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A previous version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, April 22-25, 2010. All three authors contributed equally to the paper.

Abstract

During the 1980s and the 1990s the elites of the two largest Dutch parties, the Christian Democrats and Labor, converged dramatically on policy debates relating to income redistribution, nuclear power, and the overall Left-Right dimension – a convergence which paved the way for the Dutch party system’s subsequent polarization on immigration and cultural issues. We ask the questions: Did the Dutch mass public depolarize along with party elites, and, if so, did this mass-level depolarization extend throughout the electorate or was it confined primarily to the stratum of affluent, educated, and politically-engaged citizens? We analyze Dutch Parliamentary Election Study respondents’ policy beliefs and partisan loyalties over the period 1986-1998 and conclude that the mass public depolarized during this period, and that these depolarization patterns extended equally across the subconstituencies of the highly-educated and the less-educated, the affluent and the least affluent, and the politically-knowledgeable along with the uninformed. These conclusions about Dutch subconstituencies, which mirror previous findings on Britain but differ from previous findings on the United States, have important implications for political representation and for parties’ election strategies.
American and British politics scholars increasingly emphasize the dramatic changes in the tenor of elite policy debates in their countries. In the United States these changes entail growing elite-level polarization, as the policy gap between Republicans and Democrats in Congress has widened sharply over the past three decades on social welfare issues and on cultural issues (see, e.g., Poole and Rosenthal 1997; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006). In Britain, by contrast, the Labour and Conservative party elites have converged dramatically on economic and social welfare policy during the post-Thatcher era, as Tony Blair’s “New Labour” party moderated its stances on taxes, income redistribution and nationalization of industry, while the Conservatives have increased their support for public services (Green and Hobolt 2008).

The phenomenon of U.S. elites’ policy polarization, and of British elites’ depolarization, has inspired extensive research on whether the mass publics in these countries have polarized (in the U.S.) and depolarized (in Britain) in response to party elites, and, if so, whether specific subgroups have reacted disproportionately to these elite-level policy shifts (see, e.g., Hetherington 2001; Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005; Layman, Carsey, and Horowitz 2006; Jacobson 2007; Abramowitz 2008; Green 2007; Whiteley and Seyd 2002). These questions are important because they bear on how strongly party elites influence public opinion, and whether, in turn, the public holds elites accountable for their policies. The studies cited above report consistent evidence that, taken as a whole, the mass publics in both countries have followed the leads of political elites, i.e., that the American mass public has polarized over the past three decades while the British public has depolarized during the post-Thatcher era.1 By contrast, these studies reach conflicting conclusions with respect to subconstituency-based polarization: namely, studies on the U.S. conclude that subgroups of affluent, educated, and politically-engaged citizens have polarized more than other subgroups in the electorate (see, e.g., Highton and Claassen 2008; Baldas-

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1 As we discuss below the evidence from both countries suggests that these trends may be more pronounced with respect to partisan sorting, i.e., to changes in the mean policy positions of rival parties’ supporters, than with respect to policy-based polarization, i.e., to changes in the extremity of citizens’ policy views.
sari and Gelman 2009), while studies on Britain conclude that mass depolarization extends equally across different subgroups (Andersen et al. 2005; Adams, Green, and Milazzo 2009).

Although the research summarized above illuminates mass-elite policy linkages in Britain and the United States, it is unclear whether we should expect these patterns to extend to other Western democracies. In particular, both Britain and the U.S. employ plurality voting systems and feature two dominant, mainstream, political parties, while most Western democracies employ some form of proportional representation and feature both mainstream parties and smaller “niche” parties that present more radical policies and/or that emphasize alternative policy dimensions (see, e.g., Meguid 2009; Adams et al. 2006; Spoon 2010). In addition, the United States and Britain arguably differ from other Western democracies in terms of the number and types of social cleavages (Andeweg and Irwin 2005), and the degree of governmental stability (Timmermans 2003). Prompted by these considerations, we analyze mass responses to elite policy shifts in a political context that differs sharply from those of Britain and the United States: namely, the Netherlands during 1980s and the 1990s. Unlike the U.S. and Britain, the Netherlands employs a highly proportional system to elect MPs and also features multiple parties including the large, mainstream Christian Democrats (CDA) and Labor (PvdA) along with several smaller but influential parties. Furthermore, between the mid 1980s and the late 1990s the CDA and PvdA party elites converged dramatically on social welfare policy along with support for nuclear power – developments that, as we discuss below, plausibly created an opening for the subsequent polarization of the party system on immigration and cultural issues (Van Kersbergen and Krouwel 2008; Oosterwaal and Torenvlied 2010). We ask the questions: During this time period did the Dutch public depolarize along with the elites from the two largest parties? Did different

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2 While the Liberal Democrats constitute a significant “third party” in Britain, prior to the May 2010 Conservative-Liberal Democratic coalition every postwar British government has been a single-party government.

3 Of course mainstream Dutch political competition features other parties, including the Liberal VVD and the Social Liberal D66. In our analyses, we focus on the CDA and PvdA because these are the two largest Dutch parties, and they are the pivotal players in coalition government negotiations (Andeweg and Irwin, 2005).
Dutch subconstituencies defined in terms of education, income, political knowledge and interest depolarize to roughly the same degree? And, do our findings on the Netherlands illuminate mass-elite policy linkages in Britain and the United States?

The answer we provide to each question posed above is yes. We report longitudinal analyses of Dutch Parliamentary Election Study survey data over the period 1986-1998, on citizens’ partisan loyalties along with their policy preferences, which suggest that the public depolarized significantly in terms of three distinct criteria: the dispersion of citizens’ policy preferences; their degrees of attitude constraint; and, the differences between the policy preferences of CDA supporters versus the policy preferences of PvdA partisans. Furthermore, we conclude that these mass-level patterns extended equally across the subconstituencies of the affluent and the least-affluent; the more- and the less-educated; and, the politically knowledgeable along with the uninformed. We label this phenomenon electorate-wide depolarization, a pattern that contrasts with the unequal or subconstituency-based polarization in the United States, which has occurred primarily among affluent and educated subgroups. By contrast our findings on the Netherlands parallel the conclusions that Adams, Green, and Milazzo (2009) report on the British public.

We propose a simple explanation for why electorate-wide depolarization has occurred in the Netherlands and Britain in response to parties’ policy shifts, as opposed to the subconstituency-based polarization observed in the United States. This is that the Dutch and British parliamentary delegations – in common with the delegations in most Western democracies outside the U.S. – are highly unified and thereby convey clear policy cues to citizens, compared to the more ideologically-diverse, decentralized American parties. The challenges of perceiving and reacting to West European party elites’ clear policy cues plausibly place lesser cognitive demands on citizens than do the more ambiguous and diffuse policy messages that American party elites con-

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4 In this regard, there is extensive research documenting that citizens in European democracies – all of which feature significantly greater degrees of party-line voting in parliament than does the U.S. Congress – have quite accurate perceptions of parties’ policy positions (see, e.g., Pierce 1998: Stevenson and Vonnahme 2009).
vey to the public. For while citizens’ education and political knowledge plausibly mediate their abilities to assess and react to “difficult” or confusing political scenarios, citizens’ political capacities may be less relevant to their interpretations of “easy” scenarios, where the relevant political signals are clear-cut. Put differently, West European party elites convey clear policy cues that should register even with citizens who possess limited information about politics and modest educational backgrounds. We therefore believe that our findings of electorate-wide depolarization in the multiparty, PR-based Dutch political system, in combination with earlier, parallel findings on the two-party, plurality-based British system, support the following proposition: that West European citizens’ reactions to party policy shifts will extend roughly equally across different subconstituencies in the electorate.

We believe our findings are significant for three reasons. First, the aggregate-level patterns that we identify are intrinsically important for understanding public opinion and mass-elite policy linkages in the Netherlands. To our knowledge ours is the first study that analyzes how the Dutch electorate reacted to the dramatic policy convergence between the CDA and the PvdA, which was arguably the key development in Dutch politics during the 1980s and the 1990s. Furthermore, as we discuss below this CDA-PvdA depolarization created the conditions that facilitated the subsequent elite polarization on immigration and cultural issues, which is the dominant feature of contemporary Dutch politics.

Second, our findings have an important implication for parties’ election strategies: namely, that in forecasting the electoral effects of policy shifts, Dutch party elites – and, we believe, the party elites in other West European democracies – should project that citizens from all walks of life may display reactions of equal magnitude to those of educated, affluent, politically-aware citizens. Thus, in situations where educated and affluent citizens’ policy preferences diverge from those of less-educated, lower-income citizens, political elites cannot cater to the policy beliefs of socioeconomically-advantaged subgroups without sacrificing support from less-advantaged groups.
Third, and related, our findings suggest that West European party elites have electoral incentives to provide more equal representation of different subconstituencies than do American politicians. American politics scholars conclude that elected officials respond disproportionately to the policy preferences of affluent, educated, and politically-involved citizens (e.g., Bartels 2008; Gilens 2005; Griffin and Newman 2005). This pattern of *unequal representation* plausibly stems in part from American politicians’ perceptions that the members of these privileged subgroups respond disproportionately to elites’ policy behavior, i.e., American elites are motivated to cater on policy grounds to the subgroups that are most likely to reward these policy appeals. By contrast, the electorate-wide reactions to party policy shifts that we document in the Netherlands – and which previous research has documented in Britain – may motivate party elites to provide more nearly *equal representation* of different subgroups’ collective preferences. To the extent this is the case, the electorate-wide depolarization that we observe in the Netherlands appears normatively desirable.

**Mass Reactions to Elite Policy Shifts: Previous Research and its Relevance to the Netherlands**

American and British politics scholars have begun to explore whether elite policy polarization (in the U.S.) and convergence (in Britain) has been mirrored in the mass publics in these countries. Several studies on the U.S. argue that mass-level polarization should develop disproportionately among educated and politically-informed citizens, because these individuals are most likely to perceive the growing policy polarization between Republican and Democratic elites, and should therefore exhibit the strongest reactions to elite polarization (e.g., Hetherington 2001; Fi-

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5 Of course, party policy appeals to affluent and educated voters may confer ancillary benefits, in that members of these groups may disproportionately reward the party with financial contributions and/or with participation in other campaign activities (see, e.g., Brady et al. 2009; Adams and Ezrow 2009). Our point is that we should expect that electorates that display more equal responsiveness across subgroups will receive more equal representation from party elites.
orina, Abrams, and Pope 2008; Layman, Carsey, and Horowitz 2006; Claassen and Highton 2008). Thus Hetherington (2001) demonstrates that educated and affluent Americans have perceived elite polarization to a greater extent than have other citizens, while Baldassarri and Gelman (2008) find that over the past thirty years the degree of partisan sorting in the American electorate, i.e., the correlation between citizens’ policy beliefs and their party identification, has increased disproportionately among affluent and politically-engaged citizens.

Research on Britain, by contrast, does not identify subconstituency-based differences in citizens’ reactions to Labour-Conservative elite policy convergence during the post-Thatcher era. Thus Andersen et al. (2002) find that while policy-based voting is most pronounced among British citizens who accurately perceive the parties’ positions, perceptual accuracy is not closely tied to citizens’ general political knowledge. Adams, Green, and Milazzo (2009) analyze over-time changes in the policy preferences and party support among different British subconstituencies, and find that all of the subgroups they examine – the affluent and the poor; the more- and less-educated; the more and less politically-knowledgeable – depolarized to roughly the same extent during the post-Thatcher period. Adams et al. attribute this electorate-wide depolarization to the clear policy cues that the unified British parliamentary parties communicated to the public, that were received even by citizens with low levels of education and political interest.

Given that West European parties’ parliamentary delegations are typically highly unified (e.g., Sartori 1968; Tavits 2008; Carey 2007), the Adams-Green-Milazzo argument suggests that we might expect electorate-wide reactions whenever European party elites significantly shift their policies. However, there are reasons to question whether these authors’ findings on Britain during the post-Thatcher era will extend to other West European electorates. First, Labour-Conservative policy convergence post-Thatcher is arguably the most striking instance of elite depolarization in Western Europe over the past twenty years, and is thus not typical of elite-level policy shifts in other party systems. Second, the large, mainstream, Labour and Conservative
parties constitute the left-most and right-most “poles” of the British party system, so that these parties arguably have the leeway to converge on policy without sacrificing electoral support to more radical rival parties – a luxury that mainstream parties lack in most multiparty democracies. Finally, and related, Britain typically features single-party government while most West European democracies – including the Netherlands – feature coalition governments. This distinction is important because Stevenson and his co-authors report remarkable findings that coalition governments create different incentives and opportunities for citizens to infer parties’ policy positions, compared with single-party governments (Stevenson and Vannahme 2008; Fortunato and Stevenson 2010). These considerations cast doubt on whether we can use British citizens’ reactions to party elites’ convergence post-Thatcher to project how citizens in other West European democracies may react to party policy shifts. Below we explore the extent to which Dutch citizens depolarized during the 1980s and the 1990s in response to elite-level policy convergence between the two largest parties, the CDA and the PvdA, and, whether the mass-level trends we identify extend across different subgroups in the electorate.

Dutch elites’ policy convergence during the 1980s and the 1990s: An overview

The Dutch political system has been classified by Lijphart (1977; 1999) as a consociational democracy that features considerable power-sharing across different parties including those in opposition. The features of Dutch politics that promote power-sharing include: a large number of political parties (described below) combined with a highly proportional voting system; decen-

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6 We note that by 2001 the Liberal Democrats were arguably to the left of Labour on some social welfare and economic policy issues (see Anderson et al. 2005). However, in the 2001 and 2005 British Election Studies, survey respondents’ mean placements of Labour were to the left of the Liberal Democrats, i.e., the British electorate continued to perceive Labour and Conservatives as the two ‘poles’ of the party system.

7 Over the period 1971-1996 the effective number of parliamentary parties (Laakso and Taagepera 1979) in the Netherlands averaged about 4.7, the highest number for any West European democracy except Switzerland. In
ralization of certain policy-making to advisory bodies; and, a tendency towards oversized coalitions and political accommodation (Lijphart 1999; Andeweg and Irwin 2005). These power-sharing features of Dutch politics contrast with majoritarian British politics which features a plurality-based electoral system, single-party government (with rare exceptions), and few provisions for policy-making influence for opposition parties. Furthermore, while British parties have competed primarily on economic and social welfare policy during the postwar era, Dutch parties compete on several salient dimensions including economic and social welfare policy; a secular-religious dimension; and, over the past decade, immigration and cultural issues (Andeweg and Irwin 2005; Pellikaan, van der Meer, and de Lange 2003; Pellikaan, de Lange, and van der Meer 2007; Oosterwaal and Torenvlied 2010).

During the 1980s and the 1990s the Dutch party system featured four major governing parties including the economically right-wing Liberal Party (the VVD), the centrist Democrats ‘66 (the D66), and two large, dominant parties, the center-left Labor Party (the PvdA), and the center-right Christian Democratic Appeal (the CDA).\(^8\) Following the Second World War, the major Dutch parties represented the “pillars” of Dutch social-political cleavages, and, as predicted by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), citizens’ party support was tied to their social class and religion (Andeweg and Irwin 2005: p. 491). However, electoral volatility jumped in the 1980s and 1990s as voting patterns relating to socioeconomic cleavages declined, to be replaced with higher levels of issue-based voting (Mair 2009; Thomassen, Aarts, and van der Kolk 2000).

\(^8\) In recent elections there has been increased support for the ideological extremes, represented on the left by the GreenLeft party, which emphasizes environmental protection along with support for social welfare programs and income redistribution, and on the right by List Pim Fortyun Party for Freedom which has advocated strong nationalist and anti-immigrant policies (Andeweg and Irwin 2005; Mair 2009; Pennings and Keman 2003). However, the growth of these parties – which we discuss below – occurred largely after the period of this study.
The 1980s featured sharp fluctuations in the electoral fortunes of the Dutch parties which coincided with major shifts in the policy positions of the two largest parties, the PvdA and the CDA. While the leftist PvdA and the more right-wing CDA diverged on economic and cultural issues in the early 1980s, they converged sharply later in the decade and on into the 1990s. During this period the CDA, formed in 1980 from a merger of the three largest religious parties in the system, moderated its economic and social welfare policies in an attempt to seize the middle ground between the left-leaning PvdA and the right-leaning Liberal Party (the VVD), while maintaining conservative positions on religious issues (Timmermans 2003). However, the growing secularization in Dutch society was problematic for the CDA, and the issue of euthanasia captures this religious-secular dimension (Rochon 1999). Euthanasia, which had long been controversial in the Netherlands, re-emerged following the introduction of a 1986 bill that would have de-criminalized physicians engaging in the practice, a policy the CDA vehemently opposed. The issue exacerbated tensions between the CDA and its coalition partner, the VVD, during the Lubbers government of 1982 to 1986, and eventually prompted the exclusion of the CDA from the 1994 governing coalition (Timmermans 2003). Thus, while the CDA moderated its positions on economic and social welfare policy during the latter half of the 1980s and into the 1990s, it maintained its conservative stance on the moral issues which had traditionally defined it (although it did not vocally mobilize on this issue like the small Christian right; see, e.g., Pellikaan et al. 2003, 2007).

During the 1980s the PvdA shifted its policy emphasis away from its long-term advocacy for social welfare programs and income redistribution, towards an emphasis on “new left” issues including environmental protection which appealed to the “postmaterial” voters (Inglehart 1979) that were outside the party’s traditional support constituency (Rochon 1999: p. 82). This environmental emphasis was marked by the PvdA’s strong opposition to nuclear power during the early and mid-1980s. The conflict over nuclear power between the PvdA and the CDA (which advocated continued use of nuclear energy) precipitated the dissolution of the Van Agt govern-
ment of 1981-82 (Timmermans 2003). The PvdA subsequently softened its opposition to nuclear power, thereby bridging its policy differences with the CDA (Rochon 1999). This increasing policy moderation of PvdA elites during the 1980s and 1990s was driven by electoral and coalition-based considerations.9

Did the Dutch Public Perceive and React to Elite Depolarization?

The policy convergence between the CDA and the PvdA during the 1980s and the 1990s raises the questions: Did the Dutch public perceive this elite-level convergence?, and, if so, did the public depolarize along with political elites? Here we address these questions with respect to the public as a whole, while the next section addresses subconstituency-based reactions. To assess whether the public perceived elite policy convergence we analyzed Dutch Parliamentary Election Survey (DPES) respondents’ placements of the CDA and the PvdA on the four policy scales that were included in the 1986, 1989, 1994, and 1998 surveys, and which relate to the parties’ positions on income inequality, nuclear power, euthanasia, and Left-Right ideology.10 In the original version of the surveys the Left-Right scale ran from 1 to 10 while the three policy scales ran from 1 to 7; however we recalibrated respondents’ party placements on the policy scales to run from 1 to 10, so that these placements could be meaningfully compared with Left-Right party placements. For each scale higher numbers denote a more right-wing position (the appendix pre-

9 In the words of the party leader, Prime Minister Wim Kok, the PvdA needed to “shake off its ideological feathers” to attract moderate voters (quoted in Andeweg and Irwin 2005). In addition, the party’s moderation on economic and social welfare issues was driven by coalition-based considerations: namely, that the PvdA’s policy moderation would make it an acceptable partner in a “purple” coalition with the center-right VVD. In the event, the PvdA’s moderating policy shifts accomplished both objectives in that the party increased its support among moderate voters and also engineered the “impossible” Purple Coalition with the PvdA in 1994 and 1998 (Rochon 1999).

10 Of course there were additional salient issues on the Dutch political agenda at various points during the 1980s and 1990s, such as the placement of cruise missiles on Dutch soil during the 1980s, but unfortunately the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies only consistently include the four scales listed above.
sents the texts of the policy scale questions). Table 1 reports, for each scale in each election year, the DPES respondents’ mean placements of the CDA and the PvdA, along with the difference between respondents’ mean party placements (the ‘CDA-PvdA gap’), which provides an index of the policy-based party differences that Dutch respondents perceived. These computations reveal that respondents perceived dramatic party convergence between 1986 and 1998 on the Left-Right dimension, on income inequality policy, and on nuclear power. On the Left-Right scale, for instance, respondents placed the CDA at 7.61 (on average) and the PvdA at 2.67 (on average) in 1986, so that the perceived Left-Right gap between these parties was more than five units on this 1-10 scale. However respondents’ perceptions of both parties moderated consistently across the 1989, 1994, and 1998 surveys, so that by 1998 DPES respondents placed the CDA at 6.23 and the PvdA at 4.25 (on average), i.e., the perceived Left-Right gap between the parties had shrunk to less than two units on the 1-10 scale, a decline in perceived elite divergence of over 60% compared to 1986. The computations in Table 1 reveal that DPES respondents perceived similarly dramatic party policy convergence on income inequality and nuclear power, but perceived only modest convergence on the euthanasia issue. These mass-based perceptions accord well with expert accounts of Dutch elites’ policy convergence during this period, which (as discussed above) emphasize that the PvdA and the CDA converged on social welfare and environmental issues but maintained sharp differences on euthanasia.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Policy-based depolarization trends in the mass public

We now consider the question: did the Dutch public, as a whole, depolarize along with the political elites of the CDA and the PvdA? We initially address this issue by analyzing two policy-based features of mass depolarization, that relate to citizens’ policy preferences without

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11 We have reversed the policy scales so that higher numbers denote a more conservative position, so that they are consistent with the Left-Right scale.
regard to their party loyalties. The first is the change in the diversity of citizens’ policy preferences. According to this *policy dispersion* criterion, an over-time decrease in the dispersion of Dutch respondents’ self-placements on the policy scales would be evidence of policy-based depolarization, i.e., this would indicate that the electorate had converged on policy along with party elites. Adams et al. (2009) document that the British public depolarized along with party elites on social welfare policy during the post-Thatcher era, while scholars are divided about whether the American public has polarized significantly on policy over the past thirty years, a time period when Democratic and Republican party elites have diverged dramatically (e.g., Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2004, 2008; Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Levendusky 2009).

Table 2, which reports the standard deviations of DPES respondents’ self-placements on the scales relating to income inequality, nuclear power, euthanasia, and Left-Right ideology, presents evidence that the Dutch public depolarized between 1986 and 1998 according to the policy dispersion criterion. The table reports these standard deviations on each policy scale for each election year, while the RHS column reports the change in the standard deviations between 1986 and 1998. These computations reveal that the dispersion of DPES respondents’ self-placements declined noticeably on each scale. On the Left-Right scale this standard deviation declined from 2.42 in 1986 to 1.99 in 1998, while there were significant declines in the dispersion of respondents’ self-placements on the three policy scales as well. The dispersion of DPES respondents’ self-placements, averaged across the four scales, decreased from 2.69 in 1986 to 2.40 in 1998 (see the bottom row of the table).

A second policy-based perspective on mass depolarization pertains to the connections between citizens’ positions across different issues, i.e., to what Converse (1964) labeled attitude constraint and which we label *policy constraint*. Baldassarri and Gelman (2008, pp. 418-419) emphasize that if citizens align their positions across multiple policy dimensions, then even if they do not take extreme positions on any single dimension the end result may nevertheless be a
polarized public. These authors analyze attitude constraint in the American public by computing the correlations between survey respondents’ self-placements across different policy scales. According to this perspective, if these correlations decrease over time this constitutes evidence of decreased policy constraint – and hence of depolarization – in the mass public.

Table 3 reports the correlations between DPES respondents’ positions across pairs of issues, where these positions are measured via respondents’ self-placements on the scales relating to income inequality, nuclear power, euthanasia, and Left-Right ideology. The table gives the correlation for each possible issue pair (six pairs in all) for 1986, 1989, 1994, and 1998, while the RHS column reports the change in the correlation for each issue pair between 1986-1998. To the extent that these correlations diminished over time, this will imply the citizens’ tendencies to align their positions across different policy/ideological dimensions decreased over the 1986-1998 period, i.e., that the Dutch public depolarized according to the policy constraint criterion. The computations reported in Table 3 support this hypothesis. The correlations between DPES respondents’ self-placements on pairs of issues decreased significantly between 1986 and 1998 for five of the six issue pairs, while on the sixth issue pair (income inequality and nuclear power) there was no change over time. The average correlation across the six issue pairs, which is reported in the bottom row of the table, decreased from 0.35 in 1986 to 0.25 in 1998 – which denotes a significant decline in policy constraint in the mass public across this period.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Partisan-based depolarization trends in the Dutch public

Much of the American and British literature on mass polarization emphasizes the relationship between citizens’ partisanship and their policy beliefs. According to this partisan sorting perspective, the widening gap between the ideologies of the Democratic and Republican parties-in-Congress has prompted a corresponding divergence between the policy preferences of the parties-in-the-electorate, i.e., the difference between the mean policy preferences of Democratic
partisans and the mean preferences of Republican partisans has increased over time (see, e.g., Carmines and Stimson 1989; Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Fiorina and Levendusky 2006; Hetherington 2009; Levendusky 2009). Similarly, Adams, Green and Milazzo (2009) find that the mean social welfare policy preferences of British Labour and Conservative party supporters have converged during the post-Thatcher era, in tandem with elite depolarization. These findings imply that, in the Netherlands, the policy preferences of the CDA and the PvdA partisans should have converged across the 1986-1998 period, as these parties’ elites converged on policy.

Table 4 reports analyses that pertain to the hypothesis outlined above, with respect to Dutch citizens’ partisan sorting on the issues of income inequality, nuclear power, euthanasia, and Left-Right ideology. For each policy scale in each election year, the table reports the mean self-placement computed over all respondents; the mean self-placement computed over respondents who reported that they identified with the CDA; and, the mean self-placement computed across all PvdA identifiers. We also report the policy distance between the mean self-placements of CDA and PvdA identifiers (the ‘CDA-PvdA partisan gap’ variable), which provides an index of the mass-level partisan differences on the policy scale. To the extent that the Dutch public depolarized according to the partisan sorting criterion between 1986 and 1998, we expect the CDA-PvdA partisan gap to diminish over time. The computations reported in Table 4

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12 We note that this partisan sorting may occur either because citizens shift their partisan loyalties to match their policy attitudes, and/or because citizens update their policy attitudes to fit their party identification (see, e.g., Carsay and Layman 2006; Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu forthcoming).

13 Party identification categories were computed using the question of which party an individual was an adherent, along with a follow-up question, for respondents who stated that they were not adherents of any party, which asked whether there was a party to which the respondent was primarily attracted. (The texts of both questions are reported in the appendix.) Respondents who named a party in response to either question were classified as partisans of that party. We note that we recomputed the analyses reported in Table 4 using a stricter definition of partisanship which omitted the follow-up question, and these computations supported substantive conclusions that were identical to those we report below.
support this expectation: the mean distance between CDA and PvdA partisans decreased on each policy scale between 1986 and 1998, and on three of the four scales this partisan convergence was dramatic. On Left-Right ideology, for instance, the mean self-placement of CDA partisans was 7.19 in 1986 while the mean self-placement of PvdA partisans was at 3.60, so that the partisan gap was about 3.6 units on the 1-10 scale; by 1998 this partisan gap had shrunk to 1.85 units, with CDA supporters self-placing at 6.16 (on average) and PvdA supporters at 4.31 (on average), i.e., the distance between the mean Left-Right positions of the CDA’s supporters versus those of the PvdA’s supporters declined by nearly 50% between 1986 and 1998. The partisan convergence between the CDA and the PvdA parties-in-the-electorate was equally dramatic on income inequality and on nuclear power: on both policy scales the CDA-PvdA partisan gap declined by more than 60% between 1986 and 1998.14

In toto, we find consistent evidence that the Dutch public depolarized in terms of its policy beliefs and its partisan loyalties between 1986 and 1998. Specifically, we document significant declines in mass policy dispersion as measured by the standard deviations of DPES respondents’ self-placements across the policy and ideological scales, and in mass policy constraint as reflected in the correlations between respondents’ self-placements across different policy scales.

14 We performed additional computations that bear on partisan sorting in the Dutch electorate by computing the correlations between DPES respondents’ self-placements on the policy scales and their net CDA-PvdA propensity to vote, defined as the difference between the respondent’s reported propensity to vote for the CDA and her reported propensity to vote for the PvdA. (This measure was based on the respondent’s answers to the following question: “Would you indicate for each party how probable it is that you will ever vote for that party?”) We found that the correlations between DPES respondents’ self-placements on the policy scales and their propensities to vote for the CDA versus the PvdA diminished sharply between 1986 and 1998. These computations thereby support the same substantive conclusion as the analyses reported in Table 4.
We also document a sharp decline in partisan sorting, in that the CDA and PvdA partisans’ policy and Left-Right preferences converged sharply between 1986 and 1998. These partisan-based results suggest that mass-elite policy linkages between the two largest Dutch parties and their supporters changed fundamentally between 1986 and 1998: the 1986 party system featured left- and right-wing parties-in-parliament supported by left- and right-wing parties-in-the-electorate, but the 1998 party system featured center-left and center-right parties-in-parliament supported by center-left and center-right parties-in-the-electorate. We conclude that during the 1986-1998 period when the Dutch public perceived dramatic elite convergence between the PvdA and the CDA, the public itself depolarized sharply in terms of its policy beliefs and its partisan loyalties.

**Subconstituency-based Depolarization in the Netherlands**

We next address the question: Do the mass-level depolarization patterns that we document in the Netherlands extend equally across different subconstituencies in the electorate? Figures 1A-1E, which display the mean perceptions of party Left-Right positions for subgroups defined in terms of political knowledge, political interest, education, and income, suggest that the members of all of these subgroups perceived similar degrees of ideological convergence (on average) between the CDA and the PvdA party elites between 1986 and 1998. (For simplicity Figure 1 presents subconstituency-based perceptions on the Left-Right scale only; however the patterns on the policy scales relating to income inequality, nuclear power, and euthanasia support identical substantive conclusions.) The analyses subdivided by political knowledge (Figure 1A) display the difference between respondents’ mean Left-Right placements of the CDA and their mean placements of the PvdA (the ‘CDA-PvdA gap’), for respondents who scored above-average on a general political knowledge quiz (the solid line) and for those who scored below-average on this quiz (the dotted line).¹⁵ We see that both the high- and the low-knowledge respondents per-

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¹⁵ The political knowledge quiz in the DPES consisted of twelve questions. Respondents were presented with pictures of four senior political party members and asked to identify their name, party identification, and function within that party. In 1998, for example, individuals were shown pictures of Jaques Wallage, leader of the
ceived comparable degrees of elite Left-Right convergence between 1986 and 1998: for the high-knowledge group the mean perceived gap between the CDA and the PvdA declined from about 4.9 units on the 1-10 Left-Right scale in 1986 to about 2.5 units in 1998, while for the low-knowledge group the perceived CDA-PvdA gap declined from about 5.0 units in 1986 to 2.1 units in 1998. Thus both subgroups perceived comparable degrees of ideological convergence between party elites across this time period, and in fact less-knowledgeable respondents actually perceived slightly more elite convergence than did the high-knowledge group.

Figure 1B displays trends in DPES respondents’ party placements among respondents who displayed high levels of interest in politics versus those who displayed little interest, calculated using the DPES political interest index. These subconstituency patterns based on political interest are nearly identical to the patterns based on political knowledge that were displayed in Figure 1A above: namely, both the high-interest and the lower-interest subconstituencies perceived nearly identical degrees of Left-Right convergence between the CDA and the PvdA party elites across the 1986-1998 time period.

Figures 1C and 1D extend these analyses to DPES respondents subdivided by education (Figure 1C) and income (Figure 1D), i.e., according to whether they ranked in the top or the bottom half of the survey sample in these categories. Education was calculated as the respondent’s

PvdA faction in parliament; Thom der Graaf, leader of the D66 faction in parliament; Annemarie Jorritsma, a member of the VVD and Transportation Minister; and Piet Bukman, member of the CDA and chairman of the Second Chamber. Respondents were coded ‘high’ on political knowledge if they provided more correct answers than the average respondent in the survey, and ‘low’ otherwise.”

16 The DPES uses an index of political interest developed from four questions, including: how frequently the respondent reads about national news (“nearly always” to “does not read paper”); how often the respondent discusses national news (“joins conversation” to “does not listen/not interested”); how often the respondent reads about foreign news (“nearly always” to “does not read paper”), and the respondent’s reported interest in politics (“very interested” to “not interested”). Respondents were classified as high interest if they scored above the mean on this political interest index, and were classified as low interest if they scored below the mean.
highest completed education level, which ranged from elementary-only education to university level education. Income was measured as average household income, ranging from less than 1700 to 73000 or more guilders per year. We observe that over the period 1986-1998, each subgroup of respondents – the more- and the less-educated, and the more and less affluent – perceived dramatic ideological convergence between the CDA and the PvdA, and, furthermore, these perceptions were quite similar across different subconstituencies.

Finally, one might expect that while no single citizen characteristic – i.e., political knowledge, political interest, education, or income – is sufficient to identify a stratum of voters who disproportionately perceived elite depolarization, citizens who possessed combinations of these attributes might be especially likely to perceive elite Left-Right convergence. Figure 1E displays data on DPES respondents’ perceptions of the parties, for two groups of voters. The first is a high-engagement group consisting of DPES respondents who possessed at least three of the following four attributes: they scored above-average on the political knowledge quiz; they scored above-average on the political interest index; they were above-average in education; they were above-average in income. The second group consists of low-engagement respondents who were below the mean on at least three of these attributes. The patterns displayed in Figure 1E are similar to those for the previous figures: over the period 1986-1998 the high- and low-engagement subgroups displayed similar perceptions of the Left-Right convergence between the CDA and the PvdA.

Our finding that perceptions of elite policy convergence cut across Dutch subconstituencies defined in terms of education, income, political knowledge, and political interest parallels the findings that Adams, Green, and Milazzo (2009) report with respect to British subconstituencies’ perceptions of elite policy convergence during the post-Thatcher era. By contrast, Heatherington (2001) concludes that American subgroups of educated, affluent, and politically-interested voters have perceived substantially greater increases in the policy polarization of Democratic and Republican party elites over the past thirty years, compared to the perceptions of less affluent and
educated citizens. These patterns support the hypothesis that the unified parliamentary delegations in Western Europe provide clear policy cues that register roughly equally with citizens with different sociodemographic characteristics and levels of political interest, while the more diffuse policy cues provided by the decentralized American political parties register primarily with the subconstituencies of affluent, educated, and politically-sophisticated citizens.

[FIGURES 1A-1E ABOUT HERE]

Subconstituency depolarization in the Netherlands: A policy-based perspective

While the analyses presented above suggest that Dutch citizens’ perceptions of party elites’ ideological convergence between 1986 and 1998 extended to the socioeconomically-advantaged and the politically-engaged along with the disadvantaged and the less-engaged, this does not guarantee that these different subconstituencies reacted similarly to the party convergence they perceived. Suppose, for instance, that politically-engaged citizens evaluate parties primarily based on their policy positions, while less-engaged citizens prioritize factors such as national economic conditions and party leaders’ personal images (e.g., Anderson et al. 2002; Clark 2009). In this case, we might expect politically-engaged citizens – but not the less-engaged – to adjust their partisan loyalties in response to elite-level policy convergence. Similarly, politically-knowledgeable, socio-economically advantaged citizens may differ from other citizens in their openness to elite policy persuasión, i.e., in their willingness to shift their policy positions in response to their preferred party’s policy shifts.

We begin by analyzing whether there were subconstituency-based differences in Dutch citizens’ policy-based patterns of mass depolarization. Figure 2, which reports changes in the standard deviations of DPES respondents' self-placements on the Left-Right scale between 1986 and 1998, presents evidence on changes in the degree of policy dispersion across different subconstituencies. (The patterns on the policy scales relating to income inequality, nuclear power, and euthanasia support the same substantive conclusions as the patterns we report here on Left-
The results reported in Figure 2A show that the degree of policy dispersion among respondents with above-average political knowledge (i.e., those who scored above average on the political knowledge quiz) and those with below-average political knowledge declined nearly equally across this period: for both subgroups, the standard deviation of respondents’ Left-Right self-placements declined from roughly 2.4 units in 1986 to 2.0 units in 1998, on the 1-10 Left-Right scale. We observe similar patterns when we compare the subconstituency of respondents who scored above-average on the political interest index to the subgroup of lower-interest respondents (Figure 2B). The computations for the remaining subgroups that are subdivided according to their levels of education, income, and political engagement (Figures 2C-2E), reveal slightly different patterns: in each case the socioeconomically-disadvantaged subconstituency (i.e., the less-educated, the less-affluent, and the least politically-engaged) was more ideologically dispersed than its socioeconomically-advantaged counterpart in the cross-sectional comparisons, and these disadvantaged subconstituencies displayed larger declines in their ideological dispersion across the 1986-1998 period. For instance the standard deviation of less-educated DPES respondents’ self-placements on the 1-10 Left-Right scale declined from roughly 2.7 in 1986 to 2.0 in 1998, an 0.7 decline, while the standard deviation of better-educated respondents’ self-placements dropped from roughly 2.2 units in 1986 to 1.9 units in 1998, an 0.3 decline (see Figure 2C). The patterns are similar when DES respondents are subdivided by income (Figure 2D) and political engagement (Figure 2E). These results suggest that every subgroup that we examined depolarized between 1986 and 1998 according to the policy dispersion criterion, and that to the extent that we identify subconstituency-based differences it was the less-educated and less-affluent subgroups who displayed stronger reactions to the elite-level policy convergence of the

17 As discussed above the high-engagement subgroup consists of DPES respondents who possessed at least three of the following attributes: they scored above-average on the political knowledge quiz; they scored above-average on the political interest index; they were above-average in education; they were above-average in income. The low-engagement group consists of respondents who were below the mean on at least three of these attributes.
CDA and the PvdA, i.e., these subgroups depolarized to a greater extent than did other subconstituencies in the electorate.

[FIGURES 2A-2E ABOUT HERE]

Next, we analyzed subconstituency-based depolarization differences judged according to the policy constraint criterion. Recall that our measure of policy constraint, borrowed from Baldassari and Gelman (2008), relates to the correlations between DPES respondents’ positions across pairs of issues, where these positions are measured via respondents’ self-placements on the three policy scales and the Left-Right scale. Figures 3A-3E report these correlations for 1986, 1989, 1994, and 1998, averaged across the six possible issue pairs18 and reported for different subgroups defined in terms of political knowledge, political interest, education, income, and political engagement. The patterns displayed in these figures suggest that all of the subconstituencies that we analyzed depolarized, in that the correlations between group members’ positions on different issues diminished between 1986 and 1998. Note, furthermore, that the magnitudes of these decreases in policy constraint are similar across all of these subgroups. For instance among DPES respondents who scored above-average on the political interest index the mean correlation between their positions across pairs of issues decreased from .37 in 1986 to .26 in 1998, an .11 decline, while for low-interest respondents this mean correlation decreased from .29 in 1986 to .18 in 1998, an identical .11 decline (see Figure 3B). We observe similar patterns in comparisons of the politically-knowledgeable versus the less-knowledgeable (Figure 3A), the highly-educated versus the less-educated (Figure 3C), and the politically-engaged versus the less-engaged (Figure 3E): namely, in each cross-sectional comparison the more knowledgeable/educated/engaged subconstituency displays modestly higher levels of policy constraint, but in over-time comparisons all subgroups depolarized to roughly the same extent. These patterns on the Netherlands parallel

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18 As discussed above the six issue pairs are: Left-Right-income inequality; Left-Right-euthanasia; Left-Right-nuclear power; income inequality-euthanasia; income inequality-nuclear power; euthanasia-nuclear power.
the results that Adams, Green, and Milazzo (2009) report with respect to Britain during the post-Thatcher period, namely that more educated and knowledgeable subgroups displayed greater degrees of policy-based polarization than less-educated and knowledgeable subgroups in cross-sectional comparisons, but that all of these subconstituencies displayed comparable changes in their levels of policy polarization.

[FIGURES 3A-3E ABOUT HERE]

Subconstituency depolarization: A partisan-based perspective

Next, we evaluated subconstituency-based differences in Dutch citizens’ patterns of mass depolarization, judged according to the partisan sorting criterion. Figure 4 reports computations of the differences between the mean self-placements of CDA partisans versus the mean self-placements of PvdA partisans on the 1-10 Left-Right scale (the ‘CDA-PvdA partisan gap’), computed across time for different subconstituencies defined in terms of political knowledge and interest, education, income, and political engagement. (We note that the partisan placement patterns on the three policy scales support identical substantive conclusions as the patterns we report here on Left-Right ideology.) The patterns displayed in these figures suggest that all of these subconstituencies depolarized sharply according to the partisan sorting criterion. Specifically, for each subgroup the mean Left-Right positions of CDA and PvdA supporters converged between 1986 and 1998, i.e., the magnitude of the CDA-PvdA partisan gap declined across this period. Furthermore, the degree of partisan-based polarization was similar across all subgroups. And, note that to the extent that there were modest differences across subconstituencies, it was the less-educated and less politically-interested subgroups that actually depolarized to a greater degree than their more educated and interested counterparts (see Figures 4B and 4C). Hence, we find no evidence that more affluent, educated, and knowledgeable respondents depolarized disproportionately between 1986 and 1998, according to the partisan sorting criterion.

[FIGURES 4A-4E ABOUT HERE]
Overall, we conclude that all of the different Dutch subgroups that we examine – the more and the less politically-knowledgeable and politically-interested, and the more and the less educated and affluent – depolarized between 1986 and 1998, according to the policy dispersion criterion, the policy constraint criterion, and the partisan sorting criterion. Furthermore, we find no evidence that the subconstituencies of more knowledgeable, interested, educated, and affluent citizens responded disproportionately to the depolarization between CDA and the PvdA party elites that occurred during the 1980s and the 1990s: across 1986-1998 all of the subconstituencies that we examined displayed roughly similar over-time changes in the dispersion of their ideological positions, in the correlations between their positions across pairs of issues, and in the partisan differences in the mean positions of CDA partisans versus those of PvdA partisans. Although we detect modest differences in the depolarization patterns across different subconstituencies – in particular, that more knowledgeable/educated/engaged subgroups displayed greater levels of policy constraint in cross-sectional comparisons, while less-knowledgeable/educated/affluent subgroups displayed greater changes in their degrees of partisan sorting in over-time comparisons – these differences are trivial compared to the striking similarities across the different subgroups we analyze. Simply put, we find that all of these subconstituencies perceived the elite-level policy convergence between the CDA and the PvdA that occurred across the 1980s and the 1990s; that these subconstituencies all depolarized across this period according to both policy-based and partisan-based criteria; and, that these subgroups all depolarized to roughly the same extent.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our findings on the Netherlands during the 1980s and the 1990s enhance our understanding of mass polarization trends in western democracies, and also illuminate political developments in the Netherlands over the past decade. With respect to the first point, our findings on the Dutch public parallel those that Adams, Green, and Milazzo (2009) report on the British public during the post-Thatcher period: namely, that during periods of dramatic elite policy convergence
the mass publics in both countries depolarized in terms of their policy beliefs and their party attachments, and that these depolarization patterns extended across all the major subgroups in the electorate. Furthermore, these patterns of electorate-wide depolarization in the Netherlands and Britain contrast with subconstituency-based polarization patterns in the United States, which have occurred disproportionately among the subconstituencies of affluent, educated, and politically-engaged citizens (Baldassarri and Gelman 2008; Heatherington 2001). As we stated in the introduction, we believe the most plausible explanation for these cross-national differences is that the unified parliamentary delegations in Western Europe provide clear policy cues to voters, while the decentralized American political parties provide diffuse policy cues that are difficult for politically-unsophisticated citizens to interpret. In this regard it is significant that the Netherlands and Britain display similar subconstituency-based depolarization patterns, given that these two democracies differ with respect to the number of salient political cleavages, the number of significant political parties, and their tendencies to feature single-party as opposed to coalition governments. What unites these two democracies – and what separates them from the U.S. – is that Britain and the Netherlands – in common with other West European democracies – feature unified parliamentary delegations. Our findings suggest that this feature of West European democracies has a crucial implication for mass-elite policy linkages: namely, that when party elites shift their policy positions, citizens from all walks of life will perceive and react to these policy shifts to roughly the same degree. These electorate-wide reactions that we observe in Western Europe appear normatively desirable, since they give political elites incentives to attach equal weight to all citizens’ policy preferences. By contrast, the subconstituency-based reactions that we observe in the United States plausibly motivate political elites to provide unequal representation, i.e., to tailor their policies towards the preferences of the affluent and educated citizens who respond disproportionately to elite policy behavior.

Our findings on the Dutch public’s reactions to elite policy convergence in the 1980s and 1990s also shed light on the subsequent elite polarization on immigration and cultural issues,
which has occurred over the past ten years. The convergence of the two dominant parties on the main dimension of political competition in Dutch politics, namely the Left-Right dimension, opened up the possibility for political entrepreneurs to gain traction by mobilizing new policy issues, such as immigration, in order to reap electoral gains (Pellikaan, de Lange, and van der Meer 2007; Thomassen, Aarts, and van der Kolk 2000; Hobolt and de Vries 2010). In addition, our finding that the Dutch public followed political elites by converging on Left-Right ideology plausibly illuminates why political entrepreneurs did not seek to ‘enter’ the Dutch party system by mobilizing extremist voters on traditional Left-Right issues: namely, the supply of voters who held extreme viewpoints on these types of issues declined sharply across the 1980s and 1990s. Consequently, the public and mainstream party convergence on the traditional Left-Right dimension created additional incentives for political entrepreneurs to mobilize new policy issues. During the late 1990s and early 2000s political entrepreneurs did exactly that by highlighting the immigration issue. By 2002, Dutch politics witnessed an “earthquake election” in which Pim Fortuyn successfully introduced a new dimension of polarization on the basis of issues relating to immigration and to the integration of foreigners into Dutch society (see for example Pellikaan, de Lange, and van der Meer 2007; Pennings and Keman 2003). We believe that our analyses of mass and elite depolarization on traditional Left-Right issues (along with euthanasia) during the 1980s and the 1990s thereby illuminate the subsequent polarization of Dutch elites on masses on immigration and cultural issues.
Appendix: Wording on the DPES policy scales and party rating scales

Here we provide the wordings of the policy scale and party support questions that we relied on for the empirical analyses reported in the paper. These items are included in the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies of 1986, 1989, 1994, 1998. We note that we have reversed the endpoints of the policy scale questions so that higher numbers denote a more right-wing response. In addition, for the computations reported in these tables and figures we recalibrated respondents’ self-placements (and party placements) on the policy scales to run from 1-10 instead of 1-7, so that these would be comparable to the 1-10 Left-Right scale.

**Left-Right:** It is often said of political beliefs that they are left or right. When you think of your own political beliefs, where would you place yourself on this line? Please tell the number that applies to you.

1 = ‘left’
10 = ‘right’

**Income Differences:** Some people and parties think that the differences in incomes in our country should be increased (at number 7). Others think that these differences should be decreased (at number 1). Of course, there are also people whose opinion is somewhere in between. Where would you place CDA on this line?

1 = ‘The differences in incomes in our country should be decreased’
7 = ‘The differences in incomes in our country should be increased’

**Nuclear Power:** Now I would like to ask you some questions about political affairs that are regularly in the news. As you may know, some people fear that within the foreseeable future a shortage of energy will occur in the world. One means to supply this shortage is to build nuclear power plants. Some people therefore believe that the Netherlands should quickly increase the number of nuclear power plants. Others, on the other hand, consider the dangers too great and think that no nuclear power plants should be built at all. At the end of this line are people and parties who think that additional nuclear plants should be built in the Netherlands (at number 7); at the beginning of this line are people and parties who think that no nuclear plants should be built at all (at number 1). Where would you place the CDA on this line?

1 = ‘no new nuclear plants should be built at all in the Netherlands’
7 = ‘additional nuclear plants should be built in the Netherlands’

**Euthanasia:** Now some questions about political affairs that are frequently in the news. When a doctor ends the life of a person at the latter’s request, this is called euthanasia. Some people think that euthanasia should be forbidden by law. Others feel that a doctor should always be allowed to end a life, if the patient makes that request. Of course, there are people whose opinions lie somewhere in between. Suppose that the people (and parties) who think that euthanasia should be forbidden are at the end of this line (at number 7) and the people (and parties) who feel that a doctor should always be allowed to end a life upon a patient’s request are at the beginning of the line (at number 1). I will ask you first to place some political parties on the line. If you have no idea at all which position a party has, then please feel free to say so. Where would you place the CDA on this line?

1 = ‘A doctor should always be allowed to end the life of a patient when the latter requests so’.
7 = ‘It should be forbidden that a doctor ends the life of a patient at the latter’s request’
Party support questions:

1) Many people think of themselves as adherent to a particular political party, but there are also people who do not think of themselves as an adherent to a political party. Do you think of yourself as an adherent or not as an adherent to a political party?

1. adherent  
2. not adherent

Party respondent is adherent to: To which party?

1. PVDA  
2. CDA  
3. VVD  
4. D66  
5. GroenLinks  
6. SGP  
7. GPV  
8. RPF  
9. Centrumdemocraten  
10. Unie  
11. AOV  
12. SP  
30. local party

2) Follow-up question (for those who did not indicate party support in response to question 1): Is there a party to which you feel more attracted than to other parties?

1. attracted  
2. not attracted

Party respondent is attracted to: Which party is that?

1. PVDA  
2. CDA  
3. VVD  
4. D66  
5. GroenLinks  
6. SGP  
7. GPV  
8. RPF  
9. Centrumdemocraten  
10. Unie  
11. AOV  
12. SP  
19. CPN  
21. PSP  
23. Senioren  
61. Nederland Mobiel  
63. De Groenen
References


Adams, James, Jane Green, and Caitlin Milazzo. 2009. “Which Voting Subconstituencies have Reacted to Elite Depolarization in Britain?” Presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Toronto, September 3-6.


Table 1. Dutch Survey Respondents’ Mean Placements of the CDA and the PVDA, 1986-1998

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Left-Right</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>7.61</td>
<td>7.03</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>6.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>PvdA</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>3.72</td>
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<td>+1.58</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDA-PvdA gap</td>
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<td>3.92</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>-3.06</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Income Differences</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>6.24</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>-1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PvdA</td>
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<td>2.65</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>+0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA-PvdA gap</td>
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<td>3.57</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>-1.91</td>
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<td><strong>Nuclear Power</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
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<td>6.25</td>
<td>6.27</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>-1.58</td>
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<td>2.33</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>-3.44</td>
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<td><strong>Euthanasia</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
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<td>3.58</td>
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<td>4.23</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>-0.69</td>
</tr>
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**Average across four scales**

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<tr>
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<td>3.60</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>-2.28</td>
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</table>

**Notes.** The numbers reported in the table are the mean positions that Dutch Parliamentary Election Study respondents ascribed to the CDA and the PVDA along the Left-Right scale and the issue scales, computed, for each scale in each year, over all respondents who gave a valid party placement on the scale (the appendix gives the wording of the issue scale questions). All four scales run from 1 to 10, with higher numbers denoting a more right-wing response. (We note that in the original surveys the Left-Right scale ran from 1 to 10 while the three issue scales ran from 1 to 7; we have recalibrated the issue scales to run from 1 to 10, so that they are comparable to the Left-Right scale.) The rows labeled “CDA-PVDA gap” report the difference between respondents’ mean placement of the CDA and their mean placement of the PVDA.

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<td><strong>2.76</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.62</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.40</strong></td>
<td><strong>-0.29</strong></td>
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Notes. The numbers reported in the table are the standard deviations of the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study respondents’ self-placements along the issue scales, computed, for each scale in each year, over all respondents who gave a valid self-placement on the scale. All four scales are from 1 to 10, with higher numbers denoting more right-wing responses (the appendix gives the wording of the issue scale questions). We note that in the original surveys the Left-Right scale ran from 1 to 10 while the three issue scales ran from 1 to 7; we have recalibrated these issue scales to run from 1 to 10 so that they are comparable to the Left-Right scale. The right-hand-side column gives the difference in the standard deviation of respondents’ self-placements in 1998 compared to 1986.

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<td>0.36</td>
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<td>Euthanasia – Nuclear Power</td>
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<td>0.18</td>
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<td><strong>Average across all issue pairs</strong></td>
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<td><strong>0.30</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.25</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.25</strong></td>
<td><strong>-0.09</strong></td>
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Notes. This table reports the correlations between Dutch Parliamentary Election Study respondents’ self-placements on the pairs of policy scales listed in the LHS column, with correlations computed for all respondents who gave valid self-placements on both scales (the question wording for each policy scale is given in the appendix). The RHS column reports the difference between the correlations for the issue-pair in 1998 compared to 1986.

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>4.71</td>
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<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>-1.31</td>
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Notes. The numbers reported above represent the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study respondents’ mean self-placements on the policy scales in the 1986, 1989, 1994, and 1998 surveys. Mean self-placements are given for all respondents (‘All’); for all respondents who reported that they identified with the CDA (‘CDA partisans’); and for all respondents who reported that they identified with the PvdA (‘PvdA partisans’). The figures given in the rows labeled “CDA-PvdA gap” report the differences between the mean self-placements of CDA and PvdA partisans on the policy scale. All four scales are from 1 to 10, with higher numbers denoting more right-wing responses. (We note that in the original surveys the Left-Right scale ran from 1 to 10 while the three issue scales ran from 1 to 7; we have recalibrated these issue scales to run from 1 to 10, so that they are comparable to the Left-Right scale.) The texts of the policy scale questions are reported in the appendix.
Figure 1. Respondents’ Perceptions of Differences between the Left-Right positions of the CDA and the PvdA, Stratified by Subconstituency, 1986-1998

1A: Political Knowledge

1B: Political Interest

1C: Education

1D: Income

1E: Political Engagement

Notes. The figures display the differences between the mean Left-Right position that Dutch Parliamentary Election Study respondents ascribed to the CDA versus the mean position they ascribed to the PvdA on the 1-10 Left-Right scale, across the years 1986-1998, and stratified by the respondent’s level of political knowledge, political interest, education, income, and political engagement. The definitions of these different subconstituencies (high and low political knowledge, political interest, etc.) are given in the text.
Figure 2. The Standard Deviations of Respondents’ Left-Right Self-placements, Stratified by Subconstituency, 1986-1998

Notes. The figures display the standard deviations of the self-placements of Dutch Parliamentary Election Study respondents on the 1-10 Left-Right scale, across the years 1986-1998 and stratified by the respondent’s level of political knowledge, political interest, education, income, and level of political engagement. The definitions of these different subconstituencies (high and low political knowledge, political interest, etc.) are given in the text.
Figure 3. Correlations between Dutch Survey Respondents’ Self-Placements on Pairs of Issues, Stratified by Subconstituency, 1986-1998

Notes. The figures display the mean correlations between Dutch Parliamentary Election Study respondents’ self-placements on pairs of policy scales (the vertical axis in the figures), averaged across the following six issue pairs: Left-Right-income inequality; Left-Right-euthanasia; Left-Right-nuclear power; income inequality-euthanasia; income inequality-nuclear power; euthanasia-nuclear power. These mean correlations are reported across the years 1986-1998, and stratified by the respondent’s level of political knowledge, political interest, education, income, and political engagement. The definitions of these different subconstituencies (high and low political knowledge, political interest, etc.) are given in the text, and the wordings of the policy scale questions are reported in the appendix.
Figure 4. Gaps between Mean Left-Right Self-placements of CDA and PvdA Partisans, for Different Subconstituencies, 1986-1998

Notes. The figures display the differences between the mean self-placements of Dutch Parliamentary Election Study respondents who identified themselves as CDA partisans versus the mean self-placements of PvdA partisans, on the 1-10 Left-Right scale. The definitions of the different subconstituencies (high and low political knowledge, political interest, etc.) are given in the text.