Leadership Effects in Regional Elections:
the Catalan Case

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THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: LEADERSHIP EFFECTS

Surprising as it may sound, the role of leaders in shaping voters' behaviour remains an open question to political science. If we were to rely on the general impression, leaders probably exert a strong influence on the vote. At least, this is the picture given by the media and politicians themselves most of the time. Yet political scientists have not achieved any definite agreement on the matter.

The first scholar approaches to the issue within electoral research tended to lessen leadership effects on voting behaviour. Hence, the view presented in *The American Voter* (Campbell et al., 1960) and other works by the influential "Michigan school", gave preeminence to other, more deep-rooted political attitudes, such as partisan identification, which were thought to develop in early stages of political socialization, thus strongly influencing the shaping of later, less stable attitudes, such as the evaluations of political candidates. This does not mean that the importance of leaders was denied altogether. In fact, leadership was often claimed to be a powerful factor of short-term electoral change, even if it was accepted that leader evaluations were heavily affected by more basic political predispositions (see, for instance, Stokes, 1966).

With the growing dominance of the rational choice perspective, electoral research put emphasis on those elements that are central to that paradigm. From a Downsian point of view, the fact that personal evaluations of candidates enter the calculus of voting is seen as "irrational", and therefore they are left aside (Popkin et al., 1976). Beginning in the 1980s, the topic has been payed some more attention, specially (and most valuably) from the perspective of cognitive political psychology, and there exists now a sizeable body of literature devoted to candidate images and their electoral effects.

Nevertheless, leaders have always been a topic of secondary interest in the electoral research agenda. Beyond ignoring it, what has remained as the conventional academic wisdom, if anything, is that leaders

do not matter, or at least that they do not matter as much as other factors, like ideology or party attachment. Hence there appears to be an important gap between the common impression ("leaders are important") and that of the the the academy ("they are not").

Yet there are reasons to expect that leaders matter now more than they did in the past. Even if they were irrelevant some time ago, certain recent developments registered in modern democracies have produced what has been called a process of *personalisation* of politics by which leaders may have become increasingly decisive in elections. This process of personalisation may be identified in at least four different levels[1]:

a) *Institutional level.* This applies mainly to parliamentary regimes, where leadership effects are supposed to be remarkably less consequential than under presidential systems. Prime ministers in parliamentary democracies hold a less prominent and presumably less powerful position than presidents in presidential democracies. This is so because (1) presidents are directly elected by the people, while prime ministers are choosen by the parliament; (2) presidents have a fixed term limit and can hardly be removed from office, while prime ministers are responsible before the parliament and therefore their survival depends on its support; and (3) in presidential regimes, the executive power lies in presidents themselves, as individuals, whereas in parliamentary regimes it has a collective nature, since government decisions are formally taken by a council of ministers. However, by means of the growth of the welfare state, "rationalized parliamentarism", and the monolytic behaviour of parliamentary groups, parliamentary systems have been transformed in the postwar period to yield more powerful, stable, and visibible executives with more powerful, stable, and visibible prime ministers to the forefront. In other words, parliamentary systems have moved towards presidentialism; they have been "presidentialised".

b) *Political communication.* The rise of television has dramatically transformed the process of political communication. Nowadays, television is the main source of political information for most of the

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citizens of advanced democracies. At the same time, the mass media have turned out to be more independent and become a power on themselves, with their own goals and a benefit-driven logic that favours entertainment over public concerns. Political campaigns are deeply conditioned by these changes, in a way that makes leaders to appear more prominent to the electorate. Now are the media who fix the rules and parties who fit to follow them. And the media demand images, people, and drama, rather than words, contents, and scrupulous analysis. Through the audiovisual media, political candidates become the main star of the news, the basic link between parties and the electorate.

c) *The electorate.* During the second half of the 20th century, modern societies have experienced a number of changes that have deeply affected the nature of the electorate. The cleavage structures have eroded as social disparities diminished, and group identities are now less marked than they were decades ago (Crewe & Denver, 1985; Dalton et al., 1984). Moreover, there has been a significant increase in the average levels of educational attainment and political information (Dalton, 1996). Voters are now more sophisticated, less prone to follow the traditional cues (party, class) and more open to the influence of short-term factors such as that of political leaders.

d) *Political parties.* Mass parties have given rise to the so-called "catch-all party", a party whose main concern is to win elections to achieve office, eager to sacrifice ideological concretization in order to get votes from all social groups (Kircheimer, 1966). Consequently, the attractiveness of catch-all parties is built upon performance and leadership issues. Leaders, in particular, achieve an unprecedented status within the organization and stand as its more visible asset before the electorate; today's political parties are unequivocally leader-centered.

The explanation of the process of personalisation is still "highly impressionistic" (MacAllister, 1996: 287) and needs for empirical verification, but it nevertheless seems plausible.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND: CATALAN POLITICS

Catalonia is one of the 17 autonomous comunities of Spain. But it is not only so. It also has a strong 'national identity', a language 'of its own', and a history of frequent conflicts with Spain. If not a nation state, Catalonia would clearly be a 'nation' in cultural terms[2].

Democracy and self-government were always a twofold request for Catalan people. Therefore, after the return of democracy in Spain, self-government was achieved for the Basque Country and Catalonia, and this brought about the *autonomic system* of the Spanish Constitution –a sort of halfway between a regional system and a proper federal State. Since 1980, regular elections have been held to choose the Catalan Parliament, and so, the President of the *Generalitat* (the institution of self-goverment).

The electoral system for the election of the Parliament is a list PR, following the d'Hondt formula, plus a 3% threshold, computed in each of the four districts. Aside from minor exceptions, the Catalan Parliament have always had five parties represented: the Catalan Nationalists (Convergència i Unió); the Socialist Party (PSC-PSOE, a party federated to the Spanish Socialist Party); the Spanish Conservatives, or Centrists, or Christian Democrats, or whatever (first as UCD, now as PP); the Catalan Independentists (ERC); and the post-communists (under different labels, now as ICV). Since the first elections in the post-war period, the Nationalists were always the majority in the Chamber, and their leader, Jordi Pujol, has been the president of the *Generalitat*. See the election results in Table 1.

Table 1
Election Results to the Catalan Parliament, 1980-1999

	1980	1984	1988	1992	1995	1999
CiU	27.68(43)	46.56(72)	45.49(69)	46 (70)	40.83(60)	37.7 (56)
PSC	22.33(33)	29.95(41)	29.63(42)	27.43(40)	24.81(34)	37.85(52)
UCD, PP	10.55(18)	7.66(11)	5.29 (6)	5.94 (7)	13.05(17)	9.51(12)
ERC	8.87(14)	4.39 (5)	4.12 (6)	7.92(11)	9.46(13)	8.67(12)
PSUC, ICV	18.68(25)	5.55 (6)	7.72 (9)	6.47 (7)	9.68(11)	2.51 (3)
Others	11.89 (2)	5.89 (--)	7.75 (3)	6.24 (--)	2.16 (--)	2.83 (--)

Entries are vote percentages (over total votes cast). Number of seats appear in brackets

In ideological terms, the Catalan Nationalists are a coalition of liberals and christian-democrats. However, they maintain a certain ideological diversity, with some officials who would adhere more to conservative ideals, and some who would perceive themselves as almost social-democrats. The diversity is being well managed basically by three factors: the uniting nationalist ideal, the authority of the leader, and the posts which the government provides. From this Catalan government, the Catalan Nationalists have seen three different parties and four presidents in the Spanish government. With all of them, and at different junctures, they have both strongly cooperated and strongly quarreled. Perhaps due to this combination, they have been seen as the party option which would develop the self-government with a deeper reassurance. During this long time, their main occupation has been the construction of self-government, both in institutional terms (the development of the Catalan institutions) and in socio-political terms (assembling their model of *motherland*). The Catalan Nationalists are very much the personal making of its leader, Jordi Pujol. As with all charismatic leaders, his succession is being problematic. The consecutive candidates to the post have either died, been involved in scandals, or retired with some fatigue.

The Socialists have always been the second party in the Catalan Parliament, and –at a long distance of any other minor parties– the main opposition force. However, their strength is somewhat higher than this fact may imply. They have been the party which most votes has attained at every local election and at every general election (ie, to the Spanish Parliament) contested in Catalonia. This means that the Catalan socialists have provided important political elites to both the local level and the Spanish level. Curiously enough, none of them contested an election to the Catalan Parliament until very recently. Only on 1995, the socialist Mayor of an average-size city was the socialist candidate to the presidency of the *Generalitat*. And only on the recent 1999 elections, the idolised Mayor of Barcelona finally decided to be the socialist candidate.

In conclusion, if the assumption that regional level voting is

particularly prone to be affected by leadership effects, Catalonia 1995-1999 are the elections where and when it should be noticed.

DATA AND METHOD

This paper makes use of individual data from the electoral surveys regularly conducted by the Spanish official polling agency (the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas*) in Catalonia. We shall look at four (five) consecutive regional elections/surveys: 1984[3], 1988[4], 1992[5], and 1995[6]. All surveys were conducted shortly after the holding of the respective regional election and hence include a reliable vote recall. Our dependent variable is always two-party choice, so that the analyses are restricted to the sample of respondents who vote for one of the two main parties of the Catalan party system, the Socialists (PSC) and the Nationalists (CiU). This variable is scored 1 for PSC voters and -1 for CiU voters.

In order to assess the actual impact of political candidates on voters' choices, we make use of four distinct research strategies. First, we look at the explanations given by voters themselves as the motives for their choices. In this model, which we have labelled as the "univariate model", we report the answers obtained either through open questions asking for the main reason for your vote, or by means of closed questions which prompt respondents to pick one ore more reasons out of a list that includes the leader among other possibilities (party, ideology, etc.).

Second, we estimate a "bivariate model" by regressing vote choice on respondents' evaluations of leaders. Our leaders variable just measures the difference between the socialist and the nationalist candidates' feeling thermometers[7]. This variable, as all other independent variables used in the following analyses, was recoded between 1 and -1, being 1 the most favourable evaluation for the Socialists and -1 is most favourable evaluation for the Nationalists.

Third, in the "multivariate model", we re-estimate the impact of leader evaluations on the vote when adding controls for other relevant factors. The choice of factors is necessarily constrained by the availability

of the adequate questions in our surveys. After some testing, we finally decided to exclude those variables that, though presumably important, were not available for one or more of the years:

- AGE: since the elder are more likely to support the Nationalists, this variable is recoded so that 1 (the highest pro-socialist score) is the age of the oldest respondent, and -1 (the most favourable score for the Nationalists) is that of the oldest, being 0 the mean age of the sample.
- WORKER: coded 1 for workers, -1 for all others.
- ORIGIN: ranges from -1, for native Catalans with Catalan-born parents, to 1, for respondents born in any other region from non-native parents. Intermediate categories are for natives and non-natives with parents mixed origins (one Catalan-born, the other born elsewhere).
- LANGUAGE: knowledge of the Catalan language, with score -1 for those with the highest knowledge and 1 for the lowest.
- RELIGIOUS PRACTICE: respondent's stated degree of (Catholic) religious practice –generally expressed as mass attendance, and measured by a closed question. Score -1 corresponds to the most religious, 1 to the least.
- NATIONAL IDENTITY: respondents were asked to say whether they felt "Only Catalan", "More Catalan than Spanish", "As Catalan as Spanish", "More Spanish than Catalan", or "Only Spanish". Recoded so that -1 is the score for those who feel "Only Catalan", 1 for those who feel "Only Spanish".
- LEFT/RIGHT IDEOLOGY: respondent's placement on a 10-point scale from "Left" to "Right". Recoded so that 1 is the position most to the Left and -1 is the position most to the Right.
- CATALAN NATIONALISM SCALE: respondent's placement on a 10-point scale from a "Catalanist" (or "Nationalist") position to a "Non-catalanist" (or "Non-nationalist", or "Centralist", or "Spanishist") position. Score -1 corresponds to the most Catalanist position, 1 to the least.
- PARTY PROXIMITY: difference between respondent's stated proximity to the socialist and the nationalist parties. Proximity to each of both parties was measured through a 5-point scale, ranging from "Very

close" to "Very distant". The most proximate to the Socialists (most distant to the Nationalists) are scored 1, the most proximate to the Nationalists (most distant to the Socialists) are scored -1.

In the multivariate model, all independent variables are entered simultaneously to the regression. By contrast, our fourth and last analysis, the "Block Recursive Model", we estimate the effect of every factor on the vote using a hierarchical, block-recursive model. In this case, statistical estimations are driven by theoretically-based assumptions about the causal order of independent variables. Thus, as is shown below, we assess leadership effects on the assumption that candidate evaluations are closer to the vote decision than national identity, and hence we must take into account that the former might be affected by the latter.

RESULTS

The Univariate Model

The easiest way of testing the impact of the leader on the people's vote is simply asking them. There are regular survey questions on what are the reasons people assign to their votes. It is an exercise of auto-psychoanalysis which polls tend to ask for. Table 2 shows the results of such a question for our 1999 survey.

Table 2
The Univariate Model, 1999

	Socialist voters	Nationalist voters	Both
Party positions	6.9	29.8	19.4
Party ideology	24.7	8.8	16.0
Loyal voting	21.2	13.5	17.0
Leader	19.4	12.6	15.7
Government record		26.6	14.4
Negative voting	23.3	4.7	13.2
Others + NA	4.5	4.1	4.3

Entries are % of voters who choose that reason from a given list

Taking both electorates together, the two items emphasising the proximity to parties reach a 35% (19.4%+16%); loyal voting comes next

(17%); and the leader appears as the next reason of the vote (15.7%). Government record and negative voting lag behind the leader as the reason of the vote. In conclusion, the leader seems to be an important reason of the vote, but not a dominant one.

This is also true for each electorate taken separately. Nationalist voters tend to priorise the party (29.8%+8.8%); the government record comes to an outstanding second place (26.6%), which is reasonable given its incumbency; and then comes loyal voting (13.5%) and the leader (12.6%). It has to be emphasised that we cannot decide whether loyal voting expresses a party loyalty or a candidate loyalty, since the nationalist candidate has always been the same. Socialist voters also priorise the two items related to the party (6.9%+24.7%); then comes negative voting (23.3%); loyal voting (21.2%); and only afterwards appears the leader (19.4%).

The conclusion is clear. Even in a competed and highly personalised election as it was that of 1999, leaders do not come as dominant reasons for justifying the vote. They are important, but not dominant. As a way of contrasting the previous results, Table 3 shows the same analysis for our 1995 survey (the appendix show the same analyses for previous surveys). Notice that the altered format of the survey question may explain a great part of the difference.

Table 3
The Univariate Model, 1995

	Socialist voters	Nationalist voters	Both
Government performance	6.2	27.8	20.8
Leader	16.8	21.1	19.7
Party proximity	25.4	14.6	18.1
Party programme	13.2	12.7	12.9
Spanish political situation	15.1	12.6	13.4
Nationalist backing to Spanish government	5.1	7.8	6.9

Each reason is asked in a separate question. Entries are % saying that reason is very important. Do not have to add 100

Taking both electorates together, there are three reasons which voters tend to put forward rather frequently: government performance

(20.8%), leader (19.7%) and party proximity (18.1%). If we were to add the two items referring to the parties, the party would come as the first reason for more than 30% of both electorates (18.1%+12.9%) and leader would become third. Being second or third, it seems clear that leaders reached some more importance in 1995 rather than in 1999.

Among socialist voters, primary weight was given to the party items (25.4%+13.2%), and the leader comes second at a long distance (16.8%). Among the voters of the incumbent Nationalist Party, government performance (27.8%) is unsurprisingly seen as more important. The second position is arguable once again. The leader (21.1%) seems to be the second more important reason of the vote, but adding the two party items (14.6%+12.7%) would heighten the position of the party above the leader. In any case, it seems clear that the leader of the nationalists was much more a vote winner in 1995 than it was in 1999. Is this the expression of a long term evolution? Table 4 tries to answer this question.

Table 4
Votes for the Nationalist Leader, 1984-1999

1984	1988	1992	1995	1999
35.7%	25.3%	25.0%	21.1%	12.6%

Entries are % of nationalist voters stating the leader was the reason of their vote

The answer is yes. The percentage of nationalist voters stating the leader was the reason of their vote has gone from an astonishing 35.7% to a mere 12.6%. It seems clear therefore, that the electoral appeal of the nationalist leader has been seriously decreasing through time.

This Univariate Model is exposed to an important criticism. People do not have to be conscious of the reasons of their vote. In fact, we know that people are rather bad analysts of their own behaviour: they may have the tendency to overstate *virtuous* interpretations of their acts, to answer in terms of common stereotypes, or many other erroneous expositions of the causes of their votes. For instance, it may be that people do not admit they voted for the leader because this is seen as unsophisticated, whereas voting for an ideology is seen as more respectable.

If we are to build a scientific explanation of people's votes we

cannot rely on their own justifications, but on empirical relationships between two separate variables. For instance, if we were to test whether social class exercises an impact on the vote or not, we would not ask people their opinion on this controversy. We would probably estimate their social class in some way; then ask them their vote on a separate question; and finally compute some measure of statistical association between the two separate variables. This is the procedure which follows the Bivariate Model, in the next subsection.

THE BIVARIATE MODEL

As section 0 points out, the surveys provide us with a rather standard measure of people's evaluation of leaders. The Bivariate Model will estimate the impact of these evaluations on the probability of voting either Socialist or Nationalist. We want to measure what is the growth in the probability of voting the Socialist Party, when the voter increases in one unit the comparative evaluation of the socialist leader. In order to measure this, we rely on Bivariate OLS regression models. Table 5 shows the unstandarised regression coefficients of such models. It also shows the same models using two alternative measures of the independent variable – evaluation of the leader.

Table 5
The Bivariate Model, 1984-1995

| | Measure used for the evaluation of the leaders (independent variable) | | |
	Comparative	Nationalist leader	Socialist leader
1984	1.46	0.85	0.60
1988	1.39	0.79	0.59
1992	1.65	1.01	0.64
1995	1.74	0.86	0.87

Entries are bivariate unstandarised regression coefficients between the leader evaluation and the vote. All coefficients are significant at a 0.01 level

The first column of Table 5 shows the electoral effect of a growth of one unit in the comparative evaluation of the socialist leader[8]. In practical terms, this means that if the 1984 voter moved from a balanced evaluation

of the two leaders (ex: 5-5), to an evaluation which was a tenth more favourable to the socialist leader (ex: 6-5), the probability of voting for the socialists increased in 0.146. In 1988, this remained about the same (0.139), and went up to be more than 0.16, and up again to be 0.174. Another example for 1995: in order for a given voter to increase the probability of voting for the socialists in an astonishing 50%, it was just needed to move him/her from a balanced evaluation of the leaders (ex: 5-5), to an evaluation which was three positions favourable to the socialist leader (ex: 7-4).

Table 5 also shows the electoral effect of each leader taken separately. Evaluations of the nationalist leader have a greater impact in the first three elections, but not anymore in the 1995 election. This reaffirms the alluded diminishing electoral effect of the nationalist leader.

The Bivariate Model is also subject to a serious criticism. The model does not contain any cause of the vote other than the evaluation of the leader, and this implies that any observed impact of the evaluation of the leader on the vote may be as much a genuine impact as a consequence of a mispecification of the model. For instance, an association between Leader Evaluation and the Vote might be just the consequence of the impact of Party Proximity on both variables, and not the consequence of a genuine impact. Therefore, it is arguable that Table 5 only shows spurious relationships. In order to confront this criticism we should control the Bivariate Model for all other possible causes of the vote. This means estimating a multivariate regression model in which the Vote is the dependent variable and the indepependent variables are Leader Evaluation, Party Proximity, Left/Right Ideology, and any other variable which may appear as a feasible predictor of the vote. This is done in the next subsection.

The Multivariate Model

A multivariate OLS regression model was computed for each election with Vote Recall as the dependent variable and all variables which could be thought of having an effect on the vote: Age, Language, Worker,

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Origin, Religiosity, National Identity, Nationalism, Left/Right Ideology, Party Proximity and Leader Evaluation. Other variables were excluded from the analyses because they attained no significant impacts on the vote, and even some other variables were excluded from the analyses because they were only available in some of the surveys. Table 6 shows the regression coefficients of such models. Given that all variables were recoded between +1 (the value most favourable to the Socialist Party) and -1, each unstandarised coefficient is interpretable as the variation in the probability of voting the socialists when a given voter moves from a neutral position on that variable to the position which is the most favourable to the socialists.

Table 6
The Multivariate Model, 1984-1995

	1984	1988	1992	1995
Constant	-0.11	-0.10	-0.08	(-0.02)
Age	0.14	(0.03)	(0.08)	(0.01)
Language	(0.05)	0.10	0.18	0.19
Worker	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	-0.06
Origin	0.09	(0.03)	0.08	(0.07)
Religiosity	0.09	(0.05)	(-0.04)	(-0.00)
National Identity	0.10	(0.02)	(0.03)	(-0.04)
Nationalism	(0.01)	(0.02)	0.08	(0.00)
L/R Ideology	0.42	0.52	0.44	(0.12)
Party Proximity	0.94	0.84	0.78	1.09
Leader Evaluation	0.36	0.35	0.5	0.65

Entries are multivariate unstandarised coefficients of a regression on the vote. Non-significant regression coefficients are in parentheses ($p > 0.05$)

As could be expected, the variables which stay closer to the vote decision attain a greater impact on the vote. Party Proximity is always the decisive variable. In second place, come Left/Right Ideology and Leader Evaluation, not necessarily in this order. The fourth place goes to Language, which is meritory because it is an structural-not attitudinal-variable, and therefore it is very distant from the actual vote decision. Conversely, some variables-like Nationalism-which are assumed to be of primary importance, very seldom tend to exercise any significant influence on the vote.

The coefficients for Leader Evaluation are of primary importance to

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us. They are always among the highest coefficients which means that clearly the impact of leadership over the vote is powerful. Perhaps not as much as that of Party Proximity, but powerful nonetheless. However, they are much weaker than those of the Bivariate Model. Introducing controls for Party Proximity, Left/Right Ideology, and many others, has reduced the estimated impact of Leader Evaluation over Vote Recall to a mere one fourth or one third of the previous estimation. This means that the Bivariate Model clearly overestimated those impacts. An interesting point is the increasing magnitude of the coefficients through time, which was already revealed by the Bivariate Model. The Multivariate Model verifies this conclusion: the impact of leadership over the vote is increasing through the elections.
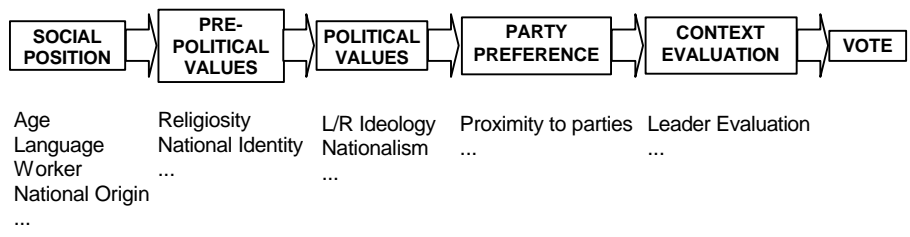
Aside from the Language, the rest of the variables which are located at the beggining of the causal chain –and so, are very remote to the vote decision– do not show any great impact on the vote. National Origin only shows significance in two of the four elections studied; and Age, Worker, Religiosity, and National Identity in one of the four. This could point to the conclusion that Catalan voting does not rely on a structural basis, but on explicitly political values and evaluations. However, this might also point to a statistical artifact. Given that all the variables are introduced at the same time, the more powerful party oriented variables tend to make redundant the presence of the more distant structural ones. For instance, given that workers tend to be more left-wing, when both variables are introduced in the model, the presence of L/R Ideology turns Worker non-significant. But this does not mean that being worker does not affect the vote, it just means that it affects the vote *through* being leftist.

In conclusion, there should be some way of capturing the electoral effect of distant structural variables, and –only afterwards– introducing in the model the new party oriented variables to capture the electoral effect *which was not captured yet* by the previous variables. In essence, we would need a model with a hierarchical inspiration. This is what the Block Recursive Model does in the next subsection.

The Block Recursive Model

The Block Recursive Model arises from a clearly theoretical point of departure. There is a causal chain which explains the vote (Campbell *et al.*, 1960). In this causal chain some variables are more remote and some are closer to the vote decision. Presumably, structural variables related to the position the voter occupies in society are the most remote. In a second stage, values should appear –first, those with no explicitly political content; then, explicitly political values. A further stage would include a very special type of political values: the attitude towards the parties or the preference for one of them. The most commonly known example of such an attitude was the indicator of party identification. However, we will use the indicator of Proximity to Parties, much more adapted to multiparty systems such as the Catalan one. And finally, there should be the variables which could be understood as consequences of political values. These variables tend to refer to the evaluation the voter does of the context in which the elections are contested. Examples of this might be the perception of the economy, the assessment of the policies, or the evaluation of the leaders. Given the object of this article, we shall introduce only the latter. Figure 1 shows our theoretical point of departure for the Block Recursive Model. The expression 'Block Recursive' (Miller and Shanks, 1996, p. 205) refers to the fact that causal arrows only point to one direction, so we assume that Political Values may influence Context Evaluation but not the reverse.

Figure 1
A Block Model of the Vote

SOCIAL POSITION	PRE-POLITICAL VALUES	POLITICAL VALUES	PARTY PREFERENCE	CONTEXT EVALUATION	VOTE
Age Language Worker National Origin ...	Religiosity National Identity ...	L/R Ideology Nationalism ...	Proximity to parties ...	Leader Evaluation ...	

In practical terms, this type of model means regressing National

Identity on the four variables reflecting Social Position. Then, the residuals of the regression are interpretable of the part of National Identity not accounted for by the individual's social position; ie, a sort of 'net' national identity. We do the same with Religiosity. And then go on to a regression model for each Political Value: we regressing Left/Right Ideology on the four variables reflecting Social Position, plus the 'net' estimates of Religiosity and National Identity. Again, the residuals of this regression are interpretable of the part of Left/Right Ideology not accounted for by the individual's social position and the individual's pre-political values; ie, a sort of 'net' Left/Right Ideology. We go on to do the same with the rest of political values, and then we do the same with leader evaluation and, finally, with vote recall. Therefore, vote recall is accounted for by the four variables reflecting Social Position, plus the 'net' estimates of pre-political values, plus the 'net' estimates of political values, plus the 'net' estimates of leader evaluation. Following this type of model, we re-estimated the effects of leadership evaluations on vote recall. The results are showed on Table 7.

Table 7
The Block Recursive Model, 1995

	ATEs	Mean	St. deviation	Adj. mean	Adj. st. deviation	ATE x adj. mean	ATE x adj. st. deviation
Age	0.16	0.13	0.50	0.13	0.50	0.02	0.08
Language	0.45	-0.53	0.54	-0.53	0.54	-0.23	0.26
Worker	(0.00)	-0.17	0.99	-0.17	0.99	0.00	0.00
Origin	0.28	-0.08	0.87	-0.08	0.87	-0.02	0.26
Religiosity	0.21	-0.35	0.50	-0.37	0.47	-0.08	0.11
National Identity	0.20	-0.15	0.57	0.02	0.45	0.00	0.10
Nationalism	0.17	-0.14	0.54	-0.04	0.42	-0.01	0.07
L/R Ideology	1.05	0.16	0.33	0.23	0.31	0.25	0.35
Party Proximity	1.36	-0.15	0.47	-0.14	0.35	-0.19	0.52
Leader Evaluation	0.65	-0.17	0.35	-0.12	0.25	-0.08	0.18
Vote Recall		-0.36	0.93				

Non-significant ATEs are in parentheses (p>0.05)

We first estimated the *apparent total effect* (ATE) for every independent variable. The ATE of a given variable is the unstandarized regression coefficient of that variable when we regress all variables on that

and previous blocks over the vote (see Miller and Shanks, 1996). We would consider that the ATE represents the impact of that variable over the vote, when we discount the impact of all other variables which may be "causes" of that variable (by "causes", we mean that they are theoretically understood to be prior). Since Leader Evaluation is the last variable included in the Block Recursive Model, the ATE for that variable includes controls for all previous variables. Therefore, the ATE for Leader Evaluation on this model is the same than its regression coefficient on the Multivariate Model.

The ATEs for Party Proximity (1.36) and Left/Right Ideology (1.05) are particularly strong, as could be expected from orthodox theories of Electoral Behaviour. More surprising is the effect of Language (0.45) and Origin (0.28), which are larger than we could expect from its remoteness from the vote decision. In any case, this reminds us the strength of the national cleavage in Catalonia. The ATE for Leader Evaluation is the third highest, but it stands at a long distance of the two champions, since it just amounts to half of the ATE for Party Proximity. In practical terms, the ATE means that moving from a neutral position towards the leaders, to the most favourable position towards one of them, increases the probability of voting him by 0.33 (0.65/2).

The fact that the ATE is very high does not imply that the referred variable has a great impact on the aggregate election results. For instance, Party Proximity shows a high ATE, but this will only have an impact on the aggregate election results if the distribution of that variable is schewed towards one of the parties. If not, the voters attracted to one side by Party Proximity will be cancelled out by the voters attracted to the other side by this very same variable. For a given variable to have a decisive impact on the aggregate election results it is necessary that the variable is schewed towards one of the parties. With this use in mind we went on to estimate the mean for each variable (both, the independent variables and the dependent variable, and all of them recoded between -1 and +1, as showed on section 0). As Table 7 shows, all variables showed means favourable to the Nationalist Party, except Age and Left/Right Ideology, which were

biased towards the Socialist Party. The positive sign on the Left/Right Ideology variable just shows the moderately leftist stance of the Catalan electorate. The positive sign on the age variable is just the reflect of a mathematical artifact: the theoretical neutral point of the variable (54.5) falls slightly above its observed mean; combined with the fact that younger people in our subsample tend to cast a more pro-socialist vote. The strongly negative mean of Vote Recall detects (and actually overstates) the wide distance between the winner Nationalist Party and the Socialist Party, which in fact was 0.24, and not 0.36.

These estimated means have a clear drawback. Their values are presumably affected by the means of variables which are located in prior stages of the causal chain. This implies that these values are not a good estimation of the net distribution of the population on that variable. For instance, the distribution of National Identity is rather schewed in favour of the pro-nationalist side (-0.15), but this might be only due to the influence of previous variables, such as Language and Origin, which are themselves schewed in favour of the pro-nationalist side (-0.53 and -0.08). In order to assess the net mean of a given variable, we have to discount the effect of all variables which are casually prior to it, thus producing what is known as the *adjusted mean*.

The adjusted mean of a given variable is computed by regressing this variable on all causally prior variables. Then, the constant of that regression gives us a good estimation of the schewness of that variable <u>net of the effect</u> (which is not due to the influence) of prior variables. For instance, the adjusted mean of National Identity is the intercept of its regression on Age, Language, Worker and Origin. The attained value (0.02) shows that the gross mean (-0.15) was largely influenced by the schewness of its predictors.

Table 7 shows that the means of National Identity, Nationalism and –to a lesser extent– Leader Evaluation became closer to the neutral point once they were adjusted. Thus showing that the distributions are not as pro-nationalist as it seemed at the first inspection. On the other hand, the mean of Left/Right Ideology actually increased once adjusted, thus showing

that the pro-socialist distribution was actually more schewed than what it seemed.

Once the adjusted means were produced, we went on to estimate the aggregate effects of each variable on the electoral results. These are computed by multiplying its ATE by its Adjusted Mean. In practical terms, this product is a measure of the vote distance between the parties which has been "generated" by that variable. The negative coefficients point to a contribution of that variable to the Nationalist victory, whereas the positive coefficients point to a contribution to the results of the Socialists. On the Nationalist side, two coefficients seem especially powerful: Language (-0.23) and Party Proximity (-0.19) were the variables which most contributed to their victory. On the Socialist side, Left-Right Ideology (0.25) softened the Socialist defeat. To a great distance, we find the effects of Religiosity (-0.08) and Leader Evaluation (-0.08); and very weak effects of Age (0.02), National Origin (-0.02), Nationalism (-0.01), National Identity (0.00) and Worker (0.00).

Thus, the contribution of Leader Evaluation to the Nationalist victory in 1995 was important but not dominant. It gave the Nationalists an estimated distance of eight points, when the overall distance estimated by the survey was thirty-six points. In reality, the actual distance between Nationalists and Socialists was 517,819 ballots, which means that the contribution of the leaders to the aggregate election results was around 110,978 ballots. Table 8 shows the results of such an analysis for all the elections under scrutiny.

Table 8
Electoral Impact of Leader Evaluation, 1984-1995

	1984	1988	1992	1995
ATE x Adj. Mean	-0.06	-0.02	-0.08	-0.08
Overall Distance	480,492	429,686	492,922	517,819
Leader Effect	123,510	48,142	218,531	110,978

The aggregate effect of Leader Evaluation fluctuated between -0.02 and -0.08, which in actual ballots meant between 48,000 and 218,000 ballots. Whether this is a high or a small figure is a relative question. The

first idea which comes to mind is that it never reaches not even a third of the distance between the two main parties. Moreover, there are some variables which have a much larger aggregate impact, such as ideology, language, and sometimes party proximity. This is what Table 9 shows.

Table 9
Aggregate effects of selected variables, 1984-1995

	Leader evaluation	Party proximity	L/R ideology	Language
1984	-0.06	-0.05	0.29	-0.11
1988	-0.02	-0.09	0.31	-0.16
1992	-0.08	-0.05	0.18	-0.17
1995	-0.08	-0.19	0.25	-0.23

After estimating the aggregate effect, we went on to estimate the individual impact of each variable on the vote decision. This is computed by multiplying the ATE by the Adjusted Standard Deviation. In statistical terms, the Adjusted Standard Deviation of a variable is the standard deviation of the residuals generated by the regression model used to estimate its Adjusted Mean. These estimations are shown on the last column of Table 7. The variables which have a larger individual impact are Party Proximity, Ideology, National Origin, and Language. Only to a certain distance comes Leader Evaluation. This pattern holds for all the elections: Table 10 summarizes the evolution of some selected variables, and shows that Leader Evaluation is regularly the weakest impact on the vote.

Table 10
Individual effects of selected variables, 1984-1995

	Leader evaluation	Party proximity	L/R ideology	Language
1984	0.11	0.42	0.34	0.22
1988	0.11	0.42	0.43	0.24
1992	0.14	0.39	0.31	0.29
1995	0.18	0.52	0.35	0.26

In addition to what has been said, a second clear pattern appears in Table 10: the impact of Leader Evaluation has been increasing through time. This shows that –even being weak– the leadership effects are growing on the individual vote decisions. However, this growth does not

occur in the aggregate estimates.

SOME CONCLUSIONS ON CATALAN POLITICS

If a stereotype is persistent in Catalan politics this is the idea that the leader of the nationalist party, Jordi Pujol, is its main asset at election time. This stereotype has been growing lately, as the time of Pujol's retirement approaches, and fears for the electoral fortune of a leaderless party spread around.

If something is proven by this paper is the empirical weakness of such a impression. It is true that Jordi Pujol has always contributed to the electoral fortunes of the nationalist party but, at least on the elections analysed by this paper, his contribution has never been neither decisive nor primary. It has not been decisive because his contribution has always been much smaller than the actual gap between the two parties. Needless to say, this is partly due to the large electoral gap which have produced all the elections under scrutiny. Probably, the results would have been different with the unavailable 1999 data. And it has not been primary because there are at least three variables which are clearly more influential than Leader Evaluation.

SOME CONCLUSIONS ON LEADERSHIP EFFECTS

The literature on leadership effects –clearly on an expansive tendency since Miller and Shanks (1996)– put forward the idea that leaders do not play a capital role in shaping the electoral outcomes. Our results confirm –to some extent– this academic hypothesis, which contradicts saloon bar knowledge.

However, our results also amend the hypothesis, because the impact of the leaders is not as negligible as that found by previous literature. This difference may be due to two factors. It might be that we are dealing with subnational elections where the leaders are more proximate to the electorate, while ideologies and parties are less present than in the national debate. It also might be that the Catalan party system is still young

and parties and ideologies are weaker than in established advanced democracies.

Following this line of argument, we would point to the possibility (not addressed on this paper) that much of leaders effect is indirect rather than direct. Since Catalan parties and ideologies are so elusive, it seems plausible to think that the actions of the party leaders somehow shape the perceptions that the electorate form about them.

NOTES

1. For a detailed account of this process and and a reference to the Spanish case, see Rico (2002: 11-29).

2. Note that the title uses the term *regional* to conform to orthodox European jargon, but this would be wrong in terms of identity.

3. Data come from the CIS survey no. 1413, conducted in April 1984 (unweighted N=4984).

4. CIS survey no. 1750, conducted in June 1988 (N=2899).

5. CIS survey no. 2033, conducted in November 1992 (N=2470).

6. CIS survey no. 2199, conducted between November-December 1995 (N=1598).

7. These feeling thermometers asked respondents to give the candidate a score between 0 (meaning that the political performance of the candidate is assessed as "very bad") and 10 ("very good").

8. "One unit" means that the voter moves from a balanced evaluation of the two leaders (ex: 5-5), to the most favourable evaluation of the socialist leader (10-0). Table 5 shows that such an extreme move produces a growth in the probability of voting for the socialists which is actually higher than 1. Since this is mathematically shocking, we shall interpret the coefficients as if the voter moved from a balanced evaluation of the two leaders (ex: 5-5), to an evaluation which is a tenth more favourable to the socialist leader (ex: 6-5). This means that we shall divide the coefficients by 10 for their interpretation.

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