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Partisanship and Vote Propensity

Traditional electoral research views partisanship as a positive, affective attachment to a single party. However, in increasingly fragmented party systems, this approach falls short. Recent studies highlight the importance of multi-party identification and negative partisanship (NPID), the strong aversion to specific parties. While existing research examines how these attachments affect the final vote, it remains unclear how they influence prior stages of decision-making, especially the formation of a consideration set (the group of parties a voter seriously considers voting for).

To compare the effects of positive and negative partisanship, this paper investigates different configurations of partisanship and their effects on the size and ideological breadth of a voter's consideration set.

Drawing on behavioural decision-making theories, this project models voting not as a discrete choice, but as a multi-stage process. I hypothesize that negative partisans possess larger and more ideologically diverse consideration sets, as ruling out certain parties does not imply voting for specific parties instead. Conversely, positive partisans are expected to hold smaller, more focused consideration sets.

These hypotheses are tested empirically using survey data from the 2021 Dutch parliamentary election. The Netherlands provides an ideal case study due to its highly fragmented system with 17 parties winning seats in the 2021 election (up from 13 in 2017), making a staged decision-making model highly plausible, while salient socio-economic and cultural conflicts drive strong affective attachments. The methodology is twofold: first, the impact of partisanship on the size of the consideration set is analysed using a multi-variate negative binomial model. Second, the ideological breadth of the selected parties is examined via logistic regression.

Because this study focuses specifically on the consideration stage, future research should investigate whether these partisan effects persist through to the final vote choice or if other short-term factors take precedence during the final vote choice.

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