

Master thesis

The impact of Christianity on voting behaviour

Do differences in religious socialization between East and West Germany lead to different voting decisions of German Christians?

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Abstract

For the first time, German right-wing voters have an option at the voting booth besides the Christian CDU, since the AFD made it to parliament. Latest election results show that citizens of the German East are the main supporters of the right-wing populist party AFD. As the differences in voting behaviour are characterized by the old borders, contextual differences may explain the phenomenon. One obvious difference is the lived religiosity. Christians are theorized as being right-wing voters, and the different religious socializations are characteristic of the German East West divide. In the following, it is researched if these differences may influence the voting decision of German Christians. Therefore, it is theorized how Christianity leads to a right-wing vote and why westerners are more likely to vote for the CDU. In line with previous research, church attendance is expected to have a moderating effect on the relationship between a CDU vote and Christians. In contrast, easterners are less likely to vote for the CDU, because of less attachment to Christianity and the CDU. After interpreting the results of the multinomial regression on EVS data, it is found that only Christianity has an impact on voting for the CDU over AFD. Different religious socializations are not accountable for different voting decisions, nor is any effect moderated by church attendance.

Keywords: AFD; CDU; religious socialization; Christians; voting behaviour

Introduction

On the 9th of November 2019, Germany will celebrate 30 years of unity. Despite that, differences are still observable, between East and West, when it comes to voting behaviour. Since the party was founded, the right-wing populist party (RPP) AFD (Alternative for Germany) is on the rise and nowadays the third strongest party in the German parliament. The biggest electorate of the party is located in the eastern federal states. Since the entry of the AFD into the German "Bundestag", the differences in voting behaviour between East and West are a hotly debated topic in the German public (Althoff, 2018; Bundeswahlleiter, 2017).

As the AFD is a relatively new phenomenon in German politics, research on voting behaviour that includes the party is rare. So far, most European scholars tried to explain differences in voting behaviour and the likelihood of voting for an RPPs on the individual level. However, as the differences in the voting behaviour of the German electorate is characterized by the old borders between East and West, differences in the social context of both areas may explain the phenomenon. Although various reason could explain the given phenomenon, this thesis will focus on differences in religious contexts.

Religion works on both levels, the contextual and the individual. Individuals hold the feeling of belonging to a specific group and the belief in a higher sense, but the religious experience is also collectively shared among the members of a religious community. Current studies show that Christianity has still an essential impact on voting behaviour. Elff and Rossteutscher (2011) proved that Germans, who attend church regularly, are loyal towards the Christian party CDU (Christian Democratic Union) and Goldberg (2014) showed that the probability of a vote for the Swiss Christians Party by Swiss Catholics is higher in religious homogenous regions.

Differences in individual and collective religiosity are one of the characteristic differences between the East and West of Germany. While the church has been present in the West all the time and is therefore a part of its society and socialization processes, the church was suppressed in the East during the communist past of the GDR. Although church memberships are steadily decreasing in most western societies, the share of non-members and atheist is above average in the East of Germany (Elff & Rossteutscher, 2011; Froese & Pfaff, 2005). Therefore, this thesis will focus on the impact of Christianity on the voting behaviour of German voters and how the atheist character of the East legitimizes the AFD as an electable party for Christians from the East.

Given situation leads to the research question: *Do differences in religious socialization between East and West Germany lead to different voting decisions of German Christians?* To answer this question, quantitative analysis of the European Values Survey Data 2017 with multinomial logistic regression will be used to find an explanation.

The scientific relevance of the thesis is given by the fact that the AFD is a relatively new phenomenon in German politics. Since the new German RPP is a member of parliament for the first time, right-wing voters have an alternative to the conservative CDU. So far, studies that include the AFD and motives of its voters are rare. The ones that are already published mainly focus on testing attitudes that are assumed to motivate a vote for an RPP, like anti-immigrant attitudes or discontent with democracy (Bieber, 2018; Dilling, 2018; Steiner, 2018). While Dilling (2018) sees the AFD as a new right-wing option for the German electorate as well, none of these studies addresses religiosity as a possible influence on a voting decision between CDU and AFD, nor the differences in religious socialization between East and West Germany. Only Althoff (2018) theorizes about the attractiveness of the AFD agenda for conservative Christians. Hence, this thesis is the first piece that exclusively researches the voting behaviour of Christians since the AFD is an option at the voting booth.

Theory

Individual Level – How religiosity leads to a vote for the CDU instead of AFD

The Christian party CDU has been the only right-wing party in the German parliament for decades and is one of the two big mainstream parties besides the social-democratic SPD (Elff & Rossteutscher, 2011). On the left-right scale that is usually used to define the political position of a party, Christian parties are located on the right. What means they are holding conservative positions on cultural and economic issues.

The Christian parties emerged in post-war Europe as daughter parties of previously existing Catholic parties. Backed up by a solid base of Catholic voters, the new Christian parties boiled the religiosity of their predecessors down to universalistic Christian values, on which they based their ideology and manifestos. Through this practice, they became catch-all parties for the conservative electorate and a counterpart to the communist and socio-democratic movements in post-war Europe. Due to the increasing secularization in Europe, the end of the cold war and the emerging of new right-wing parties, Christian parties' lost voters and therefore political power during the 1980s. German CDU could resist this trend (Gottfried, 2007; Kalyvas & van Kersbergen, 2010).

As Germany was still divided, at the time the decline of Christian parties started, anti-communism was still an issue for German voters. In the following, CDU leader and Chancellor Helmut Kohl could achieve German reunification. Fortified by this success, the party remained a strong force, while its sister parties in Europe mainly lost influence. Additionally, the CDU never had to compete for the conservative electorate. Until the 1980s, German politics was characterized by a very limited number of electable parties. Voters only could choose between the socio-democratic SPD and the liberal FDP. While the SPD, as a left-wing party, is obviously in contrast to the CDU, the liberal and cultural progressive FDP never managed to be more than a helping hand for the ruling party. Since the late 1980s, the greens and the leftist party the left made it into parliament as well. However, until the AFD gained support and made it to parliament, the CDU never had to contend with another right-wing party (Bösch, 2002; Clemens, 2009; Kalyvas & van Kersbergen, 2010).

The AFD stands for very conservative and traditionalist values on cultural issues, including being anti-same-sex marriage, and anti-Islam. In theory, religious people with a strong belief, like biblical Christians and regular church-goers, should like this type of political program as these people are forming one of the social groups with the most conservative and traditional world views. Consequently, most studies state that being Christian leads to more conservative and traditional attitudes and being secularized to more progressiveness. Following

this argumentation, Christians could vote for an RPP, as they are culturally conservative (Althoff, 2018; Arzheimer & Cater, 2009; DeHanas & Shterin, 2018; Van der Brug et al., 2009; Van Pachterbeke et al., 2011).

Although Christian voters could vote for an RPP at the voting booth, because of their cultural conservatism, this proves hardly to be the case in Germany. A recent study shows that German Christians still mostly vote for the CDU, while the AFD gains most support in regions with a low share of Christians (Bundeswahlleiter, 2017; Elff & Rossteutscher, 2011; Froese & Pfaff, 2005). However, why is this the case?

Religious socialization and self-identification

Various European scholars proved, that being a Christian is linked to being loyal towards Christian parties. The belonging to a religious group also develops a feeling of behaving like the religious peers. Therefore, Christians will vote as predicted by the socialization among the members of their social group. Even though the CDU does not entirely represent one's political views, he or she will be more likely to vote for the Christian party just because of his or her religious socialization and self-identification as a Christian (Fraser, 2015; Elff, 2007; Elff & Rossteutscher, 2011; Goldberg, 2014).

The party affiliation of German Christians towards the CDU is rooted in the history of the party. The CDU emerged out of the Catholic Centre Party after the second world war. Until the late 1950s, the party was mainly supported by Catholics. During the following years, the CDU started a massive campaign to attract Protestant voters as well and through the decades the CDU became the advocate of all German Christians (Bösch, 2002; Clemens, 2009). In recent years, being a faithful Christian remained a reliable predictor of voting for the CDU (Fraser, 2015; Elff, 2007; Elff & Rossteutscher, 2011; Goldberg, 2014). This effect is strengthened by church attendance.

Church attendance is an often-used indicator to measure the strength of belief. Christians who attend church regularly are stronger in their faith, more integrated into their religious community, and therefore, more attached to Christian values and behaviour. Furthermore, people who attend church frequently are in constant contact with their religious peers and experience more social pressure to act like the rest of their social group. Elff and Rossteutscher (2011) already showed that German Christians who attend church regularly are more likely to vote for the CDU than Christian who go to church less often. The same effect of church attendance on the likelihood of voting for a Christian party was found by Fraser (2015). Consequently, church attendance has a strengthening effect on the relationship between being a Christian and the voting decision for a Christian party.

While most scholars differentiate between Catholics and Protestants, this thesis will treat them as one group. Indeed, the history of both denominations is sometimes used to explain specific party attachments in West and East Germany, but the massive decrease in church memberships of the recent years blurred the lines between Catholics and Protestants. Churches have to combine their forces to fight the member loss. The development is manifested in the election of Angela Merkel as the first Protestant leader of the CDU. Additionally, German Catholics and Protestants do not differ in their openness towards populist parties and authoritarian ideologies (Bösch, 2002; Elff & Rossteutscher, 2011; Minkenberg, 2010; Pickel, 2018). Therefore, the first hypothesis state:

1a: Christians are more likely to vote for the CDU, instead of AFD.

1b: Higher levels of church attendance strengthen the effect.

Contextual level – How being socialized in the East makes the AFD a legitimate option for Christians

While half of the inhabitants in West Germany say that religion is important or very important for them, it is only about a quarter of the inhabitants in the East who value religion equally. Additionally, the decrease of church memberships is above average in the East (Pollack & Müller, 2013).

This is a result of the communist past of the former GDR. During this period, it was highly denounced to be part of the church or to be religious at all. Religious education was eliminated from schools and to be an active member of the church linked to the exclusion of the socialistic community. Religious education was replaced by learning an atheistic scientific based ideology, which denies every belief in god. Religion and the faith in a higher force were outlawed (Froese & Pfaff, 2005; Pollack & Müller, 2013; Minkenberg, 2010). Unlike the mainly Catholic post-communist countries in eastern Europe, the GDR was primarily Protestant. While the Catholics in other post-communist countries could rely on the support of the powerful Vatican and were able to remain an active community across borders, the Protestant Church of eastern Germany had to deal with the communist regime on its own. Therefore, the church had to cut its ties to the western counterpart and form its own church union in the GDR. That made it possible for the GDR regime to de-politicize the church and undermine the Christian traditions and rites. Secularized values became even stronger, while the church took part in undermining its religiosity (Minkenberg, 2010; Thériault, 2000).

Religious socialization in the East

Religion, family, and school are three of the "agents" of religious socialization (Wasburn & Adkins Covert, 2017) All of them have lost influence in the East. The churches due to their de-politicization during the GDR rule, the schools because of the undermining of religious education and the families as only 10% of the inhabitants in the East say that religion is a relevant topic in their families (Hahn 2000; Pollack & Müller, 2013).

Therefore, the social pressure to act like other members of the religious group will be weaker than in a context where religion is much more salient (Goldberg, 2014). Even though one identifies him or herself as a Christian, socialization in the East lowers the pressure to act like one. Secularized peers in the social surrounding affect Christian who are not sure about their voting decision. (Elff & Rossteutscher, 2011). Pickel (2018) proved that eastern Christians differ less in their political attitudes compared to non-Christians than western Christians do. The same study concludes that voters from the East are more open towards populism and anti-elitism. Both attitudes are linked to having a preference for voting for RPPs.

The difference in the voting behaviour of the eastern Christians compared to the western ones was best observable in the three parliament elections after German reunification. As the CDU was the party which the people linked to reunification, it got some political tailwind during the first elections in united Germany and could gain a significant voter increase by Christians from the former GDR. After disappointing them with political decisions that were suited for westerners, the eastern Christians turned their backs to the CDU. In the next two elections, the leftist parties SPD and PDS (nowadays the left) could gain support in the East (Bösch, 2004; Clemens, 2009; Kalyvas & van Kersbergen, 2010).

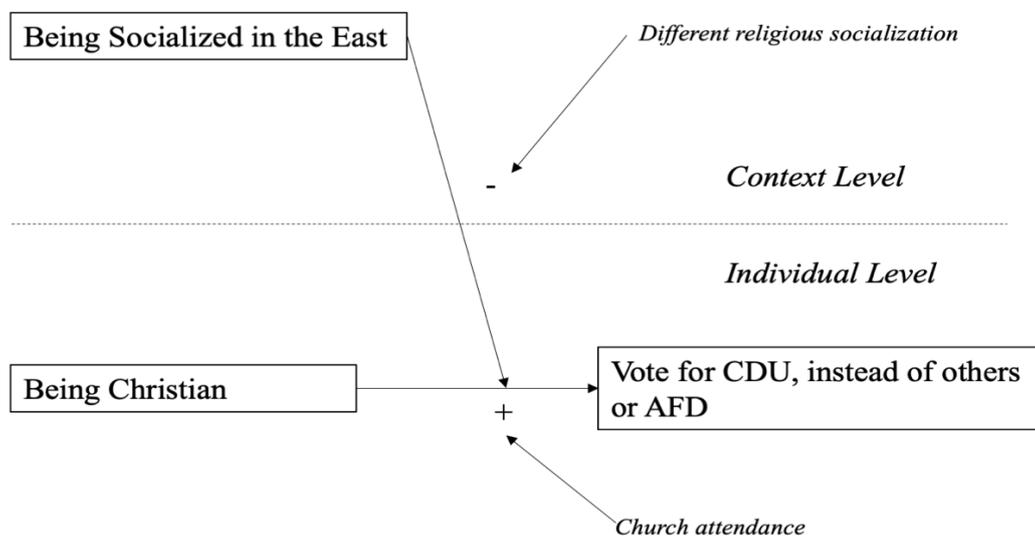
Latest election results underline that it is more common to vote for the AFD in the East. While in West Germany voters of the AFD are characterized by low levels of education and income, AFD voters in the East do not differ significantly from the mean voter. The average AFD voter of the West mainly reflects the image of a "loser of globalization" (Hambauer & Mays, 2018). The term "losers of globalization" usually refers to unskilled workers, who are working in branches that are easily offshored. These people are characterized by low levels of education and low socio-economic status (Rommel & Walter, 2018).

AFD voters from the East are part of the middle of society, not unlike the voters of other established parties. The majority of them is moderately educated and employed (Hambauer & Mays, 2018). The AFD seems to be a legitimate option in the East, besides the established parties, for secularized and religious voters. Prominent AFD politicians from the East stressed their religiosity during election campaigns. Former party leader Frauke Petry liked to tell the

story how she met her first husband, a pastor, while she has been the organist of her local church. Various AFD politicians show close attachment to the East German social movement PEGIDA. One of PEGIDA's claims is to protect Europe from an Islamization by immigrants and safe European Christianity (Althoff, 2018). Given situation in the East of Germany leads to the following hypotheses:

- 2a: The estimated effect of Hypothesis 1a is weaker in East Germany.
- 2b: The estimated effect of Hypothesis 1b is weaker in East Germany.

Figure 1. Conceptual model



Data and method

To analyse the effects of religious socialization on differences in the voting behaviour of German Christians, one needs data on the individual level. Therefore, this thesis uses data of the European Values Study (EVS) round 2017. “The European Values Study is a large-scale, cross-national, and longitudinal survey research program. It provides insights into the ideas, beliefs, preferences, attitudes, values, and opinions of citizens all over Europe.” (European Values Study, 2018) The data collection, of the 2017 round, took place in the period of 19.06.2017 to 01.09.2018. As the election for the German "Bundestag" was on the 22nd of September 2017, the survey gives reliable information about the values on which the respondents based their final voting decision. Furthermore, the EVS provides all the required information for testing the hypotheses. It entails a broad set of information about the felt and lived religiosity of the respondents, the place of residence, and party affiliations (Bundeswahlleiter, 2017; European Values Study, 2018).

As the analysis only needs data of German respondents, other country data are excluded from the dataset. After selecting all cases with German respondents, 1.494 cases remained. 803 of these cases are Christians (Catholics, Protestants, and members of Protestant free churches), 71 cases are located in the East, and 732 in the West. The difference seems to be significant, but the West of Germany has about 70 million inhabitants, while the East only has approximately 10 million. Concerning the general lower estimated count of Christians in the East, the number of cases should be enough.

Dependent variables

Vote AFD, others or CDU

The dependent variable entails information about the party choice of the respondents. The variable is trichotomous and categorical. Although only the interpretation of the results for CDU and AFD are relevant for the analysis, other party data is not excluded. This reduces the number of missing cases. However, to present the results concisely, parties that are not necessary for the analysis will be treated as one category, instead of displaying results for 7 different categories. Therefore, respondents can score 2 for the CDU, 1 for the AFD, and 0 for every other party that can be voted for during the elections of the German parliament. The trichotomy of the dependent variable makes it necessary to run a multinomial logistic regression for the analysis.

The entailed information is out of the existing variable *v174_cs*, that is originally part of the dataset, and labelled as "which political party appeals to you most?". Respondents could choose between every party that was electable during the general elections 2017, or they could name another political party, which then would be noted separately. Every party in Europe has a unique code in the dataset. Every respondent that chose the CDU as the party of attachment scores 27601 in the original variable, and 2 in the new variable. Every respondent that chose the AFD as the party of attachment scores 27606 in the original variable, and 1 in the new variable. All other party codes from 27602 to 27605 for the parties SPD, FDP, the greens and the left are summarized into others. Additionally, the score 27607 for any other existing German party is also included into others as 0 in the new variable.

Independent variables

Christian

As this thesis analyses the impact of Christianity on the voting decision of German voters, a variable about whether a respondent is a Christian or not is needed. This variable is

dichotomous, and respondents can score 0 for not being a Christian and 1 for being a Christian. The variable is coded based on information about the religious denomination that the EVS dataset entails. First, interviewers asked respondents if they are religious or not. Respondents that answered this question with no will not be asked any further questions about their lived religiosity. However, as people that are not religious are also no Christians, these respondents are still included in the "Christian" variable and score 0, for not being Christian, in the new variable "Christians." Respondents who are Russian or Greek Orthodox¹, Muslim or part of another religious group are coded 0 as well. Respondents that answered any of the original questions of the survey with "don't know" or "no answer" are coded as missing.

Every respondent that chose the Catholic, Protestant, or a Protestant Free Church will be included as being a Christian in the new variable and scores a 1.

Church attendance

The strength of belief is measured by church attendance, which is an often-used indicator for this (Elff, 2007; Arzheimer & Carter, 2009; Elff & Rossteutscher, 2011; Fraser, 2015). Christians, who attend church regularly are holding a stronger faith in God, and they are more biblical, than Christians that attend church only on specific holy days or less often (Goldberg, 2014). Therefore, the respondents are asked how often they attend church. The answers are given on an ordinal scale and entail scores from 1 to 7 (1= attend more than once a week, 2=once a week, ..., 7=practically never).

To make the measurement more consistent, the variable has been reversed coded, and respondents who answered the question with "don't know" or "no answer" are coded as missing. Respondents that scored high in the original variable will score low in the new one. Respondents who scored a 7 in the existing variable will score 0 in the new one, and so on (6 to 1, 5 to 2, ...).

It is theorized, that church attendance has a moderating effect on the relationship between the independent variable "Christians" and the outcome of the dependent variable "vote AFD, others or CDU." Christians that score high on church attendance should have a higher probability to vote for the CDU than for another party. Consequently, a variable with an interaction term between "Christians" and "Church attendance" has been created. The variable "Christians * Church attendance" represents this interaction term.

¹Strictly speaking, respondents who are Russian or Greek Orthodox are Christians as well. However, the eastern orthodox churches have their own religious elites, churches, and traditions. Additionally, the number of respondents who are orthodox is only marginal (24 out of 1494 respondents) (McGuckin, 2011).

Being from the East

It is assumed that the probability of a vote for the CDU, instead of a vote for the AFD, among Christians from the East will be lower than the likelihood of Christians in the West. Therefore, the analysis entails a variable with information about the region the respondent lives in. The original dataset only involves information about the region of residence on the NUTS-1 level. Every German federal state has a unique code in the dataset. That makes it possible to identify in which federal state the respondent lives in but does not group the federal states into eastern and western ones. However, for simplification, the federal states will be grouped into eastern and western ones in a new variable. Respondents that live in western federal state score 0, while respondents from the East will score 1 in the variable.

As it is assumed that the region of residence has a moderating effect on the relationship between Christians and their voting decision, an interaction term has to be created. Similar to the interaction between Christians and church attendance, a new variable “Christians * Being from the East” has been coded to test the impact of the moderating effect.

Control variables

According to the literature, the voting behaviour of religious people can be affected by several indicators. Therefore, four control variables are included on the individual level. These variables are gender, age, educational level, and income.

Gender can have two impacts on the research. First, men are more likely to vote for an RRP. Lately, studies proved that the majority of the AFD supporters are men, and a mentionable share is under the age of 35. Second, religious women are more confirmative and therefore more likely to vote for a Christian Party (Jaime-Castillo et al., 2016), while Althoff (2018) showed that only about 15% of the AFD supporters are women. Additionally, the elderly are more likely to be religious, conservative, and traditionalistic in their voting behaviour. Furthermore, the effects of socialization should have a more significant impact on them, as there are socialized for a more extended amount of time (Arzheimer & Carter, 2009).

Achterberg and Houtman (2006) proved that natural voters vote following their economic interests. According to this, income and education can have a quite similar impact on voting behaviour. In general, the literature assumes higher educated and individuals with a high income not to vote for RPPs, but to vote for regular right-wing parties like the CDU. High income and education levels are also linked to voting for liberal parties like the German FDP. Low levels of education and income are mainly related to progressive attitudes towards the

economy and economic redistribution. At this end of the scale, one would expect voters of the social democratic SPD or the leftist party the left.

The four variables are entailed in the original dataset. However, for a consistent measurement among all variables, the variables for gender, education, and income have been modified. Gender is a dichotomous variable, and respondents can be either women or men. Men score a 0 in the variable, while women score a 1. The age variable is a continuous scale and gives information about the age in years, with the limitation that the variable only counts up to 82. All respondents that are older than 82 are noted under “older than 82”. The youngest respondents are 18, as only full-aged individuals took part in the survey. Income is an ordinal scale with 8 levels, on which the monthly total household income is measured. The lowest level entails households with an income up to 1.100€, while the highest-level entails monthly household incomes of 5390€ or more.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<i>Dependent</i>					
Vote (AFD, CDU, or other)	1238	.00	2.00	.77	.95
<i>Independent</i>					
Christians	1492	.00	1.00	1.55	.5
Church attendance	1493	.00	6.00	1.76	1.8
Being from the East	1494	.00	1.00	.18	.39
<i>Control</i>					
Gender	1494	.00	1.00	.50	.5
Age	1494	18	82	50.42	17.88
Educational level	1493	.00	7.00	3.99	1.77
Income	1348	.00	8.00	5.16	2.61

Method

This thesis aims to analyse the relationship between several indicators on the individual level and their impact on the outcome of a trichotomous dependent variable. Therefore, the research design calls for multinomial logistic regression. Multinomial logistic regression tests the effect of several factors on the probability of the occurring of more than two outcomes in a categorical variable simultaneously.

Furthermore, it allows the researcher to test interaction effects within the different models. The interaction effects represent the moderating effects of the independent variables church attendance and being from the East on the relationship between the X Christians and the dependent variable.

Results

The results are presented in table 2 and table 3. They are separated into six different models. Every model represents a step in testing the given hypotheses. The separate adding of new elements to the analysis makes it possible to compare the different models with each other. Through this practice, it can be identified which step improves the explanatory value of the analysis, or which step reduces it. The analysis mainly focuses on interpreting the coefficients. While doing this, it is most important to see if a coefficient is negative or positive. Negative coefficients for the variable Christians on the outcome would indicate that Christians are less likely to vote for the AFD over the CDU, assuming a significant relation. The deviance reported as -2 log-likelihood, should decrease compared to the deviance of the first model when the following model let the explanatory value increase (Field, 2018).

In the first model, only the independent X “Christians” and the control variables are added to the analysis. This model represents the underlying assumption of this thesis, that Christians will be more likely to choose the CDU over the AFD. Indeed, the coefficient for Christians is negative for choosing the AFD over CDU. That means that it is more likely for Christians to choose the CDU instead of the AFD. Although the level of significance is low, the coefficient is in the right direction. Therefore, hypothesis 1a can be confirmed.

Model 2 introduces church attendance to the analysis. Church attendance has a moderately significant effect on the voting decision between AFD and CDU. The negative coefficient says that respondents who score high on church attendance are more likely to vote for the CDU instead of AFD. After adding church attendance to the analysis, the significance of the variable Christians disappears.

In step 3, the interaction effect between Christians and church attendance is added to the model. Although the coefficient is in the hypothesized direction, the effect is weak and not significant. Hence, hypothesis 1b has to be rejected.

In model 4, the variable being from the East is introduced to the analysis. Looking at the coefficient for being from the East on AFD, one can see that the variable has a mentionable, positive and highly significant effect on choosing the AFD over the CDU. The model confirms what is already known; people from East Germany are more likely to vote for the AFD.

Table 2. Results of the multinomial logistic regression on “Vote AFD, others or CDU” with CDU as the reference category.

	Model 1 (SE)		Model 2 (SE)		Model 3 (SE)		Model 4 (SE)	
	AFD	others	AFD	others	AFD	others	AFD	others
Constant	-.098 (.631)	1.347*** (.298)	-.104 (.634)	1.322*** (.299)	-.315 (.654)	1.295*** (.308)	-.605 (.671)	1.301*** (.301)
<i>Independent</i>								
Christians	-.557* (.301)	-.527*** (.133)	-.240 (.330)	-.203 (.150)	.083 (.403)	-.158 (.194)	.129 (.365)	-.189 (.153)
Church attendance	--	--	-.205** (.098)	-.204*** (.041)	-.039 (.148)	-.184** (.074)	-.187* (.102)	-.203*** (.041)
Being from the East	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.415*** (.342)	.077 (.186)
Christians * Church attendance	--	--	--	--	-.262 (.192)	-.028 (.089)	--	--
Christians * Being from the East	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Control</i>								
Gender	-.379 (.304)	.070 (.131)	-.295 (.307)	.157 (.134)	-.275 (.307)	.159 (.134)	-.288 (.309)	.156 (.134)
Age	-.013 (.008)	-.016*** (.004)	-.012 (.008)	-.015*** (.004)	-.011 (.008)	-.015*** (.004)	-.015* (.009)	-.015*** (.004)
Educational level	-.151 (.100)	.118*** (.040)	-.139 (.101)	.131*** (.040)	-.131 (.101)	.132*** (.040)	-.158 (.102)	.13*** (.04)
Income	-.044 (.062)	-.039 (.027)	-.039 (.062)	-.032 (.028)	-.037 (.062)	-.032 (.028)	-.011 (.064)	-.03 (.028)
-2 log-likelihood	1674.027		1710.008		1708.233		1705.478	
Δdf	10		12		14		14	

Dependent variable: Vote AFD, others or CDU

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Multinomial logistic regression: 1238 individuals in Germany.

The interaction effect of Christians and being from the East in model 5 represents the test of hypothesis 2a. According to the hypothesis, it is expected that the coefficient is negative. Indeed, the coefficient is negative but not significant. Hypothesis 2a has to be rejected.

Model 6 is parted into model 6a and 6b. 6a represents the results for the logistic regression for West Germany and 6b for East Germany. In both models, there is no significant effect observable. Hence, church attendance does not moderate the effect of being a Christian on voting for CDU instead of AFD more strongly in model a than in model b. Hypothesis 2b consequently needs to be rejected.

All in all, as expected, Christians vote more often for CDU than for AFD. Additionally, it was theorized that church attendance has a moderating and strengthening effect on the relationship between being a Christian and a vote for the CDU instead of AFD. This idea needs to be rejected on the basis of the analysis, as no significant effect can be observed. Same accounts for the expected lower effects of Christianity and church attendance in East Germany on voting for CDU. As the analysis does not show any significant results, the idea of weaker religious socialization and as a consequence, a lower probability of voting for CDU in the East has to be rejected as well.

Therefore, hypotheses 1b, 2a, and 2b are rejected. According to the presented results, the effect of being a Christian on voting for the CDU instead of AFD is not affected by church attendance, nor by living in the East.

Table 3. Results of the multinomial logistic regression on “Vote AFD, others or CDU” with CDU as the reference category.

	Model 5 (SE)		Model 6A (SE)		Model 6B (SE)	
	AFD	others	AFD	others	AFD	others
Constant	-.692 (.694)	1.31*** (.303)	-1.135 (.878)	1.165*** (.336)	1.489 (1.198)	2.008** (.829)
<i>Independent</i>						
Christians	.266 (.439)	-.206 (.163)	.718 (.542)	-.176 (.214)	.626 (.999)	.586 (.681)
Church attendance	-.182* (.102)	-.204*** (.041)	-.012 (.218)	-.164** (.081)	.171 (.254)	-.271 (.191)
Being from the East	1.567*** (.468)	.038 (.235)	--	--	--	--
Christians * Church attendance	--	--	-.328 (.260)	-.035 (.096)	-.525 (.408)	-.201 (.284)
Christians * Being from the East	-.329 (.7)	.116 (.381)	--	--	--	--
<i>Control</i>						
Gender	-.292 (.309)	.158 (.134)	-.283 (.398)	.175 (.147)	-.249 (.519)	.128 (.333)
Age	-.015* (.009)	-.015*** (.004)	-.012 (.011)	-.014*** (.004)	-.026 (.016)	-.021* (.011)
Educational level	-.157 (.102)	.13*** (.04)	-.142 (.133)	.144*** (.044)	-.178 (.168)	.069 (.098)
Income	-.012 (.064)	-.03 (.028)	.003 (.080)	-.032 (.030)	-.060 (.117)	-.041 (.077)
-2 log-likelihood	1705.11		1352.561		344.613	
Δ df	16		14		14	

Dependent variable: Vote AFD, others or CDU

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Multinomial logistic regression: 1238 individuals in Germany.

Conclusion and discussion

The purpose of the thesis was to explain differences in the voting behaviour of Christians from East and West Germany by means of their different religious socialization. The focus laid on identifying differences in the likelihood of choosing the CDU over the AFD at the voting booth, between Christian from the East and West. Following previous research, it was theorized that Christians, in general, are more likely to vote for the CDU than AFD, and that church attendance will strengthen this effect. As religiosity is less salient for easterners than westerners, it was assumed that the estimated effects are lower in the East. After interpreting the results, only the general assumption that Christian are more likely to vote for CDU instead of AFD can be confirmed. Based on the remaining findings, it has to be concluded that the expected lower religious socialization in the East does not make the AFD a more viable option. This is in contrast to two other studies that focused on the role of religion for explaining the likelihood of Christians voting for a Christian party, and the impact of being socialized in different religious contexts.

While Elff and Rossteutscher (2011) proved that Christian who are attending church regularly are more likely to vote CDU than Christians who attend church less frequently, this analysis could not find evidence for the moderating effect of church attendance. Also, the estimated lower probability of a CDU vote in the East was not observed, even though Goldberg (2014) found in his Swiss study that the religious homogeneity of a region, and therefore the religious socialization, can influence the individual voting decision of Christians.

An explanation, why the study could not find differences between East and West, may be delivered by rational evaluation of the German tax system by Christians from the East. Despite the fact that the church was de-politized during the GDR, after reunification, it is under the same legal restriction than the western church. While Germany is formal a secularized country, church tax is still paid via the income tax. Therefore, remaining ties between state and church cannot be denied. Especially CDU politicians are advocates of the tax systems status quo. As the church is financial dependent of the church tax, its elites and members should support a party that grants them financial safety. The amount of tax money that supports the churches is linked to the number of members that live in the respective diocese. Therefore, dioceses with a small number of members, like the eastern ones, are even more depending on tax money (Henkel, 2006). Consequently, following this argumentation, Christians from the East should not be less likely to vote for the CDU, than their western counterparts.

Another possible reason is given by one of the most significant limitations of this study, the crude measurement of religious socialization. It has been just assumed that the religious

socialization is high in the West and low in the East, but it was not measured at all, nor has been differentiated between macro and micro contexts. Indeed, Christians who are living in a secularized macro context can become even more active in their belief as they are possibly socialized in an even stronger religious micro context. Campbell (2006) proved that evangelical Christians in the USA, who are living in an area with a large share of secularized people, are even more likely to vote for the Republican party. The Republicans are traditionally the party that represents the political interests of evangelical Christians in the USA. Christians from the German East could behave in the same way, as the results of the analysis do not find differences in their voting behaviour compared to Christians who are socialized in a stronger religious context. Therefore, future research should differentiate between the overall secular macro context in the East and measure the religious activity in Christian micro contexts. Consequently, they should not only focus on the East-West divide but additionally on the percentage of Christians and secularized citizens, and the religious activity in single regions. As a result, a more fine-grained picture about the influence of religious socialization in secular macro and religious micro contexts on the voting behaviour of Christians can be drawn.

However, an explanation for the lack of influence of church attendance still has to be found. It is again the work by Campbell (2006) that delivers inspiration for future research. The survey used for Campbell's research asks the respondents whether they believe in rebirth or not. Rebirth is a central element of Evangelicalism. Therefore, he uses this characteristic as an additional measurement to identify the strength of belief and the self-identification as an Evangelical, besides church attendance. Future research could think of a similar characteristic of German Christians, to include a second predictor for the strength of belief. An additional measurement may contribute to a better understanding of the voting behaviour of Christians in Germany.

All in all, the limitations of this study can be deduced from the previously elaborated reasons, why the results may not support the hypotheses. The crude measure of religious socialization and the rely on only one measurement for the strength of belief have to be modified in future studies. Although the results support a positive relationship between being a Christian and a vote for the CDU, in a country where half of the population is Christian it is not exciting to find that they are likely to vote for a Christian mainstream party.

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CHECKLIST ETHICAL AND PRIVACY ASPECTS OF RESEARCH

INSTRUCTION

This checklist should be completed for every research study that is conducted at the Department of Public Administration and Sociology (DPAS). This checklist should be completed *before* commencing with data collection or approaching participants. Students can complete this checklist with help of their supervisor.

This checklist is a mandatory part of the empirical master's thesis and has to be uploaded along with the research proposal.

The guideline for ethical aspects of research of the Dutch Sociological Association (NSV) can be found on their website (http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page_id=17). If you have doubts about ethical or privacy aspects of your research study, discuss and resolve the matter with your EUR supervisor. If needed and if advised to do so by your supervisor, you can also consult Dr. Jennifer A. Holland, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title:

Name, email of student: Tobias Luck, 515500tl@student.eur.nl

Name, email of supervisor: Jeroen van der Waal, vanderwaal@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration: 30.01.2019 – 31.08.2019

Is the research study conducted within DPAS YES

If 'NO': at or for what institute or organization will the study be conducted?
(e.g. internship organization)

PART II: TYPE OF RESEARCH STUDY

Please indicate the type of research study by circling the appropriate answer:

1. Research involving human participants. NO

If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research? NO

Research that falls under the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act ([WMO](#)) must first be submitted to [an accredited medical research ethics committee](#) or the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects ([CCMO](#)).

- | | | |
|----|---|-----|
| 2. | Field observations without manipulations that will not involve identification of participants. | NO |
| 3. | Research involving completely anonymous data files (secondary data that has been anonymized by someone else). | YES |

PART III: PARTICIPANTS

(Complete this section only if your study involves human participants)

Where will you collect your data?

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the size of the population from which you will sample?

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

- | | | |
|----|---|----------|
| 1. | Will information about the nature of the study and about what participants can expect during the study be withheld from them? | YES - NO |
| 2. | Will any of the participants not be asked for verbal or written 'informed consent,' whereby they agree to participate in the study? | YES - NO |
| 3. | Will information about the possibility to discontinue the participation at any time be withheld from participants? | YES - NO |
| 4. | Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants? | YES - NO |

Note: almost all research studies involve some kind of deception of participants. Try to think about what types of deception are ethical or non-ethical (e.g. purpose of the study is not told, coercion is exerted on participants, giving participants the feeling that they harm other people by making certain decisions, etc.).

- | | | |
|-----|---|----------|
| 5. | Does the study involve the risk of causing psychological stress or negative emotions beyond those normally encountered by participants? | YES - NO |
| 6. | Will information be collected about special categories of data, as defined by the GDPR (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a person, data concerning mental or physical health, data concerning a person's sex life or sexual orientation)? | YES - NO |
| 7. | Will the study involve the participation of minors (<18 years old) or other groups that cannot give consent? | YES - NO |
| 8. | Is the health and/or safety of participants at risk during the study? | YES - NO |
| 9. | Can participants be identified by the study results or can the confidentiality of the participants' identity not be ensured? | YES - NO |
| 10. | Are there any other possible ethical issues with regard to this study? | YES - NO |

If you have answered 'YES' to any of the previous questions, please indicate below why this issue is unavoidable in this study.

What safeguards are taken to relieve possible adverse consequences of these issues (e.g., informing participants about the study afterwards, extra safety regulations, etc.).

Are there any unintended circumstances in the study that can cause harm or have negative (emotional) consequences to the participants? Indicate what possible circumstances this could be.

Please attach your informed consent form in Appendix I, if applicable.

Part IV: Data storage and backup

Where and when will you store your data in the short term, after acquisition?

On my personal laptop, my iCloud drive and a USB-storage.

Note: indicate for separate data sources, for instance for paper-and pencil test data, and for digital data files.

Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?

I am responsible for this.

How (frequently) will you back-up your research data for short-term data security?

The data is backed-up into my iCloud drive automatically every 15 minutes. I will back-up my data on the USB-storage at the end of every day.

In case of collecting personal data how will you anonymize the data?

Note: It is advisable to keep directly identifying personal details separated from the rest of the data. Personal details are then replaced by a key/ code. Only the code is part of the database with data and the list of respondents/research subjects is kept separate.

PART VI: SIGNATURE

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the ethical guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing information to participants about the study and ensuring confidentiality in storage and use of personal data. Treat participants respectfully, be on time at appointments, call participants when they have signed up for your study and fulfil promises made to participants.

Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

Hereby I declare that the study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I have answered the questions truthfully.

Name student:



Name (EUR) supervisor:

Date: 15.06.2019

Date: