

Framing and Political Tolerance

The Effects of Issue Framing on Adolescents' Levels of Political Tolerance towards Wilders

Bachelor Thesis

Political Psychology

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1. Introduction

The Republican pollster Frank Luntz observed in 1997 that a good political campaign revolves around an essential principle: “It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it” (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007: 9). This observation was hardly new: the phenomenon of framing is known for decades and has been researched by scholars across different academic disciplines. Political scientists have found evidence from experiments underlining the importance of framing: the attitude of citizens towards political issues and public policy is influenced by how the issue is framed (Nelson et al., 1997). This leads Druckman to observe: “framing constitutes one of the most important concepts in the study of public opinion” (Druckman, 2001: 1041).

This phenomenon of framing interestingly contributes to the understanding of real world examples when combined with political tolerance. “The willingness to put up with the expressions of ideas or interests that one rejects”, as political tolerance is defined, is of great importance in multicultural, diverse societies. However, Western Europe has witnessed the rising of several radical right parties undermining this political tolerance towards immigrant minorities. The Netherlands, where the PVV of Geert Wilders has been supported by a considerable group in Dutch society, provides an interesting case in this context. Although the message of Wilders is intolerant towards Muslims, there are groups in the Netherlands who feel resented by exactly this message and, in turn, feel intolerant towards the PVV.

This study aims to use this real world example, by researching the effect of framing on the level of political tolerance towards Wilders. A scholarly knowledge gap exists on several aspects which are central in this paper. First of all, most framing studies have focused on the United States. However, as shown by the case of Wilders, other countries provide interesting cases for framing- and political tolerance studies. Therefore, this study will focus on the Netherlands.

Secondly, due to the recent rise of Wilders, research on this topic remains limited. Nevertheless, especially the type of frame he uses corresponds perfectly with the subject of political tolerance. Wilders frequently tries to depict Muslims as criminals and terrorists, thereby being dangerous for Dutch society. His framing suggests and tries to provoke an ‘us versus them’ feeling: decent, hard-working Dutch citizens versus criminal, lazy immigrants, abusing the Dutch hospitality. With this type of framing, Wilders tries to decrease the level of political tolerance towards the Muslim minority. This is why a study combining the subjects of Wilders, framing and the consequent level of political tolerance would provide more insight into the real-world situation of the Netherlands.

Finally, the studies on framing and political tolerance have not focused frequently on adolescents. This study will especially focus on this group.

The main question which will be answered in the paper is: *What is the effect of framing on the level of political tolerance towards an activity of Wilders?* In order to answer this question, this paper has conducted an experiment: students were asked to read one of two framed articles, concerning a fictive event planned by Wilders. The first article was framed positively towards Wilders, the second article was framed negatively. Afterwards, students were asked to indicate their level of political tolerance towards the event.

Secondly, this paper will research whether a more favorable pro-Wilders attitude, as is expected among the respondents in the Dutch province *Limburg*, causes the negative frame to be less effective compared to the participants from the other, more neutral-PVV province of *Zuid-Holland*.

This paper will firstly conceptualize the concept of framing and define different types of frames. Furthermore, political tolerance will be defined, which will be linked to the person of Geert Wilders and his party PVV. Secondly, the research design and methodology will be

explained. Thirdly, this paper will present the findings from the conducted experiment. The results and implications will be summarized in the discussion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Framing

The question of how to define the concept of ‘framing’ is an issue on which academics disagree (Entman, 1993: 51). Due to the use of the concept across several academic subfields, there exists substantial conceptual disagreement and confusion about different types of framing effects, and the distinction between framing and related concepts (Chong & Druckman, 2007: 114; Slothuus, 2008: 3).

A starting point in the clarification of the framing concept is provided by the work of Entman (1993). The author argues that essential components of the framing process are “selection and salience” (Entman, 1993: 52). According to Edelman, the possible interpretations of issues and events are manifold: “The social world is a kaleidoscope of potential realities” (Edelman, 1993: 231). Therefore, a communication source should firstly identify and select “aspects of a perceived reality” (Entman, 1993: 52). Secondly, this adopted view of reality is promoted by making the selected aspects of an issue more salient: pieces of information are made more “noticeable, meaningful or memorable to audiences” (Entman, 1993: 52). In other words: by putting emphasis on certain aspects of an issue or event and the consequent downplaying of other related features, journalists and political elites try to guide the audiences to what they perceive as “the essence of the issue” (Slothuus, 2008 1; Gamson & Modigliani, 1987: 143).

Entman further argues that most frames contain an evaluative component: not only is a particular definition promoted, frames may go “so far as to recommend what (if anything) should be done (Shah et al., 2002: 343; Entman, 1993: 52). Frames may suggest a “preferred

policy direction”, a recommendation for treatment or a moral direction for the audience to evaluate the issue at stake (Gamson and Modigliana, 1987: 143; Entman, 1993: 52). Therefore, the evaluative component takes the concept of framing one step further by looking at the effects of framing on the final attitude of its audience. Framing has an effect when individuals adopt the evaluative direction suggested by the frame. Put differently, framing effects occur when the opinion of the audience is influenced by the relevant considerations promoted by the frame (Druckman & Nelson, 2003: 730; Druckman, 2001b: 226 – 231).

The research record to date demonstrates that “framing works”: numerous studies across a range of issues have shown that attitudes, behavior and public opinion are largely affected by how the issue or event is framed (Gross & D’Ambrosio, 2004: 3; Chong & Druckman, 2007: 109; Nelson & Oxley, 1999: 1042). For example, Kinder & Sanders (1990) show that the “undeserved advantage” frame causes white respondents in the United States to have less favorable opinions towards affirmative action policies compared to those respondents exposed to the “reverse discrimination” frame (134). In a similar vein, Schaffner and Atkinson (2010) demonstrate that a “death tax” frame, mostly used by the Republican party in the United States, results in less support for this tax compared to the attitude of respondents exposed to the “estate tax” frame of the Democratic party (122). Many other studies lead to the same conclusion: framing matters for public opinion (e.g. Jacoby, 2000; Iyengar, 1990; Nelson & Oxley, 1999; Brewer, Graf & Willnat, 2003; Nelson, Wittmer & Shortle, 2010; Chong & Druckman, 2007; Druckman, 2001).

However, framing experiments have mainly been conducted among University students and older adult participants. As Chien, Lin and Worthley (1996) observe, framing experiments among adolescents remain underexposed (812). In order to fill this gap, they undertook a framing experiment among high school students. Like the study from Chien, Lin and Worthley, Shen et al. (2012) found framing effects among pre-adults as well. Looking at

these empirical results, it could be expected that further framing studies among pre-adults provide similar results.

2.2 Equivalency Frames versus Issue Frames

In order to structure the concept of framing one step further, it is useful to look at the different types of frames. Although many scholars have researched this topic¹, the scope of this bachelor thesis does not allow to investigate all different forms in full depth. Two types of frames will be highlighted, due to their frequent occurrence in political science research and daily presence in mass media (Slothuus, 2008: 3).

In his study, Slothuus makes a distinction between “equivalency frames” and “issue frames” (Slothuus, 2008: 3). The former refers to frames where “different, but logically equivalent, words or phrases” are used when presenting an issue or problem (Druckman, 2001b: 228). According to Druckman (2004), this typically means presenting the same information in “either a positive or negative light” (671). Kahneman and Tversky were one of the first to apply such a frame in their study. Participants were exposed to a program which would combat an Asian disease where “200 out of 600 people will be saved” or “400 out of 600 people will die” (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984: 343).

However, Slothuus observes that this type of frame is certainly useful, but not the most widely used in political news watched or read by most citizens (Slothuus, 2008: 3). In the political reality, mass media actors will not present information in two logically equivalent manners. Issue framing, where the issue or problem is already interpreted and “a subset of potentially relevant considerations” (Druckman, 2004: 672) are brought under the attention of the public, provide a better characterization of contemporary mass media (Slothuus, 2008: 3).

¹ For a brief overview of the different sorts of frames, see Nelson, Wittmer and Shortle (2010) in *Winning with words*, eds. Schaffner & Sellers (2010) or Chong & Druckman (2007). Another example is provided by Iyengar (1990), who makes a distinction between thematic frames and episodic frames. For example, in the case of poverty, a thematic frame could point towards a general trend in society in poverty rates, whereas an episodic frame may highlight individual cases (personal experience) (Iyengar, 1990: 22).

Issue frames occur in mass media because the usual complexity of political issues lends itself perfectly to simplify the issue and make a suggestion about what should be the core elements of a controversy (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987: 143). Therefore, Jacoby (2000) argues that issue framing has an “explicitly political nature”: when political elites manage to frame an issue in such a way that “shines the best possible light on their own preferred courses of action”, this will result in a favorable public opinion towards this issue or policy (751).

A much cited example of an issue frame occurs in the study of Nelson, Clawson and Oxley (1997). A Ku Klux Klan rally was held in a small Ohio city, after which a KKK leader would make a speech. Two groups of participants were shown a news coverage of this event, where most of the facts were the same in both frames. However, the free speech frame emphasized the right of the Klan members to express their views, whereas the public order frame focused on the safety risks which the event would cause. This emphasis was added through the use of different quotes, images and interviews (Nelson et al., 1997: 571). The framing conditions had an effect: participants in the free speech frame showed higher tolerance for KKK-activities than respondents exposed to the public order treatment. Studies using two issue frames find similar results: framing does have an effect on the attitude of those who were exposed to the frame (Slothuus, 2008; Ramirez & Verkuyten, 2011; Jacoby, 2000; Sniderman & Theriault, 2004). Supported by these theoretical assumptions and empirical results, this paper conducts a similar issue-framing experiment.

2.3 Political Tolerance

Issue framing is interestingly put into practice when combined with the concept of political tolerance. For the functioning of democratic systems with increasingly diverse societies, the existence of political tolerance towards minorities and other groups is fundamental for the survival of these democracies (Ramirez & Verkuyten, 2011: 583). Sullivan et al. (1979)

define tolerance as “a willingness to put up with those things that one rejects”, which politically implies “the willingness to permit the expression of those ideas or interests that one opposes” (Sullivan et al., 1979: 784). Gibson & Bingham add to the definition of political tolerance that civil liberties should apply to all groups: when civil liberties and -rights are granted only for those with whom one agrees, the very essence of civil liberties loses its meaning and purpose (Gibson & Bingham, 1982: 604; Nelson et al., 1997: 569) Other scholars have examined the level of political tolerance using comparable definitions (Harrel, 2010; Peffley & Rohrschneider, 2003; Nelson et al, 1997).

Scholars have explored many different causes for the level of political (in)tolerance of citizens. Whereas tolerance has been examined in combination with personality characteristics (Felman & Stenner, 1997), religion (Wilcox & Jelen, 1990) and education (Vogt, 1997), other studies have focused on the relationship between support for democratic values and political tolerance. Gibson (1987) demonstrated that general support for democratic values contributed to the level of political tolerance towards homosexuals and the Ku Klux Klan. However, political tolerance is not only influenced by civil rights such as freedom of speech: other values (e.g. public order and safety concerns) may equally affect the level of political tolerance (Nelson et al., 1997). Furthermore, even fundamental civil rights may contradict with each other. Whereas the rights of free speech and assembly are anchored in most Constitutions in Western Democracies and supported by vast majorities in those countries, these values may interfere with equally supported and important Constitutional rights, such as freedom of religion (Peffley & Rohrschneider, 2003: 243; Ramirez & Verkuyten, 2011: 1587).

Nelson et al. observed that precisely these equally important, but mutually exclusive values related to political tolerance provide an excellent case to combine with the effects of issue framing. However, their case selection (a Ku Klux Klan speech and –rally) would not

optimally respond to the level of political tolerance among Dutch students, considering the absence of the KKK in the Netherlands. The next paragraph will further discuss the case selection which was chosen for this study.

2.4 Geert Wilders and the PVV

In different countries during varying periods of time, the controversial groups in society towards which political tolerance was tested have changed. Whereas communists were a contemporary topic during the 1950s in the United States (Stouffer, 1955) and Ku Klux Klan members remain at issue presently in the U.S. (Nelson et al., 1997), the Netherlands² has witnessed the rise of several populist, radical right parties during the last decade (Vossen, 2009: 437; Mudde, 2004: 551). These populist parties manifest themselves by agitating against the corrupt elite, thereby claiming to truly represent the ‘normal people’. Furthermore, these political groups adhere to a socially constructed image of an enemy of these ‘normal people’: a specific group in society, which is perceived as a threat towards the national identity (Zaslove, 2008: 323). Of these parties, the *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* [Party for Freedom; PVV] from Geert Wilders has remained most influential and seems “consolidated” in the Dutch party system³ (De Lange & Art, 2011: 1230). Since its establishment, the party has gained support among a considerable group in the Netherlands: during its first elections in 2006, the party received approximately 6% of the votes, resulting in 9 seats in the House of Representatives; in the 2010 elections, the party increased its seats to 24 (www.parlement.com).

² The rising of populist, (mostly) radical right parties has occurred in many countries in Western Europe, including France, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark and Italy. In this context, Mudde refers to a ‘Populist *Zeitgeist*’: a period of time where populist parties are rather successful (2004: 551).

³ Other populist right parties are *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* [List Pim Fortuyn; LPF] and *Trots op Nederland* [Proud of the Netherlands; TON]. Especially the LPF shared the anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim ideas of Wilders. After the murder of Pim Fortuyn on May 6, 2002 (shortly before national elections were held), the party acquired (as a newcomer) 26 seats. However, internal disputes and the absence of the party’s leader soon resulted in the demise of the party. TON, established by another VVD-dissident (Rita Verdonk), was not as radical on the immigrant issue as the LPF and PVV. The party did not acquire seats during the national elections of 2010 and has disappeared out of the public eye (See also: Vossen, 2009).

Statements of party chairman Geert Wilders and the party program of the PVV have been extensively discussed in Dutch society. The party has acquired issue ownership on the area of immigration, in particular towards Muslims (Van Kersbergen & Krouwel, 2008: 398). The party's clear anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim statements are usually provoking and insulting in tone. Furthermore, to reinforce his statements, Wilders frequently uses catchy puns and negative imaging: female Muslims should pay a “*kopvoddentax*” [tax for wearing a headscarf], Moroccan youth is labeled as “*straatterroristen*” [street terrorists] and “*haatimams*” [hate-imams] should leave the country at once (*NRC Handelsblad*, 05.05.2012; *Vrij Nederland*, 05.12.2011). Among the most notorious of Wilders' anti-Muslim activities was the release of his film *Fitna*. This short film consists of two components: the first part highlights the aspects and consequences of Islamic extremism, where images of the bombings in Madrid and London, the attacks on the World Trade Center and the murder of Theo van Gogh⁴ are used. In the second part, the influence of Islam in Dutch society is portrayed. In summary, the film is highly critical and negative towards Islamic religion and its consequences for Dutch society (Vossen, 2009: 438).

The public debate over *Fitna* and how the government and individuals should react towards this film revived a debate on the extension of civil liberties towards groups like the PVV in Dutch society. The debate evolved around a central question: should Wilders be allowed to express his views without restrictions or should boundaries be raised in order to protect the position of Muslims?

On the one hand, advocates of Wilders' message argued in the same line as Nelson et al.: civil liberties (including freedom of expression) should apply to all groups, even when those groups are controversial like the PVV (Nelson et al., 1997: 569). After the release of

⁴ Theo van Gogh was a Dutch producer and columnist. Together with Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a VVD-politician and advocate of women rights among Islamic women, he produced the film *Submission*. The film criticized the position of Islamic women and their alleged maltreatment. Three months after the film was released, Theo van Gogh was murdered by Muslim-extremist Mohammed Bouyeri. The murder of Theo van Gogh sparked outrage and fury in Dutch society (*NRC Handelsblad*, 02-11-2004; *Het Parool*, 02-11-2004).

Fitna, Geert Wilders himself has frequently referred to his right of freedom of expression (e.g. *De Volkskrant*, 14.10.2009).

Opponents have put forward reasons to limit Wilders' freedom of speech. Not only has the release of the film sparked debates about safety risks and "civic harmony" in Dutch society, fostered by the fear of terrorist attacks by Muslim extremists (Nelson et al., 1997: 569; Veldhuis & Bakker, 2009: 3). Most importantly, opponents have pointed towards the fact that political tolerance in one area may undermine the level of political tolerance in another field. In this case, freedom of expression as used by Wilders extensively limits another fundamental right, equally anchored in the Dutch Constitution: freedom of religion. For this reason, these opponents argued that "civil liberties may be restricted when other important values are put at risk": Wilders' freedom of speech and his ability to show *Fitna* should have its limits (Nelson et al., 1997: 569).

Exactly these opposing views concerning political tolerance towards *Fitna* provide an interesting case for an issue-framing experiment. On the one hand, one frame will focus on the freedom of expression arguments. The other frame will merely highlight the view from Wilders' opponents, promoting freedom of religion. As has become clear from the experiment of Nelson et al.: issue framing, when focused on such competing core values, has an effect on the final attitude towards the controversial issue. Ramirez and Verkuyten (2011) summarize the general point: contrasting values mostly lead to "unstable, ambivalent opinions that are affected by the way the controversy is portrayed" (1584 – 1585). In the example of *Fitna*, it could be expected that issue framing will influence level of political tolerance towards the film by shaping the values and determine considerations on which individuals base their political tolerance (Nelson et al., 1997: 570). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H(1): If the participants are exposed to the 'freedom of expression' frame, then they will produce higher levels of tolerance for the showing of Fitna than participants exposed to the 'freedom of religion' frame.

2.5 Limburg

The framing experiment was conducted in several parts of the Netherlands. The reason for this could be illustrated with an example. The study of Nelson et al., concerning the KKK, has been conducted in Ohio (Nelson et al., 1997: 570). Although the authors have found that framing has an effect, it would have been interesting to conduct the experiment in a different state. Would the results have been different, when the framing experiment would have taken place in (the hypothetical case of) a state where a large percentage of its inhabitants were KKK-supporters? In the literature, this component is missing. The Netherlands provides a case where regions differ in their support towards the PVV: of all provinces in the Netherlands, the PVV has gained most success in the province of *Limburg*. In the 2010 elections, almost 25% of its population has voted for the PVV, which gained this party 3 seats in the Dutch House of Representatives. The reasons for this success has not been thoroughly researched. Nevertheless, the fact that Geert Wilders is from this part of the Netherlands might partly have contributed to Wilders' success. Furthermore, anti-establishment feelings are present in Limburg, traditionally a province which has felt undervalued⁵. The success of Wilders is also apparent among young students. The day before the national, provincial and municipal elections, youngsters are entitled to cast their vote during the *scholierenverkiezing*⁶ (election for secondary school students). The results of these elections for Limburg are

⁵ Due to the historical predominance of the province of 'Holland', the province of Limburg has never played an important political- or economic role in Dutch history. Furthermore, the province is situated at the boundary of the Netherlands, far removed from the political and economic centers of The Hague and Amsterdam. Therefore, most people of Limburg do feel more connected with Belgium or Germany, also because of linguistic and geographical reasons.

⁶ More information about this project can be found at www.scholierenverkiezingen.nl.

presented in Table 1, comparing them with the results from the province of *Zuid-Holland*, where the other schools of the experiment are situated.

TABLE 1. PVV-voters among secondary school students		
Election	Percentage PVV-votes per province	
	<i>Limburg</i>	<i>Zuid-Holland</i>
National elections 2010	27,42% ^a	17,68%
Provincial elections 2011	24,61%	20,99%
<i>Source: uitslagen.scholierenverkiezingen.nl</i>		
<i>a: Percentage PVV-voters of total votes per province</i>		

The results show that among secondary school students in *Limburg*, the PVV is more supported than in *Zuid-Holland*. Therefore, it is expected that a difference might occur in both provinces when comparing the framing results: the negative frame might be less effective among students from *Limburg*, because their generally more favorable attitude towards Wilders might prove more difficult to overcome than among the students from *Zuid-Holland*, generally slightly less favorable towards Wilders. This lead to the following hypothesis:

H (2): If a student lives in Limburg, then this student will be less affected by the ‘freedom of religion’ frame compared to a student from Zuid-Holland.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In order to test the hypotheses, an experiment was conducted. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) define an experiment as a method of research, where the investigator creates the circumstances to which respondents will be exposed. External factors are held *ceteris paribus*, which ensures that the effects will occur as a result of “theoretically decisive ways” (Iyengar

& Kinder, 1987: 6). The authors summarize the key point: “The essence of true experiment is control” (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987: 6). Chong and Druckman make a useful remark concerning a framing experiment: “if the goal is to understand how frames in communication affect public opinion, then the researcher needs to isolate a specific attitude” (Chong & Druckman, 2007: 106). As will be shown in the design and procedure paragraph, both written articles obtain separate sentences, headlines and other features in order to promote and isolate the specific frame.

Secondly, an experiment should guard against “cues in the experimental situation or procedure that suggest to participants what is expected from them” (Iyengar, 1990: 25). Therefore, the experiment had a “posttest-only design”: when the students had been asked questions about their level of political tolerance towards *Fitna* before reading the article, they would have had a clue about the intent of the study (Iyengar, 1990: 26). Thirdly, respondents were “randomly assigned” to the created condition, promoting a natural selection procedure (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987: 6).

3.1 Case selection

The experiment was conducted in the Netherlands, visiting three schools throughout the country. The reasons for selecting this country are twofold. First of all, studies conducted in the Netherlands will complement the scholarly gap in framing research: many studies have been performed in the United States, whereas framing studies executed in the Netherlands remain limited⁷.

Secondly, most prominent studies concerning political tolerance have been conducted in the United States and thereby focused on groups which are irrelevant in Europe, such as the Ku Klux Klan. As has been explained in the literature review, Western Europe, including the

⁷ The study of Ramirez and Verkuyten (2011) is one of the few studies on framing and political tolerance conducted in the Netherlands.

Netherlands, has witnessed the rising of several successful, populist radical right parties. Exactly these controversial groups provide an interesting case when testing the level of political tolerance.

Additionally, because of the recentness of this phenomenon, studies concerned with tolerance towards the message of these political groups do not yet exist in abundance. The Netherlands provides an interesting real world example on which the effects of framing on political tolerance could be tested: Geert Wilders and his party PVV. Wilders use of framing tries to decrease the level of political tolerance towards Muslims in Dutch society: the Islamic religion is portrayed as medieval and objectionable; Muslims are associated with criminals and terrorists. Furthermore, according to Wilders, Muslims and immigrants in general occupy jobs of unemployed Dutch citizens. In other words: Wilders uses the ‘us versus them’ frame, embedded in a classical ‘good versus bad’ theme⁸. This framing seems to have an effect: Wilders found considerable support among Dutch citizens, in a country which traditionally has the reputation of a tolerant nation. However, many Dutch citizens do not approve of Wilders’ message. In summary, because Wilders strongly relates to both framing and political tolerance, this subject has been selected for this study.

Furthermore, framing experiments as conducted by e.g. Nelson et al. primarily focus on University students. Nevertheless, research on the effects of framing among adolescents has remained underexposed⁹. Additionally, the few studies which have examined framing effects among pre-adults mainly focused on health issues instead of levels of political tolerance (Chien et al., 1996; Shen et al., 2012). In order to contribute to this knowledge gap,

⁸ For an overview of frames used by Wilders, see “*Geert Wilders in Debat: over de framing en reframing van een politieke boodschap*” [Geert Wilders debating: about the framing and deframing of a political message] by H. de Bruijn (2010).

⁹ Cigler and Joslyn (2002) have researched levels of political tolerance among high school students in Canada, although their focus was not framing effects. There exist other examples of studies on the effects of framing among adolescents, although these primarily focus on obesity/smoking issues (Chien & Lin, 1996).

it was decided to conduct the experiment on secondary schools, studying pre-adults between 12-19 years old. Three schools were selected:

1. *Bernardinuscollege*, Heerlen (*Limburg*)
2. *Christelijk Gymnasium Sorghvliet*, The Hague (*Zuid-Holland*)
3. *Rijnlands Lyceum*, Sassenheim (*Zuid-Holland*)

The selection of these schools was primarily based on geographical reasons: while *Bernardinuscollege* is located in the province of *Limburg*, the other schools are in the *Randstad* (*Zuid-Holland*), the main city-agglomeration in the Netherlands. The reason for this selection has been explained previously in the paper: more favorable positions towards Wilders (as expected in *Limburg*) might potentially bias the effectiveness of the framing experiment.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Design

In order to test the hypotheses, two newspaper articles were written. The articles were constructed following Nelson et al. (1997). Both articles related to a fictive situation, in which Geert Wilders had asked permission at the board of Leiden University to show his highly controversial film *Fitna* at the Law Faculty in September 2008. Furthermore, both articles presented the same set of facts about the controversial situation: (1) The board of Leiden University was considering a request from Geert Wilders to show his film at the Law Faculty of Leiden University; (2) The Dutch Constitution grants all individuals and political parties alike the right to freedom of expression; (3) The message of *Fitna* and the possible consequences of the film are controversial: cars were set to fire after the release of

the film, protests are announced and the municipality of Leiden is concerned about the safety-risks of the event.

Although this information appeared identical in both newspaper articles, different and additional sentences were used to establish two frames: the Freedom of Expression frame and the Freedom of Religion frame. The headline of both articles was different, as well as comments within the text itself. Example of these different quotes and headlines can be found in Table 2. The full text of each story can be found in Appendix A .

	Freedom of expression Frame	Freedom of religion Frame
Theme	Freedom of expression has high priority at Leiden University: although the message of <i>Fitna</i> is controversial, he should be able to get his message out.	Freedom of expression has its boundaries. Freedom of religion is equally important as freedom of expression, which casts doubts about the showing of <i>Fitna</i> . Furthermore, the film <i>Fitna</i> is insulting towards Muslims.
Headlines	Geert Wilders tests Leiden University's Commitment to Freedom of Expression	Freedom of Religion not predominant at Leiden University
Quotes/phrases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How far is Geert Wilders prepared to go to protect the freedom of expression? - "Wilders has the right to express his views and students have the right to see this film when they want to", remarked by Prof. Kinneging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does Leiden University place freedom of speech above freedom of religion? - I do not agree with the fact that one of these right, equally anchored in the Constitution, becomes predominant at our University", remarked by Prof. Kinneging. - "This film insults many Muslims", remarked by the chairman of a student association.

Readers of the first article were exposed to the freedom of expression frame. This frame underlined the importance of freedom of expression above all else. For instance, the comments made by law-professor Andreas Kinneging¹⁰ in this frame focused on the right from Mr. Wilders to express his opinion by showing *Fitna*: “everyone’s right to speak and hear is such a fundamental right that we should allow this even to take place” (See Appendix C). The frame only paid attention to the freedom of expression right and did not mention conflicting values and rights such as freedom of religion. Furthermore, the article talked about “protecting” freedom of expression and “testing” the University’s commitment to this right, implicitly giving a value judgment about the vulnerability and importance of this right. By giving these implications and emphasizing the fundamentality and importance of freedom of expression, it is expected that students will give this right a high priority when deciding whether they support or oppose the showing of *Fitna*.

The second treatment was the freedom of religion frame. In this article, it was emphasized that freedom of expression has its limits: freedom of religion, which is “equally anchored in the Constitution”, has as much weight and value as other fundamental rights. In this context and contrary to the freedom of expression frame, professor Kinneging remarked: “I do not agree with the fact that one of these right becomes predominant at our University.” Furthermore, this frame appeals to the lack of decency of Geert Wilders: the article disapproves of the “insulting” message of Wilders towards Muslims. It is expected that this frame will let students think about the inviolability and boundaries of the freedom of expression right, thereby making them more receptive for a more intolerant point of view towards the activity of Wilders.

¹⁰ Although professor Andreas Kinneging is a professor at the Law Faculty of Leiden University, he has not made the statements used in the written newspaper articles. Therefore, the quotations do not reflect his opinion towards Geert Wilders and/or the film *Fitna*.

Both framed articles were designed as if they were from *NRC Handelsblad*, one of the largest, nation-wide newspapers in the Netherlands.. Most importantly, *NRC Handelsblad* was chosen because this newspaper is “generally regarded as a quality newspaper, more directed at higher social classes” (Hijmans et al., 2003: 158; Janssen, 1999: 333; Alsem et al., 2008: 533). As Druckman (2001) demonstrates, credible sources enhance the effectiveness of the frame, whereas non-credible sources using the exact same frame “fail to affect overall opinion or belief importance” (1056).

Each article had an identical layout, with the logo of *NRC Handelsblad* as the head of the article. Furthermore, the articles had the exact composition as is normally used by *NRC Handelsblad*, thereby increasing the credibility of the article. Slothuus used a similar design when copying the Danish newspaper *Politiken*: “the treatment articles were similar in structure, including length, headline size, byline, and number of sources” (Slothuus, 2008: 13). The used layout can be found in Appendix C.

3.2.2 Procedure

The experiment was conducted in the spring of 2012. 336 secondary school students (187 females, 149 males) participated in the study. Their ages ranged from 12 to 19 years ($M = 15,38$, $SD = 1,585$). The students were enrolled in *HAVO* and *VWO*¹¹ classes, ranging from first year students to graduating groups. The students participated on a voluntary and nonpayment basis. Participants groups ranged in size from 16 to 27 persons. 243 of these students attended secondary school at *Bernardinuscollege* in Heerlen (Limburg), 53 students were from the *Christelijk Gymnasium Sorghvliet* in The Hague (Zuid-Holland) and 40 students were from *Rijnlands Lyceum* in Sassenheim (Zuid-Holland). All students handed in

¹¹ The Dutch secondary school system consist of three levels: *VMBO*, *HAVO* and *VWO*. At the age of 12, all Dutch children are placed in one of these levels. *VWO* is a preparatory phase for University, which students attend for the duration of 6 years. *HAVO*-level lasts 5 years, after which students will go to a *HBO*-level of education, which has the insertion of a more practical approach compared to University.

TABLE 3. Demographic and Political Characteristics of Participants (N = 336)		
	Freq.	%
Sex		
Male	149	44,3%
Female	187	55,7
Age		
12	22	6,5
13	30	8,9
14	26	7,7
15	82	24,4
16	98	29,2
17	55	16,4
18	20	6,0
19	3	0,9
Region/School		
<i>Bernardinuscollege (Limburg)</i>	243	72,3
<i>Christelijk Gymnasium Sorghvliet (Zuid-Holland)</i>	53	15,8
<i>Rijnlands Lyceum (Zuid-Holland)</i>	40	11,9
Level of education		
HAVO 1	27	8,0
VWO 1	26	7,7
VWO 3	50	14,9
HAVO 4	126	37,5
VWO 4	53	15,8
VWO 5	37	11,0
VWO 6	17	5,1
Race/Ethnicity		
Dutch	280	83,3
West-European	9	2,7
East-European	9	2,7
Moroccan	3	0,9
Turkish	2	0,6
Indonesian	2	0,6
Chinese	3	0,9
Surinamese	2	0,6
<i>Limburgs</i>	26	7,7
Political Ideology (Left-Right Placement)		
1 = Extreme Left	4	1,2
2	6	1,8
3	34	10,1
4	52	15,5
5	61	18,2
6 = Moderate	78	23,2
7	44	13,1
8	34	10,1
9	11	3,3
10	9	2,7
11 = Extreme Right	3	0,9
Perceived multicultural environment		
No multicultural environment	111	33,0
Moderate multicultural environment	99	29,5
Multicultural environment	126	37,5
Religion		
Not religious	212	63,1
Catholic	109	32,4
Protestant	5	1,5
Buddhism	2	0,6
Islam	5	1,5
Jewish	1	0,3
Hinduism	1	0,3
<i>Note: Entries are the numbers and percentages who fall into each category for each variable. There were no missing data.</i>		

valid answers. Therefore, no cases were excluded from the analysis. Table 3 further summarizes the demographic and political characteristics of the sample.

After arriving in the classroom in which the study was conducted, the students were instructed that they would participate in scientific research. They were told that the exact purpose of the study would be explained afterwards. The students were asked to read the newspaper article of *NRC Handelsblad* in silence, without discussing the content of the article with each other. In every class, only one of the two framed articles was distributed: in this way, the students could not have an indication about the purpose of the study. Afterwards, they received a questionnaire which they answered without consultation. When every questionnaire was handed in, the purpose of the study was explained to the class and questions were answered.

3.3 Variables

The dependent and independent variables were formulated and measured as follows:

Dependent variable

To assess political tolerance, a question was used based on Nelson et al. (1997): “Do you support or oppose allowing Geert Wilders to show his film at Leiden University?” Respondents could rate this dependent variable on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from *strongly oppose* to *strongly support*.

Independent variables

The most important independent variable was the framing condition. The ‘freedom of expression’ frame was coded as ‘1’, the ‘freedom of religion’ frame was coded as ‘2’. Participants were exposed to only one of two frames.

The study contained a set of control variables, such as the dichotomous variable gender (1 = male, 2 = female). Other control variables were coded as follows: level of education ranged from 1 to 7, where 1 was coded as HAVO 1 and 7 was coded as VWO 6. In theory, 11 possible levels could have participated (5 HAVO and 6 VWO classes) but due to logistical reasons, it was not possible to conduct the experiment at all levels.

The variable ‘secondary school’ was recoded into the variable ‘region’, such that school 1 (*Bernardinuscollege*) represented Limburg and school 2 and 3 (*Christelijk Gymnasium Sorghvliet* and *Rijnlands Lyceum*) corresponded to Zuid-Holland.

The left-right scale was based on a similar scale used by Ramirez and Verkuyten (2011), ranging from 1 (*extreme left*) to 11 (*extreme right*).

Respondents could indicate their ethnicity selecting several options or giving another answer when their background was not provided. The variable ‘ethnicity’ was then coded as

‘1’: Limburgs, ‘2’: Dutch and ‘3’: immigrant background. This was done, because it was expected that due to the anti-immigrant stance of Wilders, all immigrant groups which participated in the study (e.g. Moroccan, Surinamese, Turkish and Eastern-European¹²) would be unfavorable towards Wilders. Due to the hypothesis 2, it was decided to code people who have explicitly indicated to feel ‘*Limburgs*’ as a separate group.

The variable ‘multicultural environment’ measured whether students perceived their environment as multicultural. This was an open ended question, and the answers were coded into three categories: ‘1’: no multicultural environment, ‘2’: moderate multicultural environment, ‘3’ : multicultural environment.

The last control variable was religion. A total of 8 religions were registered, from Catholicism to Buddhism. Because of the clear anti-Muslim ideology of Wilders, this variable was recoded such that ‘1’ relates to ‘other religion’ and ‘2’ is ‘Islamic religion’. The survey can be found in Appendix B.

3.4 Analysis techniques

In order to test hypothesis 1 and 2, a ordinary least squares regression analysis (OLS) was conducted to predict the value of the dependent variable (political tolerance for *Fitna*) from the independent variable ‘Frame’ and the other control variables. Because the outcome variable is not dichotomous but linear, the political tolerance scale is analyzed by simple linear regression.

3.5 Constraints

Unfortunately, due to financial, logistic and time-bound reasons, it was not possible to execute a laboratory experiment as is conducted in most studies on framing, such as Nelson et

¹² Regarding Eastern-Europeans: in early 2012, Wilders has raised eyebrows by establishing the ‘Poland-hotline’, intended for people who had for example complains about Polish seasonal workers. This initiative was not only a hot topic in the Netherlands, but was extensively discussed at the European level as well.

al. (1997), Ramirez & Verkuyten (2011), Iyengar & Kinder (1987) and others. Instead, class rooms were visited using paper-and-pencil articles and questionnaires. Although this might not appear as professional as a laboratory experiment, the experimental conditions remained identical compared to above cited studies. Therefore, there is not reason to believe this method will result in different outcomes.

Secondly, it is not entirely sure whether all adolescents have treated the survey seriously. However, there was not a good criterion to exclude one of the answers without the danger of being too arbitrary. Because all surveys were completely filled in, it was decided to involve all questionnaires in the analysis. In the discussion, the problems occurring by conducting an experiment among adolescents will be further explored.

4. RESULTS

Issue-framing theory predicts that through the use of “qualitative different yet potentially relevant conditions”, the different frames will cause individuals to focus on certain aspects of an issue when constructing their opinion (Druckman, 2004: 673). Therefore, it was expected that participants in the freedom of expression condition would express greater tolerance towards the showing of *Fitna* at Leiden University than students exposed to the freedom of religion frame. Secondly, it was predicted that due to the higher political support for the PVV in Limburg compared to Zuid-Holland, the freedom of religion frame, which was more negatively towards Wilders than the freedom of expression frame, would be less effective among students in Limburg. Table 4 displays the result of an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression model that tests both hypotheses concerning the effect of the framing condition on the level of political tolerance and the influence of region on the effectiveness of the second framing condition.

TABLE 4. Ordinary Least Squares Regression Model Predicting Tolerance for Showing 'Fitna'.

Frame	-.189** (.168)
Sex	-.113* (.169)
Level/years of education	.196** (.033)
Region	.116* (.187)
Left-Right Placement	.263** (.044)
Ethnicity	-.133** (.233)
Multicultural Environment	.054 (.100)
Religion	-.007 (.722)
R ²	.203
Number of Cases	336
Notes: Table entries are standardized regression coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses). * Indicates the coefficient is statistically significant at the level $0.05 \geq p > 0.01$. ** Indicates the coefficient is statistically significant at the level $p \leq 0.01$.	

The results provide strong support for hypothesis 1. The data demonstrate that the framing condition has a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable, tolerance for the showing of *Fitna* at Leiden University. The OLS regression model shows that when a participant is exposed to the freedom of religion frame, this student is associated with a .189 point lower score on the political tolerance scale.

Additionally, the ordinary least squares regression model demonstrates that both gender and ethnicity had a negative, statistically significant relationship with the dependent

variable. The results suggest that when the respondent is a woman, she shows .113 point less tolerance for the activity of Wilders compared to male participants. When a person has an immigrant background, this is associated with a less tolerant attitude towards the showing of *Fitna* with .133 points.

The model further demonstrates that the level of education, as well as political ideology indicates a positive, significant relationship with the tolerant-variable. The results suggest that for every unit increase of education, the respondent will be .196 point more tolerant for showing *Fitna*. In other words, the more education a student has had, the more tolerant he or she is towards the activity of Wilders. As well, the more rightist a person's political ideology is, the more he or she is prone to favor Wilders' activity. The model demonstrates that for every unit increase on the left-right scale, this person will on average be .263 point more tolerant towards the showing of *Fitna*. On the 11 point scale, this means that in general, an extreme-right person (11) will show 2.63 point more tolerance towards *Fitna* than an extreme-left person.

Nevertheless, the results fail to confirm hypothesis 2. The regression model shows an opposite pattern to what was expected: there was a positive, statistically significant relationship between the level of political tolerance towards *Fitna* and the province a student lived in. When a student lives in *Zuid-Holland*, this is associated with a .116 point increase of political tolerance towards the activity of Wilders compared to students living in *Limburg*.

5. DISCUSSION

This study has investigated the effects of framing on the level of political tolerance towards an activity organized by populist right-wing politician Geert Wilders. The results have shown that framing does have an impact: students exposed to the freedom of expression frame

showed significantly higher support for the showing of *Fitna* than students who read an article from the freedom of religion condition.

The experiment was conducted among secondary school students in the South and the West of the Netherlands. In this respect, it could be concluded that framing does have an impact on the level of tolerance among pre-adults. Additionally, although the data from both national elections as well as *scholierenverkiezingen* point towards a more pro-PVV attitude for residents in *Limburg* compared to *Zuid-Holland*, the results of this study could not confirm this pattern.

These conclusions may indicate towards further implications. First of all, it could be asked whether the context in which the experiment took place may have influenced the outcomes of the experiment. The choice for a present-day subject for a framing experiment, like Geert Wilders, provides more insight into very present-day topics, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the world we live in. Nevertheless, it may be argued that exactly this may bias the framing experiment: due to the constant news coverage of Wilders, the framing effect might be less strongly due to predispositions among the public. As Chong and Druckman (2007) observe: “The success of any given attempt to frame an issue also depends on whether other information is available to the audience” (112). In the case of the experiment conducted for this thesis, it might be argued that students were prejudiced about Wilders: three days before the experiment was conducted, the Dutch cabinet fell due to Wilders. The other coalition partners quickly framed the situation in their advantage, accusing Wilders of cowardice and irresponsibility. Entman remarks in this context: “once a term is widely accepted, to use another is to risk that target audiences will perceive the communicator as lacking credibility – or will even fail to understand what the communicator is talking about” (1993: 55). Thus, it might be argued that the framing effects could have been different, when the cabinet had not fallen and the media coverage of Wilders would not have been so negative.

A second implication relates to the effects of mass media on a society-wide level. When a framing effect has significant influence on the levels of political tolerance among participants in an experiment, what could this mean for the influence of the media on society-wide levels of political tolerance? As many authors argue, framing effects are not only observable among a relatively small group of participants: frames used in daily, contemporary mass media influences public opinion at a society-wide level (Brants & Van Praag, 2005: 2; Entman, 1993: 52; Zaller, 1992: 30). In other words: when politicians or journalists succeed in framing a message towards a certain controversial group or minority negatively, then this could lead to decreased levels of political tolerance among many people in society. A recent example has showed this trend in Dutch society: Wilders ability to frame Muslims as a threat for Dutch Society, relating them with terrorism and making suggestions about this group not belonging in the Jewish-Christian tradition of Western-Europe, has resulted in a descending level of political tolerance towards the Muslim minority on a society-wide level in the Netherlands (Van Stokkum, 2009:150; Shadid, 2009: 173).

However, another interpretation could be given as well. Contrary to controversial groups like the KKK, Geert Wilders is an accepted politician in the Netherlands with a considerable amount of supporters. Whereas the KKK will probably find difficulties to use the mass media as a platform to spread their opinions due to their lack of support in society, Wilders will find less constraints in using the mass media to express his views. Nevertheless, the study of Nelson et al. (1997) as well as this bachelor thesis found strong framing effects concerning both groups. What does this tell us about the strength and sustainability of 'accepted' politicians? Although "a common presumption is that elites enjoy considerable leeway in using frames to influence and manipulate citizens", it may be argued that the power of political elites by using framing effect have its boundaries as well (Druckman, 2001: 1044). Due to the constant information flow in newspapers, television, social media and other

internet resources, news coverage on certain issues have not been faster as now. Establishing a frame is one difficulty, but perhaps the preservation of the preferred image is a really hard task for the political elite in this modern age.

The data were not ideal: first of all, a high number of the respondents came from Limburg: for comparative research, it would have been better when the respondents were more equally spread among the regions. Furthermore, although adolescents are an interesting group for research, they are not the most ideal participants: their lack of knowledge about political issues might bias the framing effects. Additionally, it could be possible that they were not fully aware of the seriousness of the survey: keeping a class concentrated was a challenge. A last constraint among this group might be their lack of perspective: e.g., students from Limburg indicated many times that they perceived their environment as multicultural, whereas students in The Hague were less inclined to estimate their environment that way. However, in the city of The Hague live far more nationalities and religions than in Heerlen. Nevertheless, when it is chosen to conduct an experiment among adolescents, these problems will probably be hard to solve.

A second reason why the data were not ideal relates to the following implication: the data showed a strong relationship observed between the level of political tolerance for *Fitna* and the level of education of the students. It might be argued that the students not only could have been influenced by negative framing towards Wilders outside the experimental condition; most of all, it may indicate towards the strong belief in Dutch society towards freedom of speech. In both *VWO*- and *HAVO* classes, debating and formulating one's opinion plays a pivotal role in the curriculum of both tracks. Freedom of expression is seen as such an essential principle in the Netherlands, that it may not have been a fair match with freedom of religion.

In the future, studies could investigate the findings of this study further by adding more cases: more schools throughout the country (in different regions) could be visited, thereby contributing to the research for regional differences in framing effects towards Wilders. Additionally, a control group, who would read a neutral article, could be added to the research. This will possible lead to further insights into the strength of effects of different frames. Future research could also focus on the differences between framing effects on pre-adults and adults. In this case, two framing conditions (e.g. as used in this thesis) should be tested both on adolescents and adults, thereby providing comparable data about the differences (or similarities) of framing effects among these different groups.

In a country where the political landscape has recently changed and the media's role is of significant importance, studies linking the effect of framing and political tolerance are a useful contribution to better understand the situation we live in. Furthermore, the success of Wilders and his effect on Dutch society remain an issue which has not been thoroughly investigated, due to the recentness of this phenomenon. This study makes a small contribution to fill this scholarly knowledge gap.

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7. APPENDIXES

7.1 Appendix A: Texts of both frames (English)

<u>Freedom of Expression</u>	<u>Freedom of religion</u>
<i>Headline: Geert Wilders tests Leiden University's Commitment to Freedom of Expression</i>	<i>Headline: Freedom of Religion not predominant at Leiden University</i>
<p>How far is Geert Wilders prepared to go to protect the freedom of expression?</p> <p>Geert Wilders has requested to show his film 'Fitna' at the Law Faculty of Leiden University in September 2008. The board of Leiden University will decide whether to approve or deny his request in May.</p>	<p>Does Leiden University place Freedom of Speech above Freedom of Religion?</p> <p>Geert Wilders has requested to show his film 'Fitna' at the Law Faculty of Leiden University in September 2008. The board of Leiden University will decide whether to approve or deny his request in May.</p>
<p>The Dutch Constitution ensures that the PVV of Geert Wilders has the right to use his right to freedom of expression, and that individuals have the right to hear his message, if they are interested. However, the message of his film is controversial.</p> <p>Cars were set to fire in The Hague, Utrecht and Amsterdam after the release of the film on the website of the PVV. Muslim organizations have announced protests if Leiden University approves Wilders'</p>	<p>The Dutch Constitution ensures that the PVV of Geert Wilders has the right to use his right to freedom of expression, and that individuals have the right to hear his message, if they are interested. However, the message of his film is controversial.</p> <p>Cars were set to fire in The Hague, Utrecht and Amsterdam after the release of the film on the website of the PVV. Muslim organizations have announced protests if Leiden University approves Wilders'</p>

<p>request. The municipality of Leiden expects a large police force is needed to secure the safety of the event.</p>	<p>request. The municipality of Leiden expects a large police force is needed to secure the safety of the event.</p>
<p>Opinions about the displaying of Wilder’s film is mixed. Many students, faculty and staff worry about the event, but support Wilder’s right of freedom of expression. Andreas Kinnegin, professor at the Law faculty of Leiden University, remarked: “I do not approve of the content of the film, but Wilders has the right to express his views and students have the right to see this film when they want to. We have some concerns about this event, but everyone’s right to speak and hear is such a fundamental right that we should allow this even to take place.”</p>	<p>Opinions about the displaying of Wilder’s film is mixed. Many students, faculty and staff have expressed their disagreement with the showing of the film. Andreas Kinnegin, professor at the Law faculty of Leiden University, remarked: “Freedom of Expression is important, but so is Freedom of Religion. I do not agree with the fact that one of these right, equally anchored in the Constitution, becomes predominant at our University.” Yannick Looije, chairman of Student Association ‘Augustinus’, has expressed similar concerns: “This film insults many muslims. Freedom of Religion, which Mr. Wilders attacks, should be protected.”</p>
<p><i>Source: NRC Handelsblad, 20 April 2008.</i></p>	<p><i>Source: NRC Handelsblad, 20 April 2008.</i></p>

7.2 Appendix B: Survey

Survey

Please carefully read the newspaper article from *NRC Handelsblad*. After reading the article, answer the following questions:

1. Do you support or oppose allowing Geert Wilders to show his film at Leiden University?

Strongly oppose	Somewhat oppose	Slightly oppose	Neutral	Slightly support	Somewhat support	Strongly support
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2. How do you feel towards the following groups?

- Geert Wilders/PVV

Strongly Disfavor	Somewhat disfavor	Slightly disfavor	Neutral	Slightly favor	Somewhat favor	Strongly favor
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- Muslims

Strongly Disfavor	Somewhat disfavor	Slightly disfavor	Neutral	Slightly favor	Somewhat favor	Strongly favor
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3. Please choose one of the options:

Freedom of Expression

Freedom of Religion

4. How do you feel about the following statements? (1 – 7 scale again)

Freedom of Expression scale

- I believe in free speech for all no matter what their views might be
- People should have the freedom to express their own opinions publicly

- The government should not have the right to censor published materials

Freedom of Religion Scale

- I believe in freedom of religion no matter how one opposes with one religion
- People should be allowed to profess the faith they want
- The government does not have to right to interfere with the religion people would like to profess

Control variables

When more options are available, please encircle the option which relates to your situation.

1. Are you male or female? M/F
2. What is your age?
3. What is the name of your secondary school?
4. Which class are you in?
 - HAVO 3
 - HAVO 4
 - HAVO 5
 - VWO 3
 - VWO 4
 - VWO 5
 - VWO 6
 - Other, namely:
5. How would you describe your ethnic background?
 - Dutch
 - WesternEuropean
 - Eastern European

- Moroccan
- Turkish
- Antillian
- Other, namely:

6. Are you religious? If so, which religion?
7. Do you feel affiliation with the province you live in? Could you elaborate on that?
8. Would you describe your environment as ‘multicultural’? If so, could you elaborate on that?
9. If you were allowed to vote, for which party would you vote? Why?

- VVD
- CDA
- PVV
- PvdA
- D66
- GroenLinks
- SP
- ChristenUnie
- SGP
- Partij voor de Dieren
- Onafhankelijke Burgerpartij
- Other, namely:

10. When putting yourself on a left-right scale, where would you place yourself?

1.Left	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11.Right
--------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	----------

Wing										Wing
------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	------

NRC HANDELSBLAD

GODSDIENSTVRIJHEID VAN ONDERGESCHIKT BELANG AAN UNIVERSITEIT LEIDEN

VAN ONZE VERSLAGGEEFSTER
Marjoleine Heimstra

LEIDEN – Stelt de Universiteit Leiden vrijheid van meningsuiting boven vrijheid van godsdienst? Geert Wilders heeft een verzoek ingediend om zijn film ‘Fitna’ te vertonen op de Rechtenfaculteit van de Universiteit in September 2008. Het college van Bestuur van de Universiteit Leiden neemt in mei een beslissing over dit verzoek.

De Nederlandse Grondwet garandeert dat de PVV van Geert Wilders in haar recht staat wanneer Wilders beroep wil doen op zijn vrijheid van meningsuiting. Eenieder die naar hem wil luisteren, moet daartoe de gelegenheid

krijgen. De boodschap van de film ‘Fitna’ is echter controversieel. Nadat Wilders zijn film op de partijwebsite plaatste, ontstonden schermutselingen in Den Haag, Utrecht en Amsterdam. Auto’s werden in brand gestoken. Moslimorganisaties hebben protesten aangekondigd wanneer de Universiteit Leiden ingaat op Wilders’ verzoek. De gemeente Leiden houdt rekening met een verhoogde politie-inzet om de veiligheid van het evenement te garanderen.

De meningen over het plan van Wilders zijn verdeeld. Veel studenten, faculteiten en medewerkers van de Universiteit hebben hun zorgen en ongenoegen geuit over het vertonen

van de film op de rechtenfaculteit. Andreas Kinnegin, professor rechtsfilosofie verbonden aan de Universiteit Leiden, stelt: “Vrijheid van meningsuiting is belangrijk, maar vrijheid van godsdienst net zo goed. Ik ben het fundamenteel oneens met het feit dat één van deze grondrechten, gelijk verankerd in onze grondwet, op onze Universiteit voorrang krijgt.” Yannick Looije, voorzitter van de Leidse Studentenvereniging ‘Augustinus’, uit vergelijkbare zorgen: “Deze film is beledigend voor moslims. De godsdienstvrijheid, die de heer Wilders met zijn film aanvalt, moet beschermd worden.”

***Uit: NRC
Handelsblad, 20
april 2008***

Framing and Political Tolerance

The Effects of Issue Framing on Adolescents' Levels of Political Tolerance towards Wilders

Bachelor Thesis

Political Psychology

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Manon Reuters

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1. Introduction

The Republican pollster Frank Luntz observed in 1997 that a good political campaign revolves around an essential principle: “It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it” (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007: 9). This observation was hardly new: the phenomenon of framing is known for decades and has been researched by scholars across different academic disciplines. Political scientists have found evidence from experiments underlining the importance of framing: the attitude of citizens towards political issues and public policy is influenced by how the issue is framed (Nelson et al., 1997). This leads Druckman to observe: “framing constitutes one of the most important concepts in the study of public opinion” (Druckman, 2001: 1041).

This phenomenon of framing interestingly contributes to the understanding of real world examples when combined with political tolerance. “The willingness to put up with the expressions of ideas or interests that one rejects”, as political tolerance is defined, is of great importance in multicultural, diverse societies. However, Western Europe has witnessed the rising of several radical right parties undermining this political tolerance towards immigrant minorities. The Netherlands, where the PVV of Geert Wilders has been supported by a considerable group in Dutch society, provides an interesting case in this context. Although the message of Wilders is intolerant towards Muslims, there are groups in the Netherlands who feel resented by exactly this message and, in turn, feel intolerant towards the PVV.

This study aims to use this real world example, by researching the effect of framing on the level of political tolerance towards Wilders. A scholarly knowledge gap exists on several aspects which are central in this paper. First of all, most framing studies have focused on the United States. However, as shown by the case of Wilders, other countries provide interesting cases for framing- and political tolerance studies. Therefore, this study will focus on the Netherlands.

Secondly, due to the recent rise of Wilders, research on this topic remains limited. Nevertheless, especially the type of frame he uses corresponds perfectly with the subject of political tolerance. Wilders frequently tries to depict Muslims as criminals and terrorists, thereby being dangerous for Dutch society. His framing suggests and tries to provoke an ‘us versus them’ feeling: decent, hard-working Dutch citizens versus criminal, lazy immigrants, abusing the Dutch hospitality. With this type of framing, Wilders tries to decrease the level of political tolerance towards the Muslim minority. This is why a study combining the subjects of Wilders, framing and the consequent level of political tolerance would provide more insight into the real-world situation of the Netherlands.

Finally, the studies on framing and political tolerance have not focused frequently on adolescents. This study will especially focus on this group.

The main question which will be answered in the paper is: *What is the effect of framing on the level of political tolerance towards an activity of Wilders?* In order to answer this question, this paper has conducted an experiment: students were asked to read one of two framed articles, concerning a fictive event planned by Wilders. The first article was framed positively towards Wilders, the second article was framed negatively. Afterwards, students were asked to indicate their level of political tolerance towards the event.

Secondly, this paper will research whether a more favorable pro-Wilders attitude, as is expected among the respondents in the Dutch province *Limburg*, causes the negative frame to be less effective compared to the participants from the other, more neutral-PVV province of *Zuid-Holland*.

This paper will firstly conceptualize the concept of framing and define different types of frames. Furthermore, political tolerance will be defined, which will be linked to the person of Geert Wilders and his party PVV. Secondly, the research design and methodology will be

explained. Thirdly, this paper will present the findings from the conducted experiment. The results and implications will be summarized in the discussion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Framing

The question of how to define the concept of ‘framing’ is an issue on which academics disagree (Entman, 1993: 51). Due to the use of the concept across several academic subfields, there exists substantial conceptual disagreement and confusion about different types of framing effects, and the distinction between framing and related concepts (Chong & Druckman, 2007: 114; Slothuus, 2008: 3).

A starting point in the clarification of the framing concept is provided by the work of Entman (1993). The author argues that essential components of the framing process are “selection and salience” (Entman, 1993: 52). According to Edelman, the possible interpretations of issues and events are manifold: “The social world is a kaleidoscope of potential realities” (Edelman, 1993: 231). Therefore, a communication source should firstly identify and select “aspects of a perceived reality” (Entman, 1993: 52). Secondly, this adopted view of reality is promoted by making the selected aspects of an issue more salient: pieces of information are made more “noticeable, meaningful or memorable to audiences” (Entman, 1993: 52). In other words: by putting emphasis on certain aspects of an issue or event and the consequent downplaying of other related features, journalists and political elites try to guide the audiences to what they perceive as “the essence of the issue” (Slothuus, 2008 1; Gamson & Modigliani, 1987: 143).

Entman further argues that most frames contain an evaluative component: not only is a particular definition promoted, frames may go “so far as to recommend what (if anything) should be done (Shah et al., 2002: 343; Entman, 1993: 52). Frames may suggest a “preferred

policy direction”, a recommendation for treatment or a moral direction for the audience to evaluate the issue at stake (Gamson and Modigliana, 1987: 143; Entman, 1993: 52). Therefore, the evaluative component takes the concept of framing one step further by looking at the effects of framing on the final attitude of its audience. Framing has an effect when individuals adopt the evaluative direction suggested by the frame. Put differently, framing effects occur when the opinion of the audience is influenced by the relevant considerations promoted by the frame (Druckman & Nelson, 2003: 730; Druckman, 2001b: 226 – 231).

The research record to date demonstrates that “framing works”: numerous studies across a range of issues have shown that attitudes, behavior and public opinion are largely affected by how the issue or event is framed (Gross & D’Ambrosio, 2004: 3; Chong & Druckman, 2007: 109; Nelson & Oxley, 1999: 1042). For example, Kinder & Sanders (1990) show that the “undeserved advantage” frame causes white respondents in the United States to have less favorable opinions towards affirmative action policies compared to those respondents exposed to the “reverse discrimination” frame (134). In a similar vein, Schaffner and Atkinson (2010) demonstrate that a “death tax” frame, mostly used by the Republican party in the United States, results in less support for this tax compared to the attitude of respondents exposed to the “estate tax” frame of the Democratic party (122). Many other studies lead to the same conclusion: framing matters for public opinion (e.g. Jacoby, 2000; Iyengar, 1990; Nelson & Oxley, 1999; Brewer, Graf & Willnat, 2003; Nelson, Wittmer & Shortle, 2010; Chong & Druckman, 2007; Druckman, 2001).

However, framing experiments have mainly been conducted among University students and older adult participants. As Chien, Lin and Worthley (1996) observe, framing experiments among adolescents remain underexposed (812). In order to fill this gap, they undertook a framing experiment among high school students. Like the study from Chien, Lin and Worthley, Shen et al. (2012) found framing effects among pre-adults as well. Looking at

these empirical results, it could be expected that further framing studies among pre-adults provide similar results.

2.2 Equivalency Frames versus Issue Frames

In order to structure the concept of framing one step further, it is useful to look at the different types of frames. Although many scholars have researched this topic¹, the scope of this bachelor thesis does not allow to investigate all different forms in full depth. Two types of frames will be highlighted, due to their frequent occurrence in political science research and daily presence in mass media (Slothuus, 2008: 3).

In his study, Slothuus makes a distinction between “equivalency frames” and “issue frames” (Slothuus, 2008: 3). The former refers to frames where “different, but logically equivalent, words or phrases” are used when presenting an issue or problem (Druckman, 2001b: 228). According to Druckman (2004), this typically means presenting the same information in “either a positive or negative light” (671). Kahneman and Tversky were one of the first to apply such a frame in their study. Participants were exposed to a program which would combat an Asian disease where “200 out of 600 people will be saved” or “400 out of 600 people will die” (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984: 343).

However, Slothuus observes that this type of frame is certainly useful, but not the most widely used in political news watched or read by most citizens (Slothuus, 2008: 3). In the political reality, mass media actors will not present information in two logically equivalent manners. Issue framing, where the issue or problem is already interpreted and “a subset of potentially relevant considerations” (Druckman, 2004: 672) are brought under the attention of the public, provide a better characterization of contemporary mass media (Slothuus, 2008: 3).

¹ For a brief overview of the different sorts of frames, see Nelson, Wittmer and Shortle (2010) in *Winning with words*, eds. Schaffner & Sellers (2010) or Chong & Druckman (2007). Another example is provided by Iyengar (1990), who makes a distinction between thematic frames and episodic frames. For example, in the case of poverty, a thematic frame could point towards a general trend in society in poverty rates, whereas an episodic frame may highlight individual cases (personal experience) (Iyengar, 1990: 22).

Issue frames occur in mass media because the usual complexity of political issues lends itself perfectly to simplify the issue and make a suggestion about what should be the core elements of a controversy (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987: 143). Therefore, Jacoby (2000) argues that issue framing has an “explicitly political nature”: when political elites manage to frame an issue in such a way that “shines the best possible light on their own preferred courses of action”, this will result in a favorable public opinion towards this issue or policy (751).

A much cited example of an issue frame occurs in the study of Nelson, Clawson and Oxley (1997). A Ku Klux Klan rally was held in a small Ohio city, after which a KKK leader would make a speech. Two groups of participants were shown a news coverage of this event, where most of the facts were the same in both frames. However, the free speech frame emphasized the right of the Klan members to express their views, whereas the public order frame focused on the safety risks which the event would cause. This emphasis was added through the use of different quotes, images and interviews (Nelson et al., 1997: 571). The framing conditions had an effect: participants in the free speech frame showed higher tolerance for KKK-activities than respondents exposed to the public order treatment. Studies using two issue frames find similar results: framing does have an effect on the attitude of those who were exposed to the frame (Slothuus, 2008; Ramirez & Verkuyten, 2011; Jacoby, 2000; Sniderman & Theriault, 2004). Supported by these theoretical assumptions and empirical results, this paper conducts a similar issue-framing experiment.

2.3 Political Tolerance

Issue framing is interestingly put into practice when combined with the concept of political tolerance. For the functioning of democratic systems with increasingly diverse societies, the existence of political tolerance towards minorities and other groups is fundamental for the survival of these democracies (Ramirez & Verkuyten, 2011: 583). Sullivan et al. (1979)

define tolerance as “a willingness to put up with those things that one rejects”, which politically implies “the willingness to permit the expression of those ideas or interests that one opposes” (Sullivan et al., 1979: 784). Gibson & Bingham add to the definition of political tolerance that civil liberties should apply to all groups: when civil liberties and -rights are granted only for those with whom one agrees, the very essence of civil liberties loses its meaning and purpose (Gibson & Bingham, 1982: 604; Nelson et al., 1997: 569) Other scholars have examined the level of political tolerance using comparable definitions (Harrel, 2010; Peffley & Rohrschneider, 2003; Nelson et al, 1997).

Scholars have explored many different causes for the level of political (in)tolerance of citizens. Whereas tolerance has been examined in combination with personality characteristics (Felman & Stenner, 1997), religion (Wilcox & Jelen, 1990) and education (Vogt, 1997), other studies have focused on the relationship between support for democratic values and political tolerance. Gibson (1987) demonstrated that general support for democratic values contributed to the level of political tolerance towards homosexuals and the Ku Klux Klan. However, political tolerance is not only influenced by civil rights such as freedom of speech: other values (e.g. public order and safety concerns) may equally affect the level of political tolerance (Nelson et al., 1997). Furthermore, even fundamental civil rights may contradict with each other. Whereas the rights of free speech and assembly are anchored in most Constitutions in Western Democracies and supported by vast majorities in those countries, these values may interfere with equally supported and important Constitutional rights, such as freedom of religion (Peffley & Rohrschneider, 2003: 243; Ramirez & Verkuyten, 2011: 1587).

Nelson et al. observed that precisely these equally important, but mutually exclusive values related to political tolerance provide an excellent case to combine with the effects of issue framing. However, their case selection (a Ku Klux Klan speech and –rally) would not

optimally respond to the level of political tolerance among Dutch students, considering the absence of the KKK in the Netherlands. The next paragraph will further discuss the case selection which was chosen for this study.

2.4 Geert Wilders and the PVV

In different countries during varying periods of time, the controversial groups in society towards which political tolerance was tested have changed. Whereas communists were a contemporary topic during the 1950s in the United States (Stouffer, 1955) and Ku Klux Klan members remain at issue presently in the U.S. (Nelson et al., 1997), the Netherlands² has witnessed the rise of several populist, radical right parties during the last decade (Vossen, 2009: 437; Mudde, 2004: 551). These populist parties manifest themselves by agitating against the corrupt elite, thereby claiming to truly represent the ‘normal people’. Furthermore, these political groups adhere to a socially constructed image of an enemy of these ‘normal people’: a specific group in society, which is perceived as a threat towards the national identity (Zaslove, 2008: 323). Of these parties, the *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* [Party for Freedom; PVV] from Geert Wilders has remained most influential and seems “consolidated” in the Dutch party system³ (De Lange & Art, 2011: 1230). Since its establishment, the party has gained support among a considerable group in the Netherlands: during its first elections in 2006, the party received approximately 6% of the votes, resulting in 9 seats in the House of Representatives; in the 2010 elections, the party increased its seats to 24 (www.parlement.com).

² The rising of populist, (mostly) radical right parties has occurred in many countries in Western Europe, including France, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark and Italy. In this context, Mudde refers to a ‘Populist *Zeitgeist*’: a period of time where populist parties are rather successful (2004: 551).

³ Other populist right parties are *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* [List Pim Fortuyn; LPF] and *Trots op Nederland* [Proud of the Netherlands; TON]. Especially the LPF shared the anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim ideas of Wilders. After the murder of Pim Fortuyn on May 6, 2002 (shortly before national elections were held), the party acquired (as a newcomer) 26 seats. However, internal disputes and the absence of the party’s leader soon resulted in the demise of the party. TON, established by another VVD-dissident (Rita Verdonk), was not as radical on the immigrant issue as the LPF and PVV. The party did not acquire seats during the national elections of 2010 and has disappeared out of the public eye (See also: Vossen, 2009).

Statements of party chairman Geert Wilders and the party program of the PVV have been extensively discussed in Dutch society. The party has acquired issue ownership on the area of immigration, in particular towards Muslims (Van Kersbergen & Krouwel, 2008: 398). The party's clear anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim statements are usually provoking and insulting in tone. Furthermore, to reinforce his statements, Wilders frequently uses catchy puns and negative imaging: female Muslims should pay a “*kopvoddentax*” [tax for wearing a headscarf], Moroccan youth is labeled as “*straatterroristen*” [street terrorists] and “*haatimams*” [hate-imams] should leave the country at once (*NRC Handelsblad*, 05.05.2012; *Vrij Nederland*, 05.12.2011). Among the most notorious of Wilders' anti-Muslim activities was the release of his film *Fitna*. This short film consists of two components: the first part highlights the aspects and consequences of Islamic extremism, where images of the bombings in Madrid and London, the attacks on the World Trade Center and the murder of Theo van Gogh⁴ are used. In the second part, the influence of Islam in Dutch society is portrayed. In summary, the film is highly critical and negative towards Islamic religion and its consequences for Dutch society (Vossen, 2009: 438).

The public debate over *Fitna* and how the government and individuals should react towards this film revived a debate on the extension of civil liberties towards groups like the PVV in Dutch society. The debate evolved around a central question: should Wilders be allowed to express his views without restrictions or should boundaries be raised in order to protect the position of Muslims?

On the one hand, advocates of Wilders' message argued in the same line as Nelson et al.: civil liberties (including freedom of expression) should apply to all groups, even when those groups are controversial like the PVV (Nelson et al., 1997: 569). After the release of

⁴ Theo van Gogh was a Dutch producer and columnist. Together with Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a VVD-politician and advocate of women rights among Islamic women, he produced the film *Submission*. The film criticized the position of Islamic women and their alleged maltreatment. Three months after the film was released, Theo van Gogh was murdered by Muslim-extremist Mohammed Bouyeri. The murder of Theo van Gogh sparked outrage and fury in Dutch society (*NRC Handelsblad*, 02-11-2004; *Het Parool*, 02-11-2004).

Fitna, Geert Wilders himself has frequently referred to his right of freedom of expression (e.g. *De Volkskrant*, 14.10.2009).

Opponents have put forward reasons to limit Wilders' freedom of speech. Not only has the release of the film sparked debates about safety risks and "civic harmony" in Dutch society, fostered by the fear of terrorist attacks by Muslim extremists (Nelson et al., 1997: 569; Veldhuis & Bakker, 2009: 3). Most importantly, opponents have pointed towards the fact that political tolerance in one area may undermine the level of political tolerance in another field. In this case, freedom of expression as used by Wilders extensively limits another fundamental right, equally anchored in the Dutch Constitution: freedom of religion. For this reason, these opponents argued that "civil liberties may be restricted when other important values are put at risk": Wilders' freedom of speech and his ability to show *Fitna* should have its limits (Nelson et al., 1997: 569).

Exactly these opposing views concerning political tolerance towards *Fitna* provide an interesting case for an issue-framing experiment. On the one hand, one frame will focus on the freedom of expression arguments. The other frame will merely highlight the view from Wilders' opponents, promoting freedom of religion. As has become clear from the experiment of Nelson et al.: issue framing, when focused on such competing core values, has an effect on the final attitude towards the controversial issue. Ramirez and Verkuyten (2011) summarize the general point: contrasting values mostly lead to "unstable, ambivalent opinions that are affected by the way the controversy is portrayed" (1584 – 1585). In the example of *Fitna*, it could be expected that issue framing will influence level of political tolerance towards the film by shaping the values and determine considerations on which individuals base their political tolerance (Nelson et al., 1997: 570). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H(1): If the participants are exposed to the 'freedom of expression' frame, then they will produce higher levels of tolerance for the showing of Fitna than participants exposed to the 'freedom of religion' frame.

2.5 Limburg

The framing experiment was conducted in several parts of the Netherlands. The reason for this could be illustrated with an example. The study of Nelson et al., concerning the KKK, has been conducted in Ohio (Nelson et al., 1997: 570). Although the authors have found that framing has an effect, it would have been interesting to conduct the experiment in a different state. Would the results have been different, when the framing experiment would have taken place in (the hypothetical case of) a state where a large percentage of its inhabitants were KKK-supporters? In the literature, this component is missing. The Netherlands provides a case where regions differ in their support towards the PVV: of all provinces in the Netherlands, the PVV has gained most success in the province of *Limburg*. In the 2010 elections, almost 25% of its population has voted for the PVV, which gained this party 3 seats in the Dutch House of Representatives. The reasons for this success has not been thoroughly researched. Nevertheless, the fact that Geert Wilders is from this part of the Netherlands might partly have contributed to Wilders' success. Furthermore, anti-establishment feelings are present in Limburg, traditionally a province which has felt undervalued⁵. The success of Wilders is also apparent among young students. The day before the national, provincial and municipal elections, youngsters are entitled to cast their vote during the *scholierenverkiezing*⁶ (election for secondary school students). The results of these elections for Limburg are

⁵ Due to the historical predominance of the province of 'Holland', the province of Limburg has never played an important political- or economic role in Dutch history. Furthermore, the province is situated at the boundary of the Netherlands, far removed from the political and economic centers of The Hague and Amsterdam. Therefore, most people of Limburg do feel more connected with Belgium or Germany, also because of linguistic and geographical reasons.

⁶ More information about this project can be found at www.scholierenverkiezingen.nl.

presented in Table 1, comparing them with the results from the province of *Zuid-Holland*, where the other schools of the experiment are situated.

TABLE 1. PVV-voters among secondary school students		
Election	Percentage PVV-votes per province	
	<i>Limburg</i>	<i>Zuid-Holland</i>
National elections 2010	27,42% ^a	17,68%
Provincial elections 2011	24,61%	20,99%
<i>Source: uitslagen.scholierenverkiezingen.nl</i>		
<i>a: Percentage PVV-voters of total votes per province</i>		

The results show that among secondary school students in *Limburg*, the PVV is more supported than in *Zuid-Holland*. Therefore, it is expected that a difference might occur in both provinces when comparing the framing results: the negative frame might be less effective among students from *Limburg*, because their generally more favorable attitude towards Wilders might prove more difficult to overcome than among the students from *Zuid-Holland*, generally slightly less favorable towards Wilders. This lead to the following hypothesis:

H (2): If a student lives in Limburg, then this student will be less affected by the ‘freedom of religion’ frame compared to a student from Zuid-Holland.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In order to test the hypotheses, an experiment was conducted. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) define an experiment as a method of research, where the investigator creates the circumstances to which respondents will be exposed. External factors are held *ceteris paribus*, which ensures that the effects will occur as a result of “theoretically decisive ways” (Iyengar

& Kinder, 1987: 6). The authors summarize the key point: “The essence of true experiment is control” (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987: 6). Chong and Druckman make a useful remark concerning a framing experiment: “if the goal is to understand how frames in communication affect public opinion, then the researcher needs to isolate a specific attitude” (Chong & Druckman, 2007: 106). As will be shown in the design and procedure paragraph, both written articles obtain separate sentences, headlines and other features in order to promote and isolate the specific frame.

Secondly, an experiment should guard against “cues in the experimental situation or procedure that suggest to participants what is expected from them” (Iyengar, 1990: 25). Therefore, the experiment had a “posttest-only design”: when the students had been asked questions about their level of political tolerance towards *Fitna* before reading the article, they would have had a clue about the intent of the study (Iyengar, 1990: 26). Thirdly, respondents were “randomly assigned” to the created condition, promoting a natural selection procedure (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987: 6).

3.1 Case selection

The experiment was conducted in the Netherlands, visiting three schools throughout the country. The reasons for selecting this country are twofold. First of all, studies conducted in the Netherlands will complement the scholarly gap in framing research: many studies have been performed in the United States, whereas framing studies executed in the Netherlands remain limited⁷.

Secondly, most prominent studies concerning political tolerance have been conducted in the United States and thereby focused on groups which are irrelevant in Europe, such as the Ku Klux Klan. As has been explained in the literature review, Western Europe, including the

⁷ The study of Ramirez and Verkuyten (2011) is one of the few studies on framing and political tolerance conducted in the Netherlands.

Netherlands, has witnessed the rising of several successful, populist radical right parties. Exactly these controversial groups provide an interesting case when testing the level of political tolerance.

Additionally, because of the recentness of this phenomenon, studies concerned with tolerance towards the message of these political groups do not yet exist in abundance. The Netherlands provides an interesting real world example on which the effects of framing on political tolerance could be tested: Geert Wilders and his party PVV. Wilders use of framing tries to decrease the level of political tolerance towards Muslims in Dutch society: the Islamic religion is portrayed as medieval and objectionable; Muslims are associated with criminals and terrorists. Furthermore, according to Wilders, Muslims and immigrants in general occupy jobs of unemployed Dutch citizens. In other words: Wilders uses the ‘us versus them’ frame, embedded in a classical ‘good versus bad’ theme⁸. This framing seems to have an effect: Wilders found considerable support among Dutch citizens, in a country which traditionally has the reputation of a tolerant nation. However, many Dutch citizens do not approve of Wilders’ message. In summary, because Wilders strongly relates to both framing and political tolerance, this subject has been selected for this study.

Furthermore, framing experiments as conducted by e.g. Nelson et al. primarily focus on University students. Nevertheless, research on the effects of framing among adolescents has remained underexposed⁹. Additionally, the few studies which have examined framing effects among pre-adults mainly focused on health issues instead of levels of political tolerance (Chien et al., 1996; Shen et al., 2012). In order to contribute to this knowledge gap,

⁸ For an overview of frames used by Wilders, see “*Geert Wilders in Debat: over de framing en reframing van een politieke boodschap*” [Geert Wilders debating: about the framing and deframing of a political message] by H. de Bruijn (2010).

⁹ Cigler and Joslyn (2002) have researched levels of political tolerance among high school students in Canada, although their focus was not framing effects. There exist other examples of studies on the effects of framing among adolescents, although these primarily focus on obesity/smoking issues (Chien & Lin, 1996).

it was decided to conduct the experiment on secondary schools, studying pre-adults between 12-19 years old. Three schools were selected:

1. *Bernardinuscollege*, Heerlen (*Limburg*)
2. *Christelijk Gymnasium Sorghvliet*, The Hague (*Zuid-Holland*)
3. *Rijnlands Lyceum*, Sassenheim (*Zuid-Holland*)

The selection of these schools was primarily based on geographical reasons: while *Bernardinuscollege* is located in the province of *Limburg*, the other schools are in the *Randstad* (*Zuid-Holland*), the main city-agglomeration in the Netherlands. The reason for this selection has been explained previously in the paper: more favorable positions towards Wilders (as expected in *Limburg*) might potentially bias the effectiveness of the framing experiment.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Design

In order to test the hypotheses, two newspaper articles were written. The articles were constructed following Nelson et al. (1997). Both articles related to a fictive situation, in which Geert Wilders had asked permission at the board of Leiden University to show his highly controversial film *Fitna* at the Law Faculty in September 2008. Furthermore, both articles presented the same set of facts about the controversial situation: (1) The board of Leiden University was considering a request from Geert Wilders to show his film at the Law Faculty of Leiden University; (2) The Dutch Constitution grants all individuals and political parties alike the right to freedom of expression; (3) The message of *Fitna* and the possible consequences of the film are controversial: cars were set to fire after the release of

the film, protests are announced and the municipality of Leiden is concerned about the safety-risks of the event.

Although this information appeared identical in both newspaper articles, different and additional sentences were used to establish two frames: the Freedom of Expression frame and the Freedom of Religion frame. The headline of both articles was different, as well as comments within the text itself. Example of these different quotes and headlines can be found in Table 2. The full text of each story can be found in Appendix A .

	Freedom of expression Frame	Freedom of religion Frame
Theme	Freedom of expression has high priority at Leiden University: although the message of <i>Fitna</i> is controversial, he should be able to get his message out.	Freedom of expression has its boundaries. Freedom of religion is equally important as freedom of expression, which casts doubts about the showing of <i>Fitna</i> . Furthermore, the film <i>Fitna</i> is insulting towards Muslims.
Headlines	Geert Wilders tests Leiden University's Commitment to Freedom of Expression	Freedom of Religion not predominant at Leiden University
Quotes/phrases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How far is Geert Wilders prepared to go to protect the freedom of expression? - "Wilders has the right to express his views and students have the right to see this film when they want to", remarked by Prof. Kinneging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does Leiden University place freedom of speech above freedom of religion? - I do not agree with the fact that one of these right, equally anchored in the Constitution, becomes predominant at our University", remarked by Prof. Kinneging. - "This film insults many Muslims", remarked by the chairman of a student association.

Readers of the first article were exposed to the freedom of expression frame. This frame underlined the importance of freedom of expression above all else. For instance, the comments made by law-professor Andreas Kinneging¹⁰ in this frame focused on the right from Mr. Wilders to express his opinion by showing *Fitna*: “everyone’s right to speak and hear is such a fundamental right that we should allow this even to take place” (See Appendix C). The frame only paid attention to the freedom of expression right and did not mention conflicting values and rights such as freedom of religion. Furthermore, the article talked about “protecting” freedom of expression and “testing” the University’s commitment to this right, implicitly giving a value judgment about the vulnerability and importance of this right. By giving these implications and emphasizing the fundamentality and importance of freedom of expression, it is expected that students will give this right a high priority when deciding whether they support or oppose the showing of *Fitna*.

The second treatment was the freedom of religion frame. In this article, it was emphasized that freedom of expression has its limits: freedom of religion, which is “equally anchored in the Constitution”, has as much weight and value as other fundamental rights. In this context and contrary to the freedom of expression frame, professor Kinneging remarked: “I do not agree with the fact that one of these right becomes predominant at our University.” Furthermore, this frame appeals to the lack of decency of Geert Wilders: the article disapproves of the “insulting” message of Wilders towards Muslims. It is expected that this frame will let students think about the inviolability and boundaries of the freedom of expression right, thereby making them more receptive for a more intolerant point of view towards the activity of Wilders.

¹⁰ Although professor Andreas Kinneging is a professor at the Law Faculty of Leiden University, he has not made the statements used in the written newspaper articles. Therefore, the quotations do not reflect his opinion towards Geert Wilders and/or the film *Fitna*.

Both framed articles were designed as if they were from *NRC Handelsblad*, one of the largest, nation-wide newspapers in the Netherlands.. Most importantly, *NRC Handelsblad* was chosen because this newspaper is “generally regarded as a quality newspaper, more directed at higher social classes” (Hijmans et al., 2003: 158; Janssen, 1999: 333; Alsem et al., 2008: 533). As Druckman (2001) demonstrates, credible sources enhance the effectiveness of the frame, whereas non-credible sources using the exact same frame “fail to affect overall opinion or belief importance” (1056).

Each article had an identical layout, with the logo of *NRC Handelsblad* as the head of the article. Furthermore, the articles had the exact composition as is normally used by *NRC Handelsblad*, thereby increasing the credibility of the article. Slothuus used a similar design when copying the Danish newspaper *Politiken*: “the treatment articles were similar in structure, including length, headline size, byline, and number of sources” (Slothuus, 2008: 13). The used layout can be found in Appendix C.

3.2.2 Procedure

The experiment was conducted in the spring of 2012. 336 secondary school students (187 females, 149 males) participated in the study. Their ages ranged from 12 to 19 years ($M = 15,38$, $SD = 1,585$). The students were enrolled in *HAVO* and *VWO*¹¹ classes, ranging from first year students to graduating groups. The students participated on a voluntary and nonpayment basis. Participants groups ranged in size from 16 to 27 persons. 243 of these students attended secondary school at *Bernardinuscollege* in Heerlen (Limburg), 53 students were from the *Christelijk Gymnasium Sorghvliet* in The Hague (Zuid-Holland) and 40 students were from *Rijnlands Lyceum* in Sassenheim (Zuid-Holland). All students handed in

¹¹ The Dutch secondary school system consist of three levels: *VMBO*, *HAVO* and *VWO*. At the age of 12, all Dutch children are placed in one of these levels. *VWO* is a preparatory phase for University, which students attend for the duration of 6 years. *HAVO*-level lasts 5 years, after which students will go to a *HBO*-level of education, which has the insertion of a more practical approach compared to University.

TABLE 3. Demographic and Political Characteristics of Participants (N = 336)		
	Freq.	%
Sex		
Male	149	44,3%
Female	187	55,7
Age		
12	22	6,5
13	30	8,9
14	26	7,7
15	82	24,4
16	98	29,2
17	55	16,4
18	20	6,0
19	3	0,9
Region/School		
<i>Bernardinuscollege (Limburg)</i>	243	72,3
<i>Christelijk Gymnasium Sorghvliet (Zuid-Holland)</i>	53	15,8
<i>Rijnlands Lyceum (Zuid-Holland)</i>	40	11,9
Level of education		
HAVO 1	27	8,0
VWO 1	26	7,7
VWO 3	50	14,9
HAVO 4	126	37,5
VWO 4	53	15,8
VWO 5	37	11,0
VWO 6	17	5,1
Race/Ethnicity		
Dutch	280	83,3
West-European	9	2,7
East-European	9	2,7
Moroccan	3	0,9
Turkish	2	0,6
Indonesian	2	0,6
Chinese	3	0,9
Surinamese	2	0,6
<i>Limburgs</i>	26	7,7
Political Ideology (Left-Right Placement)		
1 = Extreme Left	4	1,2
2	6	1,8
3	34	10,1
4	52	15,5
5	61	18,2
6 = Moderate	78	23,2
7	44	13,1
8	34	10,1
9	11	3,3
10	9	2,7
11 = Extreme Right	3	0,9
Perceived multicultural environment		
No multicultural environment	111	33,0
Moderate multicultural environment	99	29,5
Multicultural environment	126	37,5
Religion		
Not religious	212	63,1
Catholic	109	32,4
Protestant	5	1,5
Buddhism	2	0,6
Islam	5	1,5
Jewish	1	0,3
Hinduism	1	0,3
<i>Note: Entries are the numbers and percentages who fall into each category for each variable. There were no missing data.</i>		

valid answers. Therefore, no cases were excluded from the analysis. Table 3 further summarizes the demographic and political characteristics of the sample.

After arriving in the classroom in which the study was conducted, the students were instructed that they would participate in scientific research. They were told that the exact purpose of the study would be explained afterwards. The students were asked to read the newspaper article of *NRC Handelsblad* in silence, without discussing the content of the article with each other. In every class, only one of the two framed articles was distributed: in this way, the students could not have an indication about the purpose of the study. Afterwards, they received a questionnaire which they answered without consultation. When every questionnaire was handed in, the purpose of the study was explained to the class and questions were answered.

3.3 Variables

The dependent and independent variables were formulated and measured as follows:

Dependent variable

To assess political tolerance, a question was used based on Nelson et al. (1997): “Do you support or oppose allowing Geert Wilders to show his film at Leiden University?” Respondents could rate this dependent variable on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from *strongly oppose* to *strongly support*.

Independent variables

The most important independent variable was the framing condition. The ‘freedom of expression’ frame was coded as ‘1’, the ‘freedom of religion’ frame was coded as ‘2’. Participants were exposed to only one of two frames.

The study contained a set of control variables, such as the dichotomous variable gender (1 = male, 2 = female). Other control variables were coded as follows: level of education ranged from 1 to 7, where 1 was coded as HAVO 1 and 7 was coded as VWO 6. In theory, 11 possible levels could have participated (5 HAVO and 6 VWO classes) but due to logistical reasons, it was not possible to conduct the experiment at all levels.

The variable ‘secondary school’ was recoded into the variable ‘region’, such that school 1 (*Bernardinuscollege*) represented Limburg and school 2 and 3 (*Christelijk Gymnasium Sorghvliet* and *Rijnlands Lyceum*) corresponded to Zuid-Holland.

The left-right scale was based on a similar scale used by Ramirez and Verkuyten (2011), ranging from 1 (*extreme left*) to 11 (*extreme right*).

Respondents could indicate their ethnicity selecting several options or giving another answer when their background was not provided. The variable ‘ethnicity’ was then coded as

‘1’: Limburgs, ‘2’: Dutch and ‘3’: immigrant background. This was done, because it was expected that due to the anti-immigrant stance of Wilders, all immigrant groups which participated in the study (e.g. Moroccan, Surinamese, Turkish and Eastern-European¹²) would be unfavorable towards Wilders. Due to the hypothesis 2, it was decided to code people who have explicitly indicated to feel ‘*Limburgs*’ as a separate group.

The variable ‘multicultural environment’ measured whether students perceived their environment as multicultural. This was an open ended question, and the answers were coded into three categories: ‘1’: no multicultural environment, ‘2’: moderate multicultural environment, ‘3’ : multicultural environment.

The last control variable was religion. A total of 8 religions were registered, from Catholicism to Buddhism. Because of the clear anti-Muslim ideology of Wilders, this variable was recoded such that ‘1’ relates to ‘other religion’ and ‘2’ is ‘Islamic religion’. The survey can be found in Appendix B.

3.4 Analysis techniques

In order to test hypothesis 1 and 2, a ordinary least squares regression analysis (OLS) was conducted to predict the value of the dependent variable (political tolerance for *Fitna*) from the independent variable ‘Frame’ and the other control variables. Because the outcome variable is not dichotomous but linear, the political tolerance scale is analyzed by simple linear regression.

3.5 Constraints

Unfortunately, due to financial, logistic and time-bound reasons, it was not possible to execute a laboratory experiment as is conducted in most studies on framing, such as Nelson et

¹² Regarding Eastern-Europeans: in early 2012, Wilders has raised eyebrows by establishing the ‘Poland-hotline’, intended for people who had for example complains about Polish seasonal workers. This initiative was not only a hot topic in the Netherlands, but was extensively discussed at the European level as well.

al. (1997), Ramirez & Verkuyten (2011), Iyengar & Kinder (1987) and others. Instead, class rooms were visited using paper-and-pencil articles and questionnaires. Although this might not appear as professional as a laboratory experiment, the experimental conditions remained identical compared to above cited studies. Therefore, there is not reason to believe this method will result in different outcomes.

Secondly, it is not entirely sure whether all adolescents have treated the survey seriously. However, there was not a good criterion to exclude one of the answers without the danger of being too arbitrary. Because all surveys were completely filled in, it was decided to involve all questionnaires in the analysis. In the discussion, the problems occurring by conducting an experiment among adolescents will be further explored.

4. RESULTS

Issue-framing theory predicts that through the use of “qualitative different yet potentially relevant conditions”, the different frames will cause individuals to focus on certain aspects of an issue when constructing their opinion (Druckman, 2004: 673). Therefore, it was expected that participants in the freedom of expression condition would express greater tolerance towards the showing of *Fitna* at Leiden University than students exposed to the freedom of religion frame. Secondly, it was predicted that due to the higher political support for the PVV in Limburg compared to Zuid-Holland, the freedom of religion frame, which was more negatively towards Wilders than the freedom of expression frame, would be less effective among students in Limburg. Table 4 displays the result of an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression model that tests both hypotheses concerning the effect of the framing condition on the level of political tolerance and the influence of region on the effectiveness of the second framing condition.

TABLE 4. Ordinary Least Squares Regression Model Predicting Tolerance for Showing 'Fitna'.

Frame	-.189** (.168)
Sex	-.113* (.169)
Level/years of education	.196** (.033)
Region	.116* (.187)
Left-Right Placement	.263** (.044)
Ethnicity	-.133** (.233)
Multicultural Environment	.054 (.100)
Religion	-.007 (.722)
R ²	.203
Number of Cases	336
Notes: Table entries are standardized regression coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses). * Indicates the coefficient is statistically significant at the level $0.05 \geq p > 0.01$. ** Indicates the coefficient is statistically significant at the level $p \leq 0.01$.	

The results provide strong support for hypothesis 1. The data demonstrate that the framing condition has a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable, tolerance for the showing of *Fitna* at Leiden University. The OLS regression model shows that when a participant is exposed to the freedom of religion frame, this student is associated with a .189 point lower score on the political tolerance scale.

Additionally, the ordinary least squares regression model demonstrates that both gender and ethnicity had a negative, statistically significant relationship with the dependent

variable. The results suggest that when the respondent is a woman, she shows .113 point less tolerance for the activity of Wilders compared to male participants. When a person has an immigrant background, this is associated with a less tolerant attitude towards the showing of *Fitna* with .133 points.

The model further demonstrates that the level of education, as well as political ideology indicates a positive, significant relationship with the tolerant-variable. The results suggest that for every unit increase of education, the respondent will be .196 point more tolerant for showing *Fitna*. In other words, the more education a student has had, the more tolerant he or she is towards the activity of Wilders. As well, the more rightist a person's political ideology is, the more he or she is prone to favor Wilders' activity. The model demonstrates that for every unit increase on the left-right scale, this person will on average be .263 point more tolerant towards the showing of *Fitna*. On the 11 point scale, this means that in general, an extreme-right person (11) will show 2.63 point more tolerance towards *Fitna* than an extreme-left person.

Nevertheless, the results fail to confirm hypothesis 2. The regression model shows an opposite pattern to what was expected: there was a positive, statistically significant relationship between the level of political tolerance towards *Fitna* and the province a student lived in. When a student lives in *Zuid-Holland*, this is associated with a .116 point increase of political tolerance towards the activity of Wilders compared to students living in *Limburg*.

5. DISCUSSION

This study has investigated the effects of framing on the level of political tolerance towards an activity organized by populist right-wing politician Geert Wilders. The results have shown that framing does have an impact: students exposed to the freedom of expression frame

showed significantly higher support for the showing of *Fitna* than students who read an article from the freedom of religion condition.

The experiment was conducted among secondary school students in the South and the West of the Netherlands. In this respect, it could be concluded that framing does have an impact on the level of tolerance among pre-adults. Additionally, although the data from both national elections as well as *scholierenverkiezingen* point towards a more pro-PVV attitude for residents in *Limburg* compared to *Zuid-Holland*, the results of this study could not confirm this pattern.

These conclusions may indicate towards further implications. First of all, it could be asked whether the context in which the experiment took place may have influenced the outcomes of the experiment. The choice for a present-day subject for a framing experiment, like Geert Wilders, provides more insight into very present-day topics, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the world we live in. Nevertheless, it may be argued that exactly this may bias the framing experiment: due to the constant news coverage of Wilders, the framing effect might be less strongly due to predispositions among the public. As Chong and Druckman (2007) observe: “The success of any given attempt to frame an issue also depends on whether other information is available to the audience” (112). In the case of the experiment conducted for this thesis, it might be argued that students were prejudiced about Wilders: three days before the experiment was conducted, the Dutch cabinet fell due to Wilders. The other coalition partners quickly framed the situation in their advantage, accusing Wilders of cowardice and irresponsibility. Entman remarks in this context: “once a term is widely accepted, to use another is to risk that target audiences will perceive the communicator as lacking credibility – or will even fail to understand what the communicator is talking about” (1993: 55). Thus, it might be argued that the framing effects could have been different, when the cabinet had not fallen and the media coverage of Wilders would not have been so negative.

A second implication relates to the effects of mass media on a society-wide level. When a framing effect has significant influence on the levels of political tolerance among participants in an experiment, what could this mean for the influence of the media on society-wide levels of political tolerance? As many authors argue, framing effects are not only observable among a relatively small group of participants: frames used in daily, contemporary mass media influences public opinion at a society-wide level (Brants & Van Praag, 2005: 2; Entman, 1993: 52; Zaller, 1992: 30). In other words: when politicians or journalists succeed in framing a message towards a certain controversial group or minority negatively, then this could lead to decreased levels of political tolerance among many people in society. A recent example has showed this trend in Dutch society: Wilders ability to frame Muslims as a threat for Dutch Society, relating them with terrorism and making suggestions about this group not belonging in the Jewish-Christian tradition of Western-Europe, has resulted in a descending level of political tolerance towards the Muslim minority on a society-wide level in the Netherlands (Van Stokkum, 2009:150; Shadid, 2009: 173).

However, another interpretation could be given as well. Contrary to controversial groups like the KKK, Geert Wilders is an accepted politician in the Netherlands with a considerable amount of supporters. Whereas the KKK will probably find difficulties to use the mass media as a platform to spread their opinions due to their lack of support in society, Wilders will find less constraints in using the mass media to express his views. Nevertheless, the study of Nelson et al. (1997) as well as this bachelor thesis found strong framing effects concerning both groups. What does this tell us about the strength and sustainability of 'accepted' politicians? Although "a common presumption is that elites enjoy considerable leeway in using frames to influence and manipulate citizens", it may be argued that the power of political elites by using framing effect have its boundaries as well (Druckman, 2001: 1044). Due to the constant information flow in newspapers, television, social media and other

internet resources, news coverage on certain issues have not been faster as now. Establishing a frame is one difficulty, but perhaps the preservation of the preferred image is a really hard task for the political elite in this modern age.

The data were not ideal: first of all, a high number of the respondents came from Limburg: for comparative research, it would have been better when the respondents were more equally spread among the regions. Furthermore, although adolescents are an interesting group for research, they are not the most ideal participants: their lack of knowledge about political issues might bias the framing effects. Additionally, it could be possible that they were not fully aware of the seriousness of the survey: keeping a class concentrated was a challenge. A last constraint among this group might be their lack of perspective: e.g., students from Limburg indicated many times that they perceived their environment as multicultural, whereas students in The Hague were less inclined to estimate their environment that way. However, in the city of The Hague live far more nationalities and religions than in Heerlen. Nevertheless, when it is chosen to conduct an experiment among adolescents, these problems will probably be hard to solve.

A second reason why the data were not ideal relates to the following implication: the data showed a strong relationship observed between the level of political tolerance for *Fitna* and the level of education of the students. It might be argued that the students not only could have been influenced by negative framing towards Wilders outside the experimental condition; most of all, it may indicate towards the strong belief in Dutch society towards freedom of speech. In both *VWO*- and *HAVO* classes, debating and formulating one's opinion plays a pivotal role in the curriculum of both tracks. Freedom of expression is seen as such an essential principle in the Netherlands, that it may not have been a fair match with freedom of religion.

In the future, studies could investigate the findings of this study further by adding more cases: more schools throughout the country (in different regions) could be visited, thereby contributing to the research for regional differences in framing effects towards Wilders. Additionally, a control group, who would read a neutral article, could be added to the research. This will possible lead to further insights into the strength of effects of different frames. Future research could also focus on the differences between framing effects on pre-adults and adults. In this case, two framing conditions (e.g. as used in this thesis) should be tested both on adolescents and adults, thereby providing comparable data about the differences (or similarities) of framing effects among these different groups.

In a country where the political landscape has recently changed and the media's role is of significant importance, studies linking the effect of framing and political tolerance are a useful contribution to better understand the situation we live in. Furthermore, the success of Wilders and his effect on Dutch society remain an issue which has not been thoroughly investigated, due to the recentness of this phenomenon. This study makes a small contribution to fill this scholarly knowledge gap.

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7. APPENDIXES

7.1 Appendix A: Texts of both frames (English)

<u>Freedom of Expression</u>	<u>Freedom of religion</u>
<i>Headline: Geert Wilders tests Leiden University's Commitment to Freedom of Expression</i>	<i>Headline: Freedom of Religion not predominant at Leiden University</i>
<p>How far is Geert Wilders prepared to go to protect the freedom of expression?</p> <p>Geert Wilders has requested to show his film 'Fitna' at the Law Faculty of Leiden University in September 2008. The board of Leiden University will decide whether to approve or deny his request in May.</p>	<p>Does Leiden University place Freedom of Speech above Freedom of Religion?</p> <p>Geert Wilders has requested to show his film 'Fitna' at the Law Faculty of Leiden University in September 2008. The board of Leiden University will decide whether to approve or deny his request in May.</p>
<p>The Dutch Constitution ensures that the PVV of Geert Wilders has the right to use his right to freedom of expression, and that individuals have the right to hear his message, if they are interested. However, the message of his film is controversial.</p> <p>Cars were set to fire in The Hague, Utrecht and Amsterdam after the release of the film on the website of the PVV. Muslim organizations have announced protests if Leiden University approves Wilders'</p>	<p>The Dutch Constitution ensures that the PVV of Geert Wilders has the right to use his right to freedom of expression, and that individuals have the right to hear his message, if they are interested. However, the message of his film is controversial.</p> <p>Cars were set to fire in The Hague, Utrecht and Amsterdam after the release of the film on the website of the PVV. Muslim organizations have announced protests if Leiden University approves Wilders'</p>

<p>request. The municipality of Leiden expects a large police force is needed to secure the safety of the event.</p>	<p>request. The municipality of Leiden expects a large police force is needed to secure the safety of the event.</p>
<p>Opinions about the displaying of Wilder’s film is mixed. Many students, faculty and staff worry about the event, but support Wilder’s right of freedom of expression. Andreas Kinnegin, professor at the Law faculty of Leiden University, remarked: “I do not approve of the content of the film, but Wilders has the right to express his views and students have the right to see this film when they want to. We have some concerns about this event, but everyone’s right to speak and hear is such a fundamental right that we should allow this even to take place.”</p>	<p>Opinions about the displaying of Wilder’s film is mixed. Many students, faculty and staff have expressed their disagreement with the showing of the film. Andreas Kinnegin, professor at the Law faculty of Leiden University, remarked: “Freedom of Expression is important, but so is Freedom of Religion. I do not agree with the fact that one of these right, equally anchored in the Constitution, becomes predominant at our University.” Yannick Looije, chairman of Student Association ‘Augustinus’, has expressed similar concerns: “This film insults many muslims. Freedom of Religion, which Mr. Wilders attacks, should be protected.”</p>
<p><i>Source: NRC Handelsblad, 20 April 2008.</i></p>	<p><i>Source: NRC Handelsblad, 20 April 2008.</i></p>

7.2 Appendix B: Survey

Survey

Please carefully read the newspaper article from *NRC Handelsblad*. After reading the article, answer the following questions:

1. Do you support or oppose allowing Geert Wilders to show his film at Leiden University?

Strongly oppose	Somewhat oppose	Slightly oppose	Neutral	Slightly support	Somewhat support	Strongly support
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2. How do you feel towards the following groups?

- Geert Wilders/PVV

Strongly Disfavor	Somewhat disfavor	Slightly disfavor	Neutral	Slightly favor	Somewhat favor	Strongly favor
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- Muslims

Strongly Disfavor	Somewhat disfavor	Slightly disfavor	Neutral	Slightly favor	Somewhat favor	Strongly favor
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3. Please choose one of the options:

Freedom of Expression

Freedom of Religion

4. How do you feel about the following statements? (1 – 7 scale again)

Freedom of Expression scale

- I believe in free speech for all no matter what their views might be
- People should have the freedom to express their own opinions publicly

- The government should not have the right to censor published materials

Freedom of Religion Scale

- I believe in freedom of religion no matter how one opposes with one religion
- People should be allowed to profess the faith they want
- The government does not have to right to interfere with the religion people would like to profess

Control variables

When more options are available, please encircle the option which relates to your situation.

1. Are you male or female? M/F
2. What is your age?
3. What is the name of your secondary school?
4. Which class are you in?
 - HAVO 3
 - HAVO 4
 - HAVO 5
 - VWO 3
 - VWO 4
 - VWO 5
 - VWO 6
 - Other, namely:
5. How would you describe your ethnic background?
 - Dutch
 - WesternEuropean
 - Eastern European

- Moroccan
- Turkish
- Antillian
- Other, namely:

6. Are you religious? If so, which religion?
7. Do you feel affiliation with the province you live in? Could you elaborate on that?
8. Would you describe your environment as ‘multicultural’? If so, could you elaborate on that?
9. If you were allowed to vote, for which party would you vote? Why?

- VVD
- CDA
- PVV
- PvdA
- D66
- GroenLinks
- SP
- ChristenUnie
- SGP
- Partij voor de Dieren
- Onafhankelijke Burgerpartij
- Other, namely:

10. When putting yourself on a left-right scale, where would you place yourself?

1.Left	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11.Right
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Wing										Wing
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NRC HANDELSBLAD

GODSDIENSTVRIJHEID VAN ONDERGESCHIKT BELANG AAN UNIVERSITEIT LEIDEN

VAN ONZE VERSLAGGEEFSTER
Marjoleine Heimstra

LEIDEN – Stelt de Universiteit Leiden vrijheid van meningsuiting boven vrijheid van godsdienst? Geert Wilders heeft een verzoek ingediend om zijn film ‘Fitna’ te vertonen op de Rechtenfaculteit van de Universiteit in September 2008. Het college van Bestuur van de Universiteit Leiden neemt in mei een beslissing over dit verzoek.

De Nederlandse Grondwet garandeert dat de PVV van Geert Wilders in haar recht staat wanneer Wilders beroep wil doen op zijn vrijheid van meningsuiting. Eenieder die naar hem wil luisteren, moet daartoe de gelegenheid

krijgen. De boodschap van de film ‘Fitna’ is echter controversieel. Nadat Wilders zijn film op de partijwebsite plaatste, ontstonden schermutselingen in Den Haag, Utrecht en Amsterdam. Auto’s werden in brand gestoken. Moslimorganisaties hebben protesten aangekondigd wanneer de Universiteit Leiden ingaat op Wilders’ verzoek. De gemeente Leiden houdt rekening met een verhoogde politie-inzet om de veiligheid van het evenement te garanderen.

De meningen over het plan van Wilders zijn verdeeld. Veel studenten, faculteiten en medewerkers van de Universiteit hebben hun zorgen en ongenoegen geuit over het vertonen

van de film op de rechtenfaculteit. Andreas Kinnegin, professor rechtsfilosofie verbonden aan de Universiteit Leiden, stelt: “Vrijheid van meningsuiting is belangrijk, maar vrijheid van godsdienst net zo goed. Ik ben het fundamenteel oneens met het feit dat één van deze grondrechten, gelijk verankerd in onze grondwet, op onze Universiteit voorrang krijgt.” Yannick Looije, voorzitter van de Leidse Studentenvereniging ‘Augustinus’, uit vergelijkbare zorgen: “Deze film is beledigend voor moslims. De godsdienstvrijheid, die de heer Wilders met zijn film aanvalt, moet beschermd worden.”

***Uit: NRC
Handelsblad, 20
april 2008***

Framing and Political Tolerance

The Effects of Issue Framing on Adolescents' Levels of Political Tolerance towards Wilders

Bachelor Thesis

Political Psychology

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Manon Reuters

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1. Introduction

The Republican pollster Frank Luntz observed in 1997 that a good political campaign revolves around an essential principle: “It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it” (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007: 9). This observation was hardly new: the phenomenon of framing is known for decades and has been researched by scholars across different academic disciplines. Political scientists have found evidence from experiments underlining the importance of framing: the attitude of citizens towards political issues and public policy is influenced by how the issue is framed (Nelson et al., 1997). This leads Druckman to observe: “framing constitutes one of the most important concepts in the study of public opinion” (Druckman, 2001: 1041).

This phenomenon of framing interestingly contributes to the understanding of real world examples when combined with political tolerance. “The willingness to put up with the expressions of ideas or interests that one rejects”, as political tolerance is defined, is of great importance in multicultural, diverse societies. However, Western Europe has witnessed the rising of several radical right parties undermining this political tolerance towards immigrant minorities. The Netherlands, where the PVV of Geert Wilders has been supported by a considerable group in Dutch society, provides an interesting case in this context. Although the message of Wilders is intolerant towards Muslims, there are groups in the Netherlands who feel resented by exactly this message and, in turn, feel intolerant towards the PVV.

This study aims to use this real world example, by researching the effect of framing on the level of political tolerance towards Wilders. A scholarly knowledge gap exists on several aspects which are central in this paper. First of all, most framing studies have focused on the United States. However, as shown by the case of Wilders, other countries provide interesting cases for framing- and political tolerance studies. Therefore, this study will focus on the Netherlands.

Secondly, due to the recent rise of Wilders, research on this topic remains limited. Nevertheless, especially the type of frame he uses corresponds perfectly with the subject of political tolerance. Wilders frequently tries to depict Muslims as criminals and terrorists, thereby being dangerous for Dutch society. His framing suggests and tries to provoke an ‘us versus them’ feeling: decent, hard-working Dutch citizens versus criminal, lazy immigrants, abusing the Dutch hospitality. With this type of framing, Wilders tries to decrease the level of political tolerance towards the Muslim minority. This is why a study combining the subjects of Wilders, framing and the consequent level of political tolerance would provide more insight into the real-world situation of the Netherlands.

Finally, the studies on framing and political tolerance have not focused frequently on adolescents. This study will especially focus on this group.

The main question which will be answered in the paper is: *What is the effect of framing on the level of political tolerance towards an activity of Wilders?* In order to answer this question, this paper has conducted an experiment: students were asked to read one of two framed articles, concerning a fictive event planned by Wilders. The first article was framed positively towards Wilders, the second article was framed negatively. Afterwards, students were asked to indicate their level of political tolerance towards the event.

Secondly, this paper will research whether a more favorable pro-Wilders attitude, as is expected among the respondents in the Dutch province *Limburg*, causes the negative frame to be less effective compared to the participants from the other, more neutral-PVV province of *Zuid-Holland*.

This paper will firstly conceptualize the concept of framing and define different types of frames. Furthermore, political tolerance will be defined, which will be linked to the person of Geert Wilders and his party PVV. Secondly, the research design and methodology will be

explained. Thirdly, this paper will present the findings from the conducted experiment. The results and implications will be summarized in the discussion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Framing

The question of how to define the concept of ‘framing’ is an issue on which academics disagree (Entman, 1993: 51). Due to the use of the concept across several academic subfields, there exists substantial conceptual disagreement and confusion about different types of framing effects, and the distinction between framing and related concepts (Chong & Druckman, 2007: 114; Slothuus, 2008: 3).

A starting point in the clarification of the framing concept is provided by the work of Entman (1993). The author argues that essential components of the framing process are “selection and salience” (Entman, 1993: 52). According to Edelman, the possible interpretations of issues and events are manifold: “The social world is a kaleidoscope of potential realities” (Edelman, 1993: 231). Therefore, a communication source should firstly identify and select “aspects of a perceived reality” (Entman, 1993: 52). Secondly, this adopted view of reality is promoted by making the selected aspects of an issue more salient: pieces of information are made more “noticeable, meaningful or memorable to audiences” (Entman, 1993: 52). In other words: by putting emphasis on certain aspects of an issue or event and the consequent downplaying of other related features, journalists and political elites try to guide the audiences to what they perceive as “the essence of the issue” (Slothuus, 2008 1; Gamson & Modigliani, 1987: 143).

Entman further argues that most frames contain an evaluative component: not only is a particular definition promoted, frames may go “so far as to recommend what (if anything) should be done (Shah et al., 2002: 343; Entman, 1993: 52). Frames may suggest a “preferred

policy direction”, a recommendation for treatment or a moral direction for the audience to evaluate the issue at stake (Gamson and Modigliana, 1987: 143; Entman, 1993: 52). Therefore, the evaluative component takes the concept of framing one step further by looking at the effects of framing on the final attitude of its audience. Framing has an effect when individuals adopt the evaluative direction suggested by the frame. Put differently, framing effects occur when the opinion of the audience is influenced by the relevant considerations promoted by the frame (Druckman & Nelson, 2003: 730; Druckman, 2001b: 226 – 231).

The research record to date demonstrates that “framing works”: numerous studies across a range of issues have shown that attitudes, behavior and public opinion are largely affected by how the issue or event is framed (Gross & D’Ambrosio, 2004: 3; Chong & Druckman, 2007: 109; Nelson & Oxley, 1999: 1042). For example, Kinder & Sanders (1990) show that the “undeserved advantage” frame causes white respondents in the United States to have less favorable opinions towards affirmative action policies compared to those respondents exposed to the “reverse discrimination” frame (134). In a similar vein, Schaffner and Atkinson (2010) demonstrate that a “death tax” frame, mostly used by the Republican party in the United States, results in less support for this tax compared to the attitude of respondents exposed to the “estate tax” frame of the Democratic party (122). Many other studies lead to the same conclusion: framing matters for public opinion (e.g. Jacoby, 2000; Iyengar, 1990; Nelson & Oxley, 1999; Brewer, Graf & Willnat, 2003; Nelson, Wittmer & Shortle, 2010; Chong & Druckman, 2007; Druckman, 2001).

However, framing experiments have mainly been conducted among University students and older adult participants. As Chien, Lin and Worthley (1996) observe, framing experiments among adolescents remain underexposed (812). In order to fill this gap, they undertook a framing experiment among high school students. Like the study from Chien, Lin and Worthley, Shen et al. (2012) found framing effects among pre-adults as well. Looking at

these empirical results, it could be expected that further framing studies among pre-adults provide similar results.

2.2 Equivalency Frames versus Issue Frames

In order to structure the concept of framing one step further, it is useful to look at the different types of frames. Although many scholars have researched this topic¹, the scope of this bachelor thesis does not allow to investigate all different forms in full depth. Two types of frames will be highlighted, due to their frequent occurrence in political science research and daily presence in mass media (Slothuus, 2008: 3).

In his study, Slothuus makes a distinction between “equivalency frames” and “issue frames” (Slothuus, 2008: 3). The former refers to frames where “different, but logically equivalent, words or phrases” are used when presenting an issue or problem (Druckman, 2001b: 228). According to Druckman (2004), this typically means presenting the same information in “either a positive or negative light” (671). Kahneman and Tversky were one of the first to apply such a frame in their study. Participants were exposed to a program which would combat an Asian disease where “200 out of 600 people will be saved” or “400 out of 600 people will die” (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984: 343).

However, Slothuus observes that this type of frame is certainly useful, but not the most widely used in political news watched or read by most citizens (Slothuus, 2008: 3). In the political reality, mass media actors will not present information in two logically equivalent manners. Issue framing, where the issue or problem is already interpreted and “a subset of potentially relevant considerations” (Druckman, 2004: 672) are brought under the attention of the public, provide a better characterization of contemporary mass media (Slothuus, 2008: 3).

¹ For a brief overview of the different sorts of frames, see Nelson, Wittmer and Shortle (2010) in *Winning with words*, eds. Schaffner & Sellers (2010) or Chong & Druckman (2007). Another example is provided by Iyengar (1990), who makes a distinction between thematic frames and episodic frames. For example, in the case of poverty, a thematic frame could point towards a general trend in society in poverty rates, whereas an episodic frame may highlight individual cases (personal experience) (Iyengar, 1990: 22).

Issue frames occur in mass media because the usual complexity of political issues lends itself perfectly to simplify the issue and make a suggestion about what should be the core elements of a controversy (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987: 143). Therefore, Jacoby (2000) argues that issue framing has an “explicitly political nature”: when political elites manage to frame an issue in such a way that “shines the best possible light on their own preferred courses of action”, this will result in a favorable public opinion towards this issue or policy (751).

A much cited example of an issue frame occurs in the study of Nelson, Clawson and Oxley (1997). A Ku Klux Klan rally was held in a small Ohio city, after which a KKK leader would make a speech. Two groups of participants were shown a news coverage of this event, where most of the facts were the same in both frames. However, the free speech frame emphasized the right of the Klan members to express their views, whereas the public order frame focused on the safety risks which the event would cause. This emphasis was added through the use of different quotes, images and interviews (Nelson et al., 1997: 571). The framing conditions had an effect: participants in the free speech frame showed higher tolerance for KKK-activities than respondents exposed to the public order treatment. Studies using two issue frames find similar results: framing does have an effect on the attitude of those who were exposed to the frame (Slothuus, 2008; Ramirez & Verkuyten, 2011; Jacoby, 2000; Sniderman & Theriault, 2004). Supported by these theoretical assumptions and empirical results, this paper conducts a similar issue-framing experiment.

2.3 Political Tolerance

Issue framing is interestingly put into practice when combined with the concept of political tolerance. For the functioning of democratic systems with increasingly diverse societies, the existence of political tolerance towards minorities and other groups is fundamental for the survival of these democracies (Ramirez & Verkuyten, 2011: 583). Sullivan et al. (1979)

define tolerance as “a willingness to put up with those things that one rejects”, which politically implies “the willingness to permit the expression of those ideas or interests that one opposes” (Sullivan et al., 1979: 784). Gibson & Bingham add to the definition of political tolerance that civil liberties should apply to all groups: when civil liberties and -rights are granted only for those with whom one agrees, the very essence of civil liberties loses its meaning and purpose (Gibson & Bingham, 1982: 604; Nelson et al., 1997: 569) Other scholars have examined the level of political tolerance using comparable definitions (Harrel, 2010; Peffley & Rohrschneider, 2003; Nelson et al, 1997).

Scholars have explored many different causes for the level of political (in)tolerance of citizens. Whereas tolerance has been examined in combination with personality characteristics (Felman & Stenner, 1997), religion (Wilcox & Jelen, 1990) and education (Vogt, 1997), other studies have focused on the relationship between support for democratic values and political tolerance. Gibson (1987) demonstrated that general support for democratic values contributed to the level of political tolerance towards homosexuals and the Ku Klux Klan. However, political tolerance is not only influenced by civil rights such as freedom of speech: other values (e.g. public order and safety concerns) may equally affect the level of political tolerance (Nelson et al., 1997). Furthermore, even fundamental civil rights may contradict with each other. Whereas the rights of free speech and assembly are anchored in most Constitutions in Western Democracies and supported by vast majorities in those countries, these values may interfere with equally supported and important Constitutional rights, such as freedom of religion (Peffley & Rohrschneider, 2003: 243; Ramirez & Verkuyten, 2011: 1587).

Nelson et al. observed that precisely these equally important, but mutually exclusive values related to political tolerance provide an excellent case to combine with the effects of issue framing. However, their case selection (a Ku Klux Klan speech and –rally) would not

optimally respond to the level of political tolerance among Dutch students, considering the absence of the KKK in the Netherlands. The next paragraph will further discuss the case selection which was chosen for this study.

2.4 Geert Wilders and the PVV

In different countries during varying periods of time, the controversial groups in society towards which political tolerance was tested have changed. Whereas communists were a contemporary topic during the 1950s in the United States (Stouffer, 1955) and Ku Klux Klan members remain at issue presently in the U.S. (Nelson et al., 1997), the Netherlands² has witnessed the rise of several populist, radical right parties during the last decade (Vossen, 2009: 437; Mudde, 2004: 551). These populist parties manifest themselves by agitating against the corrupt elite, thereby claiming to truly represent the ‘normal people’. Furthermore, these political groups adhere to a socially constructed image of an enemy of these ‘normal people’: a specific group in society, which is perceived as a threat towards the national identity (Zaslove, 2008: 323). Of these parties, the *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* [Party for Freedom; PVV] from Geert Wilders has remained most influential and seems “consolidated” in the Dutch party system³ (De Lange & Art, 2011: 1230). Since its establishment, the party has gained support among a considerable group in the Netherlands: during its first elections in 2006, the party received approximately 6% of the votes, resulting in 9 seats in the House of Representatives; in the 2010 elections, the party increased its seats to 24 (www.parlement.com).

² The rising of populist, (mostly) radical right parties has occurred in many countries in Western Europe, including France, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark and Italy. In this context, Mudde refers to a ‘Populist *Zeitgeist*’: a period of time where populist parties are rather successful (2004: 551).

³ Other populist right parties are *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* [List Pim Fortuyn; LPF] and *Trots op Nederland* [Proud of the Netherlands; TON]. Especially the LPF shared the anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim ideas of Wilders. After the murder of Pim Fortuyn on May 6, 2002 (shortly before national elections were held), the party acquired (as a newcomer) 26 seats. However, internal disputes and the absence of the party’s leader soon resulted in the demise of the party. TON, established by another VVD-dissident (Rita Verdonk), was not as radical on the immigrant issue as the LPF and PVV. The party did not acquire seats during the national elections of 2010 and has disappeared out of the public eye (See also: Vossen, 2009).

Statements of party chairman Geert Wilders and the party program of the PVV have been extensively discussed in Dutch society. The party has acquired issue ownership on the area of immigration, in particular towards Muslims (Van Kersbergen & Krouwel, 2008: 398). The party's clear anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim statements are usually provoking and insulting in tone. Furthermore, to reinforce his statements, Wilders frequently uses catchy puns and negative imaging: female Muslims should pay a “*kopvoddentax*” [tax for wearing a headscarf], Moroccan youth is labeled as “*straatterroristen*” [street terrorists] and “*haatimams*” [hate-imams] should leave the country at once (*NRC Handelsblad*, 05.05.2012; *Vrij Nederland*, 05.12.2011). Among the most notorious of Wilders' anti-Muslim activities was the release of his film *Fitna*. This short film consists of two components: the first part highlights the aspects and consequences of Islamic extremism, where images of the bombings in Madrid and London, the attacks on the World Trade Center and the murder of Theo van Gogh⁴ are used. In the second part, the influence of Islam in Dutch society is portrayed. In summary, the film is highly critical and negative towards Islamic religion and its consequences for Dutch society (Vossen, 2009: 438).

The public debate over *Fitna* and how the government and individuals should react towards this film revived a debate on the extension of civil liberties towards groups like the PVV in Dutch society. The debate evolved around a central question: should Wilders be allowed to express his views without restrictions or should boundaries be raised in order to protect the position of Muslims?

On the one hand, advocates of Wilders' message argued in the same line as Nelson et al.: civil liberties (including freedom of expression) should apply to all groups, even when those groups are controversial like the PVV (Nelson et al., 1997: 569). After the release of

⁴ Theo van Gogh was a Dutch producer and columnist. Together with Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a VVD-politician and advocate of women rights among Islamic women, he produced the film *Submission*. The film criticized the position of Islamic women and their alleged maltreatment. Three months after the film was released, Theo van Gogh was murdered by Muslim-extremist Mohammed Bouyeri. The murder of Theo van Gogh sparked outrage and fury in Dutch society (*NRC Handelsblad*, 02-11-2004; *Het Parool*, 02-11-2004).

Fitna, Geert Wilders himself has frequently referred to his right of freedom of expression (e.g. *De Volkskrant*, 14.10.2009).

Opponents have put forward reasons to limit Wilders' freedom of speech. Not only has the release of the film sparked debates about safety risks and "civic harmony" in Dutch society, fostered by the fear of terrorist attacks by Muslim extremists (Nelson et al., 1997: 569; Veldhuis & Bakker, 2009: 3). Most importantly, opponents have pointed towards the fact that political tolerance in one area may undermine the level of political tolerance in another field. In this case, freedom of expression as used by Wilders extensively limits another fundamental right, equally anchored in the Dutch Constitution: freedom of religion. For this reason, these opponents argued that "civil liberties may be restricted when other important values are put at risk": Wilders' freedom of speech and his ability to show *Fitna* should have its limits (Nelson et al., 1997: 569).

Exactly these opposing views concerning political tolerance towards *Fitna* provide an interesting case for an issue-framing experiment. On the one hand, one frame will focus on the freedom of expression arguments. The other frame will merely highlight the view from Wilders' opponents, promoting freedom of religion. As has become clear from the experiment of Nelson et al.: issue framing, when focused on such competing core values, has an effect on the final attitude towards the controversial issue. Ramirez and Verkuyten (2011) summarize the general point: contrasting values mostly lead to "unstable, ambivalent opinions that are affected by the way the controversy is portrayed" (1584 – 1585). In the example of *Fitna*, it could be expected that issue framing will influence level of political tolerance towards the film by shaping the values and determine considerations on which individuals base their political tolerance (Nelson et al., 1997: 570). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H(1): If the participants are exposed to the 'freedom of expression' frame, then they will produce higher levels of tolerance for the showing of Fitna than participants exposed to the 'freedom of religion' frame.

2.5 Limburg

The framing experiment was conducted in several parts of the Netherlands. The reason for this could be illustrated with an example. The study of Nelson et al., concerning the KKK, has been conducted in Ohio (Nelson et al., 1997: 570). Although the authors have found that framing has an effect, it would have been interesting to conduct the experiment in a different state. Would the results have been different, when the framing experiment would have taken place in (the hypothetical case of) a state where a large percentage of its inhabitants were KKK-supporters? In the literature, this component is missing. The Netherlands provides a case where regions differ in their support towards the PVV: of all provinces in the Netherlands, the PVV has gained most success in the province of *Limburg*. In the 2010 elections, almost 25% of its population has voted for the PVV, which gained this party 3 seats in the Dutch House of Representatives. The reasons for this success has not been thoroughly researched. Nevertheless, the fact that Geert Wilders is from this part of the Netherlands might partly have contributed to Wilders' success. Furthermore, anti-establishment feelings are present in Limburg, traditionally a province which has felt undervalued⁵. The success of Wilders is also apparent among young students. The day before the national, provincial and municipal elections, youngsters are entitled to cast their vote during the *scholierenverkiezing*⁶ (election for secondary school students). The results of these elections for Limburg are

⁵ Due to the historical predominance of the province of 'Holland', the province of Limburg has never played an important political- or economic role in Dutch history. Furthermore, the province is situated at the boundary of the Netherlands, far removed from the political and economic centers of The Hague and Amsterdam. Therefore, most people of Limburg do feel more connected with Belgium or Germany, also because of linguistic and geographical reasons.

⁶ More information about this project can be found at www.scholierenverkiezingen.nl.

presented in Table 1, comparing them with the results from the province of *Zuid-Holland*, where the other schools of the experiment are situated.

TABLE 1. PVV-voters among secondary school students		
Election	Percentage PVV-votes per province	
	<i>Limburg</i>	<i>Zuid-Holland</i>
National elections 2010	27,42% ^a	17,68%
Provincial elections 2011	24,61%	20,99%
<i>Source: uitslagen.scholierenverkiezingen.nl</i>		
<i>a: Percentage PVV-voters of total votes per province</i>		

The results show that among secondary school students in *Limburg*, the PVV is more supported than in *Zuid-Holland*. Therefore, it is expected that a difference might occur in both provinces when comparing the framing results: the negative frame might be less effective among students from *Limburg*, because their generally more favorable attitude towards Wilders might prove more difficult to overcome than among the students from *Zuid-Holland*, generally slightly less favorable towards Wilders. This lead to the following hypothesis:

H (2): If a student lives in Limburg, then this student will be less affected by the ‘freedom of religion’ frame compared to a student from Zuid-Holland.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In order to test the hypotheses, an experiment was conducted. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) define an experiment as a method of research, where the investigator creates the circumstances to which respondents will be exposed. External factors are held *ceteris paribus*, which ensures that the effects will occur as a result of “theoretically decisive ways” (Iyengar

& Kinder, 1987: 6). The authors summarize the key point: “The essence of true experiment is control” (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987: 6). Chong and Druckman make a useful remark concerning a framing experiment: “if the goal is to understand how frames in communication affect public opinion, then the researcher needs to isolate a specific attitude” (Chong & Druckman, 2007: 106). As will be shown in the design and procedure paragraph, both written articles obtain separate sentences, headlines and other features in order to promote and isolate the specific frame.

Secondly, an experiment should guard against “cues in the experimental situation or procedure that suggest to participants what is expected from them” (Iyengar, 1990: 25). Therefore, the experiment had a “posttest-only design”: when the students had been asked questions about their level of political tolerance towards *Fitna* before reading the article, they would have had a clue about the intent of the study (Iyengar, 1990: 26). Thirdly, respondents were “randomly assigned” to the created condition, promoting a natural selection procedure (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987: 6).

3.1 Case selection

The experiment was conducted in the Netherlands, visiting three schools throughout the country. The reasons for selecting this country are twofold. First of all, studies conducted in the Netherlands will complement the scholarly gap in framing research: many studies have been performed in the United States, whereas framing studies executed in the Netherlands remain limited⁷.

Secondly, most prominent studies concerning political tolerance have been conducted in the United States and thereby focused on groups which are irrelevant in Europe, such as the Ku Klux Klan. As has been explained in the literature review, Western Europe, including the

⁷ The study of Ramirez and Verkuyten (2011) is one of the few studies on framing and political tolerance conducted in the Netherlands.

Netherlands, has witnessed the rising of several successful, populist radical right parties. Exactly these controversial groups provide an interesting case when testing the level of political tolerance.

Additionally, because of the recentness of this phenomenon, studies concerned with tolerance towards the message of these political groups do not yet exist in abundance. The Netherlands provides an interesting real world example on which the effects of framing on political tolerance could be tested: Geert Wilders and his party PVV. Wilders use of framing tries to decrease the level of political tolerance towards Muslims in Dutch society: the Islamic religion is portrayed as medieval and objectionable; Muslims are associated with criminals and terrorists. Furthermore, according to Wilders, Muslims and immigrants in general occupy jobs of unemployed Dutch citizens. In other words: Wilders uses the ‘us versus them’ frame, embedded in a classical ‘good versus bad’ theme⁸. This framing seems to have an effect: Wilders found considerable support among Dutch citizens, in a country which traditionally has the reputation of a tolerant nation. However, many Dutch citizens do not approve of Wilders’ message. In summary, because Wilders strongly relates to both framing and political tolerance, this subject has been selected for this study.

Furthermore, framing experiments as conducted by e.g. Nelson et al. primarily focus on University students. Nevertheless, research on the effects of framing among adolescents has remained underexposed⁹. Additionally, the few studies which have examined framing effects among pre-adults mainly focused on health issues instead of levels of political tolerance (Chien et al., 1996; Shen et al., 2012). In order to contribute to this knowledge gap,

⁸ For an overview of frames used by Wilders, see “*Geert Wilders in Debat: over de framing en reframing van een politieke boodschap*” [Geert Wilders debating: about the framing and deframing of a political message] by H. de Bruijn (2010).

⁹ Cigler and Joslyn (2002) have researched levels of political tolerance among high school students in Canada, although their focus was not framing effects. There exist other examples of studies on the effects of framing among adolescents, although these primarily focus on obesity/smoking issues (Chien & Lin, 1996).

it was decided to conduct the experiment on secondary schools, studying pre-adults between 12-19 years old. Three schools were selected:

1. *Bernardinuscollege*, Heerlen (*Limburg*)
2. *Christelijk Gymnasium Sorghvliet*, The Hague (*Zuid-Holland*)
3. *Rijnlands Lyceum*, Sassenheim (*Zuid-Holland*)

The selection of these schools was primarily based on geographical reasons: while *Bernardinuscollege* is located in the province of *Limburg*, the other schools are in the *Randstad* (*Zuid-Holland*), the main city-agglomeration in the Netherlands. The reason for this selection has been explained previously in the paper: more favorable positions towards Wilders (as expected in *Limburg*) might potentially bias the effectiveness of the framing experiment.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Design

In order to test the hypotheses, two newspaper articles were written. The articles were constructed following Nelson et al. (1997). Both articles related to a fictive situation, in which Geert Wilders had asked permission at the board of Leiden University to show his highly controversial film *Fitna* at the Law Faculty in September 2008. Furthermore, both articles presented the same set of facts about the controversial situation: (1) The board of Leiden University was considering a request from Geert Wilders to show his film at the Law Faculty of Leiden University; (2) The Dutch Constitution grants all individuals and political parties alike the right to freedom of expression; (3) The message of *Fitna* and the possible consequences of the film are controversial: cars were set to fire after the release of

the film, protests are announced and the municipality of Leiden is concerned about the safety-risks of the event.

Although this information appeared identical in both newspaper articles, different and additional sentences were used to establish two frames: the Freedom of Expression frame and the Freedom of Religion frame. The headline of both articles was different, as well as comments within the text itself. Example of these different quotes and headlines can be found in Table 2. The full text of each story can be found in Appendix A .

	Freedom of expression Frame	Freedom of religion Frame
Theme	Freedom of expression has high priority at Leiden University: although the message of <i>Fitna</i> is controversial, he should be able to get his message out.	Freedom of expression has its boundaries. Freedom of religion is equally important as freedom of expression, which casts doubts about the showing of <i>Fitna</i> . Furthermore, the film <i>Fitna</i> is insulting towards Muslims.
Headlines	Geert Wilders tests Leiden University's Commitment to Freedom of Expression	Freedom of Religion not predominant at Leiden University
Quotes/phrases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How far is Geert Wilders prepared to go to protect the freedom of expression? - "Wilders has the right to express his views and students have the right to see this film when they want to", remarked by Prof. Kinneging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does Leiden University place freedom of speech above freedom of religion? - I do not agree with the fact that one of these right, equally anchored in the Constitution, becomes predominant at our University", remarked by Prof. Kinneging. - "This film insults many Muslims", remarked by the chairman of a student association.

Readers of the first article were exposed to the freedom of expression frame. This frame underlined the importance of freedom of expression above all else. For instance, the comments made by law-professor Andreas Kinneging¹⁰ in this frame focused on the right from Mr. Wilders to express his opinion by showing *Fitna*: “everyone’s right to speak and hear is such a fundamental right that we should allow this even to take place” (See Appendix C). The frame only paid attention to the freedom of expression right and did not mention conflicting values and rights such as freedom of religion. Furthermore, the article talked about “protecting” freedom of expression and “testing” the University’s commitment to this right, implicitly giving a value judgment about the vulnerability and importance of this right. By giving these implications and emphasizing the fundamentality and importance of freedom of expression, it is expected that students will give this right a high priority when deciding whether they support or oppose the showing of *Fitna*.

The second treatment was the freedom of religion frame. In this article, it was emphasized that freedom of expression has its limits: freedom of religion, which is “equally anchored in the Constitution”, has as much weight and value as other fundamental rights. In this context and contrary to the freedom of expression frame, professor Kinneging remarked: “I do not agree with the fact that one of these right becomes predominant at our University.” Furthermore, this frame appeals to the lack of decency of Geert Wilders: the article disapproves of the “insulting” message of Wilders towards Muslims. It is expected that this frame will let students think about the inviolability and boundaries of the freedom of expression right, thereby making them more receptive for a more intolerant point of view towards the activity of Wilders.

¹⁰ Although professor Andreas Kinneging is a professor at the Law Faculty of Leiden University, he has not made the statements used in the written newspaper articles. Therefore, the quotations do not reflect his opinion towards Geert Wilders and/or the film *Fitna*.

Both framed articles were designed as if they were from *NRC Handelsblad*, one of the largest, nation-wide newspapers in the Netherlands.. Most importantly, *NRC Handelsblad* was chosen because this newspaper is “generally regarded as a quality newspaper, more directed at higher social classes” (Hijmans et al., 2003: 158; Janssen, 1999: 333; Alsem et al., 2008: 533). As Druckman (2001) demonstrates, credible sources enhance the effectiveness of the frame, whereas non-credible sources using the exact same frame “fail to affect overall opinion or belief importance” (1056).

Each article had an identical layout, with the logo of *NRC Handelsblad* as the head of the article. Furthermore, the articles had the exact composition as is normally used by *NRC Handelsblad*, thereby increasing the credibility of the article. Slothuus used a similar design when copying the Danish newspaper *Politiken*: “the treatment articles were similar in structure, including length, headline size, byline, and number of sources” (Slothuus, 2008: 13). The used layout can be found in Appendix C.

3.2.2 Procedure

The experiment was conducted in the spring of 2012. 336 secondary school students (187 females, 149 males) participated in the study. Their ages ranged from 12 to 19 years ($M = 15,38$, $SD = 1,585$). The students were enrolled in *HAVO* and *VWO*¹¹ classes, ranging from first year students to graduating groups. The students participated on a voluntary and nonpayment basis. Participants groups ranged in size from 16 to 27 persons. 243 of these students attended secondary school at *Bernardinuscollege* in Heerlen (Limburg), 53 students were from the *Christelijk Gymnasium Sorghvliet* in The Hague (Zuid-Holland) and 40 students were from *Rijnlands Lyceum* in Sassenheim (Zuid-Holland). All students handed in

¹¹ The Dutch secondary school system consist of three levels: *VMBO*, *HAVO* and *VWO*. At the age of 12, all Dutch children are placed in one of these levels. *VWO* is a preparatory phase for University, which students attend for the duration of 6 years. *HAVO*-level lasts 5 years, after which students will go to a *HBO*-level of education, which has the insertion of a more practical approach compared to University.

TABLE 3. Demographic and Political Characteristics of Participants (N = 336)		
	Freq.	%
Sex		
Male	149	44,3%
Female	187	55,7
Age		
12	22	6,5
13	30	8,9
14	26	7,7
15	82	24,4
16	98	29,2
17	55	16,4
18	20	6,0
19	3	0,9
Region/School		
<i>Bernardinuscollege (Limburg)</i>	243	72,3
<i>Christelijk Gymnasium Sorghvliet (Zuid-Holland)</i>	53	15,8
<i>Rijnlands Lyceum (Zuid-Holland)</i>	40	11,9
Level of education		
HAVO 1	27	8,0
VWO 1	26	7,7
VWO 3	50	14,9
HAVO 4	126	37,5
VWO 4	53	15,8
VWO 5	37	11,0
VWO 6	17	5,1
Race/Ethnicity		
Dutch	280	83,3
West-European	9	2,7
East-European	9	2,7
Moroccan	3	0,9
Turkish	2	0,6
Indonesian	2	0,6
Chinese	3	0,9
Surinamese	2	0,6
<i>Limburgs</i>	26	7,7
Political Ideology (Left-Right Placement)		
1 = Extreme Left	4	1,2
2	6	1,8
3	34	10,1
4	52	15,5
5	61	18,2
6 = Moderate	78	23,2
7	44	13,1
8	34	10,1
9	11	3,3
10	9	2,7
11 = Extreme Right	3	0,9
Perceived multicultural environment		
No multicultural environment	111	33,0
Moderate multicultural environment	99	29,5
Multicultural environment	126	37,5
Religion		
Not religious	212	63,1
Catholic	109	32,4
Protestant	5	1,5
Buddhism	2	0,6
Islam	5	1,5
Jewish	1	0,3
Hinduism	1	0,3
<i>Note: Entries are the numbers and percentages who fall into each category for each variable. There were no missing data.</i>		

valid answers. Therefore, no cases were excluded from the analysis. Table 3 further summarizes the demographic and political characteristics of the sample.

After arriving in the classroom in which the study was conducted, the students were instructed that they would participate in scientific research. They were told that the exact purpose of the study would be explained afterwards. The students were asked to read the newspaper article of *NRC Handelsblad* in silence, without discussing the content of the article with each other. In every class, only one of the two framed articles was distributed: in this way, the students could not have an indication about the purpose of the study. Afterwards, they received a questionnaire which they answered without consultation. When every questionnaire was handed in, the purpose of the study was explained to the class and questions were answered.

3.3 Variables

The dependent and independent variables were formulated and measured as follows:

Dependent variable

To assess political tolerance, a question was used based on Nelson et al. (1997): “Do you support or oppose allowing Geert Wilders to show his film at Leiden University?” Respondents could rate this dependent variable on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from *strongly oppose* to *strongly support*.

Independent variables

The most important independent variable was the framing condition. The ‘freedom of expression’ frame was coded as ‘1’, the ‘freedom of religion’ frame was coded as ‘2’. Participants were exposed to only one of two frames.

The study contained a set of control variables, such as the dichotomous variable gender (1 = male, 2 = female). Other control variables were coded as follows: level of education ranged from 1 to 7, where 1 was coded as HAVO 1 and 7 was coded as VWO 6. In theory, 11 possible levels could have participated (5 HAVO and 6 VWO classes) but due to logistical reasons, it was not possible to conduct the experiment at all levels.

The variable ‘secondary school’ was recoded into the variable ‘region’, such that school 1 (*Bernardinuscollege*) represented Limburg and school 2 and 3 (*Christelijk Gymnasium Sorghvliet* and *Rijnlands Lyceum*) corresponded to Zuid-Holland.

The left-right scale was based on a similar scale used by Ramirez and Verkuyten (2011), ranging from 1 (*extreme left*) to 11 (*extreme right*).

Respondents could indicate their ethnicity selecting several options or giving another answer when their background was not provided. The variable ‘ethnicity’ was then coded as

‘1’: Limburgs, ‘2’: Dutch and ‘3’: immigrant background. This was done, because it was expected that due to the anti-immigrant stance of Wilders, all immigrant groups which participated in the study (e.g. Moroccan, Surinamese, Turkish and Eastern-European¹²) would be unfavorable towards Wilders. Due to the hypothesis 2, it was decided to code people who have explicitly indicated to feel ‘*Limburgs*’ as a separate group.

The variable ‘multicultural environment’ measured whether students perceived their environment as multicultural. This was an open ended question, and the answers were coded into three categories: ‘1’: no multicultural environment, ‘2’: moderate multicultural environment, ‘3’ : multicultural environment.

The last control variable was religion. A total of 8 religions were registered, from Catholicism to Buddhism. Because of the clear anti-Muslim ideology of Wilders, this variable was recoded such that ‘1’ relates to ‘other religion’ and ‘2’ is ‘Islamic religion’. The survey can be found in Appendix B.

3.4 Analysis techniques

In order to test hypothesis 1 and 2, a ordinary least squares regression analysis (OLS) was conducted to predict the value of the dependent variable (political tolerance for *Fitna*) from the independent variable ‘Frame’ and the other control variables. Because the outcome variable is not dichotomous but linear, the political tolerance scale is analyzed by simple linear regression.

3.5 Constraints

Unfortunately, due to financial, logistic and time-bound reasons, it was not possible to execute a laboratory experiment as is conducted in most studies on framing, such as Nelson et

¹² Regarding Eastern-Europeans: in early 2012, Wilders has raised eyebrows by establishing the ‘Poland-hotline’, intended for people who had for example complains about Polish seasonal workers. This initiative was not only a hot topic in the Netherlands, but was extensively discussed at the European level as well.

al. (1997), Ramirez & Verkuyten (2011), Iyengar & Kinder (1987) and others. Instead, class rooms were visited using paper-and-pencil articles and questionnaires. Although this might not appear as professional as a laboratory experiment, the experimental conditions remained identical compared to above cited studies. Therefore, there is not reason to believe this method will result in different outcomes.

Secondly, it is not entirely sure whether all adolescents have treated the survey seriously. However, there was not a good criterion to exclude one of the answers without the danger of being too arbitrary. Because all surveys were completely filled in, it was decided to involve all questionnaires in the analysis. In the discussion, the problems occurring by conducting an experiment among adolescents will be further explored.

4. RESULTS

Issue-framing theory predicts that through the use of “qualitative different yet potentially relevant conditions”, the different frames will cause individuals to focus on certain aspects of an issue when constructing their opinion (Druckman, 2004: 673). Therefore, it was expected that participants in the freedom of expression condition would express greater tolerance towards the showing of *Fitna* at Leiden University than students exposed to the freedom of religion frame. Secondly, it was predicted that due to the higher political support for the PVV in Limburg compared to Zuid-Holland, the freedom of religion frame, which was more negatively towards Wilders than the freedom of expression frame, would be less effective among students in Limburg. Table 4 displays the result of an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression model that tests both hypotheses concerning the effect of the framing condition on the level of political tolerance and the influence of region on the effectiveness of the second framing condition.

TABLE 4. Ordinary Least Squares Regression Model Predicting Tolerance for Showing 'Fitna'.

Frame	-.189** (.168)
Sex	-.113* (.169)
Level/years of education	.196** (.033)
Region	.116* (.187)
Left-Right Placement	.263** (.044)
Ethnicity	-.133** (.233)
Multicultural Environment	.054 (.100)
Religion	-.007 (.722)
R ²	.203
Number of Cases	336
Notes: Table entries are standardized regression coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses). * Indicates the coefficient is statistically significant at the level $0.05 \geq p > 0.01$. ** Indicates the coefficient is statistically significant at the level $p \leq 0.01$.	

The results provide strong support for hypothesis 1. The data demonstrate that the framing condition has a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable, tolerance for the showing of *Fitna* at Leiden University. The OLS regression model shows that when a participant is exposed to the freedom of religion frame, this student is associated with a .189 point lower score on the political tolerance scale.

Additionally, the ordinary least squares regression model demonstrates that both gender and ethnicity had a negative, statistically significant relationship with the dependent

variable. The results suggest that when the respondent is a woman, she shows .113 point less tolerance for the activity of Wilders compared to male participants. When a person has an immigrant background, this is associated with a less tolerant attitude towards the showing of *Fitna* with .133 points.

The model further demonstrates that the level of education, as well as political ideology indicates a positive, significant relationship with the tolerant-variable. The results suggest that for every unit increase of education, the respondent will be .196 point more tolerant for showing *Fitna*. In other words, the more education a student has had, the more tolerant he or she is towards the activity of Wilders. As well, the more rightist a person's political ideology is, the more he or she is prone to favor Wilders' activity. The model demonstrates that for every unit increase on the left-right scale, this person will on average be .263 point more tolerant towards the showing of *Fitna*. On the 11 point scale, this means that in general, an extreme-right person (11) will show 2.63 point more tolerance towards *Fitna* than an extreme-left person.

Nevertheless, the results fail to confirm hypothesis 2. The regression model shows an opposite pattern to what was expected: there was a positive, statistically significant relationship between the level of political tolerance towards *Fitna* and the province a student lived in. When a student lives in *Zuid-Holland*, this is associated with a .116 point increase of political tolerance towards the activity of Wilders compared to students living in *Limburg*.

5. DISCUSSION

This study has investigated the effects of framing on the level of political tolerance towards an activity organized by populist right-wing politician Geert Wilders. The results have shown that framing does have an impact: students exposed to the freedom of expression frame

showed significantly higher support for the showing of *Fitna* than students who read an article from the freedom of religion condition.

The experiment was conducted among secondary school students in the South and the West of the Netherlands. In this respect, it could be concluded that framing does have an impact on the level of tolerance among pre-adults. Additionally, although the data from both national elections as well as *scholierenverkiezingen* point towards a more pro-PVV attitude for residents in *Limburg* compared to *Zuid-Holland*, the results of this study could not confirm this pattern.

These conclusions may indicate towards further implications. First of all, it could be asked whether the context in which the experiment took place may have influenced the outcomes of the experiment. The choice for a present-day subject for a framing experiment, like Geert Wilders, provides more insight into very present-day topics, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the world we live in. Nevertheless, it may be argued that exactly this may bias the framing experiment: due to the constant news coverage of Wilders, the framing effect might be less strongly due to predispositions among the public. As Chong and Druckman (2007) observe: “The success of any given attempt to frame an issue also depends on whether other information is available to the audience” (112). In the case of the experiment conducted for this thesis, it might be argued that students were prejudiced about Wilders: three days before the experiment was conducted, the Dutch cabinet fell due to Wilders. The other coalition partners quickly framed the situation in their advantage, accusing Wilders of cowardice and irresponsibility. Entman remarks in this context: “once a term is widely accepted, to use another is to risk that target audiences will perceive the communicator as lacking credibility – or will even fail to understand what the communicator is talking about” (1993: 55). Thus, it might be argued that the framing effects could have been different, when the cabinet had not fallen and the media coverage of Wilders would not have been so negative.

A second implication relates to the effects of mass media on a society-wide level. When a framing effect has significant influence on the levels of political tolerance among participants in an experiment, what could this mean for the influence of the media on society-wide levels of political tolerance? As many authors argue, framing effects are not only observable among a relatively small group of participants: frames used in daily, contemporary mass media influences public opinion at a society-wide level (Brants & Van Praag, 2005: 2; Entman, 1993: 52; Zaller, 1992: 30). In other words: when politicians or journalists succeed in framing a message towards a certain controversial group or minority negatively, then this could lead to decreased levels of political tolerance among many people in society. A recent example has showed this trend in Dutch society: Wilders ability to frame Muslims as a threat for Dutch Society, relating them with terrorism and making suggestions about this group not belonging in the Jewish-Christian tradition of Western-Europe, has resulted in a descending level of political tolerance towards the Muslim minority on a society-wide level in the Netherlands (Van Stokkum, 2009:150; Shadid, 2009: 173).

However, another interpretation could be given as well. Contrary to controversial groups like the KKK, Geert Wilders is an accepted politician in the Netherlands with a considerable amount of supporters. Whereas the KKK will probably find difficulties to use the mass media as a platform to spread their opinions due to their lack of support in society, Wilders will find less constraints in using the mass media to express his views. Nevertheless, the study of Nelson et al. (1997) as well as this bachelor thesis found strong framing effects concerning both groups. What does this tell us about the strength and sustainability of 'accepted' politicians? Although "a common presumption is that elites enjoy considerable leeway in using frames to influence and manipulate citizens", it may be argued that the power of political elites by using framing effect have its boundaries as well (Druckman, 2001: 1044). Due to the constant information flow in newspapers, television, social media and other

internet resources, news coverage on certain issues have not been faster as now. Establishing a frame is one difficulty, but perhaps the preservation of the preferred image is a really hard task for the political elite in this modern age.

The data were not ideal: first of all, a high number of the respondents came from Limburg: for comparative research, it would have been better when the respondents were more equally spread among the regions. Furthermore, although adolescents are an interesting group for research, they are not the most ideal participants: their lack of knowledge about political issues might bias the framing effects. Additionally, it could be possible that they were not fully aware of the seriousness of the survey: keeping a class concentrated was a challenge. A last constraint among this group might be their lack of perspective: e.g., students from Limburg indicated many times that they perceived their environment as multicultural, whereas students in The Hague were less inclined to estimate their environment that way. However, in the city of The Hague live far more nationalities and religions than in Heerlen. Nevertheless, when it is chosen to conduct an experiment among adolescents, these problems will probably be hard to solve.

A second reason why the data were not ideal relates to the following implication: the data showed a strong relationship observed between the level of political tolerance for *Fitna* and the level of education of the students. It might be argued that the students not only could have been influenced by negative framing towards Wilders outside the experimental condition; most of all, it may indicate towards the strong belief in Dutch society towards freedom of speech. In both *VWO*- and *HAVO* classes, debating and formulating one's opinion plays a pivotal role in the curriculum of both tracks. Freedom of expression is seen as such an essential principle in the Netherlands, that it may not have been a fair match with freedom of religion.

In the future, studies could investigate the findings of this study further by adding more cases: more schools throughout the country (in different regions) could be visited, thereby contributing to the research for regional differences in framing effects towards Wilders. Additionally, a control group, who would read a neutral article, could be added to the research. This will possible lead to further insights into the strength of effects of different frames. Future research could also focus on the differences between framing effects on pre-adults and adults. In this case, two framing conditions (e.g. as used in this thesis) should be tested both on adolescents and adults, thereby providing comparable data about the differences (or similarities) of framing effects among these different groups.

In a country where the political landscape has recently changed and the media's role is of significant importance, studies linking the effect of framing and political tolerance are a useful contribution to better understand the situation we live in. Furthermore, the success of Wilders and his effect on Dutch society remain an issue which has not been thoroughly investigated, due to the recentness of this phenomenon. This study makes a small contribution to fill this scholarly knowledge gap.

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7. APPENDIXES

7.1 Appendix A: Texts of both frames (English)

<u>Freedom of Expression</u>	<u>Freedom of religion</u>
<i>Headline: Geert Wilders tests Leiden University's Commitment to Freedom of Expression</i>	<i>Headline: Freedom of Religion not predominant at Leiden University</i>
<p>How far is Geert Wilders prepared to go to protect the freedom of expression?</p> <p>Geert Wilders has requested to show his film 'Fitna' at the Law Faculty of Leiden University in September 2008. The board of Leiden University will decide whether to approve or deny his request in May.</p>	<p>Does Leiden University place Freedom of Speech above Freedom of Religion?</p> <p>Geert Wilders has requested to show his film 'Fitna' at the Law Faculty of Leiden University in September 2008. The board of Leiden University will decide whether to approve or deny his request in May.</p>
<p>The Dutch Constitution ensures that the PVV of Geert Wilders has the right to use his right to freedom of expression, and that individuals have the right to hear his message, if they are interested. However, the message of his film is controversial.</p> <p>Cars were set to fire in The Hague, Utrecht and Amsterdam after the release of the film on the website of the PVV. Muslim organizations have announced protests if Leiden University approves Wilders'</p>	<p>The Dutch Constitution ensures that the PVV of Geert Wilders has the right to use his right to freedom of expression, and that individuals have the right to hear his message, if they are interested. However, the message of his film is controversial.</p> <p>Cars were set to fire in The Hague, Utrecht and Amsterdam after the release of the film on the website of the PVV. Muslim organizations have announced protests if Leiden University approves Wilders'</p>

<p>request. The municipality of Leiden expects a large police force is needed to secure the safety of the event.</p>	<p>request. The municipality of Leiden expects a large police force is needed to secure the safety of the event.</p>
<p>Opinions about the displaying of Wilder’s film is mixed. Many students, faculty and staff worry about the event, but support Wilder’s right of freedom of expression. Andreas Kinnegin, professor at the Law faculty of Leiden University, remarked: “I do not approve of the content of the film, but Wilders has the right to express his views and students have the right to see this film when they want to. We have some concerns about this event, but everyone’s right to speak and hear is such a fundamental right that we should allow this even to take place.”</p>	<p>Opinions about the displaying of Wilder’s film is mixed. Many students, faculty and staff have expressed their disagreement with the showing of the film. Andreas Kinnegin, professor at the Law faculty of Leiden University, remarked: “Freedom of Expression is important, but so is Freedom of Religion. I do not agree with the fact that one of these right, equally anchored in the Constitution, becomes predominant at our University.” Yannick Looije, chairman of Student Association ‘Augustinus’, has expressed similar concerns: “This film insults many muslims. Freedom of Religion, which Mr. Wilders attacks, should be protected.”</p>
<p><i>Source: NRC Handelsblad, 20 April 2008.</i></p>	<p><i>Source: NRC Handelsblad, 20 April 2008.</i></p>

7.2 Appendix B: Survey

Survey

Please carefully read the newspaper article from *NRC Handelsblad*. After reading the article, answer the following questions:

1. Do you support or oppose allowing Geert Wilders to show his film at Leiden University?

Strongly oppose	Somewhat oppose	Slightly oppose	Neutral	Slightly support	Somewhat support	Strongly support
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2. How do you feel towards the following groups?

- Geert Wilders/PVV

Strongly Disfavor	Somewhat disfavor	Slightly disfavor	Neutral	Slightly favor	Somewhat favor	Strongly favor
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- Muslims

Strongly Disfavor	Somewhat disfavor	Slightly disfavor	Neutral	Slightly favor	Somewhat favor	Strongly favor
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3. Please choose one of the options:

Freedom of Expression

Freedom of Religion

4. How do you feel about the following statements? (1 – 7 scale again)

Freedom of Expression scale

- I believe in free speech for all no matter what their views might be
- People should have the freedom to express their own opinions publicly

- The government should not have the right to censor published materials

Freedom of Religion Scale

- I believe in freedom of religion no matter how one opposes with one religion
- People should be allowed to profess the faith they want
- The government does not have to right to interfere with the religion people would like to profess

Control variables

When more options are available, please encircle the option which relates to your situation.

1. Are you male or female? M/F
2. What is your age?
3. What is the name of your secondary school?
4. Which class are you in?
 - HAVO 3
 - HAVO 4
 - HAVO 5
 - VWO 3
 - VWO 4
 - VWO 5
 - VWO 6
 - Other, namely:
5. How would you describe your ethnic background?
 - Dutch
 - WesternEuropean
 - Eastern European

- Moroccan
- Turkish
- Antillian
- Other, namely:

6. Are you religious? If so, which religion?
7. Do you feel affiliation with the province you live in? Could you elaborate on that?
8. Would you describe your environment as ‘multicultural’? If so, could you elaborate on that?
9. If you were allowed to vote, for which party would you vote? Why?

- VVD
- CDA
- PVV
- PvdA
- D66
- GroenLinks
- SP
- ChristenUnie
- SGP
- Partij voor de Dieren
- Onafhankelijke Burgerpartij
- Other, namely:

10. When putting yourself on a left-right scale, where would you place yourself?

1.Left	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11.Right
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Wing										Wing
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NRC HANDELSBLAD

GODSDIENSTVRIJHEID VAN ONDERGESCHIKT BELANG AAN UNIVERSITEIT LEIDEN

VAN ONZE VERSLAGGEEFSTER
Marjoleine Heimstra

LEIDEN – Stelt de Universiteit Leiden vrijheid van meningsuiting boven vrijheid van godsdienst? Geert Wilders heeft een verzoek ingediend om zijn film ‘Fitna’ te vertonen op de Rechtenfaculteit van de Universiteit in September 2008. Het college van Bestuur van de Universiteit Leiden neemt in mei een beslissing over dit verzoek.

De Nederlandse Grondwet garandeert dat de PVV van Geert Wilders in haar recht staat wanneer Wilders beroep wil doen op zijn vrijheid van meningsuiting. Eenieder die naar hem wil luisteren, moet daartoe de gelegenheid

krijgen. De boodschap van de film ‘Fitna’ is echter controversieel. Nadat Wilders zijn film op de partijwebsite plaatste, ontstonden schermutselingen in Den Haag, Utrecht en Amsterdam. Auto’s werden in brand gestoken. Moslimorganisaties hebben protesten aangekondigd wanneer de Universiteit Leiden ingaat op Wilders’ verzoek. De gemeente Leiden houdt rekening met een verhoogde politie-inzet om de veiligheid van het evenement te garanderen.

De meningen over het plan van Wilders zijn verdeeld. Veel studenten, faculteiten en medewerkers van de Universiteit hebben hun zorgen en ongenoegen geuit over het vertonen

van de film op de rechtenfaculteit. Andreas Kinnegin, professor rechtsfilosofie verbonden aan de Universiteit Leiden, stelt: “Vrijheid van meningsuiting is belangrijk, maar vrijheid van godsdienst net zo goed. Ik ben het fundamenteel oneens met het feit dat één van deze grondrechten, gelijk verankerd in onze grondwet, op onze Universiteit voorrang krijgt.” Yannick Looije, voorzitter van de Leidse Studentenvereniging ‘Augustinus’, uit vergelijkbare zorgen: “Deze film is beledigend voor moslims. De godsdienstvrijheid, die de heer Wilders met zijn film aanvalt, moet beschermd worden.”

***Uit: NRC
Handelsblad, 20
april 2008***

