The Effects of Right-Wing News Media on Political Trust in the European Context

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Abstract

The effects of news media on political trust have long been an issue of debate in the academic community. The extent to which citizens change their political views based on information from on news outlets has not been clear. This research project set out to find the extent to which both trust and consumption of right-wing media affects political trust across three European democracies: The Netherlands; Spain; and the United Kingdom. These countries were chosen because of the differences they have shown in the news media environments. These differences range from autonomy of news outlets, journalistic professionalism, state intervention, and even circulation of newspapers. This study hypothesized that trust and consumption of right-wing news media would lead to the most political distrust in the United Kingdom, followed by the Netherlands, and lastly Spain. A regression analysis was performed on the two most right-wing news media outlets in each country, with trust in parliament as the dependent variable. The outcome of this regression analysis showed that only trust and consumption of right-wing news in the Netherlands led to political distrust. Both the results from the United Kingdom and Spain pointed towards an increase in political trust with an increase in trust and consumption of right-wing news. This study concluded that this was due to a market dominated news system in the United Kingdom, in which there is no state intervention and news outlets seek to promote viewership through means of sensationalist content. In Spain, it was concluded that there was little media autonomy, leading right-wing news media outlets to support the state heavily and therefore increase political trust.

1. Introduction

Among many Western European democracies, there has been an observed trend of increased distrust and malaise from citizens towards political institutions (Areily, 2015; Ceron, 2015). News media has been shown to play a crucial role in affecting these negative public attitudes (Avery, 2009; Norris 2000). However, while the trend of news media's effect on political malaise has been identified across several European democracies (Mosca & Quaranta, 2015), it is unclear to what extent this is equal across all countries.

Political trust is essential for a democracy to prosper (Almond & Verba, 1963). The role of the media is particularly important in determining political trust because it acts as a lens through which people evaluate political institutions (Ceron, 2015). The advent of social media networks has only enhanced this importance, not only because of its ability to rapidly distribute information, but because it allows enhanced responsiveness and accountability of political institutions (Ceron, 2015). Due to the framing of information on news media outlets, the well-documented *video malaise theory* is often used in research to describe how negativity in news media generates distrust in political institutions (Areily, 2015; Mutz & Reeves, 2005). However, this theory has been contrasted by Norris (2000) through the *virtuous cycle theory*, which argues that news media can actually increase civic engagement and increase trust in politics. These existing discrepancies in previous literature show that there is uncertainty on the social relevance of consumption of news media's role in decreasing political trust. As well as this, there has been evidence to suggest that the political ideologies of news outlets may also generate (dis-)trust in government institutions. Mitchell, Gottfried, Kiley and Matsa (2014), for instance, found that in the United States individuals who considered themselves to be 'conservative' or right-wing on the political spectrum showed less trust in news media, apart from Fox News. Moreover, this distrust in news media was correlated to distrust towards political institutions, specifically in relation to right-wing news outlets. Therefore, this study aims to further investigate the relation between trust in news media, depending on the political orientation of news media outlets, and political trust.

Avery (2009) has stated that citizens that trust political institutions will trust news media outlets. But does this relationship work vice-versa? Arguably, the degree of autonomy of a media system will reflect the extent to which individuals will trust political institutions (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). More notably, a greater level of autonomy within a media system can allow citizens to be more critical of political institutions, which may in turn affect the political trust among the population (Areily, 2015). This study finds this relationship of trust in news media essential to explain political trust. This is relevant because these two concepts are rarely studied together. Political trust often stays in the domain of political science (e.g. Hakhverdian & Maine, 2012), while trust in media is often researched by communication scientists (e.g. Wissmath & Groner, 2008). While it is not fully exceptional for these two concepts to be studied together, it is very rare for them to be researched outside of the context of the United States of America (e.g. Jonas, 2004; Moy & Hussein, 2015), and as such the need to study this relationship in a European context becomes increasingly relevant. More specifically, this study will use a comparative analysis of different European countries with varying media systems to analyze the effects of both

consumption and trust in news media on political trust. Thus, the scientific relevance of including trust in news media in this study is explained by its lack of research in a European context; while the social relevance is to find if the same theories and studies that were conducted in the United States have (dis-)similar findings within European democracies.

Up and until now, researchers have mostly reported findings on the effects of the *content* of news media on political trust (Hetherington & Rudoph, 2008; Jonas, 2004), and less about the *context* of news media on political trust; context refers to the different media systems within countries. Media systems developed differently across Western democracies because of political intervention, national culture, and economic situations of countries (Aarts, Fladmoe & Strömbäck, 2012; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). This paper suggests that such variations in media systems in a European context can affect political trust extensively. Building upon previous research (e.g. Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Mosca & Quaranta, 2015), this paper aims to deepen the analysis by observing how news media consumption and trust in news media among varying media system contexts affects political trust. This will be examined through Hallin and Macnini's (2004) *models of media systems* and add a new perspective of western democracies in Europe that fit the context of these media systems. This model consists of three types of media systems models: the *polarized pluralist model*; the *democratic corporatist model*; and the *liberal model*. To evaluate the effect of these models on political trust, this study will focus primarily on the extent to which trust and consumption of news media outlets affects political trust in these contexts. The following research question has been developed for the purpose of this study: *To what extent does consumption and trust in right-wing news media affect political trust in European democracies with varying media system characteristics?* More specifically, this research project will focus on three European countries, all of which belong to a different media system as classified by Hallin and Mancini (2004): (1) Spain (Polarized Pluralist Model); (2) the Netherlands (Democratic Corporatist Model); and (3) United Kingdom (Liberal Model).

This research project will aim to answer the proposed research question through developing a theoretical framework, in which the models of Hallin and Mancini (2004) are discussed in detail along with relevant theories to explain all other relationships in Figure 1. Thereafter, this study will provide a methodological section in which a detailed description is given on the structure of the analysis. The dataset (*Pew Research Center Fall 2017 Media and Politics in Western Europe Survey)* uses information from respondents of the selected European countries regarding their trust in news media, consumption of news media, and their political trust. Following, an evaluation of results in tandem with the discussed theories will allow this research project to develop a conclusion and an answer to the proposed research question.

2. Theoretical Framework

Throughout this section of the research there will be a discussion of relevant theories from past literature. As such, this theoretical framework will be divided into four key sections: (1) News media environments in Western democracies; (2) The effects of perceived political orientation of news media; (3) Right-wing news media consumption and political trust; (4) Trust in right-wing

news media and political trust. Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual model to describe the relationships that will be studied in this research. As shown, the literature throughout this section represents that trust in right-wing news media tends to have a negative relationship to political trust. This trend continues for the consumption of right-wing news media. These relationships will be further explained and hypothesized in relation to the different media systems that are outlined throughout this theoretical framework.

Figure One: Conceptual Model
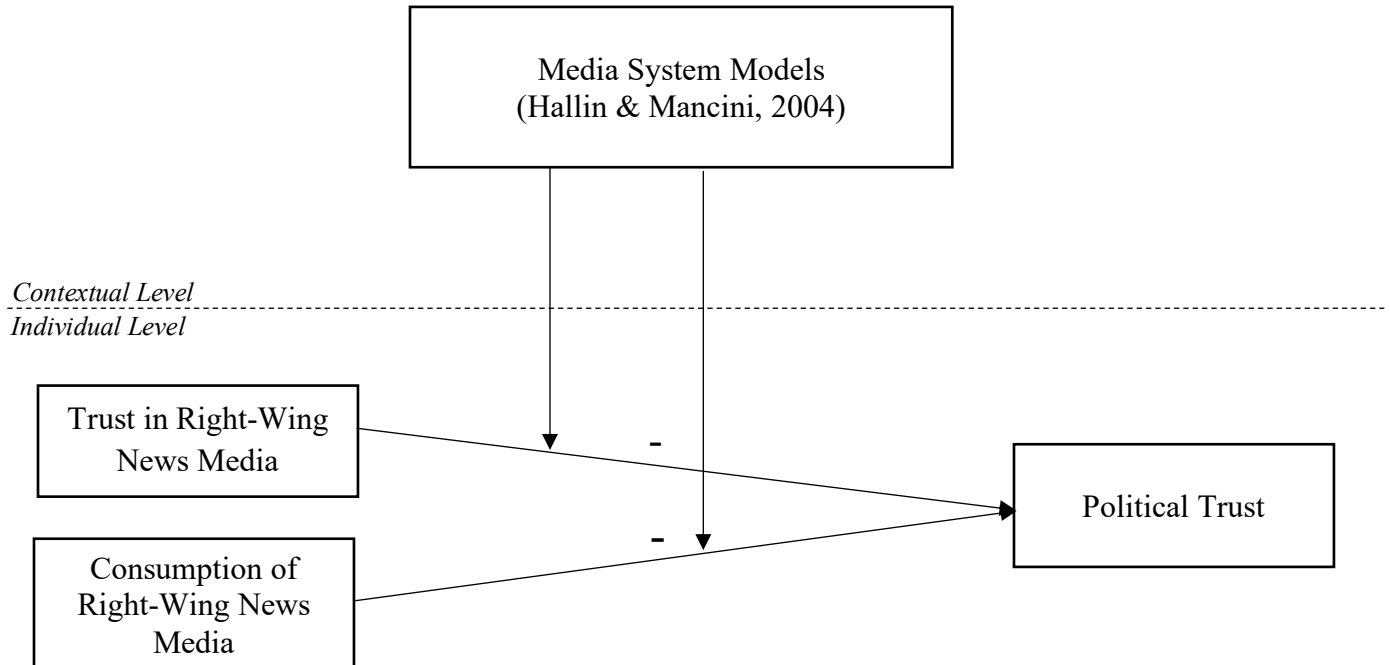
2.1. News Media Environments in Western Democracies

As mentioned previously, communication scholars have identified news media as being a crucial determinant in political trust (Wissmath & Groner, 2008). However, the term 'news media' in itself does not provide enough direction for this study. At the contextual level, news media goes beyond the content and the consumption patterns of the individual. Rather, news media will be defined by the framework of media environments laid out by Hallin and Mancini (2004). These scholars have developed a set of characteristics that define different media environments.

The first news media environment identified is the *liberal model*. This model states that the role of media is to provide objective and factual information. This model is also often embodied by North Atlantic countries; this includes countries such as the United States of America, Canada, and the United Kingdom (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). The liberal model is characterized by its strong journalistic professionalism, its low level of newspaper circulation – relative to other media environments - and a lack of state intervention within the media system (market dominance). The most common country used to describe this is the United States of America (Areily, 2015).

However, as this research seeks to observe the role of right-wing news media consumption and trust in a European context, the United Kingdom has been selected for analysis as it shares the most similarities in the model with the United States (Aalberg & Curran, 2013; Hallin & Mancii, 2004). The second news media environment that is used for analysis is the *democratic corporatist model*. This model states that news media outlets are primarily a reflection of social groups with varying political ideologies that are nonetheless dedicated to mutual social norms. Similar to the first model, the democratic corporatist model is characterized by a high level of journalistic professionalism. Contrastingly, however, there is high level of newspaper circulation, heavy subsidies, and a strong public-service broadcasting (e.g. NOS and RTL). Nevertheless, despite the state intervention and strong public-service broadcasting, this media system is still characterized strongly by its protection for press freedom. Furthermore, due to such subsidies and press freedom, this form of media system will provide more factual reporting and less sensationalist content (Aarts, Fladmoe & Strömbäck, 2012; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). The state intervention in this model does not affect the criticism towards the government. According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), this model best applies to northern and central European countries. As such, the Netherlands has been selected as the exemplary country for this model. The third and final media system that will be discussed is the *polarized pluralist model*. This media system is characterized by a low level of newspaper circulation, a low level of journalistic professionalism, and an elite-oriented press. As well as this, there is strong state intervention and large subsidies given to news media outlets. However, this does not take away from the autonomy of the media system, as the news media systems are still critical of their government despite all the state intervention. Hallin and Mancini (2004) have stated that the best fit for these models are Mediterranean countries. Therefore, Spain has been selected to represent this model throughout this research.

There has been extensive previous literature into how these three models of news media environment have affected political knowledge, political engagement, and political trust. De Vreese et. al (2006) found that the liberal model and its privatized news media outlets have been less likely to report 'hard news' and rather prefer sensationalist content. This differs from the democratic corporatist model, in which there are mainly public news media outlets. Similarly, Iyengar et. al (2009) found that the exposure to political news and information was greatest in the democratic corporatist model out of the three models. Interestingly, Aalbert, Van Aelst, and Curran (2010) found that there was the least amount of political news present within the liberal model. These previous studies all suggest similar findings, which point towards the liberal model having more sensationalist content and the democratic corporatist model having the most political information. In addition, Areily (2015) found that 'more media autonomy and journalistic professionalism evince a weaker relationship between media trust and political trust'. Hence, with this information it would follow that the liberal model would result in less political trust, while the democratic corporatist model will promote more political trust. Moreover, it can be argued that polarized pluralist model may generate the most political trust as it embodies a more restricted and less professional media environment, which in turn limits public perception by what is being reported (Areily, 2015; Aalberg, Van Aelst & Curran, 2010).

Notably, Hallin and Manini (2004) also argue that news media systems will all eventually homogenize with that of the liberal model. This is labeled the *convergence-thesis*. This is argued by the researchers through an American influence on journalistic professionalism standards and the growing commercialization of news media markets across Europe. Essentially this suggests that because of growing capitalism and market independence, there will be a push towards the news media systems characteristics present in the liberal model. While this research does not directly investigate the extent to which this homogenization process has occurred, there could potentially be results pointing toward this trend. In both the United Kingdom and the Netherlands there are similar levels of political trust based on trust in news media and news media consumption patterns. There will be no hypothesis developed for this section; the relevance of the three media systems works as a preamble to understand the development of hypothesis in later sections.

2.2. The Effects of Perceived Political Orientation of News Media

News media does not necessarily have a political ideology. Rather, individuals perceive news media to be either left- or right-wing oriented based on their own personal political beliefs and ideologies (Suiter & Fletcher, 2020). This study distinguishes between consumption and trust of varying news media outlets within a political system, to effectively understand to what extent political trust is affected by any media outlets.

Notably, this perception of media is based on political polarization, and this greatly affects both the consumption and trust of news media outlets by citizens (Kim, 2010). An individual's affiliation to a political party or politician has been seen to define their understanding of news media. This polarization has led to news media's affecting political trust. Vallone, Ross and Lepper (1985) have developed the *hostile media phenomenon* to describe the perceived hostility of news media on a person's political views. Suiter and Fletcher (2020) place importance on the perceived hostility that groups interpret from media coverage as being biased against their personal political ideologies. These authors go on to describe how a polarized population will evaluate the legitimacy and fairness of a news media outlet based on their personal divergent views about topical issues. This phenomenon of perceived hostility and political orientation of news media has been studied extensively (e.g. Arpan & Raney, 2003; Jones, 2004; Kim, 2010; Tsfati & Cohen, 2005). Considering these findings, this research project suggests using a similar approach to evaluate the effects of both consumption and trust of news media on political trust. The perceived placement of a news media outlet on a political spectrum - specifically right-wing news media - will be evaluated by citizens within the country of the selected media systems.

2.3. Right-Wing News Media Consumption and Political Trust

The different news outlets available for citizens to choose from influence the way in which information is interpreted (Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre, Shehata, 2015). Different groups also consume news media to different extents. This claim has been proven several times, for instance, with the relationship between education and political interest correlating strongly to consumption of news media (Avery, 2009; Norris, 2000). A method to understand news consumption has been

the O-M-A (opportunity, motivations, abilities) framework. This framework was developed by Luskin (1990) and has been used to explain the shift in citizens choices of news media behavior from low-choice to high-choice media environments. This can be related back to Hallin and Mancini's (2004) media system models, in which a liberal system would allow for a higher range of choice for the individual relative to that of the populist pluralist model because of an increased market demand. Prior (2007) has used this model to outline how growing opportunities in a media environment would increase the importance of a citizen's motivations and ability in a high-choice media environment. The opposite is true for a low-choice media environment. Moreover, Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre, and Shehate (2015) have outlined outcomes of increased choice in a news media environment. Firstly, patterns of news media consumption among different social cohorts will likely change. Secondly, importance of past news media consumption is likely to change. The third outcome is that the effects of news media consumption and its relationship to varying outcome will likely change.

An important concept to keep in mind when discussing right-wing news media consumption is priming. Priming is conceptualized in this study as the process through which citizens evaluate their trust in politics based on issues deemed important (Hetherington & Rudoplh, 2008). To expand, Miller and Krosnick (2000) have claimed the priming is a process fueled by agenda-setting theory, which is defined as the viewing of an issue by a population as a political issue. Essentially, agenda-setting theory states that the information citizens are exposed to by news media platforms will place importance on political issues, which is later used in an individual's evaluation of political trust. However, while news media does play an important role in priming and agenda-setting, there are also external factors that may influence an individual's perception of government and subsequently their political trust. These external factors can range from personal experience, to socialization, and even rhetoric from political actors (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Miller & Krosnick, 2000). In terms of right-wing news media, it is expected that news media environments with less media autonomy will experience greater levels of priming and agenda-setting that is favorable to the government. This is especially true if the government is controlled by a relatively more conservative party. By the same notion, the liberal model and the democratic corporatist model are expected to be more critical of the government because of greater media autonomy.

While this research project will not directly analyze the content of right-wing news media outlets, it will prove useful to understand the theoretical effects that consuming media from different outlets can have on citizen. For instance, these theories can help in understanding how and why consumption of De Telegraaf (a right-wing populist outlet) in the Netherlands (democratic corporatist model) can affect political trust. Therefore, this study hypothesizes the effect of news media consumption on political trust in varying media systems to be as follows. In Spain (polarized pluralist model) there is less media autonomy and more state intervention, which will decrease the choice of news media available for citizens and prime the population in favor of the government. Therefore, consumption of right-wing news media will increase trust in political institutions. Contrastingly, the Netherlands (democratic corporatist model) is characterized by its high media autonomy and journalistic professionalism. Therefore, it is expected that there will be

a decrease in political trust with an increase in right-wing media consumption. Finally, the United Kingdom (liberal model) is also characterized by higher levels of media autonomy and minimal intervention from the state. Therefore, consumption of news media in this environment will lead to the largest decrease of political trust. This is a result of increased competition between news media outlets, which are forced to place more sensationalist content to promote viewership, even if at the cost of political trust. Using these theories, the following comparative hypothesis have been developed on how right-wing news consumption can affect political trust in relation to varying news media environments:

H1a. Right-wing media consumption in Spain (polarized pluralist model) will lead to an increase in political trust. Spain will have the most political trust, relative to the other media systems.

H1b. Right-wing media consumption in the Netherlands (democratic corporatist model) will decrease political trust. The Netherlands will lead to less political trust than the United Kingdom (liberal model), but more political trust than Spain (polarized pluralist model).

H1c. Right-wing media consumption in the United Kingdom (liberal model) will decrease political trust. The United Kingdom will lead to the lowest political trust, relative to the other media systems.

2.4. Trust in News Media and Trust in Politics

Communications scholars have defined trust in news media to be very different to that of trust in politics. Trust in news media is often associated with concepts such as 'credibility', 'fairness', and 'professionalism' (Cappela & Jamieson, 1997). Right-wing news media outlets tend to display less of these features, relative to other news outlets (Wissmath & Groner, 2008). However, Tsfati and Capella (2003) have outlined that trust in news media is dependent on trust in institutions surrounding news media. Moreover, these scholars have also identified that trust in news media and trust in politics are not mutually exclusive. Studies in the United States of America (liberal model) have shown that trust between these two institutions is dependent on one another (Jonas, 2004; Gronke & Cook, 2007). Hence, a greater amount of trust towards news media institutions directly leads to a higher political trust. In addition, Ladd (2012) has correlated a greater amount of distrust in news media to be a factor in the growing polarization within the United States. Along with this polarization are factors associated with cynicism and malaise towards the political institutions. This shapes citizens' selection of news media outlets, which in turn can also affect their trust in political institutions. Right-wing news media outlets are often associated with having cynical and malaise views towards political institutions, as outlined by Ladd (2012), which would result in a lower level of political trust with an increase in trust of right-wing news media.

There are two essential theories for understanding the relation between trust in right-wing news media and political trust. Firstly, Norris (2000) has coined the *virtuous cycle theory*, which

states that increased media exposure leads to higher civic engagement, political interest, and political trust. Although, Ceron (2015) has found that the availability of political information within the virtuous cycle theory increases trust only among those that have access and are previously willing to receive the information; there is no effect on apathetic citizens. Secondly, Avery (2009) discusses the *video-malaise theory*, which contrast with the virtuous cycle theory. The video-malaise theory suggests public mistrust in government is the result of news media incivility, lack of information, and overall negativity. This theory applies more directly towards right-wing news media, as there is a trend of negativity and poor portrayal of political institutions (Wissmath & Groner, 2008). Moreover, the framing of politics as a 'strategic game' or as a 'horse race' by right-wing news media outlets only adds to malaise towards political institutions. Through the framing of politics in this way, citizens interpret political actors to be working for their own self-interest over that of the public good (Strömback, Djerf-Pierre, & Shehata, 2015). The negative depiction of politics, as discussed in the video-malaise theory, has been reaffirmed throughout several previous studies (e.g. Patterson, 1993; Miller, Goldenberg, & Erbing, 1979). These theories are crucial for understanding the relationship between trust in right-wing media and politics because individuals are not passive consumers of political news. Citizens are predisposed to view media messages as moderated by their preexisting political dispositions (Zaller, 1992).

Within Hallin and Mancini's (2004) models of news media environments there are differences towards trust in news media institutions. This model expects the lowest level of trust in right-wing news media to be within the United Kingdom (liberal model) and the Netherlands (democratic corporatist model). This is a result of the high media autonomy from the government, as journalists with autonomy feel they gain reputation from exposing malpractices in government (Weder & Brunetti, 2003). By the same notion, journalists with more autonomy can also be more inclined to criticize their government and the overall public sphere (Areily, 2015), which in turn leads political actors and institutions to be more aware of their actions. However, the video-malaise theory would suggest that if right-wing news media portray political actors and institutions negatively, there will be increased distrust in said actors and institutions. Therefore, there is expected to be a negative relationship between trust in right-wing news media and trust in politics within both the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. On the other hand, there is expected to be a positive relationship in Spain between trust in news media and trust in politics. This is a result of less media autonomy from the government and high levels of state intervention and subsidies. Therefore, this study hypothesizes the effect of trust in news media on political trust in varying media systems to be as follows. In Spain (polarized pluralist model) there is less journalistic professionalism and less media autonomy. These factors translate into greater trust in right-wing news media, which result in greater trust in political institutions (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Contrastingly, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (democratic corporatist model and liberal model, respectively) are characterized by higher levels of media autonomy, stronger journalistic professionalism, more choice in media news media, and less intervention from the state. Therefore, trust in right-wing news media in these environments will decrease political trust. Using these

theories, the following hypothesis have been developed on how news consumption can affect political trust in varying news media environments:

H2a. Trust in right-wing news media in the United Kingdom (liberal model) will lead to a decrease in political trust. The United Kingdom will lead to the least political trust, relative to the other media systems.

H2b. Trust in right-wing news media in the Netherlands (democratic corporatist model) will lead to a decrease in political trust. The Netherlands is expected to have less political trust than Spain (polarized pluralist model), but more political trust than in the United Kingdom (liberal model).

H2c. Trust in right-wing media in Spain (polarized pluralist model) will lead to an increase in political trust. Spain will have the most political trust, relative to the other media systems.

3. Methodology

Throughout this section of the study there will be an in-depth description of the methods that will be used answer the research question. This will be divided into two sections: (3.1) description of data and (3.2) operationalization of variables.

3.1. Data

This study proposes using a data set from the Pew Research Center from 2017. The Pew Research Center is an independent think tank that studies public attitudes and behaviors on political issues. While this think tank primarily focuses on public attitudes from the United States, the dataset for this study is a cross-country survey of Western European democracies. This dataset surveyed citizens attitudes on trust of news media, perception of news media ideology, and trust in politics across a total of eight European democracies. Moreover, this survey was conducted from October 30th to December 20th, 2017. Of the countries included in the survey only Spain, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom will be included in this analysis; the sample size for these countries are 2011, 2001, and 2001, respectively. Within each of the countries the survey was conducted in the national language. The sample design for this survey used Random Digit Dial (RDD) probability sampling of both landline and cell phone numbers - within each country there were slightly different proportions of collection from the two forms of RDD. In Spain 39% of the sample was obtained from landline numbers, while 61% was obtained from cell phones; in the Netherlands 45% of the sample was from landline numbers, while 55% was from cell phones; in the United Kingdom 40% of the sample was from landline numbers, while 60% was from cell phones.

3.2. Operationalization of Variables

Throughout this section the operationalization of the dependent, independent, and control variables will be discussed. This will provide an understanding into how each variable will be used throughout the analysis of this research. Appendices A shows a full list of variables along with labels and values.

Political trust will act as the dependent variable. Political trust has been a difficult concept to operationalize in past research (Areily, 2015; Aalberg, Van Aelst & Curran, 2010). There are several indicators of political trust, ranging from political actors, institutions, and even political knowledge. However, for the purpose of this study, political trust will be operationalized as *trust in parliament.* More specifically, the variable contains the question "Please tell me how much, if at all, you trust your parliament". Respondents of this question can state that they either trust their parliament "not at all", "not too much", "somewhat", or "a lot".

In addition, this research project has proposed using two independent variables. These include the *consumption of news media* and *trust in news media*. Firstly, *consumption of news media* measures the consumption of news media outlets within the media systems (i.e. The Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom). This variable contains the questions "Do you obtain news from ___ at least once a week?". The respondents are given the choice of 'yes', 'no', 'don't know', and 'refused'. Secondly, *Trust in news media* measures the extent to which respondents trust a news media outlet. This variable contains the question "Do you generally trust or generally distrust ___ as a news source?". This could be answered by responding either 'generally trust', 'generally distrust', 'don't know', and 'refused'.

Moreover, this research project will create a distinction between left-wing and right-wing news media outlets through the *political ideology of news outlets*. This study will use respondent's perception of political ideologies of news media outlets to reflect their political orientation (Suiter & Fletcher, 2020). With this variable the news media outlets are placed on a spectrum, which enables an analysis of the results to the extent to which more right- or left-wing parties will influence trust in politics across the different media environments. The distinction between the outlets will be determined by the variable "Some people talk about politics in terms of left, center and right. Where would you place ___ on a scale of 0 to 6, with 0 indicating far left and 6 indicating far right?". The respondents are asked to answer on a scale defined with the following values '0 = far left', '1 - 2 = left', '3 = center', '4 – 5 = right', and '6 = far right'. This distinction will allow for an understanding into how consumption and trust of news media outlets with varying political ideologies affect political trust within the selected media systems. Furthermore, this study will take the two most right-wing news media outlets into the analysis as a representation of right-wing media in the selected countries.

The last variables to be included in the regression will be the control variables. There are several individual-level factors associated with political trust. These factors could influence the outcome of the research and will therefore be controlled for. As previously seen in research by Mishler and Rose (2001), there are several variables that can directly influence political trust.

Namely, these include *age*, *education*, *gender*. The specific labels, values, and questions for these control variables can be found in Appendices A.

3.3. Step-by-Step of Data Analysis

This section of the methodology will provide a step-by-step description of the analysis. This research will begin by providing descriptive statistics for the *political ideology of varying news outlets*; this will be used to determine the two most right-wing news media outlets within the selected countries. By using the two most right-wing news outlets, this study will be able to compare and contrast the effect of right-wing news outlets across the aforementioned news media systems. While this form of selection does pose certain benefits and limitations, these will be discussed more in detail in the discussion.

Once the political ideology of each news media outlet has been defined, there will be linear regression analysis performed to find the effects that trust and consumption of news media have on political trust. These regression analyses will be performed separately for each country. Moreover, both trust and consumption of each news media outlet will be evaluated separately. The decision to run these tests separately is due to potential missing values that may affect the results. Finally, the results from the regression analysis will be presented both with and without the control variables. This will allow to see the effect that a right-wing news outlet has on political trust.

4. Analysis and Results

This section of the research will involve the analysis and presentation of results. This will begin with an explanation of the data preparation, followed by results presenting the effect of right-wing news media outlets on political trust in the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

4.1. Data Preparation

Firstly, the analysis of this research project began by establishing the political ideology of different news media outlets. The descriptive statistics for each countries news media outlets were found and the two most right-leaning news media outlets (on a scale from $0 – 6$) have been selected for analysis. Appendix B shows the descriptive statistics for the Netherlands. In this news media environment, the two news outlets selected are *De Telegraaf* and *GeenStijl*; these news outlets were ranked at a 4.1 and 3.9, respectively. Appendix C shows the descriptive statistics for Spain. In this news media environment, the two news outlets selected are *Televisión Española* and *ABC*; these news outlets were ranked at a 4.3 and 4.6, respectively. Finally, Appendix D shows the descriptive statistics for the United Kingdom. In this news media environment, the two news outlets selected are *The Times* and *Daily Mail*; the news outlets were ranked at a 4.0 and a 4.3, respectively.

Missing Values

The missing values in the data set are a result of the respondent choosing to either not answer (label = 'refused') or because they are not well enough informed to answer a question

(label = 'don't know'). Due to the high number of missing values in certain countries, the effects of each media outlet will be analyzed separately to avoid data loss. Moreover, it is noteworthy that only the Netherlands showed varying amounts of missing data between trust in news media (De Telegraaf and Geen Stijl). The data from Spain (N = 1992) and the United Kingdom (N = 1784) showed fewer missing values, and more consistency between trust and consumption of news media outlets.

As stated, the variable with the most missing values is *trust in news media* – specifically, the results from Geen Stijl. From the 2001 available respondents, only 1313 gave an answer to this question. This differs from De Telegraaf, the other Dutch news outlet to be used, as there are 1779 respondents. In an effort to not change the data and effect the results, the regression analysis will be reported separately and the number of respondents for each analysis will be stated on the regression analysis.

4.2. Effects of News Media on Political Trust across News Media Environments

As previously mentioned, this section will include an overview of the regression analysis performed for each individual country. This section is split per country. There will firstly be a description of the results from the Netherlands, followed by Spain, and lastly the United Kingdom. The aim for these results is to create an understanding of how trust and consumption of the two most right-wing news media outlets in the respective countries affects political trust.

The Netherlands

Table 1 shows the results from the regression analysis for the Netherlands. This table shows four separate models, in which both trust and consumption of the two news media outlets are evaluated separately. There will firstly be a look into the results by De Telegraaf, followed by those of Geen Stijl.

Table 1. Regression Results from the Netherlands

Dependent variable: Trust in Parliament

Effect	Model 1a		Model 1b		Model 2a		Model 2b	
	Trust in De Telegraaf		*Trust in Geen Stijl*		*Consumption of De Telegraaf*		*Consumption of Geen Stijl*	
	(N = 1779)		*(N = 1313)*		*(N = 1969)*		*(N = 1969)*	
De Telegraaf	0.050	0.080*			-0.119**	-0.094**		
	(0.045)	(0.044)			(0.046)	(0.044)		
Geen Stijl			-0.117*	-0.112**			-0.154**	-0.235***
			(0.069)	(0.067)			(0.073)	(0.072)
Education		0.189***		0.182***		0.181***		0.182***
		(0.016)		(0.018)		(0.015)		(0.015)

Age		-0.004***		-0.004**		-0.005***		-0.006***
		(0.001)		(0.001)		(0.001)		(0.001)
Gender		-0.025		-0.032		-0.041		-0.048
		(0.043)		(0.050)		(0.041)		(0.041)
Constant	2.795***	2.292***	2.892***	2.364***	2.843***	2.445***	2.821***	2.474***
	(0.030)	(0.125)	(0.28)	(0.137)	(0.025)	(0.115)	(0.022)	(0.115)
Confidence level	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
R-square	0.001	0.087	0.002	0.080	0.003	0.088	0.002	0.091

Significance levels in Table 1: *$p < 0.1$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$

De Telegraaf

Firstly, Model 1a presents trust in De Telegraaf appears to have a slight significant effect with a positive coefficient of 0.080; for every unit increase in trust for this news outlet there is a 0.080 increase in political trust. However, it was hypothesized that trust in right-wing news media would lead to political distrust within the democratic corporatist model. This unexpected result could be due to journalists reporting the malpractices of the government objectively (Weder & Brunetti, 2003). On the other hand, Model 2a indicates a significant negative effect between consumption of De Telegraaf and political trust; with every unit increase in consumption results in a decrease of -0.094 in political trust. These results indicate that the consumption of right-wing media cause distrust and skepticism towards political institutions **(**Vallone, Ross & Lepper, 1985**)**. These results do support the earlier hypothesis, as greater consumption of right-wing news media in the Netherlands was expected to decrease political trust. This is likely due to priming and agenda-setting theory, which propose that right-wing media will be more critical of political institutions (Miller & Krosnick, 2000).

Both Model 1a and Model 2a show similar results for the control variables. The results from the control variables, namely education, are expected from past literature. For instance, Avery (2009) had found that the relationship between education and political interest correlating strongly to the consumption of news media. However, beyond the effects of the independent variables, the r-square value of Model 1 indicates that only 0.1% of trust in parliament can be explained by trust in De Telegraaf. This contrasts with the 8.7% that explains trust in parliament when the control variables are taken into account. This same pattern can be observed in Model 2a, through which this news media outlet explains 0.3% of trust in parliament, while the same regression including control variables increases this value to 8.8%.

Geen Stijl

Trust in Geen Stijl contrasts highly with that of De Telegraaf. Model 1b indicates that for every unit increase in trust in Geen Stijl, there is a decrease of -0.112 in political trust. This trend is continued with the consumption of Geen Stijl. For every unit increase of consumption in the news media outlet there is a -0.235 decrease in political trust. This negative effect is notable as it falls in line with previous literature in the field. Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre and Shehata (2015) had stated that the consumption of right-wing news media by different social groups will decrease the overall trust in parliament. In this case, the consumption of Geen Stijl by certain individuals will decrease trust in parliament. Moreover, within Hallin and Mancini's (2004) democratic corporatist model it is expected that the consumption of right-wing media will lead to a lower level of political trust, as there is more media autonomy in which right-wing news media outlets can openly critique government actions. In addition, the control variables in Model 1b and Model 2b indicate the same results as those in Model 1a and Model 2a. Namely, the significant positive effect that education has on political trust. The results from Geen Stijl do support previous literature, as both trust and consumption of right-wing news media in the Netherlands were expected to lead to political distrust.

The trust and consumption of Geen Stijl explain a very small amount of variance on the dependent variable. Trust in Geen Stijl explains 0.2% of political trust, while consumption of Geen Stijl explains 0.3%. However, when the control variables are taken into consideration these values increase significantly. This indicates that although both trust and consumption of Geen Stijl have a significant effect at explaining trust in parliament, these variables are not strong predictors of political trust.

Spain

Table 2 presents the results from the regression analysis for Spain. This table shows four separate models, in which both trust and consumption of the two news media outlets are evaluated separately. There will firstly be a look into the results by Televisión Española (TVE), followed by those of ABC.

Table 2. Regression Results from Spain

Dependent variable: Trust in Parliament							
Effect	Model 1a		Model 1b	Model 2a		Model 2b	
	Trust in Televisión Española *(N = 1992)*		*Trust in ABC* *(N = 1992)*	*Consumption of Televisión Española* *(N = 1992)*		*Consumption of ABC* *(N = 1992)*	
Televisión Española	0.395*** (0.034)	0.421*** (0.034)		0.319*** (0.039)	0.320*** (0.039)		

ABC			0.324*** (0.037)	0.351*** (0.036)			0.249** (0.040)	0.233*** (0.039)
Education		0.119*** (0.014)		0.103*** (0.034)		0.107*** (0.014)		0.092*** (0.015)
Age		0.007*** (0.001)		0.008*** (0.001)		0.007*** (0.001)		0.008*** (0.001)
Gender		-0.110*** (0.034)		-0.114*** (0.034)		-0.108*** (0.034)		-0.091*** (0.035)
Constant	1.622*** (0.025)	0.799*** (0.117)	1.722*** (0.21)	0.934*** (0.117)	1.600*** (0.034)	0.882*** (0.120)	1.767*** (0.020)	1.056*** (0.118)
Confidence level	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
R-square	0.062	0.109	0.038	0.083	0.032	0.071	0.019	0.056

Significance levels in Table 1: *p＜0.1, **p＜0.05, ***p＜0.01

Televisión Española

As stated, Table 2 shows the results from the regression analysis for TVE; specifically Model 1a and Model 2a. TVE appears to have a significant and strong positive effect on political trust. Model 1a shows that for every unit increase in trust for TVE there is a 0.421 increase in political trust. Gronke and Cook (2007) argued that an increase trust in news media would directly correlate to a trust in political institutions. This trend was expected, as there is also less media autonomy in Spain resulting in more favorable content towards the government in right-wing news media (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) Model 2a, on the other hand, does not show the same difference when control variables are involved. Rather, there is a significant 0.320 increase in political trust for every unit of consumption of TVE. This trend was also hypothesized, as right-wing news media in Spain is expected to prime citizens in favor of government institutions (Hetherington & Rudoplh, 2008).

Notably, it is observed in both Model 1a and Model 2a that the independent variables do have a high level of influence on the dependent variable. Model 1a shows that 6.2% of trust in parliament can be explained by trust in TVE, while 3.2% of trust in parliament can be explained by consumption of TVE. These results become notable when compared to the r-square values that include control variables. For instance, Model 1a with control variables can explain 10.9% of political trust. This 4-point increase between trust in TVE and the control variables indicates that there is a strong correlation between the news media's ability to influence public belief towards political institutions.

ABC

Model 1b and Model 2b in Table 2 show the effect that both trust and consumption have on trust in the Spanish parliament. Firstly, Model 1b shows that for every unit increase in trust in ABC there is a significant 0.351 increase in political trust. This increase is lower than that of TVE, which is in-line with the information presented in Appendices C. This points towards ABC being the most right-wing news media outlet in the polarized pluralist model. Nevertheless, the effect size is still strong and shows a positive correlation between trust in ABC and political trust. Similarly, Model 2b shows that for every unit increase in consumption of the news outlet there is a 0.233 increase in political trust. The pattern follows in which ABC has less of an effect strength than its counterpart TVE. Moreover, both trends of Model 1b and Model 2b are in line with previous literature and the hypothesis, as was discussed in the results of TVE.

As well as this, trust in ABC only accounts for 3.8% of an effect on political trust. This effect of ABC is even lower when looking at consumption, as only 1.9% can be used to explain trust in parliament. Relative to the models in which TVE were analyzed, these r-square values are also significantly lower.

United Kingdom

Table 3 shows for the United Kingdom. This table shows four separate models, in which both trust and consumption of The Times and the Daily Mail are evaluated separately. The results are also presented and discussed separately.

Table 3. Regression Results from the United Kingdom

Dependent variable: Trust in Parliament

Effect	Model 1a *Trust in The Times* (N = 1784)		Model 1b *Trust in Daily Mail* (N = 1784)		Model 2a *Consumption of The Times* (N = 1784)		Model 2b *Consumption of Daily Mail* (N = 1784)	
The Times	0.376*** (0.040)	0.385*** (0.044)			0.225*** (0.046)	0.244*** (0.049)		
Daily Mail			0.244*** (0.046)	0.234*** (0.048)			0.103** (0.045)	0.081* (0.047)
Education		0.076** (0.035)		0.166*** (0.035)		0.116*** (0.035)		0.150*** (0.035)
Age		0.005*** (0.001)		0.004*** (0.001)		0.005*** (0.001)		0.004*** (0.001)

Gender		-0.014 (0.042)		-0.016 (0.043)		0.006 (0.043)		-0.008 (0.043)
Constant	1.911*** (0.030)	1.573*** (0.130)	2.131*** (0.24)	1.534*** (0.134)	2.138*** (0.024)	1.595*** (0.132)	2.168 *** (0.024)	1.606*** (0.134)
Confidence level	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
R-square	0.042	0.054	0.014	0.026	0.012	0.026	0.003	0.014

Significance levels in Table 1: *p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

The Times

Model 1a in Table 3 shows that there is a significant 0.358 increase in political trust for every unit increase in trust in The Times. The results from The Times do not support the hypothesis made during the theoretical framework of this research project. It was expected that increased trust and consumption of a right-wing news outlet would lead to greater distrust in political institutions within the liberal model. This positive effect correlates to past literature from Cappela and Jamieson (1997), as trust in news media is associated with characteristics of 'credibility' and 'professionalism'. These characteristics are the same as those used by Hallin and Mancini (2004) to describe the liberal media model. Moreover, this same significant positive trend is seen in Model 2a. A unit increase of consumption of The Times results in a significant 0.244 increase in political trust. Prior (2007) had argued that high-choice media models, such as the liberal model, can increase political engagement and involvement. This could in turn results in an increase of political trust with increased consumption of right-wing news media, such as The Times. However, the opposite is seen in the results. The results indicate that right-wing media in the United Kingdom increases political trust. This could be the result of news media outlets being more orientated towards sensationalist content to promote viewership, which could avoid topics related to political trust. Moreover, these results indicate that increase trust in political institutions could be due to greater availability of political information in news media (Ceron, 2015; Norris, 2000).

Table 3 also shows that political trust can explained 4.2% by trust in The Times and 1.2% from consumption of The Times. While these r-square values may seem low, they appear to play a significant effect when compared to the regression analysis that include the control variables. Model 1a, for example, shows that when control variables are accounted that 5.4% of political trust can be explained. This increase of 1.2 percentage points indicates that most of the effect on political trust is from the news media outlet. This same pattern is observed in Model 2a, through which there is only a 1.4 increase in percentage points when control variables are considered.

Daily Mail

Models 1b and 2b from Table 3 show the results from the regression analysis from the Daily Mail. From these results it is seen that for every unit increase in trust in the Daily Mail there

is significant positive effect of 0.234 increase in political trust. Consumption, on the other hand, appears to show a much lower effect on political trust. While still significant, a unit increase in consumption will only lead to a 0.081 increase in political trust. These results are interesting, as Appendices D shows that the Daily Mail is the most right-wing news media outlet in the United Kingdom. Once again, the results do not support the hypothesis laid out in the theoretical framework of this research project. This is discussed in the analysis of The Times, and the same reasoning applies for the results of the Daily Mail.

Following on the last statement, the r-square values of Model 1b and Model 2b indicate that the Daily Mail has a very weak effect on political trust. Trust in the Daily Mail accounts for 1.4% of political trust, while consumption of this news media outlet accounts for 0.3% of political trust. Therefore, these weak goodness of fit scores presented in Table 3 indicate that the Daily Mail is not a good predictor of political trust.

5.   Conclusion

This section of the report will reflect on the hypothesis of this research project. There will be a critical look into the effects of trust and consumption in right-wing media across the media models discussed to establish a relationship with political trust. This section will be split into two parts: (5.1) trust in media and (5.2) consumption of media. These steps will be taken in an effort to answer the following research question: *To what extent does news media consumption and trust in right-wing news media affect political trust in European democracies with varying media system characteristics?*

5.1. Trust in Right-Wing News Media

Based on previous literature, this study hypothesized that trust in right-wing news media outlets in the United Kingdom (liberal model) would lead to less political trust, relative to other media systems. Contrastingly, trust in right-wing media in Spain (polarized pluralist model) was expected to lead to more political trust, relative to other media models. The Netherlands (democratic corporatist model) was expected to fall somewhere in the middle of these two models. However, the results from the regression analysis performed tell a different story. In the Netherlands, trust in right-wing news media outlets led to a decrease in political trust. As stated, this trend was theorized and found by Gronke and Cook (2007). The Netherlands was the only country that showed this trend, as both the United Kingdom and Spain indicated that greater trust in right-wing news media led to an increase in political trust. Jonas (2004) had conducted previous research in the United States (liberal model) and argued that greater trust in news media will result in a greater level of political trust. The results by Jonas (2004) are concurrent with those that this study found with the United Kingdom.

The *virtuous cycle theory* stated that increased media exposure could promote civic engagement, political interest, and political trust (Norris, 2000). This could be the case in these media systems. In the liberal model, this could stem from a greater amount of sensationalist

content which puts emphasis on specific issues, leading citizens to add importance to certain political issues. While this theory applies generally, it is still relevant for right-wing media outlets. In the polarized pluralist model, however, this could be explained by the media supporting political institutions and political elites. Moreover, Ceron (2015) had gone on to argue that political information is only able to influence citizens that are willing to receive and act on such information. Perhaps the viewership of right-wing media content resonates strongly with the political content, and therefore political trust is increased. This likely contrasts so heavily with the democratic corporatist model (the Netherlands) because journalists with more autonomy are inclined to criticize the government and overall public sphere (Areily, 2015). While this autonomy does exist in the liberal model, the journalists and media outlets are more responsive to market forces as a result of lacking government intervention. On the other extreme, the polarized pluralist model is associated with low levels of journalistic professionalism, which could lead to a lack of criticism with the government.

Specifically, the results found by Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre and Shehata (2015), which showed that the trust of right-wing news media decreases the overall trust in parliament. This deviation could be seen in the polarized pluralist model. This model is associated with low levels of journalistic professionalism and an elite-oriented press. Perhaps the content promoted by TVE and ABC is more in favor of politicians and supportive of the policies. In addition, this model is known for its high levels of state intervention, relative to the other media models (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). This could indicate that the news media outlet is supportive of a right-wing party in government. Notably, the Peoples Party (Partido Popular), a right-wing Spanish political party, had just won the 2016 parliamentary elections (Senados de España, 2021). This coincides closely with the results presented and could indicate support from the news outlet towards the government.

The United Kingdom, as part of the liberal model, showed results very similar to those of Spain. Past literature had stated that trust in right-wing news media would decrease overall political trust (Gronke & Cook, 2007). However, the United Kingdom showed the opposite. This could perhaps be based on the type of outlet (e.g. tabloid) and the content that is produced. Hallin and Mancini (2004) had theorized that the liberal model would have high media autonomy and no state intervention at all. These results from right-wing news media indicate that there was a focus on increase user engagement and an emphasis on differentiating from market competition. Therefore, news media outlets in the United Kingdom are very sensitive to market demand and market changes. This often results in more sensationalist content (Aalberg & Curran, 2013). This leads media outlets in the liberal model are very subjective to demands of its viewership.

In contrast Hallin and Mancini (2004) stated that the Netherlands, as part of the democratic corporatist model, has a high level of journalistic professionalism and is very fact oriented. Due to the Netherlands high levels of journalistic professionalism and high levels of media autonomy, there is much room for the news outlet to openly critique the government for policies that are too 'liberal'. This could work as an explanation for the effects towards political trust that both trust in Geen Stijl and De Telegraaf create.

5.2. Consumption of Right-Wing News Media

This study had previously hypothesized that consumption of right-wing media in Spain, as part of the polarized pluralist model, would lead to more political trust relative to other media systems. Contrastingly, right-wing media consumption in the United Kingdom, as part of the liberal model, would lead to least political trust of the three media systems. Once again, the Netherlands, as part of the democratic corporatist model, was expected to fall in the middle of these two media systems.

Firstly, the Netherlands was the only country analyzed that showed an increase consumption of right-wing news media lead to greater mistrust in the government. This negative effect is notable as it falls in line with previous literature in the field. Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre and Shehata (2015) had stated that the consumption of right-wing news media by different social groups will decrease the overall trust in parliament. Moreover, in the democratic corporatist model it is expected that the consumption of right-wing media will lead to a lower level of political trust, due to the high levels of media autonomy and more fact-based reporting, as opposed to sensationalist content (Aarts, Fladmoe & Strömbäck, 2012; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). In addition, the consumption of right-wing news media in the Netherlands indicates a clear example of priming and agenda-setting theory. This is clear through the negative effects on political trust that are present through increased consumption of the news outlets, as citizens are primed to view political institutions in a negative light.

Priot (2007) had outlined that a greater amount of choice in a media environment would increase a citizen's political trust. This study found that the liberal model – known for its high-choice media environment – leads to greater political trust, which is in support of the previous literature. However, Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre, and Shehate (2015) had outlined that in low media choice environments, such as that of the democratic corporatist model and the polarized pluralist model, it is expected that increased right-wing news consumption and availability would lead to changes in social groups and individual changes towards political opinion.

In the democratic corporatist model, an increase in consumption of right-wing media leads to a decrease in political trust. This could be due to the high levels of media autonomy and large amounts of newspaper circulation, which result in greater access of news media to the public (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Moreover, this great deal of media autonomy allows news outlets to be openly critical of the government. In a country such as the Netherlands, which is generally considered a left-wing government, the content of a right-wing news media outlet may lead citizens to put more importance on issues such as anti-immigration or anti-EU policies. By the same token, the results from the other two media models points towards an increase in political trust with an increase in consumption of right-wing news media. In the case of the polarized pluralist model, there is relatively less media autonomy and a newspaper circulation intended for elites (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Moreover, due to high media funding in Spain by the government, there is less room for open critique of political institutions. However, the liberal model also shows high levels of media autonomy from the government. In fact, there is no

government intervention or subsidies given to news media outlets within this model. As a result, this could heavily influence all media outlets to be after more sensationalist content. This leads citizens to put importance on issues that are perhaps in favor of the government, or importance on issues that are more negative towards international institutions, such as the European Union (Hetherington & Rudoplh, 2008; Miller & Krosnick, 2000). However, the results from the United Kingdom and the Netherlands were both expected to yield the same effect on political trust, and this was not the case. For the United Kingdom this could be explained through the lack of emphasis that right-wing news outlets put on political institutions. This would fall in line with support for Brexit from the United Kingdom parliament, which could explain how increased consumption of right-wing news would increase political trust.

This research did not intend to investigate the type of content that varying right-wing media outlets release, but the results do give an indication of how negative or positive these outlets are towards the government. It appears that the characterizations of the news media environments by Hallin and Mancini (2004) are accurate, but do not necessarily indicate the extent to which political trust can be predicted. Nevertheless, this research project found that the results indicate that consumption of right-wing news media in the Netherlands (liberal model) will lead to more political trust, while increased consumption of right-wing media in Spain (democratic corporatist model) and the United Kingdom (liberal model) leads to increased trust in parliament.

6. Discussion

6.1. Limitation of Research

While the findings of this research are insightful into how citizens respond to right-wing news outlets in the context of Western European democracies, there are several limitations that hinder the validity of the results. Firstly, this research project had a very limited dataset with a maximum number of 2011 respondents per country. In addition, there were several missing values for the Netherlands, which limited the results of Geen Sijl to just over 1300 respondents. This indicates that a significant proportion of the population is not familiar with Geen Stijl, thereby limiting the generalization of the results.

In addition, this study analyzed news outlets that were characterized as 'right-wing', according to the survey data. However, in hindsight it is unreasonable to compare news outlets and varying types of media (newspaper, website, radio, etc.) across different countries. The focus of news outlets may differ completely. For instance, the Daily Mail is a tabloid newspaper, which focuses on sensationalist content and rarely reports on political institutions. This contrasts with right-wing news outlets in the Netherlands, which are more focused at openly critiquing political figures and policies debated in the parliament. This lack of comparability may also influence the interpretation and outcome of this research project.

Finally, the last limitations of this research project would be the lack of information presented on the political climate in each country and on the news media outlets. It could have been beneficial to provide information discussing the current political parties that govern a

country, as this influences the reporting that right-wing news media outlets conduct on political issues. For instance, if there is a right-wing party in office it is likely that there the right-wing news media outlets within the country will provide more supporting content towards the government, which could influence how they affect political trust. Moreover, giving a detailed account of the content of the different right-wing news media outlets analyzed could have worked to build a better understanding for the reader into the type of content that is expected from each outlet.

6.2. Future Research

This research project has created a foundation for future research. This study outlines that there are unexpected results from those that were detailed in previous literature. While there is an attempt to explain these differences, further research into the varying content of right-wing news media across European countries could provide greater insight into how political trust is affected. As well as this, future research could investigate the effects of trust and consumption of right-wing news media independently. Rather than looking at the effects in the same study, it could be beneficial to go more in detail with either trust or consumption, as these two concepts tend to overlap heavily. On another note, future research projects could also investigate the effects of all news media outlets on political trust to find if the trends are similar to those found with right-wing news.

Future research could also focus on a more qualitative approach at the content of the news media outlets. Through looking at the type of content right-wing news outlets create there could be a more accurate understanding into how political trust is affected. Finally, it could also be interesting for future research projects to investigate how different right-wing news mediums (e.g. Televisions, radio, newspaper, etc.) affect political trust.

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8. Appendix

8.1. Appendix A: Operationalization of variables.

Variable	Question number	Label	Value
Political trust	Q2c	I am going to name some institutions in our country. Please tell me how much, if at all, you trust each one parliament do you trust it a lot, somewhat, not too much, or not at all?	1 = Not at all 2 = Not too much 3 = Somewhat 4 = A lot 98 = Don't Know 99 = DK/Refused
Consumption of news media	Q8NLa – Q8NLh Q8UKa – Q8UKh Q8ESa – Q8ESh	Do you obtain news from ___ at least once a week or not or haven't you heard of it?	1 = Yes, obtain news from this source at least once a week 2 = No, do not obtain news from this source at least once a week 97 = Haven't heard of it 99 = DK/Refused
Trust in news media	Q9NLa – Q9NLh Q9UKa – Q9UKh Q9ESa – Q9ESh	Do you generally trust or generally distrust ___ as a source for news?	1 = Generally trust 2 = Generally distrust 98 = Haven't heard of it 99 = DK/Refused
Political ideology	Q10NLa – Q10NLh Q10UKa – Q10UKh Q10ESa – Q10ESh	Some people talk about politics in terms of left, center and right. Where would you place ___ on a left-right scale from 0 to 6, with 0 indicating far left and 6 indicating far right?	.00 = 0 (Far left) 1.00 = 1 2.00 = 2 3.00 = 3 4.00 = 4 5.00 = 5 6.00 = 6 (Far right) 98.00 = Haven't heard of it 99.0 DK/Refused

Education (The Netherlands)	Q34NL	What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?	1 = Geen formeel onderwijs genoten 2 = Basisonderwijs (lavo en vglo, lbo, lts, leao, lhno, huishoudschool, lagere landbouw-/tuinbouwschool, mavo, ivo, (m)ulo, 3 = Middelbaar beroepsonderwijs (mbo, mts, meao, mhno, inas, verpleging, kms, middelbare landbouwschool, middelbare tuinbouw 4 = Hoger middelbaar onderwijs (havo, vwo, mms, hbs, gymnasium, lyceum, atheneum) 5 = Hoger beroepsonderwijs (hbo, hts, heao, SPD 2/3, hogere landbouw-/tuinbouwschool, MO-A, politie-/sociale/pedagogische ac 6 = Hoger wetenschappelijk onderwijs (MA, MSc, dr., ir., mr.) 98 = Don't know 99 = Refused
Education (Spain)	Q34ES	What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?	1 = No sabe leer o escribir 2 = Sin estudios (Estudios primarios sin terminar) 3 = Primer grado (Certificado escolar, EGB 1ª etapa, más o menos 10 años) 4 = Segundo grado 1er ciclo (Graduado, EGB 2ª etapa, 1º y 2º ESO) 5 = Segundo grado 2º ciclo (FP 1º y 2º, Bachiller, BUP, 3º y 4º ESO, COU, 1º y 2º Bachillerato) 6 = Tercer grado 1er ciclo (Ingeniero técnico, escuelas Universitarias, arquitectos técnicos, peritos, magisterio, ATS, di 7 = Tercer grado 2º ciclo (Universitarios, licenciado superior, facultades, escuelas técnicas

			superiores, doctorados, etc. 98 = Don't know 99 = Refused
Education (The United Kingdom)	Q34UKa	What is the highest level of education you have completed?	1 = No qualifications obtained 2 = GCSE level, O level, CSE, or A level 3 = Higher degree (HND, teaching or nursing certificates, NVQ4, masters, PHD, NVQ5, BA or BS) 98 = Don't know 99 = Refused
Age	Q33	How old are you?	97 = 97 or older 98 = Don't know 99 = Refused
Gender	Q43	Sex (Record by observation)	1 = Male 2 = Female

8.2. Appendix B: Descriptive Statistics for Dutch News Media Outlets

Descriptive Table 1: Political Ideology of Dutch News Media

News Media Outlet	*n*	Perceived Political Ideology of Dutch News Media	
		Mean	Standard Deviation
NOS	2001	3.348	1.297
RTL	1754	3.673	1.238
Algemeen Dagblad	1995	3.367	1.238
De Volkskrant	1993	2.651	1.458
De Telegraaf	1707	4.056	1.631
NU.nl	1912	3.355	1.188
Geen Stijl	1993	3.880	1.958
Joop.nl	1422	2.732	1.715

8.3. Appendix C: Descriptive Statistics for Spanish News Media Outlets

Descriptive Table 2: Political Ideology of Spanish News Media

News Media Outlet	*n*	Perceived Political Ideology of Spanish News Media	
		Mean	Standard Deviation
Televisión Española	2001	4.341	1.331
Antena 3	2001	3.775	1.201
El Pais	1995	3.326	1.391
El Mundo	1993	4.155	1.279
ABC	1707	4.642	1.394
El Diario	1912	3.284	1.321
El Público	1993	2.855	1.467
La Vanguardia	1422	3.502	1.372

8.4. Appendix D: Descriptive Statistics for News Media Outlets in the United Kingdom

Descriptive Table 3: Political Ideology of News Media in the United Kingdom

News Media Outlet	*n*	Perceived Political Ideology of News Media in the United Kingdom	
		Mean	Standard Deviation
BBC	2001	3.424	1.406
Sky News	2001	3.729	1.343
ITV	2001	3.396	1.144
The Guardian	2001	2.732	1.664
The Times	2001	3.969	1.392
Daily Mirror	2001	2.848	1.713
Daily Mail	2001	4.316	1.683
Huffington Post	2001	2.834	1.381

CHECKLIST ETHICAL AND PRIVACY ASPECTS OF RESEARCH

INSTRUCTION

This checklist should be completed for every research study that is conducted at the Department of Public Administration and Sociology (DPAS). This checklist should be completed *before* commencing with data collection or approaching participants. Students can complete this checklist with help of their supervisor.

This checklist is a mandatory part of the empirical master's thesis and has to be uploaded along with the research proposal.

The guideline for ethical aspects of research of the Dutch Sociological Association (NSV) can be found on their website (http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page_id=17). If you have doubts about ethical or privacy aspects of your research study, discuss and resolve the matter with your EUR supervisor. If needed and if advised to do so by your supervisor, you can also consult Dr. Jennifer A. Holland, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: The Effects of News Media on Political Trust in a European Context

Name, email of student: Alfredo Lira, 443896al@eur.nl

Name, email of supervisor: Gijs Custers, Custer@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration: March 21, 2021; 3 months.

Is the research study conducted within DPAS   YES NO

If 'NO': at or for what institute or organization will the study be conducted?
(e.g. internship organization)

PART II: HUMAN SUBJECTS

1.   Does your research involve human participants.   ~~YES~~ - <mark>NO</mark>

   If 'NO': skip to part IV.

   If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research?   YES - NO
   Research that falls under the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act (WMO) must first be submitted to an accredited medical research ethics committee or the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (CCMO).

2.   Does your research involve field observations without manipulations
   that will not involve identification of participants.   YES - NO

   If 'YES': skip to part IV.

3.   Research involving completely anonymous data files (secondary
   data that has been anonymized by someone else).   YES - NO

   If 'YES': skip to part IV.

PART IV: SAMPLE

Where will you collect or obtain your data?

   -   The data will be Pew Research Centre. More specifically, the *Pew Research Centre Fall 2017 Media and Politics in Western Europe Survey*
Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

   -   The size of the total sample is 6013 respondents.
Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the size of the population from which you will sample?

   -   The size of the total population is slightly over 131 million (these are the populations of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Spain combined).

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

Continue to part V.

Part V: Data storage and backup

Where and when will you store your data in the short term, after acquisition?

- The data will be stored on my laptop, the cloud, and a flash drive. I have already acquired the relevant data from the Pew Research Centre.

Note: indicate for separate data sources, for instance for paper-and pencil test data, and for digital data files.

Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?

- I will be responsible for the day-to-day management, storage and back of data arising for my research.

How (frequently) will you back-up your research data for short-term data security?

- All of the data will be backed up once a week on all of the storage aforementioned storage spaces.

In case of collecting personal data how will you anonymize the data?

- The suggested data set is already anonymized.

Note: It is advisable to keep directly identifying personal details separated from the rest of the data. Personal details are then replaced by a key/ code. Only the code is part of the database with data and the list of respondents/research subjects is kept separate.

PART VI: SIGNATURE

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the ethical guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing information to participants about the study and ensuring confidentiality in storage and use of personal data. Treat participants respectfully, be on time at appointments, call participants when they have signed up for your study and fulfil promises made to participants.
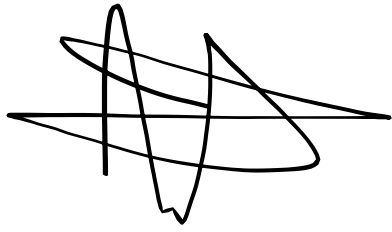
Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

Hereby I declare that the study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I have answered the questions truthfully.

Name student: Alfredo Lira   Name (EUR) supervisor: Gijs Custers

Date: 21-03-2021   Date: 21-03-2021