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# Young Scottish National Party (SNP) Members' National Identity and Party Membership

Claire Breniaux

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Spécialité Civilisation britannique contemporaine

Par

Mademoiselle Breniaux Claire

Jeunes membres du Scottish National Party (SNP) : identité nationale et adhésion partisane

Young Scottish National Party (SNP) Members' National Identity and Party Membership

Thèse présentée et soutenue à Dijon, le 3 décembre 2021

Composition du Jury :

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**Titre :** Jeunes membres du Scottish National Party (SNP) : identité nationale et adhésion partisane

**Mots clés :** identité nationale, nationalisme, jeunesse, adhésion partisane, partis politiques, Écosse

**Résumé :** L'avenir de l'Écosse au sein du Royaume-Uni semble être incertain. Bien qu'une majorité d'Écossais ait voté contre l'indépendance écossaise en 2014, le référendum sur le Brexit deux ans plus tard a nourri le mouvement indépendantiste en Écosse. La littérature académique montre que le référendum sur l'indépendance écossaise a poussé une partie de la population à adhérer à des partis politiques, en particulier le Scottish National Party. Cette thèse s'intéresse aux jeunes membres de ce parti. D'après la littérature sur l'adhésion partisane, la jeunesse est sous-représentée au sein des partis politiques. Comme le SNP semble rencontrer un relatif succès auprès des jeunes Écossais, cette thèse étudie l'adhésion de ces derniers, en cherchant à comprendre pourquoi ils s'engagent dans ce parti. Cette thèse montre que l'indépendance de l'Écosse par rapport au reste du Royaume-Uni est la raison principale pour laquelle les jeunes deviennent membres du SNP. Dans une moindre mesure, d'autres facteurs tels que l'idéologie politique des jeunes (social-démocratie), la socialisation politique et un intérêt pour la vie politique en général interviennent dans ce mécanisme d'adhésion partisane. Dans un second temps, ce travail de recherche pose la question d'un lien entre l'engagement des jeunes dans les organisations de jeunesse du SNP (Young Scots for Independence, YSI, et SNP Students) et l'identité nationale écossaise. Cette étude conclut que les jeunes adhérents au SNP perçoivent leur identité nationale de façon socio-politique et pas de façon ethnoculturelle. En d'autres termes, leur discours sur l'identité écossaise est fondé sur des valeurs sociales, voire sociétales, et politiques. Grâce à l'analyse d'entretiens et d'un sondage en ligne, cette thèse met en lumière un lien entre les perceptions qu'ont les jeunes membres du SNP de leur identité nationale et leur idéologie politique, la social-démocratie. Ce travail de recherche souligne également le lien entre la campagne de ces jeunes pour l'indépendance écossaise et leur vision de l'identité écossaise et de la britannicité. En ce sens, cette thèse aboutit à un modèle explicatif de l'adhésion partisane des jeunes au SNP, avec comme variables indépendantes, l'indépendance écossaise et la version sociétale et socio-politique de leur identité nationale. En ce sens, cette thèse propose le concept de 'socio-nationalisme' pour faire référence à l'activisme politique des jeunes membres du SNP.

Voir résumé détaillé (en français), p.447

**Title:** Young Scottish National Party (SNP) Members' National Identity and Party Membership

**Keywords:** national identity, nationalism, party membership, young party members, political parties, Scotland

**Abstract:** Scotland's future in the United Kingdom seems to be uncertain. Even though a majority of Scottish people voted to remain in the UK in 2014, the EU referendum two years later fuelled the independence movement in Scotland. Scholars show that the Scottish independence referendum encouraged people to join political parties, particularly the Scottish National Party. This work focuses on young people. Party membership scholars agree that they are underrepresented in parties. Given that the SNP seem to be rather successful in appealing to young people, this thesis explores SNP youth membership and the reasons why young Scots make the decision to join the party. It shows that Scottish independence from the UK is the most significant reason for this. To a lesser extent, other factors such as political ideology (social democracy), political socialisation and an interest in politics generally speaking, influence young people's decision to join the SNP. Then, this work examines the relationship between SNP youth membership and Scottishness. It concludes that young SNP members perceive their national identity from a socio-political perspective, not from an ethnocultural perspective. In other words, their discourse on Scottishness is based on social/societal, and political values. Thanks to empirical research (interviews and an online survey), this thesis sheds light on the relationship between young SNP members' perceptions of their national identity and their political ideology, social democracy. Also, this work highlights the relationship between these young people's campaign for Scottish independence and their visions of Scottish identity and Britishness. In that sense, this thesis builds an SNP youth party membership model, with Scottish independence and young members' socio-political version of their national identity as two fundamental independent variables. In that sense, this work argues for the use of the concept of 'socio-nationalism' to refer to young SNP members' political activism.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

EU	European Union
FSN	Federation of Student Nationalists
GIM	General Incentives Model
IndyRef	Scottish Independence Referendum
IndyRef2	Second Scottish Independence Referendum
Lib Dems	Liberal Democrats
MP	Member of Parliament
MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
ScotRef	Scottish Referendum
SDP	Social Democratic Party of Germany
SNP	Scottish National Party
SYC	Scottish Young Conservatives
SYL	Scottish Young Labour
UK	United Kingdom
YSI	Young Scots for Independence

## **Introduction**

The 2014 Scottish independence referendum led more young people to the polls than elections or other types of vote usually do<sup>1</sup>. This was especially true of the youngest Scottish citizens. The youngest Scots who went to polling stations to choose between independence and Scotland remaining part of the United Kingdom were aged 16 and 17<sup>2</sup>. 75 per cent of them declared that they had voted (The Electoral Commission, 2014). Significantly, in December 2014 the Electoral Commission report said that ‘(w)hile reported turnout from our 16-17-year old respondents was 75 per cent, 97 per cent of those who voted said they would vote again in the future’ (The Electoral Commission, 2014). This political participation outbreak among young Scottish people raises several questions. Why did they go to the polls massively? Was the extension of the franchise to 16 and 17-year-olds the reason for this? Were they excited to vote for the first time and be able to make their voices heard? Did they feel much concerned with this national question because they are the future generation of Scotland? This democratic outbreak among young people is analysed extensively by Jan Eichhorn<sup>3</sup>. He concluded that in the face of the high turnout amongst 16 and 17-year-olds for the 2014 Scottish independence

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<sup>1</sup> Young people’s apparent disinterest in politics will be introduced in the review of the literature on political participation and young party members.

According to the Electoral Commission report, 69 per cent of the Scottish people aged between 16 and 34 years old voted on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The Electoral Commission, (2014). Scottish Independence Referendum Report on the referendum held on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014. Available at:

[https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf\\_file/Scottish-independence-referendum-report.pdf](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf_file/Scottish-independence-referendum-report.pdf) Accessed on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> The Scottish Parliament, led by the SNP, allowed 16 and 17-year-olds to vote for the referendum.

<sup>3</sup> See Eichhorn, J. (2014). Newly enfranchised voters: political attitudes of under 18-year-olds in the context of the referendum on Scotland’s constitutional future. *Scottish Affairs*, 23(3), 342-353. Eichhorn, J. (2018). Mobilisation through early activation and school engagement – the story from Scotland. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 21(8), 1095-1110. See also Scottish Parliament (2015). Devolution (Further Powers) Committee. Submission by Jan Eichhorn, 3.2, 3.3.

Available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/constitution/union-and-devolution/FINAL-Evidence-volume-UDE.pdf>, Accessed on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

referendum, the lowering of the voting age in Scotland was possibly a model for other democracies to be put in place for future elections and referenda. Edwige Camp-Pietrain also highlights this point with a quote from Alex Salmond's speech on the day following the referendum: "The initiative by which 16- and 17-year olds were able to vote has proved to be a resounding success. I suspect that no one will ever again dispute their right to participate fully and responsibly in democratic elections." (Camp-Pietrain, 2016).

Besides leading young people to the polls, the Scottish independence referendum encouraged them to get engaged in political parties. As shown further down in this thesis, this upsurge is confirmed by the present research. James Mitchell, Lynn Bennie and Rob Johns also noticed a surge in the number of SNP members due to the Scottish independence referendum that was held on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (Mitchell et al., 2017). The three scholars have sketched the demographic profile of these new members. When it comes to age, they noted that while their survey of SNP members in 2007 and 2008 showed the average age of the party members was 59, their post-referendum survey conducted in 2016 finds out that this average age is now 56. Despite a small evolution, it nonetheless shows that the members who joined the party after the referendum were younger. Once more, this is confirmed by the present study.

A survey which was commissioned by Conservative peer Lord Ashcroft found out that 71 per cent of the 16 and 17-year-old people voted in favour of Scottish independence and 29 per cent voted No (The Electoral Commission, 2014). Such results raise the question of Scotland's future as a component of the UK or an independent nation. If a majority of the youngest people who voted in 2014 are in favour of independence, it may be assumed that this generation could play a decisive role if a new referendum is to be held in the future. This is one major reason why I chose to study young people in Scotland. Also, as they grew up in post-

devolution Scotland, I wanted to explore their vision of Scotland, particularly the views of young Scots who are politically active. It happens that, since 2018, the SNP has been the Scottish political party whose membership numbers are the highest, making it the largest party in Scotland<sup>4</sup>. It is confirmed by the number of its followers on social media. In June 2020, the numbers of Scottish parties’ supporters on Twitter and Facebook were as follows:

Followers on...	SNP	Scottish Labour	Scottish Conservatives
Twitter	<b>281,500</b>	44,000	35,100
Facebook	<b>319,561</b>	28,844	27,991

Table 0.1: Numbers of followers of the SNP, Scottish Labour and Scottish Conservatives on social media

When it comes to the youth and student wings of the parties, in September 2021, the numbers of their supporters were as follows:

Followers on...	Young Scots for Independence (YSI)	SNP Students	Scottish Young Labour	Scottish Young Conservatives
Twitter	<b>8,420</b>	<b>7,290</b>	2,978	2,457
Facebook	<b>9,663</b>	<b>3,630</b>	2,052	555

Table 0.2: Numbers of followers of the youth wings of the SNP, Scottish Labour and Scottish Conservatives on social media

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<sup>4</sup> Audickas, L., Dempsey, N., and Loft, P. (2019). ‘Membership of UK Political Parties’, Briefing Paper Number SN05125, House of Commons Library. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn05125/> Scottish Labour and the Scottish Conservatives are the second and third most important parties in Scotland in terms of seats at Holyrood.

The figures speak for themselves. As the SNP is currently the most popular political party in Scotland – amongst young people, but not only – this work focuses on this party in particular.

On Twitter, the YSI and SNP Students gather over 15,000 young followers. Scottish Young Labour and the Scottish Young Conservatives have about 5,000 followers between them. On Facebook, about 13,000 young Scots follow the SNP youth and student wings, as opposed to just over 2,600 supporters of Scottish Young Labour and Scottish Young Conservatives. When it comes to membership figures, it should be noted that in September 2021, YSI and SNP Students membership stood respectively at 8,053 and 5,901 members. Young people's interest in the SNP made me want to focus on them in this study. Why do they support and, eventually, join the party? Do they join the SNP because they want Scotland to become an independent nation-state? Why do they want independence?

Moreover, why is their interest in the SNP much stronger than in Scottish Labour and the Scottish Conservatives? I aimed to compare the youth wings of the three political parties to answer that question. I chose to compare young SNP members' motivations to join with those of the Scottish young Labour members and the Scottish young Conservatives because both parties were part of Better Together, the No camp, in 2014, and thus urged voters to say no to Scottish independence from the United Kingdom. As they are unionist parties, it promised to be instructive to compare young SNP members' views and reasons for joining the SNP with those of the young members of these other two political parties. With regard to the Union and independence, I predicted that they would logically be opposite. Regarding their political engagement and party membership, I could easily think that young Scottish people join the SNP to support independence. Guessing the reasons why they do so in the Scottish Labour and Conservative parties was more difficult. Further sections about research questions, hypotheses and methods focus on this point.

## Research Questions and Hypotheses

### *Why do young people join the SNP?*

As said above, the campaign for the Scottish independence referendum and the period afterwards saw many young people engage in politics. This was notably the case of young people who became political party members. Thus, as the present thesis deals with young SNP members' political involvement, the main research question of this work is as follows: why do young people join the SNP? As the Scottish independence referendum and its campaign seem to have pushed young people to engage in political parties, particularly the SNP, this study focuses on the period running from 2012 – the beginning of the referendum campaign – to today. As part of a potential further research project, a comparison between the reasons why people joined the SNP before 2012 and why they join now could also be interesting. It may shed light on differences between several cohorts of SNP members and emphasise that the independence referendum and the referendum campaign were a major factor of political engagement amongst young Scottish people<sup>5</sup>.

Since 2012, why have young people joined the SNP? Relying on the party membership literature, and more especially, on the literature on young party members, before starting this survey, I hypothesised that young Scottish people engage in the SNP for typical reasons identified by party membership scholars<sup>6</sup>. I hypothesised that these young people become SNP members for ideological reasons, namely to fight for their political ideas and beliefs that are social democracy<sup>7</sup> and Scottish independence. Young Scots may also get involved with the SNP

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<sup>5</sup> As James Mitchell, Lynn Bennie and Rob Johns did in their article about the SNP and Green party membership surge after the 2014 referendum (Mitchell et al., 2017).

<sup>6</sup> The literature on party membership and young party members will be introduced in a dedicated section further down.

<sup>7</sup> 'The idea of social democracy is now used to describe a society the economy of which is predominantly capitalist, but where the state acts to regulate the economy in the general interest, provides welfare services outside of it and attempts to alter the distribution of income and wealth in the name of social justice. Originally "social democracy" was more or less equivalent to "socialism". But since the mid-twentieth century, those who think of themselves as social democrats have come to believe that the old opposition between capitalism and socialism is outmoded;



because one or several of their relatives and/or friends are SNP members, showing the role played by socialisation. Similarly, social capital<sup>8</sup> and socio-economic resources may influence young people's decision to join the SNP. Finally, these young people may become SNP members for career reasons and/or a desire for fame and recognition by their peers. According to the literature on party membership and young people's party membership especially, these are the typical reasons why young Scottish people may get involved in the SNP<sup>9</sup>. Yet, reasons for party membership may vary from one young person to another. Also, it is worth noting that what I did not know before starting the present study was the order of those reasons in terms of importance: one young SNP member may have got involved with the party for one specific reason while another young person became a member for several reasons; the main reason why the former engaged in the party may be his or her political ideology while for the latter it may be primarily a wish to start a political career and become a politician, whereas another young Scot may have chosen party membership to fulfil a kind of moral, civic duty or make new friends. A comparison with the reasons why young people get engaged in the Scottish Conservatives and the Scottish Labour Party enabled me to draw more valuable and relevant conclusions with regard to the political engagement of young SNP members. In terms of research in political science generally speaking, such a conclusion also enabled me to explore the relationship between political ideology, party families, and factors of party membership: do people – especially the young ones – get engaged for reasons depending on their political ideology and the political family of the party they choose to join? Are the reasons for party membership rather homogenous amongst the young members of the same party? Such

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many of the values upheld by earlier socialists can be promoted by reforming capitalism rather than abolishing it.' Miller, D. (1998). Social democracy. In *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Taylor and Francis. <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/social-democracy/v-1>. doi:10.4324/9780415249126-S057-1

<sup>8</sup> See the OECD's definition of that notion: 'Social capital is defined by the OECD as "networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups". In this definition, we can think of networks as real-world links between groups or individuals. Think of networks of friends, family networks, networks of former colleagues, and so on.' <https://www.oecd.org/insights/37966934.pdf> Accessed on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> These reasons for joining a political party will be introduced in the literature review.

questions suggest that two types of comparison were necessary: inter-party and intra-party comparisons. As said earlier, this work compares young SNP members' views and motivations with those of Scottish Young Conservatives and Scottish Young Labour members (inter-party comparison). It should nonetheless be noted that, due to too small samples of young Conservatives and Labour members, the comparison made by this work is only informative or indicative. This is explained in the second and fourth chapters. Additionally, this thesis compares interview answers with survey responses amongst young SNP members (intra-party comparison).

As young people were allowed to vote for the Scottish independence referendum in 2014, they were probably more concerned by the referendum than they would have been if they had not been allowed to do so. They may have been more interested in the referendum campaign as well. Moreover, as the future of Scotland was at stake, to a certain extent their own future was at stake too. They are Scotland's future generation. They undoubtedly saw the fact of having a say in the future of their country as an opportunity to participate in its political life. Thus, I hypothesised that the lowering of the voting age is another reason why young people got interested in the Scottish independence referendum and engaged in politics then.

If young Scottish people mobilised because the future of their country in/out of the UK was at stake, this means that the context plays a part in young people's political involvement. In this sense, as the referendum and its campaign led them to become party members, I assumed that young Scots engage in the SNP for contextual reasons. In other words, does the national issue of Scotland's potential independence from the United Kingdom play a part in young Scottish people's decision to join a political party? Does the question of Scotland's future push them to join the SNP? As this party advocates Scottish independence, I predicted that the

national political context *does* play a role in young Scots joining it. But is this the only reason why they do so? If not, is this the main reason? What about young Scottish people joining Labour and the Conservative and Unionist Party? Do they join these parties because they want to preserve the Union by preventing Scotland from leaving the UK? If so, is this the only reason or the main reason why they become party members? As both political parties advocated the survival of the Union at the time of the Scottish independence referendum, I hypothesised that the wish to make Scotland stay in the UK is the reason – or one of the reasons – why these young people became party members during the referendum campaign or right after the vote. Yet, contrary to young SNP members who still push for independence today as the Noes won in 2014, I thought that the reasons why young Scots engage in the Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish Conservatives today may be different from those at the time of the referendum. As another referendum took place two years later, and given that it dealt with another very important issue in terms of constitutional future in Scotland as well as in the UK as a whole, I assumed that the Brexit question possibly played – and still plays – a part in these young people’s political engagement. Whilst young Scots may get involved with the SNP to fight against Brexit and get another Scottish independence referendum so as to join the EU again, other young people may have engaged in the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party in order to campaign for Brexit. As for those joining the Scottish Labour Party, the issue seems to be more complex as Labour is divided on Brexit.

*Is national identity a reason why young people join the SNP?*

In case the national context and the stake of independence lead young Scottish people to become SNP members, I wondered whether national identity plays a role too. In other words, is national identity a factor influencing young people to join the SNP? This is one of the most

fundamental questions in this research<sup>10</sup>. As the SNP is known as a civic nationalist party<sup>11</sup> campaigning for independence for political, constitutional, and economic reasons, denouncing what they identify as a democratic deficit between Scotland and the UK<sup>12</sup>, at first sight it seems logical to hypothesise that young Scottish people do not engage in the SNP because of their national identity.

What about young Scottish Conservatives and young Scottish Labour Party members? Contrary to young SNP members, do they join their political parties for national identity reasons?

It should be noted that supporting the hypothesis that young Scots do not engage in the SNP in the name of their national identity depends on the meaning given to the very notion of national identity. What is national identity? As is shown further down in the section dedicated to the literature on that notion, two main theories can be identified. On the one hand, the essentialist thesis suggests that national identity means – and has always meant – the same thing for every member of a given community. It is seen as something natural, which is and has always been there, shared by all the members of the nation. On the other hand, the constructivist approach suggests that national identity is a construct that evolves over time and does not necessarily mean the same thing for every individual of a given community. Also, it can be created or manipulated for political purpose (see Chapter Three).

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<sup>10</sup> The relationship between national identity and politics is more and more researched in Scotland (see Ailsa Henderson's work notably, 1999, 2005, 2007, 2020, 2021). This encouraged me to explore young SNP members' relationship to their national identity (see Chapters Three and Four).

<sup>11</sup> Civic nationalism is characterised by territorial claims to achieve sovereignty as a nation-state, without being based on ethnic arguments. Further development on the definition of civic nationalism will be provided in this work.

<sup>12</sup> According to the SNP, Scotland's voice is not heard or not heard enough in the political decision-making process that takes place in the British parliament, at Westminster. The SNP notably say that money is given mainly to England, which is the largest country, and that the majority of the political decisions taken at Westminster are in favour of England as well, while very often in disfavour of Scotland.

Together with analysing the mechanisms of party membership amongst young Scottish party members, the present work discusses existing theories of national identity by studying the way in which these young people define their Scottish identity and Britishness. The survey and interviews with young SNP members – and, to a lesser extent, with young Scottish Conservatives and young Scottish Labour Party members – enable us to place this thesis amongst the various theories of the existing national identity literature. Based on the results of the online survey and the responses that were collected during interviews, this work sheds some new light on national identity and identifies a new, updated definition of that complex notion.

*How do young SNP members see and understand their national identity?*

In order to know if YSI and SNP Students members join the party for national identity reasons, first I explored the following question: how do young SNP members perceive and define Scottish identity? As shown in the present work, the SNP and its leaders do not campaign for independence for national identity reasons. At least, they do not push for independence in the name of Scottish national identity in an ethnocultural sense. By ‘ethnocultural identity’, I mean an identity which is based on belonging to a given ethnic group through blood ties and ancestry, whose culture is commonly accepted and shared by all the members of the group (Smith, 1991; Shulman, 2002). As will be demonstrated in the present thesis, the SNP do not advocate Scottishness as an ethnic identity. And the party does not relate Scottish independence with Scottish culture either (Breniaux, 2020, 2021; Duclos, 2014, 2015, 2020; Hamilton, 1999; Leith, 2008; Leith and Soule, 2012). As it campaigns for Scottish independence for socio-economic and political reasons mainly because of what it refers to as a democratic deficit, it seems that the version of Scottish identity provided by the SNP should be viewed as socio-political<sup>13</sup>. To put it in a nutshell, as SNP elites and leaders do not refer to Scottishness as an

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<sup>13</sup> The definition of the socio-political version of national identity will be provided by the present thesis. Also, see Breniaux, C. (2020, 2021).

ethnocultural identity but as a socio-political identity, I assumed that young SNP members would understand and define Scottish identity in the same way.

Chapter Four introduces the findings about young SNP members' discourse on Scottishness. It also explores their perceptions of Britishness.

*Is there a consensus amongst these young party members when it comes to defining Scottishness and Britishness?*

One of the main research questions in this thesis is to know whether young SNP members, young Scottish Labour Party members and young Scottish Conservatives define their national identity in the same way. If so, this would support essentialist theories of national identity in the sense that Scottish and British identities have only one definition, commonly accepted, shared and experienced by everyone as something transcendental. On the contrary, if there is no consensus between young Scottish party members regarding their sense and definition of national identity, this would support constructivist theories of national identity. In this sense, national identity would depend on the way young people perceive and define it. Each young party member would think of their national identity subjectively<sup>14</sup>.

*To what extent do young SNP members feel Scottish, British and European?*

This leads us to wonder how young SNP members rank their identities in terms of importance. That question is answered by the analysis of the interviews and the online survey I conducted, using notably the Moreno question. Given what was just said about their perceptions and definitions of Scottishness and Britishness, I expected that on the one hand, young SNP members would feel either Scottish first, British second and European third; or Scottish first, European second and British third; or Scottish first, European second, and not

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<sup>14</sup> The two approaches will be defined and explained in the literature section further down.

British. On the other hand, I assumed that young Scottish Labour Party members would feel British first, Scottish second and European third, while young Scottish Conservatives would feel British first and Scottish second, or British only<sup>15</sup>. This study shows that a majority of these hypotheses were met, but interestingly, not all of them.

*Is there a relationship between young SNP members' national identity and their level of involvement in the party?*

Is there a link between national identity and the degree of political engagement of young SNP members? More precisely, do these young people's sense of national identity and the way they perceive and understand it influence the extent of their political engagement? Are they more, and more often, politically active? Are they more radical in their views? If national identity is a reason why young Scottish people engage in the SNP, it may be assumed that when a young Scot has a strong sense of national identity, he or she will probably be highly involved. Logically, if a young Scottish person joins the SNP for national identity reasons, then it may be expected that the more important Scottishness is in his/her eyes, the more he/she will be active in the party. This is why I chose to include MPs in the sample of interviewees. As they work for the SNP, MPs are supposed to be very – if not the most – involved and active party members. Also, in the YSI and SNP Students, I interviewed young members both with and without specific positions and responsibilities.

Thus, while considering the various levels of political engagement amongst these young party members and their sense of national identity, I tried to identify a link between their level of activism and their national identity.

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<sup>15</sup> As both Labour and the Conservative Party fought against Scottish independence, I guessed that the young members of these parties would feel British first and Scottish second – or British only in the case of fervent Unionists. As for European identity, I hypothesised that young Conservatives would not feel European and that, as said above, young Labour members would be more divided on the issue.

As was just shown, this thesis aims at answering various research questions. As a reminder, the main questions at the heart of this work are as follows: Why do young people join the SNP? Is national identity a reason for this? How do young SNP members see and understand their national identity? Is there a consensus amongst these young party members when it comes to defining Scottishness and Britishness? To what extent do they feel Scottish, British, and European? Is there a relationship between YSI and SNP Students' national identity and their level of involvement in the party?

## **Literature**

In order to answer the previous questions, this work discusses the existing academic literature. It aims to contribute to it in three ways. First, it adds to the literature on young people's political party membership. Then, it tests and complements the existing knowledge about the members of the Scottish National Party, their beliefs, ideology and motivations. Finally, it sheds new light on the notion of national identity.

### *Youth Party Membership*

Before studying young party members, the thesis focuses on the literature on party membership generally speaking. In their 'overview' of British party members, Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley say that 'few individual studies have been made of the people who join' (2004: 356)<sup>16</sup>. A few years later, Emilie van Haute, who specialises in the study of party membership, notes that this type of political participation is 'under-studied'<sup>17</sup>. She specifies her point by saying that 'until recently, scholars have not devoted much attention' (2011: 2) to party

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<sup>16</sup> Seyd, P., and Whiteley, P. (2004). British party members: An Overview. *Party Politics*, 10(4), 355–366.

<sup>17</sup> The heading of Emilie van Haute's chapter published in 2011 is significant: Van Haute, E. (2011). Party Membership: An Understudied Mode of Political Participation, in Van Haute, E. (ed.). *Party Membership in Europe: Exploration into the Anthills of Party Politics*. Bruxelles: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles.



membership. This might be due to the fact that party membership has been declining for a few decades now. It is widely accepted in the political participation and party membership literatures that in Western democracies, party membership has declined significantly since the 1990s and even more so since the beginning of the 2000s<sup>18</sup>.

Party membership amongst young people is even more under-studied. In 2017, Emily Rainsford notes that ‘(s)urprisingly, few scholars have studied young people in political parties youth factions’ (2017: 12). A year later, Carla Malafaia, Isabel Menezes and Tiago Neves (2018: 51) highlight ‘the *little* literature available about youth wings.’<sup>19</sup> Indeed, very few studies about young people’s political party membership have been done so far. Three theoretical models have been developed. In 2008, William Cross and Lisa Young identified three main factors explaining the party membership of young Canadians (Cross and Young, 2008). They concluded that they join political parties when they see them positively, are willing to get information about politics and political parties, and that socialisation plays an active role in their membership. In 2009, Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison created a three-dimensional model of young party membership (Bruter and Harrison, 2009a, 2009b). Depending on their motivations to join a political party, young people can be identified either as moral-minded, social-minded or professional-minded party members. More recently, Regina Weber proposed her own model (Weber, 2017, 2018). Like Bruter and Harrison, she concluded that young party members are divided in three groups: take-all group, ideologists, and reluctant. Her analysis concentrates on the macro, meso, and micro levels of political participation<sup>20</sup>. Two other studies of young party members were conducted by Matthew Lamb (2002), and Marc Hooghe and Dietlind Stolle (2004, 2005). Lamb analysed young party members in the UK. Hooghe and

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<sup>18</sup> This idea will be introduced in more details further down.

<sup>19</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>20</sup> The differences between these three levels of participation will be introduced in the literature review.

Stolle surveyed youth wings of political parties in Belgium. Yet, as far as I know, Cross and Young, Bruter and Harrison, as well as Weber are the only scholars who have tried to find a model of party membership amongst young people so far. This thesis therefore aims at filling this gap in the literature. It is also worth noting that apart from Regina Weber's analysis, the two other studies were conducted more than ten years ago. Therefore, finding an up-to-date model may be useful. Also, this work aims to contribute to the existing literature when it comes to areas of study. Cross and Young analysed young party members' engagement in Canada. Weber studied young party members of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SDP). Bruter and Harrison conducted their survey in six European countries: the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, Norway, and Hungary. When conducting their survey in the UK, Bruter and Harrison did not focus particularly on Scotland. It is also worth noting that in the UK the two scholars surveyed only Labour and the Liberal-Democrats. Therefore, focusing on the Scottish National Party, Scottish Labour and the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party seems useful. Above all, as far as I know, no studies about young SNP members, Scottish Young Labour members and Scottish Young Conservatives have been conducted so far. The present thesis will therefore shed new light on young people's party membership, more particularly on young people's membership of the SNP, and of the Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish Conservative Party to a lesser extent.

As will be shown in more detail in the youth party membership literature review, it is widely acknowledged that young people disengage from traditional modes of political participation and participate less formally and in rather new ways. In this sense, Weber (2017: 379) declares: 'It is common knowledge that young people avoid political parties. Instead, they join single-issue organisations, participate in one-time activities, and express their opinions on social media'. This might explain why few scholars do research on young party members. This

phenomenon of young people's distancing from politics is often referred to as political apathy<sup>21</sup>. According to that theory, young people are more and more disinterested in traditional modes of political participation like voting and party membership. More generally, regardless of the party members' age, it is widely accepted in the literature that party membership has been declining for decades. Scholars say that this decline is even more significant amongst young people. Philip Abrams and Alan Little already noticed this phenomenon in 1965<sup>22</sup>. More recently, Lynn Bennie and Andrew Russell declared: 'Many (...) studies have demonstrated that hostility to party politics is widespread in modern society but *endemic* among young people' (2012: 3)<sup>23</sup>. In the face of that decline, Emily Rainsford explains: 'As a consequence of the focus on *disengagement* with formal politics, we actually know very little about what "motivates actors to engage politically and what animates and drives their political behaviour"' (Hay, 2007, p. 163). We know even less about why young people engage in formal politics, such as political parties and their youth factions.'<sup>24</sup> (2017: 2). Here, understanding young people's motivations and reasons for engaging in political parties clearly appears as a gap in the literature on party membership. This work will try and fill it in.

The underrepresentation of young people in political parties<sup>25</sup> due to their political apathy may account for the lack of studies on young party members. Yet, as young people's engagement in political parties is relatively rare, it seems even more problematic. Young

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<sup>21</sup> See Marsh, D., O'Toole, T., and Jones, S. (2007). *Young People and Politics in the UK: Apathy or Alienation?* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Henn, M., Weinstein, M., and Wring, D. (2002). A generation apart? Youth and political participation in Britain. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 4(2), 167- 92; Henn, M., Weinstein, M., and Forrest, S. (2005). Uninterested Youth? Young People's Attitudes towards Party Politics in Britain. *Political Studies*, 53(3), 556-578; Sloam, J. (2007). Rebooting Democracy: Youth Participation in Politics in the UK. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 60(4), 548-567.

<sup>22</sup> Abrams, P., and Little, A. (1965). The Young Activist in British Politics. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 16(4), 315-333

<sup>23</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>24</sup> Italics in the original text.

<sup>25</sup> The underrepresentation of young people in political parties leads to the ageing of political parties as it increases the average age of party members.

people's involvement with political parties seems exceptional in a way. Then, what pushes these very few young people to join a political party? In this regard, young people's party membership is clearly worth studying.

### *Scottish National Party Members*

As for SNP members, so far and as far as I know, only one study had been conducted before this one<sup>26</sup>. This study by James Mitchell, Lynn Bennie and Rob Johns was carried out in 2008 and published in 2012 (Mitchell et al., 2012). It gives us precious information and understanding of who SNP members are, what they think and what they do. The valuable contribution of the work by Mitchell, Bennie and Johns helped me with my own analysis. The present thesis aims at adding to the knowledge about SNP members that we owe to the three scholars. Despite including members of all ages in their study, they did not focus particularly on the young ones. Therefore, this study brings more information about who young members are, what they think and what they do as political activists. As young SNP members embody the party's future, deepening our knowledge about them is important. At the European level, Bruter and Harrison point out that 'among these young party members, we will actually find those who will lead tomorrow's European nations. Would it not be important to understand what is in their hearts and minds before they make it to the front benches of national political scenes?' (2009b: 3). The present research will help us foresee the direction the party will take with them in the next years, especially when it comes to the party's platform and agenda, but also regarding the question of Scottish independence. The present analysis also means to add to Mitchell, Bennie and Johns' findings by exploring young SNP members' views and

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<sup>26</sup> A few other studies include SNP members but they do not focus particularly on them and do not go as much into detail as Mitchell, Bennie and Johns did. See for instance Bale, T., Webb, P., and Poletti, M. (2018). Grassroots. Britain's party members: who they are, what they think, and what they do. ESRC project; Bale, T., Webb, P., and Poletti, M. (2019). *Footsoldiers: Political Party Membership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. London: Routledge.

understanding of their national identity. In their book published in 2012, the three scholars dedicate a chapter to the relationship between SNP members and national identity. Yet, as shown further down, more research can be done to explore this relationship. While Mitchell, Bennie and Johns' study is based on the quantitative analysis of a survey, the present work is based on both quantitative and qualitative analyses of an online survey and in-depth interviews. Also, while the three scholars did not focus on a cohort or a specific group of SNP members to examine the relationship with national identity, this study concentrates, once again, on the young members of the party.

As the findings of Mitchell, Bennie, Johns and Leith date from the beginning of the 2010s<sup>27</sup>, this thesis sheds new light on SNP members and their national identity. In ten years, many things have happened in Scotland. Since 2011, the SNP have held a majority of seats at Holyrood. In 2014 the Scottish independence referendum was held. In 2016, it was the Brexit referendum that took place. These major events may have changed SNP members' sense and understanding of their national identity, hence the necessity and usefulness of new research.

When it comes to the SNP and national identity, this work aims at complementing research by Ailsa Henderson (1999, 2005), Murray Stewart Leith (2008, 2012) and Nathalie Duclos (2014, 2015, 2016, 2020). The three scholars agree that the idea of Scottishness which is conveyed by SNP policy platform tends to be socio-political. They argue that the SNP's campaign for Scottish independence is devoid of ethnocultural arguments. Instead, they focus on socio-economic issues and the democratic deficit which is, for the SNP, experienced by Scotland in the UK.

### *National Identity*

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<sup>27</sup> Namely before or right after the SNP started governing Scotland as they got the majority of seats in the Scottish Parliament, at Holyrood.

Finally, this thesis aims at adding to the literature on national identity. It is much wider than the literature on young people's party membership. It is also much more complex. It is commonly accepted that national identity is hard to grasp. This notion is very often seen as ambiguous. It is closely aligned with the literature on nations and nationalism. As a consequence, theoretical considerations of national identity are divided between essentialist – also known as primordial – theories on the one hand, and constructivist – also known as (post)modernist and instrumentalist – theories on the other<sup>28</sup>. Reviewing the literature on national identity was not an easy task, which, again, shows the complexity of that notion.

According to essentialist theories of nationalism, national identity is a given. It is something transcendental which is recognised and shared by all the members of a nation. Essentialists (Geertz, 1973; Connor, 1994) base their definition of national identity on key elements like ancestry, birth, blood, language and culture. Also, for them, it is fixed; it does not change over time. Richard R. Verdugo and Andrew Milne sum up essentialist theories as follows: 'At its core, the Essentialist argument is based on culture and history. Other markers for language, ancestry and blood.' (2016: 4). Verdugo and Milne also refer to 'common (...) ethnicity, and world views.' (2016: 4). Most importantly, they note that according to essentialists, national identity is fixed. In this sense, essentialists are opposed to constructivist scholars.

Constructivists define national identity as something which is constructed, malleable, which can change. Richard R. Verdugo and Andrew Milne summarise constructivist theories as follows: 'Constructivism posits that dominant groups create, manipulate, and dismantle identities for their specific gains.' (2016: 4). Scholars like Ernest Gellner (1983) consider that

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<sup>28</sup> This theoretical framework will be further introduced in Part Two.

nations, which have been developing since the industrialisation era, are artificial. According to this approach, national identity is thus a construct. While essentialist scholars insist on ethnicity as the base and origins of nations, for Constructivists like Gellner, they derive from industrialisation. Nations are invented (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) or imagined (Anderson, 1983) by their members. Contrary to Essentialists who point to its fixed nature, Constructionists consider national identity as something flexible, malleable, that can evolve, depending notably on time and place. Chapter Four shall show where the present research positions itself in the literature with the analysis of young SNP members' national identity.

The present work will also discuss what Michael Billig calls 'banal nationalism' (Billig, 1995). Namely, signs of nations are to be found in people's everyday lives, in things that are part of their everyday environment. In this respect, I will try to see if national identity is something 'banal', always there, in young SNP members' daily lives and activism. If so, do these young party members perceive and/or 'flag'<sup>29</sup> such signs of national identity consciously?

In the particular context of Scotland, this research is also based on sociologist David McCrone's ideas (McCrone, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2009, 2015, 2017). He insists on the civic, territorial, kind of nationalism which can be observed in Scotland. From a constructivist perspective, he also argues that Scottish identity has changed over time. He notably shows that the contemporary version of Scottishness tends to be based on progressivism and centre-left politics.

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<sup>29</sup> Michael Billig coined the word 'flagging' of national identity (Billig, 1995).

By exploring young SNP members' perceptions of their national identity, and by comparing them with those of young Scottish Conservatives and Labour members, this thesis discusses the very notion of national identity.

## **Methods**

In order to answer the research questions mentioned previously and to check the related hypotheses, besides building on the literature on young people's party membership and on the literature on national identity, this work is based on the results of a study conducted from 2018 to 2020. So as to get a complete overview of young SNP members' reasons for becoming party members and their views of their national identity, I chose to carry out that study in both qualitative and quantitative ways.

### *Interviews*

I interviewed YSI and SNP Students members, as well as some members of Scottish Young Labour and the Scottish Young Conservatives. The interviews with young SNP members were conducted mainly at SNP conferences in Aberdeen in June 2018, in Glasgow in October 2018 and in Edinburgh in April 2019. Then they were conducted in May 2019 and March 2020. Interviews with young Scottish Conservatives were conducted in Edinburgh in April and May 2019, and then in March 2020. As for interviews with young Scottish Labour members, they were conducted in Edinburgh in April and May 2019. A total of 25 young SNP members were interviewed, 8 young women and 17 young men, from 18 to 32 years old. A total of 7 young Scottish Conservatives were interviewed, 1 young woman and 6 young men, from 21 to 27 years old. As for young Scottish Labour members, 4 were interviewed, 2 young women and 2 young men, from 19 to 28 years old. A Brexit Party member, who was 19 at the



time, was also interviewed. Interviews were semi-guided, leaving room for interviewees to expand on their answers. They were also treated anonymously. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, depending on the length of the interviewee's answers.

### *Online Survey*

Besides interviews, an online questionnaire was sent to these young people in March 2020. It was sent to young members of the SNP, the Scottish Conservatives and the Scottish Labour Party alike. Some young members of the Scottish Green Party and the Scottish Liberal Democrats completed the survey as well<sup>30</sup>. The data were collected anonymously. A total of 82 young party members answered the questionnaire: 53 responded entirely to the survey, and 29 submitted incomplete responses. So as to draw accurate and significant conclusions, as shown further down in the thesis, I focused on the 53 complete surveys. 14 young women, 38 young men, and one person who identified as other, responded to the survey. They were between 18 and 29 years of age. The average age was 22.

It was difficult to reach young party members, especially young Scottish Conservatives and Scottish Young Labour members. This is one reason why I did not interview the same number of young people in the three political parties. Young Scottish Labour members were the hardest to reach. This explains the relatively small number of young Labour interviewees in this study. Yet, another reason for this is the fact that it focuses voluntarily on young SNP members as the main case study.

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<sup>30</sup> Members of the YSI, SNP Students, the Young Scottish Conservatives and Young Scottish Labour forwarded the link to the survey to friends, regardless of the political party with which they were involved. Despite the very small number of respondents from other parties, this was nonetheless an opportunity for me to compare their answers with those of SNP, Conservative and Labour members, and draw more significant conclusions.

To conduct this research, I chose to combine qualitative and quantitative methods for several reasons. As I wanted to understand why young people join the SNP, on the one hand, and analyse the relationship between these young people and national identity, on the other, interviews appeared as the most useful and relevant tool. Indeed, in-depth, semi-guided interviews enabled me to go beyond a mere questionnaire survey by grasping interviewees' thoughts, beliefs and ideology. Namely, I could explore what is on their minds. In my opinion, making these young Scots expand on their views about national identity, on their own definition of Scottish identity as well as Britishness – and to a lesser extent European identity – was the best way to understand their perception, their own 'version'<sup>31</sup>, of their national identity. Qualitative methods like interviews are also what other scholars of young people's party membership favour. Bruter and Harrison, who have conducted the most developed study of young party members until today, demonstrated the usefulness and reliability of interviews.

As for quantitative methods, I thought an online questionnaire was a useful tool to get statistics relating to these young people's political engagement and relationship to national identity, and thus a way of drawing complementary conclusions. I wanted to check and confirm my findings by comparing the interviews and the answers to the questionnaire. I thought it would be a good way of identifying some tendencies and strengthening my conclusions.

### *Social Media Analysis*

I also did social media analysis. As I wanted to look for signs of national identity in young Scottish party members' activism, I analysed their Tweets from a given period of time. I worked in collaboration with Eric Leclercq and Annabelle Gillet, a Doctor and a PhD student

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<sup>31</sup> The word 'version' is often used by David McCrone. See for example Brown, A., McCrone, D., and Paterson, L. (1996). *Politics and Society in Scotland*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press; New York: St. Martin's Press. David McCrone also used this word when I interviewed him on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018, at the University of Edinburgh.

in engineering sciences at the University of Burgundy, in Dijon. The two researchers collected data after we had listed keywords related to national identity, Scottishness, Britishness, and the Union between Scotland and the rest of the UK. We also analysed data thanks to a list of profiles of young Scottish party members.

### *Observation*

Finally, I did observational research. I studied young SNP members' activism at SNP conferences. These conferences were an opportunity to study their political discourse, to see them interact and behave in a political and professional environment. I also participated in the social activities that were organised during conferences. This was a good way of seeing young SNP members behave in a less formal environment. As I was not holding my notebook and recorder, they probably felt freer to talk. I had informal talks with them. This allowed me to know more about their lives and, once again, it undoubtedly made them more comfortable than a formal interview. Finally, I surveyed their posts on social media. This was a useful way of comparing what they said on social media with what they said during interviews and possibly seeing whether their public and more private discourses about national identity were similar.

### **Outline**

This thesis is divided into two parts. Part One is devoted to young SNP members' political engagement and party membership. It sheds light on the reasons why young Scots get involved with the SNP. Chapter One reviews the literature on young people's party membership. First, it focuses on the notion of political participation generally speaking and its broad literature. Then, it introduces the literature on political party membership, this 'under-studied mode of political participation' in Emilie van Haute's opinion (2011: 1). It introduces

the theories on incentives to join political parties. Finally, it concentrates on the rare studies and theories about young party members that have been conducted and developed until now<sup>32</sup>.

Chapter Two is devoted to the empirical analysis of the involvement of young Scottish people in the SNP. First, through a socio-demographic study, the chapter introduces the young members of the party, namely the members of the youth wing of the SNP, Young Scots for Independence (YSI) also known as SNP Youth<sup>33</sup>, and the members of its student wing, SNP Students, also known as the Federation of Student Nationalists (FSN)<sup>34</sup>. This chapter deals with young SNP members' age as well as their social and educational backgrounds. Additionally, it introduces the various activities that are part of their political activism. Then this chapter sheds light on their reasons for joining the SNP by testing the incentives identified in the literature on both party membership and young party members. The chapter confirms the theories about youth party membership that have been developed so far and shows that national identity is also one of the reasons why the young interviewees and respondents joined the SNP, thus suggesting that national identity has to be treated as a new variable in the explanatory models of youth party membership. So as to strengthen this point, a comparison with young members of the Scottish Conservatives and the Scottish Labour Party is made throughout the chapter.

Given that Part One emphasises that national identity is one of the reasons why young Scottish people get involved with the SNP, Part Two concentrates on the relationship between the young members of the party and their national identity. Chapter Three reviews the wide literature on national identity. The chapter focuses mainly on the constructivist approach to this notion, for the present thesis relies on constructivist arguments. Most importantly, Chapter Three explains why national identity can be considered the socio-political identity of a nation.

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<sup>32</sup> See the brief literature review above.

<sup>33</sup> The youth wing of the SNP was founded in the 1970s as the Young Scottish Nationalists (YSN) and was rebranded in 1996 as the YSI.

<sup>34</sup> The student wing of the SNP was founded in 1961.

Then, Chapter Four studies the relationship between young SNP members' political engagement and national identity. Firstly, this empirical analysis sheds light on members of the YSI and SNP Students' perceptions of national identity, particularly on Scottishness and Britishness – and on their supranational, European identity. Secondly, the chapter focuses on the role of national identity in their party membership. Then, it tries to answer the question of whether there is a link between their national identity and level of political engagement<sup>35</sup>. Finally, the chapter sheds new light on the relationship between political ideology and national identity, which reinforces the argument for the constructivist approach to that notion. So as to strengthen conclusions about the relationship between young SNP members' political engagement and national identity, a comparison with Scottish Young Labour members and Scottish Young Conservatives is made throughout the chapter. Part Two ends with a new, updated, definition of national identity, and with the identification of a link between political engagement – at least youth party membership – and national identity. A relationship between political ideology and national identity is also highlighted.

Before starting this exploration, it is worth noting that at a more personal level, this thesis develops research that was started some years ago, when I studied national identity as well as British and Scottish societies and politics through the analysis of multiculturalism in Edinburgh, first, and Britishness in the face of nationalist claims in Scotland since 1997<sup>36</sup>, second.

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<sup>35</sup> See the research questions and hypotheses above.

<sup>36</sup> Both dissertations were written in the frame of a Master's degree, in 2014 and 2015.

# **Part One**

## **SNP Youth Membership**

# **Chapter One: Theoretical Framework**

## **I) Political Participation**

*[E]very human life is touched by politics.* — Lester W. Milbrath (1965: 2)

### **1) Definitions**

#### **a) Political Participation**

The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines politics as ‘the activities associated with the governance of a country or area’ (2008: 1110). And the adjective ‘political’ refers to what is ‘relating to the government or public affairs of a country’ (2008: 1110). Still according to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary, to participate is ‘to be involved; to take part’ (2008: 1043). Thus, political participation means being involved or taking part in the political life of a country, namely in the government or public affairs of that country. It should be noted that the Concise OED’s definition of ‘politics’ and ‘political’ can be specified by saying that politics also concerns smaller and bigger entities than countries, namely villages, towns, cities<sup>37</sup>, regions, unions of nations, even the whole world. In other words, people can participate in local, national, and international politics. At least, they can participate when they are allowed to do so. Here, the notion of democracy is fundamental. According to the Concise OED, democracy is ‘a form of government in which the people have a voice in the exercise of power, typically through elected representatives’ as it comes from ‘demos’ – the people – and ‘kratia’ – power rule – (2008: 381). In their book about political participation and democracy in Britain, Geraint

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<sup>37</sup> The word ‘politics’ originates from ‘polis’ meaning ‘city’ in ancient Greek. See Plato and Aristotle’s texts about politics and democracy.

Parry, George Moyser and Neil Day define democracy as ‘[g]overnment by the people’ (Parry et al., 1992: 3). Then, political participation and democracy are inseparable. In this regard, they declare that ‘[a]ny book about political participation is also a book about democracy’ (1992: 3). In the same way, Paul Whiteley notes:

‘Political participation is at the heart of democratic government and civil society, and without it there can be no effective democracy. Participation refers to activities such as, voting, lobbying politicians, attending political meetings, joining protest rallies and being active in political parties. These activities have a common thread involving volunteering as, for ordinary citizens, they are unpaid, but they are all designed to directly or indirectly influence the policies and/or personnel of the state.’ (2012: 34).

Hence the idea that participating in politics is a way for people to influence the way the society in which they live is governed. Anne-Cécile Douillet says: ‘the democratic principle implies political participation. Thus, in a democracy, the governed are not simple subjects but citizens, individuals who can intervene in political functioning in the name of the right to participate.’ (2010: 15)<sup>38</sup>. Like Parry, Moyser and Day, Douillet enhances that political participation and democracy are interrelated. Her words also suggest that through their political participation, citizens can be considered actors of democracy. In that sense, French political scientist Philippe Braud defines political participation as ‘all the activities, individual or collective, likely to give

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<sup>38</sup> Original text in French: ‘le principe démocratique implique la participation politique. Ainsi, en démocratie, les gouvernés ne sont pas de simples sujets mais des *citoyens*, des individus pouvant intervenir dans le fonctionnement politique au nom du droit à participer.’ Italics in the original text.



the governed an influence on the functioning of the political system' (Braud, 2002: 345)<sup>39</sup>, confirming the idea of citizens' influence on government via their participation<sup>40</sup>.

This thesis thus relies on the definition of political participation as being involved in the political life of one's society, village, town, country, or the whole world, and then being able to influence the governance of such entities. More specifically, the present work concentrates on young people's political participation in Scotland via party membership.

It is worth noting that political participation is defined in various other ways. For Sarah Pickard, 'there is no authoritative definition.' (2019: 58). I agree with her in the sense that there are more and more ways of participating in politics today. Also, the definition – or, one should say the definitions – of political participation has evolved over time. In this sense, Pickard points out that political participation studies are 'period sensitive' (2019: 58). The definition of that notion was very narrow at first. Emilie van Haute notes that before the 1950s, it was associated exclusively with voting (van Haute, 2011). In that sense, it was analysed as a 'one-dimensional' (2011: 20) notion. It became 'multidimensional' (2011: 21) in the 1950s. As van Haute shows, there was an evolution of political participation studies from the 'one-dimensional' voting aspect of participation, to the appearance of typologies and, then, the idea that there are different modes and forms of participation. In the period running between the 1950s and the mid-1970s, the first scholars who understood that concept not merely as voting were Julian L. Woodward and Elmo Roper<sup>41</sup>, Serge Moscovici<sup>42</sup>, Robert E. Lane<sup>43</sup>, Jean

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<sup>39</sup> Original text in French: 'l'ensemble des activités, individuelles ou collectives, susceptibles de donner aux gouvernés une influence sur le fonctionnement du système politique.'

<sup>40</sup> For a recent analysis of the relationship between democracy and political participation, see Alexandre-Collier, A., Goujon, A., and Gourgues, G. (2020). *Reinvented Politics and Representative Democracy*. London: Routledge.

<sup>41</sup> See Woodward, J.L., and Roper, E. (1950). Research on Political Parties and Leadership. *Political Activity of American Citizens*, *American Political Science Review*, 44(4), 872-885.

<sup>42</sup> See Moscovici, S. (1954). L'analyse hiérarchique. Sur une contribution importante à la construction des échelles, *L'Année Psychologique*, 54(1), 83-110.

<sup>43</sup> See Lane, R.E. (1959). *Political Life: Why People get Involved in Politics*. New York: Free Press.

Meynaud and Alain Lancelot<sup>44</sup>, Lester W. Milbrath<sup>45</sup>, Herbert McClosky<sup>46</sup>, and Sidney Verba and Norman H. Nie<sup>47</sup>. Emilie van Haute notes that their theories all tended to see political participation as an individual and volunteer activity aiming at influencing government and governmental decisions. Additionally, she points out that they did not include informal and illegal types of participation. Beyond these similarities, Emilie van Haute argues that the limit of studies of political participation at the time was a kind of ‘ethnocentrism’ (2011: 23). While scholars, at that time, focused on only one country when doing research, political participation can vary from one country to another. Therefore, during the period running from the 1950s to the mid-1970s, in spite of similarities when it comes to the idea of an individual, volunteer activity aiming at influencing government, definitions of political participation could vary, depending on the country in which studies were carried out.

The evolution of the definition of political participation over time shows how it has broadened. Political participation should not be reduced to its electoral dimension. Sarah Pickard makes the case for a broad definition of the concept:

‘Constance Flanagan argues that “politics is about more than party affiliation and elections. Politics concerns membership in communities and the processes and practices whereby we work with fellow members of those communities to determine the kind of communities, society, and world we want to live in” (2013: 2). I agree and argue for a resolutely wide and inclusive definition: Political participation encompasses both individual and collective shared values and actions (both online and offline) in public and in private,

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<sup>44</sup> See Meynaud, J., and Lancelot, A. (1961). *La participation des Français à la politique*. Paris : PUF.

<sup>45</sup> See Milbrath, L.W. (1965). *Political Participation*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

<sup>46</sup> See McClosky, H. (1972). Political Participation, in *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, 12, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Mac Millan and the Free Press.

<sup>47</sup> See Verba, S., and Nie, N.H. (1972). *Participation in America: Social Equality and Political Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row.

which deliberately seek to maintain or bring about change to political, societal or environmental contexts within a community, locally, nationally, or globally.’ (2019: 61).

To conclude, the definition of political participation in this work is that of taking part in the public affairs of a given political entity and thus being able to influence its governing structures. It also argues for a broad definition in the face of new ways of participating in politics today. In that sense, Sarah Pickard notes: ‘The repertoire of political participation has expanded as societies have become more educated and less deferential towards the political elite and in parallel and more disillusioned about elected representatives and less trusting in them.’ (2019: 58). The definition of political participation has broadened as the political participation repertoire has widened. The second section further down focuses on the various forms it takes.

As the present thesis deals with youth party membership in Scotland, it is now necessary to define both political engagement and party membership.

## **b) Political Engagement**

The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines the verb ‘engage’ as follows: ‘participate or become involved in’ (2008: 472). Therefore, in this thesis, ‘political engagement’ is understood as young Scots’ involvement in political parties like the SNP. It should be noted that the present work distinguishes between political participation and political engagement. It argues that political engagement is a form of political participation. More precisely, it regards it as a high level of political participation. Indeed, the word ‘engagement’ suggests something which is stronger than mere ‘participation’. One’s engagement – which can also be called ‘involvement’ – implies a high degree of political participation. In that sense, political

engagement refers to types of political participation like party membership, political activism.

Political engagement can be either formal or informal. Paul Whiteley notes:

‘there are informal types of participation such as people discussing politics in the pub, in the home or in the workplace. (...) In addition, there are “sporadic interventionists” (Dowse and Hughes, 1977), that is, individuals who get involved in politics in response to local events, such as lobbying against a plan to build an incinerator in their area or to campaign in favour of a by-pass for their town. These forms of political participation are quite important but the participants often do not see themselves engaged in political participation, regarding what they are doing as a form of voluntary activity.’ (Whiteley, 2012: 36).

Taking account of Whiteley’s ideas and the view of engagement as a high level of participation, it can be said that informal forms of participation can be seen as political participation only, while formal forms (especially party membership and activism) can be viewed as political engagement. The distinction between formal and informal ways of participating is explored later in this thesis.

The definition of political engagement is developed throughout the present work. But what can be said here is that there are several levels of political participation or engagement. Party membership is a high level of participation. In the same way, there are different levels of party membership: some members are quite passive, while others are quite active. As shown in the section below, this thesis concentrates on young SNP members as a whole, including activists and less active members.

### c) Party Membership

The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines a political party as ‘a formally constituted group that contests elections and attempts to take part in government’ (2008: 1044). Philippe Braud defines it as an ‘organisation, relatively stable, which mobilises support in order to participate directly in the exercise of political power’ (Braud, 2002: 653)<sup>48</sup>. He specifies: ‘Choosing candidates, trying to get them elected, supporting and orchestrating their action, these are some of the functions most clearly specific to parties’ (2002: 405)<sup>49</sup>.

There are different levels of involvement with a political party. In his book *Les partis politiques*, Maurice Duverger identified four categories of participants: electors, supporters, members and activists (Duverger, 1951)<sup>50</sup>. According to his typology, being an elector is the lower level of involvement with a political party, while being an activist is the highest level. These categories echo Lester W. Milbrath’s research. Milbrath identifies three levels of involvement with a party: ‘(1) psychological identification with a party; (2) formal membership through payment of dues; and (3) active participation in party affairs’ (1965: 25). In other words, one can be a party supporter, a formal party member, and/or a party activist.

Regarding Maurice Duverger’s typology, Emilie van Haute rightly notes:

‘When it comes to the intensity of engagement, the involvement of the supporter goes beyond that of a voter. Admittedly, he brings his voice to the

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<sup>48</sup> Original text in French: ‘organisation, relativement stable, qui mobilise des soutiens en vue de participer directement à l’exercice du pouvoir politique.’

<sup>49</sup> Original text in French: ‘Choisir des candidats, tenter de les faire élire, soutenir et orchestrer leur action, telles sont quelques-unes des fonctions les plus visiblement propres aux partis.’

<sup>50</sup> This concerns mass parties, not cadre parties. Namely, political parties whose life depends on the people, on grassroots. Maurice Duverger distinguishes between mass parties, on the one hand, and cadre parties, on the other. Cadre parties were created before mass parties, in the nineteenth century, before universal suffrage was introduced. Their membership base is very poor. Rather, they are mainly composed of political elites and leaders. Mass parties are based on membership, notably grassroots members. Their aim is to increase the number of their members so as to win elections. They usually defend the interests of people belonging to one or several social class(es) in particular. According to these definitions, the Scottish National Party and the other biggest parties in Scotland are mass parties.

party, but is also generally in accordance with its principles and does not hesitate to express his political choice, possibly supporting it financially, and even penetrating the annexed institutions. However, the supporter participates in a more peripheral way than the member.’ (2009: 46)<sup>51</sup>.

Regarding party members in particular, she specifies:

‘When it comes to the intensity of engagement, a member is more than a voter. Voter turnout is by nature intermittent and discontinuous; it requires relatively little initiative from the voter. Conversely, party membership is almost always a voluntary choice and usually results in more continued involvement. A member is also more than a supporter, because certain actions materialise membership: taking a bulletin, a card, paying a membership fee. Supporters remain outside the party organisation; their attachment to the party therefore does not materialise in this way.’ (2009: 47)<sup>52</sup>.

When it comes to party members, as was shown earlier, they can be either passive or active. Van Haute presents this distinction as follows:

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<sup>51</sup> Original text in French: ‘En matière d’intensité de l’engagement, l’implication du sympathisant va au-delà de celle d’un électeur. Certes, il apporte sa voix au parti, mais est aussi globalement en accord avec ses principes et n’hésite pas à faire part de son choix politique, le soutient éventuellement financièrement, voire en pénètre les institutions annexes. Cependant, le sympathisant s’investit de manière plus périphérique que l’adhérent.’

<sup>52</sup> Original text in French: ‘En matière d’intensité de l’engagement, un adhérent est plus qu’un électeur. La participation électorale est par nature intermittente et discontinue; elle demande assez peu d’initiative à l’électeur. À l’inverse, l’adhésion partisane relève presque toujours d’un choix volontaire et entraîne généralement un investissement plus continu. Un adhérent est également plus qu’un sympathisant, car certains gestes matérialisent l’adhésion : la prise d’un bulletin, d’une carte, le paiement d’une cotisation. Les sympathisants restent extérieurs à l’organisation partisane; leur attachement au parti ne se matérialise donc pas de cette façon.’

‘Passive members are generally associated with internal party activities, in particular activities of a social nature or inexpensive in terms of time. Outward-facing activities (campaign activities in particular) and internal political activities (debates, drafting of motions, etc.) are carried out more by activists.’ (2009: 48)<sup>53</sup>.

She nonetheless insists that, in practice, there are sometimes blurred lines between all those categories and that the distinction between them is not always clear.

As shown in the following chapter, in this work the sample of young Scottish party members – YSI and SNP Students in particular – is composed of formal members and activists. Their motivations and political views are compared, depending on the level of their engagement in the party<sup>54</sup>.

As we have just seen, the definition of political participation has broadened over time. Today, people participate in various ways. When it comes to party membership, in Susan Scarrow’s view (Scarrow, 2015, 2017), the role of party members has changed as well. More specifically, political parties offer their members more rights and new opportunities to be active, in order to cope with the decline of party membership. They try and offer new rewards to their members. They also appeal to more supporters thanks to types of affiliation which cost less. Hence the strengthening of their link with their grassroots supporters. The transformation of party membership goes beyond the scope of the present thesis. Therefore, it is not further explored here.

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<sup>53</sup> Original text in French: ‘Les membres passifs sont généralement associés aux activités internes au parti, en particulier les activités à caractère social ou peu coûteuses en termes de temps. Les activités tournées vers l’extérieur (activités de campagne notamment) et les activités internes à caractère politique (débat, élaboration de motions, etc.) sont davantage exercées par les activistes.’

<sup>54</sup> The most active members are what Milbrath calls ‘gladiators’: amongst other things, ‘they attend meetings, campaign’, are ‘active in [the] party, solicit money, run for and hold public and party office’ (1965: 18).

Let us now detail the different forms that political participation can take.

## 2) Formal and Informal Political Participation

*[P]olitical participation (...) clearly means more than voting.* — Robert E. Lane (1959: 45)

Voting for elections, for a referendum, being a member of a political party<sup>55</sup>, supporting a politician or a party, leafleting, canvassing, demonstrating, talking about politics, claiming one's beliefs and ideas online, taking part in a social movement, among others, are all forms of political participation. The difference between them depends on their formal or informal aspect<sup>56</sup>.

Anne-Cécile Douillet's list of political activities that are part of either one category or the other is well detailed and rather complete. As formal political participation, she cites:

‘voting (for the election of representatives) and all practices related to the electoral process: involvement in a political party, involvement in an electoral campaign, political discussions and any activity aimed at obtaining information and to build an opinion to take part in the electoral choice.’ (2010: 29)<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> This is the focus point of the present thesis.

<sup>56</sup> In the literature on political participation, this dichotomy is also described as traditional/untraditional, and conventional/unconventional.

<sup>57</sup> Original text in French: ‘le vote (pour l'élection de représentants) et l'ensemble des pratiques en lien avec le processus électoral : l'engagement dans un parti politique, l'implication dans une campagne électorale, les discussions politiques et toute activité visant à s'informer et à se construire une opinion pour prendre part au choix électoral.’



It is not by chance that Douillet started her definition of formal political participation<sup>58</sup> with voting. That notion is the most obvious form of political participation in democracies<sup>59</sup>. As Philippe Braud argues, ‘Political science analysis recognises voting as an essential form of participation. In fact, it is almost universally recognised, including in countries where the freedom of choice of the candidate remains excluded.’ (Braud, 2002: 345)<sup>60</sup>. He adds that electoral participation is the one ‘by far – which makes people engage the most’ (Braud, 2002: 379)<sup>61</sup>. Voting appears as a fundamental form of political participation in the sense that besides being recognised as a right, it is often referred to as a duty: on election days, it is not rare to hear people say they have done their citizen’s duty by voting.

As I said at the beginning of the present section and as the quotation from Douillet’s book above shows, besides voting, there are plenty of other ways to participate in the public affairs of a nation. This plurality of forms of political participation is also highlighted by Phillippe Braud:

‘other modalities (than voting) exist. Some simply require minimal attention to public affairs (reading the press, discussing news, etc.); others take the form of membership in social or political organisations; still others express a desire, sometimes intense, to influence public decision-making: for example, through strikes and demonstrations intended to influence those in power. Finally, there are paradoxical forms of participation which aim to challenge

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<sup>58</sup> Douillet refers to formal participation as ‘conventional’ participation.

<sup>59</sup> As seen before, the first definitions of political participation, especially in the 1950s, focused on its electoral dimension only.

<sup>60</sup> Original text in French : ‘L’analyse de science politique reconnaît dans le vote une modalité essentielle de participation. De fait, elle est presque universellement reconnue, y compris dans les pays où la liberté de choix du candidat demeure exclue.’

<sup>61</sup> Original text in French : ‘et de loin – qui engage le plus d’individus’.

the rules of the normal institutional game by attempting to substitute other standards.’ (Braud, 2002: 345-346)<sup>62</sup>.

By saying that ‘Some (modalities) simply require minimal attention to public affairs (reading the press, discussing information, etc.)’<sup>63</sup>, Philippe Braud thus suggests that there are various degrees or levels of political participation, depending on the nature of participation itself. It is easily understandable that being a party member requires more time, energy, passion and conviction than listening to political news on the radio or talking about the new governmental measures regarding the Covid-19 pandemic with one’s neighbour. Party membership is therefore seen as a stronger type of political participation than listening to the radio or speaking to one’s neighbour. In that sense, and as was shown earlier, party membership has to be considered as political engagement, which corresponds to a high level of political participation. If it has to be noted that there are different levels of political participation – amongst which engagement – it is also important to emphasise that there are various degrees of political engagement itself. As shown further down in this work, I consider levels of engagement as variables<sup>64</sup>. Indeed, I analysed the relationship between views of national identity and the extent of engagement of the young SNP members. I hypothesised that the more involved with their

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<sup>62</sup> Original text in French : ‘d’autres modalités (que le vote) existent. Certaines relèvent simplement d’une attention minimale à la chose publique (lecture de la presse, discussions des informations...) ; d’autres se concrétisent dans l’adhésion à des organisations sociales ou politiques ; d’autres encore expriment une volonté, parfois intense, de peser sur la décision publique : par exemple, par des grèves et manifestations destinées à influencer les gouvernants. Enfin il existe des formes paradoxales de participation qui visent à contester les règles du jeu institutionnel normal en tentant d’y substituer d’autres normes.’

<sup>63</sup> Original text in French: ‘Certaines (modalités) relèvent simplement d’une attention minimale à la chose publique (lecture de la presse, discussions des informations...)’.

<sup>64</sup> In social science research, variables are ‘properties or characteristics of some event, object, person, place or thing that are measurable and can take on more than one value, or vary.’ Variables are either independent or dependent. To be more specific, ‘independent variables are typically thought of as being the cause, and dependent variables are often seen as being the effect. The independent variable, in other words, affects the dependent variable in some way.’ See the website of the Department of Sociology of the University of Utah: <https://soc.utah.edu/sociology3112/basics.php> Accessed on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

party young Scots were, the stronger their sense of national identity was and the more positive and passionate were their definitions of Scottish identity.<sup>65</sup>

Even if this work focuses on one of the formal aspects of political participation, it is nonetheless worth presenting briefly informal types of participation. As informal activities, Anne-Cécile Douillet mentions:

‘protest practices such as demonstrations, strikes, petitions (which are legal forms of unconventional participation) but also illegal practices such as boycott, occupation of a building, kidnapping, the use of arms...’ (2010: 29)<sup>66</sup>.

Therefore, contrary to formal types of participation, informal ones can be illegal. With regard to the difference between ‘conventional’ and ‘unconventional’ forms of political participation, Anne-Cécile Douillet specifies:

‘Conventional forms of political participation refer to all participation practices that are part of the logic of representative democracy, starting with voting. The unconventional forms of participation include the forms of political participation which are situated in a more protest logic, by contesting in a more or less circumscribed way the orientations resulting from the representative government or by seeking to act on it other than through the ballot box. These unconventional forms include both legal and illegal practices. While all forms of conventional participation are legal, the

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<sup>65</sup> See Part Two for the results.

<sup>66</sup> Original text in French: ‘La participation non conventionnelle regroupe des pratiques protestataires telles que la manifestation, la grève, la pétition (qui sont des formes légales de participation non conventionnelle) mais aussi des pratiques illégales telles que le boycott, l’occupation d’un bâtiment, la séquestration, le recours aux armes...’.

conventional / unconventional distinction therefore does not overlap with the legal / illegal distinction.’ (2010: 29)<sup>67</sup>.

Scholars like Scarrow (2015, 2017) suggest to go beyond this dichotomy of conventional/unconventional forms of participation. Similarly, in her book whose title speaks for itself (*Democratic Phoenix: Reinventing Political Activism*, 2002), Pippa Norris insists on the transformation of political participation. She emphasises that it has diversified over time. For example, she argues that besides traditional ways of participating like voting, individuals participate in new social movements. She also sheds light on the rise of protest politics (Norris, 2002).

These new forms of participation are what Sarah Pickard considers a third type of political participation. She argues that today, citizens participate by supporting causes like ecology, veganism, feminism, LGBT rights, to name but a few<sup>68</sup>. Here is how she thinks of the three different ways of participating:

‘Political participation tended to be divided into two main forms in the past. First, traditional (also called conventional or institutional participation), which includes registering on the electoral roll, voting in elections and being a member of a political party. Second, non-traditional (also called

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<sup>67</sup> Original text in French: ‘Les formes conventionnelles de participation politique désignent toutes les pratiques de participation qui s’inscrivent dans la logique de la démocratie représentative, à commencer par le vote. Les formes non conventionnelles de participation incluent les formes de participation politique qui se situent dans une logique plus protestataire, en contestant de manière plus ou moins circonscrite les orientations issues du gouvernement représentatif ou en cherchant à agir sur lui autrement que par les urnes. Ces formes non conventionnelles comprennent à la fois des pratiques légales et des pratiques illégales. Si toutes les formes de participation conventionnelle sont légales, la distinction conventionnelle / non conventionnelle ne recoupe donc pas la distinction légale / illégale.’

<sup>68</sup> In the 1970s, Ronald Inglehart already analysed this phenomenon. In his view, industrialisation in Western democracies led people to get interested in post-material issues instead of traditional values. See Inglehart, R. (1977). *The silent revolution: changing values and political styles among Western publics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Inglehart, R. (1990). *Culture shift in advanced industrial society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Inglehart, R., and Flanagan, S.C. (1987). Value change in industrial societies. *The American Political Science Review*, 81(4): 1289-1319.

unconventional or non-institutional participation), which encompasses protesting, dissenting and being involved in civil disobedience.<sup>69</sup> Increasingly, a third kind of identity politics or issue-based political participation is being acknowledged, which covers deliberate acts, such as product boycotts and lifestyle choices, such as veganism.’ (2015: 2).

The paragraph above highlights, again, the evolution of the definition of political participation over time. For Pickard, it is either traditional (what I call ‘formal’), non-traditional (what I call ‘unformal’), or based on the defense of a specific cause. In this regard, the scholar has listed electoral and non-electoral repertoires of political participation (2019: 62-63). As the present research concentrates on one aspect of participation – party membership – it is not our point here to introduce her much detailed and accurate list, but it is worth a look for researchers working on the various types of participation.

New forms of political participation tend to be favoured by young people. Sarah Pickard argues that ‘Young people are especially associated with newer forms of political participation, probably to the detriment of traditional politics, such as registering and voting in general elections’ (2015: 2). This idea is developed in the section dealing with young people’s political participation below.

Bearing this in mind, it is interesting to examine young SNP members’ political engagement as an exclusively formal type of political participation or including other, maybe less formal, forms of participation. As party members, it seems obvious to say that young SNP members’ political participation is formal and traditional. As is shown further down in this work, the analysis of my interviews and online questionnaires, as well as the observation I did,

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<sup>69</sup> See Norris (2002: 22).

confirm this. Yet, they also highlight that young SNP members engage in politics in less traditional ways. They notably use social media as a tool to convey their political ideas.

I showed that political participation takes many forms, whether formal/traditional or informal/non-traditional. Scholars like Pickard also insist on a third, more recent, way to participate: single-issue participation. This is particularly the case amongst the young.

Now that we have seen what participation activities can be, let's see why people participate in politics.

### **3) Explaining Political Participation**

*What leads some people to participate in politics whilst others – the majority – do not? —*  
Parry, Moyser and Day (1992: 9)

Political participation is studied either as a dependent variable or an independent variable<sup>70</sup>. It is considered a dependent variable when it is the result of certain factors and motivations, namely when it is influenced, caused by other variables, by incentives<sup>71</sup>. In that case, political participation is a consequence. For instance, it is a dependent variable when it is induced by one's education. Political participation is considered an independent variable when it leads to a consequence. In that case, it is a cause. For instance, it is an independent variable when it enables one to make new friends by joining a political organisation.

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<sup>70</sup> See definition page 76.

<sup>71</sup> As will be shown with Paul Whiteley and Patrick Seyd's General Incentive Model further down, incentives are elements that encourage/incite people to participate. See notably Seyd and Whiteley (1992, 2004), and Whiteley (1995, 2012).

As this thesis aims at explaining one of the various forms of political participation – party membership – it studies participation as a dependent variable. In other words, participation as a consequence, as influenced by certain factors and motivations.

Whether it is a dependent or independent variable, political participation is analysed at three different levels: the *micro*, *meso* and *macro* levels. The micro level relates to the individual: party membership is explained by analysing party members’ individual motivations and resources. The meso level refers to organisations which are in between individuals and macro structures like the state: party membership is explained by examining the role played by parties, especially regarding their recruitment function. The macro level relates to bigger structures, to institutions like the state: party membership is explained for example by exploring the influence of governmental institutions on people’s decision to join a political party.

The figure below, which is based on Barnes and Kaase’s theory, illustrates these three levels of explanation of political participation:

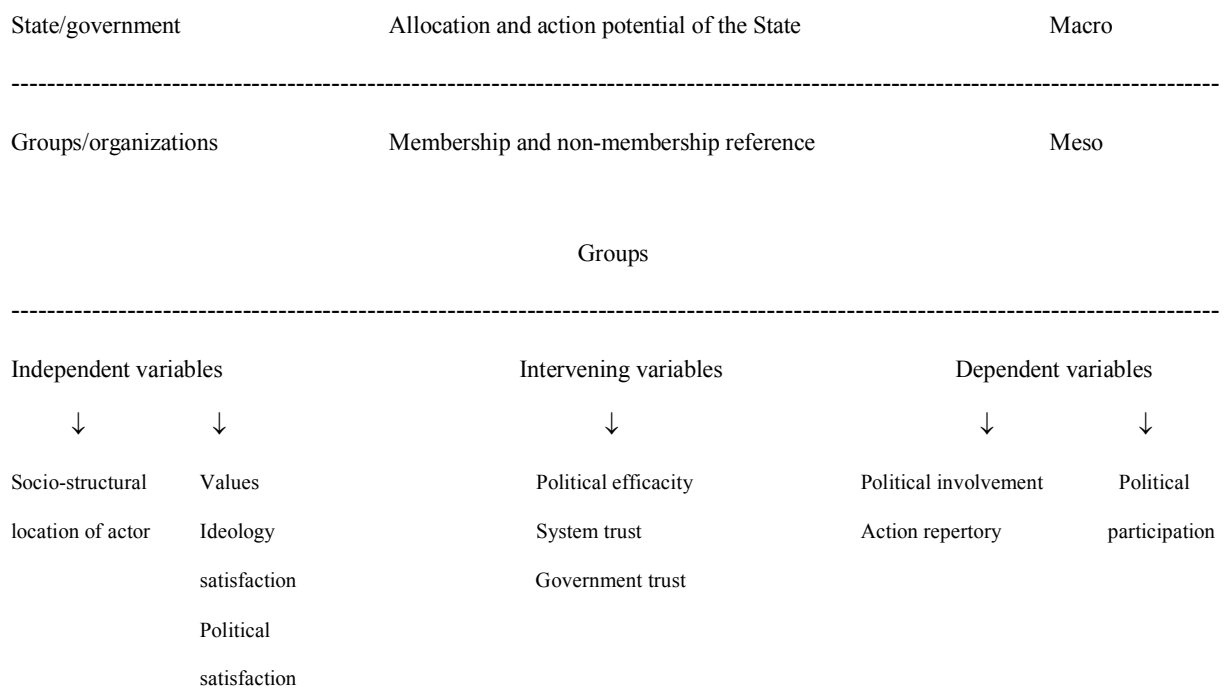


Figure 1.1: Barnes and Kaase’s theory on political participation, as shown in van Haute (2009: 73)

Again, we see that political participation and involvement – what I call ‘engagement’ in my analysis – are variables that depend on independent factors. More specifically, Kaase understands ‘all forms of political participation as a result of individual predispositions and beliefs, involvement in personal networks as well as in organizational memberships, and a set of institutional conditions’<sup>72</sup> (van Haute, 2009: 73). Further down in the present work, an introduction to the models of participation at the micro level expands on Kaase’s ideas.

In *Democratic Phoenix* (2002: 20), Pippa Norris offers a similar model, accounting for political participation at the macro, meso, and micro levels:

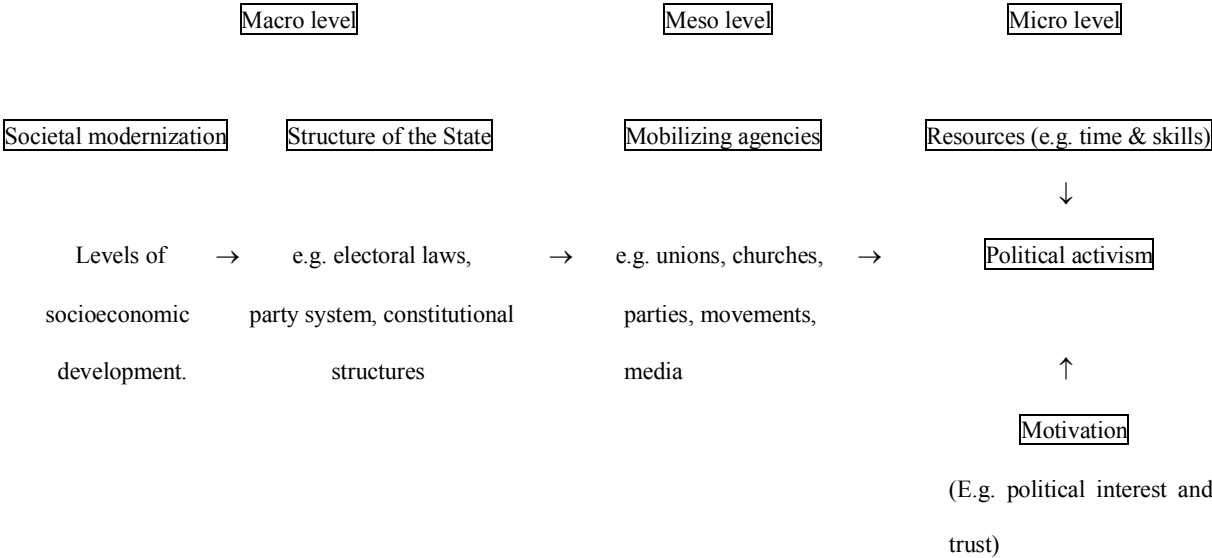


Figure 1.2: Pippa Norris’ model of political participation, at the macro, meso, and micro levels (2002: 20).

According to Norris, political participation is influenced at the three levels. As the figure above shows, these levels are interrelated. In this regard, the present thesis focuses upon SNP youth membership at the micro level, but, as demonstrated later, it also takes account of the other two levels.

Before going further, let us introduce the characteristics of each level.

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<sup>72</sup> Émilie van Haute quotes Kaase, M. (1989). Mass participation, in M.K. Jennings, and J. Van Deth (ed.). *Continuities in Political Action: A Longitudinal Study of Political Orientations in Three Western Democracies*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 25.



## a) Political Participation as a Dependent Variable: Micro Level

As said briefly before, the micro level of analysis of political participation is the individual level. Studying political participation at the micro level thus means studying the reasons why an individual participates in politics.

As Émilie van Haute notes, there are three models of political participation at the micro level: the resource model, the social psychological model, and the rational choice model. She specifies: ‘The first is based on individual resources (*resource model*), the second on attitudes (*social psychological model*), and the last on motivations for engagement (*rational choice model*)’<sup>73</sup> (2009: 73)<sup>74</sup>.

- Resource model

The resource model of participation was pioneered in the 1960s and 1970s by scholars like Lester W. Milbrath (1965), Sidney Verba and Norman H. Nie (1972), Samuel H. Barnes and Max Kaase (1979). Theorists of the resource model say that individual resources influence people’s political participation. More precisely, the more resources one has, the more one tends to participate and to be politically active. Van Haute sums up the theory of the resource model as follows: ‘participation is guided by the resources available to individuals. The social status of citizens would determine their participation level: socio-economic status, social class to which they belong, (un)employed, income, level of education’<sup>75</sup>. She goes on to say that ‘the

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<sup>73</sup> Original text in French: ‘Le premier est basé sur les ressources individuelles (*resource model*), le deuxième sur les attitudes (*social psychological model*), et le dernier sur les motivations à l’engagement (*rational choice model*).’

<sup>74</sup> Emphasis in the original text.

<sup>75</sup> Original text in French: ‘la participation est guidée par les ressources dont disposent les individus. Le statut social des citoyens déterminerait leur taux de participation : statut socio-économique, classe sociale d’appartenance, (in)activité professionnelle, revenu, niveau d’éducation.’

researchers added certain socio-demographic variables to the social status variables: age, gender, ethnic origin. (...) Finally, religious orientation and family political socialisation would also promote commitment' (2009: 73-74)<sup>76</sup>.

Nonetheless, Emilie van Haute rightly emphasises that people who have such kinds of resources do not necessarily participate in politics. She notes that this is particularly true and paradoxical in Western democracies: despite the economic development and the access to education that developed in the twentieth century in Western democracies, political participation has been declining for several decades, particularly since the 1990s.

- Social psychological model

Scholars advocating the social psychological model argue that political participation is correlated with people's psychological features/characteristics and/or social behaviour. Emilie van Haute has collected the various social and psychological characteristics that influence one's political participation:

- ‘- interest in public affairs,
- the feeling of civic duty,
- the feeling of internal and external political effectiveness,
- general support for the political system (belief in democracy, confidence in institutions, satisfaction),
- party identification or identification with a group.’ (2009: 76-77).

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<sup>76</sup> Original text in French: ‘les chercheurs ont ajouté aux variables de statut social certaines variables sociodémographiques : âge, genre, origine ethnique. (...) Enfin, l’orientation religieuse et la socialisation politique familiale favoriseraient aussi l’engagement’.

She adds: ‘Certain psychological traits favor participation: sociability, extroversion, dominance, authoritarianism, dogmatism. Conversely, other traits would be negatively correlated with participation: marginality, alienation, mistrust, cynicism.’ (2009: 76-77)<sup>77</sup>.

In the same way as the resource model, the social psychological model has some limits. Van Haute quotes Paul Whiteley and Patrick Seyd to strengthen her point: ‘a key problem with social psychological models is that they pay no attention to the rationality of decision making’ (2009: 78). This leads us to focus on the rational choice model.

- Rational choice model

With regard to that model of political participation, Emilie van Haute notes:

‘According to the utilitarian school (Hume, Bentham, Mill), (the stream of rational choice theories) is characterised by the postulate of a rationality of individuals, in search of self-interest. From this perspective, a rational person seeks to maximise their expected utility, regardless of the utility of others.’ (2009: 78)<sup>78</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> Original text in French: ‘D’une part, les auteurs ont relié positivement la participation à plusieurs types d’attitudes, dont notamment :

- l’intérêt pour la chose publique,
- le sentiment de devoir civique,
- le sentiment d’efficacité politique interne et externe,
- le soutien général au système politique (croyance en la démocratie, confiance envers les institutions, satisfaction),
- l’identification partisane ou l’identification à un groupe.

Certains traits psychologiques favoriseraient la participation : sociabilité, extraversion, dominance, autoritarisme, dogmatisme. A l’inverse, d’autres traits seraient négativement corrélés à la participation : marginalité, aliénation, méfiance, cynisme.’

<sup>78</sup> Original text in French: ‘Suivant l’école utilitariste (Hume, Bentham, Mill), (le courant des théories du choix rationnel) se caractérise par le postulat d’une rationalité des individus, à la recherche de l’intérêt personnel. Dans cette optique, une personne rationnelle cherche à maximiser son utilité individuelle attendue (*expected utility maximization*), indépendamment de l’utilité des autres.’ Van Haute refers to François Chazel: Chazel, F. (1986). ‘Individualisme, mobilisation et action collective’, in Birnbaum, P., and Leca, J. (dir.), *Sur l’individualisme*, Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale de science politique, 245.

In other words, one participates in order to get personal benefits. That model was first applied to the notion of participation by Anthony Downs in the 1960s<sup>79</sup>. Van Haute says that Mancur Olson's book *The Logic of Collective Action*<sup>80</sup> applied it to 'all forms of engagement' (2009: 79).

➤ Olson's theory of collective action

In the 1960s, economist Mancur Olson analysed the costs and benefits that people consider before choosing to join a group or an organisation. He focused particularly on unions and associations like businesses and professional associations. For him, collective action is hard to achieve for large groups because it implies that some people in these groups are 'free riders' (Olson, 1965). In other words, in large groups, individuals can be either active or passive: the latter rely on the former's efforts. Olson argues that the costs of collective action are superior to the benefits that people can get from reaching a common good. Common interests are smaller than individual interests. Therefore, individuals are discouraged to take part in the collective action. As Emilie van Haute notes, Olson's theory is often criticised for not taking account of other types of incentives. 'Therefore, the researchers amend the theory by insisting on other motivations, intangible or symbolic.' (2009 : 111)<sup>81</sup>.

➤ Peter B. Clark and James Q. Wilson

This is the case of Peter B. Clark and James Q. Wilson with their incentives model. Incentives are rewards or benefits for the people who participate. Clark and Wilson identify three types of incentives for political participation: 'material', 'solidary', and 'purposive' (Wilson, 1973). For James Q. Wilson, incentives 'may be tangible or intangible and include

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<sup>79</sup> See Downs, A. (1957). *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper & Row.

<sup>80</sup> Olson, M. (1965). *The Logic of Collective Action*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

<sup>81</sup> Original text in French: 'Dès lors, les chercheurs amendent la théorie en insistant sur d'autres motifs, immatériels ou symboliques.'

any valued benefit, service, or opportunity in exchange for which an individual is willing to contribute time, effort, or resources to an organization.’ (1973: 31). In that sense, material incentives are tangible, while solidary and purposive incentives are intangible.

### *Material Incentives*

Wilson defines material incentives as follows:

‘These are tangible rewards: money, or things and services readily priced in monetary terms. They include wages and salaries, fringe benefits, reductions in taxes, changes in tariff levels, improvements in property values, discounts on various commodities and services, and personal services and gifts for which one would otherwise have to pay (and for which one *could* pay in a market).’ (1973: 33)<sup>82</sup>.

As shown in the next chapter, I based a part of my interview and survey questions on that definition. I notably aimed at finding whether young Scottish people get involved with political parties for financial and career reasons.

### *Solidary Incentives*

Clark and Wilson distinguish between specific solidary incentives, on the one hand, and collective solidary incentives, on the other. Both types are intangible benefits. The first type corresponds to ‘intangible rewards arising out of the act of associating that can be given to, or withheld from, specific individuals. Indeed, their value usually depends on the fact that some persons *are* excluded from their enjoyment.’ (1973: 33-34)<sup>83</sup>. As examples of selective solidary

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<sup>82</sup> Italics in the original text.

<sup>83</sup> Italics in the original text.

incentives, Wilson mentions ‘offices, honors, and deference’ (1973: 34). In other words, specific solidary incentives can be regarded as individual benefits that people can get from participating. On the other hand, collective solidary incentives are ‘intangible rewards created by the act of associating that must be enjoyed by a group if they are to be enjoyed by anyone. They have some of the characteristics of what economists call a “public good” in that particular individuals within the organization cannot be excluded from their benefit.’ (1973: 34). This echoes Olson’s theory on collective action and its paradox. As examples of collective solidary incentives, Wilson mentions ‘the fun and conviviality of coming together, the sense of group membership or exclusiveness, and such collective status or esteem as the group as a whole may enjoy.’ (1973: 34). In that sense, the following chapter demonstrates that Scottish independence can be considered a collective solidary incentive for SNP youth party membership. Young Scots engage in the party to demand independence, which implies a sense of national belonging to Scotland rather than the rest of the UK. Also, once they are SNP members, the sense of belonging to a party whose members share centre-left views like social justice, fairness and equality, can be considered a collective solidary incentive too. This is also true of the fact that they are part of a political party’s youth faction: by being YSI and SNP Students members, they probably have a strong sense of belonging to Scottish youth and to the young people involved in the political life of their nation. Also, as will be shown, a majority of them think that the SNP defends young people’s interests very well.

### *Purposive Incentives*

For Clark and Wilson, purposive incentives are:

‘intangible rewards that derive from the sense of satisfaction of having contributed to the attainment of a worthwhile cause. They depend crucially

on the stated objectives of the organization and are general in that any member of such a group can derive some satisfaction from group efforts even if he himself contributed nothing but his name.’ (1973: 34).

Wilson specifies that they ‘derive from demands for the enactment of a certain law, the adoption of certain practices, or the alteration of certain institutions for the benefit of a larger public’ (1973: 35). As examples of purposive incentives, Wilson cites ‘protests against corruption or injustice, a desire for conservation and beautification of the environment, a call for revolution or patriotism’ (1973: 35). Amongst forms of political participation, the fight for issues like ecology were already mentioned by this thesis. Given that Wilson talks about the environment as a cause that can be regarded as a purposive incentive, ecology (see Pickard, 2019) can thus be seen as a purposive incentive that pushes the young to make their voices heard. With regard to Scotland, independence can easily be considered as a purposive incentive for joining the SNP as it has been the main goal of the party for decades.

➤ Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley

Whiteley and Seyd’s model is partly based on the incentives identified by Clark and Wilson. In this regard, Whiteley and Seyd’s outcome incentives correspond to Clark and Wilson’s material incentives. Process incentives echo Clark and Wilson’s solidary incentives. Whiteley and Seyd also identify ideological incentives. Their theory is examined in further detail later in this thesis.

The exploration of SNP youth membership will build partly on Clark and Wilson and Seyd and Whiteley’s theories about political participation at the micro level.

## **b) Political Participation as a Dependent Variable: Meso Level**

As implied by its name, the meso level is in-between the micro and macro levels. Namely, it corresponds to agents like organisations, which are in between society and individuals. Such organisations or agents are, for instance, the media. As vehicles for political information, it can be said that they play a part in people's participation or non-participation, depending on the way they convey information and the type of information they give. In that sense, according to Emilie van Haute, 'the role of the media as agents of mobilisation is debated. Some authors postulate that they promote disengagement by relaying a cynical image of politics. Conversely, other research pinpoints a positive relationship between media exposure and political participation' (2009: 85)<sup>84</sup>. Political parties are also part of the organisations to be found at the meso level. This is why, besides focusing on the micro level of party membership, this thesis also takes account of the meso level. A section about youth party membership further down tackles the issue of recruitment of young people by political parties. In Chapter Two, I examine the relationship between the SNP and young people. I notably analyse the way the party addresses the young and its ability to recruit them. This research is particularly interesting as young people are usually known for their distance from parties. Emilie van Haute notes that 'Intermediary organisations would make it possible to stimulate the participation of certain categories of people who are a priori less inclined to get involved because of their individual characteristics. This was already highlighted by Verba, Nie and Kim' (2009: 84-85)<sup>85</sup>. This may concern people with poor financial and educational resources, but also the young, given the common views on youth political apathy. Yet, as shown further down, political parties tend to

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<sup>84</sup> Original text in French: 'le rôle des médias en tant qu'agents de mobilisation fait débat. Certains auteurs postulent qu'ils favorisent le désengagement en relayant une image cynique de la politique. A l'inverse, d'autres recherches épinglent une relation positive entre exposition aux médias et participation politique'.

<sup>85</sup> Original text in French: 'Les organisations intermédiaires permettraient de stimuler la participation de certaines catégories de personnes a priori moins enclines à s'investir de par leurs caractéristiques individuelles. C'est ce qui avait déjà été mis en évidence par Verba, Nie et Kim'.



be quite unsuccessful in recruiting young people. Hence the need to explore the relatively important engagement of young Scots in the SNP.

### **c) Political Participation as a Dependent Variable: Macro Level**

As said earlier, the macro level is composed of agents like society, societal structures, states and governments. It notably compares political participation in different nations and political regimes. Theories on political participation at the macro level enhance the role played by societal changes. First, modernisation was pointed out by scholars like Seymour Martin Lipset<sup>86</sup>. For this school of thought, modernisation and everything it implies, like economic growth and development, industrialisation, urbanisation, and access to education, influences people's political participation. A second school of thought originates from institutionalism. 'It emphasises the importance of the influence of state structure and institutions on political participation (global, national, regional and local structure)' (van Haute, 2009: 88)<sup>87</sup>. A third group of scholars focuses upon social structures in order to explain political participation. This is the case of participation through social movements. Those theories partly come from Mancur Olson's theory of collective action. A fourth group of researchers emphasise the role played by political culture. Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba as well as Robert Putnam are part of this group (van Haute, 2009).

If we consider that political events occurring in a national context belong to the macro level of political participation, then, it can be said that this thesis takes account of the macro level of analysis so as to explain youth party membership in Scotland. As demonstrated further

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<sup>86</sup> See Lipset, S. M. (1960). *Political Man: The Social Basis of Politics*. New York : Doubleday.

<sup>87</sup> Original text in French: 'Elle met l'accent sur l'importance de l'influence de la structure et des institutions des Etats sur la participation politique (structure globale, nationale, régionale et locale)'.

down, the referendum on Scottish independence in 2014, as well as the EU referendum in 2016, seem to have played a key role in young Scottish people's joining the SNP.

To conclude, as the present work explains young Scottish people's engagement in the SNP, thus tries to find out why a young Scottish person decides, at a given moment of time, to become a member of the SNP, it studies their party membership as a dependent variable, from an individual, micro perspective. Though the main focus is on the micro level, with regard to the question of Scottish independence, notably the 2014 referendum, this research also takes account of macro considerations. As shown further down, it insists on the importance of political events in a national context when it comes to youth political participation and party membership. It takes account of the meso level as well through the analysis of the relationship between young people and the SNP, and the party's ability to recruit them.

It should be noted that, in Emilie van Haute's words, this research is both descriptive and analytical (2009): it examines both young SNP members' profiles – the descriptive study – and their engagement in the party as well as their motivations to join – the analytical study.

As the present thesis examines young Scottish people's involvement with the SNP, it is necessary to review the literature on youth political participation.

#### **4) Young People's Political Participation**

##### **a) Theses of Youth Political Apathy and Alienation**

Whether in society as a whole or in the literature on political participation, young people are usually viewed as disinterested in politics. William Cross and Lisa Young even speak of 'the dearth of young people' (Cross and Young, 2008: 1) in politics. Young people do not often vote for elections and do not trust politicians. In that sense, Cross and Young point out that in

Western democracies, young people ‘are voting in dramatically lower numbers and few are joining parties.’ (2008: 2).

Sarah Pickard notes that ‘Apathy among young people was the main explanation given for their lower electoral participation rates at the turn of the millennium. It emerged from quantitative studies of political participation in Political Science’ (Pickard, 2019: 244). She notably refers to the work of Parry et al. (1992), Pirie and Worcester<sup>88</sup>, Park<sup>89</sup>, and Kimberlee (2002). Theories of youth political apathy concentrate on the low electoral rates and party membership amongst the young. As Pickard shows, such theories are based on the idea of young people’s individualised habits. According to these ideas, young people are not motivated to participate because they are supposedly ego-centric. As Pickard notes, such views are often conveyed by the mainstream media: ‘Contemporary versions disparagingly make simplifications and emphasise the role of generations and social media, i.e. so-called “Millennials” or “the selfie generation” are said to be too self-interested, self-absorbed and/or superficial to vote’ (2019: 244). Hence the thesis of youth political apathy that derives from what Pickard calls the ‘supposed universal traits of their generation’ (2019: 244).

As for theories of political alienation amongst the young, they focus upon political systems and organisations (macro level of analysis) as responsible for young people’s disinterest in politics. Theories of youth political alienation were developed by researchers like Richard Kimberlee (2002), Matt Henn et al. (2002, 2005, 2018), David Marsh et al. (2007), and James Sloam (2007, 2012). For them, because of the political system, young people do not trust politicians and political parties. Also, they feel that they do not hear them or not enough. In other words, they feel that politicians do not do enough for them.

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<sup>88</sup> See Pirie, M., and Worcester, R. (1998). *The Millennial Generation*. Adam Smith Institute/MORI, and Pirie, M., and Worcester, R. (2000). *The Big Turn-Off: Attitudes of Young People to Government, Citizenship and Community*. Adam Smith Institute.

<sup>89</sup> See Park, A. (2000). The Generation Game, in Jowell, R. et al. (eds), *British Social Attitudes. 17<sup>th</sup> Report. Focusing on Diversity*. Sage.

It has to be said that theories of youth political apathy do not always go hand in hand with those of alienation. Tellingly, Sarah Pickard notes:

‘Young people who do not vote are not necessarily politically apathetic, many are interested in political issues, but they feel a whole range of negative sentiments: skepticism, cynicism, dissatisfaction, disillusionment, distrust, disempowerment, disgust and under-representation or misrepresentation; they have low expectations, and a lack of faith in politicians and politics: they feel alienated.’ (2019: 245).

The literature on youth political participation is sharply divided between scholars who think that young people are not motivated to participate (apathetic), especially in elections and parties, as well as alienated from politics, on the one hand, and scholars who argue that they do participate but in new and/or non-traditional ways, on the other. I focus further down on the latter and their theories of youth participation, even of ‘youthquake’ (Henn et al., 2018).

### **b) The ‘complicated’ relationship between young people and political parties (Rainsford, 2014: 48)**

Research suggests that young people tend not to trust political parties. They distance themselves from such organisations as they generally think that they do not stand for them and do not tackle enough the issues faced by young people. As Emily Rainsford says, young people tend to see political parties as ‘remote, infantile and divisive in their approach to public debate and policy formulation’ (Rainsford, 2014: 48). She emphasises the ‘disconnection between young people and political parties’ (2014: 48) by showing, also, that young people seem to

suffer from a lack of recognition by older members in parties. Interestingly, she argues that political parties may be scared of young members' possible radicalism:

‘political parties remain reluctant to give young members too great a voice in party affairs, concerned that potentially radical policy proposals could alienate older voters (who are seen as more likely to vote). Young members are thus mainly consulted on youth issues rather than mainstream “adult” policy that might also affect young people (Mycock and Tonge, 2012)’<sup>90</sup> (2014: 49).

Is this idea confirmed by the study of the youth and student wings of the SNP? The answer to this question is given in Chapter Two, dealing with SNP youth membership.

### **c) Structure vs. Agency**

The fact that few young people make the decision to join a political party raises the question of the reasons for this. Some explanations have just been mentioned above. It is worth noting that the distance between young people and political parties appears to be a two-sided-problem: young people lack interest in politics and parties, while parties themselves seem to fail to attract young members. Hence the question of structure vs. agency. These concepts, which are widely used in sociology, mean that either society and social structures influence people's decisions and actions – structure – or people make their own decisions and act on their own – agency. They are important notions to focus on when analysing young party members.

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<sup>90</sup> See Mycock, A., and Tonge, J. (2012). The party politics of youth citizenship and democratic engagement. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 65(1), 138-161.

They are related to their motivations to join a party: do they become party members after having been asked to – structure – or do they make that decision voluntarily, on their own – agency? As Marc Hooghe and Dietlind Stolle point out in a book chapter published in 2005, ‘in practically all studies the focus is on agency’, while ‘participation acts are not just a matter of agency, but also of structure’ (Hooghe and Stolle, 2005: 43). They demonstrate it thanks to a study of city councillors in Belgium. With this survey, their aim was to discover if political parties’ youth wings are a path to political careers for their members when getting older. Their findings are detailed in the section dedicated to youth party membership studies further down. What is worth noting here is the role played by the supply side on the one hand – young people – and the demand side on the other hand – political parties – in young people’s decision to join parties. As Hooghe and Stolle ask in their chapter: ‘do young people refrain from joining party politics because they are no longer interested, or because nobody bothers to ask them any more?’ (2005: 44); ‘are parties still interested in young people?’ (2005: 45). Those questions are fundamental with regard to the issue of young people’s supposed political apathy, especially towards political parties. A part of this work’s second chapter is devoted to answering these questions through the case study of the SNP and their youth and student wings. The chapter notably analyses the relationship between the party and young Scottish people, and how they manage to attract them.

#### **d) Political Socialisation**

Philippe Braud defines political socialisation as a ‘process of inculcation of standards and values that organise perceptions by social agents of political power (vertical dimension)

and group (horizontal dimension)’ (Braud, 2002: 656)<sup>91</sup>. When it comes to young people in particular, school, relatives – family, friends, neighbours – and the media are the main vehicles for political socialisation. To be more specific, there are both environments where political socialisation takes place, and actors that play a role in this process. For instance, in school – environment – the teacher is an actor of socialisation. As Braud points out, besides the well-known environments where it happens, one should think of other, ‘more specific’ (2002: 262) places of political socialisation:

‘They do not concern the entire population and, when individuals are an integral part, the voluntary membership element plays a greater role. Thus belonging to a religion, or to *political*, trade union, professional, cultural, sports *organisations*.’ (2002: 262)<sup>92</sup>.

If we apply Braud’s ideas to youth party membership, it can be said that young party members’ political socialisation was undoubtedly quite developed before joining – in other words, it influenced their decision to join<sup>93</sup> – and it develops even further as they are members of political organisations, namely vehicles for political socialisation.

Political socialisation implies that young people tend to have the same political views and attitudes as their parents – to take the example of the family as a socialisation agent. Even if this is not always the case – young people’s political participation can be influenced by that of their parents, but they can be members of parties whose ideologies and programmes are completely the opposite – political socialisation often goes hand in hand with a kind of

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<sup>91</sup> Original text in French: ‘processus d’inculcation des normes et valeurs qui organisent les perceptions par les agents sociaux du pouvoir politique (dimension verticale) et du groupe (dimension horizontale)’.

<sup>92</sup> Original text in French: ‘Ils ne concernent pas la population entière et, lorsque les individus en font partie intégrante, l’élément d’adhésion volontaire y joue un plus grand rôle. Ainsi de l’appartenance à une religion, ou encore à des *organisations politiques*, syndicales, professionnelles, culturelles, sportives.’ My emphasis.

<sup>93</sup> The role played by socialisation in young people’s decision to join political parties will be further explained in the review of the literature on youth party membership.

reproduction of political views and attitudes by young people. Even, as Braud notes, if there is some ‘interaction between the various socialisation environments’<sup>94</sup> or a ‘convergence of signals, it is then that the probability of reproduction becomes the strongest’<sup>95</sup> (2002: 265). The following chapter about young Scottish people’s engagement in the SNP examines this concept of political socialisation by shedding light on the people and environments that play a part in their decision to join the party.

In an article published in 2014, Jan Eichhorn analysed the relationship between political socialisation amongst 14 to 17-year-old Scottish people and their vote in the independence referendum. Interestingly, he concluded that socialisation pushed young Scots to go to polling stations but that it did not influence their vote for either Scottish independence or remaining in the UK. According to his findings, debating and discussing about the referendum with relatives, friends and classmates enabled them to get information, but it did not influence their vote. Therefore, without questioning the importance of socialisation, Eichhorn showed that it played a part in encouraging young people to go to vote rather than in making them choose or refuse independence. Chapter Two offers a comparison between his findings and mine, while taking account of the fact that voting and joining a political party are distinct things.

In Scotland, Jan Eichhorn is one of the scholars that researched 16 and 17-year-old voters in the 2014 independence referendum most extensively. As suggested in section f) below, lowering the voting age undoubtedly played a role in the mobilisation of young people during that major political event in the country.

## **e) New Forms of Participation**

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<sup>94</sup> Original text in French: ‘interaction entre les divers milieux de socialisation’.

<sup>95</sup> Original text in French: ‘convergence des signaux, c’est alors que la probabilité de reproduction devient la plus forte’.



As said before, the young tend to favour new, less formal, ways to participate. In this regard, William Cross and Lisa Young refer to Inglehart and Nevitte's<sup>96</sup> argument 'that younger, post materialist, voters reject hierarchical forms of political participation but do not reject, or lack interest in, politics per se.' (Cross and Young, 2008: 3). A growing number of scholars agree that there are new types of political engagement on behalf of young people. The literature shows that they participate in social movements and through the internet and social media (Gallant, 2017; Loader, 2014; Pickard, 2015, 2019). Emily Rainsford argues that 'young people are especially attracted to such alternative forms of political activism because they are more interested in *doing*<sup>97</sup> politics (e.g. Marsh et al, 2007; Bang, 2004).' (Rainsford, 2014: 48). In this regard, Sarah Pickard coined a phrase to refer to these new ways of participating: 'DIO politics', namely 'Do-It-Ourselves' politics or political participation (Pickard, 2019: 375).

About the internet and social media in particular, it seems logical that young people favour them. Indeed, they are the generation that is the most concerned about and comfortable with using the internet and social media, as they grew up, to a certain extent, along with these new technologies. Therefore, this is not by chance that Sarah Pickard speaks of Twitter as 'the preferred form of social media among most youth wings' (2015: 7) of political parties. In this regard, the analysis of young SNP members' social media profiles as well as YSI and SNP Students' accounts is part of my research methodology (see Chapters Two and Four).

## **f) Vote at 16: the Scottish Example**

As was said in the introduction of this thesis, lowering the voting age for the independence referendum in Scotland in 2014 has shown that young people were not that

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<sup>96</sup> See Inglehart, R. (1990). *Cultural Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, and Nevitte, N. (1996). *The Decline of Deference: Canadian Value Change in cross-National Perspective*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press.

<sup>97</sup> Italics in the original text.

disinterested in politics. On the contrary, it demonstrated that they could participate in politics and, even more than participate, they could get *interested* in politics. Indeed, during the whole referendum campaign and for the vote itself, many young Scottish people were mobilised. Whether on the streets, in organisations like political parties and the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP), or on social media, a lot of young Scots seemed to discover a new facet of politics. Some even got passionate about it.

The lowering of the minimum voting age was supported by the SNP, the Scottish Labour Party and Scottish Liberal Democrats. The Scottish Independence Referendum (Franchise) Act was voted in Holyrood on August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Nicola Sturgeon, who was Deputy First Minister at the time, pressed for the lowering of the voting age to 16. She said:

‘No one has a bigger stake in the future of our country than today’s young people and it is only right that they are able to have a say in the most important vote to be held in Scotland for three centuries. In next year’s referendum, Scotland’s 16 and 17-year-olds will be given the opportunity to shape their country’s path by choosing what type of country they want Scotland to be. We want to make sure that our young people have the opportunity to engage in Scotland’s democratic process. We want to give them the right to voice their views, freely and confidently, on the matters that affect them.’  
(Sturgeon, 2013a).

She added that the Scottish government aimed at ‘(p)utting younger voters on an equal footing with older voters’ (Sturgeon, 2013a).

On September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014, 75 per cent of young people aged 16 and 17 that were registered to vote went to the polls. Turnout amongst the 18 to 24-year-old people was 54 per

cent, and that of people aged between 25 and 34 was 72 per cent<sup>98</sup>. These are amazing turnouts when compared with those of young people in elections, for example. In that sense, it goes against the theory of political youth apathy detailed above. And, again, it raises the following question: why were so many young people involved with that political event?

At the University of Edinburgh, social scientist Jan Eichhorn explored the impact of the referendum on young people, especially with regard to the lowering of the minimum voting age (Eichhorn, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018). As Sarah Pickard notes: in the report he submitted ‘for the *Scottish Elections (Reduction of Voting Age) Bill*, it is stated that increased levels of political engagement among young voters in the 2014 Scottish referendum “have outlasted the referendum itself and apply to the general election context” in the UK (Eichhorn, 2015, p.2).’ (Pickard, 2019: 286). In that sense, it can be said that the lowering of the minimum voting age for the Scottish referendum may inspire other governments. As shown in Chapter Two, a significant proportion of the young party members I interviewed talked about lowering of the voting age to 16 for IndyRef as something that helped them get interested and involved in politics. An even larger proportion of the sample declared that they engaged in politics and became party members right at the time of the referendum or in its aftermath (see Chapter Two).

Lowering the minimum voting age in Scotland is a fundamental event which deserves much attention when it comes to researching youth political participation. However, given that the present thesis focuses on another specific aspect of young people’s participation, which is party membership, I choose not to review the literature on vote at 16 in Scotland in further detail.

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<sup>98</sup> ICM. (2014). *Scottish Independence Referendum Research. Post-polling Day Opinion Research Report*. Prepared by ICM Research on Behalf of the Electoral Commission.

## Conclusions

Citizens can participate in the political life of the society they live in either in formal – voting in elections, joining a party, canvassing – or informal ways – like demonstrations, boycotts, strikes. Despite so many ways of participating, the literature on political participation sheds light on its decline in Western democracies for several decades. As was suggested, some scholars argue against the decline thesis by demonstrating that people still participate today, but in different ways. New forms of participation include engagement in social movements, the fight for issues like ecology, feminism, LGBT rights, and participation via social media. Thus, to a certain extent, people probably do not participate less, but they participate differently. Whether they participate less or not, the point of the present research is to analyse one aspect of their participation: the reasons why they participate.

As was shown, political participation can be explained at three levels: micro (the individual), meso (political organisations like parties), and macro (society, institutions). Also, it can be analysed as either a dependent or an independent variable: identified factors encourage people to participate, or political participation has some influence on people's lives. As the present thesis aims at understanding why young Scots join the SNP, I consider political participation as a dependent variable.

Also, I highlighted that it is commonly viewed that young people are disinterested in politics, or that they are what is usually called politically 'apathetic'. They are known for their distrust in political parties and politicians, as well as for thinking that they do not stand for their interests and do not make their voice be heard enough. Generally speaking, the young do not seem to be interested in political issues. Actually, as Emily Rainsford rightly argues, their relationship with political parties is 'complicated' (2014: 48). Scholars agree to say that they are underrepresented in parties as few young people make the decision to become party members. Is this due to a lack of personal motivations, or to political parties that fail to recruit

them? Are they not exposed to politics enough during their childhood and teenage years? In other words, is political socialisation too poor to make parties attractive for young people? In the face of the thesis on youth apathy regarding politics, some scholars argue that the young do participate, but not in traditional ways. They suggest that, instead of voting in elections, supporting a party or a politician, or joining a party, they take part in social movements – very often single-issue social movements – and tend to use social media to share their opinions and have debates. Some scholars add that if young people were heard enough, they would probably participate more. An illustration of this is the lowering of the voting age to 16 in Scotland: for the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, a huge proportion of the young Scots who were 16 and 17, and thus allowed to vote, went to the polling stations.

The present research aims at exploring one aspect of youth political participation: party membership. Before detailing the literature on youth party membership and the reasons why the young join organisations like political parties, the next section examines the theories of party membership regardless of members' age.

## **II) Party Membership: Why do People Join Political Parties?**

### **1) The Decline of Party Membership in Western Democracies?**

*'[P]arty membership is very much a minority sport'* —Bale, Webb and Poletti (2019: 74)

#### **a) Party Membership Decline since the 1950s**

As Tim Bale, Paul Webb and Monica Poletti note in their book (Bale et al., 2019), in 1964 '(a)round 9 per cent of voters were individual party members, but only 1 per cent were by

2015.’ (2019: 74). After its golden age in the early 1950s, party membership in Western democracies started declining. Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley (1992) explain that decline with an increasing number of pressure groups in the 1950s and 1960s, which tended to tackle one issue in particular. They also underline the evolution of people’s lifestyles. They notably point out ‘people’s greater concern with individual life-style’ (1992: 18). In that sense, it is understandable that people devote less time to involvement with politics, especially political parties. Finally, they suggest that political disillusion is also responsible for this decline.

Tim Bale, Paul Webb and Monica Poletti have also tried to account for the decline of party membership in Britain. They base their arguments on issues affecting both the demand side – political parties – and the supply side – individuals. They argue that on the demand side, parties which are already well established probably make less effort to appeal to new members as they are large organisations and do not necessarily need more members to be able to get funding and win elections (2019: 9). On the supply side, Bale, Webb and Poletti highlight major socio-economic and cultural changes. For them, such changes led people to identify less and less with political parties and their ideologies – ‘party dealignment’ (2019: 9) in reference to Russell J. Dalton and Martin Wattenberg’s work<sup>99</sup> – and to a decline of traditional institutions that favoured party identification, notably ‘trade unions’ (2019: 9) and the Church. The scholars also argue that those socio-economic and cultural changes paved the way for new types of, and more numerous, leisure activities, which made party membership less attractive. Besides, as Seyd and Whiteley showed, party membership competed with the appearance of pressure groups, notably single-issue groups. Bale, Webb and Poletti point out that social media played a part in this development: through social media, people can make their voices easily heard, which makes social media a vehicle for a wide variety of opinions, sometimes questioning

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<sup>99</sup> Dalton, R.J., and Wattenberg, M. (2000). *Parties Without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

‘what used to be taken for granted’ (2019: 9). Also, like Seyd and Whiteley, they argue that disillusion with politics and a lack of trust in politicians account for the party membership decline in Britain. What is more, they underline the weakening of ideological incentives. For them, this might be due to ‘a widespread perception that ideological and policy differences between the major party alternatives had narrowed’ (2019: 85). In other words, people may think that their ideas are equally defended by political parties and non-political movements or organisations. Finally, they suggest that party membership has been declining in the UK because of the weakening of the ‘social and leisure functions’ of political parties. They highlight the decline of clubs and associations related to parties. They notably mention the decline of the Conservative Party’s youth wing:

‘the erosion of Conservative youth organization has been a major component of the declining social function of parties in Britain. The once legendary “marriage bureau” for the sons and daughters of the middle class comprised as many as 170,000 Young Conservatives in 1951 but fewer than 8,000 by the 1990s.’ (2019: 86).

The figures speak for themselves. If, as Bale, Webb and Poletti suggest, the decline of youth factions may partly account for the decline of party membership as a whole in Britain, then, studying young people’s party membership – their motivations to join, especially – appears, once more, as relevant and necessary.

## **b) Recent Rise in Party Membership in some British Political Parties**

Despite the identified decline in political party membership highlighted by a huge majority of scholars across the world, it is worth noting that some political parties recently saw the numbers of their members rise in a significant way. That is particularly the case in the United Kingdom, in a party which is the main focus of my research: the Scottish National Party.

Bale, Webb and Poletti have underlined that rise in their recent work about political party members. They analysed data from the British Election Study as well as surveys which they carried out, by focusing mainly on the Labour Party, the SNP and UKIP. They identify four main reasons for this rise in party membership. First, they explain it thanks to the “relative deprivation theory” – the idea that people join movements advocating for change in order to acquire something (such as status, financial security, life chances) which others possess but which they believe they are somehow entitled to as well.’ (2019: 87). Their major finding is that people who joined the Labour Party for the first time after the 2015 general election, tended to feel such a sense of deprivation. They note that ‘First-time joiners were less educated, less likely to work in high-status occupations and had incomes well below those of existing or returning members.’ (2019: 87). They argue that the party of Jeremy Corbyn represented hope for these first-time joiners. The three scholars identify ideology as another key element explaining the rise in membership in certain British political parties. This is particularly the case with former members that re-joined the party in 2015 and afterwards. According to Bale, Webb and Poletti’s findings, these ‘returning members’ (2019: 88) are more radical than existing members and new ones when it comes to ideology: ‘people who had previously been Labour members but left in protest against what they saw as the neo-liberalism and the war-mongering of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown (...) were significantly more left-wing and hostile to capitalism’ (2019: 88). Then, Bale, Webb and Poletti identify people’s disillusionment with ‘politics as usual’ (2019: 88) as a third reason for the rise in the membership of the Labour Party. They say that with Corbyn at its head, the party started to be seen as a more democratic



machine in the sense that members are getting more included in the decision-making process and the policy-making of the party.

When it comes to the rise in party membership numbers, Bale, Webb and Poletti also underline the role played by ‘[i]nter-party dynamics’ (2019: 89). For them, some parties gain members thanks to the fact that these members come from another party. The scholars give the example of the surge in the membership of the Green Party in 2015 – especially in England and Wales – thanks to people coming from Labour and the Liberal Democrats. Finally, they highlight political events like leadership contests and national votes as another element which can explain the rise in the membership of political parties. They give the example of the General election in 2015 (2019: 87-88)<sup>100</sup>. More interestingly for us, they illustrate their point with political events like the Scottish independence and EU referenda in 2014 and 2016. As was demonstrated with figures in the introduction of my thesis, Bale, Webb and Poletti show that there has been an increase in the membership of parties like the SNP and, to a lesser extent, the Scottish Greens, in Scotland since the campaign for the independence referendum. Interestingly, using the terminology of Paul Whiteley and Patrick Seyd’s General Incentives Model (GIM)<sup>101</sup>, Bale, Webb and Poletti argue that the national political event which ScotRef was, is related to both a collective policy incentive and an expressive incentive:

‘The process of campaigning on the issue most fundamental to the SNP’s *raison d’être*<sup>102</sup> – and at a time when the party had shown itself to be a safe pair of hands in running the devolved administration north of the border – succeeded in mobilizing an extraordinarily positive feeling for many voters

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<sup>100</sup> The 2015 General election is not a point of concern in the present thesis, especially as the explanations given by Bale, Webb and Poletti do not concern Scotland.

<sup>101</sup> Whiteley and Seyd’s model shall be introduced further down.

In their book published in 2019, Bale, Webb and Poletti refer to ‘ideological, expressive and collective policy incentives’ (2019: 88).

<sup>102</sup> Italics in the original text.

in Scotland. It spoke to the patriotism and sense of national pride that many of them naturally felt, and transformed itself into a willingness to express this through campaigning for, and then membership of, the SNP. *The surge the party enjoyed, then, can be understood both in terms of a collective policy objective (national independence) and an expressive incentive (a badge of patriotic identity).*<sup>103</sup> (2019: 89).

The ideas conveyed by the last sentence are tested with the analysis of young SNP members' reasons for joining, in the following chapter. As demonstrated, the issue of independence and a sense of national identity do play a role in young Scots' decision to join the party. In the same way, the three scholars say that UKIP's membership rose thanks to the EU referendum campaign. They say that 'one can see [UKIP membership gains during the EU referendum campaign] as driven, in part, by a collective policy incentive (Brexit) and, in part, by an expressive motivation (a signifier of national identity).' (2019: 89). Then, according to Bale, Webb and Poletti, collective issues<sup>104</sup> – at stake during referendum votes – combined with a sense of collective identity – in those cases, national identity – can push the people that are concerned to engage in politics by getting involved with a political party whose position regarding such issues is clear (in favour or against). As the number of young SNP members has been increasing significantly since the 2014 independence referendum, again it is worth examining young Scots' engagement in the pro-independence party. Notably, it must be informative to analyse the possible role played by the 'collective policy objective' and the 'expressive incentive' from Seyd and Whiteley's GIM, mentioned by Bale, Webb and Poletti.

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<sup>103</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>104</sup> For example, the constitutional future of a nation.

Significantly, the three scholars conclude that ‘while *incentives* matter *when it comes to joining*, so, too, do *triggers*.’<sup>105</sup> (2019: 89). This idea is of the highest importance with regard to the present thesis. It suggests that besides individual resources and incentives, events like the Scottish independence referendum of 2014 can explain party membership. In that sense, a new model of party membership could be built and it could include major political events as a new independent variable influencing people’s decision to join a party. This idea will be developed in this thesis.

In Scotland in particular, Lynn Bennie, James Mitchell and Rob Johns researched the influence of referenda on political party membership thanks to the analysis of the relationship between the Scottish independence referendum in 2014 and the rise in the membership of the Scottish Green Party and the Scottish National Party in the aftermath of the 2014 vote<sup>106</sup>. They conclude that the independence referendum pushed Scottish people to get involved with the two pro-independence parties. This is also evidenced by statistics: the table below presents SNP membership numbers from 2011 to 2019.

<b>Year</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014 (Sept)</b>	<b>2014 (Dec)</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2018 (Apr)</b>	<b>2019</b>
<b>Members</b>	20,139	24,732	25,245	<b>25,642</b>	<b>93,045</b>	115,102	118,959	118,162	125,691

Table 1.1: SNP membership since 2011, from SNP annual reviews (The Electoral Commission)

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<sup>105</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>106</sup> See Bennie, L., Mitchell, J., and Johns, R. (2016). Recruited by referendum: party membership in the SNP and Scottish Greens, paper presented at the Political Studies Association annual conference, Brighton; Mitchell, J., Bennie, L., and Johns, R. (2017). Referendum as platform: the SNP and Scottish Green membership surge. *Political Insight*, 8(3), 16–19; and Bennie, L., Mitchell, J., and Johns, R. (2020). Parties, movements and the 2014 Scottish independence referendum: Explaining the post-referendum party membership surges. *Party Politics*. doi:10.1177/1354068820939799 The scholars posit that ‘the referendum created a unique platform for the parties to advertise their objectives on the constitution and other policy areas and thus attract new recruits.’ Similarly, as shall be demonstrated in this work, Scottish independence and SNP policy platform are two significant factors encouraging young people to join the SNP.

As the SNP review for 2017/2018 puts it: ‘Membership of the SNP surged dramatically in the wake of the 2014 referendum vote’ (The Electoral Commission, 2018: 3). Indeed, the figures shown in the table above speak for themselves: while there were 25,642 SNP members on the day of the referendum vote, in September 2014, there were 93,045 three months later. This increase of 67,403 members clearly indicates that the referendum of 2014 was a decisive factor in Scottish people’s joining the SNP. Namely, independence itself was a huge motivation. This is confirmed with my research about Young Scots for Independence and SNP Students, as demonstrated in the next chapter. What can already be said is that at the time of the referendum campaign and the vote, young people engaged in the party in the same way as the rest of the population: while 10 per cent of the SNP members were under the age of 30 in 2013, they made up 21 per cent in December 2014.

In the face of the rise in the SNP and Greens party membership, it is worth having a closer look at members’ motivations to join.

## **2) Motivations for Joining a Political Party**

Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley say that ‘few individual studies have been made of the people who join’ (2004: 356). They add: ‘We know very little about the nature of party membership at the micro level.’ (1992: 15). Hence the contribution of this thesis. It sheds light on young people’s individual motivations to join the SNP. In that sense, it complements the existing literature on party membership, when it comes to individual reasons for joining (see Chapter Two).

In the table below, Emilie van Haute introduces the possible analyses of party membership: either as an independent or a dependent variable, at either the macro, meso, or micro level.

Cause/Effect	Level		
	System	Organisation	Individual
Party membership (PM) as independent variable	(1) PM has consequences for the political system	(2) PM has consequences for the party organization	(3) PM has consequences for the individual party member
Party membership as dependent variable	<b>(4) National, social and political structures have consequences for PM</b>	<b>(5) Party organizations have consequences for PM</b>	<b>(6) Individual characteristics have consequences for PM</b>

Table 1.2: Knut Heidar’s theoretical framework about party membership, as found in van Haute (2009: 107)<sup>107</sup>

As my research aims at identifying the factors pushing young Scottish people to become SNP party members, in this work I focus on party membership as a dependent variable. I thus consider that there are elements that influence young Scots to become SNP members. So as to study the reasons why they do so, I focus on party membership as a dependent variable at the individual, micro level (number 6 in the table above), namely ‘the influence of individual characteristics on party membership’ (2010: 108)<sup>108</sup>. In addition, as was shown above with Tim Bale, Paul Webb and Monica Poletti, as well as Lynn Bennie, Rob Johns and James Mitchell, factors at the national level can influence people’s decision to join a political party. This was particularly the case with the Scottish independence referendum (that led to a surge in SNP and the Scottish Greens membership as was just said) and the EU referendum (that pushed people to become members of UKIP). That is why, in the present work, I also focus on party

<sup>107</sup> See Heidar, K. (1994). The Polymorphic Nature of Party Membership, *European Journal of Political Research*, 25(1), 63.

<sup>108</sup> Original text in French: ‘l’influence des caractéristiques individuelles sur la démarche d’adhésion’.

membership as a dependent variable at the macro level (number 4 in the table). Finally, as I said before, the issue of political parties' recruitment of young members pushed me to analyse the relationship between the SNP and young people, as well as their ability to recruit them. In that sense, the present work also includes an analysis at the meso level (number 5 in the table).

When it comes to the literature on party membership, Emilie van Haute notes that most of the studies are based on party membership as a dependent variable. At the individual, micro level, she focuses on three main models: the resource model, the socio-psychological model and incentives models.

### **a) Resources**

First, according to the resource model, there is a link between an individual's resources and their decision to become a party member as well as the degree of their activism in the party. Those resources are financial, but not only. They can also be social and demographic resources. Emilie van Haute says that according to the resource model, based on Verba, Schlozman and Brady's theory of political participation<sup>109</sup>,

‘socio-economic status, socio-professional category, social class, level of income, level of education, have been shown to be positively linked to the phenomenon of membership. Likewise, age, gender, ethnic origin, religious orientation, family political socialisation, or previous associative, union or political commitments would determine membership.’ (2009: 109)<sup>110</sup>.

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<sup>109</sup> See Verba, S., Schlozman, K.L., and Brady, H.E. (1995). *Voice and Equality. Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. New York: Harper and Row.

<sup>110</sup> Original text in French: ‘le statut socio-économique, la catégorie socioprofessionnelle, la classe sociale d’appartenance, le niveau de revenus, le niveau d’éducation, ont été démontrés comme positivement reliés au phénomène d’adhésion. De même, l’âge, le genre, l’origine ethnique, l’orientation religieuse, la socialisation

As noted by Laura Morales (2009: 70), attitudes and interests like an interest in politics also have to be considered resources playing a part in party membership. This is explained in the next section.

### **b) Attitudes**

Some theoretical models focus on people's behaviour, namely on socio-psychological influences on party membership. These include an interest in politics, in talking about politics, as well as trust in politicians and political parties, the belief that political action is efficient, and party identification (van Haute, 2009: 110). This is important for the present research, for young people are very often known for their political apathy. Therefore, in my interviews and online surveys, I asked questions related to attitudes towards politics. The results are presented in Chapter Two.

### **c) Incentives**

Last but not least, incentives models highlight the role of motivations in people's decision to become party members as well as in their activism. As Regina Weber (2018) puts it, incentives 'refer to the benefits that someone expects to gain from becoming a member.'<sup>111</sup> The most famous model which is systematically referred to in the literature on party membership is Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley's General Incentives Model (GIM). Other

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politique familiale, ou encore les engagements associatifs, syndicaux ou politiques antérieurs détermineraient l'adhésion.'

<sup>111</sup> An analysis of incentives, in the frame of political participation theories, was introduced earlier in this thesis. See notably Clark and Wilson (1961).

scholars have also tried to explain party membership and/or activism. In this regard, Emilie van Haute refers to the theses of Richard Rose, Yvon Bourdet and Daniel Gaxie.

Rose identifies two types of individual motivations: political and non-political. For him, people are incited to become party members for political reasons such as participating in the life of their party, as well as a sense of moral or civic duty (van Haute, 2009: 110). When it comes to non-political motivations, his idea is that people join parties for career reasons, because they want to be part of social activities, make new friends, or be recognised as important people and thus feel powerful (van Haute, 2009: 110).

As van Haute says, Bourdet's thesis is rather similar to that of Rose as it sheds light on 'the search for collective good, the lure of power, the family tradition, the overcoming of a group, the need to find an emotional community, camaraderie, the notion of combat, the quest for a role, recognition, responsibility<sup>112</sup>.' (2009: 110)<sup>113</sup>.

As for Daniel Gaxie's thesis, it is based on Mancur Olson's collective action theory. He applies it to political party membership and activism. For Gaxie, as people do not naturally want to spend time for the sake of a collective good, they need other motivations to engage in political parties. He suggests that people need both material and symbolic rewards. In his article 'Économie des partis et rétributions du militantisme' published in 1977, Gaxie focuses upon these two types of incentives. Emilie van Haute sums up all those various rewards:

'the provision of positions, which is supposed to provide material advantages (security, employment), but also symbolic rewards linked to the position of the job in the hierarchy (...). Participation in itself is supposed to provide

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<sup>112</sup> Bourdet, Y. (1976). *Qu'est-ce qui fait courir les militants ? Analyse sociologique des motivations et des comportements*, Paris: Stock, 129-140.

<sup>113</sup> Original text in French : 'la recherche du bien collectif, l'appât du pouvoir, la tradition familiale, le dépassement de groupe, le besoin de trouver une communauté affective, la camaraderie, la notion de combat, la quête d'un rôle, la reconnaissance, la responsabilité'.



symbolic rewards: esteem, affection, admiration, prestige, notability, consideration. It may make possible the acquisition of a certain culture, the compensation for school elimination mechanisms, the development of a capital of relationships, of a network of solidarities. It is supposed to allow the obtaining of certain responsibilities, the development of expertise, but also of camaraderie, identification with a group, the joys of victory, discussion, friendship, relaxation, leisure, contacts, a marriage market, the structuring of existence, integration into a micro-society<sup>114</sup>.' (2009: 112)<sup>115</sup>.

It is clear that for Gaxie, a lot of rewards – either material or symbolic – explain why people make the decision to join a political party. In this regard, for him, ideology is necessary but not enough. Significantly, he argues:

‘Attachment to the cause, the satisfaction of defending one's ideas, thus constitute rewards mechanisms for political activity in the same way as financial remuneration or obtaining a job. (...) However, *if attachment to a cause is indeed a factor of political mobilisation, it is much more doubtful that it is a unique and even determining element.*<sup>116</sup> The analysis of activism based on ideological motives alone presents several difficulties. It implies first of all that all the members master the ideology which justifies this cause

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<sup>114</sup> See Gaxie (1977).

<sup>115</sup> Original text in French: ‘la provision de postes, qui procurerait des avantages matériels (sécurité, emploi), mais également des gratifications symboliques liées à la place du poste dans la hiérarchie (...). La participation en elle-même procurerait des rémunérations symboliques : estime, affection, admiration, prestige, notabilité, considération. Elle rendrait possible l'acquisition d'une certaine culture, la compensation des mécanismes scolaires d'élimination, le développement d'un capital de relations, d'un réseau de solidarités. Elle permettrait l'obtention de certaines responsabilités, le développement d'une expertise, mais aussi d'une camaraderie, l'identification à un groupe, les joies de la victoire, de la discussion, de l'amitié, la détente, des loisirs, des contacts, un marché matrimonial, la structuration de l'existence, l'intégration à une microsociété’.

<sup>116</sup> My emphasis.

or, at the very least, that they briefly articulate the main concepts thus demonstrating a high level of politicisation. However, this hypothesis appears very fragile when we know that both politicisation and political competence are all the weaker the more individuals belong to categories located “lower” in the social hierarchy – the very ones in which the members of mass political parties are most frequently recruited’ (1977: 125-126)<sup>117</sup>.

This may be true of party membership generally speaking, but SNP membership is slightly different. Studies like those by Mitchell, Bennie and Johns, and the membership figures I presented earlier clearly indicate that the Scottish independence cause seems to be a key motivation for Scottish people to join the SNP and be active in the party. Thus, in the next chapter, without questioning Gaxie’s assumption, I suggest that it should be qualified. I agree with his idea that ideology alone cannot account for party membership and activism, but I disagree that it cannot be the main reason for joining and becoming an activist. Contrary to what he says, ideology or the defense of one cause in particular can be the main, key incentive for joining and being a party activist, depending for example on political events and national contexts. Daniel Gaxie goes on:

‘Contrary to the way in which parties present their action, it is therefore doubtful that party activity is explained solely by the will to defend a cause

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<sup>117</sup> Original text in French: ‘L’attachement à la cause, la satisfaction de défendre ses idées, constituent ainsi des mécanismes de rétribution de l’activité politique au même titre que la rémunération financière ou l’obtention d’un emploi. (...) Cependant, si l’attachement à une cause est bien un facteur de mobilisation politique, *il est beaucoup plus douteux qu’il en soit un élément unique et même déterminant*. L’analyse du militantisme à partir des seuls mobiles idéologiques présente en effet plusieurs difficultés. Elle suppose tout d’abord que tous les adhérents maîtrisent l’idéologie qui justifie cette cause ou, à tout le moins, qu’ils en articulent sommairement les principaux concepts faisant ainsi preuve d’un niveau élevé de politisation. Or cette hypothèse apparaît bien fragile quand on sait que la politisation comme la compétence politique sont d’autant plus faibles que les individus appartiennent à des catégories situées plus « bas » dans la hiérarchie sociale — celles-là même dans lesquelles les adhérents des partis de masse sont le plus fréquemment recrutés.’

or, more exactly, that this will be sufficient to support it without activism providing support at the same time as gratifications to those who devote themselves to it. Without denying that ideological motives can in some cases be a factor of political mobilisation, we can expect that other incentives will come to support and strengthen them and that those who devote their time and energy to a party will be compensated in one way or another.’ (1977: 128)<sup>118</sup>.

At the end of that paragraph, Gaxie qualifies his views. I agree that various incentives besides ideology should be considered when explaining party membership and activism, but again I insist that in the case of youth SNP membership, ideology related to independence seems to be the most important motivation for joining<sup>119</sup>.

As I said earlier, to me, the results of my study suggest that political events and national contexts as well as the ideology related to them can be considered key factors of party membership. With regard to political context, Gaxie rightly notes: ‘Membership also often appears to be linked to political factors, as evidenced by its increase in periods of politicisation – general strike, electoral campaign, political crisis.’ (1977: 143)<sup>120</sup>. As shown by the Scottish independence referendum in 2014 and the EU referendum in 2016, referenda can be added to this list of political events. This is demonstrated by studies like the one by Mitchell, Bennie and Johns (2016, 2017, 2020), and my own findings (see Chapter Two).

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<sup>118</sup> Original text in French: ‘Contrairement à la façon dont les partis présentent leur action, il est donc douteux que l’activité partisane s’explique uniquement par la volonté de défendre une cause ou, plus exactement, que cette volonté suffise à la soutenir sans que le militantisme ne fournisse en même temps des gratifications à ceux qui s’y adonnent. Sans nier que les mobiles idéologiques puissent être dans certains cas un facteur de mobilisation politique, on peut s’attendre à ce que d’autres incitations viennent les appuyer et les renforcer et que ceux qui consacrent leur temps et leur énergie à un parti soient rétribués d’une manière ou d’une autre’.

<sup>119</sup> Again, this is detailed in Chapter Two.

<sup>120</sup> Original text in French: ‘L’adhésion apparaît en outre souvent liée à des facteurs politiques comme en témoigne son accroissement dans les périodes de politisation — grève générale, campagne électorale, crise politique’.

If Gaxie does talk about political contexts, he nonetheless insists, again, on the need to explore other, more personal, incentives:

‘Even when membership appears to be linked to ideological motives or to “awareness”, as in cases where it varies closely with political circumstances or when it occurs following a strike or demonstration, *only the analysis of the rewards it provides*<sup>121</sup> can account for the concrete conditions in which it occurs. If in these situations the decisions to join a party result from very general ideological or social factors, the fact remains that the consideration of the non-collective advantages that the new members derive from their initiative remains necessary to explain the mediating mechanisms which made it possible these decisions as well as the conditions and limits within which they can be made.’ (1977: 144-145)<sup>122</sup>.

Even if the following chapter questions Gaxie’s argument that ideology or the defense of one cause in particular cannot be viewed as the main motivation for joining a party, it nonetheless confirms that other incentives play a (less important) role in young Scottish citizens’ decision to get involved in the SNP.

As said at the beginning of this section, the most famous model of incentives for the explanation of party membership was built by Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley through their studies of British parties. In this regard, Tim Bale, Paul Webb and Monica Poletti underline the

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<sup>121</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>122</sup> Original text in French: ‘Même quand l’adhésion paraît liée à des mobiles idéologiques ou à une « prise de conscience », comme dans les cas où elle varie étroitement avec la conjoncture politique ou lorsqu’elle survient à la suite d’une grève ou d’une manifestation, seule l’analyse des rémunérations qu’elle procure peut rendre compte des conditions concrètes dans lesquelles elle se produit. Si dans ces situations les décisions de se joindre à un parti résultent de facteurs idéologiques ou sociaux très généraux, il reste que la prise en considération des avantages non collectifs que les nouveaux adhérents retirent de leur initiative demeure nécessaire pour expliquer les mécanismes médiateurs qui ont permis ces décisions ainsi que les conditions et les limites dans lesquelles elles peuvent intervenir’.

major legacy of the General Incentives Model (GIM) when it comes to understanding why people join political parties.

### **3) Paul Whiteley and Patrick Seyd's General Incentives Model**

Inspired by the model of social scientists Peter B. Clark and James Q. Wilson, in the 1990s Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley built the General Incentives Model (GIM) including all the incentives for party membership that they could identify. In the same way as Clark and Wilson regarding political participation as a whole, they found out that people are encouraged to join political parties for material reasons (outcome incentives), social reasons (process incentives), and ideological reasons. They went further by categorising incentives according to their individual or collective characteristics: selective incentives and collective incentives (Whiteley, 1992).

Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley distinguish between two types of selective incentives: process and outcome incentives. 'Process incentives refer to motives for participating which are not linked to outcomes, but which derive from the process of participation itself.' (1992: 60). Seyd and Whiteley's selective process incentives thus echo Clark and Wilson's solidary incentives. For instance, individuals have fun thanks to party membership in the sense that they can make new friends and gather with people whose opinions are the same as theirs. 'Selective-outcome incentives refer to motives concerned with achieving certain goals in the political process, but goals which are private rather than collective. A potential member might harbour ambitions to become a local councilor, for example, or the local mayor, or even to be elected to the House of Commons.' (1992: 60). Selective outcome incentives therefore mean that individuals make the decision to join a party because of the material benefits they can take from it. It thus refers to Clark and Wilson's material incentives. For instance, some people join a

party in order to start a political career. In this regard, Seyd and Whiteley specify that selective incentives ‘are motives for the activist rather than the inactive member, since generally these benefits only accrue to those individuals who actively work for the party’ (1992: 60).

In terms of collective motivations, Seyd and Whiteley explain that they disagree with Olson’s theory of collective action in the sense that Olson does not take into account that individuals can be motivated by collective incentives to achieve collective goals. For him, individuals who want to achieve those goals are necessarily motivated by individual incentives. Seyd and Whiteley do argue for collective incentives for party membership. For them, they ‘are motivated by collective goods’ (1992: 62). They add that ‘because people think collectively rather than individually, in terms of “What can the party do?” rather than “What can I do?”, many will participate.’ (1992: 62). As demonstrated in Chapter Two, I agree with Seyd and Whiteley. ‘Any adequate theoretical account of collective action needs to consider situations where the individual “thinks” collectively rather than individually.’ (1992: 61). This is confirmed by my findings about the relationship between young Scots’ political party membership and the national question of Scottish independence: as shall be demonstrated, independence is the most common reason why young people join the SNP.

Bale, Webb and Poletti sum up the GIM of Seyd and Whiteley in a very informative and accurate manner. They list the reasons for joining a party according to that model:

- ‘The individual’s perception of the probability that participation in group activity through the party will achieve a desired collective outcome; in other words, the respondent’s sense of *group efficacy*’
- ‘The individual’s desired *collective policy outcome*, such as the introduction of a particular policy’

- ‘The individual’s assessment of the *selective outcome benefits* of activism, that is, material or career benefits’
- ‘The individual’s assessment of the *selective process benefits* of activism, that is, the intrinsic pleasure derived from involvement in political action’
- ‘The individual’s *altruistic* motivations for activism’
- ‘The individual’s perception of *social norm* incentives for activism, that is, the desire to conform with the behaviour and expectations of personal contacts’
- ‘The individual’s *expressive* or *affective* motivations for activism, such as the strength of commitment to or identification with a given party or leader’
- ‘The individual’s perception of the costs of activism; properly speaking, this is a *disincentive*’
- ‘The individual’s belief that individual acts can influence and have a real impact on political decisions, that is, the respondent’s sense of *personal efficacy*’
- ‘The individual’s *ideological* motivations for activism’ (2019: 78)<sup>123</sup>

With regard to collective policy incentives, they specify that they consist in supporting ‘the party’s general policies or a specific policy that mattered greatly’ and/or opposing ‘the policies of a rival party, or the power of a social or economic group’. Expressive incentives can be seen as either ‘an attachment to the party’s principles’ or ‘belief in the party’s leadership’. As said before, selective outcome incentives correspond to people’s wish to start a political career. Selective process incentives equal engaging ‘in activities in which’ individuals mix ‘with other like-minded individuals’. About social norm incentives, Bale, Webb and Poletti underline ‘the influence of family, friends or colleagues’, namely political socialisation. Finally, altruistic incentives consist in supporting ‘the democratic process’ (2019: 79). In order to explore youth

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<sup>123</sup> Italics in the original text.

membership of the SNP, a majority of the questions I asked during interviews and in the online survey were based on all these types of incentives. As shown in Chapter Two, the results of my research confirm Seyd and Whiteley's typology.

## **Conclusions**

Despite the general trend of party membership decline since the 1950s in Western democracies, some political parties observed a surge in their membership in the last years. This has been particularly the case of the Scottish National Party since the independence referendum in 2014. This raises two questions. While a majority of people do not make the decision to join a political party, on the contrary, why does a minority do so? Why did the Scottish referendum of 2014 push a rather significant number of Scottish people to join the SNP?

As we have seen, party membership can be explained with various variables, at the macro, meso, and micro levels. Be it resources, socio-psychological attitudes towards politics, or incentives, I built my research methodology on the party membership models that have been developed so far. Besides being based on these models of party membership as a whole, my interview and survey questions were inspired by youth party membership studies in particular.

### **III) Studies of Young Political Party Members**

#### **1) A Gap in the Literature on Party Membership**



Emilie van Haute notes that ‘until recently, scholars have not devoted much attention’ (2011: 2) to party membership. This might be due to the fact that party membership has been declining for a few decades now, as was shown previously.

Party membership among young people is even more under-studied. Indeed, very few studies about young people’s party membership have been done so far. This might be due to the fact that young people are commonly known for their political apathy, as was shown earlier in this work. Above all, as was said, young people tend to distrust politicians and, thus, political parties. In that sense, young party membership scholars emphasise the underrepresentation of young people in political parties. William Cross and Lisa Young quote Karina Pedersen et al: “‘The young are strongly underrepresented and the old strongly overrepresented among party members” (Pedersen et al, 2004: 372<sup>124</sup>)’ (Cross and Young, 2008: 2). In the SNP, for example, the average age of members in 2013 was 53 (The Electoral Commission, 2014: 4)<sup>125</sup>. Therefore, as William Cross and Lisa Young underline in their article, making young people want to join is a big challenge for political parties. This is discussed further in the next chapter, particularly with regard to the SNP and their relationship with young people.

Only four theoretical models of youth party membership have been developed so far. These models are quite recent: they date from 2002, 2008, 2009 and 2017. The present thesis thus aims at filling this gap in the literature. Before starting to analyse empirically the study I conducted amongst young SNP members – and, to a lesser extent, amongst the Scottish Young Conservatives and the Scottish Young Labour members – the next sections are devoted to the four models of young people’s political party membership which have been developed so far.

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<sup>124</sup> Pedersen, K. et al. (2004). Sleeping or Active Partners? Danish Party Members at the Turn of the Millenium. *Party Politics*, 10(4), 367-384.

<sup>125</sup> Since 2014, the annual reports of the SNP have not been indicating their members’ average age anymore.

## **2) Matthew Lamb's Study of Young Labour Members, Young Conservatives, and Non-members**

In his PhD thesis entitled 'Young Conservatives, Young Socialists, and the Great Youth Abstention: Youth Participation and Non-Participation in Political Parties', submitted to the University of Birmingham in 2002, Matthew Lamb explored youth party membership in Labour and the Conservative Party in the UK. He analysed the responses to a questionnaire that he sent out in 2000 and 2001 to young Labour and Conservative members, but also to young non-members. He collected 537 questionnaires from party members – 255 from the Conservatives and 282 from young Labour members – as well as 538 questionnaires from non-members. The respondents were aged from 18 to 25.

Matthew Lamb's youth party membership model is based on the General Incentives Model established by Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley. To be more specific, Lamb applied that model to young members of the Conservative Party and Labour, and focused on both young party members and non-members. In the questionnaire, young members could choose up to four reasons for joining, and put them in order of importance. Building on Seyd and Whiteley's GIM, Matthew Lamb classified their reasons for joining in seven categories: 'Altruistic concerns', 'Collective positive incentives', 'Collective negative incentives', 'Selective outcome incentives', 'Selective process incentives', 'Social norms', and 'Other' (2002: 180).

Lamb found out that 78.8 per cent of the members he surveyed were male, thus confirming the overrepresentation of men in political parties. Also, he noted that his sample was overall 'well-educated (86.6% had 'A' or 'AS' Levels or equivalent) and politically active (for example 75.9% had canvassed on behalf of a political issue whilst 70.4% had taken part in fund raising for a party or pressure group)' (2002: 321). Regarding their motivations to become party members, Lamb concluded that a majority of the sample had joined for altruistic concerns: 55.3 per cent designated them as the first reason for joining. For him, these incentives 'cover

those psychological and emotional attachments to a party that are sometimes thought to fall outside traditional rational choice theory' (2002: 182). Selective process incentives then came as the second, third and fourth most important reason to join (2002: 180). Lamb specified that selective process incentives include 'those motives that are derived from the process of participation itself. So, an individual may join a political party as they feel a desire to take part in the political process or simply because they believe that taking part would be a fun thing to do.' (2002: 184). Namely, selective process incentives can be defined as meeting new people and having fun through party membership. This clearly echoes both Seyd and Whiteley's selective process incentives and Clark and Wilson's solidary incentives.

Regarding young people's reasons for not joining a political party, Matthew Lamb identified nine categories: 'Cynicism disincentives', 'Apathy disincentives', 'Ignorance disincentives', 'Formative reasons', 'Social factors and norms', 'Time disincentives', 'Financial disincentives', 'Insufficient engagement disincentives', and 'Other' (2002: 188). In that sense, Lamb's model adds to the GIM built by Seyd and Whiteley: he accounted for young Labour members and Conservatives' reasons for both engaging and *not* engaging in a political party, while Seyd and Whiteley accounted for political participation alone. As Lamb rightly puts: 'Just as Seyd and Whiteley suggested a set of incentives, I believed that we could suggest a set of disincentives to as to more accurately explain both the costs and the benefits taken into account when making a decision on membership.' (2002: 188-189). In terms of disincentives discouraging young people to become Labour or Conservative Party members, apathy disincentives came first: 30.5 per cent of the non-members designated them as the most important reason for not joining. Apathy disincentives correspond to young people's disinterest in politics and political issues. Then, the respondents designated cynicism disincentives as the second, third and fourth most important reason amongst their first preferences (2002: 188). Cynicism disincentives refer to negative views about and/or distrust in political parties and

politicians, or a sense that young people are not heard enough by parties. So, the two most important reasons why young people refuse to get involved in political parties are apathy and cynicism. Lamb's findings are thus in line with the common view that young people tend not to be interested in politics, even to be quite distant from political issues, and to have negative opinions about parties and politicians. Nonetheless, as shown by his study, young people still become party members, even if this is not the majority of them. Hence the necessity of research studies like Lamb's and mine to understand why this small minority makes the decision to join.

Overall, Matthew Lamb concluded that there are different reasons why young people choose to join the Conservative Party or Labour, or not to join a political party. Tellingly, he said:

‘in making a decision as to participate or not, young people weigh up a whole package of differing and sometimes conflicting costs (disincentives) and benefits (incentives), rather than just a single reason and make their final decision based on whether incentives outweigh the disincentives’ (2002: 197).

To a certain extent, this might remind us of Gaxie's idea that a whole variety of rewards should be considered when explaining party membership and activism. Again, I agree with the idea that there is ‘a whole package’ (Lamb, 2002: 197) of incentives to be taken into account, but I disagree with Gaxie's idea that there would not be one main or key reason for joining (again, see the next chapter).

Lamb summed up young people's reasons for joining Labour or the Conservative Party as follows:

‘the average member is interested in politics and feels strong attachment to a particular political party. He or she believes in their party's policies, dislikes the policies of their political opponents and might be considering a career in politics. They may enjoy the process of participation and feel that participation is important, and finally they might have friends and relatives who are members.’ (2002: 198).

He specified that young Labour and Conservative members are characterised by one or several of these aspects.

As for people’s reasons for not joining a political party, he summed them up as follows:

‘to generalise slightly, the average non-member is cynical about politics and not particularly interested in the political process. The figures on participation show that this is not just restricted to 'formal' participation such as membership of a political party, but also covers general involvement in politics. He or she is not very well informed about politics and he or she feels that they are too young to get involved. The non-member may be concerned about being associated with something as unfashionable as politics and in any case doesn't have any friends who are members. S/he prefers to spend their spare time doing other activities rather than politics and are put off by the perceived cost of membership. Finally, even if the non-member does have an interest in politics, they see membership as a big commitment and, whilst they might identify with a party, they feel that they do not feel strongly enough to make that final commitment.’ (2002: 198).

In the same way as he did regarding the young party members, Lamb specified that non-members are characterised by one or several of these aspects. If we compare the two quotations above, it is interesting to note that the paragraph about young people's reasons for joining is shorter than the one about their reasons for not participating. This might be due to Lamb's writing, but it nonetheless suggests that there are more disincentives than incentives to encourage young people to become party members. This is in line with the underrepresentation of young people in political parties. In a way, if the numbers of young people in parties are that small, it might be because there are more disincentives that discourage from joining than incentives that push them to join. As the comparison between young SNP members and non-members is not the point of the present thesis, I will not explore this idea further. Yet, it would be worth analysing it through a future research project. The results could help confirm my findings about young SNP members' motivations.

Lamb's model is very interesting as it adds to Seyd and Whiteley's GIM. Focusing upon disincentives, and not incentives alone, was a relevant and telling idea. However, when it comes to incentives (the very point I am interested in), Lamb's model just builds on that of Seyd and Whiteley. This limit is challenged by the present study (see Chapter Two).

### **3) William Cross and Lisa Young's Analysis**

A second model which was developed to explain why young people join political parties is that of William Cross and Lisa Young (Cross and Young, 2008). Thanks to a study they carried out with the young members of three Canadian political parties between November 2003 and February 2004, they identified various factors influencing youth party membership. This was a mail survey. 39 per cent of the 3,962 young people aged from 18 to 25 that they had

contacted responded to the survey. They were part of the Liberals, New Democrats and Bloc Quebecois, overall centre-left parties.

Their survey interestingly focuses on two aspects. William Cross and Lisa Young shed light on both reasons why young people who are politically engaged decide to join a party and the differences between young party members and the young people who participate in politics without being party members. So as to determine the reasons why they engage in political parties (dependent variable), Cross and Young tested four independent variables: socio-demographics, socialisation, young people's use of media, and attitudes towards parties.

### **a) Socio-demographics**

In socio-demographical terms, the two scholars analysed gender representation and income.

They concluded that a majority of young party members were male (53 per cent), whereas a majority of non-members – especially young people in interest groups – were female (59 per cent) (2008: 9). This is in line with the literature on party membership which shows that more men than women are part of political parties. It also agrees with the literature ‘that suggests that women are more inclined to participate in non-political organizations (Schlozman et. al, 1994<sup>126</sup>), and that women are substantially more likely than men to believe that joining an interest group is a more effective way to achieve change (Howe and Northrup 2000, 95<sup>127</sup>)’ (Cross and Young, 2008: 9). Therefore, according to Cross and Young, young people are more likely to join a political party when they are male. As the next chapter of the present work shows, the data I collected for my study confirms this finding.

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<sup>126</sup> See Schlozman, K.L., Burns, N., and Verba, S. (1994). Gender and the Pathways to Participation: The Role of Resources. *Journal of Politics*, 56(4), 963-990.

<sup>127</sup> See Howe, P., and Northrup, D. (2000). *Strengthening Canadian Democracy: The Views of Canadians*. Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy.

When it comes to income, the two scholars interestingly found out that the differences between young party members and non-members were very slight. ‘One quarter of party members report family income of \$100,000 or greater compared with 27 per cent of non-members; similarly, 29 per cent of members’ families have income of less than \$50,000 compared with 23 per cent of non-members.’ (2008: 9). Family income is thus not decisive when it comes to young people’s decision to join a party, according to Cross and Young. This is tackled in the next chapter: when interviewing young SNP members, I asked them to what social class their parents belonged. Respondents to the online survey had to answer a similar question (see Chapter Two).

## **b) Socialisation**

William Cross and Lisa Young conclude that socialisation plays a major part in young people joining political parties. For them, it is the first factor of influence on youth party membership in terms of importance. They note that, for a majority of young party members, at least one of their parents has been or is a member of a political party too. Significantly, 62 per cent of them declared having at least one parent engaged in a party, whereas only 28.4 per cent of young non-party members said so (2008: 10). Additionally, 51.3 per cent of the young party members declared that at least one of their parents was politically involved while they were growing up. Only 26.7 per cent of non-party members said so (2008: 10). It is also worth noting that amongst young members, 50 per cent were recruited by a family member (2008: 11). Hence the relevance of socialisation’s role in the young people’s decision to join a political party. This is confirmed by another finding from Cross and Young’s study: young people are more likely to become party members when attending or having attended one or several civics classes related to politics in high school or at university. The two scholars say that young people who



‘ha[ve] taken a Canadian government or politics class (...) may thus be more amenable to party membership.’ (2008: 11). Cross and Young note that attending civic classes help young people see political parties as efficient organisations to change things, whether they are party members or not:

‘In both cohorts, those with civics education view parties as more effective in achieving change. Among non-party members, 64 per cent of those with civic education consider parties somewhat or very effective at achieving change compared with 56 per cent of those without civics. A similar pattern is found among party members with 84 per cent of those with civics education believing parties an effective way of achieving change compared with 75 per cent of those without civics.’ (2008: 12-13).

Thus, whether via their parents as party members or simply politically engaged, or at school or university, young Canadians’ decision to join political parties is largely influenced by socialisation according to William Cross and Lisa Young’s study. They focus particularly on the idea that young people are predisposed to get involved with a party when they are in contact with politics via their parents during childhood. Parental influence plays the most important part in this decision, but it seems that political socialisation through education is also decisive. In order to study youth SNP membership, I based a part of my research questions and hypotheses on Cross and Young’s findings. The next chapter shows that my findings correlate with those of the Canadian scholars.

### **c) Young People’s Use of the Media**

William Cross and Lisa Young conclude that another factor influences young people's decision to join: the media and the way young people use it to get informed. Tellingly, they say that while '(i)nformation is a critical resource in political activism', '[s]tudies of youth non-voting in Canada and elsewhere have demonstrated that younger generations pay less attention to politics than prior generations, as manifested through lower rates of news consumption' (2008: 13)<sup>128</sup>. The results of their survey show that young party members are more likely to use media to get political information than young people who are politically engaged but not involved with any party. This is interesting, but it has to be said that it is rather logical: young people who join parties tend logically to be more interested in politics – and therefore in getting political information – than those who are less or not interested in politics. The results of Cross and Young's study also show that '[p]arty members consume more news from all sources in a typical week, while non-members are considerably more reliant on the Internet for their news. While non-members get 29 per cent of their news from the Internet, party members get only 21 per cent of their news from this source.' (2008: 14). This is an interesting finding as it suggests that the internet seems to be a tool for political parties to help them recruit young members. For instance, parties can target young non-members via social media. This idea is further explored in the next chapter.

#### **d) Attitudes towards Political Parties**

Cross and Young also conclude that young party members view political parties and their ability to change things in society in a more positive way than non-members. To a certain extent, this is not surprising, and even logical: if young people decide to join political parties,

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<sup>128</sup> Cross and Young refer to David Buckingham's work: Buckingham, D. (2002). *The Making of Citizens: Young People, News and Politics*. London: Routledge.

it seems obvious that they do not have a negative opinion about them. Otherwise, they would not join. In this regard, the two researchers argue for ‘significant attitudinal differences towards political parties with non-members highly suspicious of parties in terms of their general democratic performance, their efficacy in achieving social and political change and the ability of grassroots members to influence party decision making.’ (2008: 1). Therefore, unsurprisingly, their study shows a relationship between young people’s opinions about political parties and their decision to join. The more they are interested in politics and have positive views on political parties, the more they tend to be willing to join.

#### **4) Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison’s Three-dimensional Model**

In a comparative study published in 2009 (Bruter and Harrison: 2009a, 2009b), Michael Bruter and Harrison analysed the young members of 15 political parties across Europe, in six countries: the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, Norway and Hungary<sup>129</sup>. The young members they studied were aged between 18 and 15 years old. Their research combined both quantitative and qualitative methodology. Firstly, they surveyed young party members. They got 2,919 survey responses. Secondly, they had interviews with them: in total, they interviewed 519 young party members. They based their research on Peter B. Clark and James Q. Wilson’s

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<sup>129</sup> Here are the parties they studied: UK: Labour (Social Democrat), Liberal Democrats (Liberal), United Kingdom Independence Party (Eurosceptic), British National Party (Nationalist); France: Parti Socialiste (Socialist), les Verts (Green), Parti Communiste Français (Communist), Front National – now Rassemblement National (Nationalist); Germany: Christian Democratic Union (Christian Democrat), Social Democratic Party (Social Democrat), Free Democratic Party (Liberal); Spain: Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Socialist), Partido Popular (Conservative); Norway: Høyre (Conservative), Labour (Socialist); Hungary: Magyar Szocialista Párt (Socialist), Fidesz (Conservative) (2009b: 28).

work, notably the three types of incentives they had identified (see the section dedicated to Clark and Wilson's model above).

Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison's model distinguishes between three types of young party members: moral-minded, social-minded, and professional-minded members, depending on the incentives that push them to join a political party. Thus, their three-dimensional model helps explain why young people join parties. It sheds light on differences between the three types of young party members also regarding what they like and dislike about party membership, the degree and frequency of their activism, their relationship with the party and their future political engagement. Most importantly, the model shows that moral-minded members represent the largest proportion of young party members. The social-minded category comes second and the professional-minded type comes third.

- Moral-minded members

For Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison, moral-minded members are young people who join political parties for ideological reasons. 'A moral drive is characterized by a desire to give more meaning to one's life, help others, be a good citizen, and influence politics. It broadly corresponds to the purposive incentives<sup>130</sup> defined in the literature.' (2009a: 1270). In this regard, the two scholars specify that youth is a time of idealistic beliefs: 'social psychology suggests that young people tend to be more 'idealistic' than their elder (McCarthy, 2000; Samms, 1995).' (2009b: 22)<sup>131</sup>.

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<sup>130</sup> Here, Bruter and Harrison refer to Clark and Wilson's theory.

<sup>131</sup> See McCarthy, S. (ed.). (2000). *Youth Cultures, Lifestyles, and Citizenship*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, and Samms, C. (1995). *Global Generation X: Their Values and Attitudes in Different Countries*. London: Demos.

As shown further down, Bruter and Harrison conclude that moral-minded members are the most devoted to and active in their party. They feel a strong sense of attachment to its ideology.

- Social-minded members

Bruter and Harrison categorise young party members as social-minded members when they engage in a party first and foremost because they want to meet new people, make new friends and/or belong to a group of people. They specify: ‘the social dimension, partly overlapping solidary incentives<sup>132</sup>, means that a young partisan is motivated by interesting discussions, the meeting of interesting people, and a desire to make friends.’ (2009a: 1270). According to the researchers, this is not surprising: these are frequent needs amongst the young, notably teenagers, who are defining their identity and building their future.

As shown further down, they conclude that social-minded members are the least active in their parties and the least devoted to them. Also, they tend to leave them after some time. They usually do not remain party members for a long time. This seems logical when one thinks that they get involved mainly to meet new people and make friends. The older they get, the less interested in these social perspectives they may be.

- Professional-minded members

Bruter and Harrison identify a third category of young party members: professional-minded members. They conclude that they are motivated for career reasons. They specify: ‘the professional dimension revolves around a desire to achieve positions and honors, become a politician, and derive money or material benefits from party membership.’ (2009a: 1270).

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<sup>132</sup> Indeed, this is reminiscent of Clark and Wilson’s solidary incentives category.

Therefore, young professional-minded members are quite active in their parties, especially at times of elections and campaigns. They want to ensure the continued existence of their parties. In their analysis of these young party members, the two scholars notably refer to Hooghe, Stolle and Stouthuysen, whose work about the recruitment function of youth wings in political parties is presented further down in the present thesis.

In order to join parties, young people follow what Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison call the ‘paths to membership’ (2009b: 40, 228). They highlight the part played by ‘Membership role models’ or ‘sources of inspiration’ (2009b: 41), including the family, friends and organisations like unions or associations. Seeing relatives and friends engaged in a political party, or being part of an organisation, makes them want to get involved. Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison note that relatives are those who have the biggest influence on young people to encourage them to join a party. Thanks to their study, they shed light on the relevance of ‘family transmission’ (2009b: 41) with regard to young party members. Tellingly, Bruter and Harrison found out that 53.4 per cent of the young people they interviewed said they had at least one family member who was or had been a party member.<sup>133</sup>

When it comes to family models, Bruter and Harrison distinguish between two paths. On the one hand, the ‘ideological path’ (2009b: 41), namely when a young person joins a political party because they identify with the ideological beliefs of one or several relatives already engaged in a party. In other words, they share their family members’ political convictions. Significantly, Bruter and Harrison found out that about 64.7 per cent of the interviewees joined a political party as they were inspired by at least one family member engaged in or close to – for instance a supporter – that party. The scholars specify: in ‘42 per

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<sup>133</sup> In Chapter Two, in the same way as Bruter and Harrison, I focus on young SNP members’ path(s) to membership. I notably shed light on statistics regarding political socialisation in their family and the role it plays in their political involvement.

cent’ of the cases, ‘the inspiration is actually a person in the family who is/was an actual member (or employee) of the same party, and [in] 22.7 per cent’ of the cases ‘the ideological inspiration is confirmed, despite the young citizen being the first in the family to actually join the political party his family supports<sup>134</sup>.’ (2009b: 43).<sup>135</sup>

On the other hand, the ‘organisational path’ (2009b: 41), namely when a young person becomes a party member because one or several relatives are already party members, regardless of their party. As Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison note, this path to political party membership is less common amongst the young people they interviewed: 12.2 per cent of them said that at least one member of their family was or had been a member of another political party – well below the 64.7 per cent of young people declaring they had one or more family relatives engaged in or ideologically close to their own party.

Whether it is for ideological reasons or merely because of family members being party members – or both<sup>136</sup>, Bruter and Harrison thus show that political transmission in the family plays a significant role in young people’s decision to join a political party.<sup>137</sup>

In the same way, friends who are party members influence that decision. Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison found out that 16.4 per cent of the young party members they interviewed had friends in their party before they joined it<sup>138</sup>. In that case, they note that friends strengthened

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<sup>134</sup> To put it differently, ‘22.7 per cent have only inherited the ideological preferences of their families, but not any organisational habits.’ (Bruter and Harrison, 2009b: 44).

<sup>135</sup> As said above, the next chapter of this thesis shows the figures I found thanks to the present research.

<sup>136</sup> Bruter and Harrison found out that 44.3 per cent of young people had followed both ideological and organisational paths (2009b: 44).

<sup>137</sup> Again, the next chapter of the present work analyses the part played by political socialisation and imitation in young Scots becoming SNP members.

<sup>138</sup> The scholars did not ask interviewees whether they had friends in other political parties before becoming party members. Thus, the proportion of young party members who had friends already engaged in a party before they joined must be larger. When I had interviews with young Scottish party members, I asked them if some of their friends were also involved with a political party, regardless of the party (see Chapter Two).

an influence or inspiration coming from one or several family members for about two thirds of the young party members with friends in the same party.

Finally, the researchers found out that 18.1 per cent of the young people they interviewed were or had been part of another organisation. 10.3 per cent had been members of other organisations before joining a party and 7.8 joined other organisations after becoming party members. They specify that ‘party (or young party organisation) membership is more often associated with union membership, and particularly with student union membership, than membership of pressure groups.’ (2009b: 46). It is worth noting that the scholars found that, in the same way as with friends, organisational membership often strengthens family influence when it comes to young people’s decision to join a party.

Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison thus identify three main pathways to party membership amongst young people: ‘A “motorway” via family transmission, and two other important roads via friends, and through other organisations such as unions (be they trade unions or student unions) or pressure groups.’ (2009b: 46). Those three ‘routes’ to youth party membership, which, according to the scholars’ findings are often interrelated, account for 88 per cent of interviewees’ answers. This is solid evidence that in a majority of cases, young people are influenced in their decision to become party members<sup>139</sup>. Be they family members, friends or organisations, these models identified by the two scholars relate to the notion of political socialisation.

In terms of ‘processes’, Bruter and Harrison point out that young people become party members either by imitating the family member(s) and/or friend(s) who are already party members, or by opposing them (2009b: 228). On the one hand, imitating their relatives

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<sup>139</sup> As shown in the next chapter, this is reinforced by my own findings.



strengthens the scholars' thesis of models: young people want to join a political party as their relative(s) did (usually the same party). In that sense, for Bruter and Harrison, this process of imitation can be described as a positive way of joining a party. On the other hand, according to Bruter and Harrison, disagreeing with a member of their family or a friend's views is also a reason why some young people engage in political parties. According to the scholars, this process of opposition can be described as a negative way of joining a party. Here are Bruter and Harrison's expectations before starting their study:

‘if we expect a majority of young party members to have joined as their parents or friends have, we also suggest that a number of them will have joined because their parents or friends have not, or have joined another party, and that the young member will use party membership to differentiate himself/herself rather than reproduce a schema embraced by a role model.’  
(2009b: 40).

When it comes to the moment in which young people join a party, Bruter and Harrison found out that they do so either after having thought about it for some time, or in the aftermath of an event. Interestingly for us, they highlight ‘incidents that triggered their joining’ (2009b: 41). They specify that young people get involved with political parties ‘often [at] a catalytic moment, in other cases slow process of engagement. Usually directly to the “right” party, but occasionally after some hesitation.’ (2009b: 228). My study tests that idea by focusing on the Scottish independence referendum of 2014 as a key political, national event playing the role of a party membership incentive amongst young Scottish people. As the results of my study show in the next chapter, this was particularly the case in the SNP.

Tellingly, Bruter and Harrison argue: ‘Joining a party is a decision, a moment. Understanding the nature of this moment is undoubtedly essential in understanding membership as is the categorisation of the types of inspirations that have made young people prone to seize it.’ (2009b: 56). As is shown in the next chapter of the present work, I completely agree with this. The scholars note that elections are a ‘privileged time to join a party’ (2009b: 56). Either positive or negative. ‘an occasion where excitement and enthusiasm is at its peak’ (2009b: 56). In Chapter Two, I show that an independence referendum can also be a catalytic moment when young people get interested in politics and join a political party.

In their study, Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison also focus on what young party members like and dislike about party life and activities.

They identify twelve ‘favourite aspects of membership’ (2009b: 106) mentioned by their interviewees. ‘Debating, arguing and formulating’ was mentioned by 14 per cent of them and was very popular amongst moral-minded and professional-minded party members. ‘Mixing with the stars’ (2009b: 108), namely mixing with high profile politicians and celebrities was mentioned by 12 per cent of them and was popular amongst social-minded members, and very popular amongst professional-minded ones. Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison specify that ‘meeting important politicians or local figures can serve as a highlight to members and play a very important role in making them feel privileged, important, or efficacious in the political and social life of their country, their region or their village or city.’ (2009b: 109). As is shown in the next chapter of this work, this is confirmed by examples of young SNP members who take photos (selfies) with the party’s leaders, especially First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon. Then, ‘campaigning and elections’ was said to be liked by 12 per cent of the interviewees. It is more or less popular amongst moral-minded members and very popular amongst professional-minded members. Bruter and Harrison note that campaigns – whether

they are electoral campaigns or are related to one issue in particular – are a moment when young party members feel energised and enthusiastic. They feel that they play an important part in the life of their party as well as in the life of their country in the case of national elections. In a relevant way, Bruter and Harrison speak of an ‘adrenalin-fuelled atmosphere’ (2009b: 109). As Chapter Two demonstrates later in this thesis, this ‘impression that they are participating in very unique hours of the life of their country’ (2009b: 109) makes much sense in Scotland: it plays a huge role in young Scottish people’s engagement in the SNP. Then, ‘fun factor and socialising’ were mentioned in 10 per cent of the interviews conducted by Bruter and Harrison and it was very popular amongst social-minded members. It goes hand in hand with their finding that social-minded members are the second most important category of young party members in their study: ‘Considering that social-minded young party members represent the second largest contingent of young activists in Europe according to our survey, it is hence naturally expected that this particular facet of membership was spontaneously mentioned by many.’ (2009b: 110). ‘Ideological stimulation’ was mentioned by 10 per cent of the young party members and was unsurprisingly very popular amongst moral-minded members. Then, ‘Micro-level democracy’ was said to be liked by 9 per cent of the interviewees and was popular amongst social-minded members and very popular amongst moral-minded ones. ‘Internal leadership and co-ordination’ were mentioned by 8 per cent of the party members and was very popular amongst professional-minded members. ‘Inclusiveness, acceptance, respect and trust’ were said to be liked by 7 per cent of these young people and was popular amongst the moral-minded members and very popular amongst the social-minded ones. Then, ‘Networking’ was mentioned by 6 per cent of the interviewees and was unsurprisingly popular amongst social-minded members and very popular amongst professional-minded ones. A ‘sense of power’ was said to be liked by 6 per cent of the young party members and was more or less popular amongst the moral-minded members and very popular amongst the professional ones. Then, ‘Doing

things – practice as opposed to theory’ was mentioned by 5 per cent of the interviewees. Finally, ‘rebels and opponents’ were mentioned by 5 per cent of them and was a very popular idea amongst the moral-minded members. Chapter Two compares these results with the findings about young SNP members.

So as to analyse young people’s party membership, Bruter and Harrison also studied the degree of their activism in their respective political parties. They found out that social-minded members are the least active while the professional-minded ones are the most active. This is not surprising, in the sense that professional-minded members are those who feel the most concerned with their party: as professional-minded members, they are supposed to be highly interested in politics (and political careers) and in devoting time to their party. For instance, they are the most likely to participate in electoral activities like leafletting, canvassing and debating (2009b: 228). What is more, Bruter and Harrison note that in terms of activism, the moral-minded members are the most likely to get involved in radical activities like demonstrations and battles against other political parties. They are also the most likely to try to convince people to support or engage in the party. My findings regarding young SNP members’ levels of activism are to be found in the next chapter.

The findings of Bruter and Harrison with regard to the relationship between young people and their party are also noteworthy. They show that ‘social-minded members are the most critical of and the least involved with their party’ (2009a: 1273). It seems logical that these are social-minded and not professional-minded members: whether it is strategic or simply because they believe in their party and its ideology, the latter undoubtedly know that if they want to get a position in the party someday, they should avoid being critical about it.

Finally, when it comes to young party members' future, Bruter and Harrison found out that their wish to remain politically involved when getting older highly depends on their type of membership. 'In many ways, a young party member's stance on his or her political future is possibly the most definitive confirmation of his or her approach to the meaning of party membership.' (2009a: 1281). Unsurprisingly, the two scholars note that professional-minded members are the most numerous who think that they will run for elections and/or who want to get a position with responsibilities in their party. Moral-minded members tend to think that they will remain grass-root members or join other organisations such as non-political organisations. As for social-minded members, they are more likely to think that they will not be politically involved anymore. As I based a great part of my methodology on Bruter and Harrison's study, I asked young SNP members whether they thought they would still be activists when they are older. As demonstrated in the next chapter, a majority of them plan to remain politically active in the future.

I based a major part of my study on Bruter and Harrison's. The questions in the online survey and the questions I asked during the interviews were influenced by their three-dimensional model and their findings. Also, the present study adds to theirs. Whilst they examined young party members in the UK, they did not conduct research in Scotland. What is more, amongst the nationalist political parties they analysed, they focused on those that can be categorised as ethnic nationalist parties. I focus here on the SNP, which is a civic nationalist party. For all these reasons, the present thesis complements their research. It also offers an up-to-date vision of youth party membership. All this will be demonstrated in Chapter Two.

## 5) Regina Weber's Model

The fourth – and most recent – model of youth party membership was developed by Regina Weber (2017, 2018). In order to analyse incentives for party membership, she carried out an online survey amongst 4,006 members of the German Social Democratic Party (SDP) under the age of 36. Her study led her to establish a new typology of young party members. Her conclusions highlight a relationship between incentives and individual resources. Regina Weber based her research questions on Bruter and Harrison's typology: she analysed the importance of moral-ideological, professional, and social incentives as reasons for young people to join the SPD. Before studying them, the scholar reviewed the literature on political participation and concluded that young people's political participation depends on society, political parties themselves, and individual motivations, namely the macro, meso and micro levels of analysis.

### 5.1) Macro Level

Regina Weber focuses on societal aspects of young people's political participation with an emphasis on two notions: individualisation and post-materialism. First, she relies on Ulrich Beck and Christophe Lau's thesis of 'second modernity' with societal changes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries due to industrialisation and economic developments that led to individualisation<sup>140</sup>. They show that while society gets less important in people's eyes, the individual is more and more central. 'The main structures of the first modernity – the nation, the family, gender roles, and cultural and class ties – are losing their formative power' (Weber,

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<sup>140</sup> See Beck, U., and Lau, C. (2005). Second modernity as a research agenda: theoretical and empirical explorations in the 'meta-change' of modern society. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 56(4), 525-557.

2017: 380) in aid of the individual in the ‘second modernity’, namely from the beginning of industrialisation and the economic developments related to it. According to Weber, this process of individualisation is responsible for a lack of points of reference for young people today: they have to rely more on themselves to make decisions regarding their lives, which is not easy and makes their transition period from childhood to adulthood much longer. In that sense, Weber suggests that today young people participate in politics less than their parents or grandparents did: before thinking of politics, they have to think of their own lives and how to build them, especially in economic terms by finding a job. Finally, Weber argues that individualisation ‘undermines collective identities’ (Weber, 2017: 382). This is an interesting point that led me to think of a new research question regarding young Scots’ involvement with the SNP: are there any signs of individualism in their political engagement, or is their collective – here national – identity stronger than their individual motivations to join the party? Before starting my fieldwork, I hypothesised that if their national identity was stronger than the individualisation phenomenon which is central in societies today, it would suggest that national identity could play a role in their decision to join the SNP. This question is explored in the next chapter.

Besides individualisation, at the macro level Regina Weber highlights the influence of post-materialism on young people’s political participation. The development of post-materialism, which is due to industrialisation and modernisation too, led young people to believe in values rather than be interested in materialist issues. Weber relies on a famous theorist of post-materialism: Ronald Inglehart. As noted earlier, in his view, industrialisation in Western democracies led people to get interested in post-material issues instead of traditional values<sup>141</sup>. Based on this theory, Weber’s idea is that ‘materialist class divide has decreased’ (Weber, 2017: 382), leading young people to engage in politics to fight for post-material issues rather than

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<sup>141</sup> See Inglehart, R. (1977). *The silent revolution: changing values and political styles among Western publics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Inglehart, R. (1990). *Culture shift in advanced industrial society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Inglehart, R., and Flanagan, S.C. (1987). Value change in industrial societies. *The American Political Science Review*, 81(4), 1289-1319.

political and economic matters related to a social class in particular. In that sense, according to Weber, the political parties that fight for a given social class are undermined and lose interest in young people's eyes. Significantly, she says that party membership 'loses appeal when fundamental political interests no longer match the cleavages between parties' (2017: 382) based on the cleavages between classes.

At the macro level, Weber thus suggests that individualisation and post-materialism, both due to the industrialisation and modernisation of societies, influence young people's political participation. Those two phenomena make them participate less in politics than older generations or, if not less, they participate in different ways: young people participate more in the name of issues – like ecology, feminism, human rights – than in the name of politics itself or social class divides. This echoes a previous section in this work about new forms of political participation<sup>142</sup>. Regina Weber specifies: 'these changes make it more difficult for parties to attract young people, especially as many parties developed across cleavages along materialist topics, such as the divide between capital and labour' (2017: 391). Thus, she offers an explanation for young people's lack of interest in political parties.

## 5.2) Meso Level

As Regina Weber notes, the societal changes due to industrialisation and modernisation influenced political parties and their structure. First, she insists on the well-known decline of party membership in Western democracies since the 1950s<sup>143</sup>. She adds that young people are under-represented in political parties, as Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison pointed out before.

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<sup>142</sup> Regarding young people's participation particularly, see also the work of Sarah Pickard (2019).

<sup>143</sup> As shown earlier in the present work, it can nonetheless be said that there seems to be a new trend in party membership: recently, some parties like the SNP and the Scottish Greens saw an upsurge in their membership. Regina Weber goes in that sense as she says that Green and right-wing populist parties saw their numbers of members increase recently.



This observation legitimises, once again, the research topic of the present thesis. As shown earlier, the small number of young people involved in political parties raises questions. One central question is: why such a small number of young people decide to join parties? Hence, again, the need to know why the young people who choose to become party members do so. Based on the literature on youth party membership described here, the next chapter answers those questions from an empirical perspective.

Besides the well-known decline in party membership in Western democracies, especially amongst young people, Weber emphasises that industrialisation led to the professionalisation of political parties. Weber's literature review focuses on both the 'cartel party' and the 'electoral professional party' theories by Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair (1995, 1996, 2009), and Angelo Panebianco (1988). The two theories argue that, in the face of the party membership decline, political parties have professionalised and centralised their decision-making processes, which makes it harder for people to join them and become party activists. Katz and Mair demonstrate that political parties rely on the state to compensate for a lack of financial resources due to the loss of party members. As for Panebianco, he concludes that political parties tend to replace their members with professional campaigners in order to win elections. Both concepts suggest a shift from mass parties – as theorised by Maurice Duverger – towards professional parties which are now less accessible to people whose job is not related to politics. Significantly, Weber argues that this change 'reduces the role of grassroots members to supporters of professionally-organised campaigns' (Weber, 2017: 385). Namely, people who join political parties today are less able to be active and much involved with them. The next chapter of the present work shows that a small proportion of young SNP members are nonetheless pretty active in their party, and it tries to explain why. In the same way, despite the idea that 'both concepts emphasise the lack of interest among parties to recruit new members'

(Weber, 2017: 385), Chapter Two insists on the SNP's need and desire to get new members. More particularly, it sheds light on the party's efforts to recruit young people.

In this regard, in her article published in 2017, Regina Weber focuses on the role of party youth factions in young people's participation in political parties. She identifies two schools of thought. The first one enhances party youth organisations as pathways to political careers. The final section of the present chapter introduces this idea in further detail, by concentrating on the work of Marc Hooghe et al. (2004). The second school of thought points out that youth factions help political parties recruit new young members and encourage them to participate. Regina Weber refers to the works of Richard H. Kimberlee (Kimberlee, 2002), Andrew Mycock and Jonathan Tonge (Mycock and Tonge, 2012), and Andrew Russell (Russell, 2005). Weber relevantly says that youth organisations 'serve the party by reaching out to the young electorate, gain youth interests, bring young people into the party' (Weber, 2017: 387). Both theories inspired me to ask young SNP members questions about their career projects, and about friends in Young Scots for Independence and SNP Students that could have been the source of their joining. The next chapter of this thesis highlights the role of the YSI and SNP Students organisations in appealing to young Scots to join the SNP.

### **5.3) Micro Level**

Lastly, Regina Weber reviewed and developed the literature on the role of incentives and young people's individual resources in their becoming party members. She first focuses on 'time, money, and skills' (Weber, 2017: 388). She refers to the well-known socioeconomic model<sup>144</sup> based on studies conducted by Brady, Verba, Schlozman, and Nie, which emphasises that political participation depends on people's socioeconomic backgrounds and resources. As

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<sup>144</sup> For models of political participation, see Chapter One.

was explained earlier, the more money and education people have, the more they tend to participate in the political life of the society they live in. Regarding time, Weber relevantly underlines that young people in education have more time to get involved with a political party than adults with a job and a family to look after. This is confirmed by my empirical analyses in the next chapter. With regards to education, she argues that it ‘increases civic skills and individual capacities’ (2017: 388) and enables entry into social networks. As said when introducing political participation theories, education was one of the aspects I studied when interviewing and surveying young SNP members. My conclusions are presented in Chapter Two.

### **a) Weber’s Contribution to the Literature on Young Party Members**

Regina Weber reviews the literature on incentives and remarks that she adds to Bruter and Harrison’s findings with her own study. As was shown earlier, Bruter and Harrison identified three types of young party members: social-minded, moral-minded, and professional-minded party members. She goes beyond their arguments that each type of young party members is motivated for a predominant reason. Her thesis thus ‘transcends [Bruter and Harrison’s] idea that members are *either* moral-ideologically, socially, or professionally motivated’ (2018: 2)<sup>145</sup>. Here are the three categories she identifies:

‘The first and largest group has a comprehensive set of motivations, covering moral-ideological, social, and professional incentives. The second group

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<sup>145</sup> Italics in the original text.

clearly disregards professional motivations but it considers moral-ideological and social incentives as important. The (small) third group is not motivated by either of these incentives; their motivations remain undefined.’ (2018: 2).

Thus, Weber suggests that no group is motivated for professional reasons alone. This is an interesting finding which challenges common views about young people who become party members in order to start a political career.

### **b) Variables in Weber’s Analysis**

When it comes to resources in particular, Regina Weber focuses on two types of variables: knowledge and skills on the one hand, and time on the other. Keeping the socioeconomic model in mind, she explains that she chose not to consider money as a variable in her analysis, for it is difficult to measure young people’s financial resources. She rightly says: ‘the target population is mostly still in education and without established own finances.’ (2018: 5). Indeed, young people often still depend on their parents or try to earn a (usually small) living while being students. As for time, skills and knowledge, Weber distinguishes between several sub-variables. In terms of time, she labels two types of variables as ‘working’ and ‘child’ (2018: 5). She rightly specifies that young people usually have more free time than people who have a full-time job. She adds that having children and a family to look after makes it harder for people to devote time to party membership. Hence the hypothesis that it might be easier for young people to engage in a party as their time is more flexible than that of older people who already work and/or have family obligations. When it comes to knowledge and skills, Weber’s analysis focuses on six variables: ‘education’, ‘joinage’, ‘union’, ‘parentsmember’, ‘beforeactive’, and ‘activeseek’ (2018: 5-6). About education, she says that

‘the duration of education is usually associated with increased knowledge about politics.’ (2018: 5). By ‘joinage’, she means the age of young people when they join a political party and she argues that knowledge about the party might be related to age in the sense that ‘knowledge might increase with higher age’ (2018: 6). Then, she identifies a ‘union’ variable, namely the fact that young people were members of a union before joining a political party. She specifies that ‘membership in a labor union leads to knowledge about politics and collective organizations.’ (2018: 6). ‘Parentsmember’ is the variable corresponding to the fact that young people who engage in a party have at least one parent who is already a party member. Then, by ‘beforeactive’, Weber analyses young party members’ political activism before joining. She rightfully argues that ‘political activism before joining a party suggests a general interest in political activism’ (2018: 6). Finally, through the ‘activeseek’ variable, she studies the way young party members joined: did they join voluntarily, or were they recruited by the party? All those variables have been tested through the analysis of young SNP members’ political engagement (see Chapter Two further down).

### **c) Weber’s Model: Three Categories of Young Party Members**

Thanks to the various variables presented above, Regina Weber created her own model to explain youth party membership. Like Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison, she identified three types of young party members: ‘the *Take All* group’, ‘the *Ideologists*’, and ‘the *Reluctant* members’ (2018: 7)<sup>146</sup>. The *Take All* group corresponds to young party members who are moral-ideologically, socially, and professionally motivated. In Weber’s study, 48 per cent of young SDP members are part of this group. Then, 39.1 per cent of the young members of her sample

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<sup>146</sup> Italics in the original text.

gather in the *Ideologists* group. They are both moral-ideologically and socially motivated. As Weber says, it is worth noting that they do not consider professional incentives as important at all. She therefore underlines that ‘the main divide between young party members is about professional incentives’ (2018: 7). In the last group, the *Reluctants*, representing 12.8 per cent of Weber’s sample, young people do not consider any of the moral-ideological, social or professional incentives as important. Thus, she explains that this group distinguishes itself from the other two: the motivations of the young party members belonging to this category are not clear.

Interestingly, Weber finds out that apart from ‘working’, all the variables are different from one group to another. She concludes that ‘the lack of flexibility that is connected with being in the workforce does not influence the incentives for joining. All skill- and knowledge-related resources have a significant effect on the groups.’ (2018: 8) and that ‘the three motivational groups are different in their resources’ (2018: 8-9). Unsurprisingly, she finds out that being politically active before joining a political party influences young people’s decision to become party members. About education, Regina Weber concludes that the longer young people’s education is, the less they tend to be motivated by professional incentives. Also, when they are less educated, young SDP members tend to be motivated by heterogenous incentives. As for joining age, she interestingly finds out that when members join early, their motivations are clearer than those of older members. Those who join at a young age are either *Take All* members or *Ideologists*, while ‘a late decision for becoming a party member is driven more by personal interests.’ (2018: 9). When it comes to the ‘union’ variable, the researcher concludes that young people from the SDP who were union members before joining tend to consider moral-ideological and social incentives as important. This is also the case of those who joined the party voluntarily. Finally, Weber notes that her ‘analysis of the resources shows that long educational processes, union membership, and actively approaching the party make it more

likely that members disregard professional benefits and belong to the *Ideologists* group.’ (2018: 9).

Although it is not a point of interest in the present thesis, it should be noted that Regina Weber also identifies ‘a change in motivations among the young members over time’ as the more time they spend in the party, the more party members ‘tend to “lose” their incentives’ (2018: 12)<sup>147</sup>. Weber suggests that socialisation could help young SDP members keep their motivations over time. Yet, she underlines that such findings should be further explored to be confirmed.

Regina Weber’s work is thus based on both Whiteley and Seyd’s General Incentives Model, and Bruter and Harrison’s three-dimensional model of young party membership. Both Bruter and Harrison’s and Weber’s models are tested in the following chapter of this thesis. It analyses young Scottish people’s motivations to join the SNP and concludes that, overall, they do so for the same main reason: achieving Scottish independence from the rest of the United Kingdom. Even if their motivations are sometimes different and can be considered moral-ideological, social, as well as professional, a quite homogenous group can be identified. As the next chapter shows, this group of young SNP members can be viewed as ideologically led: their main reason for joining is pressing for Scotland’s independence. In this regard, as said before, Chapter Two also highlights the role of political, national contexts in young people’s decision to become political party members.

Regina Weber thus concludes that young Germans join the SDP both for personal reasons (incentives) and according to their resources. At the micro level, she identifies three types of resources for party membership: time, money and civic skills. When it comes to skills, she specifies that these are related to education and socialisation through family, friends, school,

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<sup>147</sup> An analysis of young SNP members’ motivations over time would have required more years of research.

or social networks generally speaking. Thanks to that socialisation, young people acquire knowledge and civic skills which enable them to participate in politics and join a political party. She notes that a majority of young German people join the SDP for ideological reasons, which echoes Bruter and Harrison's findings. This is also in line with my analysis of youth membership of the SNP. If our three models correlate, this will mean that young people tend to join parties for ideological reasons, regardless of their country (Bruter and Harrison studied youth party membership in six European countries, Weber did it in Germany, and I did so in Scotland).

#### **d) Limits of Regina Weber's Model**

Without questioning Weber's model – which is relevant and significant – three limits can be highlighted. First, the German Social Democratic Party was part of the parties studied by Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison in 2009. Of course, Weber's analysis adds to that of Bruter and Harrison, but to a certain extent it is not completely new or original as young SDP members had already been studied before. In the conclusions of her article published in 2018, she admits that the research questions she tried to answer 'require further analyses in other countries and party families' (2018: 13). Contrary to Weber's, the present work is based on the study of the young members of a party that was not researched by Bruter and Harrison, namely the Scottish National Party. As said in the introduction of this thesis, as far as I know, no research on young SNP members has been done before, thus bringing new knowledge to the literature on young party members. Secondly, in spite of a very strong quantitative methodology with the online survey of a huge number of young SDP members (4,006), Weber could have conducted interviews with some of them. This could have enabled her to compare the results of the interviews with those of the survey and, then, strengthen her conclusions. Finally, as



Weber admits, it could have been useful to carry out a comparative survey instead of concentrating on one political party. A comparative analysis would have highlighted potential differences and similarities between the young members of various parties, thus leading the researcher to reinforce her conclusions and probably find peculiarities with regard to the young members of the SDP. Even though the present work focuses mainly on young SNP members, it nonetheless challenges that limit with a comparison between young SNP members, young Scottish Conservatives and young Scottish Labour members.

## **6) Other Youth Party Membership Studies**

Other scholars have studied young party members. They did not build new models accounting for youth party membership, but it is nonetheless worth introducing their conclusions as most of them were useful for analysing young Scottish people's membership of the Young Scots for Independence and SNP Students.

### **6.1) Marc Hooghe et al.'s Survey of Flemish City Councillors**

Marc Hooghe and Dietlind Stolle have studied the relationship between political parties' youth organisations and the future political careers of their members. They surveyed city councillors<sup>148</sup> in Belgium. More precisely, they conducted their study amongst 32 municipalities in the region of Flanders. They collected 672 full questionnaires. The average age of the sample was 48 years old. 73 per cent of the respondents were men. And more than 60 per cent had a higher education degree (Hooghe et al., 2004). Hooghe, Stolle and Stouthuysen found out that 41 per cent of the councillors they surveyed had been members of

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<sup>148</sup> Members of municipal councils.

political parties' youth organisations. They explain that for a young person, being a member of a party's youth faction 'generates networks, which, in turn, facilitate the start of a political career' (2004: 205). Most significantly, they concluded that councillors who had been youth wings' members started their political careers earlier than other councillors: 'on average they were 31 when they first entered a local election list, while this was 39 years for the others. They received their first mandate at the age of 34, while the others had to wait until the age of 42' (2004: 202). Thus, Hooghe et al. highlight the 'recruitment function' (2004: 200) of youth factions for political parties. As they note, youth organisations should be privileged by parties if they want to cope with young people's apparent disinterest in politics and, then, recruit more young members.

Even though less than one in two Belgian city councillors they surveyed declared having been part of a political party's youth wing, Hooghe et al.'s findings still reveal the importance of youth sections. They are relevant when it comes to the role played by the membership of these factions in young people's continued political engagement as future politicians. In this sense, Hooghe et al. added to the literature on political participation and party membership: besides resources like 'gender, family links and traditions, educational status and income' (2004: 207), youth organisations membership also plays a part in people's political careers. This is illustrated in the following chapter with the example of Nicola Sturgeon, former member of the SNP's youth wing and now MSP for Glasgow Southside constituency, leader of the SNP, and Scottish First Minister.

## **6.2) Emily Rainsford's Analysis of Young People's Engagement in Three British Political Organisations**

Emily Rainsford carried out a survey of young British people engaged in political organisations (Rainsford, 2017). It was a study of 450 young people, in the youth factions of three British political parties – Conservative Future, Young Labour/Labour Students, and Liberal Youth – as well as in the British Youth Council (BYC), and the National Union of Students (NUS). The young people she studied were aged from 16 to 30. It is worth noting that the researcher chose to conduct this survey in a ‘contextualised’ way (Rainsford, 2017: 19). Indeed, she asked young people to respond to it while attending events like political meetings and demonstrations. Rainsford explains that this method ‘ensures that everyone sampled is active in the same way’ and, thanks to it, ‘it is possible to ask the respondents specific questions about the organisation they are active in such as what motivates them to engage in that organisation, whether they think the organisation will be effective in achieving its goals’ (2017: 19). I agree with these views. I would add that carrying out a study during a political event enables us to observe young people being politically active. It helps us understand what they do and in what ways. This is why I had most of my interviews with young SNP members at SNP conferences. This is further developed in the following chapter.

In the youth factions she analysed, Emily Rainsford found out that 71 per cent of young people were men (2017: 20), and 47 per cent were aged between 19 and 21 (2017: 21). When it comes to demographics, the researcher also focused on social class, education and origins. She found out that 47 per cent of the young respondents were from the lower middle class, 72 per cent had a university degree, and 93 per cent were born in the UK (2017: 21). As shown in Chapter Two, I partly based my demographical analysis of young Scottish party members on Rainsford’s own categories and findings.

So as to study young British people’s engagement in different political organisations, she chose to focus on one dependent variable and four independent variables. Whilst ‘the dependent variable is political activism in different political organisations’ (2017: 22), the four

independent variables were ‘civic and political skills, mobilisation, civic and political attitudes, and motivations’ (2017: 22). As shown in her 2017 article, she relates civic and political skills for participation with education, ‘previous civic and political participation’, and talks with friends and family members (2017: 22-23). By ‘mobilisation’, she means whether young people voluntarily chose to join a political organisation or were asked to do so. About civic and political attitudes, Rainsford specifies that they ‘include both attitudes to the political system (e.g. satisfaction with democracy) and certain actors in the system (e.g. political parties)’ (2017: 23). Finally, in terms of motivations, she bases her analysis on Bert Klandermans’ theory<sup>149</sup>. Klandermans identified three categories of motivations for political participation: instrumental, identity and ideological motivations. As Rainsford puts in her article:

‘the instrumental motivations derive from the rational choice perspective where the participant wants to gain some benefit from participating, the identity motivations are related to a sense of collective identity, the ideological measures relate to moral reasoning’ (2017: 7).

As Rainsford says, the instrumental motivations identified by Klandermans echo the rational choice models of political participation (see the section about those models detailed earlier in this thesis). Ideological motivations may make us think of the moral-ideological category of young party members identified by Bruter and Harrison. The most interesting kind of motivations for us in Klandermans’ categorisation is identity motivations. As the present thesis analyses the relationship between young SNP members’ political engagement and national identity, his theory is explored later in this work.

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<sup>149</sup> See Klandermans, B. (2004). The Demand and Supply of Participation: Social Psychological Correlates of Participation in Social Movements, in Snow, D., Soule, S.A., and Kreisi, H. (eds). *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

As a result of her study, Emily Rainsford found out that previous participation encourages young people to engage in a political organisation. When it comes to young party members in particular, she concludes that they are the least likely to have been asked to participate. Therefore, as Rainsford relevantly notes, one can wonder whether political parties are willing to recruit new members, especially young people. As said earlier, this was tackled by Marc Hooghe and Dietlind Stolle's research. Meanwhile, Rainsford unsurprisingly concludes that the members of youth factions are the most likely to have positive views regarding political parties and politicians. In terms of motivations, the researcher notes that members of youth factions and the British Youth Council are less instrumentally- and ideologically-motivated than young demonstrators. In this regard, Rainsford says that youth faction activists lack motivation. She notes: 'they have not been asked to participate and they are not motivated to participate; the only thing in the CVM model<sup>150</sup> they fulfil is the positive attitudes to the political system' (2017: 32). As demonstrated in the next chapter of this work, this contrasts with my findings about young SNP members who are, overall, quite motivated to participate. In their case, the national, political context with the question of Scottish independence clearly plays a part in their motivation and political activism.

A limit to Emily Rainsford's research is that she carried out her study with a survey alone. This quantitative methodology could have been completed by interview analysis. It might have helped her to understand in further detail young German people's motivations to participate in political organisations. Hence the need to combine quantitative and qualitative research methods, as highlighted by the empirical parts of the present thesis.

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<sup>150</sup> Civic Voluntarism Model developed by Sidney Verba, Kay Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady (1995).

### **6.3) Lynn Bennie and Andrew Russell's Study of Young Party Members in Britain**

Using existing data from party membership surveys<sup>151</sup>, Lynn Bennie and Andrew Russell presented a paper at the 2012 Elections, Public Opinion and Parties (EPOP) Conference about British young party members and their activism, political attitudes and views (Bennie and Russell, 2012). Their research questions concentrated on the number of young people in parties, their activism, the potential radicalism in their views, their opinion of party leaders, and the recruitment of young people by parties. Their results are presented below.

#### **a) Demographics**

Based on the most recent data that Bennie and Russell could find, their paper shows that the average age of the members in each party is rather old, thus in line with the ageing of party members argument. The table below sums up the most significant demographical results from Bennie and Russell's paper.

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<sup>151</sup> Regarding the young Conservatives, Lynn Bennie and Andrew Russell based their analysis on a survey conducted by Sarah Childs and Paul Webb in 2009. Regarding young Labour members, they relied on a survey by Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley in 1997. As for young members of the Lib Dems, they based their arguments on a survey by Whiteley et al. in 1998/99. Finally, regarding young SNP members, they used the findings of the survey carried out by James Mitchell, Lynn Bennie and Rob Johns in 2007/08, also explored in the present thesis.

	<b>Conservatives</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Lib Dems</b>	<b>SNP</b>
	2009	1997	1999	2008
up to 25	9	4	2	3
26-35	9	13	5	6
36-45	9	20	11	12
46-55	13	<b>24</b>	23	17
56-65	28	16	22	26
66+	<b>33</b>	23	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>
Mean	55	51	59	59
N	1690	5642	2794	6740

Table 1.3: Age of party members, as indicated in Bennie and Russell's paper (2012: 6) (percentages)

In the SNP, we see that the up to 25 and 26-35 groups are the smallest. Yet, these statistics date from 2008, notably before the Scottish independence referendum in 2014 and the EU referendum in 2016 with which a great amount of young people were involved. Thus, the analysis of young SNP members in the following chapter updates these figures.

As for young party members' sex, their paper confirms the well-known fact of the over-representation of men in political parties. The table below sums up the most significant results from their paper.

	<b>Conservatives</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Lib Dems</b>	<b>SNP</b>
	2009	1997	1999	2008
Female	39.8	39.3	45.5	31.8
Male	<b>60.2</b>	<b>60.7</b>	<b>54.5</b>	<b>68.2</b>
N	1690	5757	2807	6885

Table 1.4: Sex of party members, as indicated in Bennie and Russell's paper (2012: 6) (percentages)

In the next chapter, I compare the figures about SNP members with my statistics about the sex of the YSI and SNP Students who submitted a response to my online questionnaire and with whom I had interviews.

## **b) Activism**

The data from party membership surveys on which Bennie and Russell base their study show that young Conservatives are rather active in the party. The researchers conclude that ‘self-reported activism suggests that those aged 26-35 are the least likely to be completely inactive and the very youngest group are most likely to describe themselves as very active’ (2012: 6-7).

Bennie and Russell draw the same conclusion with regard to young SNP members. Basing their arguments on the 2008 study by Mitchell et al., they note that the youngest members of the party appear to be the most active: 45 per cent of young SNP members describe ‘themselves as very or fairly active, and they are also the least likely to report spending no time on the party’ (2012: 7). Significantly, Bennie and Russell say that ‘the youngest group looks really quite vibrant’, they ‘provide key grassroots support and organisational zeal’ (2012: 7-8), and ‘appear to be quite energetic and self-motivated’ (2012: 10). As for young Scots’ activities in the SNP, it appears that ‘standing for office and telephone canvassing’ (2012: 8) are not that popular amongst the young members of the party. The researchers explain this by saying that it takes time to campaign to be elected and/or to get a position in the party, while young people do not necessarily remain as much involved in it as they are during their youth. In this regard, Bennie and Russell argue that activism seems to decrease amongst SNP members aged from 26 to 35, due to ‘competing family and work responsibilities’ (2012: 8), as highlighted by Regina Weber with the time variable in her youth party membership model (see the section



about Weber's research above). Bennie and Russell show that young SNP members tend to be involved in activities like 'displaying posters, delivering leaflets and canvassing door-to-door (up to 25 group is the most likely to do this), and they are also quite likely to attend national conferences' (2012: 8). The two scholars note that they also tend to be quite involved through the internet. They deplore that young party members' use of social media has not been much analysed in studies about party membership, hence the need to do so with regard to young SNP members (see Chapter Two). They nonetheless note that Mitchell et al. examined the use of the SNP's website by their members. Bennie and Russell argue for generational differences between the youngest and older members of the party, 'with a small majority of young members not accessing the party's website' (2012: 9). They add that 'areas of the website restricted to members only are visited by less than a third of members, but by a significant majority of the young members.' (2012: 9). In a way, it is logical: the young are more interested in and more comfortable using new technologies like the internet than older generations. All these conclusions, based on Mitchell et al.'s findings in 2008, are tested in the next chapter.

Lynn Bennie and Andrew Russell's analysis shows that in the Liberal Democrats, 'the youngest group *and*<sup>152</sup> the 46-65-year olds look most committed' (2012: 12). The youngest members of the Lib Dems are also the members of this party who most declare they are not inactive. As the scholars rightly note, 'this is a consistent finding across the parties' (2012: 10), which shows that, despite the small number of young people engaged in political parties, they seem to be the most active party members. This goes against the common view that young people are not interested in politics at all.

The story is slightly different in Labour. Basing their arguments on the 1997 survey of the party, Bennie and Russell find that activism 'looks more middle-aged' (2012: 13) as the party 'was most dominated by older generations' (2012: 12) at that time. This is rather

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<sup>152</sup> Italics in the original text.

surprising, for young people are usually known for their left views. One might have thought that they would have been much more active in Labour.

Overall, as Lynn Bennie and Andrew Russell conclude:

‘the evidence from all the parties taken together suggests that young people in the parties can be relied upon to provide valuable grassroots support. The youngest members appear to hit the ground running in that they are no less active than the average member, and often more so.’ (2012: 13).

Again, this goes against the theory of youth apathy regarding politics. Also, it is an important conclusion that should be considered by political parties if they want to get rejuvenated through the recruitment of young people.

### **c) Political Views**

Basing their conclusions on the 2009 study of the Conservative Party, Lynn Bennie and Andrew Russell demonstrate that young Conservatives tend to be quite right-wing regarding economic issues, while they seem more liberal than older members with regard to ‘censorship’, ‘Europe and immigration’, and ‘the environment’ (2012: 14). Namely, they tend to be more liberal than older Conservative members when it comes to social and environmental issues. The second part of the present work tests the conclusion about Europe – in 2009, ‘younger members are less rabidly anti-EU’ (2012: 14) than older members – thanks to questions about the EU and the EU referendum during interviews with some young Scottish Conservatives. This apparent progressivism amongst young Conservatives compared to older members is also revealed by their views on the candidate selection process in the party: according to Bennie and Russell,

even if they are quite happy with it, the youngest are ‘more inclined to say women and minority groups (ethnic minority groups, gay rights groups) should have more power’ (2012: 20).

As for young SNP members, using Mitchell et al.’s 2008 survey, Bennie and Russell draw conclusions which are very interesting and important in order to answer the research questions of the present thesis. First, they point out that YSI and SNP Students tend to have more liberal views than older generations in the party. This is notably the case about issues like immigration, the environment, and homosexuality: ‘more than 50 per cent of two youngest groups disagreed strongly that “homosexual relations are always wrong”, only 13 per cent of those over 65’ (2012: 15). Such views are highlighted in Chapter Two. The two scholars also concentrate upon YSI and SNP Students’ views on the British monarchy. According to Bennie and Russell’s analysis, they tend to be more radical than those of older generations: ‘the youngest are definitely more radically opposed to the monarchy, with three quarters (74 per cent) agreeing that “there is no place for the monarchy in a modern society”, compared to 50 per cent of the 66 plus group and 57 per cent of members as a whole.’ (2012: 16). Most interestingly for us, Bennie and Russell focus on generational differences in the party when it comes to Scottish independence and national identity<sup>153</sup>. Thanks to the 2008 SNP survey conducted by Mitchell et al., it appears that young SNP members are ‘most committed to independence’ and ‘more supportive of the party’s official policy of independence in Europe than the party as a whole, with older members more likely to opt for independence outside of the EU’ (2012: 15). The researchers refer to Mitchell et al.’s statistics to strengthen their point: 64.6 per cent of the members up to 25 years old and 63 per cent of the 26-35-year olds support ‘independence either way’, while 44.2 per cent of the members who are 66 years old and beyond do so (2012: 16). Young people are the most supportive of this idea, whereas the 66-year olds

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<sup>153</sup> See Sobolewska, M., and Ford, R. (2020). *Brexitland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Sobolewska and Ford interestingly examine political divisions over identity in the UK, with those they call ‘identity Conservatives’ and ‘identity Liberals’.

and above are the least supportive of it. The conclusion about YSI and SNP Students being quite supportive of Scotland's independence in the EU is fundamental for my research. It legitimises the topic of my thesis: as a majority of young members want Scotland to become independent – even more, independent in the EU – it is worth examining the role played by these constitutional preferences in their involvement with the party. Bennie and Russell's conclusion is confirmed in the following chapter dedicated to young SNP members' political engagement and motivations. My research questions are also legitimised by the scholars' highlights about young SNP members' relationship with their national identity:

*'The youngest (...) tend to display the strongest national identity. Or, to be more specific, the oldest age groups are most likely to view themselves as a combination of Scottish and British, as opposed to exclusively Scottish e.g. 82 per cent of youngest see themselves as Scottish only, compared with 73 per cent of oldest.'* (2012: 16)<sup>154</sup>.

Therefore, it is worth analysing YSI and SNP Students' perceptions of their national identity and its role, if any, in their engagement in the party. This major conclusion drawn by Bennie and Russell from Mitchell et al.'s study, which is based here on the Moreno question presented earlier, is confirmed and further explored in the next chapter.

Bennie and Russell show that according to the 1997 and 1999 surveys of Labour members and the Liberal Democrats, young Labour and the young Lib Dems think more liberally than their older counterparts. The researchers notably enhance that in 1999, 'the younger generations of Lib Dems were considerably more in favour of EU integration' and 'markedly more supportive of immigration' (2012: 17). As for young Labour members, in 1997

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<sup>154</sup> My emphasis.

they tended to have more liberal views than older members regarding social and societal issues like ‘immigration, homosexuality, censorship’ (2012: 18).

Hence the conclusion that in spite of their political party and party family or ideology, young British party members tend to be more liberal than their older fellow members, especially with regard to social and societal issues like immigration<sup>155</sup>, EU integration, and the environment. This is also the case amongst young Conservatives, which might be a surprise when one knows that their political views are right-wing, thus more ‘traditional’ in a way. Such a conclusion is confirmed by my research in the next chapter. Also, it would be worth studying in further detail the generational differences in political parties. As said earlier, just a few surveys of young party members have been conducted so far: similarities and differences between party members depending on their age is a very interesting research question to work on.

#### **d) Views on Parties and Their Leaders**

Lynn Bennie and Andrew Russell’s analysis shows that, overall, young British party members are happy with internal party organisation. They note that in the Conservative Party, the youngest appear to be the most supportive of party policy-making. Young SNP members seem to be quite happy with their party organisation as well. They have a strong sense of efficacy<sup>156</sup> and like the social dimension of being a party member, namely the ability to meet new people. Besides, despite the fact that ‘it is the youngest members who are most likely to grumble that members don’t have enough influence’, young SNP members tend to think that their party leaders do their best in order to ‘represent views of ordinary members’ (2012: 20).

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<sup>155</sup> For further reading about identity politics in the UK, see Sobolewska and Ford (2020).

<sup>156</sup> They think that their activism has an impact on Scottish politics. Also, they told me that young people’s voice is heard by the SNP and its leaders. Several young members said that they are allowed to play their part in the party.

In Labour and the Lib Dems, Bennie and Russell note that young people ‘are markedly less likely to see members’ role as one of support for leadership and more likely to see the leader as too powerful’ (2012: 22). Overall, regardless of the party, young people seem to be quite happy with its structures and organisation. Also, as Bennie and Russell emphasise, they are ‘enthusiastic, confident and energetic’ (2012: 22) members. Is that the same in the sense of political parties towards young people?

### **e) Recruitment of Young People by Parties**

Lynn Bennie and Andrew Russell argue that British political parties manage rather well to ‘use’ young people to highlight their dynamic and youthful aspects. The scholars add that young people are a very efficient workforce in the service of parties during campaigns. In this regard, the scholars focus on the Conservative Party, Labour and the SNP’s attempts to reach out to young people. Conservative Future<sup>157</sup> tried to show that young people could have an influence on the party and its ‘programme and activities’ (2012: 26). In 2012, Labour launched the *Refounding Labour to Win* programme designed to value members’ views and give them a sense of efficacy in the party through an exchange with the leaders. Tellingly, Bennie and Russell note that ‘the narrative of *Refounding Labour to Win* is that Young Labour has been given new powers in order to strengthen its voice in the party’ (2012: 24). The researchers significantly demonstrate that the ‘Equality’ section of that documentation ‘explicitly makes the case for constructing a new architecture of the Labour party with young people and the youth wing fully accommodated so that Labour could become “A party for young people”’ (2012: 28). They quote the document:

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<sup>157</sup> Conservative Future was the youth wing of the British Conservative Party from 1998 to 2016. It was dissolved after allegations of sexual assaults, bullying and blackmail. A new Conservative youth wing was established in 2018, now called Young Conservatives.

‘A number of submissions referenced the crucial role that young members play at every level of our party, and there was a strong feeling that investment should take place in our youth structures – in terms of representation, events, communication, training and policy development – to ensure that our party is always able to rely on an active and motivated youth membership.’ (2012: 28)<sup>158</sup>.

Those words clearly show Labour’s willingness to integrate young people more efficiently in the party and to make their voices heard. This confirms Bennie and Russell’s finding that British political parties identify young people as valuable members and, thus, the need to reach out to them. Yet, Bennie and Russell suggest that they fail to recruit young members efficiently. As shown earlier in this chapter, that failure is also pointed out by Emily Rainsford who expands that parties should think of solutions to cope with their lack of attraction in young people’s eyes. As will be said in the conclusion of the present thesis, while ‘young people are valuable members, providing energetic grassroots support’, parties seem to fail in recruiting them, which ‘has significant implications for the future of political parties’ (2012: 29). The following chapter tackles this issue by examining the relationship between the SNP and young Scots, notably how the party is rather successful in reaching out to them, leading to an upsurge in the membership of its youth and student factions.

The strength of Bennie and Russell’s research is its comparative dimension. Comparing young members from the Conservatives, Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the SNP helped them draw relevant conclusions regarding their political views and attitudes. The limit is that it

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<sup>158</sup> Bennie and Russell’s quotation from *Refounding Labour to Win* (Labour Party, 2012).

is based on existing data, instead of new data. Also, as they examined party membership surveys only, their methodology was exclusively quantitative. In that sense, their paper does not allow for a deep understanding of young British people's reasons for joining political parties. Having conducted interviews with them would have enabled Bennie and Russell to examine their motivations for joining. As seen with their research questions, this part of young party members' engagement is not tackled by their paper. Nevertheless, such limits can be explained by the fact that the two scholars did that research for a conference presentation. No doubt they would have extended their research by collecting new data in the frame of a wider research project. In this regard, it would be worth researching all the political parties' youth wings in the UK so as to compare their members' motivations, views and activism.

Apart from Bruter and Harrison's, most of the studies presented above were based on a quantitative analysis of surveys. Qualitative research is also needed. Interviews would have confirmed – or not – the results, and would have enabled the researchers to go deeper into the analysis and understanding of young party members' motivations and views. This is overcome by the following study of young SNP members and their political engagement.

## **Conclusions**

In this chapter, I reviewed youth party membership studies. First, I concentrated on political participation. I presented the main schools of thought regarding that notion. As this thesis focuses on young party members specifically, I chose not to review political participation in great detail so as to concentrate on one aspect of that notion: party membership. Then, I



presented the different theories and models explaining party membership. Finally, I focused particularly on the literature on youth party membership.

Citizens can participate in the political life of the society they live in either in formal (such as voting in elections, joining a party, canvassing) or informal ways (like demonstrations, boycotts, strikes). Despite a wide repertoire of participation and, thus, a variety of ways of expressing one's political interest and opinions, the literature sheds light on the decline of political participation in Western democracies for several decades. As was suggested, some scholars argue against the decline thesis by demonstrating that people still participate today, but in different ways. New forms of participation include engagement in social movements, the fight for issues like the environment, feminism, LGBT rights, and participation on social media. Thus, to a certain extent, people probably do not participate less, but they participate differently. Whether they participate less or not, the point of the present research is to analyse one aspect of their participation: the reasons why they participate.

As was shown, political participation can be explained at three levels: micro (the individual), meso (political organisations like parties), and macro (society, institutions) levels. Also, it can be analysed as either a dependent or an independent variable: identified factors encourage people to participate, or political participation has some influence on people's lives. As the present thesis aims at understanding why young Scots join the SNP, I consider political participation as a dependent variable.

It is commonly viewed that young people are disinterested in politics, or that they are what is usually called politically 'apathetic'. They are known for their distrust in political parties and politicians, as well as for thinking that they do not stand for their interests and do not make their voice heard enough. Generally speaking, young people do not seem to be interested in political issues. In particular, as Emily Rainsford rightly puts it, their relationship with political parties is 'complicated' (2014: 48). Scholars agree that they are underrepresented in parties.

Only a few young people make the decision to become party members. Is this due to a lack of personal motivations, or to political parties' failure to recruit them? Are they not exposed to politics enough during their childhood and teenage years? In other words, is political socialisation too poor to make parties appealing in the eyes of young people? In the face of the thesis on youth political apathy, some scholars argue that the young do participate, but not in traditional ways. They suggest that, instead of voting in elections, supporting a party or a politician, or joining a party, they get involved in social movements – very often single-issue social movements – and tend to use social media to share their opinion and have debates. Some scholars add that if young people were heard enough, they would probably participate more. An illustration of this is the lowering of the voting age to 16 in Scotland: for the 2014 Scottish independence referendum in particular, a massive proportion of the young Scots who were 16 and 17, and thus allowed to vote, went to the polls. This shows that sometimes, young people are more willing to participate in the political life of their nation. So, what *does* urge them to participate at these particular moments? Also, why do so few young people make the decision to join political parties?

After its golden age in the 1950s, it is commonly argued amongst scholars that party membership has been declining. Due to societal change, people's change in their lifestyle, the emergence of single-issue concerns, political disillusion and a sense of distrust as regards political parties and politicians, among other things, party membership has been decreasing in Western democracies. However, some British political parties have seen a surge in their membership in the last few years. This is particularly the case of the Scottish National Party. As James Mitchell, Lynne Bennie and Rob Johns demonstrate, and as is shown in the next chapter of this work, the 2014 Scottish independence referendum pushed a significant number of Scottish people to join the SNP. Importantly, the youth and student factions of the party saw their membership numbers rise. When such a small proportion of young people join political

parties today, why do so many young Scots join the SNP? It is worth having a closer look at their motivations and views. The present work thus adds to the studies about young party members that have been conducted so far.

Scholars all agree that, at the moment, youth party membership is understudied. Hence the contribution of the present thesis. More generally speaking, this research adds to the existing studies about party membership, regardless of members' age. It offers a new model of youth party membership, that can also account for party membership as a whole. That new model is introduced in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Two: Young People's Involvement in the SNP**

### **I) Research Questions and Hypotheses**

As said in Chapter One, the campaign for the Scottish independence referendum and the period afterwards saw many young people engage in politics. This was notably the case of those who became political party members. Thus, as the present thesis deals with young SNP members' political involvement, the main research question of this work is as follows: why do young people join the SNP?

As the Scottish independence referendum and its campaign seem to have pushed young people to join political parties, particularly the SNP, this study focuses on the period running from 2012 – the beginning of the referendum campaign – to today. Since 2012, why have young people joined the SNP? Relying on the party membership literature and, especially, on the literature on young party members reviewed in the previous chapter, I hypothesise that in Scotland, young people join the SNP for the common reasons identified by party membership scholars (see Chapter One). Young Scots may get involved with the SNP because one or several relatives and/or friends of them are SNP members, emphasising the role of socialisation. Similarly, social capital and socio-economic resources may influence their decision to join the party. Ideology, namely their political ideas and beliefs, may also play a part in their party membership. Given the social democratic stance of the SNP, it can be assumed that they get involved in order to further social democracy in Scotland. They may join also for career reasons and/or a desire for fame and recognition by their peers. According to the literature on party membership and young people's party membership especially, it can be argued that these are the usual, typical reasons why young Scottish people join the SNP. Yet, reasons for party

membership may vary from a young person to another. Also, it is worth noting that what I did not know before starting this survey was the order of those reasons in terms of importance: one young SNP member may have got involved with the party for one specific reason while another young person became a member for several reasons; the main reason why the former engaged in the party may be their political ideology while for the latter, it may be primarily a wish to start a political career and become a politician, whereas another young Scot may have chosen party membership to fulfil a kind of moral, civic duty or make new friends.

Besides those common or traditional reasons for joining, I hypothesise that Scottish young people join the SNP for another reason, which is related to the constitutional and political context in Scotland: Scottish independence. Given that it is the SNP's main goal, it can be assumed that it is young people's main motivation for joining the party.

When it comes to context, as young people (aged 16 and over) were allowed to vote for the Scottish referendum in 2014, they felt probably more concerned by it than they would have if they had not been allowed to vote (see Chapter One). They may have been more interested in the referendum campaign as well. Moreover, as the future of Scotland was at stake, to a certain extent their own future was at stake too. They are Scotland's future generation. They undoubtedly saw the fact of having a say in the future of their country as an opportunity to participate in its political life. Thus, I hypothesise that the lowering of the voting age is another reason why young people got interested in the Scottish independence referendum and, then, joined the SNP.

If young Scots were mobilised because the future of their country in *or* out of the UK was at stake, it means that context plays a part in young people's political involvement. If it is confirmed that the referendum and its campaign encouraged young people to join political parties, I hypothesise that young Scots join the SNP for contextual reasons. In other words, does the perspective of Scottish independence vis-à-vis the United Kingdom play a part in young

Scottish people's decision to join a political party? Does the question of Scotland's future push them to join the SNP in particular? Again, given that the party presses for independence, I hypothesise that the national political context in Scotland does play a role in young Scots joining it. But is this the only reason why they do so? If not, is this the main reason? What about young Scottish people joining Labour and the Conservative and Unionist Party? Do they join these parties because they want to preserve the Union by preventing Scotland from leaving the UK? If so, is this the only reason or the main reason why they become party members? As both political parties advocated the survival of the Union at the time of the Scottish referendum, I hypothesise that the wish to make Scotland stay in the UK is the reason – or one of the reasons – why these young people became party members during the referendum campaign or right after the vote. Yet, contrary to young SNP members who still push for independence today (given that the Noes won in 2014), it can be assumed that the reasons why young Scots join the Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish Conservatives today may be different from those at the time of the referendum. As another one took place two years later, and given that it dealt with another very important issue in terms of constitutional future for Scotland and the UK as a whole, I hypothesise that the issue of Brexit also played – and still plays – a part in these young people's political engagement. Whilst young Scots may get involved with the SNP to fight against Brexit and get another Scottish independence referendum in order to join the EU again, others may have joined the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party in order to campaign for Brexit. As for young people joining the Scottish Labour Party, the issue seems to be more complex in the sense that Labour was divided on Brexit.

The online survey and the interviews of young SNP members and a comparison with Scottish Young Conservatives and Scottish Young Labour members help us check those hypotheses and possibly find out that national political contexts can be considered factors influencing youth party membership.

As said before, a comparison with the reasons why young people join the Scottish Conservatives and the Scottish Labour Party enables us to draw more valuable and relevant conclusions with regard to young SNP members' political engagement. As shown later in this work, in terms of research in political science generally speaking, such findings also allow us to explore a possible link between political positions, party families, and factors of party membership: do people – especially young people – get engaged for reasons depending on their political ideology and the political family of the party they choose to join? Are the reasons for party membership rather homogenous among the young members of the same party? Such questions suggest that two types of comparison are necessary: inter-party and intra-party comparisons. As argued earlier, this thesis compares young SNP members' views and motivations with those of Scottish Young Conservatives and Scottish Young Labour members (inter-party comparison). It also compares interview answers with survey responses amongst young SNP members (intra-party comparison).

To sum up, the present part aims at answering the following question: why do young people join the SNP? Part Two will then answer two related questions: is national identity a reason for their joining? And is there a relationship between their sense of national identity and the extent of their involvement with the party?

Before introducing and discussing the conclusions of this research, let's focus on the ways data were collected.

## **II) Data Collection**

As shown in the introduction to this thesis, my research methods were both qualitative and quantitative. Combined methods offer more specific and significant conclusions. First, I decided to have in-depth interviews with young SNP members because I wanted to precisely understand their motivations for joining the party and their views on their national identity. Yet, in my opinion, qualitative research alone might be subjective. At least, it is the researcher's interpretation of the interviewees' answers that can be subjective. In other words, one could argue that from one researcher to another, this interpretation may vary. It may depend, for instance, on the researcher's political participation, activism, even membership, or non-participation/membership. It may depend on the researcher's political ideology too. Also, it may be influenced by their relationship with the interviewees (i.e. if they were nice or unfriendly). For all these ethical reasons, I always tried to stay neutral with the young people I interviewed. I was very careful not to make friends with them. In search of objectivity, I also made the decision to complement the interviews with a survey<sup>159</sup>. Quantitative research can be seen as more 'scientific' or at least objective, hence the need to combine the two methods. Once more, I think that they are complementary methods which lead to more specific and significant conclusions. In that sense, my survey sample is indicative rather than representative. Indeed, there were not enough submissions to say it is representative, but nonetheless it is indicative and adds to the interviews.

In the frame of the fieldwork I did in June and October 2018, April and May 2019, and March 2020, I had interviews with 37 young party members in Scotland, including 25 young SNP members, 7 Conservatives, 4 Labour and one Brexit Party member<sup>160</sup>. These were semi-guided, in-depth interviews, which enabled me to go beyond a mere questionnaire survey by grasping interviewees' thoughts, beliefs and ideology. Namely, I could explore what is at the

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<sup>159</sup> See the survey questions in the Appendix (page 424). The survey is also accessible at: <https://sondages.u-bourgogne.fr/index.php/558275?lang=en>

<sup>160</sup> He is a former Conservative Party and UKIP member. Currently, he is a Brexit Party and Rassemblement National (French former Front National) member.



heart of their minds. Qualitative methods like interviews are also what other scholars of youth party membership favour. As shown earlier, Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison, who have conducted the most developed study of young party members so far, demonstrated the usefulness and reliability of interviews.

It was difficult to reach young party members, especially young Scottish Conservatives and Scottish Young Labour members. This is one reason why I did not interview the same number of young people in the three political parties. Young Scottish Labour members were the hardest to reach. This explains the relatively small number of young Labour interviewees in my study (this is also the case of young Labour and Conservatives in the online survey). Given that the sample of young Labour and Conservatives is indicative rather than representative, the comparison between them and SNP youth is only informative. Another reason for that small Labour and Conservative sample is the fact that the study focuses voluntarily on young SNP members as the main case study. In the aftermath of the Scottish referendum, the SNP was the party joined by most of the young Scots that had made the choice to become party members... But why?

Besides interviews, I sent an online survey to the young members of all the Scottish political parties, via emails and social media. In total, 82 people submitted responses, including 53 complete responses. As said above, this is not enough to consider my online survey representative. Nonetheless, it is enough to say that it is indicative and adds to the in-depth interviews. As I was able to get in touch with a relatively large number of SNP members for interviews, a majority of the respondents were Young Scots for Independence and SNP Students, namely 38. Besides them, 4 young Liberals, 4 Greens, 3 Conservatives, 3 Labour and one Brexit Party member responded to all the questions of the online survey. As already said, it was particularly difficult to reach young party members. I sent the survey to all the youth organisations of political parties in Scotland. I sent it to the headquarters of the youth wings,

but also to their sub-groups, university societies and regional associations. The number of respondents in each party (except the SNP) speaks for itself and shows how difficult it was to motivate these young party members to take part in the study. It could be worth researching the reasons for this in the future. The constitutional question of the nation's independence still looming may explain why the YSI and SNP Students are more willing to talk about their political engagement. To some extent, some of them may have seen me, a researcher interested in their party membership and political views, as an opportunity to make their voice heard and to press further for independence. In a sense, the present research offers some visibility to their campaign, and not only in Scotland or the UK but also in France.

It should be noted that qualitative research was also embedded in the online survey: there were not only yes/no questions, but with text answers, respondents could also specify their answers/thoughts. If many more surveys had been submitted, this qualitative analysis would not have been possible. I admit that the weakness of my data is the small number of responses to the survey. Yet, it enabled me to analyse in further detail each questionnaire that was completed.

The online questionnaire was a useful tool to gather statistics about these young people's political engagement and their relationship to national identity, leading to complementary conclusions by adding to the interviews. I wanted to check the results of my research by comparing the interviews and the answers to the questionnaire. Thanks to that comparison, I was able to identify some tendencies strengthening my conclusions.

Besides interviews and the survey, I analysed the social media accounts of SNP youth. These were the YSI and SNP Students accounts, as well as personal ones. I examined what they posted on both Twitter and Facebook. Also, Dr. Eric Leclercq and Ms. Annabelle Gillet, two computer engineering researchers working at the ESIREM (University of Burgundy) in Dijon, tried to create a model that would automatically recognise Tweets depending on their content.

Unfortunately, their model did not work. Therefore, I concentrated on young SNP members' social media accounts manually. I looked at their posts on a daily basis.

Finally, I did ethnographic observation<sup>161</sup>. I observed young SNP members at the annual conferences of the party. I looked at how they behaved, what they said to each other, and their involvement in the party (activism, speeches, organisation of events...). I also participated in social events, both with and without relation to the party, notably the karaoke which is traditionally organised by young members in the two or three days of SNP conference. And I joined parties (not political, this time) and nights out organised by some young members too. This was a good way to compare their behaviours at and outside conference, and to see to what extent their everyday lives were political.

The research methodology of the present work is thus composed of qualitative and quantitative analyses (interviews and survey), social media exploration, and ethnographic observation. Before drawing conclusions about reasons for joining the youth and student wings of the SNP, let's focus on their members' portrait.

### **III) Young SNP Members: An Introduction**

#### **1) Youth and Student Wings of the SNP: Past and Present**

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<sup>161</sup> See Broqua, C. (2009). Observation ethnographique, in Fillieule, O. (ed.). *Dictionnaire des mouvements sociaux*. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 379-386. <https://doi.org/10.3917/scpo.filli.2009.01.0379>; Adler, P. A., and Adler, P. (1994). Observational techniques, in Denzin, N. K., and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage; Delamont, S. (2004). Ethnography and participant observation, in Seale, C., Gobo, G., Gubrium, J. f., and Silverman, D. (eds.). *Qualitative research practice*. London: Sage.

The first pro-independence student organisation in Scotland was formed in 1927, even before the foundation of the SNP. Glasgow University Scottish Nationalist Association (GUSNA) campaigned for Home Rule for Scotland. In 1934, some GUSNA members played an important role in the foundation of the Scottish National Party. GUSNA is still active today.

In 1961, Neil MacCormick and Allan Macartney, among others, founded the student organisation of the SNP. At the time, the student wing was called the FSN: Federation of Student Nationalists. Today, it is still known as the FSN, but usually referred to as SNP Students. The student faction of the party aims at promoting ‘a social-democratic, independent Scotland amongst students’<sup>162</sup>. In that sense, their motto is ‘Stronger for students’, reminiscent of the SNP’s slogan ‘Stronger for Scotland’. SNP Students includes ten societies, mainly based at universities across Scotland: GUSNA (Glasgow University), SNP Strathclyde (Strathclyde University in Glasgow), DUSNA (Dundee University), GCUSNA (Glasgow Caledonian University), Edinburgh University SNP, SUSNA (Stirling University), AUSNA (Aberdeen University), St Andrews University Students For Independence (STAUSFI), UWSSNA (University of the West of Scotland), and UHI SNP (University of the Highlands and Islands).

On their website, SNP Students introduce themselves as a ‘progressive, centre-left and social democratic organisation’<sup>163</sup>. They work alongside but independently from the SNP. Their activities mainly consist in ‘campaigning’, ‘policymaking’ and organising ‘social events’<sup>164</sup>. They knock on doors and go leafletting. They also attend SNP conferences (during which I had most of my interviews with them). Besides those formal or traditional political activities as party members (see Chapter One), they are active on social media, both via the SNP Students official accounts on Facebook and Twitter and the members’ personal accounts (see the section

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<sup>162</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/snpstudents> Accessed on June 4th, 2021.

<sup>163</sup> <https://www.snpstudents.com> Accessed on June 4th, 2021.

<sup>164</sup> <https://www.snpstudents.com> Accessed on June 4th, 2021.

about Activism below). In terms of policy platform, SNP Students fight for students' rights and the improvement of their lives. They notably played a part in the abolition of university tuition fees in Scotland<sup>165</sup>. SNP Students organise social events as well, like pub quizzes and question and answer sessions with SNP political figures (usually Councillors, MPs, or MSPs).

The National Executive Committee (NEC) meets once a year in order to vote motions and elect its members for the coming year. The NEC positions are: national convener, vice convener, national secretary, national treasurer, national organiser and national communication officer.

The youth wing of the party was formed in the 1970s. It was then known as the YSN: Young Scottish Nationalists. It was reorganised in 1996. Since that date, it has been called the YSI: Young Scots for Independence. It is also known as SNP Youth. The organisation welcomes young people under the age of 30. Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland, and John Swinney, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, are two leading figures in the party that were members of the YSI. This is interesting regarding the recruitment function of political parties' youth factions (see Hooghe et al., 2004, and the dedicated section in Chapter One). This is further examined in the section about the SNP's recruitment of young people later in this work.

The aim of this SNP-affiliated organisation is Scottish independence. In this regard, their motto is 'Scotland's Future. Your Choice.'<sup>166</sup>

The YSI include regional associations. These are located in Central Scotland, Glasgow, the Highlands and Islands, the Lothian region, Mid-Scotland and Fife, North East Scotland, the South of Scotland, and the West of Scotland. Several groups are also part of the whole

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<sup>165</sup> University education in Scotland became free for Scottish students in 2008, after a bill was passed by the Scottish (SNP-led) government.

<sup>166</sup> <https://www.theysi.scot> Accessed on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

organisation: action groups, BAME<sup>167</sup> Members Group, Care Experienced Group, Content Creation Group, International Group, LGBTQI+ Members Group, Trans Empowerment Group, Women's Group. The positions in the National Executive Committee (NEC) are: national convener, national vice-convener, national secretary, national treasurer, national organiser, political education officer, national events and fundraising officer, national women's officer, national equalities officer, national communications officer, international officer, plus regional conveners.

## 2) Socio-demographics

### a) Age

In 2017, the average age of SNP members was 52 according to Bale, Webb and Poletti's study of British party members (Bale et al., 2019)<sup>168</sup>. It is worth noting that it was 53 years old in 2013 and between 55 and 59 in 2008<sup>169</sup>. Therefore, even though young people are still underrepresented in the party<sup>170</sup>, it seems that it is getting younger over the years, while

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<sup>167</sup> Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic.

<sup>168</sup> In the Conservative Party (in the whole UK), it was 57. As for Labour (in the whole UK as well), it was 53.

<sup>169</sup> 55 according to the 2013 annual report (The Electoral Commission, 2013: 4) and 59 according to Mitchell et al. (2012). With their survey of SNP members in 2007-2008, Mitchell et al. highlight the youth underrepresentation in the party: 'Early surveys showed that the SNP surge in the 1970s owed much to support from younger people, and that the average SNP voter was much younger than the average for the electorate as a whole (Miller, 1981; Kendrick, 1983). However (...), this age gap closed by the 1990s and, if anything, had reversed by the 2007 election. The reasons for this abrupt shift are unclear. What is clear is that the SNP is no longer a "young people's party" either in terms of its membership or its base of electoral support as it appeared to have been in the 1970s. It would seem that there have been two developments. First, generational change means that the youthful Nationalists of the 1970s are now in more senior age categories. Second, the SNP has disproportionately recruited amongst older people in recent years.' (2012: 58). The recent lowering of the average age of SNP members, as well as the increase of the proportion of young people since 2014, suggest that, although it still cannot be considered a 'young people's party', the SNP counts much more young Scots in its ranks today. At the time when Mitchell et al. carried out their survey, the Scottish referendum had not been held yet. As demonstrated further down, it seems to explain the reverse of the trend which was highlighted by Mitchell et al.

The two references cited by the scholars are: Kendrick, S. (1983). *Social Change and Nationalism in Modern Scotland*, PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh; Miller, W. (1981). *The End of British Politics?* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

<sup>170</sup> Bale, Webb and Poletti found out that in 2017, 3 per cent of SNP members were aged between 18 and 24.

membership of most political parties in the world is ageing<sup>171</sup>. This is confirmed by the increasing proportion of young people in the party. According to SNP annual reviews, 10 per cent of the SNP members were under 30 years old in 2013, while they made up 21 per cent in December 2014 (The Electoral Commission). Their proportion has thus doubled. One cannot but relate this increase of eleven points between 2013 and 2014 to the independence referendum. In this regard, in their annual reports, the SNP say: ‘Membership of the SNP surged dramatically *in the wake of the 2014 referendum vote*. This brought with it a dramatic improvement in the gender balance of members, and *the proportion of young people also increased markedly*.’<sup>172</sup> (The Electoral Commission, 2018: 3). Since the 2014 increase, these figures have remained largely the same<sup>173</sup>.

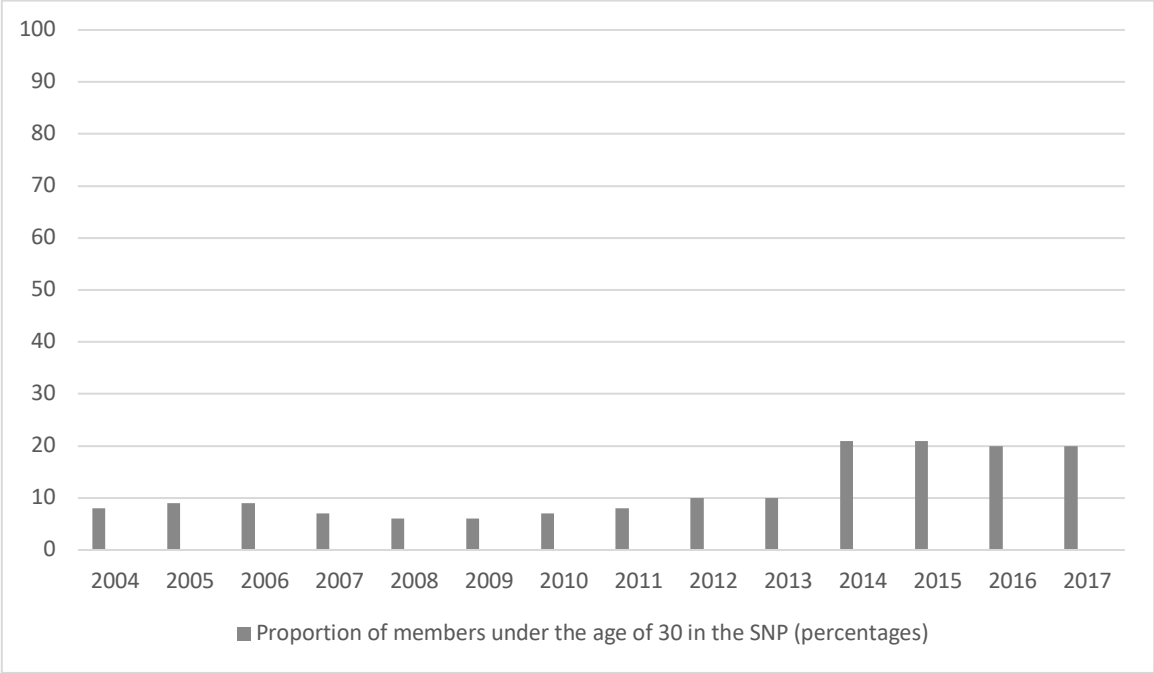


Figure 2.1: Proportion of members under the age of 30 in the SNP between 2004 and 2017 (percentages)

<sup>171</sup> Hence, again, the need to have a closer look at the young SNP members and their motivations to join.  
<sup>172</sup> My emphasis. Regarding gender, 44 per cent of the SNP members were women in 2018.  
<sup>173</sup> 20 per cent currently, according to annual reviews of the SNP. I calculated the proportion of young members in the party thanks to the official membership numbers they gave me in September 2021 (see the introduction to the present thesis): it is about 10 per cent.

Figure 2.1 clearly indicates that 2014 was a turning point in terms of youth representation in the SNP. In that sense, the independence referendum seems to have played a key role in making young people join the party. In other words, it was an incentive for party membership (SNP membership in particular) amongst young people. This is confirmed throughout the present chapter.

The average age of the SNP members I interviewed was 21 years old, ranging from 18 to 32. In Young Scottish Labour and the Young Scottish Conservatives, the average age of the interviewees was 23 and 24. As for the Brexit Party member, he was 19 at the time of the interview. Therefore, overall, the average age of the young Scottish party members with whom I did interviews is 22, ranging from 18 to 32.

The average age of the SNP members who responded to the online survey was 22, ranging from 18 to 29. That of the Labour respondents was 20. Amongst the Young Scottish Conservatives, Scottish Young Liberals and Scottish Young Greens, it was respectively 21, 23 and 22. The Brexit Party member respondent was 20 when submitting his responses. As a whole, the average age of all the respondents was 22, ranging from 18 to 29.

## **b) Gender**

### *Interviews*

Amongst the 37 party members interviewed, 26 (70 per cent) were male and 11 were female (30 per cent).



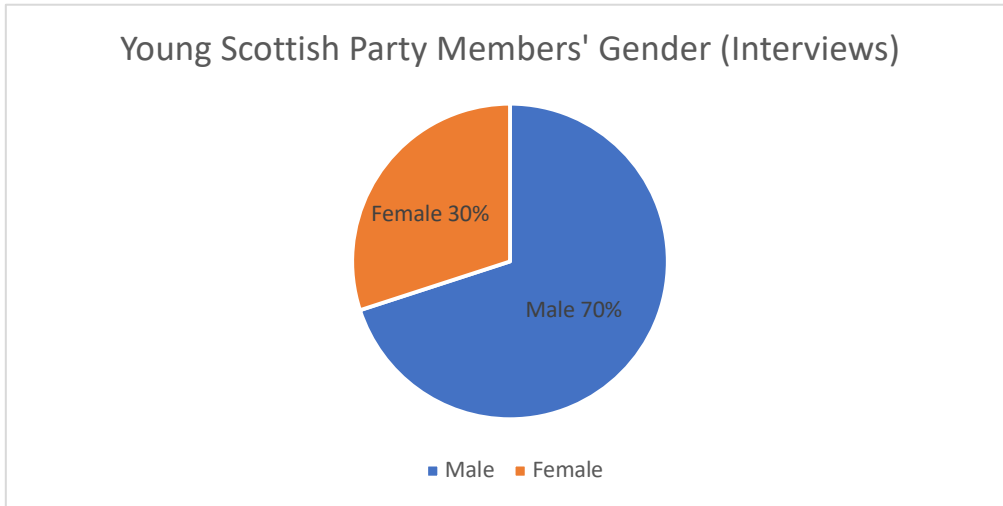


Figure 2.2: Gender in the interviews sample

In detail, in the SNP, 17 interviewees were male (68 per cent) and 8 were female (32 per cent). In Labour, it was balanced: 2 were female and the 2 others were male. In the Conservatives, 6 young party members were male, and one was female. The Brexit Party member interviewed was male.

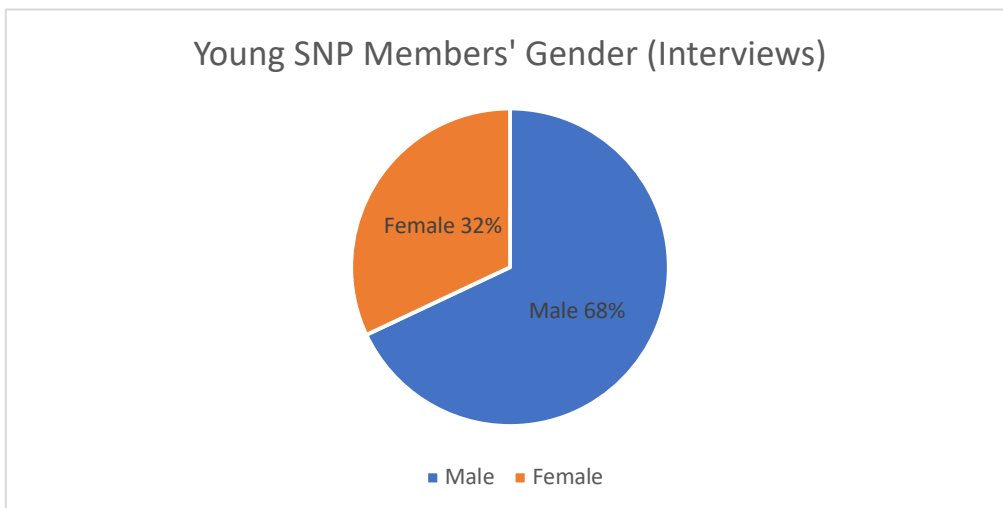


Figure 2.3: Gender of young SNP members interviewed

Although I could interview all the young members of the SNP, these statistics nonetheless align with the overrepresentation of men in political parties identified by the political participation

and party membership literature (Chapter One). They are also exactly in line with Mitchell et al.'s research on SNP members, regardless of their age: in 2007-2008, 68 per cent of the members they surveyed were male, and 32 were female (Mitchell et al., 2012: 59). As shown before, the proportion of women in the party is larger now: 44 per cent in 2018, according to the SNP annual report (The Electoral Commission, 2018).

*Online Survey*

Amongst the 53 young party members who submitted complete surveys, 72 per cent were male, 26 per cent were female, and 2 per cent identified as other.

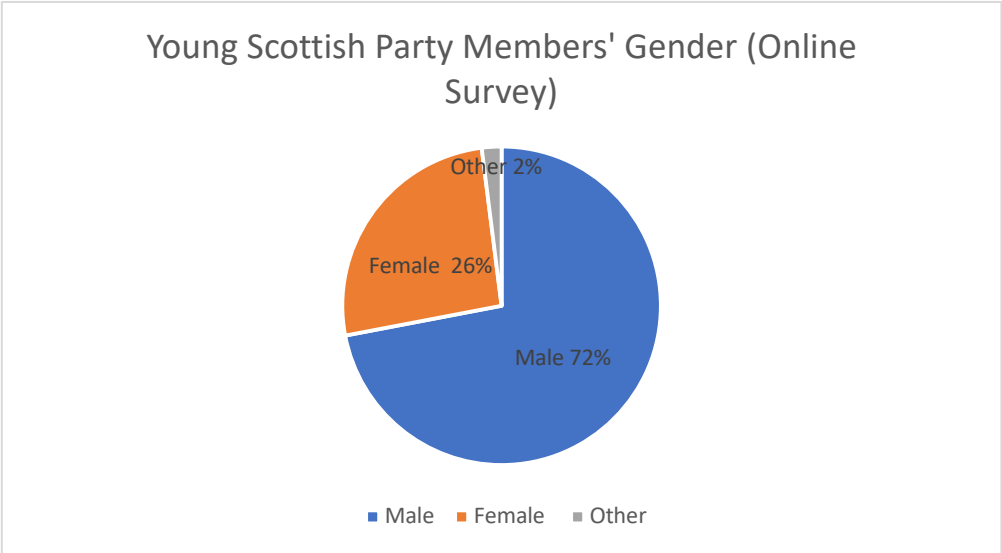


Figure 2.4: Gender in the online survey sample

In the SNP in particular, 24 respondents were male (63 per cent), 13 were female (34 per cent), and 1 identified as Other (3 per cent).

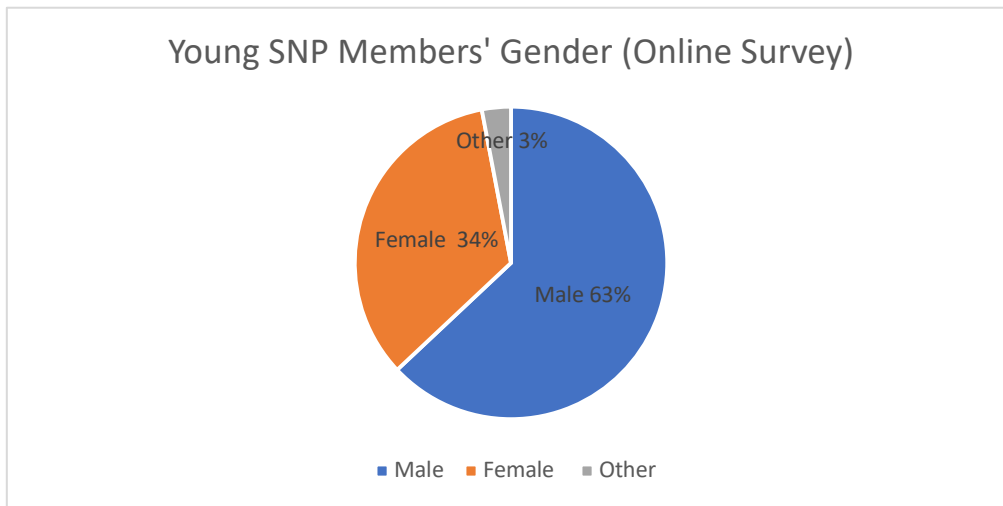


Figure 2.5: Gender of young SNP respondents

The results of both the interviews sample and the online survey support the overrepresentation of men identified in the literature on party membership (see Chapter One). They notably align with Bale et al.'s research on British party members (Bale et al., 2019). Regarding SNP members in particular, the results correlate with Mitchell et al.'s survey findings (Mitchell et al., 2012). It should be said that perhaps more young men than young women were willing to be interviewed and/or to respond to the survey. As mentioned above, in the SNP, in 2018, 44 per cent of the members were women. Despite a male overrepresentation, SNP membership is nonetheless rather balanced today. Thus, to be careful, it should be said that the four figures above indicate tendencies.

Tellingly, these figures all show that about 70 per cent of the young party members studied in Scotland (mainly in the SNP) are male. As a consequence, it can be argued that gender has to be considered an independent variable that influences youth SNP membership. This is in line with what has been found so far by youth party membership researchers. For instance, Matthew Lamb's sample was composed of a majority of young men (78.8 per cent). To a lesser extent, a majority (53 per cent) of the young people that were part of Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison's sample were also male (Bruter and Harrison, 2009b; see Chapter One).

### c) Social Class

#### *Interviews*

Amongst the 53 young party members who submitted a complete survey, 65 per cent belong to the middle class, 35 per cent to the working class, and none are from the upper class.

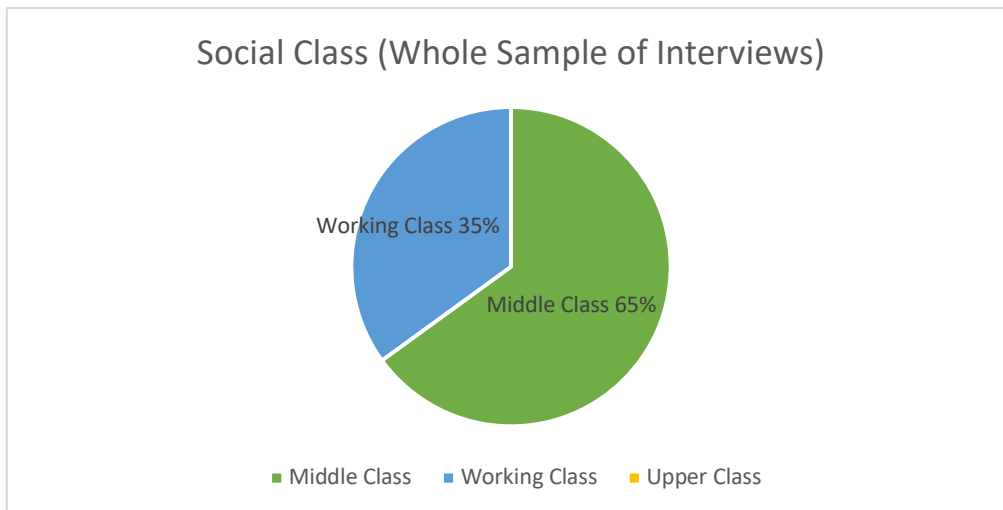


Figure 2.6: Social class in the whole sample of interviews

55 per cent of the YSI and SNP Students I interviewed belong to the middle class and 45 per cent belong to the working class. This is rather balanced. None are from the upper class.

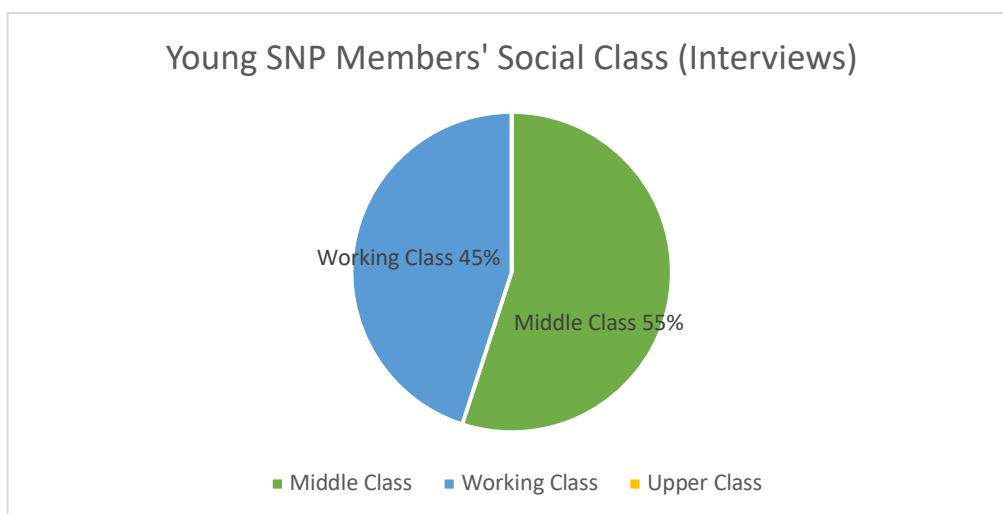


Figure 2.7: Social class amongst young SNP members interviewed

For information, 86 per cent of the young Conservatives are from the middle class, 14 per cent are from the working class and none belong to the upper class. All the young Labour members I interviewed belong to the middle class. The Brexit Party member is from the working class. Therefore, apart from him, it is in the SNP that we tend to find young people from a working-class background. Given that I could interview fewer Labour and Conservative members than SNP members, this has to be considered carefully. Once more, the sample of young Labour and Conservatives is indicative rather than representative.

The fact that 45 per cent of the YSI and SNP Students belong to the working class and 55 per cent to the middle class correlates with the party's position across the political spectrum, and with its policy platform. Namely, it is a centre-left party that works in the name of social democracy, for equality, fairness, social justice. Policies like the end of tuition fees at university, Scotland's Baby Box<sup>174</sup> and the First Home Fund<sup>175</sup> benefitted working and middle classes. Also, as explained further down, a majority of the young SNP members I interviewed campaign for a socially fairer and more equal Scotland. This is also highlighted by the issues they tackle through their activism, as shown on the YSI and SNP Students websites (see the section dedicated to their activism below).

### *Online Survey*

In the online survey sample as a whole, 53 per cent of the respondents belong to the working class and 47 per cent are from the middle class. None are part of the upper class.

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<sup>174</sup> The Scottish government provides new parents with a box full of essential items for their new born babies. As said on their website, the aim of the SNP with this policy is to ensure that 'every baby born in Scotland has an equal start in life' (see <https://www.snp.org/policies/pb-baby-box-scheme/> accessed on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021), 'regardless of their circumstances', namely regardless of their social background.

<sup>175</sup> Between December 2019 and March 2021, the Scottish government helped about 6,000 Scots buy their first house or flat. It benefitted especially young people with small income. About this policy, Nicola Sturgeon said: 'For many people, getting a deposit together is often an obstacle in buying their first home. Removing barriers and supporting people to buy the home they want is at the heart of this new fund. That is why we are acting to make the process fairer, to offer a helping hand to those buying a new home.' (see the Scottish government's website: <https://www.gov.scot/news/help-to-buy-a-home/> accessed on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

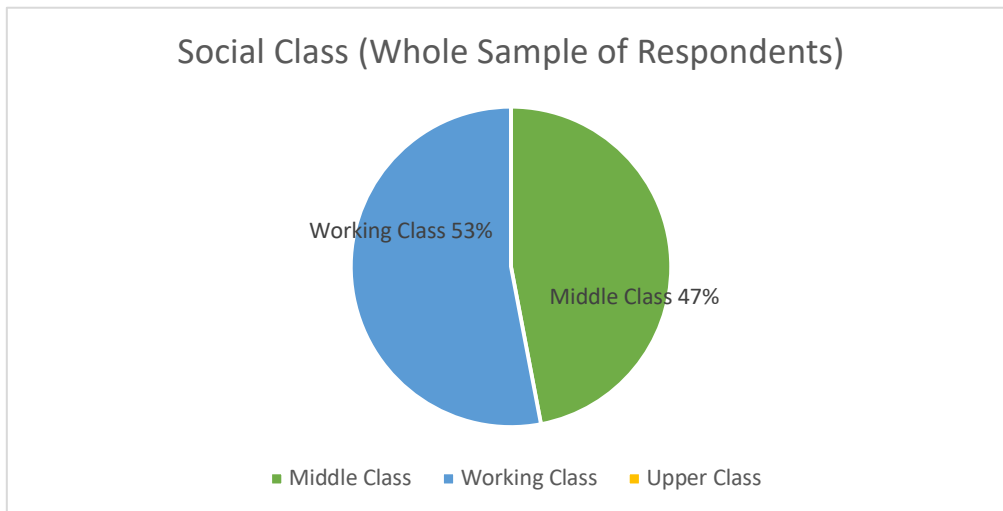


Figure 2.8: Social class in the online survey sample

Amongst the young SNP members that responded to the survey, 58 per cent are from the working class and 42 per cent are part of the middle class. Again, none come from the upper class. This is slightly different from the interview statistics (55 per cent in the middle class and 45 per cent in the working class). As 38 SNP members responded to the survey<sup>176</sup> compared to the 25 who were interviewed, this might explain that there were more members from the working class in the survey sample. Nonetheless, the results of that survey strengthen the point above about the correlation between young SNP members' social background and the political position and platform/ideology of their party, namely social democracy. In other words, the fact that a majority of the young SNP members studied here come from the working and middle classes may be explained by the policies of the Scottish, SNP-led government: as a social democratic party, the SNP are known for working on policies which target these two classes essentially.

<sup>176</sup> In total, 59 SNP members submitted responses, including 38 complete surveys.

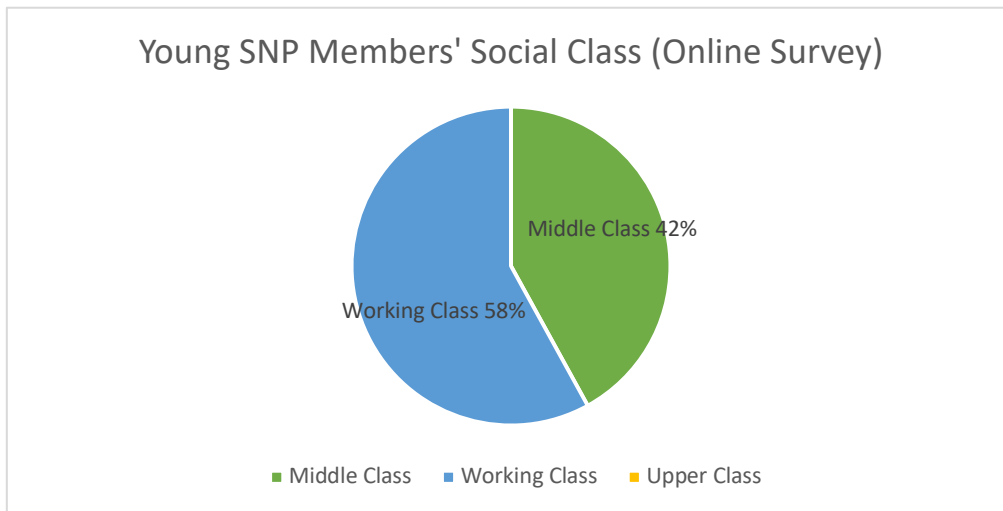


Figure 2.9: Social class amongst young SNP members surveyed

In both Labour and the Conservatives, 67 per cent of the young respondents belong to the middle class, while 33 are from the working class. As for Lib Dems, 75 per cent of them have a middle-class background, and 25 per cent come from the working class. Amongst the Scottish Young Greens that responded to the survey, it is well balanced: 50 per cent are part of the working class and 50 per cent from the middle class. Finally, the Brexit Party member has a working-class background.

The results of both the interviews and the survey show that no Scottish party members surveyed are from the upper class, regardless of the party. Besides, when it comes to social class, the results of the online survey are quite balanced: 53 per cent and 47 per cent of young party members have a middle-class or a working-class background, respectively. This is in line with the party membership studies that have been conducted so far: the average party member belongs to the middle class (Bale et al., 2019). Thus, it can be said that in Scotland, youth party membership partly depends on the social class from which young people come. Being part of the working class or the middle class makes them more inclined to join a political party. As

shown in previous studies, it confirms the importance of considering social backgrounds an independent variable in models of youth party membership.

#### **d) Education**

##### *Interviews*

Amongst the 37 party members I met, 89 per cent were or had been university students.

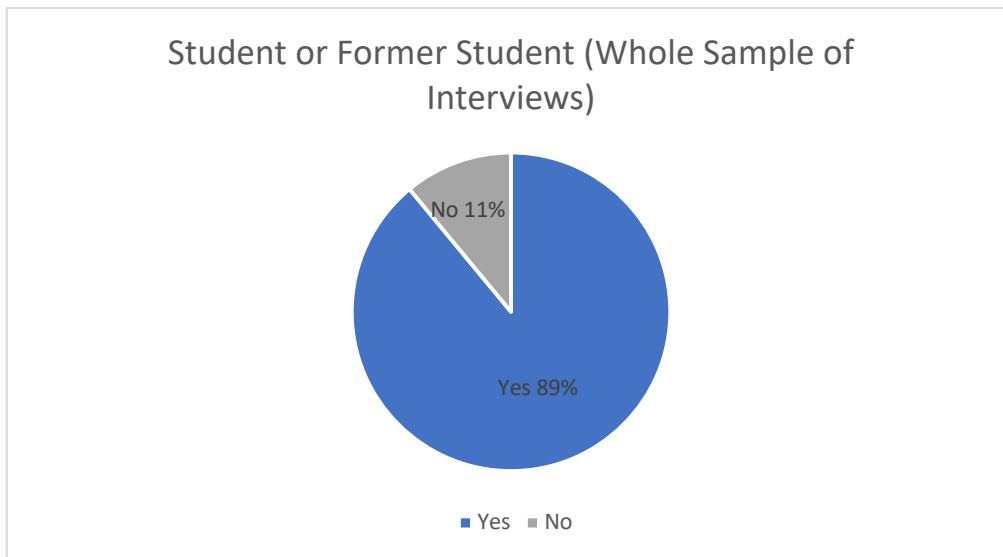


Figure 2.10: Students or former students in the whole sample of young interviewees

The following table lists the various disciplines they study or studied. As 4 interviewees did not study at university, the total number of students is 33.



<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Percentages (N out of 33)<sup>177</sup></i>	<i>Political Party</i>
<b>Politics</b>	<b>36% (12)</b>	BP, Labour, SNP, SYC
History	24% (8)	Labour, SNP, SYC
International Relations	15% (5)	SNP, SYC
Media	9% (3)	SNP, SYC
Economics	6% (2)	SNP, SYC
Mathematics	6% (2)	SNP
Medicine	6% (2)	Labour, SNP
Accounting	3% (1)	SNP
Geography	3% (1)	SNP
Journalism	3% (1)	SNP
Languages	3% (1)	SNP
Law	3% (1)	SYC
Social Public Policy	3% (1)	SNP
Sociology	3% (1)	SYC
Translation	3% (1)	SNP

Table 2.1: Disciplines studied by the interviewees (percentages)

36 per cent of the interviewees, more than a third, study or studied Politics. It comes first in the table, regardless of the party. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, studies have confirmed that young people who join political parties are more interested in politics than the young people who do not join (Cross and Young, 2008; Bennie and Russell, 2012; Rainsford, 2017; Weber, 2018). Besides, they tend to attend civics or political classes (Cross and Young, 2008). Here, the fact that 36 per cent of the interviewees study or studied Politics confirms the relationship between young people's interest in political issues, their political socialisation via school or university, and their membership.

Amongst the 25 SNP members whom I interviewed, 88 per cent were or had been university students. This was the case for all of the young Labour members I met. As for Conservatives, 86 per cent of them were going to or had gone to a university. The Brexit Party member was also a student.

<sup>177</sup> As some interviewees study several disciplines, the total does not exactly sum to 100 per cent.

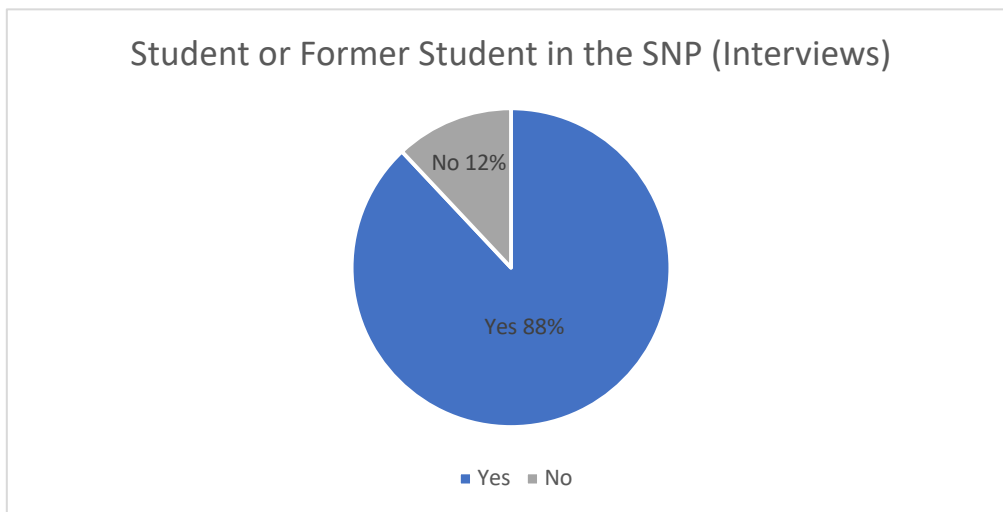


Figure 2.11: Students or former students amongst young SNP members

In the SNP, 36 per cent (8 out of 22 interviewees that went to university) study or studied Politics. Other disciplines were as follows: History and International Relations 18 per cent, Mathematics and Media 9 per cent each, Accounting, Business, Economics, Geography, Journalism, Languages, Social Public Policy and Translation 5 per cent each. Again, the fact that more than a third of the young SNP members interviewed study or studied Politics sheds light on the relationship between their interest in political issues and their party membership. Their interest in politics is noticeable through the discipline they study at university. It also highlights the part played by political socialisation in youth party membership (see the literature review in Chapter One).

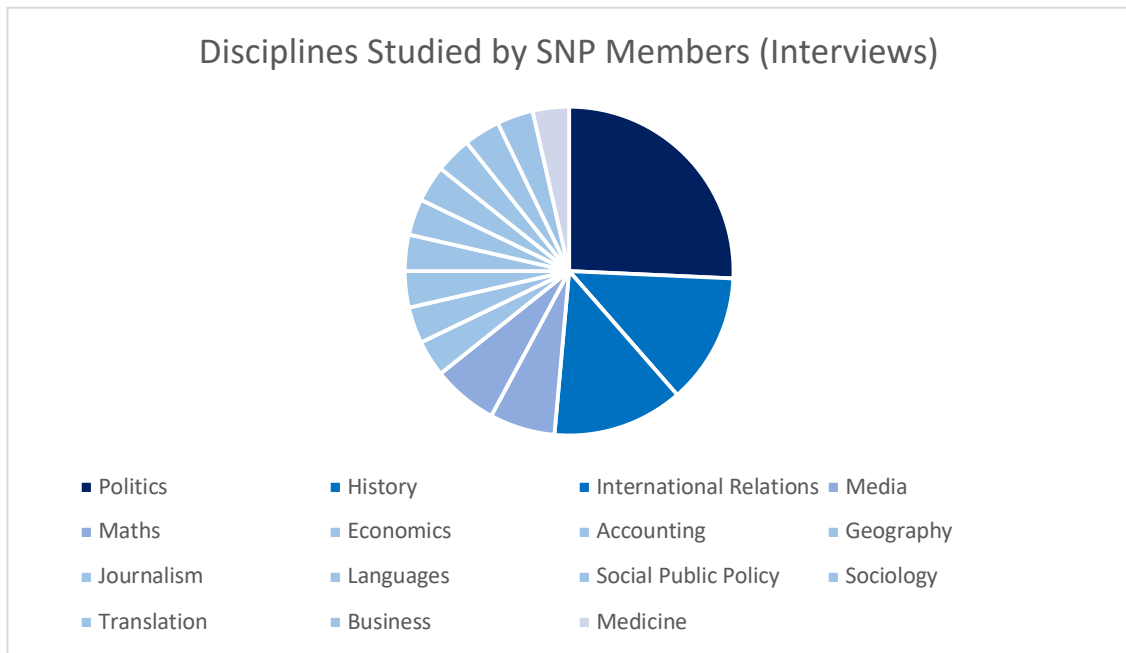


Figure 2.12: Disciplines studied at university by young SNP members interviewed (percentages)

### Online Survey

I also analysed the educational background of the young SNP members that submitted responses to the survey. As said previously, the young members of all the political parties in Scotland could respond to it. Young members of the SNP, Labour, the Greens, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and a member of the Brexit Party did so. Figure 2.13 confirms that a huge majority of them study or studied at university: 94 per cent.

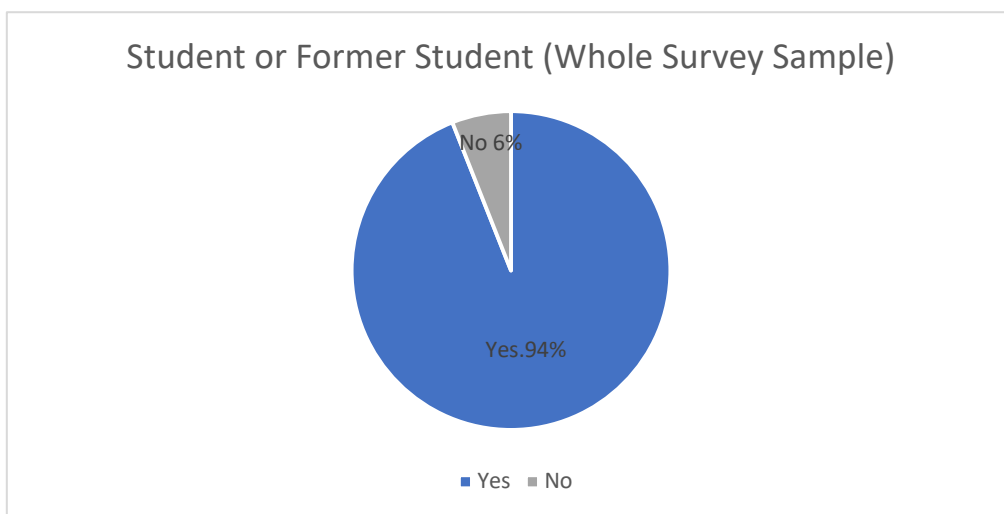


Figure 2.13: Students or former students amongst the survey respondents

Similarly, in the SNP, 92 per cent of the young respondents were or had been university students. All the Labour, Conservative, Lib Dem, and Green respondents were or had been students as well. This was the case for the Brexit Party member too.

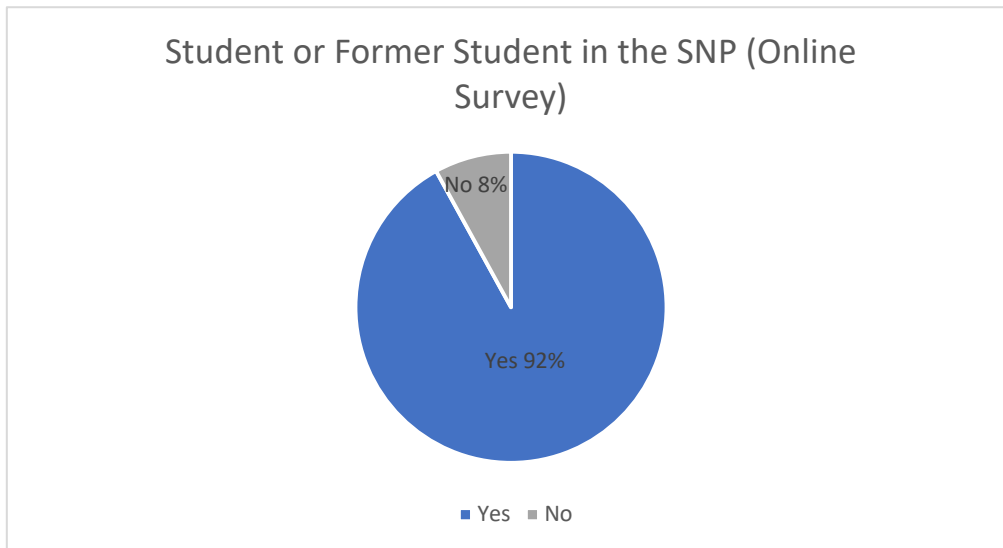


Figure 2.14: Students or former students amongst young SNP respondents

With regard to their studies, it should be noted that 38 per cent (19 out of 50) of the respondents study or have studied Politics. It comes first, and by far, in terms of frequency amongst the answers. In the same way as the results of the interviews, the fact that more than a third of the respondents study or have studied Politics is significant with regard to the role played by political socialisation, political skills, and interest, in youth party membership. Here, the fact that 38 per cent of the survey respondents study or studied Politics confirms the relationship between young people's interest in political issues, their political socialisation via school or university, and their membership.

Other disciplines include History, Law, Sociology, Economics, Medicine, and Languages, to name a few. Table 2.2 lists all the disciplines mentioned. One should note that several respondents study or studied more than one discipline, hence the total does not sum to

100 per cent. Also, as 3 respondents did not go to university, the total number of student respondents is 50.

<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Percentages (N out of 50)</i>	<i>Political Party</i>
<b>Politics</b>	<b>38% (19)</b>	BP, Labour, LD, SNP, SYC
History	18% (9)	SNP, SYC
Law	14% (7)	SG, SNP
Sociology	14% (7)	LD, SG, SNP
Economics	6% (3)	SNP, SYC
International Relations	6% (3)	SNP, SYC
Languages	6% (3)	SNP
Medicine	6% (3)	Labour, SG, SNP
Accounting	4% (2)	LD, SNP
Education	4% (2)	Labour, SNP
Geography	4% (2)	SG, SNP
Geology	4% (2)	SNP
Mathematics	4% (2)	LD, SNP
Social Public Policy	4% (2)	SNP
Computer Science	2% (1)	SNP
Engineering	2% (1)	SNP
Interpreting and Translation	2% (1)	SNP
Med/Biological Chemistry	2% (1)	SNP
Psychology	2% (1)	SNP
Statistics	2% (1)	SNP

Table 2.2: Disciplines studied by the respondents (percentages)

To conclude, the findings from both the interviews and the survey are quite significant. Firstly, they show that a huge majority of the young party members in the two samples study or have studied at university. This supports previous studies which suggested that the average party member is educated or well-educated, being most of the time undergraduates or having graduated from university (Lamb, 2002; Bale et al., 2019). In that sense, it can be argued that the more educated a young person is, the more likely they are to join the SNP. Secondly, this research confirms the role played by political socialisation, as well as political skills and interest, in youth party membership (see theoretical considerations in Chapter One). The more young Scots are interested in political issues, the more inclined they are to join the SNP. Also,

the courses they take at university probably influence their decision to join: more than a third of young members study or studied Politics. Therefore, as shown by previous studies, education has to be considered an independent variable in models of youth party membership.

**e) Place of Living**

*Interviews*

87 per cent of the whole sample of interviewees live in cities or urban areas, while 13 per cent live in rural areas.

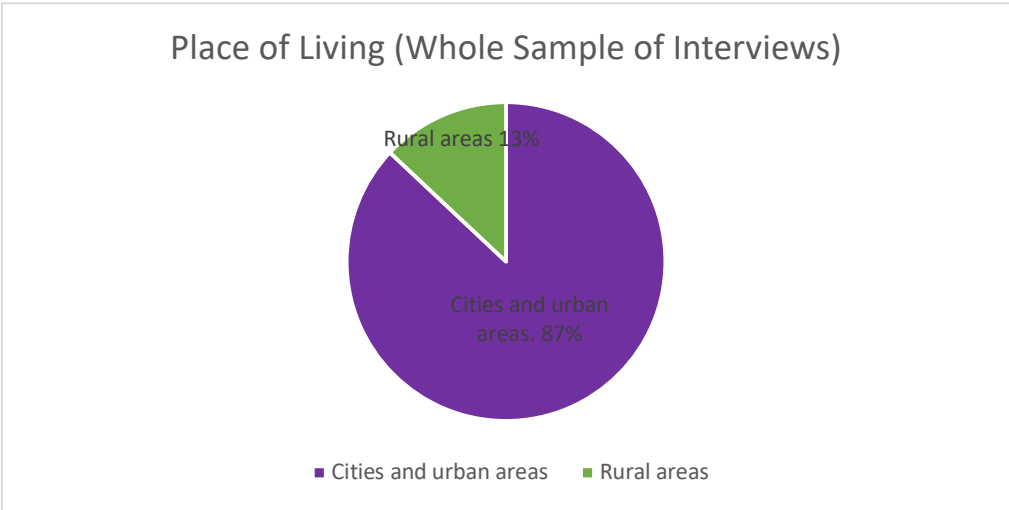


Figure 2.15: Place of living amongst young interviewees

Amongst SNP members in particular, these proportions are 88 per cent and 12 per cent respectively.

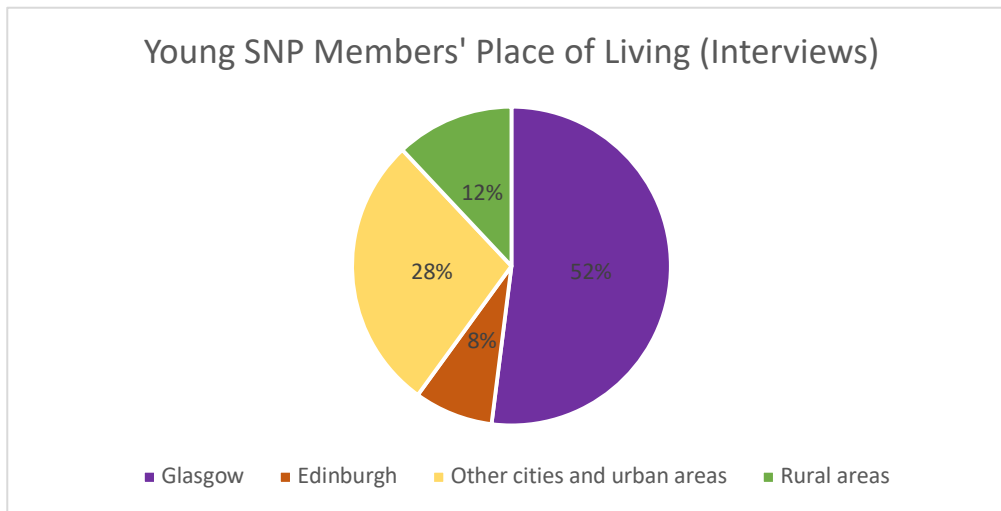


Figure 2.16: Place of living amongst young SNP members interviewed

Edinburgh and Glasgow together represent 60 per cent of the sample. What is striking is that 52 per cent of the young SNP members I interviewed are from Glasgow. Only 8 per cent come from Edinburgh (see Figure 2.16). This is a very interesting finding. It might owe to the bigger population in Glasgow than in Edinburgh. Nonetheless, it might also be explained by the fact that a majority of the Glasgow voters (53.49 per cent) voted for Scottish independence in 2014, and that a majority of Edinburgh voters (61.1 per cent) voted No<sup>178</sup>. This raises the question of the place of living as a variable that could influence party membership. Another interesting finding strengthens that point. One of the YSI I interviewed comes from Barcelona. Before arriving in Scotland in 2017, she was a Catalan activist. Given the similarities between Catalan and Scottish nationalism, it is probably not by chance that she started working for the YSI three years before moving to Scotland<sup>179</sup>.

For information, the Brexit Party member I met comes from Glasgow. In Labour, 75 per cent of the interviewees live in a city. To be specific, one comes from London, one from Manchester, and one from Glasgow. In the Conservatives, all the interviewees live in a city or

<sup>178</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/events/scotland-decides/results> Accessed on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021.

<sup>179</sup> As explained further down, the YSI are close to the Catalan nationalist movement.

an urban area. It has to be noted that half of the Labour members I met come from England. This is also the case for 40 per cent of the young Conservatives. Although the sample is too small to draw significant conclusions, given that Labour and the Conservative and Unionist Party are both pro-Union in the independence debate, a link may be made between young party members' nation of origin, their views on Scottish independence, and their party family. Given that they are from England, namely an overall pro-union nation in the UK, and a neighbour and partner of Scotland in that union, it is not by chance that they joined two parties that were opposed to independence in 2014. Besides highlighting the relationship between their party family and their opinion regarding IndyRef, it raises, again, the question of young party members' place of living/origins as a variable influencing their decision to join.

*Online Survey*

81 per cent of the whole sample of survey respondents come from cities or urban areas, while 19 per cent live in rural areas.

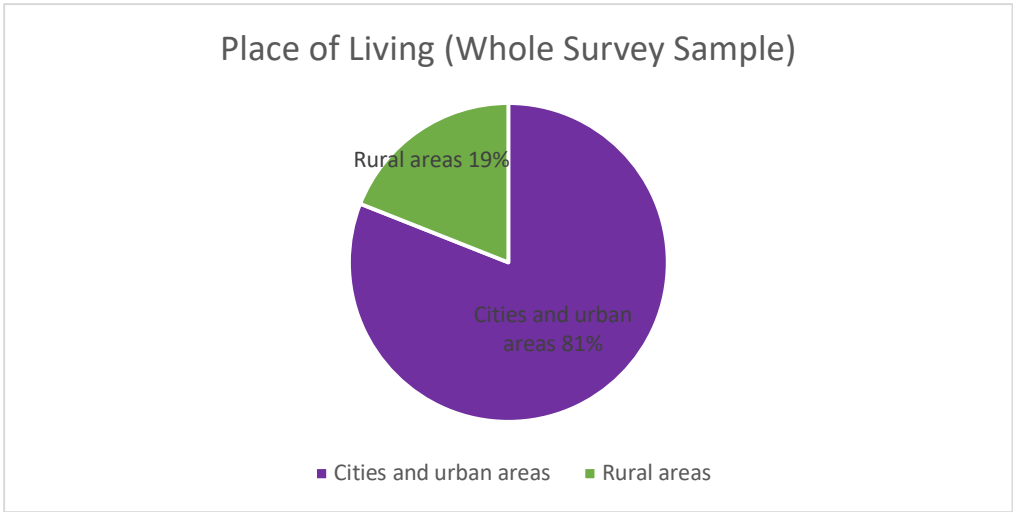


Figure 2.17: Place of living amongst young respondents



In the SNP sample, these proportions are 84 per cent and 16 per cent respectively. 23 per cent are from Glasgow, and 13 per cent from Edinburgh (Figure 2.18). This is a little different from statistics related to the interviews (52 per cent from Glasgow and 8 per cent from Edinburgh), but it still shows that a majority of the YSI and SNP Students live in ‘pro-independence’ Glasgow.

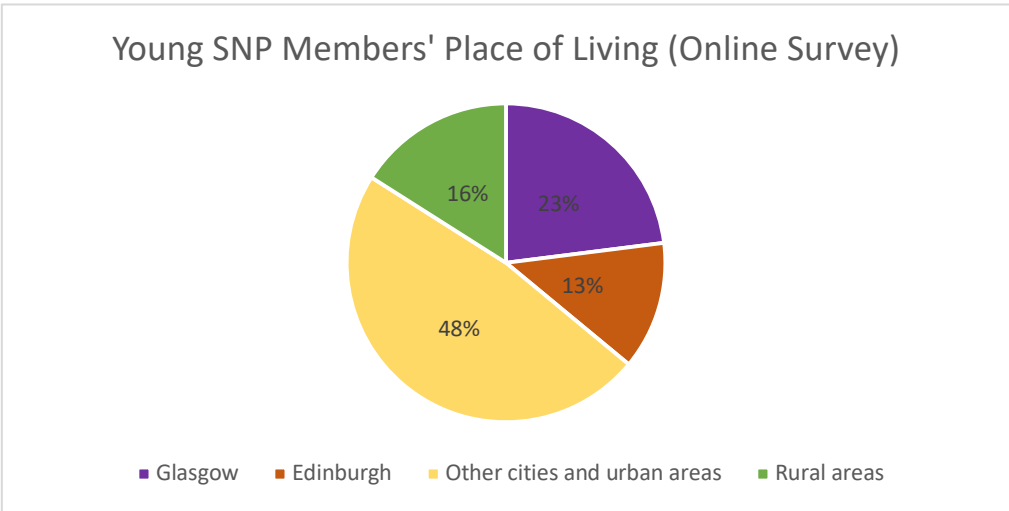


Figure 2.18: Place of living amongst young SNP respondents

It has to be noted that half of the Scottish Young Greens who responded to the survey live in rural areas. Here again, the party family they joined is related to their place of living: without saying that people who live in urban areas are not concerned with ecology and do not join Green parties, living in rural areas may encourage people to be/do so. Again, this raises the question of the place of living as a variable that could influence party membership, notably the party family that one joins. This is reinforced by the fact that 30 per cent of the young Labour and Conservative respondents come from England. As said above, and without stereotyping English people as unionists, there seems to be a relationship between their nation of origin, their views on Scottish independence, and their party family.

Both with the interviews and the survey results, this study shows that young SNP members tend to come from cities or urban areas. It might be due to the fact that political parties are more present in cities than in rural areas. For example, the official address of the SNP is located in Edinburgh. Nonetheless, it is an interesting finding and further research about it would be instructive. It could be extended to all the members of the SNP, or even to the members of other political parties, whether in Scotland or abroad.

Another interesting conclusion is that a majority of the YSI and SNP Students interviewed and surveyed come from Glasgow. As said previously, this might owe to the size of the city's population. Nonetheless, it might also be explained by the fact that Glasgow was overall pro-independence in the 2014 referendum. As I just highlighted, while a majority of the Glasgow voters voted for Scottish independence, a majority of Edinburgh voters voted No. This might explain the smaller number of young Scots coming from Edinburgh compared to Glasgow in the SNP. Once more, it suggests that people's place of living should be considered a variable influencing party membership.

#### **f) Family Obligations and Time for Involvement**

As indicated in Chapter One, Regina Weber (2018) uses time as a variable in her youth party membership model. She argues that usually, young party members can easily devote time to their party as they do not have children nor a family to look after. In other words, they are supposed to have more free time than older members and, thus, be more available to be involved and active in the party. Regarding young SNP members in particular, at the time they responded to the online survey, none had children. Amongst the members of the Greens, Lib Dems, Conservatives and Labour who responded, none had children either, thus supporting Weber's argument.

As for SNP interviewees, only one of them had children. What is more, during interviews, I asked YSI and SNP Students whether they thought their age played a part in their political engagement. Some of their answers reinforce Regina Weber's time variable in her youth party membership model. Michelle<sup>180</sup> declared that she was 'probably more involved as a young person' because it is 'easier when you are a student... you have more time to campaign'. For her, that is why 'young people are more physically active'. Jonathan and Mary confirmed these ideas by enhancing that when you are young, you have 'more free time'. This was also highlighted by Mike in the Labour Party and Jamie in the Brexit Party, who focused on the idea that you have 'more time to be involved' and some 'flexibility as a teenager'. In the same way, Matt said that being involved in youth is easier because you 'have a lot of freedom... no family, no job'. When it comes to work, Liam also said that when you are young, 'you are not working full time, which gives you the opportunity to be more regularly involved' with your party. Similarly, Katy, from the Conservatives, explained that being at university and having 'no partner and no children either' enabled her to have more time to participate. Regarding student life in particular, Robert, from the SNP, argued that it gives him 'a lot of time to invest in the party, in the weekends, evenings...'. Overall, 24 per cent of the interviewees (regardless of their party) answered that question by saying it is easier for young people than for older generations to get involved and active in a political party. Again, this is in line with the time variable identified by Weber (2018).

To sum up, the average young SNP member tends to be a 21- or 22-year-old male, who is or has been a university student<sup>181</sup> and comes from a city or an urban area, with no job and no children. The results of this research are thus in line with previous party membership and young party members studies.

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<sup>180</sup> Names were changed.

<sup>181</sup> In terms of courses studied, the discipline that comes first is Politics.

### 3) Activism

#### 3.1) Political Ideology and Policy Platform

SNP Students introduce themselves as follows: ‘SNP Students is the student wing of Scotland's largest party and party of government. We are a progressive, centre-left and social democratic organisation.’<sup>182</sup>. Regarding what they do, they specify: ‘We work tirelessly to make Scotland a better country for students across the nation.’<sup>183</sup>. They work for both an independent Scotland and for young people, especially students. In terms of policymaking, they focus on four main issues: education, equality, employment rights, and animal rights. Let us concentrate on their activism in these four areas, as written on their website.

In terms of education, they support young people who want to pursue a career in the arts. They push for financial support for students in the summer. They worked on a ‘No Detriment Policy’ along with the Scottish Young Greens and the Scottish Young Liberals so that students would not be disadvantaged by the Covid-19 crisis and its impact on university classes. They also support the SNP policy regarding free tuition fees, and estranged students. Finally, they work for the implementation of sign language in schools.

When it comes to equality, SNP Students are committed to equality for the LGBTQ+ community. This has been a sensitive issue among SNP members for a few years. It is explained in more details in the paragraph about the YSI, further down.

In terms of employment rights, SNP Students ‘help ensure people with BPD are treated with dignity and respect in their working environment.’<sup>184</sup>. They press for recognition and awareness of mental illnesses. Also, they fight against unemployment and push to make ‘the experience of applying for jobs and employment processes easier, fairer and transparent’<sup>185</sup>.

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<sup>182</sup> <https://snpstudents.com> Accessed on June 25th, 2021.

<sup>183</sup> <https://www.snpstudents.com/about.html> Accessed on June 25th, 2021.

<sup>184</sup> <https://snpstudents.com/policy.html> Accessed on June, 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021. BPD: Borderline Personality Disorder.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

In terms of animal rights, SNP Students want to make all the Scottish teaching establishments propose vegetarian and vegan meal options for students. Finally, they ‘campaign to end the exploitation of animals in situations where they are commercially raced’<sup>186</sup>.

As for the YSI, they introduce themselves as follows:

‘The Young Scots for Independence (YSI), formerly known as the SNP Youth, is the official youth wing of the Scottish National Party, composed of SNP members aged between 16 and 30. The YSI maintains autonomy from the SNP and as such is entitled to formulate its own policies and run its own campaigns.’<sup>187</sup>

Let us concentrate on their activism, as presented on their website. Besides campaigning for Scottish independence, they are ‘committed to making Scotland the nation [they] know it can be. [Their] vision is of a prosperous country where everyone gets the chance to fulfil their potential. [They] want a fair society where no-one is left behind.’<sup>188</sup>. They focus on eight issues: constitution, economy, education, environment, fairness, health, international affairs, and justice.

They are notably committed to opposing NATO-membership because of the nuclear characteristic of the alliance. In the NATO debate that took place in 2012, the YSI supported the SNP’s stance<sup>189</sup> and denounced nuclear weapons. When it comes to defence, the YSI are also committed to the campaign for the rise of the age of military recruitment to 18.

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> <https://www.theysi.scot/who-are-we> Accessed on June, 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

<sup>188</sup> <https://www.theysi.scot/our-vision> Accessed on June, 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

<sup>189</sup> Today, the SNP are pro-NATO membership.

The YSI also support the Time for Inclusive Education (Tie) campaign, which aims at ‘increasing young people’s awareness of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans identities’<sup>190</sup>, essentially at school. It happens that some old SNP members are opposed to trans people. In a meeting in Bearsden in March 2020, there was an argument between older and younger members about support for trans individuals. According to former Out For Indy trans officer Teddy Hope, trans people were harshly criticised during the meeting. Teddy Hope left the party afterwards. Other members (both young and old ones) left. This fuelled a debate between the different generations of SNP members. On Twitter, young members accused some older members of transphobia, while the latter accused the SNP youth of not knowing anything about politics at their age. On behalf of all the young members of the party, the convener of the YSI reacted by saying that age does not play any role in people’s acquiring political skills and that young people’s political commitment is as valuable as that of older people. She posted: ‘The young people of the SNP are inspiring & intelligent. Our age is no limit. We all have so much lived experience of hardship that has driven us to become activists. Our opinions are valid, we deserve to be heard & we are a credit to our cause. I will not hear it any other way.’<sup>191</sup>. Nicola Sturgeon, who planned to make it possible for Scots to legally change their gender, and was criticised for this, tried to calm things down by saying that transphobia in the SNP is unacceptable<sup>192</sup>. To a certain extent, the discrepancy between youngest and oldest members regarding this issue strengthens young people’s feelings that political parties do not listen to them, and questions their place and role in parties, as shown in the literature reviewed earlier. As part of a future research project, it would be interesting to explore this disagreement between generations by offering a comparative analysis of SNP members based on their age.

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<sup>190</sup> <https://www.theysi.scot/history> Accessed on June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

<sup>191</sup> <https://twitter.com/CailynMcMahon/status/1272266392423800834> Accessed on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

<sup>192</sup> She notably posted a video on Twitter to denounce transphobia: <https://twitter.com/NicolaSturgeon/status/1354521063502336001> Accessed on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

The YSI are also part of the campaign for sexual consent education in schools. At the SNP autumn conference in 2018, their motion about the inclusion of a ‘Relationships, Sexual Health, and Parenthood Education’ topic in school curriculum was passed.

Finally, they are quite committed to gender equality. They notably take part in the 50/50 campaign aiming at 50 per cent of representation of women in the Scottish Parliament and councils.

The interviews with young SNP members and their responses to the online questionnaire are in line with the various campaigns in which they are involved. I asked them about their ideology and the ideas they fight for as YSI and SNP Students. Besides Scottish independence, the most cited issues are: tuition fees, free education, social justice, social democracy, equality, Scotland as a place where everyone can flourish, inclusion, fairness, opposition to nuclear weapons, support for immigration, healthcare and support for the NHS, tolerance, progressive policies. Some mentioned the EU and EU membership as well. As for Sean, he is committed to ‘overcoming race issues’. He added: ‘Civic nationalism is my politics.’<sup>193</sup> All those issues align with the centre-left, social-democratic stance of the mother party. It should be noted that four interviewees declared they considered themselves socialists rather than social-democrats. It is still on the left of the political spectrum though.

In terms of radicalism or non-radicalism in the youth and student wings of the party, Lynn Bennie and Andrew Russell suggest that young SNP members are, overall, not radical. Basing their arguments on Mitchell et al.’s survey (2012), they note:

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<sup>193</sup> See the examination of SNP civic nationalism in Chapter Four.

‘There is some indication that the younger SNP members are the most pragmatic (and least fundamentalist) in terms of strategy (see Mitchell et al. 2012: 137). They are significantly less likely to agree that “the primary goal is independence; all else is secondary” (...). The younger members are also more likely to disagree with the idea that devolution makes independence more difficult to achieve. Finally, the younger members appear to have a more pragmatic approach to the importance of party image, being less likely to agree that the party should “care less about image and concentrate more on programme and policies”. Yet, they are less inclined to consider pacts with other parties.’ (Bennie and Russell, 2012: 16).

They add that:

‘Other attitudinal questions reveal that the youngest are definitely more radically opposed to the monarchy, with three quarters (74%) agreeing that “there is no place for the monarchy in a modern society”, compared to 50% of the 66 plus group and 57% of members as a whole. However, younger members are only a little more “environmental” e.g. only a little more likely to agree that car users should pay higher taxes. Overall, the age differences in the SNP are not substantial and the radical youth thesis is hard to substantiate. Indeed, other research on the party (Mitchell et al. 2012: 129, 137) suggests that attitudes are shaped more by time of joining than age per se, a cohort analysis revealing that those who joined in the 1980s are the most left-wing and those who joined before this period the most fundamentalist.’ (2012: 16-17).



In order to see if young party members' political position correlates with that of their party, I asked the same question about ideology in the other Scottish political parties surveyed.

The BP member answered: 'Euroscepticism, social conservatism, economic moderation', thus in line with the BP's ideology, especially Euroscepticism.

In the Scottish Young Greens, answers highlight a pro-independence and pro-EU stance. In terms of political position, they emphasise young members' left-wing ideology, especially socialism:

'I'd definitely describe myself as a Socialist. I would probably accept the label Communist too, much of my beliefs are influenced by my working-class background'

'Green politics, pro-independence, pro-EU, socialism, liberalism'

'Ecosocialism, radical independence, progressivism, pro-EU'

'Ecosocialism. The state exists to provide a good quality of life for all people which can be achieved through taxation. Redistribution of wealth is an end in itself. Pro Scottish independence, pro EU.'

In the Scottish Young Conservatives, it is traditions (family, Church), Unionism and small government which prevail, thus in line with the right-wing, Conservative ideology of the party:

'I believe that the family is the bedrock of society. I believe the state should grant the family as much power as possible, and support them. I also believe

in the free market, unless it is a market which naturally fails and it is an essential service. In these circumstances, the state should step in.’

‘Unionism, free market economics, tradition, constitutional monarchy, role of the Church in the State, community, small government, localism, charity, law and order.’

‘Socially liberal, fiscally conservative. Freedom is essential for human rights.’

Finally, in the Scottish Young Liberals, despite the (logical) prevalence of Liberalism, answers were rather heterogenous. They emphasise their central position on the political spectrum:

‘Liberal social democracy, internationalism’

‘High Church, absolute monarchy’

‘I believe in a mixed economy where the free market is held in check by the state. I believe that we should all work together to tackle climate change, and that a Land Value Tax should be implemented. The UK should be reformed into a federal state, preferably in the EU.’

Therefore, other young party members’ political beliefs and ideology seem to corroborate with their respective parties’ platforms. This is confirmed by the interviews. In Labour, like the respondents, young interviewees believe in equality, socialism, rights for the working people and a strong public sector. As for the Conservatives, they insisted on libertarianism, free market, low taxes and a limited government, localism, as well as Unionism (the ‘basic principle’ of the party according to an interviewee). A young Conservative said:

‘Britain’s interests need to be served. I love British history... a sense of what makes Britain unique. The Conservative Party makes the most of that. I believe in British culture, values of decency, being good with people. I’m very passionately in favour of Brexit. I have always been Eurosceptic.’

Both the online survey and the interviews show that young SNP members’ political position aligns with that of the mother party. It seems to be the case in other Scottish parties as well. In this respect, it may be posited that young Scottish party members are not radical compared with their political parties and their leaders. This is congruent with Bennie and Russell’s argument (Bennie and Russell, 2012). However, when it comes to their sense of national identity, as shall be explained in Chapter Four, some young SNP members’ views on Britishness tend to be radical compared with those of the SNP and the party’s leaders.

### **3.2) Party Activism**

#### **a) Frequency of Activism**

The results of the online questionnaire show that a majority of the young party members surveyed are very active in their party: 42 per cent are active on a daily basis. 28 per cent are active at least once a week, 19 per cent monthly, 9 per cent once or twice a year, and 2 per cent are not active at all. Combining the statistics of daily and at least once a week activism shows that 70 per cent are active every week. This goes against the common views on youth political apathy. Yet, one could refute this by saying that the case sample is composed of young people who are politically engaged. Party members are necessarily politically active compared to non-members. In that sense, it is a bit biased. Still, what is significant here is that the young party members surveyed are quite active.

This is particularly the case in the SNP. The results are similar to those for the whole sample: 45 per cent are active on a daily basis, 26 per cent at least once a week, 18 per cent monthly, 8 per cent once or twice a year, and 3 per cent are not active at all. Tellingly, combining the first three categories means that 71 per cent are active every week, and 89 per cent every month. It corresponds with what can be read on the SNP Students’ website: ‘Students are some of the SNP’s most dedicated activists.’<sup>194</sup> Figure 2.19 sums up the statistics above.

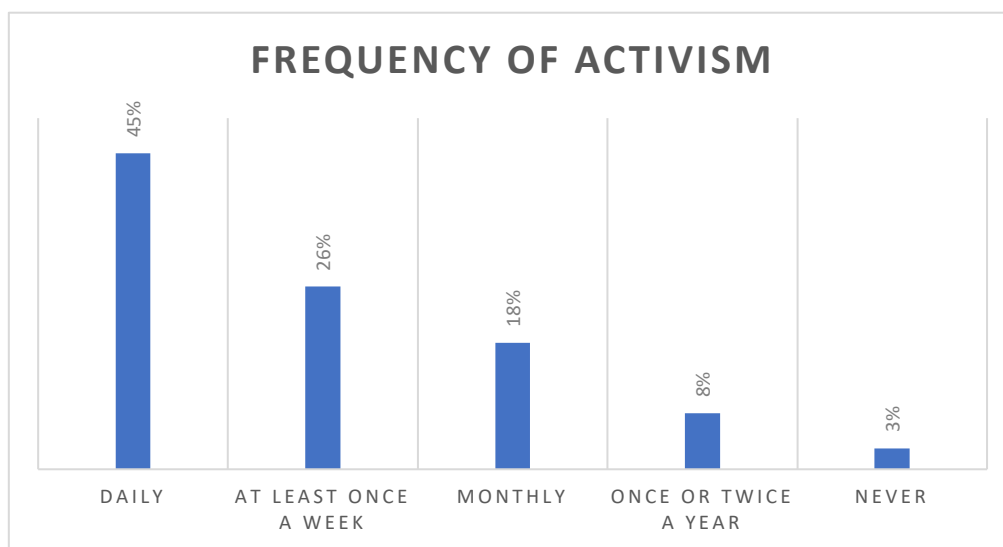


Figure 2.19: Frequency of young people’s activism in the SNP (percentages)

In the second chapter of Part II, I will examine the possible relationship between frequency of activism and the way young SNP members think of their national identity.

For information, the Brexit Party member who submitted the survey is active at least once a week. In the Conservatives, 33 per cent are active on a daily basis, and 67 per cent at least once a week. In the Greens, 50 per cent are active on a daily basis, 25 per cent monthly, and another 25 per cent once or twice a year. In Labour, it is quite balanced: one third of them are active daily, one third at least once a week, and the other third are active monthly. As for

<sup>194</sup> <https://www.snpstudents.com> Accessed on June 4th, 2021.

Lib Dems, it is well balanced too: 25 per cent are active either daily, at least once a week, monthly, or once or twice a year.

Therefore, it is the young SNP members who seem to be the most often active. This may be explained by their desire for a second independence referendum. It might be assumed that, as long as Scotland remains in the UK, SNP youth will be active and campaign for Scottish independence.

## **b) Type of Activism**

In the survey, the most cited activities are campaigning, canvassing, leafletting, attending conferences and meetings, campaigning on social media, working for politicians (usually councillors or parliamentarians), and participating in social events. The interviews and observation I did reveal the same kinds of party activities. These are formal/traditional activities, except for campaigning on social media, which is considered a new form of political participation (see Chapter One).

It should be added that the YSI were involved in the Catalan independence movement in 2017. They took part in the campaign for the independence referendum that was held on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017<sup>195</sup>. They supported the movement on social media and some YSI even went to Catalonia to participate in marches. They also supported a Catalan scholar working at the University of St Andrews, Clara Ponsatí. Together with Carlos Puidgemont, she participated in the organisation of the referendum. She faced several European and international arrest warrants, that were all finally withdrawn. The YSI publicly defended Clara Ponsatí, both on social media and by organising events.

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<sup>195</sup> The referendum was illegally held according to the central Spanish government. Carlos Puidgemont, the president of the Catalan region at the time, was accused of rebellion and arrested.

### **c) Social Media**

Involvement via social media strengthens scholars' argument that it is a tool favoured by young people to participate in politics today (Gallant, 2017; Loader, 2014; Pickard, 2015, 2019). To be more specific, 98 per cent of the whole sample of the survey respondents declared that they use social media. Only one respondent does not. He is a member of the SNP. Consequently, amongst the young SNP respondents, 97 per cent use social media. In the other five parties, all the young members who completed the survey do so.

All the young Scottish party members I interviewed use social media as well. This may be due to their age: young generations are more inclined to use social media because they have grown up with them, to a certain extent. Yet, to go beyond, I wanted to know more about their use of social media in the frame of their party membership. Therefore, I asked them whether they used it for personal and/or political purpose. In the whole sample, 91 per cent of the interviewees told me they use it both personally and politically. A majority of them tend to use Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat to share personal things, and Twitter for political purpose exclusively. Amongst young SNP members, 92 per cent use it for both personal and political purpose. In the young Conservatives, 83 per cent do it for both reasons. In Labour and the Brexit Party, it is the case of all the interviewees.

I also asked them whether they think it is a useful tool to convey political ideas. 83 per cent of the whole sample think so. In the SNP, 79 per cent of the interviewees agree with this idea. As an indication, it is also the case of the Brexit Party member, all the young Labour interviewed, and 86 per cent of the young Conservatives. Several young party members I met specified their answers. Some of them spoke of social media's usefulness in terms of politics generally speaking. Matt said: 'It's the world's library. It is a useful tool for politics and to connect people'. For Jamie, 'It's useful to connect with politicians'. Laura added: 'It's easier to

try and convince people.’ As for Lucy, ‘That’s very, very important... That’s how you win elections’. In the same way, for Sean, ‘It’s an important campaigning tool’. In this regard, some young members insisted that social media gets one’s political voice heard everywhere on the globe. Lewis said: ‘Thanks to social media, you reach more people’. Ben added: ‘Thanks to a large audience, it helps make messages heard... It reinforces the messages of the party’. Similarly, Laura declared: ‘Thanks to social media, people can get engaged, even if they live far away... for instance, people who do not live in central Scotland.’ Very interestingly for us, other young interviewees related social media to political engagement. Katy said: ‘Social media helped me to get involved’. Stuart told: ‘It helped me get involved. It’s an entry into politics.’ And for Jack, ‘Thanks to social media, people are more engaged... It encourages debate.’ Katy and Stuart’s answers shed light on the relationship between young people, social media, and political involvement, thus confirming once more the views of researchers like Nicole Gallant (2017) and Sarah Pickard (2015, 2019). Most tellingly, some interviewees emphasised the role played by social media in the independence referendum of 2014. Andrew explained:

‘It is a useful tool. If you look at who voted Yes in 2014... the people who voted Yes... I think 16 to 25-year olds, it was like 66 per cent of young people who voted Yes compared to people in their sixties... I think that’s because young people get more information. What older people see and read... their political views are more formed by what they see in the news, what is written in the newspapers which obviously contain a lot of bias, whereas if you’re young and you’re on social media, you’re open to so much information, that’s unreal... It was definitely a massive factor, without social media we would have not achieved 45 per cent at all. Most of the media is against the SNP. There’s only, I think, one paper that is in favour of the SNP, that is in favour

of independence. All the newspapers are really against us, all the journalists are against us. We have to have social media to combat that.’

Andrew clearly related social media with young people’s involvement in the referendum campaign and vote. In a rather Manichean way, he distinguished between young people who use social media to get information, and older generations who favour more traditional media like newspapers. For him, given that social media is not biased like newspapers and other media, it helped get the vote of many young people in favour of independence. Tellingly, in his view, they played an important part in achieving 45 per cent of the Yes votes. His opinion echoes that of Alex: ‘Social media is definitely useful. Without it, we would not have had 45 per cent in 2014’. This was also underlined by Lewis, who told me: ‘It is very, very useful, especially with regard to the engagement of young people... In the referendum, social media was incredibly important. Without it, we would not have had 45 per cent. The media did not help our case. Most of them are unionist... Social media helped our case.’. In the same way as Andrew, Lewis accused the traditional media of being against Scottish independence<sup>196</sup>. Then, it may not be by chance that Nicola Sturgeon is good at using social media and that she uses it a lot to interact with Scotland’s people (see the section about the relationship between the SNP and young people, page 209).

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<sup>196</sup> It would be worth exploring that point in future research.



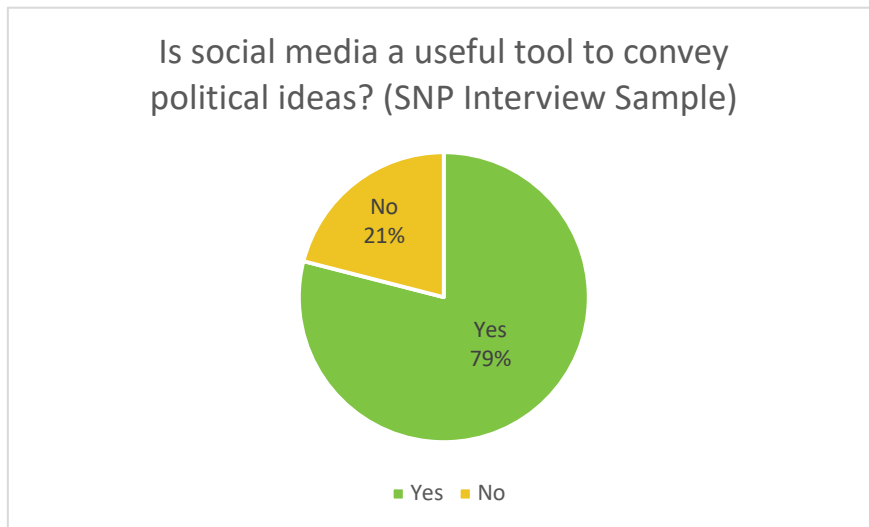


Figure 2.20: Is social media a useful tool to convey political ideas? (SNP Interview Sample)

On the other hand, a few interviewees were critical about the usefulness of social media to convey political views. They all agreed to say that it is much less efficient than canvassing and face to face discussions to convince people. Rob declared: ‘It is not a good way to engage people of the other side of the argument. Face to face is better. Talking to people on the street is the best way to convince people of a particular point’. In the same way, Grace told me: ‘You can’t change somebody’s mind through social media’. For Magnus, ‘it is minuscule compared to speaking to people face to face’. Regarding the best way to reach people, Tim said: ‘There’s nothing more organic than canvassing.’ Contrary to the quotations which emphasised the opportunity provided by social media to reach a large, world-wide audience, Michelle argued: ‘it is a drop in the ocean. It is not a useful tool to convince people who disagree with you’.

Despite these few critical comments on the inefficiency of social media compared to traditional activities like canvassing, YSI and SNP Students are, overall, quite active on social media. I was able to witness it thanks to observation. During the whole of my PhD studies, I followed them on social media. I analysed the content of both individual and organisational accounts in different parties. They are relatively active individually, especially at election times. This was also the case when Brexit officially passed. The content of their posts is both personal

and political. Yet, it should be noted that in the Facebook and Twitter accounts of the YSI and SNP Students, posts are essentially political. On a daily basis, they share things about their organisations' and party's policies, other parties (usually critical posts about the Conservatives' policies, but also about Labour) and, of course, the cause of independence. They are highly active at election times, as was the case with the Scottish Parliament election in May 2021. They notably post photos of themselves canvassing and explain why the Scottish electorate should vote for the SNP.

Social media probably helped SNP youth stay involved during the Covid-19 crisis. As conferences and meetings were cancelled, without social media it would have been hard for them to keep pushing for independence and to campaign, notably for the Scottish Parliament elections in 2021. They canvassed and leafleted before election day, but due to the Covid-related restrictions, they campaigned mostly online. In March 2021, the YSI annual meeting was held via video-conference.

Despite the critical views of a small proportion of interviewees, it can be said that a majority of the Scottish young party members I met see social media as a very efficient tool to convey political ideas. No less than 98 per cent of the whole sample use it, and a majority of them do so for both political and personal purpose. Also, thanks to observation, I saw that young SNP members tend to be quite active on social media. In that sense, it can be said that YSI and SNP Students' political activism is both traditional (canvassing, leafletting, attending meetings and/or conferences) and more 'modern' or 'innovative' (social media). To a certain extent, it may be assumed that social media is an opportunity for some young Scottish people to be politically involved<sup>197</sup>. Those who lack time and/or resources (even motivation) to canvass, leaflet, and take part in conferences and meetings may favour social media to participate. They

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<sup>197</sup> Again, see Chapter One and references to scholars who research young people's political participation via social media, i.e. Gallant (2017), Loader (2014), Pickard (2015, 2019).

are probably more involved. At least, their interest in politics is probably increased by social media: they can get as much information as possible, whenever they want, in local to international contexts, and they can easily interact with politicians (see the section about Nicola Sturgeon's interaction with young Scots, notably SNP youth, page 210). The social media variable is tested in the next section about young people's incentives and reasons for joining the SNP.

To sum up, it can be argued that SNP youth are quite active (on a daily basis or at least once a week), have overall the same views as the mother party (especially regarding independence and social democracy), and use social media a lot besides campaigning in more traditional ways like canvassing and leafletting. They are also quite involved in the party's conferences.

Now that we have examined their activism, let's analyse their reasons for joining the party.

#### **IV) Reasons for Joining the SNP**

It is time to test the variables influencing party membership and youth party membership presented in Chapter One. This section explores youth SNP membership by testing the variables identified by Clark and Wilson, Seyd and Whiteley, as well as Cross and Young, Bruter and Harrison, and Weber in the frame of young party members studies.

Regarding SNP membership in particular, I also built my methodology on the findings of Mitchell et al. They analysed SNP members' reasons for joining the party (2012: 69-83).

They listed them as they were reported by SNP members themselves, from the most to the least frequently cited. Table 2.3 summarises the answers they got:

	First stated reason	All stated reasons
<b>Independence<sup>198</sup></b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>55.7</b>
General liking for party	9.6	14.5
Anti-union/Scotland talked down	7	13.3
Further Scottish interests	6.4	10.2
Dislike other parties	5	8.9
Family/social links	4.6	6.4
Participation	3.9	8.5
Scottish/national identity	3	4.1
General reference to Scotland/Scotland as a nation	2.9	6.2
Past event/period	2.5	5.8
Personal circumstances	2.5	3.7
Party contact	2	3.4
Devolution	1.3	1.7
Leaders	1.3	2.8
Issues	1.1	4.7
Ideology <sup>199</sup>	0.3	0.8
Material rewards	0.1	0.2
Other/unclear	2.4	6.1
<i>N</i>	<i>6290</i>	

Table 2.3: Reported reasons for joining the SNP (percentages) as shown in Mitchell et al. (2012: 73)

Mitchell et al.'s findings are quite informative and valuable. Yet, as said before, their survey was conducted more than ten years ago, before the Scottish referendum in 2014 and the EU referendum two years later. It is thus worth updating it and comparing the findings of the present study with theirs. Also, when studying SNP members' motivations for joining, the three scholars did not take age into account. In that sense, the present thesis adds to their research.

<sup>198</sup> My emphasis. As demonstrated later in this thesis, independence is the main reason why young people get involved in the SNP too.

<sup>199</sup> By ideology, Mitchell et al. 'mean ideological principles other than nationalism/belief in independence, for example belief in social democracy or social justice' (Mitchell et al., 2012: 73). As shall be explained further down, contrary to Mitchell et al.'s findings presented here, political ideology seems to play a significant part in SNP youth membership. To be more specific, it appears that their campaign for independence and their political, social democratic ideology are interrelated.

To put it in a nutshell, I based my research questions about young people's reasons for joining the SNP (both during the interviews and in the online survey) on party/youth party membership models and Mitchell et al.'s research on the SNP. The following sections present the results of the interviews and the survey I carried out.

## **1) Political Socialisation**

### **a) Family**

#### *Interviews*

I tested the relationship between political socialisation and youth party membership<sup>200</sup> in the interviews I had with young Scottish party members. Regardless of the party, the parents of 61 per cent of the interviewees are politically engaged. This is the case for 63 per cent of the YSI and SNP Students<sup>201</sup>. In other words, 37 per cent of the sample declared that their parents are not politically engaged. The fact that a majority of young SNP members have parents involved in politics strengthens, again, the argument of political socialisation and the idea that family plays a role in young people's joining a political party. This is confirmed by the interview of a young SNP Member of Parliament. She told me that her brother had been elected as a councillor when he was 18. She was elected as a councillor too when she was 21. Therefore, it is the whole family that can be a factor encouraging young people to join a party, not only parents.

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<sup>200</sup> See theoretical considerations in Chapter One, notably the work of Cross and Young (2008), Bruter and Harrison (2009a, 2009b), and Weber (2018).

<sup>201</sup> It is close to the proportion of young SNP respondents to the survey: as shown earlier, 66 per cent have parents who are party members.

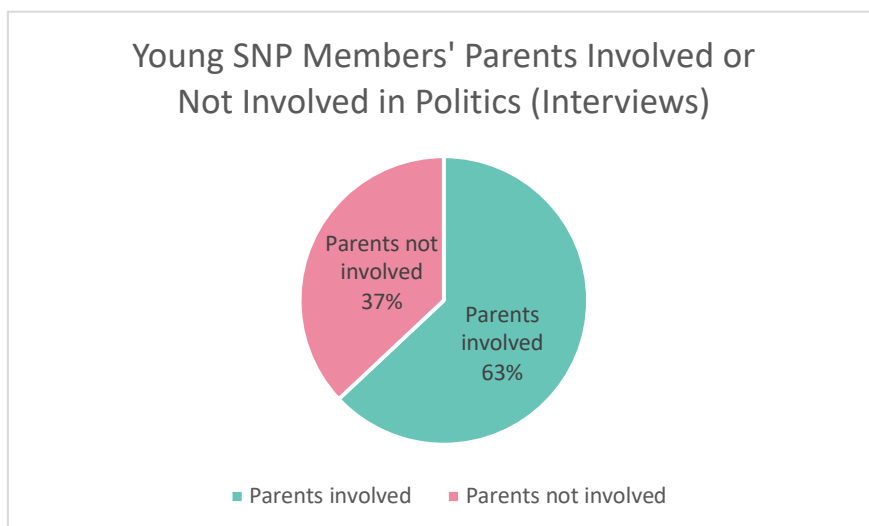


Figure 2.21: Political involvement or non-involvement of young SNP interviewees' parents

Amongst the young Conservatives, 57 per cent have parents involved in politics. In Labour, this is the case for half of the members I met. As for the Brexit Party member, both his parents are party members. This again supports political socialisation as a variable influencing youth party membership.

I also asked interviewees whether their parents talked about politics at home. Overall, regardless of the party, 62 per cent of the sample answered in the affirmative. This majority aligns again with the previous conclusions about socialisation. In the SNP, that proportion is quite similar: 64 per cent of the YSI and SNP Students interviewed said that their parents talk about political issues at home.

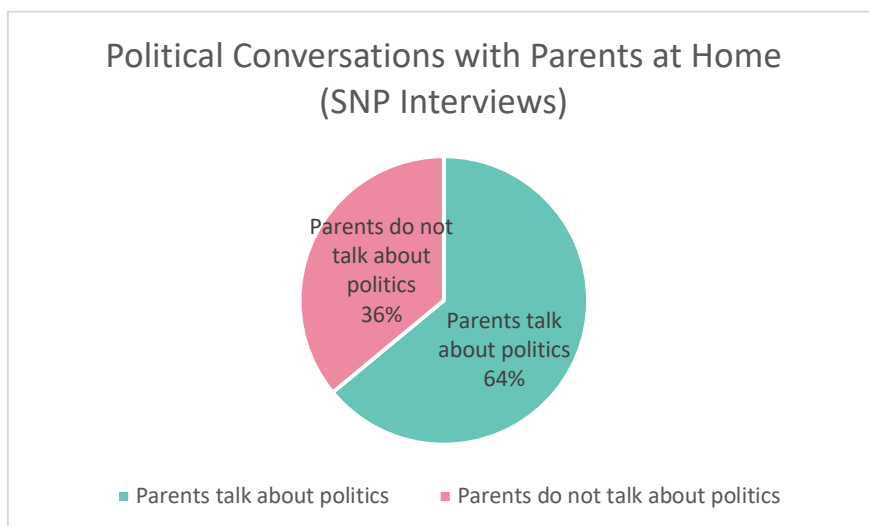


Figure 2.22: Young SNP interviewees whose parents talk/do not talk about political issues at home

In the Labour sample, half of the interviewees declared that their parents talk about politics while being at home. In the Conservatives, that proportion amounts to 57 per cent. As for the Brexit Party member, his parents talk about politics at home as well.

### *Online Survey*

The parents of 71 per cent of the young respondents (regardless of the party) participate in politics, while 19 per cent do not participate at all. To the question ‘Are your parents engaged in politics?’, 60 per cent answered in the affirmative. To the question ‘Are your parents supporters of a political party?’, 49 per cent answered yes. 28 per cent said that their parents were party members. Finally, 4 per cent said they were activists<sup>202</sup>.

In the SNP in particular, the parents of 82 per cent of the young members participate in politics. Most interestingly, 66 per cent of their parents are party members. These proportions emphasise political socialisation and, thus, align with theories on youth party membership which take account of it as a variable influencing young people’s decision to join (see Chapter One; Cross and Young, 2008; Bruter and Harrison, 2009a, 2009b; Weber, 2018). Be it through

<sup>202</sup> As this was a multiple-choice question, the total does not sum to 100 per cent.

voting, demonstrating, party support, membership or activism, these young people have been in contact with politics via their parents. Again, it confirms that family plays a key role in the decision to join a party. This is further explored in the section about young SNP members' interest in politics.

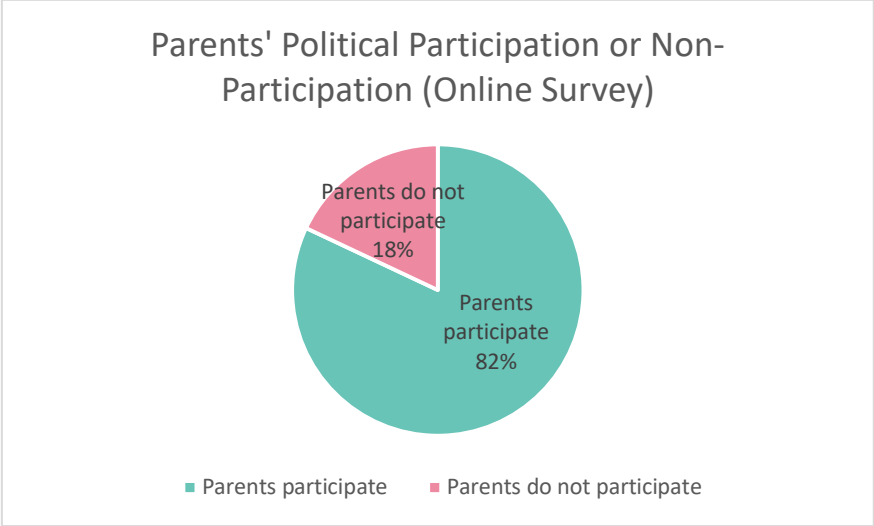


Figure 2.23: Political participation or non-participation of young SNP respondents' parents

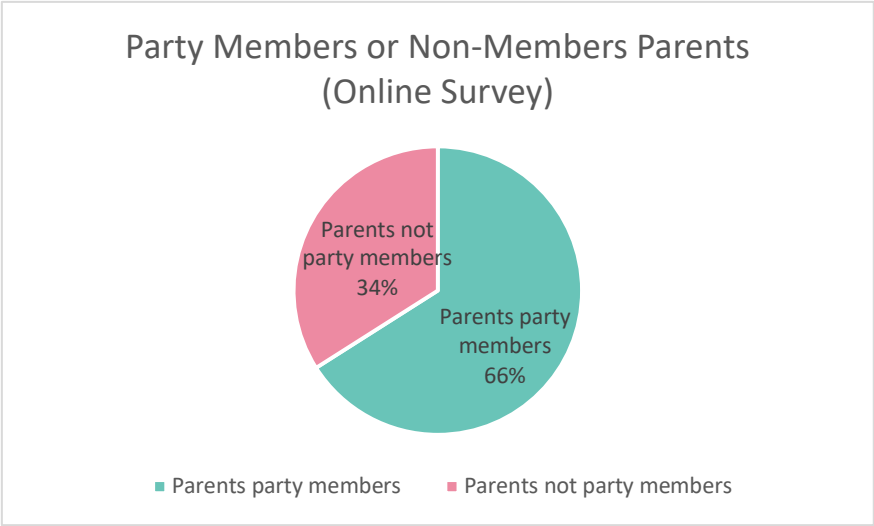


Figure 2.24: Young SNP respondents whose parents are party members or non-members



When it comes to party family, again parents seem to play a role in their children's joining. The parents of no less than 55 per cent of the YSI and SNP Students who responded to the survey are involved in the SNP. This majority clearly indicates parents' influence on their children joining a party as well as on the party family they join.

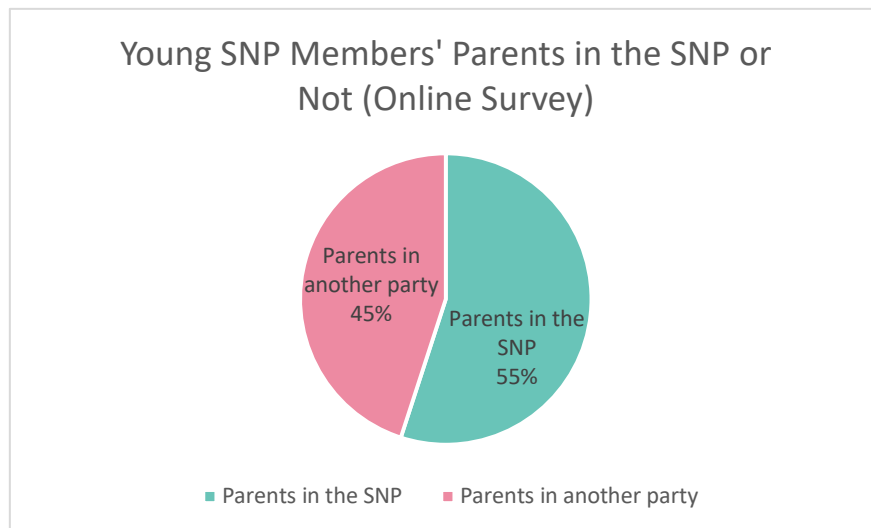


Figure 2.25: Young SNP respondents whose parents are involved in the SNP

In other political parties, 66 per cent of the parents of young Labour members are part of Labour too, and 50 per cent of young Lib Dems have parents involved with the same party. To a lesser extent, this is the case for 33 per cent of the young Conservatives and 25 per cent of the young Greens. As for the Brexit Party member, his parents are part of the SNP (probably the source of lively debates at home). As said before, these figures concerning parties other than the SNP are indicative, but not necessarily representative, given the small sample of respondents in each party. Nonetheless, whether they are members of the SNP or another party, the fact that these young people whose parents are involved with parties as well are either in the same party or in a different party (sometimes completely the opposite in terms of political ideology), strengthens Bruter and Harrison's imitation argument (Bruter and Harrison, 2009b). As demonstrated in Chapter One, the scholars say that young party members whose relatives are engaged in a party

imitate them either positively by being part of the same party, or negatively through their membership of an opposite party.

Whether they are engaged in politics, are party members, or they talk about political issues at home, the results of both the interviews and the survey indicate that a majority of young SNP members' parents participate in politics. This finding reinforces theories considering the family as a factor influencing youth party membership, which underline the role played by political socialisation in young people's decision to join a party.

### **b) Friends**

The literature also sheds light on the part played by friends in young person's decision to join a party (see Chapter One; Cross and Young, 2008; Bruter and Harrison, 2009a, 2009b; Weber, 2018). In other words, having friends involved in a party encourages young people to engage too. This is confirmed by the results of the survey of young Scottish party members: 91 per cent of them declared having friends engaged in politics. In the SNP in particular, it amounts to 87 per cent. Only 13 per cent have no friends in politics. These results suggest that friends are maybe a stronger vehicle of political socialisation than family.

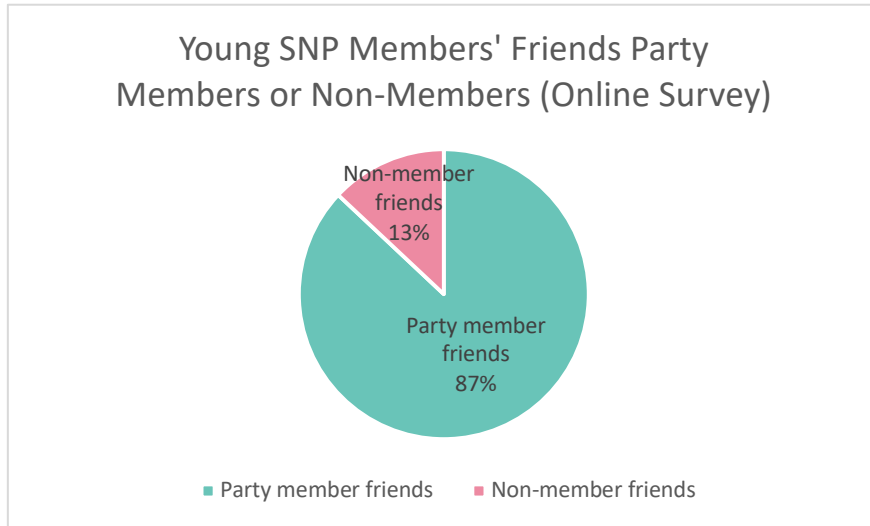


Figure 2.26: Young SNP members whose friends are party members/non-members

When it comes to party family, 58 per cent of the YSI and SNP Students surveyed have friends who are members of the SNP. 29 per cent have friends in other political parties. Again, friends do play a role in youth party membership. As a majority of their party member friends are involved in the SNP, it can be assumed that they encouraged them to join the party. This hypothesis is tested later, in the section about young SNP members’ sources of interest in politics.

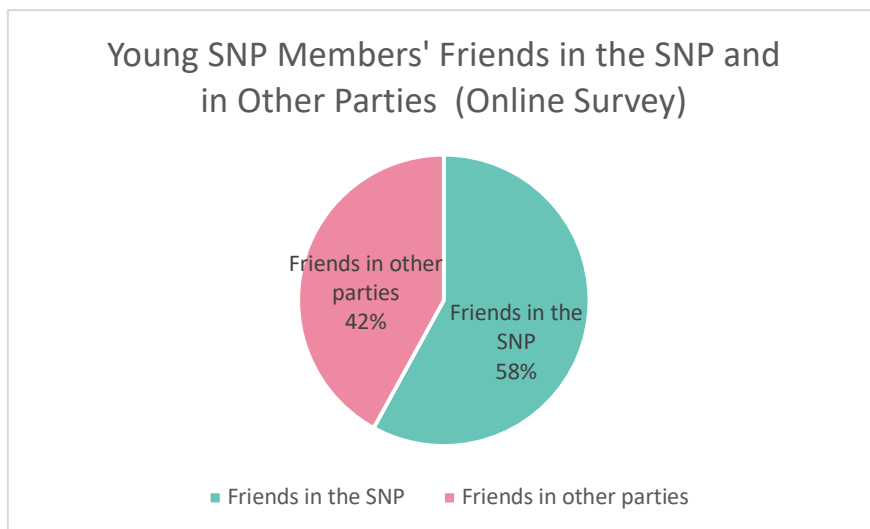


Figure 2.27: Young SNP members whose friends are SNP members, or members of other parties

Unfortunately, I am not able to compare the online survey results with those of the interviews because I did not ask questions about young Scottish party members' friends when I met them. At the time, I had not finished reviewing the literature on youth party membership. I had included variables like the family in my methodology, but not friends. Also, during interviews, I concentrated mainly on national identity and its relationship with young members' political involvement. It is one of the weaknesses of the present thesis. I tried to overcome this with the online survey. Hence, again, the fact that the survey adds to the interviews. Besides, I plan to conduct new interviews in the future. This time, I will ask questions about friends.

We have seen that, in the same way as relatives, friends influence young Scottish people's decision to join a political party, more specifically the SNP. The online questionnaire results indicate that a majority of the YSI and SNP Students have friends involved in politics. What is more, a majority have friends who are also SNP members. It nonetheless raises a question: were they already friends before joining or did they make friends with them after joining? This is examined in the next section about young SNP members' sources of interest in politics and in the SNP.

## **2) Interest in Politics**

According to the literature on young party members, young people get interested in politics for various reasons. Political socialisation through family, friends and school, as well as information via the media, the internet and social media all have an influence on young people' interest in politics (Cross and Young (2008); Bruter and Harrison (2009a, 2009b); Weber (2018), see Chapter One). Therefore, in order to explore Scottish young party members' own political interest and try to understand why they joined, I tested those variables in the

online survey. I asked respondents: ‘How did you get interested in politics?’. Given the position of the SNP with regard to independence, as well as the surge in the SNP and Scottish Greens membership in the aftermath of the vote in 2014, I added the Scottish referendum campaign as a variable.

77 per cent, thus most of the whole respondent sample, got interested in politics thanks to ScotRef campaign. Family comes second with 42 per cent, and friends come third with 34 per cent. Then, respondents’ political interest originates from: the internet/social media for 38 per cent, school and the media for 26 per cent, university for 17 per cent, and another reason for 13 per cent<sup>203</sup>.

Similarly, in the SNP, 82 per cent got interested through the independence referendum campaign, 45 per cent via their family, 37 per cent via the internet and social media, 32 per cent with friends, 21 per cent through the media, 16 per cent at school, and 13 per cent at university or for another reason<sup>204</sup>. These results confirm the importance of political socialisation, notably via the family and friends. However, the Scottish IndyRef campaign is, by far, the most common source of political interest amongst young SNP members.

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<sup>203</sup> As this was a multiple-choice question, the total does not sum to 100 per cent.

<sup>204</sup> As this was a multiple-choice question, the total does not sum to 100 per cent.

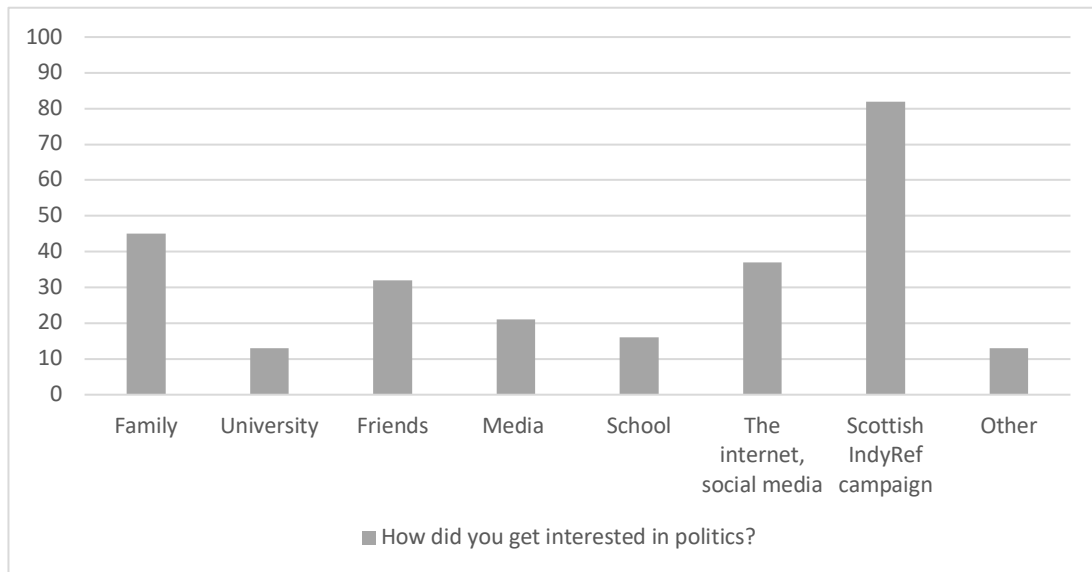


Figure 2.28: Sources of interest in politics amongst young SNP respondents (percentages)

The next table presents the results for the respondents in other parties<sup>205</sup>.

	Family	University	Friends	Media	School	The internet, social media	Scottish IndyRef campaign	Other
BP	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	<b>100%</b>	0%
SYC	33%	33%	33%	33%	67%	33%	<b>100%</b>	0%
SYG	50%	25%	50%	50%	25%	50%	<b>100%</b>	25%
Labour	0%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	<b>33%</b>	33%
Lib Dems	50%	25%	0%	50%	25%	50%	<b>25%</b>	25%

Table 2.4: Sources of interest in politics amongst young respondents in other political parties

Here again, the referendum campaign seems to be the most important source of political interest. It is particularly the case in the Conservative Party and the Greens<sup>206</sup>. Given that, with the SNP, those two parties were the most involved in the campaign, it is not by chance that it

<sup>205</sup> As this was a multiple-choice question, the total does not sum to 100 per cent.

<sup>206</sup> In the Brexit Party as well, but given that only one BP member responded to the survey, it is hard to draw any accurate conclusions. The result is indicative.

got their young members politically interested. A Conservative respondent specified his answer by saying: ‘I was pro-UK and realised it was not reversible if we lost’. One of the Liberal Democrats strengthened the idea that the referendum got young Scots interested in politics: ‘This helped me develop my politics a lot’. Some respondents mentioned other sources of interest. A young Labour member talked about the 2017 General election in the UK. And a young Green explained it was because of his interest in climate science.

### **3) Interest in the Party**

In order to understand why young people join the SNP, besides analysing their interest in politics, I also examined the sources of their interest in the party they joined. In the whole sample of respondents, a majority (68 per cent) got interested thanks to the Scottish IndyRef campaign. The internet and social media come second with 45 per cent. Friends come third with 34 per cent, followed by the family with 28 per cent, the media (17 per cent) and other reasons (11 per cent).

Similarly, in the SNP, 71 per cent of the respondents got interested in the party thanks to the referendum campaign. It is followed by the internet and social media (42 per cent), friends (32 per cent), family (26 per cent), other reasons (11 per cent) and the media (8 per cent). The independence referendum is the main source of young people’s interest in the SNP. As for the internet and social media, a section about the SNP’s recruitment of young members further down in this thesis confirms the role played by the use of social media by the party’s leader, Nicola Sturgeon. Finally, the statistics corresponding to friends and family reinforce the idea of political socialisation as a factor influencing young Scots’ decision to join the SNP.

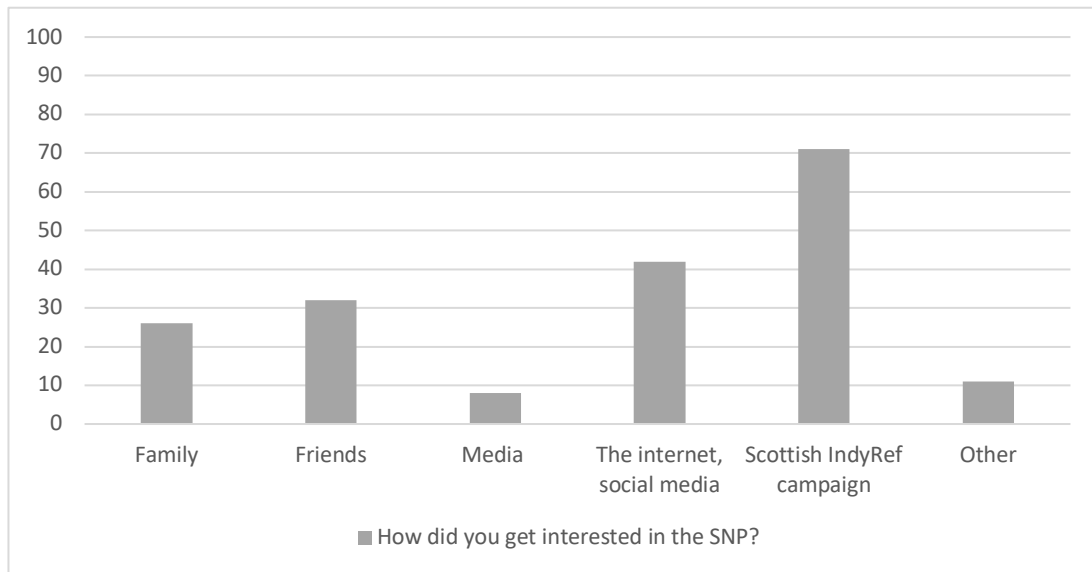


Figure 2.29: Sources of interest in the SNP amongst young respondents (percentages)

The table below presents the results for the respondents in other parties<sup>207</sup>.

	Family	Friends	The internet, social media	Media	Scottish IndyRef campaign	Other
BP	0%	0%	33%	0%	<b>0%</b>	100%
SYC	0%	33%	0%	0%	<b>67%</b>	0%
SYG	0%	0%	25%	0%	<b>75%</b>	50%
Labour	0%	33%	67%	33%	<b>33%</b>	33%
Lib Dems	50%	25%	75%	50%	<b>25%</b>	25%

Table 2.5: Sources of interest in party amongst other young respondents

Once again, ScotRef is the main source of interest in the Scottish Conservatives and Scottish Greens. It correlates with the results about young party members' sources of interest in politics. And it confirms a relationship between young Scots' interest in the independence debate and their joining of one of the political parties that were the most involved in the referendum campaign.

<sup>207</sup> As this was a multiple-choice question, the total does not sum to 100 per cent.



Amongst the ‘Other’ reasons why they got interested in their respective parties, the BP member talked about ‘research’ that he did on Brexit and the party. A young Labour member responded ‘2017 GE’. A young Green expanded on his ‘interest in green issues’. Another mentioned ‘university’. And a LibDem explained that he got interested in the party by going to meetings.

Both interest in politics and in the SNP therefore mainly originate from the Scottish referendum campaign. To a lesser extent, political socialisation (through family and friends essentially) is also a source of Scottish young people’s interest in politics and the SNP. The role of the internet and social media is significant too. The results are reinforced by the responses of young people from other political parties.

#### **4) Party Membership Benefits**

In the previous chapter, I introduced the theories on party membership and the benefits that individuals can get from it. Incentives for joining originate from those rewards. As shown when reviewing the literature, Clark and Wilson distinguish between material, solidary and purposive incentives (Clark and Wilson, 1961; Wilson, 1973). Building their model partly on that theory, Seyd and Whiteley found out that people are encouraged to join political parties for material reasons (outcome incentives), social reasons (process incentives), and ideological reasons. They went further by categorising incentives according to their individual or collective dimension: selective incentives on the one hand, and collective incentives on the other (Whiteley, 1992). Another famous theory on party membership incentives was developed by Gaxie. As said before, he identified material and symbolic rewards (Gaxie, 1977).

When it comes to youth party membership, as Chapter One shows, Bruter and Harrison distinguish between three types of young party members: moral-minded, social-minded, and professional-minded members, depending on the incentives that push them to join a political party (Bruter and Harrison, 2009a, 2009b). In other words, young people join a party because they can get moral, social, and/or professional benefits (see Chapter One). Similarly, Weber recently found out that young German people are incited to join the SDP for moral, social, professional, and less clear reasons (Weber, 2018). She identified three groups of young SDP members. The ‘Take All’ group corresponds to young party members who are moral-ideologically, socially, and professionally motivated. The ‘Ideologists’ group is both moral-ideologically and socially motivated. For Weber, they do not consider professional incentives as important at all. Finally, the motivations of the ‘Reluctant’ group are unclear (see Chapter One).

In order to test those findings, to know about the benefits that young people can get from their membership of the SNP, and therefore understand what incentives push them to join, I asked ‘What benefits do you gain from your party membership?’ in the online survey. In order of importance, 89 per cent of the whole sample of young Scottish party members make friends, 81 per cent participate in interesting debates, 72 per cent do a moral or civic duty, 51 per cent feel they have an influence over national politics, 42 per cent have the opportunity to start a political career, 11 per cent meet their girlfriend or boyfriend, 8 per cent feel famous and honoured, and none get money or any material rewards<sup>208</sup>. The last finding suggests that young party members in Scotland are not interested in money and, thus, devote time to their party for other reasons. In a way, they can be seen as altruistic. But we can also wonder whether this result owes to the fact that money and material rewards<sup>209</sup> can be taboos in our societies. Nonetheless, whether because of disinterest in money or because of taboos, it has to be noted

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<sup>208</sup> This was a multiple-choice question, hence the fact that the total does not sum to 100 per cent.

<sup>209</sup> Here, I understand material rewards as material gifts, not as working positions (see Chapter One).

that none of the Scottish young party members surveyed seems to benefit from money or any related material rewards thanks to their party membership. Therefore, it is not what attracts them and makes them want to join. In that sense, it may be posited that material incentives (Clark and Wilson, 1961; Wilson, 1973) should not be regarded as a variable which influences young people to join the party.

In the SNP, as shown by Figure 2.30, 87 per cent of the respondents make new friends, 84 per cent participate in interesting debates, 71 per cent do a moral or civic duty, 53 per cent feel they have an influence over national politics, 39 per cent have the opportunity to start a political career, 13 per cent meet their girlfriend or boyfriend, and 3 per cent feel famous and honoured thanks to party membership. If we apply Bruter and Harrison's and Weber's models to those statistics, YSI and SNP Students seem to be social-minded first, then moral-minded, and finally professional-minded members. To put it differently, most of the rewards or benefits that they can get from their SNP membership are social (friends). Then, they are moral benefits (interesting debates; moral/civic duty; influence over national politics). To a lesser extent, they are professional rewards (start a political career). Thus, it can be assumed that young people join the SNP mainly to make new friends, as well as to participate in interesting debates and do their moral or civic duty. However, as demonstrated later on in this chapter, these are rewards/benefits that young people get from their SNP membership rather than reasons why they join the party.

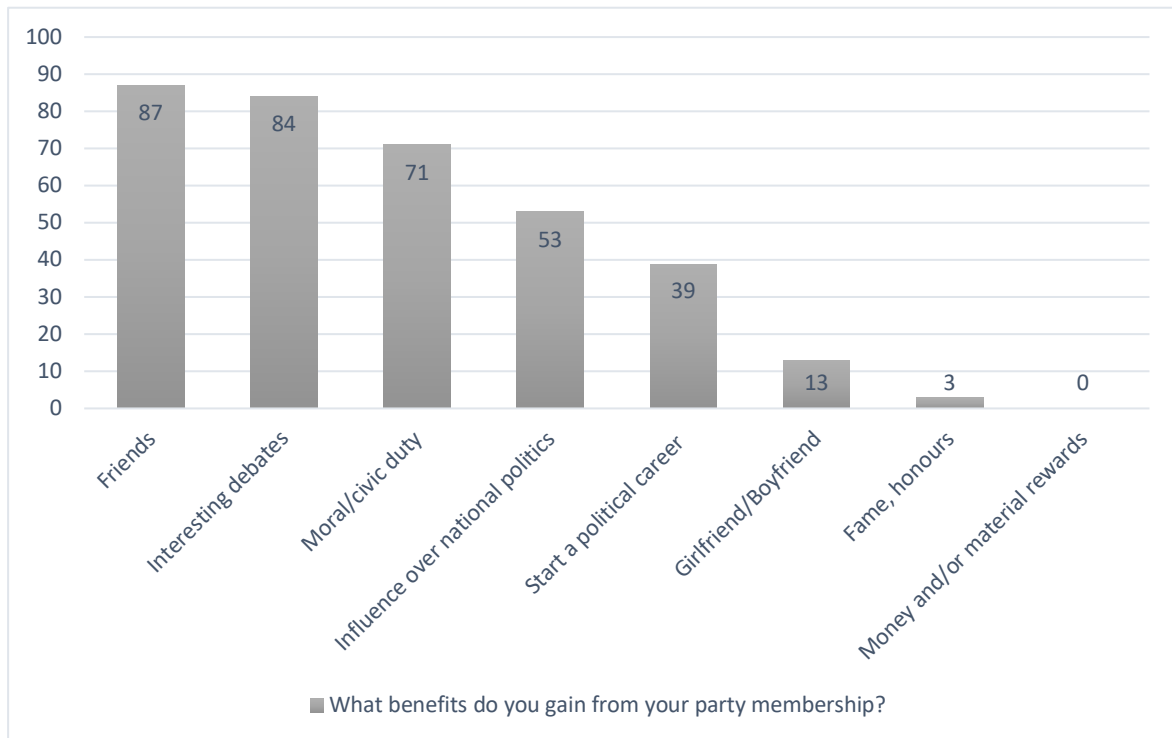


Figure 2.30: SNP membership benefits according to young respondents (percentages)

Friends were seen as the most important benefit in other parties as well: all the young Labour, Liberal Democrats and Conservatives, as well as the Brexit Party member, indicated it was a party membership benefit. Table 2.6 lists all the statistics about benefits in each party.

	Friends	Interesting debates	Moral/civic duty	Influence over national politics	Opportunity to start a political career	Girlfriend/Boyfriend	Fame, honours	Money, material rewards
<b>Brexit Party</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Conservatives</b>	100%	100%	100%	67%	100%	33%	33%	0%
<b>Greens</b>	75%	50%	50%	50%	50%	0%	25%	0%
<b>Labour</b>	100%	100%	67%	33%	33%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Lib Dems</b>	100%	50%	50%	25%	25%	0%	25%	0%

Table 2.6: Party membership benefits according to young respondents in other political parties<sup>210</sup>

<sup>210</sup> This was a multiple-choice question, hence the fact that the total does not sum to 100 per cent.

Compared to the SNP, results in other parties are more balanced. Yet, the small sample in these parties makes it hard to draw any significant conclusions when it comes to the three categories identified by Bruter and Harrison (2009a, 2009b). The table above is indicative.

To conclude, it can be said that young Scots derive various benefits from being SNP members. In terms of importance, first they make friends and enjoy social activities with them. Then, benefits are moral. Their membership gives them the opportunity to take part in interesting and stimulating debates. They can also do their moral or civic duty, in the sense that they are part of an organisation working for Scottish people. And they feel that they have an influence over national politics: for them, they play a role in the future of their country. This might be related to the independence debate and the EU referendum. As demonstrated, in the whole sample, 51 per cent of the respondents feel they have an influence over national politics. It rises to 67 per cent amongst the Conservatives. As for the Greens, half of them feel so too. The highest proportions of young members thinking they have such an influence are to be found in the Conservative Party, the SNP and the Green Party. Namely, the three political parties which are the most involved in the independence debate in Scotland. It goes hand in hand with the number of young people who have been engaging in that debate since 2014. This is analysed in details in the section about Scottish independence further down.

All those rewards can be regarded as incentives that undoubtedly push young Scots to join the SNP. Yet, as explained later in this chapter, they are not the main reasons why they get involved with the party. They certainly play a part in their remaining in the party, in their membership career, but according to this research, they have to be seen as benefits they get during their membership as a process, rather than incentives that play a role in the mechanism of their decision making to join the party.

## 5) Career

As shown in Chapter One, several researchers have analysed the career motivations of young party members. Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison identified the category of ‘professional-minded members’ (Bruter and Harrison, 2009a, 2009b). According to the two scholars, ‘the professional dimension revolves around a desire to achieve positions and honors, become a politician, and derive money or material benefits from party membership.’ (2009a: 1270). Young professional-minded members are very active in their parties, especially at election times and during campaigns. They want to ensure the continued existence of their parties. Hooghe et al. examined youth party membership from a career perspective as well. As said in the previous chapter, they studied the relationship between political parties’ youth organisations and the future political careers of their members. With their study of Flemish councillors in Belgium (Hooghe et al., 2004), their aim was to discover if political parties’ youth wings are a path to political careers for their members when getting older. As was shown, they concluded that youth factions of political parties have a ‘recruitment function’ (2004: 200). They highlighted the role played by the membership of these youth wings in young people’s continued political engagement as future politicians. They explained that for a young person, being a member of a party’s youth faction ‘generates networks, which, in turn, facilitate the start of a political career’ (2004: 205). Most significantly, they concluded that councillors who had been youth wings’ members started their political careers earlier than other councillors.

As I wanted to test those findings with a study of YSI and SNP Students, I asked them questions about their career plans.

### *Interviews*

During interviews, young party members were asked: ‘would you like to start a political career one day?’ 82 per cent of them (regardless of the party) answered in the affirmative. Most of them said that they thought about it or were open to it. Some said that they wanted to find another job first, and that they would probably think of a political career in the future.

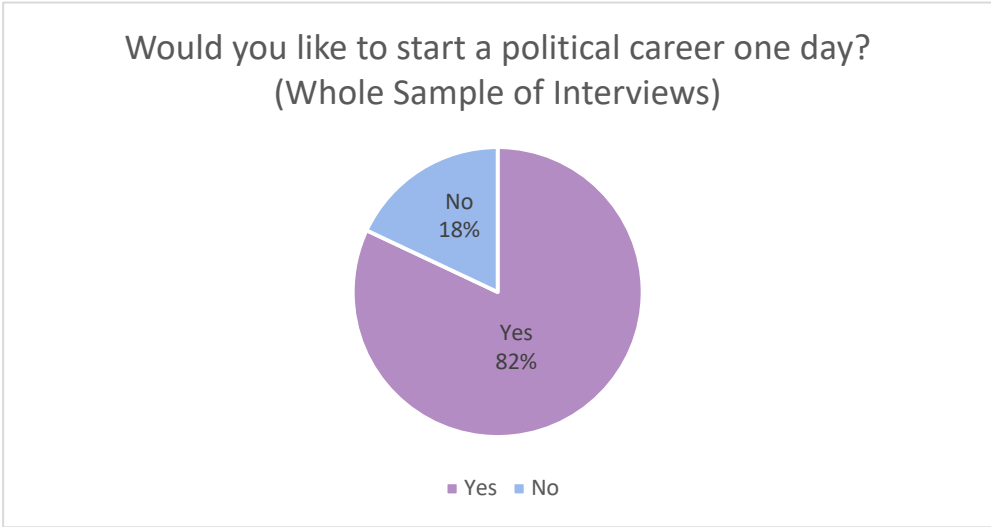


Figure 2.31: Young interviewees’ wish to start a political career

*Online Survey*

Respondents to the survey were asked: ‘would you like to become a politician?’ 68 per cent of the whole sample answered they would. In the SNP in particular, 63 per cent of the young respondents think of becoming politicians. 37 per cent answered that they would not. All the Conservatives as well as the Brexit Party member said they would like to. 75 per cent of the Greens and the Lib Dems said so, as well as 67 per cent in Labour.

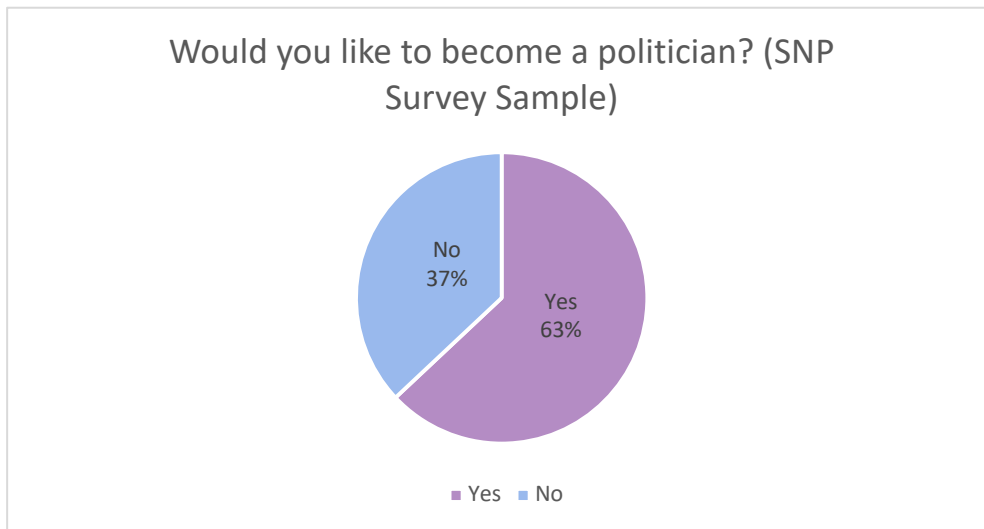


Figure 2.32: Young SNP respondents' wish to become politicians

Such statistics are well illustrated by Nicola Sturgeon's career. As said before, the MSP for Glasgow Southside constituency, leader of the SNP, and Scottish First Minister is a former member of the YSI. Therefore, amongst the young Scots who are currently part of the YSI and/or SNP Students, there could be the future SNP leader, even the future Scottish First Minister. She joined the party when she was 16 and became a very young Parliamentary candidate in the UK in 1992, at the age of 21. In order to know more about Sturgeon's YSI membership and her political career afterwards, I had planned to have an interview with her. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 crisis occurred. I still plan to do it in the future though. To a lesser extent (at least at the moment), Mhairi Black also embodies political success of a young SNP member who became a famous politician. She became the youngest MP when she got elected in the General election of 2015, at only 20 years old. She was re-elected in 2017 and 2019. I also planned to interview her, but after having been unable to do so because she was too busy at work, the Covid-19 pandemic also made it impossible. Both Nicola Sturgeon and Mhairi Black illustrate that young SNP members are likely to become prominent politicians someday. In this regard, I asked interviewees a question about Mhairi Black's current political success as a young person. She is a model for a majority of them.



Besides asking the respondents whether they wished to become politicians, I also asked them a question about their current job or their career plans. Here are the various jobs they do/plan to do:



Figure 2.33: Young SNP members' jobs/career plans

The range of sectors they work in/want to work in is broad. It should nonetheless be noted that politics (whether politician or MP/MSP staff worker) was mentioned several times. Like interviewees, some respondents specified that they think of a political career in the future, but not necessarily at the moment. One of them said: 'I would like to be a teacher and have always aspired to be a teacher however *I am so politically active I can envisage a scenario when it just becomes the next logical step* although it is not the result of any serious aspiration.'<sup>211</sup>. Similarly, another one declared: 'I currently work as a Domestic Assistant at NHS Tayside but *I would like to work as a politician in the future.*'<sup>212</sup>. Another respondent stated: 'Currently I'm

<sup>211</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>212</sup> My emphasis.

working for a bank but in the future, once I've completed my degree, I would like to get a job in the big three and eventually lead the way in the upcoming technological "revolution" *while actively being involved in politics and Scottish independence*<sup>213</sup>. Those quotations echo interview answers according to which young party members are open to a political career, but most of the time in the future or in parallel with another job. A majority of the young people I studied said that being full-time politicians is time consuming and implies too many responsibilities.

Namely, I wondered whether they planned to remain involved and active in the party rather than become politicians. In order to know more about their career plans as party members, I asked the following question in the survey: 'When you are older, will you still be a party member?'. 96 per cent of the whole sample answered in the affirmative. In the SNP in particular, it amounts to 97 per cent.

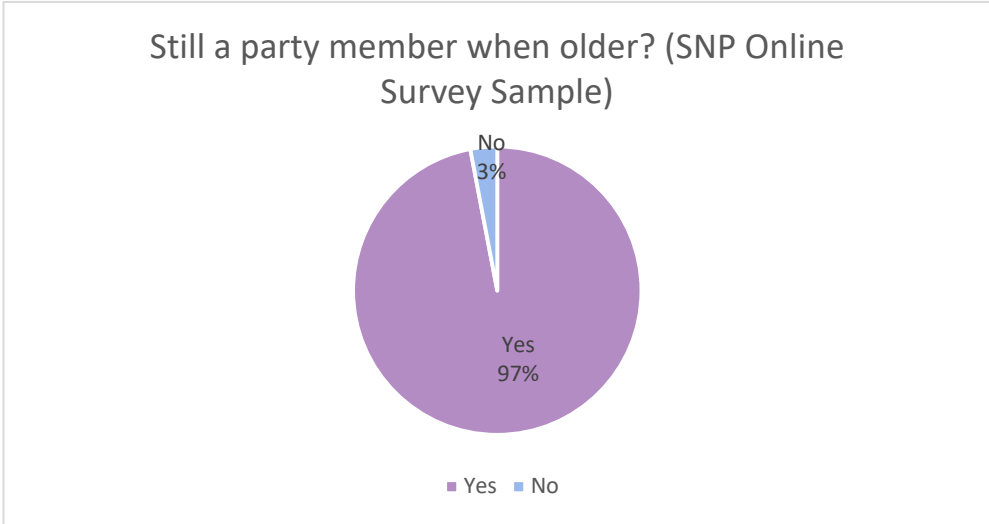


Figure 2.34: Young SNP respondents' plans to remain party members when getting older

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<sup>213</sup> My emphasis.

Amongst the respondents from other political parties, all the Greens, Labour and Lib Dems said yes. This was also the case for the Brexit Party member and 67 per cent of the Conservatives.

I asked the same question to the Scottish young party members I interviewed. 94 per cent of the whole sample plan to remain party members in the future. All the SNP members answered in the affirmative. Here are the figures in other parties: 86 per cent of the Conservatives and 75 per cent of the Young Labour. The Brexit Party member also plans to keep being a party member in the future.

We have seen that a clear majority of the young SNP members surveyed and interviewed think of becoming politicians someday or, at least, of getting a job related to politics. Some are already councillors, government officers, or MP/MSP staff workers. In this regard, it can be said that the SNP has a 'recruitment function' (Hooghe et al., 2004). It should be noted that overall, the young party members interviewed wish to be politically involved alongside another job career, rather than be full-time politicians. In terms of membership careers, a majority of SNP youth (97 per cent of the respondents and all the interviewees) plan to remain party members when getting older.

The results of the present study thus confirm that a political career is a material incentive (Clark and Wilson, 1961; Wilson, 1973) or selective outcome benefit (Seyd and Whiteley, 1992) for young SNP members. However, despite statistics highlighting the part played by the opportunity of becoming politicians someday, one of the following sections shows that this is not the most important reason why young people join the SNP. Also, as demonstrated in the previous section, only 39 per cent of the young SNP survey respondents see the opportunity to start a political career as a party membership benefit. Rather than a motivation for joining, I would say that a political career is seen by the young people surveyed as something in the continuity of their current political involvement. In other words, even if a majority of the young

Scots I studied think of becoming politicians in the future, they cannot be categorised as professional-minded members (Bruter and Harrison, 2009a, 2009b) in the sense that working in politics is not the first and foremost reason why they join.

## **6) Recruitment of Scottish Young People by the SNP**

All the resources and incentives detailed above have to be considered variables influencing youth SNP membership at the micro level. When reviewing the literature in the previous chapter, I showed that other variables could also play a role at the meso and macro levels. At the meso level, namely organisations, I showed that scholars like Lynn Bennie and Andrew Russell (2012), as well as Emily Rainsford (2017), insist that political parties do not make enough of an effort to recruit young people. It made me wish to explore the relationship between the SNP and young people, as well as their ability to recruit them.

The literature shows that in Western democracies, a majority of young people feel alienated from politics (see Chapter One). Among other things, they feel that their voices are not heard or not heard enough by politicians, and that governments are not interested in young people. They think that policies do not benefit them. The fact that the SNP are sensitive to some issues which are important to young people, may also explain why the party appears to be attractive to them. For example, despite a lack of involvement of the SNP (according to some young members) in the incident which occurred at the Bearsden meeting in March 2020 (see page 171), the fact that Nicola Sturgeon posted a video to say that she was firmly opposed to transphobia in her party probably made pro-LGBTQ+ youth feel that their views are heard by the SNP leader<sup>214</sup>. The SNP-led government's policies that benefit young people may also

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<sup>214</sup> See

attract them. Free tuition fees and lowering the voting age to 16 are the most illustrative examples. In this regard, the SNP members I met insisted that the party does very positive things for young people. They argued that it listens to them and tries to make their lives better. Thus, targeting young people with governmental policies which benefit them seems to be an efficient way for the SNP to recruit young members.

It should also be noted that Nicola Sturgeon is quite close to the young people of Scotland. Whether it is a political strategy or not, she likes to address the young people of her country. For instance, on Twitter in 2020, amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, she encouraged young people who were going back to school after lockdowns:

‘Good luck to young people returning to school today and over the rest of the week. I’m sure you’re feeling a mix of excitement and nerves - but getting back to education, and to your pals, is a big moment after a tough few months. Best wishes to you all - and to your teachers.’ August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020<sup>215</sup>

In October 2020, she reassured children that Santa Claus was going to work for Christmas and that they would get their presents as usual. She said: ‘Don’t worry kids, Santa is a key worker.’<sup>216</sup> She was probably the only government leader in the world to do this. The fact that she thought of reassuring children about their Christmas presents amidst the pandemic suggests that she cares about the young people of Scotland. This may encourage these young people to have a positive opinion about their First Minister. Then, it probably makes the SNP attractive

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[https://twitter.com/NicolaSturgeon/status/1354521063502336001?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1354521063502336001%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1\\_&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bbc.com%2Fnews%2Fuk-scotland-scotland-politics-55839227](https://twitter.com/NicolaSturgeon/status/1354521063502336001?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1354521063502336001%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bbc.com%2Fnews%2Fuk-scotland-scotland-politics-55839227) Accessed on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

<sup>215</sup> <https://twitter.com/NicolaSturgeon/status/1293444348307275781> Accessed on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

<sup>216</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbFTZKo7eE> Accessed on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

for some Scottish young people and, therefore, help the party recruit them. It should be noted that once they are recruited, they see Sturgeon in an even more positive way (see the next point). This might be explained by her closeness to them. At party conferences or during election campaigns, she often takes selfies with them. And she likes to interact with them via social media. For example, in 2020, she re-tweeted a photo by one of the YSI, picturing a group of YSI/SNP Students partying for New Year's Eve, and wrote:

‘Happy New Year to the best young folk any party could wish for.

@YSINational @SNPStudents 🍷 January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020<sup>217</sup>

That Tweet shows that she is very supportive of the young members of her party. She has been close to young Scots for a while. In 2014, even before becoming First Minister of the country, she encouraged young people who got involved in the independence campaign:

‘Good luck to @GenerationYes @myYesScotland as they launch youth campaign today. I only wish I was still young enough to join you! #indyref’

March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014<sup>218</sup>

She regularly thanks the YSI and SNP Students for their good and hard work for the party. For example, following a speech by the former YSI convener at the autumn SNP conference in 2019, she Tweeted:

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<sup>217</sup> <https://twitter.com/NicolaSturgeon/status/1212174740191948800> Accessed on June 29th, 2021.

<sup>218</sup> <https://twitter.com/NicolaSturgeon/status/449832078100922369> Accessed on June 29th, 2021.

‘We really are blessed in @theSNP with incredibly talented young members.

This is an outstanding speech by @YSINational Convener @GavinLundy’

October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019<sup>219</sup>

Similarly, she congratulated a young SNP member who delivered her first speech at the age of 16 at the 2018 annual conference. Here again, it shows her support of SNP youth. On Twitter, one of the YSI wrote: ‘The SNP value the voices and contributions of young people’. It undoubtedly encourages them to stay involved and to work hard for the party. Besides thanking them, Sturgeon proves her attachment to the youth and student wings of the party by referring to her own experience in the YSI. In 2019, right after the SNP conference in Edinburgh, she Tweeted:

‘There’s a lot that makes me proud of @theSNP but *few things make me more proud than the quality of the young people in our ranks*. Feels like just 5 mins (it’s actually 25 years 🙌) since I was in @YSINational - great to see it so strong and active today.’ April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019<sup>220</sup>

Besides highlighting her closeness to the youth and student factions of her party, such a post also makes them (and the rest of Scottish young people) aware of how a former YSI member succeeded as a politician. In other words, that post probably made YSI and SNP Students dream of having the same career as Nicola Sturgeon and possibly becoming the party leader, even the nation’s leader, one day. Such a success story undoubtedly encourages young people to get involved in the party.

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<sup>219</sup> <https://twitter.com/NicolaSturgeon/status/1184450249563234304> Accessed on June 29th, 2021.

<sup>220</sup> <https://twitter.com/nicolasturgeon/status/1122589300451880960> Accessed on June 29th, 2021. My emphasis.

In this regard, when it comes to the relationship between Scottish young people and SNP leaders, it is important to note that all the young SNP members I interviewed have a very positive view of Nicola Sturgeon. They all agree that she is a very good leader, who is charismatic, passionate about her country, and does a lot for young people<sup>221</sup>. Some even admire her. At SNP conferences, the way youth members (all the members actually) applause and shout when she arrives on stage suggests that she is a kind of rock star in their eyes. In this regard, taking a selfie with ‘Nicola’ is the goal of a lot of YSI and SNP Students, at least of those I met. It echoes what Bruter and Harrison identified as an incentive in their youth party membership model: ‘Mixing with the stars’ (2009b: 108), namely mixing with high profile politicians and celebrities, was mentioned by 12 per cent of the young party members surveyed. It is popular amongst social-minded members and very popular amongst professional-minded ones. Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison specify that ‘meeting important politicians or local figures can serve as a highlight to members and play a very important role in making them feel privileged, important, or efficacious in the political and social life of their country, their region or their village or city.’ (2009b: 109).

As shown above, the SNP (Nicola Sturgeon in particular), use social media extensively. When reviewing the literature on youth party membership in the previous chapter, I focused on the importance of social media when it comes to politics. Cross and Young (2004) demonstrated that young people use the internet and social media to get informed about political issues. Therefore, they are useful tools for political parties to recruit young members. It seems that the

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<sup>221</sup> This is in line with Bale et al.’s findings (2018) about the reasons why people join parties in the UK. As indicated in the House of Commons research briefing report of 2019, ‘SNP members (...) ranked belief in party leadership as a reason for joining higher than other parties, at 8.2. This can be compared to 7.3 for Labour, 6.9 for Conservatives and 5.7 for Liberal Democrats.’ (Audickas et al., 2019: 21). For further reading about SNP leadership, see Mitchell, J., and Hassan, G. (2016). *Scottish National Party Leaders*. London: Biteback Press. The scholars emphasise SNP’s political force under the leadership of Sturgeon. See also Sturgeon’s biography written by David Torrance: Torrance, D. (2015). *Nicola Sturgeon. A Political Life*. Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited.



SNP, and their leader particularly, understand this very well. They are rather good at it<sup>222</sup>. By being quite active on social media, Sturgeon makes the SNP visible and attractive for young people. One of the members I interviewed declared that she got involved with the party because she ‘was really inspired by watching a lot of YouTube clips of Nicola Sturgeon’. Regarding Twitter and Facebook in particular, Table 2.7 presents the numbers of likes and followers of each Scottish party youth faction. The figures speak for themselves:

	Twitter	Facebook (likes-followers)
YSI	<b>8,447</b>	<b>9,188-9,624</b>
SNP Students	<b>7,272</b>	<b>3,205-3,443</b>
Scottish Young Conservatives	2,413	514-535
Scottish Young Greens	4,866	2,014-2,159
Scottish Young Labour	2,937	1,967-2,050
Scottish Young Liberals	1,815	1,035-1,135

Table 2.7: Number of followers/likes on social media of each political party youth wing in Scotland (June 2021)

Be it on Twitter or Facebook, the numbers of likes and followers of the SNP youth and student wings are much higher than those of other Scottish political parties. This is even more true if we sum the likes and followers of both the youth and student factions of the SNP: 15,719 followers on Twitter, 12,393 likes and 13,067 followers on Facebook. It is worth noting that amongst the youth organisations of the other parties, it is the Scottish Young Greens who come second in terms of likes and followers, namely another pro-independence party. In the independence referendum of 2014, 54.3 per cent of the voters aged 16 to 19 and 54.1 per cent

<sup>222</sup> Nathalie Duclos examined the SNP’s use of new technologies, including social media (Duclos, 2013). She posits that the SNP ‘combines traditional campaigning methods with the use of technology’. Her exploration of the party’s use of new technologies focuses on the 2011 election campaign. She demonstrates that tools like Facebook and Twitter helped the SNP appeal to voters. Similarly, here, I think that social media helps them to recruit young members.

of the ones aged 20 to 24 voted No. But 62.2 per cent of the young people aged 25 to 29 voted Yes.<sup>223</sup> Despite a majority of 16 to 24-year-olds who voted against independence, the youth factions of pro-independence parties seem to be favoured by young Scottish people compared to the rest of political parties. At least, young Scots' interest in pro-independence parties on social media is stronger than in other parties like the Conservatives and Labour, which are opposed to independence. The numbers of likes and followers of the Scottish Young Conservatives are very low compared to the other youth wings. It may be due to the underrepresentation of young people in the Conservative and Unionist Party. As Rory (a young Conservative interviewee) put it: 'The average age of the Conservative Party member is 57... We should be taking this way more seriously. If you miss out our generation, in ten- or twenty-years' time, the party will not exist.' As said in the previous chapter, young people are underrepresented in all the political parties of Western democracies. Yet, according to Table 2.7, it can be assumed that the young people who are interested in politics in Scotland are most inclined to support the SNP and least inclined to support the Conservatives. Is this due to the SNP's use of social media? Is it related to the issue of independence? Both? The following section about Scottish independence helps answer this question. As it is the key reason why young Scots join the SNP, the fact that the party focuses on that very issue is a clear explanation of their ability to recruit young people.<sup>224</sup> One of their arguments is that independence has to be achieved for young people because they are the generation that will be concerned by the future constitutional status of Scotland. This undoubtedly accounts for young people's inclination to join the SNP rather than other Scottish political parties. The mere fact that 75 per cent of the young people who could vote went to the polls on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (see Chapter One) shows how much they feel concerned with the constitutional future of their nation.

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<sup>223</sup> See <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-34283948> Accessed on June 29th, 2021.

<sup>224</sup> In that sense, it can be argued that every person who is in favour of Scottish independence is likely to be interested in joining the SNP.

To conclude, it can be said that the SNP seem to be better at recruiting young people than other political parties in Scotland. It is in line with the meso level of party membership identified in the literature: besides individual incentives/resources and macro elements, the intermediary level (organisations) has to be considered too. Thanks to policies targeting young people, being close to them, and using social media as a tool to address and attract them, the SNP manage rather well to recruit young members. Compared to other parties, the proportion of young people in the party, as well as the likes and followers of youth wings on social media, speak for themselves. The SNP seem to be successful also thanks to their focus on both the constitutional future and the future generation of Scotland.

In this regard, the following section focuses on Scottish independence. As demonstrated, the SNP are successful at recruiting young people thanks to that cause. This echoes what Philippe Braud says about political parties and their mobilisation/representation function:

‘Parties have an ambition of mobilisation (Oberschall). They seek to establish themselves as representatives of a population, or *bearers of* a social project, of a "*great cause*" ... They must therefore work to share the accuracy of their views, convince of the value of their goals or program.’ (Braud, 2002: 405)<sup>225</sup>.

Let’s see how it applies to the SNP and its young members.

## 7) Scottish Independence

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<sup>225</sup> Original text in French: 'Les partis ont une ambition de mobilisation (Oberschall). Ils cherchent en effet à s'imposer comme représentatifs d'une population, ou porteurs d'un projet de société, d'une « grande cause »... Il leur faut donc travailler à faire partager la justesse de leurs vues, convaincre de la valeur de leurs objectifs ou de leur programme.' My emphasis.

### a) Time of Joining

As a reminder, in my research methodology, I chose to focus on the period running from 2012 to today, since the agreement between David Cameron and Alex Salmond to organise the Scottish independence referendum that was held in 2014. In other words, since the beginning of the referendum campaign.

#### *Interviews*

The year when most of the YSI and SNP Students I interviewed joined, is 2014 (44 per cent). A majority of them did it after the referendum. One of them said: ‘it was a big mistake I did not get involved sooner’. The year when most of the young Conservatives interviewed joined is also 2014 (43 per cent). Whereas, in Labour, the four members joined in 2006, 2015, 2017 and 2019. The one who got involved in 2017 joined for the General Election. As for the BP member, he joined in 2019<sup>226</sup>, but is a former Conservative. He had joined the party in 2016, after leaving the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). In 2020, he also joined the Rassemblement National (RN), French nationalist party<sup>227</sup>.

The fact that 2014 is the year when most of the SNP and Conservative interviewees joined is telling. During the referendum campaign, these parties led the two opposed camps: the Yes camp for the SNP, and the Better Together or No camp for the Conservatives. The Yes vote was also supported by the Scottish Greens, but the SNP was the most fervent supporter of independence. As for No, it was also supported by Labour, but, similarly, the Conservatives were the most fervent defenders of the Union, hence their official label as the Scottish Conservative and *Unionist*<sup>228</sup> Party. With the referendum, 2014 was a key time for the future

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<sup>226</sup> Not for the General Election.

<sup>227</sup> He told me he joined the RN because he identified with their political ideology, without going into detail.

<sup>228</sup> My emphasis.

of the UK and of Scotland in that union of nations. Therefore, it is not by chance that the majority of the young people I interviewed in the SNP and the Conservatives joined in 2014.

### *Online Survey*

In the whole sample of survey respondents, 98 per cent joined their party between 2012 and 2020. The only respondent who joined before 2012 did it in 2011. He is an SNP member. He did not join at the beginning of the referendum campaign, but he joined at another important period of time for the party: in 2011, they won an overall majority (69 seats) in the Scottish Parliament election. I had not yet surveyed or interviewed young Scottish party members before choosing the period running from 2012 to today. The fact that 98 per cent of the whole sample have joined in this time period highlights the role played by the Scottish independence debate. This is reinforced by the proportion of young people who have joined since 2014: 87 per cent. Also, it should be noted that 55 per cent have been involved in a party since 2016, when the EU referendum was held. This might be explained by the young age of the interviewees and respondents. As said before, the average age of the young party members I studied is 22. Given that the minimum age to join the YSI is 16, and 18 for SNP Students, it is not surprising that a majority of the young people I studied have joined since 2014 or 2016. The average member was 17 in 2014 and 19 in 2016. Nonetheless, it still confirms Mitchell, Bennie and Johns' conclusions about the catalysing role of referenda in party membership in Scotland (Mitchell et al., 2016, 2017, 2020).

That point is confirmed by the number of young respondents who got involved in the SNP. The majority of them joined in 2014 and afterwards. As Figure 2.35 shows, 29 per cent engaged in the party in 2014. It is not a huge majority, yet is the year when the highest proportion of the SNP sample got involved. The figures speak for themselves. Once more, we see that the 2014 independence referendum was a trigger that pushed young Scots to get

involved in the SNP. In the aftermath of the vote, the proportion of young people who joined the party goes from 8 to 18 per cent each year: even though it is less than in 2014, it is more than prior to 2014. The fact that 18 per cent joined in 2017 can be related to the EU referendum of 2016. As for 2019, it was right before the UK exited the EU (in January 2020). Young Scots who had voted to remain probably joined the SNP to leave the UK and join the EU again.

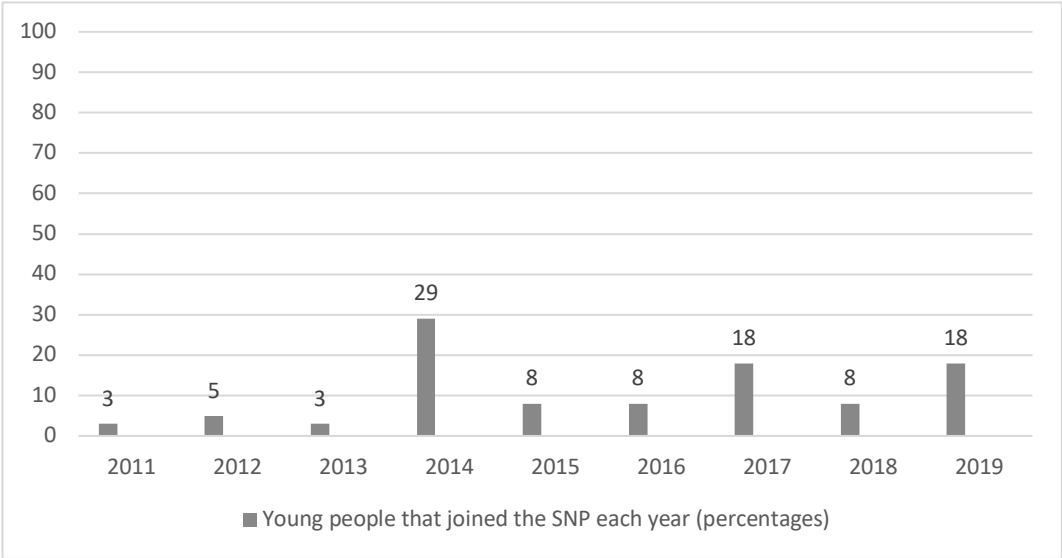


Figure 2.35: Young people that have joined the SNP each year, amongst survey respondents (percentages)

As I explained earlier, it could also be due to the fact that this study focuses on youth wings: in these organisations, members’ age is necessarily young, meaning that the date of their joining is close to 2018, 2019 and 2020, when I interviewed and surveyed them. Nonetheless, thanks to Figure 2.35, it is clear that 2014 was a turning point in terms of youth SNP membership. The results are confirmed by the SNP annual reports published by The Electoral Commission, which I presented in Chapter One. And the quotation from an SNP respondent illustrates that point as well: ‘After the 2014 independence referendum I felt like this country deserves its own real rights and to be able to make its own decisions so therefore when I turned 18 I immediately

joined the party and wanted to do amazing things leading up to an independent FAIR SCOTLAND<sup>229</sup>!

For information, the young Conservatives who responded to the online survey got involved in 2013, 2014 and 2016. Amongst the four young Greens, three joined in 2014 and one in 2016. Two young Labour members got involved in 2017 and one in 2013. In the Lib Dems, one joined in 2014, two in 2016 and one in 2019. Finally, the Brexit Party member joined in 2019, but he was part of the Conservatives and UKIP before. Altogether, it means that the year when most of the young respondents joined political parties (other than the SNP) is 2014 (33 per cent). Then, it is 2016 (27 per cent). 2017 and 2019 come third (13 per cent each). It confirms, once again, the role played by the Scottish referendum in 2014 and, to a lesser extent, the EU referendum in 2016.

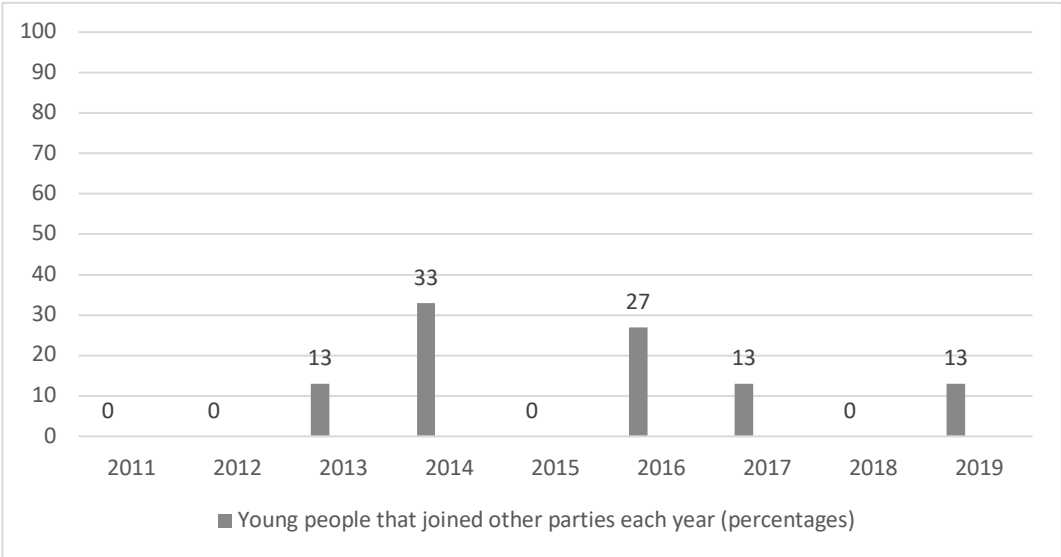


Figure 2.36: Young people that joined other Scottish parties each year, amongst survey respondents (percentages)

<sup>229</sup> Capital letters in the original text.

As was just said, 75 per cent of the young Greens joined in 2014. Given the pro-independence stance of the Scottish Greens, it is not by chance that a majority of them got involved that year. Hence, once more, the role of the independence referendum in youth party membership in Scotland, especially in the pro-independence parties. It still supports Mitchell, Bennie and Johns' findings (Mitchell et al., 2016, 2017, 2020).

Thus, it seems that referenda (the one on independence in particular) catalyse young people's involvement in Scottish political parties, especially in the SNP. It strengthens and adds to Mitchell, Bennie and Johns' findings (Mitchell et al., 2016, 2017, 2020)<sup>230</sup>. It highlights the role played by referenda in Western democracies as instruments of direct democracy<sup>231</sup>. Via a referendum, the voice of the people is heard without any intermediaries. It is thus an important democratic tool which enables people to have an influence on politics. In 2014, Scottish people had a say with regards to the constitutional future of their nation. In that sense, the independence referendum was not only a major political event; it was an institutional device thanks to which Scots could decide about Scotland's future. This may account for people's mobilisation during the referendum campaign, particularly for SNP youth membership and activism. This is confirmed by the following sections dealing with young people's reported reasons for joining the SNP, and other parties.

## **b) Interviewees' Reported Reasons for Joining**

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<sup>230</sup> In the UK as a whole, it reinforces Bale, Webb and Poletti's conclusions (Bale et al., 2019; Chapter One).

<sup>231</sup> See della Porta, D., O'Connor, F., Portos, M. et al. (2017). *Social Movements and Referendums from Below: Direct Democracy in the Neo-liberal Crisis*. Bristol/Chicago: Policy Press; LeDuc, L. (2003). *The Politics of Direct Democracy: Referendums in Global Perspective*. Ontario, Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Tierney, S. (2009). Constitutional referendums: a theoretical inquiry. *The Modern Law Review*, 72(3), 360–383.



So as to understand why young people make the decision to join the SNP, I asked interviewees for what reason(s) they got engaged in the party. Table 2.8 lists their answers:

<b>Reported Reasons for Joining the SNP</b>
I joined shortly after the <b>referendum</b> . Obviously, I'm a supporter of <b>independence</b> and when we had that disappointing result, I decided to join the party to campaign for the next time... I'm opposed to nuclear weapons... I'm a member of the CND. That's one of the main things why I support independence in the first place. Also, free tuition, free prescriptions, a variety of things that most of the party policy is aligned with... centre-left politics...
Fundamentally, because of <b>independence</b> . For a number of reasons: school system, foreign policy... the UK's been involved in the war in Afghanistan, they Invaded Iraq... I'm a bit of a pacifist. I don't think the UK's foreign policy is very ethical. They have an interventionist foreign policy also in America... So, for me, fundamentally <b>independence</b> . The only way for us to do what we want in the world is to have full powers.
It was because of <b>the referendum in 2014</b> , it engaged so many young people, including myself, and after seeing what happened in 2014, I thought nothing's gonna change unless the people do it, so I thought I might as well take an active role in politics. <i>Before that, I was not engaged at all</i> <sup>232</sup> .
<b>Independence</b> . Also, a lot of things the SNP have done have benefited me directly, like free tuition. I went to uni and I didn't have to pay any money to do so because the SNP introduced free tuition, free prescriptions that save a lot of people a lot of money every year. What else... I think things like small business bonus that enable small businesses to grow.
Prime one, which might surprise you, is to achieve <b>independence</b> for Scotland (haha). Second reason was on their nuclear weapons policy, we don't like them, we will remove them at the earliest opportunity, and then free education, plus NHS.
I became a member of the SNP just during the <b>independence referendum</b> and then when I became a student, as an active SNP member, it was just a natural kind of progression to join SNP Students.
I joined the SNP on Brexit day, on 23rd June 2016, because I'm very passionate about living in the EU, in Europe, and I felt that, you know, there was definitely no hope, I voted Yes in 2014. I wasn't well for most of the campaign so I had not joined up to that point. I just kind of wanted to play my part in bringing a better future for our country.
The initial reason was very much because I believed Scotland should become <b>an independent country</b> , and I think that's the reason why a lot of people join the SNP. That's the main driving force for me increasingly as I get older. You know, I absolutely believe in Scottish <b>independence</b> but also, you know, also I think I much more switched on about my political views... and the fact that I set on the left... so I'm kind of a social-democrat I suppose or, you know, kind of my ethos very much fits in with the SNP's ethos and that's probably most of my driving force in politics now. It is about a fair country that I want to live in rather than that <b>independent</b> , full stop, country that I want to live in if you see what I mean. And I think we can only get the fairness if we are <b>independent</b> .
It was after the <b>independence</b> movement, I just felt that it was a pity to have lost and I had to help and do something to help follow the cause.

<sup>232</sup> These words confirm that the 2014 referendum was a decisive moment in the lives of young people who engaged in politics and became party members.

I see **independence** as a vehicle to the more equal and tolerant society that I want to see, and my support for **independence** is completely tied to that.

I was too young to vote in the independence referendum in 2014, I was only 15 at the time, so that was something that I didn't really pay attention to, but then when it came out about all the broken promises and all the negative campaign by the Better together, it was a campaign based on fear and it was negative, and I didn't like that. I looked more towards **the Yes side**, more opportunity and fairness, and I found that much more attractive, the other side.

Well, after **the 2014 referendum** I got involved, and I thought one of my biggest mistakes was why not getting involved sooner, and I just felt I had to do something. I walked in the house one day and the whole family was set on the computer screen on the SNP website, trying to get passed the service. The service had collapsed because there were so many households doing that. I still believe that it's not gonna go away. That's why most of the new members have joined. To show that it's not gonna go away.

I was a member of the Scottish Green party for two years after the **referendum**. I left the Greens and joined the SNP in January 2017 and it was because the Greens tended to be quite middle class especially in Edinburgh... they don't really understand what I was fighting for, whereas the working class members of the YSI tended not to be backward like that. I quite fit in with them better I think. I felt I might share more policy with the Green party, but I agreed more with the membership of the SNP.

Through my parents, like a lot of people, but I think then it became quite clear especially nowadays when you compare the difference between what we have to offer and what the other parties have to offer, and what the direction of the travel should be. But fundamentally, yeah it was through my parents that I became a supporter of the SNP.

I've always believed when I was young that we should be an **independent** country, and that without the full powers of **independence** we wouldn't be able to make, you know, the changes that we need to build a fairer country.

I just was really inspired by watching a lot of Youtube clips of Nicola Sturgeon. That was the main thing. And I didn't like hearing so many people talk about something I didn't know anything about, and I could no longer struggle along with the view everyone else had until I started to read more into it for my own view.

At the age of 12, there was the council elections of 2012 in Glasgow. My parents went to vote at their local polling station. Even at that young age, I was very much turned on to what was going on. And I wanted to play a part to some degree basically. So, I asked my mum if I could go and talk to the woman who was standing outside the polling station with leaflets for the SNP. That woman was the candidate's sister. I asked her if I could maybe hand out some leaflets and she said 'yes absolutely fine!', so I stood there for an hour or so, at the age of 12 which is quite unusual. After that, I've been along to a few branch meetings. I didn't actually join the party formally until 2015 which is quite unusual because *a lot of people joined the party after the 2014 referendum*. For me personally, almost 100 000 people joining a political party seemed a bit populist. I didn't like the thought of that. So, I didn't choose to join the SNP at that point. Instead, I joined the Greens. I waited after the 2015 general election before joining formally the SNP. Then I started campaigning for a lot of elections... I suppose in 2015, after we had that fantastic victory in the general election, it was clear in my mind that the SNP was the only party that could deliver **independence**. Through my political journey of council elections in 2012, considering joining the Greens before joining the SNP, the constant thread through that was my desire for **independence**, the belief that **independence** was the best future for Scotland. And after that... a fantastic election victory in 2015. At that point, I decided 'ok the SNP is the only party that can deliver **independence**'.

The big thing... well the **independence** vote motivated me into politics. The big thing for the **independence** vote was social media. Now we know there's a lot of issues with social media whereas at the time it was kind of a bit newer and it seemed generally more positive or people felt more liberated in comparison to newspapers. There's actually a video on Youtube that I had watched. It was the top 10 Unionist Myths or something like that and I had seen that video, maybe in 2013, and that made me become interested (and I was following online). And one of my friends' dad said 'oh my dad is involved in the yes campaign!', and it helped also. But basically, social media helped a lot of people in the independence vote. Social media I would say, yeah.

I've been in a political party back in Catalonia and I was working for the YSI for three years before I moved to Scotland. And I think the YSI share the same values than my Catalan party. And it's very wide ideologically speaking. You can say whatever you want. It's very welcoming. My other political party is very, very left wing.
I see what they are doing on the national level and the local level. I really agree with the direction of the party, especially in the last couple of years. They are taking on these big ideas like land reform, like changing taxation to make it progressive but also have the bread and butter policies that keep the country taking over in the meantime, it's a complete package of progressive politics that seems to be working, resonating with people. And I think it's something really worth pursuing.
I joined actually after speaking to a local councillor after the 2015 general election. I spoke to her at the vote count... she is just an incredibly hard-working person, and I could really tell that she has communities at her heart. And on top of that, my family have been SNP since its foundation. Members of my family have been involved in the foundation of the party. I have the same values that my grandparents have.
I joined because of <b>independence</b> ... a few weeks before the <b>referendum</b> . I think we'll get there.
I didn't like the fact that Scotland was taken out of the EU.
That's my family, my grandparents, my Dad, that drove me to the <b>referendum</b> , to get involved. And I want to protect young people.
It's a very different party. It's fresh.

Table 2.8: Young interviewees' reasons for joining the SNP

64 per cent of the SNP interviewees say that Scottish independence is a reason why they joined. Most importantly, it is the main or only reason for getting involved for 56 per cent of the sample. The figures align with the online survey results: as a reminder, 68 per cent of the young SNP respondents got interested in the party because of the referendum.

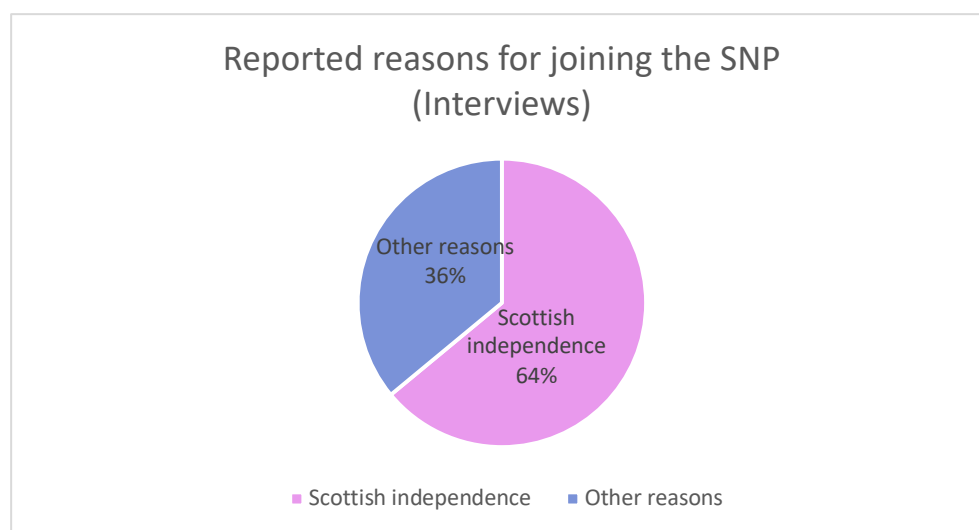


Figure 2.37: Interviewees' reported reasons for joining the SNP

Other reasons mentioned by the interviewees include family members' political engagement, Brexit, identification with the party's platform (centre-left politics, progressive, free education...), and information on the internet and social media. Those reasons confirm the previous findings about the role of political socialisation as well as the role of social media in young Scots' decision to join the SNP. As demonstrated before, 42 per cent of the survey respondents got interested in politics through their family, and 38 per cent through social media. 45 per cent got interested in the SNP through social media (see page 195). It comes second, after the Scottish referendum. Once more, it demonstrates how important and useful social media is for political parties to get young people in their ranks.

Despite a smaller sample of young members from other Scottish parties, it is worth examining their motivations. Besides providing information about the reasons why they joined their respective political parties, I compared their answers with those of SNP members. It enabled me to confirm that young people's main reason for joining the SNP is independence.

The Brexit Party member I met said: 'The EU is the number one issue for me. I joined the Brexit Party to help press for leaving the EU. My studies at school also made me want to engage in politics.' The fact that he joined first and foremost in order to achieve Brexit shows, once again, the part played by political events like referenda. It also sheds light on the influence of national/international constitutional issues. In the case of YSI and SNP Students, it is Scottish independence that encourages them to join. In the case of the BP member, it was leaving the EU. In both cases, it correlates with the main goals of the SNP and the Brexit Party. So, in a way, it is logical that they joined mainly for these reasons. It can be noted that the young BP member's words also confirm the role of political socialisation, here via school.

The following table presents interviewees' reported reasons for joining the Scottish Conservatives.

<b>Reported Reasons for Joining the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party</b>
I first got involved in politics in the 2014 <b>referendum campaign</b> , I was 16, it was the first time I was ever campaigning. A lot of young people were enthused by that campaign. By giving 16-17-year olds the right to vote they got young people involved in politics and that was really, really good. I first got involved in 2014... I was looking at the news and in the yes campaign for Scottish <b>independence</b> , they were constantly talking about how young people were supporting <b>independence</b> and I was personally <b>against it</b> , and I wanted my voice to be heard. I watched the tv and there was a guy from the SNP, for independence, who was talking about the fact that youth would vote for Scottish independence and I was sitting on the couch and was so angry, I decided to get involved.
I've always been interested in public service in the sense of serving the local and national communities. And I had a number of friends at school who were quite politically minded and politically active. And to make the local area a better place was something that I was concerned about. But I think also from a Conservative view, it was ensuring that those traditions of the local area, national traditions as well and conservative philosophies, were also put forward. I wouldn't say it was necessarily a reactionary position, but more I think... I've always identified with the Conservative world view, and I wanted to be able to ensure that this was maintained.
I think primarily because of the <b>referendum</b> . I thought it was important not only to be involved in everyday politics, but also fight for something and to maintain that fight over a long period of time.
I've always been interested in politics, I very much sort of adopt the philosophy that everything in politics has an impact on your life. I don't like the idea of people controlling my life, I very much prefer to consider individual autonomy. I was always uncomfortable with being controlled by politicians. That's why I got involved, to try and change that.
The <b>independence referendum</b> . I've always been interested in current affairs, but really got involved in politics in 2014. This was kicking off. It was a huge thing in Scotland, that enthused so many people, including myself. I wanted to <b>save the Union</b> . To me, it's my home, <b>it's my identity</b> . I just felt I had to get involved in this.
The Scottish <b>independence referendum</b> .
When you're in a new city and a new university, you want to meet as many people as possible. Just to make friends but also to be involved in politics, and I campaigned in the 2010 elections... It seemed exciting being involved. The reason is that you want to make a difference. There's something on the national picture and you think you're contributing to this. You take that to another level. Your ideas are good and you want to share them with people, to convince people.

Table 2.9: Young interviewees' reasons for joining the Conservative Party

57 per cent of the Conservatives joined because of the Scottish referendum. As George said, they 'wanted to save the Union'. Interestingly, one interviewee mentions the right to vote for 16- and 17-year-old Scots. Given the very high turnout amongst those young voters, it

undoubtedly played a part in Scottish young people’s political involvement. In that sense, other democracies should think of lowering the voting age. Even if the Scottish example is particular because of the debate about independence, it could possibly make young people participate more in politics in other nations. As a reason for joining the Conservatives, another interviewee speaks of politically active friends, which confirms, again, the role played by political socialisation. He also suggests an identification with the Conservatives’ political ideology (notably the defence of traditions). The last one seems to have been attracted to the solidary incentive or selective process incentive (see Chapter One) of making new friends. It thus confirms the results of the online survey: we have seen that 89 per cent of the whole sample see making friends as a benefit of party membership (page 198).

<b>Reported Reasons for Joining Scottish Labour</b>
I’ve always been interested in politics. That’s a way of expressing one’s opinion... Now, why Labour? Well, it’s the best party in Britain I know, and the best at engaging with young people.
I enjoy debating and I’m interested in general affairs. I started reading newspapers at 14 or 15.
My mum was involved with the Labour Party. It probably stewed from that. My general interest in school and my work experience for a local MP probably helped as well.
I’m not sure. I’ve always kind of believed in ideas like making the world a better place and things like that. The Labour Party has always been the natural party for me. It’s kind of a big part of my identity.

Table 2.10: Young interviewees’ reasons for joining Scottish Labour

No one in the Labour Party said that they joined because of the independence referendum. They mainly joined because of a general interest in politics, as explicitly stated by one of them. It seems that their interest in politics stemmed from various things, including an interest in news, in school, in giving their opinion, and a relative involved in the party, emphasising once again the role of political socialisation.

Finally, it should be noted that SNP and Conservative interviewees’ answers were longer than those of young Labour. It correlates with the fact that, amongst the young Scottish

party members surveyed, it is SNP youth who are the most often active (see the section about their frequency of activism). Also, it may suggest that SNP and Conservative young people are the most passionate about politics. As they support the two main parties that led the 2014 referendum campaign, it can be assumed that they are passionate about politics notably because they firmly want to either support independence or defend the Union.

### c) Respondents’ Reported Reasons for Joining

In the online survey, respondents were also asked why they joined the SNP. Table 2.11 lists their answers:

Reported Reasons for Joining the SNP
To make Scotland <b>independent</b> - mostly for political reasons.
I support Scottish <b>Independence</b> , and am a progressive social democrat.
I believed in the party’s vision of a better Scotland not only through <b>independence</b> but their vision on employment, immigration and the National Health Service.
I agree with a lot of the principles they represent and stand for.
I have similar beliefs to what SNP stand for.
I am pro-Scottish <b>Independence</b> and anti-Brexit. I believe that the SNP do a lot of good for Scotland, and I think their record in government is a good one. They bring about a lot of good policies e.g. the baby box, free university tuition, free prescriptions, bursaries for student nurses etc.
To campaign for <b>independence</b> for Scotland.
I was upset with the result of the <b>independence</b> referendum and wanting to join a party that would fight to make it happen.
I have been a supporter of <b>independence</b> for Scotland since I became politically aware in 2010.
I believe in <b>independence</b> , increasing the use of renewables, free tuition, the European Union, and the general socialist ideals of the party, so thought it was a good fit.

Tired of Scotland being ignored by Westminster.
Supporter of Scottish <b>independence</b> and I think they align closest with my social democratic beliefs.
I wanted to join a party with like-minded individuals for pushing the cause of <b>independence</b> . After I attended a number of SNP meetings at University, I found that I had much more in common with SNP members than other parties, and found that their primary focus on <b>independence</b> was much more in-line with my own views.
I was consistently impressed at the policy platform and direction the party was heading in under Nicola Sturgeon's leadership, and as an <b>independence</b> supporter found myself often having to defend the party's policies and record, so I thought I might as well be involved in shaping them.
Support of general party principles, support of specific manifesto in an election that year.
I moved to Scotland in 2014 in the run up to the <b>independence</b> referendum and became inspired since the voting age was lowered to 16, so I did my research and decided I wanted to join the Yes campaign!
Progressive Policies. <b>Independence</b> in the name of democracy.
Post- <b>independence</b> referendum
I was involved in the Scottish <b>Independence</b> campaign, I had many friends in the party and felt it aligned with my interest.
I support <b>independence</b> and remaining in the European Union.
To help campaign for left-wing policies.
Because the <b>independence</b> referendum was coming and I wanted to get involved and be part of it.
The SNP were the only party championing Scottish <b>Independence</b> . I wanted Scotland to get her <b>Independence</b> .
The SNP have clear, forward-thinking policies that I agree with, have an inspiring and progressive leader and MSP's and are focused on fighting for an <b>independent</b> Scotland in the EU both of which I believe to be the best options for the country.
Good policies, bad opposition parties.
I am a socialist, and believe in the party's socialist policies.
I was inspired following the result of the 2014 <b>independence</b> referendum, and wanted to make a positive change.
I saw local representatives making a difference and the leadership from the party was very inspiring.
Scottish <b>independence</b> , left wing ideas, help younger people, women, disabled people.
Scottish <b>Independence</b> ... Agree with their policies
To continue the campaign for <b>independence</b> .
To campaign for the restoration of <b>Scotland's sovereignty</b> and to help build a better and fairer country.
As an immigrant I felt this country would give me a lot of <b>freedom</b> and that's what I want for this country itself.



<b>Independence</b> , supporter of social democracy and have similar progressive beliefs.
Political Interest
Democratic right of Scotland to <b>choose who governs the country</b> . Better, fairer, progressive social democratic Scotland.
I wanted <b>independence</b> for Scotland.
I have always believed that Scottish <b>independence</b> was the best way for the people of Scotland to overcome the problems in our society, since it is only with <b>independence</b> that we can have the full powers to address those issues. At the same time, I have always considered myself an internationalist who believes in the wider European project. Although part of me hoped that the UK might engage in reform after the 2014 independence referendum, the 2016 Brexit referendum and the subsequent decision to leave the EU confirmed for me that the UK is a broken political system. It was for this reason that I joined the SNP so that I could more actively contribute to the pro- <b>independence</b> and pro-European movement within Scotland.

Table 2.11: Young respondents' reasons for joining the Scottish National Party

According to Table 2.11, independence is the main reason why young people join the SNP: 76 per cent of the respondents said so. This is perfectly in line with the survey results: 76 per cent of the young SNP respondents got interested in the party thanks to the Scottish referendum campaign. Also, 82 per cent got interested in politics because of it (see page 195).

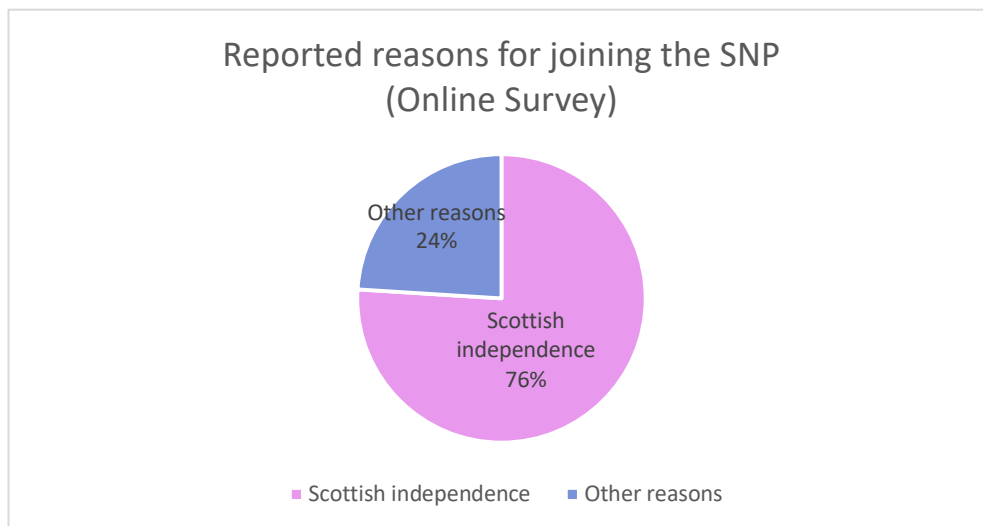


Figure 2.38: Respondents' reported reasons for joining the SNP

To a much lesser extent, other reasons for joining can be identified thanks to Table 2.11: the SNP's policy platform (regarding employment, health, immigration, young people)<sup>233</sup>, the EU<sup>234</sup>, and the leadership of the party<sup>235</sup>.

Despite the small sample of respondents in other Scottish political parties, it is worth examining their answers. It is quite informative when it comes to the Scottish independence referendum.

The Brexit Party member declared that he joined his party because of his 'firm belief in a Europe of free and independent nations'. Thus, that reason perfectly aligns with the main goal of the Brexit Party, namely leaving the EU. Then, it can be said that this member joined because he identified with the political platform and agenda of the BP.

The following table presents respondents' reported reasons for joining the Scottish Conservatives.

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<sup>233</sup> In other words, a social democratic agenda relying on socio-economic policies. Except for the EU, these findings are congruent with Bale et al.'s study of British party members. As indicated in the House of Commons research briefing report of 2019, 'SNP members were most likely to join to support party policies, ranked as 8.8 importance, whereas this was 8.1 for Labour and Liberal Democrats and 7.6 for Conservatives.' And 'SNP members (...) ranked belief in party leadership as a reason for joining higher than other parties, at 8.2. This can be compared to 7.3 for Labour, 6.9 for Conservatives and 5.7 for Liberal Democrats.' (Audickas et al., 2019: 21). See Chapters Three and Four for further comments about the social democratic platform of the SNP and young members' ideology.

<sup>234</sup> The SNP is pro-EU. Besides Scottish independence, Brexit is a significant reason explaining SNP youth activism (see the study of their sense of Europeaness in Chapter Four).

<sup>235</sup> See the section about the SNP's recruitment of young people above.

<b>Reported Reasons for Joining the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party</b>
Felt that it was the right time to join and get more involved due to the upcoming Scottish election that year (2016).
I joined the Party a few days before the 2014 Scottish <b>Independence Referendum</b> . Although I identified with centre-right politics and philosophies before this, I wanted to express my support for the <b>Union</b> by joining the Party when I moved to Edinburgh to study at the University.
Their <b>pro-UK</b> stance, as well as closely identifying with their political philosophy.

Table 2.12: Young respondents' reasons for joining the Conservative Party

It seems that two thirds of the young Conservatives joined to support the UK and oppose the independence movement.

<b>Reported Reasons for Joining the Scottish Greens</b>
The Greens are an ecosocialist <sup>236</sup> voice for <b>independence</b> .
I was studying Sustainable Development and had voted Green in the 2014 European Parliament Elections. I wanted to get more involved given that the <b>independence</b> referendum was coming up.
To tackle the climate emergency after reading into climate science.
I was looking for a party that was still Pro-Scottish <b>Independence</b> , but a bit more on the radical side of the SNP. They are very clear about where they stand on certain issues, and policy is not heavily influenced by the English & Welsh section of the Party yet they still work together productively, unlike Labour in my opinion.

Table 2.13: Young respondents' reasons for joining the Scottish Greens

According to Table 2.13, independence is a reason why 75 per cent of the Green respondents joined.

<sup>236</sup> Ecosocialism merges socialism and ecology.

<b>Reported Reasons for Joining Scottish Labour</b>
I felt for the first time like a political decision was truly going to affect my future, however was not yet old enough to vote (being 17). Thus, I believed by joining the Labour Party my voice - even if indirectly - could be represented in the run up to the general election. Equally, despite being young, no previous political leader had inspired me to get involved in politics as much as Jeremy Corbyn at the time - I truly felt like I had an opportunity for my voice as a young person to be represented in parliament.
Come from a Labour family and because of the 2017 elections.
Democratic Socialism

Table 2.14: Young respondents' reasons for joining Scottish Labour

In the same way as Labour interviewees, none of the Labour respondents joined for reasons relating to the independence debate. Even though the first response implicitly refers to the referendum, all are related to Labour's platform and agenda (especially elections). Two of them underline the importance of making young people's voices heard in the political arena.

<b>Reported Reasons for Joining the Scottish Liberal Democrats</b>
I agreed with the party's policies on the UK, EU, the environment, and taxation. I also liked the party leader, Willie Rennie, and the area I grew up in had a strong history of Liberal/ Lib Dem representation.
My family way back was involved in Liberal politics, and I felt the whole sort of Liberal banner wasn't as grand as it was back then. Wanted to try and help push it in the right direction.
Memes
The trigger to join was the summer 2019 leadership contest, but I had felt for a while that the party best represented my politics and it would make sense to be involved.

Table 2.15: Young respondents' reasons for joining the Scottish Liberal Democrats

No one in the Liberal Democrats joined because of the independence debate. Reported reasons tend to be related to the political ideology and platform of the party.

The interview and survey results introduced by the tables above show that in the SNP and the Scottish Conservatives, it is the debate about Scottish independence that pushes a majority of young Scots to get involved. This is not the case in Labour. In a way, given that the SNP and the Conservatives were the leaders of each camp in the referendum campaign, this is not surprising. They were the parties that were the most fervent supporters of either independence or the Union. Labour also positioned themselves, against independence, but in a less fervent way. All this confirms, once more, the key role played by the Scottish referendum in young people's decision to join a political party, in particular the SNP and the Conservative and Unionist Party. And it aligns with the online survey results: 82 per cent of the SNP respondents, and all of the Conservatives got interested in politics because of ScotRef. This is the case for all the Greens too, a party that was also quite involved in the campaign, in favour of independence. On the contrary, Labour and Lib Dem respondents, whose parties were less involved, got interested in politics because of IndyRef in 33 per cent and 25 per cent of the cases respectively (see Table 2.4). Those conclusions are confirmed by statistics about young respondents' interest in the party they joined. It derived from the referendum for 76 per cent of the YSI and SNP Students, 75 per cent of the Greens, and 67 per cent of the Conservatives. Whereas it encouraged only 33 per cent of Labour and 25 per cent of Liberal Democrats to get interested in their respective parties.

Therefore, there is a relationship between the role played by Scottish independence in young Scots' decision to join and the political party they join. This finding goes beyond Mitchell et al.'s conclusions: the referendum was a catalyst for Scottish people's party membership, indeed, but it should also be noted that young people whose interest in politics originated from IndyRef tended to join the parties which were the most involved in the campaign, either in the Yes or the No camp. Consequently, political events like referenda,

especially with a national dimension, should be considered a variable explaining youth party membership.

To conclude, it can be argued that Scottish independence is the key reason why young people join the SNP. It is a catalyst for their party membership and political activism. In that sense, this work aligns with Mitchell, Bennie and Johns' research on SNP members' motivations to join (2012: 69-83). It also echoes their findings about the 2014 referendum that led to an upsurge in the membership of the SNP and the Scottish Greens (Mitchell et al., 2016, 2017, 2020)<sup>237</sup>. With both the interviews and the online survey, the present thesis shows that it is since 2014 that a majority of Scottish young people have got involved with the SNP. Moreover, a majority of them identify independence as the main motivation for joining. In most of the cases, it is not the only reason, but it is the main one<sup>238</sup>. Building on young SNP interviewees and respondents' arguments, Table 2.16 lists the various factors which influence young people's decision to become SNP members:

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<sup>237</sup> It also echoes Milbrath's argument that specific elections (like crisis elections) often mobilise more people than other elections. The turnout is usually high when people consider an election important (see Milbrath, 1965: 101-105).

<sup>238</sup> Even though Bennie and Russell (2012) have not studied young SNP members' reasons for joining, they nonetheless noted that, thanks to the 2008 SNP survey conducted by Mitchell et al., it appears that young SNP members are 'most committed to independence' and 'more supportive of the party's official policy of independence in Europe than the party as a whole, with older members more likely to opt for independence outside of the EU' (2012: 15). The researchers refer to Mitchell et al.'s statistics to strengthen their point: 64.6 per cent of the members up to 25 years old and 63 per cent of the 26-35-year olds support 'independence either way', while 44.2 per cent of the members who are 66 years old and beyond do so (2012: 16). Young people are the most supportive of this idea, whereas the 66-year olds and above are the least supportive of it.

<b>Factors Influencing Young People to Join the SNP</b>	
Political ideology	<b>Independence</b> Social democracy ↔ SNP policy platform/agenda <sup>239</sup>
Political socialisation	Family (politically active/party supporters or members) Friends (politically active/party supporters or members) School/University
Personal interest	Interest in politics Interest in the SNP

Table 2.16: Factors influencing young people to join the SNP

Given that ideology (Scottish independence and beliefs in social democracy) plays the most significant part in young people’s decision to join the SNP, it may be posited that young SNP members are likely to belong to the ‘moral-minded’ category of party members identified by Bruter and Harrison (Bruter and Harrison, 2009b). Indeed, the scholars define them as young party members who join for ideological reasons (see the dedicated section in Chapter One). In that sense, it may be said that the incentives which play the most significant role in their party membership are ‘purposive’ (Clark and Wilson, 1961; Wilson, 1973). Given that Scottish independence is the main reason why young people join the SNP, this may be regarded as a ‘collective positive incentive’ (Lamb, 2002: 180), or ‘collective policy objective’ (Seyd and Whiteley, 1992, 2004).

A comparison with young members of other political parties in Scotland shows that independence/the defence of the Union seems to be an important reason why young people join the Scottish Greens/the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party. The sample is too small to say it is true of all the young members in their ranks. It is nonetheless indicative and suggests

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<sup>239</sup> This is in line with Bale et al.’s findings (2018) about the reasons why people join parties in the UK. As indicated in the House of Commons research briefing report of 2019, ‘SNP members were most likely to join to support party policies, ranked as 8.8 importance, whereas this was 8.1 for Labour and Liberal Democrats and 7.6 for Conservatives.’ (Audickas et al., 2019: 21). However, Table 2.16 distinguishes itself from Bale et al.’s findings in the sense that it adds Scottish independence to the list of reasons why people (here, young people) join the SNP.

that independence is a party membership catalyst in parties other than the SNP, in particular parties which are involved in the independence debate. Therefore, as was just said, political events like referenda, as well as national issues, should be considered a variable explaining youth party membership. If we consider that political events occurring in a national context<sup>240</sup> belong to the macro level of political participation, then, it can be said that we should take account of this variable at the macro level. But not the macro level alone. Indeed, as I explained in the introduction to the present work, a nation's independence is related to the notion of national identity. Chapters Three and Four show that national identity is perceived subjectively by each individual, which means that Scottish independence and Scottishness may play a role in youth party membership at the micro level.

## **8) National Identity**

'I'm for independence because I feel Scottish.' Harry's words raise the question of national identity as a variable influencing youth SNP membership. Can we consider that, given the importance of the campaign for independence as a reason why young people join the SNP, they get involved for national identity reasons? According to Mitchell et al.'s study, it is one of the SNP members' motivations for joining, but it is far from being the most important one (Mitchell et al., 2012: 73). They conclude: '[v]ery few of the responses contained specific reference to the importance of Scottish national identity.' (2012: 74). If, overall, SNP members,

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<sup>240</sup> Regarding political participation depending on a context in particular, see Gaxie (1977: 143; Chapter One) and Van Stekelenburg, J., Klandermans, B., and Van Dijk, W.W. (2009). Context matters. Explaining why and how mobilizing context influences motivational dynamics. *Journal of Social Issues*, 65, 815-838. With regard to SNP membership, it has to be noted that Mitchell et al. (2012) classify political context as one of the reasons why people join the party. For them, it includes 'various political events which may have triggered joining, for example, Thatcherism, the poll tax, devolution, or the party's recent electoral success' (2012: 76). They distinguish political context and Scottish independence which they categorise as a collective/purposive incentive according to the participation models built by Seyd and Whiteley, and Clark and Wilson. In my opinion, they are interrelated. It is shown by the number of young interviewees and respondents that have been joining since 2014. They decide(d) to join to campaign for independence which is, for me, both the SNP's main goal (ideological/collective incentive) and part of the political context in Scotland.



regardless of their age, do not get involved in the party for that reason, is it the same in its youth and student wings? The question is answered in the next part of this thesis. It explores the way the YSI and SNP Students perceive their national identity and the relationship with their political engagement.

## **Conclusions: A New Youth Party Membership Model**

Scottish youth party membership has thus been analysed at the micro, meso and macro levels. It was shown that Scottish independence is a catalyst for party membership amongst young people, especially in the SNP. The referendum in 2014 was a trigger that incited a significant proportion of young people to join the ranks of the party. Since then, the numbers of YSI and SNP Students have been stable and show that the cause of independence is still a factor explaining their membership. According to the interviews and the online survey I conducted, it is the most important and frequent reason why young people join the SNP. To a lesser extent, it seems to also be the case for young people who join the Scottish Greens and the Conservatives. Thus, it adds to Mitchell et al.'s research (2016, 2017, 2020) which focused on the independence referendum as a source of SNP and Green party membership, regardless of the members' age.

While independence is the most important reason why young Scots engage in the SNP, incentives and individual resources also play a part in their decision to join. The average young SNP member is or has been a university student<sup>241</sup> who comes from a city or an urban area, with no job and no children. They tend to be active on a daily basis, notably on social media, which they see as a useful tool to convey political opinions. A majority of their parents and friends are politically involved. A significant proportion of these friends and family tend to be

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<sup>241</sup> In terms of courses studied, the discipline that comes first is Politics.

members of a political party, mainly the SNP, thus confirming the role of political socialisation. The most important source of their interest in politics and the SNP is the Scottish independence debate. Family and friends are also an important source of political interest, reinforcing, once more, the political socialisation argument. The party membership benefit they rank first is making friends. In that sense, they may be categorised as ‘social-minded’ members (Bruter and Harrison, 2009b). Yet, it seems that making friends is a less significant reason why young people join the SNP than Scottish independence. Therefore, according to Bruter and Harrison’s model, they appear to be ‘moral-minded’ members (whose party membership is driven by their political ideology), rather than ‘social-minded’ ones. This corresponds also to the ‘ideologists’ category identified by Weber (2018). As for their career, they wish to/are open to becoming politicians someday. At least, they plan to keep being party members when getting older. Given that political career has not been cited as a significant reason why young people join the SNP, it may be stated that, overall, they should not be considered ‘professional-minded’ members (Bruter and Harrison, 2009b).

Altogether, we have seen that individual resources and incentives are complementary when it comes to youth party membership. All this is in line with Bruter and Harrison’s (2009a, 2009b) and Weber’s (2018) findings about young party members in the UK and other European countries. It should be noted that political ideology also plays a part in their party membership. To a lesser extent than the desire for Scottish independence, young people’s belief in social democracy seems to encourage them to become SNP members. Some interviewees and respondents mentioned SNP’s political agenda (socio-economic and immigration policies) as a reason why they joined. Their political ideology will be further explored in Chapter Four.

Finally, at the meso level, the SNP seem to be successful in recruiting young people. They notably work on youth-related policies. Also, Nicola Sturgeon is clever with using social

media to appeal to/address the young people of her nation. Be it for political purpose or because she does really care about them, she appears to be close to them.

Based on those findings, figure 2.39 presents a model of youth SNP membership. At the macro level, the Scottish independence referendum/debate suggests a new model of youth party membership with a new dependent variable: (major) political events like referenda, with a national/international dimension. Further research could possibly apply that model to other nations and to party membership in general, regardless of age.

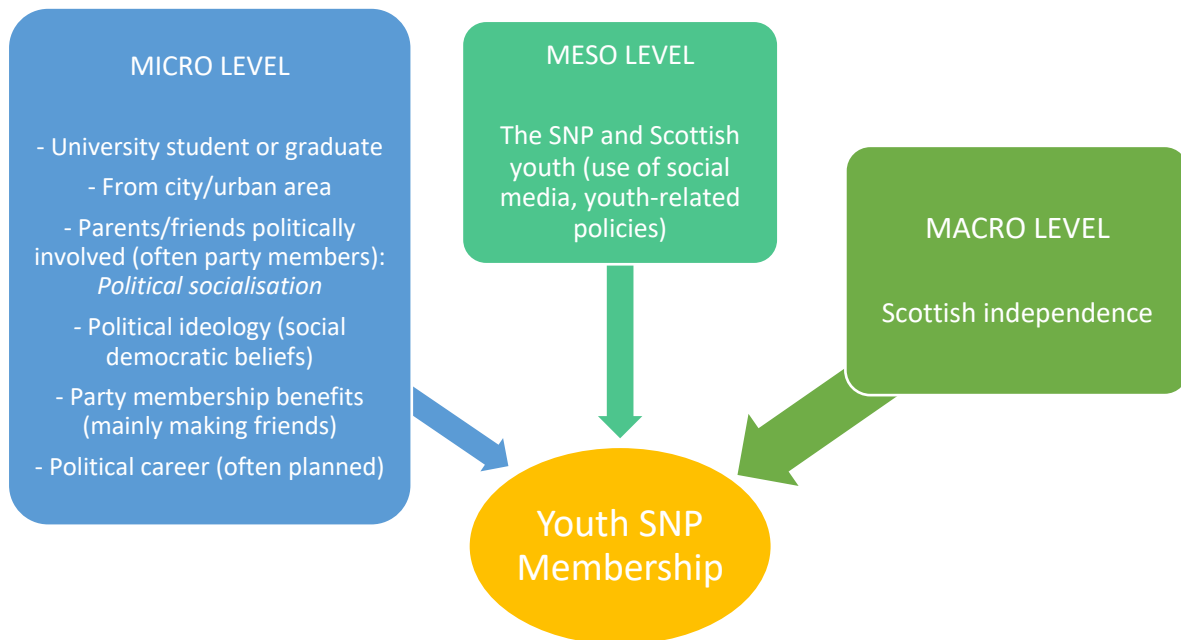


Figure 2.39: Youth SNP membership model

As said previously, given that Scottish young people’s main reason for joining the SNP is supporting independence, we can wonder whether national identity should be seen as a variable explaining their party membership too. Part Two aims to answer that question. It explores the way the YSI and SNP Students understand their national identity and its relationship with their political involvement.

# **Part Two**

**Young SNP Members'**

**National Identity**

## **Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework**

*[T]o ask who “we” are, and for what purposes, remains one of the key questions of our times.*

— David McCrone and Frank Bechhofer (McCrone and Bechhofer, in Ichijo et al., 2017: 461)

### **I) Theories of National Identity**

Whilst scholars may not agree on the definition of national identity, they do all agree that it is a complex notion. The literature on national identity is prolific and is composed of a wide range of views and theories. It is much wider than the literature on youth party membership. The aim of this chapter is to review the literature on the notion of national identity. It shall concentrate on the theories which the present thesis relies on, in order to highlight its position in the existing literature as well as its contribution.

#### **1) Definitions**

##### **a) ‘What is a nation?’**

National identity derives from the concept of nation. In Ernest Renan’s words, ‘What is a nation?’<sup>242</sup> Most of the literature agrees that it is a geopolitical entity, which is distinct from a state and a nation-state. A state is also a geopolitical entity, legitimised by its institutions. Contrary to a nation, a state’s existence is legally recognised. The existence of a nation is only based on the recognition by its people. In Benedict Anderson’s words, it is an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983). A nation is inhabited by too many people for them to be able to

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<sup>242</sup> Conference delivered at the Sorbonne on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1882. See Renan, E. (1992). *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?* Paris: Presses-Pocket (translation by Ethan Rundell).

all meet each other. Rather than meeting, they imagine their belonging to the same nation, notably thanks to symbols and rituals. For Anderson, the printed press binds the people of a nation together. That imagination of nations echoes Renan's idea that '[a] nation is a soul, a spiritual principle' (Renan, 1992). As explained further down, it might be a reason why national identity is so hard to grasp and understand. A third kind of geopolitical entity derives from nations and states. A nation-state combines the two types of entities. In that sense, Richard Verdugo and Andrew Milne define a nation-state as 'an imbrication of a Nation and a State. It is a system of political governance that derives its legitimacy from its people in governing and serving as a sovereign nation' (Verdugo and Milne, 2016: 3).

For Renan, a nation is settled both in the past and the present. It exists because it has a past and because the people who belong to it, in the present, affirm their wish to live as one, in that entity, on a daily basis. In the conference he delivered in Paris in 1882, Renan argued:

'A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things which, properly speaking, are really one and the same, constitute this soul, this spiritual principle. One is the past, the other is the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present consent, the desire to live together, the desire to continue to invest in the heritage that we have jointly received.'

He then specified:

'A nation is (...) a great solidarity constituted by the feeling of sacrifices made and those that one is still disposed to make. It presupposes a past but is reiterated in the present by a tangible fact: consent, the clearly expressed desire to continue a common life. A nation's existence is (please excuse the

metaphor) a daily plebiscite, just as an individual's existence is a perpetual affirmation of life.' (1992).

We have seen what a nation is. Now, what about national identity?

## **b) A Complex Notion**

'*National identity* is a sense of belonging to and being a member of a geopolitical entity' (Verdugo and Milne, 2016: 3)<sup>243</sup>. At first sight, that definition seems clear and easy to understand. Yet, national identity is complex and hard to grasp. It is a 'slippery' notion (Verdugo and Milne, 2016: 2), which is so hard to seize that it is sometimes considered a 'myth' (Meyran, 2009). In their book about the current state of research on national identity, Richard R. Verdugo and Andrew Milne note that a few scholars like Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper<sup>244</sup> even suggest that the notion should be 'abandoned' (Verdugo and Milne, 2016: 2). What makes it difficult to define is the fact that it is something which is there, in our daily lives, surrounding us (Billig, 1995) and which is abstract at the same time: it is so obvious in our environment that we do not necessarily try to define it; it is taken for granted, in a way. In this regard, theoretical considerations of national identity are divided mainly over its innate feature: is it an essence, something given and objective, or a construction? The next sections introduce the debate about the origins (essential/invented) of nations and, then, the different answers to that question. This will help us analyse young SNP members' perceptions of Scotland. We shall see whether they think of it as a given or a constructed nation.

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<sup>243</sup> Emphasis in the original text.

<sup>244</sup> See Brubaker, R., and Cooper, F. (2000). Beyond Identity, *Theory and Society*, 29(1), 1-47.

## **2) Essentialism/Primordialism**

Scholars from the essentialist – also known as primordialist – school of thought think national identity is innate, something objective, recognised and accepted by all the members of a nation. In this respect, it is considered an essence, hence the essentialist label. It has always been there and remains unquestioned. Tellingly, Murray Stewart Leith and Duncan Sim note that ‘[t]o a primordialist, having a nationality is as normal as having “a nose and two ears” (Gellner, 1983)<sup>245</sup>. In that sense, national identity is something natural. From that point of view, it may be argued that having a national identity is part of everyone’s life. In other words, it is part of individuals’ identities in the same way as gender for example.

Essentialists base their definition of national identity on key elements like ancestry, birth, blood, language and culture. Also, for them, it is fixed; it does not change over time.

Clifford Geertz and Walker Connor are two important figures of primordialism. For Geertz (1973), blood ties, traditions, language, religion, culture, are all primordial. People are naturally bound to those national elements. As for Connor (1994), he argues that nationalism is part of such primordial, natural features of individuals’ lives. He stresses the ethnic characteristic of nationalism<sup>246</sup> (see the definition of ethnic nationalism further down).

## **3) Constructivism/Modernism**

The natural, innate nature of nations and national identity highlighted by Essentialists is rejected by Constructionists – also known as Modernists.<sup>247</sup> Scholars like Ernest Gellner (1983) consider that nations, which have been developing since the industrialisation era, are artificial.

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<sup>245</sup> See Gellner, E. (1983). *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

<sup>246</sup> Hence the title of his book published in 1994.

<sup>247</sup> Primordialism was the prevailing school of thought before the appearance of Modernism at the end of the twentieth century.



According to this approach, national identity is thus a construct. While primordialist scholars insist on ethnicity as the base and origins of nations, for Modernists like Gellner, they derive from industrialisation. Nations are invented (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) or imagined (Anderson, 1983) by their members.

Contrary to Essentialists who point to its fixed nature, Constructionists consider national identity as something flexible, malleable, that can evolve, depending notably on time and place. It is so malleable that it can be ‘done’ (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015). Tellingly, David McCrone and Frank Bechhofer argue:

‘Perhaps (...) it would be helpful to get away from “identity” (as a noun), implying that it is a badge which affixes to people, describing who they are (...) and treat it more as a verb, “to identify with”, which implies a more active process of doing, which varies according to context.’ (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015: 17).

That modernist, constructivist view of national identity as something done, through a process of identification which is context-dependent is quite interesting. We shall go back to this in the final chapter of this work.

According to Modernists, the evolution of national identity also depends on socio-economic change. Hence the relationship between industrialisation – as well as post-industrialisation – and nations, nationalism, and national identity.

The most important figures of the modernist school of thought are Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. For Gellner, nations are not natural. On the contrary, they are artificial constructs. Besides emphasising the role of industrialisation in the construction of nations, he insists on nationalism as a source of nations: according to him,

nationalism leads to the creation of nations, not the other way around. He says: ‘Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist.’ (Gellner, 1964: 168). His theory of nationalism remains one of the most cited.

As has been said above, for Anderson, nations are ‘imagined communities’ (1983). Their members are too numerous to be able to meet each other. Rather than meeting, they use what bonds them in order to imagine their belonging to the same nation. They notably use symbols and rituals. Also – and this is central to Anderson’s argument – they imagine their nation and their national belonging through the printed press. As explained by Verdugo and Milne, in his ‘model, print Capitalism was crucial for building that imaginary identity. People in different parts of a nation were able to read the same documents in the same language that maximized sales and circulation. Readers began to understand one another and thus formed the basis for an imagined community.’ (Verdugo and Milne, 2016: 4).

As for Hobsbawm and Ranger, they state that nations and nationalism are related to the ‘Invention of Tradition’ (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). For them, historical events and traditions are used to create and preserve nations. They go further and suggest that, when needed, History is invented for that purpose. Verdugo and Milne indicate that Hobsbawm and Ranger’s approach implies that ‘national identity is invented for political reasons’ (Verdugo and Milne, 2016: 4). From a constructionist perspective, it may be said that national identity is used in politics, by governments, parties, politicians, in order to reach their goals, for example gaining or keeping power. Regarding the present thesis, it is worth noting that constructionist scholars argue that national identity is used in the political arena. We shall go back to the political use of national identity in the third part of this chapter.

#### 4) Ethno-symbolism: Anthony D. Smith's Middle of the Way Position

It should be noted that despite being considered primordialist, Anthony D. Smith's position is nonetheless qualified: he argues for a middle of the way theory, somewhere between essentialism and constructivism. As Dana Martin and Richard R. Verdugo note, for Smith, national identity is 'a hybrid of both "natural" continuity and conscious manipulation.' (Martin and Verdugo, in Verdugo and Milne, 2016: 214).

Smith identifies five 'fundamental features' of national identity: 'an historic territory or homeland', 'common myths and historical memories', 'a common, mass public culture', 'common legal rights and duties for all members', and 'a common economy with territorial mobility for members' (1991: 14). Based on those characteristics, his definition of the nation comes as follows: 'a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and legal rights and duties for members.'<sup>248</sup> (1991: 14).

Smith admits that national identity is a complex concept and insists on its 'multidimensionality':

'National identity and the nation are complex *constructs*<sup>249</sup> composed of a number of interrelated components – ethnic, cultural, territorial, economic and legal-political. They signify bonds of solidarity among members of communities united by shared memories, myths and traditions that may or may not find expression in states of their own but are entirely different from the purely legal and bureaucratic ties of the state. Conceptually, the nation

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<sup>248</sup> Original text in italics.

<sup>249</sup> My emphasis. Hence the idea that Smith's stance on nationalism and national identity is in-between essentialism and constructivism.

has come to blend two sets of dimensions, the one civic and territorial, the other ethnic and genealogical, in varying proportions, in particular cases. It is this very multidimensionality that has made national identity such a *flexible*<sup>250</sup> and persistent force in modern life and politics' (1991: 15).

Smith notes that the nation is usually understood either from a civic/territorial perspective or an ethnic point of view. Indeed, besides being divided on the innate or constructed nature of nations and national identity, the literature has been traditionally divided on their civic or ethnic features.

### **5) Civic vs. Ethnic Nationalism**

Let us first focus on the definitions of civic and ethnic conceptions of the nation. For Smith, the civic conception comes as follows: 'It is, in the first place, a predominantly spatial or territorial conception. According to this view, nations must possess compact-well-defined territories.' (Smith, 1991: 9). He notes that civic definitions of the nation are usually found in Western democracies: 'Historic, territory, legal-political community, legal-political equality of members, and common civic culture and ideology; these are the components of the standard, Western model of the nation.' (1991: 11). On the other hand, the ethnic conception of the nation ('non-Western model' as Smith calls it, mainly in Eastern Europe and Asia) is described as follows:

'Its distinguishing feature is its emphasis on a community of birth and native culture. Whereas the Western concept laid down that an individual had to

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<sup>250</sup> My emphasis. Same comment.

belong to some nation but could choose to which he or she belonged, the non-Western or ethnic concept allowed no such latitude. Whether you stayed in your community or emigrated to another, you remained ineluctably, organically, a member of the community of your birth and were for ever stamped by it. A nation, in other words, was first and foremost a community of common descent.’ (1991: 11).

Thus, the main difference between civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism is that the former is based on the ideas of territory and citizenship, while the latter relies on birth, blood and ancestry, namely the belonging to a given ethnic community<sup>251</sup>. This is well summarised by Smith himself: in ethnic nationalism, there is a ‘stress on descent – or rather, presumed descent – rather than territory’ (1991: 12).

When it comes to national identity in particular, it happens that a third school of thought (besides essentialism and constructionism) analyses the concept from a civic perspective. Dana Martin and Richard R. Verdugo define it as ‘a form of identity where membership in a geopolitical entity is unfettered by ethnicity or culture. Instead, it is based on a set of shared values about rights and the legitimacy of State institutions to govern.’ (Verdugo and Milne, 2016: 21). Basing our arguments on the civic definition of national identity, we thus may say that civic nationalism aims at (re)affirming the existence of a nation in the name of ‘shared values’<sup>252</sup>, the civil rights of the members of the nation. In other words, it is based on citizenship, namely people’s belonging to the state. While, on the other hand, ethnic nationalism is based on ethnic characteristics of national identity.

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<sup>251</sup> For Smith, an ethnic community is defined by ‘a collective proper name’, ‘a myth of common ancestry’, ‘shared historical memories’, ‘one or more differentiating elements of common culture’, ‘an association with a specific “homeland”’, and ‘a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population’ (1991: 21).

<sup>252</sup> The relationship between national identity and shared values is examined in the final part of this chapter.

Stephen Shulman goes beyond the common dichotomy between civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity. For him, we should take account of the cultural aspects of national identity. Hence his three-dimensional typology of the ‘contents of national identity’ (Shulman, 2002). In each category, he lists key aspects as follows:

<b>Content of National Identity</b>	<b>Key Components</b>
<i>Civic</i>	territory citizenship will and consent political ideology political institutions and rights
<i>Cultural</i>	religion language traditions
<i>Ethnic</i>	ancestry race

Table 3.1: ‘Alternative Contents of National Identity’ according to Shulman (2002: 559)

Interestingly, while lots of scholars define civic national identity with territorial/citizenship arguments, according to Shulman, the civic version of national identity also includes ‘political ideology’. In Chapter Four, we shall see whether that classification is applicable to young SNP members, basing our analysis on their definitions of Scottishness and Britishness.

Sociologist Rogers Brubaker (1998) also challenges the dichotomy between civic and ethnic nationalism. For him, both types of nationalism have cultural features as well. Therefore, ethnic nationalism may be regarded as ethnocultural<sup>253</sup> and civic nationalism as civic *and* cultural. Once again, we shall see, in the next chapter, whether this theory is applicable to young SNP members’ understanding of Scottishness and Britishness.

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<sup>253</sup> As explained further down, in this work I distinguish between ethnocultural national identity, composed of ethnic and/or cultural elements, and socio-political national identity, based on socio-economic arguments and a political view of society.

## 6) Banal Nationalism, Everyday Nationhood... Other Approaches to National Identity

To finish with the presentation of national identity literature, let us now focus on other approaches (than essentialism, constructivism, and the civic approach) to that notion.

### *Banal Nationalism*

In the 1990s, Michael Billig developed another theory of nationalism and national identity. In his famous book *Banal Nationalism* (1995), Billig argues that nationalism can be banal in the sense that in Western nations, national symbols are part of everyday life and help maintain the existence of these nations. He uses the word ‘banal’ to convey the idea that nationalism is to be found in the everyday routine of the members of a nation. According to him, ‘[d]aily, the nation is indicated, or “flagged”, in the lives of its citizenry.’ (Billig, 1995: 6).

Importantly, in *Banal Nationalism*, Billig demonstrates that in Western nations, people are not aware of the fact that the nation to which they belong is reflected through its symbols, on a daily basis:

‘in the established nations<sup>254</sup>, there is a continual ‘flagging’, or reminding, of nationhood. (...) [T]his reminding is so familiar, so continual, that it is not consciously registered as reminding. The metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging *unnoticed*<sup>255</sup> on the public building.’ (1995: 8).

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<sup>254</sup> Here, ‘the established nations’ stand for Western nations.

<sup>255</sup> My emphasis.

Billig states that the ‘flagging’ of a nation is forgotten by the members of that nation because they get used to it, given that this flagging happens every single day. This is clearly highlighted by Billig when he says that through daily ‘flaggings’, ‘nations, national identities and national homelands appear as “natural”’ (1995: 10). That naturalness – or, at least, that apparent naturalness – thus seems to explain why people do not pay attention to national symbols<sup>256</sup>. It appears as something unconscious:

‘Often unnoticed, these flaggings are not hidden. They are unlike the messages from the unconscious mind, which, according, to Freudian theory, are repressed from consciousness, and leave only oblique outward traces. Freud, as is well known, proposed that a complex training was necessary to enable people to read signs of the unconscious. The flaggings of nationhood are quite different. Their unobtrusiveness arises, in part, from their very familiarity. Shameful desires have not driven them from conscious awareness. No course of formal instruction is required to notice the flaggings. Instead, there need be only a conscious willingness to look towards the background or to attend to the little words.’ (Billig, 1995: 174).

Interestingly, Billig insists that national symbols are visible. Those symbols are reachable. The last sentence in the paragraph above clearly shows that national symbols are there; they are seen only by people who are aware of their presence. Billig adds: ‘The thesis of banal nationalism suggests that nationhood is near the surface of contemporary life.’ (Billig, 1995: 93). This metaphor is significant in that it emphasises that national symbols are there, unnoticed but noticeable, like the submerged part of an iceberg which individuals can see when looking

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<sup>256</sup> This may remind us of the ‘nose and two ears’ mentioned by Gellner (1983), as cited in Leith and Sim (2020). See page 245.



beneath the surface of the water. They notice the symbols of their nation when they pay attention to them. National flaggings are so obvious that people do not notice them if they do not consciously pay attention to such symbols<sup>257</sup> (Billig, 1995: 158). Again, as was said earlier, the reminders of a nation are so familiar, as they are a routine part of everyday life and we could say, the everyday landscape of the members of a nation, that these people forget about them. They forget the fact that they are still there, right before their eyes, on a daily basis. Billig suggests that it is not nationalism or national symbols which are forgotten, but the process by which people are reminded of the nation they belong to. Indeed, again, people are *unconsciously* reminded of the latter: '[t]he nation is flagged, but the flagging itself is forgotten as the nation is mindlessly remembered.' (Billig, 1995: 143-144).

If national symbols are so obvious and so familiar for people that they are invisible – unless one consciously pays attention to them – then what about national identity? As national identity is based on such symbols, it may be assumed that it is familiar and invisible as well. Billig demonstrates that, while national symbols are 'flagged' on a daily basis, national identity becomes familiar and, thus, is part of people's environment and everyday life. Thus, to an extent, national identity could be seen as 'banal' too. It is something which is always there, in our daily lives. 'It is a form of reading and watching, of understanding and of taking for granted. It is a form of life in which 'we' are constantly invited to relax, at home, within the homeland's borders. This form of life is the national identity, which is being renewed continually' (Billig, 1995: 127).

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<sup>257</sup> In this regard, Michael Billig notes that a few national symbols are visible and easily noticeable: '[O]ne can distinguish between the ways in which national flags are treated. Some are consciously waved and saluted symbols, often accompanied by a pageant of outward emotion. Others – probably the most numerous in the contemporary environment – remain unsaluted and unwaved. They are merely there as symbols, whether on a forecourt or flashed on to a television screen; as such they are given hardly a second glance from day to day.' (Billig, 1995: 40). For instance, national days, national anthems and flags heard and seen in sporting games, traditional music and dance highlight the symbols which refer to a particular nation. Billig takes the example of 'the collective rememberings of a commemoration' (Billig, 1995: 41).

Finally, in his book, Michael Billig challenges the common ideas and conceptions of nationalism as a dangerous ideology, full of passion and connoted in quite a negative way. He writes that, '[i]n both popular and academic writing, nationalism is associated with those who struggle to create new states or with extreme right-wing politics.' (1995: 5). What is interesting about his theory is that it brings some new light on the complex notion of nationalism by showing that it should not be regarded as a far-right ideology alone, which would be present in nations remote from ours. For him, it is also something which is part of our 'Western' nations. Billig argues:

'Complex habits of thought naturalize, and thereby overlook, "our" nationalism, whilst projecting nationalism, as an irrational whole, on to others. At the core of this intellectual amnesia lies a restricted concept of "nationalism", which confines "nationalism" to particular social movements rather than to nation-states. Only the passionately waved flags are conventionally considered to be exemplars of nationalism. Routine flags – the flags of 'our' environment – slip from the category of "nationalism".' (1995: 38-39).

Relying on Billig's theory, the present work tries to show that nationalism can be defined as emphasising the existence of a nation by merely referring to it, consciously or not. In that sense, the simple fact of talking about a nation (De Cillia et al., 1999; Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008) could be understood as nationalism. This is studied in Chapter Four, through the analysis of the way young SNP members perceive their nation and national identity.

## *Everyday Nationhood*<sup>258</sup>

Everyday nationhood scholars like John E. Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss<sup>259</sup> (2008) argue that people participate in the construction of nations and nationhood through their everyday life activities. In that sense, they emphasise the role of agency besides that of structures<sup>260</sup>. For example, when individuals talk about their nation, they construct it as well as the nationhood which is related to it<sup>261</sup>. As demonstrated in the next chapter, when talking about Scotland, young SNP members participate in its construction as a social democratic, fair, progressive and inclusive nation. Fox and Miller-Idriss illustrate their views with the example of people's choices as well. For them, making national choices plays a role in the construction of nations on a daily basis. They specify:

‘People “choose” the nation when the universe of options is defined in national terms. Reading a nationalist newspaper or sending one's child to a minority-language school can thus be defined and experienced as national choices. Nationhood can also be the contingent of other (non-national) choices. Thus, choosing (or approving) marriage partners or socializing with friends, while not necessarily explicitly national, can structure the trajectories of future choices in ways that reinforce nationhood as a salient idiom of belonging.’ (2008: 452).

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<sup>258</sup> For a detailed review of the literature on everyday nationalism, see Knott, E. (2015). *Everyday Nationalism: A Review of the Literature*, *Studies on National Movements*, 3.

<https://snm.nise.eu/index.php/studies/article/view/0308s/34>

<sup>259</sup> See also Skey, M. (2011). *National Belonging and Everyday Life. The Significance of Nationhood in an Uncertain World*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Antonsich, M. (2016). The ‘everyday’ of banal nationalism – ordinary people's views on Italy and Italian. *Political Geography*, 54, 32-42; and Skey, M., and Antonsich, M. (2017). *Everyday nationhood. Theorising Culture, Identity and Belonging after Banal Nationalism*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

<sup>260</sup> See page 58.

<sup>261</sup> The idea of a discursive construction of the nation echoes De Cillia et al.'s arguments in their 1999 paper. This is developed below.

Fox and Miller-Idriss add that nations are constructed on a daily basis via rituals and symbols like flags and anthems. They notably focus on sporting events like Olympic games and the football World Cup, during which displaying national flags and singing national anthems are ways of participating in the construction of nations and nationhood<sup>262</sup>. The two researchers also highlight the role of individuals' 'consumption' of the nation: via the media, school, food, clothes and other national products, people emphasise their belonging to a particular nation. Fox and Miller-Idriss explain:

‘Some products are conceived, designed and disseminated as more or less national products. The flag is not just a symbol of the nation; it is also a thing that can be bought and sold, copied and distributed. It can be hung from flagpoles or windows, draped over shoulders or coffins, stitched into jackets or baseball caps and stuck on to car bumpers or envelopes. This is the commodification of the nation: national (and nationalist) literature, media, music, costumes and food provide people with nationally marked (or markable) products for their national consumption needs.’ (2008: 550-551).

They go on:

‘Through shopping and tourism, school lessons and television viewing, ordinary people make a national world visible to themselves and, potentially, those around them<sup>263</sup>. The consumption of these national artefacts defines,

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<sup>262</sup> This is an echo of Michael Skey's research. He studies the relationship between sport and everyday nationhood. See Skey, M. (2011). *National Belonging and Everyday Life. The Significance of Nationhood in an Uncertain World*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>263</sup> See Edensor, T. (2002). *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*. Oxford: Berg.

demonstrates, and affirms the consumer's national affinities. *It marks the products – and the people who consume them – nationally.*<sup>264</sup> (2008: 551).

Although this theory of everyday nationhood does not focus on political discourse on national identity, it is nonetheless important with regard to the present work. As explained in the next chapter, even though young SNP members' discourse on national identity is political, national identity can be observed in their everyday lives. In Chapter Four, this idea shall be illustrated with sporting events like the FIFA World Cup in 2018 and the 2020 UEFA European Football Championship.

### *Personal Nationalism*

Let us finish introducing the various theories of nationalism and national identity with Anthony Cohen's viewpoint. For Cohen, nationalism can be 'personal' (Cohen, 1996) in that it is related to individuals' personal identities. To be more specific, people identify with the nation to which they belong. The nation is reflected in their personal identities. Cohen thus argues for individuals' association with the nation (1996: 810). For him, 'the nation might be regarded as a compelling formulation of the self' (1996: 802). He has studied the case of Scotland. In 1996, he points out:

'nationalism (qua personally constructed commitment to the nation) is an expression of self-identity. It is to say, "I am Scottish", when Scottishness means everything that I am; I substantiate the otherwise vacuous national label in terms of my own experience, my reading of history, my perception

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<sup>264</sup> My emphasis.

of the landscape, and my reading of Scotland's literature and music, so that when I "see" the nation, I am looking at myself.' (1996: 804-805).

The nation and the self thus converge. Cohen sheds light on the interpretative dimension of identity: 'individuals do interpretively construct their identities as members of collectivities through their unique experience of them.' (1996: 812). In other words, people's own, subjective experience of the nation shapes their sense of national identity. They perceive the nation subjectively, from a personal perspective. They can see themselves in the nation as if looking in a mirror. This is what David McCrone calls the 'personalisation of nation-ness' (McCrone, 1998: 42). In the last chapter of the present thesis, we shall see that young SNP members' views of Scottishness converge with their personal beliefs and values, based on their political ideology.

## **Conclusions**

We have seen that national identity is a complex notion, which is hard to grasp and understand. The literature is divided mainly over the innate/given/fixed and constructed/fluid nature of national identity. Other conceptions like the civic and ethnic approaches to nationalism and national identity are also opposed. Scholars like Shulman and Brubaker challenge those theories. We have seen that other approaches concentrate on the banality and everyday aspect of national identity. It is so obvious that individuals do not pay attention to signs of national identity in their environment. It is part of their daily lives. Finally, for Cohen, national identity is related to people's personal identities: the nation is a mirror in which they can see themselves.

In the following chapter, with the analysis of empirical research, we shall see where the present work positions itself amongst these various and competing theories. Before that, as it deals with the young members of a Scottish political party, it is necessary to explore the academic literature on national identity in Scotland.

## **II) National Identity in Scotland**

*[W]hatever else it may be, what we mean by “national” identity involves some sense of political community — Anthony D. Smith (1991: 9)*

### **1) ‘As One’<sup>265</sup>? The Moreno Question and Dual Identities in Scotland**

In terms of national belonging and identity, the United Kingdom is quite particular. This state is composed of four nations<sup>266</sup>. Given that British people live both in the UK as a whole and in one of its four components, what about their identity? Do they have a sense of state belonging besides a sense of national belonging? As a matter of fact, British people have dual/multiple identities: they are British and Welsh, British and English, British and Scottish or British and Northern Irish. This is due to the constitutional configuration of the UK: people live in a state (the UK) and a nation at the same time. In that sense, it may be posited that they have a state identity and a national identity.

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<sup>265</sup> ‘As One’ was the slogan of a Scottish rugby campaign launched just a few days after the independence referendum, on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2014.

<sup>266</sup> See definitions page 242.

Having dual identities raises the question of the order of importance in which these identities come. In other words, does someone living in Scotland feel equally British and Scottish, British first and Scottish second, or Scottish first and British second? Luis Moreno (2006) helped answer the question. In his PhD thesis, completed at the University of Edinburgh in 1986, the social policy and political scientist suggested a new way of measuring national identity. He concluded that Scottish people feel either: only Scottish, not British; more Scottish than British; equally Scottish as British; more British than Scottish; or only British, not Scottish. Table 3.2 presents the results of the Moreno question according to Scottish Social Attitudes surveys, from 1999 to 2020:

	1999	2000	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2016	2018	2020
Scottish not British	32%	37%	36%	31%	32%	27%	27%	28%	29%	23%	25%	23%	24%	24%	29%
More Scottish than British	35%	31%	30%	34%	32%	30%	31%	30%	33%	30%	29%	26%	28%	30%	26%
Equally Scottish and British	22%	21%	24%	22%	21%	28%	26%	26%	23%	30%	29%	32%	30%	28%	26%
More British than Scottish	3%	3%	3%	4%	4%	5%	4%	4%	5%	5%	4%	5%	4%	4%	4%
British not Scottish	4%	4%	3%	4%	5%	6%	4%	4%	5%	6%	6%	6%	5%	5%	5%
Other description	3%	4%	3%	4%	5%	6%	6%	8%	6%	5%	6%	7%	10%	9%	9%
None of these	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Table 3.2: National identity in Scotland, based on the Moreno question, from 1999 to 2020 (source: Scottish Social Attitudes surveys)<sup>267</sup>

When adding ‘Scottish not British’ and ‘more Scottish than British’, we see that, overall, people in Scotland feel more Scottish than British. This is also evidenced by the very small proportions of Scots feeling more British than Scottish, and British not Scottish. Thus, people’s sense of

<sup>267</sup> See <https://whatscotlandthinks.org/questions/moreno-national-identity-5/> Accessed on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021.



national belonging to Scotland is (much) stronger than their sense of belonging to the British state.

As the present thesis focuses on young people, it is worth looking at their sense of identity: is it more Scottish than British too? In other words, is it in line with the sense of belonging amongst the overall population? It seems to be. Citing a Scottish Social Attitudes survey, Frank Bechhofer and David McCrone note that in 2001, 57 per cent of people aged 18 to 24 chose Scottish as their relevant identity, and 8 per cent chose British (Bechhofer and McCrone, 2009: 69). Young people thus tend to feel more Scottish than British. This is of high importance for this thesis. It will be examined in the final chapter. What is also very interesting is that amongst people aged 65, a majority still identified more with Scotland than the UK in 2001 (37 per cent chose Scottish as their relevant identity, while 12 per cent chose British), but that majority is less important than amongst young people (2009: 69). Therefore, it seems that, the younger Scots are, the more inclined they are to feel strongly Scottish. It would be interesting to research such generational differences further in the future.

Let us now see how Scottish people identify without the Moreno scale, namely when they can freely choose their identity amongst Scottish, British and both (Table 3.3), and when they have to choose either Scottish or British (Table 3.4):

	1997	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2009	2010	2011
Scottish	<b>82</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>85</b> <sup>268</sup>
British	52	47	52	50	55	58	52	52	43	47	46	49	53
Both	38	35	43	41	43	47	38	43	33	33	36	37	44

Table 3.3: Trends in Free Choice National Identity, Scotland, 1997-2011 (as cited in Curtice, 2013: 13-14), percentages

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<sup>268</sup> My emphasis.

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2007	2007
Scottish	77	<b>80</b>	77	75	72	75	77	78	72
British	17	13	16	18	20	19	14	14	19
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2016	2018	2020
Scottish	73	73	75	<b>69</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>64<sup>269</sup></b>
British	15	19	15	20	24	23	23	22	23

Table 3.4: Trends in Forced Choice National Identity 1999-2020, percentages (source: Scottish Social Attitudes Surveys)<sup>270</sup>

Table 3.3 indicates that, when they can choose freely their identity, a large majority of Scots identify as Scottish: since 1997, at least 80 per cent of the sample have always identified as such. This reinforces the idea that Scottishness is quite strong in Scotland. This is confirmed by Table 3.4. Yet, the latter table tells a slightly different story. Scottishness remains the strongest identity in Scotland, especially compared to Britishness. But, we can see that compared with the 2000s, Scottish people's forced choice is a bit less Scottish today and, on the contrary, a bit more British. Interestingly, Table 3.4 shows that this trend started in 2012, namely right at the beginning of the Scottish independence referendum campaign. To an extent, it is surprising: given the strength of Scottishness, it could have been assumed that an independence vote would have reinforced even more that national identity. Yet, it seems that it is Britishness which has been a little strengthened. This is aligned with the result of the referendum: to an extent, the fact that Scotland remained in the UK reinforced Britishness, which had been seen as declining, especially since the devolution of power from Westminster to Holyrood (Nairn, 1977).

We have seen that a majority of people feel more Scottish than British or only Scottish. Therefore, it could be assumed that a majority of Scots are in favour of independence. Yet, as

<sup>269</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>270</sup> See <https://whatscotlandthinks.org/questions/forced-choice-national-identity-5/> Accessed on August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

has just been said, in 2014, 55 per cent of Scottish voters chose to remain in the UK. Let us explore the relationship between national identity and the independence debate in more detail.

## 2) National Identity and Independence

Several studies of the relationship between national identity and constitutional preferences have been conducted in Scotland<sup>271</sup>. Charles Pattie et al. (1999), David McCrone (1998, 2015), Ross Bond (2010, 2015) all worked on it. Some studies also include an analysis of the relationship between national identity and party support in Scotland, which is quite helpful for us here.

### *National Identity and Constitutional Preferences*

% by column	Scottish, not British	Scottish and British	British, not Scottish	All
Scottish Independence	<b>42</b> <sup>272</sup>	20	<b>15</b>	30
Devolution status quo	45	<b>65</b>	60	<b>54</b>
No Scottish Parliament	5	12	23	9
N	798	523	178	1588

Table 3.5: National identities and constitutional preferences in Scotland, in 2006 (as cited by Bond, in Bechhofer and McCrone, 2009: 101; source: Scottish Social Attitudes 2006)

<sup>271</sup> About the relationship between identity and politics in the UK more generally speaking, particularly constitutional issues and the EU referendum, see the recent work of Ailsa Henderson: Henderson, A., Poole, E. G., Jones, R. W., Wincott, D., Lerner, J., and Jeffery, C. (2020). Analysing vote choice in a multinational state: National identity and territorial differentiation in the 2016 Brexit vote. *Regional Studies*, N/A, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2020.1813883>; Henderson, A., and Jones, R. W. (2021). Unions of the mind: The UK as a subjective state. *Comparative European Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41295-020-00231-4>;

Henderson, A., and Medeiros, M. (2021). Identities and attitudes to decentralization in multi-level states: Understanding the territorial scales of political life. *Comparative European Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41295-020-00229-y>.

<sup>272</sup> My emphasis.

Table 3.5 shows that the more people feel Scottish, the more they are in favour of the devolution status quo or pro-independence. The more they feel British, the more they are likely to support the devolution status quo. When they feel both Scottish and British, they are more inclined to support that status quo as well. Tellingly, the highest proportion of people in favour of independence feel Scottish, not British; on the contrary, the smallest proportion supporting that constitutional option feel British, not Scottish. Also, the highest proportion of people in favour of the devolution status quo feel both Scottish and British. This suggests a possible link between Scottish people's sense of national identity and their constitutional preferences. This is further examined with the study of young SNP members' relationship to national identity in the next chapter. Finally, it should be noted that 54 per cent of the whole sample support the devolution status quo, which correlates quite well with the result of the 2014 referendum (as said above, 55 per cent of Scottish people voted to remain in the UK).

Ross Bond and Michael Rosie (Bond, in Bechhofer and McCrone, 2009; Bond and Rosie, 2010) argue for a relationship between national identity and constitutional preferences in Scotland. They nonetheless qualify their statement by saying that 'this is only true to the extent that those with exclusive sub-state identities are more likely to favour more autonomy: those with exclusive state identities are not consistently and significantly more likely to oppose such change than are those with dual identities.' (Bond and Rosie, 2010: 16).

### *National Identity and Political Party Support*

% by column	Lab	Cons	Lib Dem	SNP	None	All
Scottish, not British	51	32	33	<b>65</b> <sup>273</sup>	<b>58</b>	<b>51</b>
Scottish and British	38	38	44	29	25	33
British, not Scottish	8	<b>25</b>	18	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>
N	529	206	142	270	214	1588

Table 3.6: Party support and national identities in Scotland, in 2006 (as cited by Bond, in Bechhofer and McCrone, 2009: 103; source: Scottish Social Attitudes 2006)

Table 3.6 indicates a relationship between SNP supporters and their strong sense of Scottishness: the highest proportion of people who feel Scottish, not British, supports the pro-independence party. Amongst the people feeling British, not Scottish, the smallest proportion supports the SNP. Amongst the supporters of the pro-Union, Conservative Party, a majority feel both Scottish and British, which aligns with the fact that the party is in favour of Scotland and the UK co-habiting. It should be noted that, in the whole sample, the highest proportion of people feeling British, not Scottish, supports the Conservative Party. Therefore, even if it is not the case of all the political parties, it seems to be a correlation between people's national identity and their party support. At least, this is the case for Conservative and SNP supporters. It has to be noted that in Labour, a majority of people feel Scottish, not British. This may be surprising given that Labour was in the Better Together camp in 2014. In that sense, Bond argues:

‘although Conservative supporters are more likely to hold an exclusively British identity than those from other parties, a larger proportion have an exclusively Scottish identity than are exclusively British. Thus while both Conservative and Labour parties strongly emphasise their British credentials and would contemplate further constitutional change only within a broadly British framework, their perspectives on constitutional policy do not

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<sup>273</sup> My emphasis.

necessarily map on to the identities of their supporters. Moreover, it is also true that around one-third of SNP supporters professed some form of Britishness, and therefore the SNP's status as an explicitly non-British party is again not always reflected in their supporters' identities.' (Bond, 2009: 104).

I agree with Bond, to a certain extent. The fact that half of Labour supporters feel Scottish, not British, and that the smallest proportion of Conservative supporters feel British, not Scottish, strengthens his argument about the non-alignment between national identity and party support in Scotland. However, when looking at the results for all the parties in the three categories, instead of the results in each party (in other words, when looking at Table 3.6 horizontally instead of vertically), we see once again that the highest proportion of people feeling Scottish, not British, are likely to support the SNP, while the highest propensity of those who feel British, not Scottish, are likely to support the Conservatives. Yes, that proportion is rather small (25 per cent), but it is nonetheless the biggest of all party supporters and it is bigger than the average proportion of the whole sample saying they feel British, not Scottish (10 per cent). The point, here, is not to say that there is always a clear relationship between national identity and party support in Scotland. Rather, it is to say that this is sometimes the case.

The (occasional) correlation between national identity and party identification is in line with the results of the present study. As has been demonstrated in Chapter Two, I identified a link between the 2014 referendum as a youth party membership catalyst and the parties joined by young Scots: the vote pushed a majority of the young people interviewed and surveyed to join the SNP. It was also the case for young Conservatives. A majority of them engaged to prevent Scotland from breaking away from the UK (see Chapter Two).

Finally, with the whole sample in Table 3.6, we see that a majority of people feel Scottish, not British. This aligns with the results of the Moreno question, as well as the two tables about Scots’ free and forced choices of identity, presented above. I compare the results of Table 3.6 with mine in Chapter Four.

*National Identity in the SNP*

	SNP members	SNP voters	Electorate
Scottish not British	<b>80</b> <sup>274</sup>	43	28
More Scottish than British	17	39	32
Equally Scottish and British	3	15	29
More British than Scottish	<b>0</b>	2	5
British not Scottish	<b>0</b>	1	6
<i>N</i>	<i>6537</i>	<i>277</i>	<i>1414</i>

Table 3.7: Scottish-to-British national identity amongst SNP members, SNP voters and the electorate (percentages), as cited in Mitchell et al., 2012: 104<sup>275</sup>

Table 3.7 indicates that a great majority of SNP members feel Scottish, not British. Tellingly, none of them feel more British than Scottish, or British not Scottish. It is even higher than the proportion of people who feel Scottish not British, and support the SNP, in Table 3.6 (65 per cent). A majority of SNP voters feel Scottish, not British, too. It has to be noted that this majority amongst voters is smaller than the majority amongst SNP members. To an extent, it means that the more people are involved with the SNP, the stronger their Scottish identity is. Hence a possible relationship between their level of political participation and their sense of

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<sup>274</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>275</sup> The authors specify that ‘[f]or the purposes of clean comparison, [they] exclude those giving “Other” responses’ (Mitchell et al., 2012: 104).

national identity. This is further explored with the analysis of young SNP members' views on Scottishness in the following chapter.

Finally, Table 3.7 shows that in the electorate, statistics are quite balanced. Overall, people feel either more Scottish than British, Scottish not British, or equally Scottish and British. A very small proportion of the electorate feels either more British than Scottish or British not Scottish. This sheds light, again, on the strength of Scottishness compared to Britishness in Scotland.

Taking Tables 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 together, there seems to be a relationship between national identity and people's views on independence in Scotland. Those who feel the strongest sense of Scottishness are inclined to support it, while those who feel the strongest sense of Britishness tend to be opposed to that option. Most tellingly, the more people support/are involved with the SNP, the more they feel Scottish, not British, and the stronger their Scottish identity is. Given the stance of the SNP with regard to independence, we can once more argue for a link between national identity and Scottish independence. Is it a causal relationship? In other words, do people support that constitutional option because of their Scottishness? Or, does national identity have nothing to do with this? For Bond and Rosie, 'national identities [are] significant in explaining support for greater sub-state autonomy' (Bond and Rosie, 2010: 16). Taking account of their argument, it can be assumed that young SNP members (who join the party mainly for independence-related reasons, as indicated in Chapter Two) campaign for independence for, among other things, identity reasons. Chapter Four aims to answer the questions above and check that hypothesis with the analysis of YSI and SNP Students' thoughts of identity and the role it plays in their political involvement.



### 3) Scottish ‘Neo-nationalism’

In the academic literature, the approach to Scottish nationalism and Scottishness is mainly modernist. They are seen as civic and inclusive. Sociologist David McCrone’s work can be regarded as the largest contribution to Scottish nationalism and identity literature (McCrone, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2009, 2015, 2017). A part of his arguments builds on the research of another scholar who wrote extensively about Scottish nationalism: Tom Nairn. McCrone develops Nairn’s idea of ‘neo-nationalism’ introduced in his famous book *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (Nairn, 1977). Nairn defines the concept as follows:

‘[It is] a new political movement. (...) ‘[I]t is in a number of ways analogous to historical or mainstream nationalism. But a more careful consideration shows its different place in history and its different character and potential. It deserves to be called “neo-nationalism” rather than nationalism’ (1977: 127).

McCrone offers a definition of neo-nationalism based on various aspects, which he calls ‘key characteristics’ (1998: 128) and lists as follows:

- ‘Neo-nationalism occurs in *coherent civil societies* which are not independent states, but with ostensible but varying degrees of political autonomy.’
- ‘In each there is a *complex relationship between cultural nationalism and political nationalism*, and these have converged in recent years. “Civic” rather than “ethnic” nationalism is emphasised; a stress for political purposes on territorial *residence* rather than lineage and *blood*.’
- ‘*Multiple national identities are a feature of political identity*, rather than a monocultural one. Hence, Scots are also British (...). This plurality is

a political resource which can be played in appropriate circumstances rather than a fixed characteristic.’

- ‘It tends to occur in relatively rich regions rather than the poorest. (...)’
- ‘*Progressive political and economic aspects outweigh reactionary ones.* Movements appear as social-democratic or as neo-liberal (...). Attempts are made to align leftist and rightist elements (learning to love – or live with – the global market in a social-democratic or liberal way).’
- ‘*Different ideological elements are mixed and mobilised: right/left; ethnic/civic; past/future; local/global; corporatist/neo-liberal; separatist/autonomist.*’
- ‘These shifts in ideological messages relate to *changing and diverse social constituencies*. Unlike “bourgeois” nationalist movements of the nineteenth century, the social base is more free-floating and unpredictable.’
- ‘*The “movement” for self-government is not simply aligned with support for the party.* The voters are adept at giving only contingent support at certain elections, and voting in ostensibly “unionist” ways in others.’
- ‘*Political movements/parties are of relatively recent origin, that is, mainly in the second half of the twentieth century.* The Scottish National Party (...) [is] in essence [a] modern [creation].’
- ‘There is *ambiguity about their aims*. Are they seeking independence or autonomy? Ambivalent terms are used in political debate, such as “*Home Rule*” (...)’

- ‘This ambivalence is reflected in terms used by analysts to describe the movements: such as “*regionalism*”, or “*regional nationalism*” or “*neo-nationalism*”.’
- ‘The *variable geometry of power*: political debates take place within three dimensions not simply two dimensions: the nation, state and supra-state such as the European Union (...).’ (McCrone, 1998: 128-129)<sup>276</sup>.

In summation, McCrone argues that neo-nationalism emerges in stateless nations, namely nations like Scotland which are recognised as such but not recognised as independent nation-states<sup>277</sup>. It puts forward civic (based on territory), not ethnic (based on ancestry), arguments<sup>278</sup>. In the nations where it occurs, various identities are reported. For example, as noted previously in this chapter, Scottish people have dual or multiple identities. It is observable in developed countries rather than less economically developed countries. It is related to progressive and social-democratic policy. Its ideological and social bases are diverse. There is not necessarily a relationship between demands for self-government and party support. The political parties that have to be regarded as neo-nationalist were founded relatively recently, in the modern era. Their goals are not always clear<sup>279</sup>. Finally, the geopolitical entities involved in neo-nationalist debate are plural. For example, SNP nationalism questions the belonging of Scotland, a nation, in the UK, a state, and insists on the need to be part of the European Union, a supranational entity.

In conclusion, scholars of Scottish nationalism like McCrone are part of the modernist part of the literature. Murray Stewart Leith and Daniel P.J. Soule summarise this modernist

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<sup>276</sup> Emphasis in original. For further reading about neo-nationalism in Scotland, see McCrone, D. (1998). *The Sociology of Nationalism: Tomorrow's Ancestors*. London, New York: Routledge, and McCrone, D. (2001). Neo-nationalism in stateless nations. *Scottish Affairs*, 37(2), 3-13.

<sup>277</sup> About differences between nations, states and nations-states see definitions page 242.

<sup>278</sup> See the first part of the present chapter.

<sup>279</sup> This is not the case for the SNP, whose aim is quite clear: Scottish independence.

approach very well: ‘the Scottish modernist interpretation put forward is one of Scottishness as a territorial, civic-based form of identity, whereby an individual resident in Scotland can claim to be Scottish.’ (Leith and Soule, 2008: 4)<sup>280</sup>. In the following sections, we shall see that McCrone’s modernist understanding of Scottish nationalism is in line with the SNP’s discourse on Scotland and Scottishness. Also, as explained in Chapter Four, the conclusions of the present study align with McCrone’s ideas, especially in terms of the civic, territorial dimensions of nationalism.

## **Conclusions**

To conclude, Scottish people’s sense of Scottishness is strong. It may be argued that they have dual identities, as they live in a multinational state (the United Kingdom) as well as in one of the four nations composing that state (Scotland). The Moreno scale helps measure their national identity. It is clear that Scottish people feel (much) more Scottish than British; some even feel only Scottish, not British. As has been noted, this raises the question of a relationship between national identity and independence in Scotland. Scholars like Ross Bond have demonstrated that the link between national identity and constitutional preferences is not always clear. Nor is the relationship between national identity and party support. However, Mitchell et al. have shown that a great majority of SNP members feel Scottish and do not feel British. Hence the need to explore the potential link between young SNP members’ national identity and their campaign for independence.

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<sup>280</sup> As noted further down in this work, scholars like Ailsa Henderson (1999, 2007) and Nicola McEwen (Henderson and McEwen, 2005), Murray Stewart Leith (2008) and Daniel P.J. Soule (Leith and Soule, 2012), James Mitchell et al. (2012), Nathalie Duclos (2014, 2016, 2020), and Edwige Camp-Pietrain (2014) emphasise the civic feature of Scottish nationalism and Scottishness as well.

Finally, we have seen that Scottish nationalism is specific. It has to be understood as ‘a rational, civic, and pluralistic nationalism’ (Leith and Soule, 2012: 7)<sup>281</sup>. It is territorially-based: living in Scotland makes you Scottish. That ‘neo-nationalism’ can be observed in ‘stateless nations’, tends to be regarded as a progressive, social-democratic movement that looks at the future rather than backwards. The Scottish National Party promotes that kind of nationalism. Contrary to nationalist parties which emphasise ethnicity and culture, the SNP praises immigration, cultural diversity, and press for independence for socio-economic and political reasons. This is further explored by the next and final part of this chapter.

### **III) The Socio-political<sup>282</sup> Version of National Identity**

#### **1) National Identity and Values**

Values are ‘principles or standards of behaviour’ (Oxford English Dictionary, 2008: 1597). Generally speaking, they can be defined as ideas and/or principles in which people believe.

In Scotland in particular, two scholars have been studying the relationship between national identity and shared values: Ailsa Henderson (1999, 2007) and Nicola McEwen (Henderson and McEwen, 2005). They challenge the views of two other researchers, who examined that relationship in the 1990s: Wayne Norman and Will Kymlicka.

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<sup>281</sup> ‘Rational’ in the sense that it does not appeal to Scottish history, culture, and all the emotional repertoire that related to them. In this regard, Leith and Soule quote Keating, for whom Scottish ‘nationalist claims are based on... practical arguments about institutions, accountability and policy. This has made it one of the least romantic of nationalist movements.’ (Keating, 2001: 221, as cited in Leith and Soule, 2012: 6). ‘Civic’ in that it stresses the belonging to the Scottish nation as based on territorial arguments: living in Scotland makes individuals Scottish. And ‘pluralistic’ because it is inclusive: the Scottish nation is seen as culturally diverse and open to everyone who wants to feel Scottish, regardless of their origins. All this is developed in the sections below.

<sup>282</sup> Contrary to an ethnocultural version of national identity which is defined by its ethnic and/or cultural features, a socio-political version of national identity has to be understood as an identity based on social and political values. This definition is developed and illustrated throughout the different sections below.

Norman admits that ‘there is something to the idea that shared values keep a country together.’ (Norman, 1995: 138). Yet: ‘It seems more reasonable to look to a shared identity of some sort to secure a stable national unity. But, I suggest, shared identity relies less on shared values than is commonly assumed.’ (1995: 138). Importantly, he argues: ‘It is not typically common values that lead to a common identity, but vice versa.’ (1995: 147). Then, for Norman, the values shared by the members of a nation derive from national identity instead of shaping it. More specifically, instead of being shaped by common values, national identity relies on what can be considered ethnocultural<sup>283</sup> elements: ‘how powerless the ideology of shared values remains in the face of the traditional role played by myths, symbols, and ethnicity in the moulding of a national identity.’ (1995: 155).

Henderson and McEwen (2005) challenge Norman’s arguments. Or, at least, they show that, contrary to what Norman thinks, shared values contribute to a national sense of belonging and to the national cohesion amongst the members of a nation. It is important to note that they do not think that values lead to the creation of national identity. They qualify their opinion by saying: ‘The discourse of shared values may not, in itself, create a national identity. (...) However, a discourse of shared values may play a role in maintaining and shaping national identity.’ (2005: 177). In other words, for them, national identity does not originate from shared values. Rather, values are an aspect, a characteristic, of national identity. Henderson speaks of values as ‘markers<sup>284</sup> of national identity’ (Henderson, 1999: 137). Instead of being the source of national identity, shared values would give meaning to it. Henderson and McEwen point out that, in spite of not creating a national identity, common values nonetheless participate in its definition:

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<sup>283</sup> See definition page 251.

<sup>284</sup> In Michael Billig’s words, we could say that values ‘flag’ national identity (Billig, 1995).

‘the idea of shared values serves as a useful tool in shaping and reinforcing national identities within multinational states. *Such values contribute to defining the collective conception of national identity, describing who we are as a people, and what it is that binds us together while distinguishing us from others.*’ (2005: 173)<sup>285</sup>.

The two researchers shed light on the role played by the values shared by the members of a nation to ensure the continued existence of national identity. Those values strengthen national identity but are not the source of it. As Chapter Four shows, I partly disagree with Henderson and McEwen. I agree that national identity and shared values are interrelated. I also agree that shared values give meaning to national identity. But I disagree that values do not create national identity. As shown further down in the present work, for me, it is more complex. Basing my arguments on the results of the study of young SNP members, I argue that values do not necessarily participate in the creation of national identity, but they sometimes do. To be more specific, I suggest that national identity is quite subjective, it notably depends on individuals’ views. Therefore, rather than national identity itself, it is people’s understanding of their national identity which may derive from values. In that sense, their perceptions of national identity may depend on the values in which they believe.

As has been said above, Henderson and McEwen also challenge Kymlicka’s arguments. As Henderson and McEwen put it, for Kymlicka, ‘in multinational states, shared values or principles in themselves are an insufficient basis upon which to build the sense of solidarity and belonging that is inherent to national identity.’ (Henderson and McEwen, 2005: 176). Kymlicka notably studied the case of Quebec. For him: ‘principles of justice are too widely shared across

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<sup>285</sup> My emphasis.

national groups. What matters is not shared values, but a shared identity<sup>286</sup> (emphasis in original).’ (2005: 176)<sup>287</sup>. In other words, for Kymlicka, values like social justice and equality are too universal to be related to the definition, at the national level, of national identity. It is worth examining this point, in that it makes the relationship between national identity and values quite complex. As I explain further down, I do not agree with Kymlicka that national identity does not derive from shared values, but I agree that those values can be seen as universal. In that sense, it is hard to consider that they are associated with a nation in particular and, then, that they shape one specific national identity. I expand on this in Chapter Four.

Thus, Henderson and McEwen challenge Norman’s and Kymlicka’s argument that shared values are not the source of national identity. Yet, it is important to note that they do not reject it completely: ‘we share the view of Norman and Kymlicka that the presence of shared values is, in itself, an insufficient basis upon which to build national unity. However, this does not make the discourse of shared values irrelevant to questions of identity and unity.’ (2005: 188). In other words, national identity would not necessarily derive from shared values, but references to those values, for example in political discourse, would shape a part of it. Chapter Four tests that argument through the analysis of young SNP members’ discourse on national identity. In this respect, when it comes to Scottish nationalism, Henderson and McEwen claim that references to values in nationalist discourse help make Scotland distinct from the rest of the UK and, therefore, help legitimise the SNP’s demand for independence. They write that:

‘the discourse of shared values serves as a tool in the politics of nation-building. The idea of shared values can serve to emphasise the commonality of one nation and its distinctiveness from another, nurturing the view that

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<sup>286</sup> This is similar to Norman’s arguments.

<sup>287</sup> See Kymlicka, 1996: 131.



distinctive values require distinctive national institutions in which they may be expressed and preserved.’ (2005: 189).

This idea of shared values nurturing national identity is explored with the study of Scottish young party members in the next chapter. Henderson and McEwen focus on nationalist movements (‘the politics of nation-building’). Their analysis is therefore very helpful for the present thesis. In the future, it would be worth studying the relationship between shared values and national identity in nations which are already independent, namely nation-states. Perhaps the nurturing of national identity by shared values which is highlighted by Henderson and McEwen in Scotland and Quebec is also visible in states or nations-states. In that case, rather than playing a role in nation-building, it would probably help strengthen and maintain the identities of existing nations-states.

To fully understand Ailsa Henderson and Nicola McEwen’s viewpoint, let us see how they approach the concept of national identity. According to them, national identity is not a given, it is a construct which can change. It is ‘made’ (Henderson and McEwen, 2005: 173). It is ‘constituted and reconstituted within political and social discourse’ (2005: 176). Hence their constructivist approach to that notion. It is not by chance that Henderson’s article published in 1999 in *Scottish Affairs* was entitled ‘Political Constructions of National Identity in Scotland and Quebec’ (Henderson, 1999). In her paper, she argues that a sense of national belonging originates from individuals’ appropriation of the values conveyed by the nation they live in. If a person believes in national values, then they are able to identify with that nation and develop their sense of belonging to it.

When it comes to Scotland in particular, Henderson and McEwen state that the SNP uses Scottish cultural identity as a tool in the service of their nationalist cause<sup>288</sup>. In that sense, Henderson speaks of ‘politicised’ national identity (1999: 122, 125, 127). She and Nicola McEwen demonstrate that national identity is constructed and transformed by political parties through their discourse about the values shared by the members of a given nation<sup>289</sup>. As explained in the next chapter, I agree with their view. And I go further by analysing the origins of that discourse, namely young SNP members’ understanding of their national identity. Given that thoughts precede oral discourse, in order to study SNP discourse on national identity, it is necessary to examine thoughts about it in the party, namely members’ personal thoughts. Hence the analysis of SNP youth’s thoughts on Scottishness and Britishness (see Chapter Four).

When it comes to the relationship between national identity and political discourse, let us focus, for a moment, upon Rudolf De Cillia, Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak’s research. In a paper published in 1999, De Cillia et al. examine how national identity is constructed in discourse. Hence their constructivist approach to the concept of national identity. Like Benedict Anderson, they argue that nations are ‘mental constructs’ (De Cillia et al., 1999: 153).

They have studied the case of Austria. They conclude that, whether for the purpose of national sameness (the identity shared by the members of a nation, which gives the nation its singularity) or difference (what distinguishes a nation from the others), national identity is constructed through discourse. They argue that:

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<sup>288</sup> They show that it is also the case in Quebec. See Henderson (1999), Henderson and McEwen (2005).

<sup>289</sup> This might make us think of Pierre Bourdieu’s analysis of the part played by states in the construction of national identities: ‘Through classification systems (especially according to sex and age) inscribed in law, through bureaucratic procedures, educational structures and social rituals (particularly salient in the case of Japan and England), the state moulds mental structures and imposes common principles of vision and division (...). And it thereby contributes to the construction of what is commonly designated as national identity (or, in a more traditional language, national character).’ (Bourdieu, 1994: 7 ff, as cited in De Cillia et al., 1999: 156). See Bourdieu, P. (1994). Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field. *Sociological Theory*, 12(1), 1-18.

‘national identities – conceived as specific forms of social identities – are *discursively*, by means of language and other semiotic systems, *produced, reproduced, transformed and destructed*<sup>290</sup>. The idea of a specific national community becomes reality in the realm of convictions and beliefs through reifying, figurative discourses continually launched by politicians<sup>291</sup>, intellectuals and media people and disseminated through the systems of education, schooling, mass communication, militarization as well as through sports meetings<sup>292</sup>.’ (1999: 153).

In their paper, De Cillia et al. focus on linguistics and show that linguistic units, like the personal pronoun ‘we’, contribute to the formation of national identity. They also highlight the role of tropes like metonymies, synecdoches, and personification. They specify that: ‘Metonymies enable the speakers to dissolve individuals, and hence volitions and responsibilities, or to keep them in the semantic background. Abstract entities – as for example nations – are given a human form through the use of personification (anthropomorphization).’ (1999: 165). As for synecdoches, De Cillia et al. note that they ‘generalize and essentialize stereotypes that apply to a whole group of persons.’ (1999: 165). Also, they shed light on the ‘inculcation of nationality through state, school, media and family socialization’ (1999: 169). In the last chapter of the present thesis, we shall see that the ‘inculcation of nationality’ occurs through politics as well (through party membership in the case of the YSI and SNP Students). In this respect, the present study builds on De Cillia et al.’s findings to explore YSI and SNP Students’ discourse about Scottishness and Britishness (see Chapter Four below).

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<sup>290</sup> Emphasis in original.

<sup>291</sup> This echoes Henderson and McEwen’s ideas.

<sup>292</sup> For further reading about signs of national identity through sports, see Michael Skey’s work (2011). See also Billig (1995: 119-125).

Before examining De Cillia et al.'s work, we have seen that Henderson and McEwen argue for the politicisation of national identity. National identity is notably used in the context of nation-building. In this regard, Henderson and McEwen point out: 'Identity construction is a political process that serves a political purpose.' (2005: 173). Hence the relationship between politics and national identity. The two researchers note:

'[s]hared values nurtured within political discourse serve three different purposes: the pursuit of ideological or policy goals; the mobilization of the population; and the promotion of inter-regional solidarity and identity. In the first case, political actors often seek to promote a particular policy by aligning it with the supposed values of the population.' (2005: 174).

As demonstrated in the next section and in the last chapter of this thesis, the first case identified by Henderson and McEwen may apply to the SNP. Scottish independence and social-democratic policies seem to be interrelated.

Before exploring this, let us concentrate on Henderson and McEwen's study of the relationship between shared values and national identity in Scotland. They work on both Quebec and Scotland. These two geopolitical entities are often compared when it comes to nationalism<sup>293</sup>. While Scottish nationalism is based on socio-economic and political/constitutional arguments, in Quebec it is rather based on demands for the recognition of a distinct language and a distinct culture. Nonetheless, neither of the two independence

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<sup>293</sup> See for instance Keating, M. (1996). *Nations Against the State. The New Politics of Nationalism in Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland*. Basingstoke: Macmillan; Hamilton, P. (2004). *Converging Nationalisms: Québec, Scotland, and Wales in Comparative Perspective. Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, (10)4, 657-86; Henderson, A. (2007). *Hierarchies of Belonging: National Identity and Political Culture in Scotland and Quebec*. Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press; Kennedy, J. (2013). *Liberal Nationalisms: Empire, State and Civil Society in Scotland and Quebec*. Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

movements focus on ethnicity/race. In spite of the differences between the two, they are both considered civic nationalisms.

In their paper, Henderson and McEwen highlight the similarities between Scotland and Quebec when it comes to the values shared by their people, as part of Scottish and Canadian identities. For example, they quote the 1991 Spicer Commission report: ‘Canada is a society of freedom, tolerance and compassion... Canada is a country that believes in freedom, dignity and respect, equality and fair treatment, and an opportunity to participate.’ (2005: 178)<sup>294</sup>. Those values are perfectly similar to those defended by the SNP in Scotland. As has been shown in Chapter Two, young SNP members believe in social justice, equality and fairness. They campaign for a society where everyone can flourish. This is confirmed by the analysis of their conceptions of Scottishness in the next chapter.

Then, the scholars focus on two centre-left parties: the Liberal Party in Quebec, and the SNP in Scotland. They show that both parties insist that Quebec and Scotland are societies based on social-democratic values. The fact that they are centre-left parties suggests a possible link between party family and national identity: the way political parties define the identity of their nation may depend on the party family to which they belong. This point is further developed in the following chapter.

When it comes to the independence movement in Quebec, Henderson and McEwen concentrate on the Parti Québécois and the Bloc Québécois. They quote the latter party in regard to Quebec and its people:

‘The Quebec people show a deeply rooted commitment to and respect for liberty and *equality*. They are *tolerant*, peace-loving and concerned for the

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<sup>294</sup> See Citizens’ Forum on Canada’s Future. (1991). *Citizens’ Forum on Canada’s Future: Report to the people and government of Canada*. Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services. The Spicer Commission aims to ‘identify and defend the values that bind Canadians’ (Henderson and McEwen, 2005: 178).

*well-being* of their fellow man... a resolutely *outward-looking* people. Quebecers are traders... *open-minded* people, they welcome new ideas, new trends and new ways of doing things. (Bloc Québécois, 1998)<sup>295</sup> (Henderson and McEwen, 2005: 182)<sup>296</sup>.

That quotation clearly echoes the way the SNP portrays Scottish society and Scottish people. They also emphasise the tolerance, open-mindedness and outward-looking character of Scots. And they insist that they work for equality amongst them, as well as their well-being<sup>297</sup>. The Bloc Québécois and the SNP thus define Quebecois and Scottish societies similarly. In this respect, taking account of Kymlicka's viewpoint, it may be argued that Quebecois and Scottish national identities are not distinct identities in that they rely on the same, universal, values. To an extent, are they *national* identities? Chapter Four aims to answer that question with regard to Scotland.

Let us focus on the values promoted by the SNP in particular, and their link with Scottishness. In their paper, Ailsa Henderson and Nicola McEwen shed light on the relationship between politics and national identity in Scotland, first during Thatcherism. They argue that, in the 1980s, Scottishness tended to embody the political opposition to Thatcher's policy. They demonstrate that in opposition to the Conservative Party and the Britishness that was associated with it, Labour and the SNP promoted a Scottish identity based on values such as social justice and equality. In other words, by focusing on those values, both parties emphasised the distinction between Scotland (left-wing and social-democratic), on the one hand, and the rest of the UK, more particularly England (right-wing and conservative), on the other hand. In that

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<sup>295</sup> See Bloc Québécois. (1998). *Québec... on the road to nationhood*. Quebec: Bloc Québécois.

<sup>296</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>297</sup> This is reinforced by the analysis of young SNP members' conceptions of Scotland and Scottishness in Chapter Four.

sense, national identity and socio-political values were inter-related. Scottishness was not associated with any ethnic or racial features. Instead, it was associated with shared values. As Henderson and McEwen put it, '[o]pposition parties, particularly Labour and the SNP, nurtured and articulated collectivist values as "Scottish" values and a symbolic reflection of Scottish identity. *Being Scottish was considered to reflect a belief in social justice and egalitarianism*<sup>298</sup>.' (2005: 184). On the other hand, the 'essence of Britishness was redefined as self-reliance, thrift, enterprise and personal responsibility – the essence of Thatcherism'<sup>299</sup> (2005: 184)<sup>300</sup>.

Besides drawing a link between national identity and the values promoted by Labour and the SNP, on the one hand, and the Conservatives, on the other hand, Ailsa Henderson and Nicola McEwen highlight the correlation between the decline of the Conservative Party in Scotland at the time, and the strengthening of Scottish identity. They explain that:

'the prevailing collective conceptions of Britishness and Scottishness diverged in the 1980s, undermining the extent to which Scots could feel Scottish and British at the same time. The consistent failure of the electoral system to reflect political preferences undermined consent for the existing state structure and fuelled the demand for a Scottish Parliament. The decline in the Conservative vote, the strengthening of Scottish national identity and the demand for self-government were thus mutually reinforcing factors.'

(2005: 184).

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<sup>298</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>299</sup> Further analysis can be found in Mitchell, J. (1990). *Conservatives and the Union*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; Hall, S. (1983). The great moving right show. In S. Hall and M. Jacques (eds.). *The politics of Thatcherism*. London: Lawrence and Wishart; and McEwen, N. (2002). State welfare nationalism: The territorial impact of welfare state development in Scotland. *Regional and Federal Studies*, 12(1), 66-90.

<sup>300</sup> In Chapter Four, we shall see if Scottishness and Britishness are still the same in the SNP today.

Hence the idea that the 1980s were a turning point in terms of national identification for the Scottish people. For Henderson and McEwen, it is at that moment that Scots started to see themselves as more Scottish than British. The reason for this is the British Conservative government in the Thatcher era, and its detachment from values in which Scottish people believed. Scotland appeared to be more and more distinct from the rest of the UK through the defense of social-democratic values. Therefore, Scottishness was, at that time, rather politically- and constitutionally-related. It aligned with shared values of social justice and egalitarianism on the one hand, and went hand in hand with the constitutional issue of independence on the other hand. Henderson and McEwen argue that the SNP ‘attempts to align national characteristics’ with its ‘political and policy objectives’ (2005: 185)<sup>301</sup>. In Chapter Four, we shall see if this is still the case today.

We have seen that Henderson and McEwen analysed the relationship between Scottish identity and the values promoted by the SNP. They did likewise with the Conservative Party and the Labour Party. Here are two quotes from Margaret Thatcher and Donald Dewar, respectively:

‘Tory values are in tune with everything that is finest in the Scottish character... The values of hard work, self-reliance, thrift, enterprise – the relishing of challenges, the seizing of opportunities. *That’s what the Tory Party stands for – that’s what Scotland stands for.*’<sup>302</sup> (reproduced in Harris, 1997<sup>303</sup>, as cited in Henderson and McEwen, 2005: 184)

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<sup>301</sup> Henderson and McEwen illustrate that point with the example of the 1999 SNP manifesto. See Scottish National Party. (1999). *Enterprise, compassion, democracy*. Edinburgh: Scottish National Party.

<sup>302</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>303</sup> See Harris, R. (1997). *The collected speeches of Margaret Thatcher*. London: HarperCollins.



‘For me, what makes our country special is not just the beauty of our land but the strength of our values. It is a country where equality of opportunity and social justice are central to our sense of self. *These traditional Scottish values are also the values of Scottish New Labour...* Our vision is Scottish solutions for Scottish problems built on the solid rock of Scottish values.’<sup>304</sup> (Scottish Labour Party, 1998<sup>305</sup>, as cited in Henderson and McEwen, 2005: 185).

Interestingly, Thatcher and Dewar<sup>306</sup> related what they consider to be Scottish values with the essence of their respective political parties (see words in italics). They appropriated these values, which they viewed as part of Scottish characteristics, i.e. Scottishness. The perception of the Scottish character by the Labour Party is quite similar to the definition given by the SNP. Namely, Scottishness is seen to be based on values like social justice and equality. To an extent, it may be said that there is a consensus between the SNP and the Scottish Labour Party regarding the definition of Scottish identity<sup>307</sup>. Given that Labour and the SNP are left-wing parties<sup>308</sup>, it may be argued that there is a relationship between party family and perceptions of national identity. In other words, a left-wing party would define it differently from a right-wing party. This hypothesis is tested with the study of Scottish young party members in the next chapter.

Henderson and McEwen conclude that, in Scotland and Quebec, political parties promote ‘shared values as attributes of a particular national identity’ (2005: 187). They specify:

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<sup>304</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>305</sup> See Scottish Labour Party. (1998). *A lifetime opportunity*. Glasgow: Scottish Labour Party.

<sup>306</sup> In 1998, Donald Dewar was Secretary of State for Scotland. Afterwards, he became First Minister of Scotland.

<sup>307</sup> Henderson and McEwen note that after devolution, the Scottish Labour Party started to insist that the values that are part of Scottish character and characteristics are also shared by the people of the rest of the UK. In that sense, Labour started to oppose the SNP with regard to independence. Later, in 2014, it was thus with no surprise that Labour defended the Union in the Better Together camp.

<sup>308</sup> The SNP is centre-left.

‘specific values are considered to symbolize the nation, and to be a reflection of the bonds uniting the people of a state or sub-state national community’ (2005: 187).

Let us examine the supposed SNP’s politicisation of identity in further details. Henderson insists on the distinction between cultural identity and political identity. She specifies that: ‘When invoked in the name of a political project (...), national identity distinguishes itself from cultural identity.’ (1999: 125). For her, political parties with a nationalist objective, like the SNP, transform cultural identity into a political identity which is related to their nationalist agenda. They use that politicised identity to legitimise their claims for independence. Interestingly, Henderson argues that while cultural identity should be seen as inclusive, political identity should be regarded as exclusive. She illustrates her point with the examples of Scotland and Quebec:

‘In their efforts to advance the national cause, political parties in Scotland and Quebec have manipulated cultural identity into a political tool, articulating a framework of civic values and national characteristics that justify greater autonomy. In so doing, they have created an exclusive, and admittedly powerful identity at the expense of non-nationalists’ (1999: 125).

Thus, Henderson suggests that Scots who are against independence cannot identify with, and then, are excluded from, the political, national identity created by the SNP to strengthen their independence movement. Importantly, this implies that national identity is part of the party’s campaign for independence. As will be shown in the next section, for the referendum in 2014, the SNP detached themselves from the idea of national identity. At least, they insisted that they did not want to achieve Scottish independence for identity reasons, in the sense of an ethnic

identity. It shall also be demonstrated that the type of nationalism promoted by the SNP is civic and focuses on socio-political, socio-economic and constitutional issues rather than the defense of ethno-cultural views. As Henderson notes, the party fights for Scottish interests rather than Scottish identity (Henderson, 1999: 134, 137). Namely, its goal is to give power back to Scotland, not the defence of Scottishness. They want to appear to be the only political party that defends Scottish interests. For them, the only way to do so is to break away from the rest of the United Kingdom. According to Henderson, the fact that the SNP aim to present themselves as the only party standing for Scotland and Scottish interests, ‘in addition to the traditional pillars of identity<sup>309</sup>, has produced a sense of Scottish identity driven less by culture than the perception of political injustice’ (1999: 136-137). Hence, for Henderson, Scottishness is politicised by the SNP in that it is related to their wish to put an end to the democratic deficit<sup>310</sup> experienced by Scotland in the UK. In this regard, she adds: ‘The Westminster Parliament, its unitary style of government, and the former Conservative government<sup>311</sup> are depicted as anti-Scottish in their economic and political viewpoints.<sup>312</sup>’ (1999:137). Tellingly, Henderson concludes that ‘it is in its definition of Conservative party members, unionists, and those who would place themselves on the right of the political spectrum as anti-Scottish that the SNP contributes to its definition of Scottish identity.’ (1999: 138). Hence, once more, the idea that the SNP’s vision of Scottish identity is political, and it derives from the party’s opposition to the British government, namely the Conservatives. That point has been developed by Murray Stewart Leith (see the section

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<sup>309</sup> Henderson identifies three ‘pillars’ of Scottish society: the education system, the legal system, and Presbyterianism (see Henderson, 1999: 130).

<sup>310</sup> As noted in the introduction to this work, according to the SNP, Scotland’s voice is not heard or not heard enough in the political decision-making process that takes place in the British parliament, at Westminster. The SNP notably say that money is given mainly to England, which is the biggest country, and that the majority of the political decisions taken at Westminster are in favour of England as well, while very often in disfavour of Scotland.

<sup>311</sup> Henderson wrote her paper in 1999. At the time, the United Kingdom was governed by the New Labour of Tony Blair. The ‘former Conservative government’ to which she refers, is that of John Major, Thatcher’s successor at the head of the Conservatives from 1990 to 1997.

<sup>312</sup> See Scottish National Party. (1996). *Anti-Scottish Tories*. Edinburgh: Scottish National Party.

dedicated to his research below). And it is also to be confirmed by the analysis of young SNP members' conceptions of national identity in the last chapter of this thesis.

Thus, at first sight, it could be argued that SNP nationalism is devoid of national identity. Yet, Henderson's research shows that it is more complex and subtler than that. For her, national identity is present in the party's discourse: it is a political version of Scottishness which is used and promoted. As explained in the next chapter, the results of the present study reinforce that view.

Henderson specifies that the political or 'politicised' national identity promoted by the SNP in Scotland is characterised by its civic feature, given that it is related to civic values. She speaks of 'the civic values engendered in the content and treatment of politicised national identity' (1999: 127). The following sections show that the SNP defend social-democratic values like social justice and egalitarianism. For Henderson, there is an alignment of Scottish identity with those values and Scottish institutions in the independence campaign led by the SNP. It is notably the case for education, which is seen as a 'pillar' (1999: 136) of the Scottish nation. Henderson identifies the legal system and Presbyterianism as two other 'traditional pillars of identity' (1999: 136) in Scotland.

In summation, for Henderson and McEwen, national identity is something which can change, transform itself, and is not a given. They argue that the values shared by the members of a nation strengthen national identity and ensure its continued existence. If one assimilates these values, one identifies with the nation associated with them and, thus, is able to have a sense of national identity. In other words, a sense of belonging to a nation – therefore, a sense of national identity – can be achieved through national values. They also argue that national identity is politicised in the sense that it is used by political parties to reach their goals. They shed light on the use of Scottish identity in the SNP's campaign for independence. Importantly,

they highlight the relationship between such a politicised Scottishness and civic, social-democratic values promoted by the SNP. Hence the idea of a socio-political version of Scottishness.

## **2) The SNP and the Socio-political Version of National Identity**

As has been said, the socio-political version of national identity has to be understood as an identity based on social and political values (like civic values such as social justice and egalitarianism). It is different from an ethnocultural version of national identity, based on ethnic and/or cultural aspects.

### **a) ‘Political Discourse and National Identity in Scotland’**

#### **(Leith and Soule, 2012)**

In order to examine political discourse on national identity in Scotland, Murray Stewart Leith and Daniel P.J. Soule conducted interviews with Scottish political elite. They interviewed over 60 Scottish MPs and MSPs from all parties, in the period running from 2003 to 2009. Their aim was to explore politicians’ perceptions and understandings of national identity and Scotland<sup>313</sup>. The present thesis draws inspiration from this survey, taking account of young SNP members’ discourse in particular (see Chapter Four).

Leith and Soule found out that a majority of the elites they interviewed felt Scottish only, rather than Scottish and British or British only (Leith and Soule, 2012: 124). Yet, they note that some interviewees mentioned other identities, including a European identity.

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<sup>313</sup> For anonymity, they reported interview responses without specifying the political party of which each interviewee was a member. Thus, here are the results of their interviews regardless of political parties and positions.

Interestingly, they note that some of them emphasised their European identity besides their Scottishness, more than their British identity. In other words, some interviewees felt Scottish and European, rather than Scottish and British. In this respect, Interviewee 42 declared: ‘I’m much more comfortable being a European than I am being a Brit’ (Leith and Soule, 2012: 125). Others, like Interviewee 21, said they were Scottish, British and European: ‘I’m a British citizen, my nationality is Scots. I’m also a citizen of Europe.’ (2012: 125). As for Britishness, a minority of interviewees stated that they were British only. Even, Leith and Soule explain that

‘a significant number rejected any sense of being British, many on a national and personal level: “I would never see myself as British” (Interview 8); “There is no such thing as Britain... [it] doesn’t mean much as a nation” (Interview 12); “I’ve never considered myself British and I don’t quite know why” (Interview 11); and “I don’t accept British, as to me it has always had connotations I am not comfortable with” (Interview 47)’ (2012, 125-126).

Leith and Soule add that: ‘From their perspectives, Britishness has several aspects: it is not a nation at all; it is an alien identity<sup>314</sup> to which they cannot relate; or it is an identity that contains aspects of belonging to which they do not wish to relate.’ (2012: 126). In this regard, the scholars highlight that a great part of the political elite define Scottishness as ‘not being British (or occasionally English<sup>315</sup>)’ (2012: 127).

It is worth adding that a majority of those interviewed by Leith and Soule perceive the Scottish nation as inclusive. This reminds us of the emphasis on multiculturalism and the inclusive feature of Scottish society in SNP manifestos, as shown above. The civic/territorial

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<sup>314</sup> As shall be demonstrated in Chapter Four, this is exactly what a young SNP member told me.

<sup>315</sup> As noted by Leith and Soule, it was not rare that Britishness was associated with Englishness.

dimension of Scottishness was also stressed by a majority of interviewees<sup>316</sup>. Here are a few examples of statements:

“I think living in Scotland gives someone the opportunity to consider themselves Scottish if they wish. I think if you want to consider yourself Scottish, you should have that opportunity” (Interview 19). Another interviewee stated “you can be... not of Scottish origin but have come to live in Scotland and you’ve taken on the Scottish so... it can be either nature or nurture<sup>317</sup>, I suppose” (Interview 14) and another simply stated “Scotland makes you Scottish” (Interview 16).’ (Leith and Soule, 2012: 134).<sup>318</sup>

The two scholars identified differences between public opinion and political elites in the way they view Scotland and Scottishness<sup>319</sup>. They explain that:

‘Unlike the masses, who place more non-civic criteria on the nation, the interviewees are very inclusive in their vision of Scottishness. Where the masses, by a clear majority, see birth as an essential aspect of being Scottish this is not a view shared by these elected elites from Scotland. A notable divide between the mass opinion and the elite opinion thus emerges, especially with regard to country of origin.’ (2012: 135).

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<sup>316</sup> Leith and Soule note that a minority of political elites mentioned historical, birth, linguistic, cultural elements as constitutive of Scottishness.

<sup>317</sup> This echoes the usual academic debate about national identity: ‘nature’ refers to the essentialist viewpoint, while ‘nurture’ is in line with constructivist theories.

<sup>318</sup> In their conclusions, Leith and Soule relevantly highlight a paradox regarding Scottishness. Basing their argument on what a majority of the elites they interviewed declared, they say:

‘To be Scottish is to be distinct within the other national groups of the United Kingdom and to have a strong sense of identity; however, the borders of that identity are permeable and any individual, from another group within the United Kingdom or beyond, may choose to become a member of the Scottish nation if they wish.’ (2012: 137).

<sup>319</sup> Leith and Soule have analysed public discourse on national identity as well. See Leith and Soule, 2012, Chapter 5: Mass Perceptions of National Identity: Evidence from Survey Data, 81-119.

Thus, one may wonder whether there is a relationship between the fact that individuals are involved/not involved in politics, and their way of perceiving their national identity. Here, it seems that being a political elite goes hand in hand with having a civic conception of Scotland and Scottishness, which is less/not the case amongst Scottish people as a whole. In this regard, in the frame of future research, it would be worth comparing understandings of Scotland and Scottishness of Scottish young party members with those of young Scots in the rest of the population (see the conclusions of the present thesis).

Therefore, as Leith and Soule rightly state, while Scottish public opinion tends to challenge modernist theories of Scottishness (a civic/territorial sense of identity, regardless of individuals' origins; see the dedicated section above), elites' perceptions tend to align with that modernist school of thought. In Chapter Four, we shall see whether young SNP members' conceptions of Scotland and Scottishness are also in line with the modernist part of the literature.

In the next chapter, I compare Leith and Soule's findings with the results of the interviews I had with young SNP members. Also, I analyse the relationship between understandings of Scotland and Scottishness and political party family and positions. Leith and Soule's findings seem to indicate a consensus about the Scottish nation and Scottishness amongst the political elites of all parties (despite a few different viewpoints). Chapter Four shows that the story is slightly different amongst young party members.

Murray Stewart Leith has analysed the Scottish National Party's discourse about national identity in particular (Leith, 2008; Leith and Soule, 2012). He studied SNP manifestos from 1970 to 2010 and noticed how the party's discourse about Scottishness and Britishness changed over time. While, until the 1980s, the SNP's arguments in favour of Scottish



independence were relatively anti-British and anti-English, since that decade, the SNP have campaigned for independence exclusively on socio-economic arguments.

### *The 1970 Manifesto*<sup>320</sup>

Murray Stewart Leith chose to analyse SNP manifestos since the 1970s because ‘since 1970 the SNP has constantly returned MPs in British general elections’ (Leith, 2008: 83). It corresponds with the rise of the party as a political force in Scotland and the UK. He points out that in the 1970s, the SNP was a rather anti-English party. However, Leith notes that, in the 1970 SNP manifesto, ‘[t]he identity created was Scotland as a territorial entity, with the political focus on independence. There was no attempt to define Scottishness in purely national or ethnic/exclusive terms.’ (2008: 86). Hence, once again, the civic/territorial character of SNP nationalism.

### *The 1974 Manifesto*<sup>321</sup>

Similarly, Leith underlines the territorial emphasis in the 1974 manifesto. And, again, there were no explicit references to Scottishness. Yet, for him, a sense of Scottish identity was nonetheless conveyed by the manifesto. He argues that: ‘The SNP did not employ a strong sense of Scottishness, but the significant rhetorical presence of Scotland as a territory within the text clearly sought to serve the same purpose. There was a creation of a sense of belonging that encompassed and clearly fixed on a national dimension and this came through in several areas.’ (2008: 86). Thus, for Leith, it is by emphasising the Scottish nation in territorial terms that the 1974 manifesto conveyed a sense of Scottishness.

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<sup>320</sup> See Scottish National Party. (1970). *The New Scotland*

<sup>321</sup> See Scottish National Party. (1974a). *Scotland's Future: SNP Manifesto*

He also highlights cultural arguments in the text. Leith shows that, in the 1970s, the party fought for the survival of Scottish culture in the face of what they saw as the anglicisation of Scottish society. The 1974 manifesto

‘condemned the “anglicisation” that was taking place in education and argued that “Scots children” must engage with “their own traditions and [with] the wider heritage they share” (SNP, 1974a, p. 28). Such [an example] painted the English as the other, in historical and cultural terms. Whatever Scottishness included, it did not, at this point in time, include the English.’  
(Leith, 2008: 86).

That quotation suggests that for the SNP at that time, England threatened Scottishness and Scottish culture. In September 1974, a supplement to the manifesto was published. Leith notes that overall, its tone remained anti-English and, therefore, exclusive. The SNP’s vision of England was clearly negative. Tellingly, Scotland was designated as ‘an exploited province’ (SNP, 1974b<sup>322</sup>, as cited in Leith, 2008: 86). The adjective ‘exploited’ is quite strong. To an extent, even more than dominion, it may convey an idea of colonisation or a sense that Scotland was England’s slave. Hence the highly negative view of England from the SNP in that text.

### *The 1983 Manifesto*

Then, as noted earlier, in the 1980s, the SNP’s discourse about the UK and England started to change. Taking the example of the 1983 manifesto, Leith demonstrates that a shift occurred towards more inclusivity. This was seen with the SNP’s arguments regarding citizenship: ‘The right to Scottish citizenship for all those resident in Scotland upon

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<sup>322</sup> See Scottish National Party (1974b). *Supplement to the Election Manifesto of the Scottish National Party – September 1974*

independence, or born (or with a parent born) in Scotland, and to such others as the Scottish Parliament may decide.’ (SNP, 1983<sup>323</sup>: 3, as cited in Leith, 2008: 87). As Leith rightly notes, ethnicity is observable here: people could be Scottish citizens only if they were born or had a parent born in Scotland. This was a much different discourse to that of the SNP today, now promoting immigration and multiculturalism. Leith also highlights that the SNP still denounced an English threat on Scottish culture and education. Those negative perceptions of England were accompanied by the fact that ‘[t]he English were portrayed as the other’ (Leith, 2008: 87). Nonetheless, as underlined by Leith, the SNP’s arguments remained overall territorial.

#### *The 1987 Manifesto*<sup>324</sup>

Leith sees the 1987 manifesto as a turning point in terms of SNP rhetoric. The anti-English stance of previous manifestos was much less visible. Instead, quite negative views of the Conservatives appeared.

As for history and culture, the scholar notes that references to Scottish history were limited.

#### *The 1992 Manifesto*<sup>325</sup>

The 1992 manifesto ends with a message from Sean Connery, who, according to Leith, embodies Scottishness as ‘a Scotsman known worldwide’ (Leith, 2008: 88). Importantly, the scholar underlines several changes when it comes to the perceptions of Scotland. It was now seen as a progressive and multicultural nation. Tellingly, Leith points out: ‘The focus was now firmly on Scotland, rather than Scottishness. Identity had become the people who lived *in*<sup>326</sup> Scotland and was wide-ranging and inclusive, going beyond those simply born into Scotland

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<sup>323</sup> See Scottish National Party. (1983). *SNP Manifesto 1983: Choose Scotland – The Challenge of Independence*

<sup>324</sup> See Scottish National Party. (1987). *Play the Scottish Card*

<sup>325</sup> See Scottish National Party. (1992). *Independence in Europe - Make it Happen Now*

<sup>326</sup> Emphasis in the original text.

or Scottish families.’ (2008: 88). This echoes the civic definition of Scottish nationalism: living in Scotland makes you Scottish (see the civic, territorial definition of Scottish nationalism, notably by David McCrone).

#### *The 1997 Manifesto*

The territorial dimension of Scottishness is also to be found in the 1997 manifesto. Leith quotes it: ‘A Scotland that doesn’t ask where you’ve come from, but where we are all going together’ (SNP, 1997: 7<sup>327</sup>, as cited in Leith, 2008: 88). Here, the emphasis on the civic, territorial and inclusive features of Scottishness is clear.

#### *The 2001 Manifesto*<sup>328</sup>

The idea of Scotland as a multicultural and inclusive society was emphasised in the 2001 manifesto as well. Once again, Leith notes the absence of ethnic arguments. The emphasis was on Scotland as a place. Thus, [t]he SNP was clearly attempting to widen its scope and bring in individuals who might identify with Scotland.’ (Leith, 2008: 89).

#### *The 2005 Manifesto*<sup>329</sup>

Finally, the 2005 manifesto was even more civic in tone. As Leith notes, there were no references nor ‘appeals to’ (2008: 89) Scottishness. Once again, the SNP emphasised Scotland as a place of living. Relevantly, Leith concludes that: ‘Continued reinforcement of Scotland as a place, rather than any ethnic or exclusive-based belonging, was clearly the message.’ (2008: 89).

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<sup>327</sup> See Scottish National Party. (1997). *YES WE CAN Win the Best for Scotland. The SNP General Election Manifesto 1997*

<sup>328</sup> See Scottish National Party. (2001). *We Stand for Scotland*

<sup>329</sup> See Scottish National Party. (2005). *If Scotland matters to you, make it matter in May*

In conclusion, thanks to his analysis of SNP manifestos from the 1970s to the 2000s, Leith sheds light on the SNP's change in tone and rhetoric with regard to Scottishness. While manifestos had a relatively ethnic/ethnocultural dimension in the 1970s, with a focus on England in negative terms, at the end of the 1980s, they started to be more and more civic, with a territorial focus on Scotland as an inclusive society. As Leith shows, manifestos now completely focus on policy and the constitutional issue of Scotland's place in the UK, not on a sense of Scottishness. Very interestingly, Leith argues that it is by focusing on Scotland as a place that a sense of identity is conveyed by SNP manifestos: 'The contemporary SNP, through its manifestos, projects belonging on to the idea of Scotland as a territorial unit, not as any specific identity. *It is the linking with the place that provides a sense of identity*<sup>330</sup>.' (2008: 90). Now, let us see whether this is also the case in their elite's discourse.

To conclude, Leith insists that in the discourse of the SNP, national identity is presented as territorial, not ethnic. The emphasis is on 'Scotland the place rather than Scotland as a people' (Leith, 2008: 89). Hence, again, the civic character of SNP nationalism (see McCrone, Mitchell et al., Henderson and McEwen, Duclos, Camp-Pietrain's arguments above). More generally speaking, according to Leith and Soule's research, that view is shared by a majority of the political elites from Scotland.

As shown in Chapter Four, the present study overall correlates with that of Leith and Soule. And, by focusing on young SNP members' discourse on Scottishness and Britishness, it complements their conclusions.

## **b) SNP Civic Nationalism**

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<sup>330</sup> My emphasis.

*Minority nationalisms are dismissed as archaic, narrow-minded and “ethnic.” I have already sought to combat this prejudice in my work on minority nationalisms and the state where I argued that in many cases they represent modernising and democratising movements in the face of archaic states. — Keating, 1996: xii*

In the second part of this chapter, we have seen that scholars like David McCrone argue for the civic characteristic of Scottish nationalism. The present section shows that scholars also agree that the Scottish National Party is a civic nationalist party. Civic nationalism is claimed by the party itself, its leaders and members too. It does not campaign for Scottish independence for ethnic or cultural reasons, but to break away from the rest of the UK which, in their eyes, does not stand for Scotland nor Scottish interests. Let us focus in detail on the civic feature of their nationalist arguments.

#### *National Identity in the 2014 Referendum Campaign*

The 2014 referendum campaign illustrates the SNP’s lack of identity arguments. A reason for this seems to be that Scottish national identity is unchallenged; it is and has always been strong. Several Scottish nationalism scholars agree on that point: if Scottish national identity has been hardly mentioned, it is because Scotland as a nation is not questioned. In this respect, Michael Keating explains: ‘Compared with other nationalist movements, the SNP devotes little effort to nation building, the assumption being that the Scottish nation is an undisputed fact merely requiring constitutional change for its realization.’ (Keating, 2012: 117). While Scotland’s status as a nation is not questioned, therefore, Scottish identity is not discussed either. Murray Stewart Leith argues that: ‘In terms of national identity, Scottishness is habitually not formally envisaged, but is rarely, if ever, questioned. This conceptualization of identity as a basic bedrock, unquestioned, yet omni-present, illustrates the banality of

Scottishness and Scotland today.’ (Leith, 2010: 299). The idea of an ‘omni-present’, banal, Scottishness, clearly echoes Billig’s theory of ‘banal nationalism’ (Billig, 1995). David McCrone also emphasised the omni-presence of Scottish identity when I interviewed him at the University of Edinburgh in June 2018<sup>331</sup>.

Therefore, it seems that one of the reasons why the SNP did not talk about Scottish identity during the independence debate in 2014 is that Scottishness is not questioned by Scotland’s union with the rest of the UK. It is strong, taken for granted and firmly anchored in Scots’ daily lives.

French scholar Edwige Camp-Pietrain also tried to explain the absence of identity arguments in the SNP’s campaign for the 2014 independence referendum. She explains:

‘The SNP had a discourse centered on economic and social themes, and on “people living in Scotland”, refraining from using the term “Scottish”. The challenge for the nationalists was to avoid any shift towards ethnic lines, their leaders being careful to describe themselves as Scottish and British. They wanted to demonstrate that it was necessary to achieve independence not to defend a people, but to promote distinct "values", in particular social democracy.’ (Camp-Pietrain, 2014: 69)<sup>332</sup>.

Besides the fact that Scottish identity remains unquestioned, according to Camp-Pietrain, the Yes camp has avoided speaking of that identity in order not to lock the Scots into a separate ethnic category. Perhaps by insisting on Scottishness as an identity separate from those of other

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<sup>331</sup> This was an interview about Scottish nationalism and national identity. It was conducted on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018, at the University of Edinburgh.

<sup>332</sup> Original text in French: ‘Le SNP tenait un discours centré sur des thèmes économiques et sociaux, et sur les ‘personnes vivant en Ecosse’, se gardant d’employer le terme ‘Ecosais’. L’enjeu, pour les nationalistes, était d’éviter tout basculement vers des critères ethniques, leurs dirigeants prenant soin de se décrire comme écossais et britanniques. Ils souhaitaient démontrer qu’il fallait accéder à l’indépendance non pas pour défendre un peuple, mais pour promouvoir des ‘valeurs’ distinctes, en particulier la social-démocratie.’

British people, in an attempt to become independent, the SNP was afraid of stigmatising Scots as a racist population towards the rest of the UK. They may have conveyed a sense of Scottish exclusivity with regards to the rest of the UK. Dealing with economic and social issues instead, avoided that problem. What is also important to note is that Camp-Pietrain, like Henderson and McEwen (see the section dedicated to the relationship between national identity and values above), argues that the SNP campaigns for independence in the name of *values*, including social democratic values. This is to be confirmed by the analysis of young Scots' SNP membership in the last chapter of this work.

While academia sees Scotland and Scottishness as unchallenged, so does politicians. In the Yes camp, Nicola Sturgeon, Deputy First Minister of Scotland at the time of the referendum, explained that the identity question should be secondary in the debate on independence, in the sense that Scottish identity remained undisputed:

‘For my part, and I believe for my generation, I have never doubted that Scotland is a nation. (...) But for me the fact of nationhood or Scottish identity is not the motive force for independence. Nor do I believe that independence, however desirable, is essential for the preservation of our distinctive Scottish identity. (...) *My conviction that Scotland should be independent stems from the principles, not of identity or nationality, but of democracy and social justice*<sup>333</sup>.’ (Sturgeon, 2012).

Nicola Sturgeon clearly stated that the independence movement had nothing to do with national identity. In this regard, it may be assumed that young people do not join the SNP for identity reasons. Yet, as shown in Chapter Four, it is more complex than it seems to be. We shall see

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<sup>333</sup> My emphasis.



that it depends on how national identity is understood. In the above quotation, Sturgeon spoke of ‘identity or nationality’. Is it national identity in the ethnocultural sense of the term? Is it rather a political version of Scottish identity? In the following chapter, we shall see that despite the absence of identity arguments in SNP discourse at first sight, young party members’ definitions of Scottishness may be linked to their political involvement and, then, the cause of independence.

If the SNP did not comment on ethnocultural issues during the referendum campaign, then, what were their central arguments? Camp-Pietrain notes that ‘the campaign has been focused on economic issues, which have formed the basis of the SNP’s agenda almost since its foundation in 1934. A social dimension was added in 2014, in response to the austerity policies of the UK government.’ (2014: 11)<sup>334</sup>. Instead of identity and cultural issues, the SNP thus base their claims for independence on economic and social issues. Through the above quote, Camp-Pietrain suggests that dealing with economic issues as central issues is part of the essence of the SNP. This idea joins that of Nathalie Duclos, for whom the fact of not addressing identity and cultural issues is also part of the essence of the SNP: ‘its political strategy has always been based on modes of national differentiation other than cultural.’ (Duclos, 2014: 129). Let us explore this in further detail.

*“Utilitarian”, Civic, and Political Nationalism’ (Duclos, 2020: 88)*

Since its foundation in 1934<sup>335</sup>, the Scottish National Party has been fighting for Scottish independence from the United Kingdom. Even if they have always insisted on the need for Scotland to leave the Union and become a nation on its own again, it is worth noting that their

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<sup>334</sup> Original text in French: ‘[I]a campagne a été axée sur des questions économiques, qui constituent le fondement du programme du SNP quasiment depuis sa création en 1934. S’ajoutait en 2014 une dimension sociale, en réaction aux politiques d’austérité menées par le gouvernement britannique.’

<sup>335</sup> In 1934, the SNP was first a merger between the National Party of Scotland and the Scottish Party.

arguments have evolved over time. As Nathalie Duclos notes, from 1934 to the 1970s, the SNP claimed to be a ‘national’ (Duclos, 2020: 85) party without being either left or right-wing. In the 1970s, they started becoming a strong political force in Scotland and the UK. Their electoral victories during that decade made them develop their political ideology (social democracy) and paved the way for their move to left-wing politics. Duclos’s analysis (2014, 2016, 2020) concentrates on the policies and platform of the SNP. Her research highlights that their nationalist agenda is socio-economic and has nothing to do with culture and ethnicity. Indeed, since the 1980s, the party has been fighting for independence for two main reasons: to end the democratic deficit between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom, and promote social democracy. As has been noted earlier, for the SNP, Scotland should leave the Union to put an end to what they consider a democratic deficit. In other words, Scotland is not heard and not represented enough by the British government in Westminster. Today, the SNP more than ever insist on the political differences between Scotland and the UK. For example, they denounce the insufficient amount of money allocated to Scotland by the British Conservative government. In other words, for the SNP, Scotland should be an independent nation-state making its own decisions regarding society and the economy. Regarding society in particular, their motto is social justice. As noted before, their political ideology is social democracy. They believe in equality, social justice and fairness.

In that sense, Duclos agrees with Henderson and McEwen that Scottish identity has been politicised. Basing her arguments on McEwen’s writings<sup>336</sup>, Duclos notes that the politicisation of Scottishness occurred at two different periods of time (Duclos, 2016: 98). First, from the mid-1960s to the late 1970s, namely when the SNP gained power as a political force in Scotland, British economic issues and the North Sea oil off the Scottish coast fuelled the party’s

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<sup>336</sup> See McEwen, N. (2003). The depoliticisation of national identity? Territorial politics after devolution, in Longley, E., Hughes, E., and O’Rawe, D. (eds.). *Ireland (Ulster) Scotland: Concepts, contexts, comparisons*. Belfast, IRL: Queen’s University Belfast, 11-27.

claims for independence. Duclos notes that it is at that time, along with the rise of the SNP, that ‘Scottish national identity became politicized.’ (2016: 98). Then, from the late 1980s to the late 1990s, Thatcherism reinforced the SNP’s nationalist agenda. The party was clearly opposed to Thatcher’s policies. Duclos says that ‘[a] key reason for this opposition was Thatcher’s neo-liberal attacks on the welfare state, which changed Scottish people’s feelings of national identity.’ (2016: 98)<sup>337</sup>. Regarding Scottishness, Duclos adds:

‘McEwen sums up the link between the welfare state and national identity by stating that the welfare state was a symbol of British solidarity, but Thatcher introduced a neo-liberal ideology and policies that stressed individualism, enterprise, and so on. Scots could not identify with this picture. Scottish identity was politicized in those years because being Scottish was redefined as being anti-Conservative and pro-Welfare State.’ (2016: 98-99).

This is exactly what Ailsa Henderson and Nicola McEwen argue in their papers about the relationship between values and Scottishness, as has been explained earlier.

Thus, the SNP presses for independence in opposition to the British, Conservative government, as well as in the name of social democracy. These political/constitutional and socio-economic arguments have apparently nothing to do with national identity. Yet, as demonstrated in Chapter Four, this is slightly more complex. Actually, everything depends on how people define national identity. The next chapter explores the way young SNP members understand Scottishness. It shows that, despite the fact that the party’s claim for independence

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<sup>337</sup> See Henderson and McEwen’s arguments introduced in the previous section.

is devoid of identity arguments, there is nonetheless a relationship between Scottish identity and their political involvement.

Nathalie Duclos also highlights that for the SNP, independence would not imply a weakening of Britishness. She specifies:

‘The SNP does not consider Scottish independence in terms of identity politics. Firstly, it does not argue that the aim of independence is to give political recognition to Scottish national identity. Secondly, it does not present Scottish independence as ending a common British national identity.’  
(2016: 99).

We have seen that, both for scholars and the party itself, Scottishness is unchallenged and, then, independence is not a means of affirming and reinforcing that identity. Here, Duclos adds that it would not have an impact on Britishness either. Interestingly, she underlines the differences between SNP leaders and members with regard to that identity. While Alex Salmond, former party leader and First Minister, feels Scottish and British<sup>338</sup>, a majority of SNP members feel only Scottish, not British, according to Mitchell et al.’s study<sup>339</sup>. Salmond’s view aligns with Sturgeon’s. For the current party leader and Scottish First Minister, independence would not have an impact on Britishness. In this regard, Duclos specifies that ‘[c]laims that Britishness would survive in the event of Scottish independence are reflected in the SNP’s recurring

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<sup>338</sup> Nathalie Duclos quotes Salmond’s interview with the *New Statesman* in 2013: ‘One of the great attractions of Scottish nationalism is that it’s very much a multilayered identity. It’s never been sensible to tell people they have only one to choose... I’ve got a British aspect to my identity. Scottishness is my primary identity but I’ve got Britishness and a European identity. (Eaton, 2013)’ (Duclos, 2016: 100). See Eaton, G. (2013). Alex Salmond on its youth jobs right, the bedroom tax and why he will win. *New Statesman*.  
<https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2013/06/exclusive-alex-salmond-his-youth-jobs-right-bedroom-tax-and-why-he-will-win>

<sup>339</sup> See the next section.

argument that what it has termed the “social union” between Scotland and the rest of the UK would continue too.’ (2016: 101). She argues that:

‘The concept of a “social union” has been defended and defined as such: “Independence means running our own affairs in our own way. What it doesn’t mean is losing our cherished links with the other nations of the United Kingdom. We’ve forged strong ties and built trust with our neighbours on these islands in the 300-plus years since the Act of Union. That’s an important and valued legacy, a social union, and it will continue.” (SNP, 2011)<sup>340</sup>’ (Duclos, 2016: 101).

As explained earlier, nationalist movements/parties are very often described as either civic or ethnic. We have seen that both the SNP and scholars emphasise the civic features of this Scottish party. In this regard, Duclos rightly sums up: ‘An analysis of SNP literature reveals that the party appeals to all of the civic components of national identity, but not ethnicity, and rarely to culture.’ (Duclos, 2016: 102).

In conclusion, since the 1980s, the SNP’s arguments in favour of Scottish independence have been socio-economic and socio-political. In that sense, they are practical arguments, instead of consisting in an emotional appeal to an ethno-cultural version of Scottish identity and all the myths and history that could be related to it. This is what Nathalie Duclos means when she refers to SNP nationalism as ‘utilitarian’ (Duclos, 2020: 88). It is also well put by Michael Keating, for whom Scottish ‘nationalist claims are based on... practical arguments

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<sup>340</sup> See Scottish National Party. (2011). *Your Scotland. Your Future.*

about institutions, accountability and policy.’ (Keating, 2001: 221<sup>341</sup>, as cited in Leith and Soule, 2012: 6).

*The SNP’s Promotion of Immigration and Multiculturalism: The Inclusive Dimension of Civic Nationalism*

We have seen that, contrary to ethnic nationalist parties, the SNP do not campaign for independence for ethnic and/or cultural reasons. Instead, they promote a vision of society (economically and socially) which differs from the rest of the United Kingdom. In the second part of the present chapter, we have seen that the literature highlights the civic nature of Scottish nationalism. When it comes to the SNP in particular, a previous section highlighted Murray Stewart Leith’s research. SNP’s nationalism is civic and based on the idea of territory: you are Scottish if you live in Scotland. Now, let us examine the inclusive dimension of the SNP programme. We shall see that, besides concentrating on socio-economic and constitutional issues in its campaign for independence, the party stresses the importance of immigration and multiculturalism for Scottish society.

In 1999, Paul Hamilton published an article about what he called ‘the Scottish National Paradox’, namely ‘the Scottish National Party’s lack of ethnic character’ (Hamilton, 1999). According to him, the absence of ethnic aspects in the SNP’s discourse may owe to the fact that the party aims to appeal to all Scots. He argues: ‘The SNP attempts to stay above the fray of sectional politics by claiming to represent all Scots’ (1999: 21). He adds:

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<sup>341</sup> See Keating, M. (2001). *Nations Against the State: the New Politics of Nationalism in Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

‘The SNP’s hesitancy at articulating a substantive view of Scottish identity is at once curious and understandable. It is curious in that one would expect a nationalist party to have a clear understanding of what that nation is. On the other hand, explicit appeals to any segment of society would undermine the SNP’s claim to speak for all the Scottish people.’ (1999: 28).

Once again, Hamilton argues that there is an absence of ethnic arguments in the SNP’s discourse because their goal is to include all individuals in the Scottish society, regardless of their origins. Can this be considered political strategy? Does the party aim to gain votes at elections (and in a potential second independence referendum) through its praise of cultural diversity and immigration? This is beyond the scope of this work. But it would be worth doing further research on this absence of ethnicity in the SNP’s political discourse.

As has been noted with Leith’s research, the SNP highlight the need to recognise Scotland as a nation in territorial terms. Regardless of their birthplace and origins, the people who live in Scotland are Scottish people. As Nicola Sturgeon said at the SNP conference in Aberdeen in June 2018: ‘The “we” is everyone who chooses to live here’ (Sturgeon, 2018). In this regard, the party clearly encourages immigration. The idea of community is one of the main forces that drive the SNP today. Nicola Sturgeon and other leaders of the party promote Scotland as an inclusive society benefitting from diversity. In 2013, Sturgeon declared: ‘Contrary to what many outside observers might imagine<sup>342</sup>, the debate we are having is not about national identity. Scotland, like most modern European countries, is a melting pot of different identities – Scottish, British, Pakistani, Irish, Polish and many more.’ (Sturgeon,

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<sup>342</sup> Probably because nationalism is commonly viewed as ethnic. For example, when I talk about my research with French people, they usually think that the SNP is the Scottish equivalent of the French Rassemblement National (former Front National). Thus, I have to explain that the SNP is a civic nationalist party, demanding independence for other reasons than ethnocultural ones.

2013b). In 2016, in her speech at the opening of the fifth session of the Scottish Parliament, the First Minister of Scotland praised immigration<sup>343</sup>. She referred to Scotland as ‘an open and inclusive nation’ that ‘celebrate[s] (...) differences’, and praised immigrant people that work or study in Scotland as people contributing to the construction of a strong Scottish nation. Most significantly, she declared: ‘We are *one* Scotland’<sup>344</sup>. This kind of argument makes the SNP a clearly civic-oriented nationalist party.

To conclude, the SNP campaign for Scottish independence for socio-economic and political reasons, not identity (in the sense of ethnocultural identity) reasons. Let us see now if members’ understandings of Scottishness are aligned with the civic stance of the party and its leaders.

### **c) SNP Members’ Perceptions of Scottish Identity**

When it comes to SNP members in particular, let us focus on Mitchell et al.’s survey. James Mitchell has written extensively about the SNP. As said before, together with Lynn Bennie and Rob Johns, he conducted a very detailed study of the party members in 2008 (Mitchell et al., 2012). They notably explored the relationship between national identity and nationalism in the SNP. First and foremost, their analysis reinforces the argument about the civic dimension of SNP nationalism. They note:

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<sup>343</sup> See Irish Independent. (2016). Nicola Sturgeon: Immigration has made Scotland stronger. <https://www.independent.ie/videos/video-nicola-sturgeon-immigration-has-made-scotland-stronger-34851731.html> Accessed on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Nicola Sturgeon’s speech was delivered just a few days after the EU referendum.

<sup>344</sup> My emphasis.



‘the SNP is civic in the sense that its policies are amongst the most liberal of any mainstream party in the United Kingdom on citizenship, emigration, and multiculturalism. Additionally, very few of its members would define Scottishness in exclusive ethnic terms. The SNP members accept a plurality of ways of defining belonging to the Scottish nation.’ (Mitchell et al., 2012: 116).

The three scholars examined the different aspects that SNP members associate with being Scottish. When carrying out their survey, they asked them to rank the aspects which were the most important for them. They presented party members’ responses in the following table:

	First ranked	Second ranked
People	44	17
History	13	20
Scottish Parliament	12	12
Countryside/scenery	11	15
Democratic tradition	10	11
Education/science	4	11
Art/music/literature	3	7
Legal system	2	4
Sporting achievements	1	2
Other	1	0
<i>N</i>	6505	6478

Table 3.8: Aspects of being Scottish personally important to SNP members (percentages), as cited in Mitchell et al., 2012: 105

The fact that a majority of the members chose the ‘people’ as the most important aspect of being Scottish confirms the SNP’s focus on civic belonging to Scotland. In that sense, as Mitchell et al. note, ‘claiming to be Scots, is sufficient definition of national identity’ (2012: 111). This is related to the notion of citizenship. The scholars rightly emphasise the distinction between national identity and citizenship. While the former is related to the nation, the latter is related

to the state. It refers to individuals' 'rights; duties; and responsibilities' (2012: 109). Nonetheless, Mitchell et al. explain that despite

'conceptually distinct, [they] would expect the definition of national identity to be closely related to notions of citizenship. SNP policy is a model of civic citizenship initially drawn up in a draft constitution for an independent Scotland in 1977, chiefly drafted by legal theorist and SNP Vice President Neil MacCormick (MacCormick, 2000: 721). MacCormick later described the key provision:

"Who shall be citizens? – All persons principally resident in Scotland and all those who were born in Scotland, with no restriction on dual citizenship; a free right to renounce citizenship, with no less of residential rights in the case of renounced citizenship; absolute prohibition on any loss of citizenship otherwise than by fully voluntary renunciation. (MacCormick, 1999, 2000<sup>345</sup>)" (Mitchell et al., 2012: 109).

Thus, according to MacCormick, being a Scottish citizen is defined by living and/or having been born in Scotland. Given that the SNP insists that anyone living in Scotland is Scottish, regardless of their origins, Mitchell et al. are right to say that definitions of Scottish identity and Scottish citizenship are quite close. This echoes McCrone's arguments about the territorial dimension of Scottishness, introduced earlier.

James Mitchell, Lynn Bennie and Rob Johns tested the civic dimension of SNP nationalism by asking members about what characterises someone as 'truly Scottish' (2012: 110). Responses are presented in Table 3.9:

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<sup>345</sup> See MacCormick, N. (1999). *Questioning Sovereignty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press., and MacCormick, N. (2000). Is there a Constitutional Path to Scottish Independence? *Parliamentary Affairs*, 53, 721-736.

	Very	Fairly	Not very	Not at all
To have Scottish ancestry	24	32	27	17
To have been born in Scotland	33	30	22	15
To live in Scotland now	<b>48</b> <sup>346</sup>	32	15	6
To have lived in Scotland for most of one's life	28	37	26	9
To be a Christian	12	13	19	56
To respect Scottish political institutions and laws	<b>59</b>	34	5	2
To feel Scottish	<b>78</b>	18	3	1
To be able to speak English, Gaelic or Scots	39	34	17	10

Table 3.9: Importance of characteristics for being 'truly Scottish' (percentages), as cited in Mitchell et al., 2012: 110

The civic features of the SNP are once more highlighted: feeling Scottish, respecting Scottish political institutions and laws, and living in Scotland are considered much more important than having Scottish ancestry or having been born in Scotland.

As already noted, I based part of my research questions on Mitchell et al.'s study of SNP members. I notably took inspiration from the two tables above. As shown in the next chapter, I asked young SNP members about the different aspects of being Scottish and what characterises people as 'truly Scottish' (Mitchell et al., 2012: 110) too. Their responses are presented and analysed in Chapter Four.

With regard to young members' views of Scottish identity, Mitchell et al.'s analysis sheds light on differences between younger and older members. They studied the 'ethnic-civic conceptions of Scottish identity' amongst the SNP members they surveyed in 2008. Notably, the results show that oldest members are more likely to consider Scottishness from a civic-ethnic point of view, while the youngest members tend to view it in a civic way (Mitchell et al., 2012: 115)<sup>347</sup>. This is highlighted by the following table:

<sup>346</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>347</sup> Mitchell et al. analysed other socio-demographic variables like the age when members finished their education, religion, and the time when they joined the SNP. See Mitchell et al., 2012: 115.

Age	Civic predominant view of Scottish identity	Civic-ethnic predominant view of Scottish identity	<i>N</i>
<b>18-34</b> <sup>348</sup>	<b>62</b>	<b>38</b>	<i>516</i>
35-44	65	35	<i>736</i>
45-54	58	42	<i>1 084</i>
55-64	55	45	<i>1 641</i>
65-74	45	55	<i>1 518</i>
<b>75+</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>64</b>	<i>925</i>

Table 3.10: Ethnic-civic conceptions of Scottish identity by age (percentages), as cited in Mitchell et al., 2012: 115

We see that the predominant conception of Scottish identity is civic for a majority of the members in the youngest sample, while only a minority of the 75 and over group views it that way. On the contrary, a minority of the 18-34 group considers Scottishness as predominantly civic-ethnic, while a majority of the oldest sample do likewise. This result suggests that there may be a link between age and SNP members' way of perceiving their national identity. The present thesis will not test this hypothesis, given that it focuses on young members alone. Yet, it aligns with Mitchell et al.'s findings regarding young SNP members' civic conceptions of Scottish identity (see Chapter Four).

Mitchell et al. thus conclude that the SNP has to be regarded as a civic nationalist party with regard to their policies, and because of the mainly civic perceptions of Scottishness amongst their members. The SNP promotes immigration and cultural diversity. As for the party members, they very rarely base their definition of Scottish identity on ethnic characteristics, but, on the contrary, they overall favour its civic aspects. Living in Scotland and claiming Scottishness are enough to be Scottish.

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<sup>348</sup> My emphasis.

## Conclusions

This chapter has emphasised the civic kind of nationalism that is promoted by the Scottish National Party. First, the literature review has shown that national identity is a complex concept defined in multiple ways. Scholars are mainly divided over its given/fixed or constructed/fluid nature. As for nationalism, the literature is divided between scholars who regard it as ethnic and others who argue for a civic type as well. Others like Shulman (2002), challenge that dichotomy and suggest that it should be worth distinguishing between civic, ethnic *and* cultural nationalism. Finally, researchers like Billig (1995) argue for a banal or everyday kind of nationalism. I aimed at reviewing the national identity and nationalism literature as exhaustively as possible. Unfortunately, as the present thesis builds on two theoretical frameworks, reviewing both literatures in such detail would have taken too much time. This is especially the case for the literature on national identity, which is wider than that on youth party membership and therefore can hardly be reviewed exhaustively. I nonetheless examined the theories on which the present work builds for the analysis of young SNP members' relationship to national identity.

Therefore, we have first seen that national identity is quite specific in the United Kingdom: British people have dual (or multiple) identities, highlighted by the Moreno scale. We have also seen that Scottish nationalism is widely regarded as civic. More particularly, the SNP is considered a civic nationalist party. According to Henderson (1999) and McEwen (Henderson and McEwen, 2005), there is a relationship between the civic, social-democratic values endorsed by the SNP and the (rare) expressions of national identity in their political discourse. In that sense, instead of an ethnocultural kind of identity, it is rather a socio-political sense of identity which is conveyed by the SNP.

Also, it has been said that they campaign for Scottish independence for socio-economic reasons and to put an end to the democratic deficit, which they think is experienced by Scotland

in the UK. They also advocate cultural diversity and immigration, thus conveying the idea of Scotland as an inclusive society. Thus, the SNP do not campaign for independence for identity reasons. Or, rather, they do not stress Scottish identity in the ethnocultural sense of the term. Leith (2008, Leith and Soule, 2012) and Mitchell et al. (2012) have shown that this is the case amongst both the party elite and members. We shall now see whether the views of young party members confirm the findings of the research that has been conducted so far.

# **Chapter Four: SNP Youth Membership and National Identity**

*‘National identity is commonly seen as a fundamental frame for any forms of political participation.’* — Aladin Larguèche (in Verdugo and Milne, 2016: 26)

## **I) Empirical Enquiry into the Relationship between Young SNP Members and National Identity**

### **1) Research Questions and Hypotheses**

#### **a) How do young SNP members define their national identity?**

First, this chapter examines the way YSI and SNP Students view and understand their national identity. Do they feel Scottish only (like a majority of SNP members according to Mitchell et al.’s survey), or both Scottish and British? What about their sense of European-ness? Then, how do they define their national identity? Do they view it from a civic perspective, thus in line with the party’s position about identity and cultural diversity?

In order to answer those questions, the present chapter complements Henderson and McEwen’s, Mitchell et al.’s, Leith and Soule’s research introduced in Chapter Three. Also, it compares young SNP members’ definitions of national identity with the existing literature: are they in line with a theory of national identity in particular? Is there a discrepancy between how researchers theorise the concept and the way these young party members understand it? Do they view national identity as a given which is shared by all the members of the Scottish nation (see

Essentialism in Chapter Three)? Or, do they consider that it is subjective and fluid (see Constructivism in Chapter Three)? Do they relate it to ethnicity and/or culture, or to a sense of place?<sup>349</sup>

## **b) Is national identity a reason why young people join the SNP?**

Then, we shall explore the potential relationship between young SNP members' perceptions of national identity and their party membership. In case the national, political context and the issue of independence lead young Scottish people to become SNP members (see Chapter Two), it can be wondered whether national identity plays a role in their membership too. In other words, is national identity a factor influencing young people to join the SNP? As the party is known as civic nationalist<sup>350</sup> and campaigns for independence for political and socio-economic reasons, denouncing what they view as a democratic deficit experienced by Scotland in the UK<sup>351</sup> (Leith, 2008; Leith and Soule, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2012; Duclos, 2014, 2016, 2020; Camp-Pietrain, 2014), at first sight it may be assumed that young Scottish people do not engage in the SNP for national identity reasons.

What about young Scottish Conservatives and young Scottish Labour Party members? Contrary to young SNP members, do they join their political parties for national identity reasons? The number of respondents and interviewees<sup>352</sup> is unfortunately not sufficient to say

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<sup>349</sup> See the ethnocultural and civic theoretical considerations of national identity in Chapter Three. See also the presentation of research on Scottish nationalism and the civic type of nationalism promoted by the SNP, in the same chapter.

<sup>350</sup> As has been said in the previous chapter, civic nationalism is characterised by territorial claims to achieve sovereignty as a nation-state, without being based on ethnic arguments.

<sup>351</sup> As explained earlier, according to the SNP, Scotland's voice is not heard or not heard enough in the political decision-making process that takes place in the British parliament, at Westminster. The SNP notably say that money is given mainly to England, which is the biggest country, and that the majority of the political decisions taken at Westminster are in favour of England as well, while very often in disfavour of Scotland.

<sup>352</sup> 3 Labour and 3 Conservative respondents. 4 Labour interviewees and 7 Conservative interviewees.



that their definition of national identity is representative of all the young Labour members and Conservatives. The results are nonetheless indicative and pave the way for future comparative research.

**c) Is there a relationship between young SNP members' national identity and their level of involvement in the party?**

Finally, is there a link between national identity and the degree of political engagement of young SNP members? More precisely, does their sense of national identity and the way they perceive and understand it influence the extent to which they are politically engaged? Are they more, and more often, politically active because of national identity? Are they more radical in their views if it plays a role in their activism? If national identity is a reason why youth join the SNP, I hypothesise that if a young Scot has a strong sense of national identity, they will probably be highly involved. If a young person joins the SNP for national identity reasons, then it may be assumed that the more important Scottishness is in their eyes, the more active they are in the party. This is why I chose to include MPs in the sample of interviewees. As they work for the SNP, MPs are supposed to be very – if not the most – involved and active party members. Their engagement goes beyond party membership; it is professionalised. We shall see whether their discourse on national identity is similar to the discourse of the young members who do not work for the party. Also, in the YSI and SNP Students, I interviewed young people both with and without specific positions and responsibilities in order to see if those with a stronger sense of national identity have important positions in the party.

## 2) Methods

In terms of research methods, as has been said, I conducted interviews and an online survey. As a reminder, I interviewed 37 young party members in Scotland, including 25 young SNP members, 7 Conservatives, 4 Labour and one Brexit Party member. These were in-depth interviews, which allowed me to better understand their thoughts. I conducted those interviews in Aberdeen in June 2018, in Glasgow in October in 2018, in Edinburgh in May 2019, and via phone and video calls in March 2020. These were semi-guided interviews, which enabled young party members to expand on their definition of national identity. In this regard, Fox and Miller-Idriss argue for ‘opportunities for exploring ordinary people’s discursive representations of nationhood in terms chosen by the interviewee – not the interviewer.’ (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008: 555).

As noted earlier, it was difficult to reach young party members, especially young Scottish Conservatives and Scottish Young Labour members. This is one reason why I did not interview the same number of young people in the three political parties. Young Scottish Labour members were the hardest to reach. This explains the relatively small number of Labour interviewees in my study (this is also the case for young Labour and Conservatives in the online survey). Given that the sample of young Labour and Conservatives is indicative rather than representative, the comparison between them and young SNP members is only informative. Another reason for that small sample is the fact that the study focuses voluntarily on YSI and SNP Students as a case study. I wished to interview more than 25 of them, but those who attended the party’s conferences were almost always the same people, and attendance was not that high (about 20 or 30 each time). Also, interviews sometimes lasted more than an hour, which made it hard to conduct them during conferences that lasted two or three days each. I wish I could have conducted more interviews in 2020, but the Covid-19 crisis made it quite

complicated. Hopefully, that issue will be overcome in the future, in order to enrich the present thesis.

As said before, besides interviews, I sent an online survey to the young members of all the Scottish political parties, via emails and social media. In total, 82 people submitted responses, including 53 complete surveys. Once again, this is a small sample. Nonetheless, it is enough to say that it is indicative and complements the in-depth interviews. As I was able to get in touch with a relatively high number of SNP members for interviews, a majority of these 53 respondents were Young Scots for Independence and SNP Students, namely 38. Besides them, 4 young Liberals, 4 Greens, 3 Conservatives, 3 Labour and one Brexit Party member responded to all the questions of the online survey. I sent the survey to all the youth organisations of political parties in Scotland. I sent it to the central wings, but also to their sub-groups, university societies and regional associations. The number of respondents in each party (except the SNP) speaks for itself and shows how difficult it was to motivate these young party members to take part in the study. It could be worth researching the reasons for this in the future<sup>353</sup>. It might be due to the small number of active young members in the parties. For example, while the YSI are followed by thousands of people on Facebook and Twitter, only 78 attended the YSI annual conference in February 2021. Most significantly, while 497 young people are part of the private group of YSI members on Facebook, only 78 participated in the conference. It was held online, which made it probably easier for young members across the country to attend<sup>354</sup>. About 16 per cent did so. This suggests that a small proportion of young SNP members are really active in the party<sup>355</sup>. To an extent, it is not surprising that only 38 of them responded completely to the online survey.

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<sup>353</sup> It seems that the issue has not been tackled yet by the existing literature on youth party membership.

<sup>354</sup> Then it may be assumed that numbers of participants before Covid were probably smaller.

<sup>355</sup> In Milbrath's words, it may be argued that a small number of young SNP members are 'gladiators' (really active in the party), while a great number of them are 'transitional' members or 'spectators' (Milbrath, 1965: 18). To some extent, this implies that young people's disengagement from politics may be observed in political parties (see Conclusion).

Compared to young Conservatives and Labour Party members, the constitutional question of Scottish independence, which is still looming, may explain why the YSI and SNP Students are more willing to talk about their political engagement. To some extent, some of them may have seen me, a researcher interested in their party membership and political views, as an opportunity to make their voice heard and to press further for independence. In a sense, the present research offers some visibility to their campaign, not only in Scotland or the UK but also in France.

As I noted in Chapter Two, interviews and surveys are complementary methods. In this chapter, I analyse the results of both methods, but I focus especially on interviews, for two main reasons. First, it is hard to explore people's definitions of national identity through figures. As discourse on national identity may be very personal and subjective, it is easier to fully understand their views thanks to the analysis of interviews. Nonetheless, the survey adds to that analysis. As shown further down, questions about what young SNP members think can be considered aspects of Scottish society, and about the key features defining who is Scottish, give supplementary indications which are worth examining. Second, given that getting a representative overview of all SNP youth is not possible due to the small number of survey respondents, I prefer to concentrate on the analysis of their discourse about national identity. Fox and Miller-Idriss explain their methods applied to research on everyday nationhood:

‘Surveys are effective instruments for gaining a general overview of the national sensibilities of relatively large segments of the population. Surveys are less suited, however, for capturing variation in the nuance and texture of everyday nationhood. For this, more qualitative modes of investigation are helpful, such as interviewing and focus groups.’ (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008: 555).

This is why I chose to concentrate on interviews particularly.

Finally, as said earlier, I did social media analysis and ethnographic observation. I observed young SNP members at the annual conferences of the party and did participant observation during social events, both with and without relation to the party.

Let us focus on a last point in terms of methodology: anonymity. The fact that both interviews and the survey are treated anonymously helps to see whether there is a gap between official, party discourse and young members' private, personal discourse.

As noted in Chapter Three, SNP discourse on national identity is civic-oriented (Leith, 2008; Leith and Soule, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2012; Duclos, 2016, 2020).

'Both state and culture almost always play a role in the construction of national identity, though in official discourse, culture is of slight importance. In semi-official and quasi-private discourse, however, cultural ideas (mentally, character, behavioural dispositions (...), language, etc.), reaching to the imagination of a common descent and to ideas of an "innate nationality" come to the fore.' (De Cillia et al., 1999: 169).

That conclusion provided by De Cillia et al. argues that there would be a discrepancy between 'official discourse' and 'semi-official and quasi-private discourse' when it comes to the cultural features of national identity. De Cillia et al. studied the case of Austria. In this chapter, we shall see whether their conclusion may apply to young SNP members in Scotland. Once again, are there any differences between the official discourse of the SNP and the private/ 'quasi-private' discourse of the youth in their ranks? Is their public discourse about Scottishness in line with the discourse of the mother party, but different in private? Are there taboos about national

identity in the YSI and SNP Students? Hence the utility of interviews, but also (and even more) of ethnographic research and social media analysis. Those methods allowed me to study young SNP members' relationship to national identity in their 'quasi-private' sphere, without intervening as a researcher. As demonstrated in a section further down, I noticed a slight difference between official discourse, even interview answers, and what some young members did/said during social events or on social media. This was the case of a very small proportion of members.

In order to answer all the research questions above, let us examine YSI and SNP Students' discourse on Scottishness and Britishness.

## **II) Young SNP Members' Versions of National Identity**

### **1) YSI and SNP Students' Understanding of National Identity**

#### **a) The Concept of National Identity**

##### *Thinking of National Identity*

How do young SNP members understand the concept of national identity? Are their views in line or at odds with the existing literature?

First, it is worth noting that several interviewees insisted that national identity is something personal and, therefore, its definition varies from one person to another. For Lewis<sup>356</sup>, it is 'a personal thing'. Similarly, for Tom, it is an 'individual feeling'. This individual sense of national identity suggests that there would not be something like *a* national identity,

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<sup>356</sup> As noted earlier, names were changed for anonymity.

but *a plurality of* national identities, as there is a plurality of ways of understanding it. In that sense, Alex declared:

‘You feel part of a community, connected to the nation, whether you speak the same language, or you share the same cultural values. It’s very fluid... it can change over time. I don’t think it’s primordial. For me, it’s a social construction. That’s why people can have different national identities. People have different interpretations of national identity.’

Alex’s viewpoint is reminiscent of constructivist theories of national identity (see Chapter Three): ‘I don’t think it’s primordial. For me, it’s a social construction.’ Alex has studied politics. It is evidenced by his use of the terms ‘primordial’ and ‘construction’. He seemed to know about the difference between primordial and constructionist theories of national identity. For him, as for many other interviewees, there is not one and only national identity, but different versions or ‘interpretations’ of it. It contrasts with essentialist theories which posit national identity as something objective, innate, as a given which is conceived similarly by all members of a nation (see Chapter Three).

Also, the young SNP members I interviewed often thought that defining national identity is a hard task. It aligns with the fact that national identity, as a concept, is much debated, as has been shown with the review of the literature in Chapter Three<sup>357</sup>. Overall, young interviewees said that they did not think of their national identity, that it was part of them and they did not pay attention to it. This reminds us of Michael Billig’s banal nationalism theory. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, individuals do not pay attention to signs of nationhood

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<sup>357</sup> It should be noted that this difficulty was also experienced by the Scottish political elite interviewed by Murray Stewart Leith and Daniel P.J. Soule (2012).

in their everyday life environment. Thus, they never, or not very often, think of their national identity and how to define it. It is there, always there, and they are not particularly aware of it. In this regard, Sean said that ‘national identity is omnipresent’, and Alex highlighted that it is ‘subconscious in people’s lives’. This, again, is in line with Billig’s banal nationalism thesis.

In short, a majority of the YSI and SNP Students that were interviewed found it hard to define a concept like national identity, which correlates with the viewpoint of many national identity scholars. In Chapter Three, we have seen that some scholars even regard it as a myth or advocate giving up trying to define it.

The subjectivity of the definition of national identity highlighted by several interviewees contrasts with essentialist theories arguing for national identity as a given, namely as something objective, regarded in the same way by all the members of a nation.

Finally, a majority of the young SNP members interviewed declared that they were not used to thinking about their national identity. Even more, some admitted that they had never thought about it. Once more, this may be explained by the fact that signs of national identity, in their daily ‘flagging’, remain unnoticed. As noted in Chapter Three, this may also be due to the fact that national identity in Scotland is not questioned or discussed; it is strong and firmly anchored in Scottish society. In the previous chapter, we have also seen that Scottish nationalism is based on civic criteria and that a great majority of SNP members are likely to define national identity from that civic perspective. What about young members in particular?

Before going further, it has to be noted that a majority of the young Conservatives and Labour members whom I interviewed also found it hard to define national identity. Some said that it is something personal and subjective too. And some said that they were not used to thinking about it either. Overall, the approach to the notion of national identity in the SNP and



in other political parties was the same. Therefore, at first glance it seems that understandings of national identity amongst young Scottish party members are similar<sup>358</sup>. With the analysis of their perceptions of Scottishness further down, we shall see that, contrary to that assumption, their party family and political ideology play a significant role in the conceptions of their national identity.

### *Civic Approach to National Identity*

Chapter Three emphasised the civic nature of SNP nationalism. The literature about the party's ideology highlights their civic political agenda, especially when it comes to immigration, and the fact that they do not campaign for independence in the name of a Scottish identity that would be different from British identity. It happens that the discourse on national identity of the young SNP members I met, was, overall, civic as well. 93 per cent of the young interviewees defined the notion of national identity in civic terms. For Matt, national identity is defined 'in terms of what country you live in'. This vision of national identity is in line with the civic type of nationalism promoted by the SNP. National identity is understood as belonging to a place, as living in Scotland rather than having been born in Scotland. Similarly, for Mark, national identity means 'what you choose to be a member of', implicitly the nation you choose to be a member of. According to Josh, national identity is a feeling that comes from the fact that 'you live here, work here, doesn't matter where you're from'. Alex defined national identity as 'feeling connected to the nation, whether you speak the same language, or you share the same cultural values'. In that sense, national identity is linked with the place where you live, with the notion of residency, regardless of culture. This emphasis on place and territory supports David McCrone's emphasis on civic nationalism in Scotland. It also corresponds with the official discourse of the SNP on Scottish citizenship, and confirms the findings of Leith (2008),

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<sup>358</sup> As the samples of interviewees were much smaller in other parties, this is just informative.

Mitchell et al. (2012) and Leith and Soule (2012) that were analysed in Chapter Three. When it comes to SNP members in particular, it correlates with the results of the survey carried out by Mitchell et al. As explained in Chapter Three, they note that young SNP members tend to base their definition of Scottish identity on civic characteristics, while older members tend to base it on civic *and* ethnic aspects. In 2008, according to the researchers, 62 per cent of SNP members aged between 18 and 34 years old based their definition on civic characteristics exclusively. This figure falls to 45 per cent amongst members aged from 65 to 74, and to 36 per cent of the members above 75 years old (2012: 115). This is illustrated by Table 3.10 (page 312).

The quotations above, which reflect the thoughts of the majority of the young SNP members I met, contrast with Rob's. For him, national identity is defined by 'where you were born'. This may be seen as an ethnic conception of national identity, as it stresses the nation as a place of birth rather than a place of living. Rob was the only one to define national identity in this way, thus reinforcing the civic aspect of SNP youth nationalism.

Overall, the young SNP members I interviewed tended to define the notion of national identity in civic terms. They understand national identity as a sense of belonging to a place, to a community, and feeling comfortable/at home in that community. They were also likely to see it as a choice: for them, people choose to live in a given nation and, therefore, feel part of that national community.

### **b) Is national identity political, cultural, or both?**

As demonstrated in Chapter Three, national identity is usually seen either as civic or ethnic, and sometimes both. Shulman (2002) offers an alternative with three different aspects:

civic, cultural and ethnic. As said before, his civic conception of national identity includes a political dimension with ‘political ideology’ and ‘political institutions and rights’ (Shulman, 2002: 559). In the previous chapter I also explained that in the present thesis, I distinguish between ethnocultural national identity, composed of ethnic and/or cultural elements, and socio-political national identity, based on socio-economic arguments, socio-political values and viewpoints of society. One of my research questions was to know whether young SNP members perceive national identity from an ethnocultural or socio-political perspective. Given that they are rather technical concepts, I asked young SNP members: ‘Is the notion of national identity cultural, political, or both?’. Figure 4.1 presents the results.

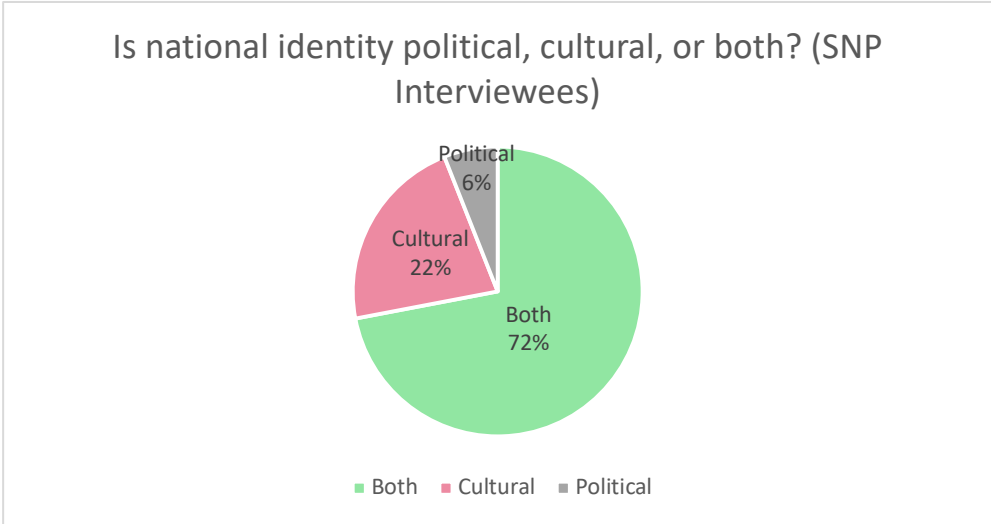


Figure 4.1: Young SNP interviewees’ view of national identity as cultural, political, or both

A majority (72 per cent) of the young SNP members interviewed think national identity is both cultural and political. Thus, it suggests that their understanding of national identity is both civic (see Shulman’s civic category with ‘political ideology’ and ‘political institutions and rights’, 2002: 559) and cultural. In other words, it is not exclusively cultural nor exclusively civic. As shown further down, this correlates with their definitions of Scottishness, even if they tend to be more political than cultural. The mingling of politics and culture echoes Brubaker’s idea that

both ethnic and civic types of nationalism have cultural features (Brubaker, 1998). Young SNP members are civic nationalists, not ethnic nationalists, but it does not prevent a majority of them from considering culture as a part of national identity. When choosing either cultural or political aspects alone, we see that more interviewees think national identity is cultural (22 per cent), while a minority (6 per cent) thinks it is political. One of the following sections shows that the story is slightly different when it comes to defining Scottishness.

In spite of a very small sample of interviewees in the Conservative and Labour parties, it is worth having a look at how they consider the notion of national identity.

National Identity is...	YSI and SNP Students	SYC	SYL
Cultural	22	50	25
Political	6	0	0
Both	72	50	75

Table 4.1: Comparison of the views of national identity as cultural, political, or both, amongst SNP youth, Scottish Young Labour and Scottish Young Conservatives that were interviewed (percentages)

Table 4.1 shows that while the results amongst young Labour interviewees are rather similar to those in the SNP, young Conservatives distinguish themselves from the others with the highest proportion of young party members thinking that national identity is cultural (50 per cent compared to 22 and 25 per cent in the SNP and in Labour). It may be assumed that there is a relationship between party family and views about national identity, in the sense that the SNP and the Labour Party can be located on the left of the political spectrum, while the Conservative Party is considered as right-wing from a comparative perspective. As noted earlier, Conservative political parties are known for their defence of the culture and traditions of a

nation. In that sense, the fact that half of the young Conservatives interviewed associated national identity with culture is not surprising.

## **2) The Moreno Question**

As noted in Chapter Three, Luis Moreno has created a scale to measure Scottish people's national identity<sup>359</sup>. We have seen that a great majority of SNP members see themselves as Scottish only. Through their study, Mitchell et al. showed that in 2008, 80 per cent of SNP members felt Scottish, not British (Mitchell et al., 2012). When it comes to age, Bennie and Russell interestingly note that amongst all the SNP members surveyed,

‘[t]he youngest (...) tend to display the strongest national identity. Or, to be more specific, the oldest age groups are most likely to view themselves as a combination of Scottish and British, as opposed to exclusively Scottish e.g. 82% of youngest see themselves as Scottish only, compared with 73% of oldest.’ (Bennie and Russell, 2012: 16).

All this correlates with the results of the present study. 88 per cent of the YSI and SNP Students I interviewed said they felt Scottish only, not British. The figure rises to 90 per cent amongst young SNP respondents to the online survey. Taking account of the ‘More Scottish than British’ option, we see that all the interviewees feel more Scottish than British or Scottish, not British. This is also the case of 95 per cent of the sample of respondents. Given that they campaign for Scottish independence from the United Kingdom, this is not really surprising. One should nonetheless remember that for the SNP, ‘Independence means running our own affairs in our

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<sup>359</sup> See details page 261.

own way. What it doesn't mean is losing our cherished links with the other nations of the United Kingdom.' (SNP, 2011). Moreover, at the time of the referendum campaign, Nicola Sturgeon insisted that independence was not related to identity issues: 'My conviction that Scotland should be independent stems from the principles, not of identity or nationality, but of democracy and social justice' (Sturgeon, 2012). With the results of the Scottish Social Attitudes Surveys, we have seen that Britishness is much less important than Scottishness in Scotland, as 64 per cent of Scottish people felt Scottish and 23 per cent felt British as a forced choice in 2020. When they could choose freely, in 2011, 85 per cent chose Scottish, 53 per cent British and 44 per cent both. With the Moreno question, 29 per cent said they felt Scottish not British in 2020 (the highest proportion of the sample), 26 per cent felt more Scottish than British, 26 per cent equally, 4 per cent more British than Scottish, and 5 per cent British not Scottish. Altogether, 55 per cent felt more Scottish than British, or Scottish only.



Figure 4.2: Moreno scale of national identity amongst young SNP interviewees

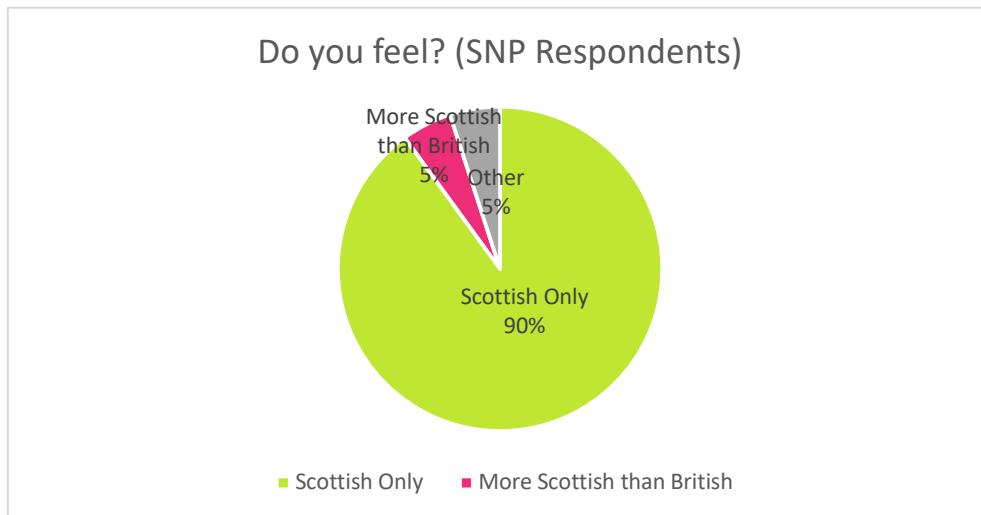


Figure 4.3: Moreno scale of national identity amongst young SNP respondents

Figures 4.2 and 4.3 clearly indicate that the young SNP members who were interviewed and responded to the online survey feel Scottish, not British<sup>360</sup>. Yet, the Moreno scale does not allow us to measure the importance of their national identity. Ailsa Henderson insists that measuring national identity is a hard task. For her, the Moreno scale is helpful, but does not allow one to grasp the degree of importance of an individual’s sense of belonging to a nation. Thus, one of the survey questions concerned the importance of Scottish identity and British identity for young SNP members. For example, to the question ‘How important is your Scottish identity?’, they could answer either ‘Not Important’, ‘Rather Important’, ‘Important’, or ‘Much Important’. Figures 4.4 and 4.5 show their responses:

<sup>360</sup> As demonstrated further down in this work, this does not imply that young SNP members’ sense of national identity is exclusive. On the contrary, they promote the idea of Scotland as an inclusive nation, where everyone is welcome.

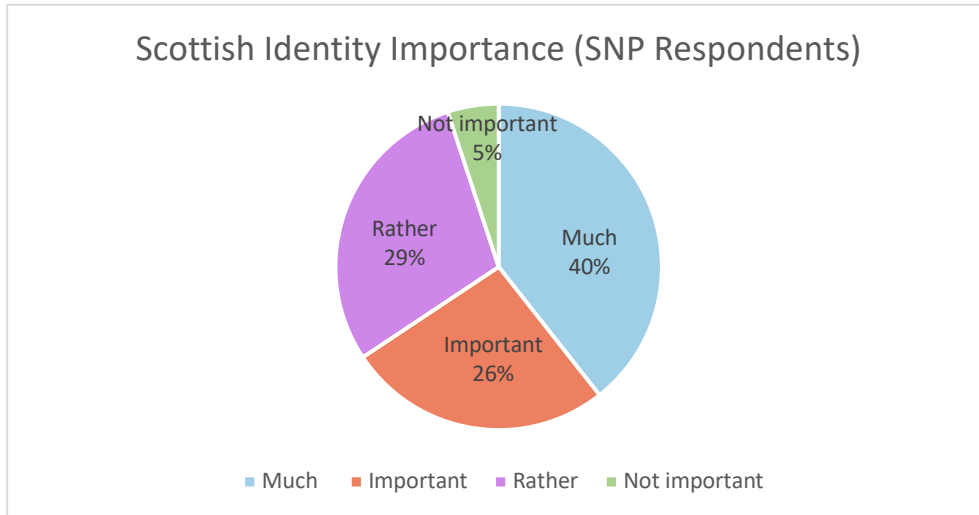


Figure 4.4: Importance of Scottish identity amongst young SNP respondents

Figure 4.4 shows how important Scottish identity is to the young SNP members that submitted the survey. In total, 66 per cent of them feel that their Scottishness is important or much important. This tends to corroborate both interviewees and respondents' answers to the Moreno question. As a reminder, 88 per cent of the YSI and SNP Students I met, and 90 per cent of the survey respondents, feel they are Scottish only (see Figures 4.2 and 4.3 above).

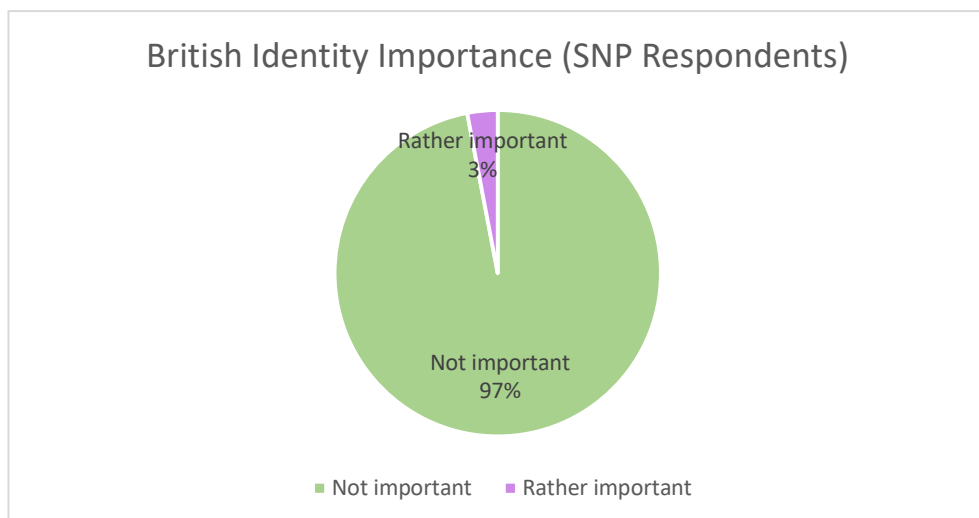


Figure 4.5: Importance of British identity amongst young SNP respondents

On the contrary, Figure 4.5 shows how unimportant British identity is to the young SNP members that submitted the survey. In total, 97 per cent of them feel that their Britishness is



not important and only 3 per cent feel it is rather important. In other words, none of the respondents consider British identity to be important. This correlates with both interviewees and respondents' answers to the Moreno question.

It seems to be a correlation between the importance of Scottishness and Britishness for young SNP members and their desire for Scottish independence vis-à-vis the United Kingdom. They feel strongly Scottish, but do not feel British. As noted in Chapter Three, the literature on Scottish nationalism does not identify a clear relationship between national identity and constitutional preferences amongst Scottish people. Bond and Rosie qualify that view and note that the link between the two is 'only true to the extent that those with exclusive sub-state identities are more likely to favour more autonomy: those with exclusive state identities are not consistently and significantly more likely to oppose such change than are those with dual identities.' (Bond and Rosie, 2010: 16). This is supported by the present findings. With the results above, it may be argued that there is a corroboration between young SNP members' sense of national identity and their constitutional preferences, namely Scottish independence. This is explored in further detail in the rest of the chapter.

As the SNP is known for its pro-European position<sup>361</sup>, I wanted to know whether young people in their ranks feel European. I thought it would probably allow to further examine the question of a relationship between national identity and constitutional preferences. Given that the SNP campaign for Scottish independence in the European Union, I expected that young SNP members would feel European. Given their constitutional preferences, I also assumed that they would probably feel more European than British. One of the survey questions read as follows: 'would you say that you have a European identity?' Figure 4.6 presents the responses to that question.

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<sup>361</sup> Their goal is to join the European Union again after Scottish independence. They urged Scottish people to vote 'Remain' in the EU referendum in 2016.

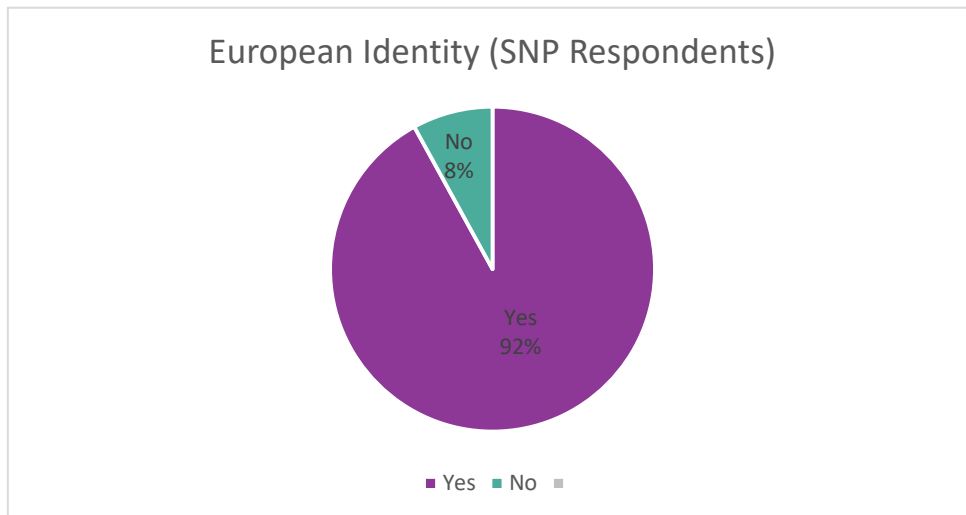


Figure 4.6: Would you say that you have a European identity?

Figure 4.6 shows that a clear majority of respondents feel European. To be more specific, 39 per cent think that their European identity is much important, 24 per cent rather important, 18 per cent important, and 13 per cent not important. By comparing the results with their responses about Britishness, European identity seems to be much more important in their eyes than British identity is. This finding is strengthened by interviews: all the young people whom I interviewed told me that they feel European. Thus, their state identity (Britishness) is non-existent or less important compared to their European, supra-national, identity. This is not surprising given that the SNP press for the independence of Scotland in the European Union. The hypothesis that SNP youth would feel European or more European compared to British (see the previous paragraph) has thus been met. Therefore, I argue for a relationship between the sense of identity (here European identity) of the party's young members and their constitutional preferences (here Scotland's place in the EU).

For comparison, here are the (indicative<sup>362</sup>) results of the Moreno question amongst young interviewees in the Conservative and Labour parties:

	<b>YSI and SNP Students</b>	<b>SYC</b>	<b>SYL</b>
Scottish, not British	<b>88</b>	0	25
More Scottish than British	<b>12</b>	14	0
Equally Scottish and British	<b>0</b>	29	50
More British than Scottish	<b>0</b>	57	0
British, not Scottish	<b>0</b>	0	25
Other	<b>0</b>	0	0

Table 4.2: Moreno question comparison between young SNP interviewees, the Scottish Young Conservatives and Scottish Young Labour members (percentages)

Unsurprisingly, the young members of the two parties that are pro-Union in the debate about Scottish independence, are likely to feel either equally Scottish and British, or more British than Scottish. In other words, their sense of Britishness is much stronger than in the SNP. For information, the young Brexit Party member whom I interviewed felt equally Scottish and British. He told me that, as a former Conservative Party member, he was pro-Union and, therefore, against Scottish independence vis-à-vis the UK. Here, his sense of national identity (feeling equally Scottish and British) and his constitutional preferences (the remaining of Scotland in the UK) corroborate. Contrary to young SNP members whose national identity (Scottishness) is strong and whose state identity (Britishness) is non-existent, in the case of this young Brexit Party member, national and state identities are at the same level. Hence, once again, the argument for a correlation between young Scottish party members’ national/state

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<sup>362</sup> Again, the samples amongst young Labour and Conservative members are too small to say that the results are representative of all these young party members.

identity and constitutional preferences. This confirms Bond and Rosie’s ideas (Bond and Rosie, 2010; see above) with regard to the whole Scottish population.

That said, what about the young Conservatives and Labour members who responded to the survey? Here are the results of the Moreno question amongst them:

	<b>YSI and SNP Students</b>	SYC	SYL
Scottish, not British	<b>90</b>	0	33
More Scottish than British	<b>5</b>	0	0
Equally Scottish and British	<b>0</b>	50	33
More British than Scottish	<b>0</b>	25	0
British, not Scottish	<b>0</b>	25	33
Other	<b>5</b>	0	0

Table 4.3: Moreno question comparison between SNP youth respondents, the Scottish Young Conservatives and Scottish Young Labour members (percentages)

While it is balanced in Labour, in the Conservative Party young respondents are likely to have a strong sense of Britishness. Half of them feel equally Scottish and British, which correlates with their support for Scotland remaining in the UK: their national and state identities are equally important. And we see that the other half prioritise their Britishness over their Scottishness: 50 per cent of the Conservative respondents feel either more British than Scottish, or British only. The strength of their state identity aligns with their position with regard to the Union. For information, the young Brexit Party member that responded to the survey feels more British than Scottish. So, young people from right-wing, Unionist parties, seem to feel more attached to Britishness than Scottishness. This is not really surprising, given that they are pro-UK.

We have just seen that a huge majority of the young SNP members who were interviewed and responded to the survey feel Scottish, not British. This is important to understand their sense of national identity, but not enough to grasp their views of Scottishness and Britishness in detail. It was noted that the Moreno scale is quite valuable and useful to measure national identity in Scotland, but qualitative research is also needed. Henderson identifies the limit to the Moreno question in measuring identity as well. She argues that: ‘The scale fails to identify the strength with which national feelings are held, what such self-identification actually means to the individual, and leaves hidden the components of identity itself.’ (Henderson, 1999: 126). Hence the necessity to analyse young SNP members’ discourse on Scotland and the UK, as well as their personal versions of Scottishness and Britishness. This is allowed by interviews. Some responses to the online survey also enable us to examine these young party members’ thoughts about their national identity, thanks to long free text questions.

For Fox and Miller-Idriss, ‘[n]ationhood does not only define [people’s] talk; it is defined by their talk.’ (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008: 539). Let us focus on identity narratives amongst the young SNP members who were interviewed and responded to the online survey.

### **3) Perceptions of the Scottish Nation**

As shown in Chapter Three, national identity is related to the concept of nation. To answer a question like ‘who are we?’ or ‘what is my national identity?’, one should first answer the question ‘what is my nation?’, to use Renan’s famous words. Thus, before examining how YSI and SNP Students understand Scottishness, let us first see how they perceive the Scottish nation.

What does Scotland symbolise in their eyes? How do they view that nation? According to them, what are the characteristics of Scottish society? Given that the SNP campaign for a

social democratic, independent Scotland, before conducting the present study I expected young SNP members to define the Scottish nation from a social democratic perspective too. The interviews and the results of the survey meet that hypothesis.

In order to find out how YSI and SNP Students members understand Scotland, and how they define their nation, I asked interviewees about the characteristics of Scottish society. Most of them painted the portrait of Scotland as a social democratic, progressive and inclusive society. Less importantly, cultural elements were mentioned by 40 per cent of the interviewees. Let us consider those three different aspects of Scottish society in detail.

### **a) Scottish Culture**

Some of the young SNP members interviewed mentioned cultural aspects when defining Scotland. Rob highlighted ‘Scottish songs like Flower of Scotland... Highland games, bagpipes, tartan, kilts, the countryside, the Loch Ness monster, Scottish icons...’. His portrait of Scotland gathers all the Scottish cultural traits that are known worldwide, especially bagpipes, tartan and kilts. As for Eleanor, Scotland is defined by its ‘ceilidhs<sup>363</sup> at Christmas, Burns’ supper<sup>364</sup>, bagpipes, embracing traditions, Scottish dialect’. This is a very traditional description of Scotland, once more based on customs that are famous worldwide.

Sean insisted on literature and spoke of ‘poetry, Burns, MacDiarmid’. Robert Burns (1759-1796) was a Scottish poet. He is one of the most famous symbols of Scotland today. Hugh MacDiarmid (1892-1978) was a Scottish poet as well, a journalist and essayist. He was involved in politics. He was part of the founding members of the National Party of Scotland,

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<sup>363</sup> Ceilidh is a traditional dance in Scotland.

<sup>364</sup> Burn’s supper celebrates Robert Burn’s poetry. See details on Burns further down.

created in 1928, which led to the creation of the Scottish National Party in 1934. While Sean's depiction of Scotland relies on important Scottish literary figures, others mentioned music, the countryside and religion. For Robert, the characteristics of Scottish society are: 'a fantastic heritage, poetry, music, culture, industry, the Church'. It seems a bit weird to mention 'industry' in the middle of a cultural and traditional description, but it shows that Robert's views on Scotland are not exclusively cultural. In this respect, only 7 per cent of the 25 interviewees talked about Scotland in cultural terms alone.

We have seen that literature, music and traditions were mentioned by some interviewees as cultural features of Scotland. As noted in Chapter Three, language is another aspect of national culture. In this regard, during the 2021 YSI Conference, a motion on Gaelic was passed by acclaim. A supporter of the resolution said:

'It cannot be stressed enough how important Gaelic is to Scotland. Gaelic is in more than just our road signs, it's in our traditional music. It's in our Ceilidh, it's in our poetry. It's in the salon, should we say, before having a drink with friends. Gaelic is a fundamental part of the country. (...) Gaelic is an integral part of Scotland's identity. It is part of us all and it is therefore up to us to make sure we never lose, not only the language itself, but the beautiful and longstanding culture that comes with it.'

It shows that the Young Scots for Independence talk about culture (here embodied by language). Yet, it has to be noted that, compared to socio-political and economic matters, cultural issues are much less often discussed by the YSI. Hence, once more, the civic dimension of SNP youth nationalism.

10 out of the 25 young SNP members interviewed referred to Scottish culture. Instead, the majority of them focused on social democracy as a defining character of Scotland.

## **b) Scotland as a Social Democratic Nation**

Chapter Three shed light on the social democratic stance of the SNP in terms of policy. As has been noted, the centre-left political party campaigns for social equality, fairness, and social justice in Scotland. The youth in their ranks share that political ideology. A majority of the young members I met depicted Scotland as a fair, socially just and progressive nation. Josh put it in a nutshell: ‘We are a social democratic country’. Jonathan specified his answer and said that Scottish society is characterised by ‘traditional values of socialism, progress, equality, respect, social security system’. The following quotations are similar:

Lewis: ‘Social justice... A space where everyone can flourish.’

Mark: ‘Fairness, openness, being honest.’

Alex: ‘A strong welfare state, the NHS... Individual freedom...’

Once again, those viewpoints align with the keystone of the SNP platform, namely social democracy.

Together with social democracy, progressivism is at the heart of their political agenda. The word ‘progress’ is often used by the party, be it on its website<sup>365</sup>, leaflets, or in speeches. Most of the interviewees mentioned progressivism as a major Scottish characteristic. For example, Tim insisted on ‘values of progressivism’ as the base of the Scottish nation. This idea

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<sup>365</sup> See for instance: ‘Delivering progress: first 100 days of this SNP Government’, <https://www.snp.org/first-100-days-of-snp-government/> Accessed on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021.



was also conveyed by some members who think that Scotland is looking forward, not backwards. In that sense, they argued that Scotland is a progressive, not regressive, society<sup>366</sup>. This was illustrated by Grace: '[Scotland] is moving forward... not caught up in History'. As for Eleanor, 'politically, [Scotland is] a nation for equality and progress, future'. Some members exemplified their arguments with references to policies benefiting young people (hence the emphasis on the 'future'), like the right to vote for Scots aged 16 and 17, women (increasing equality between women and men), and LGBTQ+ rights. This is, again, quite in line with the mother party's political agenda.

To sum up, a majority of the YSI and SNP Students that were interviewed depicted Scotland as a social democratic nation. The words 'progress', 'equality', 'fairness', 'social justice' were all much used by a great majority of the interviewees sample, thus perfectly in line with SNP discourse<sup>367</sup>. This corresponds with the literature as well, in particular with Henderson and McEwen's analysis of the values defended by the SNP (Henderson, 1999; Henderson and McEwen, 2005), Leith's examination of SNP political discourse (Leith, 2008; Leith and Soule, 2012), and Duclos' exploration of the party's policy (Duclos, 2014, 2016, 2020).

### **c) An Inclusive Society**

Finally, young SNP interviewees highlighted the inclusiveness of the Scottish nation. In this regard, together with social democracy, social justice, equality and progressivism, another

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<sup>366</sup> As shall be demonstrated in the section about interviewees' views on the UK, the story is completely different when it comes to the Union. It is majorly seen as an entity which is stuck in the past.

<sup>367</sup> See for example 'A Route Map to a Fairer Independent Scotland', the report of the Social Justice Fairness and Commission published in March 2021:

<https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/www.snp.org/uploads/2021/05/Social-Justice-Fairness-Commission-Final-Report-.pdf> Accessed on September 19th, 2021.

characteristic that they mentioned most of the time is community. Significantly, 24 out of 25 interviewees painted the portrait of Scotland as an open and welcoming nation. Here are some examples of what they told me:

Lewis: ‘We’re a welcoming country.’

Liam: ‘[Scottish society is] quite friendly, welcoming.’

Mary: ‘We’re open.’

Magnus: ‘[Scotland is characterised by a] friendly atmosphere... our commitment to democracy... our commitment to communities, making sure that everyone is heard...’

Harry: ‘[A] sense of community, Scottish spirit of fairness and community.’

James: ‘A sense of comfort and familiarity... a feeling of comfort and connection.’

Rob: ‘[Scotland is characterised by its] solidarity.’

Grace: ‘[Scotland is] inclusive, welcoming, friendly...’

They insisted on the idea of living together as one people, one nation. Their views on Scotland are quite positive. For James, it is even comfortable to live in Scotland. The ideas of openness and inclusiveness echo the SNP’s promotion of Scotland as a multicultural nation, and their support for immigration. As noted earlier, in 2018 Nicola Sturgeon declared: ‘The “we” is everyone who chooses to live here’ (Sturgeon, 2018). Here the personal pronoun ‘we’ clearly conveys an idea of community and represents all the people who live in Scotland<sup>368</sup>. The ‘we’ is implied by young SNP members in the quotations above. The openness and inclusiveness of Scottish society suggests that everyone is welcome in Scotland, regardless of their birth and origins. As long as you live in Scotland, you are Scottish. Young SNP members’ declarations are thus in correlation with the literature on Scottish nationalism, on the SNP more particularly.

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<sup>368</sup> See the reference to De Cillia et al.’s paper in Chapter Three.

Let us focus on multiculturalism in Scotland. 62 per cent of the SNP respondents to the online survey think that Scotland is characterised by cultural diversity. Even more tellingly, all the interviewees agreed that Scotland is a multicultural nation. For Matthew, ‘Scottish identity is a melting pot’. This implies that Scottishness is not one identity, but is composed of multiple identities, as people from different cultural backgrounds live together in Scotland. Alexander even said that cultural diversity is ‘the essence of what Scottish society is’. This echoes Richard’s words: ‘[multiculturalism is] part of what we are as a country. Diversity shapes our identity, what the country is’. Living together in a culturally diverse society is thus at the heart of the definition of the Scottish nation according to these two young SNP members. Like SNP leaders, the YSI and SNP Students interviewed view immigration as something positive which benefits Scotland. James declared: ‘immigration boosts the economy’. In the same way, for Peter, multiculturalism is ‘very healthy for society’. Lewis even stated: ‘we’re a nation of immigrants’. Once again, all this clearly echoes SNP leaders’ description of Scotland as an open and welcoming nation that benefits from cultural diversity, notably exemplified by Nicola Sturgeon’s speech at the opening of the fifth session of the Scottish Parliament, in 2016 (Sturgeon, 2016). The First Minister of Scotland praised immigration. She referred to Scotland as ‘an open and inclusive nation’ that ‘celebrate[s] (...) differences’, and praised immigrant people that work or study in Scotland as people contributing to the construction of a strong Scottish nation. In her address to SNP 2021 conference, she praised the role played by refugees in Scottish society:

‘It is about everyone in Scotland. *It is about those born here, and those who honour us by making this country their home*<sup>369</sup>. The Scottish election was the first time refugees and all foreign nationals with leave to remain had the right

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<sup>369</sup> The civic dimension of Scottishness is clear here: being Scottish derives not only from having been born in Scotland, but also from choosing to live there.

to vote. That was important for its own sake. But it is also a symbol of *the country we are seeking to build. Open, welcoming, diverse*. Refugees from Syria and elsewhere have settled in Alloa, on Bute, in Glasgow, in the Highlands, and many places in between. *They are a part of who we are.*<sup>370</sup>  
(Sturgeon, 2021)

The last sentence echoes what Nicola Sturgeon declared in 2016: ‘We are one Scotland’ (Sturgeon, 2016). Similarly, interview results have shown that young SNP members’ version of Scotland is one of a nation where people live together as *one* people.

#### **d) Survey Results**

The interview results are strengthened by YSI and SNP Students’ responses to the online survey. They were asked about what, for them, best represents Scotland. Figure 4.7 introduces their answers:

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<sup>370</sup> My emphasis.

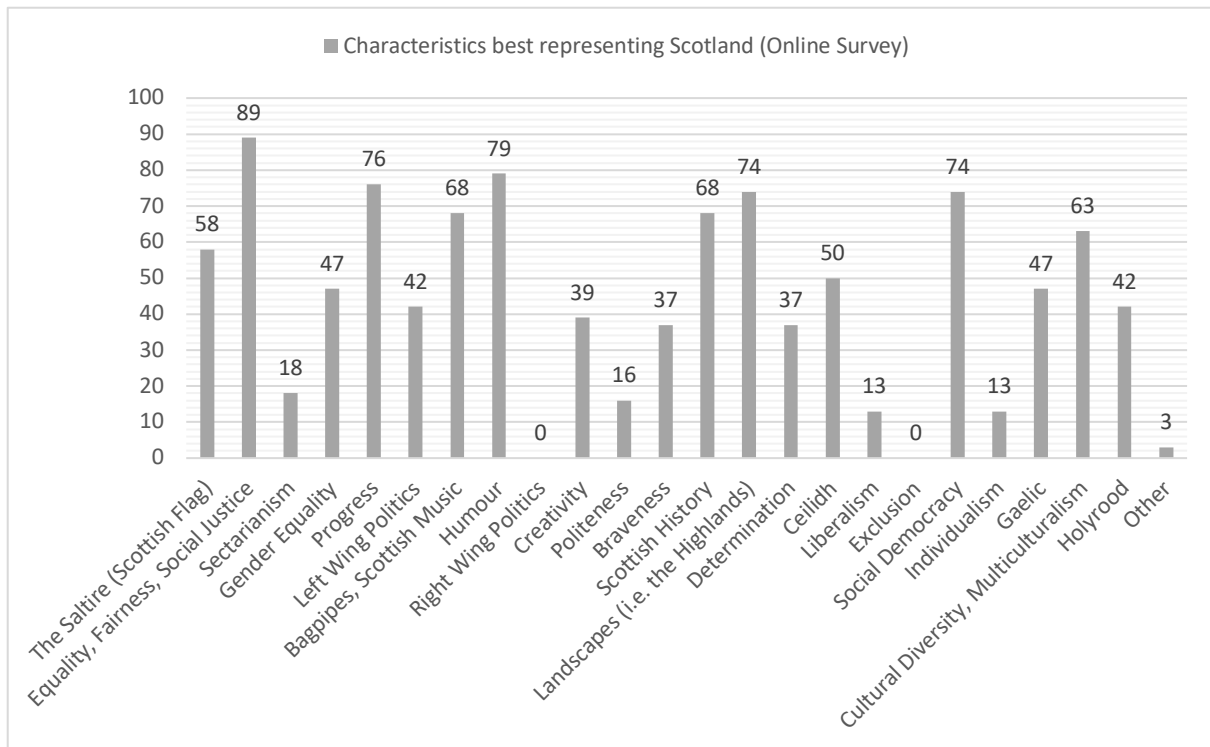


Figure 4.7: Characteristics best representing Scotland according to young SNP respondents (percentages)<sup>371</sup>

The characteristic which was chosen as the most representative (89 per cent) of the Scottish nation is ‘Equality, Fairness, Social Justice’, namely the political agenda of the SNP. ‘Humour’ comes second (79 per cent). ‘Progress’ comes third (76 per cent). ‘Landscapes’ and ‘Social Democracy’ both come fourth (74 per cent), and ‘Bagpipes, Scottish Music’ and ‘Scottish History’ come fifth (68 per cent). Amongst all the characteristics in the top 5, three are socio-political, and four are cultural. This is rather balanced. However, in the top 3<sup>372</sup>, two characteristics are socio-political: ‘Equality, Fairness, Social Justice’ and ‘Progress’. These are exactly the terms used by a majority of interviewees to talk about the Scottish nation. My point here is not to say that young SNP members’ views of Scotland are devoid of cultural aspects. As has been shown above, some interviewees referred to cultural habits and heritage to describe

<sup>371</sup> As this was a multiple-choice question, the total does not sum to 100 per cent.

<sup>372</sup> For comparison, in Labour, statistics are well balanced: the Saltire, bagpipes and Scottish music, Scottish History, landscapes, and ceilidh all come first with 67 per cent. Young Conservatives’ top 3 are completely cultural.

their nation. Moreover, Figure 4.7 indicates that cultural characteristics like ‘The Saltire’ and ‘Ceilidh’ scored quite well (more than 50 per cent each). Nonetheless, it seems that the elements about which young SNP members interviewed and surveyed think first when talking about Scotland, are socio-political, not cultural. This, again, aligns with civic nationalism, not ethnocultural nationalism.

So as to know how YSI and SNP Students perceive their nation, in the survey I asked them to define Scotland. Table 4.4 categorises their responses as follows: cultural aspects, political aspects, social behaviour and attitudes, or geographical aspects. The elements cited are those which most frequently appeared in their responses<sup>373</sup>.

<b>How would you define Scotland?</b>	
Cultural Aspects	beautiful scenery
Geographical Aspects	a territory Northern part of Great Britain small country
Political Aspects	a stateless nation left-wing politics progressive dominated by Westminster social justice fair has a lot to offer to the world democratic diverse equal inclusive community
Social Behaviour and Attitudes	open, welcoming solidarity honest brave

Table 4.4: YSI and SNP Students’ responses to ‘How would you define Scotland?’ (online survey)

A majority of their views of Scotland are political, or socio-political if we combine the ‘political aspects’ and ‘social behaviour and attitudes’ categories. The cultural category is the smallest,

<sup>373</sup> This was a long free text question, so young party members were free to write whatever they wanted.

with ‘beautiful scenery’ as the only element defining Scotland in cultural terms. This reinforces the idea that young SNP members are likely to view Scotland from a political or socio-political, not cultural, perspective. It should be noted that the way they talk about Scotland in political terms is aligned with their political ideology as SNP members. Namely, their discourse on Scotland is one of a democratic, progressive, socially just, fair, equal, inclusive and diverse nation. In that sense, it may be argued that their vision of the identity of Scotland as a nation, correlates with their political ideology, namely social democracy.

It should be noted that several respondents defined Scotland as ‘home’, which strengthens Leith’s argument of SNP discourse about national identity as a sense of place (Leith, 2008).

When taking a look at Table 4.4 again, we see that a majority of the young respondents’ definitions of Scotland were based on civic criteria. Here are a few examples to illustrate that point. For the respondents below, Scotland is:

Respondent9: ‘The Northern portion of the Island of Great Britain, and the surrounding smaller islands, and the people who chose to live and work in that area.’

R21: ‘LOVE and fairness for all no matter your skin colour, your background, your sexuality, your financial status, everyone is the same.’

R33: ‘Scotland is both a territory and a group of people who come from different backgrounds to work together for the common good.’

Those three respondents define Scotland in accordance with SNP discourse, namely Scotland as a territory open to everyone who chooses to live there, regardless of their origins (respondents

9 and 33), and characterised by egalitarianism (respondent 21). This, once more, aligns with the literature on the SNP and their civic conceptions of the Scottish nation (see Chapter Three).

### **e) Scottish Young Conservatives and Labour Members’ Perceptions of the Scottish Nation**

For informative and comparative purpose, let us have a look at how the young people interviewed in the Conservatives and the Labour Party talked about the Scottish nation.

#### *Scottish Young Conservatives*

Amongst Conservatives, definitions of Scottish society were heterogenous. Ross mentioned ‘industry... strong work... Protestantism... and determination to work very hard’. Ben also considered determination as a characteristic of Scottish society. He added: ‘not taking yourself too seriously, good sense of humour, being friendly, good drinks, alcohol, being open and honest’. As for Robert, being Scottish is: ‘having pride in your country but being open minded enough, knowing you are equal’. Like Ben, he spoke of Scottish ‘good sense of humour’. Thus, their views of Scotland were a mix of cultural aspects, values like openness, and behavioural aspects like determination. Two interviewees mentioned openness, which was emphasised by young SNP members as well<sup>374</sup>. Consequently, it may be said that despite several differences, there was a similarity between young Conservatives’ and young SNP members’ discourse.

Further down, we shall see whether there is a correlation between the way the young Conservatives I met defined Scottishness and the way they view Scottish society.

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<sup>374</sup> This is also how Jamie, the Brexit Party member (former Conservative) depicted the Scottish nation: ‘it’s a very open, friendly, nice society’.



### *Scottish Young Labour*

In the Scottish Labour Party, the young people I interviewed all described Scotland as an open and inclusive nation. Alasdair insisted on the ‘warm spirit and welcoming atmosphere’ of Scotland. Gillian highlighted the ‘diverse aspect’ of the nation, as well as the fact that ‘Edinburgh is quite cosmopolitan’. Similarly, Daisy told me that in Glasgow, multiple ethnic communities are cohabiting. Mike also argued that Scotland is an open nation, but he nuanced his viewpoint: ‘There’s a distinct identity between England and Scotland. In Scotland, there’s quite a bit of Anglophobia. It’s a very warm and open society. But I sometimes feel like I’m an outsider’. Mike comes from England. It seems that in spite of the welcoming aspect of Scottish society, as an English person he sometimes feels rejected by Scottish people. ‘Anglophobia’ is a strong word, like ‘xenophobia’. Unfortunately, as I did not do research about English people living in Scotland, it is impossible to draw any specific conclusions. In the future, it would be worth examining English people’s feelings about their identity as Scottish citizens.

As has been said, overall, the young Scottish Labour members I met see Scotland as an open and inclusive nation. In other words, their definition of Scotland echoes that of the YSI and SNP Students I interviewed, when it comes to cultural diversity and inclusiveness particularly. It should be noted that their discourse was devoid of any cultural aspects like tartan, kilts and bagpipes. Rather, their viewpoint is social (except a slight ethnic dimension in Mike’s words), which appears to be in line with young SNP members’ socio-political version of Scotland as an open and multicultural nation.

It should be noted that regardless of their political party, the young Scottish party members I interviewed think of Scotland as an open and welcoming nation. This is the only consensus amongst them when it comes to defining Scotland and Scottishness. Therefore, in the future, it would be interesting to see whether there is also a consensus between young

Scottish party members and non-party members. If so, it would mean that openness is majorly viewed as a defining characteristic of the Scottish nation by Scottish people.

To conclude, unsurprisingly, young SNP members see Scotland through a socio-political lens, as a progressive nation based on social democracy, social fairness, equality and inclusiveness. This is in line with the existing literature on the SNP (Henderson, 1999; Henderson and McEwen, 2005; Leith, 2008; Leith and Soule, 2012; Duclos, 2014, 2016, 2020). It corresponds particularly to Mitchell et al.'s findings about the way the youngest members of the party thought of national identity in 2008. As noted before, young SNP members tended to base their definition of Scottish identity on civic arguments while older members tended to base it on both civic and ethnic aspects. 62 per cent of SNP members aged between 18 and 34 based their definition on civic characteristics exclusively (Mitchell et al., 2012: 115).

As shown in the sections about the United Kingdom and Britishness further down, young SNP members' viewpoints about Scotland clearly contrast with what they think of the British state.

#### **4) Definitions of Scottishness**

'There's no Scottish state but there's a Scottish identity.' Sean's words emphasise the strength of national identity in Scotland. His words remind us of the viewpoints of both scholars and the SNP, that Scottishness does not need to be highlighted in the debate about independence in the sense that it is strong and unquestioned. Therefore, stressing Scottish identity is not necessary for the recognition of Scotland as a nation (see Chapter Three). Sean made a clear distinction between Scotland as a nation, with its identity, and Scotland as a state, namely what

the SNP want to achieve<sup>375</sup>. Let us see how the young SNP members studied in this thesis understand Scottishness, namely their national identity.

56 per cent of the interviewees defined Scottishness from a socio-political perspective, 32 per cent based their definitions on both cultural and socio-political criteria, and 12 per cent talked about culture only.

### **a) Cultural Traits**

As has been demonstrated in the previous section, some interviewees referred to cultural elements to describe Scotland, notably ceilidhs, bagpipes, tartan, kilts, Gaelic, Scottish music and poets. Similarly, some based (often a part of) their definitions of Scottishness on such cultural characteristics and traditions. Robert told me: ‘this is part of our national identity’.

As a flag is one of the most obvious symbols of a nation, before conducting interviews I expected that YSI and SNP Students would mention the Saltire when defining Scottishness. Surprisingly, none of them referred to the Scottish national flag. Except Mary who spoke of ‘the unicorn as the national animal’ of Scotland, no other interviewees mentioned national emblems. They rather focused on cultural symbols of Scottishness like traditional music, dance, tartan and legends<sup>376</sup>.

Food and drink also came out as cultural identifiers. For example, Lucy associated Scottishness with ‘alcohol and food’ and Liam told me: ‘we like to drink’.

While the Scottish accent is often seen as very distinct from other British accents, and as characteristic of Scotland, very few interviewees referred to it when defining Scottish identity. Laura talked about the ‘raw Scottish accent’. So, it seems that the Scottish accent is

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<sup>375</sup> About the difference between a nation and a state, see definitions page 241.

<sup>376</sup> As shown further down, these symbols may also be interpreted as stereotypes.

not part of national identity according to the SNP youth I interviewed. This might be due to the idea that an accent may be seen as something which distinguishes a population from others, ethnically speaking. As young SNP members are civic nationalists, this may explain why they did not mention the Scottish accent as a constitutive element of Scottishness. Furthermore, they consider Scotland an open, welcoming and inclusive nation. Hence the idea that for them, in Scotland, accents are as diverse as cultures.

Interestingly, Harry and Sean highlighted that there are two different kinds of Scottish identity. They distinguished between Highlander and Lowlander identities. For them, the former is characterised by a sense of belonging to the Highlands and feeling attached to the related culture, notably clans, tartan, and historical events like the battles between the Scots and the English. Sean referred to ‘Highland clearances... national memory, folk memory... and people leaving’. They specified that the Lowlander identity is related to life in the Lowlands of Scotland, namely a more urban and industrial way of life.

Finally, very few interviewees spoke of Scottish people’s characteristics and behaviour. For example, Liam said: ‘very often we are funny, and hard-working’.

For Matt, all the cultural elements mentioned above make Scotland unique in the world:

‘What makes Scotland different is our own culture itself, so our traditions, our heritage, our landscape, the culture of our country, how we do things... and the values we have as well, like compassion and bravery. You could say

the same thing for a lot of other countries<sup>377</sup> but I feel that's something that's very specific to Scotland.'

This is echoed by Laura's argument that 'Scottish identity is so distinct'. As for Harry, Scotland is culturally different from the UK in particular, through music: 'we have a musical sense of national identity... there are so many great bands from Scotland... This is the Scotland sphere, not the UK sphere. We have our own sphere.'

Scottishness is considered in cultural terms by some SNP youth. Eleanor went further by arguing that being Scottish means 'accepting', and being proud of, Scottish cultural 'stereotypes':

'I think it's accepting the *stereotypes* like our ceilidhs at Christmas or our Burns supper, just enjoying the experiences and being proud of that, proud of our bagpipes, that's amazing, embracing traditions, speaking to our great grandparents that speak the Scottish dialect, understanding our Scots language and Burns, and the cultural identity of Scotland as a whole'.

Here, the young SNP member clearly relates Scottishness to Scottish culture and traditions. Interestingly, several other interviewees had a completely opposite viewpoint. For them, on the contrary, Scottishness has nothing to do with such cultural clichés.

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<sup>377</sup> Indeed, as shown later in this thesis, it may be argued that Scottishness, as defined by young SNP members, is not really specific, especially in the sense that it is based on universal values. See the final part of this chapter, as well as Kymlicka's viewpoint introduced in Chapter Three.

## **b) No Stereotypes/Clichés**

‘People think of men wearing skirts.’ Mary’s words emphasise common stereotypes about Scotland and Scottish people. According to doxa, Scottish people wear kilts like the French eat snails and frogs. Even if there is something true about it (kilts are part of the Scottish culture), not everyone in Scotland wears a kilt, just as not all French people like eating snails and frogs. It can therefore be considered a part of culture and a cliché at the same time.

It is this type of stereotype that several YSI and SNP Students interviewed rejected as a component of Scottishness. Tellingly, Alex said: ‘you know tartan, haggis, kilts, you have those sorts of cultural images and stuff and stereotypes, but I think it’s just sort of you live in Scotland, you feel connected with the people in Scotland, I think that’s what it is at the core of Scottishness.’ Thus, for Alex, Scottishness is not defined by Scottish culture, but by the fact of living in Scotland. In other words, as scholars like David McCrone (1998, 2001) and Murray Stewart Leith (2008) noted, here Scottishness is based on place, on territory. As shown in Chapter Three, living in Scotland makes you Scottish. Alex’s definition of Scottish identity is clearly civic and territorial. Similarly, Liam stated: ‘Scottishness is not really bagpipes, haggis. It’s more personal. When you come to Scotland, you’re Scottish’.

Besides a sense of belonging to the Scottish territory/nation, other interviewees insisted that, instead of being defined by culture, Scottishness is based on socio-political values. For Mark, Scottish identity is ‘not the clichés like kilts, ginger heads, but fairness, openness, being honest’. While honesty can be considered a type of behaviour, values like fairness and openness are once more emphasised. Significantly, Peter argued:

*‘We are an outward looking, liberal country. Too often, our national identity is probably perceived to be bagpipes, tartan and people drinking alcohol, but Scotland is a very, very, liberal country now, the Scottish government has*

done a huge amount of stuff to try and tackle inequalities, like same sex marriage.’

Peter regrets that people (probably foreigners in his view) think of Scottishness only as playing bagpipes, wearing tartan and drinking whisky. For him, being Scottish is more than that. It is ‘tackling inequalities’ and fighting for people’s rights like same sex marriage. Associating Scottishness with same sex marriage might be surprising since same sex marriage has been legalised in many countries across the whole world. So, at first sight, it does not seem to be distinctively Scottish. This echoes the issue of values which are universal instead of being national, as identified by Kymlicka (1996). However, it aligns with civic SNP discourse about national identity, based essentially on socio-political values and social democracy (see Chapter Three).

In this regard, Josh told me: ‘Broadly I would say that we are a social-democratic country. There’s nothing to do with kilts and bagpipes for sure’. Once more, social democracy, instead of ‘kilts and bagpipes’, is at the core of Scottishness. Young SNP interviewees’ political ideology (social democracy) and their perceptions of Scottishness are interrelated. This link between national identity and political ideology (see Shulman, 2002) is examined in the last part of the present chapter.

Thus, the young SNP members quoted above view Scottishness as something which is more about social equality and justice than cultural aspects and traditions like tartan and kilts. As Josh pointed out, ‘there’s nothing to do with kilts and bagpipes for sure’, hence the idea that they understand their national identity more in a socio-political way, in terms of social values and democratic principles, than from a cultural point of view.

### **c) A Socio-political Version of Scottishness**

Chapter Three showed that in the academic literature, the SNP's version of Scottishness should be seen as socio-political, not as ethnic nor cultural (Henderson, 1999; Henderson and McEwen, 2005; Leith, 2008; Leith and Soule, 2012; Duclos, 2014, 2016, 2020). With the quotations above, this is confirmed by what the young people in the party told me.

The section about young SNP members' views of Scotland highlighted their socio-political conceptions of Scottish society, mainly based on their social-democratic beliefs. Similarly, when defining Scottishness, interviewees emphasised egalitarianism. They also insisted on progressivism as a component of Scottish identity. Eleanor expanded on the association between egalitarianism, progressivism and Scottishness: 'in Scotland, national identity means a nation which is for equality and which is progressive and really, really, really wants to shape a better future.' Here nation and national identity converge. Chapter Three showed that both concepts are (logically) interrelated. The last part of the present chapter shows that national identity may be understood as the identity of a nation. To some extent, here, Eleanor argues that Scottishness, as the identity of Scotland, is defined by campaigning for equality and for progressive policy. In other words, for her, being Scottish means living in a nation which promotes equality and progressivism. This, again, supports the argument that young SNP members' discourse on national identity is overwhelmingly socio-political.

Besides talking about social values like egalitarianism, social justice and fairness, some interviewees like Michelle associated Scottishness with politics. She said that 'modern Scottish identity is defined by social class... left wing in Scotland, which is a big part of its identity'. Thus, according to Michelle, being Scottish implies leaning to the left side of the political spectrum. She related the idea of social class with left-wing politics. It seems that, for her, being Scottish means being from a social class voting for left-wing political parties. Finally, she interestingly pointed out the socio-political part of Scottishness as the 'modern' definition of



that identity. For her, the current version of Scottishness tends to be socio-political, whereas older versions were probably more cultural. This might be explained by the ‘politicisation’ of Scottish identity (Henderson, 1999) in the last decades, with devolution and, then, the referendum on independence. Some of the YSI and SNP Students whom I interviewed emphasised that politicisation of national identity, particularly since the 2014 referendum. When I asked Eleanor whether national identity is cultural, political, or both, she argued that in Scotland, it is ‘cultural, through heritage and traditions, and political as it developed in politics in 2014’. Similarly, for Sean, the Scottish independence referendum in 2014 ‘was the first time that people had to confront their national identity in a political way’.

Harry also drew a link between Scottishness and left-wing politics. He told me that: ‘In Scotland we are socialists<sup>378</sup>, we are equal people no matter where you come from’. Thinking of our national identity equals asking the question ‘who are we?’. Here, the fact that Harry told me that ‘in Scotland we are socialists’ makes the relationship between national identity and politics quite clear. Harry related national identity with a political ideology. This might have been unconscious. Or, it might have been a strategy to insist that Scottish people are welcoming and/or that Scottish nationalism is civic.

The relationship between national identity and political ideology in Harry’s quotation echoes Shulman’s thesis of ‘alternative contents of national identity’ (Shulman, 2002: 559; see Table 3.1, page 251). As noted earlier, for Shulman, political ideology is one of the key components of the ‘civic content’ of national identity. I will comment on this in the last part of the present chapter.

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<sup>378</sup> Like Harry, some young SNP interviewees considered themselves socialists, whilst the SNP is a social-democratic party. The two left-wing political ideologies are close. While socialism means ‘the set of beliefs that states that all people are equal and should share equally in a country’s money, or the political systems based on these beliefs’ (Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/socialism>), social democracy means ‘the belief that society should change from capitalism to socialism in a gradual, peaceful way’ (Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/social-democracy>). Hence, social democracy is partly based on socialist beliefs.

In short, young SNP members' version of Scottishness is quite socio-political. This was illustrated by the quotations above. It is also exemplified by the fact that a majority of young SNP members (56 per cent) based their definitions of Scottish identity on socio-political criteria.

#### **d) Scots are Open and Welcoming**

Finally, as already shown in the section about young SNP members' conceptions of Scotland, a majority of young interviewees insisted on multiculturalism and inclusiveness as components of Scottishness. Tellingly, Josh argued: 'Multiculturalism is a part of what we are as a country. Diversity shapes our identity, what the country is'. In other words, Scottishness is an identity made of multiple identities. In that sense, Robert noted: 'Scottish identity is a melting pot, made of various cultures and worlds'. He specified that his maternal grandparents were born in Ireland. Personally, he feels both Scottish and Irish. Similarly, Tim pointed out: 'there's not really one Scottish identity, there are various Scottish identities, whether you're from Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen... and different cultures can all come together and support each other'. Once more, here Scottishness is seen as an identity made of multiple identities.

The section about Scotland showed that the YSI and SNP Students I interviewed depicted the Scottish nation as open and welcoming. Similarly, they told me that being Scottish means being open and welcoming. Magnus underlined the 'welcoming attitude of Scottish people'. Liam told me: 'we're quite friendly and welcoming'. This was echoed by Mary's words: 'we're open, as a people we are very friendly. You can have a random conversation with anyone on the street.' Therefore, for Harry, being Scottish means 'having a sense of community'.

According to the quotations above, being Scottish means having/assimilating multiple identities. This is in line with SNP discourse on immigration and cultural diversity in Scotland. And it strengthens, again, the civic aspect of their nationalism.

To conclude, young SNP members' definitions of Scotland and Scottishness overlap. Their overall view of both the Scottish nation and Scottish identity is socio-political. Their discourse was devoid of ethnic arguments. It was not devoid of cultural references, but it was, in a great majority of the cases, socio-politically oriented. Thus, the present findings are in line with the literature on the relationship between the SNP and Scottishness (Henderson, 1999; Henderson and McEwen, 2005; Leith, 2008; Leith and Soule, 2012; Duclos, 2016, 2020).

### **e) Survey Results**

So as to know how young SNP members understand Scottishness, in the survey I asked them what symbolises Scotland in their opinion. Table 4.5 categorises their responses as belonging either to 'cultural aspects', 'political aspects', or 'social behaviour and attitudes'. The elements cited below are those which most frequently appeared in their responses<sup>379</sup>.

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<sup>379</sup> This was a long free text question, so young party members were free to write whatever they wanted.

What symbolises Scotland	
Cultural Aspects	poetry (i.e. Burns) traditions national symbols (thistle, unicorn) food and drink rugby scenery accent History
Political Aspects	social justice, equality democracy multiculturalism
Social Behaviour and Attitudes	openness friendliness community tolerance

Table 4.5: YSI and SNP Students' responses to 'What does symbolise Scotland?' (online survey)

Table 4.5 sheds light on the alignment of respondents' socio-political version of Scottishness and their political position. This was also indicated by Table 4.4 about their definitions of the Scottish nation. Their understanding of Scottishness in socio-political terms is clearly related to the political ideology of their party. Again, a parallel may be drawn between young SNP members' views of Scottishness and SNP discourse on national identity (Leith, 2008; Leith and Soule, 2012). It is also in line with what Henderson and McEwen identified as the values (egalitarianism, social justice...) 'underpinning national identity' (Henderson, 1999; Henderson and McEwen, 2005) in the political discourse of the SNP (see Chapter Three).

Figure 4.8 indicates the proportions of young SNP respondents who perceive national symbols of Scotland in socio-political terms, cultural terms, and both.

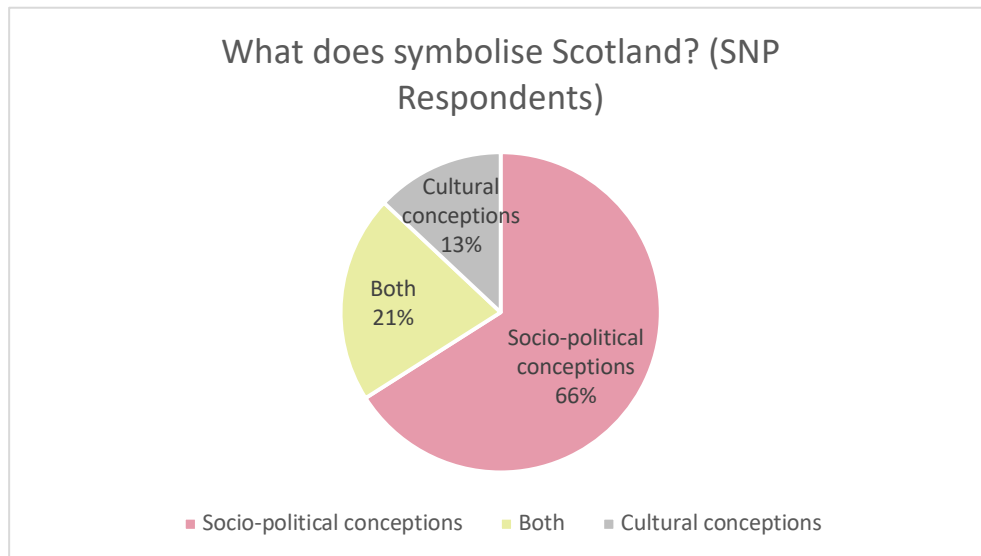


Figure 4.8: YSI and SNP Students’ responses to ‘What does symbolise Scotland?’ (online survey)

Figure 4.8 reinforces the conclusion that young SNP members’ understandings of Scottishness are majorly socio-political, then both socio-political and cultural, and, for a minority, cultural. Once more, this is in line with the literature on the relationship between the SNP and national identity.

Let us analyse some quotations that exemplify the points above:

R4: ‘It’s people and our national flag, emblem, animal, flower and anthem.’

R7: ‘Scotland is traditionally symbolised by kilts, shortbread and whisky.

Whereas modern Scotland can be symbolised by so much more. I think *the people who live in Scotland are the greatest representation of us as a nation.*’

R18: ‘For me the idea of “new Scot” is so important! As an immigrant, the fact that our government says that anyone who wants to, can call Scotland their home, is the most welcome I have ever felt in any country and it really summarises our politics as internationalist and progressive: *a place that welcomes everyone.*’

R20: ‘How friendly we are, our unique culture, our beautiful lands including Highlands and Islands, language, our left leanings compared to England.’

R23: ‘Freedom, Liberty, Prosperity, Celtic Culture, Highlands, Poor weather, Cold, Friendly, Approachable.’

R38: ‘I think having *common values* such as internationalism, supporting human rights and freedoms, and being willing to contribute to the welfare of your community are symbols of what it is to be Scottish. Our *history, cultural heritage and languages* (e.g. Scottish Wars of Independence, Highland Dress, Burns Suppers or speaking Scots or Scottish Gaelic) are also indicators of what symbolises Scotland.’

These quotations are part of the three categories identified in Table 4.5: cultural aspects, political aspects, and social behaviour and attitudes. Except for respondent 18 who perfectly exemplifies SNP civic discourse on Scotland as a place and Scottish people as the people who (choose to) live there, I chose to examine quotations with both cultural and socio-political views in order to show how both types of conceptions are articulated in the young respondents’ discourse about Scottish symbols. Besides talking about national symbols which are part of the Scottish culture, respondents 4 and 7 focus on ‘the people’. Here, Scottishness is symbolised by the people who live in Scotland. Hence, again, the civic and territorial-based nationalism of these young SNP members. Respondent 38’s answer illustrates the combination between cultural and socio-political criteria. For them, Scotland is symbolised by both ‘common values’ (Henderson, 1999; Henderson and McEwen, 2005) and cultural elements. This is an interesting response, because it shows that young SNP members’ discourse about national identity (here embodied by what they consider to be national symbols) is not always devoid of cultural elements, and that overall, those cultural elements come second in young respondents’ minds,

after socio-political elements like shared values. This, again, suggests that their views of Scotland and Scottishness are overall socio-political, as highlighted by interviews and by Figure 4.8, with cultural references sometimes.

The combination between cultural and socio-political views of Scottish symbols is well illustrated by the quotation from respondent 20. For them, besides landscapes and languages, Scotland is symbolised by its 'left leanings compared to England'. Hence the dichotomic idea of 'us vs. them' here, but this is a political version of 'us vs. them'. The respondent compared Scotland and England from political perspectives, not cultural or ethnic ones. They distinguished between the two nations according to their positions on the political spectrum. This highlights the absence of ethnocultural arguments in these young SNP members' discourse about Scotland and Scottishness (Hamilton, 1999). And it reminds us of Grace's viewpoint on which I focused earlier: there seems to be no hatred on behalf of the SNP towards the English (or more generally speaking, the British). In other words, as suggested by Grace, the SNP and, here more particularly, young party members, campaign for independence because they feel that they, as Scottish people, are different from British/English people *politically*, not culturally or ethnically speaking.

To conclude, there is an alignment of young SNP respondents' socio-political version of Scottishness and their political ideology. This was also indicated by Table 4.4 about their definitions of the Scottish nation. Their understanding of Scottishness in socio-political terms is clearly related to the political ideology of their party. A parallel may be drawn between young SNP respondents' views of Scottishness and SNP discourse on national identity (Leith, 2008; Leith and Soule, 2012).

## f) Scottish Young Conservatives and Labour Members'

### Versions of Scottishness

#### *Scottish Young Conservatives*

Cultural aspects were more noticeable in the definitions of Scottishness given by Scottish Young Conservatives than in the discourse of SNP youth. 12 per cent of the young SNP members I met based their definitions of Scottishness on cultural criteria. Amongst the young Scottish Conservatives, 75 per cent did so. This is also the case for the Brexit Party member, who was part of the Conservative and Unionist Party before.

Let us focus on the cultural references in Conservatives' discourse. When asked about Scottishness, Ross responded:

'There's a very ancient, proud Scottish *culture* based on monarchy. There's a strong Protestantism in the country. There's a great Scottish tradition of scepticism towards the power of the state. Scottishness is a strong national identity. When I think of it, I think of Highland dancers.'

As evidenced by his use of the word 'culture', Ross's definition of Scottishness is cultural. He focuses on monarchy, religion and Highland traditions. Jack's definition of Scottishness was also based on culture:

'I think even now there's still perhaps a slightly more romantic view of Scotland being something that is very much intrinsic to the Union... *that kind of Highland scene of a stag and a Scotsman in a kilt with a bagpipe*. In 1834, King George IV came to Scotland. He wore a kilt. There's a big painting that was created of that event. *Even now to me, it kind of sums up Scottishness*.



It's this kind of cultural intrinsic part that it plays within the Union, that gives it its unique identity. (...) I think Scottishness as a concept... I think it is still *very closely aligned to Britishness, but maybe I would say that because I'm supportive of the Union*. I think it's a very multi-faceted phenomenon. Highland Scottishness is very different to central belt Scottishness. I don't think it's necessarily one identity perhaps.'

Jack first talks about a 'romantic view' of Scottishness. His definition is, indeed, quite romanticised. This is particularly illustrated by the association of Scottishness with the Highlands, the stag and the 'Scotsman in a kilt with a bagpipe'. His romanticised discourse on Scottishness contrasts with the discourse of a majority of the young SNP members interviewed, namely a discourse based on pragmatic, socio-economic and socio-political views<sup>380</sup>. Interestingly, Jack argues that it is this cultural dimension that makes Scotland and Scottishness unique in the United Kingdom. In other words, for him, Scottishness is distinct from the other identities in the Union thanks to distinctive cultural components. Jack's definition of Scottishness as a multi-faceted identity echoes some YSI and SNP Students' thoughts. As shown earlier, Harry distinguished between the Lowland and Highland identities. In Labour as well, some interviewees like Alasdair noted that Scottishness could vary geographically speaking (see further down). Contrary to young SNP members, Jack emphasised the alignment between Scottishness and Britishness. His reflection that his thoughts are probably influenced

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<sup>380</sup> To some extent, this is reminiscent of the independence referendum campaign. Indeed, Conservatives like former British Prime Minister David Cameron, conveyed a rather romanticised image of the UK and of Scotland as a component of that Union. They insisted that the UK is a family of nations. They played the emotional card by saying that Scottish independence would be experienced as a divorce between Scotland and the UK. This attempt to make Scottish people 'imagine' the British 'community' (Anderson, 1983) as a family might be seen as a strategy to appeal to Scots' emotions to make them stay in the UK. For example, in a speech that he delivered two days prior to the referendum, Cameron said that breaking with 'the best family of nations in the world' would be a 'painful divorce' making British people 'utterly heart-broken'. He added that 'a family is not a compromise (...) it is a magical identity', and that independence was 'about dividing people, closing doors, making foreigners of our friends and neighbours.' (*The Independent*, 2014).

by his support for the Union argues for a relationship between national identity and the debate about Scottish independence. Supporting the Union of Scotland with the rest of the UK means feeling as much Scottish as British, according to Jack (see Chapter Three, notably Bond, in Bechhofer and McCrone, 2009; Bond and Rosie, 2010).

George's view of Scottishness was much less romanticised: '*It's just my nationality. I don't see it as anything more than that. Left-wing arguments are romantic arguments*'<sup>381</sup>. A parallel may be drawn between George's words and some of the YSI and SNP Students' views of Britishness as their nationality or legal identity ('I'm British on my passport', Josh said)<sup>382</sup>. Interestingly, it is Scottishness which George considers only a nationality, namely the opposite of young SNP members. George seems to be emotionally detached from his Scottishness, while the SNP youth I interviewed had a very strong sense of Scottishness and were emotionally detached from Britishness. Given that George is a Conservative, it probably plays a part in the fact that he feels more attached to Britishness. As has been demonstrated with the Moreno question results earlier, there seems to be a corroboration between young Scottish party members' sense of national identity and constitutional preferences. In that sense, given that the Conservative Party is pro-Union (see its label), George may be more likely to feel attached to Britishness than young SNP members who campaign for Scottish independence. This is examined in the section about Britishness further down.

Furthermore, George relates romantic arguments about Scottishness with the left side of the political spectrum. He does not explicitly refer to the SNP, but it may be assumed that the left-wing, romantic, arguments about Scottishness that he speaks of, are SNP arguments. He could refer to Labour, which is left-wing as well, but later in the interview, he explained that the SNP emphasise Scottish history, notably the wars with the English. For him, this is the romanticised dimension of SNP nationalism. He told me that the party uses those arguments in

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<sup>381</sup> See the interpretation of this view in the next paragraph.

<sup>382</sup> This is developed in the section about young SNP members' views of Britishness.

order to achieve independence. In George's view, it seems that the SNP play the emotional card. In other words, his opinion implies that the SNP target Scots' emotions related to Scottish History, notably English dominion over Scotland and wars between the two countries. This might be viewed as George's strategy to denounce the SNP as a party which romanticises Scottish History and makes use of people's emotions to achieve independence from the UK.

Some Conservative interviewees even emphasised the influence of the SNP on the way people understand Scottishness. Scottishness is even 'tainted' by the SNP according to Rory. In his view, the party promotes a romanticised idea of Scottishness, appealing to Scots' emotional attachment to this identity, which echoes George's opinion that has been explained above. As for Jack, he drew a parallel between understandings of Scottishness and nationalism:

'People talk about how outward looking Scotland is and how European it is but I don't think it's the case either to a great extent. *I think it is linked with Scottish nationalism.* I don't think the vast majority of Scots are pro-EU. *A lot of the narrative of what defines Scottishness comes very much from the SNP and it's not necessarily reflective of what it actually is.'*

These are very interesting comments, particularly because the literature on the SNP, the present thesis, and the party itself, argue that the SNP's campaign for independence does not focus on national identity (once again, in the ethnocultural sense of the term). It seems that, for opponents to the SNP, Scottishness is part of the party's nationalist discourse. It even participates in its definition. Further down, we shall see whether other supporters of the Union in the debate about Scottish independence, namely Scottish Young Labour members, have a similar viewpoint.

Without saying that the young Conservatives I met defined Scottishness exclusively in cultural terms, it has to be noted that their definitions are more cultural than those of young SNP members. As shown below, they are also more cultural than those of the Scottish Young Labour members I interviewed.

Some of the definitions above contain political arguments, but these are not the same arguments as those used by YSI and SNP Students (namely socio-political values). Here, young Conservatives' definitions suggest that left-wing politics (without a doubt, the SNP) use Scottishness in their nationalist campaign and try and give a meaning to Scottishness that it does not actually have (for example, being pro-European).

Finally, Brexit Party member Jamie (former Conservative) defined being Scottish as 'a very proud thing, a beautiful thing'. He talked about 'haggis and Irn-Bru' (a famous beverage in Scotland), hence the cultural aspect of his discourse on Scottishness. He added that Scottish identity is 'now linked with independence'. This is in line with the previous quotations: Jamie related Scottishness with politics and, like the Conservatives quoted earlier, implied that Scottishness is associated with the SNP (referenced by the word 'independence'). Once more, this is contrary to the discourse of the SNP: as has been noted, Nicola Sturgeon and her party insist that independence has nothing to do with national identity.

### *Scottish Young Labour*

As shown above, the young Labour members whom I interviewed tended to define Scotland as a culturally diverse and open nation. Their definitions of Scottishness were rather similar. Gillian added: 'the accent, and being from Scotland'. Her definition of Scottish identity sounds ethnocultural: Scottish accent may be seen as a cultural component of Scottishness, and 'being from Scotland' suggests that you are Scottish when you were born in Scotland, contrary

to YSI and SNP Students' perception of Scottishness as a civic-based identity (you are Scottish when you live in Scotland).

Gillian's conception of Scottishness was an exception amongst the Scottish Young Labour I interviewed. None of them talked about Scottishness in cultural terms alone. 50 per cent of them perceive that identity from a socio-political perspective, and 50 per cent conceive it in both socio-political and cultural ways. The results are closer to young SNP members' views of Scottishness than young Conservatives' discourse. Hence the relationship between national identity and political ideology.

Members like Alasdair related Scottishness with 'certain values, solidarity, community spirit'. Alasdair added that Scottish identity 'is not just one thing'. Interestingly, he told me that 'it's changing'. He specified that it may depend on the context, notably political context like the debate about independence. He also said that it could vary geographically speaking. Alasdair's arguments are quite aligned with constructivist theories of national identity (here, the idea that Scottishness is fluid and may be seen differently from a person to another)<sup>383</sup>. It also echoes David McCrone's argument that Scottish identity evolves according to context, notably political context (see Chapter Three).

Thanks to the comparison between the young members of different Scottish political parties, it may be said that young Conservatives' discourse on Scottishness tends to be more romanticised than the discourse of young SNP and Labour members. While the former is likely to focus on romantic Highland scenes, the latter emphasises down to earth, socio-economic and socio-political issues.

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<sup>383</sup> See the review of constructivist theoretical considerations in Chapter Three.

## **5) Young SNP Members' Views on the United Kingdom**

We have seen earlier that during interviews, YSI and SNP Students members talked about Scotland in very positive terms. Their version of Scotland is one of a social democratic, progressive and inclusive nation. Now what about their discourse on the United Kingdom? Before conducting my fieldwork, I expected that they would see the Union in a less positive way than Scotland, as they campaign for Scottish independence vis-à-vis the British state. Given that the SNP criticize the UK about socio-economic and political matters (see Chapter Three), not about ethnocultural issues (British people as the 'other'), I had assumed that the YSI and SNP Students would blame the British government, and denounce the democratic deficit experienced by Scotland. I did not expect arguments based on ethnic and/or cultural criteria. Except a few harsh comments about the UK, overall the results of the interviews and the online survey met my hypotheses.

During interviews, I asked young SNP members about the characteristics of British society. As demonstrated further down, answers were much less positive than those about Scottish society.

### **a) 'A Union of Un-equals'**

First, young SNP interviewees talked about the UK as an unequal state. For them, it is an unequal political union of four nations. As noted earlier, the SNP denounce the democratic deficit experienced by Scotland, namely the idea that Scotland is not heard enough in the UK, especially by the British government in London. In this respect, for Grace, the Union is 'unbalanced, unequal'. She explained that the Union is 'not a partnership'. In Magnus' words, 'it's something of a three-hundred-year-old arranged marriage.' In the same way, Josh pointed

out: '[we are] a family of nations, but not really... [The UK is] a political union that does not work'. Similarly, the British state is 'not a union anymore' according to Sean. This idea of the UK as an obsolete, outdated union was shared by Michelle: '[It's] not like a union today.' She then specified: 'The English are in control of every issue.' This refers to Anglo-centrism<sup>384</sup>. Namely, England is considered the centre (here the political centre) of the UK<sup>385</sup>.

The idea of imbalance between the four nations which compose the UK was exposed by Lewis when he referred to the UK as 'a union of un-equals'. This feeling was shared by most of the interviewees, which is not surprising given that the democratic deficit argument is at the heart of the SNP's campaign for independence. It also aligns with the literature on Scottish nationalism, notably with the idea that the SNP press for independence for political reasons, namely the political differences between Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Similarly, many survey respondents highlighted the democratic deficit and divisions in the Union, as the following examples show: '[The UK] is a divided, unequal, undemocratic monarchy', 'a divided and failing union of four [nations] with rapidly diverging futures', 'a political union that is split, that is hugely unequal, with most of the wealth concentrated in the south-east of England. The voices of 3 of the 4 nations in the UK don't make much a difference.' The last quotation implies Anglo-centrism again.

## **b) Sordid British Past**

Besides emphasising political divisions and inequality between the four nations composing the UK, when asked about the characteristics of British society, young SNP

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<sup>384</sup> See Henderson, A., and Wyn Jones, R. (2021). *Englishness, The Political Force transforming Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, and Wellings, B. (2019). *English Nationalism, Brexit and the Anglosphere: Still and Wider*. Manchester: University Press.

<sup>385</sup> Anglo-centrism is examined later in this thesis.

interviewees often underlined British backwardness and the dreadful past of Britain, in particular in the imperial era. Mark spoke of the UK as ‘something ageing, lost and negative’. Amongst interviewees, this sense of obsolescence of the UK as a partnership between nations was often accompanied by negative and quite critical views. It was often described as a union anchored in the past rather than the future. It was portrayed as a state that is not progressive, especially when it comes to social justice and equality.

About a third of the young SNP members interviewed associated the UK with the British Empire and colonisation. This is also the case of the survey respondents, as the following quotations illustrate: the UK was considered a symbol of ‘imperialism and the British Empire’, ‘colonialism, Empire’, and ‘cannot relinquish its colonial past or accept that it does not command the same respect in the world as it once did’. For one interviewee, Laura, Britishness is related to ‘oppression’ and a ‘bad History’ that ‘damaged’. It is viewed as a union that ‘damaged’ both locally and globally. On the one hand, some interviewees referred to the 18th century and the Jacobite rebellion. Sean mentioned ‘Highland clearances, national memory, folk memory’ as well as the battle of Culloden and the 1746 Act of Proscription banning the wearing of tartan and Highland traditional clothes. On the other hand, some members denounced colonisation and the ‘terrible things in History’ and ‘horrible atrocities’ committed by the British Empire. For Magnus, the spread of the Empire and what colonisation implied can even be regarded as ‘crimes against society’. Several interviewees told me that they were ashamed of what the British Empire did. Because of that, they insisted that they distanced themselves from the UK and what had been done by the Empire.

### **c) An Exclusive, Isolationist State**



Finally, for the young people I interviewed, the UK is an exclusive state. Some members like James denounced British isolationism. They referred to Brexit and the idea that, as an island, the UK has always seen itself apart and distinct from the rest of the world. In Mary's opinion, this 'insular view' means 'British people with British people'.

Besides isolationism, young SNP interviewees highlighted the divisiveness of British society. They insisted that the Union, governed by the Conservative and Unionist Party at Westminster, does not support cultural diversity. On the contrary, they pointed out the British government's exclusive, anti-immigration policy. James even denounced 'xenophobia' in the UK. Similarly, a survey respondent considered it was 'a small minded, xenophobic country'. These are ethnic considerations. The interviewees denounced racism towards foreigners in the UK. Together with the idea of isolationism, this suggests that young SNP members tend to understand British nationalism in an ethnocultural sense of the term... while emphasising the civic kind of SNP nationalism.

#### **d) Scotland vs. The UK (England)**

This leads us to the (sharp) difference between Scotland and the rest of the UK which was often pointed out by the YSI and SNP Students I met. All their negative views of the United Kingdom contrasted with their perceptions of Scotland. Importantly, when they talked about the differences between Scotland and the UK, they mentioned mainly political and socio-political elements. In this regard, Mary tellingly said that 'Scotland is part of Britain but different when it comes to politics'. While Scotland has been led by the SNP (centre-left political party) since 2007, and has traditionally been identified as a left-wing nation, the UK is currently led by a right-wing government. Also, as noted earlier, young interviewees insisted that contrary to Scotland, the UK is not progressive. Adam illustrated his thoughts with the

examples of LGBT rights and climate change, saying that the SNP government was much more dedicated to these issues than the British government. While the Union was seen as something ‘archaic’, belonging to the past, Scotland was depicted as a nation that looks and moves forwards. As has been said, in young SNP members’ opinion, this includes progress in terms of individual freedom and rights (see the section about their conceptions of Scottish society).

Young SNP interviewees declared that Scotland and the rest of the UK were, again, quite different when it comes to the idea of community. A majority of them stated that ‘Scottish people are welcoming’ and ‘Scotland is a lot more open’ than the UK. In this regard, Adam pointed out that the Union could be considered a ‘more hostile environment’. As for Robert: ‘British culture is not as multicultural and inclusive as Scottish culture’. Thus, while the UK was depicted as exclusive, Scotland was, once again, perceived as an inclusive nation.

Several members focused more closely on the differences between Scotland and England. Andrew said: ‘contrary to England, [Scotland is a] very diverse, tolerant country’. Lucy declared that: ‘[Scotland is] less racist than England... more welcoming’. Those opinions suggest an ‘Us vs. Them’ dichotomy between Scotland and England. In that respect, at the time of the 2018 FIFA World Cup, during an informal conversation, four YSI and SNP Students told me that they would be pleased if the winner were not the English. One of them exclaimed: ‘anyone but England!’ Some members also displayed the national flags of England’s adversaries in their Facebook profile pictures when England played games. This was also the case during the UEFA European Championship in 2021 (originally planned in 2020 but postponed due to the Covid-19 crisis). When Scotland and England played a game together, SNP youth displayed Saltires in their Facebook and Twitter accounts, with lots of supportive messages for the Scottish national team. Most strikingly, for the finale between England and Italy, many YSI and SNP Students displayed the Italian flag in their social media accounts. They also posted supportive messages addressed at the Italian football team, clearly showing

their wish to see England lose the finale. Some took pictures of themselves waving the Italian flag or wrapped in it. Some even temporarily changed their pseudonyms by writing their names in Italian. So, no need to say how delighted they were when Italy won the cup. Supporting England's adversaries was a clear opposition to that nation, once more demonstrating an 'Us vs Them' dichotomy. We have seen in Chapter Three that scholars like Billig (1995) and Skey (2011) think that sports matches offer displays of national identity, notably with national flags. To some extent, such events imply that the opposition between Scotland and England in young SNP members' minds, is sometimes more than political. Undoubtedly, waving the flag of England's adversaries might be a way to show their dissatisfaction with what they consider a democratic deficit and therefore a means of emphasising their opposition to the British government, but it was not the members of that government that played on the football ground; it was a team of professional sportsmen that stood for a nation and its members, in this case the English. Without saying that the nationalism of those young party members is ethnic, we may nevertheless wonder about its purely civic nature<sup>386</sup>. This argument should be taken carefully, given that not all the young members of the SNP displayed England's adversaries' national flags during the two championships. Nonetheless, we see that their views of differences between Scotland and the UK, England in particular, are not 100 per cent political. In that regard, Chloe said that Scotland is 'distinct from the rest of the UK, both *culturally and politically*'. This was also demonstrated with the fact that the discourse on Scotland by some SNP members was (often partly) based on cultural criteria.

## e) Survey Results

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<sup>386</sup> It may also be said that in a few cases, young SNP members' political, public discourse on national identity seems to be different from their private discourse (De Cillia et al., 1999).

So as to know how YSI and SNP Students perceive the United Kingdom, in the survey I asked them to define it. Table 4.6 categorises their responses either as cultural aspects, political aspects, or social behaviour and attitudes. The elements cited are those which most frequently appeared in their responses<sup>387</sup>.

Definitions of the UK	
Cultural Aspects	tea
Political Aspects	backwards looking political union, union of nations right-wing politics dying political union unequal union divided democratic deficit colonial stuck in the past outdated undemocratic government Anglocentric
Social Behaviour and Attitudes	self-centred xenophobic, racist exceptionalist inward looking

Table 4.6: YSI and SNP Students’ responses to ‘How would you define the UK?’ (online survey)

Table 4.6 highlights that a majority of their definitions of the UK are political, or socio-political if we combine the ‘political aspects’ and ‘social behaviour and attitudes’ categories. The cultural category is the smallest, with ‘tea’ as the only element defining the UK in cultural terms. The cultural habit of drinking tea is sometimes regarded as a cliché. Therefore, here, young SNP respondents’ definition of the UK is negative politically and socially speaking, as well as stereotypical when it comes to culture. Hence the idea that their views of the UK are nothing but pejorative.

<sup>387</sup> This was a long free text question, so young party members were free to write whatever they wanted.

Let us focus on some significant quotations.

R2: 'A political union that unfortunately wants to withdraw itself from the wider European community and is dominated by a right-wing party that does not care for those most in need.'

R5: 'A political union that is split, which is hugely unequal with most of the wealth concentrated in the south-east of England. Where the voices of 3 of the 4 nations in the UK don't make much of a difference. A political union which will not be around for much longer.'

R9: 'The UK is a divided and failing union of four states with rapidly diverging futures.'

R11: 'A relic which drives towards profit over human life. Lacks its own culture and is exceptionalist in its outlook.'

R13: 'A political union long past its sell-by date!'

R14: 'A disaster.'

R21: 'Prison.'

R28: 'The UK gets a right-wing government that only England votes for.'

R32: 'A group of countries where England tells the rest what to do. England makes the decisions. Not a union of equals. The UK remains as it benefits England and for no other reason.'

R35: 'A group of nations in a political union, largely bound together by history.'

A majority of those respondents identified the UK as a political union (which is the objective reality). Yet, the global impression is that it is an outdated political union. Given that young SNP members campaign for Scottish independence, this is not surprising. What is striking is to

see how negatively they view it. ‘Prison’ (response 21) and ‘disaster’ (response 14) are strong and quite pejorative words.

We have seen previously that young SNP interviewees focused particularly on the political position of the UK when they defined it. Namely, they talked extensively about the right-wing position of the UK due to its Conservative government at Westminster. Table 4.6 and the quotations above demonstrate this (responses 2 and 28).

The democratic deficit argument is also confirmed. The inequality between the four components of the UK was highlighted by respondent 5. The UK is thus defined as an unequal, undemocratic union of nations. This strengthens young SNP members’ claims for Scottish independence.

Finally, Anglo-centrism is quite noticeable in those quotations, especially responses 5, 28 and 32. This idea of Anglo-centrism is well summed up by respondent 32: the UK is defined by ‘a group of countries where England tells the rest what to do. England makes the decisions’. In other words, England is the political centre of the UK (see Table 4.6 page 377). Also, response 28 seems to blame England for being responsible for the political position of the whole UK, namely for the Conservative majority at Westminster Parliament: ‘The UK gets a right-wing government that only England votes for’.

With all those analyses, it may be said, once again, that young SNP respondents distinguish between Scotland and the UK (England especially) politically speaking. Through their definitions of Scotland, on the one hand, and the UK (and England), on the other hand, the ‘us vs. them’ idea that they convey has to be understood in political (socio-political, when adding the ‘Social behaviour and attitudes’ category) terms. Even if the definitions of some respondents include cultural elements, this is not on cultural (nor ethnic) criteria that they base their demand for independence.

## **f) Scottish Young Conservatives and Labour Members’ Views on the UK**

### *Scottish Young Conservatives*

Young Conservatives’ discourse on the United Kingdom included a mix of values, attitudes and cultural elements. Ross underlined ‘tolerance’ and said: ‘we’re very open to people, not judgmental. We have a sense of responsibility, of charity... we help the people’. For Rory, the UK is defined by ‘humour... having a sense of pride and responsibility to the world... being pragmatic’. He added: ‘We know what democracy is. And we’re autonomous’. As for Ben, British society is characterised by: ‘Good manners. Allowing people to have their say. It’s a very open society. And we’re polite.’ Politeness was also mentioned by Stuart.

In terms of culture, James associated British society with Christianity. George insisted on monarchy and declared that it is ‘something [British people are] very proud of’. He told me that British people respect their culture and heritage.

In the following section, we shall see whether their definitions of Britishness are in line with their discourse on the UK.

Jamie, the Brexit Party member who was previously a Conservative, talked about the UK as follows: ‘in the Union, there’s rivalry, between Scotland and England, the North and the South, Wales... For me, it is also characterised by jam and cream, Nigel Farage, tolerance. There’s a lot of divides, but tolerance is always there as well’. To say the least, this is a heterogenous definition, mingling political divisions, notably between Scotland and England, food, Nigel Farage, and tolerance. With the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), Nigel Farage has been an important figure of British nationalism. He played a significant role in the result of the EU referendum in favour of Brexit in 2016. The fact that Jamie thinks of him when

defining British society implies that he probably sees Nigel Farage as the best political leader to defend British interests. In that sense, Jamie supports an isolationist vision of the UK.

### *Scottish Young Labour*

Political institutions and monarchy are the characteristics of British society that were the most frequently cited by the young Labour members I met. Hence a mix between politics (institutions) and culture (monarchy). Daisy and Alasdair argued that the House of Commons and, more globally, Westminster Parliament, were important British institutions. Alasdair added: 'we have a proud feeling of our institutions'. He also noted the importance of the NHS as a specific British organisation.

Mike's answer was more heterogenous: 'we're weird, interesting people, hard-working... quite a unique population. We're still quite a multicultural society, and quite a modest society'. Finally, he argued that the UK is politically characterised by socialism. This is the complete opposite of young SNP members' views of the UK as a right-wing political union, which is a matter of fact given that the British government is Conservative.

In conclusion, YSI and SNP Students members are likely to view the UK in a quite negative way. A majority of the young people who were interviewed and responded to the survey think it is an outdated, undemocratic and unequal union of four nations. Their discourse on the UK was not based on ethnic arguments. It was overall political, thus strengthening their support for Scottish independence. Finally, we have seen that some young members' views are radical. The UK is depicted as a 'prison' that Scotland should leave. Let us see whether young SNP members' thoughts about Britishness are aligned with their views of the British state.



## **6) Interpretations of Britishness**

What has to be noted first is that contrary to Scottishness, which was described in positive terms, the YSI and SNP Students I interviewed defined Britishness in a (very) negative way. Tellingly, 85 per cent of them perceive that identity negatively<sup>388</sup>. Let us examine their discourse on it, and compare it with their discourse on Scottishness.

### **a) Cultural Aspects of Britishness**

Some interviewees highlighted cultural characteristics. The Union Jack and the monarchy were the most cited cultural symbols of Britishness. Sean specified that the British royal family is ‘a keystone of the British identity’. Michelle illustrated her thoughts with ‘exciting’ events like Meghan and Prince Harry’s wedding in 2018. For her, this was ‘an example of Britishness’ because we could see ‘lots of Union Jacks’ and ‘people felt part of something’. Indeed, whether in Windsor or in front of television, we (British people and the whole world) could see Britishness flagged (Billig, 1995) by thousands of Union Jacks waved by the crowd outside the St George’s Chapel. Michelle also gave the example of the 2012 Olympics that were held in London. In a more stereotypical way, Harry referred to ‘posh private schools, gentlemen, tea drinking, the BBC, and British accent’.

Finally, a few interviewees spoke of British values like respect and responsibility. For James, being British means ‘having a sense of fair play and being polite’.

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<sup>388</sup> Interviews shed light on a relationship between young party members’ understanding of Britishness and the issue of Scottish independence. While 100 per cent of the young Conservatives and young Labour members’ views of Britishness were positive, 85 per cent of young SNP members saw it in a (very) negative way. Bearing in mind that the SNP are pro-independence and that the Conservative party and Labour are pro-Union, this is not surprising. This suggests a relationship between the respective opinions of the three political parties regarding the question of Scottish independence and the way young members speak about Britishness.

## **b) Shame**

In the section about young SNP members' perceptions of the United Kingdom, we have seen that a majority of them referred to the British Empire. Some members associated Britishness with imperialism as well. When I asked Paul how he would define that identity, he answered: 'imperialist... it's the first word that comes to my mind'. For Magnus, 'the Britishness of Unionism focuses on the British Empire as opposed to the actual social justice and well-being of [the] people and community, of society'. His words suggest that, as said earlier, the UK looks backwards instead of looking forwards and making social progress in terms of justice, equality and 'well-being'. The contrast between Britishness and Scottishness is highlighted here.

Some interviewees even declared that they were ashamed of Britishness. For example, Matt told me: 'Britishness is nothing to be proud of. The UK's a union born out of corruption, which has not a very good reputation at all. It did very harmful things. It's connoted with harm and damage, exclusivity, and an in-world approach'. Robert's viewpoint was more qualified. He told me that he felt ashamed of colonialism, rather than Britishness: 'We did terrible things in History. We committed horrible atrocities, and we ought to be ashamed of it.' Magnus was much more radical when saying that he was 'ashamed of [his] Britishness'. It should nonetheless be noted that strong words like these were used only by some interviewees. Yet, bearing in mind that young SNP members are civic nationalists, it is nonetheless worth noticing a certain hostility and sometimes more or less violent arguments with regard to the UK and Britishness amongst them. Again, this is a bit paradoxical when one knows that the SNP advocate civic nationalism. We might have expected that none of them would be radical. But a majority of those who declared they felt ashamed seemed to be more ashamed of what the British Empire did than Britishness itself.

### **c) An Alien Identity**

‘I don’t feel British at all.’ Harry’s words symbolise the viewpoint of a majority of the young SNP members studied in this thesis. As noted in the section about the Moreno scale above, 88 per cent of the YSI and SNP Students members who were interviewed do not feel British at all. Some of them even told me that Britishness was an alien identity to them. This was the case for Robert, who argued: ‘I do not identify with it at all... it’s an alien concept to me’. This example illustrates the extent to which some of the YSI and SNP Students do not feel British. Feeling ‘alien’ to Britishness is a strong and striking image. It highlights a clear-cut distinction between Scotland and the UK in Robert’s opinion, thus making his campaign for Scottish independence relevant. Similarly, and even more strikingly, Magnus told me that for him, Britishness was ‘non-existent’. Once again, Magnus’ vision of Britishness is radical.

It is quite clear that a majority of young SNP interviewees distance themselves from Britishness. Amy tellingly said: ‘I detach myself from that’. A majority of them do not have any sense of Britishness. However, it should be noted that this absence of British sentiment was not accompanied by hatred towards the British. This is well illustrated by Grace’s comments: ‘there’s an issue when people think [the SNP] hate the British’. She pointed out that people should distinguish between the UK and Westminster: for her, the former is the country inhabited by British people, while the latter stands for the British government. In this sense, she added that she was opposed to the Conservative government at Westminster, not to British people. Here, the idea of the non-exclusive, civic nationalism of the SNP makes sense. Grace specified why she was not attached to Britishness: ‘I don’t feel British... I don’t feel recognised by Britain’. Identity and politics are interrelated here. As has just been shown, Grace distinguished between the UK as the home to British people, and the Westminster government. The fact that she does not feel ‘recognised by Britain’ clearly refers to the idea of democratic deficit. In other words, she does not feel British, not because she does not identify with other people living in

the UK, but because she thinks her voice as a Scottish person is not heard by the British government. Given that support for independence is related to the political issue of democratic deficit, it may be said that it is also related to identity. To be more specific, with Grace's arguments, it seems that a wish for Scottish independence and a lack of sense of Britishness are interrelated: because of the lack of representation of Scotland in the UK, at Westminster, Grace does not feel British and wants to achieve Scottish independence. This is also exemplified by James' comments: 'If one feels a very strong sense of Britishness, they are less inclined to vote Yes'. Once more, a sense of national identity and support for independence seem to be related in the young members' opinion. James specified that this mechanism is 'emotional'. In other words, if one feels emotionally attached to the UK, one is supposedly more likely to vote against Scottish independence. In this regard, let us focus on the distinction between being British and feeling British.

#### **d) Being British vs. Feeling British**

During interviews, it was interesting to hear some YSI and SNP Students say that they were factually, not emotionally, British, thus clearly distinguishing between being British and feeling so. Significantly, some said that it was official documents like passports which made them British. Josh told me: 'I'm British on my passport'. Alasdair argued: 'I never really associated myself with big emblems of Britishness like the monarchy or the Union Jack, but I do have a UK passport and driving licence'. Here Alasdair distinguishes between Britishness on the one hand (related to symbols like the British flag), and having the British nationality (conveyed by official administrative documents). Similarly, Sean declared: 'I'm still a British citizen, by law'. He told me that he does not feel British at all, but he is recognised as British 'by law'. In other words, he is not British emotionally, but legally.

The young people quoted above see themselves as British as a matter of fact. Their down-to-earth ideas enhance the absence of any emotional attachment to British identity. As some of them specified, they were born in the UK and have a British passport, merely providing them the British nationality. Therefore, they are objectively British, but subjectively they do not feel part of the UK and do not have any sense of British identity.

On the contrary, as shown earlier, they feel emotionally attached to Scottishness. Even if Magnus is British on his passport, when someone asks him about where he comes from, he responds: 'I never say I'm from Britain when I'm on holiday or overseas. I always say I'm from Scotland.' In this respect, several interviewees insisted that foreigners unfortunately often mistake them for English people. For them, this is an issue. They told me that foreigners often think of the UK as England. And they insisted that they always tell those who mistake them for English people that they are not English, they are Scottish.

### **e) Convergence of Britishness and Englishness**

When it comes to Britishness and Englishness, a lot of interviewees argued that they go hand in hand. For example, Grace said: 'I associate Britain with England, British with English'. Harry related Britishness to English identity as well. Most significantly, when I asked him about the definition of Britishness, Alex responded: 'Englishness'.

This might be due to the idea of Anglo-centrism mentioned earlier. The political, economic, financial, even media, heart of the UK is located in England. The fact that it is the biggest of the four components of the UK certainly play a role in that centrality. It is the biggest territory, with the largest population<sup>389</sup>.

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<sup>389</sup> Over 56 million people live in England (compared to over 5 million in Scotland). The surface of the country is 50,301 square miles (compared to 30,090 square miles for Scotland).

Thus, to an extent, given that several interviewees associate British with English, it may be said that when campaigning for Scottish independence vis-à-vis the UK, they actually campaign for independence from England. This might explain some young SNP members' anti-English attitude during the 2018 FIFA World Cup and the 2020 UEFA European Championship (see page 375).

### **f) Survey Results**

So as to know how young SNP members understand Britishness, in the survey I asked them what symbolises the UK in their opinion. Table 4.7 categorises their responses as belonging either to 'cultural aspects', 'political aspects', or 'social behaviour and attitudes'. The elements cited below are those which most frequently appeared in their responses<sup>390</sup>.

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<sup>390</sup> This was a long free text question, so young party members were free to write whatever they wanted.

What symbolises the United Kingdom	
Cultural Aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Union Jack</li> <li>traditions</li> <li>accents</li> <li>food and drink (fish and chips, tea)</li> <li>monarchy, the Queen</li> <li>pubs</li> <li>British rock</li> </ul>
Political Aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the British Empire, imperialism</li> <li>colonialism</li> <li>oppression</li> <li>division</li> <li>inequality</li> <li>unfairness</li> <li>lack of democracy</li> <li>right-wing politics, far-right</li> <li>bigotry</li> <li>Brexit</li> <li>Westminster</li> <li>Anglo-centrism</li> <li>political union</li> <li>broken, outdated union of four nations</li> </ul>
Social Behaviour and Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>racism</li> <li>arrogance</li> <li>hubris</li> <li>self-centred, pride</li> <li>small minded</li> </ul>

Table 4.7: YSI and SNP Students' responses to 'What does symbolise the UK?' (online survey)

Table 4.7 shows that young SNP respondents' socio-political version of Britishness is quite negative. When comparing Table 4.7 (British symbols) with Table 4.5 (Scottish symbols), we see that the contents of the 'social behaviour and attitudes' and 'political aspects' categories are clearly the opposite. While Scotland is symbolised by openness, friendliness, tolerance and a sense of community, the UK is symbolised by racism, arrogance and selfishness. Also, while Scotland is symbolised by social justice, equality, and democracy, the UK is symbolised by division, unfairness, inequality, and a lack of democracy. This clear contrast between Scottish and British symbols is congruent with SNP youth's campaign for Scottish independence vis-à-

vis the British state. Indeed, they campaign for a fairer, independent Scotland compared to what they see as a state governed by Conservatives who do not care about the people.

Figure 4.9 indicates the proportions of SNP respondents who think of the symbols of the UK in socio-political terms, cultural terms, and other<sup>391</sup>.

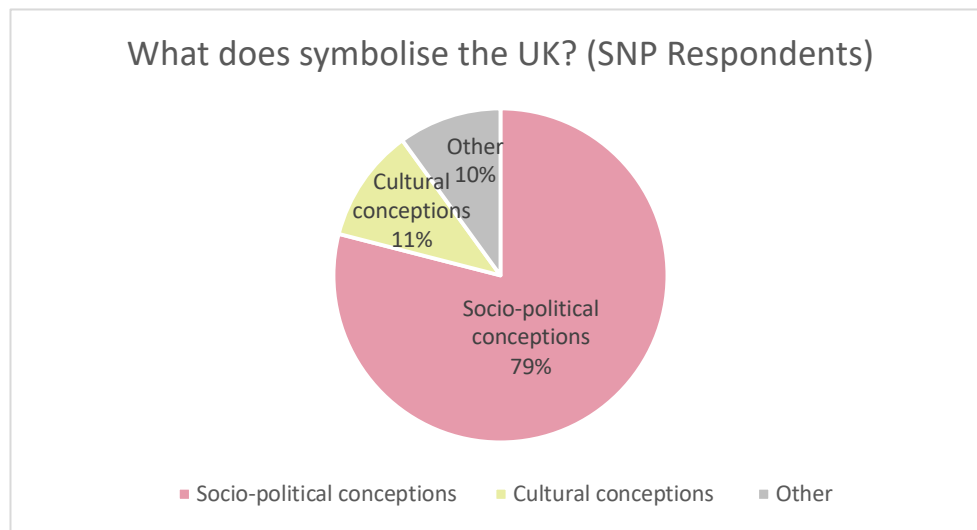


Figure 4.9: YSI and SNP Students' conceptions of what symbolises the UK (online survey)

Figure 4.9 reinforces the conclusion that young SNP members tend to understand Britishness in mainly socio-political terms. Once more, this is in line with the literature on the SNP and national identity (Leith, 2008; Leith and Soule, 2012; Duclos, 2016, 2020).

To explore those findings, let us analyse some quotations:

R1: 'Not a thing.'

R8: 'The Union is dead.'

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<sup>391</sup> Amongst 'other' responses, I could read 'shame', 'not a thing'...



R12: ‘The UK is a divided, unequal, undemocratic monarchy which is ruled by far-right elites and cannot relinquish its colonial past or accept that it does not command the same respect in the world as it once did.’

R15: ‘An echo from colonialism, a parody of nationalist exceptionalism, and an unequal partnership that overplays its own importance.’

R22: ‘Multicultural, diversity, fish and chips, the monarchy, Westminster.’

R26: ‘Outdated system, racism, prejudice, death, no democracy.’

R30: ‘Westminster believing that the only country in the UK that matters is England.’

R31: ‘England getting priority over every other country.’

R37: ‘The UK is England.’

These responses are comparable with those about the definitions of the UK presented earlier. They overall concentrate on political issues and they are devoid of any ethnic features. Also, they convey negative viewpoints. Like the responses analysed previously, responses 30, 31 and 37 denounce Anglo-centrism. ‘The UK is England’, speaks for itself.

It was noted that the YSI and SNP Students studied in this thesis are likely to think that the UK and England, as well as Britishness and Englishness, go hand in hand. Respondent 16 stated: ‘Englishness and Britishness are synonymous.’ As has just been said, some of them denounced the Anglo-centric dimension of the UK. Therefore, it may be interesting to see how they perceive Englishness, namely what, for them, symbolises England as a nation.

What symbolises England	
Cultural Aspects	monarchy, the royals, the Queen Big Ben football tea St George's Cross scenery literature (i.e. Shakespeare)
Political Aspects	right-wing politics exclusion, anti-immigration insularism British nationalism inequality division Brexit Unionism Englishness ↔ Britishness
Social Behaviour and Attitudes	exceptionalism individualism, selfishness pride racism, xenophobia

Table 4.8: YSI and SNP Students' responses to 'What does symbolise England?' (online survey)

Significantly, by comparing Table 4.5 (Scottish symbols) and Table 4.8 (English symbols), we see that the contents of the 'social behaviour and attitudes' and 'political aspects' categories are clearly opposed. While Scotland is symbolised by openness, friendliness, tolerance and a sense of community, England is symbolised by exclusion, insularism, racism, xenophobia and individualism. Also, while Scotland is symbolised by social justice and equality, England is symbolised by division and inequality.

Such an opposition contrasts with a response from a young Conservative, for whom England is 'the exact same as Scotland'<sup>392</sup>.

Here are a few quotations to illustrate the points above:

<sup>392</sup> In the Conservative Party, the UK is seen as a family of nations. Contrary to the SNP, Conservatives do not consider that the Union between the four nations is unequal. As said earlier, during the referendum campaign in 2014, former British Prime Minister David Cameron often blamed the Yes camp for supporting a divorce between Scotland and the rest of the UK, as if Scotland was 'married' with the other four nations.

R6: 'English exceptionalism, i.e. they are the only country that matters, and everything outside the country is irrelevant.'

R10: 'The Queen. Division. Brexit. British Nationalism. But, also friendliness and kindness.'

R18: 'For me, England represents exclusion and right-wing politics. I feel absolutely no affiliation to the views and politics of many English people.'

R24: 'At the moment, England is quite regressive, as they are trying to privatise the NHS, voted for Brexit, there has been a rise of xenophobia and hate crimes.'

R25: 'A nation that is clinging onto the last vestiges of the empire and longing for a return.'

R29: 'Conservative centre right politics for the older generation, left leaning Labour support in the youth.'

R31: 'Insular *ethnic nationalism*, 'us and them' attitude, selfishness.'

R37: 'Division, inequality, the English language and literary works such as Shakespeare, sports such as Cricket, Football and Rugby, racism.'

Respondent 6 denounces Anglo-centrism. As noted earlier, this is the idea that English people think England is at the centre of everything in the United Kingdom, is the most important nation in the Union. This is also noticeable with the quotation from respondent 31 ('selfishness'). This is related to the idea of democratic deficit, according to which the Union between the four British nations would be unbalanced, benefitting England first and foremost.

The quotation from respondent 10 is a mix of cultural and socio-political elements. It should be noted that the respondent mentions 'friendliness and kindness'. It confirms the

absence of hatred or ethnic ‘us vs. them’ dichotomy on behalf of young SNP members towards English people.

The political contrast between Scotland and England is exemplified by what respondent 18 said. They associated England with right-wing politics. The opposition to Scotland is implicit here; as demonstrated before, for young interviewees and respondents, Scotland is a left-wing nation. Again, this is an ‘us vs. them’ opposition from a political point of view. Response 29 is very interesting. It posits that there would be a difference between generations when it comes to political positions in England. While older generations would be likely to be right-wing, younger generations would be likely to be left-wing. Exploring similarities and/or differences between generations when it comes to political position sounds interesting. Future research could compare political affiliations between different generations of Scottish people.

An implicit comparison between Englishness and Scottishness in terms of national symbols can also be made with responses 24 and 25. England is seen as ‘regressive’, looking backwards, thus quite the opposite to Scotland, which is mostly seen as progressive and looking forwards (see the sections dedicated to Scotland and Scottishness above).

Respondent 31 argues that English nationalism is ethnic. Implicitly, it is compared to Scottish civic nationalism. To some extent, this echoes what respondents 24 and 37 said. They both argued that ‘xenophobia’ and ‘racism’ were part of what symbolises England. Again, it clearly contrasts with their views of Scotland and Scottishness as open and inclusive.

Finally, a comparison with Scotland may be made regarding divisiveness: while division is seen as a symbol of England (responses 10 and 37), we have seen that a majority of SNP respondents identified equality and community as major symbols of Scotland.

Those quotations are overall quite negative with regard to England. There are no signs of ethnic comparison, but words are strong and sometimes harsh. As has been shown, the same argument can be put forward about their views of the UK and Britishness.

### **g) Scottish Young Conservatives and Labour Members’ Versions of Britishness**

While 38 per cent of the young SNP members whom I interviewed talked about Britishness in both cultural and political terms, in Labour and the Conservative Party, 67 per cent and 17 per cent respectively did likewise. A majority (67 per cent) of young Conservatives based the definition of that identity on cultural criteria. This was the case of 15 per cent of SNP youth. No one did so in the Labour party. Hence, once more, the relationship between Conservative youth membership and overall cultural definitions of national identity, on the one hand, and SNP as well as Labour youth membership and socio-political definitions of national identity.

#### *Scottish Young Conservatives*

We have seen that the Scottish Young Conservatives that were interviewed referred to a mix of values, social attitudes and cultural aspects in their discourse about the UK. Their definitions of Britishness are similar. For example, Ben associated Britishness with: ‘a small island, good manners, cups of tea, queuing, and very quiet people’.

Some Conservatives’ versions of Britishness contrasted with young SNP members’ views. For Ross, Britishness means ‘having confidence in the rule of law, in Parliamentary democracy’. It also means that the UK is a ‘global out-looking country’. Similarly, for Brexit Party member Jamie, Britishness is defined by democracy. It is multicultural and inclusive.

This is clearly opposed to YSI and SNP Students' perceptions of British identity and the UK, particularly the emphasis on democratic deficit and an inward-looking state.

### *Scottish Young Labour*

As noted above, a lot of YSI and SNP Students I met associated Britishness with Englishness. This was also the case of some Scottish Young Labour. For example, when I asked Daisy about the definition of Britishness, she answered: 'I think of Englishness. Britishness and Englishness go hand in hand'. Interestingly, this association was not made by any of the young Conservatives interviewed. Thus, it seems that thinking of Britishness as a synonym for Englishness is influenced by the political party which young Scots are members of. Those in the SNP and Labour tend to associate the two identities, contrary to young Conservatives. Is it due to party family (left-wing, on the one hand, and right-wing on the other)? Does it owe to the fact that Labour and the SNP are both opposed to the British Conservative government, and that they are the former and current parties in government in Scotland? An extended comparative study between Scottish Young Labour and SNP youth is necessary to further examine that finding.

To summarise, young SNP members' discourses on Scottishness and Britishness are clearly opposed. Even if they argue that they do not campaign for independence for national identity reasons, there seems to be a congruence between their sense of Scottishness and their support for independence, at least from a socio-political perspective. Let us turn now to the link between their national identity and party membership.

### **III) National Identity and SNP Youth Membership**

## 1) The Role of National Identity in SNP Members' Political Engagement

Chapter Two indicated that a majority of the young SNP members studied here joined the party in order to campaign for independence. Then, this work highlighted that the core arguments of that campaign are related to their vision of Scotland compared with the rest of the UK, notably England. They think of Scotland as a social democratic nation, where everyone is equal and can flourish, regardless of their birth. On the contrary, they see the UK as an unequal union of nations, divided and inward looking. Their demands for independence are based on socio-economic and socio-political arguments, as well as the idea of a democratic deficit between Scotland and the British government<sup>393</sup>, not on ethnocultural criteria. Given that their socio-political arguments for independence are overall in line with their social democratic version of Scotland and Scottishness, it may be argued that national identity is one of the reasons why they campaign for independence. They are in favour of Scottish independence partly for identity reasons. Here national identity has to be understood as a socio-political, not ethnocultural, identity. In other words, they campaign for independence in the name of what they consider to be the social democratic identity of the Scottish nation.

In that regard, I agree with Nathalie Duclos that, if Scottish nationalism cannot be considered as cultural nationalism based on identity issues, it is because 'nationalist demands are the political translation of that identity.' (Duclos, 2014: 130)<sup>394</sup>. As noted earlier, Nathalie Duclos specifies that the desire for independence on the part of the SNP 'was born (...) from the feeling that the Anglo-Scottish union is no longer as beneficial to Scotland as in the past, and therefore that it is time to put an end to this voluntary partnership between two nations.'

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<sup>393</sup> See page 9 for a reminder.

<sup>394</sup> Original text in French: 'c'est au niveau de la traduction politique de cette identité que se situent les revendications nationalistes'.

(2014: 13)<sup>395</sup>. In other words, the source of SNP claims for independence is what they denounce as a democratic deficit experienced by Scotland in the UK.

Thus, the political ‘translation’ or version of Scottishness, in contrast with the political version of Britishness, seems to play a role in young Scots’ joining the SNP.

In that sense, the present thesis adds to the literature on youth party membership. In Chapter Two, with the analysis of young SNP members’ incentives and reasons for joining their party, Figure 2.39 showed that Scottish independence should be considered a variable at the macro level. Chapter Four has shown that national identity or more precisely, a socio-political version of Scottishness, is related to the SNP youth independence movement. As a consequence, it should be seen as a variable which influences young Scottish people to join the SNP. Here is the updated version of Figure 2.39:

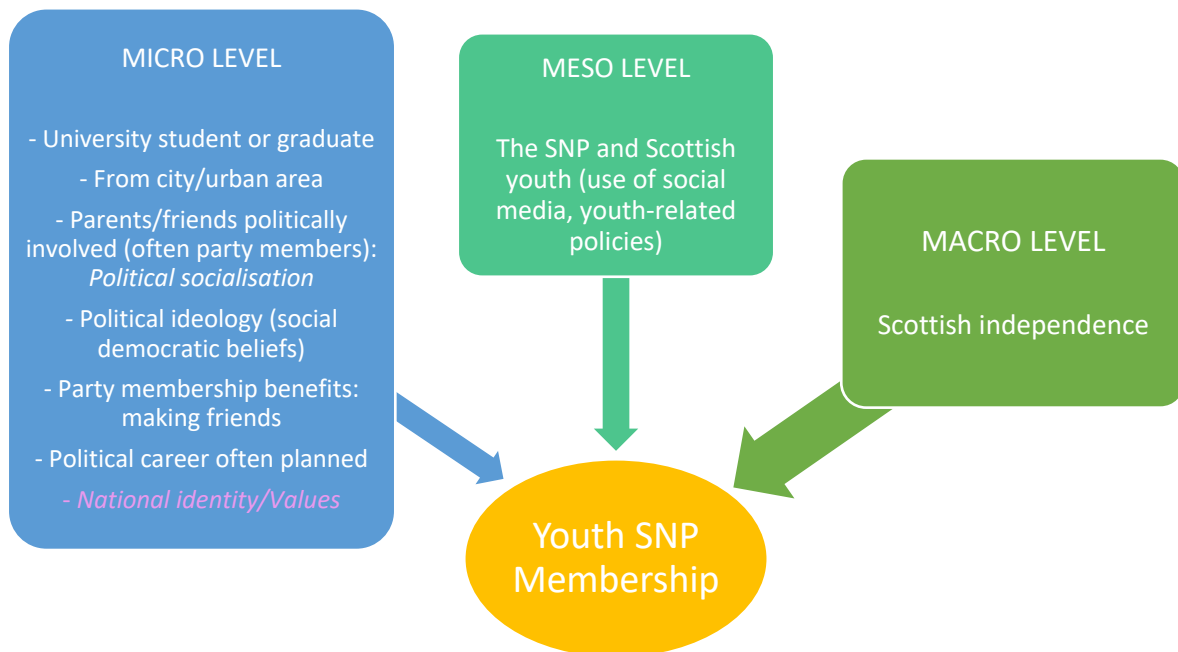


Figure 4.10: Youth SNP membership model (including national identity/values)

<sup>395</sup> Original text in French: ‘naît (...) du sentiment que l’union anglo-écossaise n’est plus aussi bénéfique à l’Ecosse que par le passé, et donc qu’il est temps de mettre fin à ce partenariat volontaire entre deux nations’.



National identity is located at the micro level here. Indeed, as we have seen throughout this chapter, it is something personal and subjective. Despite mostly seeing it from a socio-political perspective, young SNP members do not necessarily understand it in the same way. In that sense, it should be regarded as a variable at the individual level. I added the term ‘values’ to refer to the relationship between perceptions of national identity and the values people believe in. This is developed in the section called ‘Re-defining The Concept of National Identity’ below.

It has to be noted that the influence of Scottishness on young people’s decision to join the SNP is probably unconscious. When I asked interviewees whether they joined the SNP for national identity reasons, except Harry who told me ‘I’m for independence because I feel Scottish’, they answered in the negative. Yet, the analysis of their discourse on Scottishness (both in the sense of their perceptions of their national identity and their vision of the identity of the Scottish nation) shows that it is congruent with their arguments for independence. Telling me that they did not join the SNP in the name of Scottishness suggests that they are not aware of the role played by national identity in their political engagement<sup>396</sup>. As shall be explained in the conclusions, their national identity might consequently be seen as ‘banal’ (Billig, 1995).

## **2) Young SNP Members’ Sense of National Identity and Their Level of Political Involvement**

One of the research questions in this work aimed to examine the possible correlation between YSI and SNP Students’ sense of national identity and their level of political

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<sup>396</sup> Or, it might be argued that my interpretations of their discourse are different from their thoughts. The fact that I interpret the findings of the present study like this does not mean that it is how everyone should see them. These are my interpretations as a researcher, which might account for the discrepancy between young SNP members’ thoughts that national identity is not relating to their political engagement and my opinion that it does play a role in their party membership.

engagement. According to interview results, it may be said that there is no apparent correlation between young SNP members' sense of national identity and their level of political engagement. The MP and MSP I interviewed do not feel more Scottish than the others. Their discourse on Scotland and Scottishness was not different either.

## **IV) Re-defining the Concept of National Identity**

### **1) The Identity of a Nation**

#### *National Identity as the Way People See their Nation*

National identity may be understood as the identity of a nation<sup>397</sup>. Namely, it is the way the members of a nation view that nation. This may be subjective. In other words, there is a plurality of versions of national identity, including societal<sup>398</sup> and political versions (see the dedicated section further down). This adds to the existing literature on national identity. It notably complements Shulman's thesis of 'alternative contents' of national identity (Shulman, 2002: 559)<sup>399</sup>.

According to Henderson and McEwen, 'identification with a nation, if it is to be meaningful, has to be accompanied by a shared understanding of what that nation represents' (2005: 175). This is exactly the view of national identity in the present work: national identity is the identity of a nation. It is how people view and talk about their nation. Some people are

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<sup>397</sup> See the title of Montserrat Guiberneau's book: Guiberneau, M. (2007). *The Identity of Nations*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

<sup>398</sup> Societal is understood as something relating to society. Thus, here 'societal versions' are to be understood as versions of national identity relating to the views people have of society, especially the society in which they (want to) live.

<sup>399</sup> See the dedicated section further down.

likely to see it from an ethnocultural point of view, others view it from a civic and/or socio-political perspective, like the YSI and SNP Students that were part of the present study.

### *National Identity and Values*

Chapter Three introduced Norman's and Kymlicka's theses regarding the relationship between national identity and shared values. For them, national identity does not derive from shared values. Thanks to the interviews I conducted, I conclude that young SNP members' perception of the values which they see as specific to Scottish society, influence their discourse on national identity (Scottishness in particular, but also Britishness and the comparison with Scottishness). Thus, the causal relationship between shared values and national identity would come as follows:

shared values → national identity

~~national identity → shared values~~

I therefore refute Norman's and Kymlicka's ideas, showing that in the case of young SNP members, the socio-political values they attribute to Scotland are indeed part of their definition of Scottish identity. How YSI and SNP Students see their national identity depends on the socio-political values they believe in and uphold in their struggle for Scottish independence. Henderson and McEwen's arguments support this: 'For sub-state nationalists, the idea that their nation shares a distinctive set of values may enhance its sense of cohesion and difference *vis-à-vis* the rest of the population with whom it shares statehood.' (2005: 174)<sup>400</sup>. Here, young SNP members think that the 'distinctive set of values' that may be attributed to Scotland makes their nation different from the rest of the UK. They identify with what symbolises Scotland

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<sup>400</sup> Italics in the original text.

(social democracy), not with symbols of the UK (an undemocratic, right-wing, divided, inward-looking and outdated Union of nations).

As noted in Chapter Three, the values with which members of a nation identify, may be universal values. Henderson and McEwen quote Kymlicka: ‘principles of justice are too widely shared across national groups. What matters is not shared values, but a shared identity<sup>401</sup> (emphasis in original).’ (2005: 176)<sup>402</sup>. In other words, for Kymlicka, values like social justice and equality are too universal to be involved in the definition of a given national identity, at the national level. As said before, I do not agree with Kymlicka that national identity does not derive from shared values, but I agree that those values may be universal. Indeed, social justice and egalitarianism are values promoted in a wide range of countries. To some extent, they may be regarded as human, civic values or principles that go beyond borders. In that sense, it is hard to consider that they are specific to a nation in particular and, then, that they shape a national identity in particular. Henderson and McEwen confirm that:

‘there is little specifically “national” behind the values and principles promoted within nation-building discourses. Clearly, similar values may be identified across national boundaries. For example, a belief in representative democracy, equality or opportunity or the rule of law is often held across national boundaries within and beyond the state. (...) However, in the context of overlapping national boundaries and, at times, conflicting national identities, the presence of minor value differences or the priority attached to particular values can assume a heightened political significance.’ (2005: 177).

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<sup>401</sup> This echoes Norman’s arguments.

<sup>402</sup> See Kymlicka, 1996: 131.

This is particularly the case in Scotland. The SNP campaign for independence to end the democratic deficit which they blame the UK for, as well as in the name of social democratic values they believe in.

It could be argued that young SNP members' Scottishness is not really distinct and specific compared to national identities which are based on ethnicity and/or culture. To some extent, all the people in the world who believe in social democracy and the universal values promoted by the SNP may identify with Scotland. Or, if people in other nations define their national identity from a social democratic perspective as well, then Scottishness would look like other national identities and, thus, would not be distinct. In that case, the notion of national identity itself would be questioned: people's identity would be universal rather than national<sup>403</sup>. In this respect, it is not rare, today, to hear people say that they are 'citizens of the world'. In that view, national borders do not exist any longer, and people are members of a global entity rather than members of a nation.

If a future study confirms that a majority of Scottish Young Conservatives talk about Scottishness in cultural terms, it would then be argued that their version of Scottishness is probably more specific than the version of SNP members.

## **2) Different Versions of National Identity**

The results of this research show that a majority of the YSI and SNP Students who were interviewed and who responded to the survey, see their national identity (Scottishness) through a socio-political lens rather than a cultural one. They do not view it as an ethnic identity at all. This chapter has shown that the way these young SNP members understand their national

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<sup>403</sup> Or, when people's definition of national identity builds on societal values, as is the case for YSI and SNP Students, it might be posited that we should speak of *societal identity* rather than *national identity*.

identity tends to correspond to the political ideology of their party, namely social democracy<sup>404</sup>. We have seen that their discourse about Scotland and Scottishness focuses mainly on social equality, social justice, fairness, openness and inclusiveness. In other words, it concentrates on social democratic values. In that sense, it may be argued that their vision of national identity and their political ideology are interrelated. In this regard, I agree with Stephen Shulman that political ideology is part of the ‘alternative contents’ of national identity (Shulman, 2002: 559, see Table 3.1, page 251).

The relationship between national identity and political ideology is exemplified by the following quotation from a young Labour respondent to the online survey:

*‘As a young person, who is a strong supporter of left-wing politics, when considering this question, largely negative symbols come to mind.’<sup>405</sup> Having been let down time and time again (Brexit, general elections, austerity) by politics in our country, I honestly view the United Kingdom as a society which is riddled by hierarchy and class, has a huge problem with bigotry and racism and cannot fairly deem itself as a leading democracy.’*

Very interestingly, that respondent associated views of British symbols with a type of political identity and party family. They think of the UK and its symbols negatively because they are ‘a strong supporter of left-wing politics’. This confirms the idea that understandings of national identity and political ideology may be related. We may go further and argue that national identity is related to party family. This is confirmed by the analyses of young SNP members’ discourse about Scottishness and Britishness. Indeed, the results of the interviews and the online

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<sup>404</sup> It also corroborates David McCrone’s view that the contemporary version of Scottishness tends to be based on progressivism and centre-left politics (interview with David McCrone, in June 2018, at the University of Edinburgh).

<sup>405</sup> My emphasis.

survey indicate that there is probably a relationship between Scottish young party members' perceptions of their national identity and the political party family to which they belong. Young Labour members' discourse on Scotland and Scottishness seems to be rather close to young SNP members' views. On the contrary, young Conservatives' discourse is rather different. While young SNP and Labour members are likely to think of the Scottish nation and Scottishness from a socio-political perspective (with sometimes a similar emphasis on social democratic values like egalitarianism and social justice), young Conservatives are more likely to base their definitions on cultural criteria. This is not to say that young Conservatives' discourse on Scotland and Scottishness is fully cultural, but it has to be noted that cultural references are more noticeable than in the SNP and the Labour Party. As said earlier, right-wing political parties are known for their 'conservative' ideology in the sense of a preservation of traditions. Hence, once more, the potential correlation between party family and views of national identity.

This leads me to say that national identity should not be seen as either civic or ethnic/ethnocultural. A person's version of national identity may also be societal, political, or both (socio-political). Basing their statement on McCrone's analysis of Scottish 'neo-nationalism', Leith and Soule note that:

'Scottish neo-nationalism is a progressive movement that stresses civic rather than ethnic features. It has an adaptable political ideology and built-in social democracy and neo-liberal aspects. This reflects a modernist interpretation of neo-nationalism as *a positive socio-political force or identity*.' (Leith and Soule, 2012: 4).

Here, Scottish ‘neo-nationalism’ is understood as a ‘socio-political (...) identity’. The results of the present work align with Leith and Soule’s arguments. The idea of Scottishness conveyed by the SNP (by YSI and SNP Students here) is socio-political. It combines societal values and a social democratic political agenda.

Therefore, a new definition of the different versions of national identity may be proposed:

		<b>Version of National Identity</b>	<b>Key Components</b>
		<i>Civic</i>	territory citizenship
Ethnocultural Version of National Identity	}	<i>Cultural</i>	religion language traditions popular culture (music, literature, arts...)
		<i>Ethnic</i>	ancestry race
		<i>Political</i>	political ideology party family
Socio-political Version of National Identity	}	<i>Societal</i>	values social behaviour and attitudes

Table 4.9: Versions of national identity (as inspired by Shulman’s ‘Alternative contents of national identity’ theory)

With Table 4.9, which was inspired by Shulman’s ‘Alternative contents of national identity’ theory (Shulman, 2002), I argue for political and societal versions of national identity, besides civic, cultural and ethnic versions. In addition, I wish to complement Shulman’s categorisation with ‘party family’ as a component of national identity, besides ‘political ideology’. In the frame of future research, it would be worth examining whether it is political ideology which influences a party member’s understanding of national identity or the other way around.



## Conclusions

Several conclusions may be drawn from this chapter. First, the present findings are congruent with the literature on the SNP and Scottishness. The conceptions of Scotland and Scottishness by the young SNP members whom I interviewed and who responded to the online survey, are, in a great majority, civic. It is clear that their discourse on both the Scottish nation and Scottish identity are socio-politically oriented. Overall, they associate Scottishness with egalitarianism, progressivism, openness and inclusiveness. In a few cases, their discourse on national identity is also cultural.

Given that their perceptions of Scotland and Scottishness are civic and based on socio-political aspects, they are aligned with the discourse of the mother party. When it comes to Britishness, it seems however that they can be radical compared to the SNP and its leaders. While the SNP (Nicola Sturgeon in particular) insist on the fact that independence has nothing to do with national identity and that Britishness would not be undermined by a separation between Scotland and the rest of the UK, young members view Britishness negatively and distance themselves from that identity. There was no hatred towards British people amongst the YSI and SNP Students studied, but the words they used to define Britishness were pejorative, even harsh sometimes. So, the point here is not to say that young SNP members' nationalism sounds, at times, ethnic or ethnocultural, but it is to say that their perceptions of and discourse about Britishness are sometimes radical.

Second, it may be argued that national identity plays a part in their political engagement. Except for one member, the interviewees and respondents did not explicitly say that they had joined the SNP for identity reasons. However, we have seen that their conceptions of Scottishness and their arguments for independence are interrelated: they both focus on socio-political values and social democracy, particularly on social equality, fairness, openness and

inclusiveness. One of the core arguments of their campaign for Scottish independence is that Scotland and the UK (England particularly) are very distinct in societal and political terms. On the one hand, Scotland appears as a social democratic, egalitarian, progressive, open and inclusive nation. On the other hand, the UK is governed by a Conservative government that, according to them, is responsible for division, inequality, inward-looking attitudes, and does not care about people. Therefore, their conceptions of the identity of Scotland seem to be correlated to their wish for independence.

This conclusion is reinforced by their understandings of Britishness. They associate this identity with ideas of division, inequality and inward-looking attitudes. Once again, these are the arguments on which their campaign for independence is based. These elements contrast sharply with the way they consider the Scottish nation and Scottishness. Hence the relationship between their views of Scottishness, on the one hand, their conceptions of Britishness, on the other hand, and their support for Scottish independence. Given that independence is the most important reason why they joined the youth and/or student wings of the SNP, by extension national identity may also be considered a reason why they joined the party.

Third, this chapter has shed light on the relationship between young SNP members' versions of Scottishness and their political ideology. Hence the confirmation of Shulman's thesis that political ideology is a component of national identity. This is reinforced by the comparison between young SNP members' discourse on Scotland and Scottishness with the discourse of the Scottish Young Conservatives and Scottish Young Labour members that were studied here. Even if the samples were not big enough to be representative of all the young Conservative and Labour members, the results of the present study suggest that, while the Conservatives' version of Scotland and Scottishness is likely to be cultural, young Labour members' version tends to be socio-political, like young SNP members' own version of

Scotland and Scottishness. Given that the Conservatives' position on the political spectrum is opposed to Labour and the SNP (right-wing/left-wing), it may be argued that understandings of national identity and political party family are interrelated<sup>406</sup>. It would be worth examining that finding in more detail in the future, with bigger samples of young members in the Labour and Conservative parties.

Finally, this chapter contributes to the existing literature on national identity. It is in line with constructivist theories (Gellner, 1964, 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Anderson; 1983; McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015). National identity is not objective. It is not a given; it is a construction. With the example of young SNP members, we have seen that it is constructed by political parties. To be more specific, the way their members see their nation is partly related to the values they defend. Also, it has been demonstrated that national identity is quite subjective. In spite of similarities between the discourses of young SNP members about Scottishness, we have seen that national identity is something personal.

Additionally, this chapter complements the existing literature with a new categorisation of the different components of national identity. It was inspired by Shulman's 'alternative contents of national identity' (Shulman, 2002: 559). Based on Shulman's ideas and on the results of the present analysis, Table 4.9 indicates that versions of national identity can be civic, cultural, ethnic, political and societal. In that sense, national identity should not be regarded as ethnic/ethnocultural or civic alone. It can also include a socio-political dimension. As has been demonstrated, it may be related to individuals' political beliefs and identification with societal values like egalitarianism, social justice and inclusion.

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<sup>406</sup> This hypothesis goes further than Shulman's thesis: understandings of national identity would be related to political ideology generally speaking, and party family more particularly. See Table 4.9.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis has examined the relationship between SNP youth membership and national identity in Scotland. In 2014, the question of independence seems to have pushed young people to join Scottish political parties, particularly the SNP. In order to understand the reasons for this, the present thesis has focused on the period running from 2012, namely the beginning of the Scottish independence referendum campaign, to today. Interviews were carried out from 2018 to 2020. In total, 37 Scottish young party members were interviewed (25 Young Scots for Independence and SNP Students, 7 Scottish Young Conservatives, 4 Labour members, and a Brexit Party member). In addition, 53<sup>407</sup> young members responded to an online survey focusing on national identity and their political engagement (38 SNP members, 4 Greens, 4 Liberal Democrats, 3 Conservatives, 3 Labour members, and a Brexit Party member). As has been noted consistently throughout this thesis, the samples of young members of other Scottish parties (interviewees and survey respondents) are too small to be fully representative of all the young ones in those parties. They have been treated as indicative results, for informative purpose only. The sample of young SNP respondents is rather small too. Yet, as noted in this work, the number of active members in the youth and student wings of the SNP is not that significant. In that sense, the sample of respondents might be considered as representative. Ethnographic observation and social media analysis were also carried out. Unfortunately, the computer engineering model which was developed by Eric Leclercq and Annabelle Gillet at the University of Burgundy to examine signs of national identity in young SNP members' Tweets did not prove efficient with regards to the present study. Instead, I looked at their social media accounts on a daily basis. Except for Tweets at times of worldwide or European football

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<sup>407</sup> A total of 82 young people responded to the survey, but only 53 were complete.

championships<sup>408</sup>, national identity always manifested in socio-political terms and in relation to SNP policy platform.

Based on the literatures on youth party membership and national identity, first, and the results of the interviews and the online survey, thereafter, this thesis has answered five questions.

## **Research Findings**

### *Why do young people join the SNP?*

First, we have explored the reasons why young Scots join the SNP. Party membership scholars agree that young people are underrepresented in political parties. They are more likely to participate in non-traditional or less formal ways. They tend to participate in social movements and single-issue campaigns.

As Mitchell, Bennie and Johns note (Mitchell et al., 2016, 2017, 2020), the 2014 Scottish independence referendum pushed a significant number of Scottish people to join the SNP. Importantly, the youth and student factions of the party saw their membership numbers rise, notably because the voting age was lowered. Given that a small proportion of young people join political parties today, I wondered why so many young Scots choose to join the SNP.

The most important reason why young people join the party is Scottish independence from the United Kingdom. It is a catalyst for SNP youth party membership. This thesis has confirmed that the 2014 referendum was a trigger that pushed a significant proportion of young people to join the ranks of the party. Since then, the numbers of YSI and SNP Students have been stable and show that the cause of independence is still a factor explaining their membership. In that sense, it may be argued that political context influences young people to

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<sup>408</sup> See page 375.

join a political party, in particular when a major question is at stake at the national level. According to the interviews and the online survey I conducted, it seems that the issue of independence is also an important reason why young people join the Scottish Greens and the Conservatives. Thus, it adds to Mitchell et al.'s research (2016, 2017, 2020) which focuses on the independence referendum as a source of SNP and Green party membership, regardless of members' age.

Scottish independence is a variable influencing SNP youth membership at the macro level. This work has shown that incentives and individual resources, at the micro level, also play a part in their decision to join. The average young SNP member is male and is or has been a university student<sup>409</sup>, who comes from a city or an urban area, with no job and no children. They tend to be active on a daily basis, notably on social media, which they see as a useful tool to convey political opinions. A majority of their parents and friends are politically involved. A significant proportion of them tend to be members of a political party, mainly the SNP, thus highlighting the role of political socialisation in SNP youth membership. Such conclusions are congruent with the literature on party members (see notably Bale et al., 2019). The most important source of their interest in politics and the party is the Scottish independence debate. Family and friends are also an important source of political interest, reinforcing, once more, the argument of political socialisation. Making friends is the most important party membership benefit for them. As for their career, they wish to/are open to becoming politicians someday. At least, they plan to remain party members when getting older. Altogether, we have seen that individual resources and incentives are complementary when it comes to youth party membership. All those findings align with Bruter and Harrison's (2009a, 2009b) as well as Weber's (2018) research about young party members in the UK and other European countries.

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<sup>409</sup> In terms of courses studied, the discipline that is most common is Politics.

We have seen that variables at the meso level have an impact on SNP youth membership too. The party seems to be successful in recruiting young people. Their policies are likely to benefit that part of the population. What is more, SNP leader and First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, is adept at using social media to address the young Scottish people<sup>410</sup>. Whether it is a political strategy to gain votes for the party and for the Yes camp if a new referendum is to be held, or whether because she does really care about them, she appears to be close to young people.

Given that Scottish young people's main reason for joining the SNP is to support independence, I wondered whether national identity should be seen as a variable influencing their party membership too.

*How do young SNP members see and understand their national identity?*

Part Two explored the way YSI and SNP Students understand their national identity and its relationship to their political involvement. First, I reviewed the literature on national identity. Chapter Three has shown that it is a complex concept defined in multiple ways. Scholars are mainly divided over its given/fixed or constructed/fluid nature. It has also focused on the nationalism literature, which is divided between scholars who regard nationalism as ethnic and others who argue for a civic type as well. Others like Shulman (2002), challenge that dichotomy and suggest that it should be worth distinguishing between civic, ethnic *and* cultural nationalism.

Furthermore, we have noted that Scottish nationalism is widely regarded as civic. More particularly, the SNP is considered a civic nationalist party. According to Henderson (1999) and McEwen (Henderson and McEwen, 2005), there is a relationship between the civic, social-democratic values endorsed by the SNP and the (rare) expressions of national identity in their

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<sup>410</sup> About the SNP's use of new technologies, including social media, see Duclos (2013) again.

political discourse. Instead of conveying a sense of ethnocultural identity, the SNP conveys an idea of Scottishness as the socio-political identity of Scotland.

It has been said that the party campaigns for Scottish independence for socio-economic reasons and to put an end to the democratic deficit, which they think, is experienced by Scotland in the UK. They also advocate cultural diversity and immigration, thus conveying the idea of Scotland as an inclusive society. The SNP do not campaign for independence for identity reasons. Or, rather, they do not stress Scottish identity in the ethnocultural sense of the term. Leith (Leith, 2008; Leith and Soule, 2012) and Mitchell et al. (2012) have shown that this is also the case amongst both the party elite and members.

The results of the interviews and the online survey are congruent with the literature on the SNP and Scottishness (notably Henderson, 1999; Henderson and McEwen, 2005; Leith, 2008; Leith and Soule, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2012; Duclos, 2014, 2016, 2020). The conceptions of Scotland and Scottishness by the young SNP members whom I interviewed and who responded to the online survey, are, for a great majority, civic. It is clear that their discourse on both the Scottish nation and Scottish identity is socio-politically oriented. Overall, they associate Scottishness with egalitarianism, progressivism, openness and inclusiveness. In a few cases, their discourse on national identity is also cultural. But it was not exclusively cultural.

#### *To what extent do young SNP members feel Scottish, British and European?*

National identity is quite specific in the United Kingdom: British people have dual (or multiple) identities, as highlighted by the Moreno scale. It has been demonstrated that a great majority of the young SNP members studied here feel Scottish, not British. It strengthens Mitchell et al.'s findings about SNP members as a whole (Mitchell et al., 2012). This sounds unsurprising, in the sense that they are pro-Scottish independence from the rest of the UK. However, in the literature, correlations between Scottish people's sense of national identity and



constitutional preferences have not been clearly demonstrated. Also, the SNP (leaders in particular) argue that independence has nothing to do with national identity and that it would not lead to the weakening of Britishness.

It happens that some young SNP members' views of Britishness are radical compared with the SNP and its leaders. They perceive British identity negatively and distance themselves from it. There was no hatred towards British people amongst the young members studied, but the words they used to define Britishness were pejorative, even harsh sometimes. So, the point here is not to say that young SNP members' nationalism sounds ethnic or ethnocultural, but it is to say that their perceptions and discourse about Britishness can be radical sometimes.

While they do not feel British, they are much likely to feel European. This is congruent with their wish to see Scotland become independent from the UK, and join the EU again.

#### *Is national identity a reason why young people join the SNP?*

Except for one member, the SNP youth studied here did not explicitly say that they had joined the party for identity reasons. However, we have seen that their conceptions of Scottishness and their arguments for independence are interrelated: they both focus on socio-political values and social democracy, particularly on social equality, fairness, openness and inclusiveness. One of the core arguments of their campaign for Scottish independence is that Scotland and the UK (England particularly) are very distinct in societal and political terms. On the one hand, Scotland is viewed as a social democratic, egalitarian, progressive, open and inclusive nation. On the other hand, the UK is governed by a Conservative government that, according to YSI and SNP Students, is responsible for division, inequality, inward-looking attitudes, and does not care about people. Therefore, the way they view the identity of Scotland seems to be correlated to their wish for independence.

This conclusion is strengthened by their perceptions of Britishness. They associate this identity with ideas of division, inequality and inward-looking attitudes. Once again, these are the arguments on which their campaign for independence is based. These elements contrast sharply with what they consider as the Scottish nation and Scottishness. Hence the relationship between their views of Scottishness, on the one hand, their conceptions of Britishness, on the other hand, and their support for Scottish independence. Given that independence is the most important reason why they joined the youth and/or student wings of the SNP, by extension national identity may also be considered a reason why they joined the party.

*Is there a relationship between young SNP members' national identity and their level of involvement in the party?*

Interviews have indicated that there is no apparent correlation between young SNP members' sense of national identity and their level of political engagement. The MP and MSP who were interviewed do not feel more Scottish than the others. Their discourse on Scotland and Scottishness was not different either. My hypothesis that the more young members would be involved in the party, the stronger their sense of Scottishness would be, has not been met.

## **Implications of the Present Research**

### *Contributions to the Literature*

This thesis contributes to the existing academic literature on youth party membership. As noted in the first part, few studies about young party members have been conducted so far. This work aligns with Bruter and Harrison's research (Bruter and Harrison, 2009a, 2009b), and Weber's findings (Weber, 2018). While independence is the most common reason why young

Scottish people join the SNP, the present research has demonstrated that the role played by incentives and political socialisation should not be neglected.

This thesis complements the existing literature on national identity as well. It agrees with constructivist theories. National identity is not objective. It is not a given; it is a construction. With the example of young SNP members, we have seen that it is constructed by political parties. To be more specific, the way their members see the nation is partly related to the values which they endorse as a political organisation.

In that regard, we have seen that young SNP members' versions of Scottishness and their political ideology (social democracy) are interrelated. Hence the confirmation of Shulman's thesis that political ideology is a component of national identity. This is reinforced by the comparison between YSI and SNP Students' discourse on Scotland and Scottishness with the discourse of the Scottish Young Conservatives and Scottish Young Labour members that were studied here. The comparison suggests that, while the Conservatives' version of Scotland and Scottishness is likely to be cultural, the young Labour members' version tends to be socio-political, like young SNP members' understandings of Scotland and Scottishness. Given that Conservatives' position across the political spectrum is opposed to Labour and the SNP (right-wing/left-wing), it may be argued that perceptions of national identity and political party family are interrelated.

In that sense, the present work leads to a new categorisation of the components of national identity. It was inspired by Shuman's 'alternative contents of national identity' (Shulman, 2002: 559). Based on Shulman's ideas and on the interview and survey results presented here, Table 4.9 indicates that versions of national identity can be civic, cultural, ethnic, political and societal. In that sense, national identity should not be regarded through an ethnic/ethnocultural or civic lens alone.

Furthermore, this work argues for an understanding of national identity as the way people perceive a nation. To use Guiberneau's words, it should be regarded as the 'identity of nations'. In that sense, we have seen that the socio-political values in which young party members believe and their discourse on national identity may correlate<sup>411</sup>. This is why Table 4.9 includes societal and political versions of national identity, which may be combined as a 'socio-political' category.

Finally, this research contributes to the literature on Scottish nationalism and national identity. It complements the work of Henderson (1999; Henderson and McEwen, 2005), Leith (2008; Leith and Soule, 2012), Mitchell et al. (2012) and Duclos (2014, 2016, 2020) by focusing particularly on the young members of the SNP. It highlights the congruence between their own discourse and the party's discourse on national identity.

#### *The Crisis of Youth Party Membership and Activism*

As demonstrated in the review of the literature on political participation, young people are mostly regarded as politically apathetic and/or alienated. It has shown that this part of the population is underrepresented in political parties. Despite this argument, the present thesis has explained that in Scotland, a significant proportion of young people are politically active. This is mostly due to the Scottish political context with the debate on independence from the United Kingdom. As has been noted, Scottish independence is the most common reason why young people join the SNP. This cause enables the party to recruit them. Their numbers of young supporters and members are the largest in the nation. However, the sample of young members surveyed highlighted that a very small proportion of young SNP members are really active in the party. Therefore, it supports the argument of the lack of political participation amongst young people. It seems that it can be observed even in a political party. While young people

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<sup>411</sup> That conclusion supports Henderson and McEwen's research (Henderson, 1999; Henderson and McEwen, 2005).

tend to participate in new ways today, they distance themselves from traditional politics, including party membership. This is a concern for political parties. Even in parties with relatively large numbers of young members, young people appear to be disengaged from politics. Thus, political parties should think about new ways of recruiting young people as well as how to mobilise them once in their ranks. As has been argued, the SNP are rather successful in appealing to young people. Yet, given that it is mostly due to the debate about Scottish independence, we may wonder whether the party will remain attractive if independence is to be achieved someday. Will young Scots still be enthusiastic about the party? In that sense, independence could have a role to play in the future of Scotland, as well as in the future of the SNP. Regardless of members' age, given that the party's main goal is to achieve independence, what about its membership numbers if independence is to be declared one day?

#### *'Banal' Scottish Identity in Young SNP Members' Political Activism*

This thesis has confirmed scholars' view that SNP nationalism is civic in the sense that it is devoid of ethnocultural arguments. It has shed light on YSI and SNP Students members' socio-political vision of Scottishness. In spite of a few cultural comments, the young members who were interviewed and who responded to the survey perceive their national identity mostly in societal and political terms. They emphasised the egalitarian and inclusive characteristics of Scotland, thus in line with their social democratic stance. It was noted that there are no clear or explicit signs of national identity in their political activism. Nonetheless, implicit references to Scottishness can be observed in their activism. They seem not to be aware of this. Most of them told me that they did not join the SNP for identity reasons. However, it appears that their campaign for independence and the way they see Scottishness are interrelated: they campaign for a fair, socially just, inclusive, independent Scotland. It corresponds to the definition of Scottishness given by most of the young SNP members interviewed and surveyed. Given that

references to this sense of national identity in their political activism seem to be unconscious, it might be argued that they are ‘banal’ (Billig, 1995). This is confirmed by the absence of national identity ‘flaggings’ in the SNP independence movement. It might be argued that instead of being explicitly ‘flagged’ (Billig, 1995) in their discourse, Scottishness is displayed through their political agenda. While there are no explicit references to this identity in ethnocultural terms in their activism, there are implicit references to it in socio-political terms, in their social democratic policy platform. In other words, their version of Scottishness can be observed in their policies. As their political agenda deals with Scottish people’s everyday lives, to some extent it might be once again argued that national identity has become ‘banal’ in the campaign of the SNP for a social democratic, independent Scotland.

### *Socio-nationalism*

When it comes to Scottish nationalism (which might be rebranded as *nation-statism* in the sense that Scotland is stateless, but is nonetheless a nation), the present thesis suggests that YSI and SNP Students members’ independence movement is based on political and *societal* arguments. They campaign for independence in order to put an end to the democratic deficit which is, in their views, experienced by Scotland. In parallel, they campaign for Scottish independence in the name of their vision of Scottish society. We have seen that during interviews and in the survey, they defined Scotland as socially just, equal and open. Their definitions built on values. Overall, these values are social democratic and, thus, correspond to their political ideology. But it may also be said that these are societal values; this is how they view society. Here, we see that there is a thin line between the concepts of nation and society. With the present findings about young SNP members’ political engagement and Scottishness, it may be argued that YSI and SNP Students campaign for national independence as well as their (ideal) vision of Scottish society. In that sense, I propose to use the word *socio-nationalism*

instead of nationalism when referring to their independence movement. It should be understood as a concept which is close to civic nationalism, in the sense that it has no ethnocultural features and is based on the promotion of civic values like egalitarianism and inclusiveness. Yet, in my views, civic nationalism does not clearly convey the idea that it builds on a particular vision of society. The term *socio-nationalism* specifies that it is a kind of nationalism which is based on the promotion of societal values and a certain perception of society.

### **Perspectives for Future Research**

This thesis paves the way for future research, regarding both youth party membership and national identity.

It would be interesting to see whether reasons for joining the SNP converge or diverge amongst party members, with regard to their age. Also, still taking account of their age, it would be worth examining the way members over 34<sup>412</sup> think of and speak about their national identity. It would enable exploration into whether devolution has an influence on members' perceptions of their national identity. Given that young members grew up in post-devolution Scotland, they might think of/talk about their nation and Scottishness in different ways than older generations who were born before devolution. Explorations of their views of Scottishness, as well as Britishness, could be completed by an analysis of the relationship between their discourse on national identity and their political involvement. Besides age, education, sex and socio-economic background could be studied as potential variables influencing members' reasons for joining the SNP. They could also be tested as variables influencing their views of national identity.

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<sup>412</sup> As a reminder, this thesis has studied young SNP members from 18 to 34 years old.

When it comes to youth party membership particularly, it would be interesting to conduct a robust comparative study of young party members in Scotland. It would help us understand their reasons for joining a political party, and see whether these reasons converge or diverge from one party to another. Also, it would be instructive to explore in further detail the similarities and differences amongst these young party members when it comes to Scottishness and Britishness. That would enable insight into whether young SNP members' discourse is specific. More globally, such a comparison could be made between young party members in different nations in the world. This would help us see whether political context (like the Scottish independence referendum) is a major catalyst for youth party membership in other countries. Meanwhile, it might strengthen the conclusion that young party members' perceptions of their national identity are related to their political ideology/party family.

In this respect, comparing young party members in Scotland, Quebec and Catalonia sounds interesting. Young nationalists' reasons for joining their parties, as well as their discourse on national identity and its potential role in their party membership, could be compared. In that way, the question of independence as a variable influencing youth party membership would be tested.

Finally, a comparative study of Scottish young party members and non-members would probably be instructive. An examination of their discourse on Scottishness and Britishness would provide confirmation of whether their perceptions of national identity depend, in part, on their political views. This study could be carried out in different countries, so as to see whether findings would be specific to Scotland or similar in other nations.



## **Appendix**

### *Interview Questions*

How old are you?

Where do you come from?

Do/Did you study at a university? If so, where and what? Which year are you in?

Do you have a special role in the party?

When did you get involved in politics?

For what reason(s) did you engage in politics?

Would you say that your age plays a part in your political involvement? Will you still be an activist when you are older?

Would you like to start a political career one day?

As an SNP/a Labour/a Conservative member, what ideas and beliefs do you fight for?

Are you in favour or against Scottish independence?

For what reason(s)?

Have you campaigned for the independence referendum in 2014? If so, what did you do?

What about today? Are you (still) involved in the independence debate? If so, what do you do?

Is Scottish independence/the defence of the Union a reason why you got engaged in politics?

How would you define Scottishness, Scottish identity?

Is the notion of national identity cultural, political or both?

What are the characteristics of Scottish society?

Is Scotland a multicultural society? If so, what is your opinion about this?

Do you think Scottish identity is linked with Scottish institutions?

When you travel abroad, what do you respond when someone asks you from where you come?

Do you feel:

Scottish only

more Scottish than British

equally Scottish and British

more British than Scottish

British only?

Other?

Why?

Are you proud to be Scottish? If so, what makes you proud of it?

Is Scottishness a reason why you engaged in politics?

Is Scottishness an issue in the debate about independence?

If Scotland became independent, would Scottishness be reinforced?

How would you define Britishness?

What are the characteristics of British society?

Are you proud to be British? If so, what makes you proud of it?

Do Scottishness and Britishness go hand in hand?

Is Britishness an issue in the independence debate?

If Scotland became independent, would Britishness weaken?

Do Britishness and Englishness go hand in hand?

For you, what was the biggest event in Scottish History?

Is the defence of Scottish values a reason why you are politically active?

Did the Union of 1707 have an impact on Scottish identity?

What are your views of the EU and Brexit?

Would you say that you have a European identity?

If so, are you proud to be European? Why?

Can you put your identities in order (choosing between British, Scottish, European)?

If you were old enough to vote in the 2016 Brexit referendum, did you vote Remain or Leave?

Do you consider yourself a nationalist?

Is nationalism a cultural or political matter?

Do you know the Front National in France?

Can you compare it with the SNP?

Is the SNP/the Labour Party/the Conservative Party an attractive political party for young people? Why?

Are your parents politically involved?

Do they often talk about politics?

Do you share their political views?

To which social class do they belong?

Do you use social media?

For a personal or political purpose?

Is social media a useful tool to convey your ideas, notably your political ideas?

Would you be as much involved in politics if they didn't exist?

Compared to canvassing, attending conferences, debates, how much important is social media in your activism?

Do you post things about Scottishness, Scottish identity on social media?

In case of independence, what identity would you like Scotland to have as a nation? In case the Union survives, what identity would you like the UK to have as a nation-state? What about Scotland as part of the UK?

### *Survey Questions*

How old are you?

What is your gender?

Female

Male

Other

Where are you from?

Do you have children?

Yes

No

Which party are you involved with?

When did you join that party?

For what reason(s) did you join it?

Where you a member of another political party before? If so, which one?

What are your political beliefs, ideas?

How often are you active as a party member?

Never

Once or twice a year

Monthly

At least once a week

Daily

Which types of activities do you do in the political party you joined?

What is your position/role in the party or in its youth or student wing?

What benefits do you gain from your party membership?

New friends  
Girlfriend/boyfriend  
Money and/or material rewards  
Influence over national politics  
Fame/honours  
Moral/civic duty  
Participating in interesting debates  
The opportunity to start a political career  
None of the previous answers  
Other

When you are older, will you still be a party member?

Yes  
No

Do you go or did you go to Uni?

Yes  
No

If so, what do/did you study?

What is your job or which job would you want to have?

Would you like to become a politician?

Yes  
No

Which social class do you belong to?

Upper class  
Working class  
Middle class

How did you get interested in politics?

Family  
University  
Friends  
Media  
School  
The internet/social media  
Scottish independence referendum campaign  
Other (please specify)

How did you get interested in the political party of which you are a member?

- Family
- The internet/social media
- Friends
- Scottish independence referendum
- Other

Are your parents...

- engaged in politics?
- supporters of a political party?
- members of a political party?
- activists?
- None of the previous answers

If so, what party are they involved with?

- Scottish National Party
- Scottish Conservatives
- Scottish Labour Party
- Scottish Liberal Democrats
- Scottish Green Party
- Brexit Party
- Not involved in a party
- Other

Are your friends engaged in politics?

- Yes
- No

If so, in which political party are they involved?

- Scottish National Party
- Scottish Conservatives
- Scottish Labour Party
- Scottish Liberal Democrats
- Scottish Green Party
- Brexit Party
- Not involved in a party
- Other

Do you use social media?

Yes

No

Do you feel?

Scottish not British

More Scottish than British

Equally Scottish and British

More British than Scottish

British not Scottish

Other

You are Scottish if you...

were born in Scotland from Scottish parents

were born in Scotland from immigrant parents

came to Scotland and became a citizen of that country

Other

How important is your Scottish identity?

Not important

Rather important

Important

Much important

What does symbolise Scotland?

What are the characteristics that represent Scotland best?

The Saltire (Scottish flag)

Social equality, fairness, social justice

Sectarianism

Gender equality

Progress

Left wing politics

Bagpipes, Scottish music

Humour

Right wing politics

Creativity

Politeness

Braveness

Scottish History

Landscapes (i.e. the Highlands)

Determination

Ceilidh

Liberalism

Exclusion

Social democracy

Individualism

Gaelic

Cultural diversity, multiculturalism

Holyrood

Other

What is the predominant social class in Scotland?

Upper class

Working class

Middle class

What is the predominant political group in Scotland?

Far left

Left

Centre

Right

Far right

What does symbolise England?

What is the predominant social class in England?

Upper class

Working class

Middle class

What is the predominant political group in England?

Far left

Left

Centre

Right

Far right

What does symbolise Northern Ireland?

What is the predominant social class in Northern Ireland?

Upper class

Working class

Middle class

What is the predominant political group in Northern Ireland?

Far left

Left

Centre

Right

Far right

What does symbolise Wales?

What is the predominant social class in Wales?

Upper class

Working class

Middle class

What is the predominant political group in Wales?

Far left

Left

Centre

Right

Far right

How important is your British identity?

Not important

Rather important

Important

Much important

You are British if you...

were born in the United Kingdom from British parents

were born in the United Kingdom from immigrant parents

came to the United Kingdom and became a citizen of that union

Other

What does symbolise the UK?

What is the predominant social class in the UK?

Upper class

Working class



Middle class

What is the predominant political group in the UK?

Far left

Left

Centre

Right

Far right

Would you say that you have a European identity?

Yes

No

If so, how important is it?

Not important

Rather important

Important

Much important

Before Brexit, did you feel that you belonged to the EU?

Yes

No

Do you feel that you belong to Europe as a continent?

Yes

No

In 2016, for the Brexit referendum, you voted...

Remain

Leave

you did not vote or were too young to vote

Rank your identities according to the importance they have for you.

Scottish/British/European/Other

How would you define Scotland?

How would you define the UK?

Would you say that the Scottish independence referendum in 2014 was a turning point in Scottish History?

Yes

No

Would you say that the Scottish independence referendum in 2014 was a turning point in British History?

Yes

No

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## **Résumé détaillé**

### **Contexte**

Le référendum sur l'indépendance de l'Écosse en septembre 2014 a mené plus de jeunes aux urnes qu'en temps d'élections. Cela a été particulièrement le cas des plus jeunes Écossais inscrits sur les listes électorales. Les jeunes âgés de 16 et 17 ans se sont vus accorder le droit de vote lors de ce référendum. 75 % d'entre eux ont déclaré s'être rendus aux urnes<sup>413</sup>. Selon le rapport de la Commission électorale publié en décembre 2014, 97 % des jeunes votants ont déclaré qu'ils voteraient de nouveau lors de prochains scrutins<sup>414</sup>. Chez les jeunes, cet engouement pour la vie politique écossaise pose plusieurs questions. D'abord, pourquoi sont-ils allés voter massivement ? L'extension du droit de vote aux 16-17 ans a-t-elle joué un rôle ? Le fait de pouvoir voter pour la première fois et de pouvoir faire entendre leur voix les a-t-il conduits aux urnes ? En tant que future génération du pays, se sentaient-ils particulièrement concernés par l'enjeu national de l'indépendance ? Outre le fait d'avoir poussé les jeunes à se déplacer pour aller voter, le référendum sur l'indépendance de l'Écosse semble les avoir encouragés à adhérer à un parti politique. Cette hausse des effectifs de jeunes membres est confirmée par la présente thèse qui s'intéresse au cas particulier des jeunes adhérents du Scottish National Party (SNP), le parti nationaliste écossais. 87% des jeunes qui ont répondu à un questionnaire dans le cadre de ce travail de recherche ont rejoint le parti soit pendant la campagne référendaire, soit après. De plus, 2014 est l'année durant laquelle la majeure partie des jeunes YSI et SNP Students qui ont été interrogés lors d'entretiens ont débuté leur adhésion au parti. James Mitchell, Lynn Bennie et Rob Johns ont également remarqué une augmentation

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<sup>413</sup> Voir [https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf\\_file/Scottish-independence-referendum-report.pdf](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf_file/Scottish-independence-referendum-report.pdf) Consultée le 30 avril 2019.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*

du nombre d'adhérents au SNP en raison du référendum sur l'indépendance de l'Écosse qui s'est tenu le 18 septembre 2014. Les trois chercheurs ont dressé le profil démographique de ces nouveaux membres. Concernant leur âge, si leur enquête auprès des membres du SNP en 2007 et 2008 montrait que l'âge moyen des membres du parti était de 59 ans<sup>415</sup>, leur enquête post-référendaire, menée en 2016, révèle que cet âge moyen est désormais de 56 ans<sup>416</sup>. Il s'agit, certes, d'une petite évolution, mais elle montre néanmoins que les membres qui ont rejoint le parti après le référendum semblent plus jeunes. Pourquoi les jeunes Écossais qui ont fait le choix d'adhérer à un parti politique avant ou à la suite du référendum ont-ils eu tendance à rejoindre le SNP ?

Sur Twitter, les branches jeune et étudiante du parti, YSI (Young Scots for Independence) et SNP Students (ou FSN, Federation of Student Nationalists) rassemblent près de 15 000 abonnés. Les jeunes Travailleurs et Conservateurs écossais comptent au total environ 4 000 abonnés. Sur Facebook, environ 11 000 jeunes Écossais suivent l'actualité des YSI et SNP Students, contre un peu plus de 3 000 pour les Scottish Young Labour (Jeunes Travailleurs Écossais) et les Scottish Young Conservatives (Jeunes Conservateurs Écossais). L'intérêt des jeunes pour le SNP a motivé cette étude à se concentrer sur le cas des jeunes membres de ce parti. Pourquoi soutiennent-ils et, éventuellement, rejoignent-ils le parti ? Est-ce parce qu'ils souhaitent voir l'Écosse devenir indépendante ? Dans ce cas, pourquoi militent-ils pour l'indépendance ? Il s'agit des questions fondamentales traitées dans cette thèse, auxquelles s'ajoutent des questions autour de l'identité nationale de ces jeunes adhérents.

## Questions de recherche et hypothèses

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<sup>415</sup> MITCHELL James, BENNIE Lynn & JOHNS Rob. *The Scottish National Party: Transition to Power*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2012.

<sup>416</sup> MITCHELL James, BENNIE Lynn & JOHNS Rob. « Referendum as platform: the SNP and Scottish Green membership surge. », *Political Insight*, 8/3, 2017, p. 16–19.

### *Pourquoi les jeunes rejoignent-ils le SNP ?*

Comme cela a été dit précédemment, la campagne référendaire et la période qui a suivi le référendum sur l'indépendance de l'Écosse ont vu de nombreux jeunes s'engager en politique. Certains jeunes sont devenus membres d'un parti politique. Ainsi la question centrale de ce travail de recherche est-elle : pourquoi certains jeunes Écossais rejoignent-ils le SNP ? Cette étude se concentre sur la période allant de 2012 – début de la campagne référendaire – à aujourd'hui. Dans le cadre d'un futur projet de recherche, une comparaison entre les raisons pour lesquelles les jeunes Écossais ont rejoint le SNP avant 2012 et pourquoi ils le rejoignent aujourd'hui pourrait également être intéressante. Cela pourrait mettre en lumière les similitudes et / ou les divergences entre plusieurs cohortes de membres du SNP et confirmer (ou infirmer) l'idée selon laquelle le référendum d'indépendance et la campagne référendaire sont un facteur majeur d'engagement politique chez les jeunes Écossais.

Depuis 2012, pourquoi des jeunes rejoignent-ils le SNP ? En m'appuyant sur la littérature académique sur l'adhésion partisane et, plus particulièrement, sur la littérature sur les jeunes adhérents, avant d'effectuer cette enquête j'avais émis l'hypothèse selon laquelle les jeunes Écossais deviennent membres du SNP pour les raisons classiques identifiées par les spécialistes de l'adhésion partisane. J'avais émis l'hypothèse qu'ils s'engagent pour des raisons idéologiques, c'est-à-dire pour défendre leurs idées et convictions politiques que sont la social-démocratie et l'indépendance de l'Écosse vis-à-vis du Royaume-Uni. Au vu de la littérature scientifique sur l'adhésion partisane de la jeunesse, j'imaginai que la socialisation politique exerçait également une influence sur leur engagement. J'avais émis l'hypothèse qu'un ou plusieurs membres de leur famille et / ou amis étaient membres du SNP. De même, j'avais émis l'hypothèse que le capital social et les ressources socio-économiques de ces jeunes pouvaient influencer leur décision d'adhérer au SNP. Enfin, j'imaginai qu'ils s'engageaient peut-être aussi pour des raisons de carrière et / ou un désir de notoriété et de reconnaissance par leurs

pairs. D'après la littérature sur l'adhésion partisane et l'adhésion partisane chez les jeunes en particulier, ce sont les raisons classiques pour lesquelles les jeunes Écossais peuvent faire le choix de devenir membre du SNP. Cependant, les motivations à l'adhésion partisane peuvent varier d'un jeune à l'autre. Aussi, avant de mener cette étude, je ne savais pas dans quel ordre ces raisons pourraient être classées en termes d'importance : un jeune adhérent peut s'engager pour une raison précise, tandis qu'un autre peut adhérer pour diverses raisons; la raison principale pour laquelle le premier s'engage dans le parti peut être son idéologie politique tandis que pour le second, cela peut être principalement le souhait de commencer une carrière politique, alors qu'un autre jeune Écossais peut choisir de rejoindre le SNP pour accomplir un devoir moral, civique, ou dans le but de se faire de nouveaux amis. Une comparaison avec les raisons pour lesquelles les jeunes adhèrent aux Partis conservateur et travailliste a permis de tirer des conclusions spécifiques aux jeunes membres du SNP. En termes de recherche en science politique, une telle comparaison semblait permettre de répondre éventuellement à la question d'un lien entre les couleurs politiques, les familles partisans et les facteurs d'appartenance à un parti. Voici les questions auxquelles j'avais pensé en amont de mon travail de recherche : les motivations à l'adhésion sont-elles homogènes parmi les jeunes membres d'un même parti ? Qu'en est-il des jeunes adhérents de différents partis, parfois aux couleurs politiques opposées ? Deux types de comparaison me semblaient nécessaires : les comparaisons inter- et intra-partis. Comme précisé précédemment, ce travail de recherche se concentre sur les jeunes membres du SNP (comparaison intra-parti), mais comporte également une étude (moins approfondie) sur quelques Conservateurs et Travaillistes (comparaison inter-parti).

Avant d'entamer cette étude, j'avais également émis l'hypothèse selon laquelle l'abaissement de l'âge minimum requis pour voter lors du référendum avait joué un rôle dans l'adhésion partisane de jeunes Écossais au SNP. Ils se sont probablement sentis plus concernés par le référendum qu'ils ne l'auraient été s'ils n'avaient pas été autorisés à voter. Ils étaient peut-

être aussi plus intéressés par la campagne référendaire. En outre, comme l'avenir de l'Écosse était en jeu, dans une certaine mesure, leur propre avenir était également en jeu. Ils incarnent l'avenir du pays. Par conséquent, ils ont peut-être vu dans le fait d'avoir leur mot à dire sur l'avenir de leur nation une opportunité de participer à sa vie politique. Ils avaient peut-être le sentiment que l'avenir de leur pays était entre leurs mains. Si les jeunes Écossais se sont mobilisés parce que l'avenir de l'Écosse dans ou hors du Royaume-Uni était en jeu, cela signifie que le contexte national / politique joue probablement un rôle dans l'engagement des jeunes en politique. En d'autres termes, l'enjeu national que représente l'indépendance de l'Écosse joue-t-il un rôle dans la décision des jeunes Écossais à adhérer au SNP ? Comme ce parti fait campagne pour l'indépendance, j'avais émis l'hypothèse selon laquelle je pourrais répondre à cette question par l'affirmative. Mais est-ce la seule raison de leur engagement ? Est-ce la raison principale ? Qu'en est-il des jeunes Écossais qui rejoignent les Partis travailliste et conservateur ? Adhèrent-ils à ces partis parce qu'ils veulent préserver l'Union en empêchant l'Écosse de quitter le Royaume-Uni ? Si oui, est-ce la seule raison ou la principale raison pour laquelle ils deviennent membres de leur parti ? Comme les Conservateurs et les Travaillistes défendaient le maintien de l'Union entre l'Écosse et le Royaume-Uni lors du référendum, avant d'entamer mon enquête j'avais émis l'hypothèse selon laquelle le maintien de l'Écosse au sein du Royaume-Uni pourrait être la raison ou l'une des raisons pour lesquelles des jeunes Écossais ont adhéré à ces deux partis avant ou à la suite du vote. Cependant, contrairement aux jeunes membres du SNP qui continuent leur campagne pour l'indépendance aujourd'hui, alors que le « Non » l'avait emporté en 2014, les raisons pour lesquelles les jeunes Écossais s'engagent aujourd'hui dans le Parti travailliste et chez les Conservateurs peuvent différer de leurs motivations à l'engagement au moment du référendum.

*L'identité nationale est-elle une raison pour laquelle les jeunes adhèrent au SNP ?*

Dans le cas où le contexte national et l'enjeu de l'indépendance amèneraient de jeunes Écossais à devenir membres du SNP, je me suis demandé si l'identité nationale jouait également un rôle dans cet engagement. Autrement dit, l'identité nationale est-elle un facteur incitant les jeunes à rejoindre le SNP ? Le SNP étant connu comme un parti nationaliste civique revendiquant l'indépendance pour des raisons politiques, constitutionnelles et économiques, dénonçant ce qu'il appelle un « déficit démocratique »<sup>417</sup> entre l'Écosse et le Royaume-Uni, à première vue, il semblait évident d'émettre l'hypothèse que les jeunes Écossais n'adhèrent pas au SNP en raison de leur identité nationale. Finalement, tout dépend du sens que l'on donne à la notion d'identité nationale. En d'autres termes, qu'est-ce que l'identité nationale ? Comme cela sera démontré plus loin, deux théories principales s'opposent. D'une part, la thèse essentialiste suggère que l'identité nationale signifie – et a toujours signifié – la même chose pour chaque membre d'une même nation. Elle est perçue comme quelque chose de naturel, qui est et a toujours été là, et est partagé par tous les membres de cette nation. D'autre part, l'approche constructiviste suggère que l'identité nationale est construite, modelée, évolue dans le temps et ne signifie pas nécessairement la même chose pour tous les membres d'une même nation. En outre, elle peut être manipulée à des fins politiques. Ces théories seront exposées en détail dans l'état de l'art sur l'identité nationale, plus loin dans ce résumé.

*Comment les jeunes adhérents au SNP perçoivent-ils et définissent-ils leur identité nationale ?*

Afin de savoir si les membres des YSI et SNP Students rejoignent le parti pour des raisons d'identité nationale, il faut d'abord essayer de répondre à la question suivante : comment ces jeunes adhérents perçoivent-ils et définissent-ils leur identité nationale ? Comme cela a été

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<sup>417</sup> Il s'agit de l'idée que la voix de l'Écosse ne serait pas assez entendue d'un point de vue politique au sein du Royaume-Uni. Selon le SNP, le gouvernement britannique Conservateur, au Parlement de Westminster à Londres, ne prend pas en considération les volontés politiques du peuple écossais. L'exemple le plus frappant étant le résultat du référendum sur le Brexit en 2016 : alors que le Royaume-Uni a voté majoritairement pour quitter l'Union européenne, 62% des électeurs écossais ont voté pour y rester. Détail des résultats disponible sur Internet: The Electoral Commission, « EU referendum results ». Consulté le 30 avril 2019. <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk>

dit, le SNP et ses dirigeants ne militent pas pour l'indépendance au nom de l'identité écossaise. Du moins, ils ne le font pas au nom de l'identité écossaise au sens ethnoculturel du terme. Par « identité ethnoculturelle », j'entends ici une identité fondée sur l'appartenance à une ethnie donnée, par les liens du sang et la descendance, dont la culture est partagée par tous les membres du groupe<sup>418</sup>. Comme le SNP pousse à l'indépendance écossaise pour des raisons socio-économiques et politiques essentiellement et en raison de ce qu'il dénonce comme un déficit démocratique entre l'Écosse et le reste du Royaume-Uni, la vision qu'a le parti de l'identité écossaise ne semble donc pas être ethnique et / ou culturelle. Plutôt, comme cela sera démontré plus loin, l'idée de l'identité écossaise véhiculée par le SNP doit être perçue d'un point de vue socio-politique, c'est-à-dire l'identité sociale et politique d'une nation ainsi que la vision qu'une personne a de la société dans laquelle elle vit. Par conséquent, avant de débiter mon étude empirique, il me semblait que la définition de l'identité écossaise par les jeunes membres du parti serait fondée sur des arguments socio-politiques également. Cela sera confirmé plus loin dans ce résumé.

Qu'en est-il de la britannicité (ou identité britannique) ? Comment les jeunes adhérents au SNP la perçoivent-ils et la définissent-ils ? Étant donné leur position en faveur de l'indépendance écossaise, avant de commencer mes recherches, j'avais imaginé qu'ils envisageaient l'identité britannique de façon moins positive que l'identité écossaise. Du moins, comme ils militent pour le retrait de l'Écosse du Royaume-Uni, j'avais imaginé qu'ils se sentiraient moins attachés à la britannicité qu'à l'identité écossaise. De la même manière, j'avais émis l'hypothèse qu'ils percevraient l'Écosse de façon positive et que cela serait moins le cas pour l'État britannique. Comme cela sera développé plus loin, les entretiens et les résultats du sondage en ligne confirment ces hypothèses. Cette thèse compare également les perceptions et

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<sup>418</sup> Voir notamment SMITH, Anthony D. *National Identity*. Londres : Penguin Books, 1991 et SHULMAN, Stephen. « Challenging the Civic/Ethnic and West/East Dichotomies in the Study of Nationalism », *Comparative Political Studies*, 35, 2002, p. 554-585.



définitions de l'identité écossaise, d'une part, et britannique, d'autre part, entre les jeunes membres du SNP, du Parti travailliste et du Parti conservateur. Étant donné que les jeunes Conservateurs et Travaillistes écossais sont membres de partis opposés à l'indépendance, j'avais envisagé qu'ils auraient une vision plus positive de la britannicité que les jeunes membres du SNP. Du moins, j'imaginai qu'ils se sentiraient sans doute plus britanniques que les jeunes membres des YSI et SNP Students.

*La définition de l'identité écossaise et de la britannicité fait-elle consensus parmi ces jeunes adhérents ?*

L'une des questions initiales de ce travail de recherche était de savoir si les jeunes membres du SNP, du Parti travailliste écossais et des Conservateurs écossais définissent leur identité nationale de la même manière. Si tel est le cas, cela soutiendrait les théories essentialistes de l'identité nationale en ce que les identités écossaise et britannique auraient une seule et unique définition aux yeux de ces jeunes, communément acceptée, partagée par tous. Au contraire, en l'absence de consensus, les théories constructivistes<sup>419</sup> de l'identité nationale seraient renforcées. En ce sens, l'identité nationale dépendrait de la manière dont les jeunes la perçoivent et la définissent. Chaque jeune adhérent penserait son identité nationale de façon subjective.

*Dans quelle mesure les jeunes membres du SNP se sentent-ils écossais, britanniques et européens ?*

Cela m'a amenée à me demander comment les jeunes membres du SNP classent leurs identités en termes d'importance. Comme expliqué plus loin, la question Moreno fut utile pour

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<sup>419</sup> Voir l'état de l'art plus loin dans ce résumé.

répondre en partie à cette question<sup>420</sup>. Compte tenu des hypothèses sur leur discours à propos de l'identité écossaise et de la britannicité, je m'attendais à ce que les jeunes membres du SNP se sentent soit écossais, britanniques et européens, dans cet ordre; ou écossais, européens et britanniques; ou bien encore écossais, européens, mais pas britanniques. Par ailleurs, j'avais envisagé que les jeunes membres du Parti travailliste écossais se sentiraient britanniques, écossais et européens, tandis que les jeunes Conservateurs écossais se sentiraient britanniques, écossais, ou britanniques uniquement. L'analyse des résultats de cette étude montre que la majorité de ces hypothèses sont confirmées, mais curieusement, pas toutes.

*Existe-t-il un lien entre le sentiment d'identité nationale des jeunes membres du SNP et leur degré d'engagement politique ?*

Le sentiment d'identité nationale des jeunes adhérents aux YSI et SNP Students influence-t-il le degré de leur activisme ? Sont-ils plus, et plus souvent, actifs ? Sont-ils plus radicaux dans leurs opinions ? Si l'identité nationale est une raison pour laquelle les jeunes Écossais s'engagent au sein du SNP, j'avais émis l'hypothèse que dans le cas où un jeune Écossais avait un fort sentiment d'identité nationale, il serait probablement fortement engagé. Logiquement, si un jeune Écossais adhère au SNP pour des raisons d'identité nationale, alors on peut penser que plus l'identité écossaise est importante à ses yeux, plus il est impliqué dans la vie du parti. C'est pourquoi j'avais choisi d'inclure des députés parmi les jeunes interviewés. Comme ils travaillent pour le SNP, les députés sont censés faire partie des membres du parti les plus impliqués et actifs. De même, au sein des branches jeune et étudiante du parti, je me suis entretenue avec des jeunes avec et sans postes ni responsabilités spécifiques.

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<sup>420</sup> La question ou l'échelle de Moreno, développée par Luis Moreno dans les années 1980, permet de mesurer l'importance de l'identité écossaise et de la britannicité aux yeux des Écossais, qui sont supposés avoir deux identités : l'identité écossaise – qui découle de leur appartenance à la nation écossaise – et l'identité britannique – qui découle de leur appartenance au Royaume-Uni. Voir MORENO, Luis. « Scotland, Catalonia, Europeanization and the 'Moreno Question'. », *Scottish Affairs*, 54, 1986, p. 1-21.

## Méthodologie

Afin de répondre à ces questions, en plus de s'appuyer sur la littérature sur l'adhésion partisane des jeunes et sur la recherche sur l'identité nationale, cette thèse s'appuie sur les résultats d'une étude menée entre 2018 et 2020. Afin d'obtenir une vision complète des motivations des jeunes Écossais à adhérer au SNP, ainsi que de leur perception de leur identité nationale, cette étude se veut à la fois qualitative et quantitative.

Je me suis entretenue avec des membres des YSI et SNP Students, ainsi qu'avec quelques membres des Scottish Young Labour et Scottish Young Conservatives. J'ai également rencontré un membre du Brexit Party<sup>421</sup>. La majeure partie des entretiens auprès des jeunes membres du SNP a été menée lors des congrès du parti, à Aberdeen en juin 2018, à Glasgow en octobre 2018 et à Édimbourg en avril 2019. D'autres entretiens ont été effectués en mai 2019 et mars 2020, par téléphone et visio-conférence. Les entretiens avec les jeunes Conservateurs ont été réalisés à Édimbourg en avril et mai 2019, puis en mars 2020. Quant aux entretiens avec les jeunes membres du Parti travailliste écossais, ils se sont déroulés à Édimbourg en avril et mai 2019. Au total, vingt-cinq jeunes membres du SNP ont été interrogés, huit jeunes femmes et dix-sept jeunes hommes, de 18 à 32 ans. Sept jeunes Conservateurs ont été interrogés, une jeune femme et six jeunes hommes, âgés de 21 à 27 ans. Quant aux jeunes Travaillistes, quatre ont été interrogés, deux jeunes femmes et deux jeunes hommes, âgés de 19 à 27 ans. Le jeune adhérent au Brexit Party avait 19 ans au moment de l'entretien. Un plus grand nombre d'entretiens aurait été le bienvenu pour mener une étude comparative, mais entrer en contact avec les jeunes Conservateurs et Travaillistes fut beaucoup plus difficile qu'au sein du SNP. Enfin, les entretiens étaient semi-guidés, laissant la possibilité aux jeunes interrogés de développer leurs réponses comme ils le souhaitaient. Ils ont également été traités de manière

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<sup>421</sup> Aujourd'hui renommé « Reform UK ». Je me suis entretenue avec ce jeune adhérent en mai 2019. Il était membre du Parti Conservateur auparavant.

anonyme. Chaque entretien durait entre 45 et 90 minutes, selon la longueur des réponses de la personne interviewée.

Outre ces entretiens, un questionnaire en ligne a été envoyé aux jeunes adhérents des partis politiques écossais en mars 2020. Des jeunes du SNP, des Partis Travailleuse, Conservateur, Vert, Libéral Démocrate et du Brexit Party ont répondu à ce sondage. Les données ont été collectées de manière anonyme. Au total, quatre-vingt-deux jeunes adhérents ont répondu au questionnaire : cinquante-trois ont répondu entièrement à l'enquête et vingt-neuf ont soumis des réponses incomplètes. Afin de tirer des conclusions précises et significatives, je me suis concentrée sur les cinquante-trois questionnaires complets. Quatorze jeunes femmes, trente-huit jeunes hommes et une personne qui s'est identifiée comme « autre » ont répondu au sondage. Au moment d'y répondre, ils avaient entre 18 et 29 ans, l'âge moyen étant de 22 ans.

Comme cela a été dit précédemment, il fut particulièrement difficile d'entrer en contact avec les jeunes adhérents, en particulier ceux des Partis conservateur et travailliste. C'est la raison pour laquelle le nombre de jeunes interviewés dans les trois partis politiques diffère.

Pour mener cette étude, j'ai donc choisi de combiner des méthodes qualitatives et quantitatives. Afin de comprendre pourquoi les jeunes adhèrent au SNP, les entretiens se sont montrés l'outil le plus utile et le plus pertinent. En effet, de tels entretiens, approfondis et semi-guidés, ont permis de dépasser les résultats d'une enquête par questionnaire en saisissant les pensées et l'idéologie des personnes interviewées. Il semble que demander à ces jeunes de définir l'identité écossaise ainsi que la britannicité, était le meilleur moyen de comprendre leur perception, leur propre « version », de leur identité nationale. Les méthodes qualitatives comme les entretiens sont aussi l'outil privilégié par d'autres chercheurs sur l'adhésion partisane des

jeunes. Michael Bruter et Sarah Harrison, qui ont mené l'étude la plus poussée sur les jeunes adhérents jusqu'ici, ont démontré l'utilité et la fiabilité des entretiens<sup>422</sup>.

En termes de méthodes quantitatives, un questionnaire en ligne semblait un outil utile pour faire des statistiques sur l'engagement politique de ces jeunes et leur rapport à l'identité nationale, et donc un moyen de tirer des conclusions complémentaires. Cela a notamment permis de comparer les résultats des entretiens et les réponses au sondage, dégagant ainsi certaines tendances.

Afin de repérer d'éventuels signes d'identité nationale au travers de l'activisme des jeunes membres du SNP, une étude de leurs comptes sur les réseaux sociaux, en particulier de leurs publications sur Twitter et Facebook, a été réalisée. Ce travail a été effectué en partie en collaboration avec Eric Leclercq et Annabelle Gillet, Docteur et doctorante en sciences de l'ingénieur à l'Université de Bourgogne, à Dijon. Les deux chercheurs ont collecté des données après avoir répertorié les mots-clés liés à l'identité nationale, à l'identité écossaise et à la britannicité, mais aussi à l'Union entre l'Écosse et le reste du Royaume-Uni. Des données ont également été analysées par le biais d'une liste de comptes de ces jeunes sur les réseaux sociaux. Malheureusement, le modèle qu'ils ont développé ne s'est pas avéré fructueux pour mon étude. Je me suis donc tournée vers une analyse des publications de ces jeunes sur les réseaux sociaux de façon manuelle, en observant leur activité au quotidien.

Enfin, j'ai effectué de l'observation ethnographique. En d'autres termes, j'ai profité des congrès du SNP pour étudier le discours politique des jeunes adhérents, pour les voir interagir et évoluer dans un environnement politique. J'ai également participé aux activités organisées en marge des congrès. Ce fut une bonne façon de voir les jeunes membres du parti évoluer dans un environnement moins formel. Comme je n'avais pas systématiquement mon carnet de notes

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<sup>422</sup> BRUTER Michael & HARRISON Sarah. « Tomorrow's Leaders? Understanding the Involvement of Young Party Members in Six European Democracies. », *Comparative Political Studies*, 42, 2009, p. 1259–1290. BRUTER Michael & HARRISON Sarah. *The Future of our democracies: Young party members in Europe*. Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

et mon dictaphone en main, contrairement aux moments passés aux congrès, les jeunes adhérents se sentaient probablement plus libres de s'exprimer. J'ai pu m'entretenir de façon plus informelle avec eux. Cela m'a permis d'en savoir plus sur leur vie et, encore une fois, cela les a sans aucun doute mis plus à l'aise qu'un entretien formel, leur permettant peut-être de livrer leurs pensées plus librement.

## **Cadre théorique et analyse empirique**

### *Adhésion partisane des jeunes*

Dans leur étude sur les adhérents des partis politiques britanniques, Patrick Seyd et Paul Whiteley affirment que « peu d'études individuelles ont été faites sur les personnes qui adhèrent à un parti »<sup>423</sup>. Quelques années plus tard, Emilie van Haute, spécialiste de l'adhésion partisane également, constate que ce type de participation politique est « sous-étudiée »<sup>424</sup>. Cela pourrait être dû au fait que ce type de participation politique est en crise depuis plusieurs décennies. Dans la littérature sur la participation politique et l'adhésion partisane, il est communément admis que dans les démocraties occidentales, le nombre d'adhérents à un parti a beaucoup diminué depuis les années 1990 et encore plus depuis le début des années 2000.

L'adhésion partisane chez les jeunes est encore moins étudiée. Emily Rainsford fait ce constat en 2017<sup>425</sup>. Un an plus tard, Carla Malafaia, Isabel Menezes et Tiago Neves soulignent « le manque de recherches sur les organisations de jeunesse »<sup>426</sup>. Jusqu'ici, trois modèles

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<sup>423</sup> SEYD, Patrick & WHITELEY, Paul. « British party members: An Overview. », *Party Politics*, 10/4, 2004, p. 356. Texte original : « few individual studies have been made of the people who join ».

<sup>424</sup> VAN HAUTE, Emilie. « Party Membership: An Understudied Mode of Political Participation », in Van Haute, E. (ed.). *Party Membership in Europe: Exploration into the Anthills of Party Politics*. Bruxelles: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2011, p. 2.

<sup>425</sup> RAINSFORD, Emily. « Exploring youth political activism in the United Kingdom: What makes young people politically active in different organisations? », *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 19/4. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1369148117728666>

<sup>426</sup> MALAFAIA, Carla, MENEZES, Isabel & NEVES Tiago. « Living, Doing and Learning from Politics in a Youth Wing of a Political Party. », *The Qualitative Report*, 23/1, 2018, p. 51.

d'explication de l'adhésion partisane des jeunes ont été développés. En 2008, William Cross et Lisa Young ont identifié divers facteurs pouvant expliquer l'adhésion partisane des jeunes Canadiens<sup>427</sup>. Ils ont conclu qu'ils adhèrent à des partis politiques lorsqu'ils en ont une bonne image, sont avides d'informations sur la politique et les partis politiques, et lorsque la socialisation joue un rôle dans leur adhésion. En 2009, Michael Bruter et Sarah Harrison ont créé un modèle tridimensionnel de l'adhésion partisane chez les jeunes européens<sup>428</sup>. Ils adhèrent à un parti pour des raisons d'ordre moral, social ou professionnel. Plus récemment, Regina Weber a également développé son propre modèle<sup>429</sup>. Comme Bruter et Harrison, elle conclut que les jeunes adhérents de partis politiques sont divisés en trois groupes. Son analyse se concentre sur les niveaux micro (individuel), méso (intermédiaire) et macro (à échelle plus globale, notamment à l'échelle de la société) de la participation politique. Deux autres études sur les jeunes adhérents de partis politiques ont été menées par Matthew Lamb en 2002<sup>430</sup> et Marc Hooghe et Dietlind Stolle en 2004 et 2005<sup>431</sup>. Lamb s'est concentré sur les jeunes adhérents au Royaume-Uni. Hooghe et Stolle ont étudié les organisations de jeunesse des partis politiques belges. À l'heure actuelle, il semble que Cross et Young, Bruter et Harrison, ainsi que Weber soient les seuls chercheurs qui ont tenté de trouver un modèle d'adhésion partisane chez les jeunes. Cette thèse vise donc à combler ce manque dans la littérature sur l'adhésion partisane et la participation politique plus généralement. Hormis l'étude de Weber, les deux autres ont été menées il y a plus de dix ans. Trouver un modèle explicatif plus récent peut donc

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<sup>427</sup> CROSS, William & YOUNG, Lisa. « Factors Influencing the Decision of the Young Politically Engaged to Join a Political Party: An Investigation of the Canadian Case. », *Party Politics*, 14/3.

<sup>428</sup> BRUTER, Michael & HARRISON, Sarah., *op.cit.*

<sup>429</sup> WEBER, Regina. « Political participation of young people in political parties. A literature review of influencing factors on the macro, meso and micro level of participation. », *Journal of Political Science*, 27/3, 2017, p. 379-396. WEBER, Regina. « Why do young people join parties? The influence of individual resources on motivation. », *Party Politics*, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068818792576>

<sup>430</sup> LAMB, Matthew. *Young Conservatives, Young Socialists and the Great Youth Abstention: Youth Participation and Non-Participation in Political Parties*. Doctor of Philosophy, University of Birmingham.

<sup>431</sup> HOOGHE, Marc, STOLLE, Dietlind & STOUTHUYSEN, Patrick. « Head Start in Politics: The Recruitment Function of Youth Organizations of Political Parties in Belgium (Flanders). », *Party Politics*, 10, 2004, p. 193–212. HOOGHE, Marc & STOLLE, Dietlind. « Youth organizations within political parties: Political recruitment and the transformation of party systems », in Forbrig, J. (ed.), *Revisiting youth political participation, Challenges for research and democratic practice in Europe*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2005, p. 43-51.

avoir son utilité. Ce travail de recherche vise également à contribuer à la littérature existante en termes d'aires géographiques. Cross et Young ont analysé l'adhésion partisane des jeunes au Canada. Weber s'est concentrée sur le Parti social-démocrate d'Allemagne (SDP). Bruter et Harrison ont effectué leur enquête dans six pays européens : le Royaume-Uni, la France, l'Allemagne, l'Espagne, la Norvège et la Hongrie. Lorsqu'ils ont fait leurs recherches au Royaume-Uni, ils ne se sont pas particulièrement penchés sur l'Écosse. Il faut noter également qu'au Royaume-Uni, les deux chercheurs n'ont interviewé que les Travailleurs et les Libéraux Démocrates. Par conséquent, travailler sur les jeunes adhérents du Scottish National Party, du Scottish Labour et du Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party est une nouveauté. À ma connaissance, aucune étude approfondie sur les jeunes adhérents écossais n'a été menée jusqu'à présent. Cette thèse apporte donc un éclairage nouveau sur l'adhésion partisane des jeunes, plus particulièrement sur l'adhésion partisane des jeunes Écossais au SNP, et dans une moindre mesure au Scottish Labour Party et au Scottish Conservative Party.

Une très grande partie de la littérature scientifique montre que les jeunes ont tendance à ne pas participer à la vie politique de façon traditionnelle, mais participent de manière moins formelle et parfois plus innovante<sup>432</sup>. Cela peut expliquer pourquoi peu de recherches sont faites sur les jeunes adhérents des partis politiques. Ce phénomène d'éloignement des jeunes de la politique est souvent qualifié d'apathie politique. D'après cette théorie, les jeunes se

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<sup>432</sup> HENN, Matt, WEINSTEIN, Mark & WRING, Dominic. « A generation apart? Youth and political participation in Britain. », *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 4/2, 2002, p. 167- 92. HENN, Matt, WEINSTEIN, Mark & FOREST, Sarah. « Uninterested Youth? Young People's Attitudes towards Party Politics in Britain. », *Political Studies*, 53/3, 2005, p. 556-578.

KIMBERLEE, Richard H. « Why don't British young people vote at general elections? », *Journal of Youth Studies*, 5/1, 2002, p. 85-98.

MARSH David, O'TOOLE, Theresa & JONES, Su. *Young People and Politics in the UK: Apathy or Alienation?* Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

SLOAM, James. « Rebooting Democracy: Youth Participation in Politics in the UK. », *Parliamentary Affairs*, 60/4, 2007, p. 548-567. SLOAM, James. « Introduction: youth, citizenship and politics. », *Parliamentary Affairs*, 65/1, 2012, p. 4- 12.

PICKARD, Sarah & BESSANT, Judith. *Young People Re-generating Politics in Times of Crises*. Londres : Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. PICKARD, Sarah. *Politics, Protest and Young People. Political Participation and Dissent in 21st Century Britain*. Londres : Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.



désintéressent de plus en plus des modes traditionnels de participation politique comme le vote et l'adhésion à un parti politique. Plus généralement, quel que soit l'âge des membres, l'adhésion partisane traverse une crise depuis des décennies. Cette crise est encore plus importante parmi les jeunes. La sous-représentation de cette partie de la population dans les partis politiques peut expliquer le très petit nombre d'études sur l'adhésion partisane des jeunes ayant déjà été menées. Comme l'engagement des jeunes dans les partis politiques est relativement rare, il semble encore plus intéressant de l'étudier. Qu'est-ce qui pousse ces rares jeunes à adhérer à un parti politique ? L'étude des motivations et des raisons pour lesquelles ils s'engagent dans un parti politique manque à la littérature sur l'adhésion partisane et sur la participation politique des jeunes en particulier. L'objet de cette thèse est donc de combler une partie de ce manque.

Le premier chapitre, consacré à l'état de l'art sur la participation politique et l'adhésion partisane des jeunes, montre que celles-ci peuvent s'expliquer à trois niveaux : micro (au niveau de l'individu), méso (les organisations politiques, telles que les partis) et macro (la société, les institutions). En outre, elles peuvent s'analyser comme des variables dépendantes ou indépendantes : dans le premier cas, certains facteurs poussent les jeunes à s'engager en politique, et dans le second cas, l'adhésion partisane exerce une influence sur la vie des jeunes adhérents. Comme cette thèse vise à comprendre pourquoi les jeunes Écossais rejoignent le SNP, leur adhésion partisane y est considérée comme une variable dépendante.

Comme cela a été précisé plus haut, la plupart des chercheurs s'accordent pour dire que les jeunes ne s'intéressent pas ou très peu à la politique. Ils sont connus pour leur méfiance envers les partis et les personnalités politiques. Cette distance entre eux et la politique vient aussi du fait qu'ils pensent que les figures politiques ne défendent pas leurs intérêts et ne font pas assez entendre leur voix. Les universitaires s'accordent à dire qu'ils sont sous-représentés dans les partis. Est-ce dû à un manque de motivations personnelles ou est-ce les partis politiques

eux-mêmes qui ne parviennent pas à les recruter ? Ces jeunes ne sont-ils pas assez en contact avec la politique durant leur enfance et leur adolescence ? Autrement dit, la socialisation politique est-elle insuffisante pour permettre aux partis d'être attractifs à leurs yeux ?

Pour tenter de répondre à ces questions, le chapitre 2 étudie l'adhésion des jeunes Écossais au SNP aux niveaux micro, méso et macro. Il montre que l'indépendance de l'Écosse est un facteur majeur d'adhésion. Le référendum de 2014 a agi comme un événement déclencheur qui a poussé une proportion relativement importante de jeunes à rejoindre les rangs du parti. Depuis, le nombre de membres des YSI et SNP Students est stable et indique que la perspective de l'indépendance écossaise demeure un facteur d'adhésion au parti chez les jeunes. D'après les entretiens et le sondage en ligne qui ont été réalisés, c'est la raison la plus importante et la plus fréquente pour laquelle les jeunes rejoignent le SNP. 76% des jeunes qui ont répondu au questionnaire en ligne ont indiqué s'être engagés pour cette raison (voir schéma 2.38). De façon semblable, 64% des jeunes interviewés ont affirmé avoir adhéré au SNP dans le but de militer pour l'indépendance écossaise (schéma 2.37). Dans une moindre mesure, il semble que ce soit aussi la raison principale de l'adhésion des jeunes aux Verts écossais et au Parti conservateur. Ainsi, ce travail de recherche complète-t-il l'étude de Mitchell, Bennie et Johns<sup>433</sup> qui aboutit à la vision du référendum de 2014 comme une source d'adhésion au SNP et au Parti vert, quel que soit l'âge des nouveaux membres.

Bien que l'indépendance écossaise soit la principale raison pour laquelle les jeunes s'engagent au sein du SNP, les incitations et les ressources individuelles jouent également un rôle dans leur adhésion partisane. Le deuxième chapitre dresse le profil type des jeunes membres du SNP. Ils sont ou ont été étudiants. Ils sont originaires d'une zone urbaine, n'ont pas d'emploi ni d'enfants. Leur activisme politique a tendance à être quotidien. Ils utilisent

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<sup>433</sup> MITCHELL James, BENNIE Lynn & JOHNS Rob. « Referendum as platform: the SNP and Scottish Green membership surge. », *Political Insight*, 8/3, 2017, p. 16–19.

beaucoup les réseaux sociaux, qu'ils voient comme un très bon outil pour véhiculer leurs opinions politiques. Une majorité des parents et des amis de ces jeunes adhérents est engagée en politique. Une proportion importante d'entre eux ont tendance à être membres d'un parti politique, principalement le SNP, confirmant ainsi le rôle de la socialisation politique. Leur intérêt pour la politique et le SNP trouve sa source essentiellement dans le débat sur l'indépendance écossaise. La famille et les amis sont également une source importante d'intérêt politique, renforçant, une fois de plus, l'argument de la socialisation politique. Parmi les avantages à adhérer au parti, les jeunes qui ont répondu au sondage mettent en avant le fait de pouvoir se faire des amis. Quant à leur carrière, ils souhaitent / pensent à faire de la politique leur métier un jour. Du moins, ils envisagent de poursuivre leur adhésion au parti à l'avenir. Dans l'ensemble, les incitations et les ressources individuelles sont complémentaires lorsqu'il s'agit de l'adhésion des jeunes au SNP. Tout cela correspond aux recherches de Bruter et Harrison<sup>434</sup> et Weber<sup>435</sup> sur les jeunes membres de partis politiques au Royaume-Uni et dans d'autres pays européens.

Enfin, au niveau méso, le SNP semble réussir à recruter de nouveaux membres parmi les jeunes. Le gouvernement écossais, dirigé par ce parti, a tendance à prendre des mesures qui bénéficient à la jeunesse. De plus, Nicola Sturgeon, Première ministre et dirigeante du parti, se montre habile quant à l'utilisation des réseaux sociaux pour s'adresser aux jeunes de son pays. Que ce soit à des fins politiques, donc stratégiques, ou parce qu'elle se soucie vraiment d'eux, elle semble être proche des jeunes Écossais.

Fondé sur ces résultats, le schéma 2.39<sup>436</sup> propose un modèle explicatif de l'adhésion des jeunes au SNP. Au niveau macro, le référendum / le débat sur l'indépendance de l'Écosse conduit à un nouveau modèle d'adhésion partisane des jeunes avec une nouvelle variable à

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<sup>434</sup> BRUTER, Michael & HARRISON, Sarah., *op.cit.*

<sup>435</sup> WEBER, Regina., *op.cit.*

<sup>436</sup> Page 240.

prendre en compte : les événements politiques (majeurs) comme les référendums, avec une dimension nationale / internationale, autrement dit le contexte politique. De futures recherches permettraient peut-être d'appliquer ce modèle à d'autres nations, ainsi qu'à l'adhésion partisane en général, quel que soit l'âge.

### *SNP et identité nationale*

Une seule étude sur les membres du SNP a été menée avant celle-ci. Il s'agit de l'étude réalisée par James Mitchell, Lynn Bennie et Rob Johns en 2008, et publiée en 2012<sup>437</sup>. Cette recherche très fouillée fournit de précieuses informations sur le profil des membres du parti, sur leur idéologie et leur activisme. Le travail de ces trois chercheurs m'a éclairée dans ma propre étude. La présente thèse vise à compléter les connaissances sur les adhérents au SNP que nous devons à ces chercheurs. Ils ont étudié tous les membres du parti, sans critère d'âge, et ne se sont donc pas penchés sur les jeunes en particulier. Par conséquent, cette thèse fournit des informations inédites sur les jeunes membres du SNP, leur idéologie et leur engagement politique. Ils incarnent l'avenir du parti. En cela, il semble donc important d'approfondir les connaissances à leur sujet. Cette étude permet en effet d'avoir une idée de l'agenda politique du SNP dans les années à venir, lorsque les membres des YSI et SNP Students auront succédé aux dirigeants actuels. Elle permet aussi d'imaginer que le SNP poursuivra sans doute son militantisme pour l'indépendance écossaise à l'avenir.

Cette thèse vise également à compléter les résultats de Mitchell, Bennie et Johns en analysant le point de vue des jeunes membres du SNP sur l'identité écossaise et la britannicité. Dans leur ouvrage de 2012, les trois chercheurs consacrent un chapitre à la relation entre les adhérents au parti et l'identité nationale. Tandis que leur étude est purement quantitative, fondée

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<sup>437</sup> MITCHELL, James, BENNIE, Lynn & JOHNS, R., *op.cit.*, 2012.

sur les résultats d'une enquête par questionnaire, le présent travail de recherche apporte un éclairage qualitatif sur cette relation, grâce à l'analyse d'entretiens.

Concernant la relation entre le SNP et l'identité écossaise, cette étude vise également à compléter les recherches de Murray Stewart Leith, qui a notamment travaillé sur le discours du SNP sur l'identité nationale dans ses manifestes<sup>438</sup>. La période étudiée s'étend des années 1970, au moment où le SNP est devenu une force politique importante en Écosse et au Royaume-Uni, à 2010. Leith montre que le SNP véhicule une idée socio-politique de l'identité écossaise et de la britannicité dans ses manifestes. À travers la présente étude, j'ai cherché à en savoir plus sur ce que pensent personnellement les membres du parti, afin de voir s'il existe une corrélation entre l'identité nationale véhiculée par le parti et ses dirigeants, et la façon dont les adhérents envisagent cette identité. Les entretiens individuels auprès de jeunes adhérents ont permis de mesurer leur sentiment d'identité nationale et de mieux comprendre leur rapport à celle-ci, ainsi que son rôle potentiel dans leur engagement politique vis-à-vis de l'indépendance écossaise.

Ce travail fait également écho aux recherches de Nathalie Duclos<sup>439</sup> et d'Ailsa Henderson sur le SNP et l'identité écossaise. Avec Leith, les deux chercheuses s'accordent à dire que l'idée d'identité écossaise véhiculée au travers de l'agenda politique du SNP a tendance à être socio-politique. Ils soutiennent que la campagne du SNP pour l'indépendance de l'Écosse est dépourvue d'arguments ethnoculturels. Au contraire, les revendications du parti se

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<sup>438</sup> LEITH, Murray Stewart. « Scottish National Party Representations of Scottishness and Scotland. », *Politics*, 28/2, 2008, p. 83-92. LEITH, Murray Stewart & SOULE, Daniel PJ. *Political Discourse and National Identity in Scotland*. Edimbourg : Edinburgh University Press, 2012.

<sup>439</sup> DUCLOS, Nathalie. *L'Écosse en quête d'indépendance ? Le référendum de 2014*. Paris : Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2014. DUCLOS, Nathalie. (dir.). « Le référendum sur l'indépendance écossaise du 18 septembre 2014. », *Revue française de civilisation britannique*. Paris : Université Paris III Sorbonne-Nouvelle, 20/2, 2015. DUCLOS, Nathalie. « The Idiosyncrasies of Scottish National Identity », in Milne, A., and Verdugo, R. R. (dirs.). *National Identity. Theory and Research*. Charlotte, NC : Information Age Publishing, 2016, p. 83-112. DUCLOS, Nathalie. « Le nationalisme écossais et l'identité politique du Scottish National Party », in Palau, A., and Smith, M. (eds.). *Processus de transformation et consolidation identitaires dans les sociétés européennes et américaines aux XXe-XXIe siècles*. Louvain-La-Neuve : Academia – L'Harmattan, 2020. HENDERSON, Ailsa. « Political Constructions of National Identity in Scotland and Quebec. », *Scottish Affairs*, 29/1, 1999, p. 121-138. HENDERSON, Ailsa & MCEWEN, Nicola. « Do Shared Values Underpin National Identity? Examining the Role of Values in National Identity in Canada and the United Kingdom. », *National Identities*, 7/2, 2005, p. 173-191. HENDERSON, Ailsa. *Hierarchies of Belonging: National Identity and Political Culture in Scotland and Quebec*. Montreal; Kingston : McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007.

concentrent sur des questions socio-économiques et sur le déficit démocratique dont souffre l'Écosse au sein du Royaume-Uni<sup>440</sup>.

### *Identité nationale*

Ce travail de recherche contribue également à la littérature scientifique sur l'identité nationale. Celle-ci est beaucoup plus vaste que la littérature sur l'adhésion partisane de la jeunesse. Elle est aussi beaucoup plus complexe. L'identité nationale est une notion difficile à saisir et souvent perçue comme ambiguë. Elle est étroitement liée aux concepts de nation et de nationalisme. Le cadre théorique sur l'identité nationale se décompose comme suit : thèses essentialistes<sup>441</sup> – également connues sous le nom de thèses primordialistes – d'une part, et thèses constructivistes<sup>442</sup> – également appelées (post)modernistes et instrumentalistes – d'autre part. Passer en revue la littérature sur l'identité nationale n'a pas été une tâche facile, ce qui, une fois encore, montre la complexité de cette notion.

Le chapitre 3 de cette thèse offre une vision globale des recherches sur l'identité nationale. Il montre que la littérature est divisée essentiellement sur la nature innée / donnée / fixe ou construite / fluide de l'identité nationale<sup>443</sup>. D'autres théories comme les approches civiques et ethniques du nationalisme et de l'identité nationale s'opposent également. Certains chercheurs, comme Shulman<sup>444</sup>, contestent cette dichotomie et suggèrent qu'il devrait être utile de faire la distinction entre le nationalisme civique, ethnique *et* culturel. D'autres universitaires

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<sup>440</sup> D'après le SNP.

<sup>441</sup> GEERTZ, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York : Basic Books. CONNOR, Walker. *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*. Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1994.

<sup>442</sup> ANDERSON, Benedict. *Imagined Communities. Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Londres : Verso, 1983.

GELLNER, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca, NY : Cornell University Press, 1983.

HOBBSAWM, Eric & RANGER, Terence. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1983. HOBBSAWM, Eric. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1990.

<sup>443</sup> Théories essentialistes dans le premier cas ; théories constructivistes dans le second.

<sup>444</sup> SHULMAN, S., *op.cit.*

tels que Brubaker<sup>445</sup> pensent que tout nationalisme comporte une dimension culturelle. Enfin, des chercheurs comme Billig<sup>446</sup> plaident pour un nationalisme banal ou quotidien. Ils se concentrent sur la présence de l'identité nationale dans notre vie quotidienne. Selon les chercheurs partisans de cette approche, l'identité nationale est devenue « banale » dans le sens où elle est naturellement présente dans la vie quotidienne des membres d'une nation, à travers des habitudes, des publicités, des produits de consommation, les médias... Elle est tellement évidente que les individus ne prêtent pas attention aux signes d'identité nationale dans leur environnement. Cela fait partie de leur quotidien.

Le chapitre 3 se penche sur le cas particulier de l'identité nationale en Écosse. Il montre que, selon les recherches menées sur le sujet, l'identité écossaise et le sentiment national qui y est associé sont forts. Les Écossais ont en quelque sorte une double identité, car ils vivent dans un État multinational – le Royaume-Uni – ainsi que dans l'une des quatre nations qui constituent cet État – l'Écosse. L'échelle de Moreno<sup>447</sup> permet de mesurer leur identité nationale. Il est clair que les Écossais se sentent (beaucoup) plus écossais que britanniques. Certains se sentent même exclusivement écossais, non britanniques. Comme le chapitre 3 le note, cela soulève la question d'un lien éventuel entre identité nationale et indépendance de l'Écosse. Des chercheurs tels que Ross Bond ont démontré que le lien entre l'identité nationale et les préférences constitutionnelles n'est pas toujours évident<sup>448</sup>. La corrélation entre l'identité nationale et l'identification à un parti politique ne semble pas toujours claire non plus. Cependant, Mitchell et al.<sup>449</sup> ont montré qu'une très grande majorité des membres du SNP se sentent exclusivement

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<sup>445</sup> BRUBAKER, Rogers. « Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism », in Hall, J.A. (ed.). *The State of the Nation. Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1998. BRUBAKER, Rogers & COOPER, Frederick. « Beyond Identity », *Theory and Society*, 29/1, 2000, p. 1-47.

<sup>446</sup> BILLIG, Michael., *op.cit.*

<sup>447</sup> MORENO, Luis., *op.cit.*

<sup>448</sup> BOND, Ross & ROSIE, Michael. « National Identities and Attitudes to Constitutional Change in Post-Devolution UK: A Four Territories Comparison. », *Regional & Federal Studies*, 20/1, 2010, p. 83-105.

<sup>449</sup> MITCHELL, James, BENNIE, Lynn & JOHNS, R., *op.cit.*, 2012.

écossais, et non britanniques. D'où la nécessité d'explorer la question d'un lien entre l'identité nationale des jeunes adhérents au SNP et de leur militantisme pour l'indépendance écossaise.

Le chapitre 3 montre également que le nationalisme écossais est très spécifique. Des chercheurs comme Ailsa Henderson et Nicola McEwen<sup>450</sup>, David McCrone, Murray Stewart Leith<sup>451</sup> et Nathalie Duclos<sup>452</sup> insistent unanimement sur le fait que le nationalisme du SNP est civique. Il n'inclut pas de dimension ethnique ni culturelle. Il s'agit d'un nationalisme civique fondé sur l'idée de territoire : vivre en Écosse, c'est être écossais. Ce « néo-nationalisme »<sup>453</sup> a tendance à être considéré comme un mouvement social-démocrate progressiste. Contrairement aux partis nationalistes dont les arguments se veulent ethniques et / ou culturels, le SNP fait l'éloge de l'immigration et du multiculturalisme. L'idée de l'Écosse véhiculée par le parti est donc celle d'une nation inclusive. En outre, comme cela a été dit précédemment, le SNP fait campagne pour l'indépendance de l'Écosse pour des raisons socio-économiques et politiques. Ils veulent rompre avec le Royaume-Uni qui, selon eux, ne reflète pas et ne tient pas compte de leurs idées politiques. Ainsi, le SNP ne demande-t-il pas l'indépendance écossaise pour des raisons identitaires. Ou, plutôt, il ne met pas l'accent sur l'identité écossaise au sens ethnoculturel du terme. Selon Henderson et McEwen, un lien peut être établi entre les valeurs civiques et sociales-démocrates endossées par le SNP et les (rares) expressions de l'identité écossaise dans leur discours politique<sup>454</sup>.

Cette thèse démontre que le point de vue des jeunes membres du parti sur leur identité nationale correspond aux résultats des recherches qui ont été menées sur le SNP jusqu'à présent. Les résultats présentés dans le chapitre 4 rejoignent la littérature sur le SNP et l'identité écossaise. Les perceptions de l'Écosse et de l'identité écossaise des jeunes adhérents au SNP

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<sup>450</sup> HENDERSON, Ailsa., *op.cit.* HENDERSON, Ailsa & MCEWEN, Nicola., *op.cit.*

<sup>451</sup> LEITH, Murray Stewart., *op.cit.*, 2008. LEITH, Murray Stewart & SOULE, Daniel PJ., *op.cit.*, 2012.

<sup>452</sup> DUCLOS, Nathalie., *op.cit.*, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2020.

<sup>453</sup> NAIRN, Tom. *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*. Londres : NLB, 1977.

<sup>454</sup> HENDERSON, Ailsa., *op.cit.* HENDERSON, Ailsa & MCEWEN, Nicola., *op.cit.*



que j'ai interrogés et qui ont répondu à l'enquête en ligne sont, en grande majorité, civiques. Il est clair que leur discours sur la nation et l'identité écossaises est socio-politique. Dans une grande majorité des cas, ils associent l'identité écossaise à l'égalitarisme, au progressisme, à la justice sociale, la diversité culturelle et à l'ouverture sur le monde. Dans quelques cas seulement, leur discours sur l'identité nationale est aussi culturel.

Comme leur définition de l'Écosse et de l'identité écossaise est civique et fondée sur des critères socio-politiques, elle correspond au discours du SNP. En ce qui concerne la britannicité, certains jeunes sont légèrement radicaux par rapport au discours du parti et de ses dirigeants. Alors que ces derniers (Nicola Sturgeon, notamment) insistent sur le fait que l'indépendance n'a rien à voir avec l'identité nationale et que la britannicité ne serait pas remise en question en cas d'indépendance de l'Écosse vis-à-vis du Royaume-Uni, les YSI et SNP Students étudiés dans cette thèse ont une vision (très) négative de la britannicité. Ils ne s'identifient pas du tout à la britannicité et, même, s'en distancient. Il faut noter l'absence de haine envers les Britanniques parmi les jeunes membres interviewés et sondés, mais les mots qu'ils ont employés pour définir la britannicité étaient péjoratifs, voire durs parfois. Il ne s'agit pas de dire que le nationalisme promu par les jeunes membres du SNP peut être ethnique ou ethnoculturel, mais simplement de souligner que leur discours sur la britannicité peut être radical.

## **Contribution des résultats de cette recherche**

### *Le rôle de l'identité nationale dans l'engagement politique des jeunes membres du SNP*

Le chapitre 2 indique qu'une majorité des jeunes membres du SNP étudiés dans cette thèse ont choisi d'adhérer au parti dans le but de faire campagne pour l'indépendance de l'Écosse vis-à-vis du Royaume-Uni. Ce travail de recherche met aussi en évidence le fait que les principaux arguments de cette campagne en faveur de l'indépendance sont liés à leur vision

de l'Écosse comparée au Royaume-Uni, notamment à l'Angleterre. Ils voient l'Écosse comme une nation empreinte de social-démocratie, caractérisée par l'égalité de tous et où tout citoyen peut s'épanouir pleinement quelles que soient ses origines. À l'inverse, ils perçoivent le Royaume-Uni comme l'union inégale de quatre nations, un État divisé et replié sur lui-même. Comme nous venons de le voir, leurs revendications indépendantistes reposent sur des arguments socio-économiques et socio-politiques, ainsi que sur l'idée de déficit démocratique entre l'Écosse et le reste du Royaume-Uni – en particulier l'Angleterre – et non sur des critères ethnoculturels. Étant donné que leurs arguments socio-politiques en faveur de l'indépendance sont globalement similaires à leur vision sociale-démocrate de l'Écosse et de l'identité écossaise, cette thèse affirme que l'identité nationale est l'une des raisons pour lesquelles les YSI et SNP Students militent pour l'indépendance écossaise. Ils semblent donc être favorables à l'indépendance en partie pour des raisons identitaires. Ici, l'identité nationale doit être comprise comme une identité socio-politique et non ethnoculturelle. En d'autres termes, ils militent pour l'indépendance au nom de ce qu'ils considèrent comme l'identité sociale-démocrate de la nation écossaise. À cet égard, je rejoins Nathalie Duclos pour dire que si le nationalisme écossais ne peut être considéré comme un nationalisme culturel fondé sur des questions identitaires, c'est parce que « les revendications nationalistes sont la traduction politique de cette identité »<sup>455</sup>. Comme indiqué précédemment, Duclos précise que la volonté d'indépendance du SNP « est née (...) du sentiment que l'union anglo-écossaise n'est plus aussi bénéfique à l'Écosse que par le passé, et donc qu'il est temps de mettre un terme à ce partenariat volontaire entre deux nations »<sup>456</sup>. En d'autres termes, la source des revendications indépendantistes du SNP est bien ce que le parti dénonce comme un déficit démocratique dont souffre l'Écosse au sein du Royaume-Uni.

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<sup>455</sup> DUCLOS, Nathalie., *op.cit.*, 2014, p. 130.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Ainsi, la « traduction » ou version politique de l'identité écossaise, par opposition à la version politique de la britannicité, semble-t-elle jouer un rôle dans l'adhésion des jeunes Écossais au SNP. En ce sens, cette thèse contribue à la littérature sur l'adhésion partisane des jeunes. Dans le chapitre 2, qui présente les raisons pour lesquelles les jeunes membres du SNP choisissent d'adhérer au parti, le schéma 2.39 montre que l'indépendance de l'Écosse doit être considérée comme une variable exerçant une influence sur l'adhésion des jeunes au SNP au niveau macro. Le chapitre 4 montre que l'identité nationale ou, plus précisément, la perception socio-politique de l'identité écossaise, corrèle avec les arguments indépendantistes du SNP. C'est pourquoi l'identité nationale doit être considérée comme une variable qui influence les jeunes Écossais à rejoindre le SNP (voir schéma ci-dessous).

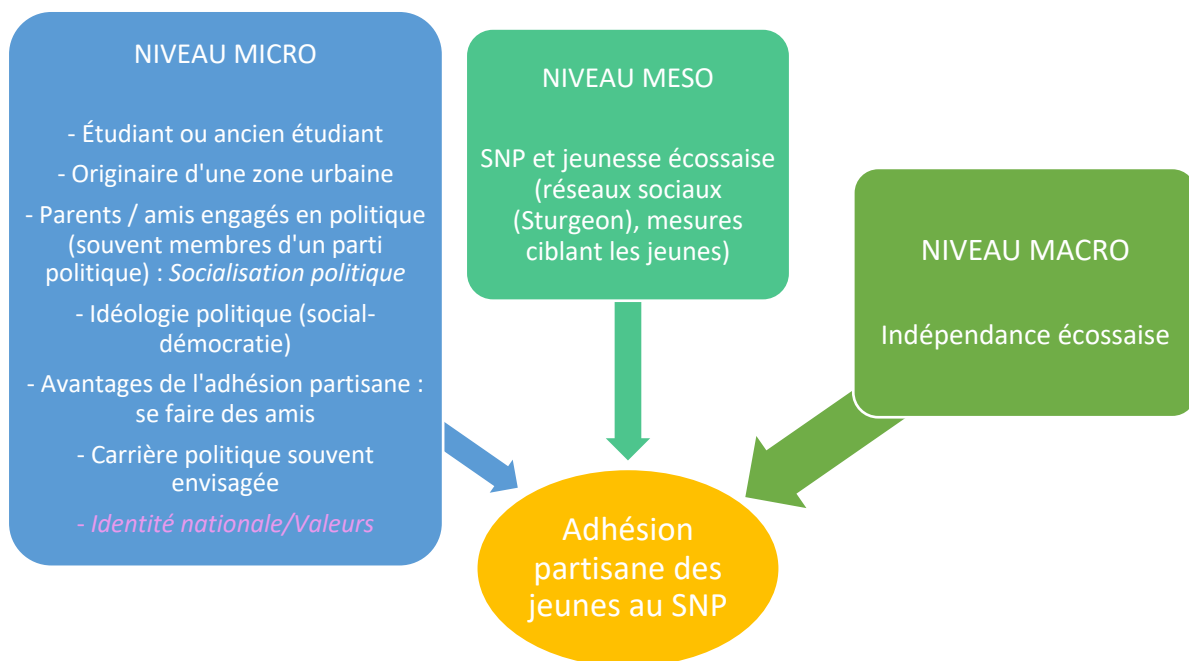


Schéma 4.10: Modèle d'adhésion partisane des jeunes au SNP

L'identité nationale se situe ici au niveau micro. En effet, comme cela est démontré dans le chapitre 4, il s'agit de quelque chose de personnel et de subjectif. Malgré leur tendance à

percevoir l'identité écossaise d'un point de vue socio-politique, les jeunes adhérents au SNP ne la définissent pas toujours de la même manière. C'est pourquoi elle est considérée comme une variable au niveau individuel ici. Le terme « valeurs » – à côté de l'identité nationale dans ce schéma – fait référence à la relation entre leurs conceptions de l'identité nationale et les valeurs qu'ils promeuvent. Cette idée est développée dans la section intitulée « Redéfinir le concept d'identité nationale » ci-dessous.

### *Degré d'engagement politique et sentiment d'identité nationale chez les jeunes membres du SNP*

L'une des questions de recherche de ce travail visait à examiner la corrélation possible entre le sentiment d'identité nationale des YSI et SNP Students et leur degré d'engagement politique. Les résultats de cette étude, en particulier les entretiens, montrent qu'il n'y a pas de corrélation entre les deux. Les députés que j'ai interviewés ne se sentent pas plus écossais que les autres jeunes membres du parti, malgré leur niveau d'engagement plus élevé puisqu'ils travaillent pour le SNP. Leur discours sur l'Écosse et l'identité écossaise n'était pas non plus différent de celui des autres jeunes adhérents.

### *Redéfinir le concept d'identité nationale*

#### ➤ L'identité d'une nation

Cette thèse suggère que l'identité nationale peut être comprise comme l'identité d'une nation. En d'autres termes, il s'agit de la façon dont les membres d'une nation voient cette même nation. Cela peut être subjectif. Il existe donc une pluralité de versions d'une identité nationale, parmi lesquelles des versions sociétales et politiques (voir la section dédiée plus bas). En ce sens, cette thèse contribue à la littérature existante sur l'identité nationale. Elle complète

notamment les idées de Shulman sur les éléments constitutifs de l'identité nationale (voir la section dédiée, plus loin dans ce résumé).

Selon Henderson et McEwen, « l'identification à une nation, pour avoir un sens, doit s'accompagner d'une vision commune de ce que cette nation représente »<sup>457</sup>. Il s'agit de l'approche de la notion d'identité nationale dans cette thèse : l'identité nationale est l'identité d'une nation. Il s'agit de la manière dont les membres d'une nation perçoivent et parlent de cette nation. Certaines personnes ont tendance à la concevoir d'un point de vue ethnoculturel, d'autres personnes d'un point de vue civique et / ou socio-politique<sup>458</sup>, comme les YSI et SNP Students étudiés dans ce travail de recherche.

#### ➤ Identité nationale et valeurs

Le chapitre 3 présente les thèses de Norman<sup>459</sup> et de Kymlicka<sup>460</sup> à propos de la relation entre l'identité nationale et les valeurs partagées par les membres d'une nation. Selon eux, des valeurs communes n'influencent pas la définition d'une identité nationale. Or, grâce aux entretiens que j'ai pu mener, je suis parvenue à la conclusion que la perception qu'ont les jeunes membres du SNP des valeurs qu'ils considèrent comme spécifiques à la société écossaise, influence leur discours sur l'identité nationale – l'identité écossaise en particulier, mais aussi la britannicité et la comparaison entre les deux. Ainsi, la relation causale entre les valeurs communes et l'identité nationale serait à envisager comme suit :

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<sup>457</sup> HENDERSON, Ailsa & MCEWEN, Nicola., *op.cit.*, p. 175. Texte original : « identification with a nation, if it is to be meaningful, has to be accompanied by a shared understanding of what that nation represents. »

<sup>458</sup> Encore une fois, il faut comprendre ce terme comme une identité qui repose sur des valeurs sociales (voire sociétales) et politiques.

<sup>459</sup> NORMAN, Wayne. « The Ideology of Shared Values: A Myopic Vision of Unity in the Multi-nation State », in Carens, J.H. (ed.), *Is Quebec Nationalism Just? Perspectives from Anglophone Canada*. Montreal and Kingstone, Londres, Buffalo : McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995.

<sup>460</sup> KYMLICKA, Will. *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1995. KYMLICKA, Will. « Social Unity in A Liberal State », *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 13/1, 1996, p. 105-136.

valeurs communes → identité nationale

~~identité nationale → valeurs communes~~

Cette thèse réfute donc les idées de Norman et Kymlicka, en montrant que dans le cas des jeunes adhérents au SNP, les valeurs socio-politiques auxquelles ils associent l'Écosse font bel et bien partie de leur définition de l'identité écossaise. La façon dont les YSI et SNP Students voient leur identité nationale dépend des valeurs socio-politiques en lesquelles ils croient et qu'ils défendent à travers leur campagne pour l'indépendance écossaise. Les arguments de Henderson et McEwen vont dans ce sens<sup>461</sup>. Dans cette thèse, les jeunes membres du SNP pensent que l'ensemble des valeurs qui peut être attribué à l'Écosse différencie leur nation du reste du Royaume-Uni. De plus, ils s'identifient à ce qui, selon eux, symbolise l'Écosse, c'est-à-dire la social-démocratie. En revanche, ils ne s'identifient pas à ce qui, d'après eux, caractérise le Royaume-Uni, c'est-à-dire une union de nations antidémocratique, de droite, divisée, repliée sur elle-même et dépassée.

Comme le chapitre 3 l'indique, les valeurs auxquelles les membres d'une nation s'identifient peuvent être des valeurs universelles. C'est ce qu'avance Kymlicka. Selon lui, des valeurs comme la justice sociale et l'égalité sont trop universelles pour être constitutives d'une identité nationale donnée, au niveau national. Comme cela a été dit précédemment, je ne partage pas le point de vue de Kymlicka selon lequel la définition d'une identité nationale ne découle pas en partie de valeurs communes. Néanmoins, je partage son argument que ces valeurs peuvent être universelles. En ce sens, il peut sembler difficile de considérer que de telles valeurs soient spécifiques à une nation en particulier et, par conséquent, qu'elles façonnent une identité nationale donnée. Ainsi, peut-on dire que la version de l'identité écossaise des jeunes adhérents au SNP n'est pas vraiment spécifique. Dans une certaine mesure, toutes les personnes dans le

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<sup>461</sup> HENDERSON, Ailsa & MCEWEN, Nicola., *op.cit.*

monde qui croient en la social-démocratie et en des valeurs universelles telles que celles qui sont promues par les jeunes du SNP, peuvent s'identifier à l'Écosse.

### *Différentes versions de l'identité nationale*

Les résultats de cette recherche montrent qu'une majorité des YSI et SNP Students qui ont été interviewés et qui ont répondu au sondage en ligne, perçoivent leur identité nationale (identité écossaise) à travers un prisme socio-politique plutôt que culturel. Ils ne la considèrent pas du tout comme une identité ethnique. Le chapitre 4 révèle que la façon dont ces jeunes appréhendent leur identité nationale tend à correspondre à l'idéologie politique de leur parti, à savoir la social-démocratie. Comme cela a été précisé plus haut, leur discours sur l'Écosse et l'identité écossaise se concentre principalement sur l'égalité, la justice sociale, l'ouverture sur le monde et la diversité culturelle, autrement dit sur des valeurs sociales-démocrates. C'est pourquoi il peut être avancé que la vision de leur identité nationale et leur idéologie politique sont liées. Cela confirme la théorie de Stephen Shulman suivant laquelle l'idéologie politique fait partie des éléments constitutifs de l'identité nationale (voir tableau 3.1, page 251)<sup>462</sup>.

Cette thèse va plus loin en affirmant qu'identité nationale et couleur ou famille politique sont liées. Cela est démontré par l'analyse du discours des jeunes membres du SNP sur l'identité écossaise et la britannicité. En effet, les résultats des entretiens et du sondage indiquent qu'il existe probablement une relation entre la perception qu'ont les jeunes Écossais de leur identité nationale et la famille politique à laquelle ils appartiennent. Le discours des jeunes Travailleurs sur l'Écosse et l'identité écossaise est assez proche de celui des jeunes membres du SNP. En revanche, le discours des jeunes Conservateurs est assez différent. Tandis que les premiers ont tendance à penser la nation écossaise et l'identité nationale d'un point de vue socio-politique – en mettant parfois le même accent sur les valeurs sociales-démocrates que sont l'égalitarisme

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<sup>462</sup> SHULMAN, S., *op.cit.*, p. 559.

et la justice sociale – les jeunes Conservateurs sont davantage susceptibles de fonder leur discours sur des critères culturels. Cela ne veut pas dire que leur définition de l'Écosse et de l'identité écossaise est pleinement culturelle, mais force est de constater que les références culturelles y sont plus présentes que dans le discours des jeunes du SNP et du Parti travailliste. Les partis politiques à droite de l'échiquier politique sont connus pour leur idéologie « conservatrice », dans le sens où ils encouragent la préservation des traditions et des valeurs fondamentales à leurs yeux. D'où, l'idée d'une corrélation entre famille / couleur politique et conceptions d'une identité nationale ici.

Dès lors, une nouvelle catégorisation des différentes versions de l'identité nationale et de leurs éléments constitutifs peut être proposée :

		<b>Version de l'identité nationale</b>	<b>Éléments constitutifs</b>
		<i>Civique</i>	territoire citoyenneté
Version ethnoculturelle	}	<i>Culturelle</i>	religion langage traditions culture populaire (musique, littérature, arts...)
		<i>Ethnique</i>	descendance race
		<i>Politique</i>	idéologie politique couleur politique
Version socio- politique	}	<i>Sociétale</i>	valeurs comportements sociaux

Table 4.9: Les différentes versions de l'identité nationale (tableau inspiré de la théorie de Shulman)

À travers le tableau 4.9, qui s'appuie sur la théorie de Shulman, cette thèse suggère qu'il existe des versions politiques et sociétales de l'identité nationale, en plus des versions civiques, culturelles et ethniques. Dans le cadre de futures recherches, il serait intéressant d'examiner la



relation de causalité entre l'idéologie politique et les perceptions de l'identité nationale : est-ce l'idéologie politique d'une personne qui influence sa façon de percevoir son identité nationale, ou l'inverse ?

#### *Recherche sur l'adhésion partisane des jeunes*

Comme précisé précédemment, cette thèse contribue à la littérature scientifique existante sur l'adhésion partisane des jeunes. Seules quelques études sur les jeunes membres de partis politiques ont été menées jusqu'à présent. Ce travail va dans le même sens que les recherches de Bruter et Harrison<sup>463</sup> et les conclusions de Weber<sup>464</sup>. Alors que l'indépendance de l'Écosse est la principale raison pour laquelle les jeunes rejoignent le SNP, la présente thèse démontre que le rôle joué par les incitations à l'adhésion et la socialisation politique ne doit pas être négligé pour autant.

#### *Recherche sur l'identité nationale*

Cette thèse complète également la littérature sur l'identité nationale. Elle s'inscrit dans les thèses constructivistes de l'identité nationale. L'identité nationale n'est pas objective. Ce n'est pas un don. Elle se construit. Avec l'exemple des jeunes membres du SNP, on voit qu'elle peut être construite ou transformée par les partis politiques. La façon dont leurs adhérents perçoivent la nation dans laquelle ils vivent est en partie liée aux valeurs promues par ces partis. À cet égard, nous avons vu que les versions de l'identité écossaise des jeunes membres du SNP et leur idéologie politique (social-démocratie) sont interdépendantes. D'où la confirmation de la thèse de Shulman selon laquelle l'idéologie politique est une composante de l'identité nationale. Comme cela vient d'être dit, ceci est renforcé par la comparaison entre le discours des jeunes du SNP sur l'Écosse et l'identité écossaise avec le discours des jeunes Conservateurs

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<sup>463</sup> BRUTER, Michael & HARRISON, Sarah., *op.cit.*

<sup>464</sup> WEBER, Regina., *op.cit.*

et Travaillistes écossais qui ont été étudiés ici. La comparaison suggère que, alors que la version des Conservateurs de l'Écosse et de leur identité nationale est susceptible d'être culturelle, la version des jeunes Travaillistes a tendance à être socio-politique, comme c'est le cas au sein des YSI et SNP Students. Étant donné que la position des Conservateurs sur l'échiquier politique est à l'opposé de celles des Travaillistes et du SNP (droite / gauche et centre-gauche), on peut affirmer, encore une fois, que les perceptions de l'identité nationale et de la famille des partis politiques sont interdépendantes.

En ce sens, le présent travail conduit à une nouvelle catégorisation des éléments constitutifs de l'identité nationale. Comme cela a été montré plus haut, en s'appuyant sur les idées de Shulman et les résultats d'entretiens et d'enquêtes présentés ici, le tableau 4.9 indique que les versions de l'identité nationale peuvent être civiques, culturelles, ethniques, politiques et sociétales. En ce sens, l'identité nationale ne doit pas être considérée uniquement d'un point de vue ethnoculturel ou civique.

## **Interprétation des résultats**

### *La crise de l'adhésion partisane et de l'activisme politique des jeunes*

Comme le montre l'état de l'art sur la participation politique, bon nombre de chercheurs considèrent que les jeunes sont éloignés de la politique, voire ne s'y intéressent pas du tout. La littérature scientifique démontre que la jeunesse est sous-représentée dans les partis politiques. En dépit de cet argument, ce travail de recherche explique qu'en Écosse, une proportion relativement importante de jeunes participe à la vie politique du pays. Cela semble lié au contexte politique, en particulier au débat sur l'indépendance de l'Écosse du reste du Royaume-Uni. Comme cela a été dit auparavant, cette thèse démontre que l'indépendance écossaise est la raison principale pour laquelle les jeunes deviennent membres du SNP. La perspective de l'indépendance permet au parti de recruter de jeunes adhérents dans ses rangs. Le nombre de

ses jeunes sympathisants et jeunes membres est le plus important parmi tous les partis politiques d'Écosse. Cependant, l'échantillon de jeunes adhérents que j'ai pu interroger et qui ont répondu au sondage en ligne a mis en évidence qu'une très faible proportion de jeunes sont vraiment actifs au sein du parti. Cela confirme l'argument selon lequel la participation politique des jeunes est en crise. Avec ce travail de recherche, on l'observe même au sein d'un parti politique. Les jeunes ont tendance à participer différemment aujourd'hui et s'éloignent de la participation politique traditionnelle, en particulier de l'adhésion partisane. Il s'agit d'un constat préoccupant pour les partis politiques. Même dans les partis dont le nombre de jeunes adhérents est relativement important, les jeunes semblent être peu ou pas engagés. Par conséquent, les partis politiques devraient réfléchir à de nouvelles façons d'attirer les jeunes ainsi qu'à de nouveaux moyens de les mobiliser une fois dans leurs rangs. Cette thèse montre que le SNP parvient plutôt bien à recruter de nouveaux adhérents parmi la population jeune. Mais comme ce relatif succès s'explique principalement par le fait que le débat sur l'indépendance écossaise mobilise les jeunes, on peut se demander si le parti resterait attractif à leurs yeux si l'indépendance finissait par s'imposer un jour. Les jeunes Écossais seraient-ils toujours enthousiastes face au SNP ? En ce sens, en plus de jouer un rôle dans l'avenir de l'Écosse, l'indépendance pourrait bien avoir un impact sur l'avenir de ce parti. Et, sans prendre nécessairement en compte l'âge des adhérents, étant donné que l'objectif principal du SNP est l'indépendance, qu'en serait-il du nombre de ses adhérents de façon générale ? Ce nombre diminuerait-il une fois l'indépendance de l'Écosse acquise ?

#### *Identité écossaise « banale » à travers l'activisme politique des jeunes membres du SNP*

Ce travail de recherche confirme et renforce la littérature académique selon laquelle le nationalisme promu par le SNP est un nationalisme de type civique, dans le sens où il est dépourvu de revendications ethnoculturelles. Cette thèse met en lumière la vision socio-

politique qu'ont les membres des YSI et SNP Students de l'identité écossaise. Même si quelques-uns ont mentionné des éléments culturels en définissant cette identité, une grande majorité des jeunes adhérents interrogés et qui ont répondu au sondage perçoivent leur identité nationale d'un point de vue sociétal et politique. Comme cela a été dit précédemment, ils ont presque tous insisté sur l'égalitarisme et l'inclusion sociale comme les deux grandes caractéristiques de l'Écosse, ce qui résonne avec leur idéologie sociale-démocrate. Ce travail de recherche démontre l'absence de signes d'identité nationale clairs ou explicites à travers l'activisme politique de ces jeunes. Néanmoins, des références implicites à l'identité écossaise ont pu être observées, ce dont les jeunes adhérents du parti ne semblent pas être conscients. La plupart d'entre eux ont déclaré qu'ils n'adhéraient pas au SNP pour des raisons d'identité. Cependant, d'après cette étude, leur campagne pour l'indépendance et la façon dont ils perçoivent l'identité écossaise semblent liées : ils militent pour une Écosse indépendante qui soit égalitaire, socialement juste et inclusive. Or, il s'avère que cela correspond en tous points à la définition de l'identité écossaise qu'une majorité d'entre eux a donnée. Étant donné que les références à ce sentiment d'identité nationale dans leur activisme politique semblent être inconscientes, on pourrait avancer l'idée que ces signes d'identité écossaise sont « banals »<sup>465</sup>. Cela est confirmé par l'absence de signes d'identité nationale clairs dans le mouvement indépendantiste du SNP. Au lieu d'être explicitement mentionnée dans leur discours, l'identité écossaise s'affiche au travers de leur agenda politique. Bien que cette identité ne se manifeste pas d'un point de vue ethnoculturel, on trouve des références d'ordre socio-politique à cette identité dans leur programme politique social-démocrate. En d'autres termes, leur vision ou « version » de l'identité écossaise est visible au travers des mesures qu'ils prennent avec le gouvernement qu'ils dirigent à Holyrood.

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<sup>465</sup> BILLIG, Michael., *op.cit.*

### *Le socio-nationalisme*

En ce qui concerne le nationalisme écossais (qui pourrait être rebaptisé *état-nationalisme* dans le sens où l'Écosse est une nation à laquelle il manque une dimension étatique), la présente thèse suggère que le mouvement indépendantiste des membres des YSI et SNP Students repose sur des arguments politiques et *sociétaux*. Ils militent pour l'indépendance écossaise dans le but de mettre fin au déficit démocratique dont l'Écosse est victime, selon eux. En parallèle, ils militent pour l'indépendance au nom de leur vision de la société écossaise. Nous venons de voir que lors des entretiens et en réponse au questionnaire en ligne, ils ont défini l'Écosse comme socialement juste, égalitaire et ouverte sur le monde. Cette définition repose sur des valeurs. Globalement, ces valeurs sont sociales-démocrates et correspondent donc à leur idéologie politique, comme cela a été suggéré plus haut dans ce résumé. Mais on peut aussi souligner qu'il s'agit de valeurs sociétales : ce sont des valeurs de société et c'est ainsi qu'ils perçoivent leur propre société écossaise. On voit ici que la frontière entre nation et société est mince, voire floue. Face aux résultats de cette étude sur l'adhésion partisane et l'identité nationale des jeunes adhérents au SNP, il semble encore une fois que ces jeunes font à la fois campagne pour l'indépendance écossaise et pour leur vision de la société écossaise. En d'autres termes, ils s'engagent au sein du SNP pour défendre l'idée d'une Écosse indépendante car leur vision de la société diffère de celle qui, selon eux, est imposée par le gouvernement britannique conservateur à l'ensemble du Royaume-Uni. C'est pourquoi je propose ici d'utiliser le terme de *socio-nationalisme* au lieu de celui de nationalisme lorsqu'il est fait référence à ce mouvement indépendantiste. Il doit être compris comme un concept proche du nationalisme civique, dans le sens où il n'est pas fondé sur des arguments ethnoculturels, mais sur la promotion de valeurs civiques comme l'égalitarisme et l'inclusion sociale. Néanmoins, selon moi, le nationalisme civique ne véhicule pas clairement l'idée qu'il s'appuie sur une vision particulière de la société.

Le terme « socio-nationalisme » précise qu'il s'agit d'un type de nationalisme qui repose sur la promotion de valeurs sociétales et sur une certaine perception de la société.

## **Perspectives de recherches**

Cette thèse ouvre la voie à de futures recherches, tant sur l'adhésion partisane que sur l'identité nationale.

Il serait intéressant de voir si les raisons pour lesquelles des personnes adhèrent au SNP convergent ou divergent entre les membres du parti, en fonction de leur âge. Aussi, en tenant toujours compte de leur âge, il serait intéressant de voir s'il existe des similitudes ou divergences entre générations en ce qui concerne l'identité nationale et leurs perceptions de celle-ci. Cela permettrait de voir si la dévolution du pouvoir au sein du Royaume-Uni<sup>466</sup> a une influence sur la perception qu'ont les adhérents au SNP de leur identité nationale. Étant donné que les jeunes ont grandi dans une Écosse post-dévolution, ils pourraient percevoir / parler de leur nation et de l'identité écossaise de façon singulière par rapport aux générations plus anciennes, c'est-à-dire des adhérents nés avant la dévolution. L'étude de leurs conceptions de l'identité écossaise, ainsi que de la britannicité, pourrait être complétée par une analyse de la relation entre leur discours sur l'identité nationale et leur engagement politique. Outre l'âge, l'éducation, le sexe et le milieu socio-économique pourraient être étudiés en tant que variables influençant potentiellement les raisons pour lesquelles les Écossais adhèrent au SNP. Ils pourraient également être testés en tant que variables influençant leurs conceptions de l'identité nationale.

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<sup>466</sup> Depuis la fin des années 1990, le pouvoir du gouvernement britannique à Westminster est en partie décentralisé vers l'Écosse qui, depuis 1999, dispose de son propre parlement.

En ce qui concerne l'adhésion des jeunes aux partis politiques en particulier, il serait intéressant de mener une étude comparative des jeunes membres des partis en Écosse, à grande échelle. Il serait intéressant d'explorer plus en détails les similitudes et les différences entre ces jeunes adhérents en ce qui concerne l'identité écossaise et la britannicité. Cela permettrait de savoir si le discours des jeunes membres du SNP est spécifique. Plus globalement, une telle comparaison pourrait être faite entre les jeunes adhérents de partis politiques dans différents pays. Cela aiderait peut-être à voir si le contexte politique (comme le référendum sur l'indépendance écossaise) est bien un facteur majeur d'adhésion partisane chez les jeunes, quel que soit le pays. Par ailleurs, cela pourrait aussi renforcer la conclusion que les perceptions qu'ont les jeunes adhérents de leur identité nationale sont liées à leur idéologie / famille politique.

À cet égard, comparer les jeunes adhérents aux partis politiques en Écosse, au Québec et en Catalogne semble intéressant. Les raisons pour lesquelles les jeunes nationalistes adhèrent à leurs partis, ainsi que leur discours sur l'identité nationale et son rôle potentiel dans leur engagement politique, pourraient être comparés. De cette façon, la question de l'indépendance d'une nation comme variable influençant l'adhésion partisane des jeunes serait testée.

Enfin, en Écosse, une étude comparative entre les jeunes membres de partis politiques et les jeunes non-adhérents ou non engagés en politique pourrait s'avérer utile. Une analyse de leur discours sur l'identité écossaise et la britannicité permettrait de vérifier que leurs perceptions de l'identité nationale dépendent, en partie, de leurs opinions politiques. Cette étude pourrait être menée dans différents pays, afin de voir si les résultats seraient spécifiques à l'Écosse ou non.