Love and marriage in election times. Inconsistency and types of floating voters

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Research Note submitted for publication in International Journal for Public Opinion Research in October 2009.

Word count (without references and tables/figures): 3,881 words

ABSTRACT:

The paper develops a typology of floating voters during the election campaign and tests this typology empirically based on a large scale internet-based panel survey conducted during the 2004 Belgian election campaign. The typology draws on the consistency or inconsistency of voters' statements and behavior: what they say about their vote intention (sure or not sure) and what they do afterwards during the campaign (switch allegiance or not) appears to be contradictory in almost one fourth of all cases. Four types of voters are discerned, two consistent and two inconsistent types. The paper substantiates that all types multivariately differ from each other and behave in a different way during the campaign. Especially in political and campaign terms, the four types seem to be robustly dissimilar.

KEYWORDS: Electoral behavior; Belgium; Voter volatility; Electoral campaigning; Panel surveying

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INTRODUCTION

In the heat of an election campaign pollsters often warn us that nothing is sure yet: a large segment of the electorate has not made its mind up yet. Apart from the fact that pollsters have every interest to state that the election game is not over yet, the so-called floating voters are still poorly understood. There are different kinds of floating voters during an election campaign and the present approaches do not really grasp these nuanced differences. The central claim of this research note is that some voters who are usually considered to be completely volatile and floating are, in reality, more decided; at the same time, a considerable segment of the electorate is not considered as floating, yet they *do* float during the campaign. The paper's primary aim is to identify these types and to explain their behavior.

THEORY, HYPOTHESES AND OPERATIONALIZATION

Bye and large, scholars agree that voters' changeability has increased during the last decades (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Norris et al. 1999). Voter volatility comes in two guises. On the one hand, voters change opinion *between* two adjacent elections. This slack change has often been explained by deep-rooted trends of structural change with altering socialization patterns, increased levels of education, and silent value shifts (Inglehart 1990). Modernization has lead to a more critical citizen, scrutinizing the offer on the political market and by no means unconditionally loyal to one party. Party dealignment is the consequence of modernization (Dalton et al. 2000).Yet on the other hand, some voters change

preference *during* the campaign in the few weeks before the polls. Consequently, election campaigns became of more interest to scholars and the campaign literature has boomed. Remarkably, this has not led to a real increase in scholarly attention for *intra-campaign* volatility (McAllister 2002)[1].

Few studies have focused specifically on the voters that shift during a campaign and even the basic facts – how many people change preference during a typical campaign? - are seldom available. Blais (2004) reviewed the existing panel survey evidence in five countries – the US, UK, New Zealand, Canada, and The Netherlands – and concluded that between 8% (US) and 30% (New Zealand) of the voters switch allegiance during the final 30 days preceding the polls. In the countries under study, he notices a slight increase in intra-campaign volatility during the last decades. This was partly confirmed by the comprehensive study of Granberg and Holmberg (1991) comparing long-term trends in the US and Sweden. The number of what they call 'switchers', people with a pre-campaign preference that was changed, slowly grew from 4% to 10% in Sweden (1956-1988) but remained stable at 3% in the US (1952-1988). In his study on electoral dealignment in Germany and Switzerland, Lachat (2004) concludes that intra-campaign volatility increased starkly in Germany: from 17% (1970) to 33% (1990); for Switzerland, though, the story is less clear as measures were not consistent but varied around 28% intra-campaign changes.

How come people change allegiance during the campaign? Three types of factors might account for intra-campaign volatility: socio-structural factors, attitudinal-behavioral factors, and campaign context factors.

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[1] In the electoral volatility literature, more attention has been devoted to the supposed *delaying* of voting decisions. Although some confusion has pervaded (Latimer 1987), we consider changing preferences and deciding late, which can be shifting as well as confirming an earlier preference, as analytically two different things.

Socio-structural accounts

The classic Michigan school ascertained that especially *age* is a crucial predictor of electoral flexibility (Converse 1969; Campbell et al. 1960). Older voters have had more occasions to vote and are therefore more prone to habituation (Meredith 1999). Modernization theorists consider especially *education* to be crucial. Rising educational levels enhanced political skills and political interest (Topf 1995; Inglehart 1990). Modernization theory postulates that floating voters are to be found among the so-called new middle *class* (white collar employees)(Zelle 1995; Lachat 2004). The Belgian party system anno 2004 is still characterized by is the catholic versus non-catholic cleavage. Therefore, we expect in the Belgian context that *religiousness*, more specifically Catholicism, to be a predictor of volatility.

Attitudinal accounts

The attitudinal-behavioral approaches cannot be entirely separated from the socio-structural accounts. Education, for example, generates *political interest*, which is a crucial variable according to the attitudinal school (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). The modernization theorists turn upside down the original argument of Lazarsfeld and colleagues (1945) who described the original floating voter as being utterly uninterested in politics. More political interest or 'cognitive mobilization' (Dalton 1984), leads to more volatility, modernization theorists claim. However we also have to consider that, following Zaller (1992), that especially an average level of political interest might lead to changing preferences (Lachat 2004). Similarly, scholars have also turned upside down Lazarsfeld's findings for the recent period claiming that *media use* determines volatility. The more a voter relies

on the media for his political information, the more it is likely that he/she is likely to change opinion (Latimer 1987).

The most obvious predictor of intra-campaign change is of course the Michigan's school's main variable: *partisan identification* (Campbell et al. 1960). The closer one feels to a party, the less chance that one will change preference before or during the campaign (McAllister 2002). Zelle (1995) contends that especially *political frustration* can explain floating votes: floating voters have less trust in political parties and are dissatisfied with the political system in general.

Finally, if we want to gauge intra-campaign volatility and claim that the volatility *during* the campaign differs from volatility *between* elections, we need to control for *inter-election volatility*. We expect inter-election volatility to be a very strong predictor of intra-campaign volatility. If other variables would remain significant predictors on top of inter-election volatility, this would imply that these variables specifically predict intra-campaign volatility beyond inter-election volatility.

Specific campaign context

The socio-structural and attitudinal factors are to a certain extent stable. Intra-campaign switching, though, is probably also affected by typical changeable campaign traits or the political context. All long-term studies showed that, although there seems to be a general trend towards more intra-campaign volatility, this trend certainly is not linear. Extreme volatile campaigns are followed by stable campaigns; some voters change opinion during a certain campaign, but they do not in another (Lachat 2004). As a consequence, in a certain campaign, some parties' voters tend to switch more than others. Controlling for *previous vote* is a good strategy to test this. Zelle (1995) found that party preference is the best predictor of

volatility; electoral volatility is not dispersed evenly over the whole political spectrum. An alternative control for previous voting behavior is the *left-right* position of voters. There is no theoretical reason to expect that left-leaning voters would, in principle, be more easily seduced to switch parties than right-leaning voters. Yet, we know that in some campaigns switching happens especially at the right-side of the electoral spectrum and sometimes at the left side. In the 2004 Belgian campaign we expect switching to be higher at the left side, because of the close competition between green and socialist party, and lower at the right side with a less crowded party offer.

Finally, the *ideological distance* between a party and its closest contender might be a useful campaign-related predictor of intra-campaign change. This variable is campaign-specific as parties reposition themselves before and during the campaign. The ideological distance factor mirrors the argument put forward by Mair (1997) who claimed that voters may change actual preferences but in fact they only shop for the 'intra-bloc' party that is ideologically closest to their initially preferred party. Instead of distinguishing two different kinds of volatility, between or beyond neighbouring parties, we will estimate one model for intra-campaign volatility but control for ideological distance.

DATA AND METHODS

The study focuses on Flemish voters, Dutch-speaking and living in the Northern part of Belgium and representing 60% of the Belgian electorate. Our web-panel evidence includes more than 7000 respondents. Although not representative, the size, detail, and design of the survey make it well-suited for an explorative study into the reasons for switch parties during the campaign. Our aim here is *not* to determine how many voters were floating in the population at large, but rather to

develop a typology of floating voters and try to account for their behavior. To have all possible types of voters in our study we tried to maximize diversity. For that purpose we recruited panel participants via banners on websites of popular radio stations, of soccer teams, of associations of the elderly, of women's organizations... Students distributed leaflets inviting people to participate at train stations, on the streets, in bars...

The panel was surveyed in five consecutive waves: two pre-campaign waves (W1 and W2), two campaign waves (W3 and W4), and one post-electoral wave (W5). TABLE 1 contains the basis facts. Response rates go down gradually. The panel is substantially skewed, with especially younger and higher educated respondents being overrepresented, but the drop out from W1 till W5 did not really affect its skewness.

<Table 1 about here>

The main strength of the study is that the number of respondents is high: 7,413 respondents answered at least one pre-campaign and the post-electoral wave. Most electoral studies simply do not contain enough volatile voters to systematically contrast faithful with changing voters and, especially, to construct types of volatile voters (Latimer 1987). Limited numbers are probably one of the main reasons why intra-campaign change has received little scholarly attention. A second strength is the fact that due to the panel design we can avoid working with questionable recall data that tend to overrate consistency of voters (Schuman and Presser 1981; Schoen 2000). As we will show, people's answers are often unreliable or at least inconsistent. What people say they do and what they actually do may

differ. In fact, our typology of voters is even based on the distinction between words and deeds.

Is our sample skewed towards volatility? In our panel, we have 18% of people changing preference during the six week campaign period (W2 – W5). This figure is perfectly comparable with Blais' (2004) data about intra-campaign shifting in other Western countries. Also in terms of inter-elections volatility, our dataset seems not at all eccentric. In our panel 27% switched parties between the 2003 and the 2004 elections, which is very similar with the 25% found in the Belgian election study (Goeminne and Swyngedouw 2007).

TYPES OF (FLOATING) VOTERS

We propose a typology of voters and intra-campaign change based on two variables. (1) Did people, before the campaign started (W2), state that they made a (definitive) decision about their vote[2]? (2) Did they actually change party preference during the campaign[3]? If a voter switched party preference during *any* of the three transitions between W2 and W5, we considered him/her to have changed party preference during the campaign (even if this person returned to his original party at a later stage). By crossing both variables we get four types of voters in a simple typology.

The basic idea is that inconsistency is a good indicator of uncertainty. When they are confronted with survey questions regarding party preference voters' uncertainty can translate in two kinds of answers: they can explicitly state that they

[2] The question wording was the following: 'Did you already decide for which party you will vote at the coming Flemish elections of June 13th?' Answers: 'Yes, I took a decision'; 'No, I did not take a decision yet'. As Belgium has compulsory voting we did not ask whether people planned to vote or not.

[3] If people stated they already took a decision (see above) they were asked the question 'If yes, for which party will you vote?' If they had said they had not decided yet, the follow-up question was: 'If not, which party has the highest chance to get your vote?'.

feel uncertain and have not made their mind up yet; or they can, in a subsequent poll, simply indicate another party as their preferred party. The first measurement of uncertainty is based on people's *subjective* self-perceptions (what they think). The second indicator of uncertainty is based on *objective* (intended) behavior (what they (will) do). Crossing both creates two extreme categories in which self-perception and (intended) behavior are consistent: (1) people who say they are certain and act accordingly by sticking to the same party all the way through; (2) people who state they are uncertain and act accordingly by switching parties in subsequent polls. The two intermediary categories consist of voters whose responses are inconsistent: their self-perception and (intended) behavior are contradictory. (3) They say they made up their mind and, still, they switch parties; (4) they say they are uncertain but they stick to the same party throughout the whole campaign. These ambivalent or inconsistent voters, we claim, are useful types that are situated in between the well-known loyal voter, on the one hand, and the completely detached voter, on the other. They form a third and a fourth type of voter, neither stable nor totally free-floating. An empirical question is whether these 'in-between' voters form only *one* intermediary type or *two* intermediary types. Are people whose self-perception is uncertain and whose behavior is certain any different from people whose self-perception is certain but whose behavior is uncertain?

<Table 2 about here>

Let us turn to the evidence in TABLE 2. A substantial fraction of the voters (6.5%) said they made up their mind but still they switch allegiance afterwards: we call them *adulterous voters*. A larger share (18.9%) says that nothing is sure yet, but

during the campaign they stick to the same party all the time; these are the *secret admirers*. Both other categories are more consequent in their answers. The *loyal voters* state in the beginning of the campaign they have made up their mind and they act accordingly: they always stick to the same party (59.0%). Finally, there are the consequent disloyal voters, we call them *bachelors*. These are the pure floating voters: they indicate that they are unsure about their preference and this is exactly what happens during the campaign: they switch parties (15.7%). Because the typology is based on a non-representative sample we do not claim that the size of these four groups in our panel corresponds with the real size of these groups in the Flemish electorate. We think it is safe, though, to state that also in the population at large all four kinds of voters exist.

The four intra-campaign change types are associated with other measures of voter volatility. First, there is a clear association with timing of decision, a classic indicator of volatility. In W5, after the polls, we asked respondents when they had made their final decision[4]. As expected, the (Spearman's Rho) correlation is .73 which is very high: bachelors decide late, loyal voters early, secret admirers and adulterous voters score right in the middle. Another variable often used to gauge volatility is split-ticket voting. As the 2004 regional elections coincided with the European elections, we can test for split-ticket voting. Again, the correlation is substantial and significant (Spearman's Rho .34): bachelors practice split-ticket voting much more than loyal voters; secret admirers and adulterous voters are situated in between.

[4] 'When did you decide for which party you would vote?' Answer categories were: the day of the elections, a few day before the elections, a few weeks before the elections, before the start of the campaign, or a longer time before.

EXPLAINING FLOATING VOTERS

So far the four types of voters appeared to be robust when bivariately tested. To really establish that we have different types of voters supposes that the types are also multivariately different. Therefore, we estimate three multinomial logistic regression of voter type using the variables put forward in theories of voter volatility. The bachelor type, the pure floating voter, is the reference category and is contrasted with adulterous voters, secret admirers, and loyal voters. First we test for the socio-structural variables only (model I); next we add the political (attitudes) variables (model II); finally we insert campaign specific factors (model III). Party membership is added as a control variable.

Model I's explanatory power is limited (R^2 = .037)(TABLE 3). This means that, in terms of socio-structural variables, both intermediary types and the loyal voters do not differ a lot from the pure floating voter. As expected, loyal voters differ far most from the bachelors: they are significantly older, more male and more catholic than their more floating counterparts. This confirms the Michigan school's main thesis that socialization (age) leads to party loyalty. It also underscores the fact that deep cleavages, in this case the religious divide, counteract partisan dealignment. Statistically spoken, secret admirers cannot, in socio-structural terms, be discerned from the bachelors. Adulterous voters, who pledge loyalty to a party but leave their party during the campaign, are more male and somewhat lower schooled than bachelors. Overall, gender is the strongest predictor: women state more often than men that they are not sure about their vote (bachelors or secret admirers); men more easily say that they are sure (loyal and adulterous voters) but they leave their party more often. The fact that education, a central variable of modernization theorists, is hardly significant challenges modernization theorists' claim.

In *Model II* the political variables are added. The overall explaining power of the model is satisfying (R^2 = .354): political factors are much more powerful explainers than socio-structural factors. The limited power of the socio-structural predictors is further reduced. Political interest, again contradicting the modernization theorists, is not significant. Media use can be discarded as well. Whether one follows politics intensively via the media or not, does not affect one's tendency for changing parties. As expected, the control variable party membership proves to be very powerful. The same applies to partisan identification: it yields substantial effects underscoring the Michigan school's argument. Democratic satisfaction is significant, but not in the direction Zelle supposed: dissatisfaction is *not* detaching people from parties but exactly the opposite. Loyal voters, adulterous voters and secret admirers are all more dissatisfied with democracy in Belgium than the bachelors. This can be explained by the extraordinarily loyal behavior of the voters of the extreme right-wing party Vlaams Belang that voices a strong anti-establishment critique (Walgrave and Deswert 2004). The two inter-election volatility variables are the strongest predictors of Model II (see appendix for details). Both effects go in the same direction for all types. People acknowledging that they have voted in the past for several parties are to be found more among the bachelors, less among secret admirers, adulterous voters and, especially, among loyal voters. The same applies for people that changed party preference between the previous 2003 elections and the beginning of the 2004 campaign. Again the loyal electorate has least changed preference in the run-up to the campaign. All this makes perfectly sense; it may even sound somewhat tautological. Yet, the fact that the other variables remain significant although we powerfully control for inter-election volatility, means these other factors specifically predict *intra-election* volatility and not just electoral volatility in general.

In *Model III*, we include campaign context variables. This further boosts the explanatory power of the model (R^2 = .439). Socio-structural variables are weakened further but most political variables remain significant. Intra-campaign volatility, hence, is determined by political *and* campaign-specific effects at the same time. Of all previous party votes, only a vote for the extreme-right is a significant predictor of loyalty: the 2004 Vlaams Belang voters know what to vote at the beginning of the campaign and they stick to their party throughout. This effect might have changed in recent years, as the Vlaams Belang got new competitors; the changeable character of this variable is the reason why we consider it as a specific campaign effect. The mirror image of the loyalty towards the Vlaams Belang is the disloyalty of the left-wing voters as captured in the left-right scale. As expected, left-wing voters are, not inherently but at least in the 2004 campaign, more volatile. They are to be found less among adulterous and loyal voters.

The most powerful predictors in Model III are both ideological distance indicators. The first of these variables taps, before the campaign (in W2), the distance (1-10) between, on the one hand, the party that was then perceived as being the closest (the party that would probably get the vote) and, on the other hand, the party that scored second. The second indicator (W4-W2) brings in the campaign dynamics. It assesses the ideological distance difference between the first and second choice party between the beginning (W2) and the end of the campaign (W4). The logic behind this double use of the ideological distance variables is precisely that during the campaign the distance between the parties is constantly manipulated. Parties strategically reposition themselves moving closer or further apart hoping that the voters would notice those changes. As the campaign evolves, perceptions of voters change. We expect, for example, that when an uncertain voter's vote slowly crystallizes, the distance between this voter's first choice party

and her second choice party would gradually increase. In W2, loyal voters, adulterous voters and secret admirers perceive the distance between their preferred party and the second party of their preference as being much bigger than the bachelors, which is logical. The W4-W2 distance measure indicates that differences between distances are becoming bigger for secret admirers and loyal voters compared to bachelors. This indicates that those two voter categories become more certain of their choice as the campaign evolves.

<Table 3 about here>

In terms of establishing floating voter types the models in TABLE 3 permit to draw clear conclusions. First, the analyses tend to support the Michigan school arguments and to question the modernization theorists. The presented evidence in particular suggests that specific campaign dynamics (as perceived by the voter) — that have not been fully theorized yet in the floating voter literature — seem to be most crucial. The volatility of voters during the campaign seems not so much determined by what they *are* (socio-structural) or how they *think* (attitudinal), but rather by the available offer on the political market and the competitive dynamics emerging before and during the campaign.

Second, our four voter typology with three distinct types of floating voters was validated by the evidence. Not surprisingly, the pure floating voter is most distinct from the loyal voter: socio-structurally, attitudinally, and in terms of the campaign these types differ from each other. Interestingly, we observed there to be *two* intermediary types - more stable than the pure floating voter but less certain than the loyal voter - that can clearly be distinguished from both extreme types and from each other. The crucial difference between both types of intermediary floating

voters is that they react differently on the campaign: the adulterous voters get less certain during the campaign while the secret admirers gradually get *more* certain during the campaign.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Based upon the distinction between subjective feelings of certainty about the choice and objective (intended) behavior, the paper proposes a typology that allows us to better understand the complex phenomenon of the floating voter during the campaign. It draws upon a question that normally is considered as a (methodological) filter question. In stead of considering response inconsistency as an annoying methodological problem, we used it as an asset to construct a campaign volatility typology. The typology can be useful in at least two respects. First, our classification of voters can help both survey researchers and pollsters to better understand self-reported (un)certainty of the vote choice. A simple dichotomy between loyal (decided) and floating (undecided) voters is unable to grasp the actual behavior of voters. Perhaps more 'subtle' survey questions could be helpful to better map uncertainty and vote preferences in election campaigns.

Besides this methodological contribution, our typology may improve the broader research on partisan dealignment and realignment. What happens in the campaign in a condensed period of just a few weeks — growing versus diminishing uncertainty — might actually also happen on a more encompassing level and much slower. In macro terms, the question becomes in what direction the stream of voters goes: from loyal to pure floating or the other way around. Does realignment compensate for dealignment? To answer this question we would need to have more data covering several subsequent campaigns. We hope that our explorative case study using non-representative panel data can be a useful first attempt.

TABLES

TABLE 1: Design of Web-based Electoral Panel 2004

		Date	N	'Response rate'
Pre-campaign	W1	2-12 March	11,486	-
Pre-campaign	W2	20-30 April	8,824	77%
Campaign	W3	17-25 May	8,419	73%
Campaign	W4	6-10 June	7,906	69%
Elections		**13 June**		
Post-campaign	W5	15-21 June	7,917	69%

TABLE 2: Types of (floating) voters (N=7,349).

	Made a decision before campaign (= W2)	Did not make a decision before campaign (= W2)
Changed preference during campaign (W3, W4, or/and W5)	*Adulterous voters* 6.5% (N=477)	*Bachelors* 15.7% (N=1,152)
Did not change preference during campaign (W3, W4, or/and W5)	*Loyal voters* 59.0 % (N=4,333)	*Secret admirers* 18.9% (N=1,387)

TABLE 3: Predictors of types of floating voters

	Model 1 (Nagelkerke R^2=.037) (Ref. cat.=Bachelors, N=1063)			**Model 2** (Nagelkerke R^2=.354) (Ref. cat.=Bachelors, N=925)			**Model 3** (Nagelkerke R^2=0.439) (Ref. cat.=Bachelors, N=908)		
	Adulterous voters	*Secret admirers*	*Loyal voters*	*Adulterous Voters*	*Secret admirers*	*Loyal voters*	*Adulterous voters*	*Secret admirers*	*Loyal voters*
Socio-structural variables									
Age (high)	ns	ns	1.01***	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Sex (male)	1.43**	ns	2.05***	ns	ns	1.60***	ns	ns	1.52***
Education (high)	.88*	ns	ns	.82*	ns	ns	.85*	ns	ns
Religiosity (Catholic)	ns	ns	1.11***	ns	ns	1.09*	Ns	ns	ns
Political variables									
Party membership (yes)				1.52**	1.47*	1.80***	1.51**	ns	1.72***
Political Interest (high)				ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Political Interest² (high)				ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Media use (high)				ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Partisan identification (high)				1.40***	1.20***	1.99***	1.31***	1.13**	1.53***
Democratic dissatisfaction (high)				1.33**	1.15*	1.41***	ns	ns	ns
Inter-election volatility									
Change last election (yes)				.ns	.51***	.22***	ns	.57***	.37***
Change in general (frequent)				.84*	.85**	.64***	82**	.88*	.70***
Campaign variables									
Previous vote Vl.Bl. (others =ns)							ns	ns	2.40*
Left-right scale (right)							1.10*	ns	1.12***
Ideological distance									
Distance W2 (large)							1.45***	1.20**	1.65***
Distance W2 – distance W4 (large)							ns	1.65***	2.11***
N	434	1,275	4,006	362	1,132	3,598	357	1,120	3,579

Note: The coefficients represent standardized betas (Exp(B)) and their significance in a multinomial logistic regression analysis models predicting different types of voters (the pure floating voters are the reference category) as the dependent variable. Sig. ***=.001 **=.01 *=.05. Exp(B)s larger than 1.0 indicate a positive effect, smaller than 1.0 a negative effect. Collinearity statistics were checked for the tolerance of all variables. See the technical appendix for coding details of all the items.

TECHNICAL APPENDIX: CODING AND MEASUREMENT

Socio-structural variables	
Age (high)	Years old (Age)
Sex (male)	Male 1, Female 2
Education (high)	5-categories from lower 1 to higher 5
Religiosity (Catholic)	3-categories: 1=Non-believer (non-believer, free-thinker); 2= Christian, but not catholic; 3=Believer 1(mainly Catholic, also Protestant and Other)
Political variables	
Party membership (yes)	1=active or passive member; 2=non-member
Political Interest (high) Political Interest² (high)	Scale from not interested in politics at all (0) to highly interested (10)
Media use (high)	Combined scale of use of newspapers, radio and television for political information
Partisan identification (high)	Score for the ideas of the favorite political party (0-10)
Democratic dissatisfaction (high)	Are you satisfied with the working of democracy in Belgium? 1=not satisfied at all, 4=very satisfied
Inter-election volatility Change last election (yes) Change in general (frequent)	 Change of party between the last election (2003) and Wave2, before the campaign started "Do you usual vote for the same party every election or mostly change party?" 1=always the same party; 2=mostly the same party; 3=mostly different parties
Campaign variables	
Previous vote Vl.Bl. (other parties not significant)	1=Voted for the extreme-right party Vlaams Belang in 2003; 2=not voted Vlaams Belang
Left-right scale (left)	Classical left (0) – right (10) scale
Ideological distance Distance W2 (large) Distance W4 – distance W2(large)	 The difference between the appreciation of the ideas of the favorite party (0-10), versus the score for the second party The same difference at the end of the campaign

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