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### Two sides to every story

*Causes and consequences of selective exposure to balanced political information*

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# Appendices

A

## Appendix A

### Example of Numerical and Narrative Texts by Types of Arguments

Numerical Texts	Narrative Texts
<p><b>Pro-Text</b></p> <p><b>Headline: Numbers Show Clear Benefits of the Affordable Care Act for Americans</b></p> <p><i>Lead:</i> I support the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and a substantial body of statistical data shows the ACA is a good thing.</p> <p><i>Example Paragraph:</i> American businesses also benefit from the ACA. Because they are required to offer health insurance, they receive tax credits to help employees pay insurance premiums. In 2015, the tax credit will increase to 50%. To compensate, the top 2% of businesses and individuals pay some extra taxes, contributing more without being hurt.</p>	<p><b>Pro-Text</b></p> <p><b>Headline: Drew’s Story: How I Personally Benefitted from the Affordable Care Act</b></p> <p><i>Lead:</i> I support the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and my personal story shows the ACA is a good thing.</p> <p><i>Example Paragraph:</i> And my boss offered me health insurance! His business got a tax credit from the ACA to help me pay for my premium. To compensate, the richer companies will pay more taxes. After all, they can give more without being hurt. I feel safe now, I can sleep. All thanks to the ACA!</p>
<p><b>Con-Text</b></p> <p><b>Headline: Statistics Reveal the Outrageous Costs of the Affordable Care Act for Americans</b></p> <p><i>Lead:</i> I am against the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and a substantial body of statistical data shows the ACA is a hurtful policy.</p> <p><i>Example Paragraph:</i> Over 30.1 million Americans bought their own private health insurance before the ACA was implemented. Many have had their plans cancelled by insurance companies because the plan didn’t meet the 10 health requirements stipulated in the ACA. And replacement insurance is substantially more expensive because it provides services that many people don’t need.</p>	<p><b>Con-Text</b></p> <p><b>Headline: Quinn’s Story: My Personal Losses from the Affordable Care Act</b></p> <p><i>Lead:</i> I am against the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and my personal story shows the ACA is a hurtful policy.</p> <p><i>Example Paragraph:</i> I am a hard-working American. Throughout the years I always worked long hours to afford private insurance. Then the ACA came and my insurance was taken away because it didn’t fit with ACA standards. This is not fair! Now I am really struggling to buy a more expensive insurance with services I don’t even need!</p>
<p><b>Balanced Text</b></p> <p><b>Headline: Statistics Unveil Pros and Cons of the Affordable Care Act for Americans</b></p> <p><i>Lead:</i> I am uncertain as to whether the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is beneficial or hurtful, and a substantial body of statistical data shows the ACA has both its pros and cons.</p> <p><i>Example Paragraph:</i> Uninsured workers also benefit from the ACA. Because businesses are required to offer health insurance, they receive tax credits to help employees pay premiums. In 2015, the tax credit will increase to 50%.</p> <p>However, the ACA also hurts uninsured Americans. Those who didn’t purchase insurance by the deadline of March 31, 2014 have to pay a tax of \$95 in 2014. This means about 4 million people, or 1.2% of the population, end up paying the tax rather than purchasing health insurance.</p>	<p><b>Balanced Text</b></p> <p><b>Headline: Pat’s Story: My Personal Gains and Losses from the Affordable Care Act</b></p> <p><i>Lead:</i> I am uncertain as to whether the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is beneficial or hurtful, and my personal story shows the ACA has both its pros and cons.</p> <p><i>Example Paragraph:</i> Luckily, the ACA gave me a tax credit that makes it easier to get insurance. And my boss just offered me health insurance! His business got a tax credit from the ACA to help me pay for my premium. Finally, for once in my life health services become affordable! I thought all my worries would be solved...</p> <p>But sadly, my experience with the ACA hasn’t been all that good. I couldn’t buy insurance before the deadline, so I’m forced to pay a high penalty. And I am still uninsured!</p>

## Appendix B

Tables showing results of hypothesis 3 testing

**Table 4.** Repeated Logit Model of Article Selection by Evidence Type, Selective Exposure among Issue Publics (Attitude Importance)

	Climate Change		Health Care	
	(N = 321)		(N = 220)	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
Intercept	<b>-1.50(.16)***</b>	.22	<b>-2.28(.34)***</b>	.10
Gender	-.09(.06)	.92	<b>-.20(.07)*</b>	.86
Age	<b>-.01(.0)*</b>	.99	.0(.0)	1.0
Education	<b>.05(.03)*</b>	1.05	<b>.11(.03)***</b>	1.12
Numerical	.15(.08)	1.16	.07(.10)	1.08
Pro-attitudinal	.03(.08)	1.03	.08(.10)	1.09
Balanced	<b>.68(.19)***</b>	1.98	<b>.87(.18)***</b>	2.38
High importance	.29(.16)	1.33	.17(.17)	1.19
Numerical X pro	-.06(.11)	.95	.17(.13)	1.18
Numerical X balanced	.24(.23)	1.27	.37(.23)	1.46
Numerical X high importance	-.14(.13)	.87	-.18(.12)	.84
Pro X high importance	-.001(.12)	.99	.04(.13)	1.04
Narrative X balanced X low importance	.15(.20)	1.16	.03(.19)	1.03
Narrative X counter X high importance	-.17(.17)	.84	-.05(.17)	.95
Numerical X balanced X high importance	<b>.31(.14)*</b>	1.36	-.13(.14)	.88

*Note.* \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ . The reference categories for the main effects were: narrative evidence, counter-attitudinal information, low attitude importance. For the two-way interaction evidence type X information type, results show the coefficients for numerical X pro and numerical X balanced. All other combinations served as reference categories. For the two-way interaction evidence type X attitude importance, results show the coefficient for numerical X high importance. All other combinations were the reference categories. For the two-interaction information type X attitude importance, results show the coefficient for pro-attitudinal X high importance. All other combinations served as reference categories. Finally, for the three-way interactions evidence type X information type X attitude importance, results show the coefficients for narrative X balanced X low importance, narrative X counter-attitudinal X high importance, and numerical X balanced X high importance. All other combinations served as reference categories.

**Table 5.** Repeated Logit Model of Article Selection by Evidence Type, Selective Exposure among Issue Publics (Attitude Strength)

	Climate Change		Health Care	
	(N = 321)		(N = 220)	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
Intercept	<b>-1.43(.22)***</b>	.24	<b>-2.01(.19)***</b>	.13
Gender	-.08(.06)	.93	<b>-.15(.07)*</b>	.86
Age	<b>-.01(.0)*</b>	.99	.0(.0)	1.0
Education	.05(.03)	1.05	<b>.11(.03)***</b>	1.12
Numerical	.16(.09)	1.17	.09(.10)	1.10
Pro-attitudinal	.05(.08)	1.06	.14(.10)	1.14
Balanced	<b>.90(.19)***</b>	2.46	<b>1.03(.18)***</b>	2.80
High strength	.08(.16)	1.08	.09(.16)	1.09
Numerical X pro	-.16(.12)	.85	.04(.14)	1.04
Numerical X balanced	-.01(.23)	.99	.06(.23)	1.06
Numerical X high strength	.08(.13)	1.08	-.019(.12)	.99
Pro X high strength	.15(.12)	1.16	.18(.12)	1.19
Narrative X balanced X low strength	-.08(.20)	.92	-.06(.19)	.94
Narrative X counter X high strength	.05(.17)	1.05	.17(.17)	1.18
Numerical X balanced X high strength	<b>.32(.14)*</b>	1.37	.13(.14)	1.13

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

The reference categories for the main effects were: narrative evidence, counter-attitudinal information, low attitude strength. For the two-way interaction evidence type X information type, results show the coefficients for numerical X pro and numerical X balanced. All other combinations served as reference categories. For the two-way interaction evidence type X attitude strength, results show the coefficient for numerical X high strength. All other combinations were the reference categories. For the two-interaction information type X attitude strength, results show the coefficient for pro-attitudinal X high strength. All other combinations served as reference categories. Finally, for the three-way interactions evidence type X information type X attitude strength, results show the coefficients for narrative X balanced X low strength, narrative X counter-attitudinal X high strength, and numerical X balanced X high strength. All other combinations served as reference categories.

## Appendix C

Results of information selection about health care across explicit and accountability manipulations.

*Predicted probabilities of selecting information type about health care by accountability manipulations (N = 324)*

	Pro-Attitudinal			Balanced			Counter-Attitudinal		
	Margin	z	90% C.I.	Margin	z	90% C.I.	Margin	z	90% C.I.
Control	.27(.07)***	6.00	.14 - .40	.61(.07)***	8.36	.47 - .76	.11(.05)*	2.38	.02 - .21
Defensive Explicit	.52(.07)***	7.36	.38 - .66	.44(.07)***	6.27	.30 - .57	.04(.03)	1.44	.01 - .09
Accuracy Explicit	.19(.06)***	3.35	.08 - .31	.78(.06)***	12.9	.66 - .90	.02(.02)	1.01	.02 - .06
Defensive incentive	.40(.07)***	5.48	.26 - .54	.53(.07)***	7.17	.39 - .68	.07(.04)	1.79	.0 - .14
Accuracy incentive	.19(.06)***	3.34	.08 - .30	.70(.07)***	10.53	.57 - .83	.10(.05)*	2.37	.02 - .19
Defensive no-incentive	.30(.07)***	4.49	.17 - .43	.63(.07)***	8.86	.49 - .76	.06(.04)	1.79	.0 - .14
Accuracy no-incentive	.34(.07)***	4.95	.21 - .48	.55(.07)***	7.40	.40 - .69	.11(.05)*	2.37	.02 - .20

Note. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ . Entries on the left column are predicted probabilities of selecting an information type, with the standard errors in parenthesis. P values indicate whether predicted probabilities are significantly different from zero.

## Appendix D

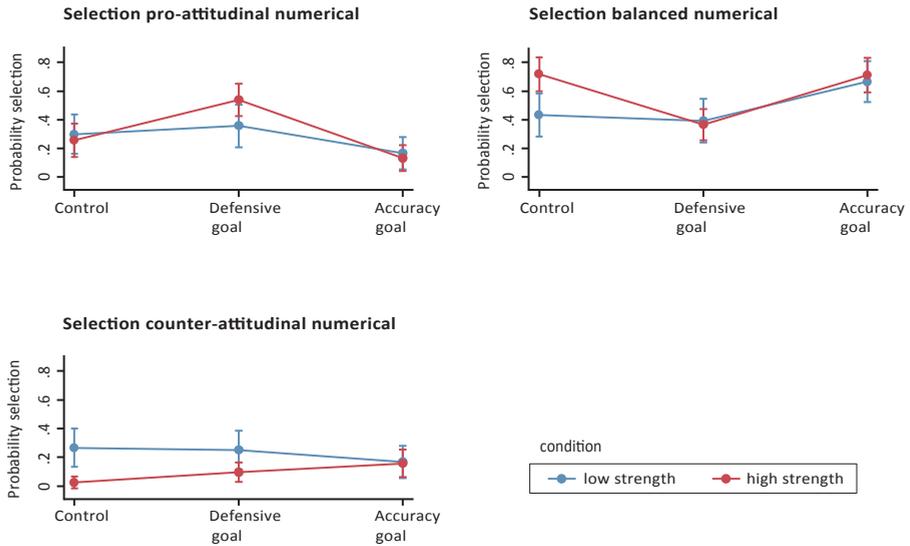
### Pretest results of stimulus material

On a scale from 1 to 5, participants rated headlines and texts about the extent they contained counter-issue arguments (values of 1 and 2), balanced arguments (value of 3), or pro-issue arguments (values of 4 and 5). The ANOVA results were significant for climate change headlines,  $F_{(6, 704)} = 1126.80, p < .001$  and texts,  $F_{(6, 704)} = 2114.40, p < .001$ . Pro-issue headlines and texts were rated more as having supporting arguments, compared to balanced and counter-issue messages (all  $p < .001$ ). Similarly, counter-issue headlines and texts were perceived more as having opposing arguments, and balanced headlines (all  $p < .001$ ), and texts were perceived more as containing both pro- and counter-issue arguments (all  $p < .001$ ). Also, the ANOVA results were significant for health care headlines,  $F_{(6, 704)} = 1586.45, p < .001$ , and texts,  $F_{(6, 704)} = 2111.45, p < .001$ . Pro-issue headlines and texts were rated more as having supporting arguments, compared to balanced and counter-issue messages (all  $p < .001$ ). Counter-issue headlines and texts were perceived more as having opposing arguments, and balanced headlines (all  $p < .001$ ), and texts were perceived more as containing both pro- and counter-issue arguments (all  $p < .001$ ). All texts were perceived equally understandable (all  $p > .2$ ), convincing (all  $p > .2$ ), coherent (all  $p > .2$ ), interesting (all  $p > .2$ ), and believable (all  $p > .2$ ).

## Appendix E

Results of hypothesis 4 and research questions 1 and 2 of motivated selection, using a single index of attitude strength (Study 2)

**Figure 3.** Predicted probabilities of selecting information type by motivation and attitude strength as a single index (Study 2) ( $N = 258$ )



Note. The three graphs show predicted probabilities of selecting pro-attitudinal, balanced and counter-attitudinal numerical content by motivated reasoning manipulations and attitude strength. Confidence intervals set at 90%.



## Appendix F

### Example of Messages by Types of Arguments

	<b>Climate change</b>	<b>Refugees</b>
Pro-issue	Climate change is a serious threat for American food security. Many scientists believe global average temperatures have increased by over 1.4°F over the last century. This is bound to have serious consequences for agriculture. These include decreases in stream flow in river basins, which would cost nearly \$200 million annually because of lack of sufficient water for irrigation. Moreover, these impacts of climate change on agricultural regions may cause yield decreases of 30% by the end of the century.	Americans should not worry about giving asylum to Syrian refugees because the fear that terrorists could infiltrate is misguided. The 21-step screening process for Syrians takes up to 24 months, and is far more rigid than the immigration process is for other refugees. Since 1980, the U.S. has invited millions of refugees, and since 2011, over 2034 Syrian refugees have been admitted. Until now, zero of these refugees have been arrested or removed on terrorism charges.
Con-issue	The U.S. plan to mitigate carbon emissions will be costly for the American economy. For example, it will significantly affect the production of coal in the United States. With enough coal existing in the country to provide electricity for 500 years, coal is bound to be an important energy resource for Americans long into the future. However, the Plan's war on coal threatens existing coal plants that generate 40% of America's affordable, reliable energy.	America should not welcome Syrian refugees as they pose a serious threat to national security. About 77% of Syrian refugees are men of military age. With the U.S. government planning to accept up to 250 000 refugees coming from Syria, the federal government will not be able to conduct thorough background checks. This will make it easier for ISIS to infiltrate terrorists by coaching them how to pass the screening process.
Balanced	The U.S. plan to mitigate carbon emissions has pros and cons. On the pro side, promoting energy efficiency would save American households an average of \$900 annually by 2030 in electricity costs, while businesses would save \$126 billion annually. On the downside, in order to garner those savings, the nation will need to make up-front investments of up to 1.3% of the GDP from 2012 to 2030. This means that Americans will have to pay 20% more for electricity.	Some reject welcoming Syrian refugees into America, believing the threat of terrorism will increase. However, others disagree. Those against admitting refugees argue that 60% of terrorism experts believe that at least one terrorist will infiltrate as a refugee, and successfully carry out an attack on the country. However, refugee supporters claim that refugees coming to the U.S. are actually victims of terrorism, which include 50% children, and 30% above the age of 65.





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# English summary

ES

Scholars, political observers, and media pundits have worried that citizens prefer mostly pro-attitudinal information about politics and public affairs, which in turn may influence the public to make uninformed decisions, develop extreme political opinions, and be less tolerant towards opposing perspectives. Although the current information environment offers citizens an unprecedented opportunity to see mostly pro-attitudinal information, the debate about the prevalence and consequences of selective exposure in a high-choice media environment is largely inconclusive. Moreover, the majority of the scholarship has focused on studying the selection and effects of one-sided political content (i.e., pro- or counter-attitudinal), and has paid little attention to balanced content, even though it is available in the media environment and consumed by citizens.

This dissertation shifts this dominant attention from one-sided information towards balanced exposure, and contributes to the selective exposure literature by studying 1) whether the selection of balanced, in addition to pro- and counter-attitudinal information depends on whether an individual is personally invested and has strong opinions about a certain issue (issue public membership), and on the type of evidence for a message claim – numerical vs. narrative; 2) how psychological factors, such as individual motivation and attributes of issue attitudes, influence balanced information selection; and 3) how balanced exposure affects information processing and attitude polarization. These questions were answered using a series of online experiments. Information selection was studied using self-selection protocols, in which participants select the stimuli from a limited set of choices. The consequences of balanced exposure were studied using randomized exposure to fixed treatment stimuli. Collectively, the experiments presented in the dissertation uncover the psychological underpinnings of balanced exposure and its attitudinal outcomes about contested and highly relevant socio-political issues, such as climate change, health care reform and refugees.

Results of the dissertation show that:

***1. The prevalence of selective exposure is overestimated***

Selective exposure is not a prevalent phenomenon among citizens. Most individuals do not want messages that only contain pro-attitudinal information, but instead, they prefer balanced messages that present arguments confirming their opinions, alongside arguments that run counter to their priors.

***2. Most citizens prefer balanced political content over one-sided content***

Exposure to balanced media content is the preferred choice for different groups of citizens. This includes people who have strong opinions and care about climate change and health

care (issue publics), as well as those less invested in those issues. Also, balanced content is selected by individuals motivated to reach accurate conclusions (accuracy motivation), as well as those seeking to defend their prior opinions (defensive motivation).

### ***3. The type of evidence for a message claim also influences information selection***

Although this dissertation studied mostly individual factors that drive balanced exposure, another conclusion is that the type of evidence for a message claim also shapes the type of political information that different citizens seek. Specifically, issue publics and average citizens prefer political messages which contain numerical over narrative evidence. In addition, the preferred form of political information for issue publics is that which uses numbers and statistics to argue two sides of a story.

### ***4. Balanced exposure reduces the influence of motivated reasoning on information processing***

Exposure to balanced content plays a crucial role in shaping how people process political information. Balanced exposure encourages more unbiased processing, relative to one-sided messages. More importantly, we learn that whether individuals are motivated to reinforce their opinions or to reach accurate conclusions, they interpret balanced content in a similar unbiased manner. Specifically, when exposed to balanced messages, defensive and accuracy motivated citizens are less likely to accept pro-attitudinal arguments and to refute counter-attitudinal ones, compared to when they are confronted with one-sided messages.

### ***5. Balanced exposure encourages unbiased thinking but does not reduce political polarization***

The availability, selection and unbiased processing of balanced political information is not enough to promote moderate political views on contested socio-political issues. Results refute the hope by some that exposure to balanced or counter-attitudinal information can depolarize political opinions. On the bright side, exposure to balanced political content reduces the risk that people's attitudes become more extreme.

This dissertation has important implications for political communications scholars, journalists and citizens. First, most citizens prefer balanced information about politics and public affairs. In addition, some citizens seek balanced content that is backed up by factual and truthful evidence. This in itself is a good reminder for media institutions and journalists advocating the notion that political media coverage should be balanced, objective and fair. Second, this dissertation suggests that the media environment can encourage more

unbiased thinking by offering balanced and neutral reporting. If journalists cover political issues in a balanced manner, different citizens would attend these messages, which in turn could encourage them to interpret contested issues more open-mindedly. Third, even though we cannot hope that coming in contact with balanced information is a solution to correct attitude polarization, the availability and exposure to such an information environment may benefit democracy in other ways. To explore these possibilities, future scholarship on selective exposure should shift its traditional focus on studying mostly one-sided political messages, and instead, extend our understanding of the causes and consequences of balanced information exposure.





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# Nederlandse samenvatting

Academici, politieke waarnemers en media-experts zijn bezorgd dat burgers meestal een voorkeur hebben voor pro-attitudinale informatie over politieke en publieke zaken. Deze voorkeur kan het publiek beïnvloeden om niet-geïnformeerde beslissingen te nemen, om extreme politieke opvattingen te ontwikkelen, en om minder tolerant tegenover tegengestelde perspectieven te zijn. Alhoewel de huidige informatie-omgeving burgers een ongekeerde kans biedt om voornamelijk pro-attitudinale informatie te consumeren, is de discussie over de prevalentie en de gevolgen van selectieve blootstelling in een hoge-keuze mediaomgeving grotendeels inconsistent. Bovendien heeft de meerderheid van voorgaand onderzoek zich gericht op het bestuderen van de selectie en de gevolgen van eenzijdige politieke inhoud (dat wil zeggen pro- of contra-attitude), en is er weinig aandacht besteed aan een evenwichtige inhoud, ook al is dergelijke inhoud aanwezig in de media omgeving.

Dit proefschrift verschuift deze dominante aandacht voor eenzijdige informatie richting gebalanceerde blootstelling, en draagt hiermee bij aan de selectieve blootstellingliteratuur door het bestuderen van 1) of de selectie van een evenwichtige, in aanvulling op de pro- en contra-attitudinale informatie afhankelijk is van of een individu persoonlijk betrokken is en een uitgesproken mening heeft over een bepaald onderwerp (lid van een issue public) en het soort bewijs voor een bericht claim - numerieke vs. verhaal; 2) hoe psychologische factoren, zoals individuele motivatie en kenmerken van attitudes ten opzichte van een onderwerp evenwichtige selectie van informatie beïnvloeden; en 3) hoe evenwichtige blootstelling tot informatieverwerking en attitude polarisatie beïnvloed. Deze vragen werden beantwoord met behulp van een serie online experimenten. Informatie selectie werd bestudeerd met behulp van zelfselectie protocollen, waarin de deelnemers stimuli selecteren uit een beperkt aantal keuzes. De gevolgen van evenwichtige blootstelling werden bestudeerd met behulp van gerandomiseerde blootstelling aan vaste stimuli. Tezamen, onderzoeken de experimenten in dit proefschrift de psychologische wortels van evenwichtige blootstelling en de uitkomsten hiervan ten opzichte van omstreden en zeer relevante politieke kwesties, zoals klimaatverandering, hervorming van de gezondheidszorg en vluchtelingen.

De resultaten van het proefschrift tonen aan dat:

### ***1. De dominantie van selectieve blootstelling wordt overschat***

Selectieve blootstelling is niet een gangbaar fenomeen onder burgers. De meeste mensen willen geen berichten die enkel pro-attitudinale informatie bevatten, en zien in plaats daarvan liever evenwichtige berichten waarin argumenten die hun mening bevestigen worden gepresenteerd, naast de argumenten die tegen hun bestaande mening ingaan.

## **2. De meeste burgers geven de voorkeur aan evenwichtige politieke inhoud ten opzichte van eenzijdig inhoud**

Blootstelling aan gebalanceerde media-inhoud heeft de voorkeur onder verschillende groepen burgers. Dit geldt ook voor mensen die een uitgesproken mening hebben over de klimaatverandering en de gezondheidszorg (*issue publics*), evenals voor mensen die minder betrokken zijn bij deze kwesties. Ook wordt een evenwichtige inhoud geselecteerd door individuen die gemotiveerd zijn om tot juiste conclusies te komen (nauwkeurigheid motivatie), evenals door diegenen die hun bestaande meningen willen verdedigen (defensieve motivatie).

## **3. Het soort bewijs voor een standpunt in een bericht beïnvloedt ook de informatieselectie**

Hoewel dit proefschrift voornamelijk individuele factoren die aan de grondslag van uitgebalanceerde blootstelling liggen bestudeerde, kan er ook een andere conclusie getrokken worden: het soort bewijs dat gezocht wordt voor een standpunt, vormt ook het soort politieke informatie die verschillende burgers zoeken. Specifieker, *issue publics* en gewone burgers geven de voorkeur aan politieke boodschappen die numeriek in plaats van narratief bewijs bevatten. Daarnaast prefereren *issue publics* politieke informatie die getallen en statistieken gebruikt om twee kanten van een verhaal te belichten.

## **4. Evenwichtige blootstelling vermindert de invloed van gemotiveerde beredenering op informatieverwerking**

Blootstelling aan evenwichtige inhoud speelt een cruciale rol voor de manier waarop mensen politieke informatie te verwerken. Evenwichtige blootstelling moedigt onpartijdige verwerking aan, ten opzichte van eenzijdige berichten. Wat nog belangrijker is, het geeft ons inzichten in de vraag of als mensen gemotiveerd zijn om hun mening te versterken of om nauwkeurige conclusies te komen, ze dan ook evenwichtige inhoud in een onpartijdige manier te interpreteren. In het bijzonder, wanneer iemand wordt blootgesteld aan evenwichtige berichten, dan zijn defensief en nauwkeurigheid gemotiveerde burgers minder geneigd om pro-attitudinale argumenten te accepteren en tegenstelde argumenten te weerleggen, in vergelijking met wanneer ze worden geconfronteerd met eenzijdige berichten.

## **5. Evenwichtige blootstelling stimuleert onpartijdig denken, maar is niet in staat om politieke polarisatie verminderen**

De beschikbaarheid, selectie en onpartijdige verwerking van evenwichtige politieke informatie is niet voldoende om gematigde politieke standpunten over omstreden sociaal-politieke kwesties te bevorderen. Deze resultaten weerleggen de hoop dat de

blootstelling aan gebalanceerde of contra-attitudinale informatie politieke opvattingen kan depolariseren. Aan de andere kant, de blootstelling aan evenwichtige politieke inhoud vermindert het risico dat de houding van mensen extremer wordt.

Dit proefschrift heeft belangrijke gevolgen voor politieke communicatie wetenschappers, journalisten en burgers. Ten eerste, de meeste burgers geven de voorkeur aan evenwichtige informatie over politiek en publieke zaken. Bovendien zoeken sommige burgers naar evenwichtige inhoud die wordt ondersteund door feitelijke en waarheidsgetrouw bewijs. Dit is op zich een goede uitkomst voor de media-instellingen en journalisten die pleiten voor het idee dat politieke berichtgeving in de media moet worden afgewogen, en objectief en eerlijk moet zijn. Ten tweede, dit proefschrift suggereert dat de media omgeving meer onpartijdig denken kan stimuleren door het aanbieden van een evenwichtige en neutrale rapportage. Als journalisten politieke kwesties op een evenwichtige manier verslaan, zouden verschillende burgers aandacht aan deze berichten schenken, wat hen zou kunnen aanmoedigen om omstrede kwesties meer onbevogen te interpreteren. Ten derde, hoewel we er niet vanuit kunnen gaan dat blootstelling aan evenwichtige informatie een oplossing is voor attitude polarisatie, de beschikbaarheid en de blootstelling aan dergelijke informatie-omgeving kunnen de democratie op andere manieren bevorderen. Om deze mogelijkheden te verkennen, moet toekomstig onderzoek over selectieve blootstelling zijn traditionele focus verleggen van het bestuderen van veelal eenzijdige politieke boodschappen naar het uitbreiden van inzichten over de oorzaken en gevolgen van evenwichtige informatie blootstelling.





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**Chapter 2: Selective Exposure to Balanced Content and Evidence Type: The Case of Issue and Non-Issue Publics about Climate Change and Health Care**

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Study design: all authors. Acquisition of data: CB. Analyses and Interpretation of data: CB, YL. Drafting of the manuscript: CB. Critical revision of the manuscript: all authors.

**Chapter 3: Desired vs. Correct Conclusions: The Motivated Selection of Balanced Content**

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Study design: all authors. Acquisition of data: CB. Analyses and Interpretation of data: all authors. Drafting of the manuscript: CB. Critical revision of the manuscript: all authors.

**Chapter 4: I Stick to My Guns: Motivated Reasoning and Biased Processing of Balanced Political Information**

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Study design: all authors. Acquisition of data: CB. Analyses and Interpretation of data: CB, YL, and MW. Drafting of the manuscript: CB. Critical revision of the manuscript: all authors.





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“Little do you know your own blessedness; for to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour.” (Robert Louis Stevenson)

Before I began writing these words, I reflected on what it meant for me to complete my journey as a PhD candidate. But, as I was about to start writing, I experienced a flashback of seemingly infinite memories. A movie played in my mind that spanned not only the last three years creating my dissertation, but also took me way back to what I can remember as the beginning of my journey. After the movie ended, I thought to myself: what a journey it has been! Perhaps, if I ever become a good writer, I will write some sort of fiction book someday. Until then I will keep these memories to myself... dear memories that I share complicitly with the wonderful people I wish to acknowledge here.

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