Faces of conflict

*Interventionism and substantiveness in the conflict framing process*

Bartholomé, A.A.J.

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Political conflicts in the media are a central aspect of a functioning democracy. Being exposed to different viewpoints helps citizens in forming an opinion and knowing what standpoints political parties take in political matters. The media play an important role in this process. This dissertation focusses on conflict framing in political news in the Netherlands. Different types of conflict framing are taken into account, specifically by making a distinction regarding the level of interventionism and the level of substantiveness in conflict framing. Furthermore, the whole range of the conflict framing process is considered. This includes the production, occurrence, and differential effects of different types of conflict frames on political participation.
FACES OF CONFLICT:

INTERVENTIONISM AND
SUBSTANTIVENESS
IN THE CONFLICT FRAMING
PROCESS

Guus Bartholomé
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Interventionism and Substantiveness in the Conflict Framing Process
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Amsterdam School of Communication Research / ASCoR Department of Communication, University of Amsterdam Nieuwe Achtergracht 166 1018 WV Amsterdam The Netherlands.
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Promotor: Prof. dr. C.H. de Vreese, Universiteit van Amsterdam
Copromotor: Prof. dr. S.K. Lecheler, Universiteit van Amsterdam

Overige leden: Prof. dr. E. Albæk, University of Southern Denmark
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction
1.1 Topic and Aim of the Dissertation

Conflict is an essential component of politics in any democracy, where political and other societal actors struggle to get their opinions across (Sartori, 1987). Through conflict, citizens receive different electoral options (Schattschneider, 1960). Conflict is the characteristic of how democracy is institutionalized, be it in parliamentary debate or during election campaigns (Wessler, 2008). Also, conflict precedes consensus, thereby ideally allowing the best idea to emerge within political discourse (Habermas, 2006; Peters, 2005). Most importantly for this dissertation, however, political conflict is today most often played out in a mediated arena, where journalists act as disseminators of a clash of political viewpoints. This importance of mediated conflict in the political process has rendered it a key element in political communication research over the years (e.g., Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997; Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992). It has also opened questions regarding the role that journalist play in the production, content, and effects of political conflict.

Research has traditionally placed journalists in the role of gatekeepers, influencing the media agenda by selecting what is to be disseminated and what is not, thereby informing the public (Shoemaker et al., 2001). In making these choices, journalists are guided by various decision mechanisms, norms, and news values (e.g., Cottle, 2003; Gans, 1979; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Conflict has been identified among the most important of news values in research throughout the years, and it is a central part of journalistic production norms, such as the quest for objectivity and balanced reporting (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Gans, 1979; McManus, 1994; Tuchman, 1978). This all suggests that journalists play an active role in shaping the news in general (Entman, 1991), and conflict in particular. The importance of the journalistic voice within the news is often recognized as important within framing theory (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Journalists play a formative role in framing political news during the news-production process. Because conflict is so important as a journalistic news value and the relevance of conflict for politics, the concept of the “conflict frame” is one of the most frequently used and found frames in political communication research today (e.g., Lengauer, Esser, & Berganza, 2011; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Vliegenthart, Boomgaarden, & Boumans, 2011). Similarly, previous research highlights the distinct effects of exposure to conflict frames on both citizen behaviour (e.g., Mutz & Reeves, 2005; Schuck, Vliegenthart, & De Vreese, 2016), and on political perceptions and attitudes (Avery, 2009; Vliegenthart et al., 2008). The prevalence and effects of conflict in the media underline the importance of conflict frames as a concept and explains the ample attention it has received in research toward political communication.
In the political communication literature, conflict frames are treated as a generic concept and thus a fundamental aspect of news (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). However, despite its importance, conflict framing research is characterized by unclear or overly general definitions and conceptualizations, which have likely also led to inconsistent findings as to which effects it has on political decisionmaking and citizens. In this dissertation, I will argue that, while conflict frames can fall under a single conceptual umbrella, journalistic work produces different types of conflict frames, and that these different types are visible in political news, and have differential effects. I specifically argue that conflict framing varies by 1) level of substantiveness, and 2) level of journalistic intervention. Through uncovering the role of different types of conflict frames in political communication, this PhD-project aims to offer a systematic analysis of conflict framing across all stages of the framing process. This includes the study of the emergence, presence, and effects of different types of conflict frames in political news. Research connecting these three different stages in the framing process is relatively scarce.

First, there is a dearth of studies uncovering the conflict frame building process and the role journalists play in this stage. Therefore, the first aim of this dissertation is to uncover to what extent journalists play an active role in the frame building process, as opposed to functioning as mere disseminators of conflict frames originating from political actors. The first study focuses on the frame building stage, so the role of journalists in framing political news in terms of conflict.

Second, I look at conflict frame presence. Here, I focus on actual manifestations of different types of conflict frames in news messages. The aim is to develop a comprehensive and yet multidimensional definition of conflict frames in the news. Therefore, the aim of the second study is to uncover different manifestations of conflict frames in political news.

Third, I look at the frame setting stage. Specifically, I look at the effects of different types of conflict frames on political participation. The typology I develop in the second study will be used as a starting point for a framing effects experiment. Furthermore, I address the underlying emotional mechanisms of these effects. Hence, the overarching research question for this dissertation is: What is the role of different types of conflict frames in the production, content and effects of conflict framing?

In the remaining part of this chapter, I introduce the background and aim of the dissertation in more detail. I will first focus on the broader relevance of conflict for journalism and political communication. This is followed by a description of framing theory as a theoretical background, and an explanation of the conflict framing process and the definition of conflict framing. Next, I will elaborate on the relevance
of different types of conflict frames including varied levels of substantiveness and interventionism. This 
will be followed by an explanation of the research context. Subsequently, I will address the relevance of 
conflict framing. Finally, I will give an overview of the dissertation chapters and methodology used.

1.2 Journalism, Politics and Conflict

The interplay between politics and journalism is essential for the functioning and development 
of democracy (Albæk et al., 2014). Nonetheless, the relationship between journalism and politics is today 
often described as troubled and complex. Based on a normative assumption of the role journalism should 
play within democracy, the literature is in part divided into scholars who argue that the majority of current 
political news has detrimental effects on an increasingly fragmented, disaffected and cynical citizenry, 
and those who argue that political news has positive outcomes too. In a negative outlook, political jour-
nalists are blamed for excessively focusing on strategy rather than substance, leading to distrust towards 
politicians and cynicism concerning the political system, a so-called "spiral of cynicism" (Cappella & Ja-
mieson, 1997). A similar concern is that market and commercial pressure affects the "internal logic" of the 
manufacturing and appearance of news messages. This process can lead to personalization, dramatization 
of events, simplification of complex affairs and polarized conflicts. These characteristics in turn allegedly 
promote a mood of anti-politics among the recipients of media messages (Habermas, 2006).

However, other researchers also adapt a more positive viewing point, focused on the "virtuous" aspect of 
exposure to political media content (e.g., Norris, 2000; De Vreese, 2005). Researched positioned on this 
side proposes that exposure to contemporary political journalism does not necessarily lead to political 
disengagement and a decline in political participation. Instead, the media can still contribute to a functi-
oning democracy by engaging and mobilizing voters (e.g., Schuck, Vliegenthart, & De Vreese, 2016). As 
is often the case, the truth probably lies somewhere in the middle. Indeed, whether exposure to media 
content leads to positive or negative effects is greatly contingent on a steadily growing list of individu-
al and contextual factors, such as media systems (e.g., Albæk et al., 2014), personality characteristics 
(e.g., Valentino, Beckmann, & Buhr, 2001), or content characteristics (e.g., Min, 2004).

As one of the most important elements of political communication today, conflict is automa-
tically an important part of this broader discussion. While the term conflict at first evokes a negative 
connotation, it is also often seen as pivotal for democracy (Sartori, 1987). Furthermore, the role of jour-
nalists in reporting on political conflict is essential. Both journalists and politicians have their share in the
ubiquity of conflict in political news (Davis, 2003). However, there are no clear guidelines on how neither journalists nor politicians should behave. It is very relevant to what extent journalists intervene when reporting on political conflict, and consequently to what extent political conflict in the news focuses on issues or revolves around nonsubstantive matters such as strategy, personal attacks and incivility. And that brings along the next question, how do journalistic interventionism and substantiveness in conflict framing affect political participation? These questions revolving around conflict framing are central to this dissertation.

1.3 Framing Theory

This dissertation is embedded in the news framing research tradition (e.g., De Vreese, 2005; Matthes, 2012; Scheufele, 1999). Framing can be understood as a process in which certain aspects and considerations of a political debate are highlighted over others. This entails a selection to be made concerning the information that is shared and certain judgments, decisions and behaviours that are suggested to the individual receiving the message (e.g., Nelson, 1997; Scheufele, 1999). A frame is often defined as a “central organizing idea or storyline that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 143). News framing is an important and large part of political communication literature and is the subject of a growing number of studies (Borah, 2011; D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010). While a number of studies in political communication focus on issue-specific news frames, research has also identified generic news frames. These types of frames transcend particular themes and occur in relation to different topics and context. These generic frames are characteristic of news coverage and journalism in general (De Vreese, 2005). Several generic news frames have been identified in political communication literature (e.g., Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Iyengar, 1994; Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Examples of these include a wide variety of frames such as human-interest frames, strategy framing and episodic framing. The focus of this dissertation will be one of the most widely used generic frames in political reporting: conflict framing.

As argued above, this dissertation will cover the whole news framing process. This news framing processes generally consist of three distinct stages, which are most often observed separately. The first is frame building, which refers to the process by which political events and issues is translated into specific news frames (De Vreese, 2005). This process is influenced by several factors both internal and external to journalism (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Research on how these influences play out for conflict framing
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specifically is lacking, even though it is essential. As the role that journalists play in actively constructing conflict frames has so far not been studied, we do not know what journalistic motivations lead to different types of conflict frames. Therefore, chapter 2 will address the conflict frame building process through expert interviews with political journalists and editors.

The second stage, frame presence, is characterized by the actual coverage of frames by the media. This aspect of framing is generally studied by means of content analysis in order to investigate the manifestations of frames in the news (e.g., Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). While a number of studies focus on the occurrence of conflict frames as a generic concept, research towards the possibility of different types of conflict frames in actual news content is again lacking. The development of a typology including different types of conflict frames by means of a content analysis will therefore be addressed in chapter 3.

The third and final stage is frame setting, which alludes to the consequences of exposure to news frames, both on an individual and on a societal level (De Vreese, 2005; Scheufele, 1999). The effects of exposure to conflict frames on citizens has been studied before. However, these studies identified several and sometimes contradictory results, and show inconsistent or overly general operationalizations of the independent variable. Not many studies take into account different types of conflict frames. Surprisingly, because the few studies that do take different types into account, suggest that different types of conflict frames can have different effects on people (Lee, Mcleod, & Shah, 2008; Min, 2004). Along these lines, I also argue that an answer into the differential effects of conflict framing depends on the study of their underlying processes. Therefore, in chapter 4, I will assess the effects of different types of conflict frames and the role of emotions as likely strong mediators when it comes to conflict.

Hence, this dissertation will take the whole range of the conflict framing process into account in order to investigate the production, occurrence, and differential effects of different types of conflict frames (see Figure 1.1 below for an overview).

1.4 How Conflict Frames Matter: Conflict as a Double-edged Sword?

As noted before, the prominence of conflict in political communication is highlighted by the ample attention it has received in research, as well as the widespread use of conflict frames by journalists reporting about political news. The features that make events including an element of conflict noteworthy may explain the prominent place of conflict in the news. Conflict signals disagreement and a problem or dispute between actors that require to be solved (Pinkley, 1990). The fact that there is an unsolved pro-
blem leads to an element of uncertainty and tension that alerts outsiders, especially when the outcome of the conflict can be of consequence to someone. Indeed, political conflict is traditionally associated with high levels of attention of the audience (e.g., Schattschneider, 1960). The attention-grabbing features of conflict framing incentivize both journalists and politicians to use conflict to get noted by the audience (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2012).

Normatively, from a deliberation theory perspective, the competition of diverging and contrasting ideas in the public debate are beneficial for citizens in making political choices. Subsequently, political communication in the public sphere that includes competing viewpoints, can ideally contribute the deliberative process (Habermas, 2006). In an ideal process of mediated democratic deliberation, a conflict takes place in the media. Here, the media serves as the public sphere. Further along in this process the conflict will be resolved by means of a communicative process characterized by rational arguments. Frames compete over attention in the media, gain importance and after a while lose importance when they get resolved through deliberation (Simon & Xenos, 2000). Deliberation in the news, when characterized by civility and a respectful exchange of ideas, is often considered a vital component of a democratic system and conflicting positions can reduce information costs for citizens drastically (Wessler, 2008).

These core characteristics of conflict, paired with the pivotal role in politics and society, have led the concept to be at the center of research in other contexts apart from news framing and political communication. A large branch of early conflict research focuses on interpersonal conflict or negotiations (Donohue, 1998; Donohue & Roberto, 1993; Pinkley, 1990; Pinkley & Northcraft, 1994). These studies deal with varying topics ranging from effects of frames in conflicts for outcomes of organizational disputes to peace negotiations. Furthermore, another category of related studies focuses on the roles of the media and journalism in war or violent conflict escalation (e.g., Cottle, 2006). These include classic studies that investigate media strategies of parties in the two world wars (e.g., Dovring, 1959; Laswell, 1971). But also more recent studies focus on the effects of coverage on the outcome of conflict and war (e.g., Taylor, 1992), and the role of the mass media in escalating conflicts, even to the point of determining media responsibility in genocide (Thompson, 2007; Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014).

While these are other relevant branches of literature that emphasize the importance of conflict as a general concept, the main aim of this dissertation is conflict framing in political communication and journalism. Conflict framing in political news is generally focused on the display of confrontation and/or disagreement between two or more political actors in the media (Lengauer, Esser, & Berganza, 2011).
The term conflict has an intuitively inherent negative connotation and early literature mainly focused on negative consequences associated with conflict framing in the news. However, an overview of the literature on conflict framing points out the double-barrelled nature of the concept. For instance, while conflict is often associated with unfavourable outcomes on citizens (e.g., Forgette & Morris, 2006; Mutz & Reeves, 2005; Vliegenthart et al., 2008), several other studies highlight positive outcomes (e.g., Jebril et al., 2013; Schuck et al., 2016). This suggests that conflict framing in the news is consequential and important when citizens are exposed to it.

Conflict frames have been associated with several negative outcomes on citizens. For instance, public approval of politicians decreases after exposure to conflict-laden television coverage (Forgette & Morris, 2006). Furthermore, studies have found conflict frames to contribute to the erosion of political trust (Mutz & Reeves, 2005), to decrease political participation (e.g., Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1994; Klein-nijenhuis, van Hoof, & Oegema, 2006), and to depress citizens’ support of European integration (Vliegenthart et al., 2008). The role of the media in portraying conflicts has also been criticized. For instance, the production of news is increasingly characterized by a sensationalistic style (Graber & Smith, 2005). Another concern often voiced by scholars, specifically vis-à-vis mediated contentious political content, is the increased personalization and the tendency to report on conflicts in terms of a horse race and on personal attributes as opposed to policy positions and more substantive disagreement, hereby restricting the deliberative process that is essential to democracy (e.g., Wessler, 2008; Patterson, 1993).

Apart from negative consequences of conflict framing, there are also advantageous sides. While conflict frames inherently entail confrontation, they do not necessarily involve a destructive side (Lengauer, Esser, & Berganza, 2011). More recent studies argue that conflict framing leads citizens to realize what is at stake and even empirically show that exposure positively affects political engagement (De Vreese, & Tobiasen, 2007; Min, 2004; Schuck et al., 2016). Conflict frames are also found to cause an increase in support for certain policies (Vliegenthart & Schuck, 2008). Hence, the literature suggests reasons why conflict framing matters in a positive or a detrimental way for politics, and conflict remains a fascinating subject of study.

Yet, as mentioned above, despite the importance and relevance of conflict framing, there is a lack of clear and coherent definitions in the literature. The term “conflict frame” was first used by Neuman, Just and Crigler (1992), who describe it as news media focussing on events where two sides are pitted against each other. In their work, conflict framing was strongly connected to game and horse race
framing. Later studies that focus on conflict frames (e.g., Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Patterson, 1993) incorporated definitions that focus on “disagreement between individuals, institutions, or countries”, and “an emphasis on points of divergence between conflicting parties” (De Vreese, Peter, & Semetko, p. 109). In this dissertation, I choose to initially follow these general definitions of political conflict as a form of disagreement between competing political actors, and therefore exclude more specific and arguably different notions of conflict such as conflict through political strategy, war and game metaphors (Patterson, 1993), and incivility (Sobieraj & Berry, 2011). While the difference between conflict and the above-mentioned concepts might seem easily upheld, all of the above have been used to refer to conflict and/or conflict framing. However, the multitude of these more specific operationalizations is troubling. Given the conceptual variation and vagueness that exists in conflict framing literature, Rinke, Wessler and Weinmann even suggested to introduce a new term for framing that includes substantive competition of policy in the news, so-called “contestation framing” (2013, p. 475). I however suggest that these different manifestations may reflect underlying subdimensions that are all variations within the overarching generic concept of conflict frames, rather than separate concepts or part of conflict framing by definition.

The generic definition of conflict framing may thus consist of different underlying dimensions, which influence the type of effects a conflict frame can have (Min, 2004). Hence, while the generic definition of conflict framing is important and the starting point of this dissertation, I also want to depart from a strictly generic view of conflict framing and incorporate a more nuanced and elaborate description of conflict framing in political news. Specifically, in this dissertation I focus on the level of substantiveness and interventionism as subdimensions of conflict framing.

1.5 Conflict Frames and Substantiveness

Some studies described conflict frames as being conceptually part of the game frame or horse race coverage (e.g., Hänggli & Kriesi, 2010; Takens et al., 2015), or as being essentially non-substantive (Gross & Brewer, 2007). The media logic thesis holds that the content of political news is the product of news values and format requirements that media make use of to attract news consumers (Esser, 2013). In this dissertation, I argue that conflict frames are not by nature part a nonsubstantive concept or a game or contestation frame. Rather, conflict frames can also be substantive and at times focus on issues or the ideas and political opinions around which the political contestation revolves (Lawrence, 2000). So, this means that I theorize that we can differentiate between substantive conflict frames that focus mainly on
political ideas, policy issues, ideological issues and values, and nonsubstantive conflict frames that address the political process, politics as a game or personal attacks.

In political communication, scholars have expressed the concern that strategic news as such becomes more prevalent, often at the cost of substantive news (e.g., Brants & Van Praag, 2006; Patterson, 1993). Furthermore, the use of this strategic game frame is associated with eroding political trust and an increase in political cynicism (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Elenbaas & De Vreese, 2008; Jackson, 2011). In fact, there is evidence of differences in effects between substantive and nonsubstantive news content in the context of political conflict. Experimental findings indicate that when conflict news focused on policy items they increased turnout, while conflicts consisting of personal attacks depressed likelihood to vote (Min, 2004). Similarly, compared to substantive news, non-substantive news on controversial issues discounts partisan affiliation as a primary consideration (Lee, McLeod, & Shah, 2008). Thus, differences in substantiveness can likely also be used to characterize conflict frames in political news and these differences will be important for outcomes on citizens.

Because of the clear link with conflict, the concept of substantiveness will be incorporated in the current dissertation. First to investigate how conflict framing in political news can vary in the level of substantiveness or nonsubstantiveness by assessing the presence of these different types conflict frames. Furthermore, the dissertation will investigate the effects of substantiveness or nonsubstantiveness in conflict framing on political participation.

1.6. Interventionism

The second dimension of conflict framing that is central in this dissertation is the concept of journalistic intervention. This concept refers to the degree to which the media take a formative role in shaping the agenda of election campaigns or “the media’s discretionary power” (Semetko et al., 1991, p. 3). Interventionism as part of the conflict framing process resonates with research on mediatization, or the degree to which political communication is constructed by media logic as opposed to a political logic (Strömbäck, 2008). The amount of journalistic interventions in news framing has been suggested to be an indicator of mediatization (De Vreese, 2014). When journalists have a greater role in determining the frame of a news story, they become more central actors.

Hänggli and Kriesi (2010) suggest that frames put forward by political actors contain less political conflict than journalistic frames. This strongly suggests that journalists have an active role in shaping
political events and opinions into conflict frames rather than just reporting conflict as it happens. Indeed, there are several circumstances in which journalistic frames adjust or even prevail over actor frames (Brüggemann, 2014). Aside from playing an important role in the frame building process, interventionism is also relevant for the manifestation of actual news content by means of journalistic visibility (Strömback & Dimitrova, 2011). Noninterventionist reporting is characterized by a descriptive style, which offers a detached and factual description of events. Interventionist reporting is associated with a more interpretative style, focused on meaning of events and that goes beyond facts and statements and incorporates journalistic explanations and analysis. A second way in which interventionism can be visible in news content is when journalists enact a watchdog role and evaluate or criticize politicians themselves (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996). When this is the case, journalists can effectively become an actor involved in the political conflict. Here, interventionism is interpreted as the extent to which journalists pursue particular missions and values instead of functioning as a detached, objective observer (Hanitzsch et al., 2011). This dissertation will incorporate interventionism in three ways. First, I investigate the extent to which journalists themselves think they intervene in the conflict frame building process and what the consequences for conflict frames in the news production process are. Second, I assess the extent to which journalists visibly intervene in media content. Third, I will examine how the absence or presence of journalistic interventionism in conflict framing affects framing effects on citizens.

1.7 Context of the Dissertation: The Dutch Case

The Netherlands is an example of a democratic corporatist media system with a strong history of public broadcasting (Van Aelst et al., 2008). Politically, the Netherlands has a multi-party system where coalitions between multiple parties are usually necessary to form a government (Lijphart, 1994). These characteristics distinguish The Netherlands from countries with different media systems and different party systems, such as the United States. The findings of this dissertation are particularly relevant for the Dutch case, nonetheless, they will inform our knowledge on frame building in countries with corresponding political and media systems, for example countries such as Germany and Denmark (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). However, its multi-party system differentiates the Dutch political system from other countries, for instance those where a two-party system is in place. This may have consequences of the characteristics and prevalence of conflict framing. In two-party systems, it may be easier and relevant to include members from the oppositional party in a conflict story, because they represent the main opposing political
Introduction

actor. Comparisons between the United states and Sweden, with a democratist corporate system similar to The Netherlands, has indeed concluded that conflict frames are more prevalent in the United States when compared to Sweden (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011).

Furthermore, the distance between the pragmatic Dutch press and politicians is relatively large, as opposed to more partisan and polarized media cultures, which may have consequences for journalistic intervention in conflict frames, which are put forward by political actors. The multiparty system leads to the importance of forming coalitions with multiple parties as a requirement for forming a government and alters the political power dynamics relevant for conflict frames. Because of the need to negotiate compromises to rule the country, imposed by the multiparty system, the Dutch political environment is often called “poldermodel”. Hence, political conflicts are traditionally resolved by making a deal which a majority of parties can agree with. This has led the political discourse, and particularly the tone of political disagreement in the Netherlands to be characterized by substantiveness and civility when compared to a more polarized context, such as for example the United States, where polarization in politics has notably increased over the years (Ceaser & Busch, 2005).

Nonetheless, during the past years, the political correctness and the politeness of contentious political discourse has been challenged by the rise of populist parties, starting with populist party led by Pim Fortuyn, who was murdered in 2002 prior to the elections (Bos & Van der Brug, 2010) The populist party of Pim Fortuyn won greatly in the subsequent elections and even took part in the ruling coalition. However, this party was eventually marginalized in popularity and disappeared from the political stage. Nonetheless, from Pim Fortuyn onwards, the tone of the overall debate seemingly changed. This is illustrated by the current electoral success of populist party PVV, led by Geert Wilders. When compared to Pim Fortuyn, Wilders' style is characterized by an even more politically incorrect vocabulary and severe personal-based attacks on other politicians, receiving ample media attention in the process (Kleinnijenhuis, Scholten, Van Attenveldt, Van Hoof, & Krouwel, 2007) This gives rise to question whether the tone of conflict framing in the Netherlands is still mainly characterized by substantive conflicts, or by nonsubstantive forms of conflict framing, such as incivility and personal attacks. By looking at different types of conflict frames in the news coverage, this thesis seeks to address this question. Most of the focus of research on conflict framing has focused on the US-context, which is characterized by only two relevant parties, high levels of polarization and prevalent ad hominem attacks in conflict news. Research on conflict framing in democratic corporatist systems such as The Netherlands is far less common.
1.8 Outline and methodology of the dissertation

To investigate the conflict framing process in the Dutch political discourse, this dissertation contains three separate studies. Each chapter represents a step in the integrated process model of framing as proposed by De Vreese (2005). Chapter 1 will focus on conflict frame building, and specifically on journalistic intervention in this stage where conflict frames are being produced. Chapter 2 will address the actual presence of different types of conflict frames in media content. This chapter will also focus on how contextual factors influence the presence of these different types of conflict frames. Finally, in Chapter 3, the frame setting stage will be central. In this chapter, the effects of different types of conflict frames on political participation are central, along with the underlying emotional mechanism that drives these effects.

One of the main strengths of this dissertation lies in the methodological variety. Each step in the framing process has different characteristics and was ideally studied using tailored methodology. In the first study, we used qualitative interviewing methodology to uncover specific circumstances in which conflict frames emerge in political news. The depth and richness of qualitative interviews was deemed pivotal to answer the research questions for this stage of the framing process. Indeed, interviews are often employed to research journalists (e.g., Lecheler, 2008; Lewis & Reese, 2009). Interviewing journalists about their work is sometimes criticized because there is a risk of answers being distorted by social desirability or by journalists simply not knowing enough about their own practices to answer questions accurately. For this purpose, we used vignettes to minimize this type of bias. Journalists were presented with short hypothetical news selection scenarios. Vignettes are effective for interviewing journalists, because they allow interviewees to imagine situations similar to the actual daily practices of news making, and thereby allow them to provide more accurate depictions of their working practices (Jenkins, Fischer, Berney, & Neale, 2010).

After uncovering the frame building process, I continue to look at the frame presence stage. Hence, for the second study, I conducted a quantitative content analysis to assess the presence of different types of conflict frames in Dutch newspaper- and online articles. A quantitative approach was essential here, to tap more general patterns and characteristics of news content. First an automated method was employed for sampling and to identify news articles with conflict frames (Burscher, Odijk, Vliegenthart, De Rijke, & De Vreese, 2014). The time-gains made by sampling in such an efficient manner were employed to develop an elaborate coding procedure were coders rated conflict framed content on
a wide array of characteristics. Coders were trained extensively and coded a large number of newspaper articles, so that comparisons between time-periods, outlet types, as well as medium types could be made.

Finally, the dissertation focuses on the final stage of the conflict framing process, the framing stage. Here the aim is to see how conflict frames affect political participation. For this purpose, I conducted an experiment. Experiments offer several benefits that make them suitable for conducting framing effect studies. They help establish cause and effect, and are suitable for replication (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). In the experiment conducted for this experiment, the content of news articles was manipulated, but the rest of the survey was kept constant for the participants, similar to previous studies (e.g., Lecheler & De Vreese, 2013). By adopting this method, we minimized the influence of external factors. Survey experiments are considered suitable for this purpose, due to the enhanced possibility they offer for randomization and manipulation (Arceneaux, 2010) effects of exposure to different types of conflict frames while limiting eventually confounding and uncontrollable influences.

I will shortly summarize the essence of the separate chapters below, along with the connection between these chapters. (See figure 1.1 for an overview).

**Figure 1.1 Conceptual framework of the dissertation**

![Conceptual framework of the dissertation](image URL)
In Chapter 1, I investigate how conflict frames emerge in political news. The focus of this chapter is specifically on the role of political journalists in this process of conflict frame building. While it is known that the influence of journalists is decisive in determining which and how frames end up in actual news content, this aspect of the framing process has long been neglected in research (De Vreese, 2012). Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to uncover the role of journalists in the particular case of the conflict frame building process. The concept of interventionism is central in this study. Journalistic interventionism alludes to the extent to which journalists are visible in the news (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011), but also to the extent to which journalist take an active stance in the frame building process (Hanitschz, 2007). This entails the construction of their own frames and adaptation of existing frames (Schnell, 2001). For conflict framing, it is unknown to what extent this journalistic intervention is the case. Hence, the main research question this chapter answers is: How interventionist are journalists in the conflict frame building process? To investigate this research question, extensive semi-structural expert interviews were conducted among Dutch political journalists and editors. The interviews and findings are structured by employing the hierarchy of influences model, as proposed by Shoemaker and Reese (1996). This model functions as a framework throughout the chapter in assessing both internal and external influences on journalistic conflict frame building.

In Chapter 2, I focus on conflict frame presence. Specifically, I focus on the dimensionality of conflict frames and investigate which different conflict frames emerge in the news. The first dimension I use to distinguish conflict frames with is by level of interventionism. I hereby build forward on the findings in chapter 1, where the relevance of journalistic intervention in conflict framing was highlighted. Furthermore, I also distinguish between conflict frames by focusing on level of substantiveness. Conflict news can focus on policy issues (e.g., Hänggli & Kriesi, 2010), or on nonsubstantive, strategic, aspects of politics (e.g., Adriaansen, Van Praag, & Vreese, 2010). Conflict news can also be characterized by incivility between politicians, instead of civil and courteous political deliberation (For gente & Morris, 2006; Mutz & Reeves, 2005). Finally, nonsubstantive conflict can focus on personal attacks, aimed style and competence (Min, 2004). Asides from substantiveness, conflict frames may vary by the extent to which journalists intervene during the news production process. The findings in chapter 1 show that journalists have a propensity to intervene in the conflict frame building process. This intervention in conflict framing can be visible in journalistic speculation on consequences of conflicts, through journalistic interpretations and analysis of political disagreements, or through the inclusion of direct commentary by the journalist.
(Hanitzsch, 2007). The extent to which journalistic intervention, but also substantiveness, are visible in conflict frames in political news is unknown. Therefore, chapter three consists of a content analysis (N = 1536) that employs factor analysis to develop a typology of conflict news coverage. Different aspects of conflict news are distinguished with level of substantiveness and interventionism as the main dimensions. After the confirmation of this typology, the chapter focuses on the prevalence of these different subdimensions of conflict frames in Dutch news and how contextual factors affect which types of conflict frames appear in the news.

In Chapter 4, I build on both chapter 2 and 3 by focussing on the consequences of exposure to different types of conflict frames. After the previous chapters highlighted the importance of interventionism (chapter 1 and 2) and substantiveness (chapter 2), this chapter aims to investigate the potential effects of exposure to different types of conflict frames on political participation. Because the outcomes of exposure to interventionist news content in general and on political participation in specific are to my knowledge largely unknown, this is a relevant new area of media-effects research. Exposure to substantive conflict is known to affect opinions and political participation of citizens differently, when compared to exposure to nonsubstantive conflict frames (e.g., Lee, Mcleod, & Shah, 2008; Min, 2004). Results towards the effects of substantiveness have however been inconclusive. Therefore, in this chapter I will also examine the underlying context and process by introducing emotions as mediators. Framing effects are known to be greatly contingent on emotional processes (Gross & D’Ambrosio, 2004; Lecheler, Schuck, & De Vreese, 2013). Particularly conflict has been associated with negative emotions such as anger (Gross & Brewer, 2007). Emotions such as anger and enthusiasm in turn have been associated with political participation (Valentino et al., 2011). Hence, it might be expected that emotions play an important role in mediating effects of different types of conflict frames. For this purpose, chapter 4 will describe a survey embedded experiment (n = 707) to investigate how different types of conflict frames affect political participation, and to assess the role of emotions in this process.

In sum, the aim of this dissertation is to better understand conflict frame building, conflict frame presence in media content, and the effects of different types of conflict frames. Using a variety of research methods, the dissertation shows that two dimensions, interventionism and substantiveness, play an important role across the conflict framing process.
References


Introduction

the KAL and Iran air incidents. *Journal of communication, 41*(4), 6-27.


Introduction


Min, Y. (2004). News coverage of negative political campaigns an experiment of negative campaign


Introduction


Chapter 1


CHAPTER 2

Manufacturing Conflict?
How Journalists Intervene in the Conflict Frame Building Process

Abstract

A considerable amount of research is devoted to the presence and effects of conflict frames in the news. However, it is unknown if journalists actively manufacture and inflate conflict in their coverage of politics, or if they merely respond to contentious politics as it happens. This study focuses on the extent to which journalists take an interventionist stance in the conflict frame building process. We conducted expert interviews (N = 16) among Dutch political journalists. Results show that journalists indeed take an active stance in conflict frame building. They contribute to the emergence of conflict frames by using exaggerating language, by orchestrating, and amplifying possible consequences of political conflict. However, intervention in conflict framing is not merely a result of individual agency of journalists. Rather, some role conceptions seem to counter an interventionist stance. Media routines that are embedded in organizational practices were found to facilitate this active role in conflict framing. Finally, journalists are mainly found to be active when politicians or parties with political power are involved.

This study is published as:

Chapter 2

2.1. Introduction

Research has shown that conflict framing is one of the most important mechanisms of political news reporting (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992). What remains unclear is the role journalists play in this process. How actively do journalists construct conflict? Do they exaggerate conflicts when making the news or do they merely respond to political conflict as it happens on the political stage? This study addresses these questions by investigating if journalists reporting political news play a formative role in the conflict frame building process.

To date, analysis of media content or media effects has been central to conflict framing studies. Earlier research highlighted the prevalence of conflict frames in the news (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Furthermore, distinct effects of exposure to conflict frames on political behaviour (e.g., Mutz & Reeves, 2005; Schuck, Vliegenthart, & De Vreese, 2016), as well as other political perceptions (Avery, 2009; Vliegenthart, Schuck, Boomgaard, & De Vreese, 2008) have been found. These findings underscore the relevance of studying conflict framing. Yet, few studies have addressed the actual journalistic practice in which these frames emerge: the conflict frame building process.

We know that journalists play a pivotal part in the process that determines which frames actually end up in the media (Hänggli, 2011). However, this aspect of the framing process has long been neglected in research (De Vreese, 2012). Journalists prefer news that entails an element of conflict (Mutz & Reeves, 2005). What remains unclear is how much the agency and intervention of journalists determines the modification of frames to emphasize conflict.

Relevant in the context of frame building is the concept of interventionism, the extent to which journalists take an active or passive stance in reporting (Strömbäck & Esser, 2009). Journalists decide if and how to report about political conflict. They may seek out political conflicts, amplify political conflicts for the attractiveness of the story, or even actively orchestrate and manufacture conflict frames. However, besides the agency of individual journalists, other aspects such as media routines and external, political, influences obviously shape how journalists frame conflict (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). The aim of this study is to assess the importance of these influences for how active journalists are in the conflict frame process.

We conducted a series of semi-structured expert interviews with political journalists in the Netherlands. We chose The Netherlands as a subject of our study, because it is an example of a democratic corporatist media system with a strong history of public broadcasting (Van Aelst et al., 2008).
Furthermore, politically, it is a multi-party system where coalitions between multiple parties are usually necessary to form a government (Lijphart, 1999). These characteristics distinguish The Netherlands from countries with different media systems and different party systems, such as The United States. While the findings generated in this study are particularly relevant for the Dutch context, they will likely also inform our knowledge on frame building in countries with a similar political and media system, such as e.g., Germany and Denmark (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). The sample includes both reporters and editors working for newspapers, television, and news-sites. We consider the in-depth quality of interviews with journalists the ideal way to disentangle how different aspects of the journalistic practice contribute to active conflict frame building: individual role conceptions, media routines and external political factors. This study aims to provide insight into the circumstances that affect how journalists play an active role or passive role in the conflict frame building process.

2.2. Frame Building: How Journalism Shapes Conflict Frames

In the framing process, particular aspects of reality are highlighted above others. A frame is concerned with variations in emphasis or salience of particular aspects in a media text (Druckman, 2001). This study focuses on the specific application of conflict frames in political news. Conflict frames are defined as news frames that “emphasize conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest” (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 95). A conflict can consist of disagreement, tension between different sides, incompatibility between viewpoints, and politicians attacking each other in the media (Putnam & Shoemaker, 2007). Conflict is considered an integral part of the political process, since it is central to a properly functioning democracy (Sartori, 1987).

Research shows that conflict frames are some of the most frequently used frames in political communication (De Vreese, Peter, & Semetko, 2001), across different media systems, countries and news formats (Lengauer, Esser & Berganza, 2011). Conflict frames are influential for a considerable number of aspects of political life. For instance, conflict frames can negatively affect support for policies (Vliegenthart et al., 2008), but also have a positive impact on turnout (De Vreese & Tobiasen, 2007), and lead to more balanced thoughts about issues (De Vreese, 2004). Indeed, exposure to conflict frames may lead citizens to realize what is at stake and why political decision-making is important (Schuck, Vliegenthart, & De Vreese, 2016).

What remains understudied is how conflict frames emerge in the media: the frame building
stage. Frame building refers to the processes that affect how media frames are formed and how frames are created and adapted by journalists (Scheufele, 1999). Journalists do not solely report about political events, they also shape these events (Entman, 1991). This agency of journalists in framing the news is a characteristic of political news coverage (Cook, 1998). Under certain circumstances, journalistic frames adjust or even prevail over actor frames (Brüggemann, 2014). Also, media strategies of political actors have been found to be contingent on media frames and preferences in an issue (Ihlen, Figenschou & Larsen, 2014). Central in the process of conflict frame building is the concept of journalistic intervention or “the media’s discretionary power” as the degree to which the media take a formative role in shaping the agenda of election campaigns (Semetko et al., 1991, p. 3).

Two aspects of interventionism are of importance for frame building. Firstly, interventionism determines the degree to which journalists are visible in a news item (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011). This is, for instance, accomplished by adapting a more interpretative style of reporting (Hanitzsch, 2007) and “journalists reporting about political news in their own words, scenarios and assessments” (Esser, 2008, p. 403). Secondly, interventionism signifies an active approach by journalists when creating or adapting frames as opposed to a passive approach (Hanitzsch, 2007). This includes constructing their own frames and altering existing frames (Schnell, 2001).

Hänggli and Kriesi (2010) suggest that frames put forward by political actors contain less political contestation than journalistic frames. This strongly suggests that journalists shape political discourse into conflict frames rather than just reporting conflict as it happens. Yet, the precise role of journalists in this process, as well as an examination of their professional attitudes towards such practices, remains unstudied. So far, the content analytical research only suggests that journalists contribute to conflict, but do they do this simply by juxtaposing contrasting views or do they actually affect the severity of the conflict by the inclusion of conflict-laden language or by agitating political actors during interviews? Hence, the main research question is: How interventionist are journalists in the conflict frame building process?

2.3. A Multi-Dimensional Approach Towards Studying Conflict Frame Building

Research towards the production of news frames benefits from applying a multi-level approach that takes into account different internal and external forces that influence journalistic performance (Gans, 1979; Scheufele, 1999). Therefore, we align our research question with the widely used ‘Hierarchy of influences model’ as proposed by Reese and Shoemaker (1996; 2014). We use this model to assess how
different levels of influences affect the degree of journalistic intervention in the conflict frame building process specifically. We focus on the individual level, the routines level, and the external level of the model.

2.3.1. Individual Level

Role conceptions and journalistic values play an important role in the production of news content (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). In this study, they are important, because they directly relate to the starting point of our study: interventionism (Strömbäck & Esser, 2009). Journalistic values may also affect intervention in the conflict frame building process. It is likely that journalists who support active conflict frame building possess role conceptions and values connected to interpretative styles of reporting. This would stand opposite to the “disseminator role”, which is all about disseminating the news as quickly, accurately, and neutrally as possible in a detached way (Weaver & Wiholit, 1996). The disseminator role presumably hinders journalists to interfere much by exaggerating or manufacturing conflict frames. Those that embrace the interpretative role, however, are more likely to include an analysis and interpretation and take an active stance in the conflict frame building process.

2.3.2. Routine Level

Journalistic practice consists of the routinized production of news stories. There are certain patterns, rules, procedures, and practices embedded in the way journalists work (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014), which may explain journalistic intervention in conflict framing. In a survey among Swedish journalists, Strömbäck et al. (2012) found that journalists believe that conflict played a bigger role in the practice of news production than it should according to their individual views.

Based on previous research, we identified three media routines likely to play a role during conflict frame building: (1) objectivity, (2) journalistic storytelling, and (3) reliance on other media.

First, the journalistic objectivity norm, or the ‘ritual of objectivity’ (Tuchman, 1978), is likely to contribute to the emergence of specific conflict frames as well as the prevalence of conflict framing in the news. The objectivity norm describes the idea of balanced reporting as good journalism (Skovsgaard, Albæk, Bro, & De Vreese, 2012). Balance in reporting often requires inclusion of an oppositional voice.

Second, journalistic storytelling as a routine often leads to the addition of an element of conflict to a story in order to transform events into a news commodity (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Journalists use
dramatic depictions to transform an issue into a vivid story (Cook, 1998; Gitlin, 1980). In a study on frame building in reporting of stem cell research in the US, Nisbet et al. (2003) illustrate how pitting opposite sides against each other is one of the ways in which journalists provide the audience with a comprehensive and attention-grabbing story.

Third, the routine of reliance on other media should play a role. Under the influence of time pressure, journalists have been shown to habitually rely on other media as an inspiration for their own reporting (Reinemann, 2004). This can eventually lead to pack journalism, where journalists reporting on the same story place an emphasis on the same angle and viewpoints (Schudson, 2003). Indeed, the competition between news media for audience attention has been associated with a preference for conflict and drama both in a U.S. (Bennett, 2005) and in a European context (Esser, 1999).

2.3.3. External Level

Which frames come forward and which do not is determined in a constant negotiation process between journalists and their sources: political actors (Lewis & Reese, 2009). While politicians are known to use the media to fight out political disputes and achieve political goals (Davis, 2003), politicians also use existing political conflicts as means to generate media attention and increase own media visibility (Strömbäck et al., 2012). However, not much is known about circumstances under which frames constructed by politicians have the upper hand over media frames, and for which types of sources journalists are more likely to intervene in the frame building process. Prior research suggests that powerful institutional actors such as parliamentary and government members are not only featured more in the news than less resourceful actors (Herman & Chomsky, 1988), but are also more successful in getting their own frames in the media (Tuchman, 1978). It is likely that journalists will make a greater effort in involving powerful actors in conflicts, taking a more active stance.

As a result of this imbalance of news exposure, less resourceful political institutions and individuals have to be creative to get news exposure and may be more likely to resort to dramatized news forms, such as conflict (Van Dalen, 2012) in an effort to fill the oppositional space when official and powerful actors close ranks (Cook, 1998). This strongly suggests that the dynamics of journalistic conflict frame building in relationship to political frames depend on the size and influence of a political actor.

In sum, we thus posit that three levels of the influences model affect the degree to which journalists intervene in the conflict frame building process: The study of individual role conceptions will tell us to
Manufacturing Conflict

what extent journalists believe they should bring conflict into the news; journalistic routines can explain if there are embedded structures in journalistic practice that support conflict framing, and political power might be an important external factor that determines the influence of journalists compared to political elites in bringing conflict into the news.

2.4. Methods

To investigate to what extent journalists intervene in the conflict frame building process, we conducted 16 in-depth interviews with Dutch political journalists and editors in charge of the editorial teams specialized in political news. These elite interviews lasted on average 45 minutes. Interviews serve as a commonly used method to capture the experiences and opinions of journalists (e.g., Lecheler, 2008; Lewis & Reese, 2009). For this study, the depth and richness of the data provided by qualitative interviews was deemed pivotal to uncover the specific circumstances in which conflict frames emerge in political news.

2.4.1. Interviews

The interviews were semi-structured with an interview protocol that served as the main guidance for the interview, but which still gave the possibility to deviate from the predetermined dimensions1. The interview protocol was organized around the three levels of influence discussed above. On the individual level, questions were asked to address the stance of journalists towards political conflict and the role of an interventionist journalistic role conception for conflict frames specifically. Furthermore, questions were included about other journalistic values and role conceptions to see how these other individual characteristics affect interventionism in the frame building process. On the routines level, questions were structured around daily practices, organizational procedures, audience perceptions and reliance on other media. We assessed how journalists deal with the news and how journalists practically follow up on news in general and news about political conflict specifically. The aim was to investigate whether the objectivity norm and the routine construction of narratives affect the emergence of conflict frames and the active role of journalists in this process, without steering the interview subjects towards these specific routines by asking direct questions. Finally, on the external level, questions were asked concerning the role of poli-

1 For the full interview protocol, see Appendix A
ticians in the conflict frame building process as well as the differences between less and more well-known politicians.

The interviews also included vignettes. Interviewees were presented with short hypothetical news selection scenarios and asked how they would deal with particular news situations and follow up on evolving stories. Vignettes provide a good way of tapping journalistic practices because they allow interviewees to imagine situations similar to the actual daily practices of news making, and thereby allow them to provide the interviewer accurate depictions of their experiences (Jenkins et al., 2010). This approach was adapted to enhance the external validity of the interviewee responses.

2.4.2. Sample

We employed purposive sampling to identify the interviewees. We utilized two main selection criteria (1) interviewees either had to work as journalists on political news or managed the team responsible for political news and (2) interviewees had to work for one of the leading newspapers, television news shows or news websites in The Netherlands. Both seasoned journalists, who were experienced and possessed an extensive knowledge concerning the topic and journalists early in their career with a still taintless and more detached view on the subject were sampled. Selecting respondents from various organisations ensures a variety of perspectives and reduces the effects of institutional characteristics of particular organisations (Shenton, 2004). Therefore, interviewees included television journalists working for both Dutch commercial and public news. Also, journalists from the major newspapers including both ‘quality’ and more ‘populist’ oriented newspapers were included. The journalists in the sample are at the centre of the political frame building process in the Netherlands and deal with framing of political news on a daily basis. To gauge the exact size of the sample, we followed a strategy developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), who suggest that theoretical saturation in interviewing is achieved when adding new cases becomes counterproductive, which is the case when the new data does not add any substantive new findings. For an overview of our sample composition, see Table 1.
**Table 1. Interview subjects.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview subject</th>
<th>Interview date</th>
<th>Media type</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Length interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journalist1</td>
<td>20/05/14</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>43:23:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist2</td>
<td>30/05/14</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>50:00:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist3</td>
<td>03/06/14</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>44:13:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist4</td>
<td>05/06/14</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>26:23:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist5</td>
<td>06/06/14</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>48:11:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist6</td>
<td>10/06/14</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>48:48:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist7</td>
<td>12/06/14</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>40:36:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist8</td>
<td>12/06/14</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>57:47:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist9</td>
<td>18/06/14</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>46:03:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist10</td>
<td>18/06/14</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>47:28:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist11</td>
<td>20/06/14</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>54:15:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist12</td>
<td>25/06/14</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>48:13:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist13</td>
<td>26/06/14</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>41:33:00</td>
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<tr>
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<td>27/06/14</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>43:39:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist15</td>
<td>01/07/14</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>55:03:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist16</td>
<td>11/07/14</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>01:00:31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2.4.3. Data Analysis**

The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed to allow full immersion and deep understanding of the material. We used thematic coding to analyze the transcribed interviews, using the step-by-step plan proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method consisted of capturing themes or patterned responses in a systematic way. The analysis was carried out using the software MAXQDA. We did not apply a strictly inductive methodology; the analysis was driven by predetermined theoretical boundaries. Specifically, we used the individual level, the routines level, and the external level of the hierarchy of influences model to limit and structure the findings. Initially, we also included the organizational level as a research dimension, but during the coding process it became clear that findings did not reveal clear differential organizational influences.
Chapter 2

In the first step of the analysis, initial codes are given when the data displays characteristics of interest to the research question and a specific theoretical dimension (e.g., When a journalist describes how non-coalition conflicts make him yawn. This falls within the external level and is given the initial code “non-coalition conflicts deemed boring by journalist”). The second step consists of determining patterns in the list of initial codes and categorizing these codes as candidate themes (e.g., A large number of initial codes can be categorized under the broader theme of a journalistic preference to intervene when powerful actors are involved). After defining these themes, the data and codes are assessed again and subcategories and subthemes are defined (e.g., Coalition consequences is defined as a subtheme, codes that fall within this category consist of journalists describing how coalition conflicts are interesting because they have consequences, as opposed to conflicts involving opposition politicians). The third step was to review the themes. In this step, extracts were analyzed in more detail by going through the data again to determine whether themes should be discarded, put together, expanded, recoded, or different sub-themes should be defined. The relations between the themes and the subthemes were also taken into account in this step. In the final step, we defined the themes extensively by working them out concisely theme by theme and reporting on them in the results section.

2.5. Findings

We organize the findings by discussing them structured around the different levels of the multi-dimensional approach, that is, by focusing on the individual, routines and external level. Within these levels, we will discuss the themes and patterns that emerged during our analysis of the semi-structured interviews.

2.5.1. Individual Level

The analysis revealed a general expression of ambivalence among interviewees when it comes to the question whether conflict in the news is a “good” or “bad” thing. This uneasiness about conflict as a substantial part of journalistic life is best illustrated by several examples. For instance, when confronted with a political conflict, a television journalist almost cynically described the attitude of political journalists towards conflict as something “which we in The Hague... enjoy thoroughly.” (Journalist10). However, at the same time, some journalists also indicated they disliked conflict reporting:
I hate reporting that purely deals with the political conflict or consists of 80% conflict. Many journalists tend to only shortly explain in the remaining 20% what really matters. I disapprove of this practice. (Journalist13)

Interestingly, this ambivalence proved to be much more visible characterisation of journalistic perceptions. For instance, it was also present in the journalist views of interventionism in political conflict reporting. When prompted, most interviewees indicated that they did not exaggerate or manufacture conflicts during reporting. Nevertheless, a number of journalists suggested this was a common practice for other journalists - particularly those working for the largest Dutch tabloid newspaper-- and that they disapproved of such practices. Overall, our interviewees reported that they value accuracy and trustworthiness, and indicated that these values prevented them from exaggerating or blowing up conflicts to the extent that the facts are violated.

A second theme that emerged from the analysis revolves around the subtle ways in which journalists do intervene and sometimes seek out actively and even orchestrate conflicts. Several subthemes that reveal these instances are described below. First, most interviewees stressed that there is a tendency to word conflicts as sharply as possible in the media while remaining to the facts. Language is used to report about conflict in a more attractive way, but most journalists stressed that violating the truthfulness of the message is avoided. A second method in which journalists intervene is by giving news items a title that suggests a stronger conflict than is necessarily the case. Some journalists indicated that certain words that add weight to the conflict and increase dramatization are added, especially in the title to attract attention from the audience.

I tend to gear up a little when making headlines. To justify this for myself I say: at least people will read the article. (. .) This is perceivably effective. If you use boring headlines (. .) they don’t stimulate the reader to continue." (Journalist16)

You often nuance things in the text. In the title you use words such as “on collision course”, or “to perish”, those kind of terms. (. .) This helps to make something insightful and engaging to readers. (Journalist9)

Third, when describing their practices, a number of journalists indicated they actively look for policy to-
Chapter 2

pics and agenda points that can potentially function as a source of conflict between political actors. This practice is a clear indicator of an active stance by journalists, instead of waiting for news events to happen, possible conflicts are identified and politicians are approached for comments on those policy subjects:

There are upcoming points on the political agenda for which you know disagreement exists between parties. There are certain topics on which the coalition parties disagree profoundly and where conflicts arise, which you, as a journalist, investigate and pay attention too. (Journalist2)

Journalists generally indicated that the watchdog role is imperative to this theme and contributes to an active approach in looking for political conflict.

We cannot take into account the interests of politicians. We want to get to the bottom of a story. This does not mean exaggerating, but sharply uncovering the truth. And the discussion is that exaggerating or amplifying will always be there, simply because the interests are different (Journalist7)

In the analysis, another assertive behaviour that emerged as a reoccurring theme was journalists asking steering questions. By asking questions in a particular way, journalists actively engage in the conflict frame building process. This is illustrated in a next example where the interviewee indicates that while conflicts are not actually caused by the journalist, they are certainly facilitated by them.

I will not go as far as to incite conflict. Just think along a little bit. (...) Sometimes I say to politicians, if you would attack [another politician], I would consider it worth reporting on that. (...) That is what I mean with ‘thinking along’. (Journalist16)

To expand the scope of a conflict, interviewees indicated they sometimes made a conflict look more severe than it actually is by adding possible and potentially hypothetical consequences of a political conflict for the politicians or political parties involved, even if such consequences are unlikely: "You [as a journalist] will always try to make the story look worse by sketching possible consequences. While you
actually know that 99% of all conflicts will be dismissed with a compromise” (Journalist11). In effect, this example shows how the scope of a conflict is enlarged by the enactment of the interpretative journalistic role conception. Prospective speculation regarding future events also serves as a way to uphold the value of trustworthiness while avoiding the introduction of false facts.

In sum, the findings indicate that professional values such as trustworthiness and factuality pose clear limitations on the extent and manner in which the interview subjects took an interventionist stance in the conflict frame building process. Nevertheless, the analysis yielded subtle practices in which journalists do take an active stance in the conflict frame building process. In the next section, we will address how these interventionist approaches are affected by journalistic routines.

2.5.2. Routines Level

Application of the objectivity norm. Journalists indicated that it is a routine to involve politicians or political actors with opposing viewpoints when producing stories about news issues. For political conflicts, stakeholders that were not already involved in a conflict are approached and asked to respond to new quotes by other stakeholders in the conflict. The majority of interviewees indicated that they approached these actors because they expected or even hoped that they joined a particular side in an evolving political conflict in the press. This is illustrated by this quote from a reporter concerning routines in news production on a conflict within a Dutch party:

When the number two has criticism on the number one, you ask certain questions: Should you be having this position? Why is that person not doing well? And of course you want to obtain viewpoints on the issue from the number one. Then you ask: What are your reactions to these allegations? (Journalist8)

Another reporter voiced a similar reaction. When asked about his working routines when presented with a scenario where a party member criticizes the party leader, he issued the following response:

I would find it interesting to go to the party leader and ask: This party member said this and this about you, what is your opinion on this. (..) and what are the consequences for the party, (..) Shouldn’t the party member fear for his position? (Journalist16)
This example illustrates a more general pattern: The objectivity norm is not merely a way in which journalists juxtapose political actor frames, questions are also formulated in a certain way that enables the scope of conflicts to expand. When there is no oppositional voice found to openly back up claims about a conflict, a number of interviewees also explained that they resort to anonymous accounts to include as opposing viewpoints, despite their reluctance to do so:

When there is a media discussion about the leadership of a politician and you cannot get a member of the party to respond openly, then it can also work [to use anonymous accounts]. Maybe politicians are willing to say something anonymously. That is not ideal, but it also indicates the sensitivity of the issue. (Journalist2)

Dramatic narratives as building blocks of conflict frames. When describing the power of conflicts in the news, interviewees indicated that, in their view, the attraction of political conflict is that audiences like to pick sides in a conflict so they can relate and identify themselves with their preferred politicians or parties. A television journalist stated: “Conflict is always really beautiful. You have a good guy. You have a bad guy. The viewer can pick sides” (Journalist4). The interviews also showed that a political conflict is interesting because there has to be an outcome. Conflict has to be consequential. When asked about what makes a political conflict interesting, this interviewee identified this as an important feature of political conflict that makes it newsworthy: “Because the ending is unknown. How is it going to end? There is more tension and that is interesting. How are they going to solve that?” (Journalist9).

The analysis also showed that certain conflicts are valued more than others. Three characteristics of conflicts emerged as themes that give a conflict journalistic value. First, a conflict has to imply a tangible outcome such as a major ideological change within a party, a change in power relations within parties and coalitions, or has to be of impact for the future of policy. Also, the interviewees indicated that conflicts that have a high entertainment value are interesting for the audience. For instance, personal conflicts where politicians attack each other or news items where the bad relations between ministers are exposed:

To make a conflict interesting to readers, you need details. You need to show how these people sometimes struggle with each other. (..) People like it when politicians are not
shown as profiteers, but as human beings who also suffer. That is the power of a political conflict. (Journalist14)

Third, personal accounts and detailed descriptions of political conflicts are ways in which to involve readers in a story. However, some interviewees also indicated these details are not always readily available. In the following example a lack of time prevented the following newspaper journalist to thoroughly find out everything about a given conflict, but nonetheless decided on reporting about it.

It is sometimes the case that you do not know everything you should know about a political conflict. You know a few things. But you still think it is important enough for the newspaper, even if it is not complete. (...) I would not call this exaggerating. (Journalist12)

This quote shows how constraints that are embedded in media routines prevented some of the journalists in exposing all of the facts and constructing a full and complete story with all of the facts.

**Routine reliance: Following the crowd.** The interviewees indicated that they sometimes had to report on political conflicts because a news event is already a big issue in other media outlets and they have to follow the 'pack'. The following television journalist voices this opinion: "One media outlet does not want to be second behind another one" (Journalist15). This reasoning occurs even when journalists don’t think a conflict is that relevant: "You do not want to be the only medium that does not bring news about which the whole country is speaking. Even if you think: Is this really interesting?" (Journalist8). In the last quote, the journalist mentioning news "about which the whole country is speaking" also illustrates that perceptions of the audience plays a pivotal role in this process. Even though having reservations about an issue’s newsworthiness, journalists will feel obliged to report about a conflict because of the wish of the audience.

When a conflict is already in the media, a common practice that came forward in the interviews was that journalists tried to find an angle that is unique to their own media outlet. They often seek to add novel facts to introduce some sort of development to the narrative of the news story. This could be done by phrasing questions to politicians involved in the conflict in a particular way. For instance, by emphasizing possible consequences of a conflict for a power structure, or by raising stakes of a particular conflict. When introduced to a vignette describing a conflict already present in the media, a journalist
When we meet them [the politicians] in the parliament, we ask: ‘What caused this fight and which side are you on?’ (...) And then they all have to speak out about the issue and because of the phrasing of the questions you already pick your angle, kind off. (Journalist 12)

2.5.3. External Level

Power is an important part of the conflict frame building process. Three main themes emerged that describe which types of conflict and for which types of political actors journalists are more likely to intervene: coalition consequences, consequences for policy and consequences for internal party relations.

First, journalists are more likely to intervene when the conflict affects the coalition. The Netherlands is a multi-party system where coalitions are needed to form the government. Constant negotiation between the government partners is needed to ascertain continuity of the incumbent coalition. Conflicts can thus potentially affect these relationships. As a result, interviewees unanimously exhibited a preference for conflicts that can affect coalition relations:

Small parties that are part of the opposition and differ in opinion are often not considered newsworthy. But when coalition members differ in opinion about an important subject among themselves, it is. If they do not agree, this can potentially cause a crisis in the government. (Journalist 8)

Coalition members that oppose government plans are considered as non-important and only newsworthy in special occasions. Paradoxically, while it is of importance to members of the political opposition to get into the news and voice their opposition towards the ruling parties, for the coalition it is important to showcase unity. The coalition preferably avoids getting into the news with a conflict angle. Subsequently, in order to find conflicts within the coalition, a more active, interventionist approach is required. In these specific ways, political power affected the extent to which the interviewees intervene and attempt to pursue conflicts. However, interviewees did indicate that less influential politicians who are not part of the coalition intervened in the conflict frame building process by informing journalists about conflicts
within the coalition.

Opposition parties tell us: ‘The situation within the coalition is complicated, they fight each other for every inch of ground’. And then they hope we investigate that and pay attention to the fact that [it does not go well] between the coalition parties. (Journalist10)

This is a practice in which political actors that are not well-known, and therefore less valuable for the press, do manage to get media attention and influence the political process trough the media.

A second pattern emerging from the analysis on the external level was the preference for conflicts that implied consequences for policy. This theme highlights a journalistic preference for political conflicts that have the potential to actually result in an outcome in the form of new or amended policy. Hence, conflicts need to have a promise of consequences and change the existing policies and laws. This is also related to the audience of the media text, consequences in the form of policies imply changes for citizens.

Recently there was a small-time politician with a deciding vote who threatened to vote against a certain policy. In such instances the media is very receptive. (..) Because it would have become a big conflict if he [The politician] would have voted no (Journalist7).

This has consequences for lesser-known politicians and their chance for exposure. When a politician from the opposition attacks the coalition, but has no chance of affecting the coalition policy because there is no majority, the journalists we interviewed did not identify this as newsworthy. In contrast, the interviewees deemed politicians that are needed for a majority or are in a position to change policy or exert power are more likely to get press coverage when involved in a conflict.

Finally, the interviewed journalists indicated conflicts that could effectively change the course of the party were most interesting for their reporting. These include internal conflicts that represent an ideological power struggle or potential change to the course of the party. These instances motivate journalists to dig deeper into a conflict and thus intervene in the frame building process.

Is there a conflict between two people or does it split up the party? Are there more people who think differently? For example party leaders or party departments. Does the conflict
between two people represent something bigger? I would try to find that out. (Journalist 15)

The findings with regard to external factors and political power in conflict frame building indicate that formal power is indeed an important determinant when it comes to interventionism in the conflict frame building process. The consequential nature of a conflict between powerful actors enhances the attractiveness for journalists. Simply pitting political actors from the opposition against government actors is not deemed interesting enough by most of the interviewees. Our results also show that journalists and political actors in a position of power have a conflict of interests. Actors in a position of power are often the ones that try to prevent news from being framed in terms of conflict. For coalition relations, it is beneficial to maintain an image of harmonious relations. Hence, it is necessary for journalists to expose conflict within the coalition without much overt cooperation from political sources within the coalition.

2.6. Discussion

This study examines the circumstances under which conflict frames emerge in the Netherlands. Our findings highlight the active role journalists play in the emergence and prevalence of conflict frames in the news media. Journalists do not merely disseminate conflict frames put forward by political actors, but actively shape when and how conflict appears in the news. Subtle methods of journalistic news production are applied to facilitate, emphasize, and sometimes even exaggerate conflict. This is partly explained by journalistic role conceptions that value exposing facts, controlling the government and informing citizens about conflicts within the coalition. However, it is limited by other journalistic professional norms that value accuracy and trustworthiness. This is seemingly a paradox, but it is known that journalistic ideology consists of a set of news values that often contradict each other (Deuze, 2005). The findings indicate that journalistic intervention in conflict framing is encapsulated in journalistic routines. These include the practices of transforming political events into a vivid story and juxtaposing political actors. Furthermore, pack journalism and news hypes function as self-reinforcing processes in which the initial framing of a subject structures and fuels follow-up reporting (Vasterman, 2005). Journalists prefer to intervene in conflicts between powerful actors or conflicts with consequences for the coalition, policy and power relations within political parties. This corresponds with earlier findings such as those by Bennett (1996), who suggests that power can be defined as the ability to affect the outcome of a particular
news event. Bennett’s arguments can also be connected with the findings on the routines level, conflict narratives require developments to remain interesting for the audience, and the types of conflict identified on the external level resemble conflicts with prospective outcomes that can keep the narrative going. However, the findings seemingly contradict earlier findings that suggested that the use of conflict frames contributed to the visibility of less powerful political actors (van Dalen, 2012). Lesser known politicians have a greater need to become a part of the news and will provide the journalists with conflict frames, resulting in a reduced need to intervene. While this is relevant for the Dutch context particularly, our findings also resonate with earlier findings from a US study by Esser (2008). In this study, it was shown that political campaigns that are more scripted and characterized by more news management led to an increase in media interventionism in the US.

Different levels of influence affect how conflict frames emerge and the extent to which journalists are active in this process. These levels are interlinked and are not always clearly distinguished in the journalistic practice (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). For instance, journalistic values are respected as much as possible when producing news, but sometimes suffer, given the limitations imposed on newsroom organizations by routines that are caused by a shortage of time and recourses. Similarly, the preference for powerful political actors may be explained by the heightened stakes in such a conflict, which results in a narrative which is more consequential to the readers, who are the main consumers of news stories.

The validity of the sample ensures the findings likely give a good indication of how conflict frames emerge in Dutch political news. These findings resonate with earlier studies conducted in the UK (Cook, 1998) and Sweden (Strömbäck, 2008), which highlight the agency of political journalists in the frame building process. The findings of the current study are likely relevant for countries with media and political systems similar to the Netherlands. The Dutch political system is characterized by a multi-party system in the parliament. This system makes coalition forming with multiple parties a requirement for a government and alters the political power dynamics relevant for conflict frames. These dynamics are presumably different in, for example, two-party systems where it is more relevant to include members from the oppositional party in a conflict story, because they represent the main opposing political actor. Furthermore, the distance between the pragmatic Dutch press and politicians is relatively large, as opposed to more partisan media cultures, where less intervention in frames put forward by political actors is likely. Indeed, different news cultures have differing levels of conflict frames in the news (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011) and journalistic values also differ between countries (Hanitzsch et al., 2011). Cross-
national studies could reveal the extent to which the presence of conflict frames is explained by differing
degrees of journalistic intervention and type of political system.

Even though the journalists interviewed in our study were open about their work practices, the
self-reported nature of studies such as ours must be taken into account. Naturally, our findings show
how journalists perceive their routines and practices. Via use of vignettes and a varied sample, we aimed
to make sure that these perceptions are as varied, specific and insightful as possible (Morehouse, 1994).
Future studies will have to compare our results to content analysis data of conflict reporting in the Ne-
therlands and beyond.

Our focus on individual journalistic perceptions also alludes to another limitation of this study,
namely that factors on the organizational level and market pressures are not taken systematically into
account. We did ask journalists about differences between news organizations with differing commercial
aims and reporting styles, but we found no structural differences. Noticeably, journalists from all types of
media outlets emphasized the importance of the audience, even those working for public broadcasters.
Cross-national comparative studies or studies with a more macro-level or quantitative approach could
assess differences between various types of organizations more proficiently. Organizational processes
may fuel journalistic intervention in the form of exaggerating headlines when journalists do not write their
own headlines. Furthermore, news media with different news formats employ different modes of news
presentation. This can potentially contribute to both the emergence of conflict and the way in which con-
flicts emerge (Cottle & Rai, 2006). For instance, a television roundtable discussion with different political
actors present may increase the chance of disputes. Content studies seem most adequate to reveal the
consequences of these architectural characteristics for conflict framing.

Conflict frames emerge not exclusively because of the agency and intervention of journalists.
News framed in terms of conflict often resonates with political reality and reflects disagreement fought
out on the political stage. Journalists do not just send frames without adding meaning, nor do they solely
provide the public with their own frames (Brüggemann, 2014). This study shows that journalists can influ-
ence the construction and adaptation of conflict frames and sheds light on contextual features that affect
the amount of journalistic framing when it comes to political conflict. This adds to the literature because
the role of journalists in the frame building process is still a relatively neglected area (Hänggli, 2011).

In conclusion, the current study contributes to the frame building theory by showing the active
role that journalists play when framing news in terms of conflict. The study reveals some of these inter-
ventionist practices as well as the role of politicians in when and how journalists intervene in the conflict frame building process. Future studies could further disentangle the motivations of journalists. What drives them to intervene in the conflict frame building process? Regarding these motives, our results emphasized the important role of the audience. Future studies must assess to what extent commercial, organizational, and other higher order factors play a part and drive these motivations. These factors are harder to disentangle in a qualitative study. Also, the dynamics of political power deserve more attention. Our results point to the flexible nature of political power. Contextual factors affect how less powerful actors can become more newsworthy, for instance by diverting from party policy. Future research must disentangle these ever-shifting power-balances, both in political media systems that are similar to and different from the Dutch case. Finally, research towards different types of conflict frames seems needed. Most research is focused on conflict as a generic concept, but our results imply different types of conflicts are present; future studies must uncover how visible these different types of conflicts are in actual press coverage.
Chapter 2

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Manufacturing Conflict

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CHAPTER 3

Towards a Typology of Conflict Frames:
Substantiveness and Interventionism in Political Conflict News

Abstract

Conflict framing literature has suffered from a lack of consistent conceptualization in previous studies. Therefore, the aim of this study is to unravel the dimensionality of conflict frames. We conducted a content analysis (N= 1536) to develop a typology of conflict news coverage. Using factor analysis, different aspects of conflict news are distinguished with level of substantiveness and interventionism as the main dimensions. Furthermore, the study focuses on the occurrence of these different types of conflict frames in the news and the role of contextual factors such as election periods. Results indicate that articles with conflict frames contain more interventionism and less strategic framing online, more journalistic intervention in quality titles and less substantive news in election times when compared to routine periods. The study contributes to the literature by offering a more nuanced view of the presence of different types of conflict news in the media.

This study is published as:

3.1. Introduction

Conflict is central to politics, because the essence of democracy is a clash of political ideas (Schattschneider, 1975) and a struggle over which is the best option (Sartori, 1987). This importance of conflict also translates into news framing research, and “conflict frames” are one of the most frequently used frames in political communication research today (Vliegenthart, Boomgaarden, & Boumans, 2011). Conflict frames are particular in that they “emphasize conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest” (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 95). Empirically, this definition as been translated to include elements such as disagreement, tension between different sides, incompatibility between viewpoints, and politicians attacking each other in the media (Putnam & Shoemaker, 2007). However, a review of the literature shows inconsistent operational definitions of conflict framing in content research, as well as differential findings within framing effects research (see Chapter 1). This promises that conflict frames are multilayered and complex constructs in the news, rather than one single entity. In this paper, we propose that there are two dimensions that are particularly important for conflict framing: The (1) level of substantiveness and the (2) level of journalistic intervention of a conflict frame.

First, conflict news can focus on policy issues and "hard" information (e.g., Hänggli & Kriesi, 2010), as opposed to non-substantive, strategic aspects of politics (e.g., Adriaansen, Praag, & De Vreese, 2010). Conflict news can also be characterized by incivility between politicians, instead of civil and courteous political deliberation (Forgette & Morris, 2006; Mutz & Reeves, 2005).

Second, conflict frames may vary by the extent to which journalists intervene during the news production process. Previous research shows that journalists have a propensity to intervene in the conflict frame building process (Chapter 2). This intervention in conflict framing is exhibited in journalistic speculation concerning consequences of political conflicts, active journalistic framing of conflict news by juxtaposing political actors, and by journalistic interpretations and analysis of political disagreements. Journalists can also be a part of the political conflict themselves. Journalists can also intervene by adding direct commentary within a news report or taking a stance on issues (Hanitzsch, 2007). Yet, the extent to which journalistic intervention is visible in actual coverage conflict frames in political news is unknown.

Hence, this study uses an extensive content analysis to develop a typology of conflict frames, depending on (1) the level of substantiveness and (2) the level of journalistic intervention within the frame. We contribute to the literature by moving away from generic definitions of conflict framing that have proven problematic in the past.
3.2. Understanding Conflict Frames in the News

Following the traditional definition, a conflict frame reflects disagreement between individuals, institutions or countries (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). In political news, conflict frames are showcased through critique or attacks from and towards political actors, or the visibility of diverging political views in the media. The popularity of conflict frames in the western media may be explained by the fact that Western journalists greatly value objective reporting (Schudson, 2001). Part of this objectivity norm is the routine of balancing between competing positions (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992). Journalists juxtapose positions and viewpoints of actors to give a fair and unbiased account of a story (McManus, 1994). Because balancing competing voices often entails the inclusion of critique or attacks on the other actors, or on the viewpoints of the other actors, this media routine contributes to the emergence of conflict frames in the media.

The generic definition of conflict frames as used in most studies has not led to accumulative research, but has allowed researchers to operationalize the concept of conflict frames in different ways in their studies. Conflict frames have been associated with a number of negative outcomes on citizens. For instance, public approval of politicians decreases after exposure to conflict-laden television coverage (Forgette & Morris, 2006). Furthermore, studies have found conflict frames to contribute to the erosion of political trust (Mutz & Reeves, 2005). However, there are studies that stress the democratic potential of conflict frames, which is connected to the idea that, if conflict is present, citizens are more likely to realise the importance of political decision-making (Schuck, Vliegenthart, & De Vreese, 2016; De Vreese & Tobiasen, 2007). Conflict frames are also found to cause an increase in support for certain policies (Vliegenthart, Schuck, Boomgaarden, & De Vreese, 2008), and a positive impact on turnout (Min, 2004). At closer look, it seems that previous effect studies have actually taken different types of conflict into account, all published under the label of conflict news or conflict framing (Lee, McLeod, & Shah, 2008; Min, 2004). These studies show that exposure to different types of conflict frames leads to different outcomes on citizens.

Surprisingly, most content analyses towards conflict frames fail to take into account different types of conflict frames and look at the more general definition of conflict framing (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) or conflict and cooperation (Vliegenthart et al, 2011). To summarize, the wide array of conceptualizations and thus operationalizations of conflict frames makes it hard to generalize results and compare studies on this subject. Also, different variations of conflict frames have led to different outcomes on...
citizens. This calls for a clear and coherent conceptualization of conflict framing that takes into account the dimensionality of the concept. Furthermore, the occurrence of these different types of questions in actual news content is of interest. Certain types of conflict frames can be more prevalent than others. Hence, we pose the following overarching research questions for this paper.

**RQ1:** To what extent can different types of conflict frames be distinguished?

**RQ2:** To what extent are these different types present in conflict news coverage?

### 3.3. Conflict Frames Depend on Journalistic Interventionism

First, we consider the level of journalistic intervention in a conflict frame. The importance of conflict as a news value makes it attractive for politicians to put forward conflicting viewpoints to gain media attention. Conflict frames that emerge can be the product of frames put forward by political or societal actors. However, conflict frames in the news are also a result of active journalistic intervention in the frame building process (Chapter 2). Journalistic intervention reflects the other dimension of conflict frames proposed in this study. Interventionism, or “the media’s discretionary power”, refers to the degree to which the media take a formative role in shaping the agenda of election campaigns (Semetko et al., 1991, p. 3). To consider the involvement of journalists lies at the core of determining whom shapes conflict coverage.

Two aspects of interventionism are of importance for conflict framing. Firstly, interventionism determines the degree to which journalists are visible in a news item (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011). Noninterventionist reporting resonates with a descriptive style, which offers a detached and factual description of events. In contrast, an interpretative style is focused on meaning of events that goes beyond facts and statements of sources (Falasca, 2014) as well as journalistic explanations and analysis (Salgado & Strömbäck, 2011). Journalistic visibility entails the adaptation of a more interpretative style of reporting (Hanitzsch, 2007) and “journalists reporting about political news in their own words, scenarios and assessments” (Esser, 2008, p. 403). This interpretative style has become an important characteristic of political news reporting, both in the United States and in Europe (Iyengar & McGrady, 2007; Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011).

Secondly, journalists can perform their watchdog role and evaluate or attack politicians themselves (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996). Here, interventionism is interpreted as the extent to which journalists pursue particular missions and values instead of functioning as a detached, objective observer (Hanitzsch
et al., 2011). This aspect of interventionism differs from journalistic intervention in the form of interpretation, because it includes a reference to the journalist’s explicit personal perspective. In contrast, an interpretative style entails the explanation of a fact, without necessarily including a value judgment (Benson & Hallin, 2007). This dimension closely resembles the “watchdog role” (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996). The journalist functions as an adversarial to politicians and organizations. In summary, political conflicts in the news can be characterized by a detached and more neutral style or a more interventionist style, with more journalistic interpretation and evaluations of politicians involved in the conflict.

3.4. Conflict Frames Vary in Their Substantiveness

Asides from interventionism, this study proposes that conflict frames themselves can differ in their level of substantiveness. Some studies described conflict frames as being part of the game frame or horse race coverage (e.g., Hänggli & Kriesi, 2010; Takens, Kleinnijenhuis, Van Hoof, & Van Atteveldt, 2013). Conflict frames have also been operationalized as fundamentally non-substantive (Gross & Brewer, 2007). In this study, we depart from the notion that conflict frames are not necessarily part of a more process-oriented approach or a game frame. Rather, conflict frames can also be substantive and focus on the issues or the ideological clash around which the disagreement revolves (Lawrence, 2000). Hence, this study differentiates specifically between substantive conflict frames that focus mainly on political ideas, policy issues, ideological issues and values, and non-substantive conflict frames that address mainly the political process, politics as a game or personal attacks.

The relevance of such a distinction in conflict framing lies in potential outcomes on citizens. Outside the context of conflict framing, scholars have expressed the concern that strategic news as such becomes more prevalent, often at the cost of substantive news (e.g., Brants & Van Praag, 2006; Patterson, 1993). Furthermore, the use of this strategic game frame is associated with eroding political trust and an increase in political cynicism (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Jackson, 2011). For example, Elenbaas and De Vreese (2008) found that strategic framing positively affected political cynicism. In contrast, exposure to issue frames can reduce political cynicism among young voters (Adriaansen, Van Praag, & De Vreese, 2010). Differences in effects between substantive and non-substantive news content have also been found in the context of conflict frames. Findings by Min (2004) indicate that while conflict news focused on policy items increased turnout, conflicts consisting of personal attacks depressed likelihood of turnout. Similarly, Lee, McLeod, and Shah (2008) found that when compared to substantive news, non-substantive...
news on controversial issues discounts partisan affiliation as a primary consideration. Thus, differences in substantiveness can be used to characterize conflict frames in political news and these differences can be important for outcomes on citizens.

3.5. What Determines the Occurrence of Different Conflict Frames?

Any framing process is influenced by the context in which it takes place. Substantiveness and level of journalistic interventionism in conflict frames is likely influenced by both the (1) type of media outlet that produces such frames, as well as (2) the political context within which a conflict frame emerges.

3.5.1. The Impact of Contextual Features on Interventionism

Regarding media type, a first distinction is conflict framing in online versus offline news media. Previous research showed that online journalists value a disseminator role more than a watchdog or interpretative role as compared to journalists from traditional media (Cassidy, 2005). This is arguably a result of the importance of speed of publication in online media, which affects news production processes (Singer, 2003). The speed with which online journalists often have to operate, is likely to cause a less active and interventionist approach in the conflict frame building process. A lack of time may refrain journalists from being visible and play a formative role in reporting on conflict news. Previous research outside The Netherlands suggests that online news contains generally less interpretative news items (Salgado et al., 2016). Therefore, we hypothesize that the level of interventionism in conflict frames is lower in online news than in newspapers.

H1A: Online news articles containing the conflict frame contain a lower level of interventionism than print newspaper articles.

A second factor that likely affects the presence of different types of conflict frames in the media are simply which type of news outlet a journalist works in (Schuck et al., 2013). Different news organizations have different organizational goals and different target audiences. In this study, a comparison will be made between tabloid newspapers and more quality newspapers. Previous research suggests that an interpretative style is more prevalent in quality titles (Falasca, 2014). Quality outlets may want to give readers more than just the news and adapt an active approach, evaluating politicians and provide readers with interpretations and backgrounds. Therefore, we hypothesize that quality newspapers contain higher levels of interventionism as opposed to tabloid newspapers.
H1B: News articles containing the conflict frame have a higher level of interventionism in quality news outlets when compared to tabloid newspapers.

The final contextual factor that will affect interventionism in conflict news relates to whether a frame emerges during election context versus during a non-election context. Research towards framing is generally focused on election times (Van Aelst & De Swert, 2009). Routine periods of news are often overlooked. However, agenda setting studies have shown that political news reporting will differ in election periods as opposed to routine news periods (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). It is known that time factors can explain variations in media interventionism in news coverage (Esser, 2008). However, it is not yet clear how these differences play out in the case of conflict frames. Therefore, differing levels of interventionism during different time periods will be treated as an open empirical question.

RQ3: Is the level of interventionism in articles containing the conflict frame higher in election when compared to non-election times?

3.5.2. The Impact of Contextual Features on Level of Substantiveness

Some researchers suggest that the higher commercialized online environment increases an audience-centered approach associated with increased focus on sensationalism and entertainment (e.g., Fenton, 2010). However, on the other hand, research suggests that there are strong similarities between news content online and offline, because journalistic norms are stable, even when the medium changes (e.g., Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009). This inconclusiveness in the literature, paired with the lack of research on content-specific differences between online and traditional news problematizes predictions on whether online news include more or less substantive conflict frames than print news. Previous studies do suggest that online news articles are shorter than print news (Maier, 2010). This may indicate there is less room for elaborations on policy issues. However, we formulate an open research question to investigate whether online or offline news will be characterized by more or less substantive news coverage.

RQ4: Are conflict frames in online news more or less substantive than in print news?

Quality newspapers may differ in their level of substantiveness in conflict framing when compared to tabloid newspapers. Tabloids generally have a greater economic motivation; they are inclined to present news in a format that has a significant entertainment and interest value, sometimes at the cost of civic or educational value (Jackson, 2011). Earlier research suggested that quality newspapers tend to focus more on substantive news than tabloid newspapers (Norris, 2000; Strömbäck & Aelst, 2010).
Therefore, the expectation is that conflict-laden news elicits higher levels of substantiveness in quality news outlets as opposed to tabloid newspapers.

H2A: *Articles framed in terms of conflict have higher levels of substantiveness in quality newspapers as opposed to tabloid newspapers.*

Coverage of political conflicts in election times might be more focused on non-substantive features such as personal attacks, attacks on competences and strategic aspects. Indeed, outside the context of conflict framing, previous studies indicate that strategic and game framing are mostly important during election times (Aalberg, Strömbäck, & De Vreese, 2012). Furthermore, Binderkrantz and Green-Pedersen (2009) indicate that during election times, political news is more focused on processes than on issues. Horse race frames are also more often used when an election is approaching (Vliegenthart & Aelst, 2010). For the specific case of conflict framing, these findings suggest that in the buildup towards an election, with candidates struggling for votes and rising stakes, the emphasis on politics as a game, strategy, and personal attacks are more prevalent than in routine times when there is no election at the horizon. Hence in this paper it is expected that during election times, political conflict in the news is less substantive than during routine times. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H2B: *Levels of substantiveness in articles containing the conflict frame are lower in in election when compared to non-election time.*

### 3.6. Methods

#### 3.6.1. Sample

To test these hypotheses and research questions, we conducted a content analysis with news articles as the unit of analysis. We assessed the occurrence of conflict frames in political news in the four largest Dutch newspapers, including two quality newspapers (Volkskrant and NRC) and two tabloid newspapers (Telegraaf and AD). Furthermore, online news from the four largest online news websites in terms of readership was included in the sample: the online versions of one quality newspaper (Volkskrant.nl) and one tabloid (Telegraaf.nl), as well as the news website of the Dutch public broadcasting (NOS.nl) and the major Dutch commercial news website (Nu.nl).

We used automated content analysis for sampling purposes; only those political news articles that included conflict frames were selected. For this purpose, we used an automated content analysis method based on supervised machine learning (Burscher, Odijk, Vliegenthart, De Rijke, & De Vreese, 2014).
Two yes/no questions are used in this method to determine whether an article entails conflict frame. The first question is: Does the item reflect disagreement between parties, individuals, groups or countries? The second: Does the item refer to two sides or more than two sides of the problem? When one of these indicators was positive, the article was included in sample. These items are often used to measure conflict frames in the news and originate from the work of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). Subsequently, 5 coders were trained to collect data from the eventual sample of conflict frame articles.

Fourteen random news days were selected during a routine news period where no extraordinary political event occurred. The days included in these weeks were randomly selected from the Dutch parliamentary year of 2014-2015. Constructing a random constructed week as a sample is considered an adequate method for news sampling (Hester & Dougall, 2007). To ensure a sample that is as varied as possible, fourteen days leading up to the elections period of the 2015 were also sampled. In total, the sample consisted of 1536 news articles. These included 1042 newspaper articles: Volkskrant (n = 323), NRC (n = 343), Telegraaf (n = 134), and Algemeen Dagblad (n = 242). Furthermore, the sample of website articles resulted in a total of 494 articles: Volkskrant.nl (n = 156), NOS.nl (n = 137), Nu.nl (n = 93), Telegraaf.nl (n = 108).

### 3.6.2. Measures

In order to measure and validate the dimensionality of conflict framing in political news, a total of 14 yes/no questions were included in the codebook. Several training sessions were organized to ensure the five coders could reliably code the items included in this study. This approach resulted in indicators that investigate presence of the concepts measured.

**Interventionism.**

Interventionist reporting style was assessed using two main indicators. First, we assessed the concept of journalistic visibility. We coded actor type for the three first actors in each news article. The presence of one or more journalistic actors among these three actors indicated journalistic visibility. An actor was coded as journalistic when a journalist or journalistic medium was specifically mentioned or when the writer of the article gave a clear evaluation of an actor involved in the political conflict in the article. Second, a measure was included to assess interpretative journalism. Coders indicated whether journalistic style of the article was predominantly descriptive or predominantly interpretative (Salgado & Strömbäck, 2012). Third, two items were included to tap adversarial journalism or the watchdog role.
in journalism. The first item measured whether a journalistic evaluation of a politician was present in the article (yes/no). For the second item, coders indicated whether the writer or another journalistic actor expresses doubts regarding the competence of political actors (yes/no). Overall, the average intercoder reliability for these variables was \( \alpha = .70 \) (Krippendorff’s Alpha)\(^2\).

To measure the extent to which the conflict frames in news articles were focused on substantive issues or not, three items were included, based on the work of Cappella and Jamieson (1997). These items assessed, if the article focused predominantly on politically substantive issues (yes/no), laws and policies (yes/no) and the presence of substantive views on policy issues by political actors (yes/no). Non-substantiveness was measured by assessing the presence of the strategic game frame elements in conflict news coverage, specifically sub-dimensions of the strategic game frame. These include two items tapping strategic framing (e.g., Is the article focused on political strategy?). Also included are three items assessing a focus on politics as a game (e.g. Does the story deal with politicians winning and losing?) In order to assess personal attacks and incivility, three items were included (e.g. Does the article include attacks on personality and style). These items were based on Aalberg, Strömbäck and De Vreese (2012). Finally, the concept of incivility was measured by using two items: insulting language and belittling language. These items were based on Sobieraj and Berry (2011). The average intercoder reliability for the substantiveness items was acceptable at .67 (Krippendorf’s Alpha). All item wordings can be found in Table 3.1.

### Table 3.1 Item Wording

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Wording</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interventionism</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int1</td>
<td>Is the journalistic style mainly descriptive or mainly interpretative?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int2</td>
<td>Is at least one of the first three actors in the article a journalist?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int3</td>
<td>Does the article include a negative evaluation of a political actor coming from a journalistic actor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int4</td>
<td>Does the journalist doubt the competence of the political actor in the article?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Substance</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

\(^2\) Item specific intercoder reliability can be obtained with author
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Sub1 Does the article give extensive information on policy-issues -problems or solutions?
Sub2 Does the article contain descriptions on the substance of legislation or proposed legislation?
Sub3 Does the article contain descriptions on the stands of politicians on policy issues?

Strategy
Strat1 Does the article refer to winners and losers?
Strat2 Does the article refer to war, games or competition?
Strat3 Does the article discuss strategy and tactics?

Personal Attacks
Pers_att1 Does the article contain criticism on style or performance?
Pers_att2 Does the article contain criticism on personality from or towards politicians?
Pers_att3 Does the article contain criticism on competence from or towards politicians?

Incivility
Inc1 Does the article contain insulting or aggressive language from or towards a political actor?
Inc2 Does the article contain belittling language from or towards a political actor?

3.7. Results

We analyze the data using the following steps: first, we aim to examine to what extent different types of conflict frames can be distinguished by conducting an exploratory factor analysis. Second, we further corroborate the factor structure by conducting a confirmatory factor analysis using SEM. We opted for this approach, because using EFA as a precursor for a CFA has been shown to be a good method to validate a factor structure (Gerbing & Hamilton, 1996). Third, we look at the occurrence of the different types of conflict frames in the general sample. Finally, we look at the impact of contextual factors using OLS regressions.

3.7.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis

In the first part of the results section, we focus on our first research question (RQ1). We want to assess to what extent different types of conflict frames can be distinguished. Hence we first conducted a principal component analysis with varimax rotation to corroborate the proposed factor dimension\(^3\). As
seen in Table 2, the items form five separate factors that generally follow the structure of the dimensions that were expected beforehand. A total of 66.02% of variance is explained by these factors. All items have a factor loading of higher than .50, which is usually considered to be an adequate threshold by statistical researchers (e.g., Hair, et al., 1998). The first factor that emerges in the factor analysis is the interventionism dimension. This factor explains 24.39% of the variation. Together, the items in the interventionism dimension have a Cronbach’s Alpha of .79 (4 items). The second factor that emerges is the substance factor, which explains 12.9% of the variance. The three items of the substance dimension have a Cronbach’s Alpha of .76 (3 items). The three next factors represent the three subdimensions of non-substantive conflict coverage. The first of these factors is personal attacks. This factor explains 11.47% of the variance (3 items). Within this dimension, the items have a Cronbach’s Alpha of .7

The second of these non-substantive factors is Strategy. This factor explains 9.78% of the variance (3 items). These items have a Cronbach’s Alpha of .54 and a correlation of \( r = .28 \) (\( p < .001 \)). Finally, the Incivility factor explains 7.41% of the variance (2 items). The Cronbach’s Alpha for these items is .7 and a correlation of \( r = .55 \) (\( p < .001 \)). These results indicate that initially, five different dimensions of conflict framing can be distinguished.

### Table 3.2. Factor analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interventionism</th>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Personal attacks</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Incivility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Int1</td>
<td>.813</td>
<td>-.091</td>
<td>-.048</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int2</td>
<td>.785</td>
<td>-.103</td>
<td>-.087</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int3</td>
<td>.776</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.248</td>
<td>.198</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int4</td>
<td>.689</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.445</td>
<td>-.137</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub1</td>
<td>-.066</td>
<td>.842</td>
<td>-.191</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>-.090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub2</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.772</td>
<td>-.170</td>
<td>-.185</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub3</td>
<td>-.126</td>
<td>.820</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 An oblique rotation method was also conducted and yielded a similar factor structure. However, this analysis yielded no between factor correlations among the five components that exceeded .32. Hence, using this as a benchmark, as suggested by Tabachnick and Fiddell (2006) we decided to stick with the initial orthogonal rotation method.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pers_att</th>
<th>Pers_att1</th>
<th>.074</th>
<th>-.180</th>
<th>.560</th>
<th>.462</th>
<th>.024</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pers_att2</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>.804</td>
<td>.243</td>
<td>.160</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pers_att3</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>-.176</td>
<td>.787</td>
<td>-.101</td>
<td>.205</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interventionism</th>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Personal attacks</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Incivility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strat1</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>-.114</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.531</td>
<td>-.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat2</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>-.056</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.753</td>
<td>.119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strat3</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.748</td>
<td>.108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incivility</th>
<th>Inc1</th>
<th>.074</th>
<th>-.028</th>
<th>.159</th>
<th>.083</th>
<th>.860</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inc1</td>
<td>.179</td>
<td>-.039</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.833</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eigenvalues</th>
<th>3.66</th>
<th>1.95</th>
<th>1.72</th>
<th>1.47</th>
<th>1.11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of variance explained</td>
<td>24.39</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>11.47</td>
<td>9.78</td>
<td>7.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s Alpha</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Factor loadings below .4 are not bold

3.7.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis was deployed to further validate the factor structure. This was done by conducting structural equation modeling (SEM). Usually, the Chi-Square statistic is used to test SEM models with significance indicating bad model fit. However, a drawback of using Chi-square is the sensitivity that large samples nearly always lead to model rejection (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). Since the sample that will be subject of analysis in this study is relatively large (n=1536), three alternative fit indices will be assessed to determine model fit: the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the standardized root mean square residual (RSMR).

The model fit of the factor structure in depicted in Figure 3.2 was implemented in the initial model. As expected, the values for the chi-square where significant, $\chi^2 (88) = 1119.13$, $p < .0001$. However, this is unsurprising given the large sample size. Nonetheless, the relevant statistics indicate the hypothesized factor structure did not fit the data well. The RMSEA = .092 where a value of .08 or lower indicates
good fit. The SRMR also indicated poor model fit: SRMR = 0.06. Here, a value of .05 or lower indicates acceptable fit. Finally, The Comparative Fit Index is too low as well CFI= .837

Figure 3.1. CFA Model

In the next part of the SEM analysis, the standardized residual covariances and modification indices of the model were assessed to see if adjustments could be made for the model. Error terms with high modification indices were covaried in the new model. This was only done for error terms that load on the same latent subdimension (Schreiber et al., 2006). Furthermore, modification indices indicated a
problem with the Pers1 variable, with generally high modification indices on other items. Hence, this variable, which also showed low factor loading, was removed. This variable tapped attacks on competence of politicians. The remaining two items of the personal attacks dimension deal with style, personality and performance. After this, the model was again tested for model fit. For the new model the chi-square was again significant. $\chi^2 (65) = 529.4, p< .0001$. After these modifications, the model yielded a much better fit to the data (CFI = .929, RMSEA= .07, SRMR= .04). Compared to traditional cut-off criteria, all indicators but the chi-square generated an acceptable goodness-of-fit.

Figure 3.2. CFA Model 2
Chapter 3

To further compare the initial and modified model, we also used the Akaike information criterion (AIC) and the Bayesian information criterion (BIC). The absolute value of the models is irrelevant. However, if values of these criteria lower after model adjustment, this indicates an improvement in model fit. For the first model, the AIC and the BIC have values of 20368.3 and 20677.69 respectively (see Figure 3.1). For the second model, depicted in Figure 3.2, these values are 17936.99 and 18225.05 respectively. This indicates that the model fit has improved greatly. In sum, the results from the CFA confirm the factor structure found in the EFA. We can thus answer RQ1 by arguing that different types of conflict frames can be distinguished. Specifically, we find 5 dimensions of conflict framing, namely interventionism, substance, personal attacks, strategic game, and incivility.

3.7.3. Level of Interventionism in Conflict Articles

Next, to answer the second research question (RQ2), we assess to what extent interventionism is present in conflict frame news coverage. For this purpose, the scores of the individual items in each of the dimensions were combined into a multi-item scale variable. The values of these scales range from .00 (dimension not present) to 1.00 (dimension present). Hence, the closer to 1.00 the score of these scale variables is, the more indicators of that particular dimension are present in that news article.

The first main dimension that can be identified for conflict news is Interventionism. In Table 3, the mean values of the multi-item interventionism scale variable are shown per outlet. The results show that the level of interventionism in conflict news is highest in the quality newspaper De Volkskrant, both in the online (.27) and print version (.29). The other quality newspaper NRC also shows high levels of interventionism (.22). Surprisingly, NOS.nl, which was considered a more quality and sober online outlet, has a low mean on journalistic intervention (.08). Furthermore, articles on online websites generally have lower levels of interventionism than traditional newspaper articles, with the exception of Volkskrant.nl which has higher levels of interventionism than the other websites, including the website of the public broadcasters. As shown in the table, the highest level of interventionism is found in both the newspaper as the website of De Volkskrant. The lowest level of intervention is on the online news site Nu.nl. For our research question, this means that level of journalistic intervention is highest in the print newspapers, with the quality titles showing generally higher levels of interventionism. Furthermore, interventionism is mostly higher in print titles when compared to online titles.
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Table 3.3 Journalistic intervention in conflict news

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>AD</th>
<th>.17 (.29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 242)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telegraaf</td>
<td>.17 (.29)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 134)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volkskrant</td>
<td>.29 (.34)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 323)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRC</td>
<td>.22 (.29)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 343)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online</th>
<th>NU.nl</th>
<th>.07 (.19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 93)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telegraaf.nl</td>
<td>.11 (.25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 108)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volkskrant.nl</td>
<td>.27 (.41)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 156)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOS.nl</td>
<td>.08 (.20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 137)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Values are means; figures in parentheses indicate standard deviations and number of cases

3.7.4. Level of substantiveness

In Table 4, the mean values of the multi-item scale variables for the substantiveness subdimensions are shown per outlet. The results indicate that the highest level of substance in conflict news articles can be found on the news-site of the Dutch public broadcasters: NOS.nl. With an average of .67 this is the highest mean score where the other outlets range from .51 to .63. Hence, political conflicts reported upon by the NOS.nl generally include more information on policy issues than political conflict news in other outlets. When looking at the personal attacks dimension, a clear difference between online and traditional outlets appears. Generally, online outlets focus more on personal attacks than traditional media. In online titles, the mean score ranges from .52 to .59 whereas in traditional media the means range.
from .37 to .44. These results seem to indicate that conflict news in online media outlets is more likely to include personal attacks than conflict news in traditional media outlets. On the strategy dimension, the highest average is found for the newspaper version of the Volkskrant, with an average of .44, followed closely by the traditional newspaper NRC with .32 and Telegraaf, which have a mean value of .45. The incivility dimension occurred the least frequent of all these dimensions. Both in online and traditional news, conflict coverage was hardly characterized by framing conflicts in terms of games and winners and losers. Values range from .10 to .18. Most incivility was found in the newspaper version of de Telegraaf (.18), followed closely by Volkskrant.nl who have a mean score of .17.

Table 3.4 Substantiveness in conflict news per outlet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>outlet</th>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Personal attacks</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Incivility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>AD (n= 242)</td>
<td>.59 (.39)</td>
<td>.37 (.40)</td>
<td>.24 (.29)</td>
<td>.11 (.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Telegrf. (n= 134)</td>
<td>.63 (.38)</td>
<td>.42 (.43)</td>
<td>.25 (.29)</td>
<td>.18 (.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volkskrt. (n= 323)</td>
<td>.63 (.38)</td>
<td>.44 (.41)</td>
<td>.33 (.31)</td>
<td>.13 (.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NRC (n= 343)</td>
<td>.62 (.37)</td>
<td>.39 (.40)</td>
<td>.32 (.31)</td>
<td>.10 (.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>NU.nl (n= 93)</td>
<td>.51 (.46)</td>
<td>.52 (.45)</td>
<td>.18 (.29)</td>
<td>.13 (.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Telegr.nl (n= 108)</td>
<td>.51 (.44)</td>
<td>.52 (.45)</td>
<td>.20 (.30)</td>
<td>.14 (.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volkskrt.nl (n= 156)</td>
<td>.55 (.48)</td>
<td>.59 (.47)</td>
<td>.26 (.36)</td>
<td>.17 (.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NOS.nl (n= 137)</td>
<td>.67 (.36)</td>
<td>.53 (.43)</td>
<td>.27 (.30)</td>
<td>.11 (.23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.8. The effects of contextual factors

In the final part of the analysis, we conducted ordinary least squares regression regressions on the separate dimensions to examine to what extent contextual factors influence the variation in two main dimensions of conflict coverage. These factors include medium type (newspaper versus online) time period (election coverage versus routine coverage) and type of outlet (“tabloid” versus “quality”).


First, we look at the Interventionist level. Table 5 displays a series of OLS regressions performed for the multi-item scale variable that represents journalistic interventionism found in conflict frame news
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items. First, the results indicate that in online news articles a significantly lower degree of online journalistic interventionism is found. Hence, the first hypothesis (H1A) is corroborated. In online coverage of political conflicts, journalists intervene on a lesser scale than in traditional newspaper coverage of political conflicts.

The second hypothesis (H1B) is also supported. Results show that the level of journalistic interventionism is significantly lower for more tabloid media outlets. This suggests that in quality newspapers, journalistic intervention in the form of evaluations and an interpretative style is present more often than in tabloid newspapers.

Finally, the results indicate that in election time, the degree of journalistic interpretation is not significantly more visible. Journalist did not become more visible in conflict news in election coverage, when compared to routine coverage. Hence, regarding RQ3, it can be concluded that there is no difference in journalistic intervention when comparing routine coverage with election coverage.

Table 3.5 Contextual factors as predictors of interventionism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>(SE)</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interventionism</td>
<td>Time (election)</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(F= 16.799***,</td>
<td>outlet type (sensational)***</td>
<td>-.086</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>-.135</td>
<td>-5.346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2 =.032)</td>
<td>Medium type (online)***</td>
<td>-.074</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>-.111</td>
<td>-4.420</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001

3.8.2. Effects of Contextual Factors on Substance

The next part of the analysis focuses on the effect of contextual factors on the level of substantiveness. As seen in Table 6, results indicate that during election times news content is significantly less substantive. This is in line with H2A. In routine coverage, the news is significantly more focused on substance than in election coverage. Furthermore, election conflict coverage differs from routine conflict coverage in the sense that there are more personal attacks, more strategic coverage and more depiction of politics as a game.

When looking at the factors internal to media, results indicate that tabloid newspapers are less
likely to include substantive content. However, contrary to expectations, the strategy, and personal attacks dimensions are significantly more prevalent in more quality newspapers.

Outlet type had a significant effect on the level of substance in conflict news. However, the results indicate lower degrees of strategy reporting in populist newspapers. Hence, hypothesis H2B can only be partially confirmed.

Medium type also did not influence the level of substance across all sub-dimensions. Nevertheless, higher degrees of strategy reporting were found for online news articles. Furthermore, the strong effect of medium on the prevalence of personal attacks deserves attention. Personal attacks are more prominently featured in online news than in traditional news.

Table 3.6. Outlet, medium type and time period as predictors of Substance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>(SE)</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(F=10.14***,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2 =.02)</td>
<td>Time (Election)***</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outlet type (sensational) *</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium type (online) *</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(F=16.75***,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2 =.03)</td>
<td>Time (Election)***</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outlet type (Sensational) ***</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-5.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium type (online) ***</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-3.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal attacks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(F=18.201***,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2 =.03)</td>
<td>Time (Election) ***</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outlet type (sensational)</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium type (online) ***</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>6.08</td>
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</table>
Towards a Typology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>(SE)</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incivility</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>2.77</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Medium type (online)</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.9. Discussion

The aim of this article was to develop a more comprehensive and fine-grained understanding of conflict framing in political news coverage. Our results indicate that articles framed in terms of conflict indeed vary along a number of dimensions. The scale developed to measure interventionism was confirmed as a dimension. Second, level of substantiveness was measured by looking at level of substance in the form of policy news and a focus on legislation. Three dimensions reflected non-substantive news coverage: strategic coverage, personal attacks and incivility. Furthermore, during election times, articles with conflict frames were found to be less substantive, deal more with strategy, personal attacks and incivility when compared to a routine news period. Second, interventionist reporting, substance, strategy, and personal attacks were lower for sensationalist newspapers when compared to quality newspapers. Finally, online articles showed lower levels of interventionism, substance and strategy when compared to print articles. However, the level of personal attacks was higher for online titles.

Framing theory has long been associated with unclear operationalizations and definitions (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). The criticism aimed towards framing mainly stem from the fuzziness of framing conceptualization and incoherent applications, illustrated in this paper by the example of conflict framing (Matthes, 2009). However, rather than abandoning the concept of framing, this paper suggests that an alternative solution would be to strengthen research towards emphasis-frames. This entails (a) providing clearer and more consistent definitions, and (b) to unravel underlying dimensions which can explain variations within generic frames. The findings in this paper point out the relevance of such variations for the specific case of conflict framing and applies pre-existing theories to identify and measure these underlying dimensions.

Specifically, our results show that contextual factors internal to the media such as medium type and outlet type affect conflict coverage. For example, the findings indicated that less journalistic inter-
ventionism is more prevalent in online coverage when compared to traditional coverage. This finding may be explained by differing journalistic routines and the emphasis on speed that characterizes online journalism (Singer, 2003). Another explanation can be found is the move towards more quality journalism by traditional media, who seek to differentiate themselves from the large numbers of free content by providing interpretative journalism and performance of the watchdog role, future research should focus on explaining the differences between online and offline content.

The findings also show the impact of election coverage versus routine coverage on the manifestation of substantive news in the media. While there is a lot of research done on election coverage content, (e.g., Strömbäck & Kaid, 2008 ) and on routine periods (e.g., Entman, 2004), research comparing these two different time periods is scarce. Earlier research did not find proximity to the elections to be a predictor of generic conflict frames (Schuck et al., 2013). Our study shows that proximity to the election does explain variations of differing types of conflict coverage. This difference between these different time periods is in line with findings from Falasca (2014), which suggest that levels of mediatization vary between periods of election and routine coverage. During election times there are several other factors that might affect contextual characteristics of contentious political news coverage that should be taken into account in future studies. One example of these factors is issue-types. Different issues that are present may lead to different characteristics of conflict reporting, due to journalists reporting differently on these issues, but also frames provided by political actors may differ on more emotionally laden issues.

Our study also has a number of limitations. We measure journalistic visibility as a proxy for journalistic interventionism. For the purposes of this study, we considered this method as most reliable as it provides a manifest indicator of journalistic intervention as it is visible to the audience in a media text and hence represents distinguishable ways of reporting about political disagreement. However, there are other, more subtle ways in which journalists intervene in the framing processes (Chapter 2). The journalistic news production process is complex and not easily observed in a content analysis alone. For instance, the differences between offline and online news articles found in this study raise interesting questions regarding the causes of these differences. We can speculate on how to explain differing content in for example online versus traditional media, but future research should focus on journalistic processes and differing routines for online and offline journalists. The enhanced time pressure resulting from the constant flow of news in online titles could affect the ability of journalists to intervene, alternatively, the interactive nature of online news which enhances possibilities for the audience in terms of selective ex-
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Exposure might affect reporting by journalists as well, especially since journalists are known to be affected by audience perceptions (Bennet, 2005).

The findings of this study are derived from political news in The Netherlands, which is an example of a democratic corporatist media system with a strong history of public broadcasting (Van Aelst et al., 2008). Future studies should also be conducted in other countries. Particularly in countries with different media systems and different party systems, such as The United States, where for instance the tone of conflict coverage might be different from the tone in democratic corporatist countries.

3.9.1. Conclusion

Concluding, our findings contribute by illustrating the different characteristics of conflict coverage in political news coverage. Our typology provides a starting point for a better and more nuanced understanding of conflict framing. Furthermore, the results highlight the importance of distinguishing between different types of conflict frames.

Future research must disentangle whether exposure to these different manifestations of conflict framing in the news affects relevant political behaviour of citizens. This particularly calls for effect studies which consider different aspects of conflict framing, both in experimental as in panel settings. Nevertheless, conflict framing as a generic concept is still valuable as a framing device that is used in journalism across all reporting contexts. Our results merely add to the concept identifying multiple layers that can be subsumed within the broader concept of conflict framing and that are distinctively present across reporting contexts and media outlets.
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Chapter 3


CHAPTER 4

Conflict Framing and Emotions:
How Level of Substantiveness and Journalistic Intervention Affect Political Participation Through Anger and Enthusiasm

Abstract
The effect of conflict frames on political participation has been an important and popular subject of study in political communication research. Nonetheless, results have been generally inconclusive. In this study, we conduct a survey experiment (n = 707) to assess how different types of conflict frames affect political participation. We specifically differentiate between level of journalistic intervention and substantiveness in conflict framing. To shed light on the underlying process behind conflict framing effects, we also investigate how these effects are contingent on emotions. Results indicate that different types of conflict frames did not result in direct effects on political participation. However, the study does point to indirect effects via emotions. Particularly anger and enthusiasm function as mediators of conflict framing effects on political participation.

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4.1 Introduction

News media are an arena where competing political opinions meet. Therefore, the idea of the ‘conflict frame’ is one of the most prevalently used frames in political news (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000), and it has received ample attention in research on political communication (Vliegenthart, Boomgaarden, & Boumans, 2005). Yet, so far, research on the mobilizing potential of conflict framing has produced conflicting results.

The lack of consistency in findings on the effects of conflict-laden news on political participation may be explained by the absence of a clear definition of conflict framing, paired with inconsistent operationalizations as well as variation in the conceptualizations from study to study (Chapter 3). Conceptualizations range from understanding conflict as an event where two sides that are pitted against each other (Putnam & Shoemaker, 2007), to more specific and arguably different elements such as strategy framing, war metaphors, game framing (Patterson, 1993), and incivility (Sobieraj & Berry, 2011). This suggests that what we know as generic conflict frames may have different underlying dimensions, which influence the type of effects a conflict frame can have (Min, 2004). Few studies focus on these different types of conflict frames. Therefore, in this study, we will take the generic definition of conflict framing as a starting point and within that generic definition focus on specific dimensions that are relevant for outcomes of exposure to conflict frames. For this purpose, we focus on two specific dimensions: the level of substantiveness and level of journalistic intervention. Conflict framed news articles can vary in the level of substance, where a focus on issues is contrasted with personal attacks. But they also vary in the level of interventionism, where detached journalism is contrasted with high levels of journalistic visibility (Chapter 3).

The key to understanding the role of these two dimensions within conflict framing is a study of the underlying psychological mechanisms that can explain a framing effect. In recent years, an increasing number of scholars have become interested in these psychological processes (e.g., Lecheler, De Vreese, & Slothuus, 2010; Slothuus, 2008). In this tradition we, in addition to testing differential direct effects, develop a mediation model of conflict framing effects, where we argue that conflict framing effects may be explained by differential emotional reactions to conflict frames. Framing effects are known to be greatly contingent on emotional processes (Gross & D’Ambrosio, 2004; Lecheler, Schuck, & De Vreese, 2013). Furthermore, conflict in particular is known to exert effects on emotional responses (Gross, Brewer, 2007), which renders them a likely central process that leads from conflict frames to changes in political
participation, which is also our intended outcome variable (see Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz, & Hutchings, 2011). The research question that is central to this paper is therefore: *To what extent do different types of conflict frames affect political participation and how are these effects mediated by emotions?* We conduct an experiment to investigate how different types of conflict frames affect political participation, and also to assess the role of emotions in this process. Our results contribute to literature by uncovering the underlying emotional mechanisms that drive the conflict framing process.

### 4.2 Understanding Conflict Framing Effects

A news frame can be seen as “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, p. 143). Framing is all about certain aspects of reality being highlighted and thereby bringing forward certain considerations, decisions and judgements (Entman, 1993; Chong & Druckman, 2007a). Conflict framing is generally regarded as one of the most prevalent mechanisms in political news reporting (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992). The ample use of conflict framing in political journalism may also be explained by the importance of conflict as a news value (Price & Tewskbury, 1997). Furthermore, a clash of political ideas in the form of conflict is essential for a democracy (Lupia, McCubbins, & Popkin, 2000). Reporting about public affairs using a conflict angle increases the attractiveness for the audience, because of its dramatic quality and attention grabbing traits. Conflict frames "emphasize conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest" (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 95). Empirically, conflict framing has been operationalized to include elements such as disagreement, tension between different sides, incompatibility between viewpoints, and politicians attacking each other in the media (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Lengauer, Esser, & Berganza, 2011; Putnam & Shoemaker, 2007). Political news reporting is often characterized by competing standpoints, and debates about issues are usually framed in opposing terms (Chong & Druckman, 2007b). Conflict frames often involve critique coming from or directed towards politicians and a confrontational way of reporting about clashing political ideas.

Conflict framing has been linked to a number of detrimental effects on political beliefs and behaviour in citizens. The conflictual nature of democratic news coverage has been suggested as a main driver of citizen disinterest (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002). Especially exposure to uncivil conflict news has been argued to increase political cynicism (Avery, 2009; Forgette & Morris, 2006). Furthermore, a
number of studies in the US-context suggest that conflict can potentially demobilize the electorate (e.g., Ansolabehere et al., 1994; Brooks, 2006). In a European context, Kleinnijenhuis, van Hoof and Oegema (2006) suggest that conflict framing has a negative impact on political participation via distrust. Interestingly, however, recent other studies find that exposure to conflict frames can lead to an increase in political participation (Schuck, Vliegenthart, & De Vreese, 2016; De Vreese & Tobiasen, 2007; De Vreese & Boomgaard, 2006). These studies take the standpoint that exposure to conflict frames may lead citizens to realize what is at stake and why political decision-making is important. Hence, the results on the effects of conflict on political participation are inconsistent. We seek to explain this inconsistency by focussing on different types of conflict frames and test how they affect political participation.

4.3 Dimensions of Conflict Framing

Conflict news coverage can revolve around a specific policy issue, or focus on personal attacks or the competence or performance of a political actor (Chapter 3). Exposure to substantive conflict frames has been found to affect opinions and political participation of citizens differently when compared to exposure to nonsubstantive conflict frames (e.g., Lee, Mcleod, & Shah, 2008; Min, 2004). Hence, a first dimension that is relevant for conflict framing is that of substantiveness.

The second relevant dimension is interventionism, which refers to the degree to which journalists are visible in a news article (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011). Conflict framing can emerge in the news in the form of a purely descriptive depiction of political disagreement, but also with an active, intervening role for the journalist in the news article. Particularly conflict frames in the news often result from active journalistic intervention in the frame building process (Chapter 2).

4.3.1 Substantiveness

Conflict frames are often operationalized as fundamentally non-substantive (Gross & Brewer, 2007). Furthermore, some researchers link conflict framing as being part of the game frame, horse race coverage, or a process-oriented frame (e.g., Hänggli & Kriesi, 2010; Takens et al., 2013). Nonetheless, research has shown that conflict frames can be substantive and that they often focus on the issues around which a dispute revolves (Lawrence, 2000). This suggests that there are two types of frames at play here: substantive and nonsubstantive conflict frames. Where substantive conflict framing focuses on policy news and legislation, nonsubstantive news coverage focuses on strategic coverage, personal attacks or
incivility. Levels of substantiveness in conflict framing are known to vary, contingent on type of outlets and political events in news reporting (see Chapter 3). For instance, substantiveness of conflict frames goes down during election times, and conflict frames deal more personal attacks, when compared to a routine news period. Furthermore, sensationalist newspapers show lower levels of substance, but also strategy when compared to quality newspapers. These examples of the manifestation of different types of conflict frames show that a distinction basted on substantiveness is relevant in terms of media content.

But what are the consequences of exposure to nonsubstantive conflict framing on political participation? There are a number of studies that suggest that issue-based news coverage encourages participation whereas nonsubstantive news coverage demobilizes. For example, studies indicate that strategic news coverage of political issues can lead to cynicism (Elenbaas & De Vreese, 2008) and even demobilization (Valentino, Beckmann, & Buhr, 2001). Findings on incivility in political conflict also point in this direction (Forgets & Morris, 2006; Mutz & Reeves, 2005). However, the specific distinction between substantive two-sided conflict framing and conflict framing consisting of personal attacks and attacks on style or performance is understudied. Furthermore, the findings focus mainly on one-sided attack advertising and incivility, and hardly on two-sided conflict framing in the media, the format in which most citizens are exposed to political disagreement. An example of a study that did focus on conflict specifically, was conducted by Lee, McLeod, and Shah (2008). Their findings indicate that, compared to substantive news, non-substantive news on controversial issues discounts partisan affiliation as a primary consideration. Min (2004) focuses directly on the impact of news coverage of political attacks on political participation. The findings do not lead to an overall effect of conflict on participation, but instead finds these effects to be contingent on the focus of the conflict. In contrast to substantive attacks, personal attacks in news articles were found to lower intentions to go out and vote. It remains an open question whether the findings of this experiment, conducted in the United States can be replicated in a European setting, with different political dynamics due to the multi-party system as well as a different media system. Nonetheless, we expect that, similarly to what previous studies suggest, substantive conflict frames will positively affect political participation, whereas nonsubstantive conflict frames will decrease political participation. This leads to the following hypothesis:

**H1:** Exposure to substantive conflict frames has a positive effect on political participation, when compared to exposure to nonsubstantive conflict frames.
4.3.2 Interventionism

Journalists play an active role in conflict frame building and often implement subtle cues to stress the importance of a conflict, to make a conflict more exiting by speculating towards future consequences, and to critically assess politicians involved in the conflict (Chapter 2). Hence, journalists are not solely disseminators of existing conflicts between political actors, but actively shape when and how conflict appears in the news. The concept of journalistic interventionism refers to the extent to which journalists report about the news in their own words scenarios and assessments (Strömbäck & Esser, 2009). In other words, the journalistic voice is used relatively more when compared to political candidate’s statements (Blumler & Gurevich, 1995; Esser, 2008). Interventionist journalists pursue particular values, are involved, socially committed, assertive, and motivated, whereas noninterventionist journalists are detached, objective and neutral (Hanitzsch, 2007). Scholars often stress the importance of interventionism, and the watchdog role of journalists (e.g., Bennett, 2003; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007).

Research towards interventionism has highlighted its importance as a journalistic role conception (e.g., Mellado & van Dalen, 2014), but also as a content characteristic (e.g., Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011). Journalists are often referred to, and also self-identify as watchdogs of political and economic powers, thereby serving as a “fourth estate” (Hanusch, 2008; Lewis, Williams, & Franklin, 2008). This highlights the normatively desirability of journalistic intervention. Despite the prevalence in journalistic work and the suggested normative importance, effects of interventionism have hardly been studied (Salgado & Strömbäck, 2012). This is surprising, because earlier studies suggest that citizens take into account journalistic self-presentation when interpreting, understanding and perceiving the news (Nielsen, 2016). This pinpoints the relevance of studying how journalistic visibility exert influence on framing effects. For instance, visible journalistic source verification has been found to improve credibility of an information source (Kruikemeier & Lecheler, 2016). Furthermore, obtrusiveness of the tone of voice of the journalist can increase attention and arousal for a news story, but on the other hand decrease perceived informativeness (Grabe, Zhou, Lang, & Bolls, 2000). Research also suggests that advocacy journalism can potentially affect issue salience when compared to objectivist "detached" journalism (Aday, 2006). Taking together these findings, we can tentatively expect that conflict frames that feature an interventionist reporting style are mobilizing. An evaluation by a journalist confirms that there is indeed “something at stake” in a given political confrontation in the media. This journalistic intervention highlights that the
topic is not only relevant because the politicians clash over it, but also because a relevant third party (the journalist) confirms the importance. This leads to the following hypothesis:

**H2:** Exposure to interventionist conflict frames has a positive impact on political participation, when compared to exposure to noninterventionist conflict frames.

### 4.4 Conflict Framing Effects: The Mediating Power of Emotions

How news frames are processed is an important question within political communication research (e.g., Chong & Druckman, 2007a; Brewer, 2001; Zaller, 1992). After establishing the existence and relevance of ‘direct’ framing effects, research is now more and more beginning to focus on why particular framing effects occur and to trace psychological processes that can explain the influence of framing on citizens (e.g., Chong & Druckman, 2007a). Given the inconsistent findings in conflict framing effects, uncovering the underlying mechanism is particularly relevant. Also, there is a lack of studies that disentangle what exactly occurs in the mind of citizens when they are exposed to conflict frames, and how this in its turn affects behavioural intentions resulting from exposure to conflict frames.

Traditionally, cognitive processes are used to explain the underlying mechanisms of framing effects (e.g., Iyengar, 1991; Chong & Druckman, 2007a, Slothuus, 2008). However, more recent research increasingly incorporates the role of emotions in processing frames and also in the effects of news frames (e.g., Gross, 2008; Lecheler, Bos, & Vliegenthart, 2015; Nabi, 2003). Moreover, the clear-cut separation between cognitive and emotional processes is widely disregarded in current literature, and instead these two processes are seen as highly interwoven (e.g., Gross, 2008; Spezio & Adolphs, 2007). Indeed, affective processes are considered to play an important role in decision making after exposure to a news frame (Lecheler, Schuck, & De Vreese, 2013). When assessing the role of emotions in news framing effects in political communication research, affective intelligence theory (Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen, 2000) is one of the most commonly used theories. Affective intelligence theory starts from the proposition that a dual emotional system governs how we process (political and media) stimuli and form decisions. The dispositional system triggers emotions such as happiness or satisfaction, as a response to new information that does not challenge their predispositions. The second, the surveillance system, triggers emotions such as anxiety or unease, because the individual is exposed to novel or threatening information (Brader, 2006). Encountering a frame in the news can be understood through this idea of the triggering one of
the emotional systems. Depending on which type of frame is encountered, specific emotions are invoked, and can lead to a response in the form of action or opinion change. The dispositional system is particularly associated with feelings of enthusiasm, where the surveillance system can lead to anxiety or anger (Redlawsk, Civettini, & Lau, 2007).

In turn, these emotions are known to function as important mediators of framing effects (Holm, 2012). Studies that take into account the role of emotions in processing political news show that, when incorporated into content of news frames, emotions can affect political opinions (e.g., Kühne & Schemer, 2015), but also information accessibility, information seeking and policy preference (Nabi, 2003). Lechler, Schuck and De Vreese (2013) find that particularly enthusiasm and anger functioned as mediators of framing effects. Similarly, other research, focussed on the role of emotions in political behaviour and highlighted the role of emotions such as enthusiasm and anger and their positive impact on political participation (Valentino et al., 2011). Given the mediating role of emotions in opinion formation, as well as their impact on political participation in general, news framing notwithstanding, it is interesting to assess how emotions as mediators affect framing effects on actual behaviour.

It is worth noting that emotions should be of particular importance for conflict framing. Experimental research has already shown that exposure to conflict framed news message can elicit an emotional response, mainly when the subject is important to the recipient of the message (Gross & Brewer, 2007). Conflict framing dramatizes a news narrative and highlights the importance of an issue or problem that needs to be dealt with, a disagreement that needs resolving. These ingredients benefit to an emotional response of the citizen confronted with the political problem. Furthermore, conflict frames are often accompanied by metaphors of war, speculation on consequences, emotional language incorporated in the frame and dramatic use of wordplay to increase the compelling nature of the news message (Chapter 2). Hence, exposure to conflict frames is particularly more likely to lead to an emotional response, when compared to other less contentious frames, such as for instance human interest framing.

Despite of this relevance of conflict framing in eliciting an emotional response, as well as the relevance of particular emotions in engaging and mobilizing citizens, the mediating role of emotions in conflict framing effects has not been taken into account before. Therefore, in this study, we focus on a set of specific positive and negative emotions as mediators. Hope and enthusiasm will be taken into account as positive emotions, while anger and fear will be taken into account as negative emotions.
4.4.1 Conflict Framing and Negative Emotions

We focus specifically on two distinct types of negative emotions: fear and anger. Both fear and anger are negative emotional responses that are connected with distinguishable motivational goals and action tendencies (Nabi, 2003). Fear is often associated with risk-avoiding behaviour, while anger is associated with risk-seeking behaviour (Lerner and Keltner, 2001; Valentino et al., 2011). As noted in the section before, conflict frames are known to lead to negative emotions (Gross & Brewer, 2007). Indeed, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) argue that being confronted with political conflict in the news may lead citizens to become frustrated. This frustration is guided by the idea that the political disagreement is in the way of their preferred policy solution, and can in its turn can lead to negative emotions such as anger and fear that expected or wanted goals are not met. Similarly, Valentino, Gregorowicz, and Groenendyk (2009) argue that when citizens are confronted with the prospect of an unwanted policy change and have enough confidence to being able to deal with it, they will produce anger.

The onset of these particular emotions may have differing consequences for subsequent behaviour. If individuals have a sense of control and believe that their actions can help in dealing with the problem they are likely to confront the problem (Lerner & Keltner, 2000). Anger as a result of conflict framing can make thoughts relating the issue more salient, which makes individuals likely to think that something can change as a result of the political process, leading to action in the form of political participation. In contrast, we expect fear not to display a mediating role in conflict framing effects on political participation. While fear is known to facilitate persuasion and attitude change, it is not likely to affect political participation (Brader, 2005). In contrast to anger, fear as a result from conflict frame might lead to aversion instead of action tendencies, and as a result in a decrease in political behaviours. Therefore, while conflict framing effects on political participation are likely mediated by anger, we do not expect a similar effect of fear. Hence, we expect these two similarly valenced emotions to behave differently in how they mediate conflict framing effects on political participation.

4.4.2 Conflict Framing and Positive Emotions

Asides from negative emotions this study also takes positive emotions into account. We focus specifically on two distinct types of positive emotions, hope and enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is a reaction to stimuli with positive implications. It is generally associated with the reinforcement of commitment to goals and strengthens the motivation to stay involved (Brader, 2005). Furthermore, enthusiasm is a
known mediator of framing effects (Lecheler et al., 2013). Hope is a similar optimistic emotion, based on the expectation of positive outcomes. The influence of conflict framing on positive emotions has not been studied before. This is unsurprising, since negative emotions are more intuitively linkable to political conflict. However, exposure to a conflict frame could also be a positive experience for an individual and lead to positive appraisal of the event. When a person learns from a political news message that there is a problem that needs to be solved and opposing political standpoints are being forwarded it signals that the politicians are working on a solution of the problem. Especially so when politicians are fighting for the idea that the recipient of the message identifies with. Research shows that enthusiasm and hope affect political participation, and can be mobilizing (e.g., Brader, 2005; Valentino et al., 2011). These effects are linked to the idea that positive emotions can broaden ones action repertoire and encourage a varied, experimental action repertoire (Fredrickson, 2004). In contrast, negative emotions encourage a more immediate fight or flight reaction.

4.4.3 Do Emotions Mediate the Effects of Substantiveness in Conflict Framing?

Level of substantiveness in conflict frames likely affects negative emotions. Following the findings of Gross and Brewer (2005), we particularly expect nonsubstantive conflict frames to elicit more negative emotions when compared to substantive conflict frames. Personal attacks, and ad hominem attacks are especially suitable to spark feelings of anger, especially when aimed at a politician that is not preferred by the recipient and that stands in the way of a solution of the conflict in the eyes of that recipient. Because of the aforementioned mobilizing effects of anger, we expect that when substantive conflict frames affect anger, anger in its turn facilitates and fosters political participation. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H3: Exposure to nonsubstantive (vs. substantive) conflict frames causes anger, which in turn functions as mediator for the effect on political participation

When substantive and noninterventionist conflict frames signal that problems are being addressed by politicians, this may lead citizens to become enthusiastic and hopeful, increasing their willingness to participate in the political process (Valentino et al., 2011). Hence, we argue that being presented with opposing viewpoints focusing on substantive viewpoints is likely to lead to an increase positive emotions, because
a policy problem is being addressed and this could lead to enthusiasm and hope in citizens. Given the potentially mobilizing capabilities of enthusiasm and hope, we expect that interventionist conflict frames affect enthusiasm and hope, and both these emotions in turn facilitate and foster political participation.

H4: Exposure to substantive (vs. nonsubstantive) conflict frames causes hope and enthusiasm, which in turn function as mediators for the effect on political participation.

4.4.4 Do Emotions Mediate the Effects of Interventionism in Conflict Framing?

There is hardly any existing research linking interventionism to emotions. Journalists that intervene when reporting about political conflict emphasize the importance and possible consequences of the conflict, and critically assess the politicians involved (Chapter 2). They hereby function as watchdogs that may lead voters to experience anger about the performance of these politicians, which in its turn leads to mobilization. Nonetheless, due to the lack of research linking journalistic intervention and emotions, we formulate an open research question.

RQ1: Will exposure to interventionist (vs. noninterventionist) conflict frames cause anger or fear, which then function as mediators for the effect on political participation?

We also look at the role of the positive emotions of hope and enthusiasm in mediating effects of substantiveness. Research linking interventionism and positive emotions is (to our best knowledge) non-existent. It may be likely that an active, watchdog journalist can signal that the politicians involved in the conflict are being monitored, reassuring citizens on the solvability of a conflict and accountability of politicians. In that way, a critical and visible journalistic voice will positively affect hope and enthusiasm. However, due to the lack of theoretical backing we will also formulate an open research question here.

RQ2: Will exposure to interventionist (vs. noninterventionist) conflict frames cause enthusiasm and hope, and will all these emotions then function as mediators for the effect on political participation?

For an overview of the theoretical models we test for both interventionism and substantiveness, see Figure 4.1.
Chapter 4

Figure 4.1 Theoretical Mediation Models

Substantiveness

H1

Anger

Fear

H2

Political Participation

Enthusiasm

Hope

RQ1

RQ2

Interventionism

H3

H4

+/-

+/+

+/

? +/-

? H3/H4

+/-

+/

+/

RQ1
4.5 Method

4.5.1 Design

To answer the hypotheses, an online survey experiment was conducted using a varied sample of Dutch citizens (N= 707). The company Survey Sampling International (SSI) collected the data. To ensure the variety of the sample, quotas were used to ensure the sample resembled the statistics of demographic characteristics in the Netherlands on age, gender and education. The experiment used a 2x2 between subjects factorial design where participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. Manipulations included the level of substance of a news article including a conflict frame (substantive conflict frame versus nonsubstantive conflict frame) and level of interventionism (detached journalistic style versus interpretative critical journalistic style). Two control groups, one with a neutral article with no conflict frame, and one including no article at all, were also added. We conducted a between subjects randomization check on age.

4.5.2. Procedure

Participants were first asked an attention question to filter out non-serious participants before the experiment starts. Then they were asked to answer a few questions on demographics. Subsequently they were exposed to an article in one of the six conditions. Because running an online experiment comes with certain challenges regarding the attention given to the stimuli, participants were forced to watch the articles for at least 30 seconds. Furthermore, an attention check was implemented to make sure that participants read the news article. After reading the article, we measured emotions. This was followed by the items measuring the main dependent variable, political participation.

4.5.3. Stimulus material

The stimulus material consisted of one news article. The topic of the news article was a debate in the parliament concerning soft drugs policy. A news article on this topic was specifically created for the purpose of this study (See appendix B). An effort was made to give the article the structure, layout and writing style of an average Dutch news article. The basic main structure and information of the article was kept as identical as possible. Manipulations of substantiveness were done in paragraphs where claims by political actors are being put forward. In the substantive conditions these arguments focused on proposed legislation and arguments in favour of the proposed legislation. In contrast, in the nonsubstantive
version, the arguments focussed on the style and competence of the opponent and included personal attacks aimed at rival politicians or political parties (Aalberg, Strömbäck, & De Vreese, 2011)

We manipulated interventionism by including interpretative and interventionist characteristics in the news articles (Chapter 3; Salgado & Strömbäck, 2012). In the interventionist condition paragraphs were included with interpretative sentences where the journalist evaluates the politicians involved in the conflict and speculates about future consequences of the conflict. Hereby, the journalistic visibility was increased compared to the visibility of political actors and the prospective aspect of the interpretative style was also emphasized.

4.5.4. Measures

In the literature, there is a lot of disagreement on how to define political participation and which elements of political participation are relevant for studying this concept (Ohme, De Vreese, & Albæk, In Press). More fleeting, case oriented and digital forms of participation have emerged (Dahlgren, 2014). While some researchers implement these forms and consider them to be a vital part of participation, others refuse to see these forms as political participation and omit them. This has led to a lack of a coherent and comparable method in which political participation is operationalized in research. Van Deth (2014) provides a framework which can function as a conceptual map and takes into account different forms of political communication. In his framework, he distinguishes between four different types of political participation. The first type of participation in this framework consists of participation taking place in the political sphere, such as voting for elections or in a referendum. The second is aimed at behaviours aimed at politics such as participating in demonstrations and such. The third focuses on civic participation. Finally, the fourth focuses on political expression and considers an activity to be participatory when it is aimed to express political aims and intentions. Considering these different forms of participation is important because previous research mainly focussed on the effects of conflict framing in general, not taking into account how conflict framing affects different types of political participation. Hence, the main dependent variable focuses on self-reported measures of political participation using the validated scales proposed by Van Deth (2014). These include two items for political participation, which entail actual participation in the political process (e.g., voting) (α = .72) (M= 5.45; SD = 1.71). Four items measure behaviours aimed at politicians or the government (e.g., demonstrating) (α = .74) (M= 2.59 ; SD = 1.30). Three items measure civic engagement (e.g., volunteering in your area) (α = .64) (M= 2.97 ; SD = 1.35).
Two items measure political expression (e.g., Expressing political opinions online) ($\alpha = .71$) ($M = 2.30$; $SD = 1.48$). Emotions were measured using explicit emotion survey items. Emotions that were measured are anger ($M = 3.92$; $SD = 2.26$), fear ($2.86$; $SD = 1.98$), enthusiasm ($3.24$; $SD = 2.01$), and hope ($M = 3.46$; $SD = 2.03$). These emotions were tapped by using a 7-point scale variable (1 = not at all to 7 = very much), which measured the extent to which the participant felt emotions when reading the news article. For a complete list of items, see Appendix C.

**4.4.5. Manipulation check**

**Substantiveness**

Three items were used to investigate whether the manipulation of substantiveness was successful. First, participants were asked to indicate to what extent the article consisted of mainly substantive arguments from politicians. The results indicate that participants in the substantive conditions deemed the article to consist of more substantive arguments ($M = 4.63$; $SD = 1.26$) than participants in the non-substantive conditions ($M = 3.76$; $SD = 1.57$) ($t(455) = -6.60, p < .0001$) (control group: $M = 3.84$; $SD = 1.63$). Participants were also asked to indicate to what extent the article featured arguments for or against policy issues, proposed legislation or laws. In the substantive condition, participants were more likely to indicate that policy issues, legislation and laws were visible ($M = 4.78$; $SD = 1.29$) when compared to the nonsubstantive conditions ($M = 3.98$; $SD = 1.61$) ($t(455) = -6.06, p < .001$) (control group: $M = 3.60$; $SD = 1.65$). For the final indicator of substantiveness, participants were asked to what extent the article consisted of personal attacks from or towards politicians. This manipulation check was also successful, as expected, the participants in the nonsubstantive conditions perceived the articles to consist of personal attacks more ($M = 4.07$; $SD = 1.62$) when compared to participants in the nonsubstantive conditions ($M = 3.06$; $SD = 1.46$) ($t(466) = 7.11, p < .001$) (control group: $M = 2.77$ $SD = 1.42$). In conclusion, all three items used for the manipulation check for substantiveness were successful.

**Interventionism**

Three items were also used to investigate whether the manipulation of interventionism was successful. In the first item, the participant indicates to what extent the journalist that wrote the article is critical towards politicians. Results indicate that the writer of the article was perceived as significantly more critical towards politicians in the interventionist conditions ($M = 4.69$; $SD = 1.33$) when compared to the noninterventionist ones ($M = 4.16$; $SD = 1.31$) ($t(466) = -4.38, p < .0001$). Participants were also asked
to indicate to what extent the opinion of the author was visible in the news article. Results indicate that in the interventionist condition, the opinion of the author was indeed regarded as more visible (M = 4.16; SD = 1.40) when compared to the noninterventionist conditions (M = 3.73; SD = 1.51) [t(466) = -3.17, p < .005]. For the final indicator of interventionism, participants were asked to what extent the article was neutral and objective. This manipulation check was also successful, as expected, the participants in the noninterventionist conditions perceived the articles to be more neutral and objective (M = 4.51; SD = 4.51) when compared to participants in the noninterventionist conditions (M = 4.13; SD = 1.47) [t(466) = 2.92, p < .005]. In conclusion, all three items used for the manipulation check were successful.

4.5. Results

4.5.1. Substance and Political Participation (H1)

The first hypothesis focused on the effects of substantiveness on different forms of political participation. For this purpose, multiple ANOVA’s were conducted. The results indicate there is no main effect of substance on political behaviour, F(1, 466) = 2.127, p=.15, \( \eta^2 = .004 \). Furthermore, no effect was found of substance on behaviours targeting politics F(1, 466) = .12, p=.73, \( \eta^2 = .005 \). Substance also did not affect civic participation F(1, 466) = 1.742, p=.19, \( \eta^2 = .004 \). Finally, no main effect of substance on political expression F(1, 466) = .981, p=.31, \( \eta^2 = .007 \) was found. These results indicate that participants exposed to substantive conflict frame articles did not elicit greater intentions to engage in any of the measured forms of political participation when compared to participants exposed to nonsubstantive conflict frame news articles (see Table 4.1). Thus, Hypothesis H1 is not supported. It should also be noted that no differences between the control groups and the conflict conditions were found\(^1\).
Table 4.1 Substance and political behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Political behaviour</th>
<th>Behaviours targeting politics</th>
<th>Civic participation</th>
<th>Political expression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive conflict</td>
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<td>2.56</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonsubstantive Conflict</td>
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<td>1.70</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control article</td>
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<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control (no article)</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5.2. Interventionism and political participation

The second hypothesis focused on the effects of interventionism on different forms of political participation. No main effect of interventionism on political behaviour was found, $F(1, 466) = .01, p=.94, \eta^2 = .00$. Moreover, interventionism did not affect behaviours targeting politics $F(1, 466) = .82, p=.37, \eta^2 = .003$. Furthermore, interventionism did not affect civic participation $F(1, 466) = 1.452, p=.23, \eta^2 = .003$. Finally, no main effect of interventionism on political expression $F(1, 466) = 1.60, p=.20, \eta^2 = .002$ was revealed. These results indicate that participants exposed to interventionist conflict frames did not elicit greater intentions to engage in any of the measured forms of political participation when compared to participants exposed to noninterventionist conflict frame news articles (see Table 4.2.). Thus, H2 is not supported.
Table 4.2. Interventionism, Political Participation and Cynicism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Political behaviour</th>
<th>Behaviours targeting politics</th>
<th>Civic participation</th>
<th>Political expression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interventionist condition</td>
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<td>1.74</td>
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<td>1.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noninterventionist condition</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control article</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control (no article)</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5.3. Mediation Analysis

Earlier applications of mediation analysis were predominantly based on the causal-steps approach (Baron & Kenny, 1986). This approach has the prerequisite of a significant main effect of the independent on the dependent variable, which in the case of this study would mean a mediation analysis would not be viable. However, recent research has emphasized the shortcomings of this approach (Hayes, 2013). This criticism focuses on a lack of power, as well as the method being prone to Type II errors (e.g., MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002; MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004). New accounts of mediations analysis discount the necessity of direct main effects and argue that the absence of an effect does not necessarily mean that an indirect effect is absent. For instance, two indirect paths that work in opposite directions can carry an effect from the independent variable to a dependent variable (MacKinnon, Krull, & Lockwood, 2000). Hence, for the mediation analysis in this study, we used Preacher and Hayes' method involving bootstrapping PROCESS-macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2013). This method invol-
ves bootstrapping, which is often seen as the recommended way of assessing indirect effects (Williams & MacKinnon, 2008). Specifically, we examine indirect effect of emotions on political participation by using 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals based on 10,000 bootstrap sample, using model 4.

4.5.4. Nonsubstantiveness, Emotions and Political Participation

To answer hypothesis H3 and H4, we assess how the negative emotions of fear and anger mediate the effects of substance on political participation. For this purpose, we conducted several multiple mediation models, comparing the substance with the nonsubstantive condition (1 = substance). Two negative emotions were included as mediators (Anger and fear), as well as two positive emotions (Enthusiasm and Hope). We opted for an approach with multiple mediators, rather than using separate single mediation models, following the various advantages of this approach (see Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

When looking at the indirect effects on political behaviour, we see a significant indirect negative effect of substance on political behaviour via anger (b = -.07, SE = .04) (95% bca CI: -.173; -.011). Substance depressed anger (b = -.40, SE = .20, p < .05), and an increase in anger contributed to higher levels of political behaviour (b = .18, SE = .04, p < .001) (See figure 4.2 for the full mediation model).
Indirect effects of emotions on substantive conflict framing effects. Unstandardized beta coefficients are shown, † p < .10, *p < .05,**p < .01, ***p < .001.

Regarding behaviours targeting politics, a significant indirect effect of substance via anger was also found (b= -.07, SE = .04) (95 % bca CI: -.173; -.011). Substance again had a negative effect on anger, which in its turn contributed to higher levels of behaviours targeting politics (b= .18, SE = .04, p < .001). Furthermore, an indirect effect of enthusiasm was also found here (b= .03, SE = .03) (95 % bca CI: .001; .112). Substance in conflict framing slightly increased enthusiasm (b = .33, SE=.18, p = .06), which in its turn led to more intentions for behaviours targeting politics (b = .12, SE=.12, p < .05), (See figure 4.3 for the full mediation model).
As for civic participation, we found a significant indirect effect of substance on political behavior via anger (b= -.03, SE = .02) (95 % bca CI: -.092; -.002). Substance had a negative effect on anger, which in its turn contributed to higher levels of civic participation (b= .07, SE = .03, p < .05) (See figure 4.4 for the full mediation model).
Indirect effects of emotions on substantive conflict framing effects. Unstandardized beta coefficients are shown, † p < .10, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Regarding political expression, a significant indirect effect of substance via anger was found (b = -.04, SE = .02) (95% bca CI: -.108; -.005). Substance had a negative effect on anger, which in its turn contributed to higher levels of behaviours targeting politics (b = .10, SE = .04, p < .001). Furthermore, an indirect effect of enthusiasm was found here (b = .03, SE = .03) (95% bca CI: .001; .112). Substance in conflict framing increased enthusiasm which in its turn led to more intentions for political expression (b = .14, SE = .05, p < .01). (See figure 4.5 for the full mediation model).
Indirect effects of emotions on substantive conflict framing effects. Unstandardized beta coefficients are shown, † p < .10, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

These results indicated that hypothesis H3 can be accepted. While no direct effect was found, results do yield a significant indirect negative effect of substance on political participation through anger. By increasing levels of anger, exposure to nonsubstantive conflict frames spark political participation. Hypothesis H4 can be partly accepted, indirect effects of substance on some forms of participation was found, increasing behaviours targeting politics and political expression via enthusiasm (See Table 4.3 for an overview of the means of emotions in the different conditions).
Table 4.3. Substantiveness and Emotions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Anger Mean</th>
<th>Anger SD</th>
<th>Fear Mean</th>
<th>Fear SD</th>
<th>Enthusiasm Mean</th>
<th>Enthusiasm SD</th>
<th>Hope Mean</th>
<th>Hope SD</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
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<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.93</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2.90</td>
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<td>1.89</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1.91</td>
<td>4.46</td>
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<td>1.98</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>2.03</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4.5.5 Interventionism

To answer the research questions RQ1 and RQ2 we investigate whether an indirect effect of interventionism on political participation via emotions. Results of the mediation models with interventionism as an independent variable indicate no indirect effects on political behaviour and civic participation via emotions. However, a significant indirect effect of interventionism via enthusiasm was found on behaviours targeting politics ($b = -.05, SE = .03$) (95% bca CI: -.127; -.010). Interventionism had a negative effect on enthusiasm ($b = -.45, SE = .18, p < .05$), which in its turn contributed to higher levels of behaviours targeting politics ($b = .11, SE = .05, p < .05$) (See figure 4.6).
Figure 4.6: Mediation Model Interventionism and Behaviours Targeting Politics

Indirect effects of emotions on substantive conflict framing effects. Unstandardized beta coefficients are shown, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed an indirect effect of interventionism on political expression ($b = -.06$, $SE = .03$) (95% bca CI: -.15; -.012). Interventionism had a negative effect on enthusiasm, which in its turn contributed to higher levels of political expression ($b = .13$, $SE = .13$, $p < .01$) (See Figure 4.7)
To conclude, the results for interventionism indicate that regarding RQ1 and RQ2 the following conclusion can be made: Interventionism did not increase participation via anger and positive emotions. In contrast, interventionism led to a decrease in enthusiasm and thereby depressed participation in the form of political expression and behaviours targeting politics. (See Table 4.4 for an overview of the means of emotions in the different conditions).

Indirect effects of emotions on substantive conflict framing effects. Unstandardized beta coefficients are shown, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.
Table 4.5 Interventionism and Emotions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Anger</th>
<th>Fear</th>
<th>Enthusiasm</th>
<th>Hope</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
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<td>2.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6 Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that conflict framing effects on political participation are mediated by emotions. Different types of conflict frames were found to affect political participation via the emotional response experienced by citizens. When examining the distinction between substantive and nonsubstantive conflict frames, the findings indicate that nonsubstantive conflict framing in affected political participation via anger. In contrast, substantive conflict frames positively affected certain types of participation via enthusiasm. Regarding the effects of interventionism, we found that interventionist reporting reduced certain types of political participation by reducing enthusiasm.

These findings indicate that the effectiveness of conflict frames to involve citizens in the political process is contingent on both the characteristics of the conflict frame, but also on the emotional reaction that is evoked by exposure to the conflict frame. Furthermore, different types of political participation were found to be affected differently, where anger affected political participation across the board, hope and enthusiasm were found to affect only certain types of political participation such as political expres-
sion and behaviours aimed at politics. Contrary to the expectations, no main effects of interventionism and substantiveness on political participation were found. In the case of substantiveness, these findings contradict the findings from a similar experiment conducted by Min (2004). She concluded that exposure to policy-irrelevant political attacks in news messages depressed the likelihood to vote. We can only speculate towards an explanation of the lack of a similar result in the current study. One important difference is that Min’s experiment entails journalistic report of an election campaign conflict not focussed on a specific topic, where the stimuli in this study focus on a conflict revolving around one specific topic; soft drug policy in a non-election setting. This difference implies that in Min’s nonsubstantive condition, no mention of policy was present at all, while in our nonsubstantive, the issue that sparked the conflict was mentioned, before turning to a focus on personal attacks in the conflict. Furthermore, Min’s experiment was conducted in a US context, where personal attacks may be more prevalent, and where citizens are potentially more used to exposure to this type of conflict framing.

The findings regarding interventionism prove an interesting starting point for future research. While journalism scholars often highlight the societal importance of interventionism and watchdog journalism (e.g., Lewis, Williams, & Franklin, 2008; Salgado & Strömbäck, 2011) the current results indicate that interventionism does not have beneficial consequences for political participation and even point to a negative indirect effect by tampering enthusiasm. These findings of course do not mean that the watchdog journalist should put up a muzzle. Nonetheless, the visible performance of the critical, interventionist role of the journalist may have to be reconsidered. Perhaps a more detached role, controlling politicians by presenting alternative facts or opposing viewpoints serves democracy better. However, this study proves only a starting point in assessing the effects of interventionism on relevant behavioural and attitudinal processing. Future studies should disentangle whether the negative effect of interventionism on enthusiasm can be replicated in other contexts and manifestations of journalistic intervention. It remains an open question whether journalistic involvement in conflict is less consequential for outcomes on citizens than for example content characteristics or framing by political actors.

Several shortcomings to this study should be noted. First, this study taps into short-term effects only. As a result, no conclusions about the longevity of the effects can be made based on these findings. Previous work shows that framing effects do persist over time, even up to weeks after exposure (Lecheler & De Vreese, 2011). Nonetheless, we do not know how long lasting the effects are in the specific case of
Conflict Framing and Emotions

close connection between conflict framing effects and emotions, particularly anger, and to a lesser extent enthusiasm.

Another shortcoming that should be noted is that emotions as mediators were not manipulated in the current study. This approach makes it harder to draw causal inferences (Imai, Keele, Tingley, & Yamamoto, 2011). Strictly statistical estimation of mediation effects is sometimes criticized as a means of testing causal mechanisms (Imai & Keele, 2010). New alternative ways to assess causal mechanisms using mediation models are under development at the moment (Bullock, Green, & Ha, 2010). Nonetheless, due to the strong theoretical backing in the literature that established the mobilizing role of both anger and enthusiasm (e.g., Valentino et al., 2011; Brader, 2005), we are confident that our theoretical basis for conducting such an analysis is well founded. Nonetheless, we should be careful with overly generalizing the causality of our findings. Future studies must be done to replicate these findings. Preferably these studies would incorporate both alternative mediators and designs that embed emotions in experimental manipulations.

A third shortcoming alludes to the measurements of the dependent variable, which focuses on behavioural intentions, and does not directly measure actual behaviour. Despite the prevalence of using self-reported behavioural intentions is research towards framing effects. Future studies would benefit from an approach incorporating the measurement of actual behaviour. Furthermore, future studies are needed to see if similar results can be found when conflict frames revolve around different issues. This could shed light on how the effects of different types of conflict frames and the underlying psychological mechanisms play out on issues that are for instance more highly contested and more polarized in their nature. Soft drugs is an issue with differing views, but perhaps less emotional involvement in citizens when compared to more controversial an threatening topics such as the refugee crisis.

All in all, this study contributes to literature by giving valuable insights to the underlying mechanisms of conflict framing. The findings challenge existing knowledge on the effects of substantive conflict news and political participation. Contrary to expectations, no such effect was found. Furthermore, this is the first study that looks at the effects of interventionism on political participation. Though no direct effect was found, this provides a starting point for future research that can further disentangle the role of interventionism and its importance (or lack of importance) for relevant outcomes on citizens. However, the main contribution of the paper lies in the finding that conflict framing effects are mediated by emotions, which highlights the close connection between conflict framing effects and emotions, particularly anger, and to a lesser extent enthusiasm.
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Chapter 4


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CHAPTER 5

General conclusions and implications
This dissertation sheds light on the whole conflict framing process. The empirical findings in this dissertation give insights on the production-side of conflict frames, the presence of different types of conflict frames in political news, and the effects of different types of conflict frames. In this concluding chapter, I will first summarize the main research findings. Subsequently I will address the main conclusions and implications of this dissertation. After this we will discuss practical implications. Finally, I will address limitations of this dissertation, along with suggestions for future research.

5.1. Summary of the Research Findings

The three studies presented in this dissertation provide a multi-methodological and comprehensive overview of the role of journalistic interventionism and substantiveness within the full conflict news framing process. The first stage of this process, conflict frame building, was the focus of Chapter 2. In this chapter, I show to which extent journalists take an interventionist stance in the conflict frame building process. This was done using a qualitative research approach. I conducted expert interviews (N = 16) among Dutch political journalists. Overall, the results of this study show that journalists take an active stance in conflict frame building. By using the well-known hierarchy of influences model proposed by Shoemaker and Reese (1996; 2014), this chapter addresses which factors within that model influence the degree of this journalistic intervention in conflict frame building. The focus is specifically on the individual level, the routines level, and the external level of the model.

The findings in this chapter indicate that journalists contribute greatly to the emergence of conflict frames through subtle methods of journalistic news production, such as the use of exaggerating language, and the orchestrating and amplifying of possible consequences of political conflict. Nonetheless, journalistic intervention in conflict framing is not merely a result of individual agency of journalists. Rather, some individual role conceptions were even found to counter an interventionist stance. Going beyond the individual level, the findings suggest that media routines, embedded in organizational practices, facilitate an active journalistic role in conflict framing. Furthermore, the findings suggest that journalists are mainly active when politicians or parties with political power are involved in a conflict. Finally, the perceived role of the audience is an important driver of interventionism in the conflict frame building process.

Chapter 3, the second study, focused on the second stage in the conflict framing process, namely frame presence in the news. The main aim of this study was to unravel the dimensionality of conflict frames and to thus create a more comprehensive and operational definition of the conflict frame.
I conducted a content analysis (N= 1536) on online and offline political news. Using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis (SEM), I identified different dimensions of conflict news: (1) level of substantiveness and (2) interventionism. Three further sub-dimensions reflected non-substantive news coverage: strategic coverage, personal attacks, and incivility. Interventionism was reflected by journalistic visibility in conflict frames and journalistic criticism or evaluations aimed at politicians. Based on this definition, I identified several contextual factors that explain the presence of different types of conflict frames. The findings indicate that, during an election campaign rather than a routine news period, news articles with conflict frames are less substantive, more strategy-focused, and consist of more personal attacks and incivility. Second, levels of interventionist conflict framing, but also substance, were less salient in tabloid news, compared to quality newspapers. Finally, conflict framing online included lower levels of interventionism, substance and strategy when compared to print articles. However, the level of personal attacks was higher.

In Chapter 4, I focus on the third stage of the framing process: the frame setting stage. In this study, I conducted a survey experiment (n = 707) to assess the effects of different types of conflict frames on political participation. The experiment used a 2x2 between subjects factorial design. Specifically, the level of substance (substantive conflict frame versus nonsubstantive conflict frame) and intervention (detached journalistic style versus interpretative critical journalistic style) of a conflict framed news article was manipulated. Results indicate that different types of conflict frames did not result in direct effects on political participation. Nonetheless, the study does show the underlying process behind conflict framing effects by showing how effects are contingent on positive and negative emotions. Non-substantive conflict framing exerted an indirect effect on political participation via anger. In contrast an indirect positive effect of substantive effect of substantive conflict framing on some forms of political participation was found via enthusiasm. Surprisingly, interventionist reporting reduced political participation via enthusiasm. Hence, both positive and negative emotions serve as mediators of conflict framing effects on political participation.

5.2 Main Conclusions and Implications

5.2.1 Towards a Comprehensive Definition of Conflict Frames

The first contribution of this dissertation is that it provides a step towards a more comprehensive and widely applicable understanding of conflict framing. In chapter 3, I suggest a typology of conflict
frames that distinguishes between different types of frames. The typology is based on my study of frame building in Chapter 2, as well as the available literature. This typology incorporates different elements of separate branches of literature that all fall under the umbrella of conflict framing. A generic definition of conflict framing is used to establish an overarching method of identification for conflict frames in general, whereupon different dimensions within this overall framework are used to distil ways of discriminating between types of conflict frames. These findings are particularly relevant because framing in general has long been associated with unclear definitions and operationalizations (Scheufele & Tewskbury, 2007). The field of framing is often said to be suffering of incoherent applications and fuzzy conceptualizations (Matthes, 2009). The findings from this dissertation may contribute to resolve some of this fuzziness for the particular case of conflict framing. Previous studies describe conflict as by definition strategic or non-substantive (e.g., Gross & Brewer, 2007), characterize political conflict by uncivil political discourse as opposed to civil and courteous political deliberation (Forgette & Morris, 2006; Mutz & Reeves, 2005), or make the distinction between attacks on style and integrity or personal attacks and attacks based on issues (e.g., Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Hänggli & Kriesi, 2010). This dissertation includes the first work combining these elements. Furthermore, we adhere to earlier claims in literature that conflicts can also be substantive (e.g. Lawrence, 2000; Min, 2004).

This has important implications for further theorizing and empirical research towards conflict framing. In future research, the basis of identifying conflict frames can be a generic definition that does not entail specifications regarding substantiveness, war, game and strategy metaphors, incivility or level of journalistic intervention. The subdimensions that come forward in this dissertation can then be used to distinguish between types of conflict framing within political news that adhere to this more general definition. These subdimensions can then be used for cross-country comparisons and cumulative research based on consistent conceptualizations. An example of an application of research on these subdimensions is given in chapter 4, where the effects of interventionism and substantiveness on political participation are assessed. The differential effects I find in Chapter 4 prove a starting point for further research towards different types of conflict frames and how the appearance of these different subcategories of conflict varies over time, context and topics.

5.2.2 The Central Role of Journalistic Intervention

The findings presented in this dissertation shed light on the importance of studying and under-
standing the extent of journalistic intervention in conflict framing in particular, and the news frame building process in general. In chapter 2, I show that journalists play a central role in conflict frame building. The insights of this study highlight that journalists do not merely function as disseminators of conflict frames, but actively shape the nature of conflict in the news. They even sometimes consciously create conflict frames. This adds to the existing interventionism literature by highlighting that interventionism is not only relevant as a role conception (Hanitzsch, 2007), or as a content characteristic (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011), but is also embedded in journalistic work and routines in the frame building process.

In chapter 3, I build on these findings by developing a typology including a measurement instrument to gauge interventionism in media content. Findings show that conflict frames can be distinguished by an interventionist style, with more journalistic interpretation and evaluations of politicians involved in the conflict, and a detached and more neutral style. The level of interventionism was found to differ between characteristics of media outlets, such as online and offline news and quality and populist newspapers. After establishing to what extent journalists intervene in the conflict frame building process and to what extent this translates into actual news content, chapter 4 investigated the consequences of exposure to interventionist conflict frames for the political participation of citizens. The findings of chapter 4 indicate that the effects of interventionism in conflict framing not straightforward and perhaps even relatively limited.

The findings regarding interventionism also contribute to framing theory by shedding light on the general frame building process. Frame building is an aspect of framing that is generally understudied (Hänggli, 2012). My findings indicate that frame building is about more than just perceiving certain aspects of reality, but also about shaping that reality. The findings in this dissertation show the workings of journalism in the particular case of conflict framing, and hereby also how this matters for actual news content. The findings implicate that while journalists intervene and take an active stance, journalism is not solely characterized by relentless interventionism aimed at framing news in terms of conflict. Specifically, the level of individual journalistic intervention is being curtailed by journalistic norms and values, such as the need for accuracy, which prevented journalists from intervening (Chapter 2). The journalistic norm of objectivity also directly contributes to the emergence of conflict frames in political news (Skovsgaard, Albæk, Bro, & De Vreese, 2012; Tuchman, 1978). The studies in this dissertation show that where journalistic values on the one hand contribute to adaptation of a conflict frame, other values prevent journalists from going overboard. This sometimes contradictory characteristics of news values has been highlighted
by scholars before (Deuze, 2005), and my findings give further insights in these frame building dynamics, which are generally understudied in framing research.

5.2.3. Creating a link between frame production, content, and effects

By incorporating and linking different stages of the conflict frame building process, the dissertation provides an extensive overview of how conflict framing works. The different studies conducted inform each other, and thus form a multi-methodological view of framing. This is interesting from a theoretical, but also a methodological point of view. I used the results from Chapter 2 regarding the conflict frame building process and interventionism to make my codebook and thus typology in Chapter 3. Furthermore, the insights from this content analysis in Chapter 3 elicited are directly used in Chapter 4 to formulate the independent variable in the experiment.

The work conducted for this dissertation provides new insights in an increasingly fragmented field of qualitative versus quantitative political communication research. The literature on news and political framing is characterised by distinct groups of studies. Studies looking at the journalistic production stage are mainly focussed on news values, journalistic roles, norm conceptions, and the social forces that influence news framing (e.g., Donsbach, 2004; Gans, 1979; Gamson & Modigliani, 1987). Frame building studies typically use methods such as expert interviews or observation. Another group of studies focus on actual coverage of news frames (e.g., Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). These studies typically use content analysis as a method of studying frames. Yet another group focuses on effects of framing (e.g., Iyengar, 1991; De Vreese, 2004; Slothuus, 2008), using panel studies and increasingly employing experimentation. The generally conceptual and methodological separation of these branches of literature implies the need to link different stages of the framing process, to investigate every aspect that is relevant to how frames come about, the nature of their presence in the media and the effects they exert (or do not) on citizens. Such an approach is often neglected in communication science, and framing theory is often criticized for the lack of coherence and inconsistent definitions (Entman, 1993). Theory development in framing can benefit from an all-inclusive approach and a generalizable application of conflict framing that holds across different steps in the framing process (e.g., De Vreese, 2005; Matthes, 2009). Furthermore, the insights from separate stages can be used to base research designs aimed at a particular stage in the framing process on insights derived from studies towards another stage, which could improve the validity and comparability of the findings. There are some examples of
recent studies that do undertake this challenge, for instance by investigating the extent to which jour-
nalistic role conceptions translate into news content (Mellado & Van Dalen, 2014; Van Dalen, De Vreese & Albæk, 2012). In sum, no content analysis can do without a proper view of journalistic action, and no framing experiment should be conducted without systematic knowledge of how realistic stimuli, based on real news coverage and frames, can be designed. This dissertation contributes by providing similar linkage between the different stages of the framing process.

5.2.4 Uncovering the underlying mechanisms of framing effects

In chapter 4, I find that the effects of different types of conflict frames in the news are contin-
gent on enthusiasm and anger. While it is known that framing effects exist and are relevant, the underly-
ing psychological mechanisms that can explain why such effects occur are often neglected (Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson, 1999; D’Angelo, 2002). Unsurprisingly, a growing line of research focuses on such underlying mechanisms (Lecheler, De Vreese, & Slothuus, 2009; Slothuus, 2008). This study contributes to this growing line of framing research that incorporates and examines particularly the emotional psychological mechanisms in framing effect studies (Holm, 2012; Kühne, Weber, & Sommer, 2015; Lecheler, Schuck & De Vreese, 2012). Previous literature has shown the link between conflict and negative emotions (Gross, Brewer, 2007). Furthermore, the effect of emotions such as enthusiasm and anger on political partici-
pation was also established (Valentino et al., 2011). This dissertation is the first to link and incorporate these findings in a full mediation analysis. Also, we add to the literature by showing that nonsubstantive emotions can lead to negative emotions such as anger, consistent with the findings of Gross and Brewer (2007). This implies that this mechanism of conflict framing which already was established in a US-con-
text, is also relevant in the Dutch setting. Furthermore, it was found that asides from affecting negative emotions such as anger, substantive conflict also led to positive emotions such as enthusiasm and hope. In the case of enthusiasm, this led to an indirect effect on participation. This highlights the importance of both positive and negative emotions in framing effects research and shows that the way in which conflict is manifested in media coverage affects the subsequent psychological process. Given the fact that in chapter four of this dissertation it was already shown that the manifestations of conflict can vary along different contextual factors, this is a very relevant finding. Conflict in political news has many faces, and which face citizens are exposed to matters for the emotional process that follows.
5.3 Societal implications

My findings give important insights for journalists who cover politics, in the Netherlands and abroad. My findings regarding interventionism suggest that conflict in the news is not only the result of political actors and their propensity to engage in conflict, but also of journalistic intervention. This journalistic role is expressed both behind the scenes, in frame building processes that are invisible to those that only see the end result—news content framed in terms of conflict. However, it is also displayed in the actual manifestation of news content, where journalists are visible either by adapting an interpretative style, speculating, or criticizing politicians. What remains is the question of the desirability of journalistic intervention. The findings in the experiment conducted in chapter 4 of this dissertation show that interventionism, at least in the context tested in this dissertation, generally had only indirect detrimental effects on participation via enthusiasm. This initially suggests that journalistic intervention, which is often seen as good and analytic journalism, could have negative effects on audiences.

The societal importance of interventionism and critical journalism is often emphasized (e.g., Lewis, Williams, & Franklin, 2008; Salgado & Strömbäck, 2011). Results in this study seem to suggest that interventionism that is clearly visible in journalistic work might not necessarily lead to desirable behavioural outcomes in citizens. However, my findings do not imply that watchdog journalism as such is a bad thing. As shown in chapter one, journalists can also intervene in a less visible way, by asking critical questions, uncovering hidden stories and exposing wrongdoings of the powerful. Also, journalists could present facts or alternative viewpoints from other political actors to expose politicians or inform the public.

These examples of interventionism can go along with a more detached and less interventionist writing style. These findings are interesting when paired with observation that journalistic involvement has become more explicit (Peters, 2011). This author further suggests that a more detached journalism can have consequences for emotional response as well, which resonates with our findings. The question is whether the presentation of journalistic intervention is necessary, and does not go at the expense of the information or substance, that can be similarly emotionally moving.

5.4 Limitations and suggestions for further research

Like in any type of scholarly work, several shortcomings should be noted. These range from general shortcomings that apply for the dissertation as a whole, to methodological shortcomings and particular shortcomings for individual chapters.
The first shortcoming I would like to address is the fact that the findings throughout the dissertation are based on a single country case, namely the Netherlands. Nonetheless, the mechanisms and findings in this dissertation are likely generalizable to other countries. Particularly countries that share the characteristics of the Dutch parliamentary and media system, such as for instance Denmark and Germany (Haling & Mancini, 2004). The Netherlands is an example of a democratic corporatist media system, with a multiparty political system and a strong history of public broadcasting (Van Aelst et al., 2008). The findings on frame building, media content characteristics and psychological mechanisms that underlie conflict framing effects presumably play out similarly in countries with relatively similar media systems. Nonetheless, replication of the findings is desirable, both in similar as in other contexts, with different media systems and other party systems. For instance, in a two-system party such as the United States, where polarization is more prevalent (Ceaser & Busch, 2005), the workings of conflict framing should play out differently. Hence, future research should focus on comparisons between different countries. The typology developed in this dissertation provides a conceptual starting point for such a cross-country comparison.

Another shortcoming is the use of interviews as a way to measure journalistic routines. This means that the findings show how journalists perceive their routines and practices. I used several strategies, such as the use of vignettes variation in the sample, to make sure that the findings are as reliable, specific and insightful as possible (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Nonetheless, the self reported nature of the findings should be taken into account, and future studies could use methods such as newsroom observation to further disentangle the frame building process and corroborate my findings on interventionism. Furthermore, combining studies towards role conceptions with methods such as content analysis could shed further light on the link between journalistic practices and actual media content. Another methodical shortcoming alludes to the experimental findings in chapter 4. Particularly, the short-term nature of the effects found should be emphasized. Effects were measured only directly after exposure. Even to previous research suggests that framing effects can be relatively long-lasting (Lecheler & De Vreese, 2011), it is unknown to what extent the effects in this particular case are persistent over time. To assess how long these effects last, replications of the study that involve multiple measurements of the dependent variable over time are needed. Another shortcoming in the experimental design is the fact that it was carried out in an online environment rather than in a more controlled setting such as the laboratory. The quality of data in online and more traditional lab settings is suggested to be relatively similar (e.g. Germine...
et al., 2012). Nonetheless, it is still possible that conducting this study in an online setting would have let to different results.

The third main shortcoming refers to the mediation analysis. My findings in chapter 4 indicated there was an indirect effect of different types of conflict frames on political participation, mediated by emotions. Hence a causal effect on the basis of two-step measurement where emotions and political participation are measured at the same time. This could arguably have implications for causality. It is common to conduct an analysis in such a way (e.g., Hoffman & Young, 201; Lecheler & De Vreese, 2012), but only acceptable if the theoretical foundation of such an approach is very strong. In the case of this study, the connection between emotional reactions on news content and political participation, which has been widely emphasized in earlier studies (e.g., Namkoong, Fung, & Schuеfele, 2012; Valentino et al., 2011). This provides a solid theoretical basis to back the use this approach. Nonetheless, future studies using a multi-step approach should be done for more definite conclusions on causality.

The experimental nature of the design of my effect study should also be noted. An experiment ensures the internal validity of an effect study and arguably serves as the best direct way to measure effects with as little confounding variables as possible. Nonetheless, sacrifices are made to the external validity and real-world applicability. A suggestion for future research would be to conduct panel studies to look at the aggregate effects of exposure to different types of conflict frames.

The final limitation that will be addressed here relates to a conceptual choice. I define typology and substantiveness as two separate subdimensions of conflict framing. One of the subdimensions of non-substantive conflict framing that is established in chapter 3 is 'strategy', which alludes to a focussing on strategical aspects of politics rather than substantive issues. Some authors argue that news content characterized by this type of reporting is driven mainly by journalistic actors, rather than political actors (Zaller, 2001) Along these lines, this type of reporting has been suggested as a characteristic of media interventionism (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011). Nonetheless, I chose to include strategic reporting in the substantiveness dimension, and not in the interventionism dimension. The main argument for this is that, while I do acknowledge that strategic framing is presumably predominantly used by journalistic actors, this is not necessarily the case. Political actors can also focus on strategic considerations, or accuse other politicians of having strategic interests.

My studies provide a good starting point for future studies, which can further disentangle the concept of conflict framing. My typology has focussed on two very important aspects of conflict fra-
Nonetheless, there may be more characteristics of conflict that may be of importance. For example, what if a conflict frame in the news focuses on a one-sided attack? Two sides of an issue can come forward in a news article that gives one point of view or political actor considerably more room to attack or discredit the political opponent, or to bring forward arguments for his or her side of the issue. Future research should assess to what extent this leads to different outcomes on citizens than fair and balanced conflict.

Furthermore, future research should focus on other actors that play a role in the conflict framing process: Politicians. Individual journalists cannot be held as solely responsible for the existence of conflict frames. The interplay between journalists and politicians is of great importance. Journalists and political actors have a paradoxical relationship, in that they simultaneously have different agenda’s, and are co-dependent (Lewis & Reese, 2009). Where this dissertation is particularly focussed on the journalistic side, future work should address the role of politicians in the conflict frame building research.

In sum, this dissertation makes an important contribution to the political communication and journalism literature by identifying and studying factors that influence conflict framing. Conflict framing is a concept with many faces, and highlighting different types of characteristics of contentious news coverage is a fruitful endeavour for future research. The typology brought forward in this dissertation, which focuses on substantiveness and interventionism, can serve as a starting point for further research.
General Conclusions and Implications

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Appendix A:

Interview Protocol and examples of vignettes (Chapter 2)

Dimension A: Journalistic Routines:

General routines

a. Could you describe your working day yesterday?
b. Is that a typical day?
c. Could you describe how you get ideas for new stories?

News selection criteria

a. Can you describe some of the elements that political news must have for you to consider it to be interesting?
Probe: What is the role of a political conflict? (if not already mentioned in answer to preceding question)
b. Vignette: I will now give you a description of two hypothetical news scenarios. Subsequently I will ask a question about it.

Vignette 1

Imagine, you are working and have two possible options for a story you can work on. The first is a story about a new governmental agreement that will be up for votes in the house of representatives. It concerns a plan to fight unemployment. The government wants to spend an extra 130 million euros for his cause. There is not much opposition against the plan, and the plan will probably pass without too much problems. The other story concerns home care. The government plans to cut on budgets for health care. They posit working more efficiently in health care can solve this problem. According to the opposition, the budget cuts go at the cost of jobs and the quality of health care, they propose a motion to scale down the plans.
a. I just described two possible stories, if you have to choose between these two, which one would you choose and can you explain why?
b. To what extent is the element of conflict in the second example influential? (if not discussed in previous answer).

**Routine reliance on other media**

a. When you read about a political conflict in another media outlet, what considerations make you decide whether to follow up on that story?
   Probe: is the media type influential? Or do the political actors that are involved matter?
b. Do you often use other media to get stories for new ideas?
   Probe: And when you use other media, can you describe what you do to make your story original?

**Vignette 2**

Imagine there is a lot of media attention for a news event about a political disagreement between two members of the CDA, Sybrand van Haersma Buma en Mona Keizer. They are struggling over the course of the party. It has already been reported about in a number of other media outlets. You also want to publish about it, what do you do to make your story original and different from previous publications?

**Audience perceptions.**

a. Can you explain to what extent you keep your audience in mind when working on a political story?
   Probe: Can your remember a situation where you thought a story was interesting but it was worked on because it was not interesting enough to the audience?
b. To what extent must a political story consist of political disagreement to be interesting to the reader?
c. Can you describe how you, as a journalist, can make a story about a political conflict more interesting to the audience?
Dimension C. External level

The role of politicians

a. Can you describe your working relation with politicians?

b. Politicians and political parties often try to get media attention to get their point across. Can you describe some of the strategies they use?

c. What types of strategies are the most effective?

(Probe:) It is often said that journalists like stories that include conflicts. Politicians make use of this by instigating conflicts in order to get media attention. Can you explain whether or not you think this is an effective strategy for politicians to get into the news?

d. To what extent do less well-known politicians use other strategies to get media attention?

Probe: Why do you think this is necessary?

Dimension D: Role conceptions

Values:

a. Can you describe three journalistic values you think are important and explain why?

Interventionism:

a. To what extent do you think it is important to describe possible consequences and strategic implications of a political conflict?

b. How important is it for a journalist to be critical of politicians?

c. Do you know of a situation where you exaggerated a political conflict to make the story more attractive?

Probe: Or do you know of an example where other people did this?

d. Why do you think political conflicts are attractive to journalists?

c. Do you ever use magnifying language when you describe a political conflict?

d. Did you ever knowingly stimulated or staged a political conflict between politicians or political parties?

Probe: Do you think other journalists do this?
Appendix B:

Experimental conditions (Study 4)

Condition A (Dutch)

Felle kritiek op beleidsplan minister van der Steur

Aanleiding van de clash was een voorstel tot aanpassing van de opiumwet van de minister. Een fel debat op het scherpst van de snede volgde, waarin voor- en tegenstanders elkaars standpunten aanvielen.

Het huidige gedoogbeleid kent een dubbel karakter. Waar verkoop in coffeeshops wordt gedoogd, is er een streng verbod op het kweken van wiet en bevoorrading van coffeeshops.

Vera Bergkamp (D66) bekritiseert het beleid van de minister in de softdrugskwestie. Ze stelt dat een war on drugs niet meer van deze tijd is en pleit voor regulering van de wietkweek. “De focus moet juist liggen op preventie, voorlichting en verslavingszorg”.

Minister van der Steur wil met zijn wet het kweken en leveren van cannabis veel harder gaan aanpakken. “Mijn wet is een klap voor criminelle organisaties. Het helpt ons criminel aan te pakken”. Hij benadrukt de gevaren van softdrugs voor de volksgezondheid.

De aanpak van drugsproblematiek is al tijden een onderwerp waarop politieke partijen elkaar stevig onder vuur nemen. Politie en justitie besteden veel tijd en geld aan de opsporing, maar kunnen volgens betrokkenen niet voorkomen dat een professionele, steeds gewelddadigere sector de drugsmarkt beheerst.

Grotere grensgemeenten, zoals Breda en Maastricht, ondervinden veel problemen van drugsterieismie uit met name België, Frankrijk en Duitsland. In Roosendaal en Bergen op Zoom werden om deze reden al coffeeshops gesloten.
Fierce criticism on policy plan
Minister Van der Steur

Cause of the clash was a proposal by the minister for an adaptation of the opium law. A fierce razor-edge debate ensued, in which opponents and proponents attacked each other personally.

The current law of acquiescence has a two-fold nature. Where selling in coffeeshops is tolerated, there is a strict ban on growing marihuana and supplying coffeeshops.

Vera Bergkamp (D66) criticises the policy of the minister regarding soft drugs. She states that a war on drugs is out dated and pleads for regulation of growing marihuana. “Instead, the focus must be on prevention, education and addiction treatment”.

With his law, Minister van der Steur aims for a harder approach on the growth and supply of marihuana. “My law is a strike for criminal organisations. It helps us to deal with criminals”. He emphasizes the dangers of softdrugs for society.

The tackling of drug problems has been a topic on which the political parties are criticizing each other fiercely. Police and justice spend a lot of time and resources on investigation. However, according to those involved, they cannot prevent a professional and evermore violent sector from controlling the drug market.

Bigger border municipalities, such as Breda and Maastricht, experience multiple problems as a result of drug tourism from mainly Belgium, France and Germany. For this reason, coffee shops in In Roosendaal and Bergen op Zoom were already closed.
Felle kritiek op "onkunde" minister van der Steur

Verslag
Door Henk Steenbergen

DEN HAAG - Parlementariërs hebben stevige persoonlijke kritiek op de "onkunde" van minister van der Steur. Hierdoor kwamen verschillende politici vandaag hard in botsing in de Tweede Kamer.

Aanleiding van het conflict was de aanpak van soft-drugsproblematiek, waar de minister verantwoordelijk voor is. Een fel debat op het scherpst van de snede volde, waarin voor- en tegenstanders elkaar persoonlijk aanvielen.

Het huidige gedog-beleid kent een dubbel karakter. Waar verkoop in coffeeshops wordt gedoogd, is er een streng verbod op het kweken van wiet en bevordering van coffeeshops.

Vera Bergkamp (D66) bekritiseert het handelen van de minister in de soft-drugskwestie. Ze stelt dat hij zich in deze kwestie volkomen belachelijk maakt. "De minister laat de Nederlandse burger volledig in de steek. Dit dossier is in handen van een onbekwaam persoon."

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Fierce criticism on ’incapability’
Minister van der Steur

By Henk Steenbergen

DEN HAAG Parliament members expressed strong personal criticism regarding the “incapability” of minister van Der Steur. Consequently, several politicians clashed hardly in the Second Chamber.

The minister is responsible. A fierce razor-edge debate ensued, in which opponents and proponents attacked each other’s viewpoints.

The current law of acquiescence has a two-fold nature. Where selling in coffeeshops is tolerated, there is a strict ban on growing marihuana and supplying coffeeshops.

Vera Bergkamp (D66) criticizes the performance of the minister in the softdrugs situation. She states that he is making a complete fool out of himself in this matter. “The minister is abandoning the Dutch citizen completely. This dossier is in the hands of an incompetent person”.

Minister Van der Steur describes the criticism on his performance as character assassination. He labels the parties attacking him as completely irresponsible. “These politicians are completely derailed. They are only in it for political gain and do not solve the problem”.

The tackling of drug problems has been a topic on which the political parties are criticizing each other fiercely. Police and justice spend a lot of time and resources on investigation. However, according to those involved, they cannot prevent a professional and evermore violent sector from controlling the drug market.

Bigger border municipalities, such as Breda and Maastricht, experience multiple problems as a result of drug tourism from mainly Belgium, France and Germany. For this reason, coffee shops in Roosendaal and Bergen op Zoom were already closed.
Felle kritiek op "onkunde" minister van der Steur

Onze vaste politieke analist Henk Steenbergen is kritisch. "Na jaren bakkeleien en kibbelen zijn de partijen geen klap opgeschoten. Hierdoor gebeurt er in feite niks om het probleem op te lossen. Dit neigt sterk naar struivosgelpolitiek."

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Het huidige optreden van de minister, alsmede de oppositie wekt geen vertrouwen. Het is de vraag of de voorgestelde beleidsoplossingen de problematiek daadwerkelijk zullen oplossen. De grote vraag is nu wat de gevolgen van dit conflict zijn voor de coalitie. Als de partijen het niet eens worden dreigt een val van het kabinet.
Fierce criticism on policy plan Minister Van der Steur

Analysis
By Henk Steenbergen

Parliament members expressed strong personal criticism regarding the “incapability” of minister van Der Steur. Consequently, several politicians clashed hardly in the Second Chamber.

Cause of the clash was the handling of soft drugs related problems, for which the minister is responsible. A fierce razor-edge debate ensued, in which opponents and proponents attacked each other’s viewpoints.

Our regular political analyst, Henk Steenbergen, is critical. “After years of arguing and bickering, both parties haven’t advanced one bit. Because of this, in fact nothing happens to solve the problem. As if politicians are burying their heads in the sand.”

The current law of acquiescence has a two-fold nature. Where selling in coffeeshops is tolerated, there is a strict ban on growing marihuana and supplying coffeeshops.

Vera Bergkamp (D66) criticises the policy of the minister regarding soft drugs. She states that a war on drugs is out dated and pleads for regulation of growing marihuana. “Instead the focus must be on prevention, education and addiction treatment”.

With his law, Minister van der Steur aims for a harder approach on the growth and supply of marihuana. “My law is a strike for criminal organisations. It helps us to deal with criminals”. He emphasizes the dangers of soft drugs for society.

The tackling of drug problems has been a topic on which the political parties are criticizing each other fiercely. Police and justice spend a lot of time and resources on investigation. However, according to those involved, they cannot prevent a professional and ever more violent sector from controlling the drug market.

Bigger border municipalities, such as Breda and Maastricht, experience multiple problems as a result of drug tourism from mainly Belgium, France and Germany. For this reason, coffee shops in In Roosendaal and Bergen op Zoom were already closed.

The current performance of the minister, as well as that from the opposition, gives no reason for trust. It is to be seen whether the proposed policy solutions will solve the problems. The big question is now what consequences this conflict has for the coalition. If the parties do not agree, the government is at risk of falling trough.
Felle kritiek op "onkunde" minister van der Steur

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Fierce criticism on ‘incapability’ Minister van der Steur

Analysis
By Henk Steenbergen

DEN HAAG Parliament members expressed strong personal criticism regarding the “incapability” of minister van Der Steur. Consequently, several politicians clashed hardly in the Second Chamber.

Cause of the clash was a proposal by the minister for an adaptation of the opium law. A fierce razor-edge debate ensued, in which opponents and proponents attacked each other personally.

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The tackling of drug problems has been a topic on which the political parties are criticizing each other fiercely. Police and justice spend a lot of time and resources on investigation. However, according to those involved, they cannot prevent a professional and evermore violent sector from controlling the drug market.

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The current performance of the minister, as well as that from the opposition, gives no reason for trust. It is to be seen whether the proposed policy solutions will solve the problems. The big question is now what consequences this conflict has for the coalition. If the parties do not agree, the government is at risk of falling trough.
Softdrugsbeleid
minister van der Steur

Door Henk Steenbergen

DEN HAAG Politici in de Tweede Kamer behandelden vandaag de aanpak van softdrugs.

Aanleiding van dit programpunt was een voorstel tot aanpassing van de opiumwet van minister van der Steur. Dit onderwerp werd besproken in de Tweede Kamer, waarin politici van verscheidene partijen hun standpunten met betrekking tot dit onderwerp naar voren brachten.

Het huidige gedoogbeleid kent een dubbel karakter. Waar verkoop in coffeeshops wordt gedoogd, is er een streng verbod op het kweken van wiet en bevoorrading van coffeeshops.

De aanpak van drugsproblematiek is al tijden een onderwerp voor politieke partijen en maatschappelijke actoren. Politie en justitie besteden veel tijd en geld aan de opsporing, maar kunnen volgens betrokkenen niet voorkomen dat een professionele, steeds gewelddadigere sector de drugsmarkt beheerst.

Grotere grensgemeenten, zoals Breda en Maastricht, ondervinden veel problemen van drugstoerisme uit met name België, Frankrijk en Duitsland. In Roosendaal en Bergen op Zoom werden om deze reden al coffeeshops gesloten.
Appendix B (continued)

Control Condition (English)

Softdrugs-policy
minister van der Steur

By Henk Steenbergen

DEN HAAG Politicians in the chamber talked about the handling of soft drugs related problems today

Cause of this topic being on the program was a proposal by the minister for an adaptation of the opium law. This topic was being discussed in the Second Chamber, where politicians from several parties brought forward their standing points.

The current law of acquiescence has a two-fold nature. Where selling in coffeeshops is tolerated, there is a strict ban on growing marihuana and supplying coffeeshops.

The tackling of drug problems has been a topic for both political parties and societal actors for a long time. Police and justice spend a lot of time and resources on investigation. However, according to those involved, they cannot prevent a professional and evermore violent sector from controlling the drug market.

Bigger border municipalities, such as Breda and Maastricht, experience multiple problems as a result of drug tourism from mainly Belgium, France and Germany. For this reason, coffeeshops in In Roosendaal and Bergen op Zoom were already closed.
Appendix C

Experimental Survey Questions (Chapter 4)

Political Participation

Type 1: Political Behaviour
Part_A1: If there were upcoming elections, how likely would you go out and vote?
Part_A2: If there were an upcoming referendum, how likely would you be to participate?

Type 2: Behaviours Targeting Politics
Part_B1: How likely would you be to contact or visit a politician in person?
Part_B2: How likely would you be to donate money for a political party, political organization or NGO?
Part_B3: How likely would you be to participate in a demonstration, strike or other political happening?
Part_B4: How likely would you be to sign a written petition (on paper) about a political or social issue?

Type 3: Civic Participation
Part_C1: How likely would you be to set up websites, blogs or social media pages about ongoings in your community?
Part_C2: How likely would you be to volunteer in an organization in your area?
Part_C3: How likely would you be to participate in a meeting about your local area?

Type 4: Politically Expression
Part_D1: How likely would you be to express your opinion in a post on social media about a political issue?
Part_D2: How likely would you be to create a group on social media to discuss or support a political cause?

Emotions

When you thinking about the news article you just read: to what extent did you feel:
Em1: Angry
Em2: Anxious
Em3: Hopeful
Em4: Enthusiastic
SUMMARY
English summary

Political conflicts in the media are a central aspect of a functioning democracy. Being exposed to different viewpoints helps citizens in forming an opinion and knowing what standpoints political parties take in political matters. The media play an important role in this process. Journalists often report on disagreement between political actors. This dissertation focusses on conflict framing in political news in the Netherlands. Framing refers to the process where journalists highlight some aspects of an issue above others while producing news. Conflict framing occurs when the journalistic focus is on disagreement between political actors or criticism coming from or aimed at political actors.

The studies brought forward in this dissertation shed light on several factors relevant to conflict framing. The main contribution of this dissertation lies in the focus on the different types of conflict framing, specifically by making a distinction regarding the level of interventionism and the level of substantiveness. Interventionism alludes to the extent to which journalists are active rather than passive in reporting on political conflicts in the news. This interventionism is manifested by visibility of the journalistic voice in the news, but also by an active journalistic stance in the news production process. Substantiveness refers to the nature of the political conflict. Reports on conflicts in the news can be focussed on substantive issues or mention details on legislation, but can also revolve around personal attacks, attacks on competence or integrity, strategy or can be characterized by incivility. Asides from looking at different types of conflict frames, this dissertation considers the whole range of the conflict framing process, including the production stage: conflict frame building, the presence of conflict frames in political news, and effects of exposure of citizens to news articles framed in terms of conflict on their willingness to participate in the political process.

In the first study (chapter 2), I look at the conflict frame building process. Specifically, I shed light on the role of journalists who report on political issues and make decisions on whether to report about a certain conflict frame or not as well as to what extent to intervene in their reporting. The findings stress the contribution of journalists on the emergence of conflict frames. This happens by means of subtle methods and routines of journalistic intervention. These include the use of exaggerating language, but also journalists orchestrating conflict or amplifying possible consequences of conflicts. Journalists are particularly keen to adapt or intervene in conflicts when powerful politicians or parties are involved.

In the second study (chapter 3), I focus on presence of conflict frames in political news and I assess the dimensionality of conflict frames. This is done by means of a content analysis on newspaper
and online news articles. In this study, I take different types of conflict frames into account. I particularly distinguish between differing levels of substantiveness and journalistic interventionism in conflict framing. Also, I look at how contextual factors affect the extent to which different types of conflict frames are manifested in the news. Findings show that during an election campaign rather than a routine news period, news articles with conflict frames are less substantive, more strategy-focused, and consist of more personal attacks and incivility. Second, levels of interventionist conflict framing, but also substance, were less salient in tabloid news when compared to quality newspapers. Finally, conflict framing online included lower levels of interventionism, substance and strategy when compared to print articles. However, the level of personal attacks was higher.

For the third and final study (chapter 4), I conduct an experiment to assess to what extent exposure to different types of conflict frames affects political participation. Dutch citizens were exposed to conflict framed news articles where the level of substance (substantive conflict versus nonsubstantive conflict) and level of journalistic intervention (detached journalistic style versus an interventionist and a more interpretative critical journalistic style of reporting) were manipulated. When citizens are exposed to articles with a nonsubstantive conflict frame, this led to anger. This anger subsequently leads to a higher intention to participate in politics. However, exposure to a substantive conflict frame led to more enthusiasm and thereby indirectly to an increase in political participation. When people were exposed to interventionist reporting in conflict framing, they became less enthusiastic, which indirectly reduced political participation. Hence, conflict framing indirectly affects political participation via both positive and negative emotions.

In short, this dissertation contributes to political communication literature by working towards a more comprehensive and widely applicable understanding of conflict framing. Furthermore, the findings presented in this dissertation shed light on the importance of studying and understanding the extent of journalistic intervention in conflict framing, journalists do not merely function as disseminators of conflict frames, but actively shape the nature and occurrence of conflict in the news. By incorporating and linking different stages of the conflict frame building process, the dissertation provides an extensive overview of how conflict framing works.
Politieke conflicten in het nieuws zijn een essentieel onderdeel van een goed-functionerende democratie. Blootgesteld worden aan verschillende standpunten helpt burgers een mening te vormen en aan kennis over de standpunten van politieke partijen in verschillende kwesties. De media spelen een belangrijke rol in dit proces. Journalisten doen dikwijls verslag van onenigheid tussen politieke actoren. De focus van deze dissertatie ligt op conflict framing in politiek nieuws in Nederland. Framing kan worden omschreven als het proces waarin journalisten tijdens het produceren van nieuws sommige aspecten van een onderwerp benadrukken ten koste van andere. Er is sprake van conflict framing als de journalistieke focus ligt op onenigheid tussen politieke actoren of kritiek afkomstig of gericht op politieke actoren.

De onderzoeken die in deze dissertatie naar voren worden gebracht werpen hun licht op verschillende factoren die relevant zijn voor conflict framing. De belangrijkste bijdrage van deze dissertatie ligt in de focus op verschillende typen conflict frames, met name door een onderscheid te maken in de mate van substantie van politieke conflicten en de mate van journalistieke interventie. Journalistieke interventie verwijst naar de mate waarin journalisten actief zijn tegenover passief. Dit manifesteert zich in de zichtbaarheid van de journalistieke stem in het nieuwsproduct, maar ook in een actieve houding in het proces van nieuwsproductie en framing. De mate van substantie in conflict framing refereert naar de inhoud van het politieke conflict in het nieuws. Nieuwsberichten met een conflict frame kunnen inhoudelijk van aard zijn en de nadruk leggen op argumenten en wetgeving of maatregelen van politici uitgebreid beschrijven. Ze kunnen echter ook draaien om persoonlijke aanvallen, aanvallen op competentie of integriteit, strategie, of onbeschaafde retoriek bevatten.

De focus van deze dissertatie op het gehele conflict framing proces. Dit bevat het stadium van nieuwsproductie waarin conflict frames gevormd worden. Daarnaast is er ook aandacht voor de aanwezigheid en kenmerken van conflict frames zoals die zich manifesteren in het eindproduct, het nieuwsbericht. Tenslotte wordt gekeken naar de effecten van verschillende typen conflict frames de bereidheid van burgers om te participeren in het politieke proces.

In het eerste onderzoek (hoofdstuk 2), kijk ik naar de productie van conflict frames. Het doel van dit hoofdstuk is het belichten van de rol van journalisten die verslag doen van politiek nieuws en beslissingen maken om wel of niet verslag te doen van een politiek conflict, maar ook de keuze maken wel of niet een actieve rol te spelen in de berichtgeving. De bevindingen benadrukken de bijdrage van journalisten aan het verschijnen van conflict frames in politieke nieuwsproductie.
tiek nieuws. Dit gebeurt door middel van subtiele methoden en routines van journalistieke interventie. Onder andere door het gebruik van overdrijving in taalgebruik, maar ook doordat journalisten mogelijke gevolgen van conflicten opblazen of zelfs conflicten arrangeren of stimuleren. Journalisten hebben met name de neiging om te interveniëren in conflicten wanneer machtige politici of partijen betrokken zijn.

In het tweede onderzoek (hoofdstuk 3), ligt de focus op de aanwezigheid van conflicten in het nieuws en de dimensionaliteit van conflict frames. Deze studie bevat een inhoudsanalyse naar verschillende typen conflict frames in berichtgeving over politiek in kranten en in online nieuws. In dit onderzoek wordt een typologie ontwikkeld waar onderscheid wordt gemaakt tussen de mate van inhoudelijkheid en mate van journalistieke interventie in conflict frames. Ook is gekeken naar verschillende contextuele factoren die beïnvloeden hoe verschillende typen conflict frames in het nieuws verschijnen. Zo blijkt dat tijdens verkiezingstijd conflict frames minder inhoudelijk zijn, meer strategie-georiënteerd en meer doorspekt van persoonlijke aanvallen en onbeleefde retoriek dan in niet-verkiezingstijd. Daarnaast was er minder journalistieke interventie, maar ook minder inhoudelijk nieuws in populaire titels, in vergelijking tot kwaliteitstitels. Tenslotte, was er minder journalistieke interventie, maar ook minder inhoudelijke berichtgeving online wanneer vergeleken met gedrukte kranten. Het aantal persoonlijke aanvallen was hoger in online nieuws.


Deze dissertatie draagt bij aan de politieke communicatie-literatuur door toe te werken naar een meer veelomvattend en breed-toepasbaar begrip van conflict frames in politiek nieuws. Daarnaast

Summary
Summary

werpen de bevindingen hun licht op het belang van van journalistieke interventie in conflict framing. Journalisten functioneren niet slechts als verspreiders van conflict frames in het nieuws, maar spelen een actieve rol in het gestalte geven in de manier waarop en of politieke conflicten in het nieuws verschijnen. Doordat in de dissertatie de verschillende stadia van het conflict framing proces naar voren kome, geeft de dissertatie een uitgebreid overzicht van de werking van conflict frames in politiek nieuws.
AUTHORSHIP
CONTRIBUTION
Authorship Contribution

Title: Chapter 2
Researchers involved (with Initials): Guus Bartholomé (GB), Sophie Lecheler (SL), Claes de Vreese (CV)

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**Authorship Contribution**

Title: Chapter 3  
Researchers involved (with Initials): Guus Bartholomé (GB), Sophie Lecheler (SL), Claes de Vreese (CV)

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Title: Chapter 4

Researchers involved (with Initials): Guus Bartholomé (GB), Sophie Lecheler (SL), Claes de Vreese (CV)

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