

The Politically Active Altruistic Individual: What Is the Effect of Altruism on Political Participation and Political Orientation?

ABSTRACT

A persistent problem of the existing models of political behaviour is that they are heavily based on the assumption of the rational citizen, thereby neglecting the fact that people can also behave altruistically. In political sciences this is problematic because empirical facts regarding voter turnout cannot be explained using costs-benefits analysis only. An important question therefore remains whether the model of the self-interested citizen is still relevant for predicting political participation and political orientation, if it turns out these phenomena do not stem from pure self-interest but from altruistic beliefs. There is no consensus on the effect of altruism on left-right political orientation. Furthermore, the effect of altruism on two-dimensional political scales including progressive-conservative orientation, has not been studied before. In this article I test the effect altruism on voter turnout, joining demonstrations, left-right political orientation and progressive-conservative orientation by using logistic regression analysis with data obtained from the European Social Survey wave 9 in the Netherlands. The main findings suggest that in the Netherlands, individuals who score high on altruism are more likely to place themselves on the left side of the left-right political scale and are more likely to vote for progressively oriented political parties instead of conservatively oriented political parties.

KEY WORDS: altruism • altruism theory of voting • voter turnout • demonstration behaviour • political orientation • political left-right scale • political progressive-conservative scale

Bachelorproject Sociologie, Utrecht University
Author: Marise van 't Wout (6578292)
Supervisor: Dr. Vardan Barsegyan
Second reviewer: Dr. M.D. Anne Brons
Date: June 14, 2021



Universiteit Utrecht

The Politically Active Altruistic Individual:

What is the effect of altruism on political participation and political orientation?

1. Introduction

The concept of altruism has been around since the 19th century, when the term was invented by Auguste Comte, a French philosopher and sociologist. Comte defined altruism as concern for the welfare of others as a result of overcoming self-interest, and thereby differentiated between altruistic motivation and selfish motivation. According to Comte, altruism is necessary for the well-being and progress of society (Bar-Tal, 1985; Feigin, Owens, & Goodyear-Smith, 2014).

However since the invention of the term, altruistic behaviour has rarely been incorporated in models for predicting political behaviour. For example, the original calculus for voting behaviour assumes the homo economicus. In addition to being an intriguing, sociological concept, altruism would therefore be, an interesting predictor of macro phenomena in society. If altruistic beliefs prove to be a better predictor of political participation and political orientation than pure self-interest, as assumed with the homo economicus, the relevance of the model of the self-interested citizen must be questioned (Fiorina, 1990; Dawes, Loewen, & Fowler, 2011).

In recent years, altruism in the political arena, has in recent years received some attention in the academic literature. For example, Zettler & Hilbig (2010) found a strong positive association between altruism and left-wing attitudes, and altruism was found to account for substantial variance in political orientation. In a subsequent study, they confirmed these positive associations again and additionally found altruism to be a predictor of voting behaviour in nationwide elections (Zettler, Hilbig, & Haubrich, 2011). Yet not everyone is on the same page in terms of research findings. Fowler (2006) & Loewen did not find a significant direct effect of general altruism on the tendency to vote (Loewen, 2010, as cited in Dawes, Loewen, & Fowler, 2011). Findings thus seem contradictory to this day, and more evidence linking altruism and different forms of political behaviour is needed.

This article will examine whether individuals who score high on altruism are more likely to participate in politics in the Netherlands than those who score low on altruism. Political participation will be measured separately as voter turnout and participation in demonstrations. Other goals of this article are to examine the effect of altruism on the placement of the self on the political left-right scale and to examine the effect of altruism on individuals' progressive-conservative orientation. This article adds to the literature by examining the effect of altruism

on types of political participation that have not been tested yet, namely participation in demonstrations. This research will show which type of participation is affected by altruism the most. In addition, the effect of altruism on two-dimensional political space has never been investigated before. Theoretical progress is made, not only by the left-right scale as the dependent variable, but also the progressive-conservative scale. Finally, this article explores new areas by using Dutch data, rather than using data from other liberal democracies in which the effect of altruism on political participation has already been explored in various ways.

To examine the hypotheses, four logistic regression analyses are conducted with altruism as the independent variable and voter turnout, participation in demonstrations, left-right orientation and progressive-conservative orientation as the independent variables. The data used is retrieved from the Dutch questionnaire of the European Social Survey wave 9. These data have been collected through face-to-face interviews.

2. Theory

2.1. The Definition of Altruism.

Bar-Tal states that “altruistic behaviour (a) must benefit to other persons, (b) must be performed voluntarily, (c) must be performed intentionally, (d) the benefit must be the goal by itself, and (e) must be performed without expecting any external reward.” (Bar-Tal, 1985; Giugni & Grasso, 2019, p. 431). Regardless of what definition of altruism or altruistic behaviour one would use, what all of definitions have in common is that they emphasize the cost of the altruists’ actions and that no self-interest is involved (Piliavin & Charng, 1990).

2.2. The Effect of Altruism on Political Participation

The altruism theory of voting builds on Downs’s (1957) cost-benefit analysis of voting. The cost benefit analysis of voting argued that narrow, economic self-interest is not sufficient to explain voter turnout. The altruism theory of voting adds to this by stating that citizens who think that others will benefit from a certain election outcome will vote, even if this involves costs in terms of time and effort. From the rational choice theory perspective, it is irrational for a citizen to vote and gain political information to do so, given the costs and benefits of that action (Jankowski, 2007). However, citizens are in fact politically active in large numbers (Dawes, Loewen, & Fowler, 2011). So models of political participation based on self-interest alone contradict observed behaviours. (Kam, Cranmer, & Fowler, 2007). If self-interest alone does not motivate political participation, what else does? There might thus be a possibility that individuals, when choosing to participate politically, are not thinking only of themselves, but

are transcending self-interest and including the benefits to others in their considerations (Fowler & Kam, 2007). If that should be the case, the idea of motivation due to economic self-interest will need to be revised, at least in the area of political participation, but perhaps also in other areas in which it is thought that homo economicus would be the model for human behaviour.

However, the relationship between altruism and political participation is context-dependent (Kam, Cranmer, & Fowler, 2007). Despite the proposition that altruists generally participate more in politics, altruists are logically more likely to participate if they may believe their actions have the potential to make a large group of individuals better off. Yet, there may also be a perception among altruists, that their actions in terms of political participation may disadvantage a group. In these circumstances, a difference between altruists and egoists in political participation is likely to be less present because making others worse off is not in line with altruistic attitudes.

According to Jankowski (2019), using the altruism theory of voting has several advantages. First, the altruism model of voting can not only explain why someone votes, but also how someone votes. This will be elaborated on later in the theoretical framework. A second advantage is that the altruism theory of voting can explain some basic, well-established empirical facts of voting behaviour. Facts about political participation that cannot be explained using cost-benefit analysis, such as Downs' (1957) theory, mentioned previously. These facts address the observation that (1) the better educated and informed citizens have a higher propensity to vote, (2) political efficacy of individuals affects their decision to vote and to engage in other forms of political participation, (3) the roll-off (ballot incompleteness) phenomenon and (4) voters frequently vote strategically. The other advantage of the altruistic explanation of voting is that it can be elevated to other forms of political participation, such as signing a petition and participating in demonstrations. The altruism theory of voting, can thus predict other forms of political participation in as well. Having discussed this, leads me to the first hypothesis: H1. Individuals who score high on altruism are more likely to vote in nationwide elections in the Netherlands than those who score low on altruism.

Predicting other form of political participation by means of altruism is necessary because individuals in Western democratic societies face few obstacles (costs) when casting their vote. Voting, due to its low cost, does not necessarily explain why voters would cross the obstacles to benefit someone else. Other forms of political participation, next to voting, the most basic behavioural expression of one's political view, include joining demonstrations and signing petitions. These other forms of political behaviour such as demonstrating may have more costs associated with them (Zettler, Hilbig, & Haubrich, 2011). As stated before,

demonstrating may have higher costs than other forms of political behaviour. Based on the assumption that the largest differences in costs are between voter turnout (relatively low costs) and joining demonstrations (relatively high costs), I choose to also examine the effect of altruism on joining demonstrations. The effect of altruism on participating in demonstrations has not been investigated before and this study can serve as exploratory research on this topic. Additionally, the inclusion of demonstrating as a form of political behaviour will allow me to compare the effects of altruism on these different forms of participation.

Contrary to differences in voting, differences in participation in demonstrations are less shaped by structural factors such as education, non-citizenship and social class. This suggests that demonstrating is an attractive tool for more disadvantaged people (Gallego, 2007). Joining demonstrations as political participation could thus attract a broader group of people than the activity of voting, which is interesting to keep in mind when making meaning of the analyses.

These factor taken together, this article examines political participation in the form of voter turnout and joining demonstrations. The second hypothesis involved is as follows: H2. Individuals who score high on altruism are more likely to take part in demonstrations in the Netherlands than those who score low on altruism.

2.2. The Effect of Altruism on the Left-Right Political Spectrum.

A person's ideology is often seen as a continuum with the poles left-wing and right-wing (Zettler & Hilbig, 2010). Zettler, Hilbig & Haubrich (2011) argue that altruism is aligned with left-wing ideology because the definition of altruistic action overlaps one of the core elements of left-wing ideology, namely the rejection of inequality. In other words, what altruism and left-wing ideology have in common is the willingness to give something to others, to support social equality. In addition, the rigidity of right-wing ideology seems difficult to reconcile with altruistic behaviour.

The study of Zettler, Hilbig and Haubrich is the only study to examine the effect of altruism on political orientation. However, there are studies that explain the effect of other personality traits on left-right political orientation. Personality traits that are part of, or related to the definition of altruism such as sensitive, open, tolerant, nuanced, open-minded, open to experience, have been associated with left-wing orientation. Other characteristics, which imply the opposite of altruistic behaviour are rigid, intolerant, xenophobic, aggressive, cold and close-minded. These characteristics are instead associated with right-wing orientation (Carney, Jost, Gosling, Potter, 2008). The discussed expected effect of altruism on left-right orientation, leads

me to formulate the following hypothesis: H3. The higher an individual's score on altruism, the higher the chance that an individual is left-wing oriented.

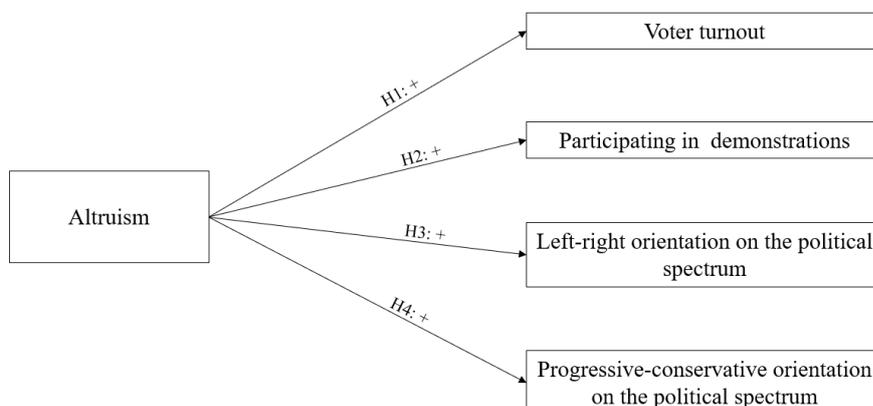
2.3. The Effect of Altruism on the Progressive-Conservative Political Spectrum

In the Netherlands, a two-dimensional political space is often used to classify an individual based on his political orientation and ideology instead of a one-dimensional political space as in the United States of America (Louwers, Rosema, 2014). An analysis by Laméris, Jong A Pin & Garretsen (2017) empirically shows that the traditional left-right scale provides a very limited picture of the political ideology of Dutch citizens. So a categorisation based on more dimensions provides more and better insight into the political views of the electorate.

In the two-dimensional political space the left-right scale is used for the socio-economic dimension and the progressive-conservative scale for the socio-cultural dimension (Voorn, 2021). Often left-wing parties are progressive, but they do not have to be, because the progressive-conservative dimension is not only about money but also about issues such as climate, European collaboration and migration.

Theories on the effect of altruism on the conservative-conservative axis are lacking. Therefore this exploratory research is needed. An expectation can however be outlined based on compatibility. Left-wing and conservative views, or right-wing and progressive views, are incompatible for many people. Only a few parties deviate from this. The left-conservative and right-progressive, therefore often remain relatively ‘empty’ (Kieskompas, 2021). Based on incompatibility of left and conservative and right and progressive the fourth hypothesis, together with the expectation that altruistic individuals are more likely to be left-oriented, is: H4. The higher an individual's score on altruism, the higher the chance that an individual is progressively oriented on the political spectrum.

Figure 1: The Conceptual Model of the Effect of Altruism on Political Participation and Political Orientation.



3. Data & Methods

3.1. The European Social Survey

The European Social Survey (ESS) was developed in 1995 and was established to create a reliable dataset that allows academics, researchers and policy makers to measure social attitudes, beliefs and behaviours between and across European nations. Since 2002, every two years around 1500 face-to-face interviews are conducted in the participating countries. The individuals are selected by strict random probability methods, using sampling frames of individuals, households or addresses at every stage. They represent the entire residential population above the age of 15 in each country. Since 2002, 38 countries have taken part in at least one round of our survey and 15 countries participated in all nine rounds. The respondents are asked over 200 questions, all translated into the language of the country in which the respondent resides. Most questions are repeated in every round. Once the data has been collected and anonymized it is added to the archive. Subsequently the data are being weighted to insure that the sample of respondents accurately reflects the demographics of the entire population.

In this article, data from the Dutch dataset coming from the ninth wave of the ESS (ESS9) are used. The data from the ninth wave in the Netherlands were collected between 28/08/2018 and 22/01/2019. The ninth wave is the most recent published wave. In the Netherlands, the ESS is also better known as the ‘Where does the Netherlands stand’ survey. The Netherlands has participated in all rounds that have taken place so far. The response rate in The Netherlands in the ninth wave was 49.6%. Compared to the target response rate of 70% this might seem low, but compared to the average response rate of all countries of 51%, the Dutch response rate is not significantly deviating. The response rate of 49.6% translates to 1673 Dutch respondents between 15 and 90 years old.

3.2.1. The measurement of the dependent variables.

Voter turnout

To examine whether Dutch respondents had voted in the Dutch national election of 2017, the following question was asked in the European Social Survey: ‘*Some people don’t vote nowadays for one reason or another. Did you vote in the last Dutch national election in 2017?*’. Respondent could answer with *yes* (1), *no* (2), *not eligible to vote* (3), (refusal, 7) or (don’t know, 8).

From this variable, I created a dummy variables to test the first hypothesis where it is necessary to distinguish between voters and non-voters. A score of 1 on ‘voted’ indicates that

the respondent voted in the 2017 national elections in the Netherlands. A score of 0 on 'voted' means that the respondent did not vote in the 2017 national elections in the Netherlands.

Taking part in demonstrations

On the question ‘*During the last 12 months, have you taken part in a lawful public demonstration?*’ respondents could answer ‘yes’ (1) or ‘no’ (2).

To create a dummy variable, I decided the scores on 'yes' retained the value of 1, and the scores on 'no' should be given the value 0.

Self-placement on the left-right scale

The Dutch version of the ESS9 questionnaire contains a question about the left or right political orientation of the respondent. This question reads: ‘*In politics, people sometimes talk about "left" and "right". Where would you place yourself on the scale, where 0 means left and 10 means right?*’

There is no binary choice of whether one is left or right oriented. In addition, the value 5 is located exactly between the values 0 (left) and 10 (right). For the ease of interpretation, I have rescaled all dependent variables, including this one, to 0/1 variables. The new value of the scores 0, 1, 2, 3 and 4 is 1 and belongs to the variable that represents left-wing orientation. The scores 6 through 10 have been given a new value of 0 and represent right-wing orientation. The value 5 on the scale does not enter into the analysis and is marked as missing.

Progressive-Conservative orientation based on voting behaviour

The ESS9 did not include questions on the respondent's progressive-conservative orientation. Still, there is a way to find out whether respondents lean more towards the conservative or progressive side of the political spectrum. To do so, I use the question ‘*Which party did you vote for in the last national election?*’. Respondents were given a choice of 14 Dutch political parties, an option 'other', an option 'blanc', 'refusal' and 'don't know'.

To classify a political party on the progressive-conservative axis requires theory. The classification in this paper relies on the official voter guide (Kieskompas, 2021) that in every election in the Netherlands, classifies parties on the political spectrum. The classification of political parties on the political spectrum is based on the position of parties on 30 propositions, on the following themes: foreign countries, ethics, housing market, environment, security, work and income, economy, healthcare, traffic and immigration.

Table 1. The Dutch political landscape based on kieskompas 2017.

Party orientation	Left	Right
Progressive	DENK, PvdD, SP, 50PLUS, GL, PvdA	D66
Conservative	CU	CDA, SGP, PVV, VVD

As can be seen in table 1, in 2017 the parties CU, CDA, SGP, PVV and VVD are classified in the conservative half of the spectrum. The remaining parties, DENK, PvdD, SP, 50PLUS, GL, PvdA and D66, tend more towards the progressive side. From this question a dummy variables has been created. The respondents who said they had voted for one of the parties on the progressive side of the spectrum score 1 on the variable ‘progressive, the others, voters for the conservative parties, have been given a score of 0. Cases wherein individuals had voted for a party that is not placed on the political spectrum of the ‘kieskompas’ are made missings.

3.2.2. The measurement of the independent variable.

Altruism

In the European Social Survey, altruism was not directly measured. However, the different components that altruistic behaviour consists of were hidden in a number of statements. The statements in which altruistic behaviour of the respondent could be measured were: 1. ‘*It is important for me to be humble and modest. I try not to draw attention to myself*’, 2. ‘*It is very important to me to help the people around me. I want to take care of their well-being*’, 3. ‘*I think it is important that everyone in the world be treated equally. I think everyone should have equal opportunities in life*’, 4. ‘*It is important for me to be loyal to my friends. I want to devote myself to the people who are dear to me*’, 5. ‘*It is important to him always to behave properly. He wants to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong.*’ and 6. ‘*It is important to me to listen to people who are different from me. Even when I disagree with them, I still want to understand them.*’ Respondent were able indicate to what extent the statement applied to them by using the response options: *Very much like me* (1), *Like me* (2), *Somewhat like me* (3), *A little like me* (4), *Not like me* (5), *Not like me at all* (6).

To arrive at a single variable that measures altruism from the above statements, a few steps precede. First, I recoded all negative phrased response categories, so that a higher score means that the statement does in fact apply to the respondent, and a lower score less so. Next, I performed a reliability analysis. Because altruism still is an abstract and complex concept, this paper considers a Cronbach’s alpha of .581 acceptable (Morling et. al., 2017). With an abstract concept such as altruism, it may be more important that the operationalisation be theoretically

justified, rather than just empirically. The use of the 6 items is theoretically justifiable because they encompass all facets of the concept of altruism as defined by the CBS, the Central Bureau of Statistics in the Netherlands (2020), namely sincerity, caring, accommodating, modesty, and compassion.

Subsequently, I calculated the scale of altruism as the mean of the combined items in which the respondent should have answered at least four of the included items in each scale to be a valid case.

3.2.3. The measurement of control variables

I have included standard measures of characteristics that have been linked to both altruism and voter turnout, demonstration behaviour and political orientation as control variables. Findings consistently demonstrate that gender has an effect on altruism, voter turnout, taking part in demonstrations, and the placement of the self on the political spectrum. (Brañas-Garza, Capraro, & Rascon-Ramirez, 2018; Andreoni & Vesterlund, 2001; Dassonneville & Kostelka, 2020; Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Norrander & Wilcox, 2008; Giger, 2009). Women is a dichotomous variable in which a score of 1 means the respondent is a female. Age also has been found to have an effect on altruism as well as on voter turnout and participation in demonstrations (Sparrow, Swirsky, Kudus, Spaniol, 2021; Bhatti, Hansen, & Wass, 2012; Norris, 2002; Peterson, Smith & Hibbing, 2020). Age is a continuous variable. Also included as control variable is education which is expressed in (rounded up) years of full-time education.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the independent, dependent and control variables.

	<i>N</i>	Mean	Std. dev.	Min.	Max.
Altruism	1118	4.629	0.524	1.50	6.00
Voter turnout	1121	0.829		0	1.00
Joining demonstrations	1122	0.036		0	1.00
Left-wing orientation	877	0.454		0	1.00
Progressive orientation	1122	0.493		0	1.00
Age	1115	48.960	18.508	15	90
Women	1122	0.457		0	1.00
Education in years	1115	14.640	4.345	0	50
Valid N (after listwise deletion)	877				

Notes. Descriptive statistics of the variables used in the regression models with the number of cases (*N*), range (minimum and maximum), mean, and standard deviation of each variable.

3.2.4. Analysis method

Because the dependent variables in this article are binomial, logistic regressions are used to analyse the effects of altruism. Logistic regression works very similar to linear regression but the former is used to obtain log odds, which can be converted into odds ratio. The ‘ordinary’ linear regression cannot be used because the normality assumption and the assumption of homoscedasticity are violated with the use of the dependent binary variable.

The logistic model is based on probability ratios: odds. The odds in the regressions will be: the probability of going to vote (pvote) divided by the probability of not going to vote (pnotvote), the probability of going to demonstrate (pdemonstrate) divided by the probability of not going to demonstrate (pnotdemonstrate), the probability of being right wing (pright) divided by the probability of being left wing (pleft), and the probability of being conservative (pconservative) divided by the probability of being progressive (pprogressive). An odds has a range of 0 to infinity. (Sperande, 2013; Sieben & Linssen, 2009).

3.2.5. Analytical strategy

Before conducting analysis, listwise deletion was applied as is common when using logistic regression analysis. This method reduced the number of respondents remaining for the analyses without missings to 877. To test the first hypothesis 'Individuals who score high on altruism vote are more probable to vote in nationwide elections in the Netherlands than those who score low on altruism' I performed the first logistic regression. The control variables ‘women’, ‘age’ and ‘education’ are part of the regression. Secondly, I tested the hypothesis ‘Individuals who score high on altruism are more probable to take in demonstrations in the Netherlands than those who score low on altruism’ with another logistic regression. Again the control variables are part of the regression. Following, I performed a logistic regressions to test the hypothesis ‘Individuals, in the Netherlands, who score high on altruism are more likely to place themselves on the left on the political left-right scale’. Finally to test the fourth hypothesis ‘The higher an individual's score on altruism, the higher the chance that an individual is progressive oriented on the political spectrum’ I performed another logistic regression.

After running the logistic regressions, the first step is to look at the significance of the log odds and odds ratio associated with the variable altruism. Independent of whether altruism has a significant effect, I will look at any significant effect of the control variables on the four dependent variables. Thereafter, I will look at the fit of the model using the Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients. If the model fits the data well, and if a significant effect is found with the first step, I can draw a well-founded conclusion supporting the relevant hypothesis.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2. In terms of voter turnout, a large majority of 77.4% of the respondents voted. About fifteen percent did not vote, the rest were not eligible to vote. Only a very small percentage, 3.3%, said they had demonstrated last year at the time of interview.

The descriptive statistics also show that roughly equal proportions of politically left and politically right oriented respondents were included in the analysis (32.9% vs. 39.6%). The middle category consisting of 27,5% are the respondents who gave themselves a score of 5 on the 0/10 scale and thus do not belong to the left or right, were omitted from the analysis. An equal distribution is also found in the political progressive-conservative division, in which exactly half turn out to be conservative or progressive, respectively, on the grounds of voting behaviour.

4.2. Logistic regressions

In the first model displayed in table 3 voter turnout is regressed on altruism and control variables age, gender and years of education. The coefficient of altruism is not significantly different from 0 ($\text{Exp}(b) = 0.925$, $\text{SE} = 0.167$, $p = 0.641$). An increase of 1 unit on the scale of altruism does not significantly change the probability of voting. So individuals who score high on altruism are not more likely to vote than individuals who score low on altruism. As a consequence, our first hypothesis 'Individuals who score high on altruism are more likely to vote in nationwide elections in the Netherlands than those who score low on altruism' cannot be supported. Regarding the control variables, one year of advancing age has only a small effect to increase odds of voting more often ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.050$, $\text{SE} = 0.005$, $p < 0.001$). However, one year additional year of in education has an appointed increase in odds to vote ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.164$, $\text{SE} = 0.023$, $p < 0.001$). To examine the fit of the entire model, I used the Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients. The Chi-square test compares the plausibility ratio of the estimated model ($-2 \text{ Log Likelihood} = 862.415$) with the plausibility ratios of the model with only the constant. The difference between these plausibility ratios is the Chi-square. The number of degrees of freedom with this Chi-square is 4, as there are 4 variables. The Chi-square of model 1 is significant at 4 degrees of freedom which means that model 1 including all variables fits the data better than a model without these variables ($\text{Chi}^2 = 145.569$, $p < 0.001$).

To test my second hypothesis 'Individuals who score high on altruism are more likely to take part in demonstrations in the Netherlands than those who score low on altruism',

demonstration behaviour is regressed on altruism and the control variables in the second model. The log odds, and therefore the odds ratio are not significant for both the altruism variable ($p = 0.573$) and the control variables, see table 3. Hypothesis 2 can thus not be supported. Also, the output shows that the model I estimated does not fit the data well. The Chi-square test associated with the Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients has the value of 38.274. This Chi-square is not significant ($\text{Chi}^2 = 5.155$, $p = 0.272$) at four degrees of freedom. It means that Model 2 with the variables altruism, gender, age and education does not fit the data better than a model without these variables.

In model three, placement on the left-right scale as a component of political orientation is regressed on altruism and the control variables. The expectation is described in hypothesis three as: 'The higher an individual's score on altruism, the higher the chance that an individual is left-wing oriented.' For the first time a significant effect is for altruism is found. It can be said that for one unit in increase in the scale of altruism, the odds of placing yourself on the left side over the odds of placing yourself on the right side of the political orientation increases by 39.9%. ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.393$, $\text{SE} = 0.120$, $p = 0.006$). From this it can be concluded that individuals who score high on altruism are much more likely to be politically left-wing oriented than right-wing oriented. The likelihood of being left-wing oriented especially increases when individuals who score very low, for example 1.5, are compared with individuals who score high, for example 6. The third hypothesis can thus be supported. Remarkably, women are 53,4% more likely to place themselves on the left side of the left-right political scale than men ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.534$, $\text{SE} = 0.123$, $p = 0.001$). The effect of education on this probability is also significant ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.044$, $\text{SE} = 0.014$, $p = 0.003$), but very small considering the difference one year of education makes. Model 3 with variables altruism, age, gender and education does fit the data better than a model without those variables ($\text{Chi}^2 = 31.861$, $\text{df} = 4$, $p < 0.001$).

In the last model, I wanted to estimate whether altruistic individuals are more likely to be progressively oriented on the political spectrum. The odds ratio shows that a unit increase on the altruism scale increases the probability of voting for a progressive party by 1.390 ($\text{SE} = 0.136$, $p = 0.016$). The effect of altruism on the probability to vote for a progressive political party is of a similar, great size effect as the effect of altruism to place yourself to the left of the left-right political scale (1.390 vs 1.393). Hypothesis 4 which reads 'The higher an individual's score on altruism, the higher the chance that an individual is progressive oriented on the political spectrum' can thus be supported. Just as being female remarkably increased the likelihood of leftward orientation, this is also the case for voting for a progressive party ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.767$, $\text{SE} = 0.139$, $p < 0.001$). The effect that education has on the likelihood of voting for a progressive

party is significant but not substantively noticeable ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.046$, $\text{SE} = 0.016$, $p = 0.006$). The fit of the model is significant at 4 degrees of freedom ($\text{Chi}^2 = 32.636$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 3. Logistic Regression. The Effect of Altruism on Voter Turnout, Demonstrating, Left Political Orientation and Progressive Political Orientation with Controls

	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	Wald
Model 1. Voter turnout				
Constant	-2.348*	0.839		7.835
Altruism	-0.078	0.167	0.925	0.217
Age of respondent	0.049**	0.005	1.050**	96.610
Women	0.001	0.167	1.001	0
Education (years)	0.151**	0.023	1.164**	41.596
Chi-square (df=4)	145.569**			
<i>N</i> = 877				
Model 2. Demonstrating				
Constant	-4.202*	1.602		6.881
Altruism	0.180	0.320	1.198	0.318
Age	-0.015	0.009	0.985	2.547
Women	-0.059	0.328	0.943	0.031
Education (years)	0.052	0.035	1.053	2.203
Chi-square (df=4)	5.155			
<i>N</i> = 877				
Model 3. Left political orientation				
Constant	-2.498	0.612		16.657
Altruism	0.332*	0.120	1.393*	7.665
Age	-0.001	0.003	0.999	0.077
Women	0.428**	0.123	1.534**	11.995
Education (years)	0.043*	0.014	1.044*	8.740
Chi-square (df=4)	31,861**			
<i>N</i> = 877				
Model 4. Progressive political orientation				
Constant	-2.533**	0.719		12.402
Altruism	0.329*	0.136	1.390*	5.849
Age	0.001	0.004	1.001	0.018
Women	0.569**	0.139	1.767**	16.717
Education (years)	0.045**	0.016	1.046**	7.543
Chi-square (df=4)	32.636**			
<i>N</i> = 877				

Note: *significant ($0.01 < p < 0.05$) **significant ($p < 0.001$).

5. Conclusion and discussion

The problem of predicting political behavior is that models based on rational choice are used, which cannot explain all empirical facts about different forms of political participation. The assumption that people also act out of other motives, such as altruistic ones, has often been ignored to this day. Partly for this reason, in this paper the question ‘What is the effect of altruism on political participation and political orientation?’ is examined. The other factor that led to this research question is that the few times altruism has been used to explain political orientation, such as by Zettler, Hilbig & Haubrich (2011), it has used only the one-dimensional scale, the political left-right spectrum, as the dependent variable. Therefore, this research builds on and looks at the two-dimensional scale of the political spectrum, a scale often used in Western liberal democracies that classifies political parties on the progressive-conservative political spectrum in addition to the left-right political scale. Examining whether altruism affects political participation and orientation allows us to find out whether a single model of voting, in which both rational choice motivation and altruistic motivation are incorporated can be created. Extending the rational choice model for predicting political behaviour by including altruistic motives can provide a basis for solving the problem of low voter turnout by showing how high turnout can be the result. In this article I have tested the effect of altruism on voter turnout, joining demonstrations, left-right political participation and progressive-conservative orientation by using logistic regression analysis with data obtained from Dutch country specific data from the European Social Survey wave 9.

I have found that individuals who score high on altruism are not more likely to vote in nationwide elections in the Netherlands than those who score low on altruism. I also found that there is no difference between individuals who score high on altruism and individuals who score low on altruism on the likelihood to demonstrate. The fact that the results of this study do not show altruistic individuals having a higher chance of voting and demonstrating, is not in line with the findings of Jankowski (2007), Jankowski (2019), Fowler & Kam (2007) and Kam, Cranmer & Fowler (2007). However, the differences between my results and the findings of last-named authors can be explained from the reasoning that individuals can also vote or demonstrate out of pure self-interest. In that case, at least part of Downs' (1957) model would be still relevant for predicting political participation. Another explanation might be that altruistic individuals may believe that their actions, such as demonstrating, have the potential to make one group better off but at the same time make other groups worse off. Making others worse off than they were before as a result of one's own actions is not in line with caring about

the other which is central to altruistic motivations. In these cases, a difference between altruists and egoists in political participation is thus likely to be less present (Kam, Cranmer, & Fowler, 2007).

I have also found that the higher an individual's score on altruism, the higher the chance that an individual is left-wing oriented. The probability for an individual who scores high on altruism to place himself on the left of the left-right political spectrum compared to an individual who scores low on altruism is much higher. For each step up on the scale of altruism, which runs from 1 to 6, the odds of placing yourself on the left side of the left-right political scale rather than the right side increases by almost forty percent. The higher probability to place yourself on the left of the political spectrum for altruistic individuals can be explained by the fact that altruistic attitudes overlap with one of the core elements of left-wing ideology which is the rejection of inequality. Both altruism and left-wing ideology have the goal of giving something to the other, regardless of the cost to yourself, as was argued by Zettler, Hilbig & Haubrich (2011).

A very similar effect in terms of effect size was found for the probability that individuals scoring high on altruism are more likely to vote for progressive oriented political parties. This finding is in line with my expectation that was based on the two-dimensional political space, which in addition to the traditional left-right scale provides the progressive-conservative scale. The expectation was that individuals who score high on altruism have a higher probability of voting for progressively oriented parties than individuals who score low on altruism. Prior research had not been done on this, so this finding is a good opportunity to build on the effect of altruism on the two-dimensional political spectrum.

This study has a few limitations that I will briefly address so that it can be avoided in the future and perhaps put striking results in this study into perspective. The first limitation concerns the composite variable altruism. A reliability analysis conducted in this study did not assign the desired value of Cronbach's alpha to the variable that would convincingly say that the various statements attempting to measure altruism actually measure the concept of altruism. Altruism is a complex concept with different conceptualizations and the European Social Survey may not contain all of their indicators. Another study, that of Hansen & Legge (2016), which attempted to measure altruism with statements from the ESS, did not even mention a reliability value, and when I calculated it, it also did not reach the desired value. They used a total of 3 statements. I used the same 3 statements, but on top of that came 3 other statements which thus resulted in a higher value of Cronbach's alpha. A second limitation of this study is that individuals who placed themselves in the middle of the left-right political scale were left

out. However, I do not expect any real implications because people who are not outspokenly left or right are probably not outspokenly progressive or conservative either, nor are they necessarily more likely to vote or demonstrate.

This article shows that predicting political participation goes beyond simply using either rational choices or altruistic attitudes. The challenge for the future is to implement these two concepts in a single model of political participation. Another implication that has emerged from this research is that is that the degree of intrinsic altruism of an individual can explain whether someone votes left or right, or progressive or conservative. Future research can and should build on this.

Literature

- Andeweg, R. B. & Irwin, G. A. (2014). *Governance and Politics of the Netherlands*. Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Bar-Tal, D. (1985). Altruistic motivation to help: definition, utility and operationalization. *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, 13, 3-14.
- Andreoni, J., & Vesterlund, L. (2001). Which is the fair sex? Gender differences in altruism. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 116(1), 293-312.
- Bhatti, Y., Hansen, K. M., & Wass, H. (2012). The relationship between age and turnout: A roller-coaster ride. *Electoral Studies*, 31(3), 588-593.
- Brañas-Garza, P., Capraro, V., & Rascon-Ramirez, E. (2018). Gender differences in altruism on Mechanical Turk: Expectations and actual behaviour. *Economics Letters*, 170, 19-23.
- Carney, D. R., Jost, J. T., Gosling, S. D., & Potter, J. (2008). The secret lives of liberals and conservatives: Personality profiles, interaction styles, and the things they leave behind. *Political Psychology*, 29(6), 807-840.
- CBS. (2020). Geluk en Persoonlijkheid.
- Coffé, H., & Bolzendahl, C. (2010). Same game, different rules? Gender differences in political participation. *Sex roles*, 62(5), 318-333.
- Dassonneville, R., & Kostelka, F. (2020). The cultural sources of the gender gap in voter turnout. *British Journal of Political Science*, 1-22.
- Dawes, C. T., Loewen, P. J., & Fowler, J. H. (2011). Social Preferences and Political Participation. *The Journal of Politics*, 845-856.
- Del Ponte, A., Delton, A. W., & DeScioli, P. (2020). Altruism and Spite in Politics: How the Mind Makes Welfare Tradeoffs About Political Parties. *Political Behavior*, 1-22.
- Downs, A. (1957). An economic theory of political action in a democracy. *Journal of political economy*, 65(2), 135-150.
- Feigin, S., Owens, G., & Goodyear-Smith, F. (2014). Theories of human altruism: a systematic review. *Annals of Neuroscience and Psychology*, 1-9.
- Fiorina, M. 1990. "Information and Rationality in Elections." In *Information and Democratic Processes* eds. J. Ferejohn and J. Kuklinski. Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 329-42
- Fowler, J. H. (2006). Altruism and Turnout. *The Journal of Politics*, 674-683.

- Fowler, J. H. & Kam, C. D. (2007). Beyond the self. Social identity, altruism, and political participation. *The Journal of politics*, 813-827.
- Hansen, O. P., & Legge, S. (2016). Drawbridges down: altruism and immigration preferences.
- Giger, N. (2009). Towards a modern gender gap in Europe?: A comparative analysis of voting behavior in 12 countries. *The Social Science Journal*, 46(3), 474-492.
- Giugni, M. & Grasso, M. T. (2019). Do Unto Others? Individual Level Mechanisms of Political Altruism . *American Behavioral Scientist*, 430-443.
- Holleman, B., Oldenhuis, P., & Kamoen, N. (2020). Issueframing als een vorm van equivalence framing: Het effect van progressieve versus conservatieve introductieteksten op gerapporteerde attitudes in politieke stemhulpen. *Tijdschrift voor Taalbeheersing*, 42(3), 279.
- Jankowski, R. (2019). Altruism and Political Participation. *The Oxford Handbook of Public Choice*, 351-360.
- Kam, C. D., Cranmer, S. J., & Fowler, J. H. (2007). When it's not all about me: Altruism, participation, and political context. *Participation, and Political Context*.
- Kieskompas. (2021). Resultaten onderzoek Kieskompas - Kieskompas.
<https://www.kieskompas.nl/nl/resultaten/>
- Laméris, M., Pin, R. J. A., & Garretsen, J. (2017). Kiezersvoorkeuren: links en rechts ingehaald. *Economisch Statistische Berichten*, 47, 140-143.
- Louwerse, T. & Rosema, M. (2014). The design effects of voting advice applications: Comparing methods of calculating matches. *Acta politica*, 49(3), 286-312.
- Morling, B., Carr, D., Heger Boyl, E., Cornwell, B., Correl., Crosno, B., Freese, J. & Waters. (2017). Research Methods. *Utrecht University*.
- Norrander, B. & Wilcox, C. (2008). The gender gap in ideology. *Political Behavior*, 30(4), 503-523.
- Norris, P. (2002). *Democratic phoenix: Reinventing political activism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Peterson, J. C., Smith, K. B., & Hibbing, J. R. (2020). Do people really become more conservative as they age?. *The Journal of Politics*, 82(2), 600-611.
- Piliavin, J. A., & Charng, H.-W. (1990). Altruism: A Review of Recent Theory and Research. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27-65.
- Sparrow, E. P., Swirsky, L. T., Kudus, F., & Spaniol, J. (2021). Aging and altruism: A meta-analysis. *Psychology and Aging*, 36(1), 49.
- Voorn, B. (2021). De politieke oriëntatie van Nederlandse gemeenten.

- Zettler, I. & Hilbig, B. E. (2010). Attitudes of the selfless: Explaining political orientation with altruism. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 338-342.
- Zettler, I. Hilbig, B. E., & Haubrich, J. A. (2011). Altruism at the ballots: Predicting political attitudes and behavior. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 130-133.