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PERSISTENCE AND STRENGTH OF THE RELIGIOUS CLEAVAGE IN SWEDEN

(De)alignment in a secularized and post-modern
nation, 1986-2016.

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Abstract

Religion matter for vote choice and party support in a secularized Sweden, yet it is dubious as to whether or not this translates into a persistent religious cleavage per se or if it is exposed to a fundamental dealignment process. In advance, this poses the question if the Christian Democrats' status as a parliamentary party has a future prevalence. This thesis seeks to unravel mechanisms explaining dealignment of the religious cleavage over time for the last 30 years and among different generations in order to further explore the state of these seemingly stable party-voter ties. The thesis provides the most thorough approach thus far regarding the relationship between religion and party preference within the Swedish case with unique variety of measures, which enables the first in depth study of the strength and persistence of the religious cleavage. The findings of this thesis demonstrate a general indication of stable party-voter ties over time. While there are signs of dealignment in terms of sympathizing with the Christian Democrats, this is however not due to generational replacement which contradicts theoretical assumptions, further implying a persistent religious cleavage in Sweden. Despite outwards tendencies within the Christian community indicating political opinion opposing the politics of the Christian Democrats, this thesis shows that religious practice and attitude still strongly affiliate with party preference for the 'Christian' party. Hence, the religious cleavage persists in an unlikely time and case.

Key words: religious cleavage, dealignment, generational replacement, Christian Democrats

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1. Introduction

There seems to be a conventional assumption that the role of religion¹ in politics is negligible and even irrelevant in the case of Sweden. Not only has church membership declined dramatically within the last couple of decades, Sweden is also by far one of the most secularized nations in the world (Inglehart & Welzel, 2008; Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2013). Religion and politics would thus seem incompatible at a glance. Merely studying the declining election results in the 21st century of the Christian Democrats, once founded upon religious interests and ‘Christian values’, confirms the suspicion of a dubious religious influence on politics. Yet, it is known that religion actually translates into political behavior for the religious part of the population, stressing the notion that it is a factor which must be considered even in the secularized case of Sweden (Hagevi, 2011; Aardal & Oscarson, 2014; Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2013). This further conforms to elementary theories of vote choice and party identification arguing that citizens tends to support parties representing specific social groups, such as class or religion (Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2013). Politically, Christians in Sweden are commonly perceived as a homogenous group promoting conservative social politics and the religious debate is reflected in life-style issues and moral values (Dalton, 2013). Within parts of the Christian community however issues such as social justice, environmental concerns and a humane migration politics are strongly and viciously advocated (Sveriges Kristna Råd, 2018; Kyrka För Fairtrade, 2018) which traditionally is associated with left-wing politics. This could suggest that there is a discrepancy among Christians in terms of political opinions despite founded upon the same religious beliefs. Simply, even though religion matters politically, the group may not be as homogenous as one might assume and it could be questioned how this affect party-voter ties and the religious cleavage.

The state of the religious cleavage provides an indication of the stability and persistence of party-voter ties, stemming from the social cleavage model that certain social groups tend to affiliate with parties representing their specific interest (see e.g. Lipset & Rokkan in Mair, 1990; Elff & Rossteutcher, 2011; Oskarson, 1994). Nevertheless, research has argued that the post-modern society has led to societal shifts affecting political behavior and the political landscape, where generational replacement is key to understand a gradual weakened

¹ Notably, the Swedish society hosts a variety of religions. This thesis will however focus on the case of Christianity due to its historical impact in the country and previous status of state religion. Even though Sweden is not a “Christian country” by reference any longer in the sense that the vast majority of the population confess Christian beliefs, one might still argue that it is the dominating religion of the country.

partisanship (Dalton 1984 & Dalton & Wattenberg, 2002). It has been argued that younger generations are less politically socialized within distinct social groups due to high levels of education and exposure to political news, which weaken traditional party-voter ties leading to a dealignment process (Thomassen, 2005; Dalton, 2013). Yet, recent research has showed that the religious cleavages actually seem to persist in some unlikely environment of the individualized and secularized modern Europe (Tilley, 2015; Elff & Rossteutcher, 2017; Elff & Rossteutcher, 2011).

For the Swedish case though, it can be concluded that religion still matters for political behavior despite being one of the most secularized nations. Even though the Swedish party system hosts a Christian Democratic party, presumably advocating the clashing social-conservative interests of the religious population, there are tendencies that the group may not be homogenous in regards of political opinion. That dealignment would occur thus seem likely and in advance erode the religious cleavage. Surprisingly, the strength and persistence of the religious cleavage has been rather overlooked within the scholarly debate in the Swedish case and there is a notable research gap regarding a possible weakening of these party-voter ties in terms of a dealignment process. It is therefore relevant to pose the question: does dealignment in general and generational replacement in particular erode the religious cleavage of Sweden?

2. Contribution, research gap and aim

This thesis approaches the relationship between religion and political behaviour set against the back-drop that the discrepancy within the Christian community regarding political opinion to some extent opposes the right-wing politics of the Christian Democrats which could be a first indication of weakened party-voter ties. Moreover, traits of the post-modern society such as secularization, modernization and the theoretical assumption of gradual change due to generational replacement, would further suggest an erosion of the Swedish religious cleavage. Yet, previous research has showed that religion matters for political behaviour in the Swedish case (e.g. Hagevi, 2015) and single-case studies of certain European countries have showed persistence of the religious cleavage (e.g. Tilley, 2015). It is therefore highly relevant to study the case of the religious cleavage in Sweden, if it is subject to a dealignment process or if it is persistent in an unlikely time and case. This bridge a significant research gap since the impact

of religion on political behaviour thus far has been moderate within the academic debate, both in regards to actual studies but also in the conceptualization of religion.

The main motivation of this thesis is therefore to build upon previous research concerning the relationship between religion and political preference by applying an ambitious set of indicators, broadening previous definitions, which enables a systematic study of dealignment over time among the electorate and in different generations. An indication of the state of the religious cleavage will thus be provided as well as intricate and thorough understanding of how religion affects political preference in a more complex manner than previous research. The thesis will therefore bridge current gap in the literature by pursuing refined explanations as to why and how religion matters politically, over time and for different generation, for the traditionally perceived religious party the Christian Democrats. The relevance of this thesis is further motivated by its academic relevance, Sweden as a case-study and the applied data.

Firstly, previous research in the Swedish context have addressed the relationship between religion and politics in regards of to what degree church attenders vote for the Christian Democrats. This thesis on the other hand will systematically study various factors concerning religious beliefs, values and attitudes as well as party support and appreciation with a generational approach. With this approach patterns of dealignment can be identified in a manner not previously explored while also detecting party-voter ties for different generations over time. This will contribute to the academic debate concerning religious cleavages from a demand-perspective, namely “the motivation among voters to use religion as a guideline for party choice” (Elff & Rossteutscher, 2017:207) in the Swedish case.

Secondly, there is an academic relevance to study the case of Sweden, often described as an outlier in regards of religious practice. Due to advanced secularization, religion ought not to matter politically and it would seem reasonable to expect gradual dealignment through, for example, a weakened relationship between religion and party support over time. Yet, existing, albeit moderate, research on the Swedish case demonstrates opposite tendencies in regards of party support for the Christian Democrats (Holmberg & Oscarsson, 2013, Hagevi, 2011, Aardal & Oscarsson, 2014). The effect of religion is still significant despite the fact that the actual group of Christian voters have declined over time (Svenska kyrkan, 2016). However, there is a lack in the literature systematically researching the dealignment process of the religious cleavage, which is why factors behind these processes needs to be studied. This will

further contribute to future research in the field aiming to identify and study reasons explaining the state of the religious cleavage in Sweden.

Thirdly, one of the major advantages of this study is that the SOM Institute cumulative dataset, Super-Riks SOM 1986-2016, will be applied. The data set has not been used previously in the context of the religious cleavage of Sweden. Applying Super-Riks SOM is advantageous since it measures beyond political opinion and vote choice, incorporating e.g. attitudes and values while also measuring party support in between election years. This enables a precise identification of a dealignment process over time as well as a rich conceptualization of religion, which is a unique contribution to the scholarly debate.

Hence, the relevance and motivations behind this study in terms of the case, academic relevance and data along with a compelling puzzle further urge the necessity of studying the relationship between religion and politics. The aim of this thesis is therefore to systematically study whether a dealignment process has occurred, applying an ambitious set of indicators of religiosity and on a generational level which can explain how or why the religious cleavage erode or persist over time. This thesis will thus study the possible transformation of the religious cleavage with a focus on party preference for the Christian Democrats.

2.1 Research question

In order to investigate the overarching research question if dealignment in form of generational replacement erodes the religious cleavage of Sweden along with the motivation of the study, two specific research questions are presented:

- Is the relationship between religion and political preference for the Christian Democrats weakening over time?
- Can a possible dealignment process be explained by a gradual process of generational replacement?

3. Theoretical Framework

Following, the theoretical framework will be developed by introducing the notion of the social cleavage model followed by the grand theoretical concept of this thesis; dealignment as well as the main mechanism behind it, generational replacement. Thereafter, the relevant finding of previous research is presented and lastly, the state of religion in Sweden is discussed. The theoretical framework will lead to the hypotheses of the thesis.

3.1 The social cleavage model

The social cleavage model, proposed in the 1960's by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) is easily understood as political conflict based on social division, such as the class-issue or centre-periphery disparity, advocating opposing perspectives of various interests and issues creating stable party-voter ties. A social cleavage in itself can however be defined as "a dividing line between two groups" (Bartolini & Mair, 2007) and while Lipset and Rokkan actually argued that "cleavages do not translate themselves into party oppositions as a matter of course" (Lipset & Rokkan; 1990) it is relevant to ponder upon how a cleavage becomes politically relevant. That is, how it can be theoretically motivated why stable bonds appear between certain parties and specific group of voters.

Kriesi (1998) defines the social cleavage model in terms of three intertwined elements; social division between groups, a consciousness of a common identity stemming from that particular social division that, lastly, is structured in organizational terms. These mutually interdependent elements can further be understood as structural, value/attitudinal and organizational factors (Westinen, 2015). Regardless, a social cleavage entails a social division where a specific social group, based on e.g. class or religion, act in accordance to a common identity which is further articulated in structural terms advocating the will and need of that particular group. Within political science research it is commonly argued that these three elements mutually constructs a political cleavage and stipulate stability between parties and voters (Kriesi, 1998; Westinen, 2015; Bartolini & Mair, 2007; Lane & Ersson, 1997).

The actors constituting the premise of a social cleavage include citizens affiliating with the specific social distinction, clearly divisional from other groups of society, and political parties founded upon the premise of proposing the will of this particular group. Or as expressed by

Kriesi (1998:167) “political actor gives coherence and organized political expression to what otherwise are inchoate and fragmentary beliefs, values and experience among members of some social groups”. These mutually dependent mechanisms between citizens and parties reinforce the bonds between parties and voters, arguably stabilizing them if, as argued by Westinen (2015), the particular party actually represent and articulate the will and need of the social group who trusts that their interests are advocated for. A social cleavage thus entail and persist upon these sophisticated interactions of coherence between parties and voters and vice versa, stemming from social division.

A common, although widely debated, notion is that social cleavages have lost its importance for party preference (e.g. Lane & Ersson, 1997; Evans & Tilley, 2012). Simply that ties, once stable between particular parties and their core group of voters, has weakened. Reason for this occurrence have been explored through various angles, such as particular parties’ disability to relate to their voters as a consequence of strategic positioning (e.g. Tilley & Evans, 2012) and citizens incentives for cleavage voting on an individual level (e.g. Oskarson, 1994). Since the scope of this thesis is to focus on structural reasons among the electorate behind probable weaker party-voter ties in order to conclude the relevance of the religious cleavage for political behaviour it is motivated to study dealignment in depth. That is, rather than to focus on the actions of the Swedish Christian Democrats to attract voters or individual motives for vote choice, theories behind dealignment process enables explanations as to why the stable party-voter ties associated with a religious cleavage is weakening on a structural level.

3.2 Dealignment theory

While the social cleavage model offers a theoretical explanation as to why certain ties between parties and voters are particularly steady, prominent social cleavages of the advanced European democracies based on class and religion has been on a stable decline the last couple of decades (Dalton & Wattenberg 2002; Dalton, 2013; Evans & Tilley, 2012). Dealignment theory offers an explanation to erosion of these once so predictable bonds. The purpose of this section is to detangle the theoretical concept of dealignment by first defining it, secondly briefly examine how research explains the process and lastly focus upon the main explanatory factor applied in this thesis; generational replacement.

Firstly, dealignment lacks a precise definition which is why it is commonly described in terms of its manifestation. In its easiest form it can be understood in terms of a gradual process

where voters no longer feel the same attachment to a certain party than it used to (Westinen, 2015). However, a dealignment process reaches beyond party affiliation among individual voters and is instead manifested in “a period during which the party-affiliated portion of the electorate shrinks as the traditional party coalitions dissolves” (Dalton et. al, 1984:14) or “gradual decline of party loyalty and party identification, insofar as the most salient issues no longer provide an incentive that attaches new voters existing parties” (Inglehart, 1984:68). Dealignment thus entails a gradual process, where former predictable portions of the electorate feel less affiliation towards a given party and who also fails to attract new voters within that part of electorate. Nevertheless, it also requires former patterns of stability between parties and voters in order for this process to occur. For this study, a dealignment of the religious cleavage would thus be recognized by a gradual process of weakened affiliation among the Christian part of the electorate towards the predicted party, the Christian Democrats, visible through a gradual decline in the relationship between religion and party preference.

Secondly, research has been dedicated to map the extent and prevalence of various dealignment processes as well as identifying causes behind it. According to Inglehart (1984), for example, dealignment is caused by a shift from cleavage-based to value-based politics in the post-modern society, where the emergence of political issues, such as environmentalism and feminism, causes traditional party affiliation based on e.g. class to erode. The functional explanation, on the other hand, argues that there used to be a functional value of partisanship in the industrialized society since it guided the voters through the complex world of politics while also shaping political opinion, no longer necessary in the modern society (Berglund et. al, 2005; Dalton, 2013). Yet, Mair (1997) proposes that dealignment is a consequence of political parties becoming distant and remote, resulting in weakened party-voter ties as the voter may feel affiliation towards a certain bloc family in general while no longer hosting loyalty towards a specific party per se. A common trait among these explanations is that a dealignment process seems to occur in the post-modern society where cleavage structures appear to diminish in terms of cueing political behaviour. The post-modern society thus seems to embody certain shifts or developments where dealignment occurs as a consequent of these societal and political transformations.

Similarly, Dalton’s (1984; 2013; Dalton & Wattenberg, 2002) cognitive mobilization thesis further pinpoints factors of the post-modern society argued to cause dealignment over time.

Instead of processing political cues from social groups or political campaigns, the electorate of the post-modern society have greater access to political information from e.g. the media. Along factors such as increased levels of education, citizens have enhanced possibility to evaluate political information individually leading to politically sophisticated individuals (Dalton 1984:264; 2013:200-201; Dalton & Wattenberg, 2002:22-23; Elff, 2007). Or as concluded by Dalton & Wattenberg (2002:22-23) “With more political information available, more people now possess the level of political skills and resources necessary to become self-sufficient in politics”. Dealignment process from a cognitive mobilization approach thus occurs on a systematic level as well as individual level. It is further claimed that this process is more likely to be concentrated among higher educated or younger citizens, indicating that political independence ought to be higher among these groups (Dalton, 2013). It is therefore expected that dealignment is more likely to occur among younger and better educated citizens in the post-modern era, leading to weaken party-voter ties among these groups.

Thirdly, a vital feature of cognitive mobilization is generational replacement which has been argued “is generally considered to be a key process driving social and political change.” (Hooghe, 2004:331). Generational replacement offers a crucial component in order to understand the process of dealignment and could even be perceived as a mechanism behind the gradual process of weakened party-voter ties. According to Dalton (1984) higher education level is more commonly associated with younger citizens and generations, enabling them to assess political information beyond social cues providing them with individual political skills, despite limited experience of the political process. Moreover, younger generations possess different attitudes and values than the generations they are replacing (Van Der Brug, 2010). These traits are expected to affect political behaviour, where dealignment among younger cohorts is a consequence of new values and attitudes as well as education, generating tools for individual political assessment beyond social or structural political cues. Moreover, dealignment due to generational replacement is expected to occur gradually with the continual influx of new generations (Dalton, 1984; Dassoneville et. al., 2012). As the advanced democracies of Europe experience a decline in structural voting, based on e.g. class or religion, generational replacement is showed to explain these changes to a large extent (Van Der Brug, 2010). Generational replacement can therefore be understood in terms of younger generations entering the political process, with weaker party affiliation based on social or structural cues, since higher education have enabled them to assess political

information individually. These generations will gradually replace older generations, more likely to possess stable party-voter ties.

Notably though, generational replacement implies that these younger cohorts maintain weak party-bonds over time and age which arguably erode previous stable party-voter ties. Consequentially, this assumes that stable party-voter ties are not generated at an older age. Nevertheless, political attitudes and behaviour are shaped early in life while early formative political and societal settings leaves lasting impacts throughout life (Dassonneville, 2012; Holmberg, 1998), which could speak in favour of generational replacement. That is, if younger cohorts are less prone to take societal cues for political behaviour in formative years where this is societally accepted, these patterns ought to last in older age when less inclined to change.

Generational replacement is therefore expected to cause a gradual dealignment since the influx of new generations, assessing individual political skills due advanced educational levels, access to political information and new values, causes weakened party-voters ties. These generations will gradually become the majority of the electorate and replace older cohorts hosting stronger partisanship. Empirically the theoretical assumption of generational replacement for this thesis would be evident by a weaker relationship between religion and party preference among younger cohorts compared to older. Even though a decline among the whole electorate and all generations is expected to occur in accordance with the dealignment theory, generational replacement would suggest that this decline is more dramatic among younger generations.

In conclusion, the social cleavage model expect stable party-voter ties to appear among groups in society associated by traits that poses a division in society, such as religion. An intricate balance between the group and the specific party is sustained when the party is responsive and advocate the will of the group. Dealignment can be understood in terms of a dissolvent of that intricate balance between parties and cleavage voters thus challenging the persistence of social cleavages. Parts of the electorate feels less affiliation towards its traditional party resulting in a gradual process of erosion of these stable party-voter ties. Generational replacement can be perceived as a driving force of the dealignment process since the influx of new, politically sophisticated generations hosting less affiliation over time towards one specific party, will gradually replace the electorate. Based on previous theoretical

claims, this thesis will define dealignment as; a gradual process where expected stable party affiliation among voters weaken over time. And for this thesis in particular, dealignment of the religious cleavage would thus entail that Christians, expected to host a stable support the Christian Democrats, will dissolve over time. If this is due to generational replacement the dealignment process will be far more dramatic among younger generations.

3.3 Previous research on religion and political behaviour

Previous research has established that religion matters for vote choice as well as opinion formation, despite being a marginal group on decline, (e.g. Hagevi, 2015; Aardal & Oscarsson, 2014; Holmberg & Oscarsson, 2013). In comparison to the socio-demographic factor of class however, the religious factor has, to some extent, been less emphasized in the Swedish example. The aim of this section is therefore to present an overview of the most relevant research currently conducted.

Firstly, it is relevant to briefly ponder upon how religion and political behavior has been approached in research. In general the scholarly debate uses *church attendance* to operationalize religion (Hagevi, 2015) and political behavior is commonly operationalized as *vote choice* (e.g. Elff & Rossteutcher, 2017) or possibly *political opinion* (e.g. Bjereld & Gilljam, 1991; Hagevi, 2009:). This naturally poses limitations in terms of capturing the full effect of the relationship of religion and political behaviour due to the narrow academic approach to these concepts. Even though Hagevi (2009) successfully attempts to broaden the definition of religion and how it affects various dimensions of political opinion in in the Western part of Sweden, this is a rare approach compared to the majority of the research field. The conclusion “religiosity can be said to directly influence the formation of individuals political opinion in Västra Götaland” (Hagevi, 2009:360) is thus founded on a more apprehensive approach to religion and political opinion in relation to much else in the research field.

Keeping the narrow conceptualization of religion and political behaviour in mind, a great amount of research of the Swedish case has been dedicated to detect party preference among the Swedish Christian electorate and how it affect political behaviour (e.g. Hagevi, 2011; Hagevi, 2015; Aardal & Oscarsson, 2013). For example, religious voters tend to support right-wing parties in general and the Christian Democrats in particular, attracting the vast majority of the regular church attendees despite some denominational differences (e.g. Hagevi, 2011;

Oscarsson & Holmberg 2013; Aardal & Oscarsson, 2014). While Knutsen (2004) has argued that Green Parties are a poor attracter of religious voters, Hagevi (2015) quite surprisingly finds that the Swedish Green Party actually received substantial support from religious voters in the national election 2014.

Furthermore, according to Hagevi (2011:254) “religion is one of the most important socio-economic explanations for vote choice” while also stating that previous research commonly concludes that the religious cleavage in Sweden is declining. Yet, Oscarsson & Holmberg (2013:90) argues that “The relationship of church attendees and party choice is just as strong today as in the 1950’s and 1960’s” when discussing the Swedish religious cleavage. In their analyses of how various socio-economic factors influence party choice in the national elections from 1956-2010, it is clear that the relationship between religion and party choice is relatively stable over time (Ibid). Thus supporting the notion of religion as a relevant factor to explain vote choice in the 21st century. Notably though, these findings do not evaluate the state of the religious cleavage, although it provides an incentive to further explore party-voter ties among the Christian electorate since religion is proved to still be relevant for vote choice and party preference.

Despite lack of research concerning the Swedish religious cleavage, research has been conducted on other advanced European democracies, generally reaching the conclusion that the assumed decline of cleavages can be questioned in terms of the religious cleavage. Elff (2007), for example, argues that it is an exaggeration to assume that the religious cleavage has weakened dramatically, based on empirical studies on seven advanced European democracies. The narrative of a dealigning religious cleavage is further questioned by Elff and Rossteutscher (2011) where the German case provides empirical evidence of a persistent religious divide in terms of vote choice. The authors further conclude “If one thinks that voting could be explained without looking at class or the religious divide, one is definitely mistaken” (Elff and Rossteutscher, 2011:125). Nevertheless, Thomassen (2005) argues that the role of religion has decreased in Europe and that Christian Democratic parties have been able to survive due to their ability to appeal to the non-religious part of the population. Yet, in the case of the UK, Tilley (2014) finds that parental inheritance of party preference has been a vital mechanism for the persistence of the religious cleavage in a setting which previously been dominated by the class cleavage. Tilley (2015:924) concludes; “Religion is thus a stronger, more resilient cleavage because it is not about contemporary politics and

contemporary party policy, but because it is rooted in those socialization processes.” Lastly, Eff & Rossteutcher’s (2017:211) concludes that “Whatever pace of secularisation, it seems premature to write off the electoral role of religion” based on their research review of the findings within the research community concerning religion and political behaviour in several advanced, western democracies.

To conclude, even though previous research has established that religion, in terms of church attendance, is a relevant factor for political behaviour in the Swedish case and that general patterns can be distinguished for the Christian part of the electorate, the empirical evidence is still rather moderate. This can be compared to international research, where religious cleavages have been studied to a larger extent. It could therefore be argued that the Swedish case would benefit of more in depth research of certain aspects of the religious cleavage through a more complex approach of religion and party preference.

3.4 Religion in Sweden

The religious landscape, or rather the role and influence of religion in the Swedish society, has changed dramatically during the 21st century. Within the last couple of decades, religious affiliation and activity have gradually lost importance. While the membership of the Swedish Church 2016 reached 61.2% of the population, admittedly a rather high number, it is far less than the 95.2% of 1972 (Svenska Kyrkans Analysenhet, 2016). Moreover, church attendance has decreased dramatically between 1990 and 2016 (Svenska Kyrkans Analysenhet, 2016) while traditional religious activities are increasingly being replaced by ‘profane’ or non-religious weddings and naming-ceremonies (Björkman et. al., 2017). An indication that Swedes consciously reject the use of religious institutions traditionally associated with certain mile stones in life. Even though Swedes still tends to have a positive attitude towards Christianity in general (Weibull, 2016) the declining numbers of religious activity and affiliation is a result of the far-progressed secularization.

According to the study of religious sociology, secularization can be defined as “a process in which religion diminishes in importance both in society and in the consciousness of individuals” (Berger, 2003:336). The secularization thesis has dominated the research field, where modernization has been argued to diminish the role of religion in the industrial Europe in general and Sweden in particular (Berger, 2003; Geels & Wikström, 2017; Bromander, 2013). And while Inglehart and Baker (2000:50) stresses that modernization in itself fails in

explaining the process of secularization the authors also concludes that “economic development is associated with major changes in prevailing values and beliefs”. This entails that modernization may not necessarily lead to secularization, but economic development is identified as a factor affecting religion on a national level. These conclusions imply that the process of secularization, highly visible in the case of Sweden, would occur along modernization of society and economic development, characteristics of the post-war Swedish society.

Despite this stable and presumably irreversible process of secularization, the scholarly debate of the 21st century however opposes the dominance of the secularization thesis in favour of the concept ‘sacralisation’. The notion is captured by Inglehart and Baker (2000:41), stating that “Established religious institutions are losing the allegiance of their followers, but there is a growing interest in spiritual concerns at the individual level”. Further pondered upon by Geels & Wikström (2017) it is argued that religion is not dead in the Swedish society, but rather it has transformed into a private matter reflecting a person’s individual search for meaning in life in a societal setting experiencing secularization in general. This is further motivated by Bromander (2013) who shows that religious activity among Swedes, such as prayer and church attendance, actually reaches the same levels as other non-religious activities. The sacralisation thesis thus recognizes the secular society while also emphasizing that religious practice and belief still occurs in a transformed setting beyond traditional religious institutions. Religion in post-modern Sweden is thus perplex, where religion still seems to persist in a transformed private form in the most secularized nations in the world.

Reconnecting to the social cleavage model, which e.g. emphasizes the collective will of a distinct group in society, the sacralisation process of the Swedish society could possibly speak in favour of an erosion of the religious cleavage. If religious affiliation of the 21st century is characterized as individual practice beyond group belonging such as a church community, it is possible that the baseline of advocating a common identity disappears. If the religious group exists of individuals not identifying themselves as part of the group but rather as someone who pray frequently, the incentives of organizing politically are few which could possibly erode the party-voter ties where the Christian Democrats are associated with practising Christians.

5. Hypothesis

Based on the theoretical assumption of weakening social cleavages in general exposed do gradual dealignment over time where generational replacement is a driving force behind this process the following hypothesis can be made:

H1. A dealignment process of the religious cleavage in Sweden is causing an erosion of the relationship between religion and party support over time.

H2. Generational replacement is the main driving force behind the gradual dealignment of the religious cleavage.

Since no research regarding dealignment has been conducted on the Swedish case even though previous research has established the importance of religion for political behaviour, it is theoretically reasonable to assume that the religious cleavage has eroded. This is further underlined when regarding how far the secularization process of the nation has undergone and that religious practice is characterized as an individual matter.

6. Method

The aim of this section is to present and argue for the methodological choices of the thesis, used in order to test the hypothesis and answer the research questions. The overall focal relationship of the thesis is how Christianity affects affiliation for the Christian Democrats. Where previous research states that religion matters for vote choice and party support, the contribution of this thesis is to explore whether dealignment has occurred over time and generation, indicating that generational replacement have eroded previous stable party-voter ties of the religious cleavage. Based on the theoretical assumption that dealignment is a gradual process, time is applied as an interaction effect, expected to moderate the focal relationship. The overall analyses of the thesis consists of two approaches; dealignment of the whole electorate and generational replacement as a possible explanation to the erosion of party-voter ties.

6.1 Operationalization

6.1.1 Independent variable

Religion or faith can be perceived as a personal statement or conviction, which is why it is highly subjective. Previous research have measured religion in terms of frequency of church attendance, where a religious person is understood as someone attending church at least once a month (e.g. Elff, 2007; Tilley, 2015; Aardal & Oscarson, 2013 etc.). This is founded upon the assumption that religious persons are more frequent attenders of religious meetings in general compared to non-religious citizens which further poses the presumption that regular church attenders are exposed to church messages, which is likely to affect political behavior (Hagevi, 2015). In line with previous research, church attendance² has been operationalized as a measure of Christianity, following the principle that attending a church service at least once within the past month is regarded a high level of religiousness. It could be noted though that this variable incorporate church service and religious meetings, implying that religious services of other religions is viable as well. Nevertheless, it is still the most applicable variable to measure church attendance.

This thesis aims to go beyond previous definitions of Christianity or religion. This is a significant contribution to the scholarly debate, where this refined approach enables a more thorough test of the hypothesis in order to answer the research questions. Two other variables of religious activities, attitudes and beliefs have therefor been operationalized into independent variables; frequency of prayer and perception of salvation. Perception of salvation is an interesting variable in this context since it is a concept vital to the Christian faith and thus capturing Christian faith beyond activities thus providing an attitudinal indicator of religion. This is also in line with religious sociological research concept of ‘sacralisation’ where religious practices has transformed into a private matter, which can be captured in frequency of prayer and perception of salvation since they target religious attitudes and practice not dependent on religious institutions. While church attendance captures an active engagement in religious practice, membership in a church or congregation was considered as a fourth independent variable since it targets an institutional aspect of religion. Due to missing data for a substantial amount of years, church membership was deemed an insufficient independent variable for the final analyses.

² See appendix 1 for the questions used to construct the variables

Naturally, other variables capturing personal faith could have been included in the analysis, such as “Do you believe in God?” However, since this study applies time-series data, an essential aspect when choosing variables is that they have been asked frequently, preferably each year of the survey. For that reason, assumable obvious variables have been excluded.

Since the three chosen independent variables are on different scales and captures diverse aspects of religion, the option of merging them into an index was rejected which is why they are used independently. The purpose of this broader operational approach of religion is two-fold; firstly to provide a more intricate measurement of religiousness compared to previous research in the field by incorporating other practices and perceptions vital of the Christian faith. Secondly, this approach can identify specific religious factors behind dealignment. It can also be argued that the chosen independent variables captures various aspects of Christian faith and its practice; frequent church attendance requires active participation in a congregation while frequency of prayer can be considered as a private religious practice in line with the sacralisation theory and perception of salvation is a theological attitude. Keeping these variables separate further emphasizes the different dimensions constituting faith and can detect how these various aspects affect party support.

6.1.2 Dependent variable

In similar manner, support or affiliation for the Christian Democrats has been operationalized into three separate dependent variables; firstly, best party in general and the Christian Democrats in particular, secondly vote for the Christian Democrats and thirdly like/dislike the Christian Democrats referred to as sympathy scores. Since the party commonly is subject to tactic voting (Fredén, 2014; Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2013) which would weaken the focal relationship, it is motivated to operationalize party affiliation beyond merely vote choice. Yet, vote choice is still incorporated in the analysis since it is the ultimate act of political behavior which is a great contribution to the results. The first dependent variable; best party in general, is used in order to outline the relationship between religion and general party preference over time. A weakened relationship indicates that religion to a less extent can explain party preference. In the second part of the analysis, this is further specified to the Christian Democrats in particular. Like/Dislike the Christian Democrats, ranging on 10 grade scale, is used since it captures affiliation towards the religious party beyond actual vote choice.

6.1.3 Control variables

In line with the theoretical expectations of dealignment in general and generational replacement in particular education, gender and age is applied as control variables, expected to have an effect on the focal relationship. Theoretically dealignment due to generational replacement regards education as a key explanatory factor to weakened party-voter ties (Dalton, 2013). Even though the results of previous research is somewhat inconclusive (e.g. Dassonneville et. al 2012; Dassonneville et. al 2014) it is still motivated to include the variable as control. The applied education variable is binary, measuring low and high education where low education reaches high school levels, while high education features university studies. This is suitable since the variable captures the difference between educational levels in a theoretical relevant manner.

In similar manner, age and gender is included as control variables. Theoretically, younger people are argued to have less party affiliation compared to older people (Dalton, 2013). Moreover, in accordance with Tilley's (2015) argumentation, age captures relevant factors such as older people tends to be more religious compared to younger people and support different parties. Age can therefore be expected to have an effect on the focal relationship. Lastly, gender is applied as the last control since higher education level mainly has risen among women (scb.se). It is therefore reasonable to assume, in accordance to the theory of generational replacement and dealignment that women are less prone of a party affiliation based on the expectations that higher education level leads to dealignment.

6.2 Data

One of the main advantages and motivations of this study is the usage of the time-series data from the Swedish SOM Institute cumulative dataset, Super-Riks SOM 1986-2016 (Weibull et. al, 2016), which is a collection of each of the yearly SOM-measurements, ranging from 1986-2016. The purpose of SOM is to measure attitudes and opinions among Swedes regarding politics, media and society (Markstedt, 2014) while also incorporating a battery of lifestyle questions. The prerequisite of the study is the ability to provide a greater conceptualization of both religion and party preference, which demanded a dataset with a great variety of questions. In this regard, SOM has the advantageous property of measuring various perspectives of party support, political opinion and behavior combined with data concerning personal values, attitudes and lifestyle choices including faith and religion.

Moreover, the dataset has not been applied previously in the study of religion and political behavior, which further makes the appliance of SOM a great contribution to the scholarly debate.

The respondents of SOM are generally representative for the Swedish population, which is crucial in order to draw valid conclusions of the data (Markstedt, 2014). Nevertheless, the survey suffers from a slight overrepresentation of older respondents and women, and even though it has decreased some over the year, the response rate is around an acceptable level around 50-55% (Arkhedet et. al. 2017; Markstedt, 2014). The age span has varied over the years, ranging from 15-75 to 16-85 (Markstedt, 2014). The scope of the survey has however increased over time, which is reflected in the amount of respondents and questions (Arkhedet et. al. 2017). As an implication, the survey has been divided into different forms within the last couple of years in order to fit the increased amount of questions. Consequently, certain questions relevant for the study that have been asked annually might have ended up in different forms which make them incomparable certain years. This can be considered as one of the most apparent weaknesses of applying Super-Riks SOM. Even though there is a great variety of questions that can operationalize the focal relationship, the fact that not all questions are asked annually or even in the same questionnaire forms causes issues in terms of lack of data for some of the years. On the other hand though, the benefit of dataset is that it goes beyond merely vote choice and religious affiliation over a significant time period. This is beneficial when aiming to supply an in depth explanation as to how and why the ties between religion and party support might erode with a broader approach to the actual concepts. Furthermore, the fact that Super-Riks SOM allows for a study conducted over a greater period of time is a great asset of the dataset, which also excuses the lack of data for some years since valid results can still be provided.

6.3 Statistical method

The analysis of the thesis is divided into two parts where the first part focuses on detecting dealignment while the second part targets generational replacement using the same set of independent and dependent variables. Each of the two analyses is constructed in a similar manner, firstly through a bivariate analysis providing a graphical overview of the relationship between independent variable; Christianity operationalized into three variables and the dependent variable; party affiliation with the Christian Democrats. The bivariate analysis is used to describe the strength of the correlation between two variables (Field, 2013) and is

therefore suitable to depict how this relationship has changed over time. These results are further transformed into graphs in order to visibly depict the change of the focal relationship. This is followed by a formal statistical test of regression analysis where time is added as an interaction effect.

The different scales of the variables had some methodological implications and the bivariate analyses are measured in Cramer's V or Eta. Cramer's V is a measurement of association between two categorical variables ranging from 0 to 1 (Field, 2013) and is applied for party sympathy and voting for the Christian Democrats. Since "Like/Dislike the Christian Democrats" ranges from -5 to 5 can be considered as an interval level rather than a nominal variable, Cramer's V is not applicable which is why eta has been applied instead. Eta also ranges from 0-1 and measures the correlation between two variables (Andersson et al. 2017). Nevertheless, bivariate analyses are conducted for each of the independent variable against each of the dependent variable for each year of the SOM survey. As a result, the strength of the various relationships operationalized as the focal relationship is provided for each year for the whole electorate and thus providing a first indication of how the relationship between religion and party association has changed over time. For the analysis targeting generational replacement, bivariate analyses are conducted for each year and generation in order to investigate if the correlation differs between generations and change over time. In line with previous research (Tilley, 2015; Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2013) generation is operationalized as decade of birth.

The bivariate analyses are followed by regression analyses, where time is added as an interaction effect in order to investigate if the effect of religion and party association decreases over time. Due to the difference of the dependent variables, logistic regression is used for models with the dependent variables; voting for the Christian Democrats and party preference of the Christian Democrats which is a specification of general party preference, since both of these variables are dichotomous. Important to note though is that logistic regression is unsuitable to compare, which is why these models are not compared but rather used in order to provide formal support for the hypothesis of a linear decline in the effect of religion and party support. For the dependent variable perception of salvation, OLS was applied instead due to the scale of the variable. The generational replacement hypothesis was further tested with regressions where generation was added as an interaction term. All the models were diagnosed accordingly.

7. Results & Analysis

Following, the results of the analysis will be presented in two parts in order to answer the research questions regarding if dealignment in form of generational replacement erode the religious cleavage of Sweden. The first part of the analysis consists of the results of the dealignment process of the electorate in general, analyzed in two steps while the second part targets tendencies of generational replacement. In total, 63 tests have been conducted in order to test the hypothesis; 27 test for the dealignment hypothesis and 36 tests for the generational replacement hypothesis.

7.1 Descriptive analyses of dealignment

In order to graphically depict change over time, the outcome of the bivariate analyses³ measuring the relationship between religion and party preference has been transformed into nine graphs, providing a visual overview of dealignment. Each of the graphs thus represents one of the operationalized relations between religion and party preference in order to detect if a dealignment process has occurred. Previously defined as a gradual process where the expected stable party affiliation among voters weakens over time, dealignment is expected to generate values of the focal relationship which weakens steadily over time. This would in turn generate stable, sloping lines in the graphs, indicating that the relationship between religion and support for the Christian Democrats is weakening over time.

Firstly, the relationship between the three concepts of religion and general party sympathy has been explored. The result of the three bivariate analyses was transformed into three graphs in order to visualize the expected change, that is, a steadily weakened relationship.

³ See appendix 3 for data

Figure 1-3 The bivariate relationship between religion; church attendance, salvation & prayer and party sympathy in Sweden, 1986-2016

Figure 1. Church attendance

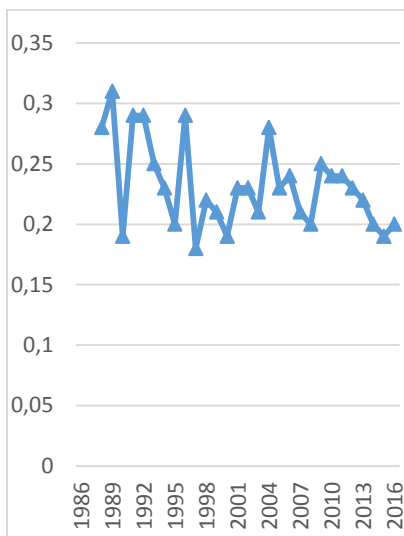


Figure 2. Salvation

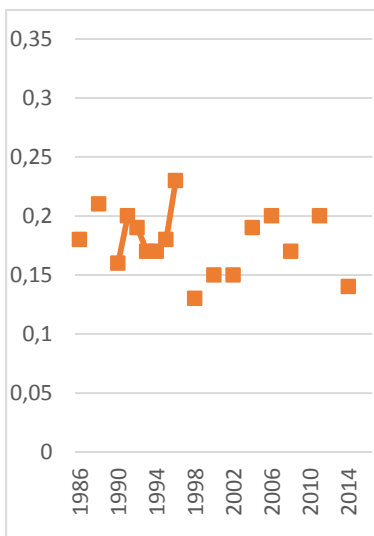
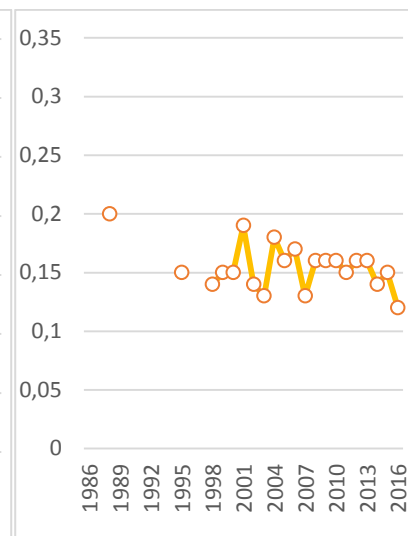


Figure 3. Prayer



Comment: Dependent variable: Party Sympathy, estimated using bivariate analysis measured in Cramer's V which is correlation coefficient of the binary relationship, ranging from 0-1 where 1 indicates a perfect relationship. Source: The National SOM surveys 1986-2016.

Most striking about the results of the bivariate analysis, representing the relation between general party sympathy and church attendance, perception of salvation or frequency of prayer, is that there are weak tendencies of a steady decline. This further generates fluctuations in the graphs, making the transformation of the relationship tricky to decipher. In general though, the bivariate analysis produced an outcome displaying a slight decline over time, thus indicating a dealignment process. This is particularly evident for church attendance and frequency of prayer. Moreover, for each of the three bivariate analyses, there is a notable difference between the first and the last measure points, which are remarkably lower, further supporting the hypothesis that slight dealignment has occurred among the whole electorate.

The second bivariate analysis, investigating the relationship between Christianity and voting for the Christian Democrats in the national elections yielded the following results transformed from the bivariate data:

Figure 4-6 The bivariate relationship between religion; church attendance, salvation & prayer and voting for the Christian Democrats in Sweden, 1986-2016

Figure 4. Church Attendance

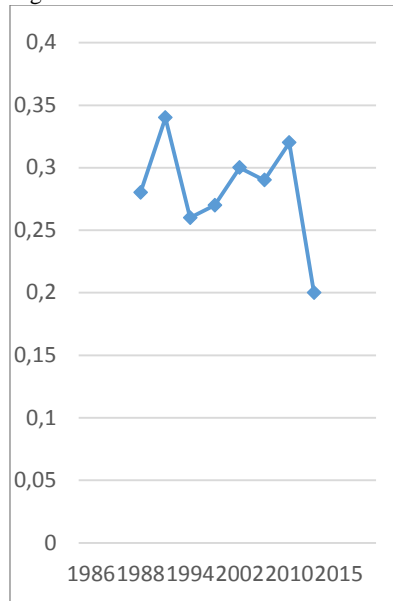


Figure 5. Salvation

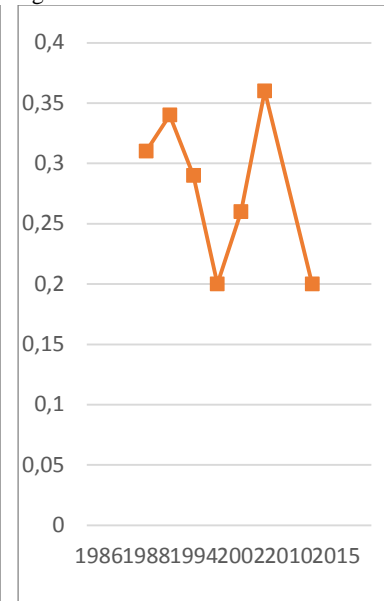
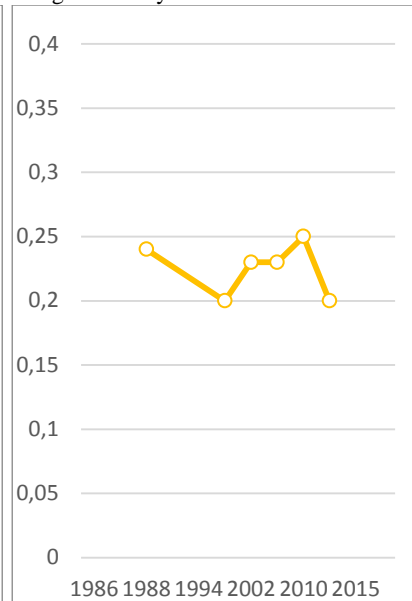


Figure 6. Prayer

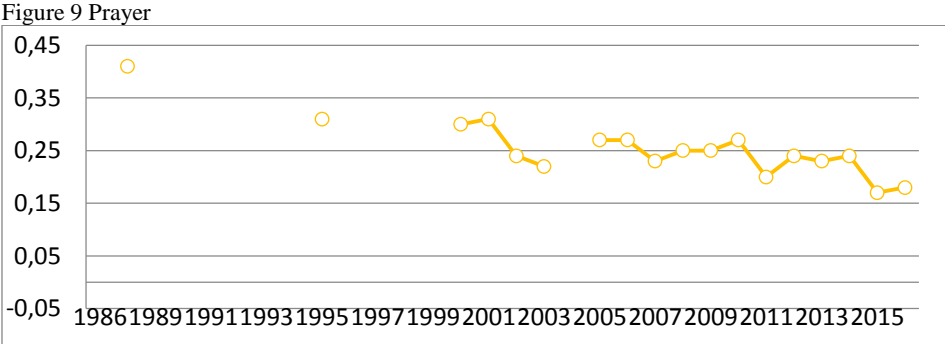
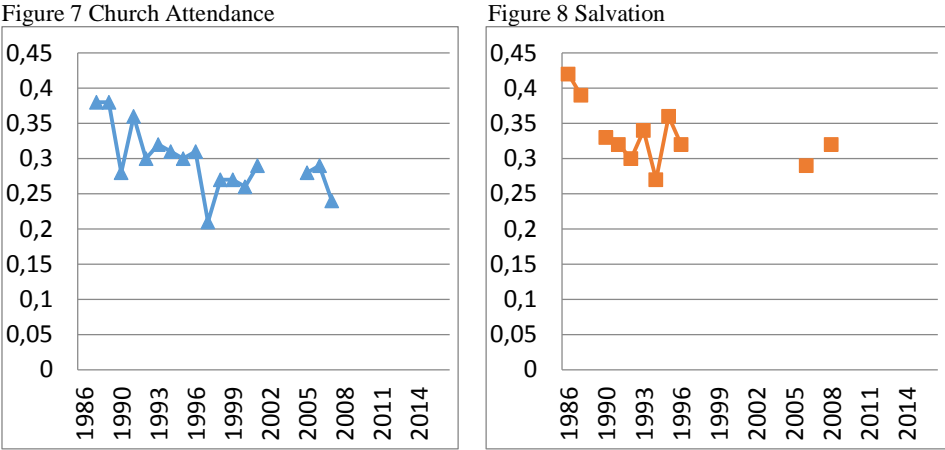


Comment: Dependent variable: vote for the Christian Democrats, estimated using bivariate analysis measured in Cramer's V which is correlation coefficient of the binary relationship, ranging from 0-1 where 1 indicates a perfect relationship. Source: The National SOM surveys 1986-2016.

As evident of the results of the bivariate analysis, the data does not conform into a generalizable pattern indicating dealignment, which is further displayed in the three graphs representing the visual outcome of the data. Neither of the figures demonstrates the expected, stable sloping line. Comparing the first point of measure with the last, for each of the three relations, it is however apparent that the last data point from the 2014 election is far lower than the first. Even though this could be interpreted as supporting the dealignment hypothesis, it could also be argued that there are weak or even insufficient indications of a steady decline in the data and as a consequence, the graphs does not generate a stable, sloping line over time. Notably, there is a significant drop in 1998 for each of the three bivariate analyses. This year, the Christian Democrats yielded its highest election results thus far, reaching 11.8% of the electoral votes (Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2018). The party thus managed to receive substantial electoral support from the non-religious part of the population as well. This arguably weakens the effect of religion for vote choice of the Christian Democrats, which is particularly evident for perception of salvation and frequency of prayer, both displaying a substantial drop for this year. Nevertheless, the overall result for the relation of religion, operationalized as three variables of religious activity or attitude, and voting for the Christian democrats shows meagre support for the dealignment hypothesis.

Lastly, the bivariate analysis for the three variables of religion in relation to sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats presented the following outcome:

Figure 7-9 The bivariate relationship between religion: church attendance, salvation & prayer and sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats in Sweden, 1986-2016



Comment: Dependent variable: vote for the Christian Democrats, estimated using bivariate analysis measured in Eta which is correlation coefficient of the binary relationship, ranging from 0-1 where 1 indicates a perfect relationship. Source: The National SOM surveys 1986-2016.

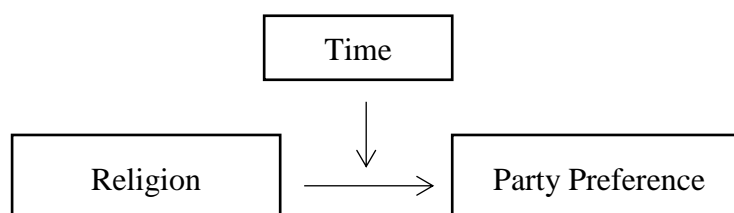
Notably, each of the three bivariate analyses produced the expected outcome of a steady decline over time, despite fluctuations, thus supporting the dealignment hypothesis. This is particularly evident for the relationship between church attendance and sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats and frequency of prayer and sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats. Due to lack of data for perception of salvation, it cannot be as easily concluded whether or not there is an occurring dealignment process; however, the last couple of point of measures are lower compared to earlier data. This entails that the relationship between frequent church attendance and sympathy towards the Christian Democrats is weakening over time, which also is applicable for frequency of prayer. Dealignment thus seems to occur, since this portrays an erosion of party-voter ties when operationalized as follow.

To conclude, the relationship between religion and party preference over time, measured through bivariate analyses and transformed into graphical illustrations, support the dealignment hypothesis to some extent however far from every case. The expected empirical outcome of a steady decline further visible in the graphs as stable, sloping lines was particularly evident in four cases despite fluctuations; church attendance and party sympathy, frequency of prayer and party sympathy, church attendance and sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats and lastly; frequency of prayer and sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats. The independent variable perception of salvation on the other hand portrayed no signs of dealignment despite tested on three individual dependent variables. Interestingly though, the dependent variable vote for the Christian Democrats, commonly used in previous research, provided weak support for the dealignment hypothesis, which supports the notion that dealignment of the religious cleavage is far more evident when broadening the definitions of both religion and party preference.

7.2 Statistical regression of dealignment

Following the bivariate analyses, the dealignment hypothesis has further been tested with regression analysis in order to provide a more in depth analysis of the relationship between religion and party affiliation for the Christian Democrats. Since the dealignment hypothesis assumes that Christians gradually will feel less affiliation towards the Christian Democrats, time has been added as an interaction term with the purpose to identify a weakened effect of religion over time. Since the expectations of dealignment as a gradual process, it is expected that there is a linear relationship between religion and party preference, which weakens gradually over time. For the dealignment hypothesis to gain support and provide a hint of the state of the religious cleavage, the interaction effect therefor ought to yield a negative and significant coefficient since it confirms that the effect of religion weakens over time among the electorate.

Figure 10 The Focal Relationship with time as an interaction term



In comparison to the bivariate analysis, party sympathy for the Christian Democrats has been applied as the first dependent variable rather than general party sympathy. The regressions will therefore show the effect of religion on party sympathy towards a specific party rather than the effect on party sympathy in general. As a consequence, the regressions formally test the first hypothesis that dealignment has occurred in the electorate.

Since three independent variables are tested against three dependent variables, nine basic models have been tested, incorporating time and the interaction effect, where the interest of the study foremost lies within the interaction effect since it can detect dealignment. Moreover, nine supplementary models have been added which includes control variables in order to validate the focal relationship and rule out spuriousness.

By firstly studying the results of the nine models without control variables, it is evident that the dependent variable sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats, estimated using OLS-regressions, yields the expected results of a negative and significant interaction term for each of the three models. This entails that an interaction effect has occurred and is moderating the focal relationship (Field, 2013). Important to note though is that by incorporating an interaction term, the values of the variables “represent the regression of the outcome on that predictor when the other predictor is zero” (Field, 2013:398). The coefficient of e.g. church attendance in model 3a can therefore be understood in terms of the relationship between frequency of church attendance and the degree of sympathy towards the Christian Democrats when time is zero, that is, the first year of measuring. Since these models all show a negative and significant interaction effect, it can be interpreted as the relationship between religion and sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats decreases .011 scale steps for church attendance, .015 scale steps for frequency of prayer and .007 scale steps for perception of salvation for each year. When controlled for other variables, the interaction effect is still negative and significant, although lower than the uncontrolled models. This entails that the effect of religion on party sympathy for the Christian Democrats decrease linearly over time when controlled for other variables. This further supports the dealignment hypothesis and is also a confirmation of the results in the bivariate analyses.

Analysis 2: Regression analysis of dealignment

	Model 1 Best party: Christian Democrats			Model 2 Voting for Christian Democrats			Model 3 Like/Dislike the Christian Democrats		
	1a	1b	1c	2a	2b	2c	3a	3b	3c
Church Attendance	1.006*** (.056)			1.207*** (.101)			1.298*** (.051)		
Prayer		.433*** (.04)			.570*** (.065)			.890*** (.041)	
Salvation			.782*** (.043)			.751*** (.058)			.731*** (.026)
Time	-.026*** (.004)	-.073*** (.004)	.03** (.01)	0.01 (.007)	-.013 (.007)	.051*** (.013)	.043*** (.004)	.015*** (.003)	.036*** (.007)
Interaction effect	.014*** (.003)	.014*** (.002)	-.004 (.003)	.003 (.006)	.004 (.003)	-.007 (.004)	-.011** (.004)	-.015** (.002)	-.007** (.002)
Intercept	-3.319	-2.288	-5.391	-3.839	-3.345	-5.450	-1.745*** (.046)	-1.428*** (.061)	-2.736*** (.070)
Adjusted/Nagelkerke R²	.125	.141	.13	.127	.104	.113	.088	.067	.088
N	61 634	76 545	25 494	18 562	21 309	12 141	25 951	26 564	16 368
	1d	1e	1f	2d	2e	2f	3d	3e	3f
Church attendance	.936*** (.057)			1.114*** (.103)			1.206*** (.054)		
Prayer		.411*** (.04)			.518*** (.066)			.836*** (.041)	
Salvation			.736*** (.044)			.716*** (.06)			.689*** (.026)
Time	-.032*** (.004)	-.079*** (.004)	.017 (.01)	.000/ (.007)	-.022*** (.007)	.037** (.013)	.034*** (.004)	.007** (.003)	.023*** (.007)
Interaction effect	.015*** (.003)	.014*** (.002)	-.001 (.003)	.004 (.006)	.005 (.003)	-.005 (.004)	-.010* (.004)	-.014*** (.002)	-.005* (.002)
Age	.012*** (.001)	.011*** (.001)	(.011)*** (.002)	.014*** (.002)	.015*** (.002)	.016*** (.002)	.017*** (.001)	.016*** (.001)	.013*** (.001)

Education	-.091* (.04)	-.167*** (.037)	-.285*** (.066)	-.316*** (.068)	-.335*** (.065)	-.412*** (.096)	.123*** (.037)	.049 (.034)	.262*** (.048)
Gender	-.095** (.036)	.155*** (.035)	-.171** (.058)	-.141* (.064)	.140* .063	-.210* (.086)	.288*** (.032)	.104*** (.032)	.305*** (.04)
Intercept	-3.476	-2.517	-5.260	-3.851	-3.515	-5.371	-2.278*** (.053)	-1.845*** (.066)	-3.166*** (.075)
Adjusted/ Nagelkerke R²	.131	.147	.137	.136	.115	.126	.102	.077	.111
N	60 603	75 391	24 872	18 240	21 040	11 804	25 951	26 564	16 368

*p>0.05, **p>0.01, ***p>0.001,

Comment: The values represent b-coefficient , standard error in parenthesis and significance level. Model 1 Dependent variable: Best party the Christian Democrats, models estimated using logistic regression with a dichotomous dependent variable. Model 2 Dependent variable: Vote for the Christian Democrats, models estimated using logistic regression with a dichotomous dependent variable. Model 3: Dependent variable: Sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats, ranging from -5 (strongly dislike) to 5 (strongly like) where 0 represent neither like nor dislike, models estimated by using Ordinary Least Square regression. Church attendance is coded: 0- Never, 1 – At least once during the last 12 months, 2 – At least once during the previous month. Frequency of prayer is coded 0- Never, 1 – At least once during the last 12 months, 2 – At least once during the previous month. Perception of salvation is coded: 1 – Not important at all, 2 – Not particularly important, 3 – Neither important nor unimportant, 4 – Important, 5 – Very Important. Time, measured from 1986-2016 was coded:0-30. Time and independent represent the interaction term between time and the independent variable tested in the model. Age, ranging from 15-85 was coded: 0-70. Education is measured as low (0) and high (1). Gender is measured man (0) and woman (1). Source: The National SOM surveys 1986-2016.

For the dependent variable party sympathy for the Christian Democrats where the party is appreciated as the best party, estimated using logistic regression, none of the uncontrolled models support the dealignment hypothesis. Interesting though, the interaction effect of model 1a provided a significant and positive interaction effect, which not only rejects the dealignment hypothesis but actually displays opposite tendencies where the effect of church attendance increase the support for the Christian Democrats. This is also applicable for the relationship between frequency of prayer and party sympathy. In model 1d, frequent church attenders have a higher estimated likelihood to rank the Christian Democrats as the best party increasingly over time, when controlled for other variables. Similar patterns can be seen for the independent variable frequency of prayer when controlled for other variables. These four models thus reject the dealignment hypothesis.

The dependent variable voting for the Christian Democrats, estimated using logistic regression, did not confirm dealignment hypothesis in any of the six models. That is, none of the models provided a significant and negative interaction effect. This does however confirm the conclusion of the bivariate analyses that dealignment has not occurred, merely that the relationship between religion and voting for the Christian Democrats is not subject of a stable decline over time.

Regarding the control variables, it can be briefly be concluded that age provides a positive and significant coefficient in each of the nine models, which indicates that older person is more likely to be positive towards the Christian Democrats. Although gender also provided significant results for each of the models as well as education, except for model 3e, the signs of the coefficients vary between the models, which is why no conclusive answer regarding its overall effect on dealignment.

To conclude; the dealignment hypothesis was supported in a total of six cases, but rejected in a total of twelve. The formal evidence of an extensive dealignment over time is weak in terms of the number of cases formally displaying an ongoing dealignment process, however sufficient enough not to reject the first hypothesis completely. The religious cleavage has therefore been rather persistent even though some dealignment has occurred in regards of evaluating the Christian Democrats through sympathy scores.

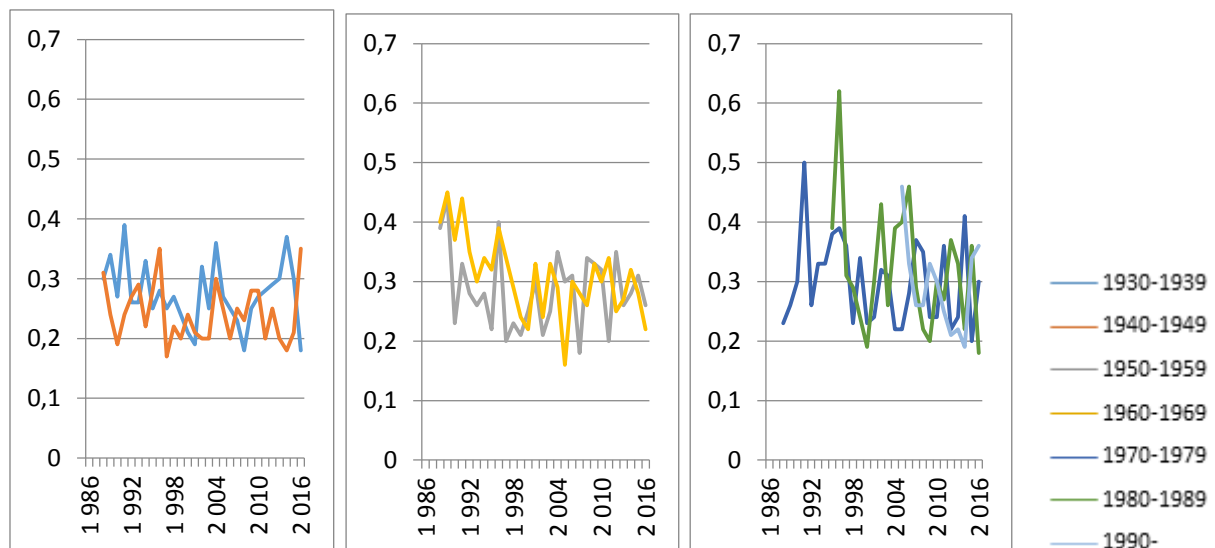
7.3 Descriptive analyses of generational replacement

Since generational replacement is theoretically argued to be a mechanism or driving force of dealignment, the second part of the analysis delve into investigating if the religious cleavage of Sweden is subject to generational replacement. Similarly to the previous analysis of dealignment, generational replacement has been targeted through bivariate analyses of the relationship between religion and party preference over time and for each generation, presented in graphs. In line with the theoretical assumptions, generational replacement of the religious cleavage would be detected in a general steady weakened relationship over time, where the younger generations would be subject to a dramatic decline. Visibly, this would be depicted as sloping lines in general for all cohorts with a steep decline among the youngest generations. This is based on the assumption that younger generations feel less affiliation towards a specific party over time. In order to display the generational differences, each operationalization of the focal relationship of religion and party preference is presented in figures of three displaying the relationship for each cohort over time.

Generational differences between religion and party sympathy

In the following order, the bivariate data of party sympathy in general is presented in relation to firstly, church attendance, secondly salvation and lastly prayer in figures of three.

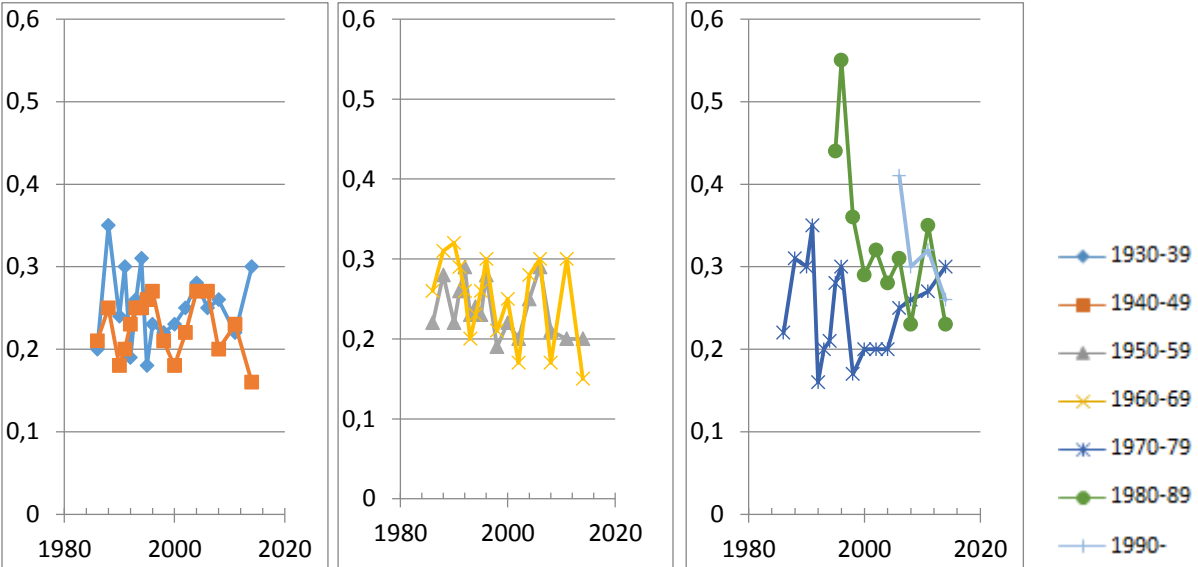
Figure 11 Bivariate analysis of church attendance and party sympathy among cohorts.



Comment: Bivariate analysis between the independent variable church attendance and the dependent variable party sympathy over time and per generation. Measured in Cramer's V; a correlation coefficient of the binary relationship, ranging from 0-1 where 1 indicates a perfect relationship. Source: The National SOM surveys 1986-2016.

The bivariate relationship between church attendance and party sympathy provides meagre proof of a general decline among the two oldest cohorts, which is further evident when transformed into graphs. The generations born in the 1950's and 1960's on the other hand, do display a slight decline over time, despite fluctuations, which is particularly evident for the 1960's generation. The expected result of a stable decline among the youngest cohort is however not obtained and when graphically displayed, it is evident that the data do not conform into a pattern of general decline. Hence, generational replacement does not seem to occur.

Figure 12: Bivariate analysis of perception of salvation and party sympathy among cohorts.

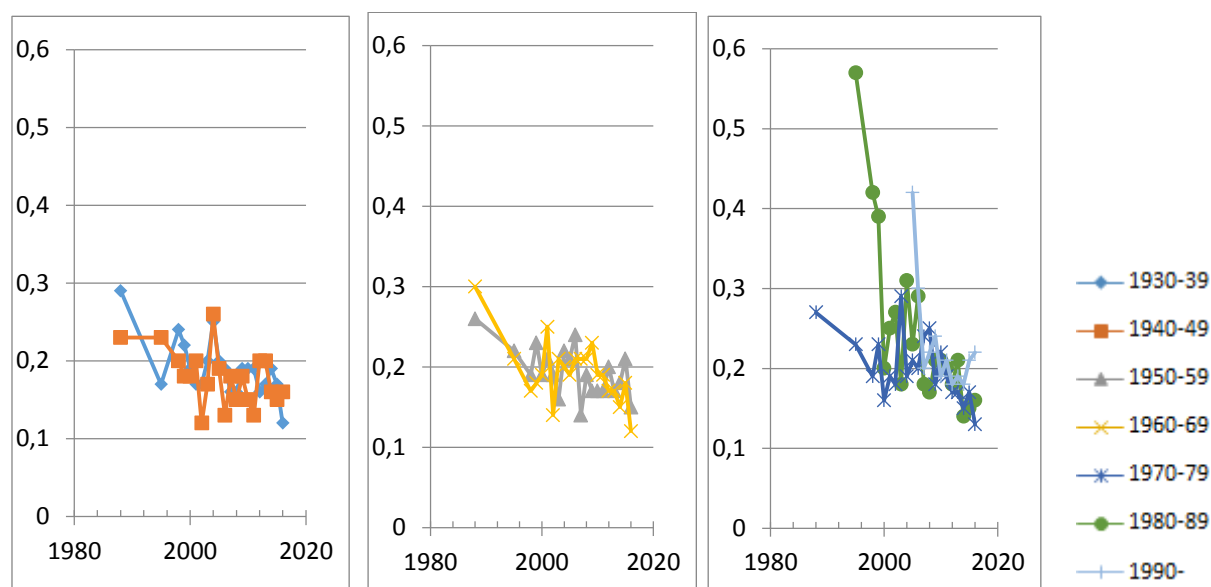


Comment: Bivariate analysis between the independent variable salvation and the dependent variable party sympathy over time and per generation. Measured in Cramer's V; a correlation coefficient of the binary relationship, ranging from 0-1 where 1 indicates a perfect relationship. Source: The National SOM surveys 1986-2016.

For the second bivariate analysis of the relation between perception of salvation and party sympathy, it can generally be concluded that there are weak evidence of generational replacement. The two oldest cohorts do not generate data that can be interpreted as a general decline, which is evident in the graphical illustration. Despite massive fluctuations, it is notable that the first point of measure is higher than the last, for both the 1950 and 1960 cohort. This could be an indication of decline, however the dramatic fluctuations urge for cautiousness of any definite interpretations. The two youngest cohorts, born in the 1980's and 1990's on the other hand, clearly displays that the relationship between perception of salvation and party sympathy is weakening over time, in accordance to the generational

replacement hypothesis. It could be noted though that for these two cohorts, a low n^4 may cause the extreme peaks of the first measure points. Moreover, these two cohorts reaches levels that are similar to older cohorts while the generational replacement hypothesis expects far lower levels among the youngest generations. Despite a decline, the occurrence of generational replacement is dubious.

Figure 13: Bivariate analysis of frequency of prayer and party sympathy among cohorts.



Comment: Bivariate analysis between the independent variable frequency of prayer and the dependent variable party sympathy over time and per generation. Measured in Cramer's V; a correlation coefficient of the binary relationship ranging from 0-1 where 1 indicates a perfect relationship. Source: The National SOM surveys 1986-2016.

Lastly, the correlation between frequency of prayer and party sympathy does imply a weakened relation over time for all of the cohorts in the analysis. This is particularly evident since each cohort obtains lower measure points for the last couple of years compared to the first. Since this trend occurs among all the cohorts it is questionable if generational replacement is the main factor behind this decline. Rather, the weakened relationship between frequency of prayer and general party sympathy is subject to a dealignment which cannot be explained by generational replacement.

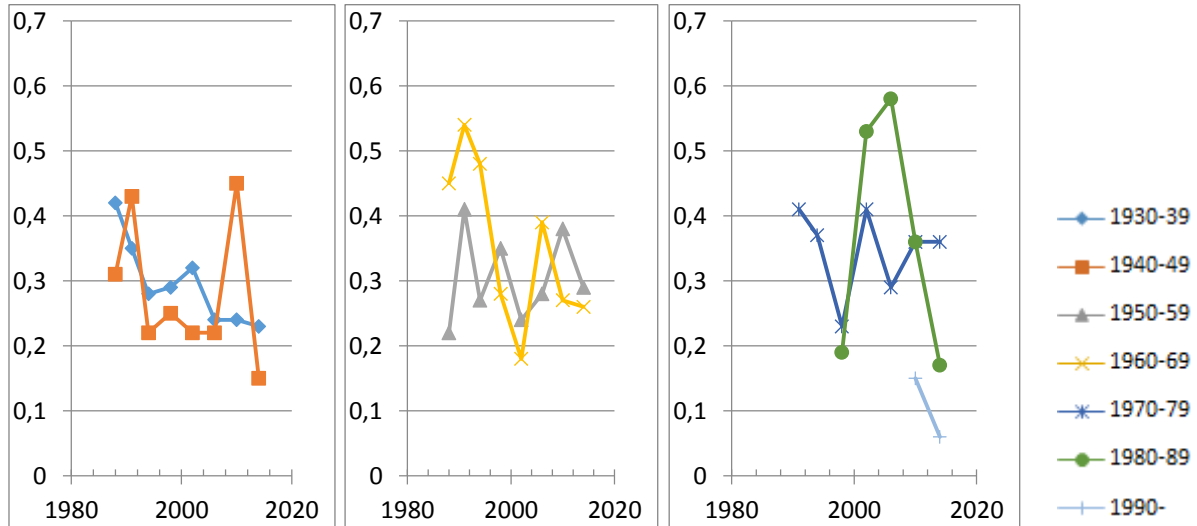
In sum, the expected result of a dramatic decline among the youngest cohorts is not apparent when studying the relation between religion and general party sympathy. Despite tendencies of a general decline or dealignment, this process occurs in a faster pace than could be expected if the generational replacement hypothesis were to be confirmed.

⁴ See table in appendix 3 for data

Generational differences between religion and voting for the Christian Democrats

Moving on to the relationship between religion and voting for the Christian Democrats, the following results were obtained from the bivariate analysis.

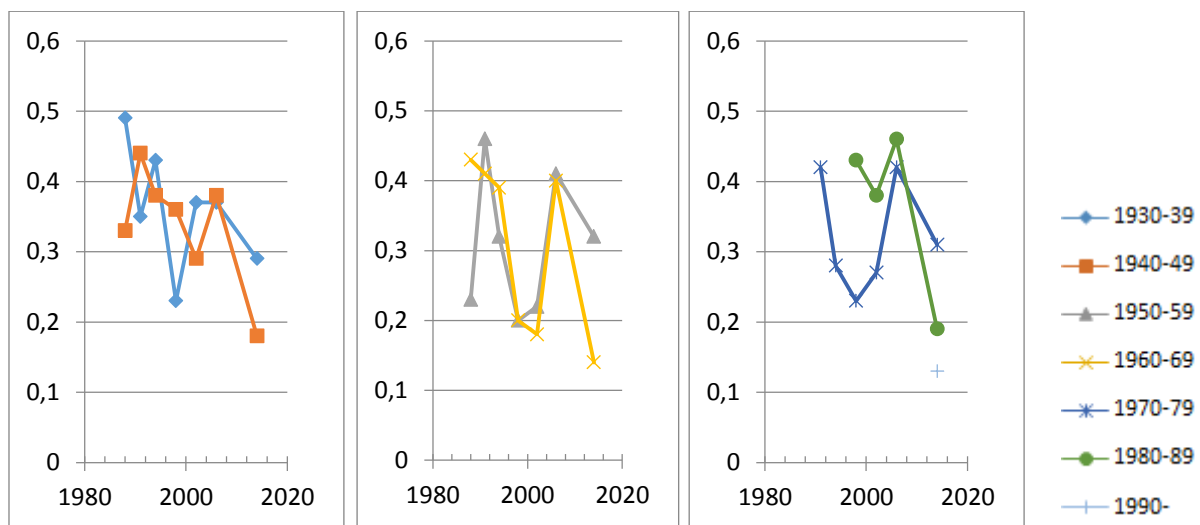
Figure 14: Bivariate analysis of church attendance and voting for the Christian Democrats among cohorts.



Comment: Bivariate analysis between the independent variable church attendance and the dependent variable vote for the Christian Democrats over time and per generation. Measured in Cramer's V; a correlation coefficient of the binary relationship ranging from 0-1 where 1 indicates a perfect relationship. Source: The National SOM surveys 1986-2016.

The bivariate relationship between church attendance and voting for the Christian Democrats does not result in a pattern of general decline over time for neither of the cohorts except for the generation born in the 1930's. That generational replacement is not occurring is further evident when studying the graphs where no conclusive pattern of decline is apparent.

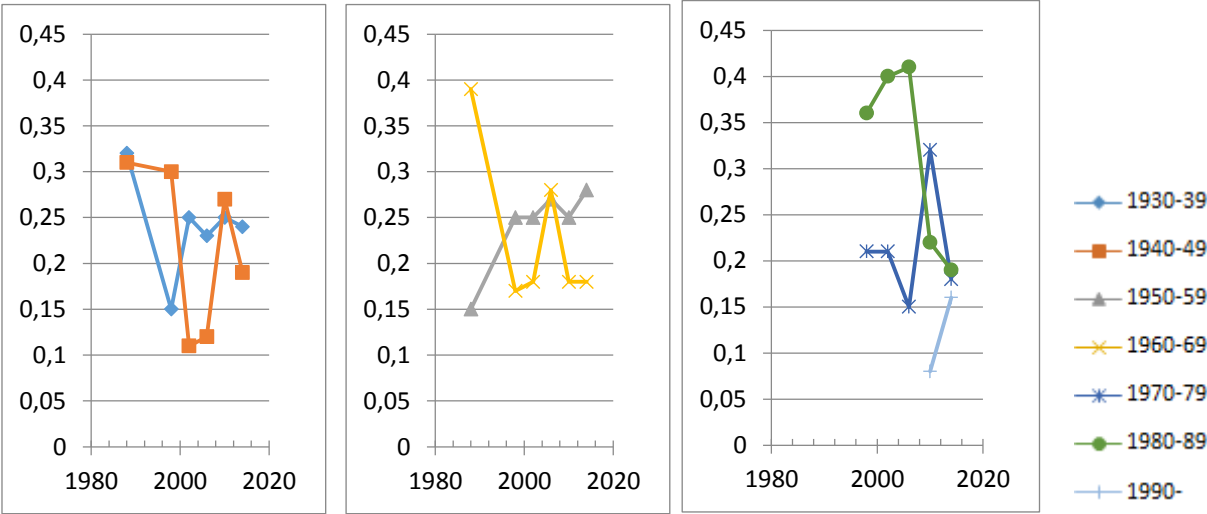
Figure 15: Bivariate analysis of salvation and voting for the Christian Democrats among cohorts.



Comment: Bivariate analysis between the independent variable perception of salvation and the dependent variable vote for the Christian Democrats over time and per generation. Measured in Cramer's V; a correlation coefficient of the binary relationship ranging from 0-1 where 1 indicates a perfect relationship. Source: The National SOM surveys 1986-2016.

Regarding the relationship between perception of prayer and voting for the Christian Democrats, the bivariate analysis resulted in a decline foremost visible among the two oldest cohorts. Notably though, all generations displays a dramatic lower point of measure the last election compared to the first, with the exception of the 1950 cohorts. Nevertheless, the theoretical expectation that a weakened relationship is far more dramatic among the youngest cohorts gains little support. Hence, there is little evidence of generational replacement.

Figure 16: Bivariate analysis of prayer and voting for the Christian Democrats among cohorts.



Comment: Bivariate analysis between the independent variable frequency of prayer and the dependent variable vote for the Christian Democrats over time and per generation. Measured in Cramer's V; a correlation coefficient of the binary relationship ranging from 0-1 where 1 indicates a perfect relationship. Source: The National SOM surveys 1986-2016.

Lastly, the results of the bivariate analysis of the relationship between frequency prayer and voting for the Christian Democrats does not provide any indications of a steady decline in general and a dramatic weakened relationship over time for the younger generations in particular. The exception being the generation born in the 1980's, displaying a substantial weakened relationship in the last two elections, yielding data that is far lower than the earlier elections. These points of measure do however reach similar levels as the older cohorts which is an argument against the occurrence of generational replacement.

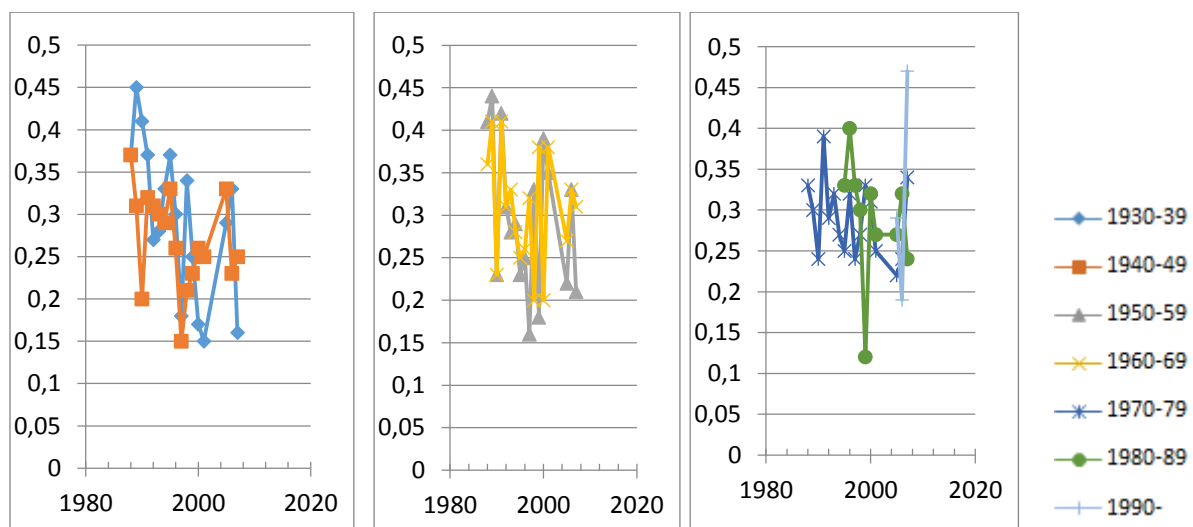
In sum, voting for the Christian Democrats does not appear to be subject to dealignment and the generational differences do not result in any conclusive results. Yet, it could be argued that the time span perhaps is a bit too narrow in order to fully conclude whether or not generational replacement has occurred, especially when regarding that generation of the 1990's is still coming off age and has therefore not been able to participate in more than two national elections. On the other hand though, keeping in mind that there are less available data

over time for the youngest cohorts, the bivariate analysis of the relationship between religion and voting for the Christian Democrats still indicates weak support for the generational replacement hypothesis.

Generational differences between religion and sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats

For the third dependent variable, sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats, measured on a 10 step scale from strongly dislike to strongly like, the bivariate analyses yielded the following results:

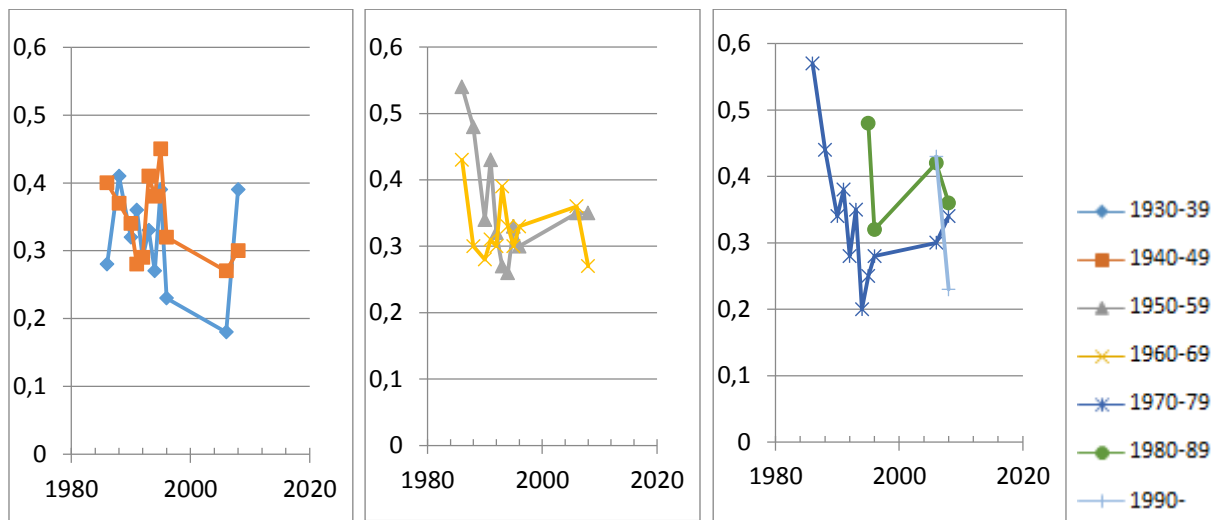
Figure 17: Bivariate analysis of church attendance and sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats.



Comment: Bivariate analysis between the independent variable church attendance and the dependent variable sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats over time and per generation. Measured in Eta; a correlation coefficient of the binary relationship ranging from 0-1 where 1 indicates a perfect relationship. Source: The National SOM surveys 1986-2016.

In general, a slight decline appears to occur among all cohorts for the relationship between church attendance and sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats over time. The exception being the youngest generation of the population, born in the 1990's, which naturally also includes far less points of measure. Even though the relationship generally seems to weaken over time among all cohorts which indicates a dealignment process, this tendency does not appear to be particularly dramatic among the youngest generations. There is thus little support for the generational replacement hypothesis.

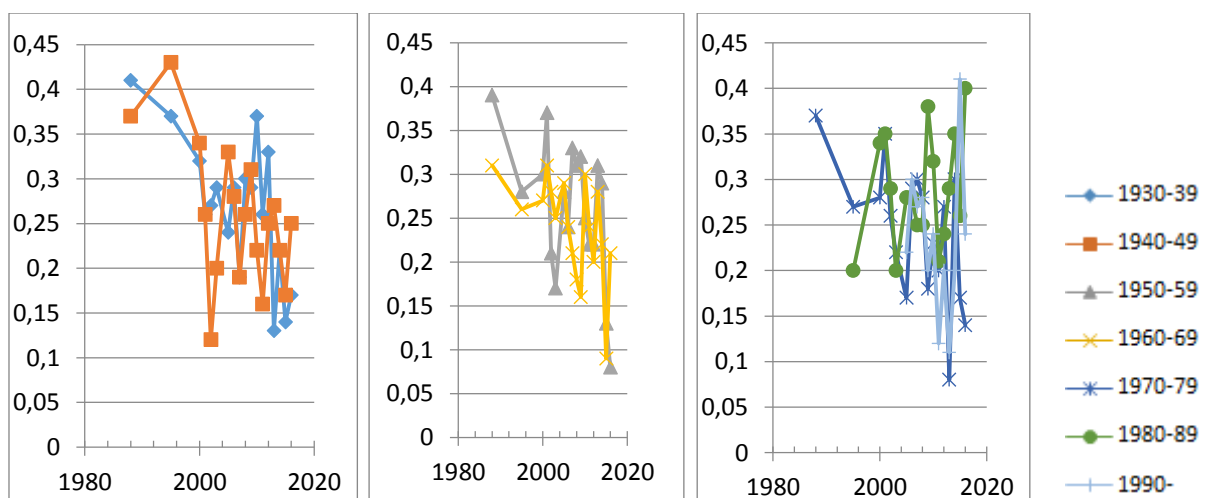
Figure 18: Bivariate analysis of perception of salvation and sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats.



Comment: Bivariate analysis between the independent variable perception of salvation and the dependent variable sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats over time and per generation. Measured in Eta; a correlation coefficient of the binary relationship ranging from 0-1 where 1 indicates a perfect relationship. Source: The National SOM surveys 1986-2016.

The relation between perception of salvation and sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats on the other hand does appear to weaken some for all the cohorts except the generation of the 1930's. Interesting enough, the relationship for the generation born in the 1970's presents a stable decline for the first couple of years, which later seems to incline steadily over time. Yet, these points of measure are still substantially lower compared to the first couple of years. Overall though, the bivariate analysis of the relationship between perception of salvation and sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats provides weak support for the generational replacement hypothesis.

Figure 19: Bivariate analysis of frequency of prayer and sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats.



Comment: Bivariate analysis between the independent variable frequency of prayer and the dependent variable sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats over time and per generation. Measured in Eta; a correlation coefficient of the binary relationship ranging from 0-1 where 1 indicates a perfect relationship. Source: The National SOM surveys 1986-2016.

Lastly, the final bivariate analysis of relationship between frequency of prayer and sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats yielded a result of a clearly weakened relationship over time for all of the cohorts with the exception of the two youngest cohorts. Even though dealignment thus seems to occur, generational replacement can be rejected since the decline is not apparent among the youngest generations but rather the opposite.

To conclude the results regarding the dependent variable sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats, dealignment appears to occur in general which is particularly evident for church attendance. However, since the youngest generations appears to be excepted from the general dealignment trend, the theoretical assumption of generational replacement can be rejected. It ought to be noted though that there are less data available for the younger generations compared to the older and thus yields shorter trends over time.

7.4 Statistical regression of generational differences

In a similar manner as when formally testing dealignment, the bivariate analyses of generational replacement have been followed by regressions. The aim of these regressions is to identify if there are any substantial generational differences regarding the relationship between religion and party preference for the Christian Democrats. Notably, this does not test for generational replacement per se since the influx of younger generations is not considered however they provide a plausible indication of how the relationship between religion and party affiliation with the Christian Democrats transforms over time and variations between generations.

Each model have tested the focal relationship where generation is included as a dummy variable as well as the interaction effect of time, generating nine models followed with nine identical models which has been tested under control for education and gender. These control variables are in line with the theoretical assumption of generational replacement while age has been rejected as a control since it is reasonable to assume that it will diminish the effect of generation, which is the variable of interest in these regressions.

Analysis: Regressions of generational replacement

	Model 4 Best party: Christian Democrats			Model 5 Voting for Christian Democrats			Model 6 Like/Dislike the Christian Democrats		
	4a	4b	4c	5a	5b	5c	6a	6b	6c
Church attendance	1.190*** (.064)			1.409*** (112)			1.250*** (.057)		
Prayer		.472*** (.044)			.618 (.074)			.833*** (.046)	
Salvation			.874*** (.05)			.862*** (.068)			.702*** (.029)
Time	-.018*** (.004)	-.07*** (.004)	.041*** (.011)	.019*** (.008)	-.007 (.007)	.065*** (.014)	.051*** (.004)	.02*** (.003)	.039*** (.007)
Interaction term	.006 (.003)	.012*** (.002)	-.007* (.003)	-.006 (-.006)	.001 (.003)	-.011** (.004)	-.011* (.005)	-.014*** (.002)	-.006* (.003)
Generation Old (30-40) ref									
Generation middle	-.235*** (-.043)	-.271*** (.041)	-.270*** (.071)	-.333*** (.076)	-.386*** (.073)	-.425*** (.104)	-.292*** (.039)	-.384*** (.039)	-.249*** (.047)
Generation young	-.520*** (.053)	-.422*** (.047)	-.562*** (.086)	-.576*** (.093)	-.558*** (.084)	-.724*** (.128)	-.522*** (.046)	-.543*** (.042)	-.494*** (.06)
Intercept	-3.325	-.2163	-5.480	-3.810	-3.179	-5.536	-1.645	-1.247	-2.568
Adjusted/ Nagelkerke R²	.14	.145	.148	.146	.11	.136	.089	.066	.101
n	55 985	73 000	21 973	16 164	19 973	10 324	22 723	25 281	14 033
	4d	4e	4f	5d	5e	5f	6d	6e	6c
Church attendance	1.184*** (.065)			1.38*** (.113)			1.230*** (.057)		

Prayer		.481*** (.045)		.617*** (.074)		.825*** (.046)			
Salvation			.858*** (.05)		.853*** (.068)			.699*** (.029)	
Time	-.019*** (.004)	-.07*** (.004)	.037*** (.011)	.016* (.008)	-.009 (.007)	.061*** (.014)	.05*** (.004)	.021** (.003)	.036*** (.007)
Interaction term	.006 (.003)	.012*** (.002)	-.006* (.003)	-.005 (.006)	.001 (.003)	-.011** (.004)	-.011* (.005)	-.013*** (.002)	-.006* (.003)
Generation old (ref.)									
Generation middle	-.235*** (.044)	-.29*** (.042)	-.289*** (.072)	-.348*** (.077)	-.428*** (.074)	-.432*** (.105)	-.304*** (.039)	-.402*** (.039)	-.275*** (.048)
Generation young	-.532*** (.054)	-.446*** (.119)	-.598*** (.088)	-.613*** (.095)	-.608*** (.208)	-.759*** (.131)	-.528*** (.047)	-.559*** (.042)	-.559*** (.042)
Education	-.063 (.042)	-.153*** (.038)	-.263*** (.07)	-.285*** (.071)	-.345*** (.067)	-.375*** (.101)	.084* (.039)	.04 (.035)	.224*** (.049)
Gender	-.086* (.039)	.153*** (.037)	-.172** (.064)	-.125 (.069)	.141* (.066)	-.205* (.095)	.257*** (.035)	.092** (.033)	.256*** (.043)
Intercept	-3.229	-2.125	-5.124	-3.487	-2.957	-5.103	-1.771	-1.298	-2.709
Adjusted/ Nagelkerke R²	.141	.147	.150	.148	.114	.138	.092	.067	.105
N	55 087	71 940	21 547	16 339	19 734	10 131	22 306	24 945	13 707

*p>0.05, **p>0.01, ***p>0.001,

Comment: The values represent b-coefficient, standard error in parenthesis and significance level. Model 1 Dependent variable: Best party the Christian Democrats, models estimated using logistic regression with a dichotomous dependent variable. Model 2 Dependent variable: Vote for the Christian Democrats, models estimated using logistic regression with a dichotomous dependent variable. Model 3: Dependent variable: Sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats, ranging from -5 (strongly dislike) to 5 (strongly like) where 0 represent neither like nor dislike, models estimated by using Ordinary Least Square regression. Church attendance is coded: 0- Never, 1 – At least once during the last 12 months, 2 – At least once during the previous month. Frequency of prayer is coded 0- Never, 1 – At least once during the last 12 months, 2 – At least once during the previous month. Perception of salvation is coded: 1 – Not important at all, 2 – Not particularly important, 3 – Neither important nor unimportant, 4 – Important, 5 – Very Important. Time, measured from 1986-2016 was coded:0-30. Time and independent represent the interaction term between time and the independent variable tested in the model. Age, ranging from 15-85 was coded: 0-70. Education is measured as low (0) and high (1). Gender is measured man (0) and woman (1). Generation is coded as a dummy variable where Generation old, people born from 1930-1949, is used as reference category, generation middle, born 1950-1969, generation young, born 1970 and onwards. Source: The National SOM surveys 1986-2016.

Firstly, the interaction effect of time, expecting that the general correlation between religion and party support for the Christian Democrats is eroding over time, yields the expected result of a negative and significant coefficient in five of the nine, uncontrolled cases (model 4c, 5c, 6a, 6b and 6c). For the OLS regression of sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats, erosion is more evident since the interaction effect is negative and significant for each of the three models. For the logistic regression of party sympathy for the Christian Democrats, the expected results of the interaction effect is occurring in model 4c, where religion is measured through the variable perception of salvation. Model 5c, also tested through a logistic regression due to the binary variable of voting for the Christian Democrats, the interaction effect is negative and significant for the independent variable of perception of salvation. Model 4b on the other hand provides an interaction effect which is positive and significant, indicating that the correlation between frequency of prayer and party sympathy for the Christian Democrats actually is increasing. Similar results are yielded in the controlled models and the effect is negative and significant for model 4f, 5f, and model 6d, 6e and 6f when controlling for other variables. There is therefore a general dealignment effect of the electorate under control for generation, as well as education and gender.

Secondly, the results in all the nine uncontrolled models shows that the three youngest generations, born in the 1970's and onwards are less likely to affiliate with the Christian Democrats compared to older cohorts. This is significant throughout all the models. For the OLS regressions in model 3a, 3b and 3c it can further be concluded that the effect of the youngest generations' sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats is approximately half a scale step lower compared to the older generations, a number that is similar in all three models. For logistic regression it can be noted that each of the model provide a negative and significant b-coefficient. Interesting enough, the generational differences still holds when controlling for other variables. That is, for each of the nine models, younger generations are still less likely to affiliate with the Christian Democrats than older generations when controlling for education and gender. Even though the bivariate analysis indicated low evidence of generational replacement, these regressions entails that there are evident generational differences in regards to party support for the Christian Democrats.

Assessing the results of the two analyses targeting generational replacement and generational differences some general conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the bivariate analyses identified that generational replacement is not occurring in the sense that there does not appear to be an

influx of younger generations with weaker party-voter ties. That is; there are weak signs that the relationship between religion and party preference for the Christian Democrats is decreasing with the influx of younger generations in the electorate. This contradicts the generational replacement hypothesis and the theoretical assumptions of it being a mechanism behind an erosion of the religious cleavage. On the other hand though, the formal test of generational differences displays that there generally is a negative and significant interaction effect of time, which is particularly evident for sympathy scores of the Christian Democrats. There is also a notable generational difference in party support, where younger cohorts are less prone to support the Christian Democrats compared to older cohorts.

The results of the analyses are therefore somewhat ambiguous; even though there are apparent generational differences in regards to party support, the bivariate analyses displays that generational replacement has not occurred in regards to younger cohorts entering the electorate with dramatically weakened party-voter ties. However, since a dealignment entails a gradual process of weakened party-voter ties with generational replacement as a driving force, the differences among cohorts identified in the regressions might imply that this slow, gradual process actually is occurring. Even though these differences have not resulted in the expected apparent signs of influx of generations with weakened party-voter ties, the generational replacement hypothesis cannot be confirmed nor rejected.

Due to the somewhat inconclusive results of the two previous analyses, the hypothesis was tested through nine additional regressions⁵ where generation was added as an interaction term instead of time. The purpose of these final regressions was to formally test if the effect of the religious cleavage is weaker among younger generations. For the generational replacement hypothesis to gain support, the interaction effect was expected to yield a negative and significant b-coefficient, implying that there is a weaker effect of religion on political support among the younger cohorts. In accordance with the theoretical assumption of generational replacement, which generally expects younger cohorts with weaker party affiliation, a negative and significant interaction term would provide further, formal support for the generational replacement hypothesis.

⁵ See appendix 5 for regression table

Nevertheless, the result of the additional regressions does not provide a conclusive result in favor of the generational replacement hypothesis. Under control for other variables, a negative and significant interaction term was yielded for one model; 3c, where the relationship between perception of salvation and sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats decreases .124 scale steps for younger generation compared to older. This is however the only case where the generational replacement hypothesis gains further formal support, since none of the other models yielded a negative and significant interaction effect. Generation as an interaction effect does therefore not appear to moderate the focal relationship between religion and party support to the expected extent in accordance to generational replacement hypothesis. The results thus indicate that the religious cleavage is still rather persistent among younger generations.

To conclude, the bivariate analyses of generational replacement did not provide sufficient support for the generational replacement hypothesis while the first formal test of the regressions displayed a significant difference in generational effect of party support. Yet, when followed up by an additional formal test of the linear relationship between religion and party support, where generation was expected to moderate the focal relationship, insufficient support was provided of the generational replacement hypotheses. Hence, even though the various analyses yield evidence of generational differences, the second hypothesis stating that dealignment is due to generational replacement cannot be confirmed. The influx of younger generations does not seem to result in a dramatically stable decline even when compared to older cohorts.

8. Concluding discussion

The aim of this thesis has been to investigate the strength and persistence of the religious cleavage, in a secularized Swedish society where previous research has established that religion matters for vote choice while societal tendencies within the Christian community display signs of political discrepancy and non-homogeneity regarding political opinion. The general conclusion of this study is however that the party-voter ties of the religious cleavage are rather persistent, yet, in some aspects a slight dealignment has occurred. This is particularly evident when operationalizing party preference as actual sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats. Despite the theoretical assumptions however, generational replacement does not explain this process to the expected extent.

Regarding the first hypothesis of dealignment it can be concluded that it can be refuted when party preference is operationalized as the Christian Democrats being the best party and voting for the Christian Democrats, despite measured against various aspects of religion. On the other hand though, the dependent variable sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats demonstrate a dealignment process of the religious cleavage, thus providing support for the first hypothesis. Regarding the second hypothesis of generational replacement on the other hand, it can be noted that there are significant generational differences in regards to party support. Yet, there is little support for generational replacement in terms of an influx of younger cohorts with weaker party-voter ties in the electorate or that the relationship between religion and party support is weaker among the youngest generations, formally tested through regressions. The second hypothesis must therefore be considered to be refuted. This implies that the theoretical assumption that the influx of younger, political sophisticated voters does not affect the Swedish religious cleavage to the degree that the theory expects. However, the somewhat inconclusive results further calls for more tests and studies in the future.

Moreover, since there are little signs of a particularly dramatic weakened relationship between religion and party affiliation among the youngest cohorts, the observed occurrence of dealignment is not exclusively a phenomenon among the youngest citizens. It is therefore questionable what the driving force behind the erosion of party-voter ties is. One possible explanation could be that that the electorate as a whole is affected by secularization.

One of the main motivations behind this study, to broaden the concept of religion and party affiliation when studying the religious cleavage over time, successfully demonstrates the perplex relationship between religion and political behaviour when applying a more intricate and complex approach. If the traditional operationalization in terms of church attendance and vote choice for the Christian Democrats would have been applied instead, the conclusion would be that there is a particularly strong and persistent Swedish religious cleavage, not exposed to a dealignment process. This study, on the other hand, manages to provide valuable insights of which mechanisms within party affiliation that are particularly sensitive and subject to a weakened relationship with religion. The religious practices of church attendance and frequency of prayer along with party preference in terms of sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats are factors that appear to be more inclined to erode the religious cleavage. Moreover, even though the study has showed that that there is a weakened relationship over time for sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats, this has not yet

affected the vote on the party. It might however be argued that it is not unreasonable that a continuance of this particular dealignment process in advance could lead to further erosion of the religious cleavage by e.g. affecting vote choice. Hence, to merely conclude that religion leads to party preference for the Christian Democrats is deceptive and theoretical assumptions of weakened party-voter ties can explain certain aspects of a societal phenomenon while also being inadequate at providing universal description at the same time.

This thesis has merely begun to unravel the underlying aspects of the strength and persistence of the religious cleavage and future research can continue upon this quest in several perspectives. Firstly, future research ought to study underlying socialization mechanism of the Christian community affecting political behaviour, such as parental inheritance or leadership cues which can explain why the religious cleavage have not eroded to expected extent. Moreover, it would be beneficial to conduct research regarding political opinion within the Christian community, if there appears to be a general will of the Christian population or if there are apparent differences within the group and how that in advance affects party preference. Lastly, this study has demonstrated the advantages of broadening the approach of conceptualizing religion and how it can provide a more complex conclusion towards seemingly simple relations. It is therefore urged that future research continue upon this initial journey.

To conclude, even though the religious cleavage is subject to slight dealignment in certain aspects and some signs of generational differences, religion is still a force to continue to reckon with regarding political behaviour. Religious practice and belief is still strongly affiliated with the 'Christian' party. Despite tendencies of political transformation within the actual Swedish Christian community in terms of political opinion, the religious cleavage is persistent in an unlikely time and place.

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Appendix 1

Questions used to operationalize the independent variable religion:

Church attendance:

BC10 “How often have you with in the last 12 month done any of the following: Attended a church service or religious meeting?” 1- Never, 2- At least once during the last 12 months, 3- At least once during the last 6 months, 4- At least once during the last 3 months, 5- Some times each month, 6- Some times each week, 7 – Several times a week. Recoded into: 0- Never, 1 – At least once during the last 12 months, 2 – At least once during the previous month.

Frequency of prayer

BC20 “How often have you with in the last 12 month done any of the following: Prayed to God?” 1- Never, 2- At least once during the last 12 months, 3- At least once during the last 6 months, 4- At least once during the last 3 months, 5- Some times each month, 6- Some times each week, 7 – Several times a week. Recoded into: 0- Never, 1- At least once during the last 12 months, 2– At least once during the previous month, 3- At least once week

Perception of salvation

BB10p “How important do you find following: salvation?” 1 – Not important at all, 2 – Not particularly important, 3 – Neither important nor unimportant, 4 – Important, 5 – Very Important

Questions used to operationalize the dependent variable party support:

Party preference:

CB11 “Which party do you like most today” 1. The Left Party, 2. The Social Democrats, 3. The Centre Party, 4. The Liberals/Peoples Party, 5. The Moderate Party, 6. The Christian Democrats, 7. The Green Party. Further recoded into a binary variable where The Christian Democrats where recoded into 1 and the other parties as 0.

Voting for the Christian Democrats

CB200a “Which party did you vote for in the parliament election” recoded into voted for the Christian Democrats (1), other parties (0)

Sympathy Scores for the Christian Democrats

CB50g “Where do you place the following party on a scale: the Christian Democrats?” -5 - Strongly dislike, 0- Neither like nor dislike, 5 – Strongly like

Questions used as control variables:

Time: Year 1986-2016 recoded into 0-1986 in numerical order to 30-2016

Age: Age “What year where you born?” complemented with register data 15-85, recoded into 0-15 in numerical order to 70-85

Gender: Sex “Are you male of female?” Male (0), Female (1)

Education: Edu2 “Which educational level do you hold?” 1 – Low/Middle, 2 – High recoded into 0 – Low/Middle, 1 – High

Generation: Gen10t Generational belonging in decades “What year where you born?” 10 - 1910-1919, 20 -1920-1929, 30 – 1930-1939, 40 – 1940-1949, 50- 1950-1959, 60 – 1960-

1969, 70 – 1970-1979, 80 -1980-1989, 90 -1990 – Recoded into dummy Generation old (ref): 1930-1940, Generation middle 1950-1960, Generation young 1970, 1980, 1990 and Generation old 1930-1960, Generation young 1970, 1980, 1990 in the last regression.

Appendix 2

Full OLS models with control variables for the formal dealignment test with the dependent variable: sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats

Fig 1. Regression model.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Church Attendance	1.159*** (.024)	1.178*** (.024)	1.298*** (.051)	1.206*** (.054)
Time		.036*** (.003)	.043*** (.004)	.034*** (.004)
Time + Ind.			-.011** (.004)	-.010* (.004)
Age				.017*** (.001)
Education				.123*** (.037)
Gender				.288*** (.032)
Intercept	-1,279*** (.022)	-1.675*** (.038)	-1.745*** (.046)	-2.278*** (.053)
Adjusted R²	.082	0.88	.088	.102
N	25 951	25 951	25 951	25 951

*** p≤.001, **p≤.01, *p≤.05. Source: Super-SOM, Dependent variable: Like/Dislike Christian Democrats (-5 - 5)

Fig 2. Regression model.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Prayer	.595*** (.014)	.596*** (.014)	.890*** (.041)	.836*** (.041)
Time		.003 (.002)	.015*** (.003)	.007** (.003)
Time + Ind.			-.015** (.002)	-.014*** (.002)
Age				.016*** (.001)
Education				.049 (.034)
Gender				.104*** (.032)
Intercept	-1,118*** (.020)	-1.171*** (.050)	-1.428*** (.061)	-1.845*** (.066)
Adjusted R²	.065	0.65	.067	.077
N	26 564	26 564	26 564	26 564

*** p≤.001, **p≤.01, *p≤.05. Source: Super-SOM, Dependent variable: Like/Dislike Christian Democrats (-5 - 5)

Fig 3. Regression model.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Salvation	.67*** (.016)	.67*** (.019)	.731*** (.026)	.689*** (.026)
Time		.019*** (.003)	.036*** (.007)	.023*** (.007)
Time + Ind.			-.007** (.002)	-.005* (.002)
Age				.013*** (.001)

Education				.262*** (.048)
Gender				.305*** (.04)
Intercept	-2.434*** (.042)	-2.594*** (.05)	-2.736*** (.070)	-3.166*** (.075)
Adjusted R²	.098	0.10	.088	.111
N	16 368	16 368	16 368	16 368

*** p≤.001, **p≤.01, *p≤.05. Source: Super-SOM, Dependent variable: Like/Dislike Christian Democrats (-5 - 5)

Appendix 3

Data of the bivariate analyses

Dealignment

DV: party sympathy (Cramer's V)

Year	Church attendance	Prayer	Salvation
1986			0,18
1987			
1988	0,28	0,2	0,21
1989	0,31		
1990	0,19		0,16
1991	0,29		0,2
1992	0,29		0,19
1993	0,25		0,17
1994	0,23		0,17
1995	0,2	0,15	0,18
1996	0,29		0,23
1997	0,18		
1998	0,22	0,14	0,13
1999	0,21	0,15	
2000	0,19	0,15	0,15
2001	0,23	0,19	
2002	0,23	0,14	0,15
2003	0,21	0,13	
2004	0,28	0,18	0,19
2005	0,23	0,16	
2006	0,24	0,17	0,2
2007	0,21	0,13	
2008	0,2	0,16	0,17
2009	0,25	0,16	
2010	0,24	0,16	
2011	0,24	0,15	0,2
2012	0,23	0,16	
2013	0,22	0,16	
2014	0,2	0,14	0,14
2015	0,19	0,15	
2016	0,2	0,12	

DV: Voting for the Christian Democrats (Cramer's V)

Year	Church attendance	Prayer	Salvation
1986			
1987			
1988	0,28	0,24	0,31
1991	0,34		0,34
1994	0,26		0,29
1998	0,27	0,2	0,2
2002	0,3	0,23	0,26
2006	0,29	0,23	0,36
2010	0,32	0,25	
2014	0,2	0,2	0,2
2015			
2016			

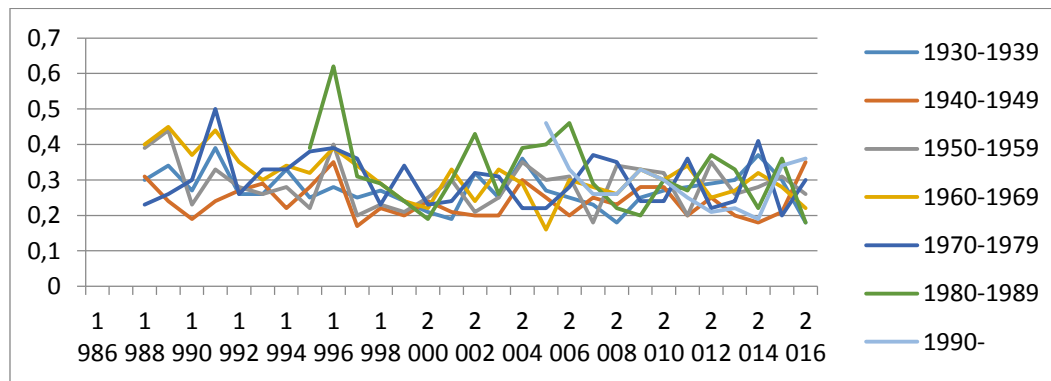
DV: Sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats (eta)

Year	Church attendance	Prayer	Salvation
1986			0,42
1988	0,38	0,41	0,39
1989	0,38		
1990	0,28		0,33
1991	0,36		0,32
1992	0,3		0,3
1993	0,32		0,34
1994	0,31		0,27
1995	0,3	0,31	0,36
1996	0,31		0,32
1997	0,21		
1998	0,27		
1999	0,27		
2000	0,26	0,3	
2001	0,29	0,31	
2002		0,24	
2003		0,22	
2004			
2005	0,28	0,27	
2006	0,29	0,27	0,29
2007	0,24	0,23	
2008		0,25	0,32
2009		0,25	
2010		0,27	
2011		0,2	
2012		0,24	
2013		0,23	
2014		0,24	
2015		0,17	
2016		0,18	

Generational Replacement:

Church attendance and party sympathy (Cramer's v)

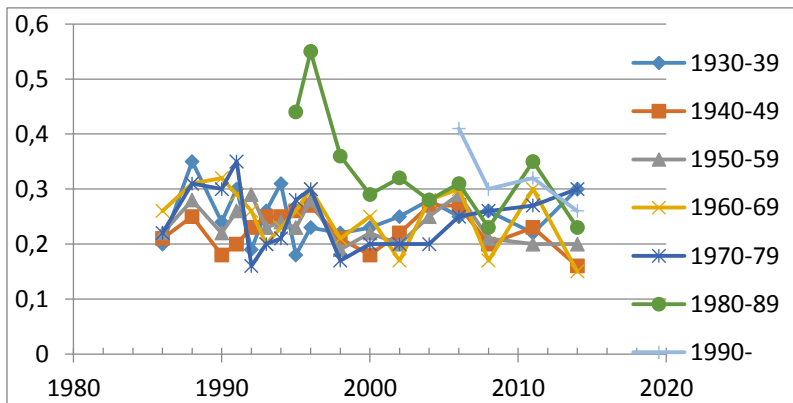
Year	1930-39	1940-49	1950-59	1960-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-
1986							
1987							
1988	0,3	0,31	0,39	0,4	0,23		
1989	0,34	0,24	0,44	0,45	0,26		
1990	0,27	0,19	0,23	0,37	0,3		
1991	0,39	0,24	0,33	0,44	0,5		
1992	0,26	0,27	0,28	0,35	0,26		
1993	0,26	0,29	0,26	0,3	0,33		
1994	0,33	0,22	0,28	0,34	0,33		
1995	0,25	0,28	0,22	0,32	0,38	0,39	
1996	0,28	0,35	0,4	0,39	0,39	0,62	
1997	0,25	0,17	0,2	0,34	0,36	0,31	
1998	0,27	0,22	0,23	0,29	0,23	0,29	
1999	0,24	0,2	0,21	0,24	0,34	0,24	
2000	0,21	0,24	0,25	0,22	0,23	0,19	
2001	0,19	0,21	0,3	0,33	0,24	0,3	
2002	0,32	0,2	0,21	0,24	0,32	0,43	
2003	0,25	0,2	0,25	0,33	0,31	0,26	
2004	0,36	0,3	0,35	0,29	0,22	0,39	
2005	0,27	0,25	0,3	0,16	0,22	0,4	0,46
2006	0,25	0,2	0,31	0,3	0,28	0,46	0,33
2007	0,23	0,25	0,18	0,28	0,37	0,29	0,26
2008	0,18	0,23	0,34	0,26	0,35	0,22	0,26
2009	0,25	0,28	0,33	0,33	0,24	0,2	0,33
2010	0,27	0,28	0,32	0,3	0,24	0,3	0,3
2011	0,28	0,2	0,2	0,34	0,36	0,27	0,25
2012	0,29	0,25	0,35	0,25	0,22	0,37	0,21
2013	0,3	0,2	0,26	0,27	0,24	0,33	0,22
2014	0,37	0,18	0,28	0,32	0,41	0,22	0,19
2015	0,3	0,21	0,31	0,28	0,2	0,36	0,34
2016	0,18	0,35	0,26	0,22	0,3	0,18	0,36



Perception of salvation and party sympathy (Cramer's v)

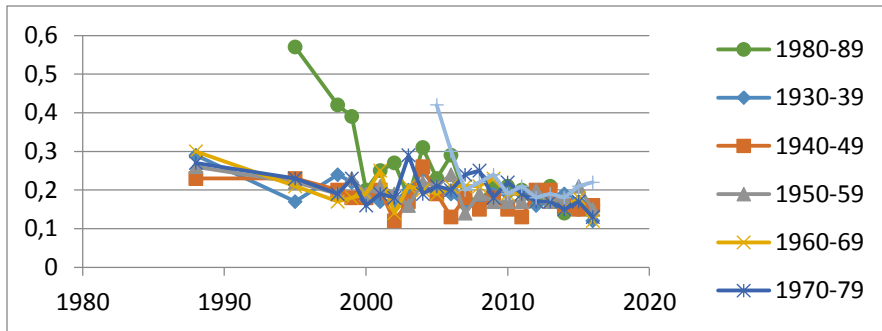
Year	1930-39	1940-49	1950-59	1960-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-
1986	0,2	0,21	0,22	0,26	0,22		
1988	0,35	0,25	0,28	0,31	0,31		
1990	0,24	0,18	0,22	0,32	0,3		
1991	0,3	0,2	0,26	0,29	0,35		
1992	0,19	0,23	0,29	0,26	0,16		
1993	0,26	0,25	0,23	0,2	0,2		
1994	0,31	0,25	0,24	0,23	0,21		
1995	0,18	0,26	0,23	0,26	0,28	0,44	
1996	0,23	0,27	0,28	0,3	0,3	0,55	
1998	0,22	0,21	0,19	0,21	0,17	0,36	

2000	0,23	0,18	0,22	0,25	0,2	0,29	
2002	0,25	0,22	0,2	0,17	0,2	0,32	
2004	0,28	0,27	0,25	0,28	0,2	0,28	
2006	0,25	0,27	0,29	0,3	0,25	0,31	0,41
2008	0,26	0,2	0,21	0,17	0,26	0,23	0,3
2011	0,22	0,23	0,2	0,3	0,27	0,35	0,32
2014	0,3	0,16	0,2	0,15	0,3	0,23	0,26
2015							
2016							



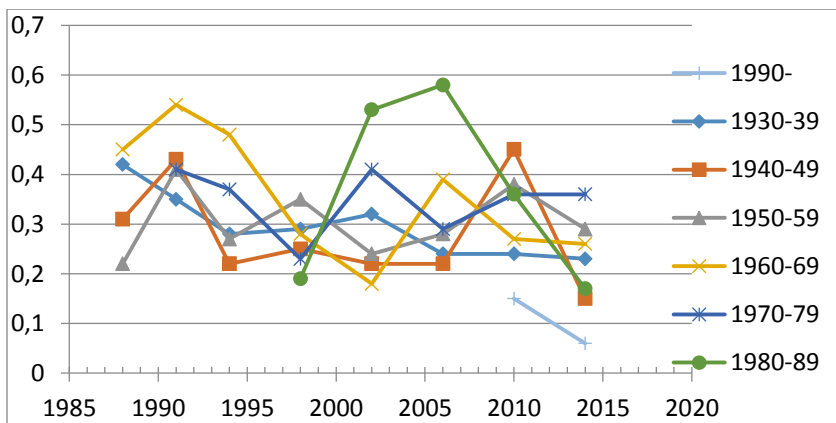
Frequency of prayer and party sympathy (Cramer's v)

Year	1930-39	1940-49	1950-59	1960-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-
1986							
1987							
1988	0,29	0,23	0,26	0,3	0,27		
1995	0,17	0,23	0,22	0,21	0,23	0,57	
1998	0,24	0,2	0,19	0,17	0,19	0,42	
1999	0,22	0,18	0,23	0,18	0,23	0,39	
2000	0,19	0,18	0,19	0,19	0,16	0,2	
2001	0,17	0,2	0,21	0,25	0,19	0,25	
2002	0,17	0,12	0,19	0,14	0,18	0,27	
2003	0,2	0,17	0,16	0,21	0,29	0,18	
2004	0,25	0,26	0,22	0,2	0,19	0,31	
2005	0,2	0,19	0,21	0,19	0,21	0,23	0,42
2006	0,19	0,13	0,24	0,21	0,2	0,29	0,3
2007	0,16	0,18	0,14	0,21	0,24	0,18	0,2
2008	0,16	0,15	0,19	0,21	0,25	0,17	0,22
2009	0,19	0,18	0,17	0,23	0,18	0,21	0,24
2010	0,19	0,15	0,17	0,19	0,22	0,21	0,19
2011	0,19	0,13	0,17	0,19	0,19	0,2	0,21
2012	0,16	0,2	0,2	0,17	0,17	0,18	0,18
2013	0,17	0,2	0,17	0,17	0,17	0,21	0,19
2014	0,19	0,16	0,18	0,15	0,15	0,14	0,18
2015	0,17	0,15	0,21	0,18	0,17	0,15	0,21
2016	0,12	0,16	0,15	0,12	0,13	0,16	0,22



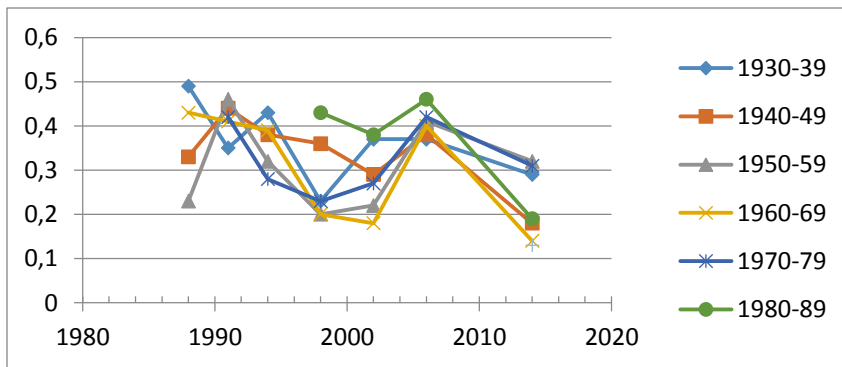
Church attendance and voting for the Christian Democrats (Cramer's V)

Year	1930-39	1940-49	1950-59	1960-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-
1988	0,42	0,31	0,22	0,45			
1991	0,35	0,43	0,41	0,54	0,41		
1994	0,28	0,22	0,27	0,48	0,37		
1998	0,29	0,25	0,35	0,28	0,23	0,19	
2002	0,32	0,22	0,24	0,18	0,41	0,53	
2006	0,24	0,22	0,28	0,39	0,29	0,58	
2010	0,24	0,45	0,38	0,27	0,36	0,36	0,15
2014	0,23	0,15	0,29	0,26	0,36	0,17	0,06
2015							
2016							



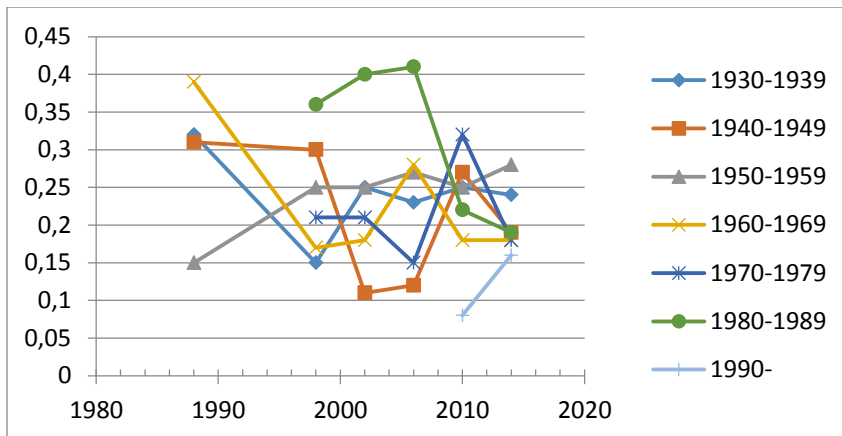
Perception of salvation and voting for the Christian Democrats (Cramer's v)

Year	1930-39	1940-49	1950-59	1960-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-
1988	0,49	0,33	0,23	0,43			
1991	0,35	0,44	0,46	0,41	0,42		
1994	0,43	0,38	0,32	0,39	0,28		
1998	0,23	0,36	0,2	0,2	0,23	0,43	
2002	0,37	0,29	0,22	0,18	0,27	0,38	
2006	0,37	0,38	0,41	0,4	0,42	0,46	
2014	0,29	0,18	0,32	0,14	0,31	0,19	0,13
2015							
2016							



Frequency of prayer and voting for the Christian Democrats (Cramer's V)

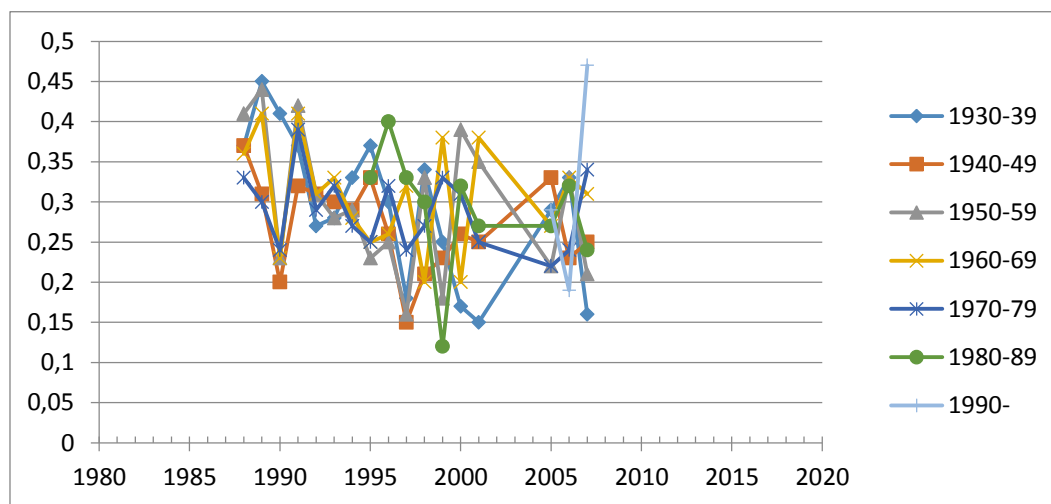
Year	1930-39	1940-49	1950-59	1960-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-
1986							
1987							
1988	0,32	0,31	0,15	0,39			
1998	0,15	0,3	0,25	0,17	0,21	0,36	
2002	0,25	0,11	0,25	0,18	0,21	0,4	
2006	0,23	0,12	0,27	0,28	0,15	0,41	
2010	0,25	0,27	0,25	0,18	0,32	0,22	0,08
2014	0,24	0,19	0,28	0,18	0,18	0,19	0,16
2015							
2016							



Church attendance and sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats (eta)

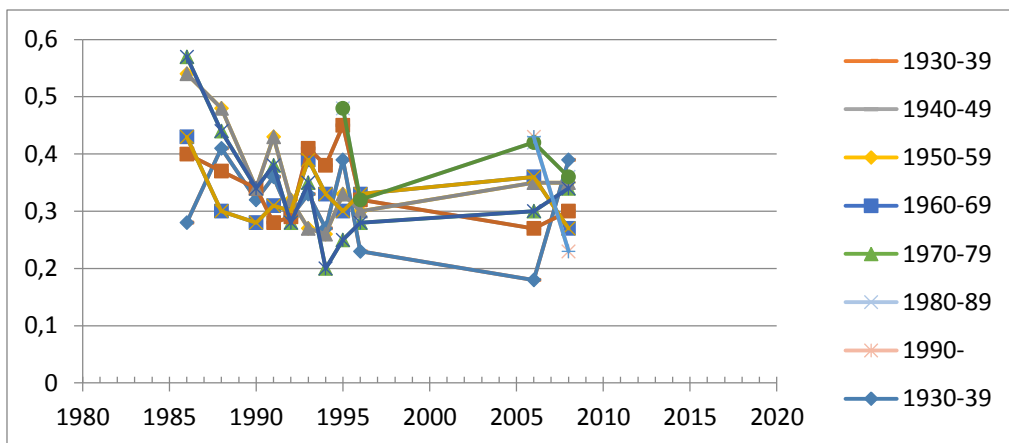
Year	1930-39	1940-49	1950-59	1960-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-
1986							
1987							
1988	0,37	0,37	0,41	0,36	0,33		
1989	0,45	0,31	0,44	0,41	0,3		
1990	0,41	0,2	0,23	0,23	0,24		
1991	0,37	0,32	0,42	0,41	0,39		
1992	0,27	0,31	0,31	0,31	0,29		
1993	0,28	0,3	0,28	0,33	0,32		
1994	0,33	0,29	0,29	0,28	0,27		
1995	0,37	0,33	0,23	0,25	0,25	0,33	
1996	0,3	0,26	0,25	0,26	0,32	0,4	

1997	0,18	0,15	0,16	0,32	0,24	0,33	
1998	0,34	0,21	0,33	0,2	0,27	0,3	
1999	0,25	0,23	0,18	0,38	0,33	0,12	
2000	0,17	0,26	0,39	0,2	0,31	0,32	
2001	0,15	0,25	0,35	0,38	0,25	0,27	
2005	0,29	0,33	0,22	0,27	0,22	0,27	0,29
2006	0,33	0,23	0,33	0,33	0,24	0,32	0,19
2007	0,16	0,25	0,21	0,31	0,34	0,24	0,47
2008							
2009							
2010							
2011							
2012							
2013							
2014							
2015							
2016							



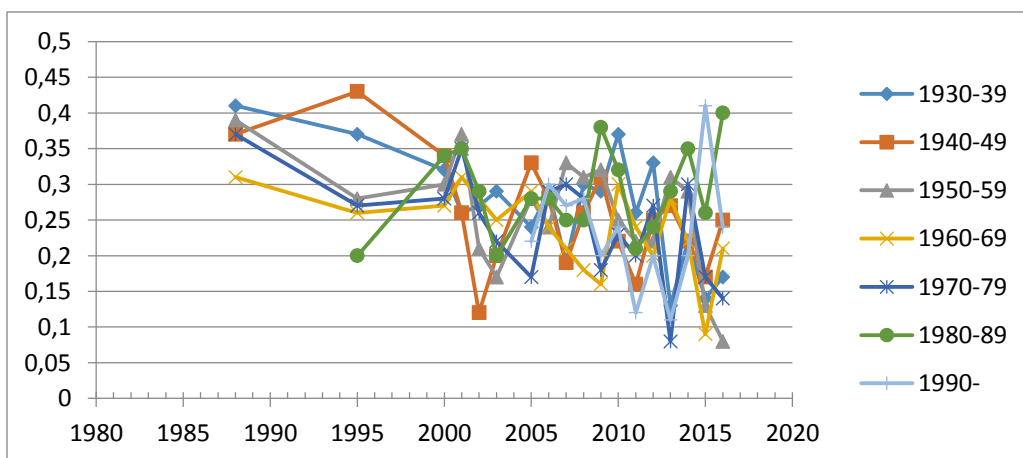
Perception of salvation and sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats (eta)

Year	1930-39	1940-49	1950-59	1960-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-
1986	0,28	0,4	0,54	0,43	0,57		
1988	0,41	0,37	0,48	0,3	0,44		
1990	0,32	0,34	0,34	0,28	0,34		
1991	0,36	0,28	0,43	0,31	0,38		
1992	0,29	0,29	0,32	0,3	0,28		
1993	0,33	0,41	0,27	0,39	0,35		
1994	0,27	0,38	0,26	0,33	0,2		
1995	0,39	0,45	0,33	0,3	0,25	0,48	
1996	0,23	0,32	0,3	0,33	0,28	0,32	
2006	0,18	0,27	0,35	0,36	0,3	0,42	0,43
2008	0,39	0,3	0,35	0,27	0,34	0,36	0,23
2009							
2010							
2011							
2012							
2013							
2014							
2015							
2016							



Frequency of prayer and sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats (eta)

Year	1930-39	1940-49	1950-59	1960-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-
1986							
1987							
1988	0,41	0,37	0,39	0,31	0,37		
1995	0,37	0,43	0,28	0,26	0,27	0,2	
2000	0,32	0,34	0,3	0,27	0,28	0,34	
2001	0,26	0,26	0,37	0,31	0,35	0,35	
2002	0,27	0,12	0,21	0,28	0,26	0,29	
2003	0,29	0,2	0,17	0,25	0,22	0,2	
2005	0,24	0,33	0,28	0,29	0,17	0,28	0,22
2006	0,29	0,28	0,24	0,24	0,29	0,28	0,3
2007	0,19	0,19	0,33	0,21	0,3	0,25	0,27
2008	0,3	0,26	0,31	0,18	0,28	0,25	0,28
2009	0,29	0,31	0,32	0,16	0,18	0,38	0,2
2010	0,37	0,22	0,25	0,3	0,23	0,32	0,24
2011	0,26	0,16	0,22	0,24	0,2	0,21	0,12
2012	0,33	0,25	0,22	0,2	0,27	0,24	0,2
2013	0,13	0,27	0,31	0,28	0,08	0,29	0,11
2014	0,22	0,22	0,29	0,22	0,3	0,35	0,2
2015	0,14	0,17	0,13	0,09	0,17	0,26	0,41
2016	0,17	0,25	0,08	0,21	0,14	0,4	0,24



Appendix 4

Full OLS models with control variables for the formal test generational replacement with the dependent variable: sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats

Fig 1. Regression model.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Church Attendance	1.138*** (.026)	1.115*** (.026)	1.280*** (.057)	1.230*** (.057)
Time		.041*** (.003)	.047*** (.004)	.05*** (.004)
Time + Ind.			-.011* (.005)	-.011* (.005)
Generation old(ref)				
Generation middle				-.304*** (.039)
Generation young				-.528*** (.047)
Education				.084* (.039)
Gender				.257*** (.035)
Intercept	-1,330*** (.023)	-1.785*** (.041)	-1.854*** (.049)	-1.771*** (.056)
Adjusted R²	.077	.084	.084	.092
N	22 306	22 306	22 306	22 306

*** p≤.001, **p≤.01, *p≤.05. Source: Super-SOM, Dependent variable: Like/Dislike Christian Democrats (-5 - 5)

Fig 2. Regression model.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Prayer	.570*** (.015)	.571*** (.015)	.848*** (.046)	.825*** (.046)
Time		.007** (.002)	.018*** (.003)	.021** (.003)
Time + Ind.			-.013*** (.002)	-.013*** (.002)
Generation old (ref)				
Generation middle				-.402*** (.039)
Generation young				-.559*** (.042)
Education				.04 (.035)
Gender				.092** (.033)
Intercept	-1,139*** (.020)	-1.287*** (.054)	-1.512*** (.066)	-1.298*** (.069)
Adjusted R²	.058	.058	.06	.067
N	24 945	24 945	24 945	24 945

*** p≤.001, **p≤.01, *p≤.05. Source: Super-SOM, Dependent variable: Like/Dislike Christian Democrats (-5 - 5)

Fig 3. Regression model.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Salvation	.652***	.649***	.709***	.699***

	(.017)	(.017)	(.029)	(.029)
Time		.02*** (.003)	.036*** (.007)	.036*** (.007)
Time + Ind.			-.007** (.002)	-.006* (.003)
Generation old(ref)				
Generation middle				-.275*** (.048)
Generation young				-.509*** (.06)
Education				.224*** (.049)
Gender				.256*** (.043)
Intercept	-2.435*** (.045)	-2.610*** (.053)	-2.746*** (.074)	-2.709*** (.082)
Adjusted R²	.093	0.96	.096	.105
N	13 707	13 707	13 707	13 707

*** p≤.001, **p≤.01, *p≤.05. Source: Super-SOM, Dependent variable: Like/Dislike Christian Democrats (-5 - 5)

Appendix 5

Analysis: Regressions of generational replacement with generation as an interaction term

	Model 4 Best party: Christian Democrats			Model 5 Voting for Christian Democrats			Model 6 Like/Dislike the Christian Democrats		
	1a	1b	1c	2a	2b	2c	3a	3b	3c
Church attendance	1.236*** (.029)			1.248*** (.052)			1.129*** (.03)		
Prayer		.698*** (.016)			.616*** (.028)			.551*** (.017)	
Salvation			.759*** (.028)			.707*** (.04)			.682*** (.02)
Generation	-.871*** (.092)	-.672*** (.075)	-.780** (.255)	-.732*** (.159)	-.671*** (.128)	-.448 (.354)	-.22*** (.054)	-.331*** (.044)	-.009 (.115)
Interaction Term	.392*** (.068)	.175*** (.034)	.102 (.067)	.292* (.121)	.164** (.061)	-.001 (.096)	-.107 (.064)	.019 (.033)	-.124** (.043)
Education	-.026 (.041)	-.070 (.037)	-.267*** (.068)	-.268*** (.07)	-.288*** (.066)	-.416*** (.099)	.112** (.039)	.022 (.035)	.253*** (.049)
Gender	-.085* (.039)	.146*** (.037)	-.180** (.064)	-.125 (.069)	.134** (.066)	-.208* (.095)	.259*** (.035)	.089** (.033)	.254*** (.043)
Intercept	-3.613	-3.761	-4.715	-3.364	-3.342	-4.464	-1.426	-1.082	-2.635
Adjusted/ Nagelkerke R²	.140	.130	.146	.145	.109	.125	.081	.061	.10
N	55 087	71 940	21 547	16 339	19 734	10 131	22 307	24 958	13 707

*p>0.05, **p>0.01, ***p>0.001,

Comment: The values represent b-coefficient, standard error in parenthesis and significance level. Model 1 Dependent variable: Best party the Christian Democrats, models estimated using logistic regression with a dichotomous dependent variable. Model 2 Dependent variable: Vote for the Christian Democrats, models estimated using logistic regression with a dichotomous dependent variable. Model 3: Dependent variable: Sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats, ranging from -5 (strongly dislike) to 5 (strongly like) where 0 represent neither like nor dislike, models estimated by using Ordinary Least Square regression. Church attendance is coded: 0- Never, 1 – At least once during the last 12 months, 2 – At least once during the previous month. Frequency of

prayer is coded 0- Never, 1 – At least once during the last 12 months, 2 – At least once during the previous month. Perception of salvation is coded: 1 – Not important at all, 2 – Not particularly important, 3 – Neither important nor unimportant, 4 – Important, 5 – Very Important. Generation was coded as binary variable where older cohorts were coded as 0 and included the generations born between 1930-1960 and younger cohorts was coded as 1 and included generations born in the 1970 and onwards. The interaction term was conducted by summing the religious variable and the generation variable. Education is measured as low (0) and high (1). Gender is measured man (0) and woman (1). Source: The National SOM surveys 1986-2016.

Full OLS models with control variables for the second formal test of generational replacement with the dependent variable: sympathy scores for the Christian Democrats

Fig 1. Regression model.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Church Attendance	1.138*** (.026)	1.133*** (.026)	1.157*** (.03)	1.129*** (.03)
Generation		-.27*** (.042)	-.212*** (.054)	-.22*** (.054)
Interaction term Gen*Rel.			-.110* (.064)	-.107 (.064)
Education				.112** (.039)
Gender				.259*** (.035)
Intercept	-1,330*** (.023)	-1.268*** (.025)	-1.282*** (.026)	-1.426*** (.031)
Adjusted R²	.077	.078	.078	.081
N	22 307	22 307	22 307	22 307

*** p≤.001, **p≤.01, *p≤.05. Source: Super-SOM, Dependent variable: Like/Dislike Christian Democrats (-5 - 5)

Fig 2. Regression model.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Frequency of prayer	.569*** (.015)	.563*** (.015)	.559*** (.017)	.551*** (.017)
Generation		-.312*** (.036)	-.323*** (.043)	-.331*** (.044)
Interaction term Gen*Rel.			-.014 (.033)	.019 (.033)
Education				.022 (.035)
Gender				.089** (.033)
Intercept	-1,139*** (.02)	-1.041*** (.023)	-1.038*** (.024)	-1.082*** (.029)
Adjusted R²	.058	.061	.061	.061
N	24 958	24 958	24 958	24 958

*** p≤.001, **p≤.01, *p≤.05. Source: Super-SOM, Dependent variable: Like/Dislike Christian Democrats (-5 - 5)

Fig 3. Regression model.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Perception of salvation	.652*** (.017)	.657*** (.017)	.684*** (.02)	.682*** (.02)
Generation		-.303*** (.054)	-.004 (.115)	-.009 (.115)
Interaction term Gen*Rel.			-.13** (.033)	-.124** (.043)
Education				.253*** (.049)
Gender				.254*** (.043)
Intercept	-2.434*** (.045)	-2.386*** (.046)	-2.447*** (.05)	-2.635*** (.055)
Adjusted R²	.093	.095	.096	.10
N	13 708	13 708	13 708	13 707

*** p≤.001, **p≤.01, *p≤.05. Source: Super-SOM, Dependent variable: Like/Dislike Christian Democrats (-5 - 5)

