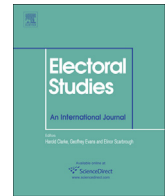




ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Electoral Studies

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/electstud

The link between social attitudes and voting propensities: Attitude-vote consistency among adolescents in Belgium



Joris Boonen*, Cecil Meeusen, Ellen Quintelier

Centre for Citizenship and Democracy, University of Leuven, Belgium

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 27 June 2013

Received in revised form 19 May 2014

Accepted 21 July 2014

Available online 7 August 2014

Keywords:

Political sophistication

Voting propensity

Adolescents

Social attitudes

Belgium

ABSTRACT

Research on the political development of adolescents is mainly focused on political engagement and attitudes. The more complex relationship between attitudes and voting behavior is less studied among citizens under the legal voting age. We investigate whether there is a link between social attitudes and voting propensities among Flemish adolescents, using data from the Parent–Child Socialization Study 2012. We observe attitude-vote consistency for three Flemish parties with a clear-cut ideological profile – the Green, radical rightist and Flemish Nationalist party. Findings show that adolescents' attitude-vote consistency is reinforced by their level of political sophistication. The correspondence between social attitudes and vote choice, however, is not impressive and significantly lower than among experienced adults, leaving room for other influential factors.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Over the past decades, considerable research attention has been devoted to the political development of young people. Within this field, the main focus has been on the political interest, knowledge, political participation and attitude-development of the young (Sherrod et al., 2010). Broadly speaking, this research domain can be approached from different perspectives. A first research line includes adolescents in the larger debate on *inequality* in political engagement and participation. On the one hand, it is argued that young citizens are less interested, have less knowledge, and participate less (or differently) in politics than older citizens, causing representational inequality (Schlozman et al., 2012). On the other hand, inequality due to social stratification patterns appears to be already present in early adolescence (Cicognani et al., 2012; Hooghe and Stolle, 2004). A second line of research focusses more

on *intergenerational differences* in political engagement and participation and stresses the importance of socio-political and historical factors in the political development of the young (Flanagan and Sherrod, 1998; Van der Brug and Kritzinger, 2012). This 'generational perspective' focusses more on processes of social change and stability. A third research domain departs from a *political socialization* perspective on the adolescents' political development. Substantial research interest has been devoted to the influence of – among others – school, friends, and parents on the development of political preferences and behavior. A final way in which young people have been subject of political research can be found in the recently re-lived debate on lowering the legal voting age to sixteen. The main point of discussion is whether adolescents are *politically mature enough* to be included in the electorate, a question which is mainly answered by comparing the levels of interest, factual knowledge and attitudinal consistency between sixteen and eighteen-year olds (Hart and Atkins, 2010).

Generally speaking, in the four above-mentioned research domains, the dominant focus has been on political engagement and on the development of social and

* Corresponding author. Parkstraat 45, Box 3602, 3000 Leuven, Belgium. Tel.: +32 (0) 16 32 01 48.

E-mail address: Joris.Boonen@soc.kuleuven.be (J. Boonen).

political attitudes: are young people interested in traditional politics, do adolescents have the ability and motivation to participate, how do their participation patterns and social attitudes develop, and are their political and social preferences stable throughout life? We argue that, while these are all very relevant and therefore frequently studied research questions, the more complex *link* between attitudes and political behavior is an understudied topic in research on the political development of adolescents. While this link has been thoroughly studied over the past decades within electoral studies, adolescents are traditionally left out of the sample, and are only included when they have the legal voting age of 18 (Coffé and Voorpostel, 2010; Plutzer, 2002; Walczak et al., 2012). Although this voting age is an institutional reality, it seems to be an empirical, rather than a theoretical argument to exclude adolescents from electoral research. Moreover, it has frequently been demonstrated that basic political attitudes and behavioral patterns are shaped before the age of eighteen and tend to be rather stable throughout the lifespan (Sears and Funk, 1999). The same goes for party preferences, which are also found to be shaped early in life, before the legal voting age (Campbell et al., 1960; Zuckerman et al., 2007).

We argue that, as is the case for other political preferences, the age of eighteen is too late in life to start investigating the attitudinal association with vote choice. Eighteen might be the legal starting point to actually cast a vote in most countries, but there has been a formation process going on several years before people go to the polling station, which we believe is essential to grasp. There are indeed only a few studies that have investigated the link between social attitudes and vote choice among adolescents, and these analyses are mostly embedded in a general analysis on the *political maturity* of adolescents. In this article, we investigate the link between social attitudes and vote choice among adolescents for three political parties with a clear-cut profile. We embed this research question in the general debate on voting age, as one of the main arguments *against* allowing young people to vote is the remained inability of this age group to vote for a party which resembles their own preferences (Bergh, 2013). As such, we can provide a theoretical contribution to the literature on political maturity and voting age. Empirically, we contribute to this strand of literature by investigating the link between social attitudes and vote intention in the multiparty system of Belgium and by focusing on party preferences instead of candidate selection. We make use of a recent representative survey among 3426 15-year old adolescents and their parents in the Flemish region of Belgium (Parent–Child Socialization Study, 2012).

2. Attitude-vote consistency among adolescents

Although research on the link between attitudes and political preferences among adolescents is still quite scarce, some scholars integrated this research question in the literature on the voting age. Since 2007, initiatives in countries such as Austria, Germany and Switzerland to partially or fully allow sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds to vote, have fed the academic discussion in other European

countries as well. Opponents of lowering the voting age argue that including adolescents in the electorate will lower the quality of democratic decisions and, as a consequence, the input legitimacy of the democratic system (Chan and Clayton, 2006). To achieve this input legitimacy, citizens are required to cast reasoned and motivated votes that are linked to their political and social attitudes (Bergh, 2013; Wagner et al., 2012). In this debate on voting age, a consistent link between attitudes and vote choice has been employed as an indicator of ‘political maturity’, a concept that has been put forward by the UK electoral commission as one of the fundamental issues in determining the appropriate vote age (Electoral Commission, 2004).

Political maturity is very broadly conceptualized as a necessary level of *social awareness* and *responsibility*, which makes ‘formal testing’ of maturity very difficult (Electoral Commission, 2004, p. 25). Due to this limited conceptualization, political maturity has been empirically operationalized in different ways, leading to different interpretations. Chan and Clayton (2006), for instance, use political interest, party identification, political knowledge, attitude stability and attitudinal consistency to make judgments on the level of political maturity of adolescents, claiming that these measures indicate the willingness and ability to participate in politics. Bergh (2013) defines political maturity as ‘a set of qualities or tools that are useful when getting involved in politics’ (p. 3) and uses measures of political interest, political efficacy, attitudinal strength and consistency between attitudes and vote choice as indicators for the concept. Hart and Atkins (2010) even include neurological maturation to demonstrate the capacities of sixteen-year-olds to vote. While political maturity is indeed a very interesting theoretical concept, it seems to be difficult to operationalize in a uniform manner. The concept seems to be somewhat of a ‘catch-all term’, in which a broad set of indicators can be embedded. However, one specific indicator of this maturity that has been quite frequently put forward by researchers is the consistency between one’s own attitudes and one’s vote choice (Bergh, 2013; Wagner et al., 2012). While the other above mentioned indicators can be useful and informative measures of political maturity as well, we will focus our research specifically on this consistency between attitudes and vote choice, which has also been referred to as ‘correct voting’. In this respect, a ‘correct’ vote is based on the values, beliefs and attitudes of the individual voter, i.e. a vote that would have been made under conditions of full information (Lau and Redlawsk, 1997, p. 586). Recent research has shown that correct voting levels are higher when there are fewer candidates and when these candidates are more ideologically distinct. On an individual level, caring about election outcomes, political knowledge and interest, experience, and strength of party identification all showed to have a positive effect on correct voting (Lau et al., 2008). We could expect that the mechanisms that facilitate a ‘correct vote’ in the American two-party setting, would also be applicable in a broader multi-party setting. Transforming the experimental based concept of ‘correct voting’ to a broader, party-based logic, we could expect that the link between attitudes and vote choice will be more likely to occur among more politically experienced and

sophisticated people, voting for a party with a clear-cut ideological profile. However, because of its normative connotation and limited operationalization possibilities – the term ‘correct’ seems to indicate that e.g. strategic votes or valence votes are less ‘correct’ votes – we prefer a different terminology, and will refer to ‘attitude-vote consistency’.

Two recent studies have investigated attitude-vote consistency among young people. Wagner et al. (2012) operationalized this consistency using (1) the similarity between adolescents’ left-right identification and the left-right positioning of the party, and (2) the similarity between adolescents’ opinion and the parties position with regard to European integration. Taking into account their limited operationalization, they find no convincing evidence that voting decisions of sixteen-year-olds are less linked with their own preferences than voting decisions of eighteen-year-olds. A second study by Bergh (2013) found mixed evidence for attitude-vote consistency among adolescents. He found some significant differences in attitude-vote choice consistency between sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds when compared with older voters, but this was dependent on the party and the analyzed attitude. For some parties, there is no difference by age, but if there is a difference, eighteen-year-olds tend to show higher consistency between attitudes and vote choice than sixteen-year-olds.

Both above mentioned studies, however, clearly indicate that, while there might be small differences between adolescents of different ages, adolescents seem to be capable of connecting their own attitudes to a vote choice, as can be expected from the literature arguing that political and social attitudes are shaped during this period in life (Flanagan, 2013; Sears and Funk, 1999). As such, our first hypothesis reads as follows:

H1. Among adolescents, there is already a link between social attitudes and vote choice.

Earlier research has shown that political interest and political knowledge, i.e. political sophistication, can enhance one’s ability to match his/her preferences with a vote choice (Lau et al., 2008). Meirick and Wackman (2004) found that even among twelve and thirteen-year-old children, higher levels of political knowledge contribute to the consistency between attitudes and a preference for a specific candidate. With respect to the current debate on voting age, we argue that adolescents reaching the age of sixteen are a more relevant unit of analysis to test the moderating effect of political sophistication. So, we expect higher levels of attitude-vote consistency among more politically sophisticated adolescents.

H2. The link between social attitudes and vote choice is stronger among adolescents with a higher level of political sophistication.

Adolescence is a phase in life in which political attitudes and value patterns are being developed (Hooghe and Wilkenfeld, 2007). Previous research has shown that young people tend to be less interested in traditional politics (Wattenberg, 2008) and processes of electoral volatility and political dealignment have particularly been found among this generation (Dalton et al., 2000; Lachat,

2007). Furthermore, we can expect older voters to have more experience with the functioning of a political system and the parties that operate in it (Anderson and Just, 2012). This experience offers them skills to match parties with their own preferences, making experience a facilitator for attitude-vote consistency (Lau et al., 2008). Therefore, we can expect that the congruence between a vote choice and one’s personal orientations will be less clear among younger, inexperienced voters compared with older experienced voters, regardless of their level of political sophistication.

As Bergh (2013) showed that a *first* voting experience does not suffice to affect one’s ability to link social attitudes with vote choice (see also Franklin, 2004), we argue that it is useful to compare adolescents not only with their two-year-older counterparts – as has been the case in the bulk of the earlier research on voting age – but also with highly experienced adult voters. If there is indeed only a small difference between adolescents and eighteen-year-old adults, as is suggested by a number of researchers (e.g. Hart and Atkins, 2010), we argue that it is desirable to analyze a significantly older generation of voters as a reference group as well. We hypothesize that attitude-vote consistency will be clearly stronger among these highly experienced voters than it is among adolescent voters.

H3. The link between social attitudes and vote choice is stronger among experienced adult voters than among inexperienced adolescent voters.

We would like to note that the above mentioned hypotheses do not assume causality between social attitudes and vote choice. Following the previous literature, we could interpret the consistency between attitudes and vote choice in two ways. From the classic works on party identification (Campbell et al., 1960), one could expect that party attachments serve as cognitive heuristics and can influence the way in which citizens develop their attitudes towards certain political issues, making them a consequence rather than an explanation of vote choice. However, we could argue that in the Belgian multiparty system, attitudes towards certain issues can also determine party attachments. Within the context of weak partisanship and high volatility, it is found that a voter’s conviction to choose for a party will be more easily thrown overboard when the voter has a conflicting opinion on a certain issue. This is confirmed by recent studies in Britain (Milazzo et al., 2012) and Belgium (Boonen and Hooghe, 2014) that found that citizens’ issue positions drive party preferences, and that party preferences do not easily change voters’ positions.

Nevertheless, in this article we do not have the aim nor the data to make claims on the direction of the correlation between social attitudes and voting intentions and we will therefore strictly discuss this as a ‘consistency’ between both.

3. Measuring attitude-vote consistency in the Belgian multiparty system

One of the main challenges in the analyses of attitude-vote consistency is how to objectively measure the

ideological profile of political parties. Traditionally, an expert judgment of the most sophisticated respondents in a survey has been used for the estimation of an objective issue position for a candidate (Lau and Redlawsk, 1997; Ryan, 2011). Lau and Redlawsk (1997) use candidates' positions as they were perceived by respondents who were above the median in political knowledge. They used this measure to operationalize their concept of 'correct voting' for individual candidates. In fragmented party systems, with a stronger focus on political parties instead of individual candidates, it is more useful to analyze attitude-party congruence instead of attitude-candidate congruence (Wagner et al., 2012). In the current study, we analyze attitude-vote consistency among adolescents in the Flemish party system, one of the most fragmented multiparty systems in Europe (Deschouwer, 2009a).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the traditional national parties in Belgium (Christian-Democrats, Liberals and Socialists) each split up into two regional parties, leading to the formation of two segregated party systems for the Dutch- and French-speaking part of Belgium (De Winter et al., 2006). Also in the 1970s, in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part) new parties, such as the Green party *Agalev* (now *Groen*), the radical right *Vlaams Blok* (now *Vlaams Belang*), and the Flemish Nationalist *Volkspartij* (now *New Flemish Alliance*; *N-VA*), have entered the electoral arena successfully as a consequence of different transformations in the Western European party system (Kriesi et al., 2012). These relatively new parties are each positioned on three main issues: environment (Greens), Flemish autonomy (Flemish Nationalists) and immigration and Flemish autonomy (Radical rightists) (Hino, 2007; Meguid, 2005).

One of the main empirical advantages of analyzing such a fragmented party system is that this provides us with political parties with strong ideological profiles. This way, the highly fragmented Flemish multiparty system is an ideal case study to analyze attitude-vote consistency since a number of parties have a clear single or nearly single-issue profile (Maddens and Hajnal, 2001). For the measure of attitude-vote consistency, we can therefore rely on party programs and earlier empirical voter and party analyses, instead of using the sophisticated expert respondent approach.

4. Data & methods

4.1. Data

To investigate the relation between social attitudes and vote choice, we use data from the Parent–Child Socialization Study 2012 (PCSS) (Hooghe et al., 2012). The purpose of this study was to collect representative data on social and political attitudes, voting behavior and socio-demographic characteristics of adolescents. Based on educational track and province, a sample of 61 schools was selected in the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium. This selection resulted in a sample of 3426 15-year-old adolescents. During class hours, the adolescents filled in a self-administered questionnaire which was supervised by professional researchers. Comparing the sample to population

statistics revealed that the composition of adolescents in the PCSS is a representative reflection of the 15-year-old Flemish population.

The adolescents were also handed a similar questionnaire for both their mother and father. The parents were asked to fill out the survey and to send it back to the university in a pre-stamped envelope. After two reminders, 67% of the mothers and 61% of the fathers returned the questionnaire. The data on the parents are especially important to investigate the third hypothesis on the distinction between experienced and inexperienced voters. By comparing the adult parents (mean age mothers 44, SD = 4.3; mean age fathers 47, SD = 5.0) with their 15-year-old adolescent children, we control for the same socio-economic background of the family, influencing the party preference (Barone et al., 2007). We do acknowledge that we can only compare the adolescents with one generation of adult voters, but because of the aforementioned advantage, we are convinced that we can provide a clear indication of the difference between the experienced adult voters (the parents) and the inexperienced adolescent voters (the children). Also, within the Belgian system of compulsory attendance, it is safe to assume that the adult voters in our sample are indeed 'experienced' voters.

To examine the first hypothesis (the link between social attitudes and voting propensities) and the second hypothesis (moderating effect political sophistication) we use the full adolescent sample of the PCSS ($N = 3,426$). For the third hypothesis (moderating effect experience) we use the family sample, i.e. also the information of the parents. We use this sample in a multilevel perspective (see Method).

4.2. Measurement

4.2.1. Dependent variable: propensity to vote

The bulk of electoral studies uses voting intention, party identification or party preference as their main dependent variable (Bergh, 2013; Brooks et al., 2006). However, research has shown that this approach has some important disadvantages, particularly in multiparty systems. Respondents in election surveys can only choose one party at a time, but this means that a large part of the decision-making process remains underexposed. For instance, we neither account for possible negative preferences (Garry, 2007), nor for the importance of multiple party identifications (Weisberg, 1980, 1999). Therefore, we asked respondents to indicate on a 0–10 scale the likelihood they might ever vote for each Flemish party in the future. Using the propensity to vote allows us to analyze the way in which voters rate all parties, not only the party they would actually vote for (Van der Eijk et al., 2006). This measure has been used in recent electoral research (Bochsler and Sciarini, 2010; Van der Brug, 2010), leading to qualified results by splitting up the process of party choice in a consideration stage and an eventual vote choice. An important empirical advantage is that we have maximized item response rates for all analyzed parties, which overcomes possible incomparability of results (Van der Eijk et al., 2006). Moreover, the propensity to vote can be used both among adolescents (who are not yet allowed to

vote) and adults (who are obliged to vote in Belgium). The average propensity to vote for the Green party among actual Green voters is 8.343, the average propensity to vote for the radical rightist party among the actual radical right voters is 8.274, and the average propensity to vote for the Flemish nationalist party among the actual Flemish nationalist voters is 8.795.¹

4.2.2. Analyzed parties

In our analyses, we focus on three major parties with a clear-cut, nearly single-issue, ideological profile: the Green party (*Groen*), the radical rightist party (*Vlaams Belang*) and the Flemish Nationalist party (*N-VA*). In this article, it is not our ambition to create a complete model of vote intention determinants among adolescents and for every party in the Flemish system. Rather, we will investigate patterns of attitude-vote consistency among adolescents. We are fully aware of the fact that having a preference for a (nearly) single issue party can determine a strong attitude-vote consistency *an sich*, but this is not our main interest in the article. We selected parties with a clear-cut profile because this allows us to measure the attitudinal associations of a propensity to vote in a one-dimensional and reliable manner, leading to qualified results. However, we do take into account that, this way, we cannot make any statements on the ability to vote consistently for *any* party.

Consistent with previous research on voting intention, we categorize the parties on the basis of their primary issue position (Meguid, 2005; Walgrave and De Swert, 2007): The Flemish Nationalist party emphasizes Flemish identity, the radical rightist party prioritizes both immigration issues and Flemish identity and the Green party emphasizes a concern for the environment. Preliminary analyses show that these presumed attitude-vote links are indeed strongest for the parties under investigation. Following, we briefly describe the ideological profile of these parties to demonstrate why these are parties with a clear-cut and outspoken core ideology.

For **Groen**, the only Green party in Flanders, economy and ecology are closely related. As such, the party proposes ecological solutions to societal problems. The Green party also prioritizes other postmaterialist values such as multiculturalism and ethical liberalism (Swyngedouw et al., 2007), but both the public and the Green party members identify the party most strongly with environmental issues (Walgrave and De Swert, 2007). Because of this issue ownership, the Green party is since the 90s able to attract a stable share of the Flemish electorate (Hooghe et al., 2010). Among the adolescents in the PCSS sample, 15.5% intended to vote for the Green party.²

¹ While the average propensity to vote for the Green party among radical right voters is 2.956, and among Flemish nationalist voters 3.336. The average propensity to vote for the radical rightist party is 2.00 among Green voters and 3.271 among Flemish nationalist voters. Finally, the average propensity to vote for the Flemish nationalist party is 4.054 among Green voters and 4.190 among radical right voters.

² The vote shares for all parties for the adolescents, their parents and the general population (elections 2010) are added in Appendix 2.

Environmental concern is measured using a factor scale of five questions on environmental attitudes (ranging from 1 = Completely disagree to 4 = Completely agree, see Appendix 3 for items). The highest loading item was 'If asked, I would contribute money to an organization that works to improve the quality of the environment' (Cronbach's α adolescents: .71; adults: .69).

N-VA, or the New Flemish Alliance, was founded in 2001 after its predecessor, the People's Union (*Volksunie*) split up into a conservative (N-VA) and a progressive (Spirit) wing (Deschouwer, 2009b). From 2007 up until the most recent elections, N-VA has grown very rapidly, from 5% in 2004 to almost 30% in 2010. Among the adolescents in the PCSS sample, 24.6% intended to vote for N-VA. The N-VA put an end to the ambiguous profile of its political predecessor, and put an independent Flanders as part of a stronger European Union as their main political goal (N-VA, 2013). Up until now, this is still at the core of the party's ideology and policy platform. Generally, there is little debate on Flemish nationalism being N-VA's strongest ideological characteristic (Deschouwer, 2009b). Due to data restrictions, for the measurement of 'Flemish identity' we could only use one, limited measure: 'In the first place, I consider myself as being a Fleming', rated on a scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much).

Vlaams Belang (VB) also has a strong regionalist, or separatist Flemish nationalist program, but the radical right-wing party mainly focuses on immigration issues, the main basis of its electoral strength (Deschouwer, 2009b; Walgrave and De Swert, 2004). Due to the *cordon sanitaire* which formally excludes them from any government formation, Vlaams Belang is a permanent opposition party. In this light Van Spanje and Van Der Brug (2007) describe VB as a 'pariah party'. The electoral success of the party is clearly in its anti-immigrant profile (Breuning, 1997; Van der Brug et al., 2000) and it is safe to say that voters with ethnocentric attitudes voting for Vlaams Belang would be voting consistently. However, not only ethnocentrism, but also Flemish identity is one of their key elements (Breuning, 1997). Previous research, however, has shown that although the 'Flemish' component might be dominantly apparent in the ideology of the party and its elites, this is not equally the case for its voters (Deschouwer, 2009b). Among the adolescents in the PCSS sample, 13.8% intended to vote for Vlaams Belang.

Ethnocentrism was measured using a three item scale, adapted from the European Social Survey. Given the fact that in Western Europe ethnic diversity is mainly associated with the inflow of immigrants, this factor scale focuses strongly on the perception of the consequences of immigration (Sides and Citrin, 2007). The items refer both to the perceived cultural and economic threat of increased ethnic diversity (Cronbach's α adolescents: .65; adults: .69; ranging from 1 = Completely disagree to 4 = Completely agree; see Appendix 3 for items).

4.2.3. Independent variables

In the analyses, we control for gender, country of birth ('born in Belgium' vs. 'not born in Belgium') and socio-economic status. In the analysis including only adolescents (H1 and H2), SES is operationalized as educational

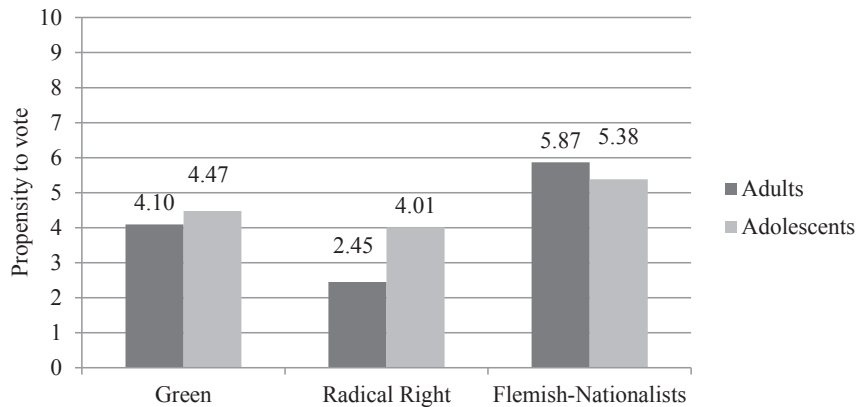


Fig. 1. Propensity to vote (range: 0–10) for the Green, extreme right and Flemish-nationalist party among adults and adolescents.

track (general education, technical education, artistic education and vocational education³) because this is mostly tied with the socio-economic status of the parents. In the analyses using both adolescents and adults (H3), we use the number of books at home as a measure of family SES.⁴

To analyze our second hypothesis, we created a political sophistication index for the adolescents. The index is a factor scale of political knowledge, political interest and following the news (See Appendix 3) (Cronbach's alpha .51). With regard to the third hypothesis, unfortunately, we could not include political knowledge for the adult sample, since these factual political knowledge questions could not reliably be included in the *mail* survey. Therefore, for hypothesis 3, we can only control for 'following the news' and 'political interest'. The descriptive statistics of the analyzed variables can be found in Appendix 4.

4.3. Method

The first two hypotheses will be analyzed using an OLS regression for the adolescents, with the propensity to vote for the three political parties as the dependent variable. A first model explores the link between social attitudes and the propensity to vote. Second, we add the political sophistication index and the interaction between political sophistication and social attitudes to explore whether adolescents with a higher level of political sophistication show a higher correlation between social attitudes and propensity to vote for one of the three parties. With regard to the third hypothesis (experienced vs. inexperienced voters) we compare the link between social attitudes and propensity to vote among adults and adolescents by means of a multilevel analysis.

³ The Flemish high school system is divided in four general educational tracks: general education, technical education, artistic education and vocational education. General education is theory-oriented and prepares students for higher education or university. The technical and artistic educational tracks combine practical skills and general education. The vocational educational track, finally, prepares pupils for a job which requires specific practical skills (Van Houtte, 2004).

⁴ Although we could also take the highest obtained degree of the parents into account, this would lead to more missing observations—while the results are highly similar.

We use multilevel analyses because the answers within the family are correlated: parents and children often have a similar party preference (Jennings et al., 2009). We model this as mother, father and child (at level 1) who are nested within the same family (at level 2). The intra-class correlation (ICC) of the intercept only model for the propensity to vote for the Green party is .306, for the radical rightist party .361, and for the Flemish Nationalist party .334. In other words, over 30% of the variance in propensity to vote for one of these parties can be explained by family characteristics, showing that multilevel modeling is indeed necessary.

5. Results

We start our analysis by describing how the propensity to vote is distributed among adolescents and adults (the parents in the PCSS sample). For the three analyzed parties, we find no major differences between adults and adolescents, except for the radical rightist party (Fig. 1): 15-year-old adolescents are far more likely to vote for radical right (mean_{adolescents} 4.0 vs. mean_{adults} 2.5; $p_{t\text{-test}} < .001$). This is not surprising as previous research indeed found that especially young voters are attracted by right parties (Lubbers et al., 2002). For both other parties, the differences are smaller. Adolescents are slightly more likely to cast a Green vote (mean_{adolescents} 4.5 vs. mean_{adults} 4.1; $p_{t\text{-test}} < .001$), while the adults in the sample are somewhat more inclined to vote for the Flemish Nationalist party (mean_{adolescents} 5.4 vs. mean_{adults} 5.9; $p_{t\text{-test}} < .001$). However, our main interest in this article is the link between the propensity to vote and the social attitudes, which we will explore in the following paragraphs.

A first analytical step is to explore the correlations between the propensity to vote for the three parties and the above described attitude that is most likely to affect the propensity to vote for every party respectively (Table 1). For all three parties, we find a clear link between each of the social attitudes and the propensity to vote.

Environmental concern is significantly correlated with the propensity to cast a green vote. The same goes for the radical rightist party, for which we find a significant correlation between the propensity to vote for this party and a higher level of ethnocentrism. Again, this relation is

Table 1

Correlation between social attitude and the propensity to vote Most relevant social attitude for political party represented by bold.

| Propensity to vote | Adolescents | | | Adults | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Green | Radical right | Flemish-nationalist | Green | Radical right | Flemish-nationalist |
| Environmental concern | .274*** N = 3124 | -.017 ns N = 3133 | .096*** N = 3110 | .379*** N = 3992 | -.211*** N = 3988 | -.003 ns N = 3976 |
| Flemish identity | -.005ns N = 3139 | .194*** N = 3145 | .223*** N = 3126 | -.085*** N = 4011 | .123*** N = 4006 | .304*** N = 3995 |
| Ethnocentrism | -.188*** N = 3170 | .308*** N = 3174 | .124*** N = 3157 | -.359*** N = 3975 | .443*** N = 3970 | .147*** N = 3960 |

Note: Entries are Pearson correlations, significances $p < 0.001$:***; $p < 0.01$:**; $p < 0.05$:* and $p > 0.05$ ns; and sample sizes.
Source: PCSS 2012.

Table 2

Link between social attitudes and propensity to vote.

| | Green | | | Radical right | | | Flemish-nationalist | | |
|--------------------------|----------|------|-------|---------------|------|-------|---------------------|------|-------|
| | B | S.E. | Beta | B | S.E. | Beta | B | S.E. | Beta |
| Constant | 3.803*** | .294 | | 1.743*** | .310 | | 4.383*** | .293 | |
| Social attitudes | | | | | | | | | |
| Environmental concern | .726*** | .052 | .246 | .029 ns | .055 | .009 | .150** | .052 | .051 |
| Flemish identity | -.085° | .049 | -.030 | .461*** | .050 | .165 | .446*** | .047 | .171 |
| Ethnocentrism | -.445*** | .054 | -.149 | .899*** | .057 | .282 | .267*** | .054 | .090 |
| Controls | | | | | | | | | |
| Gender (ref = Boy) | .487*** | .105 | .082 | .218* | .111 | .035 | -.116 ns | .104 | -.020 |
| General education (=ref) | | | | | | | | | |
| Technical education | -.184 ns | .128 | -.030 | .543*** | .124 | .082 | -.508*** | .117 | -.082 |
| Artistic education | .522° | .309 | .030 | -.330 ns | .327 | -.018 | -1.523*** | .313 | -.086 |
| Vocational education | -.501*** | .149 | -.064 | .329* | .157 | .040 | -1.577*** | .149 | -.203 |
| Born in Belgium | .462* | .206 | .041 | .101 ns | .218 | .008 | .141 ns | .206 | .013 |
| R ² | 11.3 | | | 12.4 | | | 10.6 | | |
| N | 3034 | | | 3040 | | | 3022 | | |

OLS regression. Entries are unstandardized estimates, standard errors, and standardized estimates. $p < 0.001$:***; $p < 0.01$:**; $p < 0.05$:* $p < 0.1$:° and $p > 0.1$ ns

Source: PCSS 2012.

stronger among adults than it is among their adolescent children. For Flemish identity and a propensity to vote for this party we find a clear link as well. A Flemish Nationalist vote, finally, is significantly correlated with a stronger Flemish identity. Again, the link between this social attitude and the propensity to vote is stronger among adults than it is among adolescents.

Generally, we seem to find evidence that there is indeed already a clear link between social attitudes and the propensity to vote among adolescents. However, the question remains whether this link holds if we control for structural covariates of vote choice, such as gender and socio-economic status.

In Table 2, we present three linear regression models analyzing the association between social attitudes and the propensity to vote for the three above described political parties among adolescents.⁵ Looking at the results, the

relation we found in the above described correlation matrix seems to hold in a multiple linear regression model as well. In a first model, analyzing a propensity to vote for the Green party, we find that a higher propensity to vote for this party is significantly linked with a higher environmental concern. The adolescents who are inclined to vote for the Green party are significantly less ethnocentric. Although this association with ethnocentrism is less explicit than the link with the environment, this is in line with the Green party's program, as it is a party that clearly focuses on the New Politics dimension, also referred to as the 'libertarian-authoritarian' dimension (Kitschelt, 1988). On the other hand, we do not find a higher propensity to vote for the Green party to be linked with a Flemish identity. As could be expected from earlier research, girls and adolescents from vocational education are more likely to vote for the Green party (Hooghe et al., 2010).

The second model in Table 2 explores the propensity to vote for the radical rightist party. Here, we assume that a vote for this party is linked both with a stronger Flemish identity and with higher levels of ethnocentrism. Our hypothesis can be confirmed in this regard as there is indeed a clear association between having a stronger Flemish identity and higher levels of ethnocentrism on the one hand and having a higher propensity to vote for the radical right on the other hand. A higher propensity to vote for the radical rightist party is not linked with being born in

⁵ In additional analyses, we have also taken into account other mainstream issues that are traditionally found to influence vote choice, such as religious denomination and practice, attitudes towards unemployment benefits and ethical conservatism. When adding these variables in the analyses, the main issue-attitudes (environmental concern, ethnocentrism and Flemish identity) are still clearly the most important covariates of vote choice for the parties that we investigate. As such, these additional variables did not change the results nor the interpretation of our findings and were therefore not included in our final models.

Table 3

Link between political sophistication and the propensity to vote.

| | Green | | | Radical right | | | Flemish-nationalist | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|------|-------|---------------|------|-------|---------------------|------|-------|
| | B | S.E. | Beta | B | S.E. | Beta | B | S.E. | Beta |
| Constant | 3.797*** | .312 | | 1.738*** | .328 | | 4.084*** | .310 | |
| Social attitudes | | | | | | | | | |
| Environmental concern | .741*** | .055 | .251 | .041 ns | .058 | .013 | .073 ns | .054 | .025 |
| Flemish identity | -.074 ns | .049 | -.028 | .464*** | .052 | .165 | .410*** | .049 | .156 |
| Ethnocentrism | -.449*** | .056 | -.150 | .879*** | .059 | .275 | .258*** | .055 | .087 |
| Controls | | | | | | | | | |
| Gender (ref = boy) | .487*** | .110 | .083 | .163 ns | .116 | .026 | .062 ns | .110 | .011 |
| General education (=ref) | | | | | | | | | |
| Technical education | -.153 ns | .123 | -.025 | .550*** | .129 | .083 | -.351** | .122 | -.057 |
| Artistic education | .609 ns | .335 | .033 | -.219 ns | .354 | -.011 | -.111*** | .337 | -.060 |
| Vocational education | -.489** | .160 | -.062 | .313° | .172 | .041 | -.1273*** | .160 | -.161 |
| Born in Belgium | .403 ns | .221 | .034 | .181 ns | .234 | .014 | .223 ns | .221 | .019 |
| Political sophistication (H2) | | | | | | | | | |
| Political sophistication (PS) | .026 ns | .056 | .009 | -.414* | .177 | -.132 | .050 ns | .166 | .017 |
| PS*Environmental concern | .121* | .049 | .045 | | | | | | |
| PS*Flemish identity | | | | .086° | .047 | .102 | .102* | .044 | .129 |
| PS*Ethnocentrism | | | | .156** | .054 | .051 | | | |
| R ² | 11.4 | | | 12.8 | | | 11.4 | | |
| N | 2844 | | | 2848 | | | 2833 | | |

OLS regression. Entries are unstandardized estimates, standard errors, and standardized estimates. $p < 0.001$:***; $p < 0.01$:**; $p < 0.05$:*; $p < 0.1$:° and $p > 0.1$: ns

Source: PCSS 2012.

Belgium, but it is significantly related to a lower education track status and gender.

In a third part of Table 2, we present the results for the linear regression model predicting a propensity to vote for the Flemish Nationalist party. As was mentioned earlier, the ideological core of the party's program is a strive for more Flemish autonomy. Among the adolescents, we indeed find a clear link between Flemish identity and a propensity to vote for the Flemish Nationalist party. As the main political aim of the Flemish Nationalist party is a thorough state reform leading to a more autonomous Flanders, this

priority is also apparent among the Flemish Nationalist adolescents. Girls are equally likely to cast a vote for the Flemish Nationalist party as boys, while it is more attractive for adolescents in technical, artistic and vocational tracks.

Generally, we can conclude from these results that adolescents can already draw a link between social attitudes and voting intention, confirming the first hypothesis. We find that the social attitude which is the most salient for the specific party is indeed clearly associated with the propensity to vote for that party: adolescents with a preference for the Green party are more environmentally concerned,

Table 4

Link between political experience and the propensity to vote.

| | Green | | | Radical right | | | Flemish-nationalist | | |
|------------------------------|------------|------|-------|---------------|------|-------|---------------------|------|-------|
| | B | S.E. | Beta | B | S.E. | Beta | B | S.E. | Beta |
| Constant | 3.274*** | .242 | | 3.738*** | .276 | | 2.229*** | .291 | |
| Social attitudes | | | | | | | | | |
| Environmentalism | .642*** | .051 | .206 | -.046ns | .037 | -.014 | .090* | .039 | .028 |
| Flemish identity | -.086** | .030 | -.033 | .478*** | .046 | .173 | .391*** | .049 | .142 |
| Ethnocentrism | -.528*** | .036 | -.170 | .811*** | .053 | .247 | .329*** | .039 | .101 |
| Controls | | | | | | | | | |
| Gender | .728*** | .063 | .116 | -.121° | .066 | -.018 | -.186** | .068 | -.028 |
| Number of books at home | .135*** | .026 | .067 | -.172*** | .027 | -.082 | .014ns | .029 | .007 |
| Born in Belgium | .055ns | .136 | .005 | -.004ns | .140 | .000 | .635*** | .148 | .056 |
| Adults | -.499*** | .074 | -.076 | -.151ns | .219 | -.022 | -.710** | .228 | -.102 |
| Political interest | .103* | .047 | .027 | -.149** | .048 | -.037 | .415*** | .051 | .105 |
| Following the news | -.075* | .038 | -.026 | -.089* | .039 | -.030 | .172*** | .041 | .058 |
| Interactions | | | | | | | | | |
| Adults*Environmental concern | .265*** | .066 | .063 | | | | | | |
| Adults*Flemish identity | | | | -.337*** | .059 | -.194 | .249*** | .061 | .144 |
| Adults*Ethnocentrism | | | | .339*** | .069 | .077 | | | |
| Intraclass correlation | 26.452 | | | 24.925 | | | 30.118 | | |
| N | 6821 | | | 6820 | | | 6796 | | |
| -2 Log Likelihood | 33,169.194 | | | 31,871.661 | | | 34,125.463 | | |

Multilevel analysis. Entries are unstandardized estimates and standard errors (S.E.). $p < 0.001$:***; $p < 0.01$:**; $p < 0.05$:*; $p < 0.1$:° and $p > 0.1$: ns. Number of books at home was entered as a level 2 variable.

Source: PCSS 2012.

radical rightist adolescent voters have a more ethnocentric attitude and a stronger Flemish identity, and the Flemish-nationalist adolescent voters have a more outspoken Flemish identity as well.

The regression model in [Table 3](#) tests the hypothesis whether more political sophistication leads to a closer link between social attitudes and the propensity to vote. This seems to be supported by the analyses: more political sophistication combined with a stronger concern for the environment leads to a higher propensity to vote for the Green party. Also, for the radical rightist party, we find that adolescents with a higher level of political sophistication, who score higher on ethnocentrism and Flemish identity are more likely to vote for this party. Looking at the propensity to vote for the Flemish-nationalist N-VA, we find that the interaction effect between political sophistication and Flemish identity is significant as well, also indicating that attitude-vote consistency is stronger for politically sophisticated adolescents.

In a third step ([Table 4](#)), we present the multilevel analyses comparing the link between social attitudes and propensity to vote of adults and their adolescent children. In [Hypothesis 3](#), we expected the link between one's own attitudes and one's propensity to vote to be stronger among experienced adult voters than among inexperienced adolescents. This hypothesis is supported. Generally, for the adults in the sample, all parameter estimates go in the same direction, but the larger effect sizes indicate a stronger attitude-vote link for the adult sub-sample. Given the limited space of this article, we will not discuss all relevant effects in [Table 4](#) again, but rather focus on the parameter estimates that allow us to answer the third hypothesis.

We tested the same social attitudes which are most clearly linked with the respective propensity to vote for three different parties as we did in the adolescent models in [Table 2](#). For all three parties, we found that the most substantively relevant social attitude is clearly more strongly linked to a propensity to vote among adults than it is among adolescents. First, the effect of environmental concern on the propensity to vote for the Green party is higher among adults than it is among adolescents. Second, a more ethnocentric attitude among adults has a stronger link with a propensity to vote among adults than among adolescents. The link between Flemish identity and propensity to vote for radical right is equally strong among adults and adolescents. Third, the link between a Flemish identity and a propensity to vote for the Flemish nationalists is stronger among adults than it is among adolescents as well. However, for Flemish identity, we find that young people with a stronger Flemish attitude are more likely to vote radical right than adults.

6. Discussion

In this article, we have analyzed the link between social attitudes and voting propensities among adolescents, arguing that previous research on the political development of this age group is mainly focused on indicators of political engagement and the roots of political and social attitudes, rather than on the more complex relation between attitude and vote choice. We focused our analyses on

the exploration of attitude-vote consistency among adolescents. For this purpose, we have analyzed the convergence between social attitudes – environmental concern, ethnocentrism, and Flemish identity – and the propensity to vote for the Green party, the radical rightist party and the Flemish Nationalist party in the Belgian multiparty system. With these analyses, we also contributed to the recently revived debate on voting age, as attitude-vote consistency is one of the often included indicators of ‘political maturity’, a concept frequently put forward to make statements regarding the appropriate voting age.

A first hypothesis expected a link between social attitudes and voting intentions among adolescents. This hypothesis is convincingly supported by the empirical analyses. Generally, for all three investigated parties, the most relevant social attitude partially explained a propensity to vote for that party: environmentally concerned adolescents were more likely to vote for the Green party, adolescents with a clear-cut Flemish identity for the Flemish Nationalist party, and ethnocentric adolescents with a Flemish identity for the radical rightist party. This ability to draw a link between one's own social attitudes and one's voting intention is enhanced by the level of political sophistication. If adolescents have more political knowledge, if they are more interested in politics and follow the news more often, they will be more likely to vote for a party that is substantively linked to their own social attitudes.

The third hypothesis is quite convincingly supported by our analyses as well. Among more experienced voters, i.e. the parents of the adolescents in the sample, the link between social attitudes and voting propensities is stronger. In other words, while adolescents are indeed already able to vote consistently with their attitudes, this ability is clearly more apparent among adult, experienced voters. By dividing the sample into ‘experienced’ and ‘inexperienced’ future voters we assumed a life-cycle explanation for the generational difference. As citizens grow older, they gain more experience with voting – which is mandatory in Belgium –, political parties, and the functioning of democracy in general, which will help them to cast a consistent vote. Here, our results differ from the Austrian study by [Wagner and Kritzinger \(2012\)](#) who concluded that the link between ideological dimensions (socio-economic and socio-cultural) and vote choice was similar across age groups despite their different positions in the life-cycle. One of the explanations for these different findings could be that adolescents in the Belgian sample do not have the right to vote yet and have less of an incentive to think about politics, contrary to the 16-year-olds in Austria. Another explanation for this generational difference, however, might be found in the different socialization context of the experienced and inexperienced cohorts. The current data, unfortunately, do not allow to separate these life-cycle and cohort effects.

Generally, we could state that our case predominantly supports the advocates' argument on political maturity, since 15-year-olds seem to be capable of casting a vote consistent with their own attitudes, even in a very fragmented and therefore complicated multiparty system such as the one in Flanders. Therefore, it seems to be in the political parties' interest to address adolescents as a target audience as well, particularly because social and political

attitudes and preferences which have been formed during adolescence tend to be quite stable over time (Sears and Funk, 1999). This is especially the case among those adolescents who have been (in contact with/engaged in) politics (Wolak, 2009). As such, we argue that including the 16-year-olds in the electorate will not harm the input legitimacy of the democratic system to the extent expected by opponents of lowering the voting age.

However, one should not overstate these findings, as the effect size of the convergence between attitude and vote intention is only moderate. Furthermore, attitude-vote consistency is partially dependent on the level of political sophistication of the adolescent, indicating that not all young voters will be equally capable of casting a consistent vote. These results indicate that adolescents rely on other important sources for their vote intention as well. The adolescent's voting intentions are not only affected by socializing agents such as the school system (Zukin et al., 2006) and their parents (Jennings et al., 2009), but also structural factors such as gender, SES, and religion have proven to be important sources of vote choice (Barone et al., 2007). In future research it would be interesting to include these socialization indicators more directly into the analysis. It could be studied, for instance, whether party preferences that are learned at home are more consistent with one's issue orientations, in the sense that the family provides adolescents with a political learning environment in which the logic of connecting issue preferences with vote choices can be more easily observed, emulated and adopted.

Several limitations of the present study should be acknowledged. First, we only observed three political parties

– *The Green party, the radical rightist party, the Flemish Nationalist party* – of the Flemish party system because of their strong ideological profile. This allowed us to capture possible congruence between attitudes and vote choice empirically. Applying the same logic of attitude-vote consistency to the more traditional parties, as the Christen-Democrats, Socialists and Liberals, requires a different approach, as they have a broader, more general ideological profile and we could expect that for instance class-based socio-structural factors are more important for these kind of parties (Barone et al., 2007; Botterman and Hooghe, 2012). Second, while the debate on lowering the voting age concerns 16-year-old adolescents, the data at hand included only 15-year-old adolescents. As such, the observed adolescent sample is not ideal to evaluate the argument on the political maturity of 16-year-olds in the voting age debate. However, as we already found attitude-vote consistency patterns among the 15-year-olds, we could argue that 16-year-olds would at least indicate similar associations, even more so because higher levels of sophistication reinforce the connection between social attitudes and vote intention. Moreover, previous research has already shown that, even at the age of fourteen, adolescents have developed basic political attitudes and are able to answer questions on their political preferences in a meaningful, well-structured manner (Hooghe and Dassonneville, 2013).

Appendix

Appendix 1

Mean score propensity to vote scale.

| Ptv | Vote choice | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------|--------|--------|------|---------------|--------|--------|-------|----------------------|--------|--------|------|
| | Green party | | | | Radical right | | | | Flemish nationalists | | | |
| | Child | Mother | Father | All | Child | Mother | Father | All | Child | Mother | Father | All |
| Green party | 7.74 | 9.12 | 9.27 | 8.34 | 2.85 | .86 | .72 | 2.00 | 4.45 | 3.67 | 3.19 | 4.05 |
| Radical right party | 3.29 | 2.96 | 1.96 | 2.96 | 7.81 | 8.94 | 8.94 | 8.274 | 4.31 | 3.79 | 4.24 | 4.19 |
| Flemish nationalists | 3.64 | 3.53 | 2.88 | 3.34 | 4.24 | 2.73 | 2.83 | 3.271 | 8.32 | 9.07 | 9.00 | 8.80 |

Entries are mean scores. 'Ptv': Propensity to vote

Source: PCSS 2012.

Appendix 2

Vote share of all parties in the survey (percentages) and the federal elections of 2010.

| | Adolescent | Mother | Father | Federal elections 2010 (Senate) |
|----------------------------|------------|--------|--------|---------------------------------|
| Christian Democratic party | 27.12 | 19.40 | 17.52 | 16.15 |
| Green party | 15.45 | 11.08 | 6.32 | 6.28 |
| Flemish Nationalist party | 24.65 | 34.66 | 42.28 | 31.69 |
| Liberal party | 7.53 | 14.01 | 14.90 | 13.32 |
| Socialist party | 7.96 | 10.28 | 7.98 | 15.31 |
| Radical right party | 13.78 | 7.86 | 7.66 | 12.28 |
| Other | 3.51 | 2.71 | 3.34 | 4.97 |
| N | 2990 | 1985 | 1866 | 4,003,320 |

Source: PCSS 2012 and the Belgian Federal Public Service of Home Affairs

Appendix 3

Principal component analysis of environmental concern, ethnocentrism and political sophistication.

| | Adolescents | Adults |
|---|-------------|--------|
| Environmental concern | | |
| I feel a sense of personal obligation to take action to stop the disposal of toxic substances in the air, water, and soil | .736 | .648 |
| The government should introduce stronger measures to halt pollution since few people will regulate themselves | .625 | .581 |
| If asked, I would contribute money to an organization that works to improve the quality of the environment | .756 | .778 |
| I am prepared to contribute money for research on renewable energy | .723 | .746 |
| It's a good thing that you have to pay for a plastic bag in the supermarket | .599 | .600 |
| Cronbach's alpha | .71 | .69 |
| Eigenvalue | 2.385 | 2.279 |
| Explained variance | 47.696 | 45.580 |
| Ethnocentrism | | |
| Generally, it is good for the Belgian economy that people from other countries come to live here | .809 | .830 |
| Generally, the cultural life in Belgium is undermined by people from other countries who came to live here | -.659 | -.710 |
| Belgium has become a worse place to live due to the presence of people from other countries who came to live here | .825 | .823 |
| Cronbach's alpha | .65 | .69 |
| Eigenvalue | 1.769 | 1.870 |
| Explained variance | 58.982 | 62.332 |
| Political sophistication | | |
| Political knowledge* | .617 | |
| Political interest** | .746 | |
| Follow the news*** | .786 | |
| Cronbach's alpha | .51 | |
| Eigenvalue | 1.554 | |
| Explained variance | 51.812 | |

Entries are factor loadings of principal component analysis. *Sum scale of political knowledge (multiple choice): 'Who is Belgium's Prime Minister?', 'Who is the Flemish Minister-President?', 'Who are the members of the Flemish government?' and 'Who is the President of the European Council?'. **Political interest: 'How interested are you in societal issues and politics?' (1 = not interested; 4 = very interested). ***Follow the news: 'How frequently do you follow the news (in newspapers, on television/internet and radio)?' (1 = never; 5 = every day). Source: PCSS 2012.

Appendix 4

Descriptive statistics of analysis variables.

| | Adolescents | | | | | Adults | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-------|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|-------|---------|---------|
| | Valid N | Mean | SD | Minimum | Maximum | Valid N | Mean | SD | Minimum | Maximum |
| Ptv Green | 3223 | 4.474 | 2.965 | .000 | 10.000 | 4065 | 4.095 | 3.215 | .000 | 10.000 |
| Ptv Radical right | 3230 | 4.012 | 3.155 | .000 | 10.000 | 4063 | 2.452 | 3.213 | .000 | 10.000 |
| Ptv Flemish-nationalists | 3209 | 5.383 | 2.951 | .000 | 10.000 | 4050 | 5.870 | 3.482 | .000 | 10.000 |
| Social attitudes | | | | | | | | | | |
| Environmentalism | 3247 | .000 | 1.000 | -2.790 | 3.000 | 4263 | .000 | 1.000 | -3.638 | 2.789 |
| Flemish identity | 3260 | 3.547 | 1.131 | 1.000 | 5.000 | 4287 | 3.337 | 1.221 | 1.000 | 5.000 |
| Ethnocentrism | 3345 | .000 | 1.000 | -3.038 | 1.911 | 4242 | .000 | 1.000 | -3.058 | 2.167 |
| Controls | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gender | 3425 | 1.458 | .498 | 1.000 | 2.000 | 4385 | 1.526 | .499 | 1.000 | 2.000 |
| Number of books at home | 3394 | 3.486 | 1.555 | 1.000 | 7.000 | 6788 | 3.486 | 1.555 | 1.000 | 7.000 |
| Born in Belgium | 3422 | .915 | .279 | .000 | 1.000 | 4379 | .902 | .298 | .000 | 1.000 |
| Political interest | 3420 | 1.992 | .752 | 1.000 | 4.000 | 4369 | 2.460 | .8190 | 1.000 | 4.000 |
| Following the news | 3410 | 3.536 | 1.215 | 1.000 | 5.000 | 4383 | 4.621 | .6816 | 1.000 | 5.000 |
| Political knowledge | 3076 | 2.391 | 1.032 | .000 | 4.000 | — | — | — | — | — |
| Political sophistication | 3061 | .000 | 1.000 | -2.653 | 2.504 | — | — | — | — | — |

Note. Environmental concern, Flemish identity, ethnocentrism and political sophistication are factor scales. Ptv: 'Propensity to vote'.

References

- Anderson, C.J., Just, A., 2012. Partisan legitimacy across generations. *Elect. Stud.* 31 (2), 306–316.
- Barone, C., Lucchini, M., Sarti, S., 2007. Class and political preferences in Europe: a multilevel analysis of trends over time. *Eur. Sociol. Rev.* 23 (3), 373–392.
- Bergh, J., 2013. Does voting rights affect the political maturity of 16- and 17-year-olds? Findings from the 2011 Norwegian voting-age trial. *Elect. Stud.* 32 (1), 90–100.
- Bochsler, D., Sciarini, P., 2010. So close but so far: voting propensity and party choice for Left-Wing parties. *Swiss Polit. Sci. Rev.* 16 (3), 373–402.
- Boonen, J., Hooghe, M., 2014. Do nationalist parties shape or follow sub-national identities? A panel analysis on the rise of the nationalist party in Flanders (Belgium), 2006–2011. *Nations Natl.* 20 (1), 56–79.
- Botterman, S., Hooghe, M., 2012. Religion and voting behaviour in Belgium: an analysis of the relation between religious beliefs and Christian democratic voting. *Acta Polit.* 47 (1), 1–17.
- Breuning, M., 1997. Nationalism and ethnic politics nationalism and nationalist parties: a comparison of the Flemish Volksunie and Vlaams Blok. *Natl. Ethn. Polit.* 3 (1), 1–27.
- Brooks, C., Nieuwbeerta, P., Manza, J., 2006. Cleavage-based voting behavior in cross-national perspective: evidence from six postwar democracies. *Soc. Sci. Res.* 35 (1), 88–128.
- Campbell, A., Converse, P.E., Miller, W.E., Stokes, D.E., 1960. *The American Voter*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Chan, T.W., Clayton, M., 2006. Should the voting age be lowered to sixteen? normative and empirical considerations. *Polit. Stud.* 54 (3), 533–558.
- Cicognani, E., Zani, B., Fournier, B., Gavray, C., Born, M., 2012. Gender differences in youths' political engagement and participation. The role of parents and of adolescents' social and civic participation. *J. Adolesc.* 35 (3), 561–576.
- Coffé, H., Voorpostel, M., 2010. Young people, parents and radical right voting. The Case of the Swiss People's Party. *Elect. Stud.* 29 (3), 435–443.
- Dalton, R.J., McAllister, I., Wattenberg, M.P., 2000. The consequences of partisan dealignment. In: Dalton, Russel J., Wattenberg, M.P. (Eds.), *Parties without Partisans. Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 37–63.
- De Winter, L., Swyngedouw, M., Dumont, P., 2006. Party system(s) and electoral behaviour in Belgium: from stability to balkanisation. *West Eur. Polit.* 29 (5), 933–956.
- Deschouwer, K., 2009a. *The Politics of Belgium: Governing a Divided Society*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.
- Deschouwer, K., 2009b. The rise and fall of the Belgian regionalist parties. *Reg.Fed. Stud.* 19 (4–5), 559–577.
- Electoral Commission, 2004. *Age of Electoral Majority* (London).
- Flanagan, C.A., 2013. *Teenage Citizens: the Political Theories of the Young*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- Flanagan, C.A., Sherrod, L.R., 1998. Youth political development: an introduction. *J. Soc. Issues* 54 (3), 447–456.
- Franklin, M.N., 2004. *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Garry, J., 2007. Making "party identification" more versatile: operationalising the concept for the multiparty setting. *Elect. Stud.* 26 (2), 346–358.
- Hart, D., Atkins, R., 2010. American sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds are ready to vote. *Ann. Am. Acad. Polit. Soc. Sci.* 633 (1), 201–222.
- Hino, A., 2007. Kenmerken van stemgedrag op "nieuwe partijen" Agalev en Vlaams Blok. In: Swyngedouw, M., Billiet, J., Goeminne, B. (Eds.), *De Kiezer Onderzocht. De verkiezingen van 2003 en 2004 in Vlaanderen*. Universitaire Pers Leuven, Leuven, pp. 193–212.
- Hooghe, M., Dassonneville, R., 2013. Voters and candidates of the future: the intention of electoral participation among adolescents in 22 European countries. *Young* 21 (1), 1–28.
- Hooghe, M., Heyndels, B., Jottier, D., Bircan, T., Botterman, S., 2010. Explaining the Green vote: Belgian local elections, 1994–2006. *Environ. Polit.* 19 (6), 930–950.
- Hooghe, M., Quintelier, E., Verhaegen, S., Boonen, J., Meeusen, C., 2012. *Parent-child Socialization Study (PCSS) 2012. Technical Report*, p. 28 (Leuven).
- Hooghe, M., Stolle, D., 2004. Good girls go to the polling booth, bad boys go everywhere: gender differences in anticipated political participation among American fourteen-year-olds. *J. Women, Polit. Policy* 26 (3), 1–23.
- Hooghe, M., Wilkenfeld, B., 2007. The stability of political attitudes and behaviors across adolescence and early adulthood: a comparison of survey data on adolescents and young adults in eight countries. *J. Youth Adolesc.* 37 (2), 155–167.
- Jennings, M.K., Stoker, L., Bowers, J., 2009. Politics across generations: family transmission reexamined. *J. Polit.* 71 (03), 782–799.
- Kitschelt, H.P., 1988. Left-libertarian parties: explaining innovation in competitive party systems. *World Polit.* 40 (2), 194–234.
- Kriesi, H., Grande, E., Dolezal, M., Helbling, M., Höglinger, D., Hutter, S., Wüest, B., 2012. *Political Conflict in Western Europe*. Cambridge University Press, New York, p. 349.
- Lachat, R., 2007. *A Heterogeneous Electorate. Political Sophistication, Predisposition Strength, and the Voting Decision Process*. Nomos Verlag, Baden-Baden.
- Lau, R.R., Andersen, D.J., Redlawsk, D.P., 2008. An exploration of correct voting in recent U.S. Presidential elections. *Am. J. Polit. Sci.* 52 (2), 395–411.
- Lau, R.R., Redlawsk, D.P., 1997. Voting correctly. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 91 (3), 585–598.
- Lubbers, M., Gijsberts, M., Scheepers, P., 2002. Extreme right-wing voting in Western Europe. *Eur. J. Polit. Res.* 41 (3), 345–378.
- Maddens, B., Hajnal, I., 2001. Alternative models of issue voting: the case of the 1991 and 1995 elections in Belgium. *Eur. J. Polit. Res.* 39 (3), 319–346.
- Meguid, B., 2005. Competition between unequals: the role of mainstream party strategy in niche party success. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 99 (3), 347–359.
- Meirick, P.C., Wackman, D.B., 2004. Kids voting and political knowledge: narrowing gaps, informing votes. *Soc. Sci. Q.* 85 (5), 1161–1177.
- Milazzo, C., Adams, J., Green, J., 2012. Are voter decision rules endogenous to parties' policy strategies? a model with applications to elite depolarization in post-Thatcher Britain. *J. Polit.* 74 (1), 262–276.
- N-VA, 2013. *Geschiedenis van de N-VA*. Retrieved from: <http://www.n-va.be/over-n-va/geschiedenis>.
- Plutzer, E., 2002. Becoming a habitual voter: inertia, resources, and growth in young adulthood. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 96 (01), 41–56.
- Ryan, J.B., 2011. Social networks as a shortcut to correct voting. *Am. J. Polit. Sci.* 55 (4), 753–766.
- Schlozman, K.L., Verba, S., Brady, H.E., 2012. *The Unheavenly Chorus. Unequal Political Voice and the Broken Promise of American Democracy*. Princeton University Press, p. 693.
- Sears, D.O., Funk, C.L., 1999. Evidence of the long-term persistence of adults' political predispositions. *J. Polit.* 61 (1), 1–28.
- Sherrod, L.R., Torney-Purta, J., Flanagan, C.A., 2010. *Handbook of Research on Civic Engagement in Youth*. Wiley & Sons, Hoboken New Jersey, p. 706.
- Sides, J., Citrin, J., 2007. European opinion about immigration: the role of identities, interests and information. *Br. J. Polit. Sci.* 37 (3), 477–504.
- Swyngedouw, M., Goeminne, B., Jacobs, D., 2007. De val van Agalev in 2003 en de heropstanding van Groen! in 2004. In: Swyngedouw, M., Billiet, J., Goeminne, B. (Eds.), *De Kiezer Onderzocht. De verkiezingen van 2003 en 2004 in Vlaanderen*. Universitaire Pers Leuven, Leuven, pp. 69–93.
- Van der Brug, W., 2010. Structural and ideological voting in age cohorts. *West Eur. Polit.* 33 (3), 586–607.
- Van der Brug, W., Fennema, M., Tillie, J., 2000. Anti-immigrant parties in Europe: ideological or protest vote? *Eur. J. Polit. Res.* 37 (1), 77–102.
- Van der Brug, W., Kritzinger, S., 2012. Generational differences in electoral behaviour. *Elect. Stud.* 31 (2), 245–249.
- Van der Eijk, C., van der Brug, W., Kroh, M., Franklin, M., 2006. Rethinking the dependent variable in voting behavior. On the measurement and analysis of electoral utilities. *Elect. Stud.* 25 (3), 424–447.
- Van Houtte, M., 2004. Tacking effects on school achievement. A quantitative explanation in terms of the academic culture of school staff. *Am. J. Educ.* 110, 354–388.
- Van Spanje, J., Van der Brug, W., 2007. The party as pariah: the exclusion of anti-immigration parties and its effect on their ideological positions. *West Eur. Polit.* 30 (5), 1022–1040.
- Wagner, M., Johann, D., Kritzinger, S., 2012. Voting at 16: turnout and the quality of vote choice. *Elect. Stud.* 31 (2), 372–383.
- Wagner, M., Kritzinger, S., 2012. Ideological dimensions and vote choice: age group differences in Austria. *Elect. Stud.* 31 (2), 285–296.
- Walczak, A., van der Brug, W., de Vries, C.E., 2012. Long- and short-term determinants of party preferences: inter-generational differences in Western and East Central Europe. *Elect. Stud.* 31 (2), 273–284.
- Walgrave, S., De Swert, K., 2004. The making of the (Issues of the) Vlaams Blok. *Polit. Commun.* 21 (4), 479–500.
- Walgrave, S., De Swert, K., 2007. Where does issue ownership come from? from the party or from the Media? issue-party identifications in Belgium, 1991–2005. *Harv. Int. J. Press/Polit.* 12 (1), 37–67.
- Wattenberg, M.P., 2008. *Is Voting for Young People?* Pearson Longman, New York.

- Weisberg, H.F., 1980. A multidimensional conceptualization of party identification. *Polit. Behav.* 2 (1), 33–60.
- Weisberg, H.F., 1999. Political partisanship. In: Robinson, J.P., Shaver, P.R., Wrightsman, L.S. (Eds.), *Measures of Political Attitudes*. Academic Press, San Diego, pp. 681–729.
- Wolak, J., 2009. Explaining change in party identification in adolescence. *Elect. Stud.* 28 (4), 573–583.
- Zuckerman, A.S., Dasović, J., Fitzgerald, J., 2007. *Partisan Families: the Social Logic of Bounded Partisanship in Germany and Britain*. Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Zukin, C., Keeter, S., Andolina, M., Jenkins, K., Delli Carpini, M.X., 2006. *A New Engagement? Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizen*. Oxford University Press, New York.