From bias to balance?

A longitudinal study on partisan bias in historically partisan Dutch newspapers and

the relationship with vote choice

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Abstract

Prior research on partisan media bias showed that bias seems to be present in a number of media both in the US as well as in Europe. Remarkably though, these European studies were merely cross-sectional while there are reasons to expect changes over time, especially in newspaper content. Therefore this is the first study to investigate over time changes in partisan newspaper bias within a European context. An even more democratically relevant question is what effects this partisan bias has on citizens' political behavior, such as vote choice. Strikingly though, prior European studies on the relationship between exposure to newspaper bias and vote choice were only cross sectional too, while one would expect changes in this relationship for example due to the societal change from an era of partisan logic towards an era of media logic. Also, whereas most studies assume an (in)direct influence from exposure to partisan bias on vote choice, within this study the historical presence of pillarization in society is added as an important contextual variable that influence this relationship in traditionally pillarized countries. The research was executed in the Netherlands since it is such a country. In line with expectations I found that partisan newspaper bias in historically partisan Dutch newspapers slightly decreased the last decade. Further, I showed that, likely as a result of the decreases in bias, the relationship between reading these newspapers and vote choice decreased as well. Lastly, I demonstrated the important, but declining explanatory role that pillarization plays within this relationship.

Introduction

From a normative perspective one could argue that the media in democratic countries need to provide citizens with balanced, impartial and objective information to form well-grounded opinions (Lewis, Williams & Franklin, 2008; Strömback, 2005). Nevertheless, the media are sometimes said to have partisan tendencies (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Savigny & Temple, 2010) and different reasons can be given for why this might be the case; because media want to serve the interests of their readers and therefore provide information that confirms their readers' views (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2005; Mullainathan & Shleifer, 2005); because journalists tend to be more liberal than average, influencing the selection of news (Patterson & Donsbach, 1996); because of high dependence on advertising, which leads to newspapers only addressing groups of people that are interesting to them (Strömberg, 2004), because of newspaper ownership (Bagdikian, 1985) or because of state control over media outlets (Djankov, McLiesh, Nenova & Shleifer, 2003).

Even though different reasons can be thought of for why the media are partisan, empirical investigation is necessary in order to determine whether a partisan bias is really present or not. So far, in studies on the presence of partisan media bias it has been shown that biases indeed seem to be present in a number of media, both in the United States (Groeling, 2008; Groseclose & Milyo, 2005; Kahn & Kenney, 2002; Lott & Hassett, 2004; Puglisi & Snyder Jr., 2010) and within Europe, such as Austria and the Netherlands (Brants & van Praag, 2006; Lengauer & Johann, 2013; Takens, Ruigrok, van Hoof & Scholten, 2010). Unlike the United States-based research, the European studies on the presence of partisan media bias were merely cross-sectional and thus not investigated the over time evolution of partisan media bias. This is remarkable since especially in many European countries there are reasons to expect

that partisan media bias, and particularly newspaper bias, has changed over time, for example as a result of the change from an era of partisan logic in times of strong pillarization to the current era of media logic (Brants & van Praag, 2006). Therefore this study will be the first to investigate the over time changes in newspaper bias within a European context.

From a democratic point of view though, it is even more relevant to know what effects such biases can have on citizens' political behavior, such as for example on voting. This relationship between exposure to partisan media bias and vote choice has been looked at in a number of empirical studies; for example, in the United States it was shown that reading partisan biased press was related to a vote for the party to which the media were biased to (e.g. Druckman & Parkin, 2005; Kahn & Kenney, 2002; Gerber, Karlan & Bergan, 2007) and within European countries similar results were found, such as for broadcast media in Denmark (Hopmann, Vliegenthart, de Vreese & Albaek, 2010) and newspapers in Austria (Eberl, Boomgaarden & Wagner, 2015; Lengauer & Johann, 2013).

However, the European studies on the relationship between exposure to partisan media bias and vote choice were only cross-sectional too. This is particularly remarkable for the Austrian based studies by Lengauer and Johann (2013) and Eberl, Boomgaarden and Wagner (2015), who looked at the relationship between newspaper bias and vote choice. Based on the fact that their country of study historically used to experience a strong partisan press in pillarized times that has become more independent nowadays (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Lengauer & Johann, 2013), one would expect over time changes in the relationship between reading these historically partisan newspapers and vote choice. After all, if historically partisan newspapers became less partisan, people are less likely to be influenced by their content. Also,

these same two studies did not systematically look at the effects of the historical presence of pillarization on both reading historically partisan newspapers and vote choice. This aspect is important to take into account because people in traditionally pillarized countries used to live in strong social groups which had their 'own' partisan newspaper and political party (Brants & van Praag, 2006; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Lijphart, 2008; Norris, 2004), resulting in high correlations between *historically partisan newspaper readership* and *vote choice.* If pillarization influences both variables*,* this means that citizens' vote choice is perhaps less influenced by partisan media content than what is sometimes thought, because it is the social group that accounts for this. This contributes to the idea that the citizenry is not incompetent and manipulable by the media and their political elites (Druckman, 2001). Therefore within this study I also look at the explanatory role of pillarization on both variables.

Thus, besides the over time changes in the amount of partisan newspaper bias, within this study I also look at how the relationship between reading historically partisan newspapers and vote choice evolved over time and what role pillarization plays in explaining this relationship. In doing so, the focus lies on the Netherlands, since it is an ideal-type example of a country that, similar to Austria, used to be highly pillarized with a rather strong partisan press (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Lijphart, 2008).

As a result, the following three research questions will be answered: 1) *How has partisan bias in historically partisan Dutch newspapers changed over time?, 2) How has the relationship between historically partisan newspaper readership and newspaper readers' voting behavior evolved over time?* and 3) *To what extent do the effects of pillarization in society explain this relationship?*

These questions will be answered through two longitudinal studies. First, a content analysis will be done to determine the level of partisanship of historically partisan Dutch newspapers between 1992 and 2010. Second, longitudinal survey data from the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study (DPES) will be used to look at the relationship between reading historically partisan newspapers and vote choice as well as what effect pillarization has on this relationship. In the following section the most important theoretical concepts are explained, followed by the research method, results and conclusion.

Theoretical background

Partisan media bias

Within the body of research on partisan media bias, a rather large number of notions are used to describe the different partisan biases that can be present in news coverage. However, through comparison of these different notions it becomes clear that different scholars have named similar concepts differently. Firstly there is *gatekeeping bias* (D'Allesio & Allen, 2000), *agenda bias* (Eberl, Boomgaarden & Wagner, 2015) or *selection bias* (Groeling, 2013) indicating the extent to which journalists or news organizations select stories out of the full news story population of a given day that favor one political actor or party over others and/or the extent to which parties are able to address their issues in the media. A second form of bias is *coverage bias* (D'Allessio & Allen, 2000) or *visibility bias* (Eberl, Boomgaarden & Wagner, 2015), which becomes visible through the relative amount of media attention that is given to certain issues, issue-positions, political parties or actors over others, within a certain medium. Then there is *statement bias* (D'Allessio & Allen, 2000), *tonality bias* (Eberl, Boomgaarden & Wagner, 2015) or *presentation bias* (Groeling,

2013). This kind of bias becomes visible through more favorable coverage of one political actor over another; for example, by spinning the story in such a way that it portrays one party in a more positive light over others.

To indicate the extent to which newspapers are biased towards certain political parties or actors, within this study I look at visibility bias. The initial idea was to also code the tone with which politicians or parties are mentioned, however, during the research phase I came to the conclusion that within the time limit for this thesis it was not feasible to code a sufficient number of articles when I would code both visibility and tonality. Therefore I omitted tonality bias. Selection bias, or one of the equivalent notions, was omitted since it is rather hard to uncover, due to the fact that one would need to have an insight in the full population of news items journalists have at their disposal (Groeling, 2013).

As previously stated, some scholars in Europe and the United States already investigated the presence of partisan media bias in their countries' media. The studies on media partisanship in the United States were mainly longitudinal in nature, such as the studies by Lott and Hassett (2004) and Groseclose and Milyo (2005), who found rather robust overall and over time liberal biases in American media. Other longitudinal studies found for example that newspapers that endorsed the Democratic Party were more negative towards the Republican Party and vice versa (Puglisi & Snyder Jr., 2010) and that non-editorial newspaper content was slanted in favor of the endorsed candidate (Kahn & Kenney, 2002). On the contrary, studies on media partisanship in European countries are still rather scarce and have so far been limited to cross-sectional investigation. For example, in their cross-sectional study on partisan bias on the two major Dutch TV-channels, Van Praag and van der Eijk (1998) found no partisan bias during the 1994 elections. However, different results were found

when studying newspaper bias; Brants and van Praag (2006) found fairly strong outlet-specific visibility- and tonality biases in Dutch newspapers during the 1956 election campaign; Takens, Ruigrok, van Hoof & Scholten (2010) found quite weak visibility biases in traditional newspapers during the Dutch elections of 2006 and Lengauer and Johann (2013) found that visibility and tonality biases were present in Austrian newspapers during the 2008 elections.

The fact that longitudinal studies on media bias in Europe and particularly in the Netherlands are still scarce or non-existent and only cross-sectional is rather striking since one would expect changes over time due to some historical developments, such as for example the societal change from an era of 'partisan logic' in times of strong pillarization, towards the current era of 'media logic' (Brants & van Praag, 2006).

It was in the era of partisan logic until the mid 1960's that political parallelism in the Netherlands was high, meaning that there were strong ties between the press and politics (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) and these strong ties between both institutions were the result of the highly pillarized Dutch society beginning 20th century.[1] This 'pillarization' meant that the Netherlands, similar to many other European Democratic Corporatist countries, such as Austria, Belgium and Luxembourg, but to a lesser extent also Germany and Switzerland, used to experience a strong division between different subcommunities, each belonging to a certain 'pillar' (Brants & van Praag,

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[1] There is also some criticism to the idea that the Dutch society used to be highly pillarized. For example, van Dam (2011) argues that subcommunities were indeed more robust in the past compared to the current twenty-first century, but that they were never as solid as many people think and that intergroup relations were already rather dynamic back then.

2006; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Hellemans, 1993; Lijphart, 2008; Norris, 2004). In the Netherlands these pillars were to a large extent based on religion, such as the catholic- and protestant pillar, but also on socio-economic status (Lijphart, 2008), indicated by the socialist pillar, consisting of the less wealthy and a liberal one, consisting of the more richly blessed. This ultimately resulted in four pillars in the Netherlands (Brants & van Praag, 2006; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Lijphart, 2008). Every pillar had its own rather large network of organizations, and this included amongst others their 'own' political party and 'own' press (Hellemans, 1993). Ties between these institutions were so close that independent journalism was uncommon and certain newspapers served mainly as the mouthpiece of certain political parties, leading to a rather high level of partisan media bias (Brants & van Praag, 2006; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). In the Dutch case, newspaper *Trouw* was historically tied to the protestant parties ARP and CHU, *de Volkskrant* to the Catholic KVP, *NRC Handelsblad* and *Algemeen Dagblad* to the more Liberal Conservative VVD and *het Vrije Volk* to the more social-democratic PvdA (Brants & van Praag, 2006, Lijphart, 2008).[2] *De Telegraaf*, which was also one of the national newspapers, was neutral at the time. Since *het Vrije Volk* has disappeared, in this study I focus on the four historically partisan newspapers that traditionally belonged to a pillar and are still present today.

From around mid 1960's on, when the Netherlands slowly started to de-pillarize, journalism became more independent from political influence and increasingly professionalized. Nevertheless, the press was still gentle to politicians.

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[2] Around the 1970's *Volkskrant* adopted a more left wing progressive stance, amongst others by paying more attention to the PvdA and D66 (Takens et al., 2010). Further, from 1977 on the protestant political parties ARP and CHU merged with the catholic KVP and became the current CDA (Lijphart, 2008).

Though not empirically tested, according to Brants and van Praag (2006) it was in this era of 'public logic' that "the media identified themselves more with the public good than with a specific political party" (p. 29), thus leading to a decreasing media partisanship. Since the 1990's we live in an era of 'media logic' and typical for this time period is the further increase in journalistic autonomy and professionalization but also the growth of commercial television and increasing competition on the media market. As a result, both the media and politicians need to compete more for a more fragmented audience, further decreasing the political influence on media content.

Based on these developments I expect that over the last decades the partisan media bias in historically partisan Dutch newspapers has decreased. However, critics still argue that a completely neutral form of journalism does not exist anywhere in the world (e.g. Hallin & Mancini, 2004). The prior recent empirical studies on media bias, but particularly the one by Takens et al. (2010) backs up this claim by showing that some traditional Dutch newspapers still had partisan tendencies during the 2006 Dutch elections, indicating that partisanship has indeed not completely disappeared from society. In order to empirically investigate the over time change in newspaper partisan bias in the Netherlands, the following hypothesis is derived:

H1 Partisan visibility bias in historically partisan Dutch newspapers has decreased over the last decade, but has not completely disappeared.

Relationship between partisan media bias and vote choice

Besides the mere presence or absence of partisan media bias, from a democratic viewpoint it is even more relevant to be aware of the relationship between exposure to media bias and citizens' political behavior. This becomes especially significant if you think about the fact that citizens obtain a large amount of political

information from the mass media, such as newspapers (Aalberg & Curran, 2012). Particularly the relationship between exposure to media bias and vote choice seems vital to understand, since voting is the most essential democratic tool in representative democracies, such as the Netherlands (Strömback, 2006).

So far, a number of empirical studies on this relationship have been executed. In the United States it was for example shown that reading partisan biased newspapers was related to voting for the party the paper was biased to (e.g. Druckman & Parkin, 2005; Gerber, Karlan & Bergan, 2007; Kahn & Kenney, 2002) and the same was shown for exposure to partisan television outlets (DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2006; Martin & Yurukoglu, 2015). In Europe similar results were found for broadcast media in Denmark (Hopmann, Vliegenthart, de Vreese & Albaek, 2010) and newspapers in Austria and the UK (Eberl, Boomgaarden & Wagner, 2015; Lengauer & Johann, 2013; Newton & Brynin, 2001).

What these studies have in common is that they show that more exposure by citizens to partisan media content is positively related to a vote for the party or candidate the media were biased to. Unfortunately the majority of these studies, especially the European ones, were cross-sectional and thus did not investigate the over time changes in this relationship. This is particularly striking for the studies on newspaper bias by Lengauer and Johann (2013) and Eberl, Wagner and Boomgaarden (2015) since they were executed in Austria, which is a country that historically used to experience strong ties between the press and political parties, resulting in rather partisan newspaper content, but more internal pluralism, and thus less partisan content in more recent years (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Lengauer & Johann, 2013).

As stated earlier, Dutch society has undergone similar changes as Austria when it comes to evolutions in the ties between the press and political parties and biased newspaper content (Brants & van Praag, 2006; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). If the historically partisan newspapers in the Netherlands indeed became less partisan over the last decade, as proposed in H1, and citizens are thus less exposed to partisan biased content than in prior times, it seems logical to assume that reading these less partisan newspapers has less influence on the vote choice of citizens. This leads to the expectation that the relationship between reading historically partisan Dutch newspapers and a vote for the party these papers were biased to has decreased over the years. At the same time, since it was empirically shown that Dutch newspapers still have some partisan tendencies towards the parties they were once aligned with (Takens et al., 2010), the influence of partisan media bias on vote choice has likely not completely disappeared.

Further, even though it might be the case that citizens are less directly influenced by newspaper content due to decreases in historically partisan newspaper bias, there are more reasons to expect changes in this relationship. Since the 1960's, when European societies, such as the Netherlands, started to de-pillarize, the voting behavior of the citizenry became less stable and more volatile (Mair, 2008). This meant that voter alignments became weaker and people started to vote different than what was expected based on the pillar they belonged to (Stephens, 1981). Simultaneously, citizens started to read more and more newspapers outside their pillar (Takens et al., 2010).

Thus, as a result of decreased media bias, increased voter volatility and cross-pillar newspaper readership, it seems logical to assume that the relation between

reading historically partisan newspapers and a corresponding vote has decreased too. In order to test this, the following hypothesis is posed:

H2 In the Netherlands the relationship between reading historically partisan newspapers and vote choice has decreased over time but has not completely disappeared.

Effects of pillarization on partisan newspaper readership and vote choice

Most earlier studies on the relationship between partisan newspaper bias and vote choice implied that effects on vote choice must be the direct or indirect result of mere exposure to the partisan media content, indicating that citizens are easily influenced by partisan bias. Even though it might be the case that there is such a direct or indirect influence, prior studies, such as the Austrian research by Lengauer and Johann (2013) and Eberl, Boomgaarden and Wagner (2015), did not systematically incorporate pillarization in their country as an important contextual third variable.

Adding this variable is important because in pillarized times citizens within each pillar or subcommunity were mainly exposed to the partisan newspaper belonging to their pillar and simultaneously voted for the political party that belonged to their pillar (Brants & van Praag, 2006; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Lijphart, 2008; Norris, 2004). Thus, pillarization had an effect on both the newspaper someone read as well as which party someone voted for. If pillarization affects both variables, this means that citizens are not per se solely influenced by the media content, but that the relationship is to some extent explained by the presence of social groups in society. Since historically pillarized societies, such as the Netherlands, have largely de-pillarized over the last decades (Lijphart, 2008; Hellemans, 1993), I expect that the influence of *pillarization* on *historically partisan newspaper readership* and *vote*

choice has decreased over the last decades as well. Therefore the following hypothesis is posed:

H3 The influence of pillarization on reading historically partisan Dutch newspapers as well as on vote choice has decreased over the last decades but has not disappeared.

In order to test the hypotheses and answer the three research questions within this study, the data of two longitudinal studies was used. On the one hand an overtime content analysis was done to indicate the (changes in) partisan visibility bias in historically partisan Dutch newspapers, as stated in H1. Besides this, longitudinal survey data from the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies (DPES) was used to study the relationship between historically partisan newspaper readership and vote choice and the effects of pillarization, as stated in H2 and H3. For clarity I split the methods and results into study 1 (content analysis) and study 2 (DPES survey data).

Study 1

Method

In order to investigate partisan bias in historically partisan Dutch newspapers *(H1)* I decided to use a quantitative content analysis since it is the most suitable method to systematically research manifest and/or latent content of a large amount of articles (Berelson, 1952). Through the content analysis, the content of four major Dutch newspapers was analyzed that used to fit within one of the four pillars. This included Volkskrant, NRC Handelsblad, Trouw and Algemeen Dagblad.

The universe within this study consisted of all offline political newspaper articles from the aforementioned Dutch newspapers between 1992 and 2010. An

article was regarded as political if it contained a reference to at least one political party or politician on local, regional or national level. Relevant newspaper articles were retrieved from the Academic Lexis Nexis database using an extensive search term including the names of all parties and party leaders since 1992; see appendix A.

Both 'regular' news articles, mostly originating from wire service, as well as letters and editorial/opinionated articles were included, since especially the latter are a suitable indicator for the editorial stance of a media outlet (Eilders, 2001).

Sample

Since it was not feasible to code all newspaper articles, a sample was taken. Prior research showed that a constructed week sample is the most efficient and representative method to study offline newspaper content (Riffe, Aust & Lacy, 1993). This is due to the fact that through this method variation in newspaper content is taken into account. This is important because otherwise an overrepresentation of days with relatively little political news could limit the representativeness of the data (Lacy, Riffe, Stoddard, Martin & Chang, 2001). Also, it creates the possibility to generalize the findings, which would not be possible with other kinds of samples, such as a simple random sample or a consecutive day sample. Therefore I decided to use this method. I also chose to only code newspaper articles from the years in which national elections took place. This was done since the DPES data about peoples' newspaper readership and voting behavior was obtained in election years too, which would make comparison more meaningful. Years that were studied include 1992, 1998, 2006 and 2010. Per election year I created two constructed weeks. This meant that per year, I randomly picked two Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays and gathered all the political news articles from these days for every of the four

newspapers. For feasibility reasons, per day and per newspaper I took a random subsample of minimum five and maximum eight articles. This resulted in 1002 newspaper articles in total over four years and four papers that were subject to coding.

The goal of the content analysis was to say something about the amount of visibility bias in the four earlier mentioned historically partisan Dutch newspapers. They formed the units of analysis. The sampling-unit within this study consisted of single political newspaper articles about Dutch national, regional or local politics. Since codes were allocated per newspaper article, they formed the registration-unit. Lastly, the context-unit consisted solely of the information within the newspaper article; photos, titles and information surrounding the newspaper articles were not taken into consideration during coding.

Measurement instruments

Media bias. To assess the extent to which Dutch newspapers are partisan, visibility bias was measured. In order to measure this visibility bias, I coded how often Dutch political parties were mentioned in every newspaper article. However, since the focus in political media coverage is to a large extent on politicians as representatives of their party (Hopmann, Vliegenthart, De Vreese & Albaek, 2010), the party members of the parties were coded too. See appendix B for the detailed codebook. For every newspaper article, the visibility of each party was computed by adding up the number of times an actor from a given party and the party itself were mentioned. This gave the opportunity to calculate the mean scores and check for differences in visibility bias between newspapers.

Within the United States, studying media bias could be relatively easy because one could for example use the 'equality-standard' to measure media bias (de Swert,

2011). This means that due to the two-party nature of their political system one only needs to look at whether the parties receive more or less than 50% of the attention. Longitudinally studying media bias in multi-party systems, such as the Netherlands, is much more difficult since after elections different parties of different sizes are in government. As the first European study in which overtime changes in newspaper bias are researched, within this study I introduce a new method for studying changes in media bias longitudinally that simultaneously controls for across-newspaper changes in party visibility, for example due to an incumbency bonus. This is important because parties that are in government generally receive more media attention than for example opposition parties (de Swert, 2011). In order to study these over time changes in media bias I created a *party bias score*. This means that per day from the constructed weeks (e.g. 07/01/2006) I looked at the average amount of mentions for one specific party (e.g. VVD) in the four newspapers together (total party average score). Following this I calculated the average amount of mentions for this specific party per newspaper on the specific day (individual party average score). Then I subtracted the individual party average score from the total party average score. This resulted in a *deviation from the average score* per newspaper, per party, per day. Lastly, I took the sum of the *absolute deviation to average scores*. This is the *party bias score* for one day, for one party. E.g. On one day the *total party average score* for VVD is 4,15. The *individual VVD-party average score* for Volkskrant is 3,40 and 4,90 for NRC Handelsblad. Subtracting 3,40 (individual party average score) from 4,15 (total party average score) and 4,90 from 4,15 leaves you with two *deviation to average scores* per newspaper, per party, namely +0,75 for VVD in NRC and -0,75 for VVD in Volkskrant. The sum of the absolute deviation scores is 0,75 plus 0,75 = 1,50. This is the bias score. The fundamental idea is that if these bias

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scores are getting smaller overtime, newspapers have become less biased since they pay more equal attention to political parties or actors.

Inter-coder reliability

Even though within this study the newspaper articles were only coded by one coder, an inter-coder reliability test was done to indicate whether a different researcher comes to the same result by using the same codebook. This is important since it could happen that a different coder has a different interpretation of certain aspects within a text. In order to test the inter-coder reliability for the content analysis, a second coder calculated a subsample of 96 newspaper articles. The inter-coder reliability was measured for the variables *newspaper* (nominal), *date* (ratio) and *party visibility* (ratio). I measured Krippendorff's Alpha for all variables. Cohen's Kappa and Percent agreement were only calculated for the nominal variable (Lombard, Snyder-Duch & Campanella Bracken, 2002). Since Kappa and Alpha were all above 0,90, coder reliability can be regarded as very high. See table 1 in appendix C for all reliability statistics.

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Results

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Dutch newspaper visibility bias

Before investigating whether visibility bias in the four Dutch newspapers has decreased over time as stated in H1, I looked at the aggregate party visibility biases per newspaper between 1992 and 2010. In doing so I focused on the parties that historically had close newspaper ties, i.e. PvdA, VVD and CDA (merger of ARP/CHU/KVP), as well as the minor religious parties. From figure 1 it becomes clear that on average Trouw pays most attention to the Christian oriented CDA and

other religious parties ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 5.52$) including the Orthodox-Protestant SGP, which is currently still in government and the Protestant-Christian RPF and GPV that merged in 2001 and became the Christian CU. Volkskrant relatively pays most attention to the PvdA ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 5.78$) and NRC Handelsblad pays most attention to the liberal VVD ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 4.90$). The Algemeen Dagblad does not show a bias to the liberal VVD ($M = 2.28$, $SD = 4.70$).

Figure 1: Average party visibility bias scores per newspaper between 1992-2010
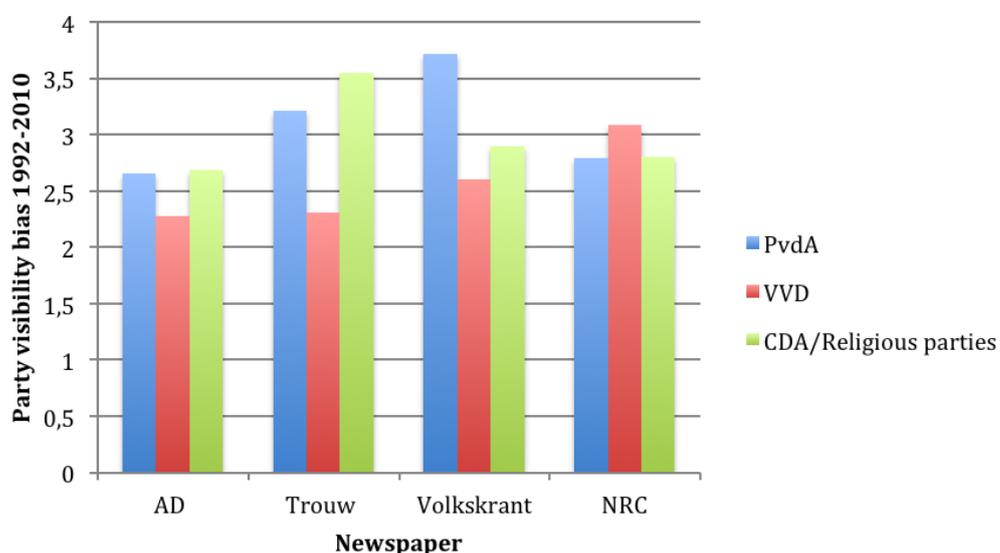
Note: N=1002.

A two-way ANOVA-test to verify whether the above-mentioned mean scores differed significantly from one another did not show any significant differences. Nevertheless, the test did show a marginally significant difference between newspapers with regard to PvdA visibility, $F (3, 998) = 2.34$, $p = 0.072$. Volkskrant pays more attention to the PvdA ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 5.78$) than the Algemeen Dagblad ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 3.99$). A post-hoc test showed that this difference in terms of PvdA visibility was close to significance ($M_{difference} = 1.06$, $p = 0.094$).

Besides significant differences in the mean scores for all years together I also looked at the mean differences for every specific year that was studied. However, only for 2006 one significant result was found, namely for the PvdA, F (3, 313) = 3.06, p = 0.029). Volkskrant (M = 3.12, SD = 5.43) wrote more often about PvdA than the Algemeen Dagblad (M = 1.44, SD = 2.49). A post-hoc test showed that the average visibility bias of PvdA between both newspapers differed significantly from one another in that year ($M_{difference}$ = 1.68, p = 0.047). Further, the mean difference in PvdA visibility between Volkskrant (M = 3.12, SD = 5.43) and NRC Handelsblad (M = 1.60, SD = 3.20) was marginally significant ($M_{difference}$ = 1.52, p = 0.075).

Over time changes in Dutch newspaper visibility bias

In order to test whether partisan media bias has decreased over time, as assumed in H1, I did a linear regression between 1998 and 2010 with the dependent variable *party bias* and the independent variable *date of article publication*. The data from 1992 was removed since the coded articles from the two newspapers in that year were from different days, making it impossible to calculate the party bias scores. Unfortunately, the regression model with *date of article publication* as independent variable and *party bias* as dependent variable was not significant F (1, 144) = 1.70, p = 0.194. Nevertheless it showed a slight decrease in partisan visibility bias between 1998 and 2010; there was a weak negative correlation between date and party bias $b*$ = -0.11, t = -1.30, p = 0.194, 95% CI [-0.16, 0.03]. Between 1998 and 2010, per day partisan visibility bias decreased with 0.06. The model had an R^2 of 0.11, indicating that 11% of the changes in partisan visibility bias can be explained by date of article publication.

Since it could be that some newspapers changed more in terms of bias over others, I also looked at the overtime changes in newspaper bias per newspaper. Although only marginally significant I found a weak negative correlation between *party bias* and *date of publication* for Volkskrant $b* = -0.29$, $t = -1.82$, $p = 0.077$, 95% CI [-0.36, 0.02]. Between 1998 and 2010 per day partisan visibility bias in Volkskrant decreased with 0.17. For NRC Handelsblad, $b* = -0.12$, $t = -0.70$, $p = 0.489$, 95% CI [-0.24, 0.12] Algemeen Dagblad, $b* = -0.11$, $t = -0.68$, $p = 0.504$, 95% CI [-0.30, 0.15] and Trouw, $b* = 0.14$, $t = -0.80$, $p = 0.427$, 95% CI [-0.10, 0.24] no significant overtime changes were found.

Study 2

Method

In order to test whether the relationship between historically partisan newspaper readership and vote choice decreased over time *(H2)* and whether the effects of pillarization on both variables decreased as well *(H3)*, data from the Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies (DPES) was used. The survey was executed in election years and the data was obtained from a representative group of Dutch citizens that were eligible to vote. The survey has been carried out since 1971, with a sample size varying between the exceptional minimum of 1271 respondents in 2003 and the maximum of 2623 respondent in 2006.

Measurement instruments

Vote choice. This variable was measured by asking respondents *'Which party did you vote for during last elections?'.* Respondents had the possibility to choose between one of the parties in parliament at that moment.

Historically partisan newspaper readership. This variable was measured through four dichotomous variables. Respondents were asked '*Do you (almost) daily read newspaper A/B/C/D?'*. The newspapers that were included are Volkskrant, NRC Handelsblad, Algemeen Dagblad and Trouw. Respondents filled out the question per newspaper and had the opportunity to either fill out 1 (yes) or 0 (no).

Pillarization. Since pillarized societies were to a large extent typified by people's religion and social class (Lijphart, 2008), within this study pillarization was captured using these two indicators. *Religion* was measured by asking the question: '*What is your religious denomination?'* and answer categories included Roman Catholic, Dutch reformed, Calvinist, Protestant church of the Netherlands, Islam, Other or No religion. *Social class* was measured by asking: *'If you were to assign yourself to a particular social class, which one would that be?*. Answer categories for this variable included Upper class, Upper middle class, Middle class, Upper working class or Working class.

Results

The relationship between partisan newspaper readership and vote choice

Earlier I introduced the expectation that if partisan bias in newspapers had gone down over the years, it would be likely that the relationship between reading historically partisan newspapers and vote choice had gone done as well. In order to test this second hypothesis, I did a multinomial logistic regression. This was the most suitable test for analysis since the dependent variable *vote choice* was nominal, had no rank order and more than two categories (PvdA, VVD, CDA and Other parties). The independent nominal variable *historically partisan newspaper readership* was

composed of four dichotomous variables: 1) Algemeen Dagblad readership, 2) Trouw readership, 3) NRC Handelsblad readership and 4) Volkskrant readership.

To indicate whether the relationship between reading historically partisan newspapers and a vote for a certain party decreased over time, I looked at changes in the Nagelkerke pseudo R^2 between 1977 and 2010. This provided the possibility to estimate the chance that someone who reads a certain newspaper votes for a certain party. Due to the large amount of variables (parties, newspapers and years) I decided to solely look at the pseudo R^2 scores and not include the multinomial regression Beta's. Further, in order to make meaningful comparisons between the years I solely included the three major parties (PvdA, VVD and CDA) that have been present in parliament between 1977 and 2010. Other parties that were in parliament in the different years were also incorporated in the calculation but were grouped as 'other'. The years 1981 and 1982 were not included, since for these years no newspaper readership data was available. Data from 1986 was left out due to the continuously returning warning in SPSS about the 'unexpected singularities in the Hessian Matrix', which could be of influence on the validity of the results. From figure 2 it becomes clear that the Nagelkerke pseudo R^2 has become smaller over the years, but has not reached zero. This means that the possibility to predict which party someone votes for based on which newspaper this person reads decreased, but that it was still possible to some extent in 2010. See table 2 in appendix D for detailed pseudo R^2 scores and model fits.

*Figure 2: Overtime changes in the relation between historically partisan newspaper readership and vote choice*
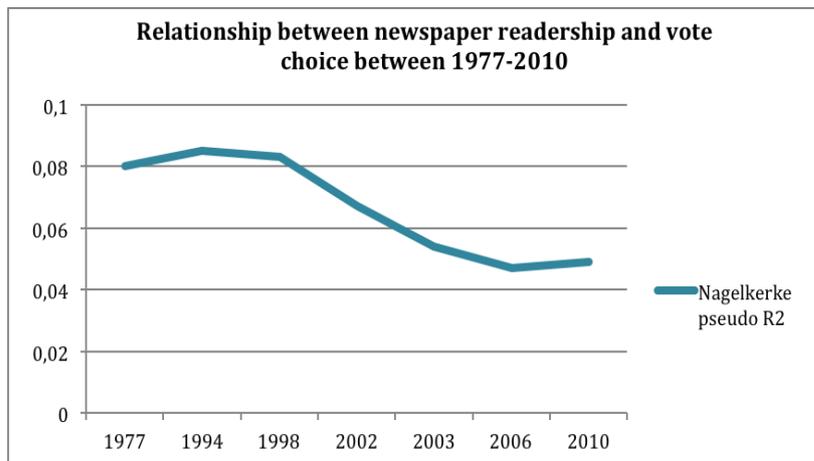
Note: '77 (*N*=1171), '94 (*N*=1062), '98 (*N*=1422), '02 (*N*=1354), '03 (*N*=1062), '06 (*N*= 1683), '10 (*N*=1593).

However, besides looking at the relationship between *historically partisan newspaper readership* and *vote choice* in general, it is also interesting to separately look at the over time changes in the relationship between specific historically partisan newspapers and vote choices for the parties they were once aligned with. In doing so I looked at the percentages of respondents who read a certain newspaper and voted for the corresponding party. See figure 3 for a visualization. Also, I ran a number of binary logistic regression analyses to see whether the over time changes in these relationships were significant.

The most striking change is between Trouw and the ARP and CDA. In 1971 readers of Trouw mainly voted for the protestant ARP (61,9%) and this relationship between reading Trouw and voting ARP was highly significant $b* = 2.78$ (0.28), odds ratio = 16.190, $p = < 0.001$. In 1977 when the Christian CDA came into existence as a merger of amongst others the protestant ARP and CHU, 76,8% of Trouw readers voted for the CDA party. Interestingly, over the years this dramatically decreased

towards a mere 32,1% in 2010. Binary logistic regression analysis with the interaction variable *year * Trouw newspaper readership* showed that this decrease was highly significant $b^* = -0.36$, odds ratio = 0.965, $p = 0.017$. Similar to Trouw, but less extensive is the relational change between reading the liberal NRC Handelsblad and a vote for the liberal VVD. Whereas the peak of 40,0% of its' readers voted VVD in 1972, only 21% still did so in 2010. Binary logistic regression analysis showed that this decrease was not, although marginally, significant $b^* = -0.02$ (0.01), odds ratio = 0.983, $p = 0.098$. Further, I looked at the changes in percentages between Algemeen Dagblad readership and a vote for the liberal VVD; no clear overtime increase or decrease is visible. This was confirmed by the binary logistic regression analysis that did not show significant changes in this relationship $b^* = -0.01$ (0.01), odds ratio = 0.988, $p = 0.137$. Lastly, in 1971 40,0% of the readers of the historically Catholic oriented Volkskrant voted for the Catholic KVP. This relationship between reading Volkskrant and voting KVP was highly significant $b^* = 0.97$ (0.20), odds ratio = 2.630, $p = < 0.001$, indicating that Volkskrant readers were much more likely to vote for the KVP than non-Volkskrant readers. Around the 1970's Volkskrant dropped its' Catholic leaning and adopted a more left wing progressive stance (Takens et al., 2010). Since then Volkskrant attracts more and more left wing voters, mostly voting for the PvdA, increasing from 15,8% in 1971 to 34,6% in 2010. Again binary logistic regression analysis showed that this over time increase was highly significant $b^* = 0.04$ (0.01), odds ratio = 1.038, $p = < 0.001$.

Figure 3: Overtime changes in the relation between historically partisan newspaper readership and vote choice

Relationship between newspaper readership and vote choice between 1971-2010
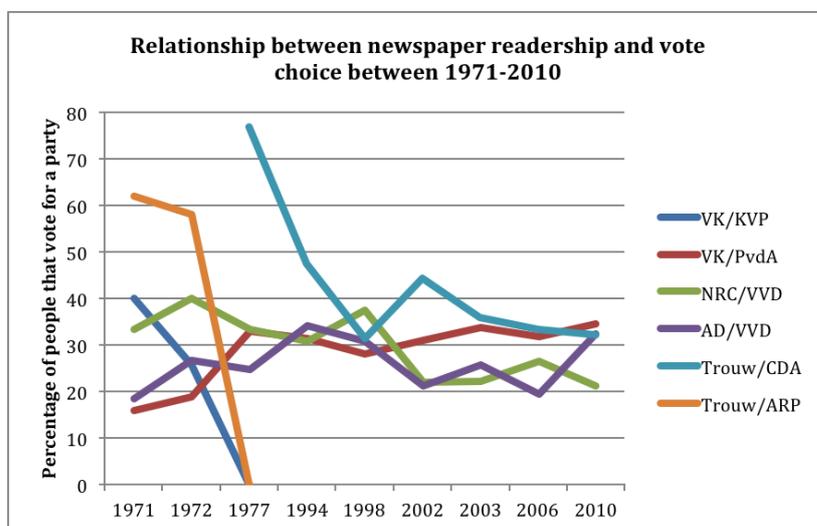
Note: '71 (*N*=1597), '72 (*N*=1280), '77 (*N*=1259), '94 (*N*=1300), '98 (*N*=1612), '02 (*N*=1448), '03 (*N*=1129), '06 (*N*= 1720), '10 (*N*=1530).

**The effects of pillarization on newspaper readership and vote choice**

Whereas it might be the case that reading a partisan newspaper (in)directly influences citizens' vote choice, I previously argued that it is important to incorporate *pillarization* as a contextual third variable in European studies on this relationship. This is because pillarization could affect both historically partisan newspaper readership as well as vote choice, as expected in H3, which could mean that it is not the partisan biased content that influences citizens per se, but that it is *pillarization* that affects this relationship too. Therefore I tested to what extent pillarization influences both newspaper readership as well as vote choice. In order to do so I ran a series of multinomial regression analyses. This was regarded as the most suitable test since the dependent variables *historically partisan Dutch newspaper readership* (Algemeen Dagblad, Volkskrant, NRC Handelsblad and Trouw) and *vote choice* (PvdA, VVD, CDA and Other) as well as the independent variable *pillarization* were

all nominal. As previously stated, pillarization was computed of *social class* and *religion* (Lijphart, 2008).

To show whether the effect of *pillarization* on *newspaper readership* and *vote choice* decreased over time, I looked at changes in the Nagelkerke pseudo R^2 between 1977 and 2010. However, before I was able to do the analyses I recoded the four dichotomous variables that measured *historically partisan newspaper readership* into one nominal categorical variable with four categories (Volkskrant, Trouw, Algemeen Dagblad and NRC Handelsblad) since the variable could otherwise not be added to the multinomial model as one dependent variable. Since some respondents filled out that they read more than one newspaper on a daily basis, these respondents were excluded from the data. Further, *social class* was recoded into three categories (Upper class, Mid class, Lower class) and the same was done for *religion* (Catholic, Protestant and not-religious). Firstly I did this for both variables to stay within the maximum amount of five categories that is allowed within multinomial regressions. Secondly, prior to recoding the warning: 'unexpected singularities in Hessian matrix encountered' popped-up in SPSS. Recoding and merging the variables helped to overcome this problem for most calculations.

I first looked at the over time changes in the effects of pillarization on newspaper readership. In figure 4, the relatively high pseudo R^2 score in 1977 ($R^2 = 0.47$) compared to 2006 ($R^2 = 0.24$) and 2010 ($R^2 = 0.31$), indicates that the possibility to predict which newspaper someone read based on which social- or religious group someone belonged to, was higher in the past compared to nowadays, with a particular large change with regard to religion. See table 3 in appendix D for detailed pseudo R^2 scores and model fits.

Figure 4: Overtime changes in the relationship between pillarization and newspaper readership

Relationship between pillarization and newspaper readership between 1977-2010
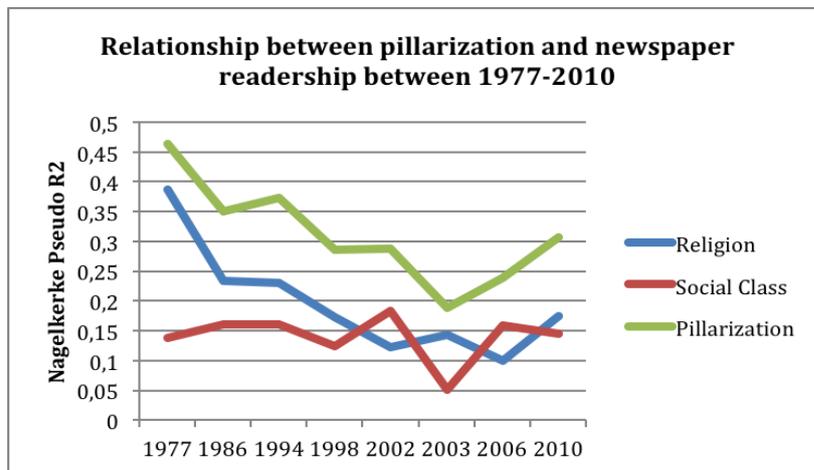
Note: '77 (*N*=321), '86 (*N*=341), '94 (*N*=425), '98 (*N*=440), '02 (*N*=492), '03 (*N*=281), '06 (*N*= 524), '10 (*N*=450). The R^2 scores for pillarization and social class in 1994 and religion in 1977 need to be interpreted with caution; SPSS warned for 'unexpected singularities in Hessian matrix'.

I found a similar result for the effect of pillarization on *vote choice*. From figure 5 it becomes clear that the effect on *vote choice* has also decreased over the last decades. Also here the Nagelkerke pseudo R^2 was much higher in 1977 ($R^2 = 0.36$) than in 2010 ($R^2 = 0.17$). Thus, the possibility to predict which party someone votes for based on which social- or religious group someone belongs to was much higher in 1977 compared to nowadays. See table 4 in appendix D for detailed pseudo R^2 scores and model fits.

Figure 5: Overtime changes in the relationship between pillarization and vote choice

Relationship between pillarization and vote choice between 1977-2010
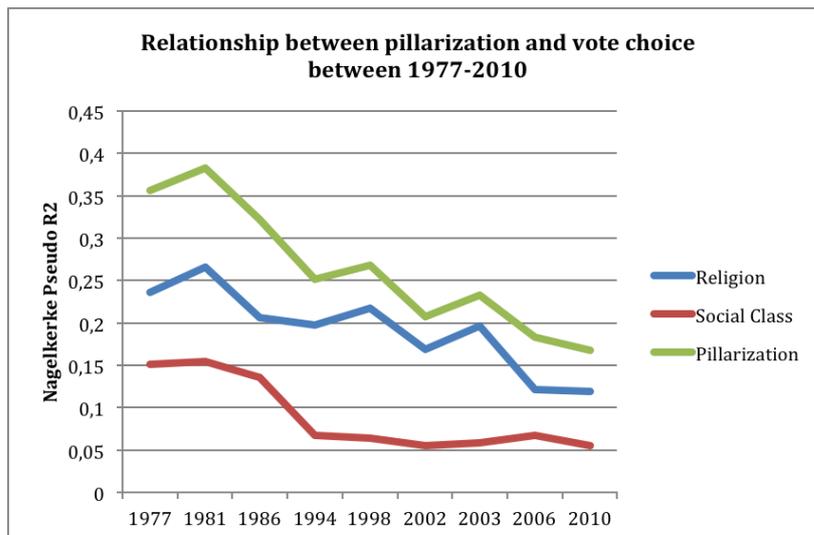
Note: '77 (*N*=1092), '81 (*N*=1192), '86 (*N*=1072), '94 (*N*=1812), '98 (*N*=1351), '02 (*N*=1306), '03 (*N*=1031), '06 (*N*= 1994), '10 (*N*=1832).

Conclusion/Discussion

This study had three goals; the first was to provide an insight into the over time changes in partisan bias in historically partisan Dutch newspapers. The second goal was to find out how the relationship between reading these historically partisan newspapers and vote choice evolved over time and the third to get a better understanding of the contextual role that pillarization plays within this relationship.

Before looking at the over time changes in partisan bias in historically partisan Dutch newspapers, I firstly looked at whether partisan bias was present at all in the newspapers under study. Interestingly, in line with earlier research on partisan bias in Dutch newspapers (Takens et al., 2010), overall between 1992 and 2010 three of the four newspapers under study showed some bias to the parties that they were once aligned with in times of strong pillarization. For example, in line with its' historically religious and protestant orientation (Lijphart, 2008) Trouw paid most attention to the Christian oriented CDA and minor Christian and protestant religious parties. NRC

Handelsblad paid most attention to the liberal VVD. Since the Algemeen Dagblad traditionally belonged to the liberal pillar it is striking that no liberal bias was found for this newspaper. On the contrary, this is in line with the earlier research by Takens et al. (2010). It thus seems that the ties between the Algemeen Dagblad and the liberal party have disappeared or where perhaps never really present. But, it could also be due to the relatively small amount of data that was coded within this study and that a larger amount would show a different result. What is also interesting, and corresponding with earlier research, is the fact that in general political visibility in the popular broadsheet Algemeen Dagblad is lower in comparison to the other more quality broadsheets (Scholten & Ruigrok, 2006). This became visible through the lower general mean scores. Lastly, Volkskrant paid most attention the PvdA, which is in line with the more left wing progressive stance that the previously catholic newspaper adopted around mid 1970's (Takens et al., 2010). All in all it thus seems that citizens in the 21st century are still to some extent exposed to partisan biased media content, which is in line with many of the earlier studies on media bias (e.g. Groeling, 2008; Lengauer & Johann, 2013; Takens et al., 2010). If, as previously shown, citizens are influenced by these biases (e.g. Eberl, Boomgaarden & Wagner, 2015; Lengauer & Johann, 2013), this underlines the power of the media and the political elites within society and undermines the normative ideal of rational well-informed democratic citizens (Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards & Rucht, 2002; Strömback, 2005).

Moreover, this general presence of these visibility biases towards the parties these papers were once aligned with are an indicator of the fact that residuals of political parallelism that used to be common in Democratic Corporatist countries (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), are still present. Since political parallelism has

theoretically disappeared in the Netherlands (Brants & van Praag, 2006) and media have become independent, it is rather peculiar that biases are still present. A logical explanation for this might be that journalists with a certain ideology or political stance consciously decide to work for a particular newspaper based on their organizational culture and history (Reese, 2007), ultimately resulting in biased content through personal journalist bias. It thus seems that even though we have moved from an era of partisan logic towards an era of media logic (Brants & van Praag, 2006), still some elements are present that are more typical for the era of partisan logic, such as the more 'colored' reporting style. The change from one era to another is thus not as obvious as it theoretically seems.

Though biases still seem to be present, in order to answer the first research question of this study I looked at how these partisan newspaper biases in the Netherlands changed over time. I expected that bias decreased over the last decade *(H1)*. Though not significantly, results indicated that this was the case and that overall the partisan bias in historically partisan Dutch newspapers decreased between 1998 and 2010. This decrease was especially present for Volkskrant. NRC Handelsblad and Algemeen Dagblad also showed decreases, though smaller than Volkskrant. For Trouw a slight increase in bias was found, though far from significance. Since three of the four papers showed a tendency to become more balanced in their content, one could argue that the trend of media becoming more independent and balanced since the 1970's (Brants & van Praag, 2006) is still on going.

From a pluralism or participatory democratic perspective this tendency is far from ideal because all interests in society should be represented (Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards & Rucht, 2002) and it is desired that different groups in society have their newspaper, which could serve their specific interests (Althaus, 2012). On the contrary

from a more republicanism or deliberative democratic point of view this convergence towards more balance is a welcoming trend since balanced and objective news is needed for impartial and rational debate between citizens (Althaus, 2012; Strömback, 2005). Arguably, in the current representative democratic system of the Netherlands it does not matter whether the media become more independent or whether some form of partisanship remains present, as long as political incompetence or corruption are uncovered (Althaus, 2012) and if enough information is provided in order for citizens to cast a vote (Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards & Rucht, 2002). On the contrary, if some presence of partisanship means that party or politician incompetence and corruption are not exposed, this could be a serious threat to any representative democracy.

Besides looking at partisan bias, I also argued that changes in the presence of partisan bias in historically partisan Dutch newspapers, together with decreases in voter volatility and cross-pillar newspaper readership, would be likely to have an effect on the relationship between reading these newspapers and vote choice. Finding out how this relationship evolved over time provided an answer to the second research question. More specifically I expected that the relationship between reading historically partisan Dutch newspapers and vote choice decreased, but that it did not disappear *(H2).* In line with this expectation, results showed that the relationship between reading historically partisan Dutch newspapers and vote choice indeed decreased over time but did not completely vanish; the possibility to predict someone's vote choice based on the newspaper this person reads was much higher three decades ago compared to nowadays. For example, in the past people who read the protestant oriented Trouw mainly voted for the protestant- or Christian party. In line with hypothesis 2 this relationship incrementally decreased until 2010. A similar decrease, though less strong, was shown for reading the liberal NRC Handelsblad and

a vote for the liberal VVD. Remarkably, the relationship between readership of the liberal Algemeen Dagblad and a vote for the liberal VVD were not very related. A possible explanation for this is the fact that the liberal press was also quite often read in non-liberal circles (Lijphart, 2008). Lastly, the relationship between readership of the traditionally catholic Volkskrant and vote choice evolved differently due to the adoption of the more left wing progressive stance of the newspaper around the mid 1970's (Takens et al., 2010). Whereas early 1970's people who read the then still catholic Volkskrant mainly voted for the catholic KVP, from mid 1970's on when the paper adopted a new stance, more and more people started to vote for the left wing PvdA. It thus seems that citizens choose to read a newspaper that corresponds with their own ideology. This matches the results of prior empirical studies on selective exposure (e.g. Knobloch-Westerwik & Meng, 2011; Stroud, 2008) and confirmation bias (Taber & Lodge, 2006). On the other hand it could also be that newspapers adapt their stance towards their public in order to distinct themselves and attract a specific market segment (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Mullainathan & Schleifer, 2005).

Finally I looked at the effects of pillarization on both vote choice and historically partisan newspaper readership. Getting an insight into the role that pillarization plays within the relationship provided an answer to the third and last research question within this study. Results indicated that as expected the influence of pillarization on reading historically partisan newspapers as well as on vote choice decreased, but did not disappear *(H3)*. This can have important implications for both democracy as well as journalism. Though earlier studies have shown that media effects on vote choice are present (e.g. Eberl, Boomgaarden & Wagner, 2015; Lengauer and Johann, 2013), my results demonstrate that citizens are not solely influenced by media content per se, but that their vote choice is based on other factors

too, such as to which social group one belongs. Ideally one would need to test whether the relationship between exposure to partisan bias and vote choice decreases once you control for effects of pillarization. If so, one could argue that the power of the media and political elites is perhaps less significant than what is sometimes thought and that the citizenry is not so incompetent, but acts as more rational human beings, which is a positive contribution to some forms of democracy (Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards & Rucht, 2002). On the contrary, determining which party to vote for and which newspaper to read based on which social group one belongs to, is not per se better or more rational than being influenced by the media.

As most academic research, obviously this study has some limitations. The most important one is the fact that only visibility bias was studied within this thesis. This is a limitation since it is only one indication of partisan media bias (Eberl, Boomgaarden & Wagner, 2015). It could for example be that Trouw pays more attention to the CDA, but that the tone with which the party or politicians from the party are evaluated is rather negative. If tone turns out to be mainly negative, one could raise questions about whether Trouw shows a partisan bias towards this party, since newspaper partisanship is historically indicated by positive party attention (Brants & van Praag, 2006). On the other hand, one could also argue that 'negative publicity is good publicity' (Berger, Sorensen, Rasmussen, 2010). From this latter perspective evaluative tone seems to matter less and solely visibility becomes more meaningful.

Secondly, I have doubts about the completeness of the Lexis Nexis newspaper database; it is striking that in some months only very few political newspaper articles were available. For example, only seven political newspaper articles were available for NRC Handelsblad in January 1998, while there were 293 available in February.

Even though I left out the days and months in which a strikingly low amount of newspaper articles was present, it is in indication of potential incompleteness of the Lexis Nexis database. This might have had a distorting effect on the results since it could be that certain articles in which a party or politician was mentioned many times, were not included in the sample. Another aspect with regard to the sample is the fact that I coded all the articles on my own. As a result, due to time constraints, the amount of articles that were coded is limited, which could have influenced the results. In order to increase the external validity of the results, all articles from the constructed weeks should have been coded rather than a subsample.

Further, in order to study the overtime changes in newspaper bias, ultimately data would need to be incorporated from before the 1960's, when Dutch society was still highly pillarized and media partisanship had its' peak. However, unfortunately newspaper articles were only available from 1992 on. This was an important limitation to this study.

Lastly, except for 1992, the years that were studied within this thesis (1998, 2006 and 2010) were election years. Prior research has shown that news coverage in election periods is generally less biased towards parties and more balanced (van Aelst & de Swert, 2009). This could have had an influence on the results within this study because within the sample also days were included that were published in the midst of the political election campaigns. As a result differences in visibility biases between newspapers might be larger in non-election years.

Nevertheless this study has contributed to the body of research in the field of media bias; besides that the results have given an insight into the presence of partisan media bias in Dutch newspapers and the evolvement of partisan bias over time I also

introduced a new and convenient method for longitudinally studying the over time changes in partisan newspaper bias in countries with multi-party coalition governments. Also, as a result of this new measurement instrument, future studies on partisan newspaper bias can be better compared with each other.

In future research ideally the current study will be replicated, although some aspects would need to be added; besides visibility bias, the current study should be extended with tonality bias and agenda bias. Also, since the direct ties between newspapers and political parties have largely disappeared (Brants & van Praag, 2006) and the media have become more independent, media have become more committed to a certain ideology than to a certain party (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Voltmer, 2000). Therefore one the one hand I believe that future research should also focus on 'ideology bias' on top of the party biases. On the other hand, similar to 'pillarization', 'ideology' seems to be an important third variable that influences the relationship between newspaper readership and vote choice. The importance of this third variable becomes clear when looking at the over time changes in the relationship between Volkskrant readership and voting for the PvdA; from the moment Volkskrant adopted a more left-wing progressive ideology, the amount of readers that voted for the left-wing progressive PvdA party increased as well. It thus seems that peoples' ideology is an important explanatory factor for both newspaper readership as well as vote choice. It therefore is another important variable that should be included in research on the relationship between newspaper readership and vote choice.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Lexis Nexis search terms

VVD OR Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie OR CDA OR Christen Democratisch Appel OR PvdA OR Partij van de Arbeid OR GroenLinks OR SP OR PvdD OR Partij voor de Dieren OR PVV OR Partij voor de Vrijheid OR CU OR ChristenUnie OR Christen Unie OR SGP OR Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij OR D66 OR Democraten 66 OR RPF OR Reformatorische Politieke Federatie OR GPV OR Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond OR Centrum Democraten OR Centrumdemocraten OR Leefbaar Nederland OR LPF OR Lijst Pim Fortuyn OR 50PLUS OR AOV OR Algemeen Ouderen Verbond OR Unie55+ OR Unie 55+ OR Marianne Thieme OR Bram van Ojik OR Marijke Vos OR Jolande Sap OR Femke Halsema OR Paul Rösemoller OR Henk Krol OR Sybrand Buma OR Pieter van Geel OR Maxime Verhagen OR Jan Peter Balkenende OR Enneus Heerma OR Jaap de Hoop Scheffer OR Arie Slob OR Andre Rouvoet OR Kars Veling OR Alexander Pechtold OR Thom de Graaf OR Boris Dittrich OR Els Borst OR Diederik Samsom OR Jacques Wallage OR Job Cohen OR Wouter Bos OR Jeltje van Nieuwenhoven OR Jacques Tichelaar OR Mariëtte Hamer OR Jeroen Dijsselbloem OR Ad Melkert OR Wim Kok OR Bas van der Vlies OR Kees van der Staaij OR Jan Marijnissen OR Emile Roemer OR Mark Rutte OR Halbe Zijlstra OR Stef Blok OR Willibrord van Beek OR Gerrit Zalm OR Hans Dijkstal OR Frits Bolkestein OR Jozias van Aartsen OR Geert Wilders OR Leen van Dijke OR Gert Schutte OR Hans Janmaat OR Pim Fortuyn OR Mat Herben OR Olaf Stuger OR Gerard van As OR Harry Wijnschenk OR Fred Teeven OR Haitske van de Linde OR Jet Nijpels OR Will Verkerk OR Bertus Leerkes OR Agnes Kant OR Gerrit Jan Wolffensperger OR Meindert Leerling OR Elco Brinkman OR Joris Voorhoeve OR Hans van Mierlo OR Thijs Wöltgens OR Peter Lankhorst OR Ria Beckers

Appendix B – Codebook

This codebook is developed as part of a Master of Science thesis in Political Communication at the University of Amsterdam, under supervision of Dr. Yphtach Lelkes. Data will be collected through Qualtrics, a survey tool that can also be used for content analysis.

The goal of the content analysis is to find out the extent to which four major Dutch historically partisan newspapers have a visibility bias towards certain politicians or political parties. In order to do so, questions will be answered about the amount of times a politician or a party is mentioned in a newspaper article.

Within this research the unit of analysis consists of four of the major Dutch newspapers, *Trouw*, *Volkskrant*, *NRC Handelsblad* and *Algemeen Dagblad*. The sampling unit consists of all offline political newspaper articles from these newspapers in the period between 1992 and 2010. The registration-unit consists of every single newspaper article, meaning that per article it is coded how often a politician or party is mentioned. The context unit within this study entails solely of the newspaper article and its' title, thus not surrounding information and/or pictures.

Every question needs to be answered with full attention. It is important to note that it might be necessary to read an article or paragraph more than once or to look up information in order to pick the most correct answer.

Part A: General Information

A0: Article number

Every article is numbered. Fill in the number that belongs to the article.

_____

A1: Newspaper

Out of which newspaper is the article you are coding?

1. De Volkskrant

2. NRC Handelsblad

3. Algemeen Dagblad

4. Trouw

A2: Date of publication

Write down the date the article was published: Encode dd/mm/yyyy.

A3: Is the article about politics?

An article is about national politics if at least one political party or a party affiliated

(e.g. MP, minister, Prime-Minister, senator, mayor, alderman etc.) is mentioned in the

context of local, regional or national politics. An article is only political if it is about

the political role of the party affiliated and thus not about different functions this

person might have/had (e.g. civil servant, policy officer, CEO etc.). If the article is not

regarded as political, code 0. Otherwise code 1.

0. No

1. Yes

B: Partisan visibility bias

B1. Which political party or politician is mentioned in the article?

Below all parties are mentioned that had at least 1 seat in parliament between 1992

and 2010. Code the amount of times a party or a party actor is mentioned in the

article. Code only the article and not the title.

If both a party as well as a specific politician of the party is mentioned, count the amount of times for both and code the sum. For example, you code: "The VVD has to take responsibility now, said Mark Rutte" as 2 for VVD. If there is a reference to a politician with 'he' or 'she' then do not code this. The same counts for example for: "the MP was not amused". In this case do not code the MP. Thus, you only code a politician if the name is explicitly mentioned. In the next example: "VVD-member Mark Rutte was satisfied" or "Rutte from the VVD" you only code 1 and not 2 because the combination refers to one specific actor.

Political actors you code include: ministers, Ministers-President, state secretaries, MP's (local, regional, national, European), senators, chairs of the lower house, political leaders, faction leaders, members of the party board, city council members, mayors, aldermen, party members or people who work for the scientific party institution.

Further, you only code a politician if he/she is mentioned in his/her political role and thus not in the context of different functions this person has/had (e.g. director of an organization, policy officer etc.). If it is unclear to which party a certain politician belongs, it is important to look up the correct information.

Also code word combinations as "VVD-plans, VVD-commission etc."

Do not code:

- Royal commissioner

- Christian-democrats, Social-democrats etc.

- Word combinations as: Commission-Wallage, PlanRutte etc.

- Text that belongs under a photo (often at the end of the article).

- Cabinet-Lubbers, Cabinet-Rutte etc. (But do code Lubbers II, Rutte II etc.)

- Government inquirer (the person who is involved with government formation). Do code this person if he/she is also a prominent party affiliated.

1. PVV

2. VVD

3. D66

4. SGP

5. PvdA

6. PvdD

7. GroenLinks

8. CU

9. CDA

10. SP

11. 50PLUS

12. LPF

13. Centrum Democraten

14. GPV

15. RPF

16. Leefbaar Nederland

17. AOV

18. Unie55+

Appendix C – Reliability statistics

Table 1: Reliability scores for content analysis variables

	Krippendorff's Alpha	Cohen's Kappa	Percent agreement
Newspaper	1,00	1,00	100%
Date	0,96	-	-
Visibility VVD	0,96	-	-
Visibility D66	0,91	-	-
Visibility SGP	0,90	-	-
Visibility PvdA	0,95	-	-
Visibility PvdD	1,00	-	-
Visibility GroenLinks	0,95	-	-
Visibility CU	1,00	-	-
Visibility SP	0,95	-	-
Visibility CDA	0,93	-	-
Visibility LPF	0,99	-	-
Visibility CD	1,00	-	-
Visibility GPV	1,00	-	-
Visibility RPF	1,00	-	-

Note: *N* = 96. Leefbaar Nederland, AOV, Unie55+, PVV and 50PLUS were excluded from reliability analysis due to no variation.

Appendix D - Tables

Table 2: Pseudo R^2's of relationship between newspaper readership and vote choice

	Nagelkerke pseudo R^2	Model fit
1977 ($N = 1171$)	0,080	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
1994 ($N = 1062$)	0,085	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
1998 ($N = 1422$)	0,083	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
2002 ($N = 1354$)	0,067	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
2003 ($N = 1062$)	0,054	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
2006 ($N = 1683$)	0,047	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
2010 ($N = 1593$)	0,049	X^2 (12) = < 0,001

Table 3: Pseudo R^2's of relationship between pillarization and newspaper readership

	Nagelkerke pseudo R^2	Model fit
1977 ($N = 321$)	0,464	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
1986 ($N = 341$)	0,350	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
1994 ($N = 425$)	0,373	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
1998 ($N = 440$)	0,286	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
2002 ($N = 492$)	0,289	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
2003 ($N = 281$)	0,188	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
2006 ($N = 524$)	0,239	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
2010 ($N = 450$)	0,308	X^2 (12) = < 0,001

Table 4: Pseudo R^2's of relationship between pillarization and vote choice

	Nagelkerke pseudo R^2	Model fit
1977 ($N = 1092$)	0,356	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
1981 ($N = 1192$)	0,383	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
1986 ($N = 1072$)	0,322	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
1994 ($N = 1812$)	0,252	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
1998 ($N = 1351$)	0,268	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
2002 ($N = 1306$)	0,208	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
2003 ($N = 1031$)	0,233	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
2006 ($N = 1994$)	0,183	X^2 (12) = < 0,001
2010 ($N = 1832$)	0,168	X^2 (12) = < 0,001