A third term for a popular chancellor.

An analysis of voting behaviour in the 2013 German federal election

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Abstract

The 2013 federal election led to a considerable change in the German party system. Yet, Chancellor Merkel secured a third term, once again, as a chancellor of a grand coalition. In this analysis we show that Angela Merkel was much more popular than her SPD challenger, Peer Steinbrück. Moreover, she was perceived as somewhat more representative of the values and policies of the party she stood for than her competitor. What is more, the candidates' perceived representativeness conditioned the impact of candidate preferences on vote choice in complex ways. As a result, support for Angela Merkel was likely to translate into votes for CDU/CSU, whereas support for Peer Steinbrück did not easily earn SPD votes. We thus conclude that, in contrast to her challenger, Angela Merkel was an electoral asset for her party. The CDU/CSU's impressive result in the 2013 federal outcome can thus be interpreted, to some extent, as reflecting its leader's popularity.

Introduction

In the 2013 German federal election, the trend towards increased electoral volatility and fragmentation continued.[1] For the first time since 1949, the FDP did not enter the Bundestag, whereas the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) was the first Euro-sceptic party that almost managed to pass the five percent hurdle. Given the FDP's defeat, the liberal-conservative coalition could not be continued. Despite these changes, however, Angela Merkel secured a third term as chancellor by forming a grand coalition as in the 2005-9 election period. These two grand coalitions, however, differ considerably. Whereas in 2005 CDU/CSU and SPD received similar vote shares, in 2013 the CDU/CSU vote share outnumbered the SPD share by some 15 percent points. In addition to this shift, the role of Angela Merkel has changed. In 2005, she had to struggle to become chancellor after an election in which she turned out to be not an electoral asset for her party.[2] By contrast, in the 2009 election the conservative CDU/CSU fought a personalized campaign in which it aimed successfully to capitalize on Mrs. Merkel's increased popularity.[3] In the 2013 election, the CDU/CSU campaign was, once again, focused on Chancellor Merkel who was now the unchallenged leader of her party. What is more, the European debt crisis, which had started during her second term, provided Mrs. Merkel with an opportunity to establish herself as renowned representative of Germany's interests on the international political scene.

Given an international crisis and a popular incumbent chancellor, opposition parties faced an uphill struggle in the 2013 election. The Social Democrats as main opposition party, however, appeared to have made a clever move to exploit their electoral potential by nominating Peer Steinbrück as candidate for chancellor. As a former finance minister he appeared to be well equipped to fight a campaign in times of an international debt crisis. Moreover, Mr. Steinbrück held not traditional Social Democratic preferences on social and economic policies which earned

him some popularity with the German public. Given this reputation, Mr. Steinbrück, as Helmut Schmidt in the late 1970s and early 1980s,[4] might have helped the SPD to garner votes of middle-of-the-road voters who otherwise would not consider casting a vote for the Social Democrats.

Both strategies that aim at capitalizing on the popularity of candidates for chancellor rest on the assumption that favourable attitudes towards a candidate are transformed into votes for his party. At first sight, this assumption appears to be uncontroversial. Taking a closer look at it, however, some doubts about its validity arise. Although a candidate was nominated by his party, it cannot be taken for granted that he is unequivocally supported by the party's leadership as well as its rank and file. A lack of partisan support or deviation from traditional policy positions might be interpreted as foreshadowing severe difficulties the candidate will face when, once in office, trying to shape public policies in accordance with his policy preferences. In effect, even voters who like the candidate might be reluctant to cast a vote for the party she campaigns for. Put differently, a perceived poor fit between a candidate and his party might be an obstacle to a smooth transformation of favourable opinions about a candidate into votes for his party.[5]

Against this backdrop, we explore the determinants of vote choice in the 2013 federal election with a special emphasis on candidate appraisal. In the next section, we will outline a model of vote choice and discuss the role of candidate orientations therein. After a short discussion of hypotheses and our methodology, we will present the results of our analysis. The evidence supports the notion that orientations towards candidates for chancellor affected vote choice, yet in complex ways. The candidates' perceived party representativeness in terms of policies and values conditioned the impact of candidate preferences on vote choice. In effect, Mrs. Merkel turned out to earn her party additional votes while Peer Steinbrück did not serve as an electoral asset for the

SPD. In the concluding section, we sum up key findings and discuss implications and limitations of our analysis.

Theoretical framework

In our analysis of the determinants of vote choice, we rely on a model in which voting behaviour is conceptualized as resulting from voters' perceptions and evaluations of political objects.[6] The determinants of vote choice can be distinguished into long-term and short-term forces. The former comprise affective party attachments as well as policy-related predispositions like values. These stable predispositions, which citizens often acquire in their early decades, lend overtime stability to political cognition and political evaluations as well as to vote choice. Short-term forces include evaluations of politicians and issues of the day which are, by and large, more susceptible to change. Accordingly, the latter are much more suitable, than the former, to explain change in voting behaviour.

Candidate orientations are shaped by both fresh information about the candidates and long-term predispositions. Holding popular policy positions, success in office or a likeable personality are likely to make a candidate more popular within the electorate. Given the role of motivated reasoning in political opinion formation,[7] however, citizens' responses to candidate-related information are conditioned by party attachments, stereotyping and other long-term forces.[8] By implication, this kind of impact of predispositions on candidate evaluations limits the latter's genuine role in affecting voting behaviour.

Irrespective of its foundation, the impact of candidate orientations on vote choice is a variable rather than a constant.[9] Provided a candidate-centred institutional setting, e.g., a presidential

election, candidate evaluations will make a considerable difference in individual vote choice. Even within a given institutional setting, candidate effects can considerably vary as a response to campaign manoeuvring. Campaigns that focus on candidates are likely to prime candidate orientations and thus to make voters eager to cast a vote in line with their candidate preferences.[10] While this kind of campaign effects are widely assumed to rest on accessibility effects and thus to be primarily driven by unconscious processes, individual differences in candidate voting might also be shaped by conscious perceptions. In particular, the fit between a candidate for prime minister or chancellor and her party might condition the impact of candidate orientations on vote choice in (parliamentary) elections.[11] For example, voters might be reluctant to cast a vote for a party which does not back its candidate unequivocally because a lack of support raises doubts about the candidate's post-electoral influence on governmental policies.

In light of this discussion, the chancellor candidates in the 2013 federal election provide an interesting case. Mrs. Merkel has been the chancellor and the long-time leader of her party. As a party leader, she has implemented significant policy shifts that are at odds with stereotypic notions of conservative stances. The U-turn in the domain of energy policy after the Fukushima disaster is a case in point. As chancellor of a CDU/CSU and FDP coalition government, she became one of the most significant political leaders in the European debt crisis. In this crisis, she aimed at steering a middle course by saving the Eurozone and not disappointing Germans reluctant to give financial support to Eurozone countries.

The challenger, Peer Steinbrück, as a finance minister in the 2005-9 grand coalition under Mrs. Merkel, was well-known as an expert in finance and economics. Given his expertise, he might have been able to attack chancellor Merkel for her policies in the European debt crisis and undermine her reputation as a competent crisis manager. Still, attacking the chancellor on this

issue was not easy because the Social Democrats, as the Greens, voted for most governmental policies concerning the debt crisis. In effect, this issue, despite its substantial significance, was rather downplayed in the campaign. Moreover, Mr. Steinbrück, despite his long-time SPD membership, was some kind of maverick within the SPD who did not subscribe to traditional Social Democratic views on finance and economics. His image as a non-traditional Social Democrat helped him to become popular before his nomination as chancellor candidate. Given this reputation, he was in a good position to garner votes from middle-of-the-road voters who otherwise would not have considered voting for the SPD. But there is a downside, as well. First, some traditional Social Democrats might have had some problems supporting this candidate. Second, non-Social Democratic voters who liked the candidate might have hesitated to vote for the SPD because they might have doubted whether Mr. Steinbrück's views were likely to become governmental policy. As a result, it could not be taken for granted that the candidate's reputation as a non-traditional Social Democrat turned out to be an electoral asset for the SPD.

Given this description, we assume that candidate evaluations, and issue orientations, were shaped by party attachments. Yet, we do not anticipate that the latter completely accounted for the former. We thus expect that candidate orientations make a difference in vote choice. In particular, we anticipate that orientations towards the chancellor candidates affect primarily CDU/CSU and SPD vote choice. What is more, the effects of candidate orientations are assumed to be conditioned by the perceived representativeness of the chancellor candidates. Following the logic outlined above, we hypothesize that a preference for or favourable evaluations of a candidate will become more powerful in affecting vote choice as the candidate's perceived representativeness of the respective party's values and policies. Put differently, a lack of fit in these terms is assumed to render candidate orientations ineffective in affecting vote choice.

Data and Methods

In this analysis we utilize data from an online survey fielded between 6th and 21st of September 2013. The survey was conducted as part of the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES) which is a joint endeavour of the German Society for Electoral Studies (DGfW).[12] The sampling frame contains all German participants eligible to vote of an offline recruited online access panel. The sample was drawn via quota sampling regarding sex, age, and education to approximate to the German population eligible to vote. This procedure aims at reducing systematic bias due to the recruitment by phone and sampling errors well-known in online surveys.[13] Despite the offline recruitment of the online-panelists, however, systematic bias cannot completely be avoided as, among others, internet access was one condition for participation in the panel. Thus, results of analyses using these data cannot be easily generalized to the German electorate.

The analysis of the determinants of vote choice is confined to voters of the six German parties with the most received votes: CDU/CSU, SPD, Left Party, the Greens, FDP, and Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), i.e. those parties who managed to enter federal parliament or failed to do so by a small margin. In the analyses of vote choice, we use multinomial logistic regression models to determine the effects of the various independent variables for each party in reference to CDU/CSU. As concerns explanatory variables, we employed the standard indicator to measure party identification.[14] Utilizing the respective responses, we created dummy variables capturing CDU/CSU and SPD identifiers for the analysis of vote choice. Issue preferences were measured employing a two-step procedure. First, respondents were asked to give the most important problem in Germany. Those interviewees who mentioned a problem were then asked to give the party they consider competent tackling this problem.[15] From these responses information were gleaned to create dummy variables indicating whether respondents consider a particular party

capable of tackling the most important issue. Given this procedure, the indicator is likely to capture a multitude of policy-related predispositions and perceptions, as both the identification of a political problem and the selection a party as most competent are driven by political predispositions and beliefs.

Turning to candidate orientations, we adopt different measures. First, we utilize information on whether the respondents preferred Angela Merkel or Peer Steinbrück. For the analyses of vote choice, we created two dummy variables indicating a preference for Angela Merkel or Peer Steinbrück, respectively. Second, respondents were asked to rate Mrs. Merkel and Mr. Steinbrück on a 11-point scale ranging from 'strongly dislike' to 'strongly like', which we transformed into an 11-point variable running from 0 through 1. Third, we utilized information concerning respondents' candidate perception. Respondents were asked to rate the two candidates' assertiveness, reliability, economic competence, likeability, and representativeness in terms of their party's values and policies on a five-point scale. Once again, from this information, we created variables ranging from 0 ('not true at all') to 1 ('definitely true') (for further information on question wording and operationalization see the appendix).

Findings

We start our analysis by inspecting voters' orientations towards issues and the two chancellor candidates. As the results reported in Table 1 indicate, a plurality considered the CDU/CSU as most competent to solve the most important political problem. Roughly a quarter of the sample deemed the SPD most competent. The remaining parties were perceived as much less competent. As might be expected, perceived party competences are correlated with party attachments.

Accordingly, adherents of a party were particularly likely to consider it capable of solving pressing political problems. Interestingly, there was a considerable proportion of the sample who did not perceive any party as competent. For those voters, issue orientations could not be helpful in choosing either party.

Turning to candidate preferences, a majority preferred Mrs. Merkel, whereas some 30 percent of the respondents preferred the SPD candidate. Party attachments preformed candidate preferences. The SPD candidate was much particularly popular with SPD adherents and got a plurality among Green identifiers. Mrs. Merkel, by contrast, was almost unanimously supported by CDU/CSU adherents. She also was preferred by a plurality of partisan independents and Left Party supporters. The latter finding is particularly interesting because in ideological terms, the Left Party is completely at odds with CDU/CSU, for which Mrs. Merkel stood. Interestingly, Left Party supporters did not consider the CDU/CSU as competent to solve important political problems. This difference suggests that Mrs. Merkel as a person with East German origin was successful appealing to, predominantly East German, adherents of the Left Party.

- Table 1 about here -

To get a more complete picture of the candidate images in the voters' minds, Table 2 reports respondents' evaluations and perceptions of the two chancellor candidates. The results concerning general evaluations indicate that Mrs. Merkel was considerably more popular than her competitor, except for adherents of the SPD and the Greens. This finding fits nicely with the above reported difference in candidate preferences. A cross-tabulation of candidate evaluations

and candidate preferences shows, however, that Mr. Steinbrück's lower popularity did not only translate into a smaller number of voters preferring him over Mrs. Merkel (not reported in tables). Mr. Steinbrück was also evaluated considerably less enthusiastically by those respondents who preferred him over Mrs. Merkel. Put differently, preferences for Mr. Steinbrück were not only less numerous but appear to have been not as strong as for Mrs. Merkel.

Looking at perceived candidate characteristics among all respondents, chancellor Merkel has a moderate lead in terms of assertiveness and is perceived as much more reliable and likeable than her competitor. This pattern, which fits nicely with the candidates' overall evaluations,[16] holds also for those respondents who do not identify with a political party. As with candidate preferences, however, party attachments considerably shaped candidate perceptions. Interestingly, Mrs. Merkel and Mr. Steinbrück were perceived as equally competent in economic matters. This pattern, which does not resemble the respective findings on candidate perception in the 2009 federal election,[17] suggests that Mr. Steinbrück's reputation as expert in finance and economics had a considerable impact on voters' impression formation.

In the respondents' eyes, virtually independent of partisan affiliation, Mrs. Merkel was, though not fully, quite representative of the CDU's values and policy positions. This finding probably reflects the fact that she has led this party for more than a decade and has considerably affected its policies by initiating considerable policy shifts. Given Mr. Steinbrück's reputation as expert in finance and economics who is not always in line with the Social Democrats' mainstream, it might be expected that he is widely considered as being not representative of the SPD's policies and values. Although his rating is somewhat lower than Mrs. Merkel's evaluation, the difference between both is not large. What is more, among partisan independents there is virtually any difference between the candidates' perceived representativeness. These findings suggest that after

the 2013 campaign Mr. Steinbrück, despite his history, was quite widely perceived as mainline Social Democrat.[18]

- Table 2 about here -

To explore the electoral significance of party attachments, issue orientations, and candidate orientations, we turn to the analysis of the determinants of vote choice. We ran a simple model of vote choice with party attachments, candidate orientations, and issue orientations as determinants of vote choice. To test the robustness of our findings, we ran differently specified models. As outlined above, candidate orientations might be conceived of in terms of candidate preferences or candidate evaluations. We thus ran the models with both specifications. Irrespective of the specification of candidate orientations, it is hard to disentangle causal interrelationships between candidate orientations and other predictor variables using cross-sectional data.[19] Candidate orientations are likely to be shaped by partisan attachments and issue orientations as well as they might affect them. Accordingly, by running models in which party attachments and issue orientations were controlled for, we captured the minimal impact of candidate orientations.

In addition to the overall impact of candidate orientations on vote choice, we are interested in the role of the candidates' perceived representativeness in conditioning the impact of candidate orientations on vote choice. The key assumption is that high levels of perceived representativeness will increase the likelihood of casting a vote in line with a favourable candidate orientation or preference for specific candidate. To examine this hypothesis, we included in our models multiplicative interaction terms that we created by multiplying candidate

orientations by the respective perceived representativeness. The results of these analyses are reported in Tables 3 and 4, with the models including this kind of interaction terms in the right-hand sections of the tables and the models without conditional effects in the left-hand sections.

The evidence reported in the left-hand sections of Table 3 and 4 indicates that party attachments and issue attitudes had considerable direct effects on vote choice in the 2013 federal election. Identifying with the CDU/CSU made voters more inclined to vote for this party and had particularly sizeable negative effects on voting for the Greens and the Left. SPD attachments increased the probability to cast votes for the Social Democrats and inhibited voters from voting for the FDP and the Greens, but not for the CDU/CSU. Turning to effects of issue orientations, the results suggest that favouring the conservative CDU/CSU on this dimension raised the probability to vote for this party. At the same time, the likelihood of voting for the Left, the Greens, or the Euro-critical AfD decreased considerably. A similar pattern emerges when studying the role of SPD issue preferences. Holding a pro-SPD attitude on this dimension made voters more inclined to vote for the Social Democrats. At the same time, it decreased the probability of voting for the Left and the AfD as well as for the CDU/CSU.

Turning to candidate orientations, the evidence suggests that they made a difference in vote choice in predictable ways. In particular, holding a preference for or a positive evaluation of a chancellor candidate increased the likelihood of voting for the candidate's party. Preferences or evaluations of the incumbent chancellor did not affect vote choice for her competitor's party. At the same time, attitudes towards Mr. Steinbrück affected vote choice for the CDU/CSU negatively. Given Mr. Steinbrück's rather low level of popularity with the electorate, this finding might not be read as indicating an electoral asset for the SPD. When it comes to vote choice for smaller parties, the evidence reported in the left-hand columns of tables 3 and 4 suggests not very

impressive effects, even though attitudes towards the top candidates of these parties are not controlled for in these analyses.

Having shown that attitudes towards the chancellor candidates affected vote choice even after controlling for party attachments and issue orientations, we now turn to the question of whether candidate effects are conditioned by the candidates' perceived representativeness. To explore this possibility, we included perceived representativeness and the above mentioned multiplicative interaction terms in the logistic regression models. The results of (logistic) regression models with multiplicative interaction variables are not easily accessible. For example, the inclusion of interactive variables changes the interpretation of coefficients on the constituent variables. Accordingly, in our presentation we proceed stepwise .

The evidence reported in the right-hand columns of Tables 3 and 4 exhibits interesting patterns. First of all, the coefficients on the variables capturing the perceived representativeness of chancellor candidates suggest that this variable makes a difference in vote choice in its own right among voters who do not prefer or even dislike the respective candidate. Interestingly, among voters who did not prefer (or even strongly disliked) Mrs. Merkel, perceiving her as representative of the CDU/CSU's values and policies decreased the probability to vote for that party while tentatively increasing the likelihood of voting for the Left. By contrast, the perception that Mr. Steinbrück was representative of the SPD's values and policies increased the likelihood that voters who did not prefer or strongly disapproved of him cast a SPD vote. Accordingly, in these groups the candidates' perceived representativeness appear to have served as electoral liability (Mrs. Merkel) or electoral asset (Mr. Steinbrück).

- Table 3 and 4 about here -

We find additional support for the notion that Mr. Steinbrück's perceived representativeness plays a different role than Mrs. Merkel's when turning to the issue of whether the candidate representativeness was effective in conditioning the impact of candidate preferences and evaluations on vote choice. Starting with Chancellor Merkel, the evidence suggests that, as expected, high levels of perceived representativeness turned out to be helpful in translating a preference for Mrs. Merkel into a vote for CDU/CSU. As Figure 1a illustrates, among those voters who did not identify with CDU/CSU or SPD and consider neither party capable of solving the most important political problem, holding a preference for Mrs. Merkel became increasingly effective in increasing the likelihood of casting a CDU/CSU vote. In a similar vein, holding a preference for Mrs. Merkel is effective in inhibiting voters from voting for the Greens or the Left Party only if Mrs. Merkel is perceived as being representative of the CDU/CSU's policies and values (not shown in tables or figures). Moreover, these findings hold when considering the mean perceived representativeness of those respondents who preferred Mrs. Merkel. Similar patterns emerge when analyzing evaluations of Mrs. Merkel instead of candidate preferences. We thus conclude that candidate preferences and candidate evaluations concerning Mrs. Merkel were quite likely to affect vote choice.

- Figure 1a-b about here -

Concerning Mr. Steinbrück's perceived representativeness, the analysis yields a somewhat different pattern. At rather low levels of representativeness, i.e. from one standard deviation below the mean representativeness to the mean, a preference for the SPD candidate turned out to be effective in making voters more inclined for the SPD and less inclined to vote for the chancellor's party. Put differently, given low to mean perceived representativeness, candidate preferences affected vote choice in predictable ways. The candidate effect diminishes and eventually vanishes when Mr. Steinbrück's representativeness approaches higher values. As Figure 1b illustrates for the same subsection of the electorate considered in Figure 1a, for those voters who considered the candidate as fully representative of the SPD's values and policies, moving from no preference to a preference for Mr. Steinbrück did not make a difference in vote choice. Interestingly, even at the mean perceived representativeness of those voters who preferred Mr. Steinbrück to become chancellor, there is no individual level effect that passes conventional levels of statistical significance. So, translating preferences into votes was not very likely.

The findings thus suggest that the candidates' perceived representativeness played a role in conditioning the impact of candidate orientations on vote choice. Concerning Chancellor Merkel, the evidence fits nicely with the notion that favourable candidate orientations will translate into votes if the candidate fits with the party in terms of values and policies. This pattern might be interpreted as suggesting that voters do not want to cast a vote for a party in which their preferred candidate is unlikely to have a say. When it comes to Mr. Steinbrück, the relationship is quite different. Among voters who perceived him as highly typical of the SPD in terms of values and policies, holding a favourable opinion about him or preferring him as chancellor hardly affected vote choice. Accordingly, preferences for the candidate hardly turned into votes for his party.

Looked at from a different perspective, the findings shed also some light on the role of candidate orientations in affecting the aggregate outcome of the 2013 election. Mrs. Merkel was quite popular with the electorate. Moreover, among voters who preferred or liked her, orientations towards Chancellor Merkel turned out to be powerful in affecting vote choice. In effect, her popularity was likely to be translated into votes for the CDU/CSU. She thus might be considered an electoral asset that has contributed considerably to her party's best result in federal elections since 1990. Concerning Peer Steinbrück, the evidence suggests a different conclusion. He was less popular, and attitudes towards him turned out to be effective only among voters who perceived him not as representative of the SPD's values and policies. These voters, however, were sceptical, rather than enthusiastic, about him. As far as candidate evaluations or preferences made a difference in vote choice, they are likely to have cost the SPD more votes than they earned it. When considering direct effects of candidate orientations, Peer Steinbrück hardly served as an electoral asset for the SPD.

Conclusions

The 2013 federal election was the first general election in Germany after the start of the European debt crisis. Under these circumstances, it might appear to be some kind of natural choice that the two most important politicians, then chancellor and finance minister in a grand coalition, in fighting the consequences of the recession that started in 2007 ran for the chancellorship. It is somewhat of an irony that, despite the candidates' history, the European debt crisis did not play a major role as a campaign issue. Yet, the candidates' history and reputation were not irrelevant. From an inter-party competition perspective, the candidacy of Peer Steinbrück with his middle-

of-the-road positions and grand coalition background signalled a low-polarization campaign. From an intra-party perspective, Steinbrück's nomination implied that a supporter of the controversial so-called Hartz reforms in the Schröder stood for the Social Democrats. In addition to the lack of polarization, the candidacy of a non-traditional Social Democrat might have decreased the mobilization of the party's rank and file and increased the SPD's potential to attract votes from partisan independents and other parties' adherents.

In our analysis, we showed that Peer Steinbrück – as his 2009 predecessor Frank-Walter Steinmeier[20] – was considerably less popular than Chancellor Merkel. Moreover, he was perceived as being somewhat less representative of the SPD's values and policies than Mrs. Merkel of the CDU. As it turned out, candidate orientations affected vote choice, net of party attachments and issue orientations. But their impact on vote choice was conditioned by the candidates' perceived representativeness in complex ways. Attitudes towards Mrs. Merkel became more effective in affecting vote choice as her perceived representativeness increased. As she was quite popular among voters who considered her representative, she was able to transform her popularity into additional votes for the CDU/CSU. Attitudes towards Peer Steinbrück, by contrast, affected vote choice primarily among voters who perceived him as being not very typical of the SPD in terms of values and policies. Because these voters were rather sceptical of him, he appears to have been rather an electoral liability than an electoral asset for his party. The opposite holds for Chancellor Merkel. In effect, the CDU/CSU's impressive result in the 2013 federal election, to certain extent, expressed Mrs. Merkel's popularity.

As with any empirical analysis, this paper is subject to several limitations. To begin with, the data for the above analyses are drawn from an online survey. In addition to potential mode effects, participants in online surveys still do not constitute random samples of the electorate, unless members of a random sample are equipped with online access. As the respondents in this paper

were drawn from a pre-recruited access panel, there are several doubts concerning the generalization of results. We thus suggest replicating the analyses with data that allow generalizations to the electorate as a whole, but were not yet available when this analysis was conducted. Moreover, we have confined the role of candidates in affecting voting behaviour to statistical effects of candidate orientations on vote choice. Yet, candidates for chancellorship might impact on election outcomes in quite different ways, e.g., by campaign style. Furthermore, given the cross-sectional nature of the data, it is impossible to disentangle the causal relationships among the predictor variables. For example, chancellor candidates' perceived representativeness might be causally linked to candidate evaluations as well as to party attachments and issue orientations in complex ways. What is more, these relationships might differ between a chancellor and long-time party leader, on the one hand, and a candidate with some kind of an outsider image, on the other hand. Employing long-term panel data or experimental designs might prove helpful in exploring these complex causal relationships. Another limitation stems from the fact that this analysis focused on a single case. In the 2013 federal election, both the chancellor and her challenger held middle-of-the-road views. So the challenger's middle-of-the-road appeal might not have attracted additional votes although it would have been successful if the CDU/CSU, for example, had fielded a controversial candidate or a newcomer. This argument rests on the notion that voting behaviour can be fully understood only if the electoral context is taken into account. Following this line of reasoning, future research would be well-advised to spend considerable effort in comparative analyses to explore the role of contextual variation, be it within or across political systems. In effect, future research might conclude that the 2013 federal election was representative of national elections in Germany and a multitude of other democracies when it comes to the role of candidate orientations in affecting vote choice – or not.

Appendix: Question wording and operationalization

Vote Choice

You are entitled to vote twice in the Bundestag election. First for a candidate from your constituency and second for a party. This is an example ballot paper which is similar to the one you are given in federal elections. Where will you place your crosses on your ballot paper?

Nominal variable *Vote choice* – 1 'CDU/CSU', 2 'SPD', 3 'FDP', 4'Greens', 5 'Left Party', 6 'Alternative für Deutschland'

Party identification

And now let's go back to the political parties again briefly. Many people in Germany are inclined to support a particular political party for a longer period of time even if they occasionally vote for another party. What about you? In general terms, are you inclined to support a particular political party? And if so, which one?

Dummy variables *PID CDU/CSU*, *PID SPD* – 0 'no', 1 'yes'.

Competence

In your opinion what is the most important political issue facing Germany at the moment? And which party do you think is best in dealing with it?

Dummy variables *Competence CDU/CSU*, *Competence SPD* – 0 'no', 1 'yes'.

Chancellor Preference

Now some questions to the candidates for chancellor of the Bundestag election 2013. Angela Merkel and Peer Steinbrück are the candidates for chancellor of the two big parties. Who would you prefer as Federal Chancellor after the Bundestag election?

Dummy variables *Chancellor preference Merkel*, *Chancellor preference Steinbrück* – 0 'no', 1 'yes'.

Evaluations, politicians

Please tell me what you think about some leading politicians. Please use the scale from - 5 to + 5 for this purpose.

Evaluation Merkel, Evaluation Steinbrück, Evaluation Trittin, Evaluation Gysi, Evaluation Brüderle – 11-point scale reaching from 0 'strongly dislike' to 1 'strongly like'.

Perceived traits of the candidates for chancellor

Please indicate to what extent you think different properties apply for Angela Merkel (Peer Steinbrück). Angela Merkel (Peer Steinbrück)
… is assertive.
… is trustworthy.
… is a likeable person.

… has sensible ideas about how to boost the economy.
… represents the values and political views of CDU/CSU (SPD).

5-point scale reaching from 0 'not true at all' to 1 'definitely true'.

Table 1: Issue competence and candidate preference by party identification in the German electorate (percent)

	Party identification					
	All	CDU/CSU	SPD	Greens	Left	None
Competence						
CDU/CSU	31	75	6	7	2	17
SPD	26	2	70	26	4	15
FDP	1	0	0	0	0	1
Greens	5	0	2	32	0	5
Left Party	6	2	3	7	67	7
AfD	3	2	2	1	0	3
N	947	271	233	107	42	159
Chancellor Preference						
Merkel	51	93	16	27	30	46
Steinbrück	31	3	73	41	16	20
N	942	281	234	107	43	153

Notes: Percentages for different sample groups; N: Number of observations.

Table 2: Candidate evaluations and perceived candidate traits in the German electorate (means)

		Party identification				
	All	CDU/CSU	SPD	Greens	Left	None
Merkel						
General evaluation	.65	.85	.54	.57	.44	.59
Assertiveness	.74	.83	.67	.75	.70	.71
Reliability	.64	.80	.53	.60	.41	.58
Economy	.63	.79	.54	.55	.47	.55
Party representative	.75	.82	.72	.75	.78	.68
Likeability	.64	.79	.54	.57	.47	.59
N	915-998	275-284	230-240	104-111	41-44	142-167
Steinbrück						
General evaluation	.54	.42	.73	.61	.38	.47
Assertiveness	.68	.60	.80	.75	.60	.63
Reliability	.52	.39	.70	.59	.36	.48
Economy	.61	.50	.78	.66	.49	.52
Party representative	.65	.56	.75	.73	.55	.65
Likeability	.48	.35	.62	.49	.32	.45
N	862-990	252-283	229-239	97-109	41-44	142-167

Note: Mean values for different sample groups; N: range of case numbers; General evaluation ranges on an 11-point scale from 0 'strongly dislike' to 1 'strongly like'; Other perceived traits range on a 5-point scale from 0 'not true at all' to 1 'definitely true'.

Table 3: Effects of party identification, issue competence, chancellor preference and candidates' party representativeness on vote choice in the 2013 Federal Election (multinomial logistic regressions)

|	SPD	FDP	Greens	Left	AfD	SPD	FDP	Greens	Left	AfD
PID CDU/CSU	-2.32**	-1.50**	-3.23**	-2.76**	-1.41**	-2.21*	-1.53**	-3.07**	-2.74**	-1.31*
	(0.80)	(0.45)	(0.55)	(0.67)	(0.51)	(0.91)	(0.49)	(0.60)	(0.72)	(0.55)
PID SPD	1.28**	-1.44	-0.91	-0.17	-0.75	1.66**	-1.19	-0.59	0.01	-0.54
	(0.49)	(0.83)	(0.57)	(0.57)	(0.81)	(0.54)	(0.84)	(0.61)	(0.62)	(0.78)
Competence CDU/CSU	-0.61	-0.19	-1.69**	-2.35**	-2.33**	-0.89	-0.43	-1.80**	-2.43**	-2.69**
	(0.69)	(0.45)	(0.48)	(0.67)	(0.70)	(0.83)	(0.49)	(0.55)	(0.74)	(0.65)
Competence SPD	3.03**	2.02*	1.61*	-0.10	0.33	4.01**	3.06*	2.40	1.17	1.12
	(0.75)	(0.95)	(0.76)	(0.83)	(1.09)	(1.22)	(1.28)	(1.23)	(1.26)	(1.47)
Chancellor preference Merkel	-1.95**	-0.13	-1.82**	-1.89**	-1.74**	-0.69	1.73	0.75	1.19	-2.08
	(0.59)	(0.69)	(0.48)	(0.50)	(0.50)	(1.72)	(2.30)	(1.07)	(1.35)	(1.60)
Chancellor preference Steinbrück	2.02**	0.01	1.48*	1.20	1.03	7.02**	5.18	4.59*	6.47**	1.32
	(0.71)	(1.11)	(0.73)	(0.75)	(0.80)	(2.09)	(2.64)	(2.08)	(2.26)	(2.44)
Party representativeness Merkel						2.06*	2.24	2.17*	3.53**	1.31
						(0.83)	(2.16)	(0.92)	(0.96)	(1.11)
Party representativeness Steinbrück						1.96*	0.02	1.23	-0.43	0.47
						(1.00)	(0.85)	(0.86)	(0.95)	(1.02)
Preference*Rep. Merkel						-1.66	-1.79	-3.65**	-4.35*	0.51
						(1.88)	(2.42)	(1.37)	(1.84)	(2.01)
Preference*Rep. Steinbrück						-6.67**	-5.78*	-4.32	-6.98**	-0.39
						(2.43)	(2.50)	(2.39)	(2.66)	(2.89)
Constant	0.36	-0.61	1.68**	1.37**	0.81	-2.25**	-2.49	-0.30	-0.64	-0.27
	(0.41)	(0.65)	(0.36)	(0.37)	(0.42)	(0.79)	(2.20)	(0.62)	(0.85)	(0.99)
-2 LogLikelihood	1427.3					1205.9				
Pseudo R^2	0.42					0.45				
N	761					668				

Notes: Unstandardized logit coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance-levels: ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$. Reference category: CDU/CSU vote.

Table 4: Effects of party identification, issue competence, candidate evaluation and candidates' party representativeness on vote choice in the 2013 Federal Election (multinomial logistic regressions)

|	SPD	FDP	Greens	Left	AfD	SPD	FDP	Greens	Left	AfD
PID CDU/CSU	-2.36**	-1.45**	-3.38**	-2.79**	-1.35*	-2.49**	-1.48**	-3.42**	-2.93**	-1.29*
	(0.72)	(0.46)	(0.53)	(0.67)	(0.55)	(0.85)	(0.52)	(0.58)	(0.76)	(0.62)
PID SPD	1.95**	-1.29	-0.30	0.58	-0.13	2.32**	-1.08	0.04	0.79	0.28
	(0.43)	(0.83)	(0.48)	(0.54)	(0.82)	(0.51)	(0.84)	(0.56)	(0.62)	(0.88)
Competence CDU/CSU	-0.89	-0.17	-1.80**	-2.16**	-2.02**	-1.17	-0.43	-1.90**	-2.28**	-2.23**
	(0.53)	(0.43)	(0.48)	(0.69)	(0.73)	(0.61)	(0.51)	(0.51)	(0.74)	(0.64)
Competence SPD	2.81**	1.81*	1.60*	0.16	0.59	3.92**	2.86*	2.58*	1.47	1.76
	(0.66)	(0.92)	(0.69)	(0.80)	(1.01)	(1.04)	(1.22)	(1.05)	(1.11)	(1.28)
Evaluation Merkel	-3.96**	-0.15	-3.72**	-4.63**	-4.90**	-1.07	-1.08	-1.17	-0.39	-2.53
	(0.90)	(1.32)	(0.91)	(0.96)	(0.99)	(1.62)	(1.83)	(1.71)	(2.42)	(2.19)
Evaluation Steinbrück	3.64**	0.89	1.63*	-0.07	0.03	9.56**	1.91	4.00*	1.42	2.67
	(0.80)	(0.81)	(0.73)	(0.82)	(0.99)	(2.83)	(1.40)	(1.78)	(2.03)	(3.08)
Party representativeness Merkel						4.24*	-1.03	4.30*	6.42**	4.72*
						(2.09)	(2.90)	(2.13)	(2.41)	(2.26)
Party representativeness Steinbrück						7.51**	0.02	4.68**	1.70	4.26
						(2.74)	(1.06)	(1.80)	(1.84)	(2.79)
Evaluation*Rep. Merkel						-5.16	2.28	-5.27	-7.45*	-5.01
						(2.67)	(3.43)	(2.75)	(3.47)	(3.55)
Evaluation*Rep. Steinbrück						-10.46**	-1.46	-5.99*	-3.61	-5.93
						(3.93)	(2.26)	(2.83)	(3.18)	(5.20)
Constant	0.43	-1.05	2.63**	3.45**	2.99**	-5.93**	-0.82	-1.26	-0.55	-1.21
	(0.86)	(1.26)	(0.77)	(0.82)	(0.79)	(2.09)	(1.49)	(1.29)	(1.69)	(1.61)
-2 LogLikelihood	1404.9					1178.3				
Pseudo R^2	0.43					0.46				
N	756					663				

Notes: Unstandardized logit coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. Significance-levels: ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$. Reference category: CDU/CSU vote.

Figure 1a: The impact of candidate preference for Angela Merkel conditioned by her perceived party representativeness on voting behaviour for CDU/CSU and SPD
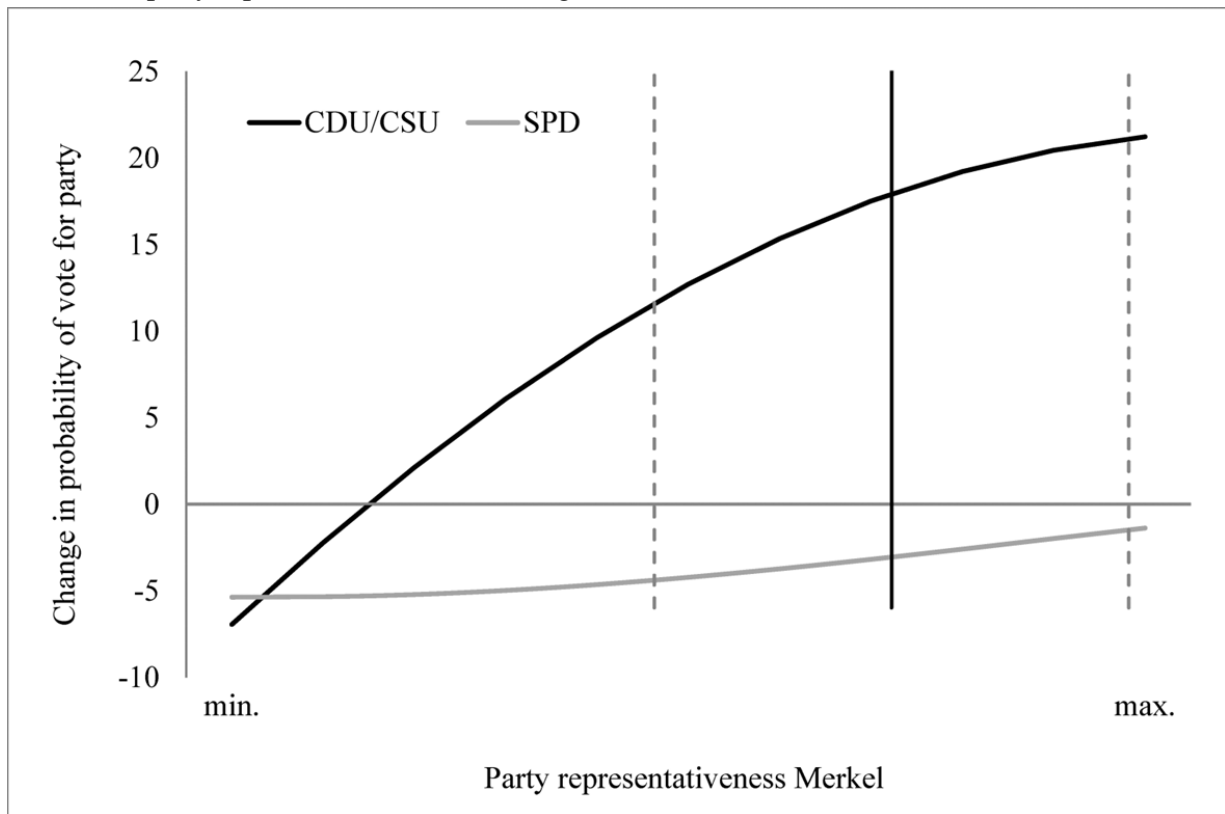
Note: Entries are changes in probabilities of casting a vote for CDU/CSU and SPD by preferring Angela Merkel as chancellor in dependence of the perceived party representativeness of Angela Merkel. These results were gleaned from the estimates reported in Table 3. Reading example: If somebody considers Angela Merkel not at all representative (0) for her party and changed the chancellor preference to Angela Merkel, the probability of casting a vote for CDU/CSU declines by some 7 percentage points. The remaining variables in the model were set to their means and modes, respectively (PID: other/none; competence: other/none; preference Merkel/Steinbrück: mean value of respondents who do not identify with CDU/CSU or SPD). Vertical lines represent the mean (solid line) plus/minus one standard deviation (dashed lines) of perceived party representativeness of the group under study.

Figure 1b: The impact of candidate preference for Peer Steinbrück conditioned by his
perceived party representativeness on voting behaviour for CDU/CSU and SPD
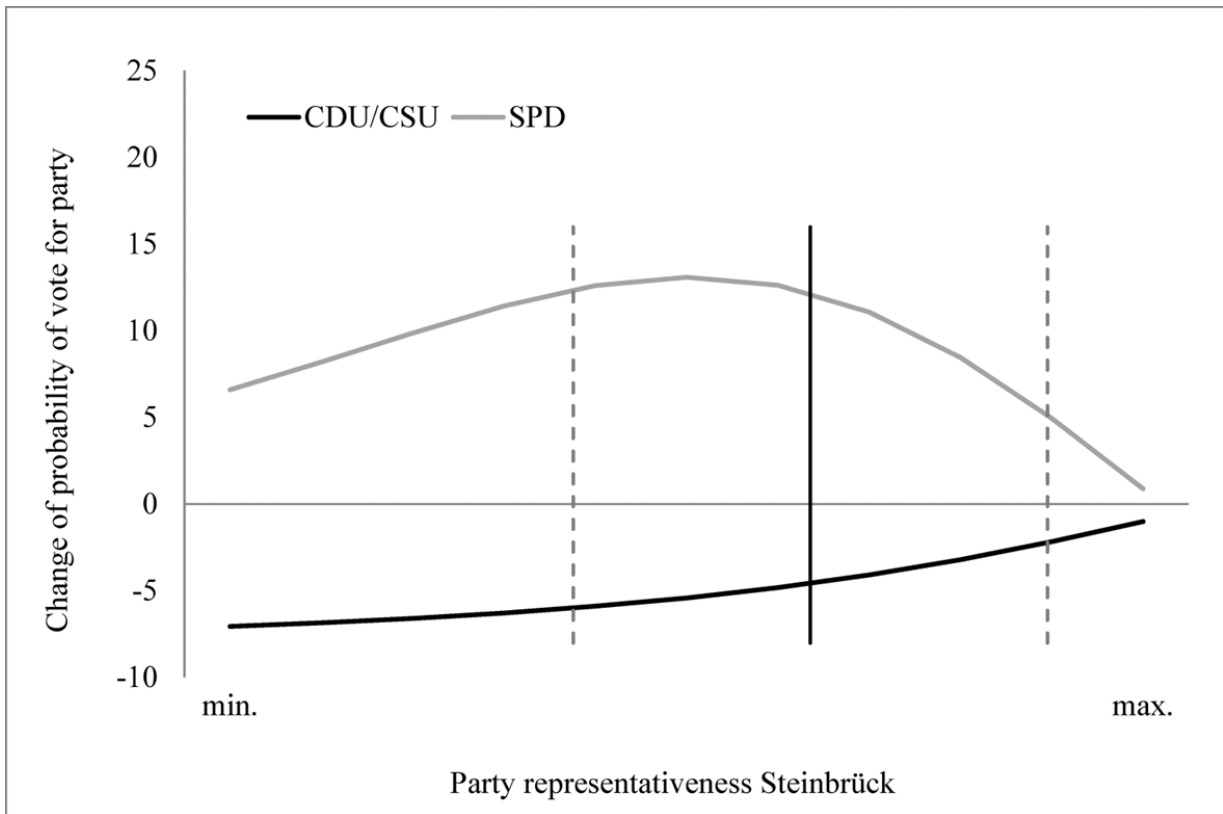
Note: Entries are changes in probabilities of casting a vote for CDU/CSU and SPD by preferring Angela Merkel as chancellor in dependence of the perceived party representativeness of Angela Merkel. These results were gleaned from the estimates reported in Table 3. Reading example: If somebody considers Peer Steinbrück neither/nor (0.5) representative for his party and changed the chancellor preference to Peer Steinbrück, the probability of casting a vote for SPD rises by some 13 percentage points. The remaining variables in the model were set to their means and modes, respectively (PID: other/none; competence: other/none; preference Merkel/Steinbrück: mean value of respondents who do not identify with CDU/CSU or SPD). Vertical lines represent the mean (solid line) plus/minus one standard deviation (dashed lines) of perceived party representativeness of the group under study.

[1] T. Saalfeld and H. Schoen, 'Party Politics and Electoral Behaviour', in S. Colvin (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of German Politics and Culture.* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), forthcoming.

[2] H. Schoen, 'Merely a referendum on chancellor Merkel? Parties, issues and candidates in the 2009 German federal election', *German Politics* 20/1 (2011), pp. 92-106; A. Wagner and B. Weßels, 'Kanzlerkandidaten - Wie beeinflussen sie die Wahlentscheidung?', *Politische Vierteljahresschrift Sonderheft "Wählen in Deutschland"* 45/1 (2012), pp.345-370.

[3] D. Ohr, M. Klein and U. Rosar, 'Bewertungen der Kanzlerkandidaten und Wahlentscheidung bei der Bundestagswahl 2009', in B. Weßels, H. Schoen and O.W. Gabriel (eds), *Wahlen und Wähler. Analysen aus Anlass der Bundestagswahl 2009* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2013), pp.206-230; Wagner and Weßels, 'Kanzlerkandidaten - Wie beeinflussen sie die Wahlentscheidung?'; Schoen, 'Merely a referendum on chancellor Merkel? Parties, issues and candidates in the 2009 German federal election'.

[4] See J. W. Falter and H. Rattinger, 'Parteien, Kandidaten und politische Streitfragen bei der Bundestagswahl 1980: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Normal-Vote-Analyse', in M. Kaase and H.D. Klingemann (eds), *Wahlen und politisches System. Analysen aus Anlaß der Bundestagswahl 1980* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1983), pp. 320-421.

[5] A. Wagner and B. Weßels, 'Parties and Their Leaders. Does it Matter how they Match? The German General Elections 2009 in comparison', *Electoral Studies* 31/1 (2012), pp. 72-82.

[6] A. Campbell, G. Gurin and W. E. Miller, *The Voter Decides* (Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson, and Company, 1954); A. Campbell, P. E. Converse, W. E. Miller and D. E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York: Wiley, 1960); W. E. Miller and J. M. Shanks*, The New American Voter* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

[7] M. Lodge and C. S. Taber, *The Rationalizing Voter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[8] E.g., L. Bartels, 'The Impact of Candidate Traits in American Presidential Elections', in A. King (ed.), *Leaders' Personalities and the Outcomes of Democratic Elections* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 44-69; D. Hayes, 'Candidate Qualities through a Partisan Lens: A Theory of Trait Ownership', *American Journal of Political Science* 49/4 (2005), pp. 908-23; J. W. Koch, 'Gender Stereotypes and Citizens' Impressions of House Candidates' Ideological Orientations', *American Journal of Political Science* 46/2 (2002), pp. 453-62.

[9] E.g., F. Brettschneider, Spitzenkandidaten und Wahlerfolg. Personalisierung – Kompetenz – Parteien. Ein internationaler Vergleich (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2002).

[10] See M. Mendelsohn, 'The Media and Interpersonal Communications: The Priming of Issues, Leaders, and Party Identification', *Journal of Politics* 58/1 (1996), pp. 112-125; H. Schoen, 'Campaigns, Candidate Evaluations, and Vote Choice: Evidence from German Federal Election Campaigns, 1980-2002', *Electoral Studies* 26/2 (2007), pp. 324-337; H. Schoen, 'Der Kanzler, zwei Sommerthemen und ein Foto-Finish. Priming-Effekte bei der Bundestagswahl 2002', in F.Brettschneider, J.W. van Deth, and E. Roller (eds), *Die Bundestagswahl 2002. Analysen der Wahlergebnisse und des Wahlkampfes* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2004), pp. 23-50.

[11] Cf. Wagner and Weßels 'Parties and Their Leaders. Does it Matter how they Match? The German General Elections 2009 in comparison'.

[12] Data for this paper has been made accessible to the public by GESIS- Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences. The data are part of the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES), conducted by Prof. Dr. Hans Rattinger (University of Mannheim), Prof. Dr. Sigrid Roßteutscher (University of Frankfurt), Prof. Dr. Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck (University of Mannheim), Prof. Dr. Bernhard

Weßels (Social Science Research Center Berlin) and Prof. Dr. Christof Wolf (GESIS). GLES is funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG). Neither the mentioned primary researchers nor GESIS are responsible for analysis and interpretation of the data in this paper. Data sets are available to the public and can be downloaded at http://www.gesis.org/wahlportal/downloads/. For further information about design and survey components of the GLES, see http://www.dgfw.info/index.php?lang=en.

[13] See for example, T. Faas and H. Schoen, 'Nur eine Frage der Zeit? Eine Analyse zweier Online-Umfragen zu den Bundestagswahlen 2002 und 2005', in H. Schoen, H. Rattinger and O.W. Gabriel (eds), *Vom Interview zur Analyse: Methodische Aspekte der Einstellungs- und Wahlforschung* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2009), pp. 343-360.

[14] The survey item reads as follows: „Viele Leute in Deutschland neigen längere Zeit einer bestimmten Partei zu, obwohl sie auch ab und zu eine andere Partei wählen. Neigen Sie, ganz allgemein gesprochen, einer bestimmten Partei zu? Wenn ja, welcher?"

[15] See on the problems concerning this indicator, C. Wlezien, 'On the salience of political issues: The problem with "most important problem"', *Electoral Studies* 24/4 (2005), pp. 555-579; R. Johns, 'Measuring Issue Salience in British Elections: Competing Interpretations of "Most Important Issues"', *Political Research Quarterly* 63/1 (2010), pp. 143-158.

[16] Additional analyses (not reported in tables) showed that perceived reliability is most strongly correlated with general evaluations of both candidates, whereas the assertiveness correlation is considerably smaller.

[17] Cf. D. Ohr, M. Klein and U. Rosar, 'Bewertungen der Kanzlerkandidaten und Wahlentscheidung bei der Bundestagswahl 2009', p. 217.

[18] This finding fits nicely with evidence suggesting that policy-related predispositions, including economic liberalism, are quite influential in predicting candidate preference in the 2013 federal election.See M. Mader and H. Schoen, 'Chancellor Merkel, the European debt crisis and the AfD: An analysis of voting behaviour in the 2013 Federal Election', in G. D'Ottavio and T. Saalfeld (eds), *Germany after the 2013 Elections* (forthcoming).

[19] See, e.g., W. Jagodzinski and S.M. Kühnel, 'Zur Schätzung der relativen Effekte von Issueorientierungen, Kandidatenpräferenz und langfristiger Parteibindung auf die Wahlabsicht', in: K. Schmitt (ed), Wahlen, Parteieliten, politische Einstellungen (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang), pp. 5-61.

[20] Cf. H. Schoen, 'Merely a referendum on chancellor Merkel? Parties, issues and candidates in the 2009 German federal election'; D. Ohr, M. Klein and U. Rosar, 'Bewertungen der Kanzlerkandidaten und Wahlentscheidung bei der Bundestagswahl 2009'.