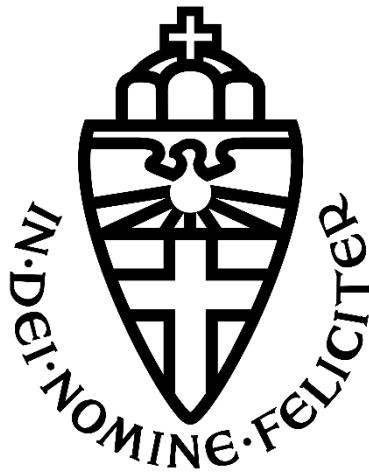


RADBOUD UNIVERSITY NIJMEGEN



Time to Grow Up

Researching an Age Based Cleavage in the
Netherlands

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Master Thesis Comparative Politics

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Abstract

Age has become a concept at the forefront of political contestation in the Netherlands in the last years. From instability of the pensions to rising health costs, it seems that the younger and older generation have opposites interests that are difficult to satisfy with a limited governmental budget. This thesis aims to understand to what extent this clash of interests has become an age cleavage within the Netherlands by using the rational choice, social identity, and cultural approach. Using mixed methods (content analysis and OLS regression) the analysis focuses on the supply (political parties) and demand (voters) side. The content analysis shows that the political parties indeed have a focus on age and have clear preferences for the younger or the older generation. On top of that, the focus of age within these party programs seem to cross ideology and economic preferences, giving a complete new dimension on how to rank political parties. The OLS regression shows unclear results. The relationship between age and voting behavior seems to be flipped the other way around than predicted, which means that younger people tend to vote for elderly favoring parties. It also does not seem to show significant results. On top of that, it is unclear if the rational choice and social identity approaches can be corroborated. There does seem to be corroboration for the cultural approach.

Acknowledgements

This thesis has been written in tumultuous times, both geopolitically as well as personally. In the year and a half that I have been working on this thesis and on myself alike, the political landscape has shifted from a concept that has always felt familiar to me, to something that always seems to be able to bring me off balance. After the Brexit and the election of Donald Trump, perhaps nothing will be able to shock me anymore, the academic bubble that I have been living in has finally burst

These realizations come in a time in which I have been becoming of age, both as a student and scientist, as well as a human being. I feel stronger in my convictions than ever, but I also feel more ready to contest the knowledge that I have accumulated in this short amount of time as a researcher.

It was very tough writing my thesis while at the same time being in a long and difficult personal road to contain my OCD. I can honestly say that there were times in this writing process that I felt like giving up because I could not find the strength to face the day, or because my ideas were not willing to be shaped. Without the following people that I want to thank from the bottom of my heart, I'm not quite sure if I was ever able to really finish this master's thesis.

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List of abbreviations:

AOW	Algemene Ouderdomswet
CDA	Christen-Democratisch Appèl
D66	Democraten 66
PvdA	Partij van de Arbeid
PvdD	Partij voor de Dieren
PVV	Partij Voor de Vrijheid
SGP	Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij
SP	Socialistische Partij
VVD	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie

Chapter 1: Introduction

There is a discrepancy between the empirical and the image-forming when we look at an age based conflict. The differences between the younger and the older generation are very nuanced. However, it is simply more appealing to talk about the younger or older generation as whole instead of giving a more truthful image of reality (Vermeij, Sonck, and van den Broek, 2014). With these paraphrased words and a final call for a nuanced debate, the Social and Cultural Rapport of 2014 conclude their chapter which is titled ‘Young versus Old.’ Although there is not much to disagree with these words, it begs the question which difference it makes for the younger and older generation who both have paid greatly for the most recent financial crisis, and feel like they actually suffered the most. Is it possible that although the empirical situation might be nuanced, an age conflict has still started to emerge, based on voters cost-benefit analysis, the groups that they identify with, or even cultural differences? These questions will be answered in this thesis that will focus on the question if there is an age cleavage in the Netherlands¹.

Cleavage theory is a theory proposed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) to comprehensively understand the political landscape in Western-Europe. Cleavage theory is able to explain how the political landscape is shaped and more importantly why. It is a double-sided theory that focuses both on the demand-side of the voters and the supply-side of the political parties (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). I define cleavage theory as *a social divide*

¹ I have decided not to make a distinction between different types of age differences. That is: age categories in terms of life-phase (young or old); age as cohort (generations). The big distinction is that if age is seen in terms of a life-phase, it would mean that people’s attitudes would change if they start to fall in a new age category. If age is seen as a cohort/generational phenomenon, people attitudes would stay with them as they get older. Although it is interesting, the data does not permit to work with this distinction, based on the fact that age as a conflict in society is such a new phenomenon (e.g. 50PLUS, the Dutch elderly party, only started to exist in 2011). Therefore, when this thesis refers to age, it can mean age as a life-phase as well as age in terms of different generations.

within a society which actors such as voters² and political parties react on by mobilizing themselves against those on the other side of the divide. This reaction causes a constant interplay between both the voters and the political parties to gain as much political pay-offs as possible (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). In the end, four traditional cleavages have been identified which all shape the political landscape in different ways: the church-state cleavage, center-periphery cleavage, rural-urban cleavage and the worker owner cleavage (which will be further explained in Chapter 2: Theoretical framework) (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967).

This research shifts the existing literature of age and voting behavior towards a more comprehensive theory of an age cleavage. The reason for doing this is that an age cleavage is capable of explaining both the demand as well as the supply side, giving a more complete image as to why people might base their vote on their age.

Updating both cleavage theory as well as the theory of age and voting behavior by combining the two as an age cleavage is scientifically as well as socially relevant for several reasons. This thesis adds to the political science field by bringing up a cutting-edge question that has not been answered before in a cleavage theory perspective: namely to what extent an age cleavage is present in the Netherlands. Next to the scientific relevance, there is a clear societal relevance in doing this research. Voting is the most important way that Dutch citizens can let their voice be heard in the Netherlands and put their faith in the Dutch political parties. Therefore, doing research that explores both the demand as well as the supply side to understand how political parties and Dutch voters behave and react towards each other is essential to understand the political landscape in the Netherlands. This thesis adds to the body

² In this thesis, the terms 'people'; 'voters'; and 'citizens' are being used interchangeably. Although the distinction between these three terms is interesting, it is of no importance of this thesis. The focus is on those people who were allowed to vote during the 2012 Dutch parliamentary elections. Which are people who are over 18 and have the Dutch Nationality

of literature that has already researched the interaction between voters and political parties by adding the age component and placing it in a cleavage theory perspective.

There are three different theoretical approaches that I will use to explain how age and cleavage theory are connected to each other: the rational choice approach, the social identity approach and the cultural approach. First of all the rational choice approach; this approach is based on the assumption that individuals are rational beings that make their decisions in line with their interests (Downs, 1957). A cost-benefit analysis is made to see which action is the most in line with gaining as much benefit at the lowest cost (Downs, 1957). The claim that I will be making is that different age group have different needs (such as pensions for the elderly and education for the younger age group). Therefore, age will be incorporated into the cost-benefit analysis of the rational individual, making elderly people choose political parties that incorporate their interests while making younger people choose political parties that incorporate their interests. In the end, this will lead to a shift in the political landscape with parties either choosing to favor elderly issues or issues of the younger age group.

The second theory is social identity which I will incorporate with rational choice (see chapter 2 for in depth reasoning). The social identity theory claims that individuals have a certain self-image through which they identify with others that have similar needs, culture or what is describes as a certain 'sameness of interests' (Tajfel, 1974). By doing this, people start to refocus on the interest of the entire group instead of the individual interest, knowing that a strong social group will benefit them in the end as well (Tajfel, 1974). This theory places the rational choice approach in a broader context of group identification instead of a focus on the individual. I claim that age is variable that brings certain needs and ideas with itself that causes people to identify with others within the same age category (Braungart and Braungart, 1986). This in turn creates different social age-groups within society, shaping the political

landscape based on the interests of these groups and political parties that try to adapt to those needs.

The third and final approach is the cultural approach, which argues that culture is able to frame and give meaning to people and the political situation in which they are situated (Lichbach and Zuckerman, 2009; Norris, 2004). I will focus specifically on the theory by Inglehart (1997) to place age cleavage theory in a cultural perspective. Inglehart focuses on the shift in voting behavior from material to 'new political values'; discovering that there are different cohort experiences between the older and younger generations. The experiences are based on growing up during or after the war (leading to a more sufficient material wellbeing), the rising level of education and geographic mobility (Inglehart, 1997). This in turn leads to different voting behavior between the older generation which focuses more on parties that focus on material wellbeing of the voter, and the younger generation which focuses more on political parties that emphasize immaterial wellbeing such as the environment and social rights (Inglehart, 1997).

This thesis is interested in an age cleavage in the Netherlands, both from a demand as well as the supply side. Therefore, the following descriptive question has been formulated:

To what extent is there an age cleavage in the Netherlands based on the 2012 Dutch parliamentary election?

To answer this question, and to broaden our understanding of the link between age and voting behavior, three different theories that have been introduced are being tested; leading to the following research question:

To what extent is there a difference between the younger age group and older age group in terms of voting in the Dutch 2012 parliamentary election and can we explain this phenomenon by using an age cleavage with a rational choice, social identity, or cultural approach?

This thesis rests on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. To fully research the supply side, the way that parties incorporate age, a content analysis will be used. All the programs of the political parties that got elected in the 2012 parliamentary elections will be analyzed to get a full image (Politiek & Parlement, 2012). The demand side, the way that citizens vote, will be tested by using OLS regression analysis. Using the ‘Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek’ (NKO; translated the National Voters Research), which allows for an in-depth analysis of voting behavior and sentiments (Van der Kolk, et al., 2013).

To fully test the research question, two dependent variables will be used. The most important and most used dependent variable is *elderly favoring parties*. This variable will be used to see to what extent there is an actual voting difference between the older and younger aged groups. However, to test the cultural approach as a causal mechanism, it is necessary to understand to what extent people are inclined to vote on parties that are trying to preserve the climate. Therefore, an additional dependent variable of *environmental favoring parties* will be used.

This thesis will begin with a theoretical framework (chapter 2) which incorporates a literature study of the link between age and voting behavior and an in depth theoretical analysis of cleavage theory and the three theoretical approaches that will be used to fully understand the causal mechanisms, which also includes the deduction of the hypotheses. The theoretical framework will end with a summary of the hypothesis. After this, the methodology will be discussed in chapter 3, which explains the data, and discussed the operationalization of the variables and the methods that will be used. In chapter 4 the results of both the qualitative

as well as the quantitative research will be tested and discussed. Chapter 5 will evaluate the results, answer the research question, briefly summarize the study and will end with a critical analysis of this thesis and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

I will focus on age-based voting behavior as my independent variable. Concretely, this means that people make their decision to vote on a specific political party based on a certain age category that they belong to. Because of the limitations of this research, and the available datasets, the distinction between parties who support the younger voters and the parties who support elderly voters is made by their view on education (or welfare) expansion/limitation. I will fully explain and defend this choice in the methodology section. Cleavage theory is paramount in understanding voting behavior and party system transformation in political science, because it is able to comprehensively explain the way that age has an impact on both society and the political landscape. However, up until now, cleavage theory has not been used to research the link between age and voting behavior. Therefore, I will begin with the explanation of the independent variable, after which I will present a short literature review and overview on what has been done within the field of political science regarding age and voting behavior to understand the relationship between the two. After this, cleavage theory will be used as a new explanation to understand this relationship. I will continue by using rational choice, social identity approach and the cultural approach as theories that can explain the causal mechanism behind a potential age cleavage. Furthermore, I will explain the hypothesis that are deduced.

2.1 Dependent Variable

To answer the descriptive question *‘Is there an age cleavage in the Netherlands based on the 2012 Dutch parliamentary election?’*, I need a dependent variable that is able to sort the political parties that Dutch citizens can vote on in a way that actually reflects a choice

between parties that have younger or elder voters as their target audience³. Therefore, the dependent variable that I will use is '*elderly favoring political parties within the Netherlands*' (from now on called: *elderly favoring parties*). In the methodological chapter (Chapter 3) and the analysis chapter (Chapter 3), I will give a more in depth explanation of this variable.

Another dependent variable is needed to research the cultural approach as a causal mechanism. For this, I need a dependent variable that is able to sort the political parties in the Netherlands based on the extent that they are pro-environmental issues. Therefore, the dependent variable will be '*environmental favoring parties*'. More details of this variable will be explained in Chapter 3: Methodology.

2.2 Literature review on Age and Voting Behavior

I will research the link between age and voting behavior. However, not much has been written about this relationship. Therefore, this section of the theoretical framework will begin with first explaining what age based voting behavior is, by presenting a short literature review. Based on this review, it is possible to understand what the main findings and causal mechanisms are between age and voting behavior that have been researched thus far.

I have ordered the literature review based on the three approaches that I will use to research if there is an age cleavage or not. This means that I will start the literature review with the basic relationship between age and voting behavior. Next, I will broaden the scope by using research that has either a rational choice, social identity, or cultural approach, or a combination of the three. Because of the completeness of the literature review, I with the small body of literature that claims that there is no relationship between age and voting behavior. Finally, I will present concrete findings of a conflict between the younger and older

³ The fact that political parties focus more or less on a specific age groups does not imply that this is the only way that they target certain voters. Subjects such as political ideology, the environment religion are for example other ways in which political parties try to differentiate one from the other.

people within the Netherlands, to give an overview what already has been done in this specific field of voting conflict.

To theorize an age cleavage, it is important to first understand the relationship between age and voting behavior. I will argue that voters vote based on age. This means that age is an important factor in explaining voting behavior. However, to come to this conclusion, the relationship between age and voting behavior will first be explained. First, the literature on the link between age and voting behavior will be explained in general, after which there will be a short summary about the known explanations of this relationship.

For there to be a relationship in which age is an important factor of voting behavior, age must have a divisive power in one way or another (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). As mentioned in the introduction, having a certain age also comes with having specific needs and even specific life views (Braungart and Braungart, 1986). It is for example not hard to imagine that a person who has just graduated from the university has other needs and interests and values in life than a pensioner. Even though this is not a problem in itself, it is theorized out that social benefits are scarce and therefore, different age groups clash over the way that social benefits should be allocated (Lynch, 2006). It is exactly this clash that divides different age groups to an extent that political parties will absorb their wishes and even deepen the division because of interest-bargaining (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967).

Even though the relationship between age and voting has not yet been thoroughly researched, there is a body of literature that seems to back up these theorizations. Braungart & Braungart (1986) wrote an insightful article in which they summarized different theories about the linkage between age and voting. One of the explanations is the life-course politics, which assumes that as a person grows older, her/his psychology, emotions, cognitive functioning and needs change as well. Because each life stage is linked to certain orientations and needs, conflict could arise between the different age groups (Braungart and Braungart,

1986, p. 208; Clark and Caffarella, 2011). Research suggests that based on different phases of age, it might be rational to vote for different political parties because specific political parties might protect the interests of specific age groups.

Cutler (1977), claims that the relationship between age and voting behavior is a little more complex. He tries to explain how it is possible that empirical evidence shows that the elderly seem to vote less, and concludes that what influences the degree of participation is the opportunity structure that the older-aged are dealing with. Cutler also discussed the assumption that older-aged people tend to be more conservative. He acknowledges that studies have shown that older-aged people are more conservative. However, his interpretation of existing data is that there are factors that suggest that this has nothing to do with age, but with generation. On top of that, his American focused research, has shown that the older-aged people in the U.S. tend to vote for the party that promises the most benefits for the older-aged group, and this party happened to be the conservative party (Cutler, 1977). This research already problematizes the relationship between age and voting behavior up to a point that it might be a generational link instead of a pure age-based link. He strong focus on the benefit that voters try to gain is in line with the rational choice approach. He actually tries to debunk the idea that aged based voting is linked to the cultural approach by showing that voting on the conservative party for elderly voters is based on a cost-benefit analysis instead of deeply rooted conservative ideas.

MacManus (1995) claims that the age groups may not be as cohesive as others assume. There seems to be increasing diversity within the older-generation. However, she also stresses that this does not erase the difference between age groups. She also finds, like other research, that age groups responses are in line with what the expected self-interest of that group is. This again stresses that although there might be a link between age-groups and voting behavior, that this not equate to strong cohesiveness within groups. Again this theory

seems to be strongly in line with the rational choice approach. The social identity approach seems less strong because this research has shown within group difference and contradicts the idea of group cohesion.

Other research suggests that the relationship between age and voting behavior might not be as rational as I have presented up until now. They indicate factors such as solidarity, identity and cultural (appropriateness) as the underlying mechanism that link age and voting. Goerres and Tepe (2010) researched older people's attitudes towards childcare and found that the relationship between age-based self-interest and voting behavior can be influenced by intergenerational solidarity. In other words, although people mainly identify themselves with their own age-group, this does not mean that solidarity between those age-groups is impossible.

Svallfors (2008) used similar variables and researched public support to older people and public support to families with children. His general conclusion is in line with the life-course politics theory; young people seemed to be more in favor of support for families with children, while older people were more in favor of support for older people. This shows that individuals within an age-group identify themselves with others in this age group. What makes the relationship more complex is that support for older people is shown to be more associated with support promoting the entire society, while support for families with children is seen as specific help for a group in need. This is because the support for older people has a stronger correlation with healthcare attitudes and beliefs, while support for families with children seems to correlate with social assistance. Both their research as well as the research by Goerres and Tepe show that belief systems, solidarity and perhaps even cultural values might be the causal link between age and voting behavior. This research starts with a rational choice approach, however the more complex layers of his survey based research show that

there seems to be an overlap with cultural values and cross-group identity which is in line with the cultural approach.

There is also a small body of literature that does not believe that age can influence voting behavior. Gilleard and Higgs (2009) conclude that age has not become a political identity (and therefore a cleavage) as for example, ethnicity has. They give three reasons for this phenomenon. First, age is seen as inadequate way of demand social rights. Second, labor interests seem to be dominant over old age in conflicts. Third, people of old age seem to be affluent, and therefore, age does not have to be as strongly institutionalized. Even though the other articles do not concretely react to these findings, it is clear by their findings that Gilleard and Higgs' research is not strong enough to restrain differences among age groups to come into existence.

Research has been done in the Netherlands about the extent that there is a divide between younger and elderly people, although this research has never been used to actually see if potential differences also lead to different voting behavior. Het '*sociaal cultureel rapport: hoofdstuk 8 – Jongs versus Oud?*' (2014) of the 'Sociaal Planbureau' of the Netherlands has used a survey to see to what extent younger and older people have different ideological views, ways of participating in politics, and different amount of trust in Dutch politics. First of all, they concluded that if you look at actual numbers, the younger people are 'worse off' than the older people in terms of paying the bill for the financial crisis, profiting from welfare and benefiting from the current way that pensions are being handled (Vermeij, Sonck and Van den Broek, 2012, p. 233). Perception of the different age groups tells a different story, both groups feel that they are the ones being disadvantaged the most by government (ibid., p. 245). Second, based on the other dimensions that have been surveyed, the researchers conclude a distance between different age-groups, but do not feel that this leads to a conflict, or what they call an *age war*.

Another research from the Netherlands about the perceived divide between younger and older people reaches the same conclusion (Pauw and Maas, 2015). Having used *structuring equation modeling*, they concluded that 36% of the respondents see a moderate to a large divide between the different age groups. A total of 52% have a moderate to large believe that there is an actual conflict between different age groups. The researchers conclude by saying that there is some reason for concern based on these findings.

2.2.1 Age-Cleavage instead of Life-course Politics

I argue that, even though life-course politics is able to explain the link between age and voting behavior, cleavage theory is a better and more integrated way to understand how age and voting behavior are related. Life-course politics is a theory that claims that people change as they get older, which impacts their needs, interests, and their way of thinking (Braungart and Braungart, 1986). An age cleavage, on the other hand, goes beyond this, stating that the age divide within a society will lead to conflicts between different age groups, which are absorbed through political parties. Therefore, by researching age and voting behavior within a cleavage setting, I am not only capable of researching voters, but also the political parties that have respond to the age based conflict.

By putting age in the broader theory of a cleavage, I have to define not only what a cleavage is, but also in what way age could have the potential to be conflict that is able to cause a conflict within society. My argument is that age has a strong effect on the way that people think and what their interests and goals are, and therefore that it is conceivable that different age groups can cause a deep divide within society, based on their interests, needs or orientation. This argument will be further developed in the next section of this theoretical framework. After explaining what an age cleavage is, I will explain the different theoretical approaches that might explain how age is able to become such a big conflict in society.

Rational choice approach claims that voters are rational and weigh the costs and benefits of a certain voting decision. Keeping in mind that age has an impact on the needs of a person, it is rational for them to include age within their cost-benefit analysis and therefore cause different political demands based on different age groups. The social identity approach claims that different societal groups stick together based on their similar way of thinking and needs in society. In this way, the elderly people stick up for each other in the same way that the younger people do, and thus cause an age divide within their political needs and voting behavior. Finally, the culturalist approach claims that voting behavior is based on different beliefs, different cultures, or orientations. Because age has an influence on the way that we think, it has the capability of influencing the cultural belief system and therefore influence the way that people vote. Inglehart (1977) already researched how culture could influence voting behavior and found an actual divide between different age groups as one of the outcomes.

2.3 Cleavages

To fully understand what cleavage theory is and how important it is, I will give a short overview of cleavage theory, beginning with the founders of cleavage theory, Lipset and Rokkan, and continuing by acknowledging researchers that have had a large impact on the theory such as Inglehart and Kriesi.

By combining historical analysis, political science and sociology, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) tried to understand how it is possible that part systems within Western Europe differ. They did not only seek the reasons for these differences in the economic development of a country, but also within the social sphere and through voting behavior (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967, p. 2). Guided by this approach, they concluded that there are some conflicts within society that run so deep that they structure social life and voting behavior of citizens by putting a cleft between two opposing groups, and thus creating cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan,

1967, p. 1-2). Although they do not give a clear definition, based on their work I describe a cleavage as *a social divide within a society which actors such as voters and political parties react on by mobilizing themselves against those on the other side of the divide*. Depending on the dominant cleavage within a society, parties would use different strategies to represent the people and win votes, different parties would oppose or align and eventually, different party system would arise (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967, p. 26).

There is a constant interplay between political parties and citizens, because they are dependent on each other to gain political pay-offs (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967, p. 26). Citizens need political parties because they make the conflicting interests within society more visible; they are able to guide the voice of the people by expressing the social structures and represent those structures in bargaining demands (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967, p. 5). This means that cleavage theory should be using both a bottom-up and top-down. Only by looking at both the people and the political parties is it possible to understand in what way a cleavage is manifesting itself. To put it even more strongly, without both aspects, a cleavage cannot exist.

According to Lipset and Rokkan, there are four main cleavages that can account for varying party systems. The first two cleavages came into existence through the conflict of nation-building itself. National revolutions across Europe caused increasing resistance between the central-nation building part of a country and those who lived in the provinces and the outer corners of the country who were distinctly different based on religion, language or ethnicity (center-periphery cleavage) Nation-building also caused strains between the new Nation-State and the historically established Church. This was because the nation-state challenged the long tradition of the privilege of the church, which lead to a conflict between those who could gain because of the rising power of the nation-state and those who benefitted from the church's privileges (church-state cleavage). The last two cleavages were caused by the industrial revolution. On the one hand, the industrial revolution caused a clash between

the landed interest and the rising class of industrial entrepreneurs (rural-urban cleavage). On the other hand, workers and owners within these new industrial society, were in conflict with each other (worker-owner cleavage) (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967, p. 14; Rokkan, 1999, p. 284).

Nowadays however, political scientists discovered that these cleavages are not as important as they were in the 20th century (Bornschieer, 2008; Enyedi, 2009). However, this does not make cleavages as a concept any less relevant. Scientist use the framework that Lipset and Rokkan have made to research new cleavages that fit more within the modern society (Inglehart, 2008; Kriesi et al., 2012). Inglehart came up with the 'post-materialist cleavage' (Inglehart, 1997). He believed that political values changed from materialistic to an emphasis on the quality of life. According to him, one of the consequences of this is a decline of conflicts along the class line (worker-owner cleavage) and less importance on issues that revolve around the industrial society (rural-urban cleavage). New conflict is entering the political arena, such as the environment, public participation and the role of women, which in turn causes conflict between those who are holding on to more traditional left-right values and those who vote based on 'new politics' values (Inglehart, 1977, p. 13). Other important work on cleavages is by Kriesi et al. (2012). Kriesi researches a potential 'integration-demarcation cleavage' that sees globalization as a potentially dividing force between those who benefit from it and those who 'lose' (Kriesi et al., 2012). Kriesi stresses how useful the framework laid out by Rokkan and Lipset is in modern times (Kriesi, 1998, p. 181). What is important to note is that cleavage theory is a fluid concept. Lipset and Rokkan wrote about cleavages that historically and empirically made sense in their time and even though these cleavages are still important in modern times, the concepts keep evolving to adapt to recent political changes.

I will research if a new type of cleavage is starting to emerge; the age cleavage. Nowadays, there is an extending body of literature that claims that there is a link between age and voting behavior. I take this body and use it to show that age has a strong divisive power

on who to vote for. Having a certain age comes with having certain beliefs and needs in life (Braungart and Braungart, 1986). Based on those needs, citizens will look for different parties that can accommodate these needs. Therefore, age and the specific needs that come with periods in one's life, has the potential to structure both social and political life, as well as voting behavior. This theoretical framework will continue with defining the mechanisms behind cleavage theory, after which the link between age and voting behavior will be more fully explored.

Although there is no clear consensus on the details of what a cleavage theory is, there is always a mechanism that explains why certain aspects in social life can become a cleavage and why certain aspect cannot. In this next section, I will explain these mechanisms in more detail and the mechanisms of age being a potential cleavage will be made more explicit.

To understand the mechanisms behind a cleavage, the relationship between political parties and citizens should first be explained. The fact that political parties compete, is said to protect the nation against the discontents of their citizens, after all the discontent is not aimed at the nation or party system as a whole, but are directed to those parties who are in office in that particular time (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). Political parties mediate between the citizens by translating social and cultural conflicts into demands for action and by bargaining with other parties to get as much out of these demands that is possible (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). Even though these mechanisms were laid out for newly established nation-states, the mechanism still holds up today. In the theory of life-course politics, each age group has different beliefs, world views, needs and interests that can clash with other age groups (Braungart & Braungart, 1986). Therefore, different age groups need political parties to translate this clash of interest between age groups into political demands, after which political parties could bargain for age-specific interest against conflicting parties. Therefore, based on

the theory of cleavages and the theories on age and voting behavior, it can be assumed that political parties will fulfill their functions in an age cleavage specific manner.

2.3.1 Age Cleavage

Cleavage theory can be used to place age-based voting behavior in a broader societal context. However, this context is not fully able to explain the causal mechanism behind age-based voting. Previous research indicates that the link between age and voting is based on either rationality, within-group identification, culture, or even a combination of those. Therefore, I will continue this framework by using rational choice approach, social identity approach and the cultural approach to explain the possible causal mechanism of age-based voting.

An age cleavage is a conflict within different age groups that structures their needs and identity in a way that is big enough to influence their political choices. Political parties see this conflict as an opportunity to bind more voters and to help structure this conflict. For an age cleavage to exist, I hypothesize that the vote that people cast should portray the age conflict in a way that older people vote for political parties who promote the interest of the elderly, while younger voters vote for political parties who promote their interests. Therefore, the first hypothesis that is deduced is:

H1: The older a person gets, the likelier he/she/x is to vote on elderly favoring parties.

Based on this hypothesis, it is possible to falsify the basic condition of an age cleavage, namely if people vote based on their age or not. Because of the of the data set, it is possible to measure the relationship between age and voting in different ways, such as the party that a voter voted on, but also the party that the vote matcher would describe as the best party to vote on.

I will now present the different causal mechanisms that could explain an age cleavage. First, the rational choice approach will be explained, which claims that people are rational and have certain needs and interests on which they make a cost-benefit analysis. Second, the social identity approach is explained in which people identify themselves with groups that have the same needs, interests or ideas in life. Finally, I will explain the cultural approach by using Inglehart's postmodernist values to see if a divide between young and old might have to do with a different generational upbringing instead of an age cleavage based on different age-groups.

2.3.2 A Rational Choice Approach and Social Identity Approach on Cleavage Theory

Voting behavior study is a subfield within political science that study why people vote (Blais, 2000; Downs, 1957). The question is not only if people vote, but more importantly why. By looking at the rational choice approach, cultural approach, social identity approach, voting behavior will be better understood. In this section I will explain the causal mechanism of both the rational choice approach as well as the social identity approach. Due to practical restrictions of the data set, it is not possible to differentiate between these two approaches in terms of hypotheses testing (for more information go to chapter 3: methodology).

The theoretical approach of rational choice is based on the assumption that people are individual and rational human beings that make decisions in line with their interests (Downs, 1957). Individuals have certain preferences and based on their calculative capacity, they make the decisions what is most beneficial to them within the constraints that they operate in (ibid.).

Rational choice approach states that people vote because it is in their interest. Downs (1957) laid out the groundwork that most rational theorists still seem to rely on (Bartels, 2010). Downs tried to describe how people were actually behaving when they made the decision to vote, opposed to how they ought to behave. Downs came with a model in which the citizens

within a democracy were rational, which concretely means that citizens vote for those parties who are most beneficial to them. (Downs, 1957). Blais describes Downs theory in his own book as a starting point. The idea of rational choice according to him is that each voter first estimates the benefits of voting against not voting and then asks him- or herself the question who to vote on, to gain the most benefits.

Green et al. (1994) also tried to understand voting behavior by using rational choice (1994). In their opinion, rational choice has some main assumptions: the first one is that rational action involves utility maximization. The second one is that there must be some consistency requirements. This means that units broadly need to act in conformity of some rational patterns (Green et al., 1994, p. 14). Thirdly, individuals maximize their expected value of pay off (which was the assumption that Blais reacted on). Fourth, maximizing agents are individuals. And finally, it is assumed that the model applies equally to all persons.

However, there is a slight paradox within this theory. It is the expected benefit of the vote that counts, which means that if the preferred candidate of the voter is sure to win or lose, then the expected benefit of voting is in fact zero. Therefore, the rational voter only benefits from voting when his or her vote is decisive, which it almost never is (Downs, 1957). In spite of the theory's prediction, many people do vote. Even if it is irrational to vote because the costs of going to vote (however small) are still bigger than the expected benefits.

Many theorists have found a way out of this paradox, but one seems to be in line with the argument of an age cleavage. The rational choice approach can explain voting behavior, even when a vote is not decisive, when there are social benefits at stake (Edlin, Gelman and Kaplan, 2007). When the rational choice approach is applied to age, it is possible to give a narrower definition of what rational choice is. In the case of an age cleavage the individuals or the actors who play a role are the voters. These voters have certain preferences based on the age category that a person belongs to. Elderly people prefer a strong pension, while it is easy

to imagine that the younger people would prefer a higher retirement age, and a better and cheaper educational system. The constraints that these individuals have in terms of voting are the specific parties that a person can vote on.

The rational choice approach focuses on individuals (Downs, 1957). However, these individuals are aware of the fact that they are imbedded in different groups with different interests and stakes (Edlin, Gelman and Kaplan, 2007). When keeping the group in mind, these researchers claim, that it becomes rational for an individual to vote in a way that contributes to the group as a whole, because the group in turn will make sure that the interests of the individuals within that group are protected. This is strongly in line with my claim that there are different age-group with similar characteristics and needs.

This way of theorizing is not only a way to put the rational choice approach in a broader perspective, it also opens the way for social identity theory. Tajfel (1974), who is one of the founders of social identity theory, states that humans categorize society into different groups to better understand society. This means that individuals (based on their self-image) identify with others, derived from the knowledge that one has about specific social groups (Greene, 1999; Tajfel, 1974). With this comes the emotional significance and the values that a certain group has (Greene, 1999; Tajfel, 1974). Not only do groups have a positive image about their own group, differences are also strongly contrasted with other groups to heighten the idea that the group in which a person resides is better or more valuable (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). What is important to state, is the key difference between the rational choice approach and social identity approach. In the social identity approach, is that members of a certain group do not interact as individuals when they interact within their group or with other groups (which is theorized by the rational choice approach), but rather act and behave as members of the group (ibid.). This means that when members of a group act, or more concretely, vote, that they do so with their own group's interest and identity in mind.

When social identity is linked to age, it can explain the high level of solidarity within different age-groups. As the life-course politics explains, being in a specific age group comes with specific needs, interest and even cultural believes (Braungart and Braungart, 1986). These are all characteristics that make it possible for individuals within certain age-groups to identify with each other, and therefore vote on political parties that are the most capable to protect the interest of the group as a whole. In this way, specific age-groups mobilize themselves around specific political parties, sculpting the political life and therefore, making it possible for an age-cleavage to form.

The rational choice approach and the social identity approach are both able to explain the causal mechanism behind an age cleavage in a comprehensive way. I explained that the rational choice approach shows that individuals make a cost-benefit analysis and act accordingly (specifically in this thesis in terms of voting behavior). It is theorized that people in different age categories have different needs. Because of these clear interests per age group, it is reasonable that individual take up their own age-based interest to incorporate within their cost-benefit analysis. People will, based on this analysis, vote on the political party that protects their age-based interest the best. Because the interest is different for younger or for older voters, society will be shaped in a way that younger and older voters will be in direct conflict with one another. After all, money that the government pumps into the interests of one group, cannot be allocated twice to the other group. Political parties will absorb this conflict, choosing side to either gain older or younger aged voters. Thus, shaping the political landscape between parties that either support the interest of the older or younger age groups. This brings both the bottom-up and top-down approach of a cleavage theory together, showing that the rational choice approach is capable of explaining how age and cleavage theory are causally linked.

The social identity approach claims that people, although they are individuals, do not base their votes on their individuality but on the needs of the group that they belong to. The elderly will vote according to what the entire group of elderly need: better pensions, good health care; while the younger people vote according to the younger group's needs: such as good education and not paying for the pensions of the older generation. All in all, this leads to the same outcome as the rational choice approach: people will vote what is in their financial interest (because their interests are aligned with the groups interest).⁴

The hypothesis that can be deduced are based on different age-based needs, that fall within the causal mechanisms that I have just explained. Therefore, every set of hypothesis will start with a quick explanation of why this specific age-based interest is actually in the economic interest of this specific age group or individual.

The first set of hypotheses claim that it is in the economic interest of younger aged voters to want to agree with a higher retirement age. While older voters will prefer lower retirement age, and therefore, cause a societal conflict. Based on the rational choice approach, voters will make an economic cost-benefit analysis and act accordingly. A higher retirement age means concretely that older people will work longer, and that society has to pay for their pensions on a later age. Since younger people also pay for pensions, and older retirement age means that they have to pay less, which in turn means more economic benefit for themselves. This in term means that older voters will vote on elderly favoring parties that incorporate their interest.

⁴ This is not to say that there are no differences between rational choice approach and social identity approach that cannot be measured. A prime example is young unemployed people. Based on rational choice, such an individual would vote based on their self-interest and cost-benefit analysis. Leading up to a vote that would incorporate the protection of the unemployed. Based on the social identity approach, however, such an individual would vote with the group's interest in mind, and because the younger group mainly exists out of working people, such an individual would vote in favor of working rights instead of unemployment rights.

Based on the data set, it was impossible to differentiate between the two approaches, however in chapter 6: analysis some testing will be done to see if we can get exploratory results.

The social identity theory claims that people vote based on the group's interest. In this case it is in the interest of the entire younger group that they do agree with a higher retirement age and for the elderly group to not want a higher retirement age for the exact same reason as the rational choice approach claims: a higher retirement age means less money towards pensions, which is beneficial for the younger age group while it is against the interest of the older age group. This in turn leads to the elderly group to vote on elderly favoring parties who would like to have a lower retirement age and the younger age group voting on political parties who want a higher retirement age. Based on these causal mechanisms, the following hypotheses are deduced:

H2a: The younger the voter, the more likely he/she/x is to agree with a higher retirement age.

In which the independent variable is the age of a voter in a continuous age spectrum, and the dependent variable is the likelihood to agree with a higher retirement age.

H2b: The more a voter agrees with a higher retirement age, the less likely he/she/x is to vote on elderly favoring parties.

In which the independent variable is the extent to which a voter agrees with a higher retirement age and the dependent variable is elderly favoring parties.

H2c: The effect of age on voting for elderly favoring parties is mediated by the agreement to a higher retirement age.

This hypothesis is a mediation hypothesis in which the dependent variable is age on a continuous scale, the dependent variable is voting on an elderly favoring party and the mediating variable is the agreement to a higher retirement age.

The next set of hypotheses is based on increased government spending on education which would economically benefit the younger age group and disadvantage the older age group, which leads to a social conflict. Education is beneficial for the younger aged group in different ways. First of all, younger aged voters will benefit directly from more government spending when they themselves still use the education al system. When they have grown older and eventually may have children of their own, more government spending on education means less direct spending by voters, or better education which their children will benefit from economically in the long run. For the elderly age group, increased government spending will only cost money for a benefit that they will not be able to use. Economically, this is not beneficial. Therefore, elderly people will vote on elderly favoring parties that focus less on education, while younger people will vote on younger favoring parties that do focus on education.

This causal mechanism is also applicable to the social identity approach in which we do not focus on individuals but on group interest. It is in the interest of the entire younger group to focus on education because the majority will be in school themselves or have children that need schooling. For the elderly it is the other way around, the majority will not be in school themselves or have children in school. Therefore, they will vote on elderly favoring parties who have less of a focus on education, while the younger group will vote on parties with a stronger focus on education. The hypotheses that have been deduced are the following:

H3a: The younger the voter, the more likely he/she/x is to agree with increased government spending on education.

In which the independent variable is the age of a voter in a continuous age spectrum, and the dependent variable is the likelihood to agree with increased government spending on education.

H3b: The more a voter wants increased government spending on education, the less likely he/she is to vote on elderly favoring parties.

In which the independent variable is the wish of a voter to have more government spending on education age and the dependent variable is elderly favoring parties

H3c: The effect of age on voting for elderly favoring parties is mediated by the agreement with increased government spending on education

This hypothesis is a mediation hypothesis in which the dependent variable is age as a dichotomous variable, the dependent variable is voting on an elderly favoring party and the mediating variable is the agreement with increased government spending.

The next set of hypotheses that are deduced from the rational choice approach claims that it is in the interest of younger voters to agree with the fact that pensioners should pay for their own pensions. These hypotheses are strongly in line with the first set of hypotheses. It is in the economic interest of the individual younger aged voter to not want to pay for the benefit of another age group, because this money cannot be spent to invest in themselves or their own needs. For older aged voters, on the other hand, it is clearly beneficial if other age groups help

pay for their pensions. This means either more pension per individual or less investment of the elderly in their own pension. Either way they are left with more money. Therefore, the elderly will vote on elderly favoring parties.

This hypothesis can also be used for the social identity approach when we shift our focus from the individual level to the group level. It is in the interest of all younger voters that pensioners pay for their own pensions, while it is in the interest of the entire elderly group that younger people do pay an amount of the pensions that the elderly receive. Therefore, the younger group will not vote on the elderly favoring parties, but younger favoring parties who believe that pensioners should pay their own pensions. The following hypothesis have therefore been deduced:

H4a: The younger the voter, the more likely he/she/x is to agree with the idea that pensioners should pay for pensions.

In which the independent variable is the age of a voter in a continuous age spectrum, and the dependent variable is the likelihood to agree with increased government spending on education.

H4b: The more a voter wants that pensioners pay for pensions, the less likely he/she is to vote on elderly favoring parties.

In which the independent variable is the wish of a voter to have more government spending on education age and the dependent variable is elderly favoring parties

H4c: The effect of age on voting for elderly favoring parties is mediated by the agreement of pensioners paying for pensions.

This hypothesis is a mediation hypothesis in which the dependent variable is age on a continuous scale, the dependent variable is voting on an elderly favoring party and the mediating variable is the agreement that pensioners should pay for pensions.

The final set of hypotheses that have been deduced based on the rational choice approach is similar to the previous causal mechanism. Older voters are more likely to agree with government spending because it is in their economic interest that the government spends more on pensions, so that the older voters have to spend less direct money on it. On the other hand, more government spending means more spending on pensions for the younger aged voters that do not directly benefit from this investment. This hypothesis can also be used to test the social identity approach when we focus on the elderly and younger groups. It is in the interest of the entire elderly group that the government focusses more on spending, while it is in the interests of the entire younger aged group that the government focusses this money on other issues that might benefit them. Therefore, the elderly group will vote for elderly favoring parties, while the younger group will not. Therefore, the following hypotheses have been deduced:

H5a: The older the voter, the more likely he/she/x is to agree with increased government spending on pensions.

In which the independent variable is the age of a voter in a continuous age spectrum, and the dependent variable is the likelihood to agree with increased government spending on education.

H5b: The more a voter wants increased government spending on pensions, the more likely he/she is to vote on elderly favoring parties.

In which the independent variable is the wish of a voter to have more government spending on education age and the dependent variable is elderly favoring parties.

H5c: The effect of age on voting for elderly favoring parties is mediated by the agreement to more government spending on pensions.

This hypothesis is a mediation hypothesis in which the dependent variable is age on a continuous scale, the dependent variable is voting on an elderly favoring party and the mediating variable is the agreement to a more government spending on pensions.

In short, I argue that rational choice approach can explain the causal mechanism behind age-based voting. Individuals are rational and make a cost-benefit analysis who to vote on. Age in this case is a variable on which the cost-benefit analysis is made, which means that people will vote on political parties that are the best in protecting their age-based interest. This in turn will shape the political landscape in a division between political parties that serve the interest in different age-groups. Concretely this means that age has the ability to structure political life and voting behavior and therefore could become a cleavage.

Social identity approach is able to explain the relationship between age and voting and eventually an age-cleavage, by claiming that the group which a person identifies themselves with, has a strong impact on individuals by providing a framework within the group with which voters make political decisions. Social identity binds certain people together and creates an identity in an us versus them relationship (Lichbach and Zuckerman, 2009; Tajfel

1974). Age has the ability to bind people together because of the distinct characteristics that every age-group has. Therefore, age, through certain age-groups that people identify themselves with, shapes the political decisions that voters make, creating a political divide between different age-groups and by doing so, making an age cleavage.

2.3.3 A Cultural Approach on Cleavage Theory

Another theory that was hinted at within research on age-based voting is the cultural approach. The cultural approach argues that culture is an important aspect within political science research because it acts as a frame in which daily life and the political is being situated (Lichbach and Zuckerman, 2009, p. 134). Culture does this by giving and framing meanings, defining political identities and imposing order on the daily life and political life. In contrast to rational choice, it is the culture which shapes the citizen's lives that ultimately drives them to vote (Norris, 2004). People are shaped by socialization processes that occur due to daily experiences at home, within education or at the workplace in which people are being influenced by their family, friends, teachers and those alike. Choosing between political parties becomes a matter of societal and individual values and attitudes towards society, not a calculated cost-benefit analysis.

The cultural approach differs from the rational approach and the social identity approach in another significant way. The fact that cultural differences within a country leads to a divide between younger and older people is more likely a symptom of a generational divide than an actual conflict between different age-groups, which gives an age cleavage a whole different meaning. Inglehart (1977) researched this phenomenon of generational conflict as a new cleavage based on 'old versus new' politics.

Inglehart researched the shift of values that focused on material-wellbeing to more immaterial values such as the quality of life in 'Western' societies. He discovered that the

main reason for this shift was the time and circumstances in which people grow up (Inglehart, 1997). According to Inglehart voters have not only shown a shift in their personal values but also in the political skills that they possess. Inglehart describes a shift in both values and skills in the newer generation that are based on different system-level sources (Inglehart, 1977). First of all, in terms of values, it is important to note that the younger generation in 1977 have been raised under significant different circumstances than the older generation. There are significant different cohort experiences between the younger and older generation. The most important is that the older generation has grown up with war experiences, which creates a need for wanting basic material needs that the government should provide for them, such as security. The younger generation has been raised with more than sufficient material wellbeing, which gives them room to focus on the improvement of a more immaterial quality of life. Second of all, in terms of skills, there also have been various significant changes such as the rising level of education and the expansion to mass media that do not only create new knowledge but also widens the geographic mobility. These two big system-level changes have led to both different values and skills for the younger generation within the political field. Which makes Inglehart conclude that, because the newer generation has less generational concerns, there is more room for ideals such as life-style and the environment to become more important (Inglehart, 1977).

The cultural approach, and more concretely Inglehart's theory, is able to explain the causal mechanism behind an age cleavage. Cultural and the time in which people grow up, frame the way people see the world, act and behave. Although different generations may grow up in the same area, time has a huge impact in framing the political life. A difference in generation can mean a difference of growing up in war or peace, with or without internet and even with or without secondary education. These macro-level changes, change the way that people see the world, and therefore politically act. Inglehart (1977) researched this

phenomenon and registered different changes (such as a post-war area, with mass communication and better education) which have lead people to focus more on post-modern values instead of direct material values such as security. We expect to see weaker post-materialist values with the elderly voters; and because we know that political parties are aware of these changes, we expect political parties who try to get to the elderly voter to absorb the more materialists value instead of the post-modern values. The two hypotheses give a more in depth view of what these post-modern values are. As stated in the theoretical framework, there is a focus on values that enhance the quality of life such as the environment or how socially focused a party is. The causal mechanism in this case is that the younger a voter is, the more they can focus on post-modern values and therefore, the more they focus on parties that focus on the environment of have a strong social component. In turn the more a voter focusses on these post-modern values, the less likely they are to vote for elderly favoring parties.

Based on this theory, the following hypothesis has been deduced.

H6: The older a person gets, the more likely he/she/x is to vote on anti-environment parties.

In which the independent variable is age, and the dependent variable is voting for anti-environment parties.

It is important to note that Inglehart published his research in 1977. This means that it is possible that the generational cleavage has shifted. In other words: a respondent who was for example 30 years old during Inglehart's research is expected to have postmodern values. This person would be around 70 years old in 2017. Meaning that the older generation right now could be the category with postmodern values. It is however difficult to say in which

category the younger generation would fall at this point. Although the younger generation has not lived through a significant event such as a war which could make them more conservative in their values, they have lived through a severe financial crisis that started around 2007. My research will show if this might have influenced their political values.

In short, I argue that the cultural approach specified by Inglehart's theory on postmodern values is able to explain the causal mechanism behind an age cleavage by using values such as the environment and the social focus of political parties. Generations are divided on these issues because of their upbringing in different times and different circumstances, which in turn leads to a generational conflict between different age groups.

2.4 Overview of hypotheses

All theories and the corresponding hypotheses are summarized in table 2.1. The hypotheses are again divided in the three theoretical approaches (rational choice approach, social identity approach, cultural approach) and show the mediation process in three steps.

Table 2.1: Overview of Hypotheses

<u>Theory</u>	<u>Hypothesis</u>
Cleavage Theory	<i>H1: The older a person gets, the likelier he/she/x is to vote on elderly favoring parties.</i>
Rational Choice & Social Identity	<i>H2a: The younger the voter, the more likely he/she/x is to agree with a higher retirement age.</i>
	<i>H2b: The more a voter agrees with a higher retirement age, the less likely he/she/x is to vote on elderly favoring parties.</i>
	<i>H2c: The effect of age on voting for elderly favoring parties is mediated by the agreement to a higher retirement age.</i>
	<i>H3a: The younger the voter, the more likely he/she/x is to agree with increased government spending on education.</i>
	<i>H3b: The more a voter wants increased government spending on education, the less likely he/she is to vote on elderly favoring parties.</i>
	<i>H3c: The effect of age on voting for elderly favoring parties is mediated by the agreement with increased government spending on education</i>
	<i>H4a: The younger the voter, the more likely he/she/x is to agree with the idea that pensioners should pay for pensions.</i>
	<i>H4b: The more a voter wants that pensioners pay for pensions, the less likely he/she is to vote on elderly favoring parties.</i>
	<i>H4c: The effect of age on voting for elderly favoring parties is mediated by the agreement of pensioners paying for pensions.</i>
	<i>H5a: The older the voter, the more likely he/she/x is to agree with increased government spending on pensions.</i>
	<i>H5b: The more a voter wants increased government spending on pensions, the more likely he/she is to vote on elderly favoring parties.</i>
	<i>H5c: The effect of age on voting for elderly favoring parties is mediated by the agreement to more government spending on pensions.</i>
Cultural	<i>H6: The older a person gets, the more likely he/she/x is to vote on anti-environment parties.</i>

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I will explain the research approach. The data and case selection will be explained and defended. I will also explain the restrictions of the ‘Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek’ (NKO) data set that will be used, and explain to what degree and how these restrictions will influence the results. After the data and case selection, the operationalization will follow in which I will explain the operationalization that will be used to test the hypotheses. I will finish with the explanation of the research methods that consists out of a content analysis and multiple OLS regressions.

3.1 Research approach

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is necessary to fully research the bottom-up and top-down aspect of an age cleavage. In terms of top-down (the supply side of the political parties) I have chosen to conduct a qualitative content analysis to get a in-depth perspective on the point of views of all Dutch political parties who have been elected in parliament during the 2012 elections.

For the demand side, it was necessary to understand the voting behavior of Dutch citizens during the 2012 election. A quantitative method has been chosen to enhance the generalization of this research. Quantitative research gives the opportunity to calculate the probabilities that certain voting behavior might occur and gives room to use different human characteristics (such as ideology and social identity) to be added in the analysis. Therefore, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods are the best approach to answer the research question.

3.3 Case selection

I have decided to focus this thesis on the Dutch parliamentary election of 2012 solely, for both theoretical as well as practical reasons. The most important theoretical reason to focus on the Netherlands is that in the recent years, there is an increasing focus on the growing conflict between young and old. The Dutch elderly party 50PLUS has been established around 2011 and first came into the parliament during the 2012 elections (Parlement & Politiek, n.d.) On top of that, the Social and Cultural Rapport of 2014 indicates that the baby boomers are receiving their pensions in the Netherlands at this point, meaning that a large portion of society is receiving social benefits related to their age while a smaller portion of working people is paying for it, which in turn leads to a tense relationship between different age-groups (Vermeij, Sonck, and van den Broek, 2014). Therefore, my expectation is that if we do not see an age cleavage within the Netherlands, there is a small chance that there is one in other countries around the world. The reason why I focus on the 2012 elections is that this is right around the time that the baby boomers were reaching the retirement age and the 50PLUS party became visible. I am writing this thesis amidst the 2017 parliamentary elections in the Netherlands, unfortunately, it will take some time before numbers and data will be usable, and therefore cannot be incorporated in this thesis (more of this in Chapter 5: Conclusion).

Although this is reason enough to choose the Netherlands as a most likely case, it would have been preferable to incorporate other Western European countries who are facing similar circumstances in terms of rising elderly parties and retiring baby boomers. Unfortunately, the current datasets such as the Eurobarometer, The European Value Survey and Election survey did not include the necessary question to answer the hypothesis. This is also the most important practical reason to exclude the rest of (West-)Europe and focus solely on the Netherlands.

Because of the theoretical appeal and the practical restrictions, I have decided to focus on the Dutch Parliamentary elections of 2012 as my case, in which I will focus both on the demand side – the Dutch voters during the 2012 elections – and the supply side – the political parties that got elected during the 2012 elections – by using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

3.4 Data

In this section, I will explain why I have chosen the Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek (NKO) and Dutch political party programs of 2012 as my sources of data, how the data is compiled, and what the pros and cons are of this dataset.

3.4.1 Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek (NKO)

The NKO is a dataset that researches electoral behavior of Dutch voters during the elections (Van der Kolk, et al., 2013). This means that the population is people in the Netherlands who are in fact allowed to vote (over 18, Dutch citizens). Respondents have an interview about 7 weeks after the election, and a self-completion questionnaire. Questions are being asked on voting behavior, political interest and communication, political issues, political knowledge, political trust and activities to influence the government (Van der Kolk, et al., 2013). The NKO exists of data from other sources (such as background variables based on data from Statistics Netherlands, ad variables related to the type and length of the interview), the after elections interview (CAPI) and the self-completion questionnaire (PAPI) (Van der Kolk, et al., 2013).

The sampling, done by the Statistic Netherlands (CBS) uses a two-step procedure. First of all, the primary neighborhoods were selected which were proportionally in terms of the number of persons who live in a respective neighborhood, after which people in the

neighborhood were randomly selected (Van der Kolk, et al., 2013). The effective sample exists of 1677 respondents who have not aborted the interview or the questionnaire in an earlier stage. The NKO has corrected for non-response by giving different weights (w1 and w2) to certain questions (Van der Kolk, et al., 2013). The dataset uses a weighing because of the consideration of the following variables: gender; age; degree of urbanization; region; the ‘country of origin’; marital status; and voting behavior (Van der Kolk, et al., 2013). The following characteristics were also considered for a representative random sample: gender; age; degree of urbanization; region; ‘country of origin’; marital status; voting behavior (Van der Kolk, et al., 2013).

3.4.2 Dutch Political Party Programs

I have decided to rank the political parties from most elderly favoring to most younger aged favoring (see: 3.6.1 Content Analysis). However, to rank the parties I needed a data source that correctly describes the position of parties on specific topics. I have decided to focus on the political parties who got elected in the chamber during the 2012 Dutch parliamentary elections, which are the following parties (from most to fewest seats): VVD; PvdA; PVV; SP; CDA; D66; ChristenUnie; GroenLinks; SGP; PvdD; 50PLUS. All the party programs were retrieved online from Parlement & Politiek (2012); a website which contained all of the original PDF’s of all the political party programs of 2012 which were included in this thesis. All the political parties had comprehensive party programs consisting of multiple topics. Because these topics do not always match each other from one program to another, I have decided to use the entire program of every political party as my data source. By choosing the 2012 political party programs, and the 2012 NKO the data directly corresponds with each other. People who voted and looked at political party programs, based their decision on the same programs that I have used as my data source.

3.5 Operationalization

In this section, I will explain the operationalization of the variables. I will start with the dependent variables, after which I will discuss the independent variables. Finally, I will discuss the control variables that I will use to account for other explanations of the relationship between age and voting behavior.

3.5.1 Dependent Variables

The dependent variable that is the main focus of this thesis is *elderly favoring parties*. This variable is measured by using a content analysis to rank all the Dutch political parties who got elected into the parliament during the 2012 parliamentary elections and rank from one to nine in which number one is the least elderly favoring party, and number nine is the most elderly favoring party. An increase on this scale therefore means that a party becomes more elderly favoring. The variable is an ordinal variable.

The second dependent variable, which is used to research the cultural approach, is the *environmental favoring parties* variable. This ordinal variable is created by doing a content analysis in which the Dutch political parties who have been elected in the parliamentary elections of 2012 have been ranked by political parties that focus the least on environmental issue in a positive way, to focusing the most on environmental issues in a positive way⁵. The rank will go from one to nine in which one is the most pro-environment party and number nine is the most anti-environment party. This means concretely that when a party increases one number on the scale, that it gets more anti-environmental.

⁵ i.e. focusing on more coal-centrals is also a way of focusing on the environment. However, to stay true to Inglehart and our goal, political parties must busy themselves with preserving and protecting the environment.

For both variables, it has been decided to exclude the PvdD and the SGP. The reason for this is that both parties are one issue parties, with the PvdD focusing mainly on animal rights and the SGP focusing on protestant religion. The reason to exclude these one-issue parties is that they might distort the results in a significant manner. People of all ages will vote for one of these parties because they promote a specific niche within the political landscape.

3.5.2 Independent Variables

In this section, I will explain the operationalizations of the independent variables. To measure people's *age*, I will use the measure of the NKO which is 'age of respondent at election date'. This variable is a ratio variable, which means that the space between each step is just a big (one year) and there is a clear zero point. The aged that has been measured in the NKO spans from 18 to 96 (Van der Kolk, et al., 2013).

To measure the extent to which people are responding favorably towards pensions, I will use different variables. First of all, the variable *retirement at 67*.. The measure that will be used is 'issue: retirement age should be at 67'. This ordinal variable ranges from 1 (fully agree) to 4 (fully disagree) (Van der Kolk, et al., 2013). This means that a one increase on this scale means that you are to agree less with a higher retirement age. This variable will be considered continuous in order to use an OLS regression (explanation in 3.6.2. Multiple Regression). Although this variable seems to fit better as ordinal, it is fair to assume to the steps between fully agree to fully disagree are of equal measure.

The next variable I use is the *pensioners pay for AOW*. This is measured in the NKO by the variable 'issue: pensioners should pay for AOW'. This ordinal variable, which for the same reasons as the first variable will be treated as continuous, reaches from 1 (fully agree) to 4 (fully disagree). This means that a one increase of the scale of this variable brings you from

fully agree to agree and therefore closer to fully disagree. The final variable that will be used for measuring pensions is *government spending: pensions*. The NKO has a measurement that is called 'government spending: pensions'. This ordinal variable, which again will be treated as continuous, reaches from 1 (much more than now) up to 5 (much less than now) (Van der Kolk, et al., 2013). To stay in line with the other variables, which have the younger favoring attitudes in the lower numbers, reaching to the elderly favoring attitudes in the higher numbers, I will switch this variable to 1 (much less than now) up to 5 (much more than now). This means that a one increase on the scale of this variables will mean that a person goes from less to more agreement of increased government spending on pensions.

To measure the attitudes towards education, I use the variable *government spending: education*, which is measured in the NKO through the variable 'government spending: education. This ordinal variable, which again will be treated as continuous, reaches from 1 (much more than now) up to 5 (much less than now).

Each of these variables also has the 999 option, which means that people got the option to answer with 'I don't know' or 'no answer' as well as the 994 option (PAPI) which means that people did not finished the at home self-questionnaire (Van der Kolk, et al., 2013). The N of these options reaches from a total (999 and 994 combined) of 9 to 15 in the variables that I will use in this thesis; except for the outlier *pensioners pay for AOW*, which has a non-response rate in the self-questionnaire of 187 and 32 don't know/no answer. Therefore, they will be excluded in the analysis.

3.5.3 Control Variables

There are other variables that can also influence voting behavior. I will control for these variables in the statistical analysis. The control variables that will be included are *gender*; *level of education*; *economic status*; and *religion*.

The first variable, *gender*, is measured in the NKO as ‘gender’, with two different options: male (1) and female (2), making this a nominal variable. To work with the variable in the analysis, a dummy will be made. Making male the reference category and female as the other option (1). The second variable is the *level of education*, measured as ‘highest education completed’. This variable is an ordinal variable, starting from elementary (1) and up to higher vocational/university (5). A dummy will be made with lower education as the reference category (0) and higher vocational/university as the other category (1). The *Economic status* is measured as ‘social class – self-image’ a variable that works from upper class (1) to working class (5), this scaling makes it an ordinal variable. Therefore, a dummy will be made that divides this variable into lower to middle class (0) and upper class (1). The next variable is *religion*, measured in the NKO as ‘religion’ with the option yes (1) and no (2). Because this is a nominal variable, a dummy will be made during the analysis to work with the different regressions, making the yes option the reference category. The final variable is *if respondent has children* which is a dummy variable (0 = no; 1 = yes). Which is added because of its potential influence on the analysis. Whether a respondent has children or not might influence the cost benefit analysis that a person makes (more spending on education or not). This again, can influence the causal mechanism of the rational choice and social identity approach.

3.6 Research methods

3.6.1 Content Analysis

The methods of this thesis contain of a quantitative part to analyze the demand side, and a qualitative part to demand the supply side. The qualitative part consists out of a *content analysis*. A content analysis is qualitative method for “making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use” (Krippendorff, 2012, p.

18). In other words; a content analysis is a ordered manner to analyze (in this case) texts, or more precise: political party programs of political parties that got elected during the Dutch parliamentary elections of 2012.

The advantage of a content analysis that texts can be reduced into different content categories (in this younger aged favoring claim sentiments or elderly favoring claims) (Weber, 1990). All the sentences that are categorized into one of these two content categories, are assumed to have similar meanings, or are related to the same concepts. In this case, Dutch political parties have been ranked from most to least elderly favoring based on the amount of elderly favoring claims they made, divided by all the aged based claims that they have made. This is illustrated in the following simple formula:

$$\text{Ranking position elderly favoring party} = \frac{\text{elderly favoring claims}}{\text{totality of aged based claims}}$$

There are several guidelines that a content analysis should adhere to. First of all, there should be clear guidelines how to measure the different categories beforehand, as to diminish the chance of 'loose interpretation'. The guidelines will increase the reliability of the analysis, increasing the chance that different researches would gain a similar outcome (Weber, 1990). Reliability refers to both the fact that the data should be reproducible, as well as the fact that the data should be stable, which means that the same coder preferably measures the same data to see if the same outcome will be produced. (Krippendorff, 2012; Weber, 1990). Secondly, it is important that the content categories are valid with what a coder wants to measure. This means that there should be a clear relationship between the content category and the content that is categorized within this category (Weber, 1990).

It is important to stress the that following content analysis comes with significant methodological drawbacks that should be addressed, based on two different reasons: the fact

that a percentage instead of absolute numbers can give outcomes that seem misleading and the fact that political parties' party program do not have to align with the popular opinion of the party.

First of all, when using percentages instead of absolute numbers it can be difficult to clearly see the amount that a political party talks about age. Take the following example: if part A has a total of 10 aged based claims of which 9 are elderly favoring, this party would have the following percentage: $\frac{9}{10} \times 100 = 90\%$. Another party, Party B, has 50 age based claims of which 30 are elderly favoring, the outcome in this case would be: $\frac{30}{50} \times 100 = 60\%$. When we compare the two in absolute numbers, it is clear that party A has a lot less elderly favoring claims than party B (9 as opposed to 30). However, percentagewise, party A has 90% elderly favoring as opposed to the 60% of party B. This example clearly shows the extent to which using percentages can distort the reality of the content analysis. Still, I have chosen to opt for the relative percentages instead of the absolute numbers for one important reason, namely in dissimilarities in form and style of the political party programs. Some political party programs such as programs of the SP and PvdA choose for lengthy paragraphs with a lot of explanation and repetition, while 50PLUS has a program that exists out of 50 claims that encompass only a couple of sentences (Politiek & Parlement, 2012). When we use absolute numbers, the outcome will automatically skew in favor of the political party programs that are more lengthy, but this does not reflect if they actually have a stronger sentiment towards age based sentiments (and particularly either the elderly or the younger generation), because every claim they make will be made in different ways because of the length and the repetitive writing style.

The second drawback of using this kind of content analysis in which political party programs are being analyzed is the fact that there can be a discrepancy between what is being said within the party programs and the popular perception of a party. Political parties make

their program after a period in which they have been in the opposition or in government, put emphasis on certain topics or even had to deal with political scandals. It is fair to assume that when political parties write their new programs, they are keeping certain questions in mind such as: which audience can I count on and which audience should I target; how can I change the public opinion of the political party; what is our goal for the up and coming period? It is imaginable that political parties may try to transform their image and use their party programs as a tool for this. This leads to possible discrepancy between what is said in the political party programs and what the perception of the citizens is of certain political parties.

Even though there are clear drawbacks in using a content analysis based on political party programs, it is still the most optimal way to create this dependent variable. First of all, it limits the bias of the coder to quantify the coding process. Even though the coding has been quantified, it is still the judgement of the coder to decide in which category a certain part of the political party program falls into, making the validity a lot higher than using a computerized method. Second of all, as has been said in the first drawback, using a percentage instead of absolute numbers is a better way to measure because of the differences in style and length of the party programs. Thirdly, although the validity may have been higher if the coding included other aspects than just political party programs (such as media debates by political parties and texts that are used on the campaign trail), doing this would not only be not feasible in terms of time, but also more difficult because political parties again differ in resources and the way that they can profile themselves out of the political party program. Therefore, it has been decided to focus solely on political party programs and quantify the coding into percentages of elderly favoring sentiments.

3.6.2 Multiple Regression

To test the demand side, a *multiple regression* (or ordinary least square regressions, OLS regressions) will be used to test the relationship between the dependent and (multiple)

independent variables. The OLS regression makes it possible to include a large number of independent variables, and is able to separate the effects of each independent variable from the other independent variables, too analyze the effect that one or a combination of different independent variables has on the dependent variable (Allison, 1999). The main theory and assumption behind the OLS regressions is that there is a linear relationship between the dependent and the independent variables (Allison, 1999). This means that with every increase of the of the independent variable (X) there is a linear increase in the dependent variable (Y). random disturbance within the data is also accounted for (ϵ). The corresponding formula is:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 \dots + \beta_k X_k + \epsilon$$

Within this formula, the β_0 is the intercept, which is the point where the line intercepts the vertical axis in a graph, or more concretely, the value where all the X's are 0. The $\beta_1 X_1 \dots + \beta_k X_k$ stands for the relationship between X_1 and Y, up to X_k and Y, or the increase of y with every unit of increase of X. The ϵ stands for the deviation of every measure towards the regressions line (Allison, 1999).

There are multiple assumptions that have to be made, and the data has to fit in with when using an OLS regressions. First of all, it assumes linearity, which has been explained above by using the formula. Secondly, it assumes that the average value of ϵ is not dependent on the X's, more specifically: the ϵ is always 0. The third assumption is homoscedasticity, which means that the degree of ϵ is always the same, regardless the values of X. The fourth assumption is that the ϵ is uncorrelated with one another. Finally, the OLS regressions assumes that the ϵ is normally distributed (Allison, 1999).

Because OLS regression requires continuous variables. All variables that have not been transformed into dummies will be considered continuous. All these variables are

variables that measure someone's opinion (from disagree to agree or the other way around). Therefore, it can be assumed that there are equal steps between every increase of scale, making it possible to treat these ordinal variables as continuous.

3.6.3 Mediation analysis

Most of the deduced hypotheses in this thesis are mediation hypotheses. Therefore, this part of the research methods section will explain how mediation analysis is conducted. Mediation hypotheses are hypotheses in which the relationship between the independent variable X and the dependent variable Y can be explained directly, as well as indirectly through one (or more) mediating variable M (Baron and Kenny, 1986; Iacobacci, 2012).

Mediation variables are tested through three different OLS regressions:

$$Y = b_{01} + cX \quad (1)$$

$$M = b_{02} + aX \quad (2)$$

$$Y = b_{03} + c'X + bM \quad (3)$$

The significance of c in (1) indicates whether there is a direct pathway from X on Y. Equations (2) and (3) are made to detriment whether there is an indirect relationship between X and U that goes through M (Iacobacci, 2012). To determine if the mediation effect is significant or not, bootstrapping will be used.

Bootstrapping is the procedure in which the sampling distribution of ab is used to derive a bootstrapped confidence interval (Preacher and Hayes, 2004). Bootstrapping makes no assumptions about the shape of the distribution of the variables or the sampling distribution of the statistic. It is a nonparametric approach to effect-size estimation and hypothesis testing (Preacher and Hayes, 2004). In other words, it is used to test the reliability and stability of the mediation analysis by assigning measures of accuracy to sample estimates.

In this way, inference about a population from the sample data, can be modeled via the resampling of the data and performing inference about a sample from the resampled data (Preacher and Hayes, 2004). A bootstrap of 5000 will be used during the analysis of the mediation hypotheses in this thesis. It can be stated that there is a significant indirect effect if the bootstrapped confidence intervals are bigger than 0.

Chapter 4: Analysis

In this part, the hypotheses that have been deduced based on the different theories in the theoretical framework will be tested. I will begin with the qualitative part (content analysis) to explain how the dependent variables have been constructed. Next I will show the descriptive of all the variables that will be used for the qualitative analysis. The qualitative analysis itself, will follow, with the use of OLS regressions.

4.1 Content Analysis

The qualitative part of this thesis focuses on understanding the supply side of an age cleavage; to what extent are age questions incorporated within Dutch political party programs, and more importantly; to what extent is there a divide within the party programs in terms of focusing on the younger or older age group? The qualitative analysis has two different focuses, because two different dependent variables have to be analyzed. First of all, a content analysis has been conducted to measure the way that age is portrayed within the Dutch political party programs of 2012. A second content analysis measured the extent to which the environment was portrayed within those same programs.

4.1.1 Content Analysis on Age

The content analysis that focuses on understanding the extent that age is a politicized issue that is used by political parties to win votes, focuses on the entire political party program. I have made the decision to analyze the entire programs, because of the fact that age intersects with different topics, such as education, health care, and housing.

Before the party programs can be analyzed, a code book has been set up. There are different categories in which age relatable subjects can fall: First of all, *general comments*,

which consists of comments made about different age groups that aren't linked to any specific subject of age. Second of all, *AOW/pensions*, in which content falls that focuses on either AOW, pensions or both. Third, *work*, which contains content related to work that is focused specifically on certain age groups, such as starters on the labor market or those who are almost ready for their pensions. Fourth, *living environment*, which focuses on age specific housing. Finally, *health care*, in which content is categorized that focuses on one specific age group, such as abortion or euthanasia. After the content is filtered in one of these categories, it can either fall within the category '*older age group sentiments*' or '*younger age group sentiments*'. Content that is age specific but favored both the older age group as well as the younger age group has been removed, because it is not able to distinguish between the different age groups.⁶

Table 4.1: Content Analysis – Aged Based Sentiments

	<i>Younger Age Sentiments</i>	<i>Older Age Sentiment</i>	<i>Total Age Sentiments</i>	<i>% Older Age Sentiment</i>
50PLUS	4	16	20	80
PVV	7	13	20	65,00
VVD	16	10	26	38,46
SP	24	12	36	33,33
PvdA	32	10	42	23,81
ChristenUnie	20	6	26	23,08
GroenLinks	17	5	22	22,73
D66	19	5	24	20,83
CDA	20	4	24	16,67

It is important to note that the content analysis conducted was qualitative by nature. This means that although different categories were made beforehand, all the data has been thoroughly analyzed, and all age based sentiments have been counted. In the end, there was

⁶ One example can be found in the political party program of 50PLUS (2012), that talked about the topic of inheritance and the lowering of the taxes on inheritance, which benefits both the older age group whose assets will not be lost to the government, as well as the younger age group, which will inherit more.

no age-related content that did not fit in any of the categories, partly because a pre-analysis was conducted to understand the way that the party programs were set up.

Table 4.1 shows the outcome of the content analysis that has been conducted based on aged based voting. The outcome is remarkable. Although it was expected that 50PLUS would have the most older age sentiments, it is counterintuitive that the CDA, popularly known as a party that mainly attracts the elder population, has percentagewise the most younger favoring sentiments (83,33%). This proves that party's perception and the party program does not always align. Of course, part of it could be that political parties change their party program to specifically target an audience that they have been missing out on. Appendix A.1 and A.2 show a more in-depth analysis of the different categories that the age sentiments could have fallen into. Which shows to what extent different subjects focus on different age groups (e.g. although healthcare could fall in both older and younger aged sentiments, the major focus on health care within the party programs was on healthcare specifically for the elderly). Looking at the in-depth analysis shows that political parties focus on different subjects to attract either the younger or the older generation. In attracting the older generation, every political party addressed the subject of health care in a age specific way. Mainly talking about health care for the elderly or life and death topics such as euthanasia and the final care before dying. Pensions and work were to other popular topics to discuss, mainly the idea that pensions should be higher or earlier accessible (only GroenLinks, CU and D66 did not express any pro-pension sentiments). In terms of work, there was a strong focus on helping the elderly get back to work at an older age or making sure that they were able to keep their jobs. Surprisingly enough, 50PLUS did not discuss work for the elderly, which is the only topic they did not explicitly discuss. Perhaps the topic is seen as evident for them, and was not necessary to include in their rather short program.

Looking at the pro-younger sentiments, it is clear that other choices have been made to attract voters. Every political party addressed education in a way that was indeed positive for the younger generation (more investments by the government, improving the quality of education or focusing more on broader education and creative ways of teaching instead of focusing too strongly on grades). Another topic that was mentioned a lot was pro-child sentiments. Either by saying that childcare should be improved or by saying that those who have children deserve extra tax reductions. The only party that did not mention any pro-child sentiments was 50PLUS.

Comparing older aged groups sentiments with younger age groups sentiments is possible over a few different topics such as living environment and general comments. With living environments, it seems that there is an equal focus on either elderly housing or housing for the younger generation (both got 8 sentiments each). VVD, GroenLinks, and D66 are the parties who have living environment sentiments that are both pro younger generation and pro older generation. General comments are made pro elderly and pro youngsters by different political parties with 50PLUS and PVV being most elderly favoring, and no clear favoring by any party for the younger generation.

Based on the content analysis, the following ranking has been made from most to least elderly favoring: 50PLUS; PVV; VVD; SP; PvdA; ChristenUnie; GroenLinks; D66; and CDA.

4.1.2 Content Analysis on Environment

To test the hypotheses of the cultural approach, a dependent variable is necessary which ranks the Dutch political parties based on their environmental stance. The decision has been made to solely focus on the environmental section of the party programs, which every party, except 50PLUS, had. The categories have been made, environmental content could either fall within

the category '*pro-environment*' or '*anti-environment*'. The decision to not make any further categories such as renewable energy, nature, or agriculture, has been made because this further distinction is not relevant for this thesis. Based on Inglehart's theory, voters will focus on the whole environmental stance of a political party, instead of different smaller subcategories of this subject.

Table 4.2: Content Analysis – Environment based sentiments

	<i>Pro- Environment Sentiments</i>	<i>Anti- Environment Sentiment</i>	<i>Total Environemt Sentiments</i>	<i>% Anti- Environment</i>
50PLUS	0	1	1	100,00
VVD	0	14	14	100,00
PVV	1	4	5	80,00
CDA	9	9	18	50,00
SP	17	5	22	22,73
ChristenUnie	19	5	24	20,83
PvdA	22	5	27	18,52
D66	13	2	15	13,33
GroenLinks	74	2	76	2,63

Table 4.2 shows the outcome of the content analysis based on pro- and anti-environment sentiments. Most sentiments were based on agriculture, renewable energy and the landscape. Some included biodiversity and genetic modification.

What is striking is that there seems to be two distinct groups, one group between 100%-80% anti-environment and one group between 23%-2% anti-environment. Only the CDA is exactly in the middle with 50% anti-environment. However, based on the qualitative analysis, it has been decided that the CDA is more anti-environment than pro-environment, even though the sum of the sentiments does not show this. It was clear, reading the environmental chapter of the CDA, that there was a strong focus on agriculture, and that agriculture should prevail, even if this would be, in some ways or cases, detrimental for the environment. When we compare 50PLUS with the VVD, it is interesting to see that both have

a score of 100% anti-environmental, with 50PLUS having mentioned only one sentiment in total in their party program while the VVD mentions 14. Based on the qualitative content analysis, it has been decided that 50PLUS still is more anti-environmental than the VVD. The only time they mention the environment is to clearly state that they will not mention the environment in their program. Claiming that like the PvdD focusses on animals, they only focus on the elderly and therefore do not deem it important to include the environment within their political party program. Based on this statement, they have been moved towards the top of the anti-environmental ranking, because the statement clearly shows no interest at all in the preservation of the environment. The VVD on the other hand, does in fact mention that they are trying to preserve the environment. However, this has not been counted as a pro-environment sentiment because in the same sentence they mention that economic progress is indeed more important if a choice should be made.

In the end, this leads to a variable that is made up by the parties from most pro-environment to most anti-environment in the following order: GroenLinks; D66; PvdA; ChristenUnie; SP; CDA; PVV; VVD; 50PLUS.

4.2 Descriptives

Table 4.3 describe the descriptives of all variables that will be used in the quantitative analysis. The N, minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation are presented for all the variables.

Table 4.3: Descriptives

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Elderly favoring party	1359	1	9	4,7506	2,15497
Anti-environmental party	1359	1	2	1,4761	0,49961
Age respondent at election	1677	18	96	49,64	17,492

date					
Retirement age at 67	1665	1	4	2,61	0,878
Government spending:	1668	1	5	2,13	0,761
Education					
Pensioners pay for AOW	1458	1	4	2,76	0,826
Government spending:	1662	1	5	3.39	0,722
Pensions					
Gender (Dum. – ref. man)	1676	0	1	0,5104	0,500
Highest education (dum – ref. elementary)					
Lower vocational	1593	0	1	0,1538	0,360
Secondary	1593	0	1	0,0634	0,244
Middle vocational/higher level secondary	1593	0	1	0,4080	0,492
Higher vocational/university	1593	0	1	0,3107	0,463
Social class (dum. – ref. upper class)					
Upper middle class	1649	0	1	0,1637	0,370
Middle class	1649	0	1	0,5149	0,500
Upper working class	1649	0	1	0,1292	0,335
Working class	1649	0	1	0,1692	0,375
Respondent is religious (dum. – ref. non-religious)	1670	0	1	0,466	0,499
Respondent has children (dum. – ref. no children)	1122	0	1	0,466	0,499
Valid N	1122				
Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek (2012)					

The average age of the respondents is 50, with the youngest being 18 and the oldest being 96.

There is a balance within gender, with a very slight bigger number of women. In terms of religion there is a balance as well, with 46% being religious (any religion). The perceived self-image in terms of social class is around middle class, and the completed highest education is between secondary and middle level vocational.

What is striking are the variables that focus on increased government spending (both for education and pension), as well as the variables that focus on retirement age and who pays for the AOW, all means are between 2,13 and 3,39 with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of either 4 or 5. With a low standard deviation between ,722 and ,878. This means that people, based on the descriptives, do not seem to have such a strong opinion on the subjects as the rational choice and social identity approach might suggest. These hypotheses will be fully tested in the analysis.

In terms of the dependent variable '*elderly favoring party*' there is a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 9 which aligns with the amount of parties that are included within this analysis. The mean is 4,7506 which is right around the middle. With the variable of '*environmental favoring parties*' there seems to be the slightest overhang towards political parties that are environmental favoring (although this could be because there are five political parties within the pro-environment category and four political parties within the anti-environment category).

All in all, the descriptives show that there is a good balance in terms of age, gender, religion, education and perceived social class. In the next part of the analysis, OLS regressions and the logit model to test the hypotheses.

4.3 OLS regression analysis

In this part, the OLS regressions will be displayed and analyzed. The hypotheses that have been deduced from the theoretical framework are based on rational choice approach and social identity approach, and the cultural approach and are all mediation hypotheses. Table 4.4 First shows the general hypothesis (H1) to see the extent to which there is a relationship between age and voting; this also includes the relationship when controlled for with the

chosen control variables. The other models in table 4.4 (model 3a to model 7a) show the relationship between the independent variable age and the different mediators. In the description of the model, is the name of the specific mediator that has been analyzed per model. I have chosen to only work with the respondents that have filled in all the relevant variables (N=1122), to make sure that the outcome is not a result of fluctuating sample, but rather changes within the sample.

Hypothesis 1 (*The older a person gets, the likelier he/she/x is to vote on elderly favoring parties*) is tested in models 1 and 2 (table 4.4). Model 1 is the model in which the relationship between age and voting behavior is tested without the control variables. Model number 2 includes the control variables.

The b in model one is -0.009. Which means that with every year increase of age, people are slightly more inclined to vote for political parties that favor the younger generation instead of the elderly. To be more precise, with every year a person gets older, a person drops 0,010 on the scale of elderly favoring parties. Model 1 is statistically significant at the 0,5% level. But has a low adjusted r^2 of 0,005, which means that the explanatory power of age is very low in understanding voting behavior, when the parties are ranked from most young favoring to most elderly favoring.

Table 4.4: Explaining Age and voting behavior (OLS Analysis)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>
Age respondent	-0.009*** (0,004)	-0,001 (0,004)	0,02663*** (0,229)	0,2834*** (0,0228)	0,2740*** (0,0244)	0,2869*** (0,0228)
Gender		-0,129 (0,128)				
Highest education (completed) - Dummies						
Elementary		reference				
Lower vocational		0,364 (0,308)				
Secondary		0,456 (0,364)				
Middle vocational/Higher level secondary		0,336 (0,291)				
Higher vocational/University		-0,367 (0,301)				
Social class - Dummies						
Upper class		reference				
Upper middle class		-0,024 (0,384)				

Middle class	-0,213			
	(0,371)			
Upper working class	-0,161			
	(0,404)			
Working class	0,021			
	(0,402)			
Respondent is religious	-0,704***			
	(0,133)			
Respondent has children	0,259*			
	(0,141)			
Issue: Retirement age should be at 67	0,3432			
	(0,636)			
Government spending: Education	0,02075			
	(0,0727)			
Issue: Pensioners should pay for AOW	0,3530***			
	(0,0717)			
Government spending: Pensions			0,02076**	
			(0,0793)	

Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek (2012)

Dependent variable: elderly favoring party

Standard errors in parentheses; * = significant at 5 percent; ** = significant at 1 percent; *** = significant at 0.5 percent

Table 4.5: Interaction models X and M (OLS regressions)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Model 3b</i>	<i>Model 4b</i>	<i>Model 5b</i>	<i>Model 6b</i>
	<i>Retirement at 67</i>	<i>Government spending: Education</i>	<i>Pensioners pay for AOW</i>	<i>Government Spending: Pensions</i>
Age respondent at election date (12 sept 2012)	0,02663*** (0,229)	0,2834*** (0,0228)	0,2740*** (0,0244)	0,2869*** (0,0228)
Retirement at 67	0,3432 (0,636)			
Government spending: Education		0,2075 (0,0727)		
Pensioners pay for AOW			0,3530*** (0,0717)	
Government spending: Pensions				0,2076** (0,0793)

Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek (2012)

Dependent variable: See model names

Standard errors in parentheses; * = significant at 5 percent; ** = significant at 1 percent; *** = significant at 0.5 percent

When we control model 1 with gender, highest education, social class, if the respondent is religious, and if the respondent has children, which is described in model 2, the initial relationship between age and voting has a slightly less steep slope of -0,001. However, the relationship between age and voting is still negative. On top of this, the relationship between age and voting behavior loses its significance completely in this model. The control variable *gender*, is not significant in this model. *Highest education* is also not significant. The control variable *social class* is not significant as well. The control variable of *religiosity* is significant at the 0,5% level and has a *b* of -0,704. This concretely means that when a respondent is not religious (the reference category), the predicted value on voting for an elderly favoring party is 0,704 points lower than for people who are religious. The last control variable is if the *respondent has children* in their household. This variable is significant at the 5% level and has a *b* of 0,259. This means that if a respondent has no children, the predicted value of voting for an elderly favoring party is 0,259 higher than respondent with children.

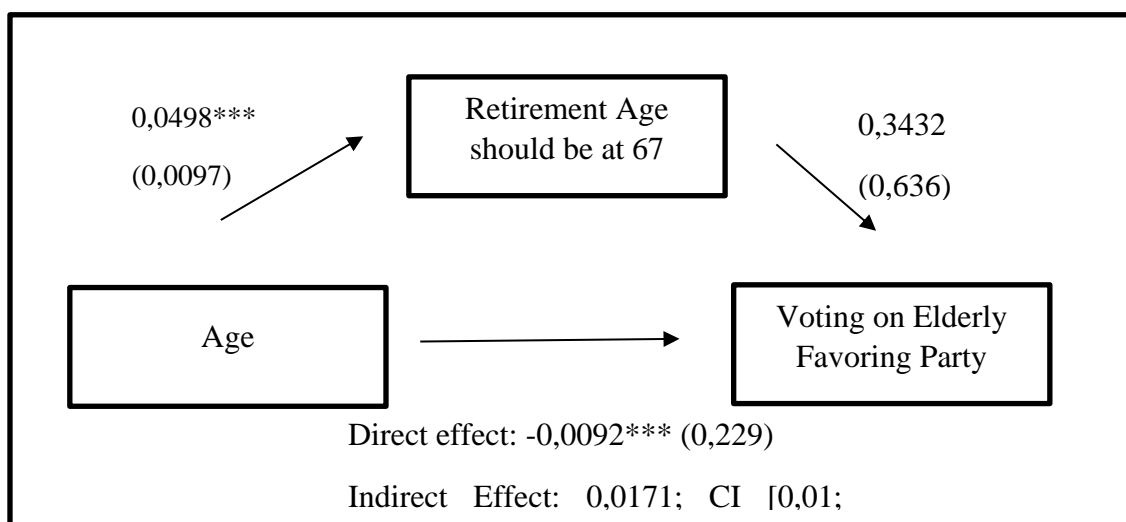
Although H1 (*The older a person gets, the likelier he/she/x is to vote on elderly favoring parties*), predicted a positive relationship within the analysis of both model 1 and model 2, it is clear that the results state otherwise. The significant model 1 has a small, but clearly negative *b*. Which means that the analysis shows the opposite outcome of what H1 expected, namely the older a person gets, the more likely they are to vote on a younger favoring party. When we include the control variables, age loses its significance completely, which means that H1 will be rejected within this thesis.

Even though H1 is rejected, which concretely means that age does not have any influence on voting behavior, I have decided to test the mediation variables. Although the mediation variables cannot be corroborate because the direct relationship between age and voting behavior is not significant, analyzing the mediation hypotheses can still give us insight in the relationship between age and the different causal mechanisms discussed in the

theoretical framework, and therefore shed a better light on the way that age and voting behavior behave as concepts, even though there may not be a direct relationship based on the concrete OLS analysis (see Discussion chapter for a deeper explanation for the reasons why using OLS regression analysis may have influenced the results).

Models 3 to 6 and models 3b to 6b (table 4.4 and 4.5) show the analyzed relationship of the mediation hypotheses. For increased readability, every hypothesis includes a figure which shows all the different effects within the mediation hypotheses. To see if there is a genuine indirect effect through the mediator, it is important that the analysis shows a bootstrapped confidence interval that is not lower than 0 and that $b \neq 0$ (Field, 2014). The direct effect shows the relationship between X (*age*) and Y (*voting for an elderly favoring party*) without the mediator.

Figure 4.1: Model 3 – Relationship age and voting with retirement age as mediator.

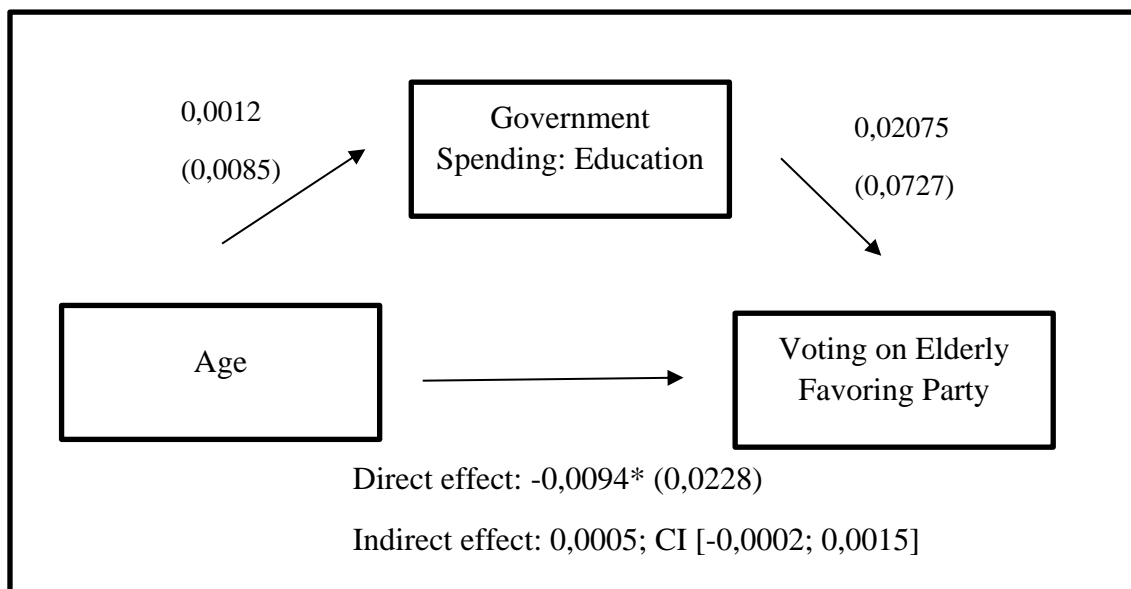


Boo

tstrapped CI based on 5000 sample.

Hypothesis 2 (*The effect of age on voting for elderly favoring parties is mediated by the agreement to a higher retirement age*) is shown in Model 3 and 3b and figure 4.1. The direct effect of model 3 (figure 4.1) is significant at the 0,5% level. The b is -0,0092 which show a negative relationship between *age* and *voting for an elderly favoring party*. The indirect effect has a $b=0,0171$ and is has a bootstrapped confidence interval between a lower level of 0,01 and an upper level of 0,003. Although this is small, it does show an indirect relationship between *age* and *voting behavior*, that goes through the sentiment that the retirement age should be at 67. Therefore, H2 can be corroborated, based on this analysis. However, keeping in mind that H1 is rejected, it is unclear to what extent H2 can truly show a significant relationship. On top of that, the adjusted r^2 is 0,0192 which means that the model only has a limited explanatory power.

Figure 4.2: Model 4 – Relationship age and voting with education spending as mediator.

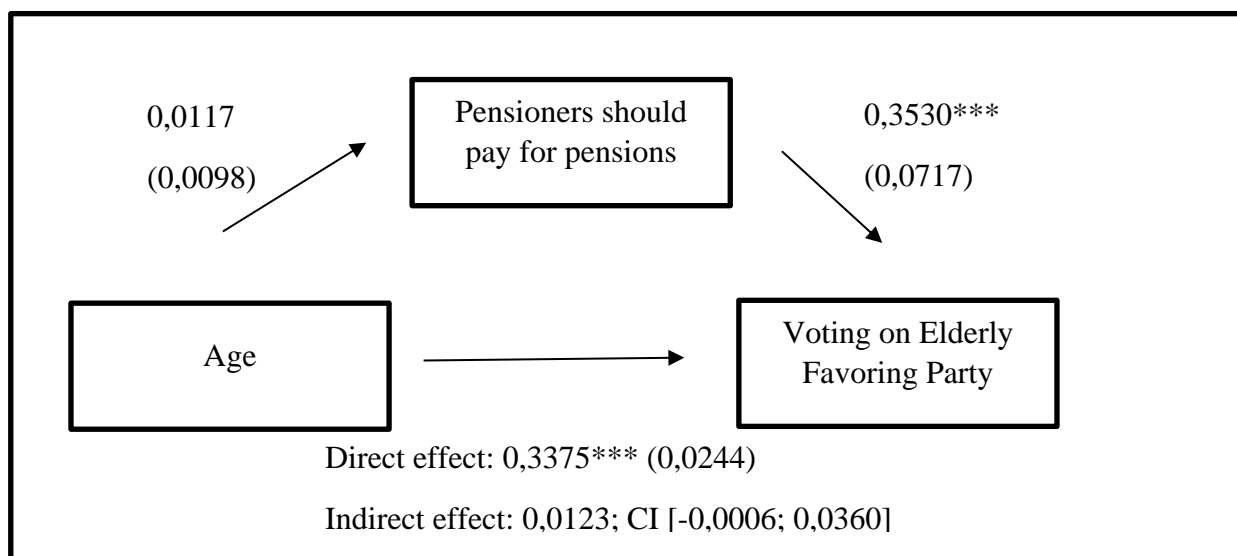


Bootstrapped CI based on 5000 sample.

Hypothesis 3 (*H3c: The effect of age on voting for elderly favoring parties is mediated by the agreement with increased government spending on education*) displayed in figure 4.2 and

models 4 and 4b (table 4.4 and 4.5) shows the direct and indirect effects of age and voting behavior with as a mediator the perception if government should spend more or less money on education. The direct effect b is -0,0094 with a p-value that is significant at the 5% level. The negative b indicates a negative relationship between age and voting behavior. The indirect effect shows a b of 0,0005 and has a bootstrapped confidence interval between -0,0002 and 0,0015. Because the confidences interval is lower than zero, it is to assume that the indirect relationship between *age* and *voting behavior* that goes through *government spending on education* as a mediator is not significant. Therefore, H3 cannot be corroborated.

Figure 4.3: Model 5 – Relationship age and voting with pensioners paying for pension as

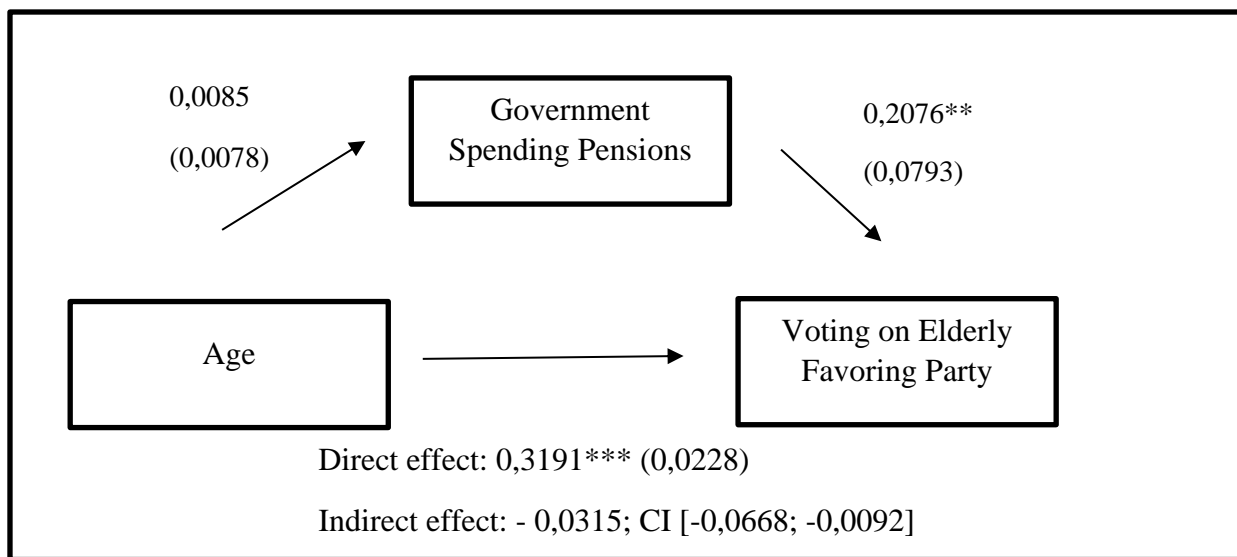


Bootstrapped CI based on 5000 sample

H4 (*The effect of age on voting for elderly favoring parties is mediated by the agreement of pensioners paying for pensions*) is shown in model 5 and 5b (table 4.4 and 4.5 and figure 4.3). This is concretely the relationship between *age* and *voting behavior* with the sentiment that *pensioners should pay for pensions* as the mediator. The direct effect is significant with a b of 0,3375, which indicates a positive relationship between *age* and *voting behavior*. The indirect

effect shows a similar pattern as model 4 (figure 4.2). The b is small with a 0,0041 and its bootstrapped confidence interval is between -0,0006 and 0,0360. This means that the indirect relationship between *age* and *voting behavior* with *pensioners paying for pensions* is not significant. Therefore, H4 cannot be corroborated.

Figure 4.4: Model 6 – Relationship age and voting with pensions spending as mediator.



H5 (*The effect of age on voting for elderly favoring parties is mediated by the agreement to more government spending on pensions*) is shown in models 6 and 6b (table 4.4 and 4.5 and figure 4.4). This model again shows similar results to model 4 and 5. The direct effect is significant and the b is 0,3191, which shows a positive relationship between *age* and *voting behavior*. The b is again very close to 0 with a 0,0018, it has a bootstrapped confidence interval between -0,0668 and -0,0092. This concretely means that the indirect relationship between *age* and *voting behavior* with *government spending on pensions* is not significant. H5 cannot be corroborated based on this analysis.

H6 (*The older a person gets, the more likely he/she/x is to vote on anti-environment parties*) is shown in models 8 and 9 (table 4.6) explore the relationship between *age* and voting for an anti-environmental party. Model 8 only includes *age* as the independent variable, where model 9 also includes the control variables. With this regression, it is possible to measure H6 that shows if there is a relationship between *age* and *voting behavior*.

Table 4.6: Explaining age and voting for anti-environmental party (OLS analysis)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Model 8</i>	<i>Model 9</i>
Age respondent at election date	0,008* (0,004)	0,008 (0,005)
Gender		-0,338* (0,134)
Highest education (completed) of respondent		-0,908*** (0,150)
Social class – self image		-0,423* (0,075)
Respondent is religious		0,105 (0,140)
Respondent has children		0,170 (0,147)

Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek 2012

Dependent variable: anti-environment party

Dummy variables: gender; respondent is religious; highest education; social class; respondent had children

standard errors in parentheses; * = significant at 5 percent; ** = significant at 1 percent; *** = significant at 0.5 percent

Model 8 shows the relationship between *age* and *voting for an anti-environment party*. The relationship is significant at 5% and has a *b* of 0,008. This means that every year a person gets older, they are increasing 0,008 on the scale of anti-environment party. This outcome, although not very significant and with only a small *b*, is in line with H6 and the theory of Inglehart, that predicted that the older generation is less focused on ‘new politics’ values such

as the environment. The adjusted $r^2 = 0,003$ which is very small. This means that the model as a whole has only limited explanatory power.

When we include the control variables, we see that the relationship between age and voting for an anti-environment party loses its significance. *Gender* is significant at the 5% percent level and has a b of -0,338. This means that those who identify as female have a 0,338 point lower predicted value on voting for anti-environment parties than those who identify as male. *Highest education* is significant at the 1% level, and has a b of -0,908. This means that when a respondent has only finished lower education, that the predicted value on voting for an anti-environmental favoring party is 0,908 points lower than people who finished higher education. Highest *Social class* is significant at the 5% level. It has a b of -0,423 which means. If a voter identifies themselves with lower or middle class, that the predicted value on voting for an anti-environmental party lowers with 0,423 point. Both respondent is religious and respondent have children are insignificant with

All in all, it is difficult to be confident in the adaptation of H6. Although model 8 shows a significant relationship, it is only significant at the 5% level. On top of that, it loses its significance when the control variables are added.

4.5 Eyeballing Dummies in Mediation

The mediation variables in this thesis are ordinal variables that have been considered continuous variables. To check to what extent this has an impact, I will check H3, which had an significant indirect effect, to see if the outcome changes if the mediator (*retirement age should be at 67*) is transformed into a dummy. The dummy is made into two distinct categories, with 0=disagree and 1=agree.

When we compare Model 10 with model 11 (table 4.7), which allows us to broadly check to what extent the mediation analysis changes if we use a dummy, we can see that both model 10 and model 11 are significant.

Table 4.7: Explaining Age and voting behavior with dummy (OLS analysis)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Model 10</i>	<i>Model 11</i>
Age respondent at election date (-0,009*	-0,010***
	(0,004)	(0,003)
Retirement age at 67 - Dummies		
Fully Agree		Reference
Agree		0,353
		(0,209)
Disagree		0,834***
		(0,214)
Fully Disagree		1,297***
		(0,235)

Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek 2012

Dependent variable: elderly favoring party

Dummy variables: retirement age at 67

standard errors in parentheses; * = significant at 5 percent; ** = significant at 1 percent; *** = significant at 0.5 percent

Table 4.7 shows the relationship between *age* and *voting for an elderly favoring party* with *retirement age at 67 (dummy)* as mediator. The indirect effect is reached by multiplying the slope of the relationship of X-M and M-Y (for X-M see Appendix A.3), the outcomes are 0,000 for disagree and fully disagree and is 0,0004 for agree. Therefore, it is fair to say that the indirect relationship is not significant.

This outcome is interesting and show that using dummy variables instead of treating the mediation variables as continuous could give different results. When compared to the mediation hypothesis with retirement age as a continuous variable, it shows that the indirect

relationship is 0,0171. This is a big difference with the 0,000 or 0,0004 that the dummies shows. Of course, no real conclusion can be drawn from this, based on the fact that when using a dummy with 2 categories instead of a continuous variable of 5 categories, differences are bound to happen. However, it is an indication that further research might be required.

4.6 Discussion

Using Content analysis and OLS regression analysis, I have analyzed the extent that an age cleavage exists in the Netherlands. The content analysis shows that age is indeed a concept that political parties have embedded within their political party program. Although some political parties have a stronger focus on age than others, all parties seem to choose side within the debate by either favoring the younger or the older generation of voters. The outcomes are remarkable with the CDA being the most younger favoring party. This outcome seems counterintuitive, which can have several reasons. First of all, the CDA is trying to attract younger voters and incorporates this within their party program, causing a discrepancy between the popular opinion of the party and what is written in the political party program. Second, it could be that only looking at the political party programs does not give the most valid outcome, although is it reliable. Other content (such as interviews or debates) could be included to give a more nuanced image. With this being said, it is safe to say that political parties will try to turn their political party program into action. Considering that the CDA percentagewise has the most younger favoring sentiments, it might be fair to say that they will be the party that will try to push the most for younger favoring actions. The content analysis for environmental favoring parties show a less counterintuitive result. Parties that focus more on old political values (such as PVV and VVD) are also the political parties that are the most anti-environmental. Based on the content analysis, the two independent variables (*elderly*

favoring parties and *anti-environmental parties*) were made, and a OLS regression could be done.

The OLS regression shows that there is no a significant relationship between *age* and *voting behavior*, when being controlled for gender, education, social class, religion, and children. On top of that, it was expected by H1 that the elderly would vote for elderly favoring parties. The analysis shows that the relationship is actually the other way around. This means concretely that it is not completely clear to what extent H1 is approved or rejected. This outcome is surprising to say the least, but at the end of the discussion, several explanations will be proposed.

The other hypotheses are divided in three different theoretical approaches. The rational choice approach and the social identity approach, which have been combined within this analysis; and the cultural approach. The rational choice approach and the social identity approach are being tested by hypotheses 2 to 5. All these hypotheses are mediation hypotheses to check whether the relationship between *age* and *voting*

H2 (*The older a person gets, the likelier he/she/x is to vote on elderly favoring parties*) was deduced based on the fact that it is both rational and in line with the social identity of the younger voters to agree with a higher retirement age, based on the fact that this means that the taxes for pensions will be divided over more people and therefore be lower. The OLS regressions showed a negative direct and indirect relationship between *age* and *voting behavior* with *higher retirement age* as mediator. On top of that, when the hypothesis is eyeballed with a mediation analysis in which the mediator is a dummy variable, the indirect relationship loses its significance. H2, therefore, is again unclear, since the OLS regression shows a significant result with again the wrong type of relationship.

H3 (*The younger the voter, the more likely he/she/x is to agree with increased government spending on education*) is another hypothesis to check whether the social identity approach

and rational choice approach are approaches that can explain the causal mechanism behind *age* and *voting behavior* based on the fact that younger people benefit from spending on education while the elderly do not. Which makes it rational for younger voters to vote for *younger favoring parties*. Although the direct effect was significant within this analysis. The indirect effect was not. This means that H3 has to be rejected. The same goes for H4 (*The effect of age on voting for elderly favoring parties is mediated by the agreement of pensioners paying for pensions*) and H5 (*The effect of age on voting for elderly favoring parties is mediated by the agreement to more government spending on pensions*), which both were deduced based on the fact that it is rational for younger voters to make sure that pensioners pay for their own pensioners as well as the fact that it is rational for the elder generation to make sure that the government increases their spending on pensions. Both H4 and H5 have been rejected because the indirect effect within the mediation analysis was not significant. Based on H2 to H5, it is not completely clear if the rational choice and social identity approach have explanatory power as a causal mechanism for an age cleavage. Although H2 is approved, the others are not, which shows the mixed results.

Hypothesis 6 (*The older a person gets, the more likely he/she/x is to vote on anti-environment parties*) was deduced to test the cultural approach which states that people base their vote based on old and new politics, dividing the population in those who vote based on 'new politics' (younger generation) and those who vote based on 'old politics' (older generation). Hypothesis 6 is adopted based on the significant outcome and the positive slope. Based on this, it is fair to say that the cultural approach has some explanatory power as a causal mechanism behind an age cleavage.

There could be several reason why the results of H1 to H5 (with exception of H2) are not as expected. First of all, the OLS regression might not be the best method to test the hypothesis. It is possible that if the continuous variables that have been used were treated as

ordinal, and a logistic regression was used, that the outcome might have been more valid. On top of that, a logistic regression also could have given room for the conditional logit model, which makes it possible to measure the hypothesis not only based on the differences that parties have over age, but also based on other values such as economic stances or ideology (Jansen, 2011). Second of all, the most distinguished age party, 50PLUS, was not yet in parliament during the 2012 elections. The elections of 2017 might have given an different landscape to work with, giving different results. Third and last, the 2012 elections are characterized by strategic voting (NOS, 2012). This means concretely that instead of voting for a political party that might have the best interest of the voter in mind, this voter instead voted for a party to make sure that an ideological desired cabinet could get in place, making the results less reliable.

Even with these explanations of why not all hypotheses have been corroborated. It is still clear that social identity approach and the rational choice approach, as well as the cultural approach have some influence in the causal mechanism behind *age* and *voting behavior*. Tale 4.6 show the hypotheses and whether they have or haven't been approved, or if the outcome is still unclear.

Table 4.8: Overview of Assessment of Hypotheses

<u>Theory</u>	<u>Hypothesis</u>	<u>assessment</u>
Cleavage Theory	<i>H1: The older a person gets, the likelier he/she/x is to vote on elderly favoring parties.</i>	rejected
Rational Choice & Social Identity	<i>H2a: The younger the voter, the more likely he/she/x is to agree with a higher retirement age.</i>	
	<i>H2b: The more a voter agrees with a higher retirement age, the less likely he/she/x is to vote on elderly favoring parties.</i>	
	<i>H2c: The effect of age on voting for elderly favoring parties is mediated by the agreement to a higher retirement age.</i>	H2: unclear
	<i>H3a: The younger the voter, the more likely he/she/x is to agree with increased government spending on education.</i>	
	<i>H3b: The more a voter wants increased government spending on education, the less likely he/she is to vote on elderly favoring parties.</i>	
	<i>H3c: The effect of age on voting for elderly favoring parties is mediated by the agreement with increased government spending on education</i>	H3: rejected
	<i>H4a: The younger the voter, the more likely he/she/x is to agree with the idea that pensioners should pay for pensions.</i>	
	<i>H4b: The more a voter wants that pensioners pay for pensions, the less likely he/she is to vote on elderly favoring parties.</i>	
	<i>H4c: The effect of age on voting for elderly favoring parties is mediated by the agreement of pensioners paying for pensions.</i>	H4: rejected
	<i>H5a: The older the voter, the more likely he/she/x is to agree with increased government spending on pensions.</i>	
Cultural	<i>H5b: The more a voter wants increased government spending on pensions, the more likely he/she is to vote on elderly favoring parties.</i>	
	<i>H5c: The effect of age on voting for elderly favoring parties is mediated by the agreement to more government spending on pensions.</i>	H5: rejected
	<i>H6 : The older a person gets, the more likely he/she/x is to vote on anti-environment parties.</i>	adopted

5. Conclusion

The question that this thesis tried to answer is:

To what extent is there an age cleavage in the Netherlands based on the 2012 Dutch parliamentary election?

By using three different theoretical approaches (rational choice approach, social identity approach, and the cultural approach) as possible explanations for the causal mechanisms, this thesis looks to the extent that an age cleavage might be visible in the Netherlands. The results are surprising. Age does not seem to have an effect on voting behavior. On top of that, rather than younger people voting for younger favoring political parties and the elderly voting for elderly favoring parties, the opposite effect became visible within the OLS regressions. This result seems to be counterintuitive just as the non-significant results. Potential explanations were discussed have been discussed in the discussion section.

To test the three theoretical approaches and give the research question clear definitions and a framework to work with, the following research question has been made:

To what extent is there a difference between the younger age group and older age group in terms of voting in the Dutch 2012 parliamentary election and can we explain this phenomenon by using an age cleavage with a rational choice, social identity, or cultural approach?

Looking at the reasoning behind the rational choice approach and the social identity approach, it is no surprise that the hypotheses only showed unclear or non-corroborative results now that

it is clear that the relationship between age and voting behavior goes the opposite direction than predicted. It is indeed counter intuitive and does not seem rational or in line with the social identity approach for voter to vote on political parties that do not have their age-based interest in mind. There seems to be more support for the cultural approach, based on Inglehart's theory of 'old' and 'new' politics. Basing you vote on either old or new politics (measured via the favoring of environmental or ant-environmental parties) indeed show a chasm between the younger and the newer generation.

Looking at the research question, a two-folded answer is needed. First of all, is there a difference in voting behavior between younger and older voters? Yes, there is a significant difference in which younger people tend to vote more for elderly favoring parties and older people tend to vote more for younger favoring parties. The second question is if the rational choice approach, social identity approach or the cultural approach can be used as a causal mechanism to understand a possible age cleavage. First, it is too early to speak of an age cleavage in the Netherlands. Although there is difference in voting behavior, the OLS regression showed that this difference is still limited and small. Second, could the three approaches be an explanation for this age cleavage? The answer in this setting is no. All three approaches have not been able to predict that the relationship between age and voting behavior would be negative. Perhaps if these approaches will be analyzed in light of the new-found results, an explanation could be possible.

It seems that the Social and Cultural Rapport of 2014 has been right in saying that it might be too strong to talk of an age based conflict within the Netherlands (Vermeij, Sonck, and van den Broek, 2014). However, I strongly believed that the results of this thesis cannot be ignored. There is indeed a relationship between age and voting behavior and this relationship might be even more exciting that I dared to anticipate within this thesis and based on the theoretical approaches.,

5.1 Limitations of this Research

This thesis has some limitations, some were obvious from the beginning, while others were discovered during the research itself. First of all, from the beginning it was clear that a content analysis might not be the most precise way to test the different hypothesis. Based on the types of variables, a logistic regression might have been a better fit, and would have paved the way for more in-depth analyses such as the conditional logit model. To be more precise, some variables that have been considered continuous in order to fit the assumptions of the OLS regression, might actually be more appropriate as an ordinal variable. However, the OLS regression was conducted and interpreted keeping its limitations in mind, and was therefore still appropriate to answer the research question.

Second of all, and related to the first limitation, shifting the variable of age from a control variable to an independent variable is something that not a lot of datasets have anticipated for. Questions related to age are very limited to say the least, questions related to age that could differentiate between the different theoretical approaches were non-existent in some datasets. In the end, the NKO was indeed the most ideal to conduct this research, but a lot of useful questions could not be used because of their low N. Therefore, limitations within the datasets did hold did research back.

Third, because this thesis used age as an independent variable, the age-period-cohort-problem (APC-problem) was inevitable. The APC-problem refers to age, period and cohort and the fact that these concepts are closely intertwined with each other (Browning et al., 2012). Concretely, when age is being used as a variable, the influence of age can be due to the process of aging, or the influences that are more associated with the data of which the subjects are observed or simply the respondents date of birth. Within this thesis, there is no clear

distinction made if the results are due to either or all three of these different types of age-related explanations.

Finally, the content analysis ideally could have been checked for its validity by conducting more content analyses over different contents such as interviews or television debates. Unfortunately, this was not feasible within the time that this thesis was written. Using mixed methods costs time both in preparation and the conducting of it. What was possibly lost in validity of this content analysis, was gained in its reliability.

5.2 Recommendations for Further Research

Much is still to be gained in researching age and voting behavior. This thesis has shown some interesting results, with the relationship between age and voting behavior being flipped on its head. Further research could build on this new knowledge and work with the entirely new puzzle that this thesis has created: Why do younger people vote for elderly favoring parties and the other way around? There are several ways that further research could work with this new-found question.

First, datasets could be made with a stronger focus on age and how it relates to voting behavior. A better dataset which ask people behind their possible age-based intentions of voting could not only help with conducting more valid analyses, but can also give a chance to retest the relationship between age and voting behavior. It might take a while but repeating those questions over time could give a real insight of the dynamics of age based voting over time, giving better chance to understand possible causal mechanisms behind it.

Future research could also lay a focus on content analysis. The question that has been raised within this thesis is if a regular content analysis that has been conducted and seems to

be widely accepted within political science (namely analyzing political party programs) is the best way to understand the reasoning of a political party. Perhaps additional data would not only be beneficial but even necessary to truly understand what a political party wants and which strategy it uses.

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Appendix

Appendix A.1: Content Analysis Age Based voting – Older Age Group Sentiments

	<i>general comments</i>	<i>pro-pensions</i>	<i>work</i>	<i>living environment</i>	<i>healthcare</i>	<i>total:</i>
50 plus	8	4	-	1	3	16
PVV	7	1	-	2	3	13
VVD	3	2	1	1	3	10
SP	3	3	2	-	4	12
PvdA	-	2	6	-	2	10
CU	-	-	2	-	4	6
Groenlinks	-	-	2	2	1	5
D66	-	-	1	1	3	5
CDA	1	2	-	-	1	4

Content analysis: Older Age Group Sentiments

Appendix A.2: Content Analysis Age Based Voting – Younger Age Group Sentiments

	<i>general comments</i>	<i>anti pensions</i>	<i>work</i>	<i>living environment</i>	<i>healthcare</i>	<i>pro child sentiments</i>	<i>education</i>	<i>total</i>
50 plus	2	-	1	-	-	-	1	4
PVV	1	-	1	-	-	1	4	7
VVD	-	1	2	2	-	3	8	16
SP	1	-	2	-	2	5	14	24
PvdA	2	1	5	2	1	1	20	32
CU	-	1	4	2	-	5	8	20
Groenlinks		2	1	1	-	2	11	17
D66	2	1	-	-	3	1	12	19
CDA	2	1	3	1	-	7	6	20

Content analysis: Younger Age Group Sentiments

Appendix A.3: Content Analysis Age Based Voting – Younger Age Group Sentiments

**Table 4.7: Explaining Age and voting behavior with dummy
(OLS analysis) X-M relationship**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Retirement at 67</i>	<i>Retirement at 67</i>	<i>Retirement at 67</i>
	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Fully Disagree</i>
Age respondent at election	0,001	0,000	0,000
date	(0,001)	(0,001)	(0,001)

Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek 2012

Dependent variable model: see model

standard errors in parentheses; * = significant at 5 percent; ** = significant at 1 percent; *** = significant at 0.5 percent