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Talking politics at the dinner table: stereotypes in children's political choices

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Abstract:

This study examines how primary school aged or middle childhood and pre-teens are led in their (potential) voting behavior by stereotypes (gender, age, ethnicity of candidates) and by social background (parents' political preferences and voting behavior, children's media use and memberships, political discussion at home). The experimental design of this study is not one that is often encountered in childhood research. In a fictitious research setting Belgian 6 to 13-year-old children (N = 264) voted for their 'ideal' mayor, based on candidates' physical appearances. Belgian original children were found to prefer young Belgian origin mayoral candidates with European looks of their own gender. The results of this experiment furthermore indicated that, besides of parents' political preferences and education, domestic political discussion is of significant influence on children's choices regarding ethnicity, gender or age of political candidates.

Keywords: Political socialization, children, voting behavior, candidate evaluations, political stereotyping, parents' political preferences, Belgium.

This article examines how children are led in their voting behavior by stereotypes and by their social background. Stereotypes – beliefs we possess about social groups (Brown, 1986: 188) – play an important role in political impression formation, the construction of the mental image of another persons' cognitions and beliefs (McGraw, 2003) by adults, but what about children? The study follows a new path, because it connects political socialization – the childhood acquisition of specifically political orientations (Niemi, 1973) –, to political impression management – the aim to control the political image about oneself held by others (De Landtsheer et al., 2008; De Landtsheer, 2004; McGraw, 2003). One may not underestimate the growing importance of perception and political impression formation for children and adults in a mediated world. It was, after all, the “modernization” of politics and of mass media due to commercialization, globalization and visual

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culture that encouraged the study of impression management (Maarek, 1995; Schwartzberg, 1977; De Landtsheer et al., 2008). The introduction relates the subject of children's political stereotyping to political socialization theory and to political impression management, and it introduces 'impression assessment' as the method for measuring political impressions. The second part is a methodology section that describes the experimental research design. Part three details the results of the experiment on Belgian children's political preferences in relation to their social background and domestic environment (parental influence, youth organisations, media impact), after which social implications of the study are discussed in the final section.

Introduction

Political participation and interest are not privileges restricted to adults. Children are active participants in the political sphere, they have their own interests and they are capable of making rational "political" choices. (Sears & Brown, 2013; De Vries et al. 2010; Greenstein, 1965). Politics should not only be taken here only in its narrow definition of institutional politics and the routine work of politicians or voting behaviour. But should also comprise the political, a case of ideas about freedom or justice (Martin, 2013) or even morality and resource allocation (Killen & Smetana, 2014).

Political socialization originally focused on the childhood or pre-adult acquisition of specific political orientations (Niemi, 1973). Since a quarter century, scholars in the political socialization area have broadened their research to the entire life span, because of the finding that people may still be open to change during adulthood (Sapiro, 1994). Regardless the scope, findings still support the importance of early learning and political competence of youngsters. There does not seem to change much to party identification and to prejudice and ethnic and racial identity after the pre-adult acquisition of these political attitudes (O. Sears & Brown, 2013).

This study details the less common subject of children's political stereotyping in voting behavior. The study takes a comparative point: which factors are most likely to play some role in stereotyping by children. Is it their parents' voting intentions, political preferences and level of education? And what about the talk about politics at home; children's membership in organizations; and children's' (frequency of) media use. Former research testifies of the significance of the above factors for the categorization by children of other individuals into more and less favorable groups. Children's experience of political phenomena, their political knowledge, and even their future voting behavior are influenced by environmental cues (school, home, media, important third persons, distinct socio-economic and ethnic background) (Sears and Brown, 2013; Abendschön, 2010, 2013; Neundorf and others, 2013; Hess and Torney, 1967).

It can be concluded from earlier studies that for the child's scholarly, civic and social education level, the domestic situation is crucial. Parents' political interest and engagement affect the transmission of political values and especially partisanship on to the child (Dinas, 2014; Fitzgerald, 2011; Jennings and Niemi, 1981). Families are now often composed in a way that differs from the traditional two-parent family, but the value transmis-

sion shows the same pattern (Jennings and others, 2009). The amount and type of political information that is being 'allowed' at home, and especially discussion about politics at home, increases children's receptivity to their parents' ideas and partisanship (Wolak, 2009; Schulman and DeAndrea, 2014). If both parents have different political preferences, their children might later engage more intensively in politics, and change their voting behavior more often (Fitzgerald and Curtis, 2012; Nieuwbeerta and Wittebrood, 1995). Parents are the most likely agents of political socialization because they spend so much time with their children, from a young age onward.

School and school books are, besides, well-known factors of political socialization and particularly of stereotyping (Lawy, 2014; Blanc, 2012; Lee and others, 2012; Ichilov, 2003; Bar-Tal, 1996). Children may equally be influenced and socialized into politics as members of organisations such as youth movements (Eccles and Barber, 1999; Hansen and others, 2003; Torney-Purta et al. 2001). Furthermore, the media, most notably television and the Internet, have taken an important place in contemporary communication and socialization and may have a considerable impact on children's political development and preferences (Moeller and de Vreese, 2013). All circumstances in which children learn, discuss and think about any kind of political process affect their political socialization (Abendschön, 2013; van Deth and others, 2011). Political education may not only happen in an explicit way (education, discussion) but also in an implicit, peripheral way (Jennings and Niemi, 1981; Kroh and Selb, 2009; McIntosh and others, 2007; Schmid, 2012).

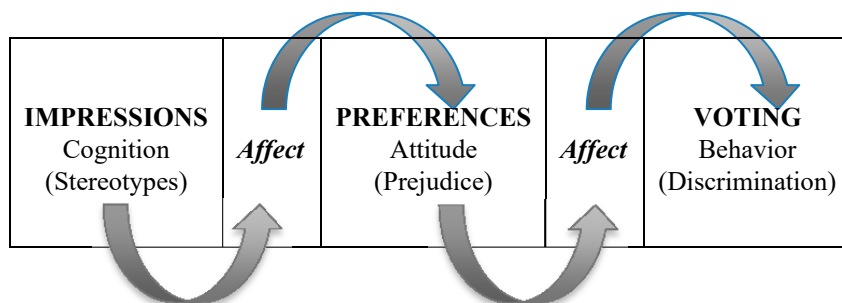
As a method, political socialization studies generally use survey and rating scales or qualitative research for investigating such issues as stereotypes and prejudice or pre-adult family transmission of party identification. The method of "impression assessment" used in this study fully takes into account the significance of emotion in voting intentions. Until now, only little effort has been invested in the direct measurement of the emotional aspects of prejudice and voting (Kinder, 2013: 822). New about the current approach of "impression assessment" is that it connects political socialization to impression management theory and methodology (De Vries et al.; McGraw, 2003). Whereas a first study (De Vries et al.) aimed to assess children's perception of politics and tried to compare children's perception of politics with the perception by adults, the current study goes one step further. This study examines the role of prejudice in the political impression formation by children. Environmental cues that influence the way children think will be isolated from the child's thoughts. In order to know in what degree a child is being influenced and how strong the child's own perceptions are. It is important to assess the mental world of the child without confusing or reorienting the child's thoughts. In most societies children are kept far away from the political playground, therefore they have no knowledge about the specific points of view or (other) characteristics that distinguish political parties or even individual politicians from each other. Children, as a consequence, make a "political" choice purely on the base of physical appearances, and of aspects of (political) socialization, whereas the aspect of political knowledge can be generally excluded. It is, however, possible to discover what kind of mental picture emerges in a child's mind when confronted with politics, and how this image is shaped.

There is already an idea of "political" preference among children, when it comes to choices based on physical appearances. At a young age, boys and girls develop gender-specific orientations towards politics and they take the same-gender parent as an example

(Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974; Hooghe and Stolle, 2004; Hooghe and Dassonneville, 2013). Children identify themselves easier with same-gender candidates, and they look for their own gender stereotypes in candidates (Friedman and Zebrowitz, 1992; Alexander and Andersen, 1993; Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993; Rosenwasser and Seale, 1988; Lammers and others, 2009). De Vries and colleagues (2010) showed that the overall image of the ideal mayor seen through children's eyes corresponds to the idea of a traditional, formal city mayor, as would appear on children's television shows: a dark-haired man, wearing traditional, unobtrusive clothes, and a hat. Interestingly, the children's "ideal" politician resembles the one of adults: a dark or grey-haired 40-45 years old, in a traditional, formal dark suit with a white shirt and a tie (De Landsheer, 2004; De Landsheer et al., 2000; Rosenberg, 1987). Voters prefer male leaders (Andersen & Garrison, 1978; Feingold, 1994; Lord & others, 1986) and so do children, but according to De Vries and colleagues (2010), they are more likely to prefer a female mayor as they grow older. In one American study children of 2,5 years old, were asked to choose photographs of unfamiliar peers they would like to play with; a majority of white and black children preferred a same-race face (Katz & Kofkin, 1997). Children are prejudiced against other social groups from an early age, and their biases decrease with age but never disappear (O' Sears & Brown, 2013: 70).

Stereotypes represent the cognitive process of categorization into social groups, whereby stereotypes simplify social reality and make life easier for us. Stereotypes represent the cognitive aspect of prejudice, an attitude in which negative emotion is the central ingredient. While stereotypes are generalizations that are directed to members of out-groups that are mostly but not always negative, prejudice consists of a view in which another group is seen as inferior in combination with feelings of animosity (Duckitt, 2003; Kinder, 2013). Feelings can range from hatred and disgust to discomfort and indifference (Pettigrew, 1985). This study examines stereotyping by children in voting behavior that is mediated by impressions, and as a consequence focus is on implicit or unconscious prejudice and stereotyping. Attitudes can be measured, also implicit ones, but the measuring of attitudes and behavior remains a big challenge. Figure 1. about impressions and preferences as mediating pathways in children's voting presents the theoretical model for impression assessment that we use in this study.

Figure 1. Model for Impression Assessment: Impressions and Preferences as Mediating Pathways in Children's Voting



Methods

Measuring voting behavior of children is not a straightforward study, as we cannot simply analyze the outcome of voting behavior or even vote intention. First of all, as for age restrictions children cannot vote during elections. Secondly, it is difficult to examine children's voting intentions, because it is likely that children will experience difficulties in comprehending questions on political opinion and preferences, especially with regard to differences in policy issues and political positions of candidates (questions that for sophisticated adults are being perceived as difficult). Nevertheless, from a certain age children definitely do develop political preferences. Those preferences may not be directly visible, but it is certainly reflected in an underlying or peripheral route, as discussed for instance in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). It is possible to examine the peripheral political preferences of children as we consider the (differences in) their political perceptions based on looks and appearances, or their political 'impressions'. Young children have the tendency to attend the observable rather than the abstract (O'Sears & Brown, 2013: 66).

Children's political preferences, therefore, can be studied by measuring experimental voting behavior in arranged elections. The voting choice with this is based upon the impressions that the young respondents have of the appearance of the politicians, or better the mayors, children's number one politicians (Edwards, 2001).

The research design of this study is based on settled demographical facts, instead of 'aesthetical' features that are manipulated. Three different sets of photographs distinguish the choice on which a vote depends. This study takes the independent variables gender, ethnicity and age into account. The first set consists of photos of male versus female mayors. The second set makes a distinction in ethnicity (expressed by color of the skin) by showing photographs (all male) of three different populations: 'Europeans' (Belgian origin), 'North Africans' (Moroccan or Turkish origin) and 'Sub Saharans' (Central African, Afro-American or Afro-European origin). The third set classifies the presented candidates (all male and 'European') into three age categories: young (under 30), middle (30-50) and old (above 50). Finally, a fourth set has been added, a so-called 'mixed set', with a selection of photos out of the three other sets. This voting form has been used as a backup and control group.

The selection of the 21 photographs in this experiment was based upon a number of criteria. First, all photos represent actual Belgian mayors who were in office at the time of the experiment (March 7, 2010). Necessarily, there are some exceptions in the category of ethnicity, because there are approximately no mayors with a non-Belgian origin. Instead, photos of other actual politicians (aldermen or MPs) were used. A second criterion is that all photos had to be as similar as possible – except for the independent variable – in each type of voting form. Therefore, we used photos from the official websites of the Belgian districts were used. This means that all mayors look straight in the 'camera', are decently dressed, have a friendly and open face (smiling) and that all photos have more or less the same size.

The research design allows for connecting stereotyping in children's political choices to social background related indicators. In a fictitious research setting, 400 young respondents¹ were asked to vote for their 'ideal' mayor. Children that participated, belong

to the category of the so-called school age, children with an age between 6 to 13 years (usually the ages that children in Belgium go to primary school). Each respondent received a voting form and was accompanied to a voting booth. Then an instructor invited the respondent to fill in the voting form autonomously, by marking a hierarchical top-3 of first most favorite, second most favorite and third most favorite candidate out of all candidates from one set of photographs. Each voting form consisted of one out of three sets of photographs (or in some cases the additional control set). At the same time of 'voting', the related parent that accompanied the child was asked to fill in an 'identity card', which included questions that provided the necessary socio-demographic and socialization data. Each identity card could be linked to its related voting form by a previously fixed coding system.

After selection of the useful data collection from all participants, we were able to maintain the data of a total of $N=264$ registered children. The participants in the experiment were between 3 and 15 years old, but only children in so-called school-age (6-13) are retained. Most of the youth participants, however, had already entered primary or secondary school at the moment of the data collection. The average age is 9.58 years, as the most frequent (median) ages are 10 and 11, together covering almost 40 percent of the young respondents. The division between males (50.8%) and females (49.2%) is almost equally spread.

Results

Children's political preferences

In order to identify the most popular mayor(s) among all pictured politicians, a total rank of all individual cases has been made. The first, second and third choices are included in the results. Based on the calculation of the total number each 'candidate' has been favored as either first, second and third choice, and taking into account a weight factor² (depending on possible choices of each photo), this result provides a good understanding of the most favorite mayors. The photographs below represent the top-5 of most favored candidates. The two most popular mayors, following this calculation, are by far the most selected ones as first choice as well (both $N=70$). The first ranked mayor is ranked the most in absolute number ($N=169$), the second achieved the highest rank after weighted calculation. When the most favorite choices are being analyzed it appears that children prefer young and modern candidates. Noticeable is the fact that female mayors are taking top positions in the ranking (place 1 and 3), although it is also a woman who is chosen the least of all.

Figure 2: Top 5 most popular mayors among children (N=169)



The different photographs of the mayors in the individual cases can be divided into a number of groups, based on the variables *gender*, *age* and *ethnicity*. Again, a hierarchical ranking can be made, regarding the children's preferences, in absolute numbers and in a weighted score. Logically similar to the individual cases, two groups stand out clearly: young males and females. When we look at the differences in hierarchical preferences per respondent, we see a similar pattern in the first and second choices as in the total average results. Respectively, 32.9 percent (1st) – 31.3 percent (2nd) – 32.9 percent (3rd) chooses a young male as the 'ideal' mayor. As second best mayor (per group) a female has been indicated as first or second choice (23.7 percent and 21.9 percent), but as third choice the 'female-group' is set on third place (13.3 percent) in favor of the 'North African-group' (13.6 percent, but that is only one vote over the females). This is rather remarkable, as this group scores lowest on the overall average. Similarly, preferences of middle-aged males are ascending as hierarchy descends (more votes for this group as third than as first choice) as well, while the group 'Sub-Saharan' males shows the opposite way.

We can specify the outcome of the mayor preferences by differentiating the three variables separately. Table 1 displays the specified results of mayor preferences divided by the variable *gender*, *age* and *ethnicity*. In general, results show that a majority chooses a male candidate over a female (52.4 percent against 47.6 percent). However, when we consider the hierarchical outcomes, a female is preferred over a male mayor as first and second choice (respectively: 54.1 percent and 53.1 percent). Out of 97 individual cases 15 respondents (or 15.5 percent) chose a complete male top three, whereas 11 respondents (11.3 percent) have a complete female preference.

Significant differences ($P < .001$) in preferences are found between male and female respondents. Nearly a third of the male respondents preferred a female candidate over a male candidate, whereas 71.7 percent of the female respondents chose a mayor of the same sex. In this specification only the first choices are included.

A selection of the independent variable *age* is made as well. In this selection, only male mayors are included (since there is no differentiation of age in the female category possible). Corresponding with the overall results, young candidates are preferred over older candidates. Surprisingly, the oldest age category is, as a whole, the least popular. This does not meet our expectations, as the hypothesis states that children choose for stereotypical old(er) mayor candidates, much like they know from, for instance, children's television programs. In our experiment the age difference of the respondents has no sig-

nificant effect on preferences by age of the mayors, nor has the respondents' gender or education.

Table 1: Differences in mayor preferences according to gender, age and ethnicity

Variables		TOTAL N	PERCENTAGE	GENDER CHILD (%) ^a	
				=FEMALE	=MALE
GENDER	FEMALE	138	47.6	71.7***	32.4***
	MALE	152	52.4	28.3***	67.6***
AGE	YOUNG	124	42.5		
	MIDDLE	89	30.5		
	OLD	79	27.1		
ETHNICITY	EUROPEAN	157	53.8		
	NORTH AFRICAN	78	26.7		
	SUB-SAHARAN	57	19.5		

a. Only first choice preferences are used

*** $P < .001$

Selection of the last independent variable, *ethnicity*, demonstrates that more than half of the respondents (53.8 percent) chooses a 'European'-looking mayor, in this case, a candidate of Belgian origin. Considering the fact that approximately 90 percent of the respondents is of Belgian origin and that most people prefer a candidate with which they can identify themselves, this percentage is in fact relatively low (Hooghe and Dassonneville, 2013; Hooghe and Stolle, 2004). Nevertheless, 15.5 percent of the respondents has chosen a complete 'European' top three, whereas only 3.1 percent selected a complete 'Sub-Saharan' top three and even no one chose exclusively 'North African' candidates. More female than male respondents have chosen European candidates over other ethnicities (respectively 63.4 percent against 54.0 percent), but this difference is not significant.

Social background and political socialization

Additionally, this experiment enables us to connect children's political preferences to processes of political socialization. Certain socio-demographic and socialization characteristics could influence (or cause differences in) political orientation. To estimate the respondent's background, we asked the adult accompanying the child at the moment of data collection (in most cases this was one of the child's parents) about their education and their own political preferences and voting-behavior. The parents' education and voting behavior can be considered as implicit or indirect political socialization influences, because it's indirectly caused by status inheritance. However, we were also interested in the explicit/direct ways of political socialization processes, which can be measured by how and to what extent children are exposed to political content. First of all, and most im-

portant, this concerns the frequency of how often politics is being discussed at home (which we call 'domestic socialization'). Secondly, this refers to other information channels (media use and societal activities) by which children are politically affected.

The results show that voting behavior ($P < .05$) of the parents affects the children's political preferences significantly. Also, parental political preference ($P = .06$) tends to influence the children's political preference. Interesting results are found regarding the independent variable of ethnic diversity. The results demonstrate that, in the group of parents who have 'left' political preferences and 'left' voting behavior (sp.a, social democrats, and in particular Groen!, environmental party), children choose candidates out of the three ethnic selections equally divided (almost exactly one third per ethnic group). However, 'center' and 'right' political preferences by parents (especially parents who vote for the Christian democratic CD&V or the liberal democratic Open VLD) are reflected in a strong 'European' (white) candidate preference by their children. Respectively 75.0 percent (parents' preference is center) and 53.3 percent (parents' preference is right) puts a European (white) mayor in first place.

The other socio-demographic variable, the parent's education level, is also borderline significant ($P = .06$). Due to an overrepresentation of academic educated parents in this experiment, we decided to divide education level roughly into three categories: lower education, higher education and university education. Children of lower educated parents choose female and young male candidates equally (both 36.0 percent), whereas old males and candidates of foreign ethnicity were not chosen at all. Children of higher educated parents choose significantly less often female candidates (12.8 percent), but old male mayors are put in the first place more often than in the other classifications (11.5 percent). Within the academic parents group, children prefer young males the most (44.1 percent) and they choose considerably less female (19.6 percent) mayors and male mayors of an average age (middle age, only 13.7 percent), perhaps in favor of the 'North African' group (9.8 percent).

We discussed several aspects that influence the dependent variable (political preferences of children) when the focus is on one of the three independent variables (gender, age and ethnicity). However, we are interested in extraneous variables as well, which altogether explain the influence of political socialization. In order to assess the influence of political socialization in a domestic context, the adult respondents were asked about the extent to which the topic of politics is been discussed at home. The response options in the questionnaire are restricted to five possibilities (never, rarely, sometimes, regularly and often). A large majority of 58.3 percent of the respondents answered 'sometimes'. The extremes (never and often) are seldom picked. The mean of 2.97 (slightly less than the middle) shows that it rather occurs that politics is rarely or even not at all discussed at home, although this is only a minimal difference. The second interpretation of children's political socialization is within a societal context, whereby the questionnaire asked about membership of any type of society (or club). Only 12.2 percent of the young respondents are not a member of any society. Finally, parents were asked about their child's quantity of media use (specified to television and internet use in minutes per day). The respondents watch television with an average of 74.2 minutes per day, whereas 'one hour' is most often indicated. This number is significantly higher than their average internet use: 41.9 minutes per day. Altogether, the children in this experiment spend an average time of 116 minutes (i.e. almost two hours) per day to television and internet.

Table 2: Preferences by degree of domestic political socialization (in percentages)^a

Politics discussed at home	FEMALE	MALE YOUNG	MALE MIDDLE	MALE OLD	MALE NORTH AFRICAN	MALE SUB-SAHARAN	TOTAL ^b
NEVER-RARELY	30.4	34.8	21.7	13.0	0.0	0.0	100
SOMETIMES	14.9	38.0	22.3	9.9	9.9	5.0	100
REGULARLY-OFTEN	20.0	50.0	12.5	2.5	5.0	10.0	100
TOTAL ^b (average %)	19.3	39.6	20.3	9.2	6.8	4.8	100

N.B. The percentages in this section are not weighted, i.e. the proportions of the preferences with respect to the group categories (gender/age/ethnicity) are not properly, but it is the differences between the classification groups that matters.

$N = 207$ $p < .05$

The question is to what extent children's political preferences are influenced by political socialization (in a broad sense). Therefore, we collected data about domestic, societal and media influences on political socialization. In this experiment, neither membership of any kind, nor the quantity of media use made any significant difference on the respondents' political preferences (and voting behavior). However, certain domestic circumstances do affect this dependent variable (see table 2). First of all, the extent to which politics is discussed at home influences the political choices. In home situations in which political issues are never or rarely discussed, 30.4 percent of the children prefer a female candidate (with an overall average of 19.3 percent for female preference). If parents talk about politics occasionally (classification = sometimes) with their children, a female preference is only 14.9 percent, but the choice for a mayor of a different ethnicity is likely higher. In the category 'regularly or often', the share for a female candidate is 20.0 percent. Another remarkable finding is the fact that within the first classification (never-rarely) not one respondent chose a candidate of a foreign ethnicity.

Conclusion and discussion

The results of this study performed by the experimental "impression assessment" method confirm for the Belgian context partly what we already know from studies elsewhere (Europe, US) using other methods. These results are far from encouraging when it comes to the advancement of diversity in a changing European political landscape. The 6 to 13-year-old respondents in our Belgian study voted massively for young male candidates with 'European' looks. Also (young) females are relatively chosen a lot; the most popular candidate of all is a young female mayor. These preferences are, nevertheless, in particular at the expense of old male candidates and candidates of a foreign ethnicity. Within the category of ethnicity, we have hypothesized that children choose for candidates with whom they are familiar, i.e. candidates who resemble the mayor stereotype the most. As expected, children from Belgian origin tend to choose, following this logic, in majority candidates of Belgian origin as well. This is explicable since in fact almost every mayor in Belgium has a 'European' look.

But in respect to ethnicity, we can also report some surprising findings that at least give us more hope. There is the fact that parents' political preferences have a significant influence on the political choices of children regarding to diversity in candidate's ethnicity. Children whose parents (intend to) vote for center or right parties, choose in majority 'European' looking (white) mayors, whereas the choices by children of left-minded parents, and of children with a parent of higher or academic education show much more variety in their own political preferences. How can we interpret and explain this outcome? It is plausible that certain characteristics of the parent, at a socio-demographic level, are part of the political socialization process, though in a less direct way. We should be cautious to establish causalities with respect to the question how and to what extent this form of political socialization determines political stereotypes in children's mind. Nevertheless, based on the results of our experiment, we can conclude that, with an expanded model of measuring, political socialization influences the political perception of school-aged children undeniably.

The results show furthermore, not surprisingly, but positively, that in a domestic situation in which parent and child never or rarely talk about politics, children tend to have a more stereotypical political preference than children for whom politics is a familiar topic of discussion at home. In other words, the former (traditional) group chooses (depending on the sex of the respondent) 'European' male or female candidates, with a relatively large preference for older mayors (middle or old age). This particular preference decreases strongly as domestic political discussion increases. The latter (less traditional) group chooses less often-female candidates and older male candidates, and it expresses more variety in political preferences, especially in favor of other ethnicities.

However, political socialization is not limited to political discussion at home – this is only one indicator. We earlier argued that their entire environment politically socializes children. This study intended to measure societal and media influences as well, but unfortunately, we found no significant results in these categories. A lack of time and space in our experiment to assess these forms of political socialization may have been responsible for these unsatisfying results, and further research, with advanced measuring, should give more clarity on this.

Secondly, the people who joined this experiment differ from the population in mainstream society in a socio-demographical context. When we consider the ratio of the parents' level of education and voting behavior, we witnessed that high-educated parents, and conservative (NV-A, Open VLD) and environmentalist (Groen!) party voters are overrepresented in our study. In further research we should compare the diversity of the population in the experiment to the real population.

Finally, we should mention that research in experimental settings, and especially with young children, is exposed to certain difficulties. We were fortunate to have access to a large group of young participants, in most cases accompanied by a parent, who were willing to co-operate in this experiment. Nonetheless, co-operation of young respondents requires a thoughtful approach: the questionnaire and instructions have to be understandable and easy to do, only a limited number of questions can be asked, and the task has, in some way, to be 'pleasant'. All these considerations relate to some restrictions to the experimental design, but in our opinion, the data has been collected in the best possible way regarding the circumstances.

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Notes

- 1 Participants were recruited during a special children's day at the University of Antwerp
- 2 The weight factor depends on the number of possible respondents that could hypothetically have chosen each type of photo in the four different voting forms. In formula: $TOTAL\ WEIGHTED = N\ TOTAL / \Sigma (N\ possible\ cases).$

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