

Article

Crowding-In and Crowding-Out. Studying the Relationship between Sustainable Citizenship and Political Activism in Flanders

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Abstract: This study examines whether pro-environmental behavior crowds-in (associates positively with) or crowds-out (displaces) political activism. This research is part of a broader debate on the nature of individual pro-environmental behavior and whether it can be considered a political act. Studies generally show a positive association between pro-environmental behavior and political activism. However, few have differentiated between types of pro-environmental behavior. In contrast, our study uses Flemish survey data to examine the relationship between political activism and different modes of pro-environmental behavior: sustainable transport, shopping decisions, energy curtailment, and waste sorting. The results are generally consistent with previous studies. Political activism was positively related to sustainable transport, shopping decisions, and waste sorting. However, it was negatively associated with energy curtailment. Results thus suggest that energy curtailment may displace political action. In conclusion, by differentiating between various modes of pro-environmental behavior, our study confirms but also nuances the usefulness of concepts such as sustainable citizenship. These notions often frame individual pro-environmental behavior as part of broader political and collective strategies to address environmental issues. Our study shows that this may exclude some forms of ecologically significant behavior such as energy curtailment.

Keywords: environmentalism; political activism; crowding-in; crowding-out; social class



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1. Introduction

Social values are seen as standards for discerning what is good and just. They suggest how people should behave in a range of circumstances, even if they do not accurately reflect how people behave. Although it is still customarily assumed that social values are embedded in society as a whole, and that they thus portray the basic standards society would like to embrace and live up to, a range of social theories have also focused attention on the rise and expansion of different 'value spheres' (in the terminology of Max Weber) or social fields and systems (in contemporary jargon), which are defined by their own values and normative expectations. Some kind of institutional 'polytheism' seems characteristic of increasingly complex societies (e.g., [1,2]). Politics is often looked at to translate values and value changes into specific guidelines and actions. However, much dissatisfaction with 'traditional' politics has to do with the way the political field is limited in its efforts at steering the choices people make in different circumstances. Not only is it difficult to put values into action through positive and/or negative sanctions, but the 'eigenvalues' of both the political field and other fields may also impede how certain challenges can be addressed politically and how political decisions can be implemented in various situations.

In part triggered by an alleged erosion of trust in traditional political institutions, more emphasis has in recent decades been put on new types of political action, especially at the level of individual or household behavior [3]. The notion of lifestyle politics, as used by scholars such as Giddens [4] and Bennett [5], for example, allows dealing with

private actions and lifestyle choices as political statements. In the case of environmental politics, emphasis has in some ways also shifted towards individual behavior and responsibility [6]. Although not without criticism (e.g., [7,8]), a growing body of literature is developing around value concepts such as political consumerism and sustainable (or ecological) citizenship.

Political consumerism, on the one hand, is defined as “market-oriented engagements emerging from societal concerns associated with production and consumption” ([9], p. 2). Research on political consumption focuses for the most part on the relationship between political consumption and collective modes of political activism (e.g., voting or protesting). It has, however, included a rather narrow range of individual behaviors. The focus has been largely on buy- and boycotting, even if the range of behaviors is at times expanded to include lifestyle choices and discursive action [10]. Ecological or sustainable citizenship, on the other hand, refers to “the role that people from all walks of life should play in taking daily responsibility for global sustainable development” ([11], p. 90). This concept thus entails a wider range of pro-environmental behaviors, such as sustainable transport and sorting waste. At the same time, however, not much attention has hitherto been devoted to the position of pro-environmental behavior in the broader spectrum of political activism. According to Zorell and Yang [12], the literature on political consumerism and sustainable citizenship has long coexisted without much interaction. Little is indeed known about the relationship between political activism and different modes of individual pro-environmental behavior (for an exception see [12]).

Against this background, we use Flemish survey data (N = 1449) to examine the relationship between different types of pro-environmental behavior and political activism. More specifically, we focus on pro-environmental shopping decisions, sustainable transport, energy curtailment, and sorting waste. Combining the literatures on political consumerism and sustainable citizenship allows researchers (i) to focus on the political, value-oriented nature of individual sustainable citizenship (cf. political consumerism) and (ii) to broaden the scope beyond consumerism to include other types of pro-environmental behavior (cf. sustainable citizenship). This approach should also allow us to shed light on the ‘eigenvalues’ that define the complexity of environmental issues.

2. Crowding in vs. Crowding out

In the struggle for climate change mitigation, we increasingly look towards individual behavior and responsibility [6]. Since the highly influential Brundtland Report [13] defined sustainability as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”, much attention has been paid to green consumerism and market-based solutions [14]. However, consumer-centric terms such as political consumption, sustainable consumption, and conscious consumption have sparked a debate between critics and proponents. Critics argue (i) that political consumerism may be an elite consumption strategy mostly found among middle- and higher classes [15].

Furthermore, (ii) the debate has focused on the question of whether political consumption crowds-in or crowds-out political action [16]. The skeptics argue that the focus on individual and household behavior may individualize, substitute, and/or displace (i.e., crowd-out) our capacity and willingness to act collectively and politically [17,18]. Moreover, a fundamental tension may exist between consumerism and politics [19]. The individualistic and need-driven nature of the market sphere may collide with the collective nature and values of the political sphere. The proponents, on the other hand, consider political consumption as a new mode of political engagement [12], focusing mainly on politically oriented buy- or boycotting as a way to pressure markets and governmental agencies [3]. Accordingly, individual behavior is framed as part of broader political and collective strategies for climate change mitigation [20–23]. This notion proposes a positive association between pro-environmental behavior and political engagement. Moreover, political consumerism can even trigger collective forms of political activism [16].

Generally, empirical inquiries confirm the crowding-in hypothesis [3,12,16]. However, studies have often neglected to differentiate between types of pro-environmental behaviors. Zorell and Yang [12] argue that research should study real-world sustainable practices in its multiplicity. In this study, we look beyond consumerism to include different modes of engaging in sustainable citizenship. For Dobson [24], sustainable citizenship refers to the obligation of all citizens to take responsibility for environmental issues through the sum of their individual and household practices. In other words, it is a citizens' duty to consider collective environmental issues in their private life sphere. While this idea initially arose as a theoretical ideal, more recent empirical accounts have developed a more practical understanding of sustainable citizenship (e.g., [25,26]). In specific, both quantitative and qualitative studies have looked beyond consumerism to include different types of pro-environmental behavior (e.g., [12,27]). A practical view on consumption allowed researchers to look beyond the process of acquiring certain goods in the market sphere [28,29].

In this study, we examine the relationship between political activism on the one hand and shopping decisions (i.e., consumerism), sustainable transport, energy curtailment, and sorting waste on the other (cf. [27]). Moreover, we identify the socio-demographic characteristics of sustainable citizens and political activists. Results allow us to provide a more detailed and nuanced analysis of the notion of sustainable citizenship and its relation to political activism. In the following section, we explore the possible relationships between political activism and the four different types of pro-environmental behavior: sustainable transport, energy curtailment, shopping decisions, and sorting waste.

3. Sustainable Citizenship

While pro-environmental consumption is often defined as an individual practice as it reflects personal choice, previous research indicates that people use pro-environmental shopping decisions to express their political views, suggesting a positive relationship between pro-environmental purchases and political activism [3,16,19,30,31]. The aim of this paper is to look beyond consumerism to include other pro-environmental practices, namely sustainable transport, energy curtailment, and sorting waste. In other words, we examine whether the relationship between pro-environmental behavior and political activism differs between types of pro-environmental behavior. Additionally, previous studies highlight that sustainable consumerism is mostly found among middle and higher classes, and can therefore also be seen as an elite practice and distinction strategy [15]. Accordingly, we also examine social differences in both political activism and the different types of pro-environmental behavior. As we see later, this is useful to indicate a certain social class bias in the literature on political consumerism and sustainable citizenship.

The notion of lifestyle politics [4] suggests that private actions and lifestyles choices are seen as political statements, thus highlighting the signaling functions of pro-environmental practices. The political nature of pro-environmental behavior is emphasized by the fact that it involves personal costs for a collective benefit [32]. Other motivations and personal benefits may confound the status and political nature of pro-environmental behavior [33]. This may especially be the case for energy curtailment. Energy curtailment refers to certain changes in energy consumption practices and habits that are used to consume less energy. Examples of energy curtailment include reducing temperature and turning off the lights when leaving the room. While this requires a change in lifestyle and sacrifices in terms of luxury and comfort [34], these practices are also seen as a convenient way to engage in pro-environmental behavior as they do not require much effort [35]. Additionally, no upfront investments are necessary [36]. Furthermore, a distinction should be made between energy consumers [34]. While idealistic, often highly educated consumers curtail their energy use for environmental purposes, many others take a more materialistic stance. It may, more particularly, be used to save money. Thus, from a financial perspective, energy curtailment is often attractive for low-income households [37]. Furthermore, energy curtailment is an invisible—or inconspicuous—practice which is conducted mostly in-doors [38,39]. In

conclusion, the financial benefits, low personal costs, and invisibility may prevent energy curtailment to be seen as a political act.

Concerning sustainable transport, we define it in this study as opting for a means of transport other than the car, such as public transport or bicycle. Similar to energy curtailment, it may be tied to financial motives (e.g., saving money on gas), thus being especially attractive for low-income households (that may not even be able to afford a car). Yet, research also found that sustainable transport is positively associated with educational attainment [40]. Again, this suggests that highly educated groups may engage in sustainable transport for environmental purposes, while low-income households take a more materialistic stance. However, in contrast to energy curtailment, sustainable transport is considered highly effortful and visible, which is useful to signal certain environmental values [35]. On the one hand, it is often less convenient and more time-consuming than transport by car. On the other hand, it is exclusively practiced outdoors, thus visible by other people, or at least perceived as such. In this context, Dobson (2003) acknowledges sustainable transport as a key practice of sustainability which aims at influencing existing value chains. According to this view, individuals can collectively boycott the use of unsustainable modes of transport by consciously choosing a bicycle or public transport over a car.

Finally, considering sorting waste, previous research identified it as a low-cost and invisible way to engage in pro-environmental behavior [35,41]. Moreover, in Flanders, where this study is located, waste sorting is highly regulated and has been compulsory for quite some time. Therefore, waste sorting may be rather individualized. However, it is also regarded as an ideal typical way to act upon one's environmental concern [42]. Individuals often view sorting waste as a central pro-environmental practice, which is used to show that they not only care about the environment but also the community they live in [42,43]. Action groups are often formed around issues such as waste management and cleaning up public spaces. Wang and Zhang [44] even argue that such activities strengthen one's sense of belonging to a community, thus also stimulating other forms of public engagement. One explanation for a positive relationship between sorting waste and public activism may be the fact that sorting waste entails few personal benefits, while it does take some effort and time [45].

4. Materials and Methods

The analysis for this study is based on data from the Flemish Survey on Socio-Cultural Shifts 2016 (SCV-survey). The survey was conducted by the Study Service of the Flemish Government [46]. The SCV-survey is a measurement instrument to map socio-cultural shifts in Flanders, focusing on attitudes, values, and behavior. The questionnaire was performed face-to-face using a representative sample for the Dutch-speaking population above the age of 18 living in the Flemish Region or Brussels Capital Region (Belgium). A total of 1449 participants were included in the dataset. To compensate for selection bias and non-response, sampling weights were used. Weights were constructed by combining 3 steps of weighting [47]. First, design weights were used to correct for oversampling based on geographic area (postal code). Second, non-response weights accounted for selective non-response based on type of dwelling, gender, marital status, age, nationality, and degree of urbanization. Lastly, post-stratification weights took into account geographical region (Brussels/Flanders), educational attainment, and gender.

Given the presence of latent variables in our model, we used structural equation modeling techniques (SEM) to investigate the relationship between political activism and different types of pro-environmental behavior. A weighted least square estimator (WLSMV) was used because latent indicators were ordered categorical variables [48]. The following fit statistics were used for model evaluation: chi-square test, comparative fit index (CFI), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (see [49,50] for reviews). Our inquiry was conducted stepwise [51]. First, a measurement model was constructed. The measurement model was used as a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate latent factors, which were judged on reliability and validity (cf. [52,53]). The measurement model was also used to

investigate bivariate associations between variables. Afterwards, the measurement model was transformed into a structural model.

At the dependent variable level, four types of pro-environmental behaviors were measured: pro-environmental shopping decisions (indicators: 'Recycled products', 'Take into account packaging, e.g., no surplus, bio-degradable, etc.', 'Inspecting the product labels', 'Biological products', 'Local food', 'Env. friendly household products/cleaning supplies', and 'Env. friendly personal care products'), sustainable transport (we defined sustainable transport in this study as opting for an alternative mean of transport other than the car e.g., public transport or bicycle. This does not include the purchase of energy efficient cars such as hybrid vehicles.) (indicators: 'Cycling or walking short distances', 'Searching for alternatives to a car as much as possible', and 'Public transport when possible'), sorting waste (indicators: 'GFT waste', 'Small hazardous waste', 'Going to the container park', and 'Returning empty batteries'), and energy curtailment behavior (energy curtailment referred to certain changes in energy consumption practices and habits that are used to consume less energy. This does not include the purchase of energy efficient technologies such as solar panels) (indicators: 'shutting down electrical devices when not in use', 'dimming lights when leaving the room', and 'only heating rooms when really necessary'). Participants could reply on a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

Political activism was measured based on a composite measurement by means of seven items. Specifically, respondents were asked whether they ever engaged in 'signing a petition', 'attending a demonstration', 'attending a political meeting or gathering', 'contacted a politician or civil servant to give their opinion', 'donating or collecting money for a political or social cause', 'contacting or appearing in the media', and 'joining an online political forum or discussion'. Finally, we included the following socio-demographic variables in our model: monthly household income (1. Less than EUR 500—42. More than EUR 10,450), education (primary education or less [ref. cat.], secondary or tertiary education), age (range: 18 to 98), and gender (score 0 for male and 1 for female). Household size (range: 1 to 10) was also included to control for household composition when measuring household income.

5. Results

For each type of pro-environmental behavior, we first calculated the mean sum score of the indicators. Pro-environmental shopping decisions (mean score: 2.71) and sustainable transport (mean score: 2.95) were the least popular ways to engage in pro-environmental behavior. Energy curtailment (mean score: 4.31) and waste sorting (mean score: 4.43) occurred more frequently, most likely because they entail fewer personal costs. Afterwards, we further examined these types of pro-environmental behaviors and how they relate to socio-demographics and political activism through structural equation modelling.

Figure 1 shows the covariances found in the measurement model ($\chi^2 = 1281.1$ df = 375, $p \leq 0.001$; CFI = 0.938; TLI = 0.923; SRMR = 0.054; RMSEA = 0.041). All factors seemed valid and reliable, with the following minima for AVE (0.46) and CR (0.73). Political activism seemed positively associated with, respectively, pro-environmental shopping (std. cov. = 0.31 $p \leq 0.001$), sorting waste (std. cov. = 0.24, $p \leq 0.001$), and sustainable transport (std. cov. = 0.14, $p \leq 0.001$). However, results also show that political activism was not significantly related to energy curtailment.

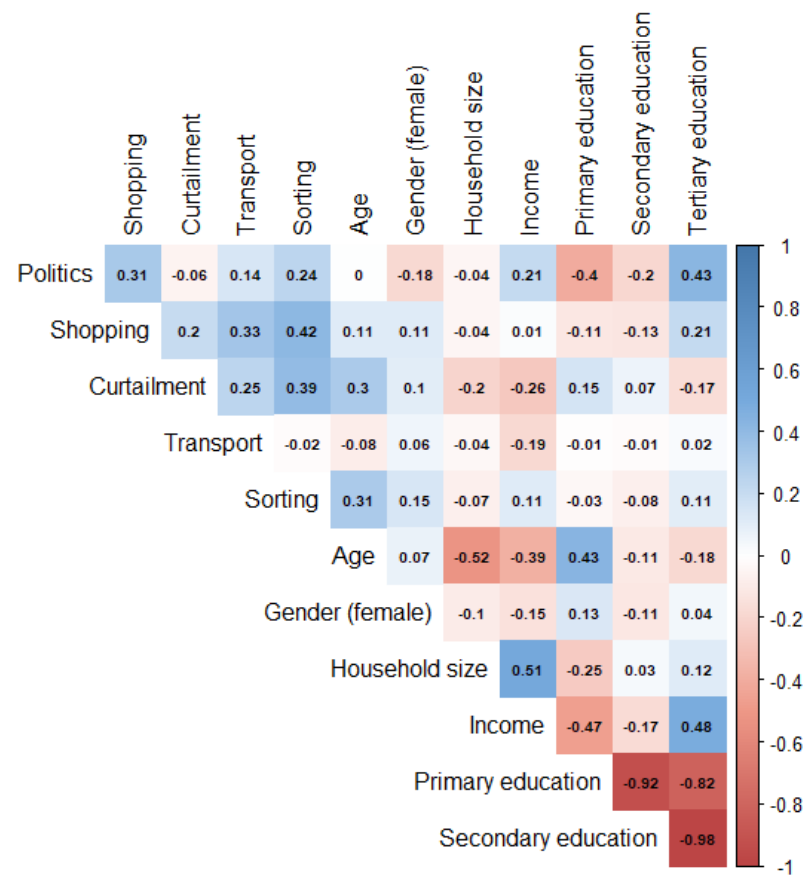


Figure 1. Correlation matrix i.e., correlations between all variables included in the analysis. Darker cells indicate a stronger relationship between two variables. White cells indicate a non-significant relationship (p -value > 0.05).

Furthermore, we found that political activism was most common among men (std. cov. = -0.18 , $p \leq 0.001$) with a relatively high household income (std. cov. = 0.21 , $p \leq 0.001$) and tertiary education (std. cov. = 0.43 , $p \leq 0.001$). In terms of sustainable citizenship, its association with socio-demographic characteristics depended on the type of pro-environmental behavior. Pro-environmental shopping was most common among older people (std. cov. = 0.11 , $p \leq 0.001$), women (std. cov. = 0.11 , $p \leq 0.01$), and tertiary educated groups (std. cov. = 0.21 , $p \leq 0.001$). Sorting waste was mostly found among older people (std. cov. = 0.31 , $p \leq 0.001$), women (std. cov. = 0.15 , $p \leq 0.001$), and people with a small household (std. cov. = -0.07 , $p \leq 0.05$), high income (std. cov. = 0.11 , $p \leq 0.01$), and tertiary education (std. cov. = 0.11 , $p \leq 0.05$). Energy curtailment was negatively associated with household size (std. cov. = -0.20 , $p \leq 0.001$), income (std. cov. = -0.26 , $p \leq 0.001$), and tertiary education (std. cov. = -0.17 , $p \leq 0.001$). In contrast, it was positively associated with age (std. cov. = 0.30 , $p \leq 0.001$). Additionally, women seemed most engaged in energy curtailment (std. cov. = 0.10 , $p \leq 0.05$). Lastly, sustainable transport choices were most common among young people (std. cov. = -0.08 , $p \leq 0.01$) with a low household income (std. cov. = -0.19 , $p \leq 0.001$).

Figure 2 visualizes the structural model, and Figure 3 shows the results. The model seemed to fit well with the data ($\chi^2 = 954.493$ df = 356, $p \leq 0.001$; CFI = 0.949; TLI = 0.940; SRMR = 0.059; RMSEA = 0.036). On the one hand, socio-demographics and the different types of pro-environmental behavior were used to predict political activism. On the other hand, pro-environmental behavior was predicted by socio-demographics in order to identify sustainable citizens. Firstly, results suggest that both the crowding-in and crowding-out hypothesis should be nuanced. On the one hand, our results partly confirm the

crowding-in hypothesis. Specifically, political activism seemed to relate positively to sorting waste (std. $\beta = 0.23, p \leq 0.001$), pro-environmental shopping (std. $\beta = 0.18, p \leq 0.001$), and sustainable transport (std. $\beta = 0.14, p \leq 0.01$). In contrast, we found a negative association between energy curtailment behavior and political activism (std. $\beta = -0.16, p \leq 0.01$). Energy curtailment may crowd-out political activism.

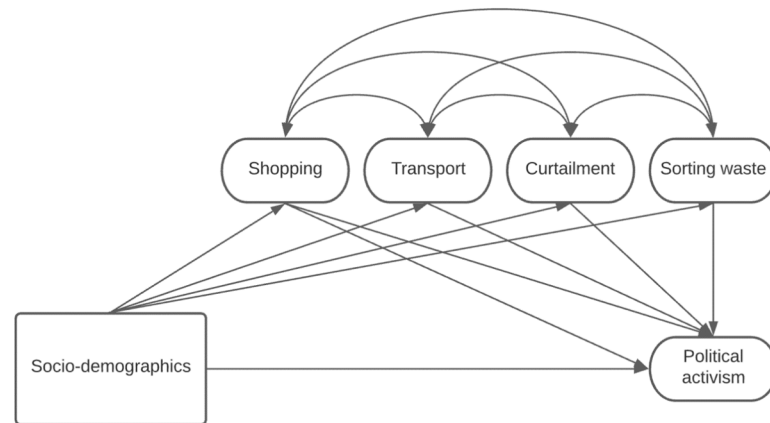


Figure 2. Path model. Political activism serves as fully endogenous variables and socio-demographics as fully exogenous variables. Pro-environmental behavior is used to explain political activism, while being explained by socio-demographics. Covariances between types of pro-environmental behavior are also included.

Secondly, we found significant associations between political activism and pro-environmental behavior on the one hand, and socio-demographic characteristics on the other. Considering age, older people seemed to engage more in pro-environmental shopping (std. $\beta = 0.15, p \leq 0.001$), energy curtailment behavior (std. $\beta = 0.22, p \leq 0.001$), and sorting waste (std. $\beta = 0.37, p \leq 0.001$) compared with younger people. In contrast, sustainable transport was more common among younger people (std. $\beta = -0.12, p \leq 0.01$). Furthermore, we found a negative direct effect of gender on political activism (std. $\beta = -0.17, p \leq 0.001$), which indicated that men were most politically active. Yet, pro-environmental shopping (std. $\beta = 0.08, p \leq 0.05$) and sorting waste (std. $\beta = 0.13, p \leq 0.001$) were most common among female respondents. Additionally, we found that household size was negatively associated with political activism (std. $\beta = 0.12, p \leq 0.01$). Considering income, we found negative associations with energy curtailment (std. $\beta = -0.16, p \leq 0.001$) and transport (std. $\beta = -0.27, p \leq 0.001$) and a positive association with sorting waste (std. $\beta = 0.24, p \leq 0.001$). Energy curtailment behavior and sustainable transport were most common among low-income households, while sorting waste was most common among high-income households. Finally, in the case of education, we found positive relationships with political activism (std. $\beta = 0.21, p \leq 0.01$ for secondary education and std. $\beta = 0.39, p \leq 0.001$ for tertiary education), pro-environmental shopping (std. $\beta = 0.09, p \leq 0.05$ for secondary education and std. $\beta = 0.25, p \leq 0.001$ for tertiary education), and sustainable transport (std. $\beta = 0.01, p > 0.05$ for secondary education and std. $\beta = 0.11, p \leq 0.05$ for tertiary education).

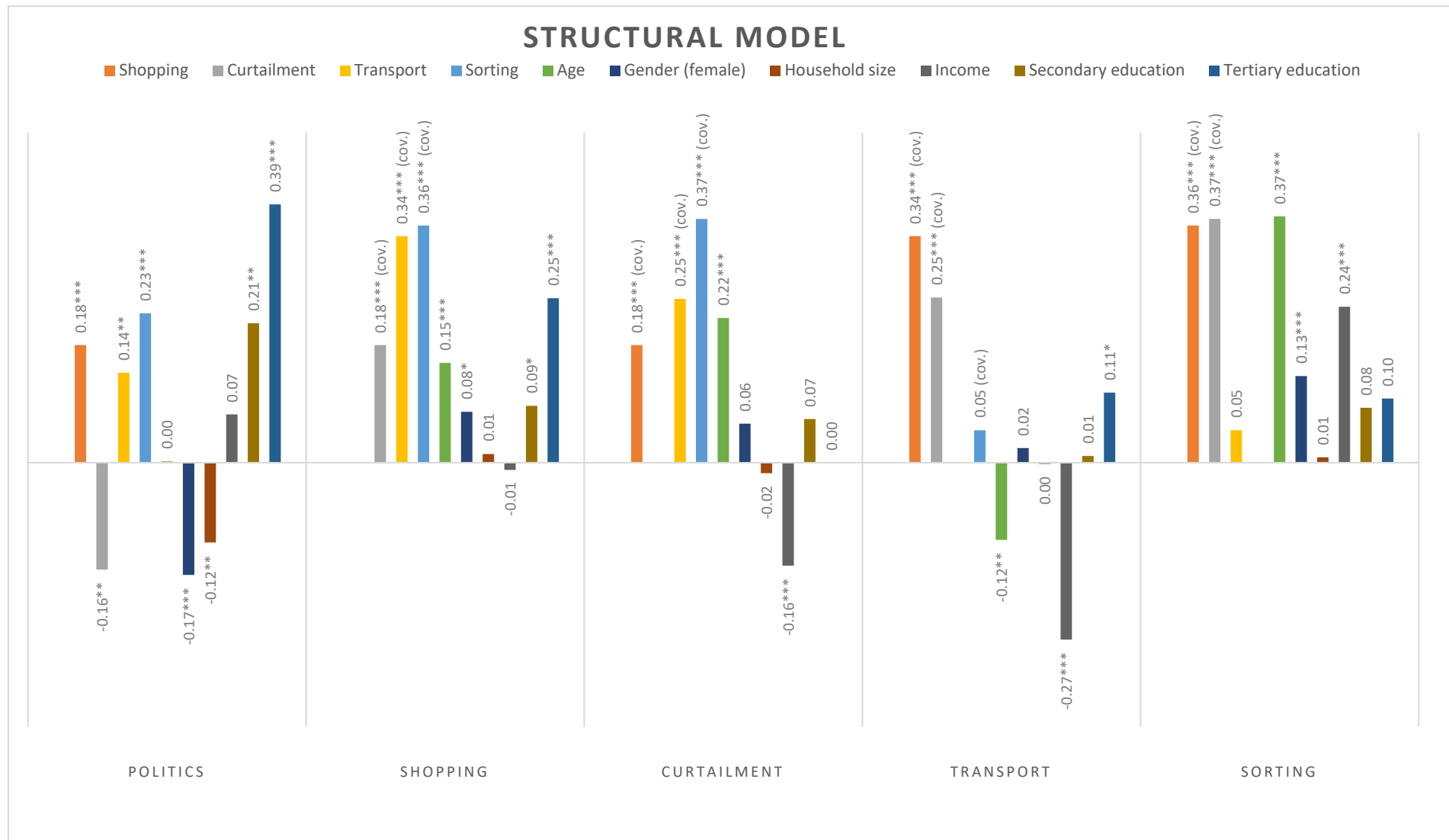


Figure 3. Regression coefficients. For significance, the following standards were applied: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

6. Discussion

Throughout the years, behavioral change has become “the ‘holy grail’ of sustainable development policy” [54]. Individual and household pro-environmental behavior is now seen as part of a larger strategy to address environmental issues and even became a dominant strategy for individuals and policy makers. However, skeptics have argued that this individualizes a collective issue and may displace our willingness and capacity to act collectively [17,18]. In the current study, we investigated whether individual pro-environmental behavior crowds-in or crowds-out political activism. Previous studies mostly confirm the crowding-in hypothesis but have mainly focused on consumer action, or so-called ‘politics in the supermarket’ (e.g., [3,16]). In contrast, the objective of this study was to nuance this and provide a better understanding of the relationship between pro-environmental behavior and political action by broadening the scope beyond consumerism to include different modes of pro-environmental behavior, namely shopping decisions, transport, energy curtailment, and sorting waste.

The results are generally consistent with previous studies: political activism was positively related to sustainable transport, shopping decisions, and waste sorting. However, our study also indicated that political activism may be negatively associated with energy curtailment. Moreover, we found a negative relationship between energy curtailment and household income. This may suggest that there are financial motives at hand, which in turn may confound the political nature of energy curtailment. Energy curtailment seems an individualized and apolitical way to engage in pro-environmental behavior. Previous research indeed suggests that energy curtailment is attributed a lower environmental status because it is a low-cost behavior with clear financial benefits [33,35]. Similarly, among the other behaviors, the association between sustainable transport and political activism is the weakest. On the one hand, its negative relationship with income suggests financial motives. On the other hand, in contrast to energy curtailment, its relationship with political activism may still be positive given that sustainable transport is a highly visible and effortful behavior, thus potentially signaling environmental values [35]. Moreover, sustainable transport is often seen as a key practice in the environmental movement and a boycotting strategy to avoid transportation by car [24].

Although this was not the focus of this study, we also found some interesting results regarding the gendered nature of political activism. While men have historically been more engaged in traditional political action, research found a reversed gender gap when it comes to political consumerism [3,55]. This is in line with the results of our study. Specifically, we confirm that women seem most engaged in pro-environmental shopping and sorting waste, while engaging less in traditional political action. A potential explanation can be found in the gendered nature of public and private life spheres. In particular, women may be most active in the domestic life sphere, which in turn translates into increased pro-environmental behavior.

Lastly, results suggest that some forms of political engagement may have an elitist notion. Firstly, traditional political action mostly occurred among the highly educated. Moreover, pro-environmental shopping and sorting waste seemed to relate positively to, respectively, education and income. Sustainable transport was also positively associated with educational attainment. In contrast, energy curtailment and sustainable transport were negatively related to income. Our findings thus suggest that lower class pro-environmental behavior is the least political in nature and most likely financially motivated. This is especially true for energy curtailment. Notions of political consumerism and sustainable citizenship, which focus on the political nature of pro-environmental behavior, may therefore inadvertently reinforce elitisms in pro-environmental behavior. In this line of reasoning, Kennedy and Givens [15] argue that pro-environmental behavior itself should not be confounded with environmental values and political motives. Even if behavior is financially motivated, it can still have a positive impact on our natural environment [27,56].

This study also has limitations that in turn provide avenues for future research. Firstly, longitudinal and qualitative research may be necessary to strengthen causal claims and provide a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between political activism and

different modes of pro-environmental behavior. Secondly, we defined energy conservation in terms of curtailment and transport in terms of alternatives for a car. Previous research suggests that findings may be different when considering efficiency technologies such as solar panels and electric cars [33,35]. Thirdly, our study revealed an association between poverty and pro-environmental behavior in the form of transport choices and energy curtailment. Additional research may focus on (energy) poverty and on how people in poverty deal with environmental concerns, how they themselves understand their pro-environmental behavior, and on the presence of potential spill-over effects to other types of pro-environmental behavior. More specifically, new research on energy curtailment, energy poverty, and political activism may be needed in light of the current energy crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have had a significant effect on the energy sector, e.g., increasing energy prices, intensifying energy poverty, and decreasing investments in renewable projects due to economic uncertainty [57,58]. On the one hand, the current crisis may have increased political interest in energy issues and transitions. It may also have increased household curtailment efforts. On the other hand, the crisis may have somewhat moved the energy debate away from a climate change discourse towards an economic discourse. Lastly, we studied the relationship between sustainable consumption and political activism in a Flemish context. We encourage cross-national and cross-cultural research. People from different countries and cultures may experience sustainable citizenship and its relationship to political activism differently. In particular, most research to date has been conducted in the Western hemisphere [55]. Thus, current knowledge may be tied to a Western and/or democratic political process. Moreover, political consumerism is often exemplified in the purchase of fairtrade products, whereby Western consumers show solidarity with developing countries. Future research should therefore attempt to broaden the scope to a more global picture.

7. Conclusions

In conclusion, by broadening the scope to include different modes of pro-environmental behavior, our study confirms but also nuances the usefulness of concepts such as political consumption and sustainable (or ecological) citizenship. These concepts often attempt to frame individual pro-environmental behavior as a part of broader political and collective strategies to address environmental issues. Our study shows that this may exclude some forms of ecologically significant behaviors such as energy curtailment. It points to the need to distinguish between different ‘value spheres’ and different types of action (see also [59]).

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