more intensely about his fellow citizens than the Republican candidate Dole. Also in 1996, Clinton appeared even less trustworthy, thus increasing the difference between him and his Republican challenger. The extremely close presidential election in 2000 is reflected in the trait pattern for the presidential candidates Al Gore (Dem.) and George W. Bush (Rep.). Neither of them enjoyed a clear advantage with respect to their public image. Whereas Gore appeared as somewhat more knowledgeable and intelligent ('cognitively competent') as well as a politician who cared about his fellow citizens ('empathy'), Bush was rated higher on his leadership qualities. In comparing both candidates in 2008, the clear electoral victory of Barack Obama has no base in a higher evaluation of the Democratic candidate's leadership qualities or his trustworthiness. Only his empathy is seen as markedly higher than that of his Republican competitor.

Coming to *Australia* and the six elections to the House of Representatives, a first glance at Table 11.1 reveals that, overall and much like the United States, Australian political leaders receive fairly good evaluations in the electorate. Furthermore, the differences between the Australian political leaders lie in the same range as those between the US presidential candidates. And in both systems political leaders are perceived as widely different if specific circumstances apply. Apart from these first general observations, there are some noteworthy patterns for individual elections in Australia. Paul John Keating, Prime Minister for the Labor Party since 1991, was evaluated as a strong and capable leader who in 1996 clearly outperformed his contender, John Howard from the Australian Liberal Party, in terms of his leader potential. By contrast, Howard fared much better than Keating with respect to his trustworthiness, reliability, and empathy. In 1998, Howard again received lower assessments on his leadership qualities in comparison with his competitor who was then Kim Christian Beazley, Labor Party, the Australian leader of the opposition since 1996. But in 1998 these poor evaluations of Howard also extended to the remaining attributes so that his Labor contender performed better across all traits. Interestingly, in 2001 the evaluation for the leadership trait was reversed. Now, Howard who had been Prime Minister for the Liberal Party since 1996 was perceived as possessing higher leadership capabilities than his Labor challenger Beazley. Drawing a first, preliminary conclusion when

inspecting the elections in 1996, 1998, and in 2001, it appears as not very likely that evaluations of leader traits in Australia could prove as decisive for these election outcomes. Despite large differences between the candidates, often in favour of Howard's challenger, John Howard and his Liberal Party won all three House of Representatives elections. However, in 2004 and 2007, the pattern changed since the party with the more popular candidate managed to win in both elections: in 2004, Mark Latham, who had been elected as leader of the Labor Party in 2003, was considered as less competent than his Liberal competitor, the incumbent John Howard, who managed to win the election for the Liberal Party. In 2007, Kevin Rudd, leader of the Labor Party since December 2006, was far more popular than John Howard. Again, the higher trait evaluations were reflected in the electoral victory which, in addition, was accompanied by a massive swing from the Liberal to the Labor Party.

The story of leader image in *Sweden* during the 1990s revolves around the leaders of the two biggest parties: Ingvar Carlsson of the Social Democrats and Carl Bildt of the Conservative Party. Bildt was appointed as party leader shortly after the Conservative Party's defeat in the 1985 election. Carlsson's debut was far more unexpected. He became party leader and prime minister overnight directly after the assassination of Prime Minister Olof Palme in 1986 – an event that paralysed domestic politics in Sweden for the following years. After this shock, sympathies for the Social Democratic Party and its new leader grew to record high levels. In the continuing tracking of party leader popularity in Sweden, Carlsson's score in 1986 and 1987 is still the all-time record (see Holmberg and Weibull 2002). The Social Democrats won a comfortable victory in the 1988 general election (43.2 per cent) and were able to form a minority government with the parliamentary support of the Communist Party. The electoral victory is well reflected in voters' perceptions of Bildt and Carlsson. In 1988, Ingvar Carlsson was considered as a more 'reliable', more inspiring leader ('leadership'), more knowledgeable than Bildt ('cognitive competence'), and he was considered much more in touch with ordinary people ('empathy').

Three years later, in the 1991 election, there was a much tighter race between the two contenders in all respects. Bildt scored higher on all leader traits than he did in 1988, and was now considered a more inspiring leader (SNES data) than Carlsson as well as a stronger leader (SOM data). Although Carlsson still had the upper hand with respect to his 'empathy', this could not help the Social Democrats avoiding the worst election result since 1932 (37.7 per cent). Although Bildt had had a slow start winning the support of his own party sympathizers and the Swedish electorate, he now became the prime minister of a non-socialist four-party coalition that also included a newcomer in the Swedish Riksdag, the Christian Democratic Party.

Once the images of Carlsson and Bildt had become established during the years 1986–91, they were very stable between the 1991 and 1994 elections, according to the SOM institute. A moderate shift is revealed for the leadership qualities

which were rated somewhat higher for the leader of the opposition, Ingvar Carlsson, in 1994 than three years earlier. A rapidly worsening national economy and increasing unemployment helped the Social Democrats back to power in the 1994 election. Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson announced his resignation in 1995, and Göran Persson became the new leader of the Social Democrats. In Persson's first election campaign (i.e. 1998), the much more experienced and well-known Carl Bildt became his opponent. The themes of the election were focused on social welfare policies, especially health care, lower education, and childcare. In his last election as party leader, Bildt received his highest scores on 'reliability' (0.63), 'leadership' (0.55), and 'cognitive competence' (0.85). But during his thirteen years as party leader for the Conservative Party, he never managed to improve his ratings with respect to his 'empathy'. In 1998, Bildt enjoyed an overall much more positive evaluation than the newcomer Persson and managed again – the third election in a row – to win more voters over to the Conservative Party. But that was not enough to win a majority for a new non-socialist coalition. Persson could secure parliamentary support for his minority government mainly from the Green Party and the Left Party.

In 2002, Göran Persson's leader popularity peaked as he defeated the new conservative leader Bo Lundgren. Persson improved his evaluations on all traits, especially on 'leadership' which increased from 0.35 in 1998 to 0.82 in 2002. The weak performance of Bo Lundgren was identified as an important factor in the historical defeat of the Conservative Party in 2002 (15.2 per cent) (Holmberg and Oscarsson 2004).

The 2006 election displayed the largest leader effects on the vote recorded at Swedish elections (Oscarsson and Holmberg 2008). Göran Persson's popularity plummeted at the same time as his opponent, conservative leader Fredrik Reinfeldt, received the highest popularity ratings ever recorded for a Swedish party leader. Reinfeldt's and Persson's evaluations were virtually identical on the four traits under study.

Having got a first impression of the trait measures for each nation, we analyse next to what extent the *overall evaluation* of political leaders is constituted by the individual leader traits. Table 11.2 presents regression analyses, with each leader's global evaluation as the dependent variable and the individual trait dimensions as the explanatory variables.

Beginning with the United States, it can be seen that there is a close association between individual traits and the overall judgement of the presidential candidates. For each election and each candidate, explained variance of the overall judgement is equal to 50 per cent or higher. There are at least three different explanations as to why the associations between individual traits and global evaluation are uniformly high. First, one could argue that all these traits measure in fact the important determinants of a leader's overall evaluation. Therefore, individual attributes would inform the overall evaluation of a leader. Here, the causal direction would flow from trait judgements to global evaluations (Funk 1999: 706). Conversely, it

TABLE 11.2. *Political leaders' traits and global evaluations (dependent variable: global evaluation; OLS regression, beta-coeff.)*

US presidential elections, 1988–2008

	1988		1992		1996		2000		2004		2008	
	Dukakis (Dem.)	Bush sen. (Rep.)	Clinton (Dem.)	Bush sen. (Rep.)	Clinton (Dem.)	Dole (Rep.)	Gore (Dem.)	Bush (Rep.)	Kerry (Dem.)	Bush (Rep.)	Obama (Dem.)	McCain (Rep.)
Cognitive competence	ns	0.09**	ns	ns	0.06**	ns	ns	0.18**	ns	0.21**	ns	ns
Leadership	0.45**	0.34**	0.33**	0.32**	0.29**	0.32**	0.32**	0.21**	0.38**	0.29**	0.26**	0.29**
Trustworthiness	0.12**	0.19**	0.25**	0.15**	0.36**	0.17**	0.23**	0.16**	0.20**	0.13**	0.33**	0.24**
Empathy	0.25**	0.29**	0.28**	0.41**	0.27**	0.38**	0.35**	0.35**	0.33**	0.36**	0.34**	0.35**
Adj. R^2	0.50	0.59	0.57	0.63	0.76	0.56	0.60	0.56	0.64	0.76	0.69	0.61
N	1,098	1,136	1,267	1,341	1,018	994	1,014	976	731	792	738	728

Australian elections to the House of Representatives, 1993–2007

	1993		1996		1998		2001		2004		2007	
	Keating (Lab.)	Hewson (Lib.)	Keating (Lab.)	Howard (Lib.)	Beazley (Lab.)	Howard (Lib.)	Beazley (Lab.)	Howard (Lib.)	Latham (Lab.)	Howard (Lib.)	Rudd (Lab.)	Howard (Lib.)
Cognitive competence	ns	ns	−0.10**	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Leadership	0.23**	0.30**	0.27**	0.33**	0.28**	0.23**	0.30**	0.28**	0.38**	0.23**	0.35**	0.22**
Trustworthiness	0.22**	0.15**	0.28**	0.18**	0.20**	0.25**	0.29**	0.33**	0.20**	0.36**	0.33**	0.46**
Reliability	0.24**	0.20**	0.14**	0.23**	0.14**	0.17**	–	–	–	–	–	–
Empathy	0.24**	0.23**	0.26**	0.13**	0.14**	0.25**	0.20**	0.28**	0.24**	0.33**	0.12**	0.24**
Adj. R^2	0.66	0.57	0.59	0.57	0.43	0.63	0.47	0.65	0.54	0.71	0.52	0.70
N	2,342	2,288	1,331	1,318	1,314	1,319	1,371	1,378	1,273	1,287	1,361	1,404

Swedish elections to the Riksdag, 1988–2006

	1988		1991		1994		1998		2002		2006	
	Carlsson (soc dem)	Bildt (con)	Carlsson (soc dem)	Bildt (con)	Carlsson (soc dem)	Bildt (con)	Persson (soc dem)	Bildt (con)	Persson (soc dem)	Lundgren (con)	Persson (soc dem)	Reinfeldt (con)
Cognitive competence	0.16**	0.07**	0.21**	0.12**	–	–	0.20**	0.17**	0.19**	0.18**	0.16**	0.14**
Leadership	0.36**	0.30**	0.29**	0.26**	–	–	0.28**	0.36**	0.15**	0.14**	ns	ns
Reliability	0.44**	0.46**	0.37**	0.36**	–	–	0.39**	0.28**	0.43**	0.29**	0.45**	0.41**
Empathy	ns	0.14**	0.10**	0.21**	–	–	0.10**	0.16**	0.18**	0.26**	0.19**	0.23**
Adj. R^2	0.61	0.64	0.59	0.54			0.59	0.48	0.55	0.38	0.43	0.42
N	545	511	551	531			443	449	423	348	462	410
SOM data												
Cognitive competence	–	–	0.15**	ns	0.10**	ns	–	–	–	–	–	–
Leadership	–	–	0.32**	0.34**	0.27**	0.34**	–	–	–	–	–	–
Trustworthiness	–	–	0.24**	ns	0.25**	0.14**	–	–	–	–	–	–
Reliability	–	–	0.21**	0.46**	0.24**	0.32**	–	–	–	–	–	–
Adj. R^2			0.58	0.54	0.55	0.51						
N			691	684	852	858						

Note: **: ≤0.01;

*: ≤0.05 (two-tailed); ns: not significant.

Only those respondents are included in the analysis who voted for either the presidential candidate of the Democratic Party or for the Republican candidate (US), for the Labor Party or for the Liberal Party (Australia), for the Social Democratic Party or the Conservative Party (Sweden). For question wordings, operationalizations, and estimation procedures see the appendix.

Data: see Table 11.1.

might be stated that a large part of the electorate has little information on political candidates. Hence, it could appear as likely that individual trait attributes are inferred from the global impression. Finally, individual trait attributes and global evaluations could both be due to third variables, for instance due to the exposure to the election campaign. If at all, a definitive solution to this problem of causal inference could only be attained by means of a longitudinal or an experimental design. As we are confined to working with cross-sectional, non-experimental data, we have to content ourselves with a somewhat more modest aim: a strong relationship between individual leader evaluations and leaders' global judgements can be taken as a weak indication that the overall evaluation – and eventually the vote – is indeed affected by individual trait evaluations. In addition, since our comparative analysis is based exclusively on politically relevant and performance-related leader traits, it would give some support to the notion that political leaders are judged in fact according to 'rational' standards.

On the whole, the first part of Table 11.2 reveals a straightforward message. With only two exceptions, for all six US presidential elections 'leadership' and 'empathy' are the two most important characteristics of the candidates' global image. 'Trustworthiness' certainly is an important facet of the presidential candidates' images but in most cases it only reaches third rank. 'Cognitive competence' plays a relatively minor role. How can these observations be related to the well-documented finding, that competence and integrity (which is trustworthiness for all practical purposes) are the most important traits for a leader's public standing (Miller et al. 1986; Bean 1993)? First, it may be questioned whether, conceptually as well as empirically, competence and leadership are really separate trait dimensions in the public's perception. Perhaps, it is more appropriate to view competence as a broader concept. In this perspective, competence should therefore also subsume more general leadership and managerial qualities (see also Miller and Shanks 1996; Funk 1999), not only a leader's perceived ability to solve urgent political problems. For this reason, the pattern in the first part of Table 11.2 corresponds fairly well to common wisdom since leadership qualities certainly tap an essential subdimension of leader competence.[8] Secondly, '*cognitive* competence', which is measured by the two indicators 'intelligent' and 'knowledgeable', is conceptually much more narrow than a leader's competence in general.

What may appear as surprising if compared with the conventional empirical wisdom is our finding that – overall – 'empathy' is a stronger determinant of a leader's overall judgement than 'trustworthiness'. In the perspective of voter rationality, both attributes appear as equally indispensable so that theoretically there is no convincing argument in favour of either 'trustworthiness' or 'empathy'. Since 'trustworthiness' is in part measured by a candidate's perceived morality, in 2000 and in 2004 only by morality, it seems possible that the connotation of morality is too narrow in order to capture the entire meaning of trustworthiness. Consequently, the relationship between trustworthiness and a leader's global

evaluation as it emerges from the first part of Table 11.2 may be a rather conservative estimate of the 'true' importance of trustworthiness.

In gauging the importance of individual traits, we have focused on the regression coefficients of the trait variables. *In this perspective*, a trait is more important for the overall image, the larger the coefficient, that is, the larger the slope of the 'evaluation curve'. Viewed from this angle, 'cognitive competence', for instance, is not especially important for a leader's global evaluation. Clearly, this result and the related interpretation are both due to the fact that US presidential candidates, as well as political leaders in Australia and in Sweden, are almost unanimously considered as 'cognitively competent'. Since leader traits such as 'cognitive competence' have thus only a small variation in the electorate, there is little room left for an important effect upon the overall image in regression analysis. Yet it would be rather strange to maintain that in general 'cognitive competence' does not count when a political leader is to be evaluated. A political leader who was regarded as *not* being intelligent would almost certainly face severe problems with respect to his public image. Obviously, an effect such as this could only show up in a statistical analysis if the specific trait indicator covered the whole theoretical range of the dimension. This qualification should be kept in mind when comparing 'conventional wisdom' with our findings and interpretations.

An interesting observation can be made in Table 11.2. In many cases, a trait seems more important the *less* it is seen as being part of a candidate's image. For instance, in 1996, Bill Clinton received very low marks with respect to his trustworthiness by the American electorate, and this attribute proves to be the most important facet of his global image. There is in fact only one presidential candidate for whom trustworthiness is the most important facet of the overall image, Bill Clinton in 1996. Conversely, Bush sen. was seen as a politician who did not care very much about his fellow citizens ('empathy'), and this attribute emerges as by far the most important determinant of his global evaluation in 1992. In a similar manner, this rule applies to Dole in 1996, to George W. Bush in 2000 and in 2004, and to McCain in 2008, all of whom appeared as not particularly empathetic. Again, this trait is the most important determinant of overall image perception for each Republican candidate. Only in two instances, for George W. Bush in 2000 and in 2004, has 'cognitive competence' been a relevant effect on a leader's overall image. With respect to this particular attribute, Bush in 2004 received the lowest assessment of all presidential candidates between 1988 and 2008.[9] Similar patterns of low trait values and large effects of those traits on the overall image emerge for Dukakis in 1988 and Kerry in 2004, with respect to their leadership qualities.

Perhaps these observations could be generalized in terms of the *salience* of a leader's individual traits and its potential impact on a leader's global evaluation. There may be several reasons why a trait is especially significant for a candidate in a particular campaign: the perceived absence of a trait could be one aspect,[10] intensive media coverage a second. If salience is high for an individual trait,

it appears then likely that this trait exerts an important effect on the overall judgement.

Turning to *Australia*, the content of the candidates' global evaluations appears to be more varied than in the United States (middle part of Table 11.2). Similar to that in the United States, leadership is important in each election for the overall judgement of a candidate, as is empathy. The differences between the effects of individual trait dimensions on global evaluation are not very large in Australia, however. Apart from cognitive competence, leadership, trustworthiness, reliability, and empathy all affect the candidates' overall image with almost the same strength. The two recent elections, 2004 and 2007, seem to deviate somewhat, though, from this pattern. In 2007 in particular the 'trustworthiness'-trait of John Howard is far more important than the other attributes.

To render the analyses sufficiently comparable across the nations, the regression analyses for Australia from 1993 to 1998 have also been estimated with the reliability dimension *excluded*. Since reliability can be interpreted as an aspect of trust in the capability sense (Miller et al. 1986: 528), it is only natural, then, that trustworthiness, which refers to another aspect of trust, namely honesty, appears as an even more important determinant of a leader's overall image in this case.[11] As is the case for the United States, we find also some indications for Australia that the perceived absence of a leader trait increases this trait's salience and, consequently, its impact on the global evaluation of the respective leader. John Howard's perceived leadership qualities in 1996 and also his trustworthiness since 2001 illustrate this mechanism.

The effects of individual traits on leaders' global evaluations for *Sweden* are documented in the lower part of Table 11.2. For the SNES as well as for the SOM data, leadership qualities have strong and robust effects over time. In this respect the Swedish pattern is fairly similar to the US findings. The greatest and most persistent effect, though, on Swedish leaders' overall image goes back to 'reliability' ('pålitlig'), a trait which could not be drawn on for the US analyses and which was only moderately important in the Australian case. Results show that reliability exerts the greatest impact on global leader evaluations in ten out of fourteen regression analyses.[12]

To summarize our findings for the content of political leaders' overall images in the electorates of the United States, Australia, and Sweden, there are two aspects worth mentioning. First, *the overall image of the top political leaders is clearly structured by politically relevant and performance-related leader traits in each of the three political systems*. Explained variance is uniformly high when the leaders' global evaluation is accounted for by these individual traits. Our findings are thus in line with the assumption that political leaders' evaluations in the electorates of Western democracies are based on politically 'rational' criteria. Secondly, the way in which the overall image is structured and shaped does differ between the systems. In Australia, leader image is broadly based on various political traits, which in most cases have almost equal importance. By contrast, in the United

States and Sweden, we find some of the leader traits to be more influential than others. Whereas in the United States, leadership and empathy are the most conspicuous facets, in Sweden reliability counts most when it comes to evaluating political leaders.

In analysing the relationships between individual leader traits and leaders' global evaluation, we have focused on how the overall leader image is constituted. And with that perspective it is not necessary to control for variables such as citizens' party identification. This is quite different when the potential electoral impact of leader traits on the vote decision is to be ascertained. To evaluate correctly how important individual leader traits are for the vote choice presupposes that further potential explanatory variables are incorporated in the analysis. Therefore, in order to estimate effects of leader traits on the vote, one has to control for party identification, because at least some of the traits 'are closely related to party sentiments . . . and are therefore most susceptible to elimination in a more properly specified model' (Bean 1993: 125).

In an analysis of the potential effect of leader trait evaluations on the vote, it also has to be decided whether each leader's traits should be operationalized separately or whether perceptions of competing candidates should rather be combined, for instance by building a differential (Bean and Mughan 1989: 1,168). Bean and Mughan present evidence for Australia and Britain which indicates that individual trait evaluations of competing leaders are only weakly correlated (1989: 1,169). This result supports the practice of analysing leader traits and their effects on the vote separately for each candidate. By contrast, in using trait differentials in regression analyses it would be implied for each trait that the effect on vote choice is the same for both candidates. Furthermore, since it cannot be excluded that there are differences between incumbents and challengers or between candidates with different ideological orientations, we have chosen to estimate models with separate traits for each candidate (Table 11.3).

As Table 11.3 (first part) demonstrates for the *US* data, the effect pattern, by and large, does not change much if the dependent variable is vote choice instead of global image evaluation and if, additionally, it has been controlled for party identification. Performance-related leader traits thus appear to play a role the decision as to which presidential candidate to vote for. And again, as a rule, leadership qualities and empathy exert the strongest impact in most cases. There are only a few exceptions to this general rule: first, analogous to the model for the overall candidate image, trustworthiness for Bill Clinton, the presidential candidate of the Democratic Party, is the main determinant among the traits in explaining the vote choice. Clinton received low marks for his trustworthiness and his bad moral reputation was then transferred to the eventual choice at the presidential election. Secondly, in 2008, Obama was evaluated as trustworthy, which in this particular case goes together with a strong effect on vote choice. As far as differential effects

TABLE 11.3 *Effects of political leaders' traits on the vote: controlling for party identification (OLS regression, beta-coeff.)*

US presidential elections, 1988–2008:

	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008
			Democratic candidate			
Cognitive competence	ns	ns	0.06**	ns	ns	ns
Leadership	0.17**	0.15**	0.10**	0.15**	0.15**	0.14**
Trustworthiness	ns	0.15**	0.20**	0.09**	ns	0.23**
Empathy	0.13*	0.05*	0.17**	0.11**	0.13**	ns
			Republican candidate			
Cognitive competence	ns	ns	ns	ns	−0.10**	ns
Leadership	−0.18**	−0.12**	−0.06*	−0.14**	−0.10**	−0.12**
Trustworthiness	−0.08**	ns	ns	−0.07**	ns	ns
Empathy	−0.22**	−0.25**	−0.17**	−0.13**	−0.26**	−0.11**
Adj. R^2	0.60	0.64	0.70	0.66	0.69	0.69
N	1,098	1,272	994	930	756	727

Australian elections to the House of Representatives, 1993–2007:

	1993	1996	1998	2001	2004	2007
			Labor candidate			
Cognitive competence	ns	−0.06**	ns	ns	ns	ns
Leadership	0.03*	0.05*	0.11**	0.07**	0.11**	0.08**
Trustworthiness	0.07**	ns	ns	0.07**	ns	0.06**
Reliability	0.07**	0.12**	ns	–	–	–
Empathy	0.05**	0.07**	ns	ns	ns	ns
			Liberal candidate			
Cognitive competence	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Leadership	−0.03*	−0.06**	ns	−0.13**	ns	−0.07**
Trustworthiness	ns	ns	ns	−0.10**	−0.20**	−0.15**
Reliability	−0.09**	−0.09**	−0.15**	–	–	–
Empathy	−0.07**	−0.07**	−0.10**	ns	−0.11**	ns
Adj. R^2	0.76	0.75	0.72	0.75	0.74	0.76
N	2,355	1,296	1,303	1,370	1,266	1,391

Swedish elections to the Riksdag, 1988–2006:

	1988	1991	1994	1998	2002	2006
			Social Democratic leader			
Cognitive competence	ns	0.10**	–	0.09**	ns	ns
Leadership	ns	0.07**	–	ns	ns	ns
Reliability	0.30**	0.19**	–	0.24**	0.21**	0.20**
Empathy	ns	ns	–	ns	ns	ns

			Conservative leader			
Cognitive competence	ns	−0.08**	–	−0.06**	ns	ns
Leadership	ns	−0.08**	–	−0.08**	ns	ns
Reliability	−0.15**	−0.10**	–	−0.10**	−0.10*	−0.19**
Empathy	−0.08**	−0.13**	–	−0.09**	−0.09*	−0.13**
Adj. R^2	0.66	0.68		0.66	0.58	0.53
N	495	519		407	343	404
SOM data			Social Democratic leader			
Cognitive competence	–	ns	ns	–	–	–
Leadership	–	0.07**	ns	–	–	–
Trustworthiness	–	0.09**	0.09**	–	–	–
Reliability	–	ns	0.08**	–	–	
			Conservative leader			
Cognitive competence	–	ns	ns	–	–	–
Leadership	–	−0.07**	ns	–	–	–
Trustworthiness	–	ns	ns	–	–	–
Reliability	–	−0.14**	−0.15**	–	–	–
Adj. R^2		0.79	0.75			
N		685	867			

Note: ** ≤0.01; * ≤0.05 (two-tailed); ns: not significant.
Only those respondents are included who voted for either the candidate of the Democratic Party or for the Republican candidate (the United States), for the Labor Party or for the Liberal Party (Australia), and for the Social Democratic Party or the Conservative Party (Sweden). For question wordings, operationalizations, and estimation procedures see the Appendix.
Data: see Table 11.1.

between candidates are concerned, leadership qualities and empathy count for the Democratic as well as for the Republican candidate.[13]

For *Australia*, we also find a fair number of leader trait effects on the vote to be significant (Table 11.3, second part). Similar to the pattern for candidates' overall image, there are no clear differences between the trait dimensions as far as the effect on party vote is concerned. If we compare the Australian models for vote choice with the US models, it is apparent that the effects of individual leader traits on the party vote are somewhat smaller in Australia. Conversely, explained variance for the Australian vote models is higher in comparison with the United States, which indicates that the effect of party affiliation on the vote is more important in the Australian system than it is in the United States. This result without doubt reflects the fact that the parties have been quite successful in retaining a strong position within the electorate (McAllister 2002*b*).

Finally, the third part of Table 11.3 shows the effects of individual leader traits on the two-party vote for *Sweden*. Perhaps contrary to what one might assume for the Swedish political system, where the political parties traditionally have had a strong position, we find remarkable effects for individual trait dimensions of leader evaluation on the vote choice even if it is controlled for party identification. As could be expected from the analyses of global evaluation, a leader's 'reliability' plays a particularly important role for the Swedish party vote. In 1988, 'reliability' was the sole trait of the Social Democratic candidate Ingvar Carlsson that was significantly related to the party vote. But, again, it is not simply the exceptional situation in the aftermath of the assassination. In each election year, amid all trait dimensions 'reliability' has by far the greatest effect on the voting decision. The persistence of the 'reliability' effects on party choice in Sweden becomes even more convincing when analysing the results of the 2002 and 2006 elections. In the case of the Social Democratic leader Göran Persson, the effect of the 'reliability'-trait is the only effect that comes out statistically significant in the analysis. And for the conservative leaders (Bo Lundgren in 2002 and Fredrik Reinfeldt in 2006), the 'reliability' and 'empathy' traits show significant direct effects on the vote.

When comparing our findings for vote choice as a dependent variable between the United States, Australia, and Sweden, it should be noticed that these results are conditional on how we control for further determinants of the vote, such as long-term predispositions. Obviously, party identification, the control variable we have used in our multivariate analyses, is only one competing explanatory variable besides leader traits. It cannot be excluded that we would have come to other patterns of trait effects if we had included specific determinants for each country, for instance ideological orientations in Sweden or race in the United States. And we could have devised alternative operationalizations of citizens' long-term party attachment in addition. We thus cannot, and do not, claim to have documented the 'true' effects of leader traits on the vote in Table 11.3. To that extent, our interpretations should focus not on the absolute levels of the trait effects but rather on the possibly diverging patterns between the political systems.

To sum up, *performance-related leader traits such as leadership qualities, trustworthiness, reliability, and empathy clearly have a discernible impact on the voting decision in Western democracies*. No matter whether the presidential system of the United States or parliamentary systems like Australia or Sweden are under scrutiny, in each election and for each candidate we find significant effects for political leader traits on the vote in our multivariate analyses. Thus far, these findings give some support to the notion that voters utilize 'rational' criteria of leader evaluation when casting their ballot. Having said this, there are also differential patterns of leader effects in the three nations we have studied. These differential patterns seem in part to be due to the system type, as the strong effects for leadership qualities in the United States suggest. Leader effects, however, also vary strongly over time. Whether, and to what degree, individual traits become significant thus depends on the specific historical context. The effect of Bill

Clinton's perceived 'trustworthiness' or the role of 'reliability' in Sweden are striking illustrations of a varying salience depending on the historical context.

11.6 POLITICAL VERSUS NON-POLITICAL LEADER TRAITS

Up to this point in our analyses we have focused solely on leader traits, which are without exception politically relevant. Cognitive competence, leadership qualities, trustworthiness, reliability, or empathy are all more or less directly related to a voter's political utility income. In the last step of our empirical analyses we will attempt to shed some light on the question of whether truly non-political leader traits have attained some relevance for the voting decision as is often claimed by advocates of a personalization of politics. In the 1998 German election study, three different indicators were included to measure different facets of leadership or managerial qualities: a leader's ability to 'get his own way', 'to balance diverging interests', or 'to give politics a clear course' all point to the leadership dimension. The problem-solving capability of the two chancellor candidates is covered using two indicators intended to measure a candidate's skill with respect to the economy. A candidate's 'trustworthiness' is measured straightforwardly by directly naming this attribute to the respondents. Fairly similar to the US measure, it has also been asked to what degree a candidate 'cares' about his fellow citizens in order to tap the 'empathy' dimension.

In comparing both chancellor candidates, the differences with respect to leadership qualities are noticeable but not very significant (see Table 11.4, first part). By contrast, as far as competence in the economic area is concerned, the incumbent Helmut Kohl receives markedly worse evaluations than SPD candidate Gerhard Schroeder.

A particular feature of the German part of the CSES study are three measures which tap political style ('convincing appearance') as well as strictly personal, non-political attributes such as a candidate's family life or his physical attractiveness. With the German data it is possible therefore to explicitly test the relative weight of political versus non-political leader traits for a parliamentary democracy. Table 11.4 reveals clear differences between the two chancellor candidates with respect to 'physical attractiveness' and 'family life'. The family life of Gerhard Schroeder, who divorced for the third time, is rated more negatively than that of Kohl, while Schroeder is seen as the more attractive candidate.

The second part of Table 11.4 displays the relationships between the individual leader traits and the global evaluation for both chancellor candidates. Overall, the relationship between candidate traits and the overall image is weaker than it proved to be in the United States, Australia, or Sweden. This difference might indicate that leader images for the German public are not quite as firmly structured

TABLE 11.4 *Politically relevant versus non-political leader traits*
Evaluation of German political leaders' traits, 1998 (arithmetic means, trait variables scaled from 0 to 1)

	Kohl (CDU/CSU)	Schroeder (SPD)	Diff.
Managerial qualities	0.68	0.71	−0.03**
Competence for the economy	0.45	0.65	−0.20**
Trustworthiness	0.64	0.63	0.01
Empathy	0.57	0.65	−0.08**
Convincing appearance	0.69	0.78	−0.09**
Family life	0.92	0.55	0.37**
Physical attractiveness	0.31	0.61	−0.30**
n_{max}/n_{min}	1,176/1,090	1,160/1,069	

Global evaluations and German leader traits, 1998 (dependent variable: global evaluation; OLS regression, beta-coeff.):

	Kohl (CDU/CSU)	Schroeder (SPD)
Managerial qualities	0.07*	ns
Competence for the economy	0.18**	0.26**
Trustworthiness	0.29**	0.30**
Empathy	0.16**	ns
Convincing appearance	0.07*	ns
Family life	−0.06*	0.14**
Physical attractiveness	0.12**	0.11**
Adj. R^2	0.45	0.37
N	985	957

Effects of German political leaders' traits on the vote, 1998; controlling for party identification (OLS regression, beta-coeff.):

	Schroeder (SPD)
Managerial qualities	ns
Competence for the economy	0.19**
Trustworthiness	0.11**
Empathy	ns
Convincing appearance	ns
Family life	0.06*
Physical attractiveness	ns
	Kohl (CDU/CSU)
Managerial qualities	ns
Competence for the economy	−0.15**
Trustworthiness	−0.17**
Empathy	ns
Convincing appearance	ns
Family life	ns
Physical attractiveness	ns
Adj. R^2	0.54
N	970

Note: ** $\leq$0.01; * $\leq$0.05 (two-tailed); ns: not significant.
Only those respondents who voted for either the Social Democratic Party (SPD) or for the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) are included in the analysis. For question wordings, operationalizations, and estimation procedures see the Appendix.
Data: German National Post Election Study 1998 (CSES, ZA-No. 3073).

or coherently organized as in these other three countries. However, since the German chancellor candidates have been well known to the public for several years, it seems more plausible, then, that some of the German indicators do not measure the theoretical constructs as well as in the three other systems.

For both chancellor candidates, perceived competence to solve the problems of the German economy has a considerable impact on the overall image. Even more important for both candidates is their 'trustworthiness'. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, indicators of personal, largely non-political traits are revealed as being fairly important in the multivariate analysis of the German data. The more they are perceived as physically attractive, the more positive they are viewed in global terms. For Gerhard Schroeder, in addition, there is a strong effect of his family life on his overall judgement, a trait which is certainly not directly performance-related. Since Schroeder divorced for the third time and married again not long before the national election in 1998, here again a saliency effect is likely to be at work, which may be ascribed to intensive media coverage.[14]

Fairly similar to the patterns for the United States, Australia, and Sweden, the picture for Germany does not change much if actual vote choice is taken as the frame of reference instead of global image evaluation. The third part of Table 11.4 reveals that, for the German data, the measures for competence and trustworthiness largely keep their importance. For both German chancellor candidates, trustworthiness as well as competence with respect to the economy are significantly related not only to the overall image but also to the voting decision. However, traits which belong to the non-political criteria lose most of their relevance. Only the public evaluation of SPD candidate Schroeder's family life is still significantly related to party choice, thus giving at least weak support to the notion of specific personalization in German electoral behaviour (Klein and Ohr 2000, 2001). It can only be speculated how much weight such non-political traits would have in the United States, Australia, or Sweden. For the United States, one would expect that strictly personal, non-political attributes are important, at least to some degree, if the findings of Miller et al. (1986) or Keeter (1987) can be transferred to recent presidential elections.

11.7 CONCLUSION

In public discussions of the personalization of politics and voting behaviour, it is often feared that citizens increasingly base their political judgements and their eventual voting decision on superficial, media-built images of political leaders. Seen from this angle, the democratic mechanism whereby the most capable and the most responsible leaders are chosen is believed to have eroded during the last decades.

The empirical analyses we have presented in this chapter do not lend much support to this rather pessimistic scenario. With the United States, Australia, and Sweden, we have analysed three clearly distinct types of Western democracy – a presidential system on the one hand and two different types of parliamentary systems on the other hand, which both have their specific traditions and institutional rules. And for each of these three democratic systems and each election under scrutiny we have found that leader traits such as leadership capabilities, trustworthiness, reliability, and empathy to be closely related to the overall image of political leaders as well as to the eventual voting decision. Therefore, our baseline hypothesis concerning the role of leader traits in different political systems is, all in all, confirmed: *politically relevant and performance-related leader traits are important criteria for voters' political judgements and decisions, and this importance is fairly similar across the political systems we have analysed.* This does not exclude, though, that some differences do exist between the systems as far as the role of individual leader traits is concerned. *Which* of the political and performance-related leader traits prove to be most important for a candidate's overall image or for the vote varies between the systems but also over time and according to the specific context of an election.

It is in line with our baseline hypothesis and our comparative findings that in the German context, non-political leader traits such as physical attractiveness exert a rather modest impact on leader with evaluations and on the vote when contrasted to the influence of politically relevant leader traits.

In sum, our findings are able to shed some light on the *content* of a possible personalization of voting behaviour. While the debate as to whether leader evaluations have in fact become more important for the vote over time is still open, our analyses clearly corroborate the notion that leader evaluations and their effect on the vote in the electorate are firmly based on politically 'rational' considerations – be it in a presidential or in a parliamentary system.

NOTES

1. By contrast, *indirect* leader effects would relate to such leader impacts as the transformation of a party's ideology or image (King 2002*a*: 5).
2. According to Nimmo and Savage (1976), a candidate's *image* should be defined as the voter's perception '. . . based on both the subjective knowledge possessed by voters and the messages projected by the candidates' (Nimmo and Savage 1976: 8).
3. Image components have also been distinguished into political role attributes and stylistic role attributes (Nimmo and Savage 1976).

4. Bean (1993) uses seven dimensions, namely 'competence', 'integrity', 'strength', 'harmony', 'general likability', 'other personal', and 'policy/party/group' references (Bean 1993: 115).
5. The distinction between political and non-political traits is more complicated than it appears at first sight: 'references to the leader's personal characteristics can also be seen as "instrumental" in a broader sense. The leader's experience, his intelligence, his sincerity, his calmness, his eloquence, his likeability – or his shortcomings by these standards – can be regarded as qualities which will affect the likelihood of his achieving goals which electors value' (Butler and Stokes 1974: 357–8).
6. 'Traits such as integrity, reliability, and competence are hardly irrational, for if a candidate is too incompetent to carry out policy promises, or too dishonest for those promises to be trusted, it makes perfect sense for a voter to reject a politician regardless of his or her party' (Dalton 2000*b*: 338).
7. In the 2008 study, leader traits were ascertained by means of a two-part design where one part of the sample was randomly assigned to the usual leader trait questions with four answer categories (extremely well, quite well, not too well, or not well at all; see the Appendix). The other part of the sample received a new set of trait questions with five categories. In order to work with consistent indicators over time we have decided to use only the usual trait questions with four categories.
8. To gauge the dimensionality of the leader traits, confirmatory factor analyses were conducted for the US presidential elections and the Australian elections. These factor analyses clearly indicate, first, that a complex factor structure of three or four dimensions has a better fit to the data than simple structures. In almost all cases a model with four dimensions performs best (with the indicators for 'reliability' excluded in the Australian case). According to these analyses, 'intelligent' and 'knowledgeable' build a first dimension, 'strong leadership' and 'inspiring' a second dimension, 'moral' and 'honest' a third one, and, finally, 'compassionate' and 'cares' the fourth dimension. The first dimension could be interpreted as a leader's 'cognitive competence', the second dimension as his or her 'leadership qualities', the third dimension as 'trustworthiness', and the last dimension as 'empathy' or 'warmth'. Yet it should be noted that in order to get statistically reliable results more trait indicators would be necessary. For this reason statistical analyses can only provide very weak and, at best, supplementary support for our approach to measuring dimensions of leader evaluations.
9. This observation is perfectly consistent with some of the literature on 'negativity effects' (cf. chapter 10), which underscores the particular relevance of negative evaluations.
10. Bean and Mughan are more cautious when stating that the precise qualities that have an effect are poorly predicted by their distribution among voters (Bean and Mughan 1989: 1,173–4).
11. The small but significant coefficient for Labor candidate Keating's 'cognitive competence' in 1996 has the wrong sign which would indicate that the higher Keating's perceived intelligence and knowledge, the lower the score on his global evaluation. A possible interpretation, yet admittedly an ad hoc one, could be that

'cognitive competence' in some contexts might be understood as an attribute which refers to a leader's competence being primarily theoretically oriented – in contrast to the quality of being a strong leader.

12. When using the SOM surveys for 1991 and 1994, the effects for reliability are somewhat smaller. However, it should be noted that the Swedish indicator for 'trustworthiness' ('ärlig', which can be translated as 'honest') is linguistically close to 'pålitlig', and both words could be used almost interchangeably in the Swedish language. In addition, in 1991, despite controlling for 'trustworthiness', 'reliability' is by far the most important facet of the image of Conservative Party candidate Carl Bildt.
13. It should be noted that the signs of the regression coefficients are expected to be negative for the Republican candidate as the dependent vote variable has been coded '1' for the Democratic candidate and '0' for the Republican candidate.
14. The small negative effect of the family trait for Helmut Kohl should not be interpreted substantively. As the first part of Table 11.4 reveals, Kohl's family life has been evaluated as extremely positive and reaches a mean evaluation of 0.92 where 1.00 is the theoretical upper limit. This particular trait thus has almost no variance, which makes it difficult to obtain a reliable estimate.

Appendix: Question Wording, Coding, Estimation

LEADER TRAITS

The United States:

- Traits: intelligent, knowledgeable, provides strong leadership, inspiring, moral, honest, compassionate, really cares about people like you.

  > 'I am going to read a list of words and phrases people may use to describe political figures. For each, tell me whether the word or phrase describes the candidate I name. Think about Al Gore. In your opinion, does the phrase "he [is] . . ." describe Al Gore extremely well, quite well, not too well or not well at all.' (Wording in 2000, ICPSR No. 3131; wordings in the other election studies are virtually identical.)

- Coding: from '0' (not well at all) to '1' (extremely well).

Australia:

- Traits: intelligent, knowledgeable, provides strong leadership, inspiring, moral, honest, trustworthy, reliable, dependable, sensible, compassionate.

  > 'Here is a list of words and phrases people use to describe party leaders. Thinking first about John Howard, in your opinion how well does each of these describe him – extremely well, quite well, not too well or not well at all?' (Wording in 2001, SSDA Study No. 1048; wordings in the other election studies are virtually identical.)

- Coding: from '0' (not well at all) to '1' (extremely well).

Sweden:

- Traits: knowledgeable, inspiring, reliable, knows the thoughts and opinions of ordinary people (SNES); knowledgeable, strong leader, inspiring, honest, reliable (SOM).

  > SNES: 'We will continue with party leaders. I will now read a few words and expressions which can be used to describe different attributes of the party leaders. I would like you to tell how appropriate you think each of them is

when you think of [party leaders]. Thinking about [party leader] . . . , how appropriate do you consider the following statement?'

- Coding: from '0' (very inappropriate) to '1' (very appropriate).

SOM: 'Below, you find a number of expressions that can be used to describe the party leaders' different traits. How appropriate do you think they are when you think of [leaders]?'

Four alternatives: 'very appropriate', 'rather appropriate', 'not very appropriate', 'not appropriate at all'.

- Coding: from '0' (not appropriate at all) to '1' (very appropriate).

Germany:

- Traits: gets his own way, balances diverging interests, gives politics a clear course, good concept to boost economy, good concept to fight unemployment, trustworthy, cares for the well-being of his fellow citizens, convincing appearance, has his private life under control, attractive.

'At the last national election Helmut Kohl and Gerhard Schroeder were the two chancellor candidates. I am going to describe to you some attributes. Please tell me by using a scale from 1 to 5 how strongly these attributes apply to Helmut Kohl or Gerhard Schroeder. A value of 1 indicates that an attribute does not apply at all to the politician, 5 indicates, that an attribute applies completely to the politician. You can grade your opinion by choosing the values in between.'

- Coding: from '0' (does not apply at all) to '1' (applies completely).

EVALUATIVE DIMENSIONS

The dimension variables have been built as an additive index (arithmetic mean) of the individual trait variables.

The United States:

- Cognitive competence: intelligent, knowledgeable (1996: only knowledgeable)
- Leadership: leadership, inspiring (2000, 2004, 2008: only leadership)
- Trustworthiness: moral, honest (2000, 2004: only moral)
- Empathy: compassionate, cares (1996, 2000, 2004, 2008: only cares)

Australia:

- Cognitive competence: intelligent, knowledgeable
- Leadership: leadership, inspiring

- Trustworthiness: moral, honest (1993: only moral; 2001, 2004, 2007: honest, trustworthy)
- Reliability: reliable, dependable (not available in 2001, 2004, 2007)
- Empathy: sensible, compassionate

Sweden:

- Cognitive competence: knowledgeable
- Leadership: inspiring (SOM data, 1991 and 1994: strong leader, inspiring)
- Trustworthiness: honest (SOM data, 1991 and 1994)
- Reliability: reliable
- Empathy: knows the thoughts and opinions of ordinary people

Germany:

- Managerial qualities: gets his own way, balances diverging interests, gives politics a clear course
- Competence for the economy: good concept to boost economy, good concept to fight unemployment
- Trustworthiness: trustworthy
- Empathy: cares
- Convincing appearance: convincing appearance
- Family life: private life under control
- Physical attractiveness: attractive

GLOBAL LEADER EVALUATION

The United States:

> 'I'd like to get your feelings toward some of our political leaders and other people who are in the news these days. I'll read the name of a person and I'd like you to rate that person using something we call the feeling thermometer. The feeling thermometer can rate people from 0 to 100 degrees. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the person. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward the person and that you don't care too much for that person. You would rate the person at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the person. If we come to a person whose name you don't recognize, you don't need to rate that person. Just tell me and we'll move on to the next one.' (Wording in 2000, ICPSR No. 3131; wordings in the other election studies are virtually identical.)

- Coding: from '0' to '1'.

Australia:

> 'Again using a scale from 0 to 10, please show how much you like or dislike the party leaders. Again, if you don't know much about them, you should give them a rating of 5. How do you feel about Kim Beazley?' (Wording in 2001, SSDA Study No. 1048; 1993: 'please show how favourable or unfavourable you feel about the party leaders.')

- Coding: from '0' (strongly dislike) to '1' (strongly like).

Sweden:

> SNES (face-to-face interview with showcard): 'On this card there is a kind of scale. I would like you to use it in order to state how much you like or dislike the different parties. If you like a party, you use the "plus" figures. The better you like a party, the higher the figure. For parties you dislike, use the 'minus' figures. The more you dislike a party, the higher the minus figure. The zero point on the scale indicates that you neither like nor dislike a party. Where would you place [party]? Using the same scale for the party leaders, where would you place [party leaders]?'
>
> SOM (mail questionnaire): 'This question is about how one in general likes or dislikes the political parties. Where would you place the different parties on the following scale? [parties]. And if you use the same scale for the party leaders, where would you place [party leaders]?'
>
> The dislike–like scales run from −5 (dislike strongly), over 0 (neither like nor dislike), to +5 (like strongly) in both the SNES and SOM studies.

- Coding: from '0' (dislike strongly) to '1' (like strongly).

Germany:

> 'Please say, how much you like or don't like some of the German politicians. Beginning with Helmut Kohl, where would you categorize him if 1 means that you don't like him at all and 11 means that you like him very much?'

- Coding: from '0' (don't like him at all) to '1' (like him very much).

VOTE CHOICE AND PARTY IDENTIFICATION

Vote choice has been operationalized as the vote for the two main presidential candidates (the United States) or the main parties (Australia, Sweden, Germany). Voting for the presidential candidate of the Democratic Party (Australia: for the

Labor Party; Sweden: for the Social Democratic Party; Germany: for the Social Democratic Party) has been coded as '1', casting the ballot for the candidate of the Republican Party (Australia: for the Liberal Party; Sweden: for the Conservative Party; Germany: for the CDU/CSU) as '0'. All other respondents have been excluded. *Party identification* has been constructed with two dummy variables. Volunteering a party identification for the Republican Party has been coded with '1' on the Republican dummy variable; respondents identifying with the Democratic Party (or another party) or respondents without a party attachment ('independents') or respondents who did not volunteer an explicit party attachment (including DK) have been coded with '0'. Explicit refusals have been excluded from the analysis. The second dummy variable for Democratic Party attachment has been built accordingly. The same logic has been applied when coding the dummy variables for party identification for Australia, Sweden, and Germany.

ESTIMATION PROCEDURE FOR OLS REGRESSIONS

In estimating the regression equations for Tables 11.2, 11.3, and 11.4, we have used one common procedure. In a first step, regression equations have been estimated with all potential predictor variables included, for instance with all trait variables available in an election year. In a second step, the equations have been re-estimated by including only those predictor variables which proved to be significant (≤ 0.05; two-tailed test) in the first step. If predictor variables were still not significant in the second step, these variables have been excluded and the equation has once more been re-estimated.

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