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Explaining individual electoral success in intra-party competition

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Preface

Precies vier jaar geleden begon ik aan een nieuw avontuur: een doctoraat in Antwerpen. Als je begint aan een doctoraat krijg je af en toe waarschuwingen van anderen over hoe stressvol, geïsoleerd en frustrerend deze periode kan zijn. Nu, vier jaar later, kan ik gelukkig zeggen dat ik me in deze waarschuwingen niet echt herken. Natuurlijk waren er de nodige downs, maar er waren toch vooral veel ups en eigenlijk kan ik terugkijken op een periode die vooral heel leuk en leerzaam was. De reden dat ik met zulke positieve gevoelens op de afgelopen jaren terug kan kijken, heeft alles te maken met alle leuke, intelligente en grappige mensen die direct of indirect aan mijn proefschrift hebben bijgedragen en die daarom hier een woord van dank verdienen.

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1

Introduction

1.1.   Introduction

In the 2006 national elections in the Netherlands something unique occurred. For the first time in Dutch parliamentary history, a candidate on the second position of a party's ballot list, Rita Verdonk of the Liberal party, was able to attract more votes than the number one on that ballot list, the leader of the Liberals Mark Rutte. Verdonk became popular during her time as Minister for immigration and integration by taking a tough stance on these issues. However, in the advent to the general elections, she lost the primaries for the leadership of the Liberal party from Rutte and instead became runner-up. Nevertheless, despite her second position on the ballot list, Verdonk was able to attract almost 70.000 preferential votes more in the general elections than Rutte, 620.555 in total. This result had strong political consequences, as Verdonk demanded an internal party commission to investigate the consequences of her victory and she was openly questioning whether she should not become the new leader of the Liberals in parliament. When it was decided that Rutte would remain the leader, she kept criticizing the party leadership on multiple occasions, ultimately leading to her expulsion ten months later.

In the Dutch elections of 2012, preferential votes also played a role for the Christian Democrats. When constructing the ballot list, the party leadership decided not to give a spot on the ballot to Pieter Omtzigt, an MP that had been in parliament for the Christian Democrats since 2003. Omtzigt, dissatisfied with this decision, actively sought the support of fellow party members to still get on the ballot list. At the party congress he succeeded in this and was able to get a spot.

Nevertheless, the party placed him on the 39th position, a position from which one normally does not stand any chance to get elected. However, by running an active campaign Omtzigt was able to get in parliament after all. He attracted 36.750 preferential votes; more than twice the number necessary to overcome the threshold to get elected in parliament by preferential votes. Similar examples can be found in other countries too. In Austria, Josef Cap, the leader of the Socialist Youth Organization, criticized the leading party functionaries for their privileges and, as a consequence, was placed on a low spot on the ballot list. However, he received support from voters in the elections of 1983 and was able to attract enough preferential votes to get elected out of order, making him the first Austrian politician to do so since 1956, with more politicians following him later. In 1995 in Belgium there were voices raised on whether Minister Kelchtermans should remain a minister after the elections, since he was responsible for the failed introduction of the so-called eco-box, a box for environmental garbage that all citizens had to buy, but that turned out to be almost impossible to open. However, because of his strong popularity at his home base, he received a high number of preferential votes during the elections, even more than Prime Minister Van den Brande, which made his return practically unavoidable.

The above examples all illustrate situations where preferential votes played an important role for the internal power balance of parties, for the composition of parliament or for the distribution of executive mandates. Although their exact influence depends on the institutional context, preferential votes matter for internal party affairs, for candidates as a way to get elected or to gain more power, and for voters as they may not only have a preference for political parties, but also for specific candidates. Yet, despite its importance, this intra-party dimension of elections has for a long time received relatively little academic attention compared to the attention that has been given towards the inter-party dimension. Already in 1985, Katz noted that 'the tendency to think of election results in purely partisan terms has meant that very little research has been

conducted on questions relating to intraparty preference voting' (Katz, 1985:87). Twenty-five years later, Colomer (2011:7) stated that it was still a 'neglected dimension'. Nevertheless, progress on this topic has been made. In the past few years scholars have classified political systems regarding their extent and type of intra-party competition (Carey & Shugart, 1995), and in a recent book Renwick and Pilet (2016) find that electoral reforms have made systems more personalized, giving more weight to the intra-party electoral dimension. Especially since the 1990s, more weight has been given to preferential votes, although the actual effects of these reforms often still remain limited (Renwick & Pilet, 2016: 249-265). Studies have also investigated which voters are more likely to cast preferential votes, finding that it are especially politically interested voters who make use of this type of voting and that it occurs more often when there is more proximity between candidates and voters – for instance when voters are familiar with candidates, either directly or through mediatized contact (André et al., 2013; André, Wauters, & Pilet, 2012; Van Holsteyn & Andeweg, 2012). Finally, studies have started investigating the question which candidates are more likely to be individually electorally successful and attract preferential votes, pointing towards factors such as ballot list position (Lutz, 2010; Marcinkiewicz, 2014), political experience (Put & Maddens, 2015) and socio-demographic factors, most notably gender (McElroy & Marsh, 2010).

Yet, despite the scientific progress that has been made, many lacunas remain regarding the question why some politicians are more popular. As a consequence, we are still not fully able to grasp why certain candidates receive more preferential votes than others. The goal of this dissertation is therefore to get a deeper understanding of the factors that explain individual electoral success and to position these explanations in a broader framework. More specifically this dissertation aims: 1) To get a better insight into the factors that explain the individual electoral success of candidates, with a focus on factors that have not received much academic attention, such as the ideology of candidates, their

campaign style and their media coverage; 2) To investigate how these different factors interact with each other. The different explanations for individual success do not act in a vacuum but also influence each other. Earlier studies have not always taken these interrelations sufficiently into account; 3) To explore the causal mechanisms behind these effects.

Ultimately, this leads to two central research questions that can be considered two sides of the same coin. The first research question reads as follows: *Which factors explain why certain political candidates have more individual electoral success and therefore receive more preferential votes than others?* This question concentrates mainly on the candidate perspective and focuses on the factors that explain the individual success of political candidates and their interrelation. This question and these aims will be central in chapter 3 to 6. The second research question is related to the first, but shifts the perspective from candidates to voters, in order to explore the mechanisms behind some of the effects. More specifically I ask: *Why do voters cast preferential votes for certain candidates and not for others*? This research question will be touched upon in chapter 3, but will especially take a central position in chapter 7, where the role of voter-candidate similarity is examined. The case selected to answer these questions is Belgium. The motivation behind this case selection will be given in chapter 2.

The remainder of this introductory chapter is structured as follows. The next three sections (1.2 to 1.4) explore the concept of preferential voting in more detail. First, the phenomenon of preferential voting is conceptualized. Subsequently, preferential voting is positioned within the broader debate of personalization and afterwards I motivate why preferential votes are important to study. In the fourth section (1.4), a theoretical framework is developed that helps to identify the factors explaining individual electoral success and that serves as a larger framework for the relationships between these factors. Finally, this chapter concludes by giving an overview of the other chapters of this dissertation.

1.2. The preferential vote

Before positioning preferential voting in the broader field of personalization and discussing why it is important to investigate, I first conceptualize what is actually meant by a preferential vote in this dissertation. This sounds easier than it is. What constitutes a preferential vote is very dependent on a country's specific institutional framework, making it difficult to develop a universal conceptualization of the preferential vote[1] (André, Wauters, & Pilet, 2012; Marsh, 1985; Van Holsteyn & Andeweg, 2012). Therefore, in order to come up with a universal conceptualization that can be applied to all systems with preferential voting, we need to find a common denominator across systems. Ultimately, in its most universal and simplest form a preferential vote can be defined as a vote for an individual candidate within an open- or flexible-list system.

Yet, as said before, the specifics of what this type of vote exactly constitutes differ between systems. For instance, in most systems the preference for a candidate is categorical, meaning that a voter can either support a candidate or not. Yet, in others the preference is ordinal, such as in the Single Transferable Vote (STV) systems of Ireland and Malta where citizens can rank candidates, or in Switzerland and Luxembourg where voters can give one or two preferential votes to a candidate (Renwick & Pilet, 2016). The extent to which a preferential vote influences the division of seats also varies between systems. In open-list systems preferential votes fully determine the division of seats within the party, whereas in flexible-list PR systems other factors, such as the order on the ballot list, mostly determine who gets elected and the influence of preferential votes is rather limited. The differences in preferential voting between countries make comparative research on this topic very challenging, often limiting this research to

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[1] The literature also labels it as preference vote, but both terms can be used interchangeably. In another note one could argue that the term candidate vote would better capture the concept, as one does not always know to what extent the vote really reflects a preference for the candidate, especially in systems with compulsory candidate voting (Nagtzaam & van Erkel, 2017). Nevertheless, in this dissertation I choose to use the term preferential voting as it is the most common used term in the literature.

single country studies. In addition, it is not always clear whether a vote is actually preferential. Especially in countries such as the Netherlands, Finland and Estonia, where candidate votes are compulsory, it is difficult to identify whether the vote really indicates a preference for the candidate or rather reflects a preference for a party. For these countries preferential votes are often operationalized as votes for candidates on the second position of the ballot list and lower, as for the first position (the list puller) it is too difficult to dissect whether it is a preference for the candidate or the party. However, a recent experiment shows that a large group of voters would still cast a vote for the first candidate on the list if the optional list vote would be introduced, indicating that for many citizens a vote for the list puller does reflect a preference for that candidate (Nagtzaam & van Erkel, 2017). At the same time, some voters who vote for a candidate on the second position or lower, would cast a list vote when presented with this option. This indicates that the operationalization for the Netherlands to classify only votes for the second candidate or lower as preferential votes, may not fully reflect reality. In systems with compulsory candidate voting it therefore remains difficult to dissect the preferential vote from the party vote. Chapter 2 explores the variations in PR-list systems in more detail.

It is also important to note that a preferential vote is not necessarily the same as a personal vote. The concept of the personal vote was developed by Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina (1984) and further developed by Cain, Ferejohn and Morris (1987) and has mainly been used in the context of majoritarian single-member district systems. In these systems the competition is between a single candidate per party. Consequently, it is difficult to disentangle whether citizens vote because they want to endorse the party or because they want to endorse the candidate. The personal vote refers to the latter situation. In this case, the vote decision is fully motivated by personal-based vote earning attributes of the candidate, and not by party-related vote earning attributes (Shugart, Valdini, & Suominen, 2005; Thijssen, 2013). Thus, voters are motivated to vote for the

candidate because he or she is an incumbent, or because he or she did a lot of constituency work. While a preferential vote *can* be a personal vote, for example in situations where citizens want to vote for a candidate because that particular candidate is from the same area and they know him/her, or because he/she did a good job in fulfilling a political mandate, this is not necessarily the case. For instance, chapter three of this dissertation shows that many voters cast a vote for the first candidate on the list or the first woman on the list. While these votes are preferential (they indicate a preference for that candidate and help the candidate to get in parliament) they are not personal, as it is not a vote based on the personal qualities of the candidate; if a different candidate had been placed on that ballot position he or she would have received that vote too. Or in other words, had that candidate stood on a lower position or on a different party list he or she would not have been given the preferential vote. Thus, while a preferential vote can be a personal vote, this is not necessarily the case, as the preference for a candidate is not always based on personal vote-earning attributes.

Moreover, there is ample evidence that preferential votes are often nested within a party choice. In a study on the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system in Ireland, Marsh (2007) shows that although the STV system is perhaps the system that is most driven by personal votes, depending on the method of measurement only 20 to 40 per cent of the voters seem to base their candidate vote on candidate characteristics. This indicates that votes are still party driven. This becomes even more clear in a thought-experiment by van Holsteyn & Andeweg (2010). They find that most Dutch voters who casted a vote for the party leader would not have casted a vote for this leader if he or she belonged to a different party. These studies indicate that preferential votes may contain a personal element, but that these choices are often embedded in a party choice. In this sense, the intra-party competition can often not be disconnected from the inter-party competition and many voters first decide which party to vote for and only subsequently (possibly) decide which candidate to support within that party.

In Belgium this is even strengthened by the fact that when voting electronically, voters first have to indicate which party they would want to vote for, and in a second screen have the option to vote for a candidate.[2]

1.3.   Preferential voting in the context of personalization

In order to contextualize the phenomenon of preferential voting, we can link it to the broader notion of personalization. Personalization refers to the process in which 'individual political actors have become more prominent at the expense of parties and collective identities' (Karvonen, 2010:4, see also Mcallister (2009) and Adam and Maier (2010) for an overview of the personalization debate). This manifests itself in different ways, and many scholars argue that preferential voting is one way in which the personalization of voting behavior becomes manifest (Renwick & Pilet, 2016; Wauters et al., in press). However, one can wonder to what extent personalization is actually a 'new' phenomenon. To some extent it could be seen more as a swing of the pendulum back to the earliest notions of representative democracy. In the early days of representative democracy, when the idea of electing officials gained ground over other forms such as direct democracy and lotteries, representation was seen as a very personal relation between a representee and her representative (Manin, 1997). Elections were considered a mean for voters - still limited to a small fraction of the population - to elect those officials that were deemed the most wise, virtuous and competent to reach the common interest of the people. Opposite views also existed, for example in the United States, where the anti-federalists argued that representatives should be like the people and share a similarity (Manin, 1997: 117). Nevertheless, in all cases representative democracy was seen as something

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[2] In half of the municipalities in Belgium citizens vote by paper. When voting by paper voters do immediately get to see all parties and candidates. In a study on the local level Wauters et al. (2013) find a small effect of voting by paper, with the number of voters casting a preferential vote being slightly higher in municipalities using paper than municipalities voting electronically.

personal with (a limited elite group of) citizens voting for individual officials, who would act individually in the legislature.[3] In this light, it is also no surprise that political thinkers such as Condorcet, Hamilton and Madison feared the formation of political factions or parties, as factions would serve partial interests rather than the general interest. This early personalized notion can be still be traced back in different constitutions in older liberal democracies; references to political parties are often limited, and in Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands political parties are not even referred to at all (van Biezen & Borz, 2009). In the Dutch constitution there is even an article explicitly stating that individual MPs should be able to act 'without burden', meaning that they should have individual autonomy.[4]

It is only in the second half of the nineteenth century that the perspective on representative democracy changed and moved from a personal notion of representation - Manin (1997) labels this 'parliamentarism' - to a party democracy. Especially with the introduction of the mass parties in the twentieth century, party platforms gained importance and the party representation dimension became more salient at the expense of the personal representation dimension (Colomer, 2011). Rather than thinking about individual politicians, voters became more occupied with political parties. This is exemplified by a quote of a British voter in 1951 who stated: 'I would [even] vote for a pig if my party put one up' (as quoted by Karvonen, 2010: 41). This illustrates the fact that this voter only cared about his party and not about this party's candidates. The role of collective political organizations also became manifest in the 'frozen party

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[3] For the notion of personalization one could even go back further in time, to ancient Athens. Although in the ecclesia (εκκλησια) all male Athens citizens spoke on their own, Sinclair (1988:139) describes how often fractions emerged around certain political leaders. These were not political parties in the classical sense, but rather groups consisting of supporters around one leading figure, and in that sense they were very personalized.

[4] Originally, this law article stated that MP's should vote 'zonder last of ruggespraak' which can be translated into 'without burden or deliberation'. However, as this would by law actually mean that there could be no deliberation within a party it was changed into 'without burden' in 1983. In practice, this means that MP's cannot be punished for not voting along party lines and that they can keep their seat if they get expulsed from the party.

systems' in Western Europe, where parties organized alongside salient cleavages and citizens' vote on parties largely depended on their sociological background and therefore remained very stable over time (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967).

The current shift from the party democracy to more personalization – although academic experts still debate the extent to which personalization is actually occurring (see Kaase, 1994; Kriesi, 2012) – can in that sense be seen as a (small) step back to the more classical notion of representation. However, it is unlikely that political parties become completely obsolete in the near future. Rather, it seems more likely that they will persist, although their functions may change. Manin (1997) argues therefore that the process of personalization leads to a third notion or phase of representative democracy, the so-called 'audience democracy'. While in Manin's notion of the audience democracy parties still play an important role, they become more personalized with an increasing role for political leaders and candidates *within* the collective party. Elections transform from a choice between party platforms, to a choice between party leaders, with a particular focus on which politician becomes the country's new leader. Political parties still play a central role, but increasingly become instruments in service of the leader, for networks, funding and finding volunteers for the campaign (Manin, 1997:219). This may also result in more flexible types of organizations, such as 'grass-root' movements. These developments are illustrated by the recent surge of populist parties with their strong focus on the leader, but also by the fact that more and more political parties in Western Europe organize a form of primaries to select their political leaders.

Different processes can be identified that have contributed to the personalization of politics. First of all, processes of individualization and dealignment have made citizens less attached to political parties. The individualization thesis states that citizens are no longer born with a certain identity, but rather have to construct their identity themselves (Beck, 1997; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). One way in which this comes to expression is that

citizens no longer identify with a single party and that socio-demographic characteristics are no longer the most important predictors of party choice (Dalton, McAllister, & Wattenberg, 2000). The old cleavage structure, as described by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), has disappeared and it is no longer the case that workers automatically vote for the Social Democratic party and Catholics for the Christian Democrats. Consequently, voters have become more volatile, losing their connection to a single party, and switching between parties for each election.[5] Rather than party identities and broad ideologies, short-term factors such as the state of the economy (Lewis-Beck, 1988; Lewis-Beck & Nadeau, 2011), political issues (van der Brug, 2004; Fournier et al., 2003; Walczak & van der Brug, 2012) and the image of the political leader (Aarts, Blais, & Schmitt, 2011; Bittner, 2011) have become more important factors to explain voting behavior. In other words, in order to cope with the loss of affective ties with a political party, voters may search for new emotional connections with leaders and individual politicians instead.

Second, changes have occurred within the media landscape. In the 1950s and 1960s most media were affiliated with a political party and the media-agenda was largely determined by these parties. In the 1970's this partisan logic changed to a public logic, where the media became more independent of political parties and started to act increasingly as watchdogs (van Praag, 2006). The media had a second transformation in the 1980s and 1990s. A new logic, the so-called media logic, came to existence (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999). Within this logic the media started to commercialize and became more and more preoccupied with finding commercially attractive news stories. The focus turned increasingly towards conflicts, elections as horse races and political leaders as embodiments of their party (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999). This went together with the increasing importance of visual media such as the television, where leaders are used to

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[5] Recent research seems to suggest that whereas party identification is in decline, citizens may still identify themselves with a party bloc and that volatility only occurs within that block (van der Meer et al., 2015).

visualize the party and the introduction of the social media which allows for more communication between candidates and voters.

Finally, Manin (1997) points towards a third explanation. Personalization can also be a result of the more complex societies we live in. Due to increasing technological developments and globalization, the problems we face have become more complex. As a result, it has become more difficult for governments and parties to anticipate on these problems. Due to this unpredictability of events, party manifesto's become less important and rather it becomes more important for voters that they personally trust the leader to be capable to deal with these complex unpredictable problems (Manin, 1997:221). This could result in a stronger focus on party leaders and hence a 'presidentionalization' of politics (Poguntke & Webb, 2005).

The process of personalization may manifest itself in different spheres. Additionally, it can take place at two different levels. We can thus speak of a different *locus* and *focus* of personalization. In their conceptualization Rahat and Sheafer (2007) concentrate on the locus of personalization. They argue that personalization can occur in three different spheres: institutional personalization, media personalization and behavioral personalization. Media personalization is then further dissected into paid media personalization and campaign personalization.[6] Behavioral personalization is further dissected into personalization of the behavior of politicians and personalization of the behavior of voters. Balmas et al. (2014) categorize types of personalization on the basis of their focus. They state that personalization can be centralized, meaning that there is an increased focus on political leaders, or that it can be decentralized, meaning that more power flows to other candidates than the party or executive leaders. In the rest of this section I combine the frameworks of Rahat and Sheafer (2007) and Balmas et al. (2014) into one single classification of types of personalization and describe how preferential voting could (potentially) fit in this classification.

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[6] Rahat & Sheafer (2007) also distinguish a third sub-dimension of media personalization; privatization, but we do not take this dimension into account here.

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The first dimension of the classification is institutional personalization. This form of personalization encompasses an adoption of rules or institutions to give more power to individual politicians. Examples of centralized institutionalized personalization are laws that give an increasing power to Prime-Ministers over their government (O'Malley, 2007; Poguntke & Webb, 2005). Examples of decentralized institutional personalization would be cases where preferential votes were given more weight in the selection of candidates or cases where closed or flexible lists are changed to open lists (Renwick & Pilet, 2016).

The second and third dimensions are personalization in the media and personalization in campaigns. Centralized media personalization occurs when the media focus their attention on a few key politicians (presidents, ministers or party leaders) instead of cabinets or parties (Van Aelst, Sheafer, & Stanyer, 2012). With decentralized personalization the focus of the media shifts to individual candidates that do not take a central position in their party, such as ordinary MPs. The media dimension of personalization is very contested in the literature, with empirical evidence providing mixed evidence. Some studies indeed find a personalization trend (Langer, 2010; Reinemann & Wilke, 2007), whereas others do not, or find mixed evidence at the best (Kaase, 1994; Kriesi, 2012). For centralized campaign personalization we refer to the increasingly important role of leaders in the campaigns. With an increased focus on party leaders, elections become more about personalities and the question who becomes the Prime Minister, rather than which parties get in parliament. Decentralized campaign personalization refers to the situation where candidates on the party list start to campaign more for themselves in order to attract preferential votes, rather than for the party.

The fourth dimension focuses on the behavior of politicians outside election time. Centralized personalization, in this case, refers to the increasing power Prime Ministers have in their cabinets or party leaders have within their party (Balmas et al., 2014). Decentralized personalization, in this case, occurs

when MPs act on their own in parliament and vote against the party line, or in less extreme cases initiate laws or ask parliamentary questions.

Finally, the fifth dimension refers to the personalization of electoral behavior. Again we can make a distinction between centralized and decentralized personalization, although for this dimension also the labels first- and second-order personalization are used (Van Holsteyn & Andeweg, 2012). Centralized or first-order personalization refers to the increasing importance of political leaders in the vote decision. Whereas traditionally voters casted their vote on the basis of their socio-demographic group or party identification, nowadays voters increasingly base their vote on short-term factors such as relevant issues, but also political leaders. A number of studies have indicated that a favorable image of the party leader can lead to electoral gains for the party (Aarts et al., 2011; Bittner, 2011), although others have only found a limited effect (King, 2002). Decentralized, or second-order personalization on the other hand, refers to the role of ordinary candidates in the mind of voters and suggest that candidates other than the party leader (also) increasingly play a role in the voter's electoral decision-making process.

Preferential voting can be positioned within this fifth dimension of electoral personalization, both in its centralized and decentralized form. When voters cast a preferential vote for the list puller it is a centralized form of electoral personalization, whereas voters can also support a lower positioned candidate, making it a form of decentralized personalization. Sometimes these two forms contrast each other. Wauters et al. (in press) show that as a consequence of increasing centralized personalization and a support for the party leader, preferential votes for lower positioned candidates have been in decline in the most recent Belgian elections.

Of course, the term personalization implies a trend that increases over time and there is indeed some evidence that this is the case. In a recent book Renwick and Pilet (2016) show that in a number of countries, as a consequence of

institutional reforms, preferential voting has increased. In Belgium, preferential voting raised from 27.3 per cent in 1939 to 51.9 per cent in 1978 and to more than 60 per cent in the recent elections (Renwick & Pilet, 2016: 219). In recent elections this number has decreased again a little, from 66.6 per cent in 2003 to 57 per cent in 2014 (Wauters & Rodenbach, 2014), but nevertheless the level remains much higher than in the decades before. Similar trends can be found in Austria, where preferential voting increased from 0.1 per cent in 1979 to 26.4 per cent in the 2013 elections, and the Netherlands where votes for the second candidate on the ballot list increased from 7.5 per cent in 1981 to 27.1 per cent in 2002 (Renwick & Pilet, 2016: 227). Like in Belgium, this trend has decreased slightly in the recent elections, but nevertheless it remains much higher than in the 1970's and 1980's. Renwick and Pilet (2016) do not find an increase in all countries. However, in many of the countries where the trend of preferential votes remained stable, the base level was already very high, such as Switzerland where it remains stable around 60 per cent. Moreover, the authors find that as a consequence of different reforms since the 1980s, the role of preferential votes in the distribution of seats has somewhat increased in a number of countries. For instance, in the Netherlands between 1946 and 1989 only three candidates got elected out of order in that whole time frame. Since 1997 in every election at least one or two candidates have been elected out of order per election, with four candidates that got in parliament due to preferential votes in the 2017 elections. This number is even higher in local elections.

While the concept of personalization and the classification of its types prove a useful background for this dissertation, it should be noted that the investigation of a longitudinal trend is not its focus. Rather, I argue that topic of personalization can also be used in a cross-sectional perspective, in which case we should speak of the degree to which (electoral) behavior is being personalized. For instance, campaign strategies of political candidates can be more personalized or more party centered, and votes can be for a party or for a person. Additionally,

the different spheres can tie together. While in this dissertation I focus on preferential voting, a (potential) form of personalized electoral behavior, this is not unrelated to the other dimensions. Preferential votes are only possible when institutions are personalized and leave room for this type of voting. Moreover, preferential voting may be linked to personalized media attention (chapter 5) and personalized campaign strategies (chapter 6), as these may be key explanatory factors for attaining preferential votes. These are links that this dissertation will investigate. Additionally, by investigating the factors behind the casting of a preferential vote, this dissertation provides insight into whether these votes are more personal- or more party-driven and that way provides insight into whether preferential votes are indeed a sign of personalization, as is often argued.

1.4.   Preferential votes – Why they matter

The previous section showed that preferential votes may have become more important in the light of the personalization of politics. However, there are three additional reasons why preferential votes are important to investigate. First of all, as already mentioned before, preferential votes affect the composition of parliament. Whereas most scholars on electoral systems and voting behavior tend to focus on the division of seats between parties (Lijphart, 1999; Rae, 1967), preferential votes matter as they influence which politicians occupy these seats once divided between parties.[7] This is important considering that parties are not unitary actors. Thus, the composition of the party's parliamentary delegation impacts its thinking and will influence the policies a party develops, especially on unexpected issues (Katz, 1985: 86). Which candidates get into parliament is also important in the light of descriptive representation, especially for scholars who argue that legislatures should, at least to some extent, be a reflection of society

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[7] An exception is the STV-system, where votes are not pooled. In these systems candidates win seats and the seat distribution of the party is dependent on how many of its candidates are elected.

(Mansbridge, 1999; Pitkin, 1967). Under ideal institutional circumstances, preferential voting could be one way to get a more representative composition of parliament and thereby influences which voices are heard, which is important for the deliberative process.

However, there are strong differences between countries in the extent to which preferential votes can actually impact the seat distribution. Their effect is the strongest in STV-systems and proportional systems with an open list. Here preferential votes fully determine the (intra-party) division of seats. More variation exists within flexible-list systems. In a number of East-European countries, and especially in the Baltic states, the number of candidates elected out of order runs between twenty and thirty per cent (Renwick & Pilet, 2016: 243). In other systems, such as Iceland and the Netherlands, preferential votes have almost no effect. In Iceland this goes even so far that although they have a flexible list system on paper, no candidate got elected out of order since 1946 (Renwick & Pilet, 2016: 241). Belgium is positioned somewhere in between, even though almost all candidates get elected in order, in 2014 eight candidates got elected out of order for the Flemish elections and four for the federal elections.

Nevertheless, the impact of preferential voting goes beyond the division of seats. A second reason why preferential votes matter, and one that also holds in systems where preferential votes exert no strong influence on the seat distribution, is that they are a tangible indicator of an individual candidate's popularity. Of course, the extent to which the candidate is actually self-responsible for the amount of preferential votes obtained is debatable and is one of the main questions this dissertation tries to answer, given that to a large extent the number of votes is related to the popularity of the party and the position on the ballot list. Nevertheless, for politicians preferential votes do often act as an important resource that can be instrumental in order to get good political functions or a better ballot list position during the next elections (Ackaert, 1996; De Winter, 1988; Panebianco, 1988; Wauters, Verlet, & Ackaert, 2012). For

instance, in a recent study Folke, Persson, & Rickne (2016) find in two different contexts, the local elections in the flexible-list system of Sweden and the open-list system of Brazil, that candidates who win more preferential votes than their runner-up are more likely to become the local party leader. They label this the 'primary effect' of preferential votes (Folke, Persson, & Rickne, 2016). In addition, they find that this effect is strongest for candidates with a higher position on the list, indicating that even for candidates who are already certain that they get elected, preferential votes are important. A recent study by André et al. (in press) finds that for candidates with a lower ballot list position preferential votes are also important, in order to obtain a better list position at the next election. For three countries, Belgium, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, they show that rank difference, the difference between the position of the candidate on the ballot and the position a candidate gets from the electorate, impacts the position on the ballot list in the next election. More specifically, when candidates are ranked higher by voters than by the party, this will result in a better ballot list position at a next election. The reasoning behind this is that parties want to promote candidates that are successful at earning preferential votes, because parties benefit from this vote-seeking behavior of candidates, since votes are ultimately pooled (André et al., in press:2). However, Andre et al. show that these effects are stronger for candidates with a lower position on the list, as for the high ballot list positions also other factors come into play. All in all, preferential votes are one way for candidates to climb up the party ladder; for high positioned candidates to get good political functions, for lower positioned candidates to get a better ballot list position at the next election.

Finally, the importance of preferential votes is not only instrumental, but they also matter because they have intrinsic value to voters. Simply put, certain voters have an actual preference for specific candidates, and therefore also want to express their vote for these candidates rather than, or in addition to, their preference for a party. Related to this intrinsic value is a study by Farrell and

Mcallister (2006) finding evidence that in systems where the ballot structure incorporates preferential features, and voters have a say in the distribution of seats, satisfaction with democracy is higher. At the same time, there is no evidence that negative features that are sometimes attributed to preferential vote systems, such as less party cohesion and more instability, indeed occur (Karvonen, 2004). Therefore, if we want to better understand voters and their behavior we should not only focus on how they vote with regard to parties, but also how they vote with regard to candidates.

1.5.   Understanding individual electoral success

Having conceptualized the preferential vote and having motivated why it is important to investigate, this section will give an overview of factors that could explain why some politicians receive more preferential votes than others. These factors form the basis for the hypotheses in the separate chapters. Of course, this dissertation does not work in a vacuum, but builds on previous work that has already found evidence for the effect of certain factors. The aim of this section is therefore threefold. First, I will classify the common explanations into four categories. Second, for each category I explain what we already know, but also which gaps are still left. These gaps form the basis for the subsequent research chapters. Third, I will develop a (causal) theoretical framework on the basis of the four categories. The aim of this dissertation is not to fully test this framework all at once, but rather this framework serves as a general model in which the different chapters can be positioned. Based on the individual chapters, I can make an assessment on whether this causal framework indeed seems plausible in the final chapter. Looking at previous literature I can bring the factors back to four categories; party-related characteristics, individual-based characteristics, media factors and campaign factors.

Although preferential votes are often linked to the concept of personalization, this does not mean that candidates can fully act on their own. Individual candidates always belong to a party and factors at the party level therefore influence the success of the individual candidate. In general, there are two factors in this category; party affiliation and ballot list position.

The first factor, party affiliation, has a strong influence on the success of candidates. Candidates belonging to electorally more successful parties have an electoral advantage over their peers from smaller parties. To some extent this relationship is endogenous, as the success of the individual candidates also shapes the success of their party. Nevertheless, research shows that in general the party still comes first. According to van Holsteyn and Andeweg (2010) most voters first decide which party to vote for and then decide which candidate to support within that party. Given that the party still comes first, this means that candidates from larger parties have a larger potential electorate/audience and can therefore potentially attract more preferential votes. In addition, the potential of preferential votes may also be influenced by the ideology of the party. The electorate of certain types of parties may be more likely to cast a preferential vote than others. We can expect that the electorate of parties that are more ideological or issue driven may base their vote more on the ideology of this party, compared to the electorate of parties with a more catch-all nature. In the latter case, voters may be more inclined to cast preferential votes, giving a greater potential for the attraction of these votes to the candidates belonging to these parties. The rate of preferential voting may also be lower for certain new one-issue parties that mobilize their voters around an issue, rather than their candidates.

A second party-related factor is ballot list position. Especially in flexible systems this is a party-related factor, as in these systems it are the political parties that determine which candidate gets on which position. Previous research has

indicated that, at least in flexible list systems, ballot list position is one of the most, if not *the* most, important predictor for the success of candidates. Studies consistently show that candidates placed on a higher ballot list position, receive more votes than candidates on lower positions (see for example Geys & Heyndels, 2003; Miller & Krosnick, 1998; Thijssen & Jacobs, 2004). The only exception is the last position, the so called list-pusher, which is able to attract some more votes (Marcinkiewicz, 2014). Yet, although the effect of ballot list position is consistent among studies, questions remain how this effect exactly works. Is it really ballot list position itself that influences the number of preferential votes a candidate obtains or are candidates on higher ballot list positions a different type of candidate and do they receive certain benefits that may give them an electoral advantage? In other words, it may be the case that this effect only works indirectly; candidates at a higher ballot list position may receive more attention in the media, receive more resources to run an effective campaign, or it could be the case that in order to occupy a good ballot list position, one should have certain inherent electorally beneficial characteristics, such as being an incumbent. In these cases the ballot list position effect is personal driven. On the other hand, ballot list position may also directly influence individual electoral success itself, in which case it is party-driven. Previous research has often spoken about a primacy effect; a term from psychology that indicates that when presented with a long list of options, people have a selection bias towards the first option. Given the little information citizens often have about candidates, they may simply vote for the first candidate, as this decision takes the least effort. Whether ballot list position exerts an influence only indirectly, or also directly influences preferential votes, has remained unresolved and it will be this question that takes a central position in chapter 3.

Individual-based characteristics:

While party-related factors explain part of the variation in the number of preferential votes, a second category of factors can be found at the level of the individual. Candidates have different individual-based characteristics or qualities that could explain why they perform electorally better or worse than other candidates. In general, the literature has focused on two types of such individual-based characteristics: socio-demographic characteristics and political experience.

The extent to which socio-demographic characteristics shape the electoral success of candidates has received ample attention. Many of these studies, however, focus either on the competition between candidates in single-member districts or on the socio-demographic characteristics of party leaders. Cutler (2002), for example, shows that the socio-demographic characteristics of party leaders matter to voters and that voters are more inclined to vote for a leader when the socio-demographic distance is smaller. Similar conclusions are reached by McDermott (2009) and Piliavin (1987). The role of socio-demographic characteristics has received less attention with regard to preferential voting, although there is growing attention for this topic, especially regarding the effect of gender and ethnicity. However, evidence is mixed. When looking purely at the descriptives, studies show that women (Wauters, Weekers, & Maddens, 2010) and candidates from an ethnic minority background (Bergh & Bjørklund, 2011; Thijssen & Jacobs, 2004) receive significantly less preferential votes than their native male counterparts. Yet, this difference is mostly due to structural differences between socio-demographic groups on other factors, such as their ballot list position and media attention. McElroy & Marsh (2010) and Wauters, Weekers and Maddens (2010) show that once we control for these structural inequalities there is no difference between male and female candidates. Thijssen and Jacobs (2004) and Thijssen (2013) even find that when controlling for all other factors, candidates from minority groups such as women and ethnic minority candidates perform electorally better and that being a woman or candidate from

an ethnic minority background can lead to more preferential votes. Their reasoning is that underrepresented groups develop a stronger social identity and are therefore more inclined to vote for someone from the in-group. Other studies have tested this claim by investigating at the voting level whether women are more likely to vote for female candidates (Erzeel & Caluwaerts, 2015; Holli & Wass, 2010; Marien, Wauters, & Schouteden, 2017). They find no evidence for this claim. However, these studies almost exclusively focus on the level of the voters (demand-side), without taking into account structural differences between candidates (supply side). In order to really get an insight in the role of socio-demographic characteristics and test whether candidates from underrepresented groups attract more preferential votes because underrepresented voters are more inclined to vote for them, we would need to test this expectation by simultaneously model the supply and demand side. This will be done in chapter 7.

A second individual-based factor, and one around there is more consensus, is political experience. The finding of an incumbency advantage is one of the strongest findings in political science. Especially in the American literature, the result that incumbents receive more votes than their challengers has been shown again and again (see for example (Abramowitz, 1975; Cain et al., 1984, 1987; Johannes & McAdams, 1981; Krebs, 1998). Similar results are expected in the competition for preferential votes. Even though political experience does not necessarily lead to popularity itself, it does lead to more name recognition. Ministers, mayors and MPs are better known than new candidates and therefore benefit from this name recognition effect, especially considering that voters are unlikely to vote for candidates whom they do not know. In addition, political experienced candidates can show their skills and in that sense build a reputation. It is therefore no surprise that studies on preferential voting indeed find evidence for an effect of political experience on the percentage of preferential votes obtained (see Maddens et al., 2006; Thijssen, 2013; Thijssen & Jacobs, 2004; Van Holsteyn & Andeweg, 2012), although Maddens et al. (2006) only find an effect of

candidates running for the senate, suggesting that the effect may be limited to experience in legislative bodies.

Next to socio-demographic factors and political experience, we can also expect a third factor, that's has not received much academic attention, to be of influence, namely the ideology of a candidate. Even though parties usually offer a clear ideological platform, we know from previous literature that they are not always ideologically homogenous. Already in 1976 Sartori showed that different factions may exist within a single party. Also other scholars have shown that candidates within one party can have heterogeneous preferences (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2011). Consequently, it is possible that voters are not only guided by ideology in their choice for a party, but also when they decide which candidates they want to give a preferential vote to. However, no study has investigated the role of ideology in preference voting yet. We should therefore explore whether ideology plays a role and in which direction. On the one hand, it could be a successful strategy to slightly deviate from the party line, as candidates can distinguish themselves this way and voters could cast preferential votes for candidates that deviate somewhat from the party as a signal to this party to alter its course. On the other hand, deviating from the party line may also works against the electoral success of a candidate, as voters may see this as a sign of disobedience and punish a candidate that is not in line with the party. Besides, the potential voters for this candidate may already have chosen a different party. Finally, it is also possible that the ideological position of candidates plays no role at all. It may be too difficult for voters to base their preferential vote on ideology, as being able to position political candidates in an ideological space is cognitively demanding and voters may not be able to do so. Even more importantly is that often this information about the candidate's position may not be available. Political candidates do not individually present an ideological platform and also in the media there is usually no coverage about the individual ideological position of a candidate, unless it really leads to conflicts within the party. Hence, due to the

fact that a positioning of candidates within a party is cognitively demanding and given that not much information is available, it could be that the ideological position of candidates within their party plays no role at all and instead voters refrain to less cognitively demanding heuristics, such as ballot list position, gender or the political experience of a candidate when deciding which candidate(s) to give a preferential vote to. Chapter 4 sheds more light on these questions.

Media factors:

Party-related characteristics and individual-based characteristics matter. However, in many cases citizens can only learn about these characteristics through the media, as for most citizens the mass media are still the most important channel of information (Shehata & Strömbäck, 2014; de Vreese, 2010). A number of studies have pointed out that visibility and tone in election news coverage influence party choice (Hopmann et al., 2010; Oegema & Kleinnijenhuis, 2000; Semetko & Schoenbach, 1994) or presidential choice (Bartels, 1993; Dalton, Beck & Huckfeldt, 1998; Schmitt-Beck, 2003). Yet, the role of the media in the intra-party competition has remained understudied. Nevertheless, there are different reasons to expect that the media impact preferential voting. The most important reason might be that more media attention leads to more electoral success as it creates a feeling of proximity between candidates and their electorate. Not only will voters recognize the name of their candidate on the ballot list, but they might also get the feeling that they have more information about them and that they are better able to evaluate these politicians. Thus, when evaluating the ballot list, voters are more likely to select a candidate they 'know', giving an advantage to candidates who receive more media attention. Only two studies have provided some evidence that the media indeed play a role. Maddens et al. (2006) only take up media in their model as a control variable, but do find a positive effects for politicians between appearing in the newspaper and winning preferential votes. A second study by Van Aelst et al. (2006) focuses more

specifically on media attention and also find evidence that more coverage in newspapers result in more votes.

Yet, apart from these two studies evidence on the effect of the media is limited. In addition, certain questions have remained unanswered. For instance, in general a distinction can be made between the long campaign, the year before the election, and the short campaign, the month before the election (Norris et al., 1999). Yet, we do not know how these two periods differ in effect. In addition, effects might be different between candidates. The media might work for certain top candidates, but not for ordinary candidates or vice versa. Finally, we may expect that the media may mediate certain other effects. Certain socio-demographic characteristics or political experience may only impact preferential votes when voters learn about them from the media. These are all questions that we cannot answer yet and that will be addressed in the fifth chapter.

Campaign factors:

The final category of explanatory factors revolves around campaigning. Compared to studies on the role of the media, this category has received more attention. There is a large body of literature that focuses on the effect of constituency campaigning and which concludes that candidates who pay more attention to local issues which matter in their own constituency, reap the benefit of this campaign strategy (Denver & Hands, 1997; Denver et al., 2002; Pattie, Johnston, & Fieldhouse, 1995). Yet, these studies are mostly conducted in systems with single-member districts. Regarding preferential voting, most studies focus on the amount of money candidates spend. In a study on the 2003 Belgian elections Maddens et al. (2006) find evidence that the more money candidates spend on the campaign, the more preferential votes they obtain. This finding has also been consistently confirmed by other studies. Put and Maddens (2015) show that campaign money matters at the local level. A finding that was also found for the Irish local elections (Benoit & Marsh, 2003). Samuels (2001) reaches the same

conclusions for the open list system of Brazil and also Johnson (2013) finds an effect of campaign money on votes in Brazil, Ireland and Finland. The message of these studies is all the same; the more money a candidate spends, the more electoral gains he or she will receive.

However, the amount of money spent is only one feature of the campaign. One can also wonder whether the content of the campaign and the strategy behind it matters. A recent collection of studies has shown that there is considerable variation in campaign styles between candidates in systems with preferential voting. This variation exists between countries, as certain systems induce more personal-vote seeking behavior (Carey & Shugart, 1995), but also within countries. Especially in flexible list systems, where candidates are motivated to maximize both the number of seats for the party – as more seats means that more candidates of the party get elected – as well as their individual share of preferential votes, we can distinguish party-centered campaigns from personalized campaign strategies (Gschwend & Zittel, 2015; Zittel & Gschwend, 2008). Studies have pointed towards different features that can explain these differences between candidates, such as incumbency (Eder, Jenny, & Müller, 2015), perceptions of the likelihood to get elected (Selb & Lutz, 2015) and the party they belong to (Cross & Young, 2015; De Winter & Baudewyns, 2015). However, until now research has not investigated whether these strategies actually impact the electoral results. We do not know whether personalized campaign strategies attract more preferential votes. This is a gap that will be addressed in the sixth chapter.

A comprehensive framework

We can combine the four different explanatory factors at the candidate level in one framework. This framework is depicted in figure 1.1.[8] As the figure shows,

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[8] Note that the aim of the framework is to explain differences between the individual electoral success of candidates. The focus lies thus with candidates and as a consequence

each set of factors is expected to have a direct influence on individual electoral success. However, there are also relationships between the different sets of factors. Not only are there direct effects, but also indirect effects. Individual-based characteristics are furthest removed in the funnel of causality and are expected to influence all other sets of factors. For instance, from previous research that examines how parties select candidates and decide the order of the ballot list, we know that factors such as political experience matter and that also socio-demographic characteristics are taken into account when selectorates form the list (Gallagher & Marsh, 1988). 'News value theory' confirms that the media also work in this way. In general, journalists tend to write more about incumbents and higher positioned politicians (Van Dalen, 2012; Midtbø, 2011; Tresch, 2009; Wolfsfeld, 2011). Individual-based characteristics additionally influence campaign factors, as research has shown that incumbents have more resources for their campaign and in general run a more personalized campaign (Eder et al., 2015). We also expect that there are effects from party-related factors, especially ballot list position, on attention in the media and on campaigning. Previous research found that journalists tend to write more about candidates who are at the top of the ballot list (Van Aelst et al., 2008) and also that these candidates are more heavily featured in the campaign material of a party (Lefevere & Dandoy, 2011). Finally, there may be a relationship between campaign factors and the media, as candidates who run a more intense campaign may be featured more in the news. In this dissertation, I will not only focus on the direct relationships, but also on the indirect relationships that are depicted in the framework.

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voters are not included. However, voters do of course matter for the underlying mechanisms behind these effects. They will therefore be studied in chapter 7.

Figure 1.1: A theoretical framework explaining individual electoral success
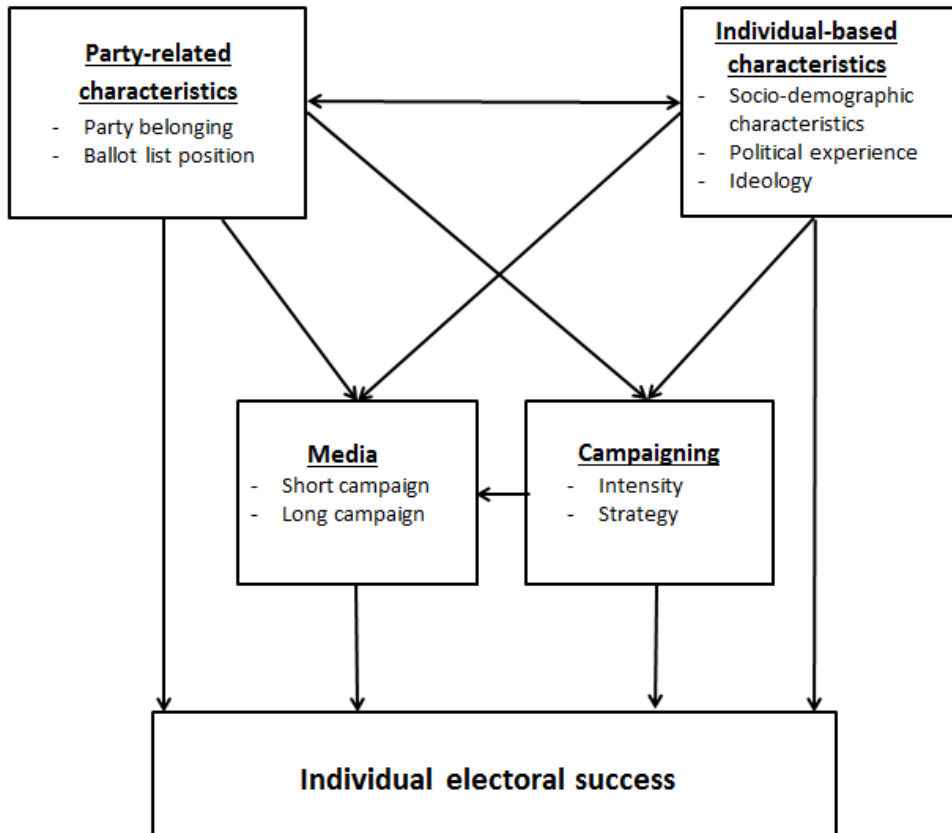
Of course, the framework does not capture every variable that could possibly affect preferential voting. What especially lacks from the framework is how the context candidates operate in influences individual electoral success. Especially differences in electoral rules between countries and factors at the electoral district are lacking from the model. From previous research we know that electoral rules have a psychological impact on voters (Blais & Carty, 1991; Blais et al., 2012; Duverger, 1951). However, given the focus on the Belgian case, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to include the variation in institutional rules, although previous research demonstrates that especially whether voters are obliged to vote for a candidate or not greatly impacts preferential voting (Nagtzaam & van Erkel, 2017). André and Depauw (2017) also show that electoral

rules, and especially the extent to which preferential votes impact the seat distribution, influence the extent to which voters are willing to cast a preferential vote. Because of the focus on factors at the individual level, I do not include factors at the district level in the model either. Yet, variation between districts in the success rates of their candidates exists. For instance, in districts with higher magnitude it is easier for candidates to get elected out of order, although the literature is not clear as to whether this is because voters are instrumental or whether these districts often have stronger candidates (André et al., 2012; Thijssen, Wauters, & van Erkel, in press). Additionally, it may be easier for candidates lower on the ballot list to attract votes in smaller districts, given that the distance between candidates and voters is smaller and the relationship is more personalized (Renwick & Pilet, 2016). These differences between districts will be taken into account in the analyses by means of fixed effects, but will not be studied directly. Third, the success of a candidate may be dependent on the other candidates of that list. A candidate with an ethnic minority background or a Minister may profit more if he or she is the only one with this feature on the list. In the next methodological chapter, I will investigate to what extent the context could impact the findings of this dissertation.

1.6. Outline of the dissertation

In this dissertation I will look at the questions and puzzles that have been raised in the previous section. **Chapter 2** starts with an overview of the case selection and data collection. It will first describe the different preferential voting systems and provide a comparative overview. It will then give a more comprehensive description of the central case in this dissertation: Belgium. The chapter also explains the motivations for this case selection. Finally, the remainder of the chapter will describe the data collection and some main methodological issues, such as the way in which the dependent variable is operationalized in each chapter.

Chapters 3 to 7 each focus on one of the aspects that have been raised in this chapter. Each chapter takes one of the four categories - party-related factors, individual-based factors, media explanations or campaign explanations - as central focus, although each chapter also takes into account the interplay with the other categories. They can therefore each be read as separate research papers, and each chapter contains a separate introduction, theoretical framework, methodology, result section and conclusion. Consequently, some overlap between the chapters may exist, although this has been minimalized. The empirical findings will be brought together in the final chapter and linked back to the general framework.

Chapter 3 concentrates on party-related factors and more specifically on the role of the ballot list position. Central in this chapter stands the question through which mechanisms ballot list position influences the number of preferential votes a candidate obtains. As said before, ballot list position is one of the strongest factors to explain individual electoral success, but to what extent this works indirectly through media attention, campaign potential or inherent electorally beneficial characteristics of the candidates on these positions, or directly due to a so-called primacy effect, remains unresolved. This chapter dissects these different mechanisms. This provides more insight on whether ballot list indeed is a party cue, or is related to personal characteristics.

Chapter 4 is positioned in the category of individual-based characteristics. The aim of this chapter is not to focus on factors that have previously been studied, such as political experience, but rather to look at the role of an unstudied factor in the research on the intraparty competition: the ideological position of candidates within the party. This chapter is more explorative in nature, as I do not have clear expectations about whether and in which direction ideology could play a role. I therefore investigate whether it is more beneficial for candidates to keep in line with the party ideology, or whether candidates should ideological distinguish themselves. I also explore this for different ideological dimensions.

Chapter 5 focuses on media. Compared to media effects in the general elections, the role of news coverage has been understudied in relation to preferential voting. Yet, there are ample reasons to expect that the media also matter for candidates in the competition for preferential votes. This chapter studies which effects the media have, and distinguishes between media in the short campaign and in the long campaign (Norris et al., 1999). It also explores to what extent these effects are conditional on the type of candidates. Are the effects stronger for top candidates or for ordinary candidates? Since I am interested in the interrelation between factors, it also investigate to what extent the media mediates other effects and positions it in a broader causal chain.

In **chapter 6**, campaign strategies take a central role. Previous studies have often focused on the influence of money on individual success. This chapter rather investigates the different campaign strategies that are available to candidates and distinguish between party-centered and personalized campaign strategies. Three dimensions are taken into account: campaign norm, campaign agenda and campaign finance. For each dimension I study whether the strategy to focus on the person rather than the party is an electorally successful one.

Chapter 7 shifts the perspective from candidates to voters. The aim of this chapter is to investigate from the perspective of voters which factors matter in the decision-making process around preferential voting. The chapter focuses specifically on similarities between candidates and voters, formulating the expectation that citizens are more likely to vote for candidates that are like them and expecting these effects to be stronger for underrepresented groups such as women, the younger and citizens from smaller municipalities. It does so by introducing dyadic models in which I similarly model voter characteristics, candidate characteristics and characteristics at the dyadic level. Considering that the focus is on gender, age and municipality, the chapter could be classified in the individual-based characteristics category. However, in the models I also control for certain other factors such as ballot list position and media attention, so it

additionally serves as an extra robustness test for these factors. Studying these effects from the perspective of voters is useful in order to get a better understanding of the mechanisms behind the effects introduced in the general framework.

Finally, **chapter 8** knits the different chapters together. It presents the main findings from each chapter and links these findings back to the framework that was introduced in Figure 1.1. This chapter also reflects on the normative implications of the findings of the dissertation. To end the chapter, I will reflect on the shortcomings of this dissertation and suggest avenues for further research.

2

Case selection and data

The aim of this chapter is twofold. First, it provides a comparative overview of different types of systems of preferential voting, situating the case of Belgium in this comparative perspective and motivating why it is a good case to investigate preferential voting. The second part of this chapter describes the main datasets that will be used in the dissertation. Additionally, a motivation will be given for some of the methodological choices that apply to all chapters.

2.1. A comparative overview of preferential-list PR systems

For a long time, scholars have classified electoral systems on the basis of their inter-party features. One of the first scholars to do so was Douglas Rae (1967) who used three different dimensions to classify electoral systems; the electoral formula that is used, the magnitude of the districts and the structure of the ballot. This classification was later expanded on by Arend Lijphart (1999) in his seminal work *Patterns of democracy,* which added more dimensions such as the extent to which the state is federalized. In recent years, scholars have increasingly started to classify electoral systems also on the basis of their intra-party features. The first ones to do so were Marsh (1985) and Katz (1986). They distinguish three types of systems on the basis of whether voters or parties determine which candidates are allocated seats in parliament. In closed-list systems, citizens can only vote for political parties, while the parties determine which candidates take up the seats they win. At the other end of the spectrum, we find open-list systems, in which voters determine which candidates receive a seat, either because they directly select candidates or because they determine the rank order on the party's ballot

list. In between these two types, we find the flexible-list systems, where seats for candidates are allocated by a combination of voters and the party. Parties determine the order of the ballot list and seats are allocated according to this order, but candidates can receive a higher position on the ballot list by surpassing a given quota of preferential votes. This quota differs per country and can be either very high, making the system in practice more a closed-list system, or low, bringing it closer to the open list system.

The classification of systems on the basis of intra-party features was further expanded on by Carey and Shugart (1995). They classify systems regarding the extent to which they allow and give incentives to campaign on a personal reputation, rather than on a party reputation. Like their predecessors, Carey and Shugart distinguish systems on the basis of the *ballot* dimension and differentiate between closed-, flexible- and open-list systems. However, they also add the dimensions *pool*, *votes*, and *district magnitude*. *Pool* differentiates systems where votes casted for candidates are pooled at the party level from systems where only the candidates that receive the votes benefits. Systems where votes are not pooled at the party level are more personalized. With *vote* Carey and Shugart refer to the type of vote that citizens can cast. They distinguish between political systems where citizens can only cast a single party vote (which always goes together with a closed list), systems where citizens can cast multiple candidate votes and systems where citizens can cast a single candidate vote. According to Carey and Shugart the latter type of vote is the most personalized. However, this has later been contested by Renwick & Pilet (2016), who argue that systems are most personalized when voters can cast multiple candidate votes. Finally, the dimension of *district magnitude* refers to the number of seats available in a district. Carey and Shugart argue that the effect of district magnitude is not unidirectional, but that in open- and flexible-list systems more personalization occurs when the district magnitude increases, whereas in closed-list system more personalization occurs when the district magnitude is small.

The most recent classification of electoral systems based on the intra-party dimension was developed by Renwick and Pilet (2016). Like their predecessors, their indicators are used to measure whether electoral systems are more party-centered or more personalized. They build on the classification of Carey and Shugart (1995), but rather than only taking into account whether the system motivates candidates to cultivate their personal reputation, their classification focuses more on the extent to which voters can express preferences among candidates and whether these preferences determine who gets elected. They develop seven indicators that determine whether systems are more or less personalized (Renwick & Pilet 2016). The first indicator is the number of preferences a voter can give. Voters may not be able to express their preferences at all (such as in the closed-list systems), only give their preference to one candidate, or they may be able to express their preference for multiple candidates at the same time. The second indicator is the type of preferential vote citizens can cast. This may be categorical, by simply supporting a candidate or not, or ordinal, with voters having the option to vary in their degree of support. An example of the latter is Switzerland, where voters can give two preferential votes to the same candidate. The third indicator of Renwick and Pilet refers to whether preferences can only be given within a political party or whether voters can support candidates across political parties. The latter is called *panachage* and is possible in Switzerland and Luxembourg. The fourth indicator is linked to the actual intra-party choice voters have and is operationalized as the number of candidates a voter can choose from within a party. The fifth indicator is the distance between voter and candidates, with stronger personalization in systems with smaller district sizes. The sixth indicator is the extent to which preferential votes impact the allocation of seats to candidates, which follows the previous explained difference between open-, flexible-, and closed-lists. Finally, the seventh indicator of Renwick and Pilet also follows Carey and Shugart (1995) and is the extent to which votes are pooled.

As the overview of these different classifications illustrate, countries differ on the intra-party dimension and certain electoral systems give more room to political candidates than others. For the study of preferential voting especially open and flexible lists are relevant, as in closed-list systems citizens can only cast a party vote. Additionally, here I will focus on *preferential-list PR systems*; systems in which 'interparty allocation takes place across party lists, but voters are permitted (or sometimes required […]) to indicate a preference for one or more candidates within one list, or, rarely, across more than one list' (Shugart, 2005:40). These are systems where the list is flexible or open and votes are pooled. The Single Transferable Vote (STV) system that is used in Ireland also allows voters to indicate their preference for candidates by ranking them. However, this system is different from preferential-list PR systems as votes are not pooled at the party list.

Table 2.1 shows which European countries have a preferential-list PR system and depicts the most important differences between these systems. The first difference is based on the *vote* dimension of Carey and Shugart (1995) and on the first indicator of Renwick and Pilet (2016). It depicts whether citizens can cast one or multiple preferential votes. There is also a second main difference between preferential-list PR systems that has not been described by these authors and that is whether preferential voting is optional or not. In certain systems, such as Finland or the Netherlands, voters are obliged to cast a preferential vote.[9] In many other systems, preferential voting is optional. Voters can either cast a vote for one or more candidates or cast a party vote. Table 2.1

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[9] In these systems votes are usually considered to be real preferential votes when they are cast for the second candidate on the list or lower (Van Holsteyn & Andeweg, 2012). In that sense one could argue, that for these countries one should speak of compulsory candidate voting, with preferential votes being only those votes for the number two or lower. Yet, an experiment by Nagtzaam and van Erkel (2017) shows that also votes for the leader can be preferential, while votes for the number two or lower may actually be party votes. For that reason, I decided to keep the term compulsory preferential voting, although one could plausibly make the argument that only a vote for the second candidate or lower should be considered a preferential vote in these systems.

only depicts European cases. Outside Europe there are a few countries with preferential-list PR systems, especially in Latin-America (Brazil, Chili, Peru), but in general preferential voting is still mostly a European phenomenon.

The table shows that most countries have made preferential voting optional.[10] Only four countries force citizens to cast a candidate vote: Estonia, Finland, Poland and the Netherlands. There is a more equal division between countries with single and multiple preferential voting; nine countries only allow a vote for one candidate, whereas twelve countries allow voting for more than one candidate. In the end, most countries have a system with optional and multiple preferential voting. In line with the second and third indicator of Renwick and Pilet (2016) there are some further differences within these countries with optional and multiple preferential voting. For instance, Luxembourg and Switzerland allow citizens to cast their vote for candidates across political parties (*panachage*) and to give candidates two preferential votes (*cumulation*). In Iceland citizens can rearrange candidates on the ballot list by striking candidates out. However, these features are uncommon and only apply to one or two specific cases. The two main differences in type of preferential votes remain those between single and multiple preferential voting and optional and compulsory preferential voting. The country that will be investigated in this dissertation, Belgium, has a system of optional multiple preferential votes. The next section describes the Belgian case in more detail and explains what makes it a suitable case.

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[10] The table is based on information from Renwick & Pilet (2016) and from their database on electoral systems that can be found on http://www.electoralsystemchanges.eu/. This data depicts the countries until 2013. Since then three countries have adopted a preferential-list PR systems; Bulgaria in 2014 and Croatia and Italy in 2015.

Table 2.1: A comparative overview of preferential-list PR systems

	Single preferential vote	Multiple preferential votes
Optional preferential vote	Austria Bulgaria (*since 2014*) Croatia (*since 2015*) Denmark Sweden	**Belgium** Cyprus Czech Republic Greece Iceland Italy (*since 2015*) Latvia Lithuania Luxembourg (*with panachage*) Norway Slovakia Switzerland (*with panachage*)
Compulsory preferential vote	Estonia Finland Poland The Netherlands	-

2.2. The case of Belgium

Belgium is a Western European consociational democracy. Since 1993 it is also officially a Federal state. It has three regions: Flanders, Wallonia and the capital region of Brussels. Additionally, it has two main language communities; the Dutch-speaking population and the French-speaking population.[11] The Dutch-speaking citizens mostly reside in the region of Flanders. Wallonia on the other hand is mostly French-speaking. The region of Brussels contains both language communities, although the majority of its citizens are French-speaking. Due to the federal nature, each of the regions has its own regional parliament and government with considerable power and own competences, alongside a federal government and parliament. There are also separate parliaments and

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[11] Belgium also has a German language community that received more power after the reforms of Belgium towards a federal state. However, the German language community only has a population of 75.000 citizens.

governments for the French and German communities. Because of the high overlap between the Dutch-speaking community and the Flemish region, there is no separate parliament for this language community, but its tasks and competences have been taken over by the Flemish parliament and government (Deschouwer, 2012).[12] Each language community has its own political parties and citizens can only vote for the parties and politicians from their own community. This means that there are no national parties, but that party families are divided by language. Additionally, the media system is separated; each community has its own newspapers, public broadcaster, and commercial channels. The language division thus creates two separate political systems, one Walloon (French) and one Flemish (Dutch). This dissertation will only focus on the Flemish community, with over 60% of the population the majority of the country. It focuses on both elections for the Flemish parliament and for the (Flemish part) of the Federal parliament.

Flanders has six main political parties. Historically, three parties shared power: the Christian Democratic party (CD&V), the Social Democratic party (sp.a) and the Liberals (Open VLD). In recent years, as a result of, among other factors, the depillarisation of Belgium, three new parties have managed to win seats: the Greens (Groen), the regionalist party (N-VA) and the populist radical right party (VB). The first two parties even managed to get in government. Recent elections also saw some other small parties emerge that were not successful to obtain a seat. Of these parties the Socialist party (PVDA) is the most interesting, as it was almost able to surpass the electoral threshold of 5% in the 2014 elections. The electoral system that is used in Belgium is proportional and seats are divided

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[12] Most of the Dutch-speaking community resides in Flanders. The exception is a small group of Dutch-speaking citizens in Brussels. Because of this there are six parliamentarians elected from Brussels who can only vote on competencies related to the community, such as culture, sports and tourism (Deschouwer, 2012). Also in the Flemish government there is always one minister from Brussels who is responsible for one these community competences.

according to the D'Hondt system (Deschouwer, 2012).[13] An important feature of Belgium is that it has compulsory voting. Thus, voters are obliged to show up at the polling station, although they are allowed to cast a blanc vote or an invalid vote. However, in recent years nobody has been fined for not showing up.

Since 2003 the region of Flanders has five different electoral districts that overlap with its provinces: Antwerp, East-Flanders, West-Flanders, Limburg and Flemish-Brabant. Each district has its own list with candidates. Political parties themselves determine which candidates they place on their ballot list and in which order. However, most parties let their party members have some influence on the final ballot list (Gallagher & Marsh, 1988). Parties are usually considerate in creating balanced ballot lists, making sure that lists have a more or less equal distribution of geographical regions, gender and age groups (De Winter, 1988). For gender there is even an almost perfect balance, as laws introduced in 2006 stipulated gender equality with 50% of the candidates on the list being women. The order of the ballot list matters greatly as Belgium has a flexible-list system. Thus, the ballot list order determines which candidates take up the seats the party wins, but voters can change this order using preferential votes.

As table 2.1 already indicated, Belgium has optional multiple preferential voting. Thus, voters can choose between two types of vote. Either they cast a vote for the political party thereby agreeing with the order on the ballot list, a list vote, or they cast a vote for one or more candidates, a preferential vote. Since 1995 voters can cast as many preferential votes as they like, as long as these votes are for candidates belonging to the same party. Which candidates take up the seats the party wins, is decided by a combination of preferential votes and list votes. First of all, candidates who receive enough preferential votes to surpass a quota immediately get elected. This quota is equal to the total number of votes for the party divided by the number of seats this party wins plus one. Thus, for a party with 60.000 votes that wins four seats, the quota is 12.000 and all candidates with

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[13] At the level of the municipality the Imperiali system is used for the translation of votes to seats, instead of the D'Hondt system.

more than 12.000 preferential votes immediately get a seat in parliament. In a second step, candidates that did not reach the quota can complement their pool of preferential votes using list votes. These list votes first go to the highest candidate on the ballot list who did not yet reach the quota. If any list votes or seats are left, the next candidate on the ballot list can complement his/her pool of preferential votes. This continues until all list votes are depleted or all seats are filled. Should any seats be left while the pool of list votes is depleted, the final seats go to the candidates with the most preferential votes.

Because of the system where candidates highest on the list can complement their preferential votes using list votes, the order on the ballot list is important. Thus, Belgium is a flexible-list system. Until 2003 all list votes could be used to complement the pool of preferential votes. However, since 2003 this has been decreased to only half of the list votes. As a result of this reform, the number of candidates elected out of order has increased, as it now occurs more often that there are seats left after the list votes have been depleted. Between 1919 and 1999 only 30 candidates got elected out of order (Renwick & Pilet, 2016:242). In 2014 eight candidates got elected out of order in the elections for the Flemish parliament, and four in the elections for the federal parliament (with two in Flanders). However, most of these candidates are candidates at the last position of the ballot list, the so-called list pusher, which is often a prominent politician. Respectively six out of eight candidates elected out of order in the Flemish elections and three out of four in the Federal elections were list pushers. In addition, even though it increased, the number of candidates elected out of order is still low, making the Belgian system still relatively closed. However, as stated in the previous chapter, preferential votes matter mostly to candidates because they can help them to obtain a better position on the ballot list or give them a higher chance to receive an executive mandate from the party (André et al., in press; Folke, Persson, & Rickne, 2016).

Next to a slow increase in the candidates elected out of order, also the use of preferential voting has increased. Figure 2.1 depicts this trend over time for the federal elections. Until 1960 the percentage of voters that casted a preferential vote was always below 30 per cent. From 1960 onwards we see a steep increase in this use and since 1995 the percentage of preferential votes has always been above 50 per cent. The highest score of preferential votes was in 2003, when 67 per cent used this option. Since then there has been a slight decreasing trend, although the use of a preferential vote is still very high in a historical perspective. In the most recent federal elections of 2014, 57 per cent of the voters casted one or more preferential votes. For the Flemish election this was very similar with 55,2 per cent. There are some differences in the usage of preferential voting between political parties, which are depicted in table 2.2. In general the number of preferential votes cast is higher for the more traditional parties (CD&V, sp.a and Open VLD) and lower for the 'new' parties (N-VA, Groen and VB).

Figure 2.1: An overview of the use of preferential voting in the federal elections across time.
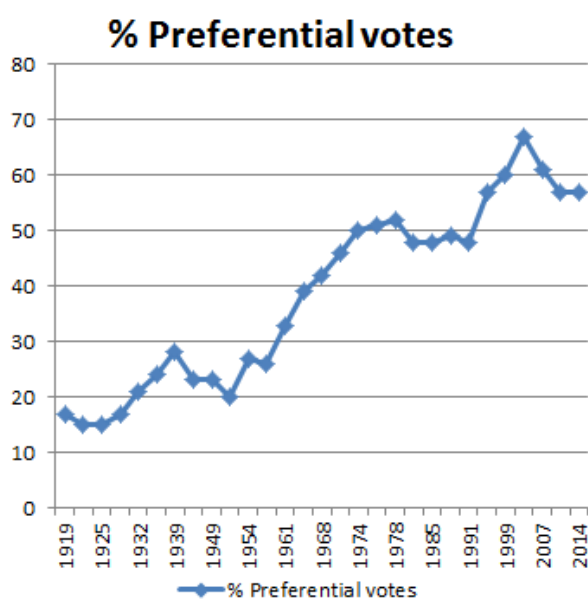
Data source: Wauters & Rodenbach, 2014

Table 2.2: An overview of the use of preferential voting per party.

	% Preferential votes Federal	% Preferential votes Regional
CD&V	60,7%	67,9%
N-VA	50,9%	45,2%
Groen	46,6%	46,8%
sp.a	59,1%	61,6%
Open VLD	67,3%	58,6%
VB	50,5%	49,5%
PVDA	56,8%	49,5%

Data source: Wauters & Rodenbach, 2014

A particular feature of the Belgian ballot lists that should be mentioned here, is that each ballot list consists of two types of candidates. First, the party drafts a list of effective candidates. These are candidates that can get directly elected into parliament either due to their ballot list position or by preferential votes according to the processes mentioned above. In total the parties are allowed to have as many effective candidates on the list as there are seats for the district. However, in addition to this effective list, parties also include a list of successors, equal to half of the seats available in the district. These successors cannot get elected directly. Rather, they take up a seat when one of the elected effective candidates does not take up his or her mandate. For successors, preferential votes only matter insofar that they may get a higher rank on the successor list. In general though, most successor candidates do not stand a chance to receive a seat, the only exception is the first successor candidate on the list. Because successor candidates cannot get elected directly, this dissertation only focuses on effective candidates.

Finally, it should be mentioned that I investigate the most recent Belgian elections of 2014. These elections were held on the 25th of May and were called the 'mother of all [Belgian] elections' for the reason that voters simultaneously had to cast a vote for the regional, federal and European level. I will investigate the Flemish and (Flemish candidates of the) Federal elections. Due to the equal

division of competences across the two levels, both are considered first-order elections (Deschouwer, 2012: 133). Note that in the models of the empirical chapters the regional and federal level are always modelled simultaneously, using fixed effects. I will not discuss differences in effects between the levels, simply because no substantial differences in models between the two levels were found. This is perhaps not surprising, given that due to their first-order nature, the mechanisms behind the effects can be expected to be very similar across the levels.[14] I do not study the European elections which are a typical example of second-order elections. Interesting about the elections of 2014 is that candidates could no longer run both for the regional and federal level. Before, elections for these separate levels were held in different years and many candidates participated at both levels. Because in 2014 the elections for both levels were held at the same day, candidates could no longer do so. Consequently, parties had to recruit many new candidates. A total of 1435 effective Flemish candidates participated in the elections. Ultimately, the federal and regional elections were won by the regionalist N-VA, which meant that for the first time in Belgian history a party that was not part of the three traditional parties became the largest.

Belgium constitutes an interesting case to study preferential voting, since the combination of optional and multiple preferential voting makes it analytically very suitable. In systems where voters are obliged to cast a candidate vote, it is not always clear whether the preferential vote for a candidate is a real preferential vote or whether the voter actually wanted to support the party. This holds especially for the first candidate of the list, although a recent experiment by Nagtzaam & van Erkel (2017) shows that in certain cases this also holds for lower positioned candidates. In Belgium, with its system of optional preference voting, this forms no problem as citizens without preference for a candidate can simply

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[14] This in contrast to for example the local level, where voting may be more personalized and where more personalized factors such as the contact with citizens may play a larger role. For more discussion on this see a forthcoming book chapter (Thijssen, Wauters, & van Erkel, in press).

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cast a list vote. Also, multiple preferential voting makes it easier to study the phenomenon, especially when one is interested in the question which candidates are most electorally successful. The reason is that candidates are less dependent on each other. In systems with single preferential vote, a vote for candidate X automatically implies that the other candidates on that list no longer receive a vote from that voter. Thus, candidates are strongly dependent on the other candidates on the list. Due to the option of multiple preferential voting, this is less of a problem in Belgium. In theory, a voter can cast a vote for all candidates on the party list, and thus candidates are less dependent on each other. In practice, however, the problem of dependency is not completely averted, as most voters still limit the number of preferential votes they cast. However, due to the fact that voters can theoretically cast as many preferential votes as they want (within a party), it is at least minimalized in Belgium. The independence of candidates is even higher compared to a number of other systems with multiple preferential voting, where voters can cast more than one preferential vote, but there is still a limit. For instance, in the recently introduced system of Italy, voters can cast two preferential and in Cyprus it is limited to four. The Belgian system also lacks certain other analytically complicating factors that some other countries have, such as negative preferential votes (Iceland), or panachage and cumulation (Switzerland and Luxembourg).

In sum, as a result of the combination of optional and multiple preferential voting, and given that certain other complicating factors are not apparent, Belgium is analytically very suitable to understand the process of and the mechanisms behind preferential voting. Regarding the generalizability of the findings, we can expect that most of the findings will at least to some extent also hold in other systems, as many countries share the combination of optional and multiple preferential voting. Nevertheless, when translating the findings to other cases one should take into account the specific institutional differences described above and consider how they may change certain of the effects. The final chapter

of this dissertation will reflect more extensively on the generalizability of the findings from Belgium to other countries.

2.3. Data

In order to answer the research questions posed in the previous chapter, a combination of four datasets will be used in this dissertation. The first one is a population dataset with basic information for all Flemish candidates who participated in the 2014 Flemish and federal elections. The second dataset encompasses more fine-grained data on a majority of these candidates by means of a candidate survey. These two datasets form the main data for this research. However, they are complemented with two other datasets. First of all, data were gathered about the media attention for each candidate, using GoPress, an online newspaper database. Additionally, the PartiRep electoral survey is used to link candidates and voters data in chapter 7.

Candidate population data

The first dataset contains basic information on all Flemish political candidates who participated in the Flemish and Federal elections on the 25th of May 2014. To a large extent these data were gathered through the official lists and electoral results that have been published by the Belgian Federal government (http://verkiezingen2014.belgium.be). This way information was retrieved for each single candidate about their political party, electoral district, ballot list position and number of preferential votes obtained. Data were gathered for candidates from the six parties that managed to obtain a seat (N-VA, CD&V, Open VLD, sp.a, Vlaams Belang and Groen) and for candidates from the PVDA, a party that was very close to obtaining a seat. As said before, the focus is on the effective candidates, and not on successors. A total of 1435 effective candidates participated in the elections for these seven parties.

Next to these official records, information was collected on the socio-demographics of all candidates and their most important political mandates. For each candidate, their gender, whether they belonged to an ethnic minority, age and residence were coded by the researcher. Gender and ethnicity were coded using the candidates' names.[15] Regarding ethnicity, coding on the basis of name might not always fully capture the real ethnic identity of candidates. However, I do believe this is a valid method given that voters in most cases also make an assessment of the candidate's ethnicity using their names. Also, in previous research this method has been used (Thijssen, 2013; Thijssen & Jacobs, 2004). For age and residence, which cannot be deduced from the ballot list directly, the personal websites of the candidates, or their subpage on their political party's website, were used. In almost all instances, the candidates' age could be easily retrieved. However, for many candidates only the year of birth could be found. For these candidates I subtracted their birth year from 2014. Nevertheless, this means that for candidates born after the 25th of May, their age may be overestimated with one year. Ultimately, on the population level the average age is 44.5 years. For the candidates participating in the elections the actual average is 44.2. For candidates running for elections at the Federal level the average is 45.1. This is in line with the data gathered on the Federal level by Smulders, Put, & Maddens (2014). Additionally, the gender distribution is balanced with 49.5% being female and 50.5% being male. 5.9% of the candidates have a non-European ethnic background.

Also the political experience of each candidate was coded. For mandates at the local level it was not possible to reliably gather these data using official sources. However, I could do so for experience in the Regional and Federal parliament. It was also possible to reliably code whether the candidate had experience as a Minister and/or Mayor. I checked who had been Minister or parliamentarian in the last few legislative rounds and whether they were on one

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[15] In case of names that are common for males and females, the candidate's personal websites were used to validate the coding.

of the ballot lists. For the coding of mayors, a website that keeps track of all political mandates in Belgium (http://www.cumuleo.be), as well as a political database with information on most of the running political candidates (http://directory.wecitizens.be), were used. In the population 8.2% of the candidates had taken up a seat before in the Flemish parliament and 9.6% in the Federal parliament. Additionally, 8.5% of the candidates were or had been mayor of a Flemish city and 3.0% of the candidates had experience as Minister.

The dataset on the population level is used extensively in chapter 4, 5 and 7, where these data are sufficient for the research question at hand. For the other chapters, a dataset with more details on candidates, which were gathered by means of a candidate survey, is used.

Candidate survey data

For a number of research questions posed in this dissertation, more detailed information on the candidates was necessary, that could not be retrieved using official information. For instance, in chapter 3 and 6 information is needed about the campaign activity and strategy of candidates. In chapter 4 more information is needed about their ideological position. In order to gather these data a candidate survey was developed. The problem with elite surveys is that often the response is low. Therefore, it was decided to make this survey part of a broader Voting Advice Application (VAA) in which voters could find which candidate resembles them the most on the basis of ideology and given preferences on certain socio-demographic characteristics. This way, we hoped to provide candidates with an incentive to participate. The candidate survey was part of the FWO-project 'Understanding personalized votes' awarded to Peter Van Aelst and Peter Thijssen. The VAA was developed together with Tree Company.

The strategy to add a questionnaire to a VAA paid off and 902 of the 1435 candidates participated in the survey, a response rate of 62.9%, which is very high

for an elite survey.[16] In the survey it was explained which questions were part of the VAA and would be made public, namely the questions on ideology and the socio-demographic characteristics that were in line with our population data. For the other questions in the survey it was made clear that the results would not be shared. This approach may have resulted in some social desirability bias on the ideology questions. However, given the purpose of these ideological questions for this dissertation, it constitutes no problem and is even desirable. Since we are interested in how the ideological position candidates take respective to their party impacts their electoral fortune, it is precisely this ideological image that candidates communicate to their voters that we want to capture.

The survey itself was distributed online to all Flemish political candidates participating in the Flemish and federal elections, using Qualtrics. Contact was made with the seven political parties who provided us with the e-mail addresses of the candidates. The first candidates were contacted on the 13th of March 2014, about two months before the elections. The last questionnaires were completed on the 14th of May, although most candidates completed the survey before the end of April when the VAA went online. The survey itself consisted of four parts. In the first part, candidates were asked about their work and political experience. For a number of political mandates they were asked whether they had experience with this mandate, and if so for how many years. This was an extra check of the population data and additionally provided me with data on local mandates. In the second part of the survey, candidates had to indicate for 30 ideological statements on a seven-point scale to what extent they agreed or disagreed. The statements were clustered in six ideological dimensions; Economy, Migration, Environment, Europe, Ethics, and Federalism. More information on these statements can be found in chapter 4. The third part of the survey consisted of a number of questions on the socio-demographic characteristics of candidates. Next

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[16] The survey was also sent to successor candidates and Flemish candidates that participated in the European elections. However, I do not use the data on these candidates in this dissertation. In total 1520 political candidates completed the survey.

to age, ethnicity and gender, which were already collected on the population level, we also gathered data on their level of education and their religion. The final part of the survey consisted of questions on campaign strategies. Candidates were presented a number of campaign activities and means and were asked whether they planned to use them. Additionally, a number of questions were asked about whether they planned to use a more party-centered or a more personalized campaign. These measures are analyzed in chapter 6. Appendix A presents the survey questions that were used, translated to English.

Table 2.3: Test for the representativeness of the sample

Variable	Population	Survey	χ²-test/t-test
Male	50.5%	53.7%	χ²(1)=3.6
Female	49.5%	46.3%	
Belgian/European ethnicity	94.1%	93.6%	χ²(1)=0.5
Non-Belgian/non-European ethnicity	5.1%	6.4%	
Age (average)	44.5 years	42.8 years	t(899)=-4.2**
Experience Flemish parliament	7.7%	8.2%	χ²(1)=0.3
No experience Flemish parliament	92.3%	91.8%	
Experience federal parliament	8.9%	9.6%	χ²(1)=0.6
No experience federal parliament	91.1%	90.4%	
Experience as Minister	2.4%	3.0%	χ²(1)=1.4
No experience as Minister	97.6%	97.0%	
Experience as Mayor	8.9%	8.5%	χ²(1)=0.1
No experience as Mayor	91.1%	91.5%	
Antwerpen	27.8%	30.8%	
Limburg	13.7%	11.8%	
Oost-Vlaanderen	22.9%	24.1%	χ²(4)=8.6
Vlaams-Brabant	17.1%	17.2%	
West-Vlaanderen	18.5%	16.2%	
CD&V	14.3%	14.7%	
N-VA	14.3%	15.7%	
Groen	14.3%	19.2%	
sp.a	14.3%	13.0%	χ²(6)=40.8**
Open VLD	14.3%	13.9%	
Vlaams Belang	14.3%	8.3%	
PVDA	14.3%	15.2%	

* p<.05, ** p<.01

A Chi-square test and a one-sample t-test for age, show that in general the candidates that completed the survey are representative for the whole population of candidates (see Table 2.3). However, there are two exceptions. The candidates in the survey are significantly younger than the population. In the population the average age is 44.5 years, whereas it is 42.8 years in the survey. Although significant, this difference is not substantial and unlikely to strongly affect the results. The second exception is party affiliation with a slight overrepresentation of candidates from the Green party and an underrepresentation of candidates from the Far-right. Yet, given that in the models party effects will be controlled for, and considering that there is no theoretical reason why this difference would bias the results, I decided not to weight for this variable. For all other characteristics the sample is representative. Most importantly, the candidates in the survey are representative for the whole population regarding their political experience and ballot list position. There is therefore a fairly representative group of 'stronger' and 'weaker' candidates and we can expect the findings from the survey to hold for the full population.

Media data

In addition to the two main datasets described above, information had to be retrieved about the number of times candidates appeared in the media. This information was collected using *Gopress*, a database and search function that archives all Belgian newspapers. The focus is on newspaper articles because of their extensive attention on the election campaign. Since television coverage is more narrowly focused on the top candidates, this medium is less suited for this study. Using *Gopress* I counted the number of newspaper articles in which a candidate was mentioned in a given time period. Included in the search were the major Flemish broadsheets *De Morgen, De Standaard* and *De Tijd*, the popular newspapers *Het Laatste Nieuws* and *Het Nieuwsblad,* and the free daily *Metro.* Given that candidates run for election in their own constituency, we also included

the most important regional newspapers *Het Belang van Limburg, de krant van West-Vlaanderen* and *De Gazet van Antwerpen.*

For each politician the full name was used as search string. However, it was verified whether all articles were indeed about this candidate and whether there was not another person with a similar name who also appeared in the newspaper. In general, newspapers report the full name when covering a politician, yet exceptions may be the party leaders and ministers, who may be mentioned with only their surname. For these candidates therefore only the surname was used in the search string, and each time it was counted which of the articles were about that specific candidate. In the search, a distinction was made between attention during the short campaign and during the long campaign. This follows Norris et al. (1999), who see the short campaign as more or less the month before the election, in this case all media reports from 25 April 2014 to 24 May 2014, and the long campaign as the year before Election day (25 May 2013 to April 24 2014).

PartiRep voter survey

For chapter 7, where the candidate data are linked with information on voters, the PartiRep survey was used. This is an electoral survey in Belgium that was developed by a collaboration between a number of Belgian universities (KU Leuven, Universiteit Antwerpen, Universiteit Gent, Universiteit Hasselt, Université Libre de Bruxelles, and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel). The survey was distributed to a geographically stratified sample of eligible Flemish (and Walloon) voters based on the National Registry, to enhance the representativeness of the sample. It consists of two waves; one before the election on May 25th and one after. The first wave was conducted face-to-face between the 20th of March and the 17th of May 2014. 2256 Flemish respondents were selected, of which 1001 accepted to be interviewed, a response rate of 44.3 per cent. In the second wave the respondents that were interviewed in the first wave were again interviewed by

telephone between the 26th of May and the 1st of July 2014. 826 Flemish respondents participated in this second round, 83 per cent. Since I am interested in how respondents actually voted, mostly questions from the second wave were used, even though I did use some background characteristics that were asked in the first wave

The most important part of the PartiRep survey for this dissertation is the simulation ballot. During the interview in the first wave, all respondents were given simulation ballots for the three elections, similar to the real ballot that they had to fill in on election day. In the second wave they were then asked to look at this simulation ballot and report how they voted during the elections. This simulation ballot is extremely useful as it gives an indication whether and for which particular candidate or candidates the respondent casted a preferential vote. In chapter 7 this information is linked to the candidate population data.

2.4. Methodological considerations

The separate chapters will describe which variables and methods are used for that particular study. However, two main methodological issues should be addressed that apply to all chapters; the dependent variable and the role of the context.

The dependent variable

With the exception of chapter 7, the dependent variable in most of the chapters is the individual electoral success of a candidate. To measure this success, preferential votes are used. However, there are different ways in which this can be operationalized. One can simply take the absolute number of preferential votes a candidate obtained. A problem with this measure, however, is that candidates participate in different electoral constituencies, and the district magnitude and number of voters in these constituencies strongly influence the number of preferential votes candidates receive; obtaining 2000 preferential votes in a small district with a small magnitude, will not be the same as obtaining

2000 votes in a larger district. Hence, the absolute number does not have the same meaning across contexts. Conceptually, one can also expect that for candidates and parties themselves these absolute votes have less meaning. When evaluating how well a candidate performed, parties are expected to look at how well candidates performed relatively to the other candidates within the district or the party. A relative measure of preferential votes obtained that takes into account these differences is therefore the preferable option.

Two options are available; one can divide the absolute number of preferential votes by the total number of preferential votes casted in a district, the district proportion, or one can divide it by the total number of preferential votes casted in a district for a given party, the list proportion. In this dissertation I use both measures. In each chapter I motivate which of the two measures is used and why. In general, the list proportion is more suitable when one only wants to focus on the intra-party competition, as it measures the electoral score of a candidate relative to other candidates on that ballot list. The district proportion is suitable if one wants to take into account both the intra-party competition and the inter-party competition, as it also takes into account the score of candidates from other parties within that district. For instance, chapter 3 investigates the role of ballot list position. Given that this is only relevant for the intra-party competition the list proportion is used; candidates at a top position are unlikely to attract voters from other parties because of their position, as these other party lists also have candidates at a top position. However, in other chapters, such as chapter 6 that focuses on personalized campaigning, it makes sense to also take the inter-party competition into account and therefore also investigate what happens when we use the district proportion. By means of a personalized campaign strategy, certain candidates may win over voters who would otherwise vote on another (closely related) party. For these chapters it makes sense to look both at what happens in the inter-party competition and in the intra-party competition.

It should be noted that the distribution of the dependent variable is extremely skewed. Most candidates score below 10% of the votes on their party list, while a limited number of candidates score 20% or higher. This is a problem given that it means that the residuals of our analyses have a non-normal distribution when we run a linear regression. Additionally, since the variable is a proportion, values are bound between 0 and 1. To solve these two problems, a natural log transformation of the dependent variable will be used (Marcinkiewicz, 2014; Taagepera, 2011). An alternative strategy would be to employ beta regressions, rather than a normal linear regression with a log transformed dependent variable. Beta regression analysis is a model strategy developed to tackle proportional data. Nevertheless, in the end, when running the models with beta regressions, the outcomes are very similar to the model where the dependent variable is logarithmically transformed. I therefore choose to present the latter method, as beta regressions do not sufficiently tackle the problem of the extremely skewed distribution of the dependent variable. In the first empirical study, chapter 3, and mostly in the corresponding appendices C and D, I will compare the results of the beta regression models with the model where the dependent variable is transformed and show that the latter transformation result in residuals that are approximately normally distributed using the concrete example of that chapter.

The role of context

The focus of this dissertation is on candidate characteristics that explain their individual success. Nevertheless, candidates are of course embedded within a context. Their success is also influenced by the electoral system, by the district they run in and by the characteristics of the other candidates on the list. Given that this dissertation focuses only on Belgium, the electoral rules are constant for all candidates. However, there is variation in the districts they run in. Previous research showed that two particular features of the district stand out in

influencing preferential voting: district magnitude – the number of candidates running in a district - and district size. Some studies (see for example André et al., 2012) hypothesized that given that voters are instrumental, they cast more preferential votes in districts with a higher magnitude. The mechanism behind this would be that in these districts it is easier for low-positioned candidates to pass their peers, giving a higher strategic incentive for voters to cast a preferential vote. A recent study finds indeed that in districts with higher magnitude voters are more likely to cast a preferential vote, but that this is less for strategic reasons and more because these districts tend to have a more popular list puller (Thijssen, Wauters and van Erkel, in press). Next to district magnitude, district size also impacts preferential voting. In small districts, it is easier for candidates lower on the ballot list to attract votes, given that the distance between the candidate and the voters are smaller and more personalized (Renwick & Pilet, 2016). I will control for these district characteristics by adding fixed effects.

The success of a candidate may also be dependent on the other candidates of that list. As said before, compared to many other systems, this dependence is limited in Belgium due to the fact that citizens can cast multiple preferential votes and thus support all candidates on the list. Nevertheless, in practice few citizens do so. Thus, even in Belgium, candidates may still be dependent on the composition of their ballot to some extent. A candidate with an ethnic minority background or a Minister may profit more if he or she is the only one with this feature on the list. Appendix B test for these possible composition effects by running interactions between several candidate characteristics and the ballot composition of those characteristics. These tests do not give any indication of a ballot list composition effect. While this does not necessarily mean that these effects do not exist at all, as more fine-grained analyses are necessary to reach this conclusion, it at least gives an indication that the results of this dissertation are not biased by them. However, in this light the 2014 elections should be mentioned. In contrast to previous Belgian elections candidates could no longer

run simultaneously for the Flemish and Federal elections in 2014. This, combined with the fact that both elections were held on the same day, means that there was less variation regarding the number of incumbents on a list, as they are spread out over the federal and Flemish lists. In addition, the institutional rules regarding gender parity and the fact that parties take the ethnicity of their candidates more into account, means that ballot lists are more balanced nowadays and that also regarding the socio-demographic composition there is less variation across ballot lists. This may diminish the effect of the ballot list composition. Although it would need to be tested further, it could be that ballot list composition effects may have existed in earlier elections when there was more variation between lists. Nevertheless, given the fact that appendix B indicates that ballot list composition effects do not bias the results of this dissertation, I decided to not include them in the models of the different chapters, in order to make these models more parsimonious and to avoid adding an extra analytical level that is mostly redundant. Additionally, regarding the generalizability of the findings, one could argue that the previous situation in Belgium where candidates could run for different elections was rather the exception and that Belgian rules are now more in line with other countries.

3

The first one wins: Distilling the primacy effect

3.1.   Introduction

When people are presented a list with ordered items, they will disproportionally select the first option. This bias towards the first object considered in a set, which is also known as the primacy effect, has been identified in marketing research studies (Drèze, Hoch & Purk., 1994), in multiple-choice knowledge tests (Cronbach, 1950; Mathews, 1927) and in surveys (Dillman, Smith and Christian, 2009). Evidence also suggests that the primacy effect influences the outcome of elections (Bain & Hecock, 1957; Brockington, 2003; Koppell & Steen, 2004; Lijphart & Pintor, 1988; Miller & Krosnick, 1998). During elections, a name-order effect takes place, meaning that the first candidate on the ballot list disproportionally benefits from this position, especially when voters have limited information about individual candidates. However, this electoral primacy effect has mainly been studied in single-member districts (Brockington, 2003; Koppell & Steen, 2004).

Recently, a number of studies have questioned whether a primacy effect might also be found in the intra-party electoral competition that exists in many proportional systems in Western Europe (Faas & Schoen, 2006; Lutz, 2010; Marcinkiewicz, 2014). Previous research has shown that a candidate's position on the ballot list is one of the most important factors explaining individual electoral success. The higher a candidate's position, the more preferential votes a candidate receives (Geys & Heyndels, 2003; Miller & Krosnick, 1998). However,

while it has been proven that ballot list position matters, the mechanisms behind this effect remain unclear. On the one hand, voters may be inclined to vote for higher positioned candidates because they often have the most political experience, the greatest means to invest in their campaign and get the most media coverage. In these cases, voters rationally evaluate candidates and actually vote for the candidate they prefer. However, it may also be due to the primacy effect. Citizens may be biased towards the first position on the list, just because it is the first position, and therefore vote for the highest rank politician irrespective of his or her qualities.

This chapter examines the extent to which the electoral success of high positioned candidates is due to their internal and external characteristics or to what extent it is due to the primacy effect. Thus, we aim to complement previous studies that have also examined the primacy effect in proportional systems, but have not always been sufficiently able to separate this primacy effect from alternative explanations. Furthermore, many studies have used the primacy effect too much as a container concept, both theoretically and empirically. While they have found evidence that candidates at the top of the list win more votes, regardless of other characteristics, the cognitive decisions and mechanisms behind this bias have remained undertheorized and understudied. The bias could exist because voters use a cost-reducing strategy and therefore opt for the first option as the simplest heuristic. Alternatively, voters may start at the top of the list when evaluating candidates, which benefits those with a higher rank.

Studying the primacy effect is important from a democratic point of view. In an age of self-responsibility, where individual politicians hold themselves more or less exclusively responsible for their electoral success, the primacy effect may create a false notion of democratic legitimacy. It may also set in motion a self-fulfilling presidentialization logic to the extent that the individual self-responsibility claims are endorsed by the party by giving electorally successful

politicians more visibility and budget in future campaigns. Consequently, it is the first on the list who becomes president and not the other way around.

The primacy effect is especially challenging in contexts where there is a trend of (proposed) electoral reforms to give more weight to preferential votes. For example, Bulgaria introduced preferential voting in 2011, while Belgium gave more weight to preferential votes in the composition of parliament (Thijssen, 2013). Also, in the Netherlands, a large citizen forum advised electoral reforms by abolishing the threshold for individual candidates to give voters more influence on which candidates are elected. These reforms are done under the assumption that citizens attach importance to showing their preference for politicians within a party. Yet, if we find that many voters are guided by a primacy effect, we have to rethink these assumptions. The existence of a pure primacy effect indicates that many citizens are guided by non-substantial factors when casting a preferential vote. This implies that a large part of the preferential votes are non-preferential, just as Converse (1964) claimed that for many citizens political attitudes are non-attitudes. It also suggests that political parties still have the most leverage over who gets elected, as they determine the order of the ballot list. It is therefore important to distil the primacy effect to find out which part of the bonus of higher positioned candidates is substantial and which part is unsubstantial.

3.2. The primacy effect

There are a number of reasons why a high position on a ballot list may increase a candidate's electoral success. To some extent, this is related to specific characteristics of the candidates at the top of the list, as parties are inclined to give higher positions to contenders who are likely to attract many votes (Lutz, 2010), a point we return to later. However, standing at the top of a list might also have an influence in itself due to the primacy effect. When casting a vote, citizens use different heuristics to reach a decision. For example, when voting for a political party, or when voting for a candidate in 'first past the post' systems,

many citizens base their decision on a party or candidate's ideology. However, ideology becomes less important when one has to choose between candidates on the same list in a multi-party system. Of course, candidates differ somewhat in their ideological stances, but this variation is limited in comparison to the more outspoken differences between parties. Consequently, citizens have to rely on other cues. Ideally, they would base their vote on the evaluation of a candidate's competence and/or expertise. However, to evaluate candidates on the basis of objective criteria is cognitively demanding and requires information and resources. Therefore, it can be expected that many citizens rely on easier shortcuts. The most straightforward piece of information available to voters is a candidate's position on the ballot list. Some citizens may vote for the first candidate on the list simply because he or she occupies the first position, without making a rational evaluation of any other attributes. Thus, in its purest form, we can define the primacy effect as a cost-reducing strategy by citizens casting a vote for the first candidate on the ballot list simply because this candidate occupies the first position, without taking into account any other of the candidate's attributes, which would not have been given to this candidate if he or she had occupied a lower position on the ballot list.

However, while voting for the first candidate as a cost-reducing strategy could be one possible mechanism behind the primacy effect, it assumes that there is an inherent bias towards the first option, without any rational evaluation of it. Yet, this does not always hold true, especially when the order of the list is not randomly determined, as is the case in many countries. When political parties determine the order of a ballot list, citizens may be confident that parties position the most competent candidates first. While in this case the decision to cast a vote for higher-ranked candidates is not based on a direct rational evaluation of the actual or perceived competence of the candidate, it is based on the heuristic that if a candidate gets a good position from the party, this candidate must be qualified and competent. In other words, the primacy effect may occur because

people believe that the best options are ranked highest. However, even in this case, it holds that the voter would not have selected the candidate on the first position if that candidate had occupied a different position. Thus, in its purest form, we can define the primacy effect as follows: *A cost-reducing strategy by citizens to cast a vote for the first candidate(s) on a ballot list simply because this candidate occupies the first position, which would not have been given to this candidate if he or she had occupied a lower position on this ballot list*. Based on this definition, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 1a: *Regardless of other attributes, the first candidate on a ballot list will disproportionally receive more votes than lower ranked candidates* (<u>pure primacy effect</u>)*.*

The abovementioned mechanisms explain why the first candidate on a list benefits from the primacy effect. Yet, we can also distinguish a different mechanism, which not only accounts for the success of the first candidate on the list, but impacts all high positioned candidates. According to Miller and Krosnick (1998:293) 'people tend to evaluate objects with a confirmation bias' (p. 293). When evaluating a list of options, or political candidates (in the context of elections), voters tend to look for reasons to vote for a candidate rather than for reasons not to vote for a candidate (Koriat et al., 1980). As citizens often start evaluating a list from the top, the confirmation bias, together with fatigue in the case of long lists, prevents citizens from evaluating all options, biasing voters towards the first options presented (Miller & Krosnick, 1998). Whereas the previous mechanism explains mainly why the first candidate on the list receives more votes, this confirmation bias would also benefit other highly ranked candidates. Thus, it also gives the second-listed candidate an advantage over the third-listed candidate, who then has an advantage over the fourth-listed candidate, and so forth. This gives the following hypothesis:

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Hypothesis 1b: *Regardless of individual attributes, the higher the position of a candidate on a ballot list, the more votes this candidate will receive* (<u>confirmation bias</u>).

Most studies on the primacy effect focus on the United States (Bain & Hecock, 1957; Brockington, 2003; Koppell & Steen, 2004; Miller & Krosnick, 1998), while little research has been conducted on this effect in the countries in Western Europe with intra-party preference voting. Exceptions are Faas and Schoen (2006), Lutz (2010) and Marcinkiewicz (2014) who have studied respectively Germany, Switzerland and Poland. They have all found that a candidate's ballot list position has a substantial effect on success, giving preliminary evidence that the primacy effect also occurs with regard to preferential voting. However, especially Faas and Schoen (2006) and Lutz (2010) have not controlled for all the important alternative explanations that could explain the success of higher positioned candidates, such as the intensity of a candidate's campaign and media coverage. Moreover, both American and European studies have not differentiated between the two different mechanisms behind the primacy effect mentioned above.

3.3. Intrinsic and extrinsic traits

While the different mechanisms behind the primacy effect can explain why candidates with a higher ballot list position score better in elections, we can also think of alternative mechanisms. Citizens may base their vote on a direct evaluation of candidates' attributes. Parties anticipate the electoral success of candidates and are therefore inclined to give the best position to those with the best electoral potential (De Winter, 1988). Consequently, these candidates often possess certain intrinsic traits that are electorally beneficial. Often they are politicians with considerable political experience, either as a parliamentarian, minister or mayor of a big city (Gallagher & Marsh, 1988; Put & Maddens, 2013). As research has shown that citizens are more inclined to vote for incumbents

(Cain et al., 1987; Gelman & King, 1990; Johannes & McAdams, 1981), this could explain why these candidates obtain more preferential votes. Candidates with a higher position on the list may also be more inclined to run an intense campaign. The reason behind this is twofold. First, it is difficult to get elected when positioned at the bottom of a list. Thus, it would be a risky investment to allocate considerable time and resources to the campaign. Second, because party resources are limited, candidates are not supported equally. Instead, more resources are provided to higher positioned candidates, as they are their parties' figureheads. Accordingly, they get more attention in their parties' political advertisements and receive a larger portion of their budget (Lefevere & Dandoy, 2011). In short, candidates who occupy a high position on the ballot list may share certain electorally beneficial intrinsic traits that allow them to win the most preferential votes, such as extensive political experience and the resources to run an intense campaign, and obtain more votes for those reasons, rather than because of a primacy effect.

Hypothesis 2a: *The effect of the ballot list position on a candidate's electoral success is mediated by the fact that these candidates share certain electoral beneficial intrinsic traits, such as more political experience, or are running a more intensive campaign.*

We expect that especially the first candidate on the list possesses considerable political experience and will receive the lump sum of a party's campaign funds. This could explain the bonus they receive.

Hypothesis 2b: *The bonus for the first candidate on a list is mediated by electoral beneficial intrinsic traits.*

Alternatively, the effect of the ballot list position on electoral success could be

mediated by extrinsic traits, especially media coverage. Not every politician receives equal media attention, as for some candidates it is easier to pass the news gates than it is for others. This is due to the fact that politicians differ in the extent to which they have news value. Studies on the 'news value theory' (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; O'Neill & Harcup, 2009) have shown that journalists use different criteria to decide who is newsworthy and who is not, with the most important criterion being power (Van Dalen, 2012; Midtbø, 2011; Tresch, 2009; Wolfsfeld, 2011). Consequently, journalists are more likely to cover incumbent candidates, such as ministers and parliamentarians, as they exert more news value. They are also more likely to cover candidates with the highest ballot list position. Different empirical studies, such as Midtbø (2011) in Norway and Van Aelst et al. (2008), in Belgium, have confirmed that the position of a candidate on the ballot list is indeed an important selection criterion for journalists. Not only are the highest ranked candidates usually experienced and powerful politicians, they also tend to have a more established relationship with journalists. Hence, because political parties determine the order of the ballot list and position the most important politicians at the top, ballot list position is an easy heuristic for journalists in determining who to cover in their articles. At the same time, parties also promote these top candidates the most (Lefevere and Dandoy, 2011). Accordingly, this is an extra cue for journalists to report more on them.

We expect that media coverage has a positive effect on the electoral success of a candidate (Maddens et al., 2006; Van Aelst et al., 2008) as it creates a feeling of proximity between a candidate and his electorate. Not only do voters recognize the candidate's name on the ballot list, they might also feel that they have more information to evaluate him or her. Thus, when evaluating the ballot list, voters are more likely to select a candidate they 'know', giving an advantage to candidates with more media attention.

Hypothesis 3a: *The effect of the ballot list position on a candidate's electoral success is mediated by the amount of media coverage received.*

We expect that the media also mediate the bonus for the first candidate on a list. Here the mediation is probably even stronger, as these candidates are the embodiment of their party and will therefore receive extra media coverage and thus a stronger bonus.

Hypothesis 3b: *The bonus for the first candidate on a list is mediated by the amount of media coverage received.*

Figure 3.1 gives a schematic overview of the different mechanisms that could be behind the success of higher positioned candidates.

3.4.   Data and method

In order to study the hypotheses, the candidate survey is used, which was described in the previous chapter. The candidate survey is chosen over the population data in order to be able to include campaign data. As we are interested in how well candidates perform within a list, and especially how well high positioned candidates perform compared to low positioned candidates on the same list, list proportions are used rather than the district proportion in this chapter.[17] This means that for each candidate the absolute number of preferential votes is divided by the total number of preferential votes cast for the candidate's party in a certain district. Thus, a score of .10 means that the candidate received 10% of all preferential votes that were cast for candidates of party A in district X. However, the distribution of this proportion is extremely skewed (see Figure c1, Appendix C). Most candidates score between 1 and 10% of the votes on their party list, while there are a number of candidates who score 20% or higher. This is

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[17] See chapter 2 for the difference between these two measures.

problematic as it means that the residuals of our analysis have a non-normal distribution when we run a linear regression. Additionally, since the variable is a proportion, values are bounded to have a value between 0 and 1. To solve these two problems, a natural log transformation of the dependent variable is necessary (Marcinkiewicz, 2014; Taagepera, 2011). Figure c2 (Appendix C) illustrates that this transformation of the dependent variable leads to residuals that are approximately normally distributed.[18]

Figure 3.1: A schematic overview of the "distilling process".

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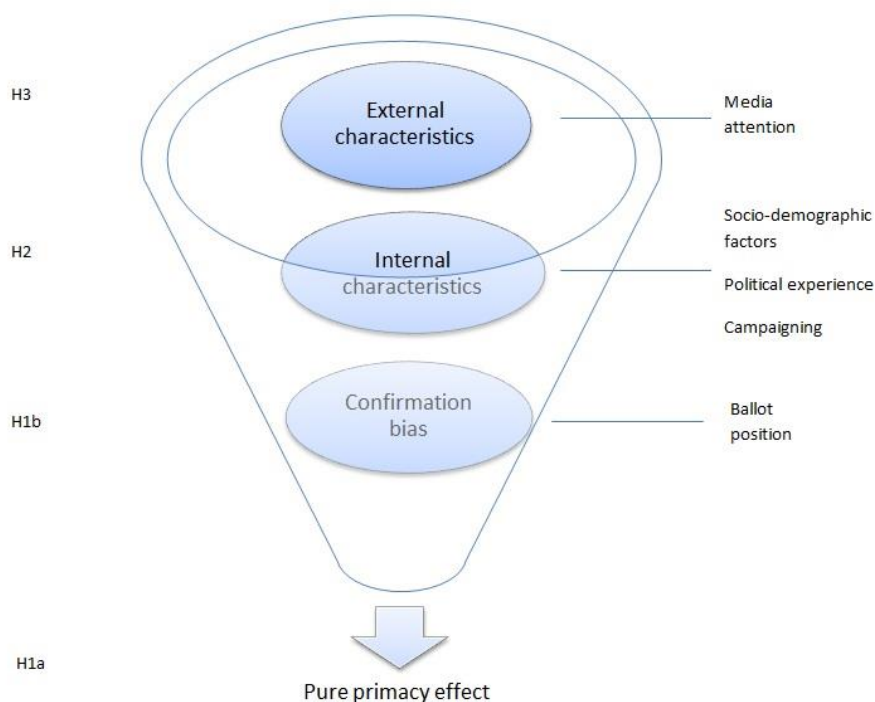
[18] An alternative for the proportional natural of the dependent variable would be to assume a beta distribution of the errors. For that reason we also ran our models with beta regressions (Table D1, Appendix D). The outcomes are very similar to the model where the dependent variable is logarithmically transformed. In the end, we chose the latter model, as beta coefficients do not sufficiently tackle the problem of the extremely skewed distribution of the dependent variable.

The main independent variable of interest is ballot list position. In order to distinguish the electoral bonus for the first candidate on the list (pure primacy effect) from the extra votes one receives by occupying one higher position on the list (primacy effect due to confirmation bias), we include the ballot list position as well as a dummy for the first position. Most likely, the effect of ballot list position is not linear but decreases for lower positions. For that reason the variable ballot list position is logarithmically transformed. Additionally, a dummy for the last position is added as control, since previous research has shown that these candidates score relatively better than other low positioned candidates (Marcinkiewicz, 2014). We also include different intrinsic characteristics of candidates. These are variables such as age, gender and ethnic background as well as political experience. In order to operationalize political experience, different measures are used; legislative experience at the local level, executive experience at the local level, experience as mayor, experience in one of the three parliaments (regional, federal or European) and experience as a minister. The model also includes a measure for the intensity of a candidate's campaign. In the survey, candidates had to indicate for twelve campaign means and activities whether they planned to use it or not in their campaign.[19] By counting the number of campaign means a candidate planned to use, a campaign intensity index is composed, running from 0 (no intense campaign) to 12 (a very intense campaign). To measure media coverage the data from GoPress is used. We are aware that while the ballot list position influences media coverage, there might also be an effect of media coverage on the ballot list position. To control for this endogeneity, a separate variable is added which measures media attention of the candidate in the eleven months before the start of the campaign. By adding this measure the

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[19] These campaign means are leaflets, cards, posters, advertisements, websites, emails, Facebook and Twitter. The activities are contacting voters by telephone, campaigning in local associations, campaigning at markets and doing door-to-door visits.

mediating effect of the media during the campaign can be filtered out.[20] In addition, an extra dummy is added for candidates who appeared in more than 15 newspaper articles during the campaign. The reason to add this dummy is that it can be expected that the effect of media coverage might not be linear. Once a candidate passes a certain threshold he/she will appear to be all over the campaign and this perceived omnipresence will catalyze the effect of media coverage. We opt for a threshold of 15 news articles, since only 5% of the candidates were covered in more than 15 articles.[21]

As the different candidates are nested in political parties, electoral districts and type of elections (regional or federal), the model also includes dummies for the district and election in which each candidate was competing. By adding these fixed effects, we indirectly control for factors that matter at the district level, such as constituency size. To account for the data structure in which candidates are nested in a party list as well, clustered-robust standard errors are used. This way, we control for the fact that the score of a candidate is dependent on the score of other candidates on the same list (Marcinkiewicz, 2014). Finally, to make sure that the pure primacy effect is distilled and that the results are not driven by a few top politicians who are extremely popular and ranked first on the list, the percentage of votes for the party list that were list votes are added. The Belgian context with its multiple districts and list votes, enables us to easily control for the varying popularity of the different candidates who are placed first on the ballot list by their party. The percentage of list votes that are being cast for a political party in a district is influenced by 1) party factors and 2) the popularity of the first candidate on the list. By centering the percentage of list votes on the party mean across the different districts, all party factors are filtered, leaving us

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[20] While media attention during the election campaign is somewhat correlated to media attention before the election, VIF scores for our regressions are acceptable and never exceed 3, indicating that including both measures does not lead to multicollinearity problems.

[21] As a robustness test we also checked what happens when we use a threshold of 20 newspaper articles, but we found similar results.

with an indirect measure of the first candidate's popularity.[22] Thus, a higher score means that more list votes were cast than average for this party, indicating that an unpopular candidate was placed on the first position. The reverse is true for very popular candidates, such as Bart De Wever, president of the Regionalist party that won the election, for whom the percentage of list votes cast for his party in his district was far below the party average. Thus, by including this measure we can control for the popularity of some top candidates, who might otherwise bias our results. The independent variables are introduced in a number of nested models. The first model only includes the different measures of the ballot list position, together with the controls. Subsequently, the different intrinsic characteristics of the candidates are added, followed by a model that includes media coverage. Respondents with missing values are deleted listwise. The final N is therefore 810.

3.5.   Results

Before discussing the results of the regression analyses, it is useful to first concentrate on the distribution of the key variables. Table c1 and c2 (Appendix C) depict the descriptives for the different controls, as well as provide an overview of the distribution of media attention. It shows that candidates receive on average 7647 preferential votes. However, the high standard deviation of 15814 votes indicates that there are large differences in the success rates of the candidates. Table c1 also illustrates that most candidates have at least some political experience at the local level (over 60%). Candidates with legislative or executive mandates at the national level are more rare (about 10%). There are also strong differences in media attention. While, on average candidates are mentioned in six

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[22] Of course this assumes that the proportion of list votes is mostly driven by the candidate on the first position and not by other candidates on the list. We can test this by regressing the percentage of list votes on individual success, adding an interaction with the first position on the list. We find indeed that the less list votes being cast, the more success the first candidate on the list has. This indicates that the assumption holds.

articles during the campaign period, we find that more than half of the candidates (55%) do not receive any mentions at all. Moreover, less than 3% is mentioned in more than 50 newspaper articles. This unequal distribution in media coverage could be an important explanation behind the ballot list position effect, as it may be the extra media coverage which could explain the success of top positions.

Table 3.1 presents the regression analyses. In the first model, only ballot list position, dummies for the first and last position, and fixed effects for the different electoral districts are included. This model serves as a benchmark for the subsequent models in which we add respectively the intrinsic characteristics of candidates (to test hypotheses 2a and 2b) and media coverage (to test hypotheses 3a and 3b). The final model, in which all these variables are added, can then be compared with the benchmark model. If there is still an effect left of ballot list position and the first candidate on the list, it means hypotheses 1a and 1b are supported.

The first model illustrates a significant influence of the ballot list position on the proportion of preferential votes. First of all, there is a strong bonus for the first candidate on the list. When a candidate occupies the first position on the ballot list, the proportion of preferential votes increases with a factor of 2.32/ 132%[23], and thus more than doubles. This immediately points towards the existence of a pure primacy effect, although we still need to control for alternative mechanisms in order to really draw conclusions about the first hypothesis. The model also gives preliminary evidence that candidates with a higher ballot list position profit due to a confirmation bias. The coefficient of the ballot list position reveals that once a candidate moves up one decile on the ballot list, the proportion of preferential votes increases by a factor of 1.049/4.9%.[24] This

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[23] Given that the dependent variable is log transformed, the effect can be calculated with the formula e^b. In this case that is $e^{.840} = 2.32$

[24] As both the dependent and independent variable are log transformed, the effect of a 10 per cent increase in the independent variable can be calculated with the formula $e^{\left(\log\left(\frac{100+10}{100}\right)\right).b}$ in this case that is $e^{\left(\log\left(\frac{100+10}{100}\right)\right).500}$=1.049. Also note that throughout this dissertation I will take the reverse of ballot list position in the tables for reasons of

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Table 3.1: Results of OLS regression. Fixed effects for the different electoral constituencies are not depicted. Standard errors are clustered.

Individual electoral success (log)	Model 1 b(SE)	Model 2 b(SE)	Model 3 b(SE)	Model 4 b(SE)
Ballot list				
First candidate on the list	.840(.08)**	.782(.09)**	.627(.07)**	.544(.07)**
Ballot list positon(log)	.500(.03)**	.456(.03)**	.433(.03)**	.430(.02)**
Last candidate on the list	.775(.07)**	.705(.06)**	.636(.05)**	.643(.05)**
Inherent characteristics				
Age		.000(.00)	.001(.00)	.001(.00)
Female		.218(.02)**	.234(.02)**	.235(.02)**
Ethnic minority		.153(.06)**	.158(.05)**	.167(.05)**
Local council		.008(.03)	-.020(.02)	-.013(.03)
Alderman		-.039(.03)	-.056(.03)	-.044(.02)
Mayor		.109(.04)*	.044(.05)	.048(.04)
Experience Flemish parliament		.124(.05)*	.097(.05)	.104(.05)*
Experience Federal parliament		.179(.06)**	.122(.06)*	.141(.05)**
Experience European parliament		.547(.07)**	.591(.10)**	.567(.07)**
Minister		.245(.12)*	.011(.14)	.114(.10)
Campaign intensity		-.001(.01)	-.001(.01)	-.002(.00)
Media				
Media coverage(log)			.014(.00)**	.013(.00)**
Media coverage t-1(log)			.006(.00)*	.005(.00)
> 15 newspaper articles			.361(.11)**	.221(.09)**
Controls				
Federal election	.174(.02)**	.182(.02)**	.185(.02)**	.181(.03)**
Percentage of list votes (centered on party mean)	.009(.00)**	.010(.00)**	.011(.00)**	.013(.00)**
Constant	2.775(.06)**	-3.025(.08)**	-2.998(.08)**	-3.031(.08)**
R^2	.831	.871	.881	.887
N	810	810	810	804

p<.05; **p<.01

is a substantial effect. The first model thus provides preliminary evidence for hypothesis 1a and 1b, although it does not yet control for intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics. Note that model 1 also demonstrates a strong bonus for the last

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interpretability. So a positive effect means that a higher ballot list position (position two instead of three) leads to more votes.

candidate on the list. However, we want to stress that this indicates only that this candidate receives more votes than one would expect based on the low position, not that he or she receives more votes than candidates with a top position on the list. Finally, the R-square reveals that by just adding the different measures of ballot list position, already 83% of the variance in the list proportions of preferential votes for each candidate can be explained. This indicates that the position on the ballot list is a very strong predictor of individual electoral success.

In the second model, the intrinsic characteristics of candidates are added in order to test the second hypothesis, which states that certain electoral beneficial intrinsic traits, such as more political experience or running a more intensive campaign, mediate the effect of ballot list position. This model illustrates that a number of these intrinsic characteristics have a positive significant impact on electoral success. With regard to socio-demographic factors, it shows that ceteris paribus, women and candidates with an ethnic minority background attract more votes. Yet, no effect is found for age. The model also supports the incumbency effect. Candidates with more political experience score better during elections. This is mostly true for national representative political functions, e.g. parliamentarians. Interestingly, no independent effect of campaigning is found. Model 2 reveals no indication that candidates who use a broader range of campaign means will indeed score more votes. In other words, at least in the context of the intra-party competition, campaign intensity does not matter. However, we should note that the model only takes into account the number of campaign means that are used and that not looks at different strategies, such as party-centered versus personalized campaign strategies (Zittel & Gschwend, 2008). This will be investigated in chapter six.

Table 3.2: An overview of the relationship between ballot list position and respectively political experience (logistic regression models), and media coverage (OLS models).

	Mayor b(SE)	Minister B(SE)	Experience Flemish parliament b(SE)	Experience Federal parliament b(SE)	Media coverage b(SE)
First candidate	-.243(.77)	.535(1.24)**	-1.793(.65)**	-.663(.71)	1.676(.52)**
Ballot list position	.489(.23)*	1.741(.72)*	2.584(.28)**	2.594(.38)**	.993(.19)**
Last candidate	.741(.72)	5.369(1.31)**	4.878(.72)**	5.082(.76)**	2.271(.62)**

*p<.05; **p<.01
Note: Controls and fixed effect are similar to table 3 (N=810).

The question is whether these intrinsic characteristics, and especially political experience, mediate the ballot list position effect, as stated in hypothesis 2. If we focus on the coefficients of the ballot list indicators, we see that this is the case. Adding the different factors to the model confounds 8.8% of the effect of the ballot list position in general and 6.9% of the bonus for the first candidate on the list. Of course in order to really support hypothesis 2 and conclude that intrinsic characteristics confound the ballot list position effect, we also have to assure that list pullers or candidates with a higher ballot list position are indeed more likely to have political experience. Table 3.2, which presents a number of logistic regressions with the different political functions as dependent variable, illustrates that this is indeed the case. The table reveals that the higher the list position, the more likely it is that one has experience as a parliamentarian. Additionally, for the first position on the list we find that that these candidates are more likely to have experience as minister. To test the mediation more formally, Sobel-Goodman tests are conducted (Goodman, 1960; Sobel, 1982).[25] These tests confirm the

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[25] To account for the dichotomous nature of some of our mediating variables, we used a spreadsheet developed by Nathaniel R. Herr, which can be found at: http://www.nrhpsych.com/mediation/logmed.html#tools. The values for the Sobel-

previous picture and show that the ballot list position effect, as well as the extra bonus for being first on the list, are significantly (p<.05) mediated by political experience. Thus, part of high positioned candidates' success is due to the fact that they are more often MPs or ministers. This supports the second hypothesis. Nevertheless, even after controlling for this, there is still a substantial effect left of the different ballot list position indicators.

In model 3, media coverage is added to test the third hypothesis, which states that part of higher positioned candidates' success is due to the extra media attention they receive. The results of this model indicate that even when controlling for media coverage in the months before the campaign, media attention during the campaign period significantly affects one's individual electoral success. Candidates who get more coverage in the media receive more preferential votes. More specifically, for every increase of 10% in media coverage, the proportion of preferential votes increases by 0.1%.[26] While this may seem low at first instance, it can be quite impactful, as it means that a candidate who gets covered in five articles scores 5% more preferential votes than his fellow party member who gets mentioned only once. Moreover, as expected, there is an additional electoral bonus for candidates mentioned in more than 15 articles. In line with hypothesis 3, the results also show that when adding media coverage to the model, the effects of the indicators for ballot list position decrease. The effect of the ballot list position is confounded by 5.3% compared to model 2, while the bonus for the list puller is confounded by 19.8%. This indicates that especially the extra electoral bonus for the first candidate is due to the fact that these candidates get more attention in the media. We confirmed this with Sobel-Goodman tests, which show that the mediation of the effect of the ballot list position by media coverage is significant, while the effect of being the first candidate on the list is significantly mediated both by media attention and the

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Goodman test were calculated using a tool developed by Kristopher Preacher and Geoffrey Leonardelli, which can be found at: http://quantpsy.org/sobel/sobel.htm.

[26] $e^{\left(\log\left(\frac{100+10}{100}\right)\right).0.014}$

dummy for being covered in more than 15 articles. These findings support hypothesis 3a and hypothesis 3b.

Based on the three models, we thus find support for hypotheses 2 and 3. Both intrinsic traits, in particular political experience, and extrinsic characteristics such as media coverage can explain why candidates with a higher ballot list position are more successful. When comparing baseline model 1 with model 3, in which the different intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics are added, we find that the effect of the ballot list position itself is in total confounded by 13.4% and the bonus for the list puller is confounded by 25.4%. Nevertheless, even after controlling for these different characteristics, there is still a substantial effect of the ballot list position left in model 3; 75% of the effect remains. We argue that, considering that we controlled for the most likely alternative mechanisms, the effect that is left most likely reflects the primacy effect. This supports hypotheses 1a and 1b. The fact that we find support for both hypothesis 1a and 1b indicates the existence both of a pure primacy effect, as well as a confirmation bias when casting a vote at the ballot.

However, we should take into account that some candidates who are ranked first are party presidents who enjoy significant overall popularity. Party presidents might often be seen as the embodiments of their party, and, for that reason generate extra votes, as they are the first candidates who come to mind when thinking about that party. Normally, the factors that are included in our model should already control for this popularity. Nevertheless, to be certain, we run a robustness check in model 4 in which we omit these party presidents. The fact that the results remain similar indicates that the results are not idiosyncratic in the sense that they are dependent on a specific configuration of extremely popular top politicians.

Table 3.3: Robustness checks of model 1 for a number of Belgian elections.

Individual electoral success (log)	Federal 2014 (Wallonia)	Federal 2010 (Wallonia and Flanders)	Federal 2007 (Wallonia and Flanders)	Flemish 2009
	b(SE)	b(SE)	b(SE)	b(SE)
First candidate	.708(.10)**	.680(.06)**	.684(.06)**	.895(.11)**
Ballot list position(log)	.570(.03)**	.565(.02)**	.528(.03)**	.470(.04)**
Last candidate	.445(.06)**	.954(.07)**	.857(.09)**	1.060(.11)**
Percentage of list votes (centered on party mean)	.009(.00)**	.006(.00)*	.003(.00)	.006(.00)
R^2	.847	.793	.770	.736
N	405	1025	950	708

p<.05; **p<.01

Finally, we should note that the results are only based on the Belgian 2014 election. We can do an explorative robustness test whether similar patterns can be found in other Belgian elections. Unfortunately, we lack precise data for these other elections. Especially information on media attention and campaign intensity are difficult to gather. Nevertheless, we can test the robustness of our findings in two ways. First of all, we replicate model 1 for a number of different Belgian federal and regional elections both in Flanders and Wallonia. This way we test whether similar trends appear with regard to the different indicators of ballot list position. Table 3.3 illustrates that this is the case. In all recent elections, both in Flanders and Wallonia, and both at the regional and at the federal level, candidates with a higher ballot list position receive more votes. Furthermore, there is an additional bonus for the first candidate on the list. The size of the coefficients remains very similar over time. As a second test, we replicate all our models for the 2012 local elections in Antwerp. An almost identical candidate survey to the one in 2014 is available for these elections and therefore we have information on the candidates' level of political experience and on their campaign strategy. Also, the Gopress database was used to gather information about their media coverage. Table 3.4 demonstrates the results of the replication. Our results

Table 3.4: Results of the OLS regression for the district elections 2012 Antwerp.

Individual electoral success (log)	Model 1 b(SE)	Model 2 b(SE)	Model 3 b(SE)
Ballot list			
First candidate on the list	1.284(.16)**	1.210(.15)**	1.050(.16)**
Ballot list positon(log)	.480(.04)**	.439(.04)**	.390(.04)**
Last candidate on the list	1.405(.27)**	1.236(.25)**	.879(.23)**
Inherent characteristics			
Age		.000(.00)	.001(.00)
Female		.043(.07)	.043(.07)
Ethnic minority		.043(.28)	.048(.28)
Political experience		.218(.06)**	.146(.06)**
Campaign intensity		.010(.01)	.003(.01)
Media			
Media coverage(log)			.064(.03)**
Media coverage t-1 (log)			.025(.02)
Controls			
Percentage of list votes (centered on party mean)	.019(.01)**	.020(.01)**	.021(.01)**
Constant	-2.893(.06)**	-3.123(.08)**	-2.896(.08)**
R^2	.546	.551	.565
N	358	358	358

*p<.05; **p<.01
Note: Fixed effects for the different electoral constituencies are not depicted. Standard errors are clustered.

are very similar to Table 3.2. Just like for the 2014 elections, we find that having a higher ballot list position leads to more votes, with an extra bonus for the first candidate on the list. In line with hypothesis 2 and 3, these effects are confounded by political experience (ballot list position: 5.7%; first candidate on the list: 8.5%), as well as media attention (ballot list position: 11.2%; first candidate on the list: 13.2%). Nevertheless, even after controlling for these different characteristics, there is still a substantial effect of the ballot list position left, supporting hypothesis 1a and 1b. These analyses show that our results are robust across different Belgian elections.

3.6.   Conclusion and discussion

Empirical research has shown that a candidate's ballot list position is one of the crucial factors that explain individual electoral success. However, we previously lacked precise knowledge about the mechanisms underlying this effect. One possible mechanism is the primacy effect, the bias of voters towards the first option of a presented list. Alternatively, highly positioned candidates may benefit because they share certain electorally favorable intrinsic characteristics, such as more political experience, or more resources to run an intense campaign. These candidates may also receive more media coverage and for that reason have more success in obtaining preferential votes. The aim of this chapter was to disentangle these different mechanisms in order to distil the primacy effect. Moreover, by distinguishing different mechanisms behind the primacy effect, separating the confirmation bias from the pure primacy effect, we aimed to open the black box of this effect, both theoretically and empirically.

Three main conclusions are reached. First of all, the chapter shows that part of the success of higher ranked candidates can be explained by the media coverage these candidates receive. As candidates at the top of the ballot list are more likely to have some power, the media is more keen to cover them, resulting in more media attention. This creates more name recognition and increases their chance of electoral success. Chapter five will investigate media effects in more detail.

Second, the chapter finds that intrinsic characteristics of high positioned candidates explain part of their success. Yet, contrary to our findings, it is not campaign intensity that explains the success of high positioned candidates. Rather, especially political experience is an important factor. Candidates with a higher ballot list position are often parliamentarians with more political experience than their lower positioned peers. Thus, to some extent their success can be explained by a full rational evaluation of their intrinsic traits by citizens.

Finally, and most importantly, the chapter finds support for the existence of a primacy effect in the context of proportional systems. Even when taking into account alternative mechanisms, the study demonstrates that citizens are more likely to cast a vote for candidates who occupy the first position on the ballot list. Two mechanisms are behind the primacy effect. First, voters have a confirmation bias when they evaluate a list. This also explains why the number two benefits over the number three, who in turn benefits over the number four. Additionally, there is a pure primacy effect. Some citizens vote for the first candidate on the list simply because he or she occupies the first position, without further evaluation of any other attributes.

One of the limitations of this chapter is that it only focuses on Belgium. For future research we should therefore investigate whether the primacy effect also exists in other proportional systems. However, as explained earlier, we expect this to be the case. The Belgian electoral system shares several features with many other countries with intra-party preference voting, such as the option to cast a list vote. Moreover, it is even more likely that a primacy effect will be found in a system with obligatory preference voting, as citizens with the least political knowledge and thus the most sensitivity to the primacy effect cannot cast a list vote. Nevertheless, comparative studies that investigate how specific electoral rules impact preference voting are necessary.

A second limitation of this chapter is that it is unable to dissect the primacy effect even further. As said before, we use a broad conceptualization of the primacy effect in this paper. We argue that we can speak of a primacy effect when citizens simply vote for this candidate, because it is the easiest choice, as well as when they vote for the first candidate for reasons of indirect rationality, namely the idea that the party gave a good position to these candidates and for that reason must be competent. For future research, it would be necessary to disentangle these different options even further using experimental studies.

This chapter's findings have strong democratic implications. First, they show that there are often no rational motivations behind preferential voting. The success of high positioned candidates, who win most of the preferential votes, can for almost 75% be explained purely by non-substantive factors, meaning that the vote for the first spot on the ballot list would also have been cast if that position would have been occupied by a different candidate. Many voters simply follow party cues. This is relevant considering that politicians often hold themselves more or less exclusively responsible for electoral success, a logic that is frequently followed by the party when determining who gets what position on the ballot list after the election. Second, although many commentators and researchers argue that we live in a an 'age of personalization' in which politicians have become more important at the expense of the political party (Karvonen, 2010; Mcallister, 2009), this study demonstrates that the order of the ballot list is a strong determinant of a candidate's success. As in many West European countries the political party composes the ballot list, we can conclude that parties still have an important influence over which politician will be successful, and thereby also hold a tight grip on the composition of parliament. We should therefore be careful in declaring the demise of the role of political parties in the new age of personalization. In the final chapter of this dissertation I will reflect on the normative implications of these findings more extensively.

The odd one out? The influence of ideological positioning on individual electoral success

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter showed that ballot list position is an important explanatory factor for individual electoral success. To a large extent, the influence of ballot list position was explained by a primacy effect. However, the chapter also indicated that next to ballot list position, other factors, such as media attention and individual-based characteristics, influence how many preferential votes candidates obtain. In the following chapters, I will focus on these alternative explanations, with this chapter specifically concentrating on individual-based characteristics. The idea that individual-based characteristics of candidates matter, has indeed received ample support by previous research. However, most of these studies focus on the socio-demographic characteristics of candidates or their political experience (Erzeel & Caluwaerts, 2015; Thijssen, 2013; Maddens et al., 2006;). This chapter, on the other hand, tests whether a third set of individual-based factors, related to the ideological position of candidates, also matters. From the literature on party voting (and presidential voting), we know that in general elections ideology plays a role. Even though the extent of the influence of ideology is debated (Campbell et al., 1960), there is no doubt that for many voters, their ideology plays an important role in their vote decision, or at least influence which parties get in their consideration set (Alvarez & Nagler, 1998; van der Meer et al., 2015; Thurner, 2000). This raises the question to what extent ideology also plays a role in the intra-party election. Can candidates win

preferential votes by taking an ideological niche position within the party? Or will they be electorally punished for deviating from the party and is it therefore better to stick to the party line instead? To my knowledge, no studies have investigated this in a multi-party system. There is literature on how homogenous parties are, showing that often parties are ideological somewhat diverse and, in certain situations, can consist of multiple internal fractions (Sartori, 1976). Yet, to what extent the ideological position of individual candidates influences voters in their decision regarding preferential votes, remains unclear. The aim of this chapter is to look into this and assess the role of ideology on the individual electoral success of candidates.

4.2. Party heterogeneity, ideological positioning and its electoral impact

Although we often consider political parties to be unitary actors when for instance examining their role in coalition formations (e.g. Laver & Schofield, 1998; Warwick, 1996), investigating their strategic aims (e.g. Müller & Strøm, 1999), or looking at the way parties shape the ideological space (e.g. Downs, 1957), parties are in fact far from unitary. In his seminal work *Parties and Party Systems,* Sartori (1976) already studied factions within parties. Also, more recent studies have focused on ideological differences within parties by investigating party cohesion, assessing to what extent MPs of a party vote the same in parliament (see for example Andeweg & Thomassen, 2011; Bowler, Farell & Katz, 1999; Ceron, 2015; Traber, Hug & Sciarini, 2014). They investigate the pathways to party cohesion in parliament and conclude that although ideological homogeneity is one of the strongest determinants of party cohesion, sometimes differences exist between candidates and parties need to use other means such as disciplinary sanctions (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2011). Candidates are not always congruent with their parties, especially on issues that are not owned by that party. This suggests that also in multiparty systems, ideological differences between candidates of the

same party can exist, even though they may be more limited in comparison to the ideological broader parties in two-party systems – think of the Democrats and Republicans in the United states, two parties that are ideologically very heterogeneous. On certain ideological dimensions candidates may take a (slightly) different position than their party.

The question arises to what extent the ideological positioning of candidates within a party affects their individual electoral success. Can candidates win preferential votes by occupying a unique ideological position within their party? Or does this rather hurt their electoral success? Both options seem theoretically plausible; ideology could have a positive effect on the number of preferential votes a candidate obtains, but voters may also electorally punish candidates that deviate from the party line.

Regarding the positive effect, taking an ideological niche position within the party could be a successful strategy for candidates. By slightly deviating from the official party line, candidates can distinguish themselves from their party peers. Of course, there are limits to the ideological margin for maneuver of candidates, as deviating too far from the party line may actually push away the party electorate, or, more likely, make it impossible to get on the party's ballot list in the first place. Nevertheless, deviating slightly from the official party line could be a successful way to draw attention to oneself. Additionally, the electorate of a party is not homogenous. Voters may agree with a party on most ideological dimensions, but take a slightly different stance on others. Candidates taking a niche position within the party may attract this niche group of the electorate, which could be a more successful strategy than following the official party position, which is already 'overpopulated' by other candidates. This strategy may also win over voters from parties that are ideologically closely related. Hence, there are a number of reasons why adopting an ideological position within the party that is 'less crowded' may be a successful electoral strategy for individual candidates.

Of course, one could also hypothesize the effect to work in the other direction. Deviating from the party line may work against the individual electoral success of candidates. Candidates who are not fully congruent with the official party line may be punished by their party's electorate for not 'staying on message' (Norris et al., 1999). A study by Van Holsteyn & Andeweg (2010) indicates that for most voters the party still comes first. In a thought experiment among Dutch voters they find that even for most voters that had a clear preference for a candidate, the party was still more important. When asked whether they would still vote for their preferred candidate if this candidate would be on the list of a different party, most voters indicated that they would not (Van Holsteyn & Andeweg, 2010). This shows that for most citizens the vote decision follows a two-stage process; citizens first decide which party they vote for and only subsequently decide whether to cast a preferential vote and for whom. Given that the preferential vote is thus strongly embedded in the party vote, voters may not appreciate it when a candidate does not follow this party line. Especially in multiparty systems, such as the Belgian case, deviating from the party line may be a risky strategy for candidates, as there are many ideological close alternative parties available. Thus, when voters want a different ideological course for the party, they may be more likely to vote for one of the other parties, rather than express a preference for a candidate that is taking a niche position within the party. In sum, it may be a more successful strategy for candidates to stay close to the official party line and thereby to position close to the 'median voter' within the own electorate.

Of course, the ideological positioning of candidates may also have no electoral effect at all. There are two reasons why no effect of intra-party ideology is possible. First, from previous research we know that for voters it is already difficult to position political parties on ideological dimensions and issues (Dejaeghere & van Erkel, 2017; Lefevere & Lesschaeve, 2014; Miller & Stokes, 1963). Positioning individual candidates from those parties in an ideological space

will be even more difficult and cognitively demanding. Many citizens may simply not have the political knowledge or interest to know where candidates stand and not be aware of the minor ideological differences within a party. Second, even for citizens who would potentially have the resources and interest to do so, this information may not be available. Political candidates in PR-list systems usually do not present an individual ideological platform and in the media there is usually no coverage on the individual ideological position of a candidate, unless it really leads to conflict within the party. Therefore, the ideological position of candidates within a party may play no role at all. Rather, voters may use easy heuristics, such as ballot list position, gender or political experience when deciding which candidate(s) to give a preferential vote to.

Based on the theoretical reasoning above, two rivaling hypotheses are formulated that contrast the null-hypothesis that ideology has no effect on preferential votes. These hypotheses take into account that intra-party ideological positioning of candidates can have a positive (H1a) or a negative (H1b) effect on the electoral success of individual candidates. If both hypotheses are rejected then it can be assumed that ideology has no effect on the number of preferential votes obtained.

Hypothesis 1a: *Candidates taking an ideological niche position within the party and deviating from the ideology of the party are electorally more successful.*

Hypothesis 1b: *Candidates remaining ideologically closer to the party line are electorally more successful.*

There is also the possibility that the effect is curvilinear. Deviating from the ideology of the party may be positive when this deviation is small, but once candidates are positioned too far from the party they will be electorally punished. This leads to the following third sub-hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1c: *The effect of a candidate's ideological deviation from the party on individual electoral success follows a curvilinear effect.*

Of course, it could be that ideology does not work across the board, but only affects the electoral success of top candidates. Given that in Belgium ballot lists are long - ranging between 12 and 33 candidates depending on the district - it is highly unlikely that voters have information on the ideological position of all candidates. However, they may have an indication of the ideological position for the candidates at the top of the ballot lists, and know whether these candidates belong to the economic left wing of a party or to the economic right wing. Hence, it could be that for most of the candidates their ideological position vis-à-vis the party will not play a role, but that it does matter, either positively or negatively, for the top candidates on the ballot list. To define these top candidates, I follow Put and Maddens (2013) and focus on the so-called 'realistic candidates'; candidates at the top of the list who are almost certain to get elected. However, given that parties with a high party magnitude can have up to seven realistic candidates, I limit the conceptualization of top candidates to a maximum of the first three realistic candidates on the list.

Hypothesis 2: *The effect of ideological positioning on individual electoral success will matters only for top candidates.*

Political parties have to take a stance on different issues linked to the different ideological dimensions, such as the economy, immigration and Europe. From the literature, we know that the salience of these issues differs per party. Also, the theory of issue ownership states that voters associate certain issues more closely with certain parties (Petrocik, 1996; Walgrave & de Swert, 2007). It is on these owned issues that parties are deemed most competent by the voter and voters could base their party choice on the party that they see as the owner on the issue

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that matters most to them (van der Brug, 2004; Green & Hobolt, 2008). Thus, a voter who finds immigration the most important issue, may vote for the party that is considered to own immigration. The effect of a candidate slightly deviating from the party line could possibly differ based on whether they reposition themselves on an owned dimension or not. For instance, we may expect that on owned issues candidates are electorally punished when not following the party line. Given that many voters will choose their party based on the stance on the owned issue, they may not vote for candidates that do not follow this line, i.e. a green candidate taking a different stance on the issue of environment. Alternatively, ideological repositioning may be rewarded on dimensions that are not owned by the party. If voters indeed select parties based on the owned issues they may not always be fully congruent with the party on other issues/ ideological dimensions. Consequently, they may vote for a candidate who deviates somewhat from the official party platform on these other dimensions. To keep the example of the Greens, perhaps some Green voters vote for this party for environmental reasons, but are economically slightly more right-wing. A candidate of the Greens could jump in this niche position and position herself more economically right-wing to the party in order to attract the preferential votes of this group of voters. In sum, we may find different effects of the candidate's ideological position vis-à-vis the party between the issues/ideological dimensions that their party owns and the other issues. I therefore formulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a: *Deviating from the official party line will have a negative effect on the electoral success of candidates for issues owned by the party.*

Hypothesis 3b: *Deviating from the official party line will have a positive effect on the electoral success of candidates for issues not owned by the party.*

Finally, differences may exist between parties. Some parties have a very clear ideological platform, aiming for a specific and coherent electorate. Other parties have multiple fractions within their party and are in that sense more *catch-all* in nature. These catch-all parties are often large mainstream parties that more explicitly aim for votes rather than for ideology and tend to develop a more centrist party platform (Kirchheim, 1966). Consequently, their ideology may not always be consistent and different views exist within the party, as well as within its electorate. One can expect that for these ideologically more diverse parties, deviating from the party line as a candidate is electorally rewarding. As the electorate is more diverse, there is a higher electoral potential for candidates that deviate. Within parties that are not catch-all, the electorate is more coherent and therefore deviating from the party line is likely to be less rewarding.

Hypothesis 4: *Deviating from the official party line has a positive effect on the individual electoral success of candidates in catch-all parties.*

4.3.   Data and method

In order to test the hypotheses, the candidate survey is used (see chapter 2 for a detailed description). For this survey, candidates answered a large number of questions, including a long battery of ideological questions. I use sub-dimensions, rather than only a general left-right dimension, since this enables to tease out the effects of ideology in more detail. In total, candidates were presented 30 ideological questions on six dimensions: Economy, Migration, Environment, Europe, Ethics, and Federalism. Candidates were forced to answer these questions in order to continue with the survey, so no respondents are lost. The answers on these questions were not only used for this chapter, but also for a voting advice application that was developed together with De Morgen and Tree Company (see chapter 2). One can argue that the questions therefore do not measure the real ideological position of candidates, as they may slightly change

their position in campaign time for strategical reasons. However, we argue that for the aim of this study this is actually a more valid measurement, since we want to measure the ideological image that candidates communicate to their voters.

The 30 ideological questions are all statements on which candidates had to indicate to what extent they agree, ranging from 1 (no agreement) to 7 (full agreement). Examples of these statements are: '*The government should interfere to reduce differences between income*', '*The European unification should not go any further*' and '*Belgium should close its borders for asylum seekers*'. The items are recoded so that they all run in the same direction, with a higher score indicating a more rightwing/authoritarian/Eurosceptical attitude. Although each dimension was measured using five questions, only the four questions with the highest factor loading in a principal component analysis are used. Almost all the factor loadings are above .7, with only one item that has a loading of .68. For the environment sub-dimension only three items have a sufficient loading. All scales have a Cronbach's alpha above .7. In the end six ideological dimension scales are constructed with values between 4 to 28. The exception is the environment scale that runs from 3 to 21, as only three items scale sufficiently. An overview of the statements, the principal component analysis and the scale reliability scores can be found in appendix E.

To operationalize the ideological position of candidates in relation to their party, first the average position of all candidates is aggregated to represent the party's position. This procedure has been used in previous research and generates a valid indication of the official party line (Dejaeghere & van Erkel, 2017). One could argue that this average position should not be based on all candidates, but only on those elected in parliament, or should be weighted by preferential votes. However, none of these alternative measures result in very different average positions and hence the positioning of parties is robust. Next, the absolute deviation is calculated by taking the absolute value of the score obtained after subtracting the party's average position from the candidate's position. This new

indicator measures the absolute ideological difference between party and candidates on each dimension. Low scores mean that the candidate is very much in line with the party, while high score indicate that the candidate deviates strongly from the party line. In addition, an alternative operationalization is used – subtracting the score of the candidate from the party score – which also takes into account the direction of the deviation, as a deviation from the party to the left may affect the results differently than a deviation to the right. The first measure is labeled *absolute distance* and the second measure *directional distance*. The hypotheses are tested with both measures.

For the dependent variable, the individual electoral success of a candidate, the share of preferential votes obtained is used. Just like the previous chapter, I do not use the absolute numbers of votes, but instead use a relative measure. However, unlike the previous chapter where the number of preferential votes for a candidate was divided by the number of preferential for all candidates from the candidate's ballot list, the so-called list proportion, this time the district proportion is used and the number of preferential votes of the candidate is divided by the total number of preferential votes for all candidates within the district. The reason to use the district proportion rather than the list proportion is that this measure also takes into account the inter-party competition, which may play a role here, given that with their ideological position candidates may attract voters that normally vote for other (ideologically related) parties. The effect of ideology may not be just limited to the voters of a candidate's own party, but may also affect voters from other parties.[27] Given that the dependent variable is skewed again, leading to a non-normal distribution of the residuals, the variable is transformed logarithmically just like in the previous chapter.

As independent variables, the constructed ideological difference measures are added. Additionally, the models control for the most important alternative explanations that have also been included in the previous chapter;

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[27] As a robustness check I also tested the effect of ideological placement on the list proportion. In the end this gives the same results as using the district proportion.

gender, ethnicity, political experience, media attention and ballot list position. Fixed effects are added for political parties and districts. Exceptions are the models including issue ownership, where the clustering for candidates in parties is accounted for by clustered robust standard errors, since issue ownership is measured at the party level. To include a measure for (associative) issue ownership, an online representative survey (N=960) is used (Dejaeghere & van Erkel, 2017). In this survey, respondents were asked to indicate for every dimension which specific party came to mind when thinking about it. These responses are aggregated to determine which party respondents associated the most with a specific dimension. In the end, the Greens are coded as owners on environment, the regionalist party on federalism, the liberals on economy, and the populist radical right party on immigration. In all cases, at least 25% of the voters associated that party with the sub-dimension and this is in line with the coding of Dejaeghere & van Erkel (2017).[28] For the ethical dimension, no clear owner is appointed, as the parties are very close to each other. Finally, in order to operationalize top and ordinary candidates, a combination of party magnitude and ballot list position is used. Party magnitude, the number of seats a party won in a district, is used to determine who the realistic candidates are. For smaller parties in smaller districts there is only one realistic candidate, whereas for large parties in large districts there can be up to seven. However, ballot list position is used to limit the realistic candidates to maximum the first three positions on the ballot list.

4.4.   Results

Before testing the electoral effect of ideological positioning, it is useful to first get an idea whether candidates actually deviate from the party line. Figure 4.1 (based

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[28] 71,3% associated the Greens with environment, 36,9% the Liberals with economy, 32,3% The Christian Democrats with Europe, 25,0% the Far-right with immigration and 53,6% the regional party with the Federal issue.

Figure 4.1: Overview of the distribution per dimensions and party (based on van Erkel, Thijssen, & Van Aelst, 2014)
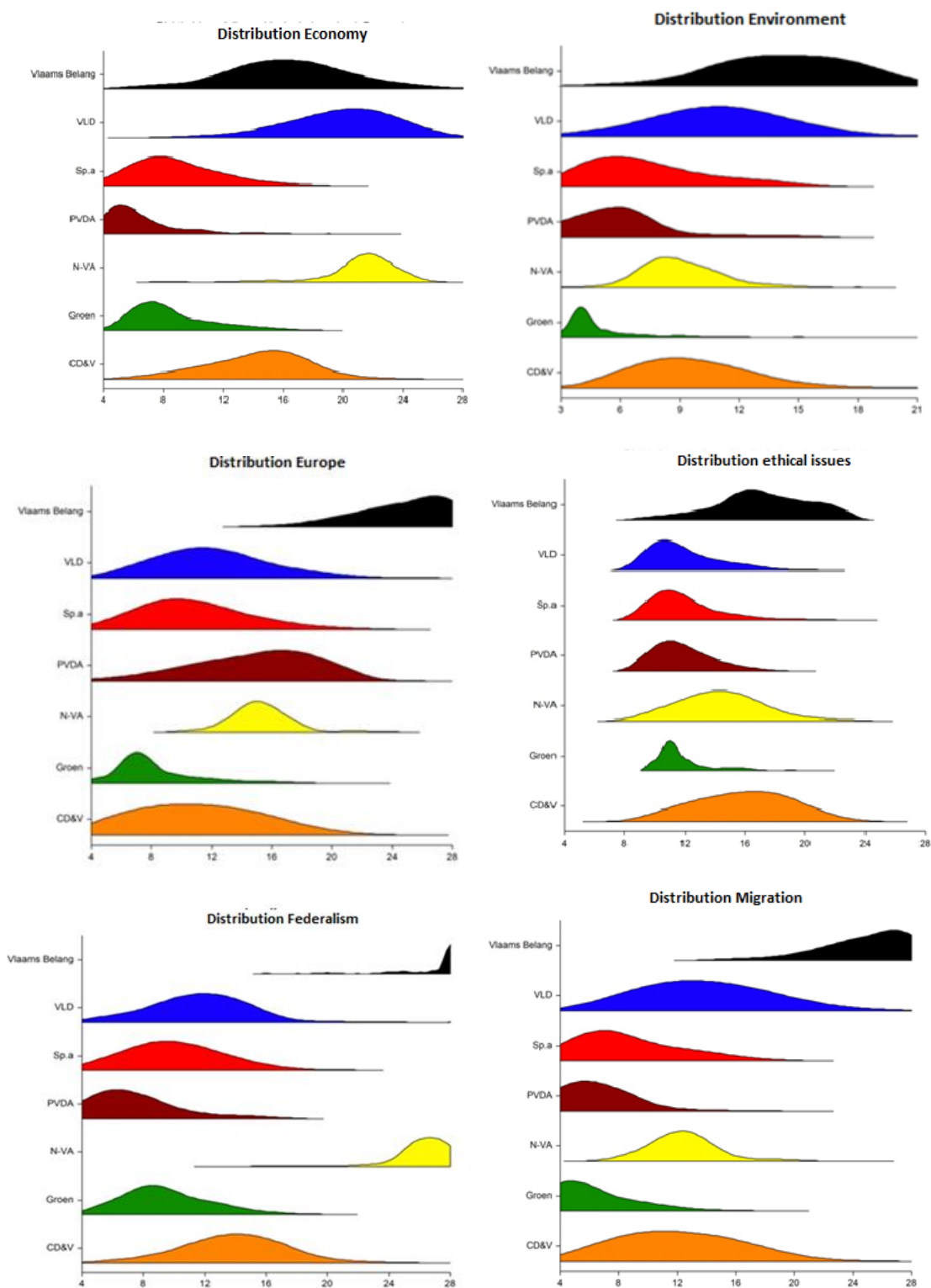
on van Erkel, Thijssen & Van Aelst, 2014) gives an overview of the ideological distribution of candidates per dimension per party. The figure shows that there indeed exists variation within parties. Parties are not homogenous actors with candidates who all think alike. Rather, the ideological distribution within parties is fairly heterogeneous. For instance, on the issue of economy the figure shows that candidates from left-wing parties are mostly left on this dimension and candidates from right-wing parties are more right. However, some candidates are more moderate than their party, while other candidates are more extreme. The figure also illustrates that the extent to which parties are heterogeneous varies per party and per dimension. Especially within the Christian Democratic party, candidates seem to take different positions. This is not surprising given the catch-all nature of this party. In addition, parties seem to be more homogenous on their core dimension (the Greens on environment, the regionalists on federal issues) and more diverse on dimensions that matter less to them.

The question is to what extent these individual ideological differences are related to the individual electoral outcomes. In model 1 Table 4.1 the effect of the absolute ideological distance on individual electoral success is tested. The model clearly demonstrates that the ideological position of candidates does not affect the proportion of preferential votes they receive. Although the sign of the coefficients suggest that candidates further removed from the party's official line receive less votes (in line with h1a), none of the six dimensions come close to statistical significance, and therefore both hypotheses 1a (i.e. positive effect) and 1b (i.e. negative effect) are rejected. An alternative option is that the effect is curvilinear. Model 2 in Table 4.2 therefore adds a quadratic term (controls not depicted). Yet, also in this model no ideological effects are found and therefore hypothesis 1c is also not supported. In sum, there is no direct effect of absolute ideological distance on the individual electoral success of a candidate.

Table 4.1: The effects of absolute ideological distance on individual electoral success

Individual electoral success (log)	Model 1 b(SE)
Absolute distance: economy	-.002(.01)
Absolute distance: environment	-.005(.01)
Absolute distance: Europe	-.003(.01)
Absolute distance: migration	-.003(.01)
Absolute distance: ethics	-.005(.01)
Absolute distance: federalism	-.006(.01)
Age	-.002(.00)
Female	.257(.02)**
Ethnic minority	.230(.05)**
First candidate on the list	1.129(.06)**
Ballot list positon	.034(.00)**
Last candidate on the list	.531(.06)**
Local council	.150(.03)**
Alderman	.001(.03)
Mayor	.130(.05)**
Experience Flemish parliament	.232(.05)**
Experience Federal parliament	.296(.05)**
Experience European parliament	.460(.21)*
Minister	.281(.09)**
Media coverage (log)	.023(.00)**
Federal election	.167(.02)**
Political party (ref. = Christian Democratic party)	
- Regionalist party	.416(.04)**
- Green party	-.789(.05)**
- Social Democratic party	-.469(.05)**
- Liberal party	-.184(.05)**
- Far right	-1.281(.06)**
- Socialist party	-1.769(.05)**
Constant	-5.253(.07)**
Adjusted R²	.896
N	899

*p<.05; **p<.01

Note: Fixed effects for electoral districts and the main issue ownership variables are not depicted

Table 4.2: OLS regression assessing interaction effects

Individual electoral success (log)	Model 2 b(SE)	Model 3 b(SE)	Model 4 b(SE)
Absolute distance: economy	-.004(.01)	-.008(.01)	-.000(.01)
Absolute distance: environment	.018(.01)	-.008(.01)	.007(.01)
Absolute distance: Europe	-.014(.01)	-.001(.01)	-.001(.01)
Absolute distance: migration	.012(.01)	-.003(.01)	.009(.01)
Absolute distance: ethics	-.000(.01)	-.005(.01)	-.002(.01)
Absolute distance: federalism	-.014(.01)	-.006(.01)	-.007(.01)
Absolute distance: economy^2	.000(.00)		
Absolute distance: environment^2	-.001(.01)		
Absolute distance: Europe^2	.002(.00)		
Absolute distance: migration^2	-.001(.01)		
Absolute distance: ethics^2	-.000(.00)		
Absolute distance: federalism^2	.001(.01)		
Top candidate		.901(.11)**	
Top candidate * Absolute distance economy		.041(.03)	
Top candidate * Absolute distance environment		-.052(.03)	
Top candidate * Absolute distance Europe		.016(.03)	
Top candidate * Absolute distance migration		-.052(.03)	
Top candidate * Absolute distance ethics		-.028(.02)	
Top candidate * Absolute distance federalism		-.004(.02)	
Owner economy * Absolute distance economy			.009(.02)
Owner environment* Absolute distance environment			-.021(.02)
Owner Europe * Absolute distance Europe			-.002(.02)
Owner migration * Absolute distance migration			.005(.03)
Owner federalism * Absolute distance federalism			-.016(.03)
Adjusted R²	.856	.879	.819
N	899	899	899

*p<.05; **p<.01

Note: Fixed effects for electoral districts, control variables (see Table 4.1) and the main issue ownership variables are not depicted; model 4 uses clustered robust standard errors.

Table 4.3: The effect of ideological distance in interaction with political parties

Individual electoral success (log)	Model 5 b(SE)
Absolute distance: economy	-.003(.02)
Absolute distance: environment	-.026(.02)
Absolute distance: Europe	-.009(.02)
Absolute distance: migration	-.004(.02)
Absolute distance: ethics	.005(.01)
Absolute distance: federalism	-.005(.02)
Political party (ref = Christian Democratic party)	
- Regionalist party	.312(.13)*
- Green party	-.748(.13)**
- Social Democratic party	-.648(.14)**
- Liberal party	-.257(.15)
- Far right party	-1.278(.17)**
- Socialist party	-1.724(.14)**
Absolute distance: economy * Regionalist party	.023(.03)
Absolute distance: economy * Green party	.038(.02)
Absolute distance: economy * Social Democratic party	.007(.02)
Absolute distance: economy * Liberal party	.017(.02)
Absolute distance: economy * Far right party	-.011(.02)
Absolute distance: economy * Socialist party	-.026(.02)
Absolute distance: environment * Regionalist party	.028(.03)
Absolute distance: environment * Green party	.023(.03)
Absolute distance: environment * Social Democratic party	.047(.03)
Absolute distance: environment * Liberal party	.034(.03)
Absolute distance: environment * Far right party	.015(.03)
Absolute distance: environment * Socialist party	.006(.03)
Absolute distance: Europe * Regionalist party	.009(.03)
Absolute distance: Europe * Green party	-.009(.02)
Absolute distance: Europe * Social Democratic party	-.009(.02)
Absolute distance: Europe * Liberal party	.030(.02)
Absolute distance: Europe * Far right party	.007(.03)
Absolute distance: Europe * Socialist party	.017(.02)
Absolute distance: migration * Regionalist party	.016(.02)
Absolute distance: migration * Green party	-.010(.02)
Absolute distance: migration * Social Democratic party	.025(.03)
Absolute distance: migration * Liberal party	-.002(.02)
Absolute distance: migration * Far right party	.007(.03)
Absolute distance: migration * Socialist party	-.035(.02)
Absolute distance: ethics * Regionalist party	.005(.02)
Absolute distance: ethics * Green party	-.039(.02)
Absolute distance: ethics * Social Democratic party	.001(.02)
Absolute distance: ethics * Liberal party	-.038(.02)
Absolute distance: ethics * Far right party	-.008(.02)
Absolute distance: ethics * Socialist party	-.009(.02)

Absolute distance: federalism * Regionalist party	-.034(.03)
Absolute distance: federalism * Green party	-.012(.02)
Absolute distance: federalism * Social Democratic party	.010(.02)
Absolute distance: federalism * Liberal party	-.007(.02)
Absolute distance: federalism * Far right party	.003(.03)
Absolute distance: federalism * Socialist party	.023(.02)
Adjusted R²	.897
N	899

*p<.05; **p<.01

Note: Fixed effects for electoral districts and control variables are not depicted

However, it could be that no direct effect is found because it only works for certain candidates. Therefore, an interaction is added between top candidates and the absolute ideological distance in model 3. Again no significant effects are found. Not even top candidates, for whom more information regarding their ideological position may be available, are electorally rewarded or punished for deviating from the party line. Hypothesis 2 should therefore also be rejected. Model 4 tests hypotheses 3a and 3b, according to which deviating from the party may have a negative effect on owned issues or a positive effect on not-owned issues. Yet, none of the interaction terms with issue ownership are significant, indicating that deviating from the party line on owned issues has no electoral consequences either. Finally, model 5 in Table 4.3 adds interaction terms between ideological distance and the political parties, in order to test the fourth hypothesis, which states that deviating from the party line only has an effect for catch-all parties. Yet, in the model none of the interaction effects are significant. There is no indication that ideology plays a role for catch-all parties. Consequently, also hypothesis 4 holds no ground.

The previous analyses only focused on absolute distances without taking into account the direction. Therefore, table 4.4 presents the same analyses, this time using the directional ideological distance, in such a way that a negative score means that the candidate is more left than the party and a positive score that the candidate is more right on that dimension. Model 6 and model 7 show that to a large extent the findings remain the same and that hypotheses 1a, b and c all have to be rejected. The only difference is that this time there is a significant effect for

Table 4.4: The effect of directional distance

Individual electoral success (log)	Model 6 b(SE)	Model 7 b(SE)	Model 8 b(SE)	Model 9 b(SE)
Directional distance:economy	-.001(.00)	.001(.00)	-.000(.00)	-.001(.01)
Directional distance:environment	-.001(.00)	.002(.00)	-.001(.01)	.002(.01)
Directional distance:Europe	-.004(.00)	-.003(.00)	-.003(.00)	.002(.01)
Directional distance:migration	-.001(.00)	-.006(.00)	-.005(.01)	-.002(.01)
Directional distance:ethics	-.007(.00)*	-.004(.00)	-.002(.00)	-.008(.00)
Directional distance:federalism	-.001(.00)	.000(.00)	-.003(.00)	-.003(.01)
Directional distance:economy^2		-.001(.00)		
Directional distance:environment^2		.001(.00)		
Directional distance:Europe^2		.000(.00)		
Directional distance:migration^2		.001(.00)		
Directional distance:ethics^2		-.000(.00)		
Directional distance:Federalism^2		-.001(.00)		
Top candidate			.791(.06)**	
Top candidate*economy			.015(.02)	
Top candidate*environment			.029(.02)	
Top candidate*Europe			.025(.02)	
Top candidate*migration			.015(.02)	
Top candidate*ethics			-.028(.01)*	
Top candidate*federalism			-.021(.02)	
Owner economy*economy				-.006(.02)
Owner environment*environment				-.020(.02)
Owner Europe*Europe				-.016(.01)
Owner migration*migration				-.004(.02)
Owner federalism* federalism				.012(.02)
Adjusted R²	.896	.856	.878	.820
N	899	899	899	899

*p<.05; **p<.01

Note: Fixed effects for electoral districts, control variables and the main issue ownership variables are not depicted, model 9 uses clustered robust standard errors

the ethical dimension. Candidates who position themselves more conservative on the ethical dimension perform electorally less well. It is slightly puzzling why there is an effect on the ethical dimension and not for the other dimensions. However, when inspecting this effect in more detail, it seems that it is fully driven by one outlier. One candidate scores 15 points higher on the conservative scale than the average candidate of his party, and receives a below average proportion of preferential votes. Once this candidate is omitted from the analysis, the effect of the ethical dimension is no longer significant. This outlier could indicate that in certain extreme cases, where candidates are totally out of line with their party,

they will be electorally punished. However, there are two reasons to assume that this relation is spurious, with another factor driving the extreme position of the candidate. First, the outlier is not a well-known candidate – in the advent to the elections he did not appear in any newspaper article – which makes it unlikely that voters were aware of his position. Second, we do not find that on the other dimensions the ideological outliers were electorally punished. Taking into account these two arguments, the latter explanation (i.e. spurious correlation) seems more plausible. Model 8 adds an interaction between directional ideological distance and top candidates. With the exception of (again) the ethical dimension it finds no evidence that there is an effect for top candidates and therefore does not support hypothesis 2. Finally, like in model 4, there is no significant interaction between deviating ideologically and issue ownership in model 9.[29] So in general, using a directional measure rather than an absolute measure shows the same pattern, as none of the hypotheses are supported.

Overall, focusing on the separate dimensions and investigating both the absolute ideological distance and the directional ideological distance, there are no situations in which intra-party ideology matters. In addition, testing whether the effect only matters for certain candidates (H2) on owned issues (H3) from certain parties (H4), did not yield any significant results. Rather, the usual suspects such as ballot list position, political experience and socio-demographic characteristics determine the electoral fortune of candidates the most.

In appendix F some extra robustness checks are presented. I test what happens when the ideological distances are standardized to take into account the distribution within the party (Model A and B in Table F1 and F2), but this does not result in any different findings. It also tests what happens when, rather than using a dichotomous categorization of issue ownership, the percentage of voters associating the party with the dimension is used (Model C and E in Table F3 and F4). Also when using this measure, no support is found for hypotheses 3a and b.

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[29] I also tested for the possibility that owned issues only matter for top candidates via a three-way interaction, but again this yields no significant results.

Finally, model D and F test what happens when taking into account the importance the electorate of a party gives to each dimension. In the voter survey all voters were asked how important they find each dimension on a scale from 1 to 7. I aggregated these scores per party and interacted them with ideological distance. Yet, none of the interactions are significant, indicating that there is no intra-party ideological effect. In general, also these models indicate that the candidates' ideological position vis-à-vis the party cannot explain differences between candidates' individual electoral success.[30]

4.5. Conclusion and discussion

The aim of this chapter was to assess the extent to which the ideological position of candidates within their party affects their individual electoral success. Previous studies have mostly ignored this factor and this chapter therefore serves as a first exploration. The chapter assessed both the direct effect of ideology, but also tested whether ideology only matters for certain candidates from certain parties on certain issue dimensions. However, in none of the situations was there any significant effect of a candidate's ideological position vis-à-vis the party on electoral success. Even when using alternative operationalizations, no significant effects were found. Also when taking into account the importance of a dimension or the distinction between top and ordinary candidates, is there no sign that ideology matters. In sum, this chapter clearly shows that in the intra-party competition ideology does not matter. Rather, factors such as ballot list position, socio-demographic factors and political experience determine the proportion of preferential votes.

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[30] Ideally, I would also have tested whether the ideological deviation from the party has an effect when the electorate of that party is more diverse. Unfortunately, I do not have sufficient data on voters to investigate this. While the survey distributed by SSI included some of the ideological statements that were asked to candidates, it does not include all statements. Additionally, different respondents were presented with different statements. Therefore the number of voters per statement is too small to reliably calculate a standard deviation, especially for smaller parties.

How can we explain this non-finding? The most likely explanation is that voting for candidates on the basis of their ideology is cognitive demanding. While voters may act rational, this rationality is bounded. Often voters already have problems to know which position parties take on different ideological dimensions (Dejaeghere & van Erkel, 2017), let alone where the individual candidates stand. Additionally, this information is often not available. Most candidates do not individually present an ideological platform and also in the media there is usually no coverage about the individual ideological position of a candidate, unless it leads to conflict within the party. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that intra-party ideology plays no role and that voters use easier cues when deciding which candidates to give a preferential vote to. An alternative explanation is that voters know that (elected) candidates have little impact on the party position, given that party unity in the Belgian context is very high.

Of course, this chapter only served as a first exploration. For example, it focused exclusively on candidates without taking into account voter data. One avenue for future research would therefore be to link voter and candidate data and assess whether the likelihood of a preferential vote increases when voter and candidate are ideological closer. Chapter 7 links voter and candidate data, but because we do not have the same statements for candidates and voters they cannot be matched ideologically. Additionally, in this chapter I focus on six ideological dimensions rather than the general left-right dimension. Ideally, I would also investigate what happens when candidates indicate that they are more left or more right on the general dimension, but data for this general dimension were not available. However, I do not expect to find any differences, as the most important components of the general left-right division are captured with the six dimensions. Another factor this chapter overlooks is salience. Although voters may not give their vote to candidates that deviate from the party line, they may vote for candidates that campaign more on dimensions or issues that they find salient. A party's spokesperson on defense may receive more votes from a citizen

that finds this the most important issue. Unfortunately, the data do not allow to test this, but future studies should look into this.

The findings of this chapter point to some broader implications. The results indicate that candidates cannot really win votes by taking an ideological niche position within their party. Given the Flemish context this is perhaps not surprising. The multiparty competition in Flanders, with at least six parties with seats in parliament, means that many parties are ideologically close to each other. This means that when voters are not ideologically in line with their party, they may be more likely to switch to a closely related party, rather than expressing their ideological preferences using preferential votes. The situation may be different in party systems with fewer effective parties, where the electorates of these parties are more ideologically diverse. However, such systems usually do not have any form of preferential voting. Additionally, party discipline is quite strong in Belgium (Depauw, 2006). Even when candidates differ from the party line on an ideological dimension, they are unlikely to deviate from the party line when voting for a law in parliament, thus putting ideological differences within a party less at the forefront, and making it difficult for voters to detect intra-party differences.

The findings also further support the idea that preferential voting is the second step in a two-step flow model. A previous thought experiment by Van Holsteyn and Andeweg (2010) already suggested that voters first decide which party they vote for and in a second step decide whether and for which candidate they vote. Although more testing is needed, the findings from this chapter are in line with that conclusion. Ideology seems to play a role in the party vote, at least to some extent, but does not seem to influence the preferential vote. In other words, voters seem to pick a party first (partly) based on ideology and then use other factors such as ballot list position, socio-demographic characteristics and political experience to vote for a candidate *within* that party.

5

Can I have your attention please? Differences in long and short campaign media effects for top and ordinary political candidates

Co-authored with Peter Van Aelst and Peter Thijssen, paper currently under review

5.1. Introduction

In its essence, politics is a struggle for power; politicians compete for votes, aim to get political mandates, and ultimately hope to influence policy. However, this struggle for power is not limited to the political arena, but takes place at a second front as well: the media. With the increasing 'mediatization of politics' (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014), attracting media attention is of vital importance for political actors. In particular, because campaign studies have shown that citizens get most of their political information from the media (Sparks, 2010) and that media attention hence impacts electoral success. This chapter will therefore shift the perspective and not focus on party-related or individual-based characteristics, but rather assesses to what extent candidates can attract preferential votes by getting into the news.

While many studies have pointed out that visibility and tone in election news coverage can influence party choice (Hopmann et al., 2010; Oegema & Kleinnijenhuis, 2000; Semetko & Schoenbach, 1994) or presidential choice (Bartels, 1993; Dalton, Beck & Huckfeldt, 1998; Schmitt-Beck, 2003), few studies have investigated the role of media in the competition for preferential votes *within* parties. Notable exceptions are the papers by Maddens et al. (2006) and Van Aelst et al. (2008), but they either include media attention only as control variable or take the role of media attention on preferential votes as a starting

point and focus more on which politicians get in the news. Nevertheless, one can expect the media to exert a strong influence on which candidates win the most votes, since candidates have to be known by the general public in order to receive votes and the easiest way to do this is through the media.

This chapter makes three contributions to the literature on media effects in election time. First, we not solely focus on the short campaign, but also assess the long-term impact of media, during the so-called long campaign, which starts more or less one year before election day (Norris et al., 1999). Most campaign studies examine media effects exclusively in the few weeks before the elections. However, images of and awareness about candidates may already build longer before. Second, most studies consider the effect of the media to be homogenous for all candidates. However, this chapter argues that this is not the case and investigate how effects differ for top and ordinary candidates, as the mechanisms through which media impacts their electoral success may work differently. Finally, this chapter integrates media in a traditional model of electoral success, following the idea of a 'funnel of causality' (Campbell et al., 1960). This enables us to investigate whether media visibility, apart from having a direct effect, also influences how other factors, such as socio-demographic factors and incumbency, affect electoral success. In order to study these relations, we employ Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). This enables to test some of the relations theorized in the general framework of chapter 1.

5.2.   The impact of the media on vote choice: A heterogeneous effect

The question whether the media impact vote choice has been a central one since the 1940's. Starting from the Chicago school, different studies have investigated how the media exert an influence on public opinion, and ultimately vote choice. Most of these early Chicago school studies, such as Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), later being reinforced by the Michigan school (Campbell et al., 1960), found none or only weak media effects and therefore conclude that the media only play a

limited role in influencing voters. In this 'era of minimal effects' the flow of media information was seen as a two-step model (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) in which messages first reach opinion leaders and only through them reach the general audience. Consequently, the reception of media messages was strongly influenced by one's social network, making citizens less receptive towards messages that are not congruent with the ideas of their network. However, from the 1980's and onwards, stronger media effects on vote choice have been found (Bartels, 1993; Curtice, 1997; Hopmann et al., 2010; Oegema & Kleinnijenhuis, 2000; Schmitt-Beck, 2003; Semetko & Schoenbach, 1994; but see Beck et al., 2002; Newton, 2006; Norris et al., 1999 who still find no or only limited media effects). Bennett and Iyengar (2008) point out that these differences in findings between the 'era of minimal effects' and the later studies can mainly be attributed to societal changes; as citizens have become more individualized and less detached to their homogenous networks, they became more receptive to media messages.

Whereas the media may impact one's party or presidential vote, we expect the media to exert an even stronger influence when it comes to *intra-party competition*. In the inter-party competition most voters have at least some ideological preference or identify themselves to some extent with a party. Therefore, in order for media attention to lead to an actual change in voting behavior, citizens have to be persuaded. Consequently, the media effect is often limited to floating voters, who are more easily persuaded (Chaffee & Rimal, 1996). However, in the intra-party competition the mechanisms through which the media may influence one's vote are expected to work differently. Classical factors that are taken up in vote choice models, such as party identification, issue salience and ideology (see previous chapter), are less important in intra-party preference voting, as candidates belong to the same political party and are therefore ideologically more homogenous. Instead, other factors, such as name recognition and personal character traits, increase in importance (Collingwood et al., 2012). Consequently, in the intra-party competition media effects are less

cushioned by party identification. This is identical to the primary elections in the United States, where media effects have found to be much stronger than in general presidential election, as the party label plays a less prominent role (Latimer, 1987). Rather than changing vote choice through *persuasion*, in the intra-party competition the media can already impact voters by providing *information*. As political parties present long lists of candidates – ranging between 12 to 33 candidates in Belgium – the most important prerequisite for candidates, in order to become electorally successful, is simply to be known by voters and one of the easiest way to do so is by getting in the news. A study conducted in Belgium indeed found that candidates who generally receive more media attention indeed obtain more preferential votes (Van Aelst et al., 2008).

Yet, we argue that the mechanisms through which the media impacts electoral success will diverge between candidates. From the literature we know that within open and flexible list multimember district systems, there are different types of candidates (Obler, 1974; Put & Maddens, 2013). In this study, we distinguish *top* from *ordinary* candidates on the list and test whether media effects differ between them. In order to make this distinction, we partly build on an earlier classification by Put and Maddens (2013). They state that in general there are realistic candidates and marginalized or unrealistic candidates. Realistic candidates are those at the top of the list, who are almost certain to get elected, whereas marginal or unrealistic candidates occupy positions that are contested or almost impossible to get elected from. The benefit of this classification is that it encompasses the intra-party element very well. It takes into account party magnitude and allows including more realistic candidates for large parties in large districts, whereas it only gives one realistic candidate to smaller parties in smaller districts. In the data and method section, we go more into detail about the operationalization of top and ordinary candidates.

We expect that especially for top candidates media attention during the long campaign matters. These candidates have higher news value, either because

they are important within their party, or because they take up an executive mandate. Therefore, most of them already receive news attention between elections. Consequently, they do not need media visibility shortly before the elections in order to raise name recognition. Rather, these candidates aim for constant media attention in the long campaign, as this can make them seem more viable during the actual election campaign (Abramowitz, 1989). Media attention during the long campaign can help to create a reputation which spills over to the rest of the campaign and ultimately to the number of votes obtained. In other words, top candidates who do not receive enough coverage in the long campaign may 'miss the boat' and will not be considered as campaign leaders by voters. It will be difficult for top candidates to make up for this backlog in the short campaign, as the cards have already been shuffled in the long campaign. This mechanism would be in line with studies on the American primaries, which have shown that especially media attention at the beginning of the campaign serves to persuade voters to vote for certain candidates, as information levels are low and opinions have not yet been crystalized (West, 1994), whereas media attention later in the campaign mostly serves to reinforce this popularity (Aldrich, 1980; Haynes et al., 2004).

For ordinary candidates, on the other hand, we expect that media attention during the short campaign matters more. As stated before, their most important reason to get in the media is to receive name recognition. More attention in the media raises a candidate's salience (Goldenberg & Traugott, 1987). According to the recency effect, citizens are more likely to vote for candidates who are at the top of their heads and cognitively more accessible at the moment of casting a vote (Hong & Nadler, 2012; Zaller & Feldman, 1992). It can be expected that a candidate is especially salient in the voters' mind when attention in the media is close to Election Day. Media attention earlier in the campaign matters less for candidates, as they may already be forgotten by the day of elections, or at least will be not be in the top of the minds of voters.

Furthermore, the large majority of them has little or no news value outside the campaign, and therefore hardly receives any media attention before the short campaign. Based on these expectations, we formulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: *For top candidates, media attention during the long campaign is more important for their electoral success than media attention during the short campaign.*

Hypothesis 1b: *For ordinary candidates, media attention during the short campaign is more important for their electoral success than media attention during the long campaign.*

5.3. Media within the 'funnel of causality'

In the previous section we explained how media attention can influence the number of preferential votes political candidates obtain and how we expect this effect to vary between candidates. However, as chapter 1 already showed, media attention is embedded within a broader framework of factors that affect electoral success, but which also influence whether candidates get in the media. If we want to understand how media influences the process of preferential voting, we should therefore not exclusively focus on the direct effects, but also take indirect effects into account. These alternative factors determine who gets in the news and at the same time media attention may influence how these other factors affect electoral success. Figure 5.1 provides a schematic overview of common factors which the literature has found to influence individual electoral success and the position of the media in this chain. The figure builds on the classical idea of a 'funnel of causality' (Campbell et al., 1960), but looks at it from the candidate's perspective. Thus, some (candidate) factors can be positioned close to electoral success in time and content, such as campaign media attention, whereas, for instance, the

political candidate's gender and political experience, are positioned more at the beginning of the chain.

Figure 5.2: The funnel of causality

| Socio-demographic characteristics | Political experience | Media coverage (non-campaign) | Ballot list position | Media coverage (campaign) | **Individual electoral success** |
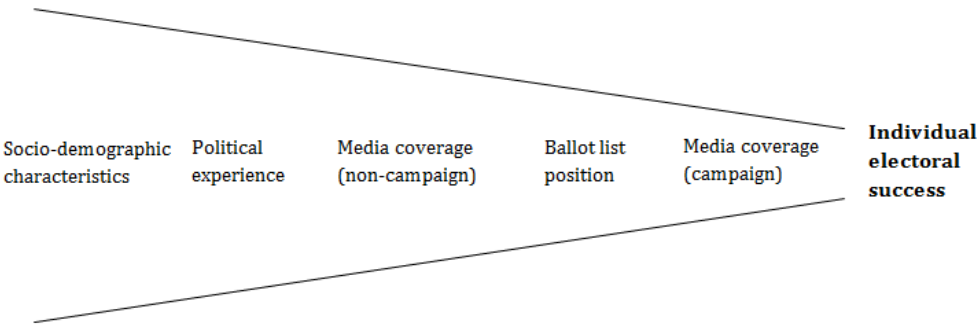
At the basis of the funnel, we find the socio-demographic characteristics of a candidate. Previous studies indicate that, holding everything else constant, women win more preferential votes than men (Cutler, 2002; Thijssen, 2013). These extra votes for women can be explained by the fact that they are still underrepresented in politics, instigating women to vote for female candidates. However, while women may receive extra votes due to identity-voting, other studies have suggested that the thresholds to get in the news are higher for them (Adcock, 2010; Kahn, 1994; Vos, 2013). Additionally, Aalberg and Strömbäck (2011) show that men are more media-driven and search more contact with journalists than women. We therefore expect that the electoral identity bonus women receive, will be (partly) suppressed by their disadvantage of receiving less media attention.

Moreover, we expect this suppression to be stronger for ordinary candidates than for top politicians. Previous studies indicate that the gender bias in news attention is especially strong for ordinary candidates, and less so for top

politicians (Kahn, 1994).[31] In the case of leading politicians, journalists are more guided by political function to determine newsworthiness. Yet, when information about candidates is sparse, such as for ordinary candidates, journalists are more inclined to rely on the gender of a political actor to determine newsworthiness, creating a bias. Thus, we expect the news thresholds to be higher for ordinary female candidates, suppressing their identity bonus, and more easy to pass for top female candidates.[32]

Hypothesis 2a: *In the case of ordinary candidates, the electoral identity bonus female candidates receive is suppressed by a lack of media attention.*

Hypothesis 2b: *In the case of top candidates, the electoral identity bonus women receive is not suppressed by a lack of media attention.*

The second factor in the funnel is political experience. Because retrospective voting is a common and sensible cue for many voters, previous studies indicate that incumbents are electorally more successful (Cain et al., 1987; Gelman and King, 1990). At the same time, they are also more likely to receive media attention (both in the long and short campaign). According to the news value theory (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; O'Neill and Harcup, 2009), politicians 'with power' display a higher news value and will therefore be more covered in the news (Van Dalen, 2012; Midtbø, 2011; Tresch, 2009; Wolfsfeld, 2011). Moreover, the public is expected to be more interested in stories about persons they know, stimulating journalists to write about well-known politicians. Thus, when it comes to obtaining preferential votes, politicians with legislative and executive functions

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[31] With this we refer to the amount of coverage female candidates receive. There is still a bias in the frames and metaphors that are used for female top candidates (see for example Gidengil & Everitt, 2003).
[32] We expect a similar effect for candidates with an ethnic minority background. But due to low variation in ethnic background among the top candidates in our data, we were not able to test this.

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could profit directly from their political function, and this effect is further inflated by the extra media attention they receive due to their function.

Just like the previous hypotheses, we expect differences between ordinary and top candidates and hypothesize that both the direct incumbency bonus, as well as the inflation effect through the media will be stronger for the latter. In the case of ordinary candidates, placed lower on the list, incumbents occupy more often backbench mandates. While they will benefit from these mandates, the advantage is likely to be limited to voters of the own region. Top candidates, on the other hand, will be more likely to occupy political functions at the national level, which not only makes it more likely to reach the electorate, but also increases their news value, thereby generating extra media attention.

Hypothesis 3a: *The electoral bonus incumbents receive, is inflated by the extra news attention they receive.*

Hypothesis 3b: *The inflation of the incumbency bonus by the media is stronger for top candidates than for ordinary candidates.*

A final factor in the funnel is ballot list position. This variable is needed to make the crucial distinction between top and ordinary candidates (see method section). However, as chapter 3 demonstrated, also more subtle differences in ballot position within these categories can have important consequences. As the funnel theorizes, ballot list position not only influences who receives media attention during election time (short campaign), but is itself also influenced by preceding media attention (long campaign). Political parties are expected to be more inclined to give popular politicians, who appear more frequently in the media, the highest positions on the list. Ballot list position will not only have an influence through media, but will also influence a candidate's vote directly. Chapter 3 showed that when presented with a long list of options, people tend to pick the

first options. Next to this primacy effect, citizens may also vote for higher ranked candidates, because they trust the party to put the best candidates on the top spots (Miller & Krosnick, 1998). Therefore, it is expected that candidates with a higher ballot list position profit directly, but also indirectly from the extra media attention they receive because of their position. Since we already use ballot position to distinguish between top and ordinary candidates, ballot list position is only included as control variable.

5.4.   Data and method

To test the hypotheses, the population dataset is used and combined with the media dataset, both described in chapter 2. Top and ordinary candidates are operationalized using a combination of party magnitude and ballot list position. In line with Put and Maddens (2013), party magnitude, the number of seats a party won in a district, is used to determine who the realistic candidates are.[33] However, for large parties in large districts this means that there can be up to seven realistic candidates. Since it seems unlikely that all these realistic candidates are also top candidates, we limit top candidates for these lists to the realistic candidates on the first three positions. On this basis, there are one to three top candidates per party list, depending on the size of the party and of the district. We also coded the last candidate on the list, the list pusher, as top candidate. These candidates are often, at least in the Belgian context, well-known politicians with good chances to get elected. All other candidates are considered ordinary candidates. In total, the data consists of 212 top and 1223 ordinary candidates. Given that certain choices on which we base our classification of top and ordinary candidates may be contested, we will test whether our findings

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[33] There is a discussion on whether to use the party magnitude of the same elections, given that parties may already have an indication of how many seats they will obtain by polls, or the party magnitude of the previous elections. In this paper we use party magnitude of the 2014 elections. However, a robustness check with the party magnitude of the previous election leads to similar results.

remain robust with slightly different operationalizations for top and ordinary candidates.

To measure the dependent variable, electoral success, the district proportion of preferential votes is used. For *media attention* a distinction is made between attention during the short campaign and during the long campaign. This follows the idea of Norris et al. (1999), who see the short campaign as more or less the month before the election, in our case all media reports from 25 April 2014 to 24 May 2014, and the long campaign as the year before Election day, in our case all articles between 25 May 2013 and April 24 2014. Like electoral success, media attention is skewed, so again we take the natural logged transformed variables.[34] Next to media attention, a number of control variables are added, very similar to the previous chapters.

Table 5.1 provides an overview of the descriptives for top and ordinary candidates. They show strong differences between top and ordinary candidates with regard to their electoral score. Top candidates receive almost five times the number of preferential votes of ordinary candidates (respectively 22583 and 4437 votes). Top candidates also appear more frequently in the news. Outside the campaign period, they receive on average fifteen times as much attention as ordinary candidates (291 versus 19 articles). During the short campaign, this difference is even stronger, as top candidates appear on average in 31 news items, while ordinary candidates appear on average in just 1.5 articles. However, in all cases the variance is quite high indicating that there are also strong differences within the two groups.

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[34] Although media in the long and short campaign are related, we have no indication of any multicollinearity problems in the analysis.

Table 5.1: Descriptive statistics of variables used in analyses

Variable	Top candidates		Ordinary candidates	
	Mean(S.E)	Freq.(%)	Mean(S.E)	Freq.(%)
Number of preferential votes	22583.0(30152.1)		4436.9(3663.3)	
Media attention (short campaign)	31.30(81.69)		1.46(3.67)	
Media attention (long campaign)	291.25(568.31)		19.06(45.42)	
Gender				
- Male		63.68%		51.84%
- Female		36.32%		48.16%
Legislative mandate				
- Yes		67.92%		4.82%
- No		32.08%		95.18%
Executive mandate				
- Yes		33.49%		6.21%
- No		66.51%		93.79%

In order to test the hypotheses, we employ path models. SEM is very suitable to test such path models, as it allows the researcher to include multiple dependent variables in the same model (Kline, 2011). Thus, one can test a complex causal model where different factors influence each other.[35] We run two separate models, one for top candidates and one for ordinary candidates, and compare similarities and differences between them. Due to the fact that some of the endogenous variables are binary and others continuous, some paths were estimated by means of linear regression, and others by means of logistic regression (GSEM). Robust clustered standard errors are used to account for the fact that the candidates are nested in election-district combinations.

In the modelling, first paths are included from the social demographic factors, gender and ethnicity, to all factors later in the funnel. Subsequently, paths were added from executive and legislative incumbency to the different factors later in the model, and so forth. Additionally, we added a path from district magnitude to individual success and, in the case of ordinary candidates, also to

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[35] We are aware of alternative methods to analyze mediation such as described by Imai et al. (2010). However, since we analyze multiple mediations at the same time, we employ SEM instead.

ballot list position. These models fit the data well.[36] In the next step we go from a full model to a more parsimonious model. Hence, all paths that were insignificant were omitted. Appendix G provides a graphical overview of the final, parsimonious models for top and ordinary candidates, whereas Table 5.2 shows in more detail the unstandardized coefficients of each effect and the model fit measures. Figure 5.2 and 5.3 highlight the paths relevant to the hypotheses.

5.5. Results

When comparing the model for top politicians with the model for ordinary candidates, it immediately becomes clear that the extent to which media affect electoral success differs. For top candidates, the effect of news attention during the *long* campaign is significant, whereas for ordinary candidates, the effect of media attention during the *short* campaign is significant (Table 5.2 and Figure 5.2). This indicates that the common idea that politicians should attract as much media attention as possible during the short campaign to boost their popularity does not hold for top politicians once we take previous news attention into account. For them, the electoral competition already starts during the long campaign. The coefficient indicates that for each increase in news attention by 10%, the proportion of preferential votes increases by .6%.[37] For ordinary candidates, on the other hand, long-term media has no direct effect. Rather, for them any extra attention shortly before Election Day is beneficial. For each increase in news attention by 10%, the proportion of preferential votes increases with .1%. While this effect may seem low at first instance, it can be quite impactful as it means

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[36] Note that using GSEM (or clustered standard errors for that matter) makes it impossible to retrieve fit indices. Therefore we estimated our model fit using a normal SEM model without clustered standard errors. Considering that both models are derived from the same correlation matrices, and the specification of both models is similar, we would argue this is the most correct way to handle this problem. For top candidates the fit indices are as follow: $\chi^2(5)=4.04$, p=0.54, RMSEA=0.00 (90% CI: 0.00–0.074), CFI=1.000. For ordinary candidates we get the following fit indices: $\chi^2(3)=3.60$, p=0.31, RMSEA=0.017 (90% CI: 0.00–0.068), CFI=1.000.

[37] $e^{\left(\log\left(\frac{100+10}{100}\right)\right).066}$

that candidates who get mentioned in five articles will score 5% better than fellow party members who get mentioned only once. We should not totally neglect the effect of news coverage in the long campaign for ordinary candidates, as it does affect the likelihood to get covered during the campaign, but insofar that long campaign news matters only indirectly. The differences between top and ordinary candidates are in line with our first hypotheses (1a and 1b).

The models in Table 5.2 also provide evidence for the second set of hypotheses. We expected that female politicians benefit from identity voting, but that for ordinary candidates this advantage is partly suppressed because female candidates appear less in the media. Figure 5.2 highlights the relations between gender, media attention and electoral success, based on the results of the full model in Table 5.2. Focusing on ordinary candidates, we find a significant positive effect of being female. In general, the proportion of preferential votes increases by 19.5% for female candidates.[38] However, at the same time the results show that ordinary female politicians receive significantly less coverage in the media, which negatively affects their electoral success. Thus, for ordinary candidates, the electoral advantages of female candidates are indeed partly suppressed by their lack of media attention, supporting hypothesis 2a. For top candidates, we also find a direct positive effect of being female on electoral success, with the proportion of preferential votes increasing by 18.2% for female top candidates. Yet, unlike for ordinary candidates, there is no difference between male and female candidates in their media coverage. Hence, the electoral identity bonus of these candidates is not suppressed by their lack of media coverage, supporting hypothesis 2b.

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[38] $e^{(.178)}$

Table 5.2: Results of the SEM model

	Top candidates b(SE)	Ordinary candidates b(SE)
Individual electoral success (log) on		
Media long campaign (log)	.066(.02)**	N/S
Media short campaign (log)	N/S	.012(.00)*
First candidate on the list (Ref = List pusher)	1.403(.06)**	-
Nr.2	.397(.05)**	-
Nr.3	.301(.07)**	-
Ballot list position	-	.030(.00)**
Executive mandate	N/S	N/S
Female	.167(.05)**	.178(.02)**
District magnitude	-.013(.00)**	-.036(.00)**
Legislative mandate	N/S	.257(.04)**
Media short campaign (log) on		
First candidate on the list	1.621(.39)**	-
Media long campaign (log)	.848(.21)**	.323(.04)**
Female	N/S	-.393(.14)**
Legislative mandate	N/S	1.434(.30)**
Executive mandate	N/S	.733(.37)*
District magnitude	N/S	-.042(.02)*
List puller on		
Media long campaign (log)	.548(.14)**	-
Nr.2 on		
Female	1.922(.50)**	-
Nr.3 on		
Female	N/S	-
Ballot list position on		
Media long campaign (log)	-	.270(.05)**
District magnitude	-	-.521(.02)**
Legislative mandate	-	5.845(.87)**
Media long campaign (log) on		
Legislative mandate	1.091(.27)**	2.666(.31)**
Executive mandate	1.642(.22)**	3.266(.26)**
Female	N/S	-1.156(.14)**
District magnitude	.046(.02)*	N/S
Executive mandate on		
Legislative mandate	.877(.32)**	1.709(.35)**
Female	-.698(.31)*	-1.561(.33)**
χ^2(df)	22.28(22)	5.04(6)
RMSEA	.008	.001
RMSEA CI	.000-.058	.000-.034
CFI	.999	1.000
N	212	1223

*p<.05; **p<.01

Note: Paths that were not significant in both models are omitted from the parsimonious SEM models. Paths that are significant in one model and not the other are indicated by N/S in the model where they are not significant.

Figure 5.2: Direct and indirect effects of gender and minority status for top (above) and ordinary (below) candidates.
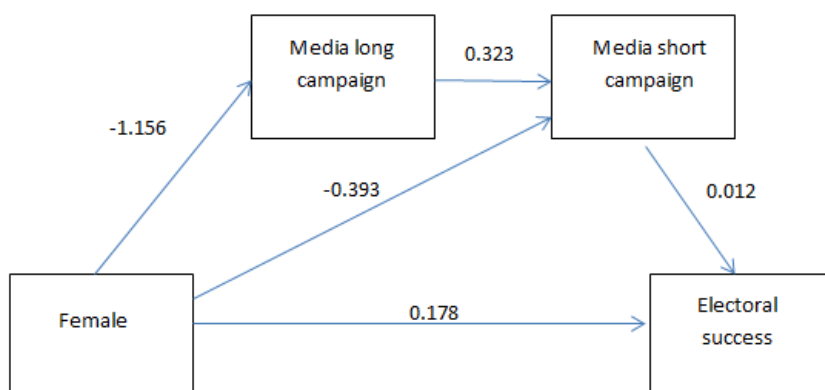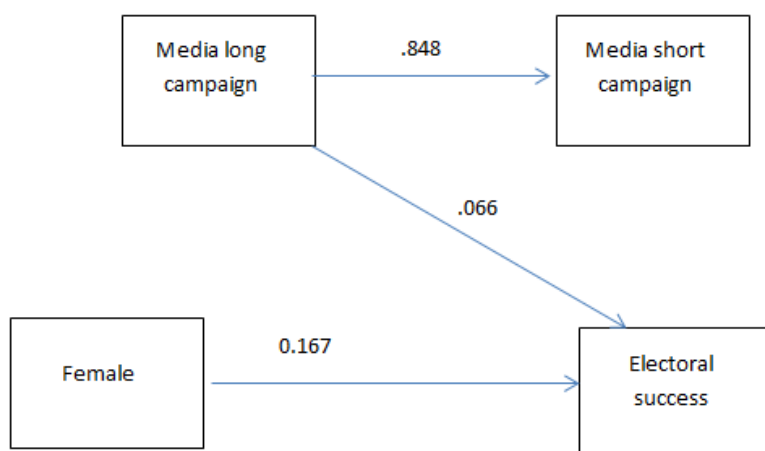
Figure 5.3: Direct and indirect effects of incumbency for top (above) and ordinary (below) candidates.
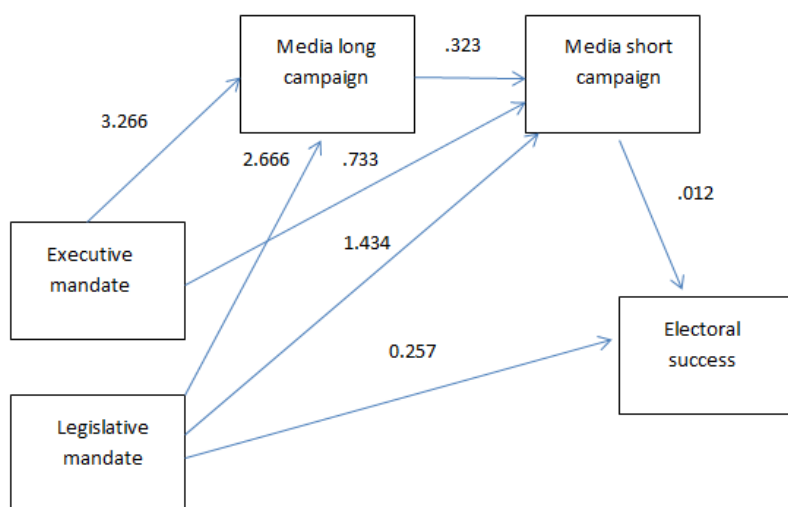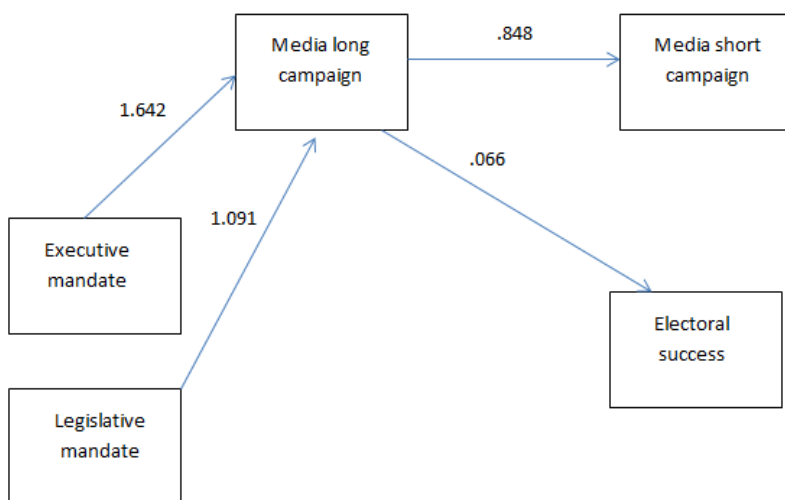
Figure 5.3 provides an overview of the incumbency effects. The figure shows that having experience in an executive and legislative mandate indeed affects electoral success, but only indirectly through the extra media attention which candidates receive in the long campaign. Because of the extra media attention, the proportion of votes that candidates with executive mandates receive increases by 11.4%.[39] For candidates with legislative mandates, the proportion of votes increases by 7.5% through increased media attention. Interestingly, and going against hypothesis 3a, there is no direct effect of incumbency on electoral success for top candidates. On the other hand, hypothesis 3a does hold for ordinary candidates, regarding their legislative mandates. The proportion of votes that ordinary candidates with legislative mandates receive, increases by 29.3%, simply due to being experienced. At the same time, ordinary candidates with legislative experience also receive more votes because they are more covered in the media, both in the long and short campaign. This leads to an additional bonus of 3.1%.[40] For executive mandates we only find an indirect effect, which is rather limited for ordinary candidates with an increase in the vote by about 2.2% through the indirect effect via the media.

All in all, limited support is found for hypothesis 3a and no support is found for hypothesis 3b. The relationship between incumbency, media and electoral success differs from our initial expectations; for top candidates experience in executive and legislative functions matter only in so far that they generate extra media attention, but they do not matter directly. For ordinary candidates, on the other hand, the electoral bonus via the media is limited. Rather, for these candidates, executive and legislative functions have a direct effect. These findings can be partly explained by the distribution between these groups (Table 5.1) given that candidates with a legislative or executive mandate really stand out amongst the ordinary candidates. Nevertheless also for the group

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[39] $e^{(1.642*.066)}$

[40] $e^{(2.666*.323*.012)} + e^{(1.434*.012)}$

of top candidates, only 33% of the candidates occupied an executive mandate, yet these candidates do not seem to be able to distinguish themselves directly.

We end the result section with two robustness checks in order to gauge the sensitivity of the operationalization for top and ordinary candidates. Alternative operationalizations are used in which all candidates at the first three positions of the ballot list are coded as top candidates and a second test in which all candidates at the first two positions are coded top candidates.[41] In both cases, we also coded the list pusher as top candidate. The results of these sensitivity analyses, which can be found in online appendix H, indicate that almost all of the findings are robust. Both alternative model specifications find that for top candidates the long campaign matters most, whereas for ordinary candidates coverage in the short campaign is the most important. The other hypotheses are also confirmed under almost all circumstances, although the tests do show that when coding all first three ballot list positions as top candidates, there is a direct effect of having an executive mandate for top candidates, which is more in line with hypothesis 3a. Additionally, when coding all candidates at the first two ballot list positions as top candidates, there is an indication that female top candidates might get less media coverage after all, but this is not significant at the p<.01 level.

5.6.   Conclusion and discussion

Although previous research provides evidence that the media influence electoral success, most of it focuses on the inter-party competition. This chapter examined what effect media attention has on the individual electoral success of political candidates for the intra-party competition. Two major conclusions are reached, which are of value for future studies on media effects in election time.

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[41] Ideally we would have performed a third sensitivity test in which we further distinguish the list puller from other candidates or make three categories. Unfortunately this is not possible given the fact that we would not have enough statistical power for the SEM analysis.

First of all, the findings show that it is relevant to distinguish between top and ordinary candidates when it comes to the direct media effect. In the case of ordinary candidates, the large majority of people on the electoral lists, especially media attention during the short campaign impacts electoral success. This can be explained by the fact that for these candidates the most important reason to get in the media is to obtain name recognition and become salient in the voters' minds. Thus, the closer this attention is to election day the better. For top candidates, on the other hand, media attention during the long campaign leads to more preferential votes. For them media attention matters not so much to get name recognition, but rather determines who are the most viable candidates in the voters' mind. Top candidates need to build a reputation before the heat of the campaign starts. A candidate on top of the list cannot just appear out of nowhere. These findings not only indicate that we need to distinguish between types of candidates, but more importantly show that researchers should include the long campaign in their study of media effects. Not doing so would lead to wrong conclusions. Second, the results suggest that media attention needs to be studied in a broader causal model, as it impacts how other factors influence electoral success. For example, for ordinary candidates, the lack of media attention for female candidates suppresses the direct identity bonus they receive. On the other hand, for top candidates we found that the incumbency bonus is only apparent because these candidates get more frequently covered in the media.

This study only focused on the case of Belgium, and future studies should therefore investigate whether these findings can be confirmed in other countries. In general, we expect similar mechanisms to be at play. Many of the elements of the Belgian system of intra-party preference voting can also be found in other European countries. For instance, 12 out of the 21 countries with a preferential-list PR system share the combination of optional and multiple preferential voting (e.g. Iceland, Norway and Switzerland). Of course, we are aware that certain differences in the specific electoral rules exist. In some countries, such as the

Netherlands and Finland, preference voting is compulsory. Also, differences exist in the number of preferential votes that voters can cast, sometimes limiting this to just one vote. This could actually increase the importance of media attention for candidates even further. Especially when multiple voting is not possible, citizens may be less inclined to support candidates lower on the list (Nagtzaam and Erkel, 2016), meaning that it becomes even more important for ordinary candidates to attract coverage in the media. Future research should provide more insight in how the specific electoral configurations impact preference voting and moderate media effects.

A second shortcoming of this study is that it focuses on media visibility, but did not look into detail at *how* candidates are portrayed. We know from previous studies that for political actors the tone or favorability of coverage matters (e.g. Shaw, 1999). Just like the main media effect, we speculate that also with regard to tone, differences exist between top and ordinary candidates. We specifically expect that the tone of attention is more important for top candidates than for ordinary candidates, as for the latter group media attention is about raising salience, so every article, positive or negative, is welcome. For top candidates, on the other hand, it is not so much about getting known, but more about creating a favorable image. Therefore, for this group we expect that tone matters more, which might nuance our finding that for top candidates media attention during the short campaign is less relevant.

The conclusions have implications that are useful for the literature on campaigning and preferential voting. The study shows that media effects should not be considered as homogenous as they vary between types of candidates, and between the long and short campaign. In other words, campaigns should not be studied in a vacuum. These implications apply to multimember district proportional systems where the electoral struggle between candidates is to a large extent an intra-party competition, but may also hold in majoritarian systems, where candidates compete in an inter-party competition.

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One for all or all for one: The electoral effects of personalized campaign strategies

Chapter based on: van Erkel, P. F. A., Thijssen, P., & Van Aelst, P. (in press). One for all or all for one: The electoral effects of personalized campaign strategies. *Acta Politica*

6.1. Introduction

Recently, scholars have argued that the decline in party membership and the deterioration of party identification have enhanced the role of individual politicians in the political arena (Karvonen, 2010; Mcallister, 2009; Rahat & Sheafer, 2007). Moreover, new social media platforms increase opportunities for personalized communication within election campaigns (Enli & Skogerbø, 2013). This may have given candidates increased incentives to adopt new strategies to cultivate personal votes, which can manifest itself in multiple ways. Candidates can become more active in the media and/or parliament, for instance by sending individual press-releases or initiating new bills (Bowler, 2010; Crisp et al., 2004). However, they can also adopt a more independent campaign style. A recent strand of literature concentrates on the latter strategy and distinguishes between party-centered campaigns, where candidates promote the political party, and personalized campaigns, in which candidates accentuate their own political identity (Cross & Young, 2015; De Winter & Baudewyns, 2015; Eder, Jenny & Müller, 2015; Gschwend & Zittel, 2015; Selb & Lutz, 2015; Zittel & Gschwend, 2008). These studies explore under which conditions candidates are more likely to run personalized campaigns and conclude that campaign strategy is dependent on

factors such as political experience (Eder, Jenny & Müller, 2015) and the anticipated electoral outcome (Selb & Lutz, 2015).

While the question *when* political candidates run personalized campaigns received a lot of scholarly attention, the question to *what extent* personalized campaigns contribute to electoral success has mostly been neglected. Earlier empirical studies in Great-Britain conclude that candidates who campaign stronger on issues that matter in their own constituency, benefit from this (Denver et al., 2002; Pattie, Johnston & Fieldhouse., 1995). Yet, constituency campaigns do not necessarily have to be personalized, since candidates may also stress the success of their party within their district. Additionally, Great-Britain is characterized by a majoritarian political system with single-member districts in which a limited number of candidates, belonging to different political parties, compete for votes. It remains unclear whether personalized campaign strategies lead to electoral benefits in complex PR-list systems, where candidates not only compete with candidates from other parties, but also with candidates from their own party.

Whereas the previous chapters looked at party factors, candidate characteristics and the media, this chapter contributes to the literature introduced above and assesses the electoral effects of personalized campaign strategies. The Belgian context provides candidates with incentives to run both party-centered campaigns and personalized campaigns, creating variation between individual candidates in the campaign strategy they use. Using the candidate survey described in chapter 2, the campaign strategy for each candidate is mapped out and it is investigated whether more personalized campaigns generate more preferential votes. The results suggest of this chapter that this is only partly the case. Especially the investment of personal campaign money is an important predictor of individual electoral success. Moreover, the findings show that candidates who aim to attract attention for themselves instead of the party also score better, but this effect is contingent on a candidate's financial resources

and list position. Finally, we find that personalized campaigning matters more for candidates from traditional parties.

6.2. Personalized versus party-centered campaign strategies

In multi-member district systems, where an intra-party competition complements the inter-party competition, candidates have a dual aim of winning votes for their party and for themselves. Consequently, they are faced with a trade-off in deciding which campaign strategy to use. Zittel and Gschwend (2008) distinguish between two types of strategies; party-centered campaigns and personalized campaigns. In *party-centered campaigns* the main goal of candidates is to maximize the share of attention for their political party, putting themselves second. Hence, candidates mostly emphasize the accomplishments and ideology of the party and focus less on their personal ideas and merits. In *personalized campaigns*, on the other hand, the aim is to attract as much attention for oneself as possible. Hence, the main focus is not on the political party, but fully on the individual candidate. Politicians can emphasize their experience and accomplishments, bring forward new issues, or ideologically differentiate oneself from the party. However, these two campaign strategies should be seen as ideal types, since politicians may adopt elements of both in practice. For a more specific conceptualization of the two strategies we follow the framework of Gschwend and Zittel (2015) and distinguish three dimensions on which campaigns can be more personalized or party-centered: campaign *norm*, campaign *agenda*, and campaign *finance*.[1]

Campaign *norm* relates to the overall goal of the campaign. As stated before, candidates can maximize the attention their political party receives (party-centered campaign), or rather use their campaign to maximize attention for themselves (personalized campaign). Although both strategies have an electoral goal, the second strategy provides more 'personal' information about the candidate and could thus persuade voters to cast a preferential vote, as citizens

prefer to vote for someone they know and can identify with (Gshwend & Zittel, 2015). The second dimension, *campaign agenda*, is related to the issues that are stressed during the campaign. Generally, political parties focus on a limited set of issues, aiming to make these issues salient in the campaign (Budge & Farlie, 1983; Norris et al., 1999). We expect that candidates mostly follow their party on these core issues. However, to distinguish themselves from other candidates within the party, they can also decide to personally highlight issues that are important in their constituency or on which they are an expert. In any case, a campaign is more personalized if a candidate decides to highlight other issues than the ones the political party focuses on. The final dimension is related to the *financial* aspect. When a campaign is fully party-centered candidates will rely completely on the money and existing distribution networks of the party. However, candidates can also invest their own money in the campaign. We follow Gschwend & Zittel (2015) and expect that candidates who rely less on party money and more on their own money, have more autonomy and thus more room to adopt a personalized campaign strategy.

In sum, campaigns are personalized when candidates aim to maximize their personal attention, highlight issues that do not receive attention from the party and use party-independent finances. However, these dimensions do not necessarily have to go together. Candidates can aim to maximize attention for themselves, but still stick to traditional party issues. Similarly, they can stress new issues, but rely solely on party money. Thus, while the three dimensions are related and may strengthen each other, candidates do not have to score high on all dimensions simultaneously.

Recent studies show strong variation in campaign styles between candidates *within* an electoral system. For instance, candidates' anticipation of getting elected strongly influences their campaign strategy (Eder et al., 2015; Selb & Lutz, 2015; Zittel & Gschwend, 2008). Politicians are especially likely to run personalized campaigns when they expect to have some chances to get elected,

but are not certain yet. Incumbency and a good ballot list position also make it more likely to run a personalized campaign (Eder, Jenny & Müller, 2015), as these candidates often have more political experience to stress in their campaign. Finally, Eder, Jenny and Müller (2015) show that variation exists between candidates of different political parties. They argue that personalization is stronger in typical catch-all parties, which are ideologically more diverse.

Moreover, spending caps – especially important in the Belgian case – are an additional factor in explaining differences in personal campaigning and, more importantly, personal spending on campaigns (Weekers, Maddens & Noppe, 2009). However, these caps are not the same for all candidates. Depending on incumbency and ballot list position, candidates can spend more or less personal money. High positioned candidates, reflecting the number of seats for a party in the previous legislature plus one, can spend 8700 euro plus an additional 0.035 euro for each voter in the constituency. All other candidates have a limit of 5000 euro (De Winter & Baudewyns, 2015).

While we already have insight in why candidates choose different campaign strategies, it is unclear whether these strategies actually work. Previous research shows that spending money in campaigns matters (Johnston & Pattie, 2008; Put, Maddens & Smullers, 2015; Samuels, 2001). However, these studies focus on the amount of money spent, but do not distinguish personalized from party-centered campaigns (Johnson, 2013; Maddens et al., 2006). An exception is a recent study by Gschwend and Zittel (2015). They investigate candidates in the 2009 German elections and find that personalized campaigns are more effective than party-centered campaigns. This effect is especially strong for the financial and agenda dimensions. However, this study focuses on single-member districts with one candidate per political party. It remains untested whether personalized campaign strategies are effective in the more complex context of a proportional system with flexible lists. Whereas in single-member district systems the party label plays an important role in the choice for a candidate, this is much less the

case in multi-member districts systems where multiple candidates run for the same party. In order to receive votes, but also to be recognized at all in such systems, candidates have to put in more effort to attract attention for themselves.

We expect that candidates electorally benefit from more personalized campaigns. In particular in multi-member districts systems with many candidates competing on the same party list, candidates have to attract attention in order to be recognized and stand out from their peers. Using personalized campaign strategies could help candidates to generate name recognition for themselves, making it more likely to attract citizens' votes. Additionally, personalized campaign strategies can be used by candidates to stress their political track-record in order to convince citizens of their competence. The strategy to use a personalized campaign agenda can also be beneficial. By stressing other issues than their party, candidates can distinguish themselves from their fellow party candidates. Adding to that, they can stress more local issues to attract more local votes. Finally, we also expect that personal investments generate more preferential votes. While all forms of campaign funding will be helpful in obtaining votes, we expect that the effect of personal money will be stronger than the investment of party money, as candidates who invest more personal money can run a more autonomous campaign in which there is more room to attract attention for oneself and can signal their ambition towards voters.

Hypothesis 1a: *Candidates who aim to attract more personal attention receive more preferential votes than candidates who aim to attract more attention for their political party.*

Hypothesis 1b: *Candidates who campaign on personal issues receive more preferential votes than candidates who campaign on party issues.*

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Hypothesis 1c: *Candidates who invest more personal money receive more preferential votes than candidates who rely more on party money.*

However, the electoral effects of the three dimensions of personalized campaigning might not work across the board. Differences can be expected between candidates depending on their ballot list position. High positioned candidates are given a higher profile in the advertisements of political parties and in general possess more resources in terms of campaign money and staff (Lefevere & Dandoy, 2011). Also, they more easily attract attention from the media than lower ranked candidates, who are often completely ignored (Van Aelst et al., 2008). For that reason, high positioned candidates will be more successful in reaching their audience. Moreover, they may have a more extensive political track-record and can therefore more easily stress personal achievements. Lower positioned candidates have less resources at their disposal, receive less coverage in the media and have in general a modest political track-record to highlight, making it more difficult to set up successful personalized campaign strategies in order to convince citizens to vote for them. Another reason why we expect personalized campaigns to be more effective for high positioned candidates is that they are probably more strongly embedded in the inter-party competition compared to low positioned candidates, whose main competitors are mostly their fellow party members. Thus, by running personalized campaigns, high positioned candidates might not only attract voters from their own party, but might also convince voters from ideological related parties to vote for them. We expect this to be less likely for low positioned candidates, who are unlikely to actually make voters switch parties with a personal campaign strategy.

Hypothesis 2: *The positive effects of a personalized campaign norm, agenda and finance on individual electoral success is stronger for candidates with a higher ballot list position.*

We also expect that personal campaign money may strengthen the effects of the other two dimensions. Candidates can try to attract attention for themselves or put new issues on the agenda, but if their campaign hardly reaches the electorate it is unlikely to have any effect. Therefore, candidates have to press leaflets, develop websites and perhaps even hire personnel to join their campaign team. Thus, it is not sufficient to try to attract as much attention for oneself as possible, but candidates also need to possess enough resources to actually succeed in spreading their personalized message to the voters. In that sense, personal money can be seen as an important prerequisite for the success of the other two dimensions.

Hypothesis 3: *The positive effects of a personalized campaign norm and agenda on individual electoral success is stronger when candidates invest more personal money in their campaign.*

Finally, we expect the effectiveness of personalized campaign strategies to depend on a candidates' party. More specifically, we expect that personalized campaign strategies lead to more preferential votes for candidates of traditional parties such as the Christian Democratic, Social Democratic and Liberal party, than for candidates belonging to niche parties such as the Greens, Far-Right, and the Regionalist party. Previous research indicates that the electorate of traditional parties is much more likely to cast a preferential vote than citizens who vote for niche parties (André et al., 2012), since the latter are more guided by their party's ideology. Thus, for candidates of traditional parties there is potentially more to gain from running a personalized campaign strategy. Additionally, traditional parties have a stronger pool of candidates. Many of them have experience at the local or national level, making the competition between them fiercer than the

competition between candidates of newer parties, who only have a few well-known politicians.

Hypothesis 4: *A personalized campaign strategy is more effective for candidates belonging to a traditional political party than for candidates belonging to a niche party.*

6.3. Data and method

To test the hypotheses, the candidate survey as described in chapter 2 is used. However, not all candidates answered the questions on personalized campaign strategies. Therefore, in the end, the analyses will use the 602 candidates who completed all relevant questions on (personal) campaigning. Belgium is a good case to study personalized campaigning strategies, as its system provides candidates with incentives to maximize votes for the party as well as their personal votes, thereby creating a sort of trade-off. Political parties are important as seats are divided between them and as they determine the order of the ballot lists. Thus, if a party wins more seats, their candidates have more chance to get elected. At the same time, preferential votes matter to change the order of the ballot list. Additionally, André et al. (in press) show that even for candidates who do not receive enough preferential votes to get elected, they still matter because they influence which ballot list position a candidate will have at the next elections. Candidates thus have incentives to maximize both the share of party votes and their preferential votes.

To measure the electoral effect of the different campaign strategies, individual electoral success is again used as dependent variable. For this chapter we use the district proportion; we divide each candidate's absolute number of preferential votes by the total number of preferential votes cast in the electoral district of the candidate. The district proportion is chosen over the list proportion, as it enables us to test the fourth hypothesis, which requires interaction with

party dummies. If the list proportion would be used instead, only the intra-party competition could be modelled, not the inter-party competition that also matters for higher positioned candidates. However, the result section also assesses what happens when the list proportion is used instead, because this may give more insight in what is going on behind the effects. For instance, the theoretical section of this chapter described how a personalized campaigning strategy may be more effective for high positioned candidates than for the lower positioned. We speculated that this may be because high positioned candidates participate both in the inter- and intra-party election and can attract more easily voters from other (closely related) parties. Should this be the case, a stronger effect should be found in the interaction between personalized campaign strategy and ballot list position when using the district proportion instead of the list proportion.[42]

Three dimensions of personalized campaigning are distinguished, following the operationalization of Zittel and Gschwend (2008). The first dimension, *campaign norm,* is measured by asking candidates on an eleven-point scale about the main goal of campaigns. More specifically, candidates were asked whether they aim to attract attention for their party (0) or for themselves (10). For the second dimension, *campaign agenda*, candidates were asked whether they focus on issues in their campaign that do not receive attention from their party. This variable represents a dummy in which a positive answer reflects a more personalized campaign. Finally, *campaign finance* is operationalized by concentrating on campaign funding. First, candidates were asked how much money they plan to spend on their campaign. Subsequently, they were asked what percentage of this amount is funded by the party and what percentage is paid with own money. Using these questions, two variables are created: *party*

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[42] Note that for some of the other chapters we also compared what happens when using list proportions instead of district proportions. However, in those chapters no real substantial differences were found between the two dependent variables, which is why we did not report on this comparison there and rather chose the operationalization that made conceptually most sense for those chapters. In this chapter, the comparison does provide some added insights to the analyses which is why we decided to report on it.

funds (percentage of party funds*total campaign spending) and *personal funds* (percentage of own investment*total campaign spending).[43] If the first hypothesis is correct then personal funds should have a stronger effect than party funds. Candidates were questioned before the elections, at the start of the campaign. This way, candidates cannot adjust their answer based on their electoral success.[44]

As stated in the theoretical framework, there are a number of factors that may influence electoral success, but also the campaign strategy candidates use. In order to increase the internal validity, a number of controls are added. First of all, we control for campaign intensity. In the survey candidates were presented with twelve campaign means and activities, and were asked whether they plan to use them in their campaign.[45] By counting the number of positive answers, a campaign intensity index is composed, running from 0 to 12. The model also controls for other factors which may influence both the adopted campaign strategy and the proportion of preferential votes. Hence, different socio-demographic variables are included such as age, gender, and ethnicity (Cutler, 2002; Erzeel & Caluwaerts, 2015). Previous studies also show that political experience influences the electoral success of candidates and their campaign strategy (Maddens et al., 2006; Thijssen, 2013; Van Holsteyn & Andeweg, 2012). Therefore, a measure of incumbency at the local and national level is included, as well as ballot list position with additional dummies for the first and last candidates

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[43] Belgian candidates have to officially declare their campaign spending. However, since these records do not distinguish between party and personal money, they are more suitable when we would study how much money candidates effectively spent in their campaign, but less useful in specifically studying personalized financing.

[44] We are aware that asking candidates beforehand does not capture the fact that some candidates might spend more or less money than intended during the campaign. However, a problem of asking candidates afterwards is that those who performed less well than expected, may be inclined to understate the amount of money they spent. With our measure we avoid this problem.

[45] The campaign means are leaflets, cards, posters, advertisements, websites, emails, Facebook and Twitter. The activities are contacting voters by telephone, campaigning in local associations, campaigning at markets and door-to-door visits.

on the list, who usually receive an additional electoral bonus. By controlling for incumbency and ballot list position we also account for the fact that some candidates have a higher spending cap.

We also address the option that the effects suffer from reversed causality; anticipated electoral performance may affect the strategy of a candidate. Therefore, candidates had to indicate in the survey whether they "were certain", had a "high chance", a "low chance" or "no chance" to get elected.[46] This variable is recoded into a dummy in which 0 indicates that the candidate does not expect to be elected, whereas 1 means that (s)he does. Finally, to control for the fact that candidates run for different parties and in different districts, dummies are added for the different districts and political parties, as well as the electoral level in which candidates participate.

The next section presents a number of regression models. The first models include the three dimensions of campaigning together with different control variables. Subsequent models add interaction terms to test the other three hypotheses. As the residuals have a non-normal distribution when running the regressions, a transformation of some variables is necessary. A Box-Cox test indicates that a natural logarithmic transformation should be used for the dependent variable and also for the two campaign spending measures and media coverage, all variables which are very skewed.

6.4.   Results

Figure 6.1 shows that candidates vary strongly in their campaign goal. In general, candidates lean more towards a party-centered campaign, which is not surprising considering that parties are still the most important actors in the Belgian political

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[46] The validity of this measure was checked by comparing it with actual results. Of the candidates who said they would certainly get elected, 97% also got elected. For candidates who indicated that they had a "high chance" or a "low chance", this was respectively 68% and 3%. Of the candidates who indicated they had no chance at all, no one got elected.

system. About 20% percent of the candidates indicate that their only goal is to maximize attention for their party. A similar percentage aims to perfectly balance the goal of maximizing party attention with the goal of maximizing their personal attention. The percentage of candidates that aim to attract attention only for themselves is very low, even though about 22% of the candidates is leaning to the personalized side (score between 6 and 10). The campaign agenda (Table 1) as well shows clear variation among candidates. Although most candidates simply follow the party, almost one out of four candidates plan to campaign on different issues. Finally, the personal funds of candidates varies strongly around an average of 1324 euro. However, almost one out of four candidates does not invest any personal money in the campaign, while at the same time 3% spends more than 10.000 euro.

Figure 6.1: Overview of the campaign goal distribution.
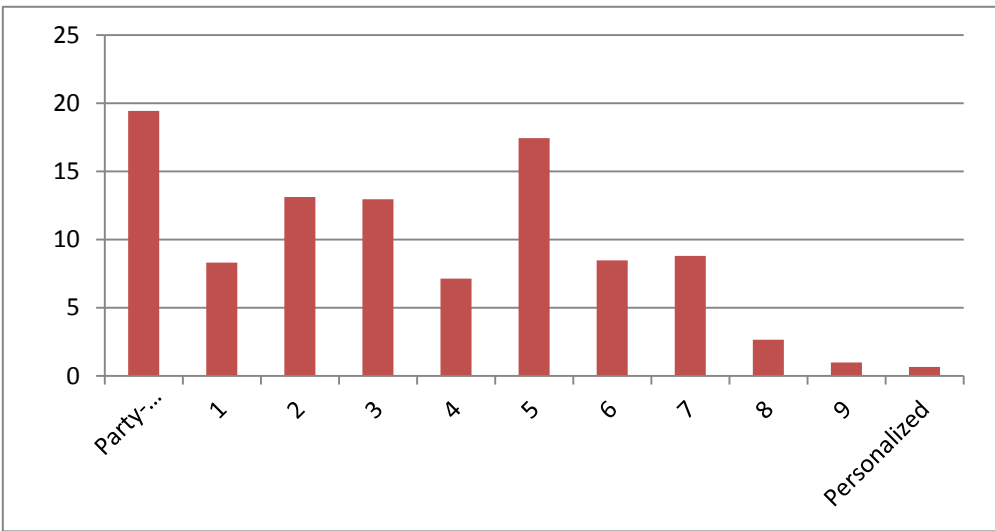
These descriptives show that most candidates run mainly party-centered campaigns, but that there is strong variation, with a majority of candidates adopting at least some elements of a personalized campaign. The subsequent question then becomes whether this variation actually matters. In Table 6.1 we run a number of regressions to study the electoral effects of these campaign

Table 6.1: OLS regression models of electoral success(N = 602). Fixed effects for districts

Individual electoral success(log)	Model 1 b(SE)	Model 2 b(SE)
Campaign norm	.013(.01)	-.002(.01)
Campaign agenda	.022(.06)	.045(.03)
Party spending(log)	.013(.01)	-.001(.01)
Personal spending(log)	.041(.01)**	.018(.01)**
Political party (Ref.=Christian Democratic party)		
- Regionalist party	.458(.09)**	.405(.05)**
- Green party	-.719(.09)**	-.677(.06)**
- Social democratic party	-.377(.09)**	-.436(.05)**
- Liberal party	-.248(.08)**	-.195(.05)**
- Far right party	-1.208(.10)**	-1.248(.07)**
- Socialist party	-1.652(.10)**	-1.619(.07)**
Electoral level (Ref.=Regional)		
- Federal	.326(.05)**	.173(.03)**
Ballot list position		.029(.00)**
First candidate		.904(.09)**
Last candidate		.508(.07)**
Woman		.297(.03)**
Ethnic minority		.217(.06)**
Age		-.002(.00)
Local legislative mandate		.162(.04)**
Flemish parliament		.094(.06)
Federal Parliament		.174(.07)**
European Parliament		.468(.19)**
Local executive mandate		-.005(.03)
Major		.103(.05)
Minister		.787(.14)**
Anticipation to get elected		.288(.05)**
Campaign intensity		.011(.01)
Constant	-6.130(.11)**	-5.783(.15)**
R²	.676	.896

*p<.05 **p<.01

strategies. The first model includes the different dimensions of a personalized campaign strategy together with dummies for parties, electoral constituencies and electoral level. The model shows that candidates investing more personal money in their campaign, receive more preferential votes. When candidates spend 10% more personal funding, the proportion of preferential votes (in the district) increases by .4%.[47] While this may seem small at first sight, it is actually

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[47] $e^{\left(\log\left(\frac{100+10}{100}\right)\right).041}$

quite substantial, as it means that the proportion of preferential votes of candidates who spend 200 euro increases by a factor of 1.04 (4%) over candidates who spend 100 euro. While personal funding is significant, party funding is not. We expect that this is because candidates who invest more personal money can run a more autonomous campaign, and therefore also a more substantive personalized campaign, than candidates who rely more on party money. This tentative expectation gets support in an explorative analysis, in which we regress the extent to which candidates feel that they can run an autonomous campaign on the amount of personal money invested. This analysis indeed finds a significant relationship (not in table) between investing personal money and being able to run an autonomous campaign. The amount of money spend on the campaign might also be a proxy for a candidate's effort. However, we did somewhat control for this alternative mechanism by adding intensity of the campaign to our model.

No significant effects are found for the other dimensions. Candidates who claim to run a more personal campaign do not benefit from this, nor do candidates who emphasize new issues.[48] These results hold in model 2, in which we control for political and socio-demographic characteristics, the intensity of one's campaign and the anticipated electoral outcome. We conclude – just like in the first model – that neither campaign norm nor campaign agenda have significant positive effects, but that personal funding does matter. Concluding, support is found for hypothesis 1c, but hypothesis 1a and 1b have to be rejected.[49]

The second hypothesis states that the personalized campaign strategies may only work for higher-positioned candidates. This could explain the insignificant finding of campaign norm and agenda in the first two models. To test the second hypothesis, model 3 adds interaction terms between the three

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[48] We included campaign norm as a linear effect. Yet, we investigate what happens when we recode the scale in three categories; party-centered (score 0-4), in between (score 5) or personalized (6-10). Even with this specification no effect is found.

[49] None of the VIF values are higher than 4, indicating that there are no problems of multicollinearity.

dimensions of personalized campaigning and ballot list position (Table 6.2). The significant interaction between list position and campaign norm supports hypothesis 2. Candidates on the second position on the list benefit more from personalized campaign strategies than candidates on the third place, and so on. To get a better understanding, figure 6.2 plots the marginal effect of the campaign norm on the proportion of preferential votes, depending on list position (Brambor et al., 2006). The figure shows that the strategy to attract attention for oneself is significant for the first four candidates on the list (about 20%), but not for candidates on the fifth position or below. The relationship is quite strong for higher-positioned candidates. For example, for candidates who take the second position on the ballot, the coefficient of campaign norm is .019, indicating that for each increase of the campaign norm by one, the proportion of preferential votes increases with 1.9%. For candidates on the 4th position, this percentage still has a value of 1.5%. However, hypothesis two is only partially confirmed, as the interactions with campaign agenda and personal funding are insignificant. Thus, while attracting attention for yourself as a candidate is a successful strategy for high-ranked politicians, emphasizing different issues is not. The coefficient of personal funding is equal for all types of candidates.

Model 4 interacts personal spending with campaign norm to test the third hypothesis, which stated that the strategy to attract as much attention to oneself works best if one also invests personal money in the campaign. The model supports this hypothesis. We find a significant positive interaction between campaign norm and the amount of personal money invested in the campaign. Figure 6.3 plots the marginal effect of the campaign norm on the proportion of preferential votes, depending on personal money. The plot shows that attracting

Table 6.2:0 Interaction models (N = 602).

Individual electoral success(log)	Model 3 b(SE)	Model 4 b(SE)	Model 5 b(SE)
Campaign norm	.023(.01)*	-.024(.01)*	-.010(.02)
Campaign agenda	.019(.06)	.045(.05)	.093(.10)
Party spending(log)	.001(.01)	.001(.01)	.003(.02)
Personal spending(log)	.017(.01)**	.002(.01)	.049(.01)**
Ballot list position	.023(.00)**	029(.00)**	.028(.00)**
Campaign norm * Ballot list position	.002(.00)**		
Campaign agenda * Ballot list position	.001(.00)		
Personal spending * Ballot list position	.000(.00)		
Campaign norm * personal spending		.005(.00)**	
Campaign agenda * personal spending		.001(.01)	
Political party (Ref.=Chr. Dem.			
- Regionalist party			.579(.14)**
- Green party			-.458(.11)**
- Social Democratic party			-.348(.12)**
- Liberal party			-.299(.15)*
- Far right party			-1.073(.13)**
- Socialist party			-1.296(.11)**
Campaign norm * Regionalist party			.019(.02)
Campaign norm * Green party			.011(.02)
Campaign norm * Social Democratic party			.008(.02)
Campaign norm * Liberal party			.001(.02)
Campaign norm * Far right party			.027(.02)
Campaign norm * Socialist party			-.003(.02)
Campaign agenda * Regionalist party			-.120(.14)
Campaign agenda * Green party			-.128(.12)
Campaign agenda * Social Democratic party			.077(.13)
Campaign agenda * Liberal party			.008(.12)
Campaign agenda * Far right party			-.152(.14)
Campaign agenda * Socialist party			-.069(.14)
Personal spending * Regionalist party			-.038(.02)*
Personal spending * Green party			-.050(.02)**
Personal spending * Social Democratic party			-.022(.02)
Personal spending * Liberal party			.011(.02)
Personal spending * Far right party			-.038(.02)*
Personal spending * Socialist party			-.101(.02)**
R²	.897	.897	.902

*p<.05;**p<.01

Note: Controls (see model 2) are not depicted

attention for oneself instead of the party is only a successful strategy if one has at least 2700 euro to spend.[50] A personalized campaign is futile when investigating less personal money. About 13% of the candidates meet spends 2700 euro or more.

Figure 6.2: Overview of the interaction between campaign norm and list position
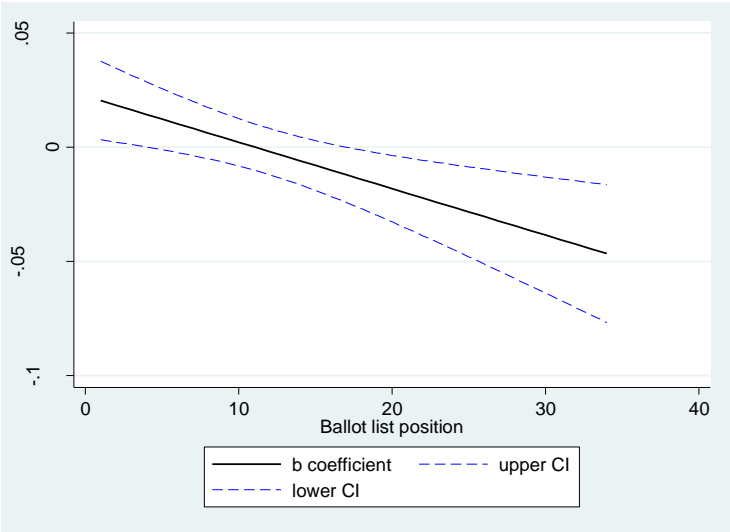
Figure 6.3: Overview of the interaction between campaign norm and personal spending

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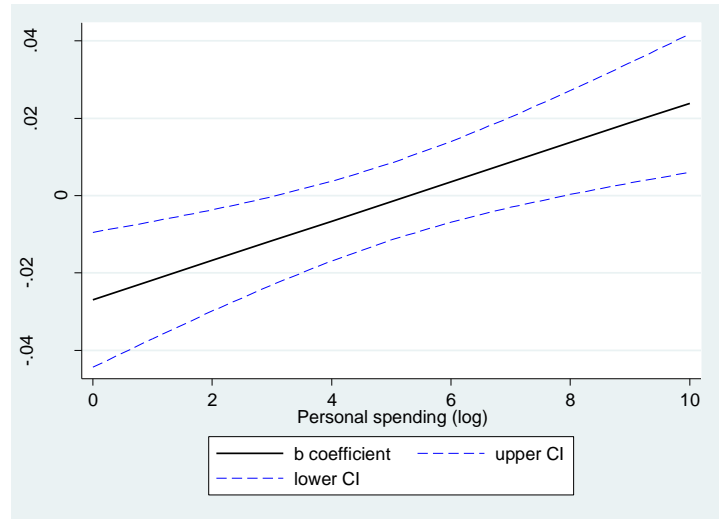
[50] $e^{7.9}$

Model 5 tests whether there are differences between candidates from different political parties. Our expectation was that personalized campaigns are more effective for candidates from traditional parties and less for "new" parties. The model shows that this is indeed the case for the finance dimension. Personalized funding is significant for candidates of the Christian Democratic, Social Democratic and Liberal party, but not for "new" parties such as the Greens, Far Right, regionalist and Socialist party. This in line with hypothesis 4. But again, the hypothesis is only partially confirmed as no interaction effects were found for campaign norm or campaign agenda.

As stated in the method section, problems may exist with regard to endogeneity. We partly took this into account by controlling for a number of factors that may influence both the campaign strategy and the electoral outcome, and by including a measure for electoral anticipation in the model. However, as an extra test to find out whether the effect of spending personal money is not driven by the fact that candidates who expect to do well in the elections, and who ultimately also receive many preferential votes, spend more personal money, an interaction term is added between a candidate's electoral anticipation and personal spending. Problems of internal validity are apparent if the results show that the effect only holds for those candidates who expect to be elected. However, model A in Table 6.3 shows that this is not the case. The effect of personalized campaigning also holds for candidates who do not expect to be elected. Other problems of causality may exist due to the fact that some candidates simply have more means to run a personalized campaign. In other words, the amount of money one can spend is not distributed randomly over candidates, but depends on a number of factors such as incumbency, list position and party affiliation. We took this into account by controlling for these factors in model 2. Yet, differences may also exist due to the spending cap in Belgium, which allows some candidates to spend more than others. To test the effects of these spending caps, we add a dummy indicating whether a candidate had a high or low

spending cap in model B. When comparing this model to model 2, similar results emerge, indicating that the results are not influenced by rules on campaign spending. Appendix I further examines the robustness of the results. It tests whether the non-normal distribution of the residuals and outlier cases with regard to electoral success and campaign spending affects our findings. In both situations the findings remain robust.

Table 6.3: Robustness models (N = 602).

Individual electoral success (log)	Model A b(SE)	Model B b(SE
Campaign norm	-.001(.01)	-.003(.01)
Campaign agenda	.044(.03)	.035(.03)
Party spending (log)	-.011(.01)	-.000(.01)
Personal spending (log)	.016(.01)**	.016(.01)**
Anticipation to get elected	.223(.10)**	.183(.05)**
Personal spending (log)*anticipation	.010(.01)	
Spending cap		.283(.00)**
R^2	.896	.901

*p<.05;**p<.01
Note: Controls are not depicted

Finally, we test what happens when the list proportion is used instead of the district proportion. Model C, D and E replicate model 2 to 4 using the list proportion. A noticeable difference between model 2 (Table 6.2) and model C (Table 6.4) is that, when using the list proportion, campaign agenda becomes significant. Whereas stressing another issue than the party in a campaign does not lead to electoral benefits in the inter-party competition, it can lead to extra votes in the intra-party competition. Voters who already decided which party to vote for may cast a(n) (extra) preferential vote for a candidate that campaigns on an issue they find important and that is not represented enough in the campaign of the party. This is also an interesting finding in the light of chapter 2. In that chapter, little evidence was found that the ideological positioning of candidates really mattered electorally, while the findings here give some tentative evidence that candidates can stand out by giving more attention to a certain issue/policy dimension. However, it should be noted that the effect size is rather limited. A

Table 6.4: OLS regression models of electoral success with the list proportion (N = 602).

Individual electoral success (log)	Model C b(SE)	Model D b(SE)	Model E b(SE)
Campaign norm	-.001(.01)	.011(.01)	-.012(.01)
Campaign agenda	.057(.03)*	-.000(.05)	.070(.05)
Party spending(log)	.002(.00)	.002(.00)	.002(.00)
Personal spending(log)	.011(.00)*	.001(.01)	.004(.01)
Political party (Ref.=Chris Dem.			
- Regionalist party	.057(.04)	.051(.04)	.049(.04)
- Green party	.217(.05)**	.214(.05)**	.219(.05)**
- Social Democratic party	.023(.04)	.020(.04)	.024(.04)
- Liberal party	.014(.04)	.006(.04)	.014(.04)
- Far right party	.111(.05)*	.106(.05)*	.105(.05)*
- Socialist party	.357(.06)**	.352(.06)**	.347(.06)**
Electoral level (Ref.=Regional)			
- Federal	.185(.02)**	.184(.02)**	.188(.02)**
Ballot list position	.033(.00)**	.034(.00)**	.032(.00)**
First candidate	1.049(.08)**	1.058(.06)**	1.057(.08)**
Last candidate	.584(.06)**	.581(.06)**	.568(.06)**
Woman	.243(.02)**	.238(.02)**	.243(.02)**
Ethnic minority	.237(.05)**	.235(.05)**	.232(.05)**
Age	-.001(.00)	-.001(.00)	-.001(.00)
Local legislative mandate	.079(.03)**	.083(.03)**	.083(.03)**
Flemish parliament	.150(.05)**	.156(.05)**	.141(.05)**
Federal Parliament	.231(.05)**	.235(.05)**	.230(.05)**
European Parliament	.658(.16)**	.629(.16)**	.653(.16)**
Local executive mandate	-.016(.03)	-.017(.03)	-.020(.03)
Major	.088(.04)*	.081(.04)	.085(.04)
Minister	.509(.12)**	.524(.12)**	.507(.12)**
Anticipation to get elected	.185(.04)**	.189(.04)**	.177(.04)**
Campaign intensity	.006(.01)	.005(.01)	.005(.01)
Campaign norm*list position		-.001(.00)	
Campaign agenda*list position		.005(.00)	
Personal spending*list position		.001(.00)	
Campaign norm*personal spending			.002(.00)
Campaign agenda*personal spending			-.003(.01)
Constant	-4.085(.10)**	-4.066(.10)**	-4.046(.10)**
R²	.835	.836	.835

*p<.05;**p<.01
Note: Controls for electoral districts

second noticeable difference when comparing model D and E with model 3 and 4, is that the interactions are no longer significant. Again, the explanation is most likely the different nature of the inter- and intra-party competition. As speculated

in the theoretical section, we expected personalized campaign strategies to be more successful for high positioned candidates than low positioned candidates, as they are probably stronger embedded in the inter-party competition compared to low positioned candidates and are thus more likely to succeed in using their personal reputation or qualities to attract voters from other (related) parties. The findings here seem to provide evidence for this mechanism. The results show that top candidates can attract votes by using a personalized focus in their campaign when taking into account the inter-party competition, but not when only taking into account the intra-party competition. In sum, based on the comparison between list and district proportions, there seems to be some tentative evidence that a personalized campaign agenda is more useful to attract voters from the own party, whereas campaigning on a personal reputation is more successful in attracting voters from other (closely related) parties, but only for those candidates with a high ballot list position.

6.5.   Conclusion & discussion

This chapter shows that it pays off for candidates to adopt personalized campaign strategies. Candidates who run personalized campaigns receive on average more preferential votes than candidates adopting party-centered campaign strategies. Especially the way campaigns are financed seems to matter. Politicians who rely more on personal money, and are therefore able to run a more autonomous campaign, receive a higher bonus than politicians who rely fully on party money. Additionally, there is some evidence that campaigning on a different issue than the party is beneficial in the intra-party competition, although the effect is rather limited. This chapter also shows that the electoral benefits of a personalized campaign are not similar for all candidates. Politicians with high ballot list positions are particularly successful in translating their personalized campaign into votes. We speculate that this is due to the fact that they possess more resources, both in terms of campaign organization and in terms of media attention. In most

countries the media focus solely on the most popular candidates across parties, making it more likely that their personal strategy is picked up by the public and pays off in terms of preferential votes. The results suggest that personalized campaign strategies may also be more effective for high positioned candidates because they not only compete in the intra-party, but also in the inter-party competition, and can attract voters from other parties using their personal reputation. Apart from ballot list position, the electoral impact of a personalized campaign strategy is also conditional on the personal investment of candidates. In general, personalized campaigns only lead to more preferential votes if one spends a significant amount of personal money, about 2700 euro according to the model. These financial resources are probably necessary to actually reach the electorate with a personal message. Furthermore, these personal means might indicate that there is more at stake for the candidate and indicate that (s)he is willing to really invest a lot of time and energy in his/her campaign. Finally, the findings show that effects are different for candidates of different parties. Personalized campaign strategies are more effective for candidates of traditional parties than for candidates of niche parties. We hypothesized that this is due to the fact that traditional parties are ideologically more catch-all and have stronger candidates, making the intra-party competition more fierce and individual campaign strategies more important.

By showing that personalized campaign strategies are effective for certain candidates, we have contributed to the campaign literature. We hope these findings will inspire scholars and we suggest at least three pathways for future research. First, more comparative studies are necessary to address the role of the electoral system. One of the limitations of this study is that it is only conducted in the Belgian context. Nevertheless, we expect to find more or less similar results in similar systems such as the Netherlands, Denmark and Austria, where candidates also aim to win preferential votes, but at the same time are (stronger) dependent on the party, providing them incentives for both party-centered and personalized

campaigns. However, differences exist between these countries that could influence the effect of personalized campaigning. First, whereas Belgium has spending caps for candidates, several other countries, such as the Netherlands, Denmark and Switzerland, do not. This could mean that the effect of personal spending may be even stronger here, although in practice the amount of money candidates actually spend is very limited, especially compared to for example the United States. Second, differences exist with regard to specific electoral rules. Whereas Belgian voters are allowed to cast multiple preferential votes, voters in several other systems are limited to one vote only. This may be a disadvantage for lower positioned candidates and could make differences in the effect of personalized spending between high and low positioned candidates even stronger. A comparative design could shed light on how these institutional differences impact the effect of personalized campaigning.

As a second suggested pathway, we need to get more insight into the role of personal money. In line with Gschwend and Zittel (2015), we find that this dimension of the personalized campaign strategy has the strongest effect. Yet, this chapter is unable to uncover the exact mechanism behind it. Does personal money matter because it leads to more autonomous campaigning, meaning that a candidate not only receives more visibility (as campaign spending in general tends to do) but also has more room to promote oneself, or is it rather a proxy for political ambition? Simply put, more ambitious candidates will likely receive more votes and are also more willing to spend more money on it. It may also be that spending more money means that these candidates are more committed, which is rewarded by voters. The findings seem to suggest that it is the first mechanism that is behind the personal spending effect. We find no differences when we control for certain aspects that are related to personal ambition. For instance, the variation of the intended campaign intensity or the feeling that one stands a real chance to get actually elected has no influence on the spending effects. Of course this tentative evidence does not allow us to give a conclusive answer to this

question, since we lack survey items that fully tap into personal ambition. Hence, the mechanism behind personal spending warrants further investigation.

Third, it might also be a step forward to take privatized campaigns into account. One could argue that privatization, a focus on the personal life and non-political traits of candidates, forms a relevant fourth dimension of personalized campaigning. Future research could investigate how privatization relates to the other three dimensions and how it affects the electoral success of candidates.

In sum, we conclude that personalized campaigns are effective, but mostly for candidates with high positions on the ballot list or candidates with enough resources to set up an effective personalized campaign. This means that the strategy to cultivate personal votes has the least effect for those who could benefit from it the most. Put differently, candidates that are ranked lower and have less campaign money to spend, cannot make up for their weaker position by running a more personalized campaign. In that respect, party interests do not seem to be hampered by personal campaigning, because only those candidates on top of the list profit from it. Since top candidates on the list are generally more strongly endorsed by the party leadership, the party 'still comes first', so to say. In practice, this means that decentralized personalization (Balmas et al., 2014) remains limited if it is not accompanied by institutional personalization (Rahat & Sheafer, 2007). As long as systems do not have open lists, it is still the political party that holds a tight grip in the background and the agency of candidates remains limited. A notable exception for candidates may be to campaign on an issue which was not taken up by the party, which could lead to more votes for ordinary candidates as well. However, we should note that the effect of campaign agenda is rather limited.

Sharing is caring: The role of voter-candidate similarities in the intra-party electoral competition

Single-authored paper, currently under review

7.1.   Introduction

To what extent do citizens vote for political candidates that resemble them? Already in *The American Voter* Campbell et al. (1960) hinted at the possibility that identity effects may occur with citizens voting for candidates similar to them. This possibility was confirmed in the election of that same year, when many Catholic Republicans voted for John F. Kennedy because he was Catholic, whereas many Protestant Democrats refrained from voting for that same reason (Converse et al., 1961). Also in the 2016 elections, the question was raised to what extent Hillary Clinton could attract the female voter. However, in the primaries, Clinton's political opponent, the 75 years-old Bernie Sanders, was remarkably popular amongst young voters, suggesting that sometimes opposites attract.

A number of studies investigated the question whether similarities between voters and candidates influence electoral behavior. Most of them indeed provide evidence that the propensity to vote for a candidate increases when candidate and voter resemble each other (Cutler, 2002; McDermott, 2009; Piliavin, 1987; Sigelman et al., 1982). They show that women are more likely to vote for female candidates (e.g. Cutler, 2002; Dolan, 1998; Plutzer & Zipp, 1996) and African-American voters are more likely to select African-American candidates (e.g. Sigelman et al., 1995; Sigelman & Sigelman, 1982). They also demonstrate that citizens identify more with candidates from the same region (e.g. Gimpel et

al., 2008; Lewis-Beck & Rice, 1983). However, almost all of these studies have been conducted in the United States. Research on this topic outside the US is limited, although Banducci & Karp (2000) and Cutler (2002) find that in multiparty systems shared traits with a party leader increase the likelihood that voters cast a vote for that party.

In this chapter, the extent to which voter-candidate similarities matter for preferential voting is assessed. Whereas in the previous chapters candidates were used as unit of analysis, this chapter shifts the focus to voters, modelling the vote decision-making process behind preferential voting. It provides more insight in the extent to which citizens are more likely to vote for candidates that resemble them. Additionally, previous chapters showed that female candidates and candidates with an ethnic minority background receive more preferential votes, controlling for other factors. I argued that this is because female voters and ethnic minority voters are more likely to vote for candidates like them than native men, but this needs to be investigated. The research design introduced in this chapter will enable to do so.

Few studies have examined the effect of voter-candidate similarity on preferential voting. Only with regard to gender do we find a handful of studies, with some providing evidence that gender similarities increase the propensity to vote (Erzeel & Caluwaerts, 2015; Giger et al., 2014; Holli & Wass, 2010; Marien et al., in press), and others finding no evidence for this effect (McElroy & Marsh, 2010; Wauters et al., 2010). These mixed results could be explained by the fact that some studies use voter data, whereas others study the level of political candidates. Moreover, gender is unlikely to be the only socio-demographic characteristic on which voters base their decision. I expect that also other characteristics, such as age and the municipality of a candidate, will matter. In addition, it can be expected expect that especially underrepresented group will use preferential voting as a pathway to overcome their underrepresentation and are therefore more prone to be guided by similarities.

This chapter makes three contributions. First, it studies the influence of voter-candidate similarity on electoral behavior in the intra-party competition, focusing not only on gender, but also examining other factors such as age and geographical proximity. Second, it investigates the conditionality of this similarity effect, arguing that especially underrepresented groups will be inclined to vote for political candidates similar to them. Finally, this chapter makes a methodological contribution by simultaneously including voter characteristics and candidate characteristics in one model. Most studies on preferential voting either focus on political candidates (supply side) or on voters (demand side), but never bring the two together in one model. Studies on gender-based voting, for example, often use survey data, asking respondents whether they voted for a male or female (or coding this using simulation ballots). Yet, this research design does not allow to sufficiently take into account factors at the candidate level, such as the fact that female politicians are less likely to be positioned on the first position of the ballot list and often have less political experience. This could bias the results of these studies. Going beyond existing work, this chapter looks at dyadic voter-candidate pairs, investigating both supply and demand elements, making it possible to fully model the role of voter-candidate similarities in the decision-making process around preferential voting.

Investigating the effect of voter-candidate similarities is not only useful to get more insight into why voters cast preferential votes for certain candidates and not for others, but also to better understand the role of socio-demographic factors on voting behavior outside the United States. Furthermore, the relation between voter-candidate similarities and preferential voting is important to study from a normative perspective. If citizens, and especially underrepresented groups, are indeed guided by similarities with candidates in their decision who to cast a preferential vote for, this could ultimately be a mechanism to overcome the underrepresentation of certain groups. Especially when systems become more open and give more weight to preferential votes in the distribution of seats within

a party. Through a better descriptive representation this may ultimately lead to a better substantive representation (Mansbridge, 1999).

7.2.   The influence of voter-candidate similarities on voting

In general, the literature identifies two reasons why citizens may be inclined to vote for candidates similar to them. The first explanation finds it roots in the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and is based on the idea that citizens are guided by social group membership in their vote choice (Plutzer & Zipp, 1996; Pomper, 1975). Although social identity theory is mostly used to explain conflicts between groups in society, it can also shed light on why citizens may develop a group identity based on shared characteristics, such as gender or race, but also religion, class or local identity (Dickson & Scheve, 2006). Because of this identity, citizens may feel more solidarity and affection with candidates from their 'in-group' and be more inclined to vote for them.

A second reason for finding an influence of voter-candidate similarities is more substantial in nature. A number of studies found that voters use socio-demographic candidate cues, such as gender, age or race, to attribute certain characteristics to candidates (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; McDermott, 1997; Terkildsen, 1993). Hence, citizens could vote for candidates that resemble them because they expect these candidates to share similar experiences and ideas and therefore to be the best option to represent their interests (Erzeel & Caluwaerts, 2015). This idea can be traced back to scholars working on descriptive representation (Mansbridge, 1999; Pitkin, 1967). It is argued that especially in low information elections, where citizens lack information on policy stances of candidates, citizens may be guided by similarities with candidates in order to fill their information gap (Cutler, 2002; McDermott, 1997). It is also argued that the two mechanisms of identity and interest representation especially motivate underrepresented groups to base their vote on similarities with the political candidate. Because these groups still face barriers in society, they may develop a

stronger group identity (Erzeel & Caluwaerts, 2015). Moreover, they may be more worried about an underrepresentation of their interests in parliament and try to change the status quo by voting for someone from the in-group (Dolan, 2008; Gidengil, 1996).

Empirical evidence in the United States has supported the idea that citizens vote on the basis of shared characteristics. One of the first studies on this topic was conducted by Sigelman and Sigelman in 1982. In an experimental design, they pitted fictional candidates against each other in a two-candidate race, each time changing their race, age and gender. They asked undergraduate students who they would vote for and find that similarity indeed leads to more support for a candidate. The experiment was replicated five years later by Piliavin (1987) with a more diverse group of respondents, reaching similar results. Also in a more recent study, McDermott (2009) shows that both in the US elections of 1958 and 2004 groups similarities mattered, although she does find a small decrease of its effect over the years, and also demonstrate that it not works for all types of similarities. Banducci & Karp (2000) and Cutler (2002) show that similarities are also important outside the US. Banducci & Karp find in four countries, Australia, Canada, Great-Britain, and New-Zealand, that women are more likely to vote for a party if the party leader is a female. Similar conclusions are reached by Cutler (2002) who studies the Canadian elections of 1993 and 1997 and concludes that voters are more likely to vote for a party when the *socio-demographic distance* between the voter and the party leader- a combined measure of gender, religion, language and living place – is smaller.

Studies on voter-candidate similarities in systems with preferential voting are scarcer. The most studied characteristic is gender, for which there are a handful of studies investigating whether women are more inclined to cast a preferential vote for a female candidate (Erzeel & Caluwaerts, 2015; Marien et al., in press; McElroy & Marsh, 2010). Nevertheless, I expect voter-candidate similarities to be a key factor in explaining why voters select candidates over

others when casting a preferential vote. First of all, unlike in a two-candidate race, in a list system party preference does not prevent voters to base their vote on socio-demographic characteristics. Whereas in a two-candidate race voters might decide not to vote for a female/young/local candidate because this candidate belongs to the other party, this is not the case in systems with intra-party competition, as parties present long lists of candidates, usually with mixed demographic backgrounds. Thus, voters can first decide for which party they are going to vote and subsequently vote for a candidate of that party based on the candidates' socio-demographic characteristics. There is no longer a trade-off between basing the vote on partisanship and basing the vote on socio-demographic cues. Second, in systems with intra-party competition ballots are more diverse, as political parties aim to construct balanced ballot lists consisting of candidates with various backgrounds (Gallagher & Marsh, 1988). This gives voters actually the opportunity to base their vote on candidate similarities, which is not always the case in two-candidate races, where certain types of candidates may simply not run in a certain district. A third reason why voter-candidate similarities may exert a bigger influence in intra-party elections is that it is a low information context. Parties present long lists of candidates – in Belgium these lists range between 12 and 33 candidates – meaning that a large number of candidates compete in the same election. Therefore, it is impossible for voters to gather information on all these candidates and, consequently, voters may instead base their vote on the socio-demographic characteristics of the candidates in order to fill this information gap (Sanbonmatsu, 2002).

In sum, I expect voter-candidate similarities to play an important role in the decision-making process of voters in intra-party competitions. The next section will focus on three such similarities: gender, age and location/proximity. The reason to select these three characteristics is that they are key features in the representation literature and that they are all three used by Belgian political parties when constructing the ballot list (De Winter, 1988; Galtung & Ruge, 1965).

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In addition, they are easy for voters to get information on, especially gender and location. Gender can most of the times simply be inferred by the name of the candidate. With regard to location, most citizens are likely to be aware of whether a candidate is from the same municipality, especially when they are interested in voting for a local candidate. Ideally, ethnicity would also be included, but unfortunately I only had information about the ethnicity of the candidates, but not on the voters in our sample.

Gender, age and location

So far, a handful of studies have examined the role of same-gender based voting in the intra-party electoral competition.[51] Most of these studies provide evidence that same-gender based voting is indeed occurring frequently. Holli & Wass (2010) and Giger et al. (2014) examine Finland and show that men are more likely to vote for men and women for women, concluding that 'gender-based voting appears to be an important factor that affects electoral outcomes regardless of type of election' (Holli & Wass, 2010:624). Erzeel & Caluwaerts (2015) and Marien et al. (in press) find similar effects in the context of Belgium. However, not all studies reach the same conclusion. McElroy & Marsh (2010) investigate in Ireland whether women tend to vote more for female political candidates, but fail to find any gender effect. Also, studies in the US do not always support a same gender effect (McDermott, 2009). Despite these mixed findings, it can be expected that same-gender based voting will occur. Gender can be the basis of a social identity, with women (or men) having the feeling that they should show solidarity to candidates from the same gender, or can serve as a proxy for policy-based voting, as research has shown that the gender composition of parliament influences which issues are on the political agenda (Mansbridge, 1999; Schwindt-Bayer, 2006).

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[51] Although we follow the literature and use the terms gender and same-gender voting, what we technically investigate is sex and same-sex voting, given that we only have information on the biological characteristics of candidates.

I am also interested in whether women are more inclined to cast a same-gender based vote than men. As stated before, underrepresented groups may have more incentives to vote for candidates similar to them, because they have a stronger sense of identity and more to win by getting represented. Erzeel & Caluwaerts (2015), Holli & Wass (2010) and Giger et al. (2014) have the same expectation, but surprisingly find the opposite, showing that men are more likely to vote on the basis of gender than females. This surprising finding may be explained by the design that is used. All three studies use voter data, not taking into account characteristics of the candidates, apart from their gender. Yet, taking supply characteristics into account is important, since there are still large gender differences in the position on the ballot list candidates occupy and in their political experience. For example, in the recent Belgian elections only 21 of the 70 Flemish lists had a female candidate leading. In addition, in the Belgian parliament, 40% of the MPs are women and 60% are men. Finally, there is also a gender bias in the media coverage of political candidates, with male candidates receiving more attention than their female counterparts. This gender bias holds even when taking into account alternative explanations (Vos, 2013). Since previous studies showed that voters are inclined to vote for candidates with more political experience and also for candidates on the first position on the list, and since these candidates tend to be more often male, the finding that men vote more on the basis of same gender might actually be a construct of the fact that citizens tend to vote for experienced candidates with a higher ballot list position who get more coverage in the media. Men may simply vote for male candidates based on ballot position, experience, and media attention and not because of gender. This is in line with previous studies which focus on the candidate level and aim to explain why certain candidates receive more preferential votes than others. While in empty models with just gender they find that men receive more votes than women, this effect disappears when controlling for alternative

explanations (Wauters et al., 2010), or even show that women receive more votes than men (Thijssen & Jacobs, 2004).

In a recent study Marien et al. (in press) acknowledge the role of the supply side. They demonstrate for example that female candidates receive more votes when they occupy the first position on the ballot list. Marien et al. (in press) also dissect voting for female or male candidates further by not only investigating whether respondents cast votes for male or female candidates (or mixed votes), but by also making a distinction between voters who cast votes for the first candidates on the list and voters that cast votes for candidates that do not occupy the first position. While their main findings are in line with Erzeel & Caluwaerts (2015) and Holli & Wass (2010), showing that male voters are more likely to cast a vote for at least one male candidate than female voters for at least one female candidate, their findings nevertheless indicate that this difference disappears once only the first candidate is taken into account. Men and women are as likely to vote for the first candidate on the list when this candidate shares the voter's gender (Marien et al., in press: 16). This shows the importance of including supply side factors.

As mentioned above, inequalities between male and female politicians do not only exist with regard to ballot list position, but also with regard to political experience and media coverage. Therefore, it can be expect that once one controls for more characteristics at the supply side, there may actually be a stronger effect of the same-gender cue among women, which would be in line with the common theoretical expectation in the literature. By bringing demand and supply together, thereby controlling for structural inequalities between male and female candidates, this study can better isolate same-gender based voting and more rigorously test whether women base their vote more on a gender cue

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than men.[52] Based on these expectations, the following hypotheses are formulated:

Hypothesis 1a: *Voters are more likely to cast a preferential vote for a candidate if this candidate has the same gender.*

Hypothesis 1b: *The effect of having the same gender on the likelihood of casting a preferential vote for a candidate is stronger amongst female voters than amongst male voters.*

Whereas a number of studies investigate same-gender based voting, not much research has been conducted on same-age voting. As far as I know, none of the studies on PR systems have taken age into account, and even in the US, studies on the topic are scarce. Only Piliavin (1987) and Sigelman & Sigelman (1982) include age in their experiments, finding evidence that younger voters are more inclined to cast a ballot for younger candidate than middle aged or older voters. We can expect that like gender, some citizens are more inclined to cast a preferential vote for candidates close to their own age. Western societies are aging and this demographic change has a profound impact on social spending. As a result, intergenerational issues are becoming more prominent in politics (Goerres & Tepe, 2010; Joshi, 2013). This manifests itself for example by the existence of several pensioners' parties in Western Europe. Hence, age may increasingly become a basis around which citizens form a social identity, and may consequently be an important cue for citizens in deciding whom to vote for. Thus,

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[52] Of course I have to admit that I can never fully isolate gender motivation from other voting motivations. However, by controlling for ballot list position, media coverage and political experience, the most important alternative motivations are controlled for. In addition, in case I have forgotten to include important other motivations, such as money spent on the campaign, the inclusion of these variables would more likely to work in favor of our hypothesis than against due to the inequality between male and female candidates on most of these variables(access to campaign money etc.).

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the likelihood of a preferential vote being cast for a candidate is expected to increase when the age distance between voter and candidate decreases. This effect may be more pronounced for younger and older voters, as these groups are still underrepresented in parliament (Kissau, Lutz, & Rosset, 2012; Norris & Franklin, 1997). This leads to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a: *Voters are more likely to cast a preferential vote for a candidate when the age distance between voter and candidate decreases.*

Hypothesis 2b: *The effect of having a similar age on the likelihood of casting a preferential vote for a candidate is stronger among younger and older voters than it is among middle age voters.*

Finally, voters may also look for candidates that share local ties. Already in 1949 Key suggested that local ties are of great importance in explaining voting behavior (Key, 1949). This was later confirmed by other studies showing that local voting plays an important role in presidential elections as well as gubernational elections, with candidates having a clear home state advantage (Blais et al., 2003; Gimpel et al., 2008; Lewis-Beck & Rice, 1983). Górecki & Marsh (2012; 2014) also find evidence for local voting in Ireland, demonstrating that the likelihood to rank a candidate on the ballot increases when the distance between voter and candidate decreases. These studies all suggest that citizens feel an affection with the place they live and are therefore more inclined to support local candidates. They may have the feeling that candidates from their region are best able to represent their (local) interests. Additionally, they may simply know some of the local candidates personally and vote in their support, which is why this type of voting is sometimes labeled 'friends and neighbor' voting (Górecki & Marsh, 2014).

Outside the STV system of Ireland, almost no studies have investigated the effect of same-municipality voting in systems of preferential voting. Two notable exceptions are Put & Maddens (2015) in Belgium and Tavits (2010) in Estonia, but neither of these studies find a significant effect. This may be due to the fact that they use an aggregate design, examining whether municipality size influences the relative size of the number of preferential votes of a candidate. However, this effect may be neutralized at the aggregate level, as Lewis-Beck & Rice (1983) showed that, at least in the US, local ties play a more important role for voters from smaller regions, since these voters tend to be stronger connected to their region. Hence, it can be expected that when investigating the micro level, by matching the location of voters and candidates, an effect of shared municipality will be found, which is stronger for citizens of smaller municipalities. This leads to the final hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a: *Voters are more likely to cast a preferential vote for a candidate from the same municipality.*

Hypothesis 3b: *The effect of living in the same municipality on the likelihood to cast a preferential vote for a candidate will be stronger for voters from smaller municipalities.*

7.3. Research design

Most studies on preferential voting, including the previous chapters, either focus on the level of political candidates (supply side) or on voters (demand side). While studies at the candidate level are useful and necessary when one wants to explain why certain candidates are more successful than others in attracting preferential votes, they do not allow the researcher to model the decision-making process of voters. By focusing on the candidate level, inferences on how voters behave can only be made indirectly and furthermore this approach is not able to investigate

how certain factors impact some voters more than others. Since in this chapter I am interested in the role of voter-candidate similarities in the decision-making process, focusing on the level of the voter is more appropriate. Yet, even solely focusing on the voter level does not provide the full picture, as one has information on the 'demand' side, but not on the 'supply' side. Given that I am interested in similarities between voters and candidates, information is needed on both. Therefore, voter and candidate characteristics are combined in one model by looking at dyadic relationships. This way the vote decision-making process can be modelled while taking into account characteristics of the available choices. Combining the supply and demand side of the electoral market is not new and has already been applied by research on voting behavior with regard to political parties, in order to cope with the more complex multiparty systems (see van der Eijk et al., 2006). However, the dyadic approach has not been applied to studies on preferential voting.

In order to bring voters and candidates together, data from the candidate population dataset is combined with the PartiRep voter survey. Both datasets were described in chapter 2. A stacked dataset matrix is used in which the units of analyses are respondent-candidate dyadic pairs. Consequently, each respondent appears in the dataset multiple times, namely in a combination with every candidate they could vote for; the latter depending on the district where the respondent lives and the party voted for. Table 7.1 gives an (hypothetical) example with only a few of the included variables of how the dataset looks like in a situation where the respondent can vote for three candidates. In the real Belgian elections these district sizes vary between 12 and 33 candidates. Ultimately, the data is stacked in 14454 dyadic pairs nested in 1310 candidates and 394 voters. I should note that one of the assumptions is that voters first select a party and subsequently vote for one or more candidates from this party. This assumption follows from the Belgian institutional rules, where preferential votes can only be given to candidates belonging to the same party, and is in line with

Table 7.1: Example of stacked data matrix

voter id	Candidate id	Preference Vote (0=no, 1=yes)	Gender voter (0=f, 1=m)	Gender candidate (0=f, 1=m)	Gender congruence	Age voter	Age candidate	Age difference	Position on the ballot list
1	1	0	1	0	0	18	33	-15	1
1	2	1	1	1	1	18	56	-38	2
1	3	0	1	1	1	18	44	-26	3
2	1	1	0	0	1	58	33	-25	1
2	2	1	0	1	0	58	56	-2	2
2	3	0	0	1	0	58	44	-14	3
3	1	0	0	0	1	32	33	-1	1
3	2	0	0	1	0	32	56	-24	2
3	3	1	0	1	0	32	44	-12	3

the electronic system used in half of the municipalities,[53] where voters first get a screen with the different parties and secondly receive a screen with the candidates from that party. Of course, the assumption may not always hold. Especially party presidents may motivate voters to switch to a different party, thus the votes for these party presidents may involve an inter-party element. However, in general the assumption will hold for most other candidates. In addition, even if the assumption is violated, it is unlikely to strongly bias our results as the focus lies on characteristics that are common on both lists. It is unlikely that voters switch parties because they want to vote for a woman, as half of the candidates on the list from their own party are also female.

Since the data have a cross-nested structure, with respondent-candidate dyadic pairs nested simultaneously in respondents and candidates, and given that the dependent is binary, a cross-classified multilevel logistic model is used. The model also takes into account that the dyadic respondent-candidate pairs are situated in a political party, an electoral district and also either at the federal or regional level. In order to remove this variance, fixed controls for parties, districts and a dummy for the federal elections are added (not depicted in table, but depicted in appendix J).

The main independent variables are gender similarity, age similarity and same municipality, all situated at the lowest level, as they are dyadic in nature. Gender similarity (a.k.a. same sex voting) is a dummy coded 1 if both the respondent and the candidate are male or if both are female. Age similarity is calculated by taking the absolute (negative) difference between the age of the candidate and the age of the respondent. Thus, this measure takes the value of zero if the respondent and candidate are exactly the same age, and -20 if they differ 20 years in ages. In order to determine whether the candidate and the respondent are from the same municipality, their zip code is used. Belgian zip codes have four digits, with the first three digits indicating the municipality. Thus,

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[53] http://www.elections.fgov.be/index.php?id=3301&L=1

same municipality is a dummy variable which is coded 1 if the first three digits of the candidate and the respondent match.[54] In order to take into account the supply side, several control variables that the literature and the previous chapters have identified as important explanations of a political candidate's success are added; ballot list position (van Erkel & Thijssen, 2016), political experience (Put & Maddens, 2015), socio-demographic factors, such as gender, age and ethnicity (McElroy & Marsh, 2010), and media coverage (Van Aelst et al., 2008). Media coverage is logarithmically transformed for its skewed distribution. Both media during the campaign, as well as before the campaign are taken up in the model. Also dummies for the first and last candidates on the list are added, as research points out that these candidates receive an additional bonus above the normal ballot list position effect (van Erkel & Thijssen, 2016). Finally, it is possible that once more candidates from a municipality are on the same ballot list, voters may vote for only one of these candidates. This could bias the results for candidates from larger municipalities, where there are likely to be more candidates from the same municipality. By adding a variable that measures how many other candidates from the same municipality are on a party ballot list, the model controls for this potential bias.

Characteristics of the voter are not included in the main model, since they do not directly affect the choice for certain candidates; for voters these characteristics remain stable over the different choices. One exception is the number of preferential votes cast by the respondent, since the likelihood that a respondent voted for a candidate increases when this respondent cast more preferential votes. However, as already speculated in hypothesis 1b, 2b and 3b, gender, age and size of the municipality may moderate certain effects. In later

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[54] There a few exceptions to this. In the bigger cities such as Antwerp and Ghent, the first three digits do not correspond with the full municipality, but with the districts within these cities. Hence, for the big cities we investigate whether voters are more likely to vote for candidates from their own district. This is a conservative test of our hypothesis.

models I therefore do include these variables, but in interaction with same gender and age difference.

One last note on the Belgian case is in order. Belgium forms a good case for this research as political parties are considerate in creating balanced ballot lists, making sure that lists have a more or less equal distribution of geographical regions, gender and age groups (De Winter, 1988). For gender there is even a perfect balance, as laws introduced in 2006 stipulated gender equality with 50% of the candidates on the list being women. These balanced ballot lists are ideal as it not only means that candidates actually have the opportunity to vote for candidates of the same gender/age/location, but they also decrease the likelihood that our results are driven by the specific composition of the ballot lists, as the ballot lists are more or less comparable across parties with regard to gender, age and local distribution.[55] In addition, the fact that voters can cast multiple preferential votes makes Belgium a good case. It means that citizens can use multiple criteria at the same time and that the decisions to vote or not vote for a candidate are more or less independent from each other. In systems with a single preferential vote the decision to vote for a candidate cannot be modelled independently from the decision to vote for another candidate.

7.4.   Results

Table 7.2 presents the results of the analyses. The first model includes the three main effects of shared gender, age and municipality. The model supports hypothesis 1a. It shows a positive significant effect of candidates and voters sharing the same gender. This gives an indication that, ceteris paribus, female voters are more likely to vote for female candidates, whereas men are more likely to vote for male candidates. Interesting, however, is that once the effect size is

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[55] This does not hold for ethnicity, where we find almost no candidates of different ethnic origin on the ballots of the Far-right party, and a higher number of candidates from non-Belgian origin on ballot lists of the Greens and Liberals.

taken into account, this claim should be somewhat nuanced. When estimating the predicted probabilities, keeping all other variables fixed on their mean, it shows that the probability of voting for a candidate is 2.8% when the candidate is from the opposite gender and 4.2% when the candidate and the respondent have the same gender. Thus, the model find evidence for a same-gender effect, but this effect is only one of many factors that play a role in the decision-making process. However, as posited in hypothesis 1b, differences may exist between male and female voters. Therefore, model 2 includes an interaction between same gender voting and the gender of the voter. This interaction is significant and shows that casting a preferential vote on same-gender candidates is more prevalent among women than it is among men. When calculating the margins, it shows that the likelihood that women vote for a candidate is 2.2% if the candidate is male and 8.7% if the candidate is female, ceteris paribus. Interesting, is that for men gender cues do not seem to influence their decision-making process. The effect becomes negative, but in significant. The analysis thus indicates that men do not vote for male candidates for gender-motivated reasons, but that instead this is a construct of citizens being more likely to vote for incumbent politicians with a high ballot list position, candidates who often happen to be male. Once this inequality is taken into account, support is found for hypothesis 1b. This finding stands in contrast to previous studies, which found the opposite, and it illustrates the importance of not only taking the demand, but also the supply side into account.

When focusing on the effect of age similarity in model 1, no significant effect is found. In other words, in contrast to the role of gender, there is no evidence that citizens are more inclined to cast a preferential vote for a candidate when they are closer in age. Hypothesis 2a should therefore be rejected. However, perhaps like the gender effect, it are only certain age groups for whom age matters. To test this, model 3 includes an interaction between the age of voters and age similarity, also plotted in Figure 7.1. The model and figure show indeed that, compared to middle-aged voters, age similarity does play a role for younger

voters. This partly supports hypothesis 2b. As seen before with gender, it seems that similarity plays a role in the decision-making process of voters, but again only for an underrepresented group.

Table 7.2: Cross-nested multilevel logit models. *N (dyadic pairs) = 14,454: N (candidates) = 1,310: N (voters) = 394.*

Individual electoral success (log)	Model 1 b(SE)	Model 2 b(SE)	Model 3 b(SE)	Model 4 b(SE)
Level 1 (dyadic)				
Same gender	.402(.08)**	1.443(.14)**	.402(.09)**	.435(.09)**
Age similarity	.004(.00)	.005(.00)	.003(.01)	.004(.00)
Same municipality	3.347(.18)**	3.385(.18)**	3.361(.18)**	3.891(.21)**
Candidate characteristics				
Ballot list position	.099(.01)**	.096(.01)**	.099(.01)**	.101(.01)**
First candidate on the list	2.594(.25)**	2.672(.23)**	2.591(.25)**	2.557(.25)**
Last candidate on the list	1.195(.29)**	1.274(.28)**	1.218(.29)**	1.190(.30)**
Ethnic minority	-.396(.30)	-.152(.30)	-.413(.30)	-.395(.31)
Experience Flemish parliament	.531(.17)**	.415(.16)*	.534(.17)**	.562(.18)**
Experience Federal parliament	.805(.17)**	.664(.16)**	.808(.17)**	.787(.17)**
Mayor	.005(.16)	.265(.15)	.015(.16)	.040(.16)
Minister	-.002(.27)	-.047(.26)	.030(.27)	.131(.28)
Media coverage(log)	.054(.03)*	.076(.03)**	.053(.03)*	.050(.03)
Media coverage t-1(log)	.025(.03)	.073(.03)*	.028(.03)	.026(.03)
Other candidates in municipality	.074(.08)	.076(.08)	.076(.08)	.091(.08)
Number of preferential votes casted	.488(.01)**	.491(.02)**	.487(.01)**	.492(.02)**
Interaction				
Male voter		1.130(.15)**		
Same gender*male voter		-2.118(.24)**		
Age (ref=middle age (31-64))				
- Young voter (≤30)			.415(.26)	
- Elder voter (65+)			.116(.24)	
Age difference*young voter			.026(.01)*	
Age difference*elder voter			-.001(.01)	
Municipality Size (per 1.000 residents, centered)				-.000(.00)
Same municipality*municipality size				-.032(.01)**
Constant	-4.415(.28)**	-5.160(.30)**	-4.509(.29)**	-4.495(.29)**
σ^2_{voters}	.005	.013	.004	.009
$\sigma^2_{candidates}$	.793	.616	.802	.814

*p<.05, **p<.01
Note: Controlling for party and district dummies.

Finally, the effect of living in the same municipality is examined. Is there a home-field advantage for politicians? Model 1 indicates that there is indeed a positive significant effect of a candidate and a voter living in the same municipality on the likelihood of a preferential vote. Hence, the idea of a preferential vote as a local vote, as posited in hypothesis 3a, is supported. In other words, an important determinant in the decision-making process of voters, when deciding whether they cast a preferential vote for a candidate, is whether this candidate is from the same area. When looking at the effect size, it shows that proximity plays a strong role in the voters' mind. Whereas the probability that a respondent casts a vote for a candidate from a different municipality is 3.2%, keeping all other variables at the mean or at a score of 0, this probability increases to 48.4% when the candidate is from the same municipality. Shared municipality thus seems to play a much more important role in voters' minds than shared gender or age. The effect of proximity is even stronger than the effect of voting for the first candidate on the list, where the predicted probabilities increase from 3.1% to 29.7%. Moreover, the finding also strongly support hypothesis 3b. Model 4 includes an interaction between shared municipality and the size of the municipality (or district of the municipality) per 1000 respondents and centered on the grand mean. The interaction is negative, indicating that local voting is strongest in smaller municipalities. This is plotted in figure 7.2. The plot shows that for a voter living in a municipality with 20.000 residents, the likelihood to vote for a candidate increases from 3.1% to 60.9% if this candidate comes from the same municipality. For voters from municipalities with 5.000 residents it increases from 3.1% to 71.6%, whereas for voters in municipalities with 100.000 residents it only increases from 2.9% to 5.8%.

Figure 7.1: Marginal effects of age difference for middle aged (above) and young voters (below).
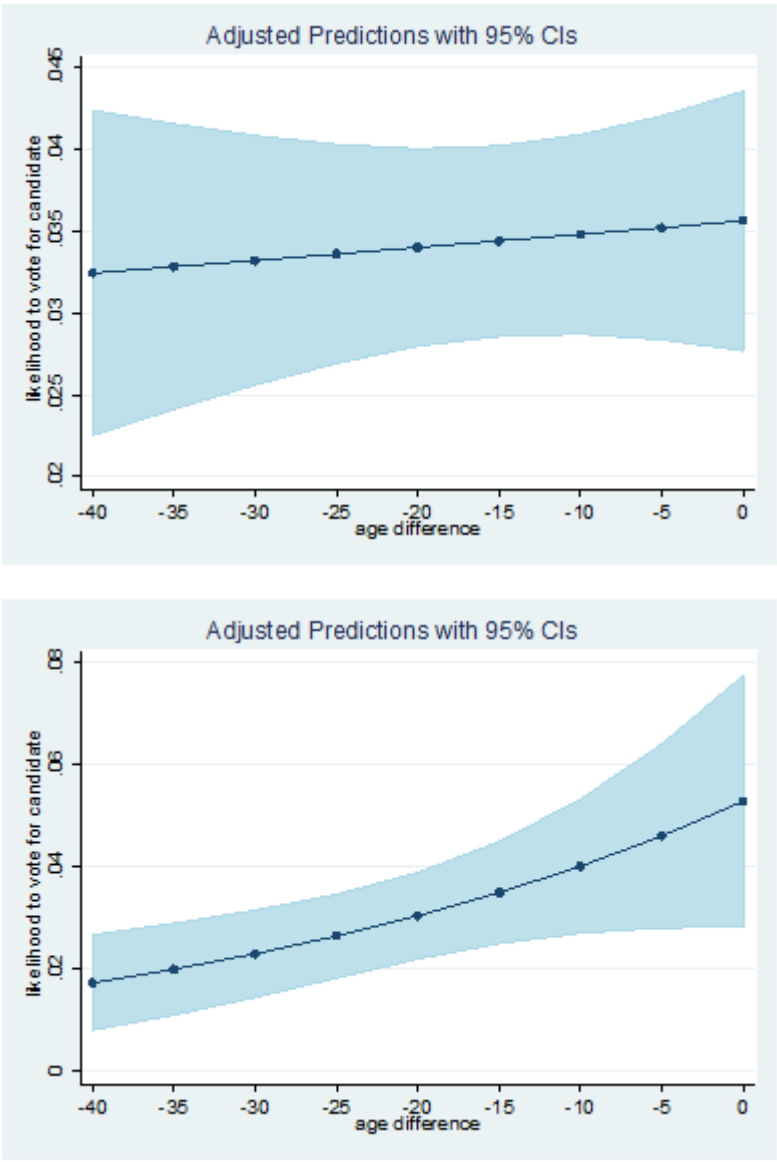
Finally, one could wonder to what extent these findings are constant across parties. Appendix K uses interactions to test whether the effects are homogenous across parties. The results suggest this is mostly the case. An exception is local voting which has a significant effect for the Green party and the Social Democratic party. One plausible explanation for this difference is that these parties are electorally more successful in the urban areas, areas where model 4 showed that people are less inclined to vote for local candidates.

Figure 7.2: Marginal effects of shared municipality for different municipality sizes
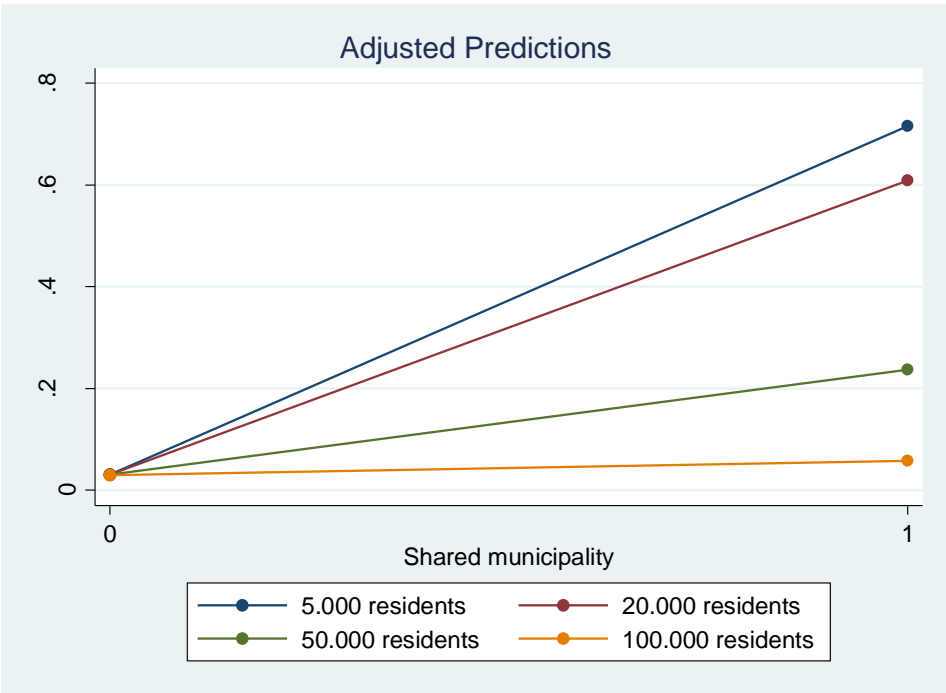
7.5. Conclusion and discussion

Previous studies have found voter-candidate similarities to be an important factor in explaining voting behavior in the American context (McDermott, 2009; Sigelman & Sigelman, 1982). Similarly, studies find that the socio-demographic characteristics of political leaders can attract voters to a party in multiparty

contexts (Banducci & Karp, 2000; Cutler, 2002). However, with the exception of gender similarities, the role of other voter-candidate similarities has not been structurally studied in the intra-party context. This chapter argues that voter-candidate similarities are important to explain why voters select some candidates over others when casting a preferential vote. Moreover, it answers the question whether voters from underrepresented groups are more guided by voter-candidate similarities than voters from overrepresented groups. To do so, a new approach, which simultaneously models voter and candidate characteristics, was introduced. The chapter reaches three major conclusions.

First of all, the findings support the claim that citizens are more likely to cast a preferential vote for candidates when these candidates share certain traits with them. Voter-candidate similarities play an important role in the decision-making process preceding a preferential vote. However, differences exist between traits. While there is a strong effect of shared municipality, there is only a moderate effect of sex and no general effect of age. I can only speculate about the differences between these traits, but one explanation for the differences may be variation in knowledge about these traits. Gender can in the most cases, with some unisex names as exceptions, be inferred from the name on the ballot list. For citizens it is also not difficult to gather information on which candidates are from their municipality, as candidates are more likely to campaign in their own municipality, get coverage in the local news and as citizens may know them from local elections. The age of candidates is more difficult to know since this cannot be inferred from the ballot list and is also (with perhaps some young candidates as exception) not a characteristic that is central in the campaign. An alternative explanation is that for some of these traits the related interests are more politicized and the social identities stronger. In Belgium, for example, local identities are still very important, whereas age may be a less politicized cleavage/social identity. Further research is required to better understand what is going on behind each of these traits.

Second, in line with what we expected, the findings provide evidence that underrepresented groups are more likely to be guided by voter-candidates similarities. The results show that both female voters and younger voters are more likely to be guided respectively by gender and age similarities. This can be either an instrumental vote, as a way to increase their substantive representation in parliament, or may be more symbolic, as a way of showing support.

Third, this chapter shows the need to control for the supply side when investigating the influence of candidate-voter similarities on voting behavior. Due to the fact that many factors at the supply side are still unequally distributed, such as the position on the ballot list, political experience and media coverage, and due the fact that these characteristics matter in the decision-making process of voters, results will be biased when not controlling for them. This makes it more difficult to isolate voter-candidate similarities from other factors. At the same time, it shows that due to this inequality at the supply side, identity votes do not necessarily lead to a better representation of certain groups. Since identity voting is only one factor in the decision-making process around preferential voting, and since citizens are still guided by other factors, a more equal distribution between groups on the ballot list, in political functions and in media coverage of political candidates is necessary in order for identity voting to work as a mechanism to overcome inequality.

The findings leave some questions open that ought to be investigated in future research. First of all, while this chapter focused on gender, age, and municipality, other similarities, such as education, social class, and especially ethnicity, may also play a role in the decision-making process of voters. Unfortunately, due to data limitations these characteristics could not be included in this study. Including more voter-candidate similarities could provide a better insight into why certain similarities matter more than others.

Second, this study focused on a single case, Belgium. Notwithstanding important theoretical and empirical reasons to study this country, a single case

study does not provide insights into how certain electoral rules enhance or temper the influence of voter-candidate similarities. Like Belgium, a number of European countries allow citizens to cast multiple votes (e.g. Latvia, Luxemburg, Switzerland). However, there are also countries like Finland or the Netherlands where voters can only cast a single preferential vote. This could lead to different findings as in these systems voters face a tradeoff between different decision criteria. This is not the case in systems with multiple preferential votes. In order to study the impact of these institutional differences, a comparative design is required.

Finally, future research should shed more light on the extent to which the composition of the ballot list influences the effect of voter-candidate similarity. Certain features of a candidate, such as gender or age, may lead to more votes if these candidates are more unique on a ballot. Given that the ballot lists in our data have an equal gender distribution due to the Belgian quota law this does not influence our results regarding gender. With regard to municipality our data did contain some candidates that only had a few competitors on their ballot from their own municipality, while others were the sole competitor of their municipality. Nevertheless, when I controlled for this possible composition effect (chapter 2 and Appendix B), no differences were found.

All in all, the findings of this chapter have important implications. They show that preferential votes are used by underrepresented groups as an instrument to support their own members and thereby as a way to reach better descriptive representation. However, due to structural differences between groups at the supply side this potential for descriptive representation is often not met. In addition, the fact that parties keep a strong control over who gets elected by determining the order of the ballot list, limits the influence of identity votes. Our results do suggest that once systems start to adopt more open lists, and once a more equal distribution between groups on the ballot list and in the coverage of the media is reached, voting on the basis of shared similarities could lead to a

better descriptive composition of parliament. This could deliver a more equal representation of underrepresented groups, increasing their substantive representation, and in the long run can help to increase the trust of these groups in politics and ultimately in democracy as a whole.

8

Conclusion and discussion

8.1. Introduction

This dissertation set out to investigate why certain politicians are individually more successful in the intra-party competition. Why do some politicians obtain a high share of preferential votes, while others do not? Fortunately, progress has been made on the topic of preferential voting in recent years, but many lacunas still remain. The dissertation aimed to get a deeper understanding of the factors explaining individual electoral success and to position these explanations in a general framework. More specifically, this dissertation focused on three goals. The first goal is to get a better insight in the factors that can explain the individual success of candidates, with a focus on factors that have not received much academic attention yet. Hence, I examined the effect of personalized campaign strategies, individual media coverage and the ideological positioning of candidates. The second goal is to investigate how these different factors interplay with each other. The different explanations do not only affect the number of preferential votes obtained, but also affect each other. For instance, ballot list position can lead to more votes directly, but may also impact the electoral success through the extra media attention these higher positioned candidates receive. Third, I wanted to get more insight into the mechanisms behind the effects, by not only focusing on the perspective of candidates, but by also modelling the decision-making process of voters when casting a preferential vote for a particular candidate. I particularly focused on the role of similarities between candidates and voters.

In order to reach these goals, the 2014 Belgian elections were examined. Belgium is a clear example of a preferential-list PR system. It constitutes a good case to study preferential voting, since the combination of optional and multiple preferential voting makes it analytically very suitable. Data were gathered for all 1435 effective Flemish candidates participating in the elections. This was done by collecting population data through official records, but also by means of a candidate survey. Additionally, the PartiRep electoral survey was used to match candidates and voters with each other. In this final chapter the main findings of each empirical chapter will be discussed and linked back to the general framework that was introduced in chapter 1. The chapter also reflects on the implications of the different findings and suggests avenues for further research based on the limitations of this dissertation.

8.2. Main conclusions

Using the results of the five empirical chapters, it is time to put the pieces together. What are the most important factors that explain the individual success of political candidates and how do these factors relate to each other? What do these findings tell us about preferential voting? And how do they link back to the discussion about personalization? Based on the results of this dissertation three main conclusions can be drawn. First of all, individual electoral success within the intra-party competition is the result of a complex set of different factors which also influence each other. Second, these explanations do not always work across the board. Especially media and campaign effects are contingent on other factors, working differently for top and ordinary candidates. Third, preferential votes can have a personal element in them, but in most cases the party also still plays a crucial role in determining which candidates will be successful. In this section, I will discuss each of these conclusions and their normative implications in more detail.

The complex model of individual electoral success

Each of the empirical chapters focused on a separate explanatory logic, although often in relation to alternative explanations. Table 8.1 integrates the different findings of the five empirical chapters. In this way, I can test whether the findings are consistent across the chapters and formulate an answer to the central research question; _Which factors explain why some political candidates have more individual electoral success and therefore receive more preferential votes than others?_

From the table it becomes clear that the individual electoral success of candidates in the intra-party electoral competition can be explained by a combination of the four factors that were identified in chapter one: party-related factors, individual-based factors, media factors and campaign factors. Party affiliation matters due to the fact that candidates from electorally more successful parties have a larger electorate that can cast a preferential vote for them. Additionally, one of the most consistent findings across the five chapters, and very much in line with the general literature, is that ballot list position is one of the key explanations behind individual electoral success. Chapter 3 shows that even when taking into account alternative mechanisms, citizens are more likely to cast a vote for candidates who occupy the first position on the ballot list. This can be explained by a primacy effect, a psychological bias of voters towards the first options on the list, especially the top option. There are two mechanisms behind this primacy effect. First, voters have a confirmation bias when they evaluate a list. This explains why the number two benefits over the number three, who in turn benefits over the number four. Second, we can speak of a pure primacy effect. Some citizens vote for the first candidate on the list simply because he or she occupies the first position, without further evaluation of any other attributes. Voting for the first candidate on the list is an easy heuristic when deciding which candidate to support, especially for voters with limited political knowledge. The

role of the ballot list position is one of the strongest effects found in this dissertation.

Table 8.2: Overview of key findings

	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Chapter 6	Chapter 7	Outcome
Party-related factors						
Political party		+		+	+	**+**
Ballot list position	+	+	+	+	+	**+**
First candidate on the list	+	+	+	+	+	**+**
Last candidate on the list	+	+	+	+	+	**+**
Individual-based factors						
Woman	+	+	+	+	+	**+**
Age	-	-		-	C	**-/C**
Ethnic minority background	+	+		+	-	**+**
Ideological position		-				**-**
Experience in parliament	+	+	C	+	+	**+/C**
Experience as mayor	-	+	-	-	-	**+/-**
Experience as Minister	-	+	-	+	-	**+/-**
Local legislative experience	-	+/-		+		**+/-**
Local voting					+	**+**
Media factors						
Short campaign	+	+	C		+	**C**
Long campaign	+		C		-	**C**
Campaign factors						
Campaign intensity	-			-		**-**
Campaign norm				C		**C**
Campaign agenda				+/-		**+/-**
Personal spending				+		**+**

Note: + significant effect; – no significant effect; +/- mixed evidence; C conditional effect

Individual-based factors are also important to explain a candidate's success. Especially socio-demographic characteristics matter in this regard. All chapters indicate that candidates from underrepresented groups, such as women and candidates with an ethnic minority background, are, ceteris paribus, more successful electorally. Chapter 7 investigates the mechanism behind these effects. The aim of this chapter was to examine which factors matter to voters in the decision-making process involved in preferential voting. In order to do so, a new way to investigate preferential voting was introduced, using dyadic models in which voter characteristics, candidate characteristics and characteristics at the

dyadic level were simultaneously modelled. The chapter shows that similarities matter to voters. Voters are more inclined to cast a preferential vote for candidates that are like themselves. However, especially underrepresented groups are guided by these voter-candidates similarities. For instance, women are more likely than men to base their decision on a candidate sharing the same gender. This can explain the effect for gender that is found in each chapter. For age, evidence was only found for younger voters being more inclined to vote for their own age group. Chapter 7 also finds a strong effect of local voting, with voters being more likely to cast a preferential vote for candidates that come from their municipality. There is one inconsistency across the chapters for the socio-demographic characteristics, namely regarding ethnicity, as in chapter 7 I do not find that candidates from an ethnic minority background receive more preferential votes. However, the reason for this is, most likely, that in the PartiRep electoral survey there are almost no voters with a different ethnic background, making it difficult to find such an effect.

Next to socio-demographic characteristics, and in line with the literature on the incumbency effect, political experience also matters. However, there are mixed findings between the chapters about which type of experience matters the most. From all five chapters it becomes clear that candidates who already had at least one term in parliament perform better than their peers without parliamentary experience. Yet, there are mixed findings regarding other types of political experience, such as experience as Minister, mayor or in a local legislative body. Some chapters find support for this, whereas other chapters do not. The reason for these differences is most likely that certain of these factors strongly tie together. In Belgium many MPs also take up other legislative or executive mandates and for example often are mayor of a city at the same time. When asked whether they had experience in one or more of these functions at some point in time, over 20 per cent of the candidates answered positively on multiple categories. Although there are no indications of multicollinearity in the models,

the strong interrelation could nevertheless prevent us from reaching a clear picture. So in sum, political experience matters, especially experience as parliamentarian, but further research is necessary to tease out these effects further.

Chapter 4 shows that, unlike socio-demographic characteristics and political experience, the third individual-based characteristic, the ideological position of a candidate, does not impact individual electoral success. The chapter assessed the direct effect of ideology, but also kept the option open that ideology only matters on certain issue dimensions or for certain candidates. However, in none of these situations did the results point to any significant effect of ideology on electoral success. Even when using different operationalizations, no effects were found. While ideology may play a role for voters when deciding which party to vote for, it does not play a role when deciding which candidate of that party to support. Knowing where individual candidates stand ideologically within the party is cognitive demanding and limited information is available. Hence, voters may refrain to easier cues, such as ballot list position or socio-demographic characteristics.

The effect of media attention is consistent across the studies in which it is included. Simply put, candidates who appear more in the news receive more votes. By getting in the news, candidates obtain name recognition, which is important as voters are unlikely to vote for candidates they do not know. Chapter 5 studies these media effects in more detail. The chapter shows that media effects work differently for top and ordinary candidates. In the case of ordinary candidates, the large majority on the electoral lists, especially media attention during the short campaign impacts electoral success. This can be explained by the fact that for them the most important reason to get in the media is to obtain name recognition and to become salient in the voter's mind. Thus, the closer this attention is to Election Day the better. For top candidates, on the other hand, media attention during the long campaign leads to more preferential votes. For

them media attention matters not so much to get name recognition, but rather determines who are the most viable candidates in the mind of voters. Top candidates need to build a reputation before the heat of the campaign. A candidate on top of the list cannot just appear out of nowhere.

Finally, also campaign factors play a role. However, in this regard it should be noted that none of the chapters found any effect of the campaign intensity of candidates. Rather, it seems that it is the content of the campaign that matters the most. Chapter 6 showed that in general a more personalized campaign pays off. Especially, the investment of personal money is a successful way to obtain more votes, as it leads to a more autonomous campaign. Also mixed evidence for the effect of a personal campaign agenda was found. This suggests that while candidates may not be able to win votes by taking a unique ideological position within their party, they may be able to do so by specializing on a unique issue that is not stressed by other candidates. However, the findings of the chapter suggest that these effects of personalized campaign strategies are contingent on the ballot list position and the amount of money one can spend, with personalized campaigns being only successful for those candidates high on the ballot list. I will discuss this contingency in more detail in the next subsection.

All in all, from Table 8.1 it becomes clear that the electoral success of candidates is determined by a combination of factors. However, as said before, these factors also influence each other. Figure 8.1 therefore depicts the larger framework that was introduced in the first chapter. Based on the findings of the dissertation, the framework seems to be a useful schemata for understanding the causal processes behind individual electoral success and it follows the idea of the funnel of causality which was introduced by Campbell et al. (1960) in *The American Voter*. At the basis of this funnel stand the party-related characteristics and the individual-based characteristics. These two set of factor impact electoral success directly, but also influence each other. For instance, when drafting the ballot list, political parties aim to have a balanced list regarding socio-

demographic characteristics (Gallagher & Marsh, 1988). Also they are more likely to position more experienced candidates at the top (André et al., in press). The other way around, candidates of certain parties are more likely to have political experience, simply because these parties are more likely to govern.

The party-related characteristics and individual-based characteristics also indirectly impact individual electoral success through media attention and campaigning. Chapter 3 and chapter 5, and also some previous literature, show that media attention and campaign mediate the other effects. Candidates win more votes when getting in the media, but who passes the news gates is to a large extent determined by factors set earlier in the funnel. Often they are the politicians with the most power; those with a high ballot list position, and much political experience (see for example Van Dalen, 2012; Midtbø, 2011; Tresch, 2009; Wolfsfeld, 2011). Chapter 5 also shows that especially for lower positioned women it is harder to get in the news, which suppresses their identity bonus. The same holds for campaigning where certain candidates will be more likely to run a personalized campaign than others. For example, previous studies have shown that political experience and a good ballot list position also make it more likely to run a personalized campaign (De Winter & Baudewyns, 2015; Eder et al., 2015) as these candidates often have more political experience to stress in their campaign. Also the Belgian rules allow for a higher spending cap to candidates at the top positions than to candidates lower on the list. All in all, the framework shows that the proportion of preferential votes obtained is determined by a complex set of factors which influence each other. It also indicates that the explanation logic behind individual electoral success follows a different logic than that of the party vote, where factors such as ideology, political issues, and retrospective voting are more important.

Figure 8.1: The integrated framework
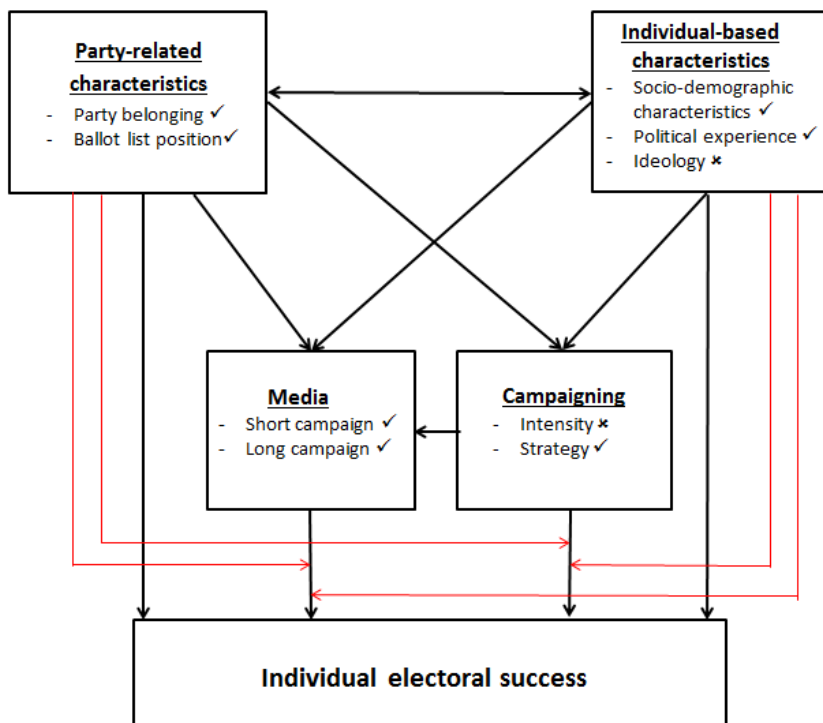
Of course the suggested framework is somewhat simplified. For instance, one could also draw an arrow between the long media campaign and ballot list position, as candidates that appear more in the media outside the campaign may be positioned on a higher place by the party. Additionally, certain variables are not taken up in the model and also the institutional context is lacking. These are limitations that I will discuss in section 8.4.

Contingency of effects

As table 8.1 indicates not all effects work across the board. Especially regarding the media and campaign effects differences exist between candidates based on their party-related and individual-based characteristics. Chapter 5 for instance demonstrates that for realistic candidates at a top ballot list position it is media

attention in the long campaign that matters most. For ordinary candidates on the other hand, it is media attention just before the election which is more influential. This can be explained by the fact that for ordinary candidates the most important reason to get in the media is to obtain name recognition and become salient in the voter's mind. Thus, the closer this attention is to Election Day the better. For top candidates, on the other hand, media attention during the long campaign leads to more preferential votes. For them media attention matters not so much to get name recognition, but rather determines who are the most viable candidates in the mind of voters. Top candidates need to build a reputation before the heat of the campaign. A candidate on top of the list cannot just appear out of nowhere. These differences between top and ordinary candidates are also found in chapter 6. While a personalized campaign can be a successful strategy to attract preferential votes, this seems to be mostly the case for candidates at top ballot list positions and/or candidates that can invest sufficient personal money – which, given the spending cap in Belgium, is also related to ballot list position. Their personal campaign strategy is more likely to be picked up by the public and pays off in terms of preferential votes. Additionally, this finding suggests that for these candidates personalized campaign strategies may also be more effective because they not only compete in the intra-party, but also in the inter-party competition and can attract voters from other parties using their personal reputation. I also found that personalized campaign strategies are more effective for candidates of traditional parties, compared to candidates of niche parties. The most likely explanation for this difference is that traditional parties are ideologically more catch-all and have stronger candidates, making the intra-party competition more fierce and individual campaign strategies more important. In order to depict this contingency of media and campaign effects on party-related and individual-based characteristics, I added four new arrows in the framework of figure 8.1.

The fact that media and campaign effects differ between candidates on the basis of other features has implications for the intra-party competition. Especially the contingency of the campaign effects means that the strategy to cultivate personal votes has the least effect for those candidates that could benefit from it the most. It suggests that candidates who are already at a disadvantage due to their party-related characteristics, and to a lesser extent individual-based characters, have a difficult time compensating for this disadvantage with their campaign. On the other hand, those candidates who are already have an advantage due to their ballot list position, profit even more when they run an effective campaign. To some extent this creates a Matthew effect and it can explain why a small group of candidates receive the large share of preferential votes. From a normative point of view, this means that the positive effect preferential voting can have for the quality of democracy remains limited, at least in the Belgian system. In potential, preferential voting can give voters more control on the composition of parliament, leading to a better (descriptive) representation, but this potential is not fully met. The large sum of preferential votes are still very much concentrated within a small group of candidates. The contingency of the effects also indicates that the party still exert a high control over who ultimately get elected and which candidates are the most popular, which brings us to the third general conclusion of this dissertation.

The party still matters

One of the questions that was touched upon in the introduction, and that also received previous attention in the literature on preferential voting, is to what extent preferential votes are personal votes; Can they be seen as an indicator of the supposed personalization trend or are preferential votes are still very much party driven? In general, the findings of this dissertation indicate that although preferential votes can definitely have a personal element in them, the party still plays a central role and holds a strong control over which candidates will receive

the most preferential votes. This becomes most clear by the central role of ballot list position. Ballot list position impacts the electoral outcome 1) directly; 2) influences the amount of media attention and through the Belgian spending cap determines the amount of money candidates can spend and 3) also moderates media and campaign effects. In other words, the system of preferential voting (in Belgium) is strongly biased in favor of candidates with top positions on the list. This provides the party with strong leverage over the outcome of the intra-party competition, as it are the parties that draft the ballot lists and determine which candidate gets on which position, at least in Belgium. Of course, this does not mean that personal characteristics of candidates do not play any role at all or that the outcome is fully determined by parties. The effects this dissertation found of local voting and identity factors indicate that a group of voters base their decision on personal factors rather than, or in addition to, party factors. Nevertheless, by drafting the ballot list and by dividing resources between candidates, political parties play a crucial role in determining who will be successful. In that regard we should be careful in declaring the demise of the role of political parties in the so-called age of personalization, as the party 'still comes first', so to say.

In the light of this debate, we can also wonder to what extent candidates can shape their own electoral fortune. How much influence do they have over the amount of preferential votes they receive? Certain factors, such as the socio-demographic characteristics of candidates, are structural, and are a given constant to the candidates. Although they may affect preferential voting, there is no way for candidates to influence them. Nevertheless, with regard to other factors, candidates can have some agency, but mostly in the long term. For example, given that political parties (mostly) control which candidate gets which position on the ballot list, or which candidates get a position as Minister or the option to run for mayor, candidates cannot influence these factors in the short span of the elections. However, as a long term strategy they could work their way up in the party ranks. A similar situation holds for media coverage. Also here we

find a mix between structure and agency. On the one hand, candidates can contact journalists or send out press releases and that way increase their likelihood to get in the media. However, ultimately their fates also rests on the decisions made by journalists and editors, and, as chapter 5 shows, they are more likely to cover those politicians who they think have news value. In the short span before the election candidates could impact their success by taking an ideological niche position or with their campaign strategy. However, this dissertation finds no evidence that ideological positioning yields any effects and campaigning seems to matter mostly for top candidates. The dissertation does, however, find some evidence that candidates can win votes by attracting local votes and by stressing different issues than the party, although effects for the latter are limited. In sum, our results suggest that the candidates have some influence but that it is relatively limited, especially for those positioned lower on the list, at least in the short span of the campaign. In the long term the most successful strategy for candidates is probably to try to score relatively well for one's list position and this way slowly climb the party ladder. I will return to this point in the final section of this chapter

8.3. Limitations and avenues for further research

Despite the contributions that this dissertation made regarding our knowledge on preferential voting, it also has a number of limitations. Hence, it leaves room to avenues for further research. In this section I will discuss the most important limitations of the dissertation and describe how these could be handled in future research.

Generalizability

In order to understand the factors behind preferential voting, I studied the case of Belgium, and more specifically the elections in Flanders. Although Belgium is a good case, given the fact that it is analytically very suitable to study preferential voting, it is still only one country - or to be more precise one region. This does

raise the question to what extent the findings can be generalized towards other countries with preferential list PR-systems. Like Belgium, a majority of the European preferential list PR-systems, 12 out of 21, have a combination of multiple preferential votes with the option to cast a list vote. I therefore expect that most of the effects found for Belgium will work more or less similarly in these countries. For example, we can expect that in other countries the media will play an important role, incumbents receive more preferential votes and ballot list position will be a key determinant. Also, many of the cognitive mechanisms behind preferential voting that are found in this dissertation, are likely to hold in other countries. There is no reason to assume that only Belgian voters are guided by a primacy effect. In the same light, it seems unlikely that similarities between voters and candidates play no role at all beyond Belgium. Of course the specifics may work slightly differently, but there is no rationale to assume that in other countries these mechanisms are not apparent.

However, as chapter 2 already described, differences do exist between countries regarding the institutional context. In some countries preferential voting is obliged, and in nine countries citizens are only allowed to cast a preferential vote for one candidate. In two other countries, Luxembourg and Switzerland, the options voters have are even more extensive than in Belgium and voters can make use of panachage, and cast preferential votes for candidates of different political parties. Due to the focus on Belgium, this dissertation cannot provide an answer on how these institutional features affect its main conclusions. Nevertheless, some expectations can be formed on how effects might differ. For example, it has been theorized that in systems with compulsory preferential voting more votes go the first candidate on the list. The rationale behind this is that voters who would normally cast a list vote, now are obliged to vote for a candidate and therefore cast a vote for the first candidate, as this is the least cognitively demanding option. In other words, the expectation would be that in these systems the primacy effect is stronger. However, in a different article - not in this dissertation -

I investigated together with a colleague to what extent this actually is the case, using an experimental design, and we find that the proportion between preferential votes for the first candidate on the list and other candidates is similar between systems with and without compulsory preferential voting, indicating that the primacy effect is about equally strong between these institutional contexts (Nagtzaam & van Erkel, 2017).

The differences between countries with single preferential voting, rather than multiple preferential voting, may be larger. In systems with multiple preferential voting, like Belgium, citizens can be guided by multiple decision rules simultaneously, and for example vote for both the first candidate on the list and someone from their neighborhood. In systems with single preferential voting on the other hand, voters face a trade-off. Voting for candidate X automatically means that one cannot vote for candidate Y. This could mean that certain explanatory logics become less important at the expense of others. Especially, since in the abovementioned study we also find that multiple preferential voting benefits lower positioned candidates more. About one-third of the voters casting a preferential vote in Belgium, combine a preferential vote for the first candidate on the list with a vote for a lower positioned candidate (Thijssen, Wauters, & van Erkel, in press), and we find that when voters are limited to a single preferential vote it are especially the lower positioned candidates that lose votes (Nagtzaam & van Erkel, 2017). Consequently, factors such as local voting, but also socio-demographics such as gender and ethnicity, may become less important in systems with single preferential voting.

Although Nagtzaam & van Erkel (2017) made a first attempt to assess preferential voting in different institutional contexts, more comparative research is necessary, especially to assess to what extent different explanatory logics hold within the different institutional contexts. Until now almost all studies on preferential voting, including this dissertation, have been single case studies, often focusing on Belgium. The most likely reason for this is that comparative

research on this topic is difficult. First of all, it is costly and time consuming to gather cross-national comparative data, since one needs information on a large number of candidates. Also from the voter perspective the number of questions about preferential voting is limited in electoral surveys. A more structural problem, however, is that due to institutional differences, the operationalization of the main dependent variable, individual electoral success, is different across countries. This makes it difficult to include multiple countries within a single model. The method I employed in chapter 7, using dyadic voter and candidate data, could be one way to overcome this problem, as it brings back the preferential vote to a core element which is comparable across systems; a vote for a candidate by a voter. Since it brings back the dependent variable to a single operationalization, it can be used for comparing results across countries. With a large enough country sample, one could even nest the dyadic data within the different country characteristics and model how these institutional features impact the different effects. However, this does imply that more countries than Belgium should include simulation ballots in their electoral surveys.

The role of context

The framework of figure 8.1 only takes into account characteristics at the candidate level. Nevertheless, electoral success is also influenced by the context, which may also moderate certain effects. The abovementioned electoral institutions come to mind as some of these context features, but there are also other ones. For instance, this dissertation concentrates on first-order elections. Nevertheless, the processes may work differently in second-order elections, especially at the local level. Previous research shows that the rate of preferential voting by citizens is higher at the local level than at the national level (André et al., 2013; Thijssen, 2013). More importantly, at the local level the percentage of citizens voting for a candidate that does not occupy the first position on the list is substantially higher than at the national level, where the majority of voters cast a

list vote or support the first candidate on the list. A study by Thijssen, Wauters, & van Erkel (in press) uses two electoral surveys and finds that at the local level 55.7 per cent of the voters (that completed the survey) cast a vote for a lower positioned candidate (sometimes alongside the first candidate on the list), whereas at the national level this is only 34.1 per cent. The explanation behind this difference lies in the proximity between candidates and voters at the local level. Citizens are more likely to (personally) know candidates in local elections and as a result of these intersubjective connections are more likely to cast a personal vote, whereas at the national level there is more distance, and citizens have to rely on more simple heuristics such as ballot list position. This may result in party-related factors being less important in the local elections. In sum, comparing elections at different levels is a useful approach for further research.

Another feature of the context that may moderate effects is the composition of the ballot list. The success of a candidate may be dependent on the characteristics of the other candidates on the list. For instance, a candidate with an ethnic minority background or a minister may profit more is he or she is the only one on with this feature on the list. In chapter 2 I already addressed this issue and tested whether the main results of this dissertation are influenced when taking these ballot list composition effects into account. In the end, no evidence was found that composition effects bias the findings of this dissertation. Nevertheless, Belgium, with its system of multiple preferential voting, is a least likely case for ballot list composition effects, as voters are not limited to one vote and not face a trade-off when choosing between candidates. In other countries, such as Estonia, Finland and the Netherlands, we may find these effects. More fine-grained analyses could shed more light on this. One way to test this would be to use experiments where subjects are exposed to different ballot list compositions.

Alternative explanations

This dissertation investigated a number of explanation logics behind preferential voting, grouped within four main categories; party-related factors, individual-based characteristics, media and campaign strategy. In general, these factors have high explorative power and can predict the electoral outcome quite well. Nevertheless, this does not mean that they are exhaustive. There are a number of factors that are not included in this dissertation, that may affect the individual electoral success as well, and therefore warrant further research.

The first factor that has not been included in this dissertation is the social network of candidates. Chapter 7 demonstrates that the local vote matters and that citizens are inclined to vote for someone from their own neighborhood, especially in smaller municipalities where ties are stronger. It is therefore likely that candidates can attract votes by being more embedded within their community. Candidates that play a role in associations or in for example a labor union may increase their electoral strength. By forming local ties they can receive more name recognition and this way win more personal votes. However, it should be noted that in a previous study by Thijssen & Jacobs (2004) some measures of social capital, such as being a member of local associations, were included in a model to explain individual electoral success, but no effects were found. However, the effect may run via ballot list position, with candidates being more embedded in organizations receiving a better ballot list position and, as a consequence, obtaining more preferential votes.

A second factor lacking from the models in this dissertation is the parliamentary behavior of political candidates. A number of scholars find that in systems which are more personalized, such as systems with preferential voting, parliamentarians show more signs of personal-vote seeking legislative behavior (Bräuninger, Brunner, & Däubler, 2012; Carey & Shugart, 1995; Crisp et al., 2004). A recent study tests more specifically whether the legislative behavior of MPs impact their electoral results, concluding that especially MPs initiating single-

authored law proposals shortly before the elections obtain more personal votes (Däubler, Bräuninger, & Brunner, 2016). In the end, the reason why the behavior of parliamentarians was not included in this dissertation is that its focus lies on all candidates rather than only parliamentarians. Nevertheless, the robust effect that was found for political experience within a legislative body, might actually be the result of the legislative behavior of these candidates, rather than political experience itself.

Also, regarding media attention a number of questions remain unanswered in this dissertation. The focus of chapter 5 is mainly on the amount of media attention a candidate receives. However, it does not look at the coverage itself. Yet, it is possible that being covered at the front page of a newspaper has a larger effect than being covered in an article on page nine. Additionally, the tone of the article is likely to have an influence. It seems to be plausible that favorable news will have a stronger effect than unfavorable news. This effect can also differ between candidates. Perhaps for candidates lower on the list any news attention is welcome, positive as well as negative news, while for candidates at the top of the list only positive news helps to receive votes. Further research will have to test whether this expectation holds.

In the light of media coverage, this dissertation also did not include social media activities of candidates. Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, are increasingly replacing or complementing traditional media as channels through which citizens receive political news. For political candidates they form an interesting option to directly communicate with their voters and reach a large electorate. In this sense, they can be used as a mean for politicians to attract preferential votes. However, until now research seem to suggest that the role of Twitter is still limited, at least within the intra-party competition. Kruikemeier (2014) shows that Dutch politicians that use Twitter, receive on average more preferential votes than their peers who are not active on Twitter. Spierings and Jacobs (2014) find similar results showing that candidates with more followers

receive more preferential votes on average, but only if they are actively tweeting. However, in both cases the effects of the social media are moderate. A study by Van Aelst, van Erkel, D'heer, & Harder (2016) also shows that the equalizing potential that is sometimes attributed to Twitter, allowing politicians who cannot get into the traditional media to attract attention online, is not really met. Rather, the authors find support for normalization; it is mostly those politicians who do well in the traditional media that also have the most followers and retweets on Twitter. In this sense, the potential of the social media for individual candidates is still not really fulfilled. However, while the effect of social media on preferential voting may be limited for the 2014 elections, we can expect it to become increasingly important over time. Its development and influence on electoral success therefore warrants more investigation.

Finally, this dissertation does not take into account the appearance of candidates. However, the political psychology literature shows that (perceived) personality traits of political leaders - think for example of competence, confidence, trustworthiness and intelligence - as well as their physical appearance, strongly affects how voters evaluate them (see for instance Bailenson et al., 2008; Budesheim & DePaola, 1994; Dumitrescu, Gidengil, & Stolle, 2015; Rosenberg et al., 1986). Yet, a large share of this literature focuses on the United States. Additionally, studies that did look at Western Europe usually only investigate whether the traits of political leaders impact the party vote. For instance, they let voters evaluate political leaders and then measure whether respondents are more inclined to vote for those parties of which they rated the leaders positively ,often ignoring the strong endogeneity problems from which this design suffers. Moreover, while these studies provide evidence that leadership evaluations and personality traits of political leaders, such as reliability, are important, the studies only tell us about the effect on party votes and not on preferential votes. It remains unclear to what extent the physical features and (perceived) personality traits of common candidates can enhance or diminish

their individual electoral success. One avenue for future research would therefore be to focus on these common candidates and test whether their appearance affect their share of preferential votes. This can for example be done with an experimental design in which physical features of (fictional) political candidates are manipulated to test whether this makes respondents more or less likely to vote for them.

Longitudinal perspective

A fourth limitation is that the dissertation only focuses on one single point in time. It studies candidates during the span of only one election. As a consequence, it does not fully grasp the electoral success of candidates during previous elections. In general, this is not a problem for the analyses of this dissertation, as I mostly control indirectly for this with measures such as ballot list position, incumbency and in chapter 6 electoral anticipation. Nevertheless, future research could benefit from adopting a longitudinal design, tracking candidates over the span of multiple elections. This would make it possible to make stronger claims about causality and also provides more insight into the consequences of being successful or unsuccessful in the intra-party competition. One possibility may for example be that candidates can slowly climb the 'electoral ladder'. They may be successful in one election, as a result of this success receive a better ballot list position in the subsequent election and because of this better ballot list position become even more successful. Focusing on multiple election could give us more insight into these dynamics, something which this dissertation fails to do, due to its static nature.

Nevertheless, tracking these dynamics may not be an easy task. How do we know whether a politician performed well during an election? While one may simply use the absolute number of preferential votes obtained, or the district or list proportions, these measures may not be the most valid indicator of electoral success. Especially since this dissertation has shown that the number of votes

obtained is strongly influenced by a number of features, such as among others ballot list position. Thus, when a candidate obtains five per cent of all the preferential casted within a list, this may be an extremely good score for a candidate low on the list, but a real disappointment for the first candidate on the list. Therefore, when looking at previous success, one should take into account that it is relative to other features. One option for a future study would be to use the models of this dissertation to predict the scores candidates should receive based on their party affiliation, ballot list position, incumbency status, etc. One can then see whether candidates score better or worse than the proportion of votes they 'should' have obtained. This measure can then be included in the model for subsequent elections.

8.4.   Final words

The dissertation started by positioning the intra-party electoral competition, and more specifically preferential voting, within the personalization debate, asking whether preferential votes indeed point towards a trend of increased personalization. Closely related is the question to what extent political candidates have leverage over their own electoral score. If preferential votes are indeed a sign of personalization, then we should see that candidates have strong influence on the share of preferential votes they obtain and can use their personal reputation to shape their own electoral fortune. To start with the answer on the second question, the results of this dissertation indicate that candidates can have an impact on their own electoral score, but that this influence is bounded. These boundaries are set by the political parties. Especially by drafting the ballot lists, parties strongly determine the success of their candidates. Not only because ballot list position influences the share of preferential votes directly – candidates at top spots in general always receive a higher share of votes than their lower positioned peers, even when taking into account differences between these politicians – but also because high positioned candidates receive extra benefits,

such as more media attention and, in Belgium, the option to invest more money in their own campaign, which also makes other strategies, such as a personalized campaign strategy, more effective for them.

However, within these boundaries, candidates have some room to influence their own success. While lower positioned candidates may not be able to compete with their peers at the top spots, they may do relatively well compared to their fellow lower positioned competitors. Factors such as socio-demographic characteristics and previous political experience may cause candidates to perform well *relative* to their position. Also, by winning over local voters and by stressing issues that are not raised by the party, candidates may score better than their peers on similar positions. This way they can get in the picture of the party leadership and slowly climb the party ladder to get a better spot at a later election. In that sense, preferential votes have a learning function for political parties. Parties can use the results of the elections to determine which candidates are popular, and over repetitive elections make sure that the most popular candidates will get the top spots. Candidates at the top spots, on the other hand, are mostly in competition with the other top candidates. While these candidates will almost always receive a higher share than candidates at lower positions, they may still disappoint by not receiving a high share of votes relative to their good position. In sum, preferential votes are a sign of popularity, but only in a bounded form. In order to know how popular a candidate is – or at least get an idea of the electoral potential of a candidate – one should look at a candidate's score relative to the ballot list position, rather than the absolute score or the relative proportion in a district.

What does this say about the broader discussion on personalization? The idea that preferential voting points towards a trend of personalization should be nuanced. On the one hand there is indeed an increase in the usage of preferential votes, although this trend is not linear. Voters increasingly seem to prefer to cast a vote for a candidate, rather than for the abstract notion of a party. However, at

the same time the results of this dissertation indicate that for voters it is cognitively demanding and time consuming to evaluate all candidates. Hence, many voters make use of simple heuristics such as party cues. In many cases preferential votes are therefore not personal votes (Cain et al., 1987). In that sense Manin (1997) may be right. While the pendulum may swing from a clear party democracy to a stronger role for political candidates, political parties will not become obsolete and keep playing an important role in some form, at least for the foreseeable future. Political parties still hold a tight grip over which candidates receive the most preferential votes.

Does the important role of the party and the limited influence candidates have themselves then mean that systems of preferential voting are redundant and should be replaced? My answer on this would be 'definitely not'. As said before, candidates can still perform relatively well for the ballot position they have. This way preferential votes can be used by candidates to climb the party ladder. Additionally, one could say that one of the reasons parties have a strong influence on the success of their candidates lies within the institutional context and rules. While in a number of countries electoral rules have been reformed in favor of a stronger influence of preferential votes - mostly as a mean to increase trust between voters and their representatives (Renwick & Pilet, 2016) - often these reforms have been very limited, providing only changes in the margins, and thereby limiting the actual effects of these reforms on political trust. Especially in flexible-list systems, the impact of preferential voting on the distribution of seats within parliament remains limited. Consequently, voters may not have any motivation to make the effort of evaluating the high number of candidate on a ballot list, as these votes usually do not translate to seats, nor do candidates to fully commit to a personal campaign. Thus, in order to have a system where voters and their selected representatives are closer connected, with voters determining the composition of the parliament, significant institutional reforms are necessary that translate to a more open list system. Of course, for political

parties this forms a risk, as they will lose some of their control, and above all lose an important mechanism to ensure party discipline and unity. Governing parties may therefore refrain from initiating these reforms. Nevertheless, I would argue that a more open system in which preferential votes are more influential could have many positive effects. It will give voters a stronger incentive to evaluate the different candidates of a party, as it gives them a direct influence on the composition of the parliament. This could also ensure a better descriptive representation within parliaments, as the results of this dissertation showed that underrepresented groups are more likely to cast votes for candidates similar to them. Ultimately, I believe that making preferential votes more important in the electoral process will result in a closer connection between voters and parliamentarians, which in turn may enhance the general trust of citizens in the political system.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Questionnaire candidates (translated to English)

Part 1 : Answers to the next set of questions will be shown on the public website.

1. **Political experience**

Did you ever had a seat in one or more of the following legislative bodies?

	Yes	No
Municipality council		
Province council		
Flemish parliament		
Brussels parliament		
Federal parliament		
European parliament		

How many years did you have a seat in this legislative body? (Only the categories to which the respondent answered yes in the previous question are shown).

	Number of years
Municipality council	
Province council	
Flemish parliament	
Brussels parliament	
Federal parliament	
European parliament	

Did you ever held one or more of the following political functions?

	Yes	No
OCMW-president		
Alderman		
Mayor		
Provincial deputy		
Minister		

How many years did you held this position? (Only the categories to which the respondent answered yes in the previous question are shown).

	Number of years
OCMW-president	
Alderman	
Mayor	
Provincial deputy	
Minister	

Did you ever took part in a previous election?
        0 Yes – 0 No

Are you a member of the party for which you run?
        0 Yes – 0 No

[if yes] In which year did you become a member of this party?

2. **Professional experience**

What is your current main occupation?
Please be as specific as possible (For example; Alderman in Kortrijk; teacher at a primary school, Flemish member of parliament, accountant at company X). If you have more occupations, please mention the occupation that takes most of your time. When you do not have any occupation please describe your current situation (e.g. student; retired)? *(max. 100 characters)*

Current main occupation:
…………………………………………………………………………………………………

Could you indicate what professional experience(s) you have? (Multiple answers are possible)
-        Self-employed entrepreneur (less than 5 employees)
-        Self-employed entrepreneur (more than 5 employees)
-        High management (for example: board of direction, manager)
-        Middle management
-        Employee
-        Free occupation (lawyer, doctor …)
-        No other professional experience

Bellow you have the option to further specify your (non-political) professional experience more concretely. (*Max. 150 characters*)

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Are you currently a member of a trade union or employers' organization? (Multiple answers are possible)

    0 Yes, trade union

    0 Yes, employers' organization

    0 No

3. **Thematic questions and expertise**

Which main political themes are the most important to you?
Choose exactly two themes from the following six:

1. Economy and social policy

2. Environment and energy

3. Immigration and integration

4. Federal reforms

5. Europe and internationalisation

6. Ethical issues

We would like to present you a number of statements. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with these statements. Your answers can range from "totally disagree" (-3) to "fully agree" (+3).

1. The government should interfere to reduce differences between incomes.
2. The government should enforce as few rules as possible.
3. Social benefits should be decreased
4. The interests of the working class should be defended more.
5. The government should interfere less in the economy.
6. Citizens who work are being taxed too much by the government.

1. The benefits of sustainable energy are being overrated.
2. Environment-damaging products should be made more expensive.
3. To reach a clean industry I would be willing to pay more for products.
4. The dangers of climate change are exaggerated.
5. Rules regarding the environment should not harm the economy.

1. Migrants make too much use of social benefits.
2. Migrants contribute to the wealth of our society.
3. Migrants form a threat to our society.
4. Belgium should close its borders for asylum seekers.
5. Migrants should be able to keep their own culture.

1. The European unification should not go any further.
2. Belgium has received many benefits from its EU membership.
3. We should first solve our own problems before we help other European countries with economic problems.
4. We should share our wealth with poorer countries, even if it means we lose some wealth.
5. Most problems can be best solved at the European level.

1. The government should not be allowed to make any difference between straight and gay couples.
2. The government should make stricter rules on euthanasia.
3. Women should always be able to abort their pregnancy.
4. Marriage should only be possible between a man and a woman.
5. You should always be allowed to decide on your life's end.

1. Flanders should receive more competencies
2. The federal state is the most competent to run diplomatic relations with foreign countries.
3. Social security should be fully split.
4. Belgium should stay in existence.
5. To what extent do you feel Flemish or Belgian? (1= I consider myself only Flemish, 2-3= I consider myself more Flemish than Belgian … 7= I consider myself only Belgian)

Provide up to three concrete policy domains which you plan to work on as politician in the next few years. (Be concise, for example: Oosterweelverbinding; Street criminality; Reforms in education ...)
1. ……………… (max 150 characters)
2. ………………
3. ………………

4. Personal information

You are ..   o Male
                  o Female

What is your year of birth?
…

What is the zip code of your current residence area? …

What is your highest level of education?
o Primary education/ no certificate
o Lower secondary education (all types)
o Higher secondary technical or vocational education (tso or bso)
o Higher secondary education (aso)
o Professional Bachelor
o Academic Bachelor
o Academic Master
o PhD

Which studies did you follow after your secondary education?
…………………………………………………………………………….

What is your civil status?
o Married
o Unmarried, but living together
o Divorced
o Unmarried
o Other, namely …..
Do you have children?
0 Yes
0 No

[If answered yes] How many children do you have? …….

Does at least one of your parents have a different nationality than the Belgian nationality?

o Yes, from another country that is part of the European union
o Yes, from another country that is not part of the European union
o No

If yes, which nationality? ……………….

Do you consider yourself to be …
- Catholic
- Protestant
- Orthodox Christian
- Christian, but not Catholic
- Muslim
- Jewish
- Liberal religious (*Vrijzinnig)*
- Non-religious
- Other : …………………………………………………………………………………..

What is your favorite newspaper? (Please mention only one)
…………………………………………………………..

What are the most important associations or organizations of which you are a member? (Maximum of 3)

1. ………………
2. ………………
3. ………………

What is your sexual orientation?
o Homosexual
o Heterosexual
o Bisexual
o I do not want to share this information

On the website there is the possibility to present yourself to voters. There is space to introduce yourself to the electorate in one short sentence and there is a larger profile in which you can put a more extensive message.

How would you like to present yourself as a candidate on the website in one short sentence? We will copy this message directly to the website. (150 characters maximum)
………..

How would you like to present yourself in your profile space? We will copy this information directly to the website. (500 characters maximum)

………

………

With which name are you on the ballot list?

First name …………………………………

Surname ……………………………

Contact details:
Here we give the option to provide contact information at which voters could reach you.

Webpage:
Facebook page:
Twitter:
Phone number:
E-mail:

Part 2 : Answers to the next set of questions will <u>NOT</u> be shown on the public website. (They serve only for academic purposes)

1. Do you expect to be elected on the 25th of May?
o   Yes, almost sure
o   Most likely
o   Most likely not
o   Definitely not

2. How many hours did you spent **the last week** to prepare your campaign?
……….. hours

3.   Are you planning to use any of the following activities during the campaign? If so, how important do you think these activities are to your campaign?

	Are you planning to use these activities		How important do you think this activity is?			
	Yes	*No*	*Not important*	*Somewhat important*	*Important*	*Very important*
Distributing campaign material						
Contact by phone						
Campaigning in local associations						
Door-to-door visits						
Campaigning at markets						
Public debates with other candidates						
Meeting party members/ attending party assemblies						
Media activities (press releases, interviews)						
Other, namely ………						

4.   Are you planning to use any of the following means in your campaign? If so, how important do you think these means are to your campaign?

	Are you planning to use these means		How important do you think this mean is?			
	Yes	*No*	*Not important*	*Somewhat important*	*Important*	*Very important*
Facebook						
Twitter						
Youtube						
SMS						
Personal blog						
Chat sessions						

Personal website						
E-mails						
Personal leaflets and cards						
Letters						
Personal advertisement in a newsletter						
Affiches						
Other, namely ………						

5. What is the main aim of your campaign? Where would you position yourself on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 stands for "to attract as much attention as possible for my party" and 10 stands for "to attract as much attention as possible for myself as a candidate"?

As much attention as possible for the party	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	As much attention as possible for myself
	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	

6. To what extent do you have the feeling that you can be autonomous in your campaign? Where would you position yourself on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 stands for "the feeling that party fully determines you campaign" and 10 for "the feeling that you can develop your campaign autonomously"?

Party fully determines campaign	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Campaign can be developed autonomously
	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	

7. How much money (in euro's) do you plan to spend on your personal campaign (including money from the party, donations and personal money)?

8. What percentage of this budget is from the party, from donations and from your personal money? (Answer in percentages)

Party …………………………..
Donations……………………
Personal money …………………….

9.   Do you plan to focus on issues in your campaign that do not receive attention from your political party?

o   Yes, namely

……

o   No

Appendix B: Composition effects (chapter 2)

There may be a dependence of candidates on the other candidates on the ballot list. A candidate with an ethnic minority background or a Minister may profit more electorally is he or she is the only on with this feature on the list. In other words, the composition of the ballot list may affect the results we find. I therefore test in this appendix to what extent this is the case and to what extent the effects found in this dissertation may be biased by these composition effects. For each characteristic I counted how many other candidates there where on a party's ballot list. For instance, I counted for every ballot list how many candidates with an ethnic minority background there were. I then interact this composition variable with the same variable at the individual level. This way I can test for instance whether candidates with an ethnic minority background are more successful if they are more unique on the ballot. Given that these are cross-level interactions with one variable placed at the ballot level and one at the individual level, I make us of a multilevel model. Table B1 presents the results of this model.

The results show that almost none of these interactions are significant. This is an indication that the effects at the individual candidate level are not dependent on the composition of the ballot list. Effects are not different if a candidate is unique on its list or whether there are more candidates that share that characteristic. The only exception however is experience in the Flemish parliament where the interaction is significant. This effect becomes stronger when more candidates on the same ballot list have taken up a seat in the Flemish parliament. Nevertheless, in general the results suggest that composition effects do not strongly influence the results.

Table B1: test for competition effects. Fixed effects for parties and electoral districts not depicted.

Individual electoral success (log)	b(SE)
Ballot list position	-.379(.01)**
First candidate on the list	.757(.04)**
Last candidate on the list	.542(.03)**
Female	.217(.02)**
Ethnic minority	.103(.05)
Age (ref. 36-64)	
- Young (18-35)	.001(.04)
- Elder (65+)	-.068(.07)
Experience Flemish parliament	-.072(.07)
Experience Federal parliament	.165(.09)
Mayor	.110(.07)
Minister	-.100(.20)
Federal elections	.188(.02)
Media coverage (log)	.018(.00)**
Media coverage t-1 (log)	.015(.00)**
Ethnicity (composition)	.019(.01)
Ethnicity (interaction)	.021(.02)
Young (18-35) (composition)	.010(.01)
Young (interaction)	-.001(.01)
Elder (65+) (composition)	-.029(.03)
Elder (interaction)	.026(.03)
Flemish parliament (composition)	-.019(.01)*
Flemish parliament (interaction)	.062(.02)**
Federal parliament (composition)	-.012(.01)
Federal parliament (interaction)	.029(.03)
Mayor (composition)	-.014(.01)
Mayor (interaction)	.006(.01)
Minister (composition)	-.051(.03)
Minister (interaction)	.279(.16)
Constant	-3.281(.11)
N (individuals)	1435
N (ballot lists)	70

*p<.05; **p<.01

Appendix C: Overview of distribution (chapter 3)

Figure C1: Distribution of the dependent variable before transformation.
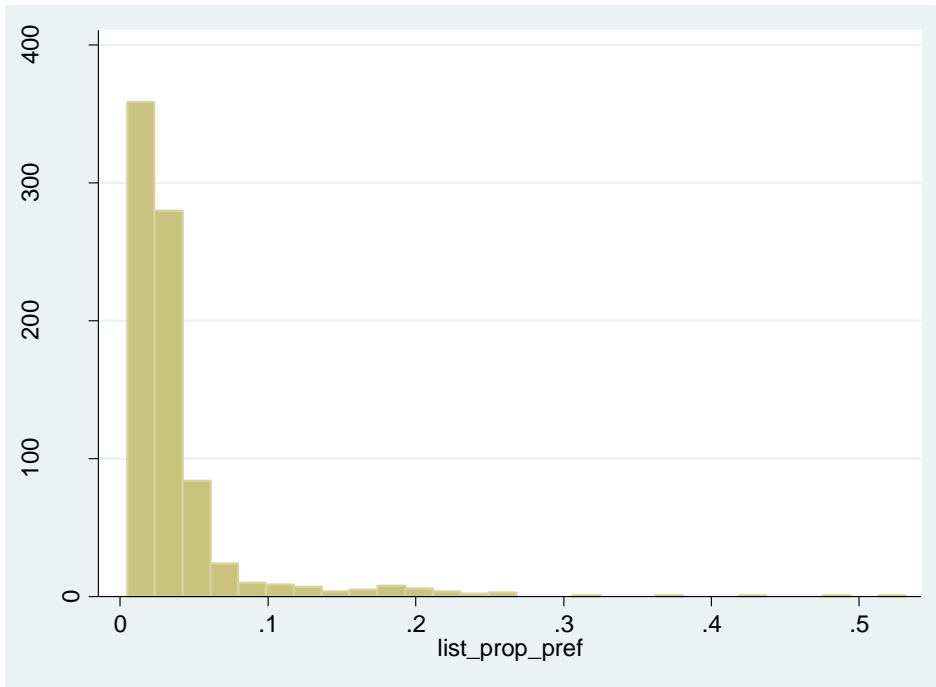
Figure C2: Distribution of the residuals after the log-lin model.
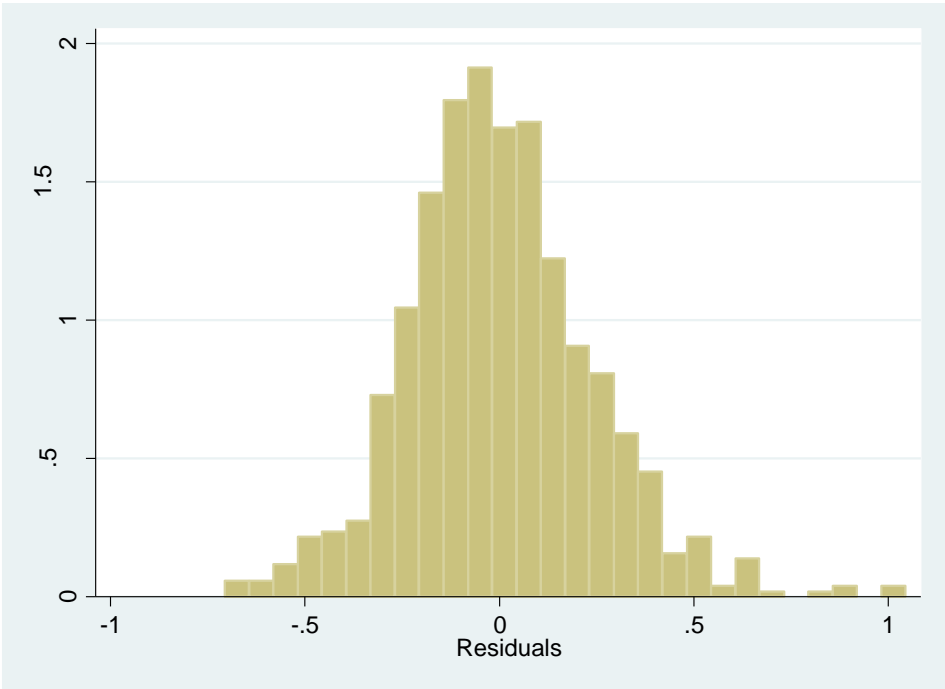
Table C1: Descriptive statistics

	Mean (S.D)	Freq (%)
Number of preferential votes	7647.47(15814.2)	
Ballot list position	11.32(7.5)	
Media attention	6.24(40.5)	
Media attention t-1	65.1(286.9)	
Campaign intensity	8.09(2.1)	
Age	42.39(11.9)	
Gender		
- Male		373(46.05)
- Female		437(53.95)
Ethnicity		
- Belgian/European		761(93.95)
- Ethnic minority		49(6.05)
List puller		
- Yes		47(5.80)
- No		763(94.20)
List pusher		
- Yes		34(4.20)
- No		776(95.80)
Local council		
- Yes		508(62.72)
- No		302(37.28)
Alderman		
- Yes		224(27.65)
- No		586(72.35)
Mayor		
- Yes		65(8.02)
- No		745(91.98)
Experience Flemish parliament		
- Yes		65(8.02)
- No		745(91.98)
Experience Federal parliament		
- Yes		76(9.38)
- No		734(90.62)
Experience European parliament		
- Yes		3(0.37)
- No		807(99.63)
Minister		
- Yes		20(2.47)
- No		790(97.53)
Party		
- Green party		160(19.75)
- Social Democratic party		103(12.72)
- Christian Democratic party		116(14.32)
- Regionalist party		131(16.17)
- Liberal party		112(13.83)
- Far right party		71(8.77)
- Socialist party		117(14.44)
Electoral level		
- Regional		464(57.28)
- Federal		346(42.72)

Table C2: A distribution of media coverage

Number of articles	Frequency (%)
0	55.9%
1-10	37.8%
11-20	2.6%
21-50	1.1%
51-100	1.4%
>100	1.2%

Appendix D: Beta regression models

Table D1: Results of the beta regression models.

Individual electoral success (log)	Model 1 b(SE)	Model 2 b(SE)	Model 3 b(SE)	Model 4 b(SE)
Ballot list				
First candidate on the list	.945(.09)**	.883(.10)**	.720(.08)**	.645(.07)**
Ballot list positon(log)	.515(.03)**	.490(.04)**	.446(.03)**	.454(.02)**
Last candidate on the list	.749(.08)**	.722(.07)**	.614(.08)**	.676(.05)**
Inherent characteristics				
Age		.000(.00)	.001(.00)	.000(.00)
Female		.218(.03)**	.249(.03)**	.246(.02)**
Ethnic minority		.084(.07)	.108(.07)	.158(.06)**
Local council		-.008(.03)	-.062(.04)	-.035(.03)
Alderman		-.077(.04)	-.100(.04)**	-.034(.03)
Mayor		.078(.09)	-.007(.08)	.014(.05)
Experience Flemish parliament		.091(.10)	.046(.08)	.039(.04)
Experience Federal parliament		.181(.08)*	.099(.07)	.123(.05)*
Experience European parliament		.507(.08)**	.552(.13)**	.562(.07)**
Minister		.258(.16)	.040(.17)	.247(.25)**
Campaign intensity		-.012(.02)	-.018(.02)	-.001(.01)
Media				
Media coverage (log)			.024(.01)**	.015(.00)**
Media coverage t-1 (log)			.014(.00)**	.008(.00)**
> 15 newspaper articles			.349(.12)**	.128(.10)**
Controls				
Federal election	.201(.02)**	.196(.03)**	.202(.03)**	.183(.03)**
Percentage of list votes (centered on party mean)	.002(.00)	.001(.00)	.003(.00)*	.013(.00)**
Constant	-2.593(.08)**	-2.676(.17)**	-2.630(16)**	-2.794(.10)**
N	810	810	810	804

*p<.05; **p<.01

Appendix E: Overview of the issue dimension scales (chapter 4)

Item	Economy
The government should interfere to reduce differences between incomes (*recoded*)	.877
The government should enforce as few rules as possible	.883
The interests of the working class should be defended more (*recoded*)	.744
The government should interfere less in the economy	.860
Cronbach's alpha	.870

Item	Environment
The benefits of sustainable energy are being overrated	.856
The dangers of climate change are exaggerated	.846
Rules regarding the environment should not harm the economy	.741
Cronbach's alpha	.747

Item	Europe/international
The European unification should not go any further	.865
Belgium has received many benefits from its EU membership (*recoded*)	.763
We should first solve our own problems before we help other European countries with economic problems	.826
We should share our wealth with poorer countries, even if it means we lose some wealth (*recoded*)	.657
Cronbach's alpha	.786

Item	Immigration
Migrants make too much use of social benefits	.844
Migrants contribute to the wealth of our society (*recoded*)	.904
Migrants form a threat for our society	.870
Belgium should close its borders for asylum seekers	.858
Cronbach's alpha	.886

Item	Ethics
The government should make more strict rules on euthanasia	.869
Women should always be able to abort their pregnancy (*recoded)*	.787
Marriage should only be possible between a man and a woman	.710
You should always be allowed to decide on your life's end (*recoded)*	.822
Cronbach's alpha	.809

Item	Federal
Flanders should receive more competencies	.876
The federal state is the most competent to run diplomatic relations with foreign countries (*recoded*)	.915
Belgium should stay in existence (*recoded*)	.911
I feel more Belgian than Flemish (*recoded*)	.926
Cronbach's alpha	.926

Appendix F: Robustness tests chapter 4

Table F1: The effect of the standardized absolute ideological distance on individual electoral success

Individual electoral success (log)	Model A
Standardized absolute distance: economy	-.001(.02)
Standardized absolute distance: environment	-.014(.02)
Standardized absolute distance: Europe	-.007(.02)
Standardized absolute distance: migration	-.011(.02)
Standardized absolute distance: ethics	-.031(.02)
Standardized absolute distance: federalism	-.016(.02)
Adjusted R²	.896
N	899

*p<.05; **p<.01
Note: Control variables are not depicted

Table F2: The effect of the standardized directional ideological distance on individual electoral success

Individual electoral success (log)	Model B
Standardized directional distance: economy	-.002(.01)
Standardized directional distance: environment	-.006(.01)
Standardized directional distance: Europe	-.005(.02)
Standardized directional distance: migration	-.009(.01)
Standardized directional distance: ethics	-.030(.01)*
Standardized directional distance: federalism	-.000(.01)
Adjusted R²	.896
N	899

*p<.05; **p<.01
Note: Control variables are not depicted

Table F3: Extra tests absolute distance[56]

Individual electoral success (log)	Model C b(SE)	Model D b(SE)
Absolute distance : economy	.002(.01)	.021(.13)
Absolute distance : environment	.009(.01)	.059(.03)
Absolute distance : Europe	-.012(.01)	.088(.09)
Absolute distance : migration	-.011(.01)	.214(.18)
Absolute distance : ethics	-.023(.01)	.085(.09)
Absolute distance : federalism	-.006(.01)	.006(.04)
Ownership (continuous) * economy	.000(.00)	
Ownership (continuous) * environment	-.000(.00)	
Ownership (continuous) * Europe	.000(.00)	
Ownership (continuous) * migration	.001(.01)	
Ownership (continuous) * ethics	.002(.00)	
Ownership (continuous) * federalism	-.000(.00)	
Importance * economy		-.003(.02)
Importance * environment		-.011(.01)
Importance * Europe		-.021(.02)
Importance * migration		-.041(.04)
Importance * ethics		-.020(.02)
Importance * federalism		-.004(.01)
Adjusted R²	.885	.890
N	762	762

*p<.05; **p<.01

Note: Fixed effects for electoral districts, control variables and the main issue ownership variables are not depicted, clustered robust standard errors are used

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[56] There is no data for associative issue ownership and importance of the dimension for the PVDA/socialists. PVDA candidates were therefore omitted.

Table F4: Extra tests directional distance

Individual electoral success (log)	Model E b(SE)	Model F b(SE)
Directional distance : economy	.008(.04)	.046(.09)
Directional distance : environment	.003(.01)	.027(.06)
Directional distance : Europe	.003(.01)	.055(.06)
Directional distance : migration	.006(.01)	.085(.12)
Directional distance : ethics	-.012(.00)	.035(.06)
Directional distance : federalism	.000(.01)	.055(.06)
Ownership (continuous) * economy	-.000(.00)	
Ownership (continuous) * environment	-.000(.00)	
Ownership (continuous) * Europe	-.000(.00)	
Ownership (continuous) * migration	-.000(.01)	
Ownership (continuous) * ethics	.000(.00)	
Ownership (continuous) * federalism	-.000(.00)	
Importance * economy		-.008(.02)
Importance * environment		-.005(.01)
Importance * Europe		-.013(.01)
Importance * migration		-.016(.02)
Importance * ethics		-.010(.01)
Importance * federalism		-.013(.01)
Adjusted R²	.891	.891
N	762	762

*p<.05; **p<.01

Note: Fixed effects for electoral districts, control variables and the main issue ownership variables are not depicted, clustered robust standard errors are used
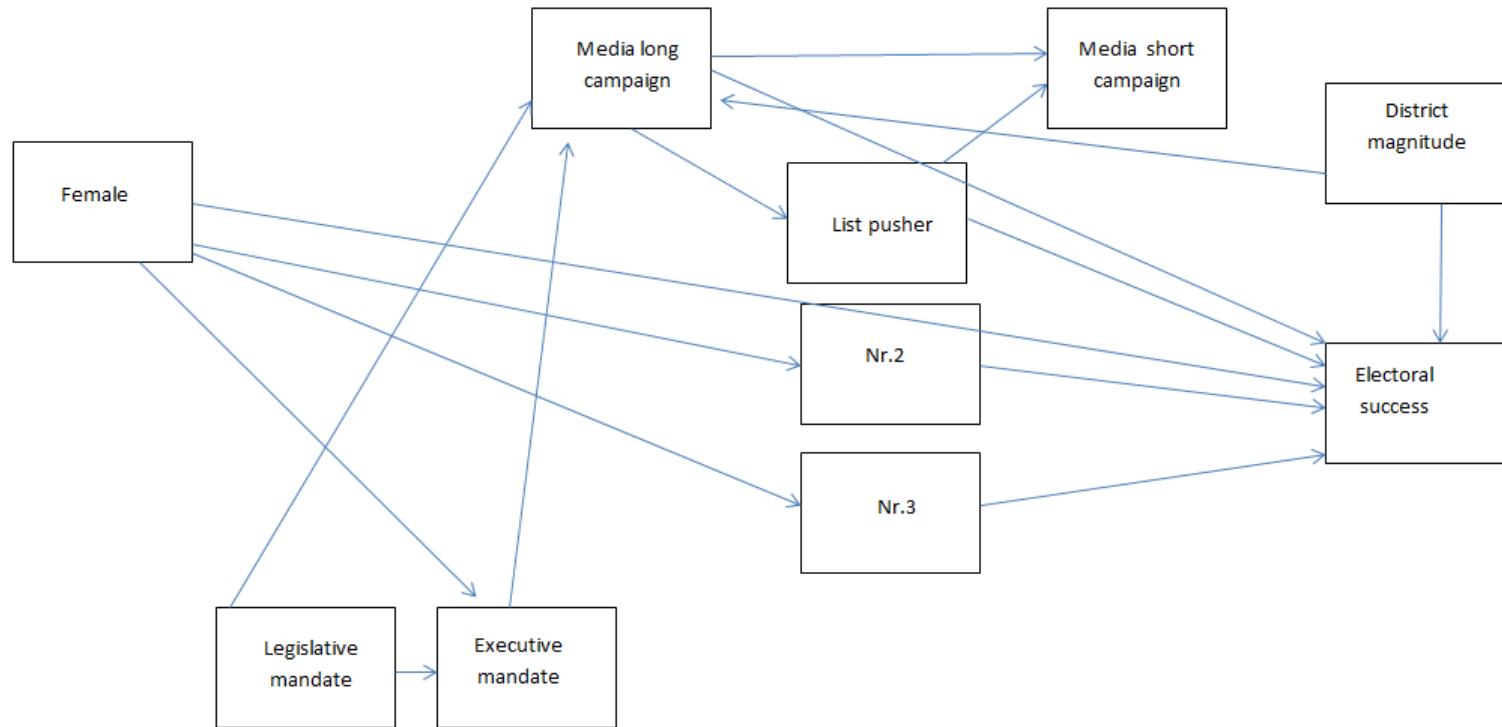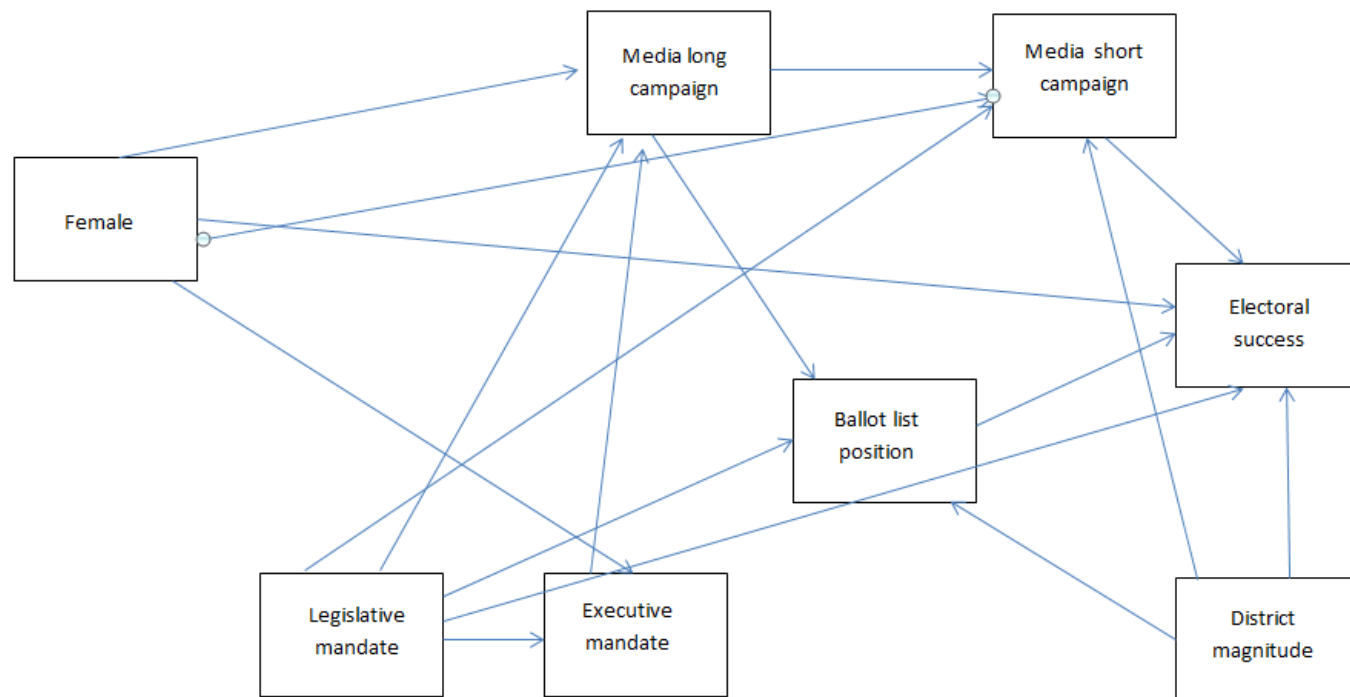
Appendix H: Sensitivity tests (chapter 5)

Table H1: Top candidates operationalized as top 3 and list pusher

	Model for top candidates b(SE)	Model for ordinary candidates b(SE)
Individual Electoral success (log) on		
Media long campaign (log)	.050(.01)**	N/S
Media short campaign (log)	N/S	.011(.00)*
First candidate (Ref = List pusher)	1.410(.06)**	-
Nr.2	.394(.05)**	-
Nr.3	.247(.05)**	-
Ballot list position	-	.028(.00)**
Female	.212(.04)**	.185(.02)**
District magnitude	-.018(.00)**	-.035(.00)**
Legislative mandate	.100(.05)*	.276(.05)**
Media short campaign (log) on		
First candidate	1.797(.31)**	-
Media long campaign (log)	.732(.09)**	.314(.04)**
Female	N/S	-.400(.15)**
Legislative mandate	N/S	1.515(.31)**
District magnitude	N/S	-.043(.02)*
First candidate on		
Media long campaign (log)	.684(.12)**	-
Nr.2 on		
Female	2.135(.44)**	-
Media long campaign (log)	-.150(.03)**	
Nr.3 on		
Female	-1.040(.30)**	-
Ballot list position on		
Media long campaign (log)	-	.223(.04)**
District magnitude	-	-.506(.01)**
Legislative mandate	-	5.646(1.07)**
Media long campaign (log) on		
Legislative mandate	1.801(.30)**	2.713(.34)**
Executive mandate	2.019(.23)**	3.300(.28)**
Female	N/S	-1.130(.15)**
District magnitude	.065(.03)*	N/S
Executive mandate on		
Legislative mandate	1.408(.32)**	1.981(.39)**
Female	-.759(.30)*	-1.616(.33)**
χ^2(df)	27.13(21)	7.53(7)
RMSEA	.032	.008
RMSEA CI	.000-.064	.000-.038
CFI	.994	1.000
N	280	1155

*p<.05; **p<.01

Note: Variables in bold show the dependent variable of each path. Paths that were not significant in both models are omitted from the parsimonious SEM models. Path that are significant in one model and not the other are depicted and indicated by N/S in the model where they are not significant.

Table H2: Top candidates operationalized as top 2 and list pusher

	Model for top candidates b(SE)	Model for ordinary candidates b(SE)
Individual Electoral success (log) on		
Media short campaign (log)	N/S	.014(.00)**
Media long campaign (log)	.059(.01)**	N/S
First candidate (Ref = List pusher)	1.421(.06)**	-
Nr.2	.409(.05)**	-
Ballot list position	-	.031(.00)**
Female	.209(.05)**	.170(.02)**
District magnitude	-.016(.00)**	-.034(.00)**
Legislative mandate	N/S	.376(.05)**
Media short campaign (log) on		
First candidate	1.795(.74)**	-
Media long campaign (log)	.750(.12)**	.324(.04)**
Female	N/S	-.413(.14)**
Legislative mandate	N/S	1.470(.28)**
Executive mandate	N/S	.861(.33)*
District magnitude		
First candidate on		
Media long campaign (log)	.615(.11)**	-
Female	-.859(.39)*	
Nr.2 on		
Female	1.981(.44)**	-
Media long campaign (log)	-.213(.04)**	
Ballot list position on		
Media long campaign (log)	-	.313(.05)**
District magnitude	-	-.500(.02)**
Legislative mandate	-	6.390(.70)**
Media long campaign (log) on		
Legislative mandate	1.880(.34)**	2.889(.25)**
Executive mandate	1.848(.29)**	3.114(.25)**
Female	-.591(.26)*	-1.181(.14)**
District magnitude	.059(.02)*	N/S
Executive mandate on		
Legislative mandate	1.403(.38)**	1.823(.32)**
Female	-1.025(.30)**	-1.436(.30)**
χ^2(df)	13.32(15)	8.32(6)
RMSEA	.000	.018
RMSEA CI	.000-.058	.000-.044
CFI	1.000	.999
N	210	1225

*p<.05; **p<.01

Note: Variables in bold show the dependent variable of each path. Paths that were not significant in both models are omitted from the parsimonious SEM models. Path that are significant in one model and not the other are depicted and indicated by N/S in the model where they are not significant.

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Appendix I (chapter 6)

We are aware that our dependent variable and also the amount of money candidates spent are very skewed and that as a result the residuals are non-normally distributed. We solve this problem to some extent by taking the logarithmic transformation of these variables, as indicated by the Box-Cox test. Yet, even after the logarithmic transformation, the residuals are still slightly skewed. To test whether this biases our results, we re-estimate the main model (model 2), this time omitting all cases which pose a problem and may affect our results (model A).[57] Model A in table I1 show that our main conclusions hold and that our analysis is not affected by a slight violation of the normality assumption.

We also test whether our results are driven by specific outliers. For instance, Bart de Wever, leader of the Flemish nationalists, attracted almost 20% of the preferential votes in his constituency. To test whether our results are affected by these extreme popular candidates, we omitted them from our analysis in model B.[58] In model C we dropped outliers on the personal and party funds variables as well. In both model B and C we find similar results as our baseline model 2, indicating that the findings are very robust and not driven by outliers.

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[57] More specifically we omitted all standardized residuals higher than 2 and lower than -2.
[58] We mark cases as outliers if the value exceeds Q3 + 3(Q3-Q1).

Table I1: Robustness models. Controls (see model 2) are not depicted

	Model A b(SE)	Model B b(SE)	Model C b(SE)
Campaign norm	.002(.01)	-.000(.01)	-.001(.01)
Campaign agenda	.032(.03)	.041(.03)	.019(.03)
Party spending (log)	.004(.01)	.001(.01)	-.001(.01)
Personal spending (log)	.017(.00)**	.015(.00)**	.012(.01)*
R^2	.921	.878	.875
N	577	583	554

* p<.05; ** p<.01

Appendix J: Full model (chapter 7)

Individual electoral success (log)	Model A b(SE)
Level 1 (dyadic)	
Same gender	.400(.08)**
Age similarity	.004(.00)
Same municipality	3.347(.18)**
Candidate characteristics	
Ballot list position	.099(.01)**
First candidate on the list	2.613(.24)**
Last candidate on the list	1.214(.29)**
Ethnic minority	-.386(.30)
Experience Flemish parliament	.532(.17)**
Experience Federal parliament	.813(.17)**
Mayor	.004(.16)
Minister	.005(.27)
Media coverage(log)	.055(.03)*
Media coverage t-1(log)	.023(.03)
Voter characteristics	
Number of preferential votes casted	.489(.01)**
Party (ref: Christian Democratic party)	
- Regionalist party	-.209(.16)
- Green party	-.080(.22)
- Social Democratic party	-.256(.18)
- Liberal party	-.085(.18)
- Far Right party	.233(.36)
- Socialist party	.493(.33)
District (Ref: Antwerp)	
- Limburg	.979(.19)**
- Oost-Vlaanderen	.389(.17)*
- Vlaams-Brabant	.430(.20)*
- West-Vlaanderen	.518(.18)**
Federal level	.194(.12)
Constant	-4.395(.28)**
σ^2_{voters}	.006
$\sigma^2_{candidates}$	.797

N (dyadic pairs): 14454. N (candidates): 1310. N (voters): 394.

*p <.05, ** p<.01

Appendix K: Interaction with political parties (chapter 7)

Table k1: The effects of voter-candidate similarity indicators in interaction with political parties

Individual electoral success (log)	Model A b(SE)
Same gender	.478(.16)
Age similarity	.002(.01)
Same municipality	4.395(.41)
Political party (ref = Christian Democratic party)	
- Regionalist party	.940(.13)*
- Green party	1.232(.51)*
- Social Democratic party	.260(.45)
- Liberal party	.889(.47)
- Far right party	.963(1.06)
- Socialist party	2.060(.86)*
Same gender * Regionalist party	.004(.01)
Same gender * Green party	.008(.02)
Same gender * Social-democratic party	-.015(.02)
Same gender * Liberal party	.010(.02)
Same gender * Far right party	.083(.05)
Same gender * Socialist party	.007(.03)
Age similarity * Regionalist party	.028(.03)
Age similarity * Green party	.023(.03)
Age similarity * Social Democratic party	.047(.03)
Age similarity * Liberal party	.034(.03)
Age similarity * Far right party	.015(.03)
Age similarity * Socialist party	.006(.03)
Same municipality * Regionalist party	-.777(.50)
Same municipality * Green party	-1.856(.75)*
Same municipality * Social Democratic party	-1.611(.59)**
Same municipality * Liberal party	-.116(.63)
Same municipality * Far right party	-.685(1.16)
Same municipality * Socialist party	-1.485(1.20)

*p<.05; **p<.01

Note: Fixed effects for electoral districts and control variables are not depicted

English abstract

In many Western European political systems citizens not only have to vote for a political party, but also have the option, or are obliged, to vote for one (or more) candidate(s) within that party, a so-called preferential vote. Preferential votes matter as they influence the distribution of seats within the party, and are a tangible indicator of a candidate's popularity. Candidates that win more preferential votes have a higher chance to receive a political function and are likely to receive a better ballot list position at the next elections. The aim of this dissertation is to explain why certain candidates receive more preferential votes, and thus have more individual electoral success, than other candidates. What drives these differences? Additionally, the dissertation investigates the mechanisms behind some of these explanations for differences in individual electoral success, by also taking into account voters. To do so, the case of Belgium is selected and data is gathered for all Belgian (or rather Flemish) political candidates regarding their socio-demographic factors, electoral outcome, media coverage and campaign style. In addition, in the final chapter these data are linked to data from the PartiRep electoral survey in order to model the decision-making process of voters.

The dissertation shows that individual electoral success in intra-party competition is the result of an interaction between four type of factors; party-related characteristics, individual-based characteristics, media factors and campaign factors. Regarding party-related characteristics, not only the party to which candidates belong has an influence on how many votes they can potentially attract, but especially ballot list position, which is mostly determined by the party, has a very strong effect on electoral success, both directly and indirectly through an increase in media attention. Candidates on higher positions score better than their lower-positioned peers, even when controlling for alternative explanations. Individual-based factors are also important to explain a candidate's success.

Especially socio-demographic characteristics matter in this regard. The findings of this dissertation show that candidates from underrepresented groups, such as women and candidates with an ethnic minority background, are, ceteris paribus, more electorally successful. The reason for this is that underrepresented groups are more guided by voter-candidates similarities. For instance, women are more likely than men to base their decision on a candidate sharing the same gender. Political experience also can explain the success of political candidates, with especially parliamentarians receiving more votes. Finally, this dissertation shows that individual electoral success is also the result of media attention and campaign strategies, which are themselves influenced by party-related characteristics and individual-based characteristics. Candidates who appear more in the media and who run a more personalized campaign, in general, obtain more preferential votes, although the latter factor is conditional on the amount of money invested and the position on the ballot list. In sum, individual electoral success is the result of a number of factors that also strongly influence each other. These factors behind a preferential vote differ from the explanations for party votes. For instance, no evidence is found that the individual ideology of a candidate matters for obtaining preferential votes.

The dissertation also demonstrates that not all effects work across the board. Regarding media attention, it demonstrates that for top candidates especially attention in the long campaign matters, as here the board for the rest of the campaign is set and it is decided who are the most viable candidates in the minds of voters. For ordinary candidates especially media attention before the start of the campaign is beneficial. Also differences are found in the effect of personalized campaigning. The strategy to focus on oneself rather than the party can be beneficial for top candidates, but does not work for ordinary candidates. In practice, this creates a Matthew effect and means that that the strategy to cultivate personal votes has the least effect for those who could benefit from it the most.

The dissertation concludes that while candidates can have an impact on their own electoral success, this influence is bounded, with the boundaries being set by the political parties. Especially by drafting the ballot lists, parties still strongly determine the success of their candidates. Not only because ballot list position influences the share of preferential votes directly, but also because high positioned candidates receive extra benefits, such as more media attention and, in Belgium, the option to invest more money in their own campaign, which also makes other strategies, such as a personalized campaign strategy, more effective for them. Yet, within these boundaries, candidates have room to influence their own success. While lower positioned candidates may not be able to compete with their peers at the top spots, they may do relatively well compared to their fellow lower positioned competitors. Factors such as socio-demographic characteristics, the local vote, and previous political experience may cause candidates to perform well *relative* to their position. This way they can get in the picture of the party leadership and slowly climb the party ladder to get a better spot at a later election. Candidates at the top spots, on the other hand, are mostly in competition with the other top candidates. While these candidates will almost always receive a higher share than candidates at lower positions, they may still 'disappoint' by not receiving a high share of votes relative to their good position. This implies that even in the, by many announced, 'age of personalization', political parties will not become obsolete and keep playing an important role in some form, at least for the foreseeable future. Political parties still hold a tight grip over which candidates receive the most preferential votes.

Nederlands abstract

In veel West-Europese politieke systemen kunnen kiezers niet alleen stemmen voor een politieke partij, maar hebben ze ook de optie, of zijn ze verplicht, om te stemmen op een of meerdere kandidaten binnen die partij, een zogeheten voorkeurstem. Deze voorkeurstemmen zijn belangrijk omdat zij van invloed zijn op de verdeling van de zetels binnen de partij en omdat zij een concrete indicator zijn voor de populariteit van een kandidaat. Kandidaten die meer voorkeurstemmen behalen, hebben een grotere kans op een politieke functie en zullen tijdens de eerstvolgende verkiezingen waarschijnlijk een betere lijstplaats krijgen. Het doel van deze dissertatie is om te verklaren waarom sommige kandidaten meer voorkeurstemmen behalen, en dus individueel meer electoraal succes hebben, dan andere kandidaten. Wat schuilt er achter deze verschillen? Daarnaast onderzoekt deze dissertatie de mechanismes achter deze verklaringen voor het verschil in voorkeurstemmen tussen kandidaten door ook te kijken naar kiezers. Voor dit onderzoek is de casus van België geselecteerd en data is verzameld voor alle Belgische (of eigenlijk Vlaamse) kandidaten met betrekking tot hun sociaal-demografische karakteristieken, verkiezingsuitslag, media-aandacht en campagnestrategie. Daarnaast worden deze data in het laatste empirische hoofdstuk gelinkt aan data van het PartiRep kiezersonderzoek om zo het besluitvormingsproces van kiezers te modeleren.

De dissertatie laat zien dat het individuele electorale succes in de intra-partij competitie het resultaat is van een interactie tuddrn vier typen factoren: partij-gerelateerde karakteristieken, individu-gesitueerde karakteristieken, media factoren en campagne factoren. Betreffende partij-gerelateerde karakteristieken is het niet alleen de partij waar een kandidaat toebehoort dat beïnvloedt hoeveel stemmen een kandidaat potentieel kan aantrekken, maar is er vooral ook een sterk effect van de lijstpositie op electoraal succes, zowel direct als indirect via bijvoorbeeld extra media-aandacht. Kandidaten op hogere plaatsen op de kieslijst

scoren beter dan de laaggeplaatste kandidaten, zelfs wanneer we controleren voor alternatieve verklaringen. Deze lijstpositie wordt grotendeels bepaald door de partij. Individu-gesitueerde karakteristieken zijn ook belangrijk om de verschillen in electoraal succes tussen kandidaten te verklaren. Vooral sociaal-demografische karakteristieken zijn hier van invloed en de dissertatie laat zien dat kandidaten van ondervertegenwoordigde groepen, zoals vrouwen en kandidaten met een etnische minderheidsachtergrond, ceteris paribus electoraal succesvoller zijn. De verklaring hiervoor is dat ondervertegenwoordigde groepen hun stem meer baseren op gelijkenissen met de kandidaat. Zo zijn vrouwen vaker geneigd om hun stem te geven aan kandidaten van het zelfde geslacht dan mannen. Ook politieke ervaring doet er toe. Hierbij zien we vooral dat parlementariërs meer voorkeurstemmen ontvangen. Tenslotte laat de dissertatie zien dat voorkeurstemmen ook het resultaat zijn van media-aandacht en campagnestrategieën, dewelke op zichzelf weer beïnvloed worden door partij-gerelateerde en individu-gesitueerde karakteristieken. Kandidaten die meer in de media verschijnen en die een meer gepersonaliseerde campagne voeren, ontvangen over het algemeen meer stemmen. Al is dit laatste conditioneel ten opzichte van het geld dat is uitgegeven tijdens de campagne en de positie op de kieslijst. Al met al is individueel electoraal succes het resultaat van een viertal type factoren, die ook elkaar beïnvloeden. Deze factoren achter een voorkeurstem verschillen van de factoren achter een partijstem. Zo is er bijvoorbeeld geen bewijs dat de individuele ideologie van een kandidaat van invloed is op het aantal behaalde voorkeurstemmen.

De dissertatie laat ook zien dat niet alle effecten gelijk zijn voor alle kandidaten. Voor media-aandacht bijvoorbeeld vinden we dat voor topkandidaten vooral aandacht in de lange campagne van invloed is, aangezien hier het spelbord wordt klaargezet, terwijl voor gewone kandidaten aandacht vlak voor de verkiezingen meer van belang is. Ook worden verschillen tussen kandidaten gevonden voor een gepersonaliseerde campagnestijl. De strategie van kandidaten

om op henzelf te focussen in plaats van de partij werkt voor topkandidaten, maar niet voor gewone kandidaten. In de praktijk creëert dit een Mattheus-effect waarbij de strategie om gepersonaliseerde stemmen te winnen het minste effect heeft voor die kandidaten die er het meest van zouden kunnen profiteren.

We kunnen concluderen dat kandidaten een invloed kunnen hebben op hun eigen electorale succes, maar dat deze invloed begrensd is. De grenzen worden gesteld door de politieke partijen. Vooral via het opstellen van de kieslijsten hebben partijen een grote invloed op het succes van hun kandidaten. Niet alleen omdat lijstpositie een directe invloed heeft op electoraal succes, maar ook omdat het, via onder andere extra media-aandacht, een indirect effect heeft en omdat andere strategieën, zoals een persoonlijke campagne, alleen effectief zijn voor kandidaten op de hoogste posities. Echter, binnen deze begrenzingen hebben kandidaten ruimte om hun succes te beïnvloeden. Hoewel laaggeplaatsten kandidaten niet kunnen concurreren met de topposities, kunnen ze relatief goed scoren in vergelijking tot de andere laaggeplaatste kandidaten. Factoren zoals sociaal-demografische karakteristieken, de lokale stem en politieke ervaring kunnen ervoor zorgen dat kandidaten *relatief* goed scoren ten opzichte van hun positie. Op deze manier kunnen ze in het vizier van de partijtop komen, langzaam binnen de partij omhoog klimmen en tijdens de eerstvolgende verkiezingen een betere plaats op de lijst krijgen. Kandidaten op de topposities zijn dan weer voornamelijk in competitie met de andere topkandidaten. Hoewel deze kandidaten eigenlijk altijd een groter percentage stemmen krijgen dan de laaggeplaatste kandidaten, kunnen ze toch 'teleurstellen' door niet goed te scoren ten opzichte van hun lijstpositie. Deze bevindingen en conclusies impliceren dat ook in de, door velen uitgeroepen, tijd van personalisering politieke partijen niet overbodig zullen worden en een grote rol zullen blijven spelen, in ieder geval in de nabije toekomst. Politieke partijen hebben nog steeds een grote vinger in de pap als het aankomt op welke kandidaten de meeste voorkeurstemmen ontvangen.