

Dia 1

## Political bias in TV-Interviews

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XVIIth International Seminar in Broadcast Talk  
"Belligerence in broadcast talk"  
Ross PRIORITY  
13th - 16th September 2009

Dia 2

## Occasion of the study

Introduction   Method   Results   Discussion

- In the Netherlands, the political bias of media interviewers is a hotly debated issue
- Example of a politician, accusing a journalist of biased questions:  
Interviewer (IR) Sven Kockelmann and interviewee (IE) Geert Wilders  
(Goedemorgen Nederland, 15/02/2007)
  - IE: *Once again, we are from the party whose people say what they think. You may be from the party whose people only say something when it helps.*
  - IR: *I do not belong to any party.*
  - IE: *Well, that's not what it looks like.*
  - IR: *How is that?*
  - IE: *Well, your questions are quite suggestive.*
- Our study investigates political bias of journalists in Dutch TV-interviews

In the Netherlands, the political bias of media interviewers is a hotly debated issue. It is not a debate on journalistic norms and values, but on journalistic *practice*. Just as in the United Kingdom, the United States and many other countries that value the freedom of the press, Dutch news interviewers are expected to adhere to certain basic standards of professional conduct such as impartiality and objectivity. The

debate focuses in particular on journalistic practice on Dutch national radio and television, which are state-subsidized and fulfil a public function. The criticism levelled at media journalists includes their left-wing bias. Journalists are alleged to support left-wing ideals and opinions rather than the right wing body of thought and to influence future voters in propagating a preference for left-wing political candidates over right-wing ones. The slide shows an example of a politician accusing a journalist of being biased.

Original text:

IE: *Nogmaals, wij zijn van de partij die zegt wat we vinden.*

*U bent misschien van de partij die alleen maar wat zegt als het helpt.*

IR: *Ik ben helemaal van geen enkele partij*

IE: *Nou dat lijkt soms wat anders*

IR: *Waarom?*

IE: *Nou, uw vragen zijn vrij suggestief.*

This debate on journalists being biased provided the practical impetus for our study. Although it is an empirical issue, research on the matter is scarce. We try to fill this gap by empirically investigating the possible political bias of Dutch media interviewers during the run-up to the elections of December 2006.

Dia 3



**Interaction in TV-interviews**

Introduction Method Results Discussion

- The TV-interview has surpassed other more traditional means of political communication (Elliott & Bull 1996: 49; Ekström 2001)
- Interviewers are intermediaries between politicians and the general public
  - ◆ Institutional role of talk manager
  - ◆ 'Watchdog' of a participatory democracy (Clayman et al. 2007: 23)
- The current journalistic profession shows a tension (Clayman & Heritage 2002a: 150-236; Hutchby 2006: 127-133)
  - ◆ Norm of 'neutrality'
  - ◆ Increasingly 'adversarial' interviewing style
- Interviewers use complex question formats, e.g.,
  - ◆ Formulation (Heritage 1985: 101-112)
  - ◆ You say X, but what about Y?-pattern (Hutchby 1992: 675-684)

Nowadays and worldwide, the television interview is one of the most widely used and best-developed formats for political communication (Elliott and Bull, 1996: 49; Ekström, 2001). Particularly in the run-up period to elections, politicians appear in TV-interviews almost daily. In the context of a growing number of 'floating voters' in the Netherlands, estimated at 30% before the last elections, gaining access to the electorate through TV-interviews can be of decisive importance. Thus it is no wonder that politicians are eager to exploit this setting to reach and attract voters.

Although it is potentially helpful to politicians in gaining political success, taking part in a TV-interview is also a risky endeavour. In more traditional political platforms, like public speeches or political advertising, politicians have full control over content and process. In the TV-interview, however, there is a third party involved, the interviewers, who take over a lot of the control. In their institutional role as talk managers, interviewers set the topics, ask the questions, determine who speaks, and decide when a question has been answered sufficiently. Moreover, as mediators between politicians and the viewers at home, interviewers fulfil a democratic function in that they are expected to probe policy issues and to organize the public debate. It is the politicians' task to present themselves to the viewers while answering difficult questions, posed by interviewers who enter the scene as 'watchdogs' (Clayman et al. 2007: 23) of a participatory democracy.

Various scholars have pointed to a tension in the current journalistic profession (Clayman & Heritage 2002a: 150-236; Hutchby 2006: 127-133). On the one side, neutrality in the sense of 'neutralism'<sup>1</sup> is considered an important condition for good journalism: broadly speaking, interviewers have to take a 'balanced, impartial, or neutral stance' towards statements and opinions of the interviewee (Clayman & Heritage 2002a: 199). On the other side, as critical investigators of political practice and as proponents of a participatory society, it is the interviewers' task to ask penetrating and opposing questions and prevent evasive answers. Thus, in order to discover the 'real' facts, journalists have to approach their sources critically and should not be the passive extensions of the politicians' voices. The journalists react to this tension by utilizing question forms that do not express a personal stance, but at the same time contain a critical position, i.e., by using question formats which realize a complex positioning of the participants in the interview setting, such as the formulation (Heritage 1985: 101-112) and the 'You say X, but what about Y?' -pattern (Hutchby 1992: 675-684).

1 'Neutralism' is distinguished from 'neutrality' in the professional literature (Clayman & Heritage 2002a). The questions in media interviews cannot meet the norm of 'neutrality' in an absolute sense: the selection of topics and contexts is not neutral, questions unavoidably contain presuppositions that are problematic for the interviewee to a lesser or higher degree, and questions are formulated in such a way that they create a specific expectancy of the answer.

## Political bias

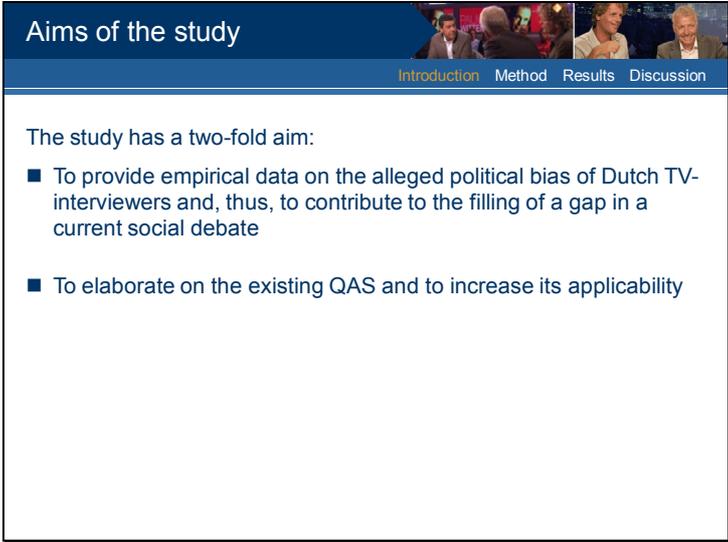
Introduction
Method
Results
Discussion



- We studied political bias empirically by making use of and elaborating on Clayman and Heritage's category system for the analysis of question design QAS (Clayman & Heritage 2002b: 754-771; Clayman et al. 2007: 30)
- Apart from giving insight into political bias, our application of QAS gives insight into the quality of QAS in a different context (US vs. The Netherlands) and a different type of interview (press conferences vs. TV-interviews)
- Political bias can also be studied by observing the physical amount of coverage each side receives (D'Alessio & Allen 2000)
- Our study concerns:
  - Coverage bias, defined as an unequal attribution of speaking turns and speaking time to politicians differing in political orientation
  - Bias in question design, defined as an unequal treatment of politicians differing in orientation with respect to the ways in which answers, reactions, statements and accounts are solicited

Recently, Clayman and Heritage developed a subtle system of categories for the analysis of the range of question forms used by interviewers of politicians, the Question Analysis System or QAS (Clayman & Heritage 2002b: 754-771; Clayman et al. 2007: 30). In total, QAS takes into account ten features of question design. They argue that the different features in general indicate 'adversarialness', while they form groups indicating aspects of adversarialness such as 'initiative' and 'assertiveness'. They developed this QAS when they tried to determine the historical trend that journalists interrogate American presidents in an increasingly aggressive way – a trend that was indeed found. This QAS may be particularly useful for the problem we are focusing on. Its application to Dutch interviewers' questions when approaching politicians with different political backgrounds shows either 'equal treatment' or 'bias'. Apart from this, an application like this provides insight into the quality of QAS in a different context (US vs. The Netherlands) and a different type of interview (press conferences vs. TV-interviews).

A different form of bias, which we also took into account, is the so-called 'coverage bias' (D'Alessio & Allen 2000): journalists might be biased in the physical amount of coverage that the various 'sides' or 'parties' in a discussion receive, i.e., they might allow some parties more speaking turns and more speaking time. Our study concerns both 'coverage bias' and 'bias in question design'.



## Aims of the study

The study has a two-fold aim:

- To provide empirical data on the alleged political bias of Dutch TV-interviewers and, thus, to contribute to the filling of a gap in a current social debate
- To elaborate on the existing QAS and to increase its applicability

We can now summarize the aim of this study as a two-fold one:

- 1 The study aims to provide empirical data on the alleged political bias of Dutch TV-interviewers and, thus, to contribute to the filling of a gap in a current social debate.
- 2 We aim to elaborate on the existing QAS and to increase its applicability.

We are well aware that we are not investigating the complex notion of 'political bias' in all conceivable ways. The study is confined to a number of relatively encompassing aspects of this notion.



## Data collection

- Multiple Case Study
- 12 interviews from Dutch late-night talk show Pauw & Witteman
  - 4 featuring a left-wing politician, 4 featuring a right-wing politician, 4 featuring politicians in the political centre
  - So-called *Kieskompas* - a sociologically-based positioning of the political parties in the Netherlands in a conceptual framework with two dimensions: left vs. right and progressive vs. conservative - was used in defining political orientations
  - Equal distribution of party leaders and party members
  - Distribution of male and female politicians as equal as possible
  - In total: 186 minutes, 700 questions

We carried out a *multiple case study*. We analysed 12 interviews taken from the late-night talk show 'Pauw & Witteman', in which interviewers Jeroen Pauw and Paul Witteman receive guests who play prominent roles in politics, culture and science. The shows last approximately one hour. With one exception, all the interviews were broadcast in the ten-week period preceding the parliamentary elections of December 2006. The format of all analysed programmes was such that one party-leader or MP of a political party active in the electoral struggle was interviewed for 10 to 15 minutes, while there were two or three other, non-political guests sitting round the table. With the aid of the *Kieskompas* - a sociologically-based positioning of the political parties in the Netherlands in a conceptual framework with two dimensions: left vs. right and progressive vs. conservative -, we decided which two of the eleven political parties were most prototypically left-wing and right-wing, as well as which two were most representative of the political centre. For each of these six parties, an interview with the party leader and an interview with an MP was included in the analysis. The distribution of male and female politicians was kept as equal as possible. Table 1 gives an overview of the interviews that were analysed. The 12 interviews were transcribed and segmented into turns in which a question was asked. We used a rather broad notion of 'question' (see Huls 2009: 158-159). The data collection encompasses 186 minutes of conversation and 700 questions.

Dia 7

Data collection						
Introduction <b>Method</b> Results Discussion						
Overview of the data collection						
Nr	Date	Politician	Function	Party	Orientation	
01	03-11-06	Jan Marijnissen	♂ Party leader	SP	Left wing	
02	30-10-06	Agnes Kant	♀ Member of Parliament	SP	Left wing	
03	17-11-06	Femke Halsema	♀ Party leader	GroenLinks	Left wing	
04	18-01-07	Mariko Peters	♀ Member of Parliament	GroenLinks	Left wing	
05	09-11-06	Alexander Pechtold	♂ Party leader	D66	Centre	
06	11-09-06	Lousewies van der Laan	♀ Member of Parliament	D66	Centre	
07	18-10-06	Jan Peter Balkenende	♂ Party leader	CDA	Centre	
08	13-09-06	Maxime Verhagen	♂ Member of Parliament	CDA	Centre	
09	07-09-06	Mark Rutte	♂ Party leader	VVD	Right wing	
10	06-11-06	Rita Verdonk	♀ Member of Parliament	VVD	Right wing	
11	14-11-06	Marco Pastors	♂ Party leader	Eén NL	Right wing	
12	25-10-06	Joost Eerdmans	♂ Member of Parliament	Eén NL	Right wing	

Dia 8

**Data collection**

Introduction Method Results Discussion

Interview setting



Jeroen Pauw Paul Witteman

Dia 9

**Data analysis**

Introduction Method Results Discussion

In correspondence with QAS the following five aspects of question design were studied:

1. Initiative  
One way to show initiative is to introduce the questions with statements, as shown in example 1 in your handout. Another way is by asking more than one question in a turn



In correspondence with QAS, the following five aspects of question design are investigated:

**1 Initiative.** Interviewers can choose to be relatively passive in the sense that they allow the politician maximum leeway to construct a response and impose few

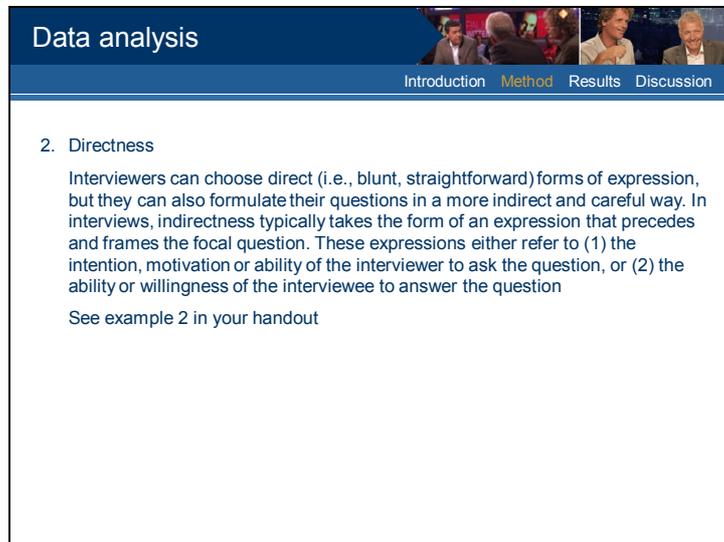
constraints. Alternatively, they can show initiative by elaborating on their questions and formulating them in such a way that the agenda for response is constrained. One way to show initiative is to introduce the questions Q with utterances U, as shown below.

Example: *Jan Marijnissen, je was er inderdaad niet bij, want RTL had ervoor gekozen om een twee-debat te organiseren. Femke Halsema zei daar in 'De leugen regeert' hele boze woorden over. Andre Rouvoet liet vanmorgen in De Volkskrant weten dat hij het een vorm van kiezersbedrog vond. Vind je dat ook?*

A translation of this example in English can be found in the handout.

Another way to show initiative is to ask more than one question in one (and the same) turn.

Dia 10



The image shows a presentation slide with a blue header and a navigation bar. The header contains the text 'Data analysis' and a small video thumbnail. The navigation bar has four items: 'Introduction', 'Method', 'Results', and 'Discussion', with 'Method' highlighted in yellow. The main content area of the slide is white and contains the following text:

2. Directness

Interviewers can choose direct (i.e., blunt, straightforward) forms of expression, but they can also formulate their questions in a more indirect and careful way. In interviews, indirectness typically takes the form of an expression that precedes and frames the focal question. These expressions either refer to (1) the intention, motivation or ability of the interviewer to ask the question, or (2) the ability or willingness of the interviewee to answer the question

See example 2 in your handout

**2 Directness.** Interviewers can choose direct (i.e., blunt, straightforward) forms of expression, but they can also formulate their questions in a more indirect and careful way. In the latter case, the interviewer reckons with potential face loss of the IE. Indirectly formulated questions are perceived as being more polite. In interviews, indirectness typically takes the form of an expression that precedes and frames the focal question. These expressions either refer to (1) the intention, motivation or ability of the interviewer to ask the question, or (2) the ability or willingness of the interviewee to answer the question.

Example: *Mag ik je vragen om een klein stukje voor te lezen?* (See the handout for a translation in English).

**Data analysis**

Introduction **Method** Results Discussion

3. Assertiveness

Assertiveness refers to the degree to which aspects of question design express expectations concerning the answer

See example 3 in your handout



**3 Assertiveness.** No question is completely neutral. The notion of 'assertiveness' refers to the degree to which aspects of question design express expectations concerning the answer. Basically, there are two ways to construct 'tilted' questions: (1) by prefacing the question with statements or arguments in favour of one of the answering alternatives, and (2) by formulating the question in the suggestive sentence mode.

In example 3 in the handout both ways of constructing 'tilted' questions co-occur:  
*Nou, ja, kijk, vanuit die doodstraf, je kunt toch ook zeggen dat als Saddam Hoessein wordt uitgeleverd aan een tribunaal, waar de meeste partijen het allemaal mee eens waren dat dat tribunaal er was, want het eigen volk zou die man moeten berechten. En als je dan weet dat in die cultuur doodstraf bovenaan staat, dan is het toch niet zo gek dat die Saddam Hoessein ook die doodstraf krijgt?*

**Data analysis**

Introduction **Method** Results Discussion

4. Opposition

Opposition concerns the degree to which the interviewer takes a position opposite to that of the interviewee. Opposition takes place when the question is overtly critical with respect to the interviewee and his or her party. Interviewers can express opposing views either in the introduction to the question or in the design of the question itself. Introductions are opposing when they contain rejecting or negatively evaluating remarks concerning utterances and acts of the interviewee. Opposition in the question itself occurs when the interviewer openly disagrees, contradicts or evaluates negatively

See example 4 in your handout

5. Accountability

Accountability refers to the degree to which the interviewer requests interviewees explicitly to account for their policy. The interviewer can formulate his question on accountability in a formally 'neutral' way and simply ask for the reason why the politician behaved the way he or she did, or he can – as is shown in example 5 in your handout - be more accusing by portraying the political decision as doubtful or inexplicable

**4 Opposition.** Opposition concerns the degree to which the interviewer takes a position opposite to that of the interviewee. Opposition takes place when the question is overtly critical with respect to the interviewee and his or her party. Interviewers can express opposing views either in the introduction to the question or in the design of the question itself. Introductions are opposing when they contain rejecting or negatively evaluating remarks concerning utterances and acts of the interviewee. Opposition in the question itself occurs when the interviewer openly disagrees, contradicts or evaluates negatively.

Example 4 in your handout: *We hadden gisteravond hier wethouder Aboutaleb uit uh Amsterdam, die zich nogal opwond over het feit dat juist dit kabinet onder uw leiding zo weinig aandacht had gegeven voor de problemen die Amsterdam met dit probleem heeft. Laten we even dat fragmentje terugzien. We zijn benieuwd hoe uw reactie daarop is.*

**5 Accountability.** Accountability refers to the degree to which the interviewer asks the interviewee explicitly to account for his policy. The interviewer does not accept a political decision without an argument. He challenges the interviewee to justify his political behaviour. The interviewer can formulate his question in a formally 'neutral' fashion and simply ask for the reason why the politician behaved the way he did (see example 5, Q1), or he can be more accusatory by portraying the political decision as doubtful or inexplicable (example 5, Q2).

IR: *Staat er iets over in het verkiezingsprogramma van de VVD?*

IE: *Nee.*

IR: *Hoe kan dat? Is toch een belangrijk onderwerp geweest? Bolkestein is er jaren mee aan de slag geweest*

**Data analysis**

Introduction **Method** Results Discussion

We have expanded QAS with a sixth analytical perspective:

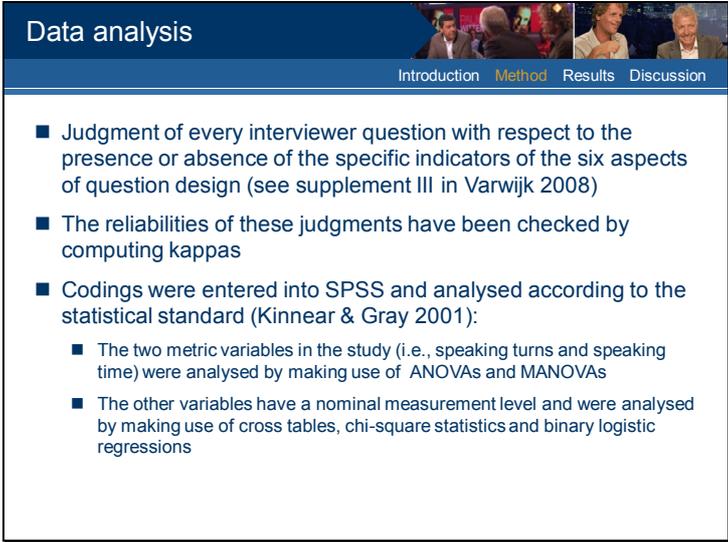
6. Persistence

Our notion of persistence applies to the interviewer's behaviour in extended sequences of questions. The interviewer shows persistence when he does not simply take the politician's answer for an answer, but repeats his question, explicitly addresses the politician's evasive reactions or interrupts the politician

See example 6 in your handout.



We have expanded QAS with a sixth analytical perspective, **persistence**. Clayman and Heritage (2002b: 749) claim that QAS can be used to analyse question design in both TV-interviews and press conferences. However, they neglect an important difference in the two contexts. In contrast to press conferences, where the politician distributes the turns in such a way that an interviewer can ask only one or (rarely) two questions, where after the floor goes to the next one, the TV-interview allows for a longer, coherent sequence of questions by the same interviewer. Although this might look like a small difference, its consequences are far-reaching: the interviewer has the opportunity to react to the adequacy of the answers and exploit a range of means in follow-up questions to obtain a more revealing answer. Our notion of persistence applies to the interviewer's behaviour in such extended sequences of questions. The interviewer shows persistence when he does not simply take the politician's answer for an answer, but repeats his question, explicitly addresses the politician's evasive reactions or interrupts the politician.



**Data analysis**

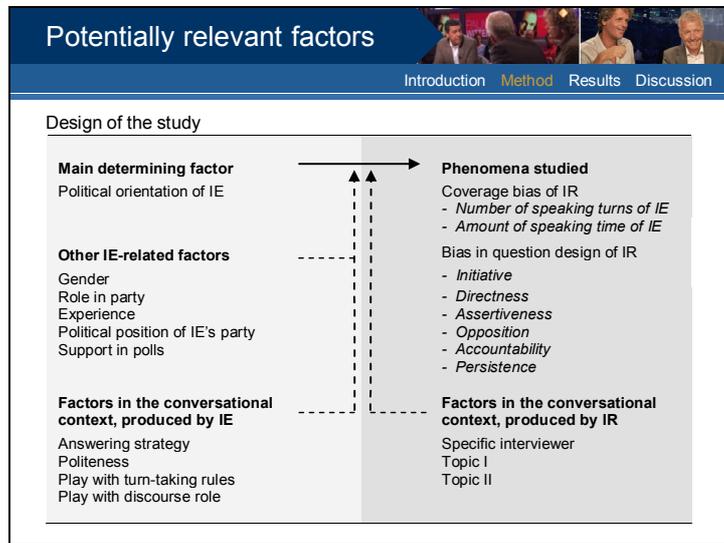
Introduction **Method** Results Discussion

- Judgment of every interviewer question with respect to the presence or absence of the specific indicators of the six aspects of question design (see supplement III in Varwijk 2008)
- The reliabilities of these judgments have been checked by computing kappas
- Codings were entered into SPSS and analysed according to the statistical standard (Kinnear & Gray 2001):
  - The two metric variables in the study (i.e., speaking turns and speaking time) were analysed by making use of ANOVAs and MANOVAs
  - The other variables have a nominal measurement level and were analysed by making use of cross tables, chi-square statistics and binary logistic regressions

Every question of the interviewer in our data collection was judged with respect to the presence or absence of the specific indicators of the six aspects of question design. This judgment, which was made by Jasper Varwijk, was often based upon formal aspects of the question, and thus could be made with a relatively high degree of reliability (Clayman et al, 2007: 31). Problematic cases were discussed by both researchers, and treated consistently by adding guidelines to the coding manual. Furthermore, a third researcher carried out an independent judgment of 5% of the questions. This judgment was compared with Varwijk's assessment, and Cohen's Kappa, a measure that gives insight into the agreement between the judges, was computed (Cohen 1960). The kappa values of the six aspects of question design were as follows: initiative .91; directness: 1.00; assertiveness .78; opposition .71; accountability 1.00; persistence .56.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>: The reliability of the coding of persistence with a value of .56 is not optimal. The kappa values of the underlying indicators 'repeating the question', 'commenting on evasive action of the politician' and 'interruption' were .47, .47 and .66 respectively. Defining the indicators in a more formal way and providing more specific guidelines can improve these reliabilities.

The codings were entered into SPSS and analysed according to the statistical standard (Kinnear & Gray 2001). This means that the two metric variables (i.e., the granted amount of speaking turns and the granted amount of speaking time) were analysed by making use of ANOVAs and MANOVAs. The other variables have a nominal measurement level and were analysed by making use of cross tables, chi-square statistics and binary logistic regressions.



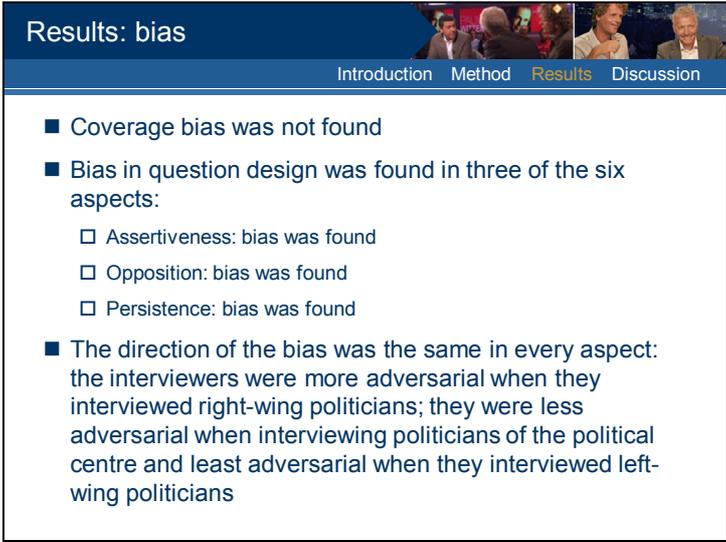
Suppose we find a relationship between the political orientation of the interviewee and the aspects of question design, and that this relationship turns out to confirm the accusations mentioned in the introduction as made by certain right-wing politicians in particular that right-wing politicians are approached in a more adversarial way than left-wing politicians. Then, the conclusion that the interviewers show bias would still be premature, because this relationship might be determined by other factors than the political orientation. For example, it is easy to imagine that an evasive answer of a politician might drive the interviewer to more assertiveness and persistence in his next question. If right-wing politicians show this answering behaviour more often than left-wing politicians, then the bias found cannot be attributed to the interviewer, but can be said to be their 'own fault'. On the basis of previous research into interaction (in TV-interviews) and the relationship between media and politics, the factors that might be the most relevant as offering alternative explanations for our findings were determined and included in our study. We found twelve of them. They are listed in the handout.

A number of them concerns the reactions of the interviewee in the turn immediately preceding the question: did the interviewee provide an answer or show a form of evasive action? An analysis of evasive action is not an easy endeavour. We based ourselves upon own research, as well as on research done by others (e.g., Harris 1991; Clayman 2001; Kuiper 2006; Huls 2008 and 2009). We ended up distinguishing 23 forms of evasive action. These were grouped into four factors: 1) answering strategy; 2) politeness strategy; 3) playing with the turn-taking rules; and 4) playing with the discourse role.

Five factors are inherently related to the interviewee: their 'gender', their role in the party (party leader or MP?), and political experience, their party's political position (in power or in the opposition), and their party's position in the polls (support may be stable, increase or decrease).

The last three factors are determined by the interviewers. It is possible that one of the interviewers shows bias, while the other does not. Moreover, the topic of the question (does the question address a topic in national politics or another topic; does the question address a topic in international politics or another topic) might determine the adversarial behaviour of the interviewers.

Dia 16



The slide is titled "Results: bias" and features a navigation bar with four tabs: "Introduction", "Method", "Results" (which is highlighted in orange), and "Discussion". The main content area contains a bulleted list of findings:

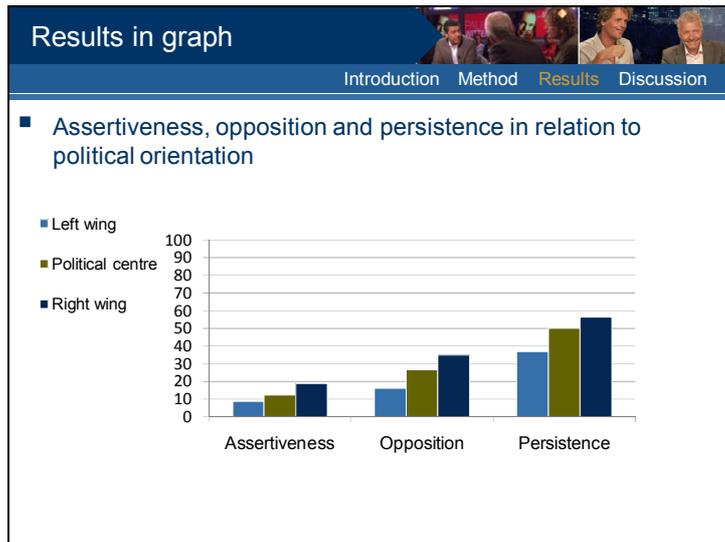
- Coverage bias was not found
- Bias in question design was found in three of the six aspects:
  - Assertiveness: bias was found
  - Opposition: bias was found
  - Persistence: bias was found
- The direction of the bias was the same in every aspect: the interviewers were more adversarial when they interviewed right-wing politicians; they were less adversarial when interviewing politicians of the political centre and least adversarial when they interviewed left-wing politicians

**Coverage bias** was not found. The politicians of the differing orientations received an equal number of speaking turns (mean number of 58.2) and also an equal amount of speaking time (mean 15.5 minutes).

**Bias in question design** was found in three of the six aspects studied. There was no bias in *initiative*, *directness* and *accountability*.

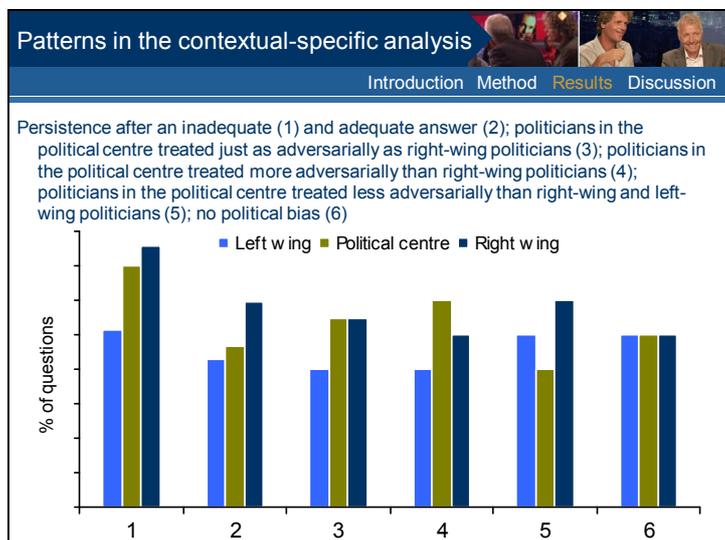
But bias was found in assertiveness, opposition and persistence.

The **direction of the bias** was the same in every aspect: the interviewers were more adversarial when they were interviewing right-wing politicians; they were less adversarial when interviewing politicians of the political centre and least adversarial when they interviewed left-wing politicians.



However, on slide 15 we put forward that a bias, if found, might be determined by other factors than the interviewer. First, the 12 factors that might offer an alternative explanation were investigated with respect to their effect on persistence, opposition and assertiveness. 13 of these 36 effect determinations (12 contextual factors x 3 aspects of question design) were statistically significant. Next, we made context-specific cross tables and studied the precise character of this effect on what really concerns us: the political bias.

The bar diagrams 1 and 2 on the next slide show an example of such an effect determination and context-specific analysis.

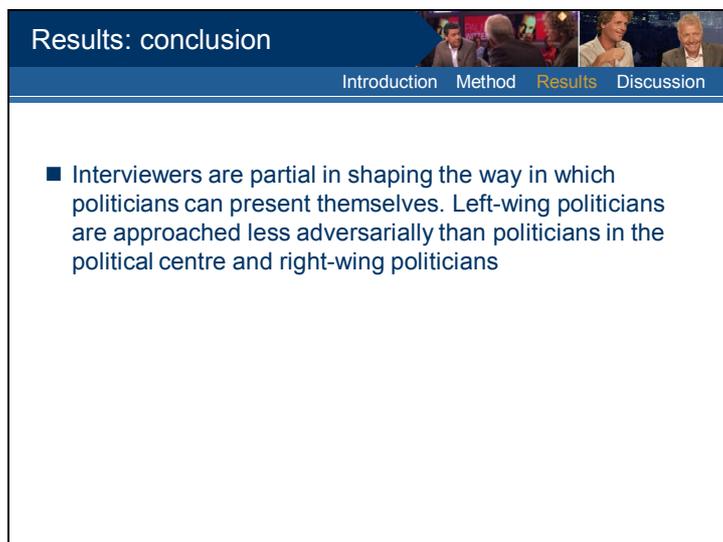


The interviewers are more persistent after a so-called inadequate answer: the figures in 1 are higher than in 2, but their bias is apparent in both context 1 and context 2. We conclude that this aspect of the answering behaviour of the politician shapes the question design, but does not offer an alternative explanation for the bias that we found.

In this way, we studied what happens to the political bias in the 26 contexts that are encompassed by the 13 factors that proved to be relevant. Overwhelmingly (16 times), we found the pattern that left-wing politicians are approached in a less adversarial manner than politicians from the political centre, while the approach to right-wing politicians is most adversarial, i.e., the pattern shown in the bar diagrams 1 and 2. Furthermore, we found variation in the position of the politicians in the political centre: they are treated just as adversarially as their right-wing colleagues in six contexts. This pattern is shown in bar diagram 3. In one context, they are treated in a more adversarial manner than the right-wing politicians. This can be seen in bar diagram 4. Moreover, in one context, they are treated less adversarially than both left-wing and right-wing politicians, as visualized in bar diagram 5. However, these patterns are all patterns of bias favouring left-wing over right-wing politicians. An equal treatment as visualized in bar diagram 6 is found twice: in persistence of the interviewers when they addressed MP's and when the preceding turn of the politician was direct. We conclude that, in nearly all (24 out of 26) contexts investigated, left-wing politicians are approached with significantly less persistence, opposition and assertiveness than right-wing politicians.

The study of the factors that might have offered an alternative explanation for the political bias found did not result in an alternative explanation (for more details, see Varwijk 2008: 40-48). Some had an effect on the adversarialness of the questions, but not on the bias in the use of these questions. More generally, the conclusion of this study is that interviewers are partial in shaping the way in which politicians can present themselves. Left-wing politicians are approached less adversarially than politicians in the political centre and right-wing politicians.

Dia 19

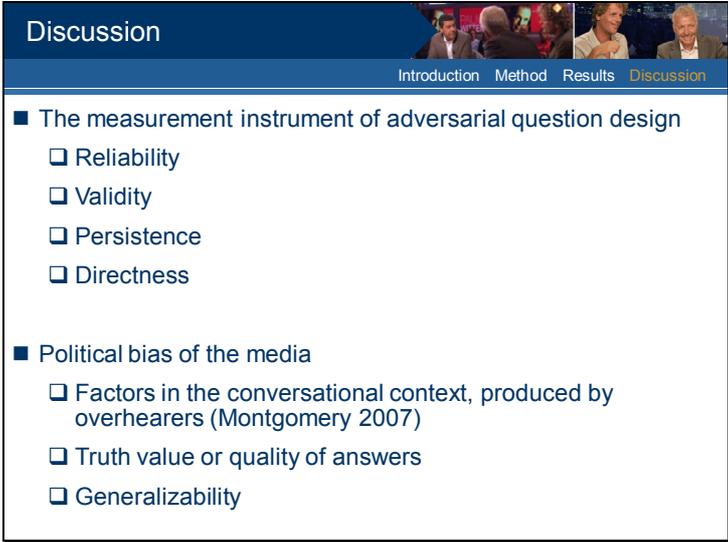


The slide features a dark blue header with the title 'Results: conclusion' in white. To the right of the title is a small image showing a group of people in a meeting. Below the header is a navigation bar with four tabs: 'Introduction', 'Method', 'Results' (highlighted in yellow), and 'Discussion'. The main content area is white with a black border and contains a single bullet point in blue text.

Results: conclusion

Introduction Method Results Discussion

- Interviewers are partial in shaping the way in which politicians can present themselves. Left-wing politicians are approached less adversarially than politicians in the political centre and right-wing politicians



Discussion

Introduction Method Results Discussion

- The measurement instrument of adversarial question design
  - Reliability
  - Validity
  - Persistence
  - Directness
- Political bias of the media
  - Factors in the conversational context, produced by overhearers (Montgomery 2007)
  - Truth value or quality of answers
  - Generalizability

The aim of our study was a two-fold one. On the one hand, the study aimed to contribute to the development of a measurement instrument of adversarial questioning in TV-interviews. On the other hand, the aim was to provide a contribution to the discussion on the partiality of the Dutch media.

### 1 The measurement instrument of adversarial question design

QAS proved to be a manageable instrument for the analysis of adversarial question design. It could be applied in a reliable way (see slide 14), while its validity is underpinned in previous research of the scholars who developed it (Clayman et al. 2007: 27 and 32).

In this study, we expanded QAS with a sixth aspect of adversarial question design. The aim of this expansion was to reach a better fit of this instrument, which until now had been applied to press conferences only, with the specific context of the TV-interview. Nearly half of the questions (48.8%) showed a form of persistent question design, which proves the relevance of this expansion to the analysis of TV-interviews. Moreover, a post-hoc analysis of the relationships between the various aspects of adversarial question design showed that persistence has a low correlation with the other aspects (varying from .01 with accountability to .16 with opposition). The analysis of persistence has completed the picture of the interviewer bias, while it represents a different aspect of the overarching notion of 'adversarialness'. However, the reliability of the coding was not optimal and can be improved (see note 2). Apart from exploring possible expansions, it is also important to reflect on the possibility that the instrument might be too extended. The aspect of *directness* in particular might not fit into it. More specifically, this aspect distinguished itself from the other aspects of QAS in that one politician received a remarkably different treatment than the other eleven: the Prime-Minister Balkenende was approached significantly more often indirectly. On the one hand, this preferential treatment is in accordance with politeness theory (Brown & Levinson 1987), which regards

indirectness as being related to perceptions of the power difference between speaker and addressee, and on the other hand it is inconsistent with QAS, which sees indirectness as an aspect of the construct of 'adversarialness'.

## **2 Political bias of the media**

Our study showed political bias that was not related to and thus could not be explained by one of the many factors in the design of the study. When the contextual factors studied cannot clarify the interviewer bias, where does it come from? Where are there factors that we neglected?

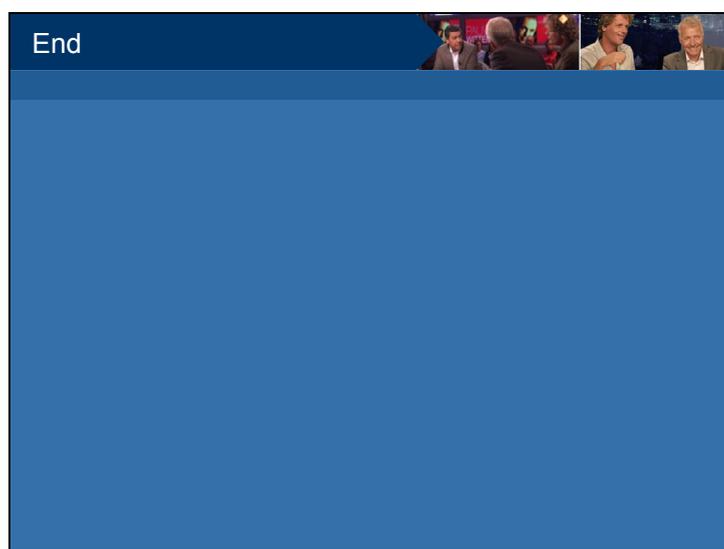
There is a group of factors, which can be labelled as 'factors in the interview context, produced by other participants than interviewers and politician', that we touched upon during the analysis and that was not included in the study beforehand. Apart from interviewer and interviewee, there were guests at the table who can take part in the interview explicitly by taking turns, while they can also make a 'silent' contribution by their alignment (Montgomery 2007) with interviewers and/or interviewee. Moreover, there is an audience in the studio, whose alignment with interviewer and/or interviewee can affect the course of the interview. Finally, there is an audience at home, which can play a role via alignment with interviewer and interviewee. Montgomery (2007) offers useful insights for the empirical study of these alignment factors, which we recommend be included in future research. However, if these factors prove to be relevant, we gain a subtle insight into the dynamics of the interviews-in-context and the responsibility for the bias found moves from 'the interviewers-as-individuals' to 'the interviewers interpreting alignments in a participant structure', but the political bias itself is unaffected.

We paid a lot of attention to the answering behaviour of the interviewee, but possibly not enough to the *truth value* and *quality* of the answers. Suppose left-wing politicians are right more often than right-wing ones and their answers are qualitatively better. If this supposition is true, it is more than reasonable that the interviewers should show political bias. However, we have not investigated the truth values of the statements and the quality of the answers, because we were afraid to stir up a hornets' nest. But on second thoughts, this explanation does not have to be served off as 'impossible to investigate'. It is possible to carry out a qualitative and intensive follow-up study of the transcripts and analyse so-called 'minimally contrasting pairs' (Brown & Gilman 1989): sequences of utterances on comparable issues with comparable relationships to reality and truth, but differing with respect to the political orientation of the interviewee. Although such an analysis might not explain the bias that we found, it can offer additional insight into the precise way it works. That by itself is a gain.

Finally, we would like to say something about the generalizability of the outcome. The results of this study show that an important political platform in the run-up to the parliamentary elections of 2006 was not impartial. However, the late-night talkshow of Pauw and Witteman was not the only platform where politicians presented themselves to the public. This study is a case study whose results cannot be generalized to other TV-programmes, radio or newspaper interviews, or media in general. At this point it is interesting to take a look at the mission of Dutch Public Broadcasting, which states in its first sentence: "Dutch Public Broadcasting belongs to everyone and is aimed at everyone, everywhere and always" (Mission and Strategy, no date or year). According to University-of-Amsterdam researcher Scholten (in Wind 2007), the idea is that "the differing broadcast associations may be

biased, but it is a task for them together to present sufficient multiformity”. In this perspective, our finding that Pauw & Witteman are left-wing is remarkable, but there is no cause for concern if it is counterbalanced by right-wing platforms. However, insight is lacking here. What is needed is more research into different interviewers, programmes, broadcasting systems, - stations and – organizations, and other forms of media. Only then will it be possible to make generalizing statements about the political bias of Dutch media.

Dia 21



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