

Smarter Voting?

Online Voting Advice Applications in the Netherlands and their influence on democratic processes.

MASTER THESIS Media Culture and Society

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Preface

September 2012, the start of my masters degree, coincided with the Dutch parliamentary elections of 2012. Voting advice applications were a hot topic then: most people I know used them and were also taking them very seriously. This is what gave me the idea to look further into this subject. How did these things work? And why did people need to use them? It became immediately clear to me that this would be a good subject for my master's thesis. Ten months later, and my research into VAA's is now finished. Although there were some small setbacks such as the difficulty of finding enough respondents I am glad to say that I enjoyed the process of writing it. I want to thank my supervisor Ericka Menchen -Trevino for guiding me through the writing process and of course the 175 respondents who completed my survey.

-Valerie Schulte Nordholt

Abstract

In the 2006 parliamentary elections in the Netherlands, more than 5 million people used online Voting Advice Applications (VAAs). Given that so many people use them, research about the use of VAAs is important to see what influence they have on democratic processes in the Netherlands. This thesis uses a survey with different manipulated conditions to separate the different elements of VAAs. These elements are the wording of the statements that are used, the integration of deliberative politics and the decision making processes and the non-rational processes of decision making that are triggered by answer scales. The results found that certain political subject are more sensitive to manipulation then others and that it is possible to integrate some elements of deliberation in VAAs. In conclusion VAAs turn out to be very manipulative and users should keep in mind that the results are very arbitrary. At the same time they could be improved by introducing more deliberative element to better reflect the political landscape of the Netherlands.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Dutch society was highly stratified. As a protestant you would go to a protestant school, play football at the protestant football club and buy bread at a protestant bakery. Of course you would vote for the protestant ARP party. This stratification of society was called pillarisation. In the 60's and 70's, due to modernization, the introduction of television and the advent of mass culture, depillarisation took place. Different groups interacted more with each other and people did not have a fixed party anymore. This meant there now was a large group of undecided voters who were not sure which party they should vote for. Because of these new undecided voters new parties started up, and votes became scattered across a wide political spectrum of parties

This development continues to today, with long established parties such as the Christian CDA losing support and new parties such as the populist PVV and the party for the animals gaining seats in parliament. The more parties however, the more difficult it is for voters to vote correctly based on their fully informed interest (Lau & Redlawsk, 1997). In the early 2000's a solution for this problem was offered: sites started popping up that offered a selection of political statements with which the user could agree or disagree. The political party that most 'fit' their preferences would appear at the top of the list. These sites use so-called voter advice applications (VAA's). These applications are not just used in the Netherlands but in many European countries with multi-party systems. They help the voter to make sense of a multitude of opinions and beliefs and save voters the trouble of having to read the often hundred pages long political programs. The popularity of these applications are reflected in numbers: in the 2006 parliamentary elections in the Netherlands, 4.7 million people used the *stemwijzer* (Ladner, Fivaz & Pianzola, 2010). Another 1.5 million people used another VAA, the *kieskompas* (Ladner, Fivaz & Pianzola, 2010). These two VAAs are the most popular in the Netherlands. *Stemwijzer* is developed by ProDemos, which describes itself as a 'national non-partisan organization' (Prodemos, 2012). It is an NGO that informs and activates citizens to participate in democracy. The development of the *Stemwijzer* is not subsidized by anyone but is rather financed through advertisements. *Kieskompas* is developed by a team of academics that are connected to the VU university in Amsterdam in association with the *Trouw* newspaper, which also funds it. In general *Kieskompas* is regarded as being more multi-dimensional than *stemwijzer* with the user being placed in a grid between two categories: right or left leaning on the one hand and progressive or

conservative on the other. The political parties are also placed on this grid and at a glance the user can see where he or she is situated on the political spectrum.

Despite the large number of users, not a lot is known about what considerations are made regarding the specific statements that are used. For *Stemwijzer* a hundred statements are chosen by the makers, which are then brought down to fifty statements. These fifty statements are submitted to party authorities who decide what the party's answer will be and if there need to be extra statements (Kleinnijenhuis & Scholten, 2007). The consequences of this are that parties will chose strategic questions, which is what one advisor of the Christian democrats has already admitted (Kleinnijenhuis & Scholten, 2007). The official selection procedure for the *Kieskompas* works differently. Instead of asking political parties about statements, they take the statements from official party programs. After selection and determining the political parties answer, *Kieskompas* will run them past the political parties (Kleinnijenhuis & Scholten, 2007).

These two voting advice application both approach the process from different viewpoints. As *Stemwijzer* is founded by an organization (ProDemos) that promotes the interaction of citizens with politics its goals are to make the voting process as clear and simple as possible (Stemwijzer, 2012). Additionally they want to make people vote in accordance to their own political views (Veiling, 2012).

Kieskompas seems to have somewhat similar viewpoints: it calls itself an enterprise that has as its core activity 'the development-of applications with which a complex process of choice can be simplified' (Nieuwsbank.nl, 13-07-2007). In 2009 it won the E-democracy award from the World E-democracy forum, for bringing about political change through the internet (Kieskompas, 2009). The difference between *Kieskompas* and *Stemwijzer* is that *Stemwijzer* gives a voting advice and *Kieskompas* positions the voter somewhere in a landscape that is formed by the different positions of the political parties. However, both seem to aim to make the process of choosing to vote for a particular political party a simpler process. It is also this particular aim that I will be discussing in this thesis. Can voting advice applications bring people closer to being a fully-informed voter, and is the idea of 'the fully-informed voter' helpful?

The research that has been done about voter advice applications has focused on different aspects of the applications. Some research has focused on the impact that these applications have on turnout and voting behavior. Research in different European countries

has shown that the voting advice application does affect how voters behave. Due to these applications, in the 2004 Belgian elections there was a 'modest change' in voting behavior (Walgrave, van Aals & Nuytemans, 2004). In the Swiss federal election in 2007 the voting advice application affected the turn out and citizen's propensity to deal with politics in general (Ladner & Pianzola, 2007).

In the Netherlands, statistics from *Stemwijzer* have shown that the results that *Stemwijzer* gives, differ from the actual election results ('*Stemwijzer: Nederlander eens*', 2012). The number one party that people got on *stemwijzer* was the populist PVV party, followed by the socialist party (SP), the labor party (PVDA), the green party (Groenlinks) and the party for the animals (PVDD). In contrast, the actual election where won by the liberal party (VVD), followed by the labor party (PVDA), the freedom party (PVV), the socialist party (SP) and the Christian Democrats (CDA), with the green party and the party for the animals ending up on the 8th and 10th place. This begs the question if more 'extreme parties', such as the SP and PVV are actually favored by the VAA. Of course another explanation could be that online voting advice application are used by a younger demographic that is more likely to go out on the internet to help decide who to vote for as opposed to the older demographic that follow the more established parties such as the VVD and the labor party.

These particular VAA results are also reflected by research in Lithuania, that found that the VAA might be advantageous to non-ideological populist parties because they are the most flexible to adjust to the attitudes of the average voter (Ramonaitė, 2010). Other research has focused more on how the VAA reflects the ideological landscape and how statements selections are calibrated with regard to parties. In the literature there is also a tendency to criticize about statement selections and manipulations of statements by political parties (Garzia, 2010). Given that there are many points of criticism to make about the VAA, it could be questioned if it is still a device that enhances informed citizenship by better linking voters to the parties that would best represent their interest.

Another criticism that can be made is that VAAs seem very individualized. It is all about the individual voter choosing his or her preferences in a vacuum where no compromises have to be made. At the same time, the political system in the Netherlands is characterized by the 'polder-model', a consensus model in which political parties have to make compromises all the time, not just among themselves but also with other stakeholders. This 'polder-model' consists of 'Consultation, co-ordination, and bargaining over all

important issues of socio-economic policy between union federations, employer federations and the government.' (Hartog, 1999, p484). However, few aspects of this model are incorporated in VAA's, which leaves a large disconnect between VAA's and how actual politics are being conducted.

1.2. Research Questions

In this thesis, a survey will be used to find out how different aspects of voting advice applications influence peoples votes and if people answer questions differently when a number of different conditions are manipulated. By doing this, it will be determined how online VAAs change voting behavior and how emphasizing certain cognitive processes of decision can alter peoples choices when filling out VAAs. The main question will be very broad, leaving room for specific sub-questions aimed at discovering different aspects of VAAs.

The main question is as follows:

How do responses to VAA's change when aspects of statements are changed or added?

Sub questions are:

1. Will adding deliberative elements to VAA statements lead participants to choosing the respective condition more than the control condition?

2. Will changing positive phrasing to negative phrasing lead participants to choosing the respective position more than the control condition?

3. Will right or left-leaning word choices lead to participants choosing the respective position more than the control condition?

4. Are the effects of emotions captured by VAA's?

1.2 Justification and relevance

A democracy can only exist when people turn out to vote. Increasingly however, the way we vote is changing. In the Netherlands alone Voting Advice Applications are used by millions of people to determine which party they should choose (Ladner, Fivaz & Pianzola, 2010). VAAs are a relatively new phenomenon and the research that has been done is mostly dispersed across different applications and their effects in different countries. This thesis will work towards a more comprehensive view of voting applications by understanding their relevance and connection to Dutch society. *Kieskompas* won the e-democracy award for bringing about political change through the internet. This statement will be taken apart and it will be considered *how* VAAs are bringing about this change by looking at how individuals are influenced by particular VAA statements and which considerations they make when answering these statements.

VAAs will also be more closely connected to actual political processes. Processes which happen after voting has taken place: the forming of coalitions and the discussion of issues with other people. In this way VAAs become more closely connected to everyday politics and might be more relevant even after elections.

At the end of this thesis I will review how processes of e-democracy are influencing people and the decisions they are making when voting. E-democracy is a relatively new concept that focuses on the use of information and communication strategy by 'democratic sectors', within political processes. These processes can take place at different levels, local, nationwide, or global (Clift, 2003). It is also a field of study, that aims to advance the practice and understanding of work conducted by governments, NGO's and others (jeDEM, 2012). This thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of e-democracy and how it changes political processes. At the end of this thesis a framework will be given which can be used to obtain further insights into VAAs and e-democracy.

2. Theory

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter the interaction of VAAs with democratic processes will be examined. First of all, VAAs will be placed in the context of how internet has changed democratic processes and especially e-campaigning. Secondly, it will be examined how three

conceptualizations of democracy can contribute to a better understanding of Voting Advice Applications: the model of the informed citizen, Participatory democracy and deliberative democracy. It will also be described how these theories can be connected to the Dutch political system. Thirdly, it will be examined how belief systems and schema theory might be helpful in explaining why VAAs give certain results and how people chose their political preference. Lastly, the role that VAAs play in agenda setting and previous research that has been conducted about VAAs will be looked at.

2.2 Internet and democracy

To be able to examine the impact of internet on democracy we first have to ask how we can define what democracy is. Samuel Huntington gives a procedural definition that focuses on elections: '[a political system is] democratic to the extent that its most powerful decision makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes' (Huntington, 1991, 7). So periodically returning fair and free elections are a good bench-mark to judge whether a society is democratic or not, and competition between candidates should be free. Elections are defined as the ultimate benchmark of democracy. Elections are also what are most impacted by voting advice applications. Of course it is not just voting advice applications that reflect how democracy is changed by the internet. A number books have been written about the impact of internet on democracy; these books focus on 'the tensions between surveillance, privacy and security', local democracy, social movements and the governance of the internet itself or e-mobilization (Chadwick, 2006; Coleman & Blumber, 2009). The concept in this branch of research that deals with elections is called E-campaigning and examines how the internet changes electoral processes. Key assumptions are that developments in e-campaigning are most likely to evolve in places with high internet use and that the parties with the most resources will also be most successful on the internet. The impact that the internet has on party competition is one branch in this kind of research. One argument for the internet ensuring a more competitive environment is that E-campaigning allows parties which are marginalized to reach a platform on the internet. On the other hand however, big parties have more money and therefore also more resources to put into their websites (Chadwick, 2006). Through researching the 2004 US elections a trend was noticed in favor of the latter argument. In the 2012 Dutch elections VAA users could chose to include small marginal parties in their list of results. However, it is not known if this impacted their results in the

election in any way.

VAA in this regard would seem to fit into the concept of e-democracy: although they are not affiliated with any of the parties (which would defeat the whole purpose of VAA) they can be an asset in e-campaigning. The way that political advisers and party officials deal with these VAA is prime evidence of that. This might also limit the democratic power of VAA and E-campaigning through institutional adaption: political parties design sleek websites with spin doctored politics and have the resources to influence how these VAA are designed (Chadwick, 2006). This leads to the conclusion that there is less of a democratic grassroots change and that it is just business as usual: the old political systems expanded to the internet. However this is not to say that VAA may not change democracy in other ways.

2.3 Three models of democracy

There are three different models of democracy that can be useful in understanding how VAA fit into the political system: the informed citizenship model, the participatory democracy model and the deliberative democracy model. Most European countries have a multiparty system which fits into the model of deliberative democracy and collective bargaining. On the other hand the US system fits better into the model of the informed citizen, in which each citizen is required to make his or her own choice by being fully informed. However the model of the informed citizen can also be used in connection to the European multi-party system, or the two-party system of the US. In this chapter, the relevancy of each of these models to VAA will be examined.

Democracy and informed citizenship

If information is at the heart of democracy than VAA could theoretically create a situation where the voter is closer to a fully informed citizen and democracy (as defined by classic theorists) would be better served. Democracy in the classic sense would be defined as citizens paying active attention to government policy so that they can make the correct decisions (Lau & Redlawsk 1997).

According to this view, a situation of perfect democracy is created by 'voting correctly'. A correct vote is defined by Lau and Redlawsk (1997) if it is based on the fully informed interest of the individual voter. Other research has shown that well-informed voters do vote differently than those that are poorly-informed (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1995). By using VAA it would seem that voters can get closer to the party that most fully reflects

their opinion, by being better informed about which issues each parties represent. By being well informed they can vote to better represent their own interest, picking out a party which happens to agree with them on most points.

Schudson (1998) however argues that the concept of the informed citizen is inadequate and does not satisfactorily explain the relationship between civilians and democracy. In his history of citizen democracy, he describes how the idea of the informed citizen started in the U.S. with progressive era politics at the end of the 19th century. Politics became more separate from daily life and became disconnected from self-interest (Schudson, 2002). Voting became more of an imaginative leap and therefore being informed became a perquisite for making the right choice. He sees the informed citizen as one of the four distinct eras of American civic life, with the four eras overlapping each other. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century civic responsibility consisted of deferring to the ruling elites. In the second era, which covers most of the nineteenth century, citizens themselves were considered more important and politics consisted of strong local party organizations that mobilized citizens. The third era, beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing through the first half of the twentieth, is the era of the informed citizen. From the 1950's onwards, the 'rights-conscious' citizen emerged, with individual and collective rights driving politics forwards with the judiciary branch moving to the center of importance (Schudson, 2001).

However, Schudson criticizes some aspects of the concept of the informed citizen as he believes that it should be modified and complemented by specialist expert resources. Because research has shown that voter's political knowledge has often been very low in the US, the informed citizenship model also seems like a unreasonable expectation (Delli Carpini, 2000). If we take this argument to its logical conclusion it would mean that the US democracy has been inadequate. Schudson himself however argues that we should not see the lack of informed citizens as a problem of democracy itself but as a problem of the model itself: information is simply not the most important concept of democracy (Schudson, 2003).

Schudson also connects his argument to the internet: another fallacy is thinking that the internet makes the concept of the informed citizen more relevant because all information is after all easily reachable now. He compares this to a camping trip in which people need to do everything themselves; searching for all this information should not be the voter's task. Instead he argues for more personal contact. It does indeed seems

impossible for an individual voter to keep up with the constant stream of information that is readily available (Schudson, 2003). He argues that the internet will not erase existing structures of democracy but this is in itself debatable. Is the process of democracy not a little bit changed when 4 million people (out of 13 million prospective voters) do indeed use VAAs to help them gain information about voting? Schudson warns that we should not only look at how the internet enhances citizens information but that we should also consider the trust-based, rights-based and party-based views.

Another criticism of the informed citizen model can be found in that this model disregards emotions and dispositions that do steer people in political life (Mutz, 2006). Research on the Dutch VAAs also suggests that though all parties are measured by the same standards, users might get different results than they would without a VAA because voters are used to judge parties by their most outstanding qualities, rather than carefully considered positions (Kleinnijenhuis & Scholten, 2006). This might account for the just small shift that Walgrave et al. found in the Belgian elections in 2004 (Walgrave, van Aelst & Nuytemans, 2004). Even though the VAA were telling people one thing, personal emotions and considerations might influence them to do something else. This is also the point that Zaller makes. He says that people might have multiple views on a specific issue, and that whichever view prevails, depends on the considerations that are on top of their heads, the so-called salient information recall(Zaller, 1992); voters don't have on true preference, which goes directly against the idea of the informed citizenship model.

Graber(2003) also gives arguments against the informed citizenship model. She objects that people do not have enough time to inform themselves. There is so much political information that it becomes impossible for citizens to take all of it in. According to her, the informed citizenship model should be adjusted to the monitorial citizenship that Schudson propagates(Schudson, 2002). In this model citizens do attain information, but just a moderate amount of it. Gruber argues for the use of television as an educator because audiovisual information makes it easier for people to absorb information (Gruber, 2003). Lupia and McCubbins agree with this point; voters do not have to possess adequate information, as long as they can get it from other sources, they are likely to make reasonable decisions (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998). Like Gruber they argue that other sources of information, like opinion leaders, party identification and the media may be used as shortcuts. Reasoned choice does not require full information but the ability to predict the

consequences of an action. Large amounts of information do not ensure knowledge (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998). This assumption refutes the informed citizenship model of people making the best choices if only they have the correct knowledge.

So according to this view, citizens still need to be able to make choices based on information, but this information should be picked out for them by the media or other actors and made easy to choose from; what Lupia and McCubbins call 'cues'. When information is attained through the media, this process is called media priming. The concept of media priming can be seen as being on the other side of the coin from monitorial citizenship. Whereas Graber approaches monitorial citizenship from the side of the receiver of the information, the concept of media priming approaches it from the sender; that is to say the media. Like monitorial citizenship, the basic assumption of media priming is that the citizen is not fully informed and cannot be fully informed. Through priming, the media sets the terms by which political judgments are reached (Alger, 1998). Priming is something which occurs over a certain period of time (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

The process of media priming and the cues that people attain through that can be connected to VAAs in two different ways. First of all VAAs, like other media also help people attain cues of information, maybe even more effectively than those other media. Information that voters can obtain through VAAs is after all much more individualized than any information that is broadcasted on television. Second of all, through the process of media priming certain statements that are used in VAAs should be familiar to respondents, which might make them behave in certain ways. So VAAs not only use media priming but are also affected by it.

Informed citizenship in the Netherlands

Keeping in mind the amount of political parties that are serious contenders in Dutch politics, it seems that to be an informed citizen in this (or any other) multi-party system would be very time-consuming, even more so than in two-party systems. Given that Graber has argued that even in the US system it is difficult for people to conform to the ideal of the informed citizen (Graber, 2003), it seems equally if not more difficult to do this in the Dutch system. The popularity of VAAs has shown that these programs are considered viable shortcuts by prospective voters and it seems to be an example of monitorial citizenship; with citizens picking up the information that they need there.

Participatory democracy

The idea of VAAs as an information shortcut are focused on one aspect of democracy, that of citizens being well informed enough to make decisions. Another aspect is that of the voter turn-out, of participatory citizenship. VAAs have been shown by previous research to enhance education in citizens and increase turn out (Ladner & Pianzola, 2010; Marshall & Schmidt, 2012). From the point of view of Participatory democracy theory, this is a good development. Participatory democracy theory argues that people need to be educated about politics and that participation is necessary to avoid the abuse of power (Gutman, 1993). Sometimes the concept of Participatory democracy is meant in the most narrow sense of the word: citizens turning up to vote. In participatory theory, the more citizens vote, the more legitimate the democracy is. Unlike the informed citizenship model it does not really matter if citizens vote according to their best interest, it just matters if they vote. The object of participation is not just democracy for its own sake, but the existence of greater leverage which can lead to a more egalitarian distribution of power (Bachrach & Botwinick, 1992). Participatory democracy would therefore close the gap between the ruling few and the many who are ruled. Bachrach & Botwinick approach this concept from an American point of view, in a context of declining rates of voting and participation. However, other use the concept of participate democracy in a broader way. Mutz for example sees participatory democracy as citizens acting politically; working on campaigns together and demonstrating (Mutz, 2006).

Participatory democracy in the Netherlands

The Netherlands had compulsory voting until the 1970's. After this system was abolished voting turnout unsurprisingly decreased, although the last decade voting turnout has been stable (Aarts & Wessels, 2002) . This is not a trend that is specific to the Netherlands. Although some measures indicate that in the United States voter turnout has been decreasing, these measures are an illusion as the census had included a lot of groups that were ineligible for voting, therefore dragging the average down (McDonald & Popkin, 2001).

However, given that people have become more educated, voting turnout should have been increasing, instead of remaining at the same level. According to Aarts and Wessels, these stable numbers therefore mean that people have become less interested in politics altogether. (Aarts & Wessels, 2002). However even though voting turnout has been stable,

the number of people that have been using VAAs keeps increasing (Ladner, Fivaz & Pianzola, 2010). This means that the people actively participating in political processes is also increasing and that VAAs as a tool of e-democracy do stimulate participatory politics under this broader definition.

Deliberative democracy

Deliberative democracy is an extension of Participatory democracy. It expands upon the concept of Participatory democracy by considering increased voting as not enough to stimulate a healthy democracy; there should also be debates, political talk and other deliberative processes (Elster, 1986). In contrast to the informed citizenship model, deliberative democracy is much more socially oriented than individual. It argues that people should participate by argument, evidence and persuasion (Gutman, 1993). Mutz further defines deliberation as people being exposed to oppositional perspectives through political talk (Mutz, 2006).

She even argues that, at least in the United States, deliberative democracy and Participatory democracy are contradictory (Mutz, 2006). The more exposure people have to opposing views, the less likely they are to participate in politics (Mutz, 2006). When confronted with differing opinions, people have more hesitation in taking sides. Mutz defines deliberative democracy not just as discussions but also as exposure to different opinions. According to her, the traditionally well-informed, good citizen of American politics is most lacking in this criterion, because they will mostly associate with like-minded people. It has to be kept in mind however, that Mutz's research has taken place in the United States, which has a political model that is more partisan than the European consensus model; people might be less likely to associate themselves with people that have different viewpoints.

Another remark that Mutz makes about the theory of deliberative democracy is that it is lacking in both the theoretical as the empirical department. The benefits of deliberative practices are unclear and the concept of deliberation itself is unclear. There is also a lack of link to outcomes of deliberative processes (Mutz, 2008).

Given that the VAA seems suited to a Participatory democracy (in that it encourages people to concern themselves with politics and also educates them about politics) does this mean that it also decreases deliberation, as Mutz argues? At first sight, the VAA certainly seems more suited to Participatory democracy than the deliberative model, because it is

aimed at the individual. People are not particularly encouraged to discuss things with each other because filling in the VAA is a very individual process. In fact, the deliberative democracy model seems the antithesis to VAAs. VAAs seem more aimed at eliminating analysis and discussion than that they encourage it: the program itself does all the work in getting to a particular solution. It perfects the analysis that the voter would otherwise have to make on his own. This leads to a kind of contradiction: even though voting advice applications do not seem to encourage the process of deliberation they are mostly used in countries that have a strong, deliberative culture. In fact, almost all of the research about VAAs has taken place in countries with a multiple-party political system in which deliberation forms an important part of the political process. It seems that it would make more sense that people use VAAs in countries where there are more political parties to choose from; in the two-party system of the UK and the US for example, VAAs do not seem to have caught on so much. The next paragraph will further discuss these deliberative systems, focusing especially on the Netherlands.

Deliberative democracy in Europe and the Netherlands

Most western European countries have multi-party systems. This means that there is a non majoritarian rule, because most parties never gain a majority. This leads to the forming of coalitions that are characterized by a special form of bargaining and negotiation (Laver & Schofield, 1990).

In the Netherlands the political system is characterized by the 'polder model', a consensus model in which cooperation and compromises take a central place. The system is non-majoritarian and based on consensus between the different parties (Hendriks & Michels, 2011). This consensus is needed because parties practically never get majorities in parliament. This lack of majorities leads to a system where parties have to negotiate and compromise on their issues. Aspects of this consensus model are found in every part of the political system; one such aspect is the model of neo corporatism, which is 'a combination of non-competitive relations among interest associations, with bargaining between interest associations and government' (Andeweg, 2000, p.697). Mutz definition of deliberative democracy (people being exposed to opposing opinions through political talk), seems well-suited to the Dutch polder model as do other definitions and clarifications of the concept, such as Gutman and Thompson's: 'The reasons that deliberative democracy asks citizens and their representatives to give should appeal to principles that individuals who are trying to

find fair terms of cooperation cannot reasonably reject' (Gutman & Thompson, 2004, p.3.). This appeal to shared principles is also a cornerstone of the poldermodel with its consensus politics. Gutman and Thompson's definition seems to focus more on the deliberative process of politicians and citizens, whereas Mutz definition seems to focus only on the citizens themselves. The latter's definition is therefore more relevant to VAAs, which are concerned with voters. However, VAAs do not stimulate either definition of deliberative democracy. They focus instead on the individual's opinion and disregard the deliberative aspect of Dutch politics.

2.4 VAAs and belief systems

Having discussed these three aspects of democracy, information, participation and deliberation, the focus will now shift to how VAAs fit into the political process overall and specifically in belief systems. The research that Converse has done about people's belief systems is very similar to how VAAs work (Converse, 1964). However this research has been contested and criticized and Converse has admitted that there were some methodological deficiencies (Converse, 200). In his 1964 research Converse asked questions and found that there was no underlying belief structure, but just random opinions. People don't adhere to one ideology, and they don't have a clear grasp of what an ideology is. There was a serious lack of coherence in the response. He also found that there was a correlation between the amount of political information people had, their education and the presence of a belief system. These findings were later nuanced by Converse himself who said that cognitive limitations were not the cause of this and that actually many people do have some idea of policies, even if it is a limited amount of policies. However the idea that there are some deficiencies in people's grasp of ideology is an interesting one and might explain the success of VAA's.

Assuming that people have a somewhat limited awareness of what policies they support, we can also assume that this can be changed. Looking at it this way, the VAAs might structure random opinions, making them consistent. Research by Ramonaite has found that populist parties can use this to their advantage: because most people think in non-ideological ways, non-ideological, populist parties will be favored (Ramonaite, 2010). Zaller makes a further distinction, between aware and non-aware citizens. This last group will tend to think in less ideological consistent ways, because they have internalized fewer

considerations (Zaller, 1992). For this group of people, voting advice applications might be most relevant. The way that people internalize political knowledge has also been examined by Graber, by using the *schema theory* of social sciences (Graber, 1988). This theory states that people have only limited capacity for dealing with information, which forces them to form simplified mental models called schemata. A schemata is a "cognitive structure consisting of organized knowledge about situations and individuals that has been abstracted from prior experiences. It is used for processing new information and retrieving stored information" (Conover and Feldman, cited in Graber, 1988, p.28). Graber connects schema theory to the forming of political knowledge and explores how schema formation is passively contributed to by the media. She finds that schemata's are heavily influenced by the media, especially when it comes to stories that individuals themselves do not have much knowledge about. Individuals form schemata from whatever is presented to them. Which specific schemata's are evoked, depends on the cues that are sent. These cues are in turn formed by the words that are used. So for example the sentence 'Government funds were used to pay for this program' can provoke other schemata than the sentence 'taxpayers money was used to pay for this program', even though they are basically saying the same thing. Taxpayers money for instance points to the fact that 'your' money was used for something which can have more negative connotations than government funds which sounds more neutral. Another example, this one taken from Frank Luntz, a Republican strategist is saying 'healthy economy' instead of 'economic growth'. The first phrase conjures more positive images than the second phrase; it provokes different schemata .

Walgrave, Nuytemans and Pepermans examined the effect of schemata by showing statement selection specifically affected the outcome of voting application advice. They also believe that words can be framed in a particular right wing or left wing way and that the way these sentences are framed also effects the advice of voting applications, just like statement selections (Walgrave, Nuytemans & Pepermans, 2010). This would mean that these words can trigger different schemata in individuals and dependent on which ones they trigger, results are given. These schemata's themselves are mostly formed by the issues that the media report about, through the process of media priming, which is linked to the question of agenda setting.

2.5 Agenda Setting

Political information does not flow directly from the political leaders who make decisions to the public. The press play an important role in between the two: they filter and decide which information they give the most importance to. This is called agenda-setting and is determined by various complex social processes (McCombs, Maxwell & Shaw, 1976).

More recent research into agenda-setting has also considered the effect of the internet on agenda setting (Kim & Lee, 2006). Kim and Lee suggested that through the internet there could be a reverse agenda-setting effect in which the public influenced the media's agenda setting. However most of the time there is a complicated interaction between public and traditional media with the public bringing forward older media stories or the traditional media reporting on an anonymous blog and spreading it to both online and offline public. Ragas and Roberts (2009) describe how agenda-setting might change further. With traditional agenda setting as defined by McCombs, Maxwell and Shaw (2009), people change their beliefs to fit in an agenda in order to avoid isolation. However the effect of the internet might be that the opposite happens; people determine their beliefs first and then find a groups that have similar agenda's. This process is called 'Agenda Melding' (Ragas & Roberts, 2009). In the same way, by using VAA's people first chose their beliefs and then they find the appropriate political party, instead of supporting the party first and then adjusting them to accord with the parties believes.

Klijnijenhuis and Scholten describe how Kieskompas selects statements based on the issues that are most prominent in the party programs (Kleinnijenhuis & Scholten, 2007) and then choses three questions that deal with these issues. This suggests that Agenda Setting is done by the parties themselves. However, considering there are so many parties, there is still a selection that has to be made between the issues that different parties consider the most important. Issues can be favorable or unfavorable for certain parties. There are also parties that 'own' some of the issues (Walgrave, Nuytemans & Pepermans, 2009). An example in Dutch politics would be the immigration issue that has been owned by the PVV, a party specifically set-up because of this issue and whose leader constantly seeks media-attention in regards to this subject.

Other issues might be considered unfortunate for parties like the VVD wanting to raise pension age. The problem is that there are so many different issues to consider, that often the ratio of favorable issues and unfavorable issues do not balance out for every single

party, which gives some parties an unfair advantage over other parties in the selection of specific statements (Walgrave, Nuytemans & Pepermans, 2009). Another problem with parties owning certain issues is that it is unclear for voters how parties think about issues that are not explicitly on their own agenda. In this regard, VAAs offer a useful informational shortcut like the shortcuts that Lupia and McCubbins (1998) and Graber (2003) consider a legitimate alternative for the informed citizenship model.

In conclusion, it seems that VAA can have an impact on the traditional agenda setting done by political parties and the press, by not only connecting parties to issues that are most favorable to them but connecting them to all the issued that are important in an election. It certainly becomes more difficult for political parties to avoid certain unfavorable issues if people can easily see (and select) them on VAAs. These unfavorable issues are issues on which some parties will have more trouble convincing people (Walgrave, Nuytemans, & Pepermans, 2009), such as the labor party's policy of increasing taxation (which is only vaguely referred to on their website as 'everyone should give a fair contribution' (PVDA, 2012). In this way, the layer of PR that is omnipresent in all party communications is stripped away to a certain extend by VAAs. To a certain extent, because parties themselves also confer with the makers of VAAs to determine what their positions are which does give them some say into how they are represented.

2.6 Previous research

Previous research on VAAs has almost exclusively taken place in European settings; in countries like Germany, Lithuania, Switzerland and Belgium. Not surprisingly, these are all countries that have a multi-party system. In an article that gives a good overview of the current state of research on VAAs Garzia discusses the effect that VAAs has on voters on three different levels, which correspond with the three different aspects of democracy that were discussed in this chapter. First of all, they encourage voters to get more information, he calls this the cognitive dimension, which overlaps with the concept of the informed citizen(Garzia, 2010). Second of all VAAs motivate people to turn-out to vote (the participatory dimension). Third of all the VAAs (though less frequently) convinces voters to change their political preference (Garzia, 2010), which might be counted as the deliberative dimension. Research on the Belgian elections confirms that the VAA do effect election results, but only moderately (Walgrave, van Aelst and Nuytemans, 2010). Research on the German elections has shown that the VAA that was used there, (the Wahl-O-mat)

significantly affected behavior and cognition (Marschall & Schmidt, 2012).

Garzia, in his overview also divides the criticisms on VAAs to four different categories. First of all, there is criticism on the selection of statements that are included in the tests. Empirical research has found that the specific statement selection has a considerable impact on the information that voters get (Walgrave, Nuytemans & Pepermans, 2009). This research consisted of configurations of 500,000 different statements. Out of 50 statements, they selected 36 questions. The results they got was that any of these selections of 36 out of 50 statements yielded different results. They also found that both Dutch VAAs, *Stemwijzer* and *Kieskompas*, yielded quite different results. Additionally, there were large fluctuations in the outcomes in different election years that did not reflect the political landscape. The example that is used here is of the Dutch VAA systems. In 2002 the CDA got a 12 % of de stemwijzer voting advice, while in 2003 it got 3%, which did not reflect the actual election outcomes at all. This is also true for the advices of different VAAs. The voting advice shares of the same parties in the same years was different for *Kieskompas* than for *Stemwijzer*.

The conclusion was that statement selection always favor certain parties (with each different statements selection favoring different parties). Ramonaite even suggests that the parties that are favored by VAAs are mostly populist parties. He found that in the Lithuanian VAA, the absence of an ideological consistent belief system worked in favor for the populist National Resurrection Party (Ramonaite, 2010). The other parties, such as the labor party, adopted a more moderate stance, where trade-offs had to be made. The populist National Resurrection party in contrast, was for more welfare but also against a progressive tax rate. This absence of a clear ideology worked well together with the VAA, because voters just pick and choose from lose statements. In conclusion, his research found that the VAA does not necessarily lead to a better form of government. Walgrave, Nuytemans & Papermans stressed that statement selection was where the crux of VAA research should be and that VAA builders should be aware that not all similar selections lead to similar effects (Walgrave, Nuytemans & Papermans, 2009). A similar ethical argument is made by Ladner, Felder and Fivaz, who consider '*To what extent can providers be held accountable?*'(Ladner, Felder & Fivaz, p30) an important question.

The second point of criticism is the different salience that voters and parties attach to certain issues, this includes criticism that the 'agree', and 'does not agree' options create false dichotomies (Garzia, 2010).

The third point of criticism involves questioning how each party's position is established. Through the method that *Stemwijzer* uses (asking the political parties themselves about their position), it is also possible that these positions deviate from the official party program. Already one party's advisor has conceded that his party did answer these questions strategically (Kleinnijenhuis & Scholten 2007).

Fourthly, the dimensionality of the policy space on which voters and parties are placed is critiqued. However, this is not true for all VAAs. *Kieskompas* for example is more multi-dimensional than the linearity of *Stemwijzer* (Garzia, 2010). It includes two different scales, left to right and progressive to conservative, which are placed in a grid. However these scales might not be the most relevant for many issues of current politics. In many European countries there are now parties which are not organized along politics of the right or the left, but along issues of environmentalism or immigration.

On the subject of agenda setting, research found that people perceive the impact of a VAA on their electoral behavior to be bigger than it actually is. They note that the VAA system might make parties follow the public instead of convincing the public to follow them, which makes the public the agenda setter instead of the other way around. This can stir populism (Walgrave, van Aelst and Nuytemans, 2004).

2.7 Sub questions

The main question of this thesis is: How do responses to VAA's change when aspects of statements are changed or added? It is divided into four sub questions that will be answered through survey experiments, therefore they all carry hypotheses.

The four sub questions and hypotheses are as follows:

1. Will changing positive phrasing to negative phrasing lead participants to choosing the respective position more than the control condition?

Hypothesis: The participants will choose the respective condition more

2. Will right or left-leaning word choices lead to participants choosing the respective position more than the control condition?

Hypothesis: The participants will choose the respective condition more

3. Will adding deliberative elements to VAA statements lead participants to choosing the respective condition more than the control condition?

Hypothesis: The participants will chose the respective condition more

4. Are the effects of emotions captured by VAA's?

Hypothesis: There effects of emotions are distinct from what the VAA measures

Through the use of surveys I will test how these concepts can be integrated into the standard VAA questions, and if people answer these changed questions differently.

3. Methods

The method of data collection that will be used is a survey. The method of surveying has been chosen because it is a clear and concise way to determine the influence that the

wording of statements has on the way that respondents answer. This survey also approximates the VAA devices and is therefore the best way to gain more knowledge about how VAAs function. In this chapter the relevant background for each question will be considered and the considerations that should be made when setting up questions. This chapter is divided into four parts, with each question consisting of one part, and the fourth part being about the survey design itself. For the design of the survey the program Qualtrics will be used. As a basis for the survey Kieskompas will be used as a template instead of stemwijzer, because Kieskompas has a more detailed scale. Stemwijzer has a scale of three options, which consist of the following: Agree. Neither. Disagree. Kieskompas uses a more extensive list of options, which consist of Completely agree, agree, neutral, do not agree, completely disagree and no opinion. By using this last list of options, it is possible to obtain a more precise level of measurement, and thus more analysis will be possible.

The survey will use statements and variations of statements that were used in the VAA for the Dutch National Parliamentary Elections of 2012. The 2012 elections, which took place on September 12th, were focused around the issues of the European Union and austerity measures. Important issues were the heightening of the age for state pensions, the allocation of money to higher education and increase of taxation. All these issues were highly visible in the media and were discussed on a daily to weekly basis on current affairs programs and in the newspapers. One of the goals of this survey is to recreate this deliberative atmosphere in the questions themselves, by focusing on discussion instead of just personal considerations. In the September 2012 elections twenty one political parties were participating, although ten of those parties had almost no chance to get a seat in the parliament. People could choose to leave out these small insignificant parties from their voting advice on *Stemwijzer* and *Kieskompas* and just focus on the parties that were likely to get seats in parliament.

3.1 Will changing positive phrasing to negative phrasing lead participants to choosing the respective position more than the control condition?

'Respondents are more likely to disagree with negative questions than to agree with positive questions' (Kamoen, 2012, p.118). This means that respondents generally answer questions which have the word 'allow' in them more negatively than they answer questions with the word 'forbid' positively. Kamoen concludes that there is a positive/negative asymmetry. To eliminate this asymmetry the same question formulated in a different way

can be added to the survey to see if this makes any difference in how people answer these particular questions. See Appendix A, Condition 2 for how positively phrased questions were changed into negative questions.

3.2 Will right or left-leaning word choices lead to participants choosing the respective position more than the control condition?

Walgrave, Nuytemans and Pepermans (2009) describe how wording of statements need more attention. One idea that they put forward is that statements can be worded in a specific right wing way, or a left wing way. Frank Luntz, a U.S. political consultant who has worked primarily for conservatives, in his book *Words that work* adds that in politics words have changed how people behave or think about issues, and that words carry specific ideological connotations (Luntz, 2007). According to his experiences, personalized language works the best; that is to say, describing policies in personal terms, which he calls 'clear, simple and inspirational' (Luntz, 2007, p.160). Examples that he gives are that the words 'estate tax', were changed to 'death tax', which made the words carry a completely different ideology. With 'estate tax' having a more left wing connotation of taxing large properties while the words 'death tax' carry a more right wing view towards taxes as being excessive. Death tax also implies a policy of taxing death people which was obviously not the point of the estate tax (which was taxing *property* of dead people). These words imply different ideologies and approaches to one issue and color them in an ideological way. Another example of making words sound more 'right wing' or 'left wing' is using the words taxpayers money instead of government funds or tax relief instead of tax cutbacks. See Appendix A, Condition 4, Q1, Q4, Q6 and Q8 for the specific words that were changed.

3.3 Will adding deliberative elements to VAA statements lead participants to choosing the respective condition more than the control condition?

As was discussed in the last chapter, VAAs do not encourage deliberation, although they are used primarily in deliberative cultures. The VAA is not a deliberative tool in that it aimed at the individual and his or her opinions. It does not force people to compromise on issues but instead lets them pick and choose their own individual composition of opinions, which almost never fully overlap with one particular party. This bears little resemblance to how deliberative politics work in practice, like the Dutch 'polder system' in which

compromises need to be made every day. In this sub question, it will be examined if adding a deliberative element to statement questions changes their outcomes. An example would be to take a statement that was used in the 2012 Stemwijzer: 'all coffee shops should close' and adding a prefix before the answer options about the respondents willingness to let the party they voted for comprise on the issue. This condition would look at the institutional meaning of compromising, which takes place after elections. Another condition exploring the deliberative dimension will also be added. This conditions explores deliberation in the sense of discussion and will ask the respondent in the extent to which they are willing to discuss the issue by adding a prefix before the answer options.

3.4 Are the effects of emotions captured by VAA's?

As covered in the theory chapter, people do not only chose according to what they know, but they are also influenced by other considerations and emotions (Mutz, 2006; Zaller, 1992). This condition will test whether the effects of emotional decision making are captured by VAA's by separating the emotional aspect. Although Kieskompas uses a scale of one to ten to measure how suitable party leaders would be as a prime ministers, there is nowhere else were users can indicate their emotions or what their instinctive responses to certain issue are. Therefore one of the conditions in the survey will use a sliding scale where users can indicate how they feel about certain issues. The sliding scale was chosen because it makes it possible for respondents to intuitively indicate how they feel about issues. There will be a timer in the background to see how quickly people respond to the questions and to eliminate respondents who take an unusually long time and therefore don't answer the questions instinctively.

3.5 Survey design

The survey design consists of seven different conditions, including one control condition containing the original *Kieskompas* statements. They all measured different constructs. The survey uses a between subject-design, which will use randomization to attain equivalent groups.

Randomization

Subjects were assigned randomly to one of the seven conditions. What does this mean and why is this necessary? First of all, it was to reduce the effect of confounding factors (van Peer, Hakemulder & Zygier, 2007, p.143). A between subject-design needs

equivalent groups. To get an equivalent group, participants need to be selected by coincidence. If the participants are not randomized, every condition would be answered by the same group of people. This has to do with the way that the survey was distributed. For example, the survey was sent out to the youth departments of several political parties. When they all answer the same condition, the results will get skewed. The survey was also posted on different times at different places: this means that the people who answered it already had some factors in common because they were reached through certain channels at certain times. It is important that at the beginning of the survey, respondents are equivalent, before the treatment is introduced. When there is a difference at the end of the survey, it will be more meaningful, because we can say with more certainty that this is because of the treatment.

Secondly, randomization is needed because while we can know that political party affiliations might skew the results, there might also be other factors that will influence results that are unknown. These factors cannot be held constant because we don't know what kind of factors they are. The only thing that can be done is making sure that everyone of these unknown factors has about an equal chance of occurring. There are other probability distributions that can be used, however they can all introduce a confounding factor (Fisher, 1966).

Thirdly, randomization is necessary as "the necessary precondition for probabilistic inference from the results" (Fienberg & Tanur, 1966, p.239). That is to say, without randomization it would be less certain that any inferences could be made from the results of the survey or any generalizations to a larger population. It will help to keep effects that are not attributable to the manipulation of the independent variable statistically separated (Kirk, 1982).

Randomization is usually associated with experiments, but Fienberg and Tanur consider the difference between randomization in experiments and surveys only a difference in the narrow sense and emphasize that the two are connected (Fienberg & Tanur, 1966). In both cases the purpose of randomization is the generalization of results. In fact Fienberg and Tanur discuss experiments that are embedded in surveys as an important feature of surveys. The two should therefore not be thought of as separate.

Although there other methods than randomization they are not as feasible for this thesis as randomization. One other procedure for example is matching where different

participants are paired together on already known traits. However, these known traits are usually obtained by previous experiments with the same, which are not available. Also, it is only useful when the variable where you are selecting participants with is predictable. In this survey some variables are predictable (such as how people with certain political affiliation would answer questions). However there are also factors which are unknown such as the influence of the newspaper that a respondent has read that day. These variables cannot be taken into account with the matching procedure which is why randomization makes more sense (van Peer, Hakemulder & Zygier, 2007, p.143).

The statements

In the control condition the questions have been taken directly from *Kieskompas* with no changes. The questionnaires are very short and consist of only ten questions per questionnaire. They include two different issues, on which there are large divides between different ideologies: income (with questions about taxation) has a large right-wing left-wing divide and ethics, which has a large divide between progressives and conservatives. There are four questions about income and three questions about ethics. By using these two specific issues it will be easier to examine how much an effect the various conditions have on belief systems. At the end of the survey a couple of standard questions are asked such as political preferences and if the respondent has used a VAA before. These questions are asked at the end of the survey to prevent respondents feeling obligated to answer according to any political preferences they might have filled in. To get a clearer picture of the demographics of the respondents, age and gender will also be asked.

To fill up the rest of the questionnaire, random questions from *Kieskompas* have been used, which will remain the same in every condition. These questions have been put there to prevent respondents from generalizing and answering questions to quickly (van Peer, Zygier, Hakemulder, 2007). The occurrence of learning effects can also be prevented in this way because it will be more difficult for respondents to see the purpose of these questions.

A brief remark with regards to the statements can also be made about the internal validity of this research. The control condition (the original questions of the *Kieskompas*) was taken to be neutral. However, this condition might also already have influenced people through the use of certain terms that can be construed as more right wing or left wing, or in

countless other ways. In fact, there is probably no neutral way to embark upon a research project into political statements.

Positivity/Negativity: One condition

This condition deals with the problem of negative and positive asymmetry by changing the wording in such a way that it is opposite to the original question. For example the statement 'Ritual slaughter should be banned' was changed into 'Ritual slaughter should be allowed'. And 'instead of a grant, student allowances should be a loan' was changed into 'instead of a loan, student allowances should be a grant'. These manipulated statements will be presented in the survey along with the old statements. The aim of this test is to find out whether people answer differently if the question is worded positively or negatively by looking at what the effect is of including the same questions rephrased in the survey.

Ideology: Two conditions

Some words were changed into more ideologically charged words, taking the example of Luntz (2009). The first version of this condition will have more right wing wording, for example by replacing tax cut backs with 'tax relief', implying that taxes are an incredible burden. The word student grant was turned into 'gift' making it sound more generous. Child support was turned into child support benefit, which amplifies the implication of generous spending by the government. In the other condition changes were made to make words more left wing. 'The more money parents make' was changed into 'the richer parents are' and 'people with the highest incomes' was changed into 'people who are very rich'. And 'student allowances' was changed into 'student support money' making it sound more like a necessity then a nice extra.

Deliberation: Two conditions

This condition examines the effect that more deliberative questions will have. In this conditions the statements themselves remain the original questions but a prefix is added to the answer options to the effect of: I would be willing to allow the party I vote for to compromise on this issue...' Approximating the political process that takes place after elections: that of forming coalitions and making compromises, a very important aspect of Dutch political culture.

The second condition looks at the concept of deliberation not from the viewpoint of political processes and coalition forming but as a way of stimulating discussion within

society, using Gutmans concept of deliberative democracy (Gutman,1993). To reflect this aspect of democracy the prefix 'I would like to discuss this issue with other people' has been added to the answer options. Of course these are not the only methods that could be used for making VAA's more deliberative. For example you could make VAAs more deliberative by adding more interactivity and connecting users to each other. However, such a method would be outside of the scope of this thesis.

Emotions: One condition

This condition is different from all the others in that the respondents are not being asked to give an opinion on an issue, but rather they are being asked how they feel about the statement. In this condition not the Likert-scale was used like the other conditions, but instead a thermometer from 0-100 on which respondents can intuitively indicate how they feel about an issue. They will be guided by the ANES (American National Election Studies) feeling thermometer (ANES, 2007). This thermometer offers a range of responses from a hundred degrees, which indicates a very warm or favorable feeling to zero degrees, which indicates a very cold or unfavorable feeling.

Survey collection

The population of this survey consisted of Dutch respondents of voting age. They were recruited through different channels on the internet (Facebook, Twitter). Every respondent was randomly assigned to one of the seven conditions. Although the aim was to get 30 respondents per condition, in the end it turned out to be a little bit less than 30 for most conditions. The data that was collected was analyzed through a manipulation check, by comparing means through the use of non-parametric tests, given that the scores were not normally distributed.

4. Results

In this chapter, the results of the survey will be described. These results have been obtained by using the SPSS program to analyze the data with different tests. When putting the data in SPSS, some data were recoded. The scale went from 1 (disagree completely) to 5 (agree completely) for most variables. The variables in the condition with the sliding temperature scale were recoded to match with the other scales, with 0-20 becoming 1, 21 to 40 becoming 2, 41 to 60 becoming 3, 61 to 80 becoming 4 and 91 to 100 becoming a 5. The questions in the rephrasing condition that were formulated in the opposite way to the original question were also recoded so that they both correspond with the same direction of questioning (i.e. if the original question was formulated negatively the reversed question

was recoded so that the answers correspond with each other). In total 175 individual respondents answered the survey. The responses were divided across the different conditions in the following way.

1. The control condition: 27 respondents
2. Positive and Negative wording: 27 respondents
3. Right wing wording: 30 respondents
4. Left wing wording: 24 respondents
5. Coalition forming: 19 respondents
6. Discussion: 26 respondents
7. Emotions: 24 respondents.

Before looking at the results of the different conditions, the descriptive statistics pertaining to the composition of the characteristics of the respondents will be discussed.

4.1 Descriptive statistics

The average age of the respondents is 39 ($SD = 15.67$). More than half (55%) of the respondents were female. Regarding the previous uses of VAAs, the respondents answered as follows: Slightly more than three quarters (77%) of respondents had used VAAs in the last elections (the parliamentary elections in the autumn of 2012). Slightly less than three quarters (70%) had also used VAAs in other elections, matching the increasing number of users reported by *Stemwijzer* itself (Stemwijzer, 2012).

When asked what their political leanings were, a little bit more than half (52%) of respondents said they were more left leaning than right leaning, and a small amount (20%) said they were more right than left leaning. Almost one third (28%) said they were not inclined either way. Two thirds (66%) of respondents regarded themselves as more progressive than conservative and a small amount (13%) considered themselves more conservative than progressive. A fifth of respondents (21%) identified themselves with neither option. The percentage of people who always voted for one particular party was slightly less than half (47%), with the rest being undecided.

4.2 Positivity/ Negativity

To conduct this test, firstly the variables of the questions that were turned around were recoded. The difference that is tested here is the difference between the answers on the control condition and the answers when there are also questions included that are worded in the opposite way.

When choosing which tests to conduct with SPSS, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was first used to determine whether the data were normally distributed. As the p-values were highly significant for all the questions, the distributions of the responses to the individual questions were not normally distributed. This means a non-parametric test was required.

Firstly, the difference was tested *within* the 'rephrasing' group, for which the Wilcoxon test for paired samples was used (see *Table 1*). This test is different from all the other test in that it looked at the difference in how condition two respondents answered positively and negatively phrased questions . For only one statement (Civil servants should be able to refuse marrying gay couples) a significant ($Z=-1.960$, $p<0.050$) difference was found , with more people answering in favor of the question when it was negatively worded.

The second test that was conducted was a between subjects test, testing the difference between the control group and the group that was asked the questions that were oppositely worded together with the control questions. For this test, a non-parametric between subjects test was needed. Therefore the Mann-Whitney (U-test) was used (see *Table 2*). The hypothesis was:

The results suggest that there is a statistically significant difference for three different statements: ' Employees have to pay taxes over their traveling compensation expenses, just like they do over their income'(Z=-2.258, p<0.05), ' Instead of a grant, students allowances should be a loan' (Z=-2.239, p <0.05) and 'Civil servants should be able to refuse marrying gay couples' (Z=-2,167, p=<0.05). Again, the direction of the difference was positive, with more people answering in favor in the case when something was worded in the negative way. When comparing the effects of rephrasing statements within a group and between a group, the effect seems strongest between the different groups. This means that the null hypothesis can be rejected for the effected questions.

Table 1

Wilcoxon Test of paired samples in positive/negative group

	Q1	Q2	Q4	Q5	Q7	Q8	Q9
Z	-1,444	,000	-,807	-1,960*	-2,687**	-,361	-,956 ^c

*p<0.05 ** p<0.01

Note: To see which statements are meant by Q1, Q2 etc. see Appendix A

Table 2

Mann-Whitney Test of independent samples for control group and positive/negative group

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
Z	-2,528*	-,463	-,138	-2,239*	-2,167*	-1,542	-,781	-,192	-,075	-,848

*p<0.05 ** p<0.01

Note: To see which statements are meant by Q1, Q2 etc. see Appendix A

2. Right Wing / Left wing

For the statements that were worded in a right wing way, the Mann-Whitney test was chosen to compare them to answers of the control group (see *Table 3*). A highly significant effect was found for the statement: 'Instead of a gift, students allowances should be a loan.' ($Z=-2,763$, $p<0.01$). The respondents who saw this statement were more likely to vote in favor of the statement, than the ones who got the more neutral word grant instead of gift. In another Mann-Whitney test, no significant differences were found between how people who considered themselves more right or left wing answered these statements.

The Mann-Whitney test was also used for the statements that were worded in a left wing way. Like in the previous test, a significant effect was found for the statement about student loans (see *Table 4*). In this case the statement was: 'Instead of a grant, students support money should be a loan'. People were more likely to vote for in favor of this, when the words student support money were used instead of allowances ($Z=-2,584$), ($p<0.05$).

There was also a significant difference to be found in the way that right wing or left wing people answered this question. With left wing people being more likely to answer in favor of this statement ($Z=2.787$, $p<0.01$). In both the right wing and left wing condition the null hypothesis can be rejected for the statement about student loans.

Table 3

Mann-Whitney test for control group and right wing.

	Q1	Q4	Q6	Q8
Z	-1,372	-2,763**	-,968	-1,838

* $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$

Note: To see which statements are meant by Q1, Q4 etc. see Appendix A

Table 4

Mann-Whitney test for control group and left wing

	Q4	Q6	Q8
Z	-2,584*	-,321	-,420

* $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$

Note: To see which statements are meant by Q1, Q4 etc. see Appendix A

4.3 Deliberation

Coalition

Using the Mann-Whitney test significant differences from the control group were found for two out of ten statements (see *Table 5*): 'Employees have to pay taxes over their traveling compensation expenses, just like they do over their income' ($Z=-2.501$, $p<.05$), 'The Netherlands should stay in the eurozone.' ($Z=-2.115$, $p<0.05$). In case of the first statement people who were asked about coalition forming voted more in favor of the statement. In case of the second statement, people who were asked about coalition forming voted more against the statement.

Discussion

In this condition, the answer options were prefixed with the words 'I would like to discuss this issue with other people'. Using the Mann-Whitney test, significant differences were found for four statements, and nearly significant differences were found for three more questions (see Table 6). The four statements were significant effects were found were ($Z=-2.668$, $p<0.01$). 'Instead of a grant, students allowances should be a loan' ($Z=-4.247$, $p<0.01$), 'Civil servants should be able to refuse marrying gay couples' ($Z=-3.567$, $p<0.01$), and 'The Netherlands should stay in the eurozone.' ($Z=-2.400$, $p<0.01$). In the first three statements, people were more favorably inclined to discuss with other people and in the last statement people were more likely to be against the statement when asked if they wanted to discuss the statement. For all these statements, the null hypothesis can be rejected as there was a stronger reaction to be found in either direction.

Table 5

Mann-Whitney test for control group and coalition group

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
Z	-2,501*	-1,201	-,643	-1,872	-,460	-,989	-,012	-,023	-,445	-2,115*

* $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$

Note: To see which statements are meant by Q1, Q2 etc. see Appendix A

Table 6

Mann-Whitney test for control group and discussion group

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
Z	-2,668**	-1,787	-1,853	-4,247**	-3,567**	-,959	-1,684	-1,116	-,313	-2,400*

* $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$

4.3 Emotion

When running the Mann-Whitney test on the emotion condition, no significant differences were found except for an almost significant difference of the fourth statement: '

Instead of a grant, students allowances should be a loan.' (p=0.053). This means that we can accept the null hypothesis; the effects of emotions are already captured by VAA's.

Table 7

Mann-Whitney test for control group and emotions group

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
Z	-,434	-1,614	-1,523	-1,933	-,236	-1,561	-,133	-,530	-1,424	-1,175

Note: To see which statements are meant by Q1, Q2 etc. see Appendix A

5. Discussion and Analysis

In this chapter the results of the survey will be related back to the theoretical framework of the first chapters. The four sub-questions will be related back to the research and in the final paragraph to each other, after which the main question will be answered in the conclusion.

5.1 Will changing positive phrasing to negative phrasing lead participants to choosing the respective position more than the control condition?

In all statements that were found to be significant, a stronger response was elicited when something was worded in the negative way. However this response was already found to be less strong when respondents were exposed to both versions of the same questions . This means that a more considered response is given if both variations of a question are

given. Research into the phrasing of questions has shown that when words like 'forbid' are used, the response is more negative than the response to words like 'allow' is positive (Kamoen, 2010). However, in these statements the original questions were often phrased in a negative way (For example: 'ritual slaughter should be banned'). When this was reversed ('ritual slaughter should be allowed'), there was indeed a big difference between the answers, suggesting that it is important how such statements are phrased. Another observation was that whenever the question was phrased negatively the answer tended to differ in a specific direction. That is to say the answers were always more positive. This suggests that the effect only appears when people tend to agree more with the negative phrasing of these specific issues and that when they disagree with something they are less likely to voice it that strongly. All together, it seems easier for respondents to agree with statements then to disagree.

5.2 Will right or left-leaning word choices lead to participants choosing the respective position more than the control condition?

In the right wing condition only one statement showed a significant difference. This was when the word 'gift' was used instead of 'grant', with gift carrying a more ideological connotation of students getting something for nothing. In the left wing condition the same statement was affected, when the word 'allowances' was replaced by student support money.

All in all these results confirm that word selection can be considered as important as statement selection. Although not all statement were affected, in both cases a considerable percentage of total statements was changed with three out of ten statements being affected in the *positive/negative condition* (30%), one out of four being affected in the *right wing condition* (25%) and one out of three being affected in the *left wing condition* (33%). How can this be interpreted? First of all, it confirms what Walgrave, Nuytemans and Pepermans (2009) already predicted and what they observed with statement selections. The phrasing that is chosen affects the way people answer the statements. This can be done through changing the way the question is phrased or using words that carry a different ideological connotation. Second of all, it means that certain schemata are triggered when different words are used, with the words functioning as cues, like Graber proposes (Graber, 1993).

5.3 Will adding deliberative elements to VAA statements lead participants to choosing the respective condition more than the control condition?

The results for the two deliberative conditions differed between the two different instructions. The discussion condition produced four significant differences (40%), with three more that were almost significant, while the coalition condition produced just two significant differences (20%).

Coalition

The two statements that were significantly different were about whether the Netherlands should leave the Eurozone, and about tax on traveling compensation expenses. For the first statements few respondents were willing to compromise, and for the second statement many respondents were willing to do so. This shows that even when an element of compromise is introduced in the question, people would still mostly choose the same option. This shows that voting advice applications are not very conducive to compromise or 'polder' politics and that people are not really willing to make compromises in this stage of the voting process.

Discussion

In the discussion condition, the differences were far more pronounced, with almost every question being somewhat affected. Apparently people are much more familiar with the process of discussing political stances than with thinking about coalition forming. In the theory section of this thesis it was argued that VAAs seem to discourage discussion instead of encouraging it, by seeking to do the analysis for the voter instead of letting the voter come to their own conclusions. The response to this condition shows that it is not impossible to integrate ideas about deliberation into the VAA and that the respondents were open-minded about the idea of discussing issues. This shows that VAAs do not have to be contradictory to the idea of a deliberative democracy.

5.4 Are the effects of emotions captured by VAA's?

No noteworthy results were found by using the thermometer scale as a measurement and the null hypothesis was accepted. This means that the answers did not differ from the control condition. Either it was not clear enough or people are already heavily influenced by their emotions when using VAAs and the extra emphasis on emotions was superfluous.

This results discredits the idea of informed citizenship and VAAs bringing people

closer to 'correct voting' as defined by Lau & Redlawks (2007). In fact it gives more credit to the theories by Zaller about how mass opinion is formed; people's views being determined by whichever consideration happens to be on their minds (Zaller, 1992), making it a less rational decision. This confirms most of the criticism about the informed citizenship from Schudson (2003), Delli Carpini (2000) and Mutz (2006).

Considering that this was the only condition which used a different response scale - using a sliding scale which was more sensitive than the 'agree- disagree' options in the other conditions - it is interesting to note that there was no difference between the two scales. This deflects Garzia's criticism that using the 'agree-disagree' options influences people's answers (2010). There might still be a false dichotomy, but in respect to how people react to these different options this makes no difference.

5.5 Comparing the results

Throughout all the conditions some statements generated significant differences and some statements were not affected at all by the rephrasing or emphasizing of the different conditions. The statements which were affected were the following ones:

- 'Civil servants should be able to refuse marrying gay couples'
- 'The Netherlands should stay in the eurozone.'
- 'Employees have to pay taxes over their traveling compensation expenses, just like they do over their income'
- 'Instead of a grant, students allowances should be a loan'

These four (out of ten) statements were the only ones that differed significantly in all the conditions. Two of these (as categorized by *Kieskompas*) were income statements, one was an ethics statement and the remaining question was categorized as 'Europe'. Why were these questions affected, while the others weren't? As explained in the theory chapter, through media priming and monitoring some issues may be more salient than others, which means that people have been primed by the media to have stronger opinions on them. When a condition changes, this would have a stronger effect because people can recall more immediate information about the issue and have already formed schemata. This could be the result of the media priming of the 2012 elections, in which these issues might have been

those that were given extra attention by the media. However there might also be other reasons and further research is needed on why these statements in particular were affected. These four issues could also be those categorized by Walgrave, Nuytemans and Pepermans (2009) as the favorable or unfavorable issues for certain party issues on which people have strong opinions.

6. Conclusion

The aim of my thesis was to look at how VAAs influence democratic processes. I did this by testing how responses to VAA's change when aspects of statements are changed or added. The chief result that I found was that responses change considerably. This change was found to be important in regards to different parts of the democratic process. By looking at different elements of democracy and connecting them to VAAs, I established a framework in this thesis to examine how VAAs are used by prospective voters and how the different parts of the democratic process were influenced.

The first of those concepts was the model of the fully informed citizen. As many

authors have criticized this concept, it was adjusted to the so-called monitorial citizen. This monitorial citizen obtains information through media priming and cues. On the one hand, VAAs can help citizens to obtain this information by presenting it in an easy and accessible way. On the other hand however, it is not so much a medium that carries out the priming as a medium that is influenced by priming and agenda setting. The survey results have shown that that four out of ten statements were affected by manipulations. Why these particular statements were affected and not others can be a question for further research, for example into the effect that media priming and agenda setting might have on how VAA's are answered.

Secondly, I found that VAAs stimulate participation (in the narrow sense of the word) in the political process. When people use VAAs they simultaneously concern themselves with politics, and as such the VAA is a way to connect people to the democratic process. However, if we look at the broader meaning of the word participation (which also means people going out and contributing to political activities) , it might be that VAAs actually hinder this process. This is connected with the third concept of democracy, deliberative democracy. The survey results have shown that people are very willing to discuss the different statements. However, Mutz (2006) has argued that increased deliberation actually decreases participation, as people are becoming less sure about their own views.

One major criticism of VAAs that was discussed in this thesis is also connected to deliberative democracy. VAAs are most popular in countries in which deliberation is a major part of the political process. These are countries like the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland and so on. At the same time, the way VAAs are set up is very individual and leaves little room for discussion. The question was if this deliberative aspect of politics can be integrated into the VAA. The survey had two conditions which were connected with deliberation: discussion and coalition. Coalition can be seen as deliberation of politicians and discussion is rather deliberation between citizens themselves. Thinking about coalitions was less popular with respondents than thinking about discussions. It can be concluded that it may be easier to integrate deliberative processes at the level of electoral politics than later in the democratic process, at the level of coalition making.

How does e-democracy factor into those findings? First of all the fact that these VAAs are now online means that their accessibility increases greatly. We have seen that the number of people using VAAs is increasing (Ladner, Fivaz & Pianzola, 2010) and they

therefore encourage participatory democracy.

Secondly, the possibility of gaining information increases. Even though selections are always colored, people do gain information more easily through VAAs. Although many criticisms have been made about the concept of informed citizenship, some of them can be deflected through the use of VAAs. For example, that the concept is inadequate because people have always been under-informed. This might be true in the political system that Schudson is writing about (late 19th century American politics). However, thanks to VAAs people are generally more informed about what political parties represent and therefore the concept of informed citizenship is not wholly irrelevant to e-democracy.

Thirdly, there have been mixed findings with regard to how conductive e-democracy and VAAs are to deliberative political culture. On the one hand, people are not averse to having the concept of discussion introduced in the VAA, but on the other hand they do not want to think about other deliberative elements of politics, such as coalition forming. This thesis merely used one way of introducing deliberative aspects in VAAs, and that there could of course be other methods that could make VAAs more deliberative such as adding more interactivity by for example connecting users to each other.

Lastly, another important aspect of this research is what it says about how VAAs function. The test with the different wordings has shown that the way people answer statements is affected in unpredictable ways by certain word changes. This means that people are already affected by which words are used. It is however very difficult to see how this could be solved. It is hard to take into account how exactly people are affected by word choice. One direction this research might be taken is to look further into schemata and how these are triggered by certain cue's.

Much of the criticism that was covered in the second chapter also had to do with how VAAs influence people. One of these criticisms was that VAAs are not accountable to anyone. This can be a problem when statement- and word selections are so highly susceptible to slight changes. This problem of accountability is difficult to solve when it is hard to see how exactly people are being influenced and what triggers them to be influenced. It is also difficult to see who exactly should be held accountable except the providers. One solution could be to put more disclaimers on VAAs to make sure that people do not take them too seriously. However, this will probably be difficult to sell to the providers of VAAs.

A second point of criticism was that VAAs might be susceptible to populism because the programs of populist parties are easier to translate to VAAs than the programs of parties that are more moderate or nuanced. The results have shown, however, that the statements that were affected by manipulation were not necessarily issues on which populist parties tend to score in the Netherlands. This means that at least the tendency towards populism is not caused by word selection or the rephrasing of questions but might be an inherent part of the logic of VAAs. The relevancy of this criticism, however, might be called into question: it has been shown that VAAs only marginally effect the way people vote. In addition, in the Netherlands populist parties are confronted by the system of coalition forming and 'polder' politics. In practice therefore, this point of criticism is easily deflected.

All together, this study has shown that the way that VAA's are set up not only influences how respondents answer but also that there are different ways to approach VAA's by integrating them into political processes of discussion and coalition-forming.

The last part of this conclusion will be concerned with how well the theory and method suited this topic, and how the investigation might have been limited. I will end with some recommendations for further research into VAA's.

I used a number of different theories. These were political theories about informed citizenship and different concepts of democracy. Secondly a more sociological theory was used about the formation of belief systems. I used this interdisciplinary approach of multiple theories because it was well suited to the different aspects of VAA's. Another approach could have been to just focus on one aspect, for example on belief systems. However most of the existing literature about VAA's is already concerned with just one aspect. In the beginning of my thesis I explained that my aim was to establish a wider framework, which is why I chose to use multiple theories from different fields. I believe that a holistic approach was therefore the approach best suited to this thesis.

The method that I chose to use was a survey. First of all, because within the survey I could have different conditions, to measure multiple constructs. This meant I could integrate all the different theories into the survey design. Second of all, a survey approximates real VAA's closely, which I needed to do because I was measuring responses to real VAA statements. The way I set up the design was to use one control condition, and six manipulated conditions. Every respondent could answer one condition. This set-up was chosen to prevent learning-effects and to make it seem like people were answering a real

VAA.

However, there were also some limitations to this research. First of all the number of people that responded to the survey was a little bit less than the absolute number needed. Second of all, I had to chose which VAA statements to use, to make the survey a manageable length. This means that some issues were unfortunately left out, even though they might have shown interesting results.

Areas for future research could focus on why certain statements and issues are more susceptible to manipulation and how this benefits or works against political parties. For example which issues are favorable and unfavorable for which parties? It might even be of interest to small political parties to see if there might be a bias in the results in favor of more established parties. Furthermore surveys could also be supplemented by interviews and extensive case-studies that follow the political habits of one or more people to see how the use of VAA's influence these habits.

Although I have focused on the Netherlands, it would also be interesting to examine other countries and look at how the political processes there are influenced by the emergence of voting advice applications. For example a comparative study of VAA's in countries with a two-party system and a multiple-party system might shed some light on which political conditions stimulate the use of VAA's. This thesis can be seen as only the beginning of a larger inquiry in how e-democracy is changing the way that politics function. Both *Kieskompas* and *Stemwijzer* will have a wealth of data that could give more insight in how VAA's are answered.

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Appendix A: The Surveys

Note: Originally this survey was conducted in Dutch

Welcome. This Erasmus University research project **will take about 5 minutes and consists of questions related** to voting advice applications (Examples are Stemwijzer or Kieskompaas). The issues that **will be covered** were relevant in the Dutch elections of 2012. If your views have changed since 2012, please report your current views. Please answer these as if you were really filling in a Voting Advice Applications **questionnaire**. All results will remain anonymous. The questionnaire will take about **five minutes** to answer. **Thank you!**

A. Have you used VAAs before? Yes/No

B. Would you consider yourself more right wing or left wing? Right Wing/Left Wing/Neither

C. Would you consider yourself more progressive or conservative?

Progressive/Conservative/Neither

D. Do you generally support a particular political party? Yes/No.

E. What is your highest completed level of education?

1. VMBO
2. HAVO
3. VWO
4. MBO
5. HBO
6. WO Bachelor
7. WO Master
8. PHD.

F. Male/Female

G. What is your year of birth?

Condition 1: Standard statements

Q1

Employees have to pay taxes over their traveling compensation expenses, just like they do over their income

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q2

Ritual slaughter should be banned

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q3

The government should cut back on financing art

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q4

Instead of a grant, students allowances should be a loan.

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q5

Civil servants should be able to refuse marrying gay couples

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q6

The more money parents make, the less child support they should get

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q7.

The government should cut back on developmental aid

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q8

The tax rate for the highest incomes should go up

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q9

Elderly people who believe that their life is finished, should be allowed to end their life with professional help

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q10

The Netherlands should stay in the eurozone.

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Condition 2: Rephrases

Note: The questions are presented in the order they were given in the survey. The number of the question corresponds with the order of the control condition.

Q5. Civil servants should be able to refuse marrying gay couples

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q1B. Employees should be allowed to have tax free travelling compensation expenses, they shouldn't pay taxes like they do over their income

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q2B. Ritual slaughter should be allowed

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q9. Elderly people who believe that their life is finished, should be allowed to end their life with professional help

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q8. The tax rate for the highest incomes should go up

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q3. The government should cut back on financing art

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q4. Instead of a loan, students allowances should be a grant.

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q5B. Civil servants should always accept marrying gay couples

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q6B. The amount of child support that parents get should not be dependent on the amount of money they make

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q10. The government should cut back on developmental aid

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q8B. The tax rate for the highest incomes should not go up

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q9B. Elderly people who believe that their life is finished, should not be allowed to end their life

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q1. Employees have to pay taxes over their traveling compensation expenses, just like they do over their income

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q4 Instead of a grant, students allowances should be a loan.

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q2. Ritual slaughter should be banned

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q6. The more money parents make, the less child support they should get

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Condition 3: Right wing words.

Q1. Employees should not get tax relief over their traveling compensation expenses, like they do over their income

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q4. Instead of a gift, students allowances should be a loan.

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q6. The more money parents make, the less child support benefits they should get

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q8. Highest incomes should not have tax relief.

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Condition 4: Left Wing Words

Q4. Instead of a grant, students support money should be a loan.

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q6. The richer parents are, the less child support they should get

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q8. The tax rate for people who are very rich should go up

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Condition 5: Coalition-forming

Q1. Employees have to pay taxes over their traveling compensation expenses, just like they do over their income.

I would be willing to allow the party I vote for to compromise with coalition partners on this issue

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree
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Q2. Ritual slaughter should be banned

I would be willing to allow the party I vote for to compromise with coalition partners on this issue

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree
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Q3. The government should cut back on financing art

I would be willing to allow the party I vote for to compromise with coalition partners on this issue

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree
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Q4. Instead of a grant, students allowances should be a loan.

I would be willing to allow the party I vote for to compromise with coalition partners on this issue.

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree
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Q5. Civil servants should be able to refuse marrying gay couples

I would be willing to allow the party I vote for to compromise with coalition partners on this issue

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree
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Q6. The more money parents make, the less child support they should get

I would be willing to allow the party I vote for to compromise with coalition partners on this issue

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree
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Q7. The government should cut back on developmental aid

I would be willing to allow the party I vote for to compromise with coalition partners on this issue

Completely	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely
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Agree				Disagree
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Q8. The tax rate for the highest incomes should go up

I would be willing to allow the party I vote for to compromise with coalition partners on this issue

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree
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Q9. Elderly people who believe that their life is finished, should be allowed to end their life with professional help

I would be willing to allow the party I vote for to compromise with coalition partners on this issue

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree
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Q10. The Netherlands should stay in the eurozone.

I would be willing to allow the party I vote for to compromise with coalition partners on this issue

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree
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Condition 6: Discussion

Q1. Employees have to pay taxes over their traveling compensation expenses, just like they do over their income

I would like to discuss this issue with other people

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q2. Ritual slaughter should be banned

I would like to discuss this issue with other people

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q3. The government should cut back on financing art

I would like to discuss this issue with other people

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q4. Instead of a grant, students allowances should be a loan.

I would like to discuss this issue with other people

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q5. Civil servants should be able to refuse marrying gay couples

I would like to discuss this issue with other people'

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q6. The more money parents make, the less child support they should get

I would like to discuss this issue with other people

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q7. The government should cut back on developmental aid

I would like to discuss this issue with other people

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q8. The tax rate for the highest incomes should go up

I would like to discuss this issue with other people

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q9. Elderly people who believe that their life is finished, should be allowed to end their life with professional help

I would like to discuss this issue with other people

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Q10. The Netherlands should stay in the eurozone

I would like to discuss this issue with other people

Completely Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely Disagree	No Opinion
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Condition 6: Emotions

100° Very warm or favorable feeling

85° Quite warm or favorable feeling

70° Fairly warm or favorable feeling

60° A bit more warm or favorable feeling than cold feeling

50° No feeling at all

40° A bit more cold or unfavorable feeling than warm feeling

30° Fairly cold or unfavorable feeling

15° Quite cold or unfavorable Feeling

0° Very cold or unfavorable feeling

Please answer the scale according to this thermometer. Eg sliding the scale to 30 corresponds with having a 'fairly cold or unfavorable feeling' towards the statement.

Appendix B: Surveys in Dutch

Welkom. Dit onderzoeksproject van de Erasmus Universiteit zal ongeveer **vijf minuten duren** en bestaat uit vragen die te maken hebben met zogenaamde **Stem Advies Applicaties** (bekende voorbeelden hiervan zijn **stemwijzer** en **kieskompas**). De kwesties die in deze enquête voorkomen waren belangrijk in de Nederlandse verkiezingen van 2012. Beantwoord de vragen alsof je echt een stemwijzer aan het invullen bent. Als je mening veranderd is sinds 2012, beantwoord de vragen dan volgens je huidige mening. Alle resultaten zullen anoniem blijven. De enquête zal ongeveer **vijf minuten** in beslag nemen. Bedankt!

1. Heb je stem advies applicaties gebruikt in de aanloop naar de verkiezingen van September 2012?
2. Heb je stem advies applicaties gebruikt bij een andere verkiezing?
3. Beschouw je jezelf als meer links of rechts?
4. Beschouw je jezelf als meer progressief of conservatief?

5. Steun je over het algemeen één bepaalde politieke partij?
6. Wat is het hoogste niveau van onderwijs dat je hebt voltooid?
7. Wat is je geslacht?
8. Geboortejaar?

Conditie 1: Standaard vragen

Q1. Werknemers moeten belasting gaan betalen over hun reiskostenvergoeding, net als over het inkomen

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q2. Ritueel slachten moet verboden worden

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q3. De overheid moet bezuinigen op kunstsubsidies

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q4. In plaats van een gift moet de hele studiefinanciering een lening worden

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q5. Ambtenaren van de burgerlijke stand mogen weigeren homostellen te trouwen

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q6. Hoe meer ouders verdienen, hoe minder kinderbijslag ze moeten krijgen

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q7. Op ontwikkelingssamenwerking mag worden bezuinigd

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q8. Het belastingtarief voor de hoogste inkomens moet omhoog

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q9. Ouderen die vinden dat hun leven voltooid is, mogen met professionele hulp een einde aan hun leven maken

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q10. Nederland moet in de euro blijven

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Conditie 2: Herformuleringen

Q1. Ambtenaren van de burgerlijke stand mogen weigeren homostellen te trouwen

Completely Disagree	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q2. Werknemers zouden reiskostenvergoeding moeten krijgen zonder daar belasting over te betalen

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q3. Ritueel slachten moet worden toegestaan

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q4. Ouderen die vinden dat hun leven voltooid is, mogen met professionele hulp een einde aan hun leven maken

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q5. Het belastingtarief voor de hoogste inkomens moet omhoog

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q6. In plaats van een lening moet de hele studiefinanciering een gift blijven

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q7. Ambtenaren van de burgerlijke stand mogen nooit weigeren homostellen te trouwen

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q8. De overheid moet bezuinigen op kunstsubsidies

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q9. De hoeveelheid kinderbijslag die ouders krijgen zou niet afhankelijk moeten zijn van hun inkomen

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q10. Op ontwikkelingssamenwerking mag worden bezuinigd

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q11. Ouderen die vinden dat hun leven voltooid is, mogen niet een einde aan hun leven maken

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q12. Het belastingtarief voor de hoogste inkomens moet niet omhoog

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q13. Nederland moet in de euro blijven

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q14. Werknemers moeten belasting gaan betalen over hun reiskostenvergoeding, net als over het inkomen

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q15. In plaats van een gift moet de hele studiefinanciering een lening worden

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q16. Ritueel slachten moet verboden worden

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q17. Hoe meer ouders verdienen, hoe minder kinderbijslag ze moeten krijgen

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Conditie 3: Rechtse woorden

Q1. Werknemers zouden geen belastingvrijstelling mogen krijgen over hun reiskostenvergoeding

Completely Disagree	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q4. In plaats van een lening moet de hele studiefinanciering een schenking blijven

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q6. Hoe meer ouders verdienen, hoe minder kinderbijslag steun ze moeten krijgen

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q8. De hoogste inkomens mogen geen belastingsverlichting krijgen

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Conditie 4: Linkse woorden

Q4. In plaats van een lening moet financiële hulp voor studenten een gift blijven

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q6. Hoe rijker ouders zijn, hoe minder kinderbijslag ze moeten krijgen

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q8. Het belastingstarief voor de rijkste mensen moet omhoog

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Conditie 5: Compromissen

De volgende vragen gaan over hoe belangrijk je deze kwestie vindt en of je zou willen dat de partij waarvoor jij gekozen hebt over deze stelling gaat onderhandelen met andere partijen.

Q1. Werknemers moeten belasting gaan betalen over hun reiskostenvergoeding, net als over het inkomen

Ik zou de partij waarop ik stem toestaan om over deze kwestie te onderhandelen met coalitie partners

Completely Disagree	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q2. Ritueel slachten moet worden verboden

Ik zou de partij waarop ik stem toestaan om over deze kwestie te onderhandelen met coalitie partners

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q3. De overheid moet bezuinigen op kunstsubsidies

Ik zou de partij waarop ik stem toestaan om over deze kwestie te onderhandelen met coalitie partners

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q4. In plaats van een gift moet de hele studiefinanciering een lening worden

Ik zou de partij waarop ik stem toestaan om over deze kwestie te onderhandelen met coalitie partners

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q5. Ambtenaren van de burgerlijke stand mogen weigeren homostellen te trouwen

Ik zou de partij waarop ik stem toestaan om over deze kwestie te onderhandelen met coalitie partners

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q6. Hoe meer ouders verdienen, hoe minder kinderbijslag ze moeten krijgen

Ik zou de partij waarop ik stem toestaan om over deze kwestie te onderhandelen met coalitie partners

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q7. Op ontwikkelingssamenwerking mag worden bezuinigd

Ik zou de partij waarop ik stem toestaan om over deze kwestie te onderhandelen met coalitie partners

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q8. Het belastingtarief voor de hoogste inkomens moet omhoog

Ik zou de partij waarop ik stem toestaan om over deze kwestie te onderhandelen met coalitie partners

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q9. Ouderen die vinden dat hun leven voltooid is, mogen met professionele hulp een einde aan hun leven maken

Ik zou de partij waarop ik stem toestaan om over deze kwestie te onderhandelen met coalitie partners

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q10. Nederland moet in de euro blijven

Ik zou de partij waarop ik stem toestaan om over deze kwestie te onderhandelen met coalitie partners

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Conditie 6: Discussie

De volgende vragen gaan niet over of je het eens of niet eens bent met de stelling maar of je een discussie zou willen houden met andere mensen over deze stelling. Als je dus mee eens invult dan ben je het er mee eens dat je over deze stelling zou willen discussiëren.

Q1. Werknemers moeten belasting gaan betalen over hun reiskostenvergoeding, net als over het inkomen

Ik zou graag met andere mensen over deze kwestie in discussie gaan

Completely Disagree	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q2. Ritueel slachten moet worden verboden

Ik zou graag met andere mensen over deze kwestie in discussie gaan

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q3. De overheid moet bezuinigen op kunstsubsidies

Ik zou graag met andere mensen over deze kwestie in discussie gaan

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q4. In plaats van een gift moet de hele studiefinanciering een lening worden

Ik zou graag met andere mensen over deze kwestie in discussie gaan

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q5. Ambtenaren van de burgerlijke stand mogen weigeren homostellen te trouwen

Ik zou graag met andere mensen over deze kwestie in discussie gaan

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q6. Hoe meer ouders verdienen, hoe minder kinderbijslag ze moeten krijgen

Ik zou graag met andere mensen over deze kwestie in discussie gaan

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q7. Op ontwikkelingssamenwerking mag worden bezuinigd

Ik zou graag met andere mensen over deze kwestie in discussie gaan

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q8. Het belastingtarief voor de hoogste inkomens moet omhoog

Ik zou graag met andere mensen over deze kwestie in discussie gaan

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q9. Ouderen die vinden dat hun leven voltooid is, mogen met professionele hulp een einde aan hun leven maken

Ik zou graag met andere mensen over deze kwestie in discussie gaan

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Q10. Nederland moet in de euro blijven

Ik zou graag met andere mensen over deze kwestie in discussie gaan

Helemaal niet mee eens	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Helemaal wel mee eens
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Conditie 7: Emoties

De volgende vragen gaan over instinctieve gevoelens bij bepaalde kwesties. Antwoord alsjeblieft volgens de schaal van de thermometer die aan het begin van elke vraag te zien is. De antwoordbalk kan verschoven worden.

100° Heel erg warm of gunstig gevoel

85° Erg warm of gunstig gevoel

70° Vrij warm of gunstig gevoel

60° Iets meer een warm of gunstig gevoel dan een koud gevoel

50° Helemaal geen gevoelens

40° Iets meer koud of ongunstig gevoel dan een warm gevoel

30° Vrij koud of ongunstig gevoel

15° Erg koud of ongunstig gevoel

0° Heel erg koud of ongunstig gevoel

1. Werknemers moeten belasting gaan betalen over hun reiskostenvergoeding, net als over het inkomen

THERMOMETER

2. Ritueel slachten moet verboden worden

THERMOMETER

3. De overheid moet bezuinigen op kunstsubsidies

THERMOMETER

4. In plaats van een gift moet de hele studiefinanciering een lening worden

THERMOMETER

5. Ambtenaren van de burgerlijke stand mogen weigeren homostellen te trouwen

THERMOMETER

6. Hoe meer ouders verdienen, hoe minder kinderbijslag ze moeten krijgen

THERMOMETER

7. Op ontwikkelingssamenwerking mag worden bezuinigd

THERMOMETER

8. Het belastingtarief voor de hoogste inkomens moet omhoog

THERMOMETER

9. Ouderen die vinden dat hun leven voltooid is, mogen met professionele hulp een einde aan hun leven maken

THERMOMETER

10. Nederland moet in de euro blijven

THERMOMETER

Appendix C: Conditions ordered per statement

Note: For the Coalition, Discussion and Emotion condition the original statement was prefixed by the sentences which are written here.

Statement 1:

Original: Employees have to pay taxes over their traveling compensation expenses, just like they do over their income

Rephrases: Employees should be allowed to have tax free travelling compensation expenses, they shouldn't pay taxes like they do over their income

Left wing: Employees should not get tax relief over their traveling compensation expenses, like they do over their income

Right Wing: -

Coalition: I would be willing to allow the party I vote for to compromise with coalition partners on this issue

Discussion: I would like to discuss this issue with other people

Emotion: Please answer the scale according to this thermometer. Eg sliding the scale to 30 corresponds with having a 'fairly cold or unfavorable feeling' towards the statement.

Statement 2

Original: Ritual slaughter should be banned

Rephrases: Ritual slaughter should be allowed

Left wing: -

Right Wing: -

Coalition: I would be willing to allow the party I vote for to compromise with coalition partners on this issue

Discussion: I would like to discuss this issue with other people

Emotion: Please answer the scale according to this thermometer. Eg sliding the scale to 30 corresponds with having a 'fairly cold or unfavorable feeling' towards the statement.

Statement 3

Original: The government should cut back on financing art
(Control statement)

Statement 4

Original: Instead of a grant, students allowances should be a loan.

Rephrases: Instead of a loan, students allowances should be a grant.

Left wing: Instead of a grant, students support money should be a loan.

Right Wing: Instead of a gift, students allowances should be a loan.

Coalition: I would be willing to allow the party I vote for to compromise with coalition partners on this issue

Discussion: I would like to discuss this issue with other people

Emotion: Please answer the scale according to this thermometer. Eg sliding the scale to 30 corresponds with having a 'fairly cold or unfavorable feeling' towards the statement.

Statement 5

Original: Civil servants should be able to refuse marrying gay couples

Rephrases: Civil servants should always accept marrying gay couples

Left wing: -

Right Wing: -

Coalition: I would be willing to allow the party I vote for to compromise with coalition partners on this issue

Discussion: I would like to discuss this issue with other people

Emotion: Please answer the scale according to this thermometer. Eg sliding the scale to 30 corresponds with having a 'fairly cold or unfavorable feeling' towards the statement.

Statement 6

Original: The more money parents make, the less child support they should get

Rephrases: The amount of child support that parents get should not be dependent on the amount of money they make

Left wing: The richer parents are, the less child support they should get

Right Wing: The more money parents make, the less child support benefits they should get

Coalition: I would be willing to allow the party I vote for to compromise with coalition partners on this issue

Discussion: I would like to discuss this issue with other people

Emotion: Please answer the scale according to this thermometer. Eg sliding the scale to 30 corresponds with having a 'fairly cold or unfavorable feeling' towards the statement.

Statement 7

Original: The government should cut back on developmental aid
(Control Question)

Statement 8

Original: The tax rate for the highest incomes should go up

Rephrases: The tax rate for the highest incomes should not go up

Left wing: The tax rate for people who are very rich should go up

Right Wing: The highest incomes should not have tax relief.

Coalition: I would be willing to allow the party I vote for to compromise with coalition partners on this issue

Discussion: I would like to discuss this issue with other people

Emotion: Please answer the scale according to this thermometer. Eg sliding the scale to 30 corresponds with having a 'fairly cold or unfavorable feeling' towards the statement.

Statement 9

Original: Elderly people who believe that their life is finished, should be allowed to end their life with professional help

Rephrases: Elderly people who believe that their life is finished, should not be allowed to end their life

Left wing: -

Right Wing: -

Coalition: I would be willing to allow the party I vote for to compromise with coalition partners on this issue

Discussion: I would like to discuss this issue with other people

Emotion: Please answer the scale according to this thermometer. Eg sliding the scale to 30 corresponds with having a 'fairly cold or unfavorable feeling' towards the statement.

Statement 10

Original: The Netherlands should stay in the eurozone.
(control Question)