

The effect of news coverage on political tolerance in The Netherlands

A content analysis of news articles compared with indicators of political
tolerance

Bachelor Thesis Political Psychology

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Abstract

The Netherlands are known to be a tolerant country. However, the debate on the immigration issue has relatively increased in salience in the last decade. This thesis concentrates on the effect of two Dutch newspapers on levels of political tolerance. Based on the theories of agenda-setting and framing this bachelor thesis shows there is a genuine relationship between a growing amount of negative news coverage about immigrants and the growing levels of political intolerance. A unique content analysis is applied to determine the content of news coverage in 1999 and 2008. These results are compared with questions from the European Values Study that are indicators of political tolerance. The applied content analysis also shows an interesting difference between the two selected newspapers *Telegraaf* and *Volkskrant*. *Telegraaf* tends to present news fact more negatively and publishes less neutral results while *Volkskrant* publishes less negative articles and more neutral articles. A possible explanation for this difference could be found within the theory of pillarization which has been very characteristic for the Netherlands in the 20th century.

Preface

The Netherlands has a global image and tourist brand as a wealthy, tolerant and liberal society. In 2002 Pim Fortuyn, a prominent Dutch, politician was murdered because of his ideas about Islam. In 2004 Theo van Gogh, a Dutch columnist, was also murdered for his opinion about Islam. These events didn't fit to the image people had of the Netherlands (Van der Veer 2006, 112). The last decade, right wing populist parties like the PVV of Geert Wilders showed a spectacular growth in parliament. Liberal and right party VVD became the biggest party in parliament. The Netherlands have made "a swing to the right", as most political commentators tend to say. It is often suggested that this swing to the right has been accompanied by a growing salience of the debate on immigration and other cultures.

This bachelor thesis will explore the effects of news coverage on levels of political tolerance. In this paper I will present data from the European Values study (EVS) that show us that levels of political intolerance in the Netherlands have substantially grown between 1999 and 2008. Events like the murders on Pim Fortuyn and Theo van Gogh certainly must have played a big part in the rising of political intolerance, but the effect of the media hasn't been properly researched in the Netherlands. A unique content analysis of two Dutch newspapers in 1999 and 2008 will be compared with the indicators of political tolerance from the EVS. Based on theories of agenda-setting and framing I will hypothesize that there is a genuine relationship between a growing amount of negative news coverage about immigrants and growing levels of political intolerance.

Political tolerance

In their article "On the conceptualization and measurement of political tolerance", Gibson and Bingham conclude that the concept of Political tolerance refers to the willingness to extend rights to all members of society. Most social scientists define political tolerance as allowing political freedom to those members of society who are politically different (Gibson and Bingham, 1982, 76). As Sullivan, Piereson and Marcus define tolerance it implies a willingness to put up with those things that one rejects. In the political sense this means to permit the expression of ideas that one opposes. A tolerant individual is therefore a person who allows a wide berth to those ideas that challenge his own way of life (Gibson and Bingham, 1982, 76). Typically, political tolerance is measured by asking respondent whether they would allow certain rights to political minorities. For example the freedom of speech, but

also more specific activity's as to exist as a legal group, teach in public schools or run as a candidate for president. Recent work also focused on more social aspects, as whether people are willing to live next door, come to diner, and date daughters and sons of family's from a political minority. Most tolerance researchers don't offer a rigorous conceptualization and operationalization of political tolerance (Gibson and Bingham, 1982, 76-77). In this bachelor thesis, the concept of political tolerance will be analyzed as a one-dimensional attitude that defines to what extent people allow social liberties and certain social rights towards political minorities (Gibson and Bingham, 1982, 76).

Social identity theory and realistic conflict

Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior examined how social and economic concerns drive reactions towards minorities. They based their hypothesis on two different theories. Realistic conflict theory states that the core of group conflict is based in competing economic interests. People identify with a group because they have an individual interest to do so. Realistic conflict theory is focused on the structural and social sources of group conflict. The key explanatory variable is economic competition and the driving motive is to be materially better off. Social identity theory implies people to decide who they are, based on the group they belong to or identify with. People strive for a positive self-concept and are therefore motivated to evaluate their own group positively and often evaluate other groups negatively (Sniderman et al., 2004, 35). Social identity theory focuses on group membership and the positive or negative evaluation of other groups. The explanatory variable is therefore group-membership (Sniderman et al., 2004, 36).

Sniderman et al. investigated how concerns about either economic well-being or cultural identity influence citizen's responses towards immigrants. These concerns can manifest themselves in two different ways. People already may have developed an ongoing concern about for example their economic interest and therefore are concerned about being economically better off. This is what Sniderman et al. call a pre-disposition. On the other hand, concerns can also be triggered within people's immediate circumstances. This is what Sniderman et al. call situational triggers (Sniderman et al., 2004, 36). An example of a situational trigger used in the experiments of Sniderman et al. is providing information about a group of immigrants saying that these people are not highly educated and not suitable for a

job. This information affects the way people evaluate immigrants and whether they are concerned about immigrants (Sniderman et al., 2004, 42).

Also a combination of these effects is possible. Sniderman et al. state that situational triggers could galvanize those people already concerned about a certain subject or a particular problem (Sniderman et al., 2004, 36). They tested the effect of pre-dispositions and situational triggers on the levels of tolerance in the Netherlands towards minorities. They concluded that concerns over national identity are a more driving force than concerns over economic interests. Their experiments show that situational triggers are able to mobilize opposition towards minorities and that situational triggers also mobilize support beyond the core constituency already predisposed to oppose immigrants (Sniderman et al., 2004, 45-47).

The effect of media coverage

Levels of tolerance are influenced by pre-dispositions and situational triggers. The media can have a substantial influence on pre-dispositions. Pre-dispositions are ongoing concerns people have about a certain subject. The media can provide people with necessary information to develop these ongoing concerns. For example, ongoing information about high criminal rates among immigrants can lead to the development of a negative pre-disposition about immigrants. The media can provide immediate circumstances that trigger peoples concerns on a specific subject or problem.

Therefore it is interesting to look at the effects of media coverage on levels of political tolerance. In 1978 Shaw and McCombs conceptualized the agenda-setting function of the media as a positive relationship between what various communication media emphasize and what voters come to regard as important. This influence is an inevitable by-product of every day news flow. Newspapers for example can place a high level of salience on certain topics through headline size and placement within a newspaper. The audiences learn these saliencies from the media and incorporate a similar set of weights into their personal agenda. Therefore, increased salience of a topic or issue within the media leads to salience of that topic or issue among the public (Shaw and McCombs, 1978, 11-12). News media decide what the important issues of the day are, they cover these issues frequently and prominently and therefore, people also conclude these issues are important. Agenda-setting thus refers to the idea that there is a relationship between the issues that the mass media emphasize and what people become to evaluate as important issues.

The Agenda-setting effect is based on memory-based models of information processing. Also models of accessibility are used to explain agenda-setting. The effect of the agenda-setting model lies within the higher accessibility an issue gets by treatment in the news. It is not the information about the issue that has an effect. Just the simple fact that the issue is being treated by the media and the fact that people have been triggered to think about it and process the information carries the effect of the issue becoming more salient (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007, 14). According to agenda-setting theory, the media decide what we think and talk about, but not how we evaluate issues or make decisions. Agenda-setting thus leads to the forming of opinions about presented issues, but agenda-setting also primes opinions about public figures and shapes opinions by emphasizing particular attributes of issues (McCombs, 2005, 549).

McCombs stated that the initial stage of agenda-setting focuses on the salience of public issues. However, the effect of agenda-setting is defined not only by the salience of one issue, but by the relative levels of salience among a set of issues (McCombs, 2005, 546). The salience of topics therefore needs to be evaluated relative to other topics. Most researchers apply a content analysis in mass communication research to decide the relative amount of attention for a specific issue. Just an increase of the amount of stories devoted to a specific issue does not mean the issue salience has increased. It could simple be the consequence of a newspaper publishing more stories in general. By gathering the amount of stories devoted to several issues, we can investigate whether a particular subject has relatively increased in salience compared to other issues. Secondly, the prominence of the news about an issue can also be enlarged by page placement, size of the headline, amount of time or space, or appearances in the lead (McCombs, 2005, 550). The tradition in research into public agenda-setting is to adopt a research design which combines mass media content analysis and public opinion surveys (Rogers, 1993, 69).

In the case of political tolerance, the effect of agenda-setting means that when media are writing more about immigrants (positive or negative) people are triggered to think about immigrants and their position in Dutch society. Iyengar and Kinder did several experiments to test the effect of agenda-setting by national television. Their evidence showed that when television focuses on a problem, the priorities of the public were altered towards this particular problem. When the national television moved to a different subject, public priorities altered again. The public shifted to prioritize the same issue that the media where prioritizing. These results were confirmed for a variety of issues and for different time slots. Some of the

experiments focused on defense or social security and some of the experiments were conducted during an hour, a week or a year (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987, 33).

However, the agenda-setting theory is not sufficient to explain a possible alternation in public opinion. According to this theory, the media decide the subject that people think about, but not how they evaluate the proposed problems. According to Chong and Druckman, the concept of framing refers to “the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue” (Chong and Druckman, 2007, 105). In their article “Framing theory” (2007), they state that framing “organizes everyday reality by providing a meaning to an unfolding strip of events and promoting a particular definition and interpretation of political issues”. Frames in communication therefore matter because they affect attitudes and behavior of the audience. A standard way to measure the effect of frames for example on political tolerance towards a hate-group is to check for variances produced by different frames. Another standard is based on the comparison of a treatment group and a control group. The control group simply receives the descriptive information about an issue, while the experimental group is exposed to the same information within a certain type of frame (Chong and Druckman, 2007, 109).

Nelson, Clawson and Oxley contributed to our knowledge about the effects of media framing on levels of political tolerance. Nelson et al. conceptualize framing as “the process by which a communication source, such as a news organization, defines and constructs a political issue or public controversy” (Nelson et al., 1997, 567). They hypothesized that people’s opinion and reasoning about certain political issues is shaped by the way the mass media present these issues. Framing centers on the effect of media content while the agenda-setting effect is focused on the mere coverage of an issue (Nelson, 1997, 567). By framing an issue, the media present us with certain underlying causes and likely consequences of a perceived problem and therefore give us criteria to evaluate these problems and assess the possible remedies. The media often use certain thematic frames or episodic frames. By using frames, the media basically shape our individual understanding of certain issues by focusing on specific elements or features of a broader subject or controversy. In this way, the media reduce a possible complex issue to only a few simple aspects (Nelson et al., 1997, 567-568)

Nelson et al. state that tolerance controversies are a potentially fruitful area for examining the effect of framing. Nelson et al. tested the effect of different frames on levels of tolerance towards the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). They found that levels of tolerance depended on

the different news frames they used in their experiments (Nelson et al., 1997, 574-576). In their experiments they used a local television broadcast and added a reporter telling two different stories about a gathering of the KKK. They used two different frames. In the first frame, the reporter emphasized the right of the KKK to express their opinions, to speak in public and the fact that the supporters of the KKK had the right to hear what the clan had to say. They called this the freedom of speech frame. In the second frame the reporter highlighted the disturbances that erupted during the gathering of the KKK and showed police officers in riot gear. This was called the public order frame (Nelson et al., 1997, 571). After seeing the frame of the freedom of speech, respondents expressed higher levels of tolerance towards the KKK, than after watching a frame where a potentially explosive clash between two angry groups was presented. Their experimental stimuli were extracted from the real world. Nelson et al. also found an effect of the importance of specific values evoked by the news frame. Their experiments showed that framing can have a significant effect on the importance assigned to the value of public order. When the media emphasize the importance of public order and the negative consequences that the presented news fact have for public order, the public also regards public order as an important value. (Nelson et al., 1997, 574-576).

Bartels stated that more attention was needed for the fact that measurement error significantly increases the apparent impact of media exposure on opinion change. Most observable opinion changes over a short period of time show a modest effect of media exposure. Bartels concluded that media exposure has a smaller effect on pre-existing opinions. If the public already formed an opinion on a specific issue, the effect of media exposure is smaller. Media exposure therefore is stronger when prior opinions about issues or candidates are weak. Especially for new candidates and new issues, media exposure has a significant effect (Bartels, 1993, 275).

Based on the theories presented above, this bachelor thesis will analyze the effect of news coverage about immigrants on levels of political tolerance in the Netherlands. I will hypothesize that there is a genuine relationship between a growing amount of negative news coverage about immigrants and the growing levels of political intolerance. I will test this hypothesis by examining whether there is correlation between indicators of political tolerance from the EVS and the results from a content analysis of Dutch newspapers. If there is more negative news coverage on immigrants and minorities, there will be a higher level of political intolerance. This bachelor thesis will not provide data that show that the priorities of the

public were altered. The agenda-setting effect has become so widely accepted in the literature that a relative increase in newspaper coverage on the immigration issue, combined with an increase in negative coverage and increased levels of intolerance would strongly suggest a genuine relationship between these phenomena.

Research design

The content analysis contained two Dutch newspapers, *Telegraaf* and *Volkscrant*. I chose *Telegraaf* because this is the newspaper in the Netherlands with the largest amount of daily readers. *Telegraaf* is also a newspaper known to have a right orientation on the political left-right scale. *Volkscrant* on the other side is the largest newspaper in the Netherlands with a known left orientation on the political left-right scale. Since the political division between left and right has traditionally been very important in Dutch politics I chose two newspapers that represent both sides of the spectrum. Ideally, the content analysis should contain several newspapers because newspapers in the Netherlands are known to have their own character and political orientations. Especially the free newspapers like *Metro*, *Spits* and *Pers* which are distributed within public transport can also have a large effect since these papers have a large amount of daily readers. The program used for the content analysis, LexisNexis, doesn't contain the necessary information to conduct a content analysis on these newspapers. For this bachelor thesis I chose the two most important traditional daily newspapers: *Telegraaf* and *Volkscrant*.

I analyzed the published articles that covered news on immigrants during the period that the EVS-surveys were conducted. The EVS- survey in 2008 was conducted between 21/05/2008 and 31/10/2008. The EVS-survey in 1999 was conducted between 01/03/1999 and 31/08/1999. The first part of the content analysis focused on the relative salience of a set of topics. With a simple search string in LexisNexis¹ I gathered all articles published between these dates that mentioned a few specific topics in the headline. For example: all articles that contained the word *education* in the headline were collected and summed up. When performing a search string within the complete article, a lot of articles were produced that weren't applicable for the content analysis. When searching for Health care for example, articles were presented about the medical staff of the Dutch national soccer team. To reduce this margin of error I chose to only search within the headline of the articles. For this reason the margin of errors for the results of this first part of the content analysis is relatively small and comparable for all topics. The amount of articles were ordered in a table and put into descending order. Based on the descending orders of the amount of topics in 1999 and 2008 we can conclude for both newspapers whether the topic of immigration has become more salient relative to other topics in 2008.

¹ The search string for LexisNexis was: (Headline: Economie, Defensie, Onderwijs, Zorg, Landbouw, Veiligheid, Immigranten OR Moslims)

For the second part of the content analysis I used another search string in LexisNexis² and collected all articles that concerned news on immigrants and minority's in the Netherlands. This search string collected articles that contained one or more words from the search string somewhere in the complete article. Also this part of the content analysis produced lots of articles that weren't applicable. These articles covered recipes for Turkish food or news about immigrants in foreign countries. These articles were all coded as "not applicable" and left out of the analysis.

I conducted the content analysis based on the theory of Nelson, Clawson and Oxley. They stated that the media use frames and therefore basically shape our individual understanding of specific issues by focusing on specific elements or features of a broader subject or controversy. In this way, the media reduce a possible complex issue to only a few simple aspects (Nelson et al., 1997, 567-568). Based on the codebook that is presented in the appendix of this bachelor thesis I gave all useful articles a positive, negative or neutral code. The content analysis was completely conducted by hand. The coding of the articles was based on the content of the headline and the lead of the article. As explained in the codebook, articles were coded "negative" if the headline or/and lead of the article was mainly negative about immigrants in the Netherlands. Basic messages within the headline and lead that were coded negative were for example: too many immigrants, high criminal rates, high unemployment rates, high drop out of school, bad school performances, not speaking Dutch, immigrants in relation to terrorism or behavior of immigrants which is evaluated as negative in the article. Articles were coded "positive" if the headline or/and lead was generally positive about immigrants in the Netherlands. The article for example contained information about: less immigrants than last year, lower criminal rates, lower unemployment rates, lower drop out of school, good school performances, speaking Dutch, stories of immigrants who are having success in jobs or behavior of immigrants which is evaluated as positive in the article. The third option within the coding procedure was a neutral code. Articles that contained a mixture of positive and negative news were coded "neutral". These articles contained both negative and positive aspects of a presented news fact. These articles were less explicit about whether presented facts were negative or positive. For example: Building a mosque is sometimes presented as a simple fact (code "neutral"), and sometimes the building of a

² The search string for LexisNexis was: immigranten OR immigrant OR islam OR moslims OR moslim OR allochtoon OR allochtonen OR Turk OR Turken OR Marrokaan OR Marrokanen OR assielzoekers OR assielzoeker

mosque is being presented as ridiculous, not in correspondence with the wishes of the people in the neighborhood etc. and is presented as an example of immigrants who are taking over the community and demolishing traditional Dutch culture (“code negative”). Articles where coded neutral when the presentation of the news facts was more sophisticated. Neutral articles where articles that didn’t choose a negative or positive evaluation of what happened, but enlightened both sides. These articles tried to explain both negative and positive aspects of the news and both negative and positive aspects of the behavior of immigrants.

European Values Study

To determine the levels of political tolerance in the Netherlands I use data from the European Values Study. The presented questions from the European Values Study are indicators of political tolerance. The first question is about whether people would like immigrants to become their neighbors. The second question is about whether people would allow immigrants the right for a job in times of economic crisis. These questions therefore indicate to what extent people allow certain social liberties and social rights towards immigrants and minority’s (Gibson and Bingham, 1982, 76). The Data from the EVS are also in accordance with the presented theories by Sniderman et al. The first question about whether people would like minority’s to come live next door is in accordance with social identity theory. People evaluate minorities based on the social group they belong to. Striving for a positive self-image people are expected to negatively evaluate the minority group which is presented in the question if they do not belong to this group themselves. The second question on allowing immigrants a job in times of economic crisis is based on realistic conflict theory. People evaluate the minority groups presented in the question based on their own economic interest (Sniderman et al., 2004, 35-36).

Gibson and Bingham (1982) stated that political tolerance is typically measured by asking respondents whether they allow political minorities certain rights. Early studies provided people with only one group and asked the respondents about their feelings about this group. Early empirical studies of tolerance in the 1950’s (Stouffer, 1955; Prothro and Grigg, 1960 and McClosky 1964) all found high levels of intolerance and unwillingness to extend civil liberties towards certain groups in America. Many researchers (Davis, 1976 and Nunn et al., 1978) concluded in the 1970’s that levels of tolerance in the USA had increased since then (Sullivan et al., 1979, 781). But Sullivan, Piereson and Marcus critique their way of

measuring tolerance. They concluded that the concept of tolerance is in itself content-free. The content of ideas which lead to opposing a political minority are irrelevant to the principle itself. A tolerant person is prepared to extend certain freedoms to the people with ideas that he specifically rejects. Therefore, Sullivan et al. focus on the analytical problem derived from the fact that people oppose different groups and different ideas. In measuring tolerance, people must therefore be allowed to select unpopular groups themselves (Sullivan et al., 1979, 785). The research design of early studies investigated the attitudes towards groups that were pre-selected by the researcher. Sullivan et al. state that by using this research design, we are bound to confuse tolerance with the contents of respondents beliefs about the groups the investigator selected. Whether these beliefs are negative or positive, it's not possible to conclude whether the respondent is tolerant towards these ideas or not. The question we want to answer is to what extent a respondent allows minority's to express these opinions. Previous studies therefore weren't content free. Sullivan et al. designed a content-controlled measurement of tolerance. In their research they provided the respondents with a list of potentially unpopular groups that varied on different aspects. The respondent were presented with a series of questions that defined whether they would not allow certain activity's towards one of the groups. The respondents were free to choose which of the groups they filled in and whether they wanted to fill in a group at all. This way, the results of the survey specifically dealt with political tolerance towards minorities and weren't contaminated by political beliefs concerning these minorities. Therefore this way of measuring is content-controlled. This way of measuring tolerance has been adopted by most subsequent studies (Sullivan et al., 1979, 785).

The first question from the EVS is content free. Respondents are asked by an interviewer whether they would like certain people to become their neighbors. The literal question was: On this list are various groups of people. Could you please sort out any that you would not like to have as neighbours? The possible results were mentioned or not mentioned (or -2 no answer, -1 don't know). To answer this question they were presented with a list of different groups and are allowed to make a choice themselves. The card with the list of groups that was presented to the respondents is shown in the appendix of this thesis. The data show us how many times respondents chose people from a different race, Muslims, or immigrants in reaction to this question. Strictly speaking, this question is not about political tolerance in the narrow sense presented by Gibson and Bingham (1982), because the question doesn't concern whether respondents allow minorities a social right. Though the question does give us

an indication to what extent the respondent is willing to put up with people with different ideas and whether the respondent would like people from the presented minorities as their neighbors. Therefore the questions should be an indicators of political tolerance. It shows whether people would like immigrants to come and live next door, which could be interpreted as a social liberty.

Strictly speaking, the second variable from the EVS is not content free. People are not allowed to make a choice between groups, but on the other side, aren't presented with a pre-selected group as well. The literal question from the EVS was: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? When jobs are scarce, employers should give priority to Dutch people over immigrants. The possible results where 1 agree, 2 disagree or 3 neither (or -2 no answer, -1 don't know). It is not feasible that the results are contaminated by political beliefs concerning certain minority groups because no group is mentioned at all. The second variable tells us whether people allow immigrants in general the social right of a job. Therefore this is a more obvious indicator of political tolerance than the first question. The second question literally asks whether respondents allow immigrants a social right.

Data EVS

Just a quick look at the indicators of political tolerance from the EVS shows us that levels of intolerance have increased since 1999. Figure 1, 2 and 3 show the answers respondents gave to the first question from the EVS. On the question whether people would allow certain groups to be their neighbors in the survey in 1999, 5 % of the respondents mentioned people from another race (Figure 1), 12,2% mentioned Muslims (Figure 2), and 5 % mentioned immigrants/foreign workers (Figure 3). The 2008 survey contained the same question. 10,9% of the respondents mentioned people from another race. This is 5.9% more than in 1999. 18,4% of the respondents mentioned Muslims. This shows an increase of 6,2%. 15,1 % of the respondents mentioned immigrants/foreign workers in general. This is an increase of 10,1%. The Bar charts give a visual presentation of the increase of these indicators of political tolerance between 1999 and 2008. Based on these content controlled questions we can conclude that there has been a substantial increase in levels of political intolerance between 1999 and 2008. The percentages of people who would not like to accept people from the three presented minorities as their neighbors has increased substantially.

The second question concerned whether people would allow immigrants a job in times of economic crisis (Figure 4). In 1999, 26,3 % agreed to give priority to Dutch people when it comes to dividing jobs in times of economic crisis. In 2008 36,3% of the respondents says they would give priority to Dutch people in times of crisis. This means an increase of 10% between 1999 and 2008. This fourth question confirms the increase of political intolerance between 1999 and 2008. The percentage of people who do not allow immigrants a job in times of economic crisis has substantially increased since 1999. Table 1 contains the frequencies, amount of respondents and percentages from the two EVS-questions.

Figure 1

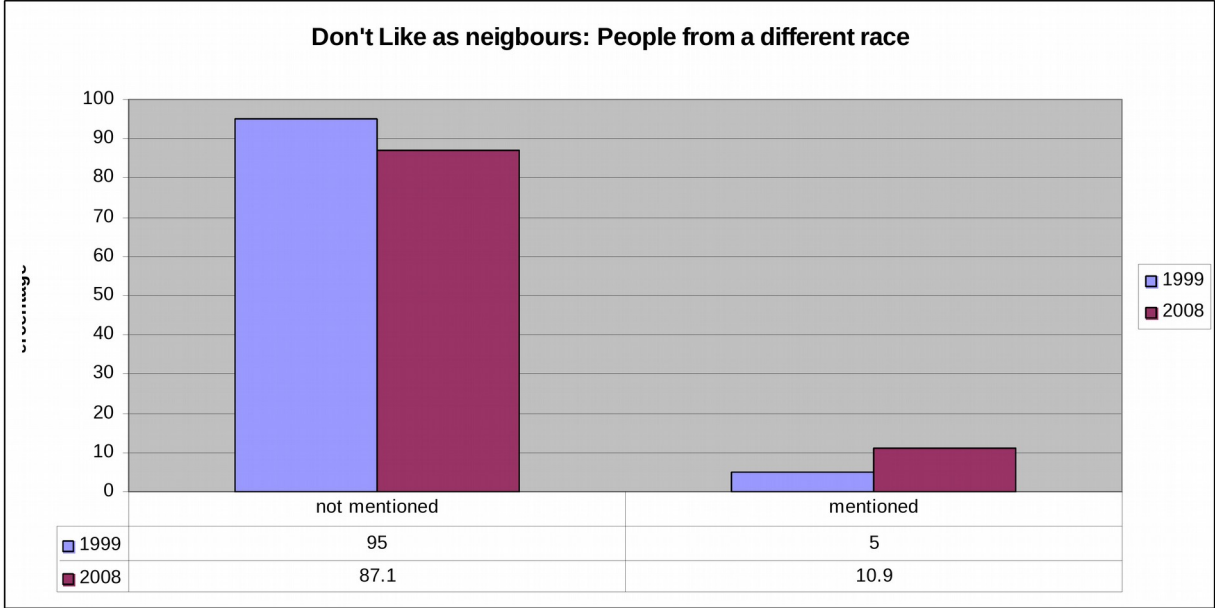


Figure 2

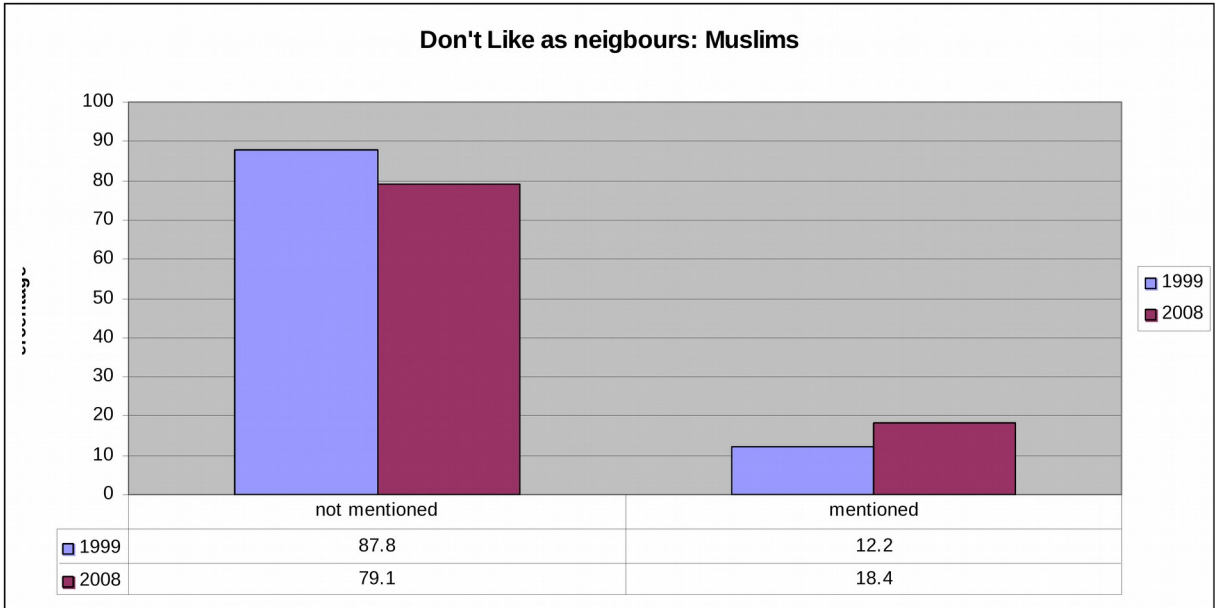


Figure 3

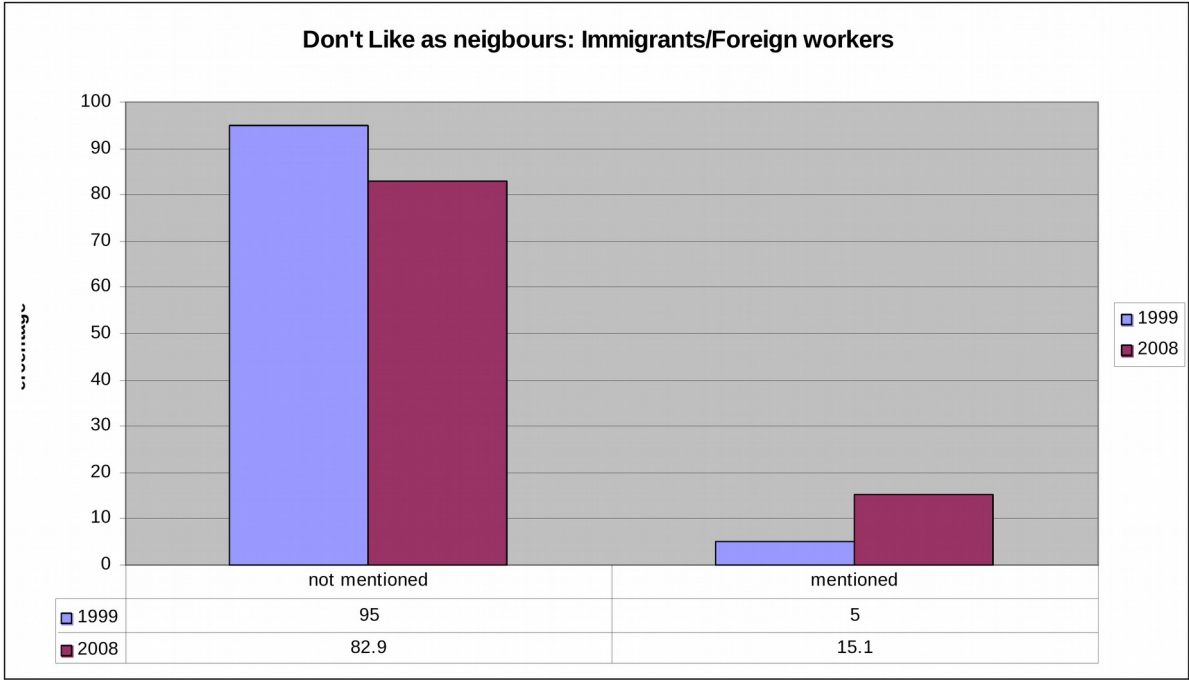


Figure 4

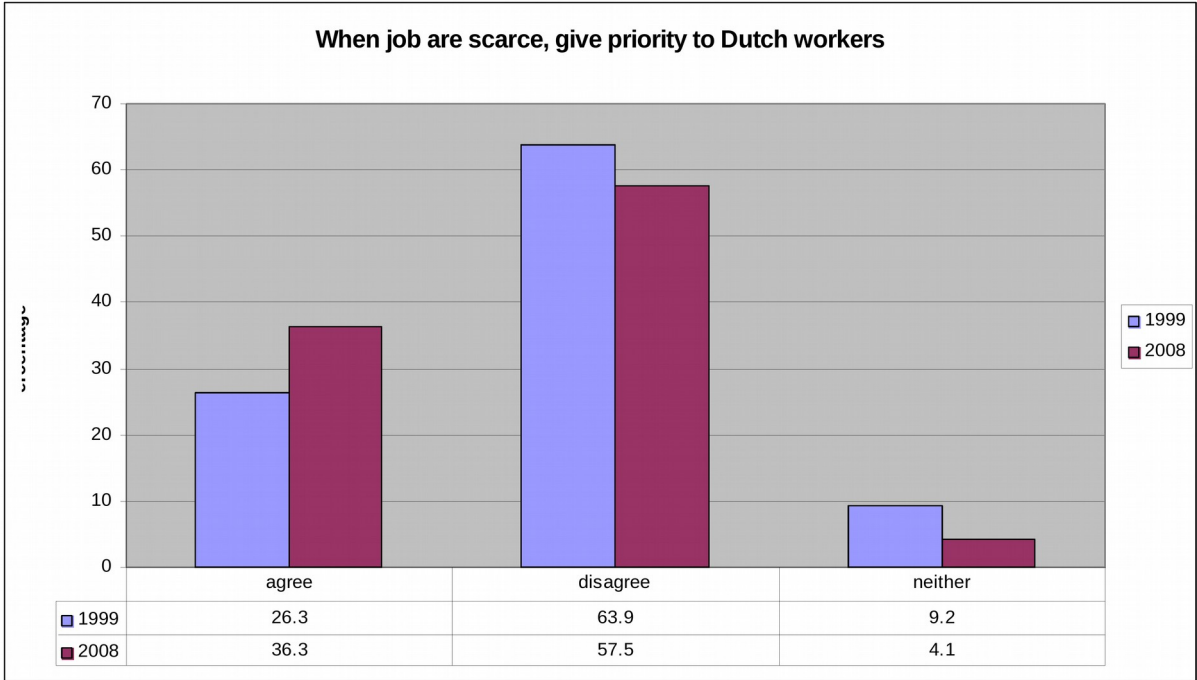


Table 1

Frequencies and percentages Data EVS 1999 and 2008

2008				1999			
Don't like as neighbours: people of different race							
		Frequency	Percent			Frequency	Percent
	not mentioned	953	95		not mentioned	1354	87.1
	mentioned	50	5		mentioned	169	10.9
	Total	1003	100		Total	1523	98
Don't like as neighbours: muslims							
		Frequency	Percent			Frequency	Percent
	not mentioned	881	87.8		not mentioned	1229	79.1
	mentioned	122	12.2		mentioned	286	18.4
	Total	1003	100		Total	1515	97.5
Don't like as neighbours: immigrants/foreign workers							
		Frequency	Percent			Frequency	Percent
	not mentioned	953	95		not mentioned	1289	82.9
	mentioned	50	5		mentioned	234	15.1
	Total	1003	100		Total	1523	98
When jobs are scarce: giving Dutch priority							
		Frequency	Percent			Frequency	Percent
	agree	264	26.3		agree	564	36.3
	disagree	641	63.9		disagree	893	57.5
	neither	92	9.2		neither	63	4.1
	Total	997	99.4		Total	1520	97.8

Data Content Analysis

Table 2

Relative salience *Volkskrant*

1999			2008		
Rank	Topic	Frequencies	Rank	Topic	Frequencies
1	Economy	33	1	Health care	37
2	Health care	25	2	Economy	34
3	Immigration	18	3	Education	31
4	Education	16	4	Immigration	22
5	Agriculture	9	5	Defense	14
6	Defensive	8	6	Environment	11
7	Environment	8	7	Agriculture	7
8	Public order	8	8	Public order	7

Table 2 shows the relative effect of agenda setting for *Volkskrant* in 1999 and 2008. In the descending order in 1999 the issue of immigration was the third topic, based on the amount of articles that were gathered during the first part of the content analysis. In 2008 the topic of immigration was the fourth topic and basically changed places with the topic of education. This means that for *Volkskrant*, the relative salience of the immigration topic has decreased slightly.

Table 3

Relative salience *Telegraaf*

1999			2008		
Rank	Topic	Frequencies	Rank	Topic	Frequencies
1	Health Care	15	1	Economy	48
2	Education	13	2	Health care	33
3	Defense	12	3	Public order	20
4	Economy	10	4	Defense	19
5	Agriculture	10	5	Education	19
6	Environment	7	6	Immigration	14
7	Public order	5	7	Environment	13
8	Immigration	2	8	Agriculture	4

Table 3 shows the relative salience for *Telegraaf* in 1999 and 2008. In the descending order in 2008 we see that the topic of immigration now takes sixth place while in 1999 it took the

eight and last place in the descending order. This suggests that the salience of the immigration topic has increased relatively to the other topics. Especially safety and economy also show a substantial increase in levels of salience.

Table 4

			Positive	Negative	Neutral		Total
<i>Telegraaf</i>	1999		4	12	14		30
			13%	40%	47%		100%
<i>Volkskrant</i>	1999		3	21	49		73
			4%	29%	67%		100%
<i>Telegraaf</i>	2008		16	74	34		124
			13%	60%	27%		100%
<i>Volkskrant</i>	2008		13	42	52		107
			12%	39%	49%		100%

Table 4 shows us the exact numbers and percentages of positive, negative and neutral results from the content analysis. For both newspapers we find a large difference in the amount of negative results between 1999 and 2008. In 1999 40% of the articles *Telegraaf* published were negative and in 2008 60% of the articles *Telegraaf* published were negative. A comparable difference is to be found with *Volkskrant* (29% in 1999 and 39% in 2008). The amount of negative articles published on immigrants and minority's has grown between 1999 and 2008. For both newspapers we also find a lower amount of neutral results in 2008 than in 1999. *Volkskrant* published 67% neutral articles in 1999 and 49% in 2008. *Telegraaf* published 47% neutral articles in 1999 and 27% in 2008. The results also show that in 2008 there are simply more articles concerning immigrants and minorities in both newspapers than in 1999. *Volkskrant* shows a small growth in positive results between 1999 and 2008. Results for *Telegraaf* show 13% positive results in 1999 and also in 2008.

Figure 5 and 6 show the percentages of the four EVS-questions and the amount of negative and neutral articles for both newspapers. Figure 5 shows how the increasing levels of intolerance from the indicators of the EVS correlate with the increasing amount of negative articles. Figure 6 shows how the amount of neutral articles decreases while levels of intolerance increase.

Figure 5

Percentage of negative articles Telegraaf and Volkskrant and percentage of respondents who mentioned Muslims, People from another Race, Immigrants/Foreigners and people who don't allow immigrants a job in time of crisis

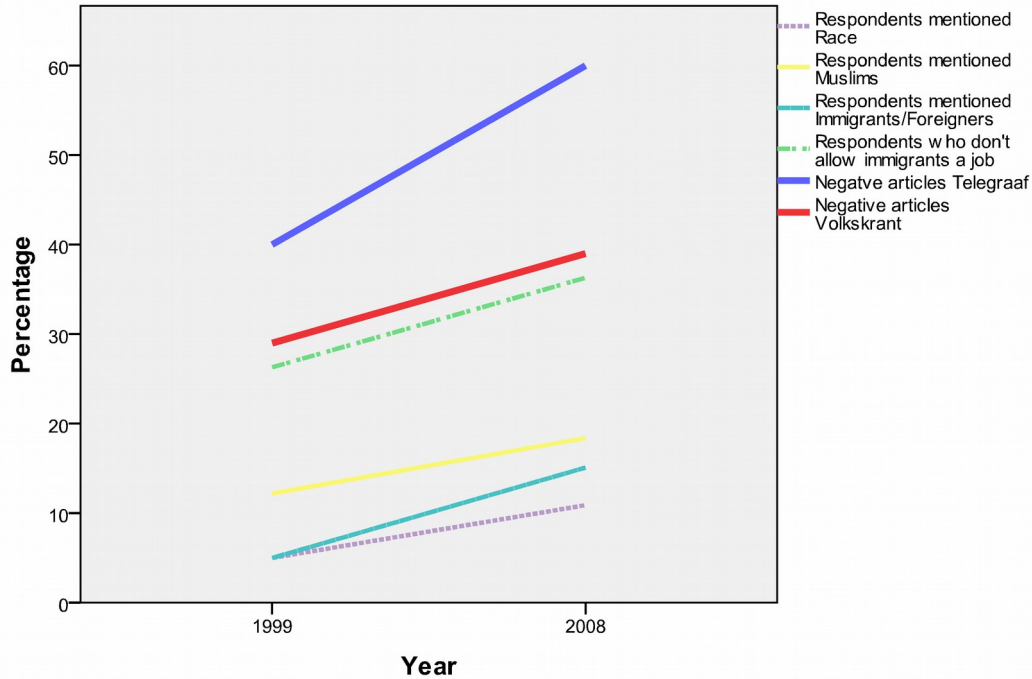
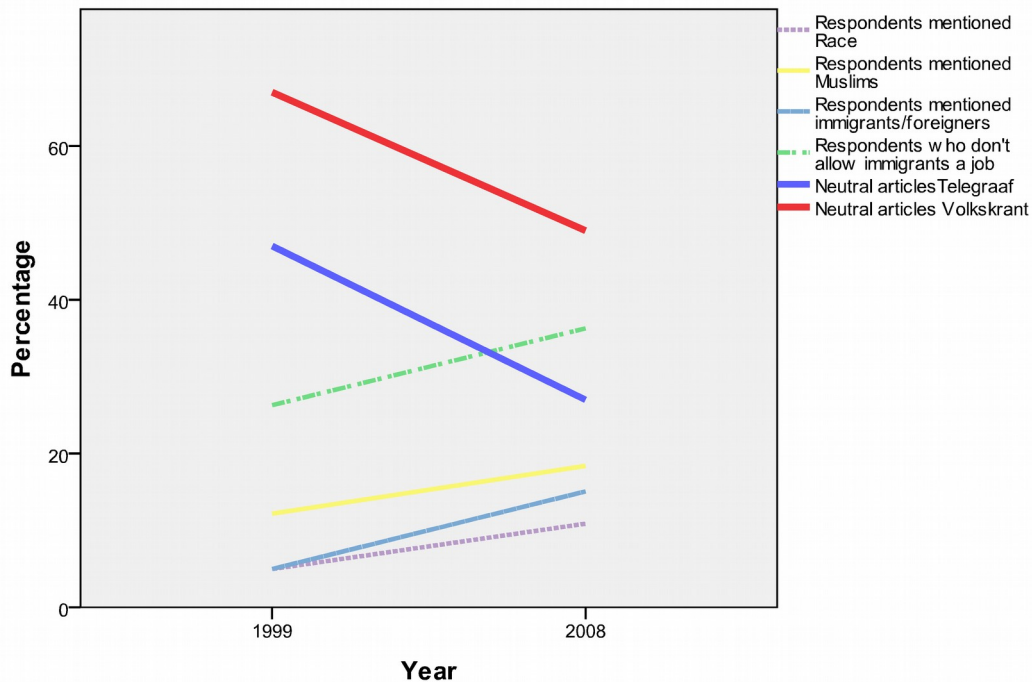


Figure 6

Percentage of Neutral articles Telegraaf and Volkskrant and percentage of respondents who mentioned People from another race, Muslims, Immigrants/Foreigners and respondents who don't allow immigrants a job in time of crisis



We also find an interesting difference between the two newspapers. *Volkskrant* seems to publish more neutral and less negative articles than *Telegraaf*. In 1999 *Volkskrant* published 10% less negative articles than *Telegraaf* and 20% more neutral articles. In 2008 *Volkskrant* published 21% less negative articles and 22% more neutral articles. Although the amount of negative and neutral results for both newspapers has changed, the relative difference between the two newspapers remains quite constant. *Volkskrant* published more neutral articles than *Telegraaf*, and *Telegraaf* published more negative articles than *Volkskrant*. In 2008 *Volkskrant* even published 20% less negative articles than *Telegraaf* in stead of 10% in 1999. This difference can also be observed within figures 5 and 6. These figures show how the vertical distance between the red line (*Volkskrant*) and blue line (*Telegraaf*) remains constant while the amount of negative and neutral articles change between 1999 and 2008. This is a very interesting result. A possible explanation for these differences lies within the history of pillarization that has been very characteristic for the Netherlands.

Figure 7

Percentage of Positive articles Telegraaf and Volkskrant and percentage of respondents who mentioned People from another race, Muslims, Immigrants/Foreigners and respondents who don't allow immigrants a job in time of crisis

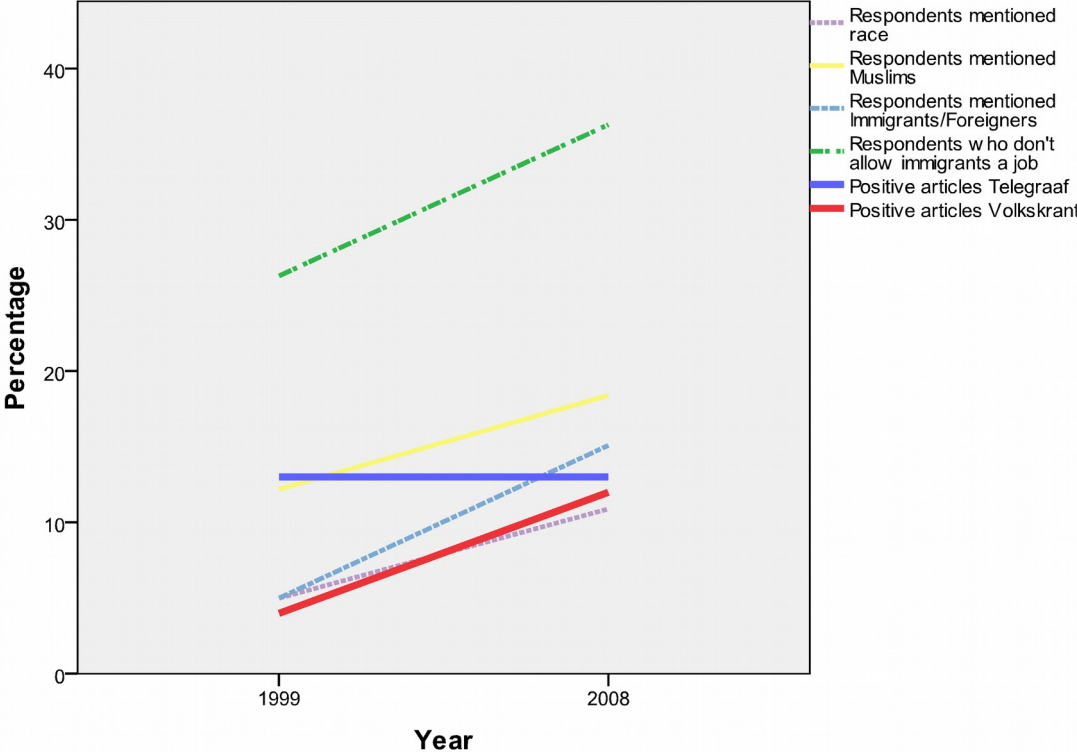


Figure 7 shows the percentages of positive articles for both newspapers and the questions from the EVS. As shown in Table 4, *Telegraaf* remains quite stable in the amount of positive articles, while *Volkscrant* shows an increase of 8%. While levels of political intolerance increase, so does the amount of positive articles *Volkscrant* published.

Discussion

The results of the data from the EVS and the content analysis provide us with four important elements on which we can base our conclusions. In the first place the content analysis showed us that in 2008 there were simply more articles in both newspapers concerning immigrants and minorities in the Netherlands. However, the relative salience of the immigration topic hasn't increased for *Volkscrant*. It actually decreased slightly. For *Telegraaf* though, the relative salience of the immigration topic has increased substantially (Two places within the descending order). Only for *Telegraaf* the immigration topic has become more salient. Based on the agenda-setting theory this brings us to the conclusion that the topic of immigration and other cultures has become slightly more salient in the Netherlands.

However, the agenda-setting theory is not sufficient to explain the alternation in public opinion which we found within the data from the EVS. According to agenda-setting theory, the media decide the subject that people think about, but not how they evaluate the proposed problems. The content analysis based on the framing theory of Nelson, Clawson and Oxley (1997) resulted in more articles in both newspapers with a negative content in 2008 than in 1999 (*Telegraaf* + 20%, *Volkscrant* + 10%). The first question of the EVS was about whether people wouldn't like immigrants and minorities to become their neighbors. For people from another race we found an increase of 5,9%, for Muslims an increase of 6,2%, and for immigrants and foreigners in general we found an increase of 10.1%. Figure 5 shows how the percentages of negative articles in *Telegraaf* and *Volkscrant* correlate with the percentages of respondents who mentioned the different minorities from the first question in the EVS. The second question from the EVS showed an increase of intolerance by 10%. Figure 5 also shows the increase of the second question from the EVS. Figure 5 clearly shows us that the differences in levels of political tolerance correlate with the differences in the amount of negative news coverage.

Another element in the results of the content analysis is the fact that for both newspapers there are relatively less neutral results in 2008 than in 1999. Figure 6 shows how

the percentages of neutral results decrease while the indicators of political tolerance from the EVS increase. The positive results remain quite stable although *Volkskrant* shows a slight increase from 4% to 12%. All articles that contained a mixture of positive and negative news were coded neutral. The articles that were coded neutral gave a sophisticated analysis of certain problems with immigrants or tried to enlighten both sides of the news. The neutral articles therefore weren't solemnly negative or positive. The decrease of neutral articles and increase of more negative articles in both newspapers corresponds with a tendency of polarization within Dutch politics. Not only the political parties on the right side of the political spectrum have been gaining more support. The Socialist Party on the left side of the spectrum has also shown a spectacular growth in parliament last ten years. The political parties in the middle of the political spectrum are losing a lot of support in parliament. As political commentators tend to say, the debate on immigration has not only become more salient, but its tone has also sharpened and politicians are proposing hard policies. The data from the content analysis acknowledge this statement.

Finally the content analysis also showed an interesting difference between the two newspapers that were analyzed. *Volkskrant* scored more neutral results than negative results in both years. *Telegraaf* scored more negative than neutral results in 2008. In 1999 the neutral and negative results for *Telegraaf* were quite comparable (neutral 47% negative 40%). In general *Volkskrant* published more neutral articles than negative articles, and *Telegraaf*, especially in 2008, tends to publish more negative articles than neutral articles. This means that *Volkskrant* generally presents news concerning immigrants more sophisticated and generally tries to enlighten both negative and positive element of the news. *Volkskrant* even shows an increase in positive articles while *Telegraaf* chooses a negative context in their articles more often.

An explanation for this difference could be found within the Dutch history of pillarization. In 20th century Dutch society was separated in different pillars (social groups) based on cultural and religious identity. These pillars had their own schools, political parties, Student fraternities, Universities, labor unions, broadcasting services and also news media. These newspapers and broadcasting services weren't objective at all. They were systematically used for propaganda aiming to mobilize the pillars to vote for the party belonging to the pillar. That's why newspapers still have their ideological roots and these are still represented in daily coverage. *Volkskrant* used to be the newspaper of the catholic pillar. Nowadays *Volkskrant* has a tendency of representing the opinion of the left side of the

political spectrum. *Telegraaf* used to be the newspaper for the liberal/neutral pillar (Lijphart, 1990, 51-67). When Pim Fortuyn became a popular politician *Telegraaf* was supporting his vision on politics in their daily papers. *Telegraaf* is known to be supportive of the right side of the political spectrum. The ideological roots of the two newspapers could be the explanation for the fact that *Telegraaf* tends to publish more negative than neutral articles. *Telegraaf* often chooses to present their readers with a negative context of the news concerning immigrants. *Volkscrant* on the other side publishes more neutral than negative articles. *Volkscrant* chooses to present the news more sophisticated and tries to enlighten both negative and positive elements.

Conclusion

After analyzing the data from the EVS and analyzing the results from the content analysis, we found substantial correlation between the levels of political tolerance in The Netherlands and the amount of negative news coverage about immigrants in two Dutch newspapers. I will not be able to conclude there is a direct causal relationship between the amount of negative news coverage and levels of political intolerance. Simple correlation doesn't allow us to conclude there is also causation. Also, this bachelor thesis didn't include a time-lag. For this reason we can't say whether the media has changed the opinion of the people by the effects of agenda-setting and framing, or whether the media are reacting to those opinions. The growing amount of negative news coverage about immigrants and growing levels of political intolerance combined with the relative increase of salience for the immigration issue, strongly suggest there is a genuine relationship between these phenomena. The hypothesis for this bachelor thesis is therefore confirmed. Taking into account all that has happened in the last ten years like the murders of Pim Fortuyn and Theo van Gogh, the rising of populist right parties and the polarization of Dutch politics, it isn't reasonable to think that negative news coverage is the only reason for higher levels of political intolerance, but its influence should not be underestimated.

The results of this thesis also have substantial explorative value. The content analysis has also presented us with interesting difference between the two analyzed newspapers. In general, *Telegraaf* was found to publish more negative articles than neutral articles and *Volkscrant* on the other side published more neutral than negative articles. *Telegraaf* therefore often chooses to present news concerning immigrants and minorities in the Netherlands with a negative frame or context, highlighting negative aspects of the news. *Volkscrant* scored more

neutral results and seems to present the news more sophisticated not only describing the negative aspects of the news, but also the positive elements. This result provides us with an interesting subject for further research. In the discussion, I briefly noticed that a possible explanation for this difference could be found within the ideological roots that all Dutch newspapers still have from the Dutch history of polarization. A comparable content analysis, as performed for this bachelor thesis, containing more Dutch newspapers with different ideological roots could present us with more insights to the differences between newspapers in the amount of positive, negative and neutral news coverage.

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Data resources

- European Values Study: 3th and 4th wave (1999-2000 and 2008)
- LexisNexis Academic

Appendix

A. Codebook bachelor project 2012 Thomas Truijens

1. Column one

Information concerning the article

Newspaper, Data, headline, Lead

2. Column two

If the article is about the way immigrants behave in the Netherlands or news concerning immigrants in the Netherlands this article is useful for my analysis. This information is found within the headline and/or lead of the article.

Code: -

If the headline and/or lead of the article concerns news in other country's or news that doesn't concern immigrants in the Netherlands the article isn't useful for my analysis. These articles are coded as "not applicable".

Code: "not applicable"

3. Column three

This column is only useful when column two contains an empty code

Negative, positive or neutral.

Negative code:

Article is mainly negative about immigrants in the Netherlands:

To many immigrants, high criminal rates, high unemployment rates, high drop out of school, bad school performances, not speaking Dutch, immigrants in relation to terrorism, behavior of immigrants which is evaluated as negative in the article, more immigrants than last year

Negative news concerning immigrants in the Netherlands

Code: “negatief”

Positive code:

Article is positive about immigrants in the Netherlands:

Less immigrants then last year, lower criminal rates, lower unemployment rates, lower drop out of school, good school performances, speaking Dutch, story’s of immigrants who are having success in jobs, school etc., behavior of immigrants which is evaluated as positive in the article

Positive news concerning immigrants in the Netherlands

Code:” positief”

Neutral: Not positive and not negative, or a mixture of both

Article contains a mixture of positive and negative news (contains both negative and positive aspects of a presented news fact) or the article is less explicit about whether presented facts are negative or positive. For example: Building a mosque is sometimes presented as a simple fact (code neutral), and sometimes the building of a mosque is being presented as ridiculous, not in correspondence with the wishes of the people in the neighborhood etc. (code negative)

Code: “neutral”

4. Column four

If necessary, contains a explanation of the chosen code

B. Card presented to respondents during first incorporated question form the EVS-Survey

CARD 6

- A People with a criminal record
- B People of a different race
- C Left wing extremists
- D Heavy drinkers
- E Right wing extremists
- F People with large families
- G Emotionally unstable people
- H Muslims
- I Immigrants/foreign workers
- J People who have AIDS
- K Drug addicts
- L Homosexuals
- M Jews
- N Gypsies
- O Christians