Psychology of Language and Communication 2022, Vol. 26, No. 1

sciendo

DOI: 10.2478/plc-2022-19

Lidwien van de Wijngaert
Faculty of Arts, Radboud University, Netherlands
Experts in Media en Maatschappij, EMMA, Netherlands

Understanding polarization: A case study of Black Pete in the Netherlands

Polarization is generally considered as something undesirable that needs to be resolved. To reduce polarization, it is important to understand what processes cause it. Brandsma (2016) developed a framework that helps to understand the process of polarization. The framework also intends to formulate a communication strategy to address a polarized situation. The current study investigates how social media data as derived from a specific polarized case relates to Brandsma's framework. Using Twitter data, we investigated the case of Black Pete in The Netherlands. Results provided support for the Brandsma framework. At the same time, this study provided additional, more nuanced insights into the subtle communicative aspect of polarization. Results showed that polarization is a process of change in which identity ("us" vs. "them") as well as the issue itself (proponents vs. opponents) play an important role. By using these insights, the negative effects of polarization may be addressed differently. The key to reducing polarization lies in the ability to change while maintaining or developing the identity of groups that oppose each other.

Key words: social media, polarization, network analysis

Address for correspondence: Lidwien van de Wijngaert
Faculty of Arts, Radboud University, Postbus 9103, 6500 HD Nijmegen, Netherlands
E-mail: lidwien.vandewijngaert@ru.nl
This is an open access article licensed under the CC BY NC ND 4.0 License.

According to King and Anderson (1971, p. 244) polarization, as a rhetorical phenomenon, may be defined as "the process by which an extremely diversified public is coalesced into two or more highly contrasting, mutually exclusive groups sharing a high degree of internal solidarity in those beliefs which the persuader considers salient." The difference between a regular and a highly polarized conflict is that in a polarized situation, the issue itself has become less important while the groups that oppose each other and their political, societal, and cultural differences become central stage. According to De Dreu (2009), polarization may yield benefits on an individual level, but it has large costs at a societal level. A well-known example that is often mentioned in this context is the increased division in American politics (Fiorina et al., 2010). The main concern is that increased distance between opposite parties will lead to increased gridlock and an inability to reach consensus on legislation (Holmes & McNeal, 2016). Therefore, polarization as a process is something to be prevented or, as an outcome, to be resolved. The first step towards solving a polarized situation is to understand how the polarization process works. Brandsma (2016) provided a framework (see next section) for understanding polarization. This framework has already been used in a number of studies. However, these studies were mostly based on interviews and analyses of news reports. In the current study, we examined whether the laws, roles, and processes that Brandsma distinguishes in his framework can be recognized in social media data. To do this, we focused on a case that has yielded a lot of (polarized) debate on Twitter. There are several reasons why we think that a case study using social media data of a polarized situation can provide additional insights into the process of polarization. First, social media data, unlike self-reports as used in interviews or data derived from journalist interpretations, do not intrude on or interfere with the context of the research (Araujo & Neijens, 2020). Second, although the external validity of a social media case study is limited, it does allow the possibility to study the relatively rare conditions of a polarized situation longitudinally, systematically, and quantitatively, with a positive impact on ecological validity. The insights that emerge from this approach may contribute to practical applications and managerial guidelines as well as to developing tools that allow interventions in early stages, so that a (strongly) polarized situation can be prevented. Third, by examining social media data from a specific polarized case, it is possible to gain insight into the communication processes that underlie the development of the polarized situation from the very start of the process. This focus on communication is important because interaction and communication is the vehicle through which polarization develops.

Therefore, the current study addressed the following question: how does the polarization framework by Brandsma (2016) relate to a polarized case on social media? The practical relevance of answering this question was to find out whether the game changers proposed by Brandsma can help reduce polarization or whether other interventions are required.

The article is structured as follows. First, we discuss Brandsma's conceptual

framework in more detail. Next, we present our choice for the case of Black Pete and the methodology in more detail. After that, we present our findings. Finally, we relate the findings back to the framework. We end the article with our propositions for communicative action.

A Framework of Polarization

Dutch philosopher Brandsma (2016) presented a conceptual framework of polarization that can help understand the polarization process. According to Brandsma, polarization is based on a thought construct in which people constantly express themselves about the identity of others: the focus is on *us-them* thinking, rather than on a conflict around some specific issue. The consequence is that people drift apart in opposing groups.

Brandsma (2016) defined three laws in which polarization is rooted. The first law is related to Tajfel and Turners' (1979) social identity theory. This theory was originally developed to understand the psychological basis of discrimination between groups. Social identity refers to a person's awareness of belonging to a particular group (the ingroup), for example, on the basis of national, cultural, gender, political, or urban identity. People who do not belong to the ingroup are counted as part of the outgroup and are treated as such. These processes make it difficult to establish relationships between groups and reduce polarization.

The second law in Brandsma's framework is that polarization cannot develop without fuel. That fuel consists of presenting positive statements of one's own identity and negative statements about the identity of the outgroup (Wilson et al., 2020).

The third law is that polarization is not something static or rational, but rather a matter of dynamic sentiments. Facts and arguments are subsequently less effective and relevant in an increasingly polarized situation. Communication constructs such as priming (Domke et al., 1998), framing (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981), and reinforcement (Bail et al., 2018; Bruns, 2019; Lord et al., 1979; Masip et al., 2020; Söderberg, 2017) apply here.

In addition to the three laws, Brandsma distinguished five roles in his conceptual framework:

- The pusher is the one that fuels us-them thinking. Pushers have no interest in reducing polarization. They are not interested in dialogue and are convinced of being right. Pushers are present on both sides of the polarized spectrum.
- Joiners, under polarization pressure, decide to opt for one pole or the other.
- Between the poles, at a distance from the joiners, there is room for the silent middle. The silent middle does not take sides. The silent middle is diverse and not guided by the polarizing statements of the pushers.
- The bridge builders see the shortcomings in the ideas of the opposites and want to do something about polarization by organizing dialogue. Using a rational approach, the classic bridge builder tries to stand objectively and neutrally above the parties. According to Brandsma, instead of

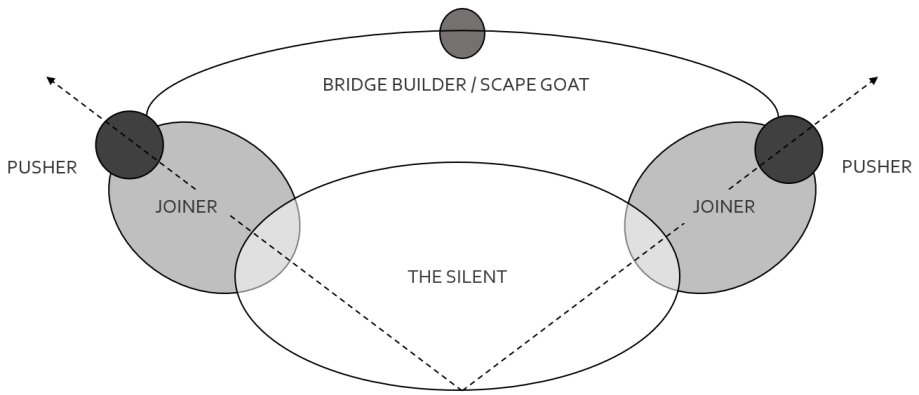
building bridges, this role only gives additional fuel to the opponents in the polarization process.
- The bridge builders run the risk of being pushed in the fifth role: the scapegoats. Both opposing parties can put the blame for the conflict on the scapegoat.

Together, the pushers, joiners, the silent middle, bridge builders, and scapegoats lay out the space in which polarization can emerge (see Figure 1).

According to Brandsma, interventions to combat polarization should focus on strengthening the resilience of the silent middle against the pressure from the poles, and should therefore not be aimed at the pushers. The vicious circle can be broken with the help of four game changers:
- Change the target audience: do not focus on the pushers, but strengthen the (silent) middle.
- Change the subject: choose an issue that concerns the middle group – and preferably also the joiners. The focus should be in addressing this issue rather than the already expressed opinions.
- Change the position. Instead of building bridges, the focus should be on developing a frame that is rooted in the center and allows dialogue.
- Change the tone of the controversy. Do not address the issue in terms of right and wrong.

With this framework, Brandsma not only provided a tool to talk about a polarized situation but also guidelines for communication professionals to reduce polarization. At the moment, the framework has been applied to a handful of cases in which a polarized situation has emerged. Ratheiser-van der Velde (2018) used the framework to describe of case of the Rwandan genocide. In addition, the Dutch Ministry of General Affairs (2018) applied the framework

Figure 1. *Polarization Framework (Brandsma, 2016)*



to several smaller polarized cases related to nature management, air traffic, citizen participation, and the diversity debate. The results of these studies seem to confirm the mechanisms of the framework. However, these studies were based on interviews and analyses of news reports. Interviews might be biased due to the self-report bias, while newspaper accounts are based on interpretation and selection by journalistsSocial media data may provide a more pronounced picture of polarization as people may feel less inhibited to express their thoughts in an online environment (Suler, 2005).

Research Approach and Method

Starting from Brandsma's polarization framework, the current study investigated how the process of polarization emerges by examining a corpus of social media (Twitter) data regarding the case of Black Pete in The Netherlands. This section provides background information about the choice for this specific case as well as details about the data gathering and approach to the data analysis.

The case of Black Pete

According to Yin (2003, p. 40) the selection of a single case can be motivated by its unique and longitudinal character. To understand the controversy surrounding Black Pete, it is important to provide some contextual information about the Sinterklaas feast in The Netherlands, Belgium and some parts of France. Sinterklaas is a legendary figure based on Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of children. On Sinterklaas Eve (December 5th) children get presents from Sinterklaas. Sinterklaas also is the basis for the North American figure of Santa Claus, as introduced in the early 19th century. During the American War of Independence, the Dutch inhabitants of New York City, reinvented their Sinterklaas tradition, as a symbol of the city's non-English past (Lendering, 2008). Sinterklaas is assisted by Black Peter ("Zwarte Piet"), a dumb helper dressed in a Moorish outfit and, traditionally, with a (painted) black face. In addition, Black Pete scares and punishes disobedient children. Rodenberg and Wagenaar (2016, p. 716) explained the controversy surrounding the Black Pete figure as follows: "The Netherlands' most important tradition, the celebration of the feast of Saint Nicholas, (Sinterklaas) has become subject to nation-wide contestation. As Dutch society has become more multicultural, partly due to the immigration from the former Dutch colonies in the West-Indies, new sensitivities have arisen about this institutionalized heritage practice. At the core of the controversy is the figure of Black Pete, Saint Nicholas' black faced companion. Some communities within Dutch society perceive this figure as highly menacing and insulting. To a substantial part of the population, however, Black Pete is an essential part of its heritage and identity. The ensuing controversy can be understood as a matter of heritage narratives conflicting." The choice of this polarized issue for the

current study was based on the fact that this discussion has been going on for years. Moreover, social media provides an important platform for the discussion. Hence, there is a substantive amount of longitudinal data available. Because of this, it is possible to gain insight into the development of the polarized debate.

Corpus of Twitter Data and Analysis

We specifically chose to use Twitter data for several reasons. First, it allowed us to analyze the data in several ways. For example, we could investigate which hashtags and word (combinations) were commonly used and how discussions developed over time. Another advantage of using Twitter data is that is allows a network perspective. To view Tweets in terms of a network, accounts of citizens, officials, organizations, or companies serve as nodes. The relationships between these accounts are formed by an @ mention (someone mentions someone else in a tweet) or a retweet. Using the network that emerges, it is possible to identify clusters that, through retweets and @ mentions, are more strongly connected to each other than to the rest of the network. By looking at the use of hashtags and dialogues (over time) from the perspective of the clusters, it is possible to gain insight into how polarization emerges.

We searched the period between November 15 and December 1 (the traditional duration of the festivities around the Sinterklaas feast) for the years 2011-2019 for messages on Twitter that combined words such as "Black Pete" and "Saint Nicholas" with words such as "discrimination" or "racism." Although this choice may have yielded some bias, it also excluded many tweets about the feast itself which had no relation to the debate on Black Pete.

For this case, 2019 is a natural end point because the lockdown measures as a consequence of the pandemic that were in force at the time of the Sinterklaas feast. The exact query was ("zwarte piet*" OR zwartepiet* OR roetveegpiet* OR sinterklaas) (discriminatie OR racisme) [("*black pete**" OR *blackpete** OR *sooty pete* * OR "*Saint Nicholas*") (*discrimination* OR *racism*)]. We used Coosto (a Dutch commercial social media scrape tool) that to collect our data. This resulted in a corpus of 44,423 Tweets in Dutch and Flemish language from 20762 accounts.

To analyze the corpus of tweets, we first cleaned the data of empty, unreadable characters and capitals and so forth. Next, we extracted the top 20 hashtags that were used in the tweets. To prepare for network analysis, we extracted retweets and @ mentions from the tweets. We used the Louvain clustering algorithm to establish clusters. R Studio was used for all these steps. The edge list that emerged from this was imported in Gephi, where we visualized the network that consisted of 9257 nodes (accounts) and 20595 edges (mentions) using only the giant component and the eight largest clusters. We drew the dividing line at eight because a large number of much smaller clusters followed after that. Next, we investigated at what moment the clusters we found were active and which hashtags were used by which clusters. Finally, we looked at some of the

conversations in response to the tweets that were retweeted most often in each cluster. By looking at these interactions, we obtained more in-depth insight into how different clusters discussed the issue of Black Pete.

Results

This section presents the results from the data analysis. First of all, we looked at the total number of tweets per year. From Figure 2, we can derive that over the years, the number of tweets has increased, with two peaks: one in 2014, when there was a first physical confrontation between supporters and opponents of Black Pete, and one in 2018, when there was a strong reaction from both politics and society on both sides to a Sooty Pete that the public broadcaster made. Sooty Pete or Chimney Pete is an alternative to Black Pete. Their face is smeared with soot from the chimneys that Piet has to go through to deliver gifts.

Next, we looked at the network of @ mentions and retweets. This shows how different clusters were organized in the Twitter arena. Each dot in Figure 3 represents a Twitter account. A line between two dots shows that an account has retweeted a post or mentioned another account. The colors represent clusters of accounts that are more closely connected to each other than they are connected to the rest of the network. From Figure 3, several clusters can be distinguished.

In order to understand how these clusters differ from each other, we looked at when each of the clusters was most active and what hashtags were used relatively often.

Figure 4 shows that in the early years, a medium sized (pink) cluster was present in an early stage of the debate. Soon after, three small clusters (yellow, sea-green, and red) followed. Two large clusters eventually took over the discussion: the (light) blue and the green clusters dominated the discussion in 2018. In addition, two new clusters appeared: the orange and the indigo cluster.

Figure 2. *Number of Tweets per Year in the Twitter Corpus*

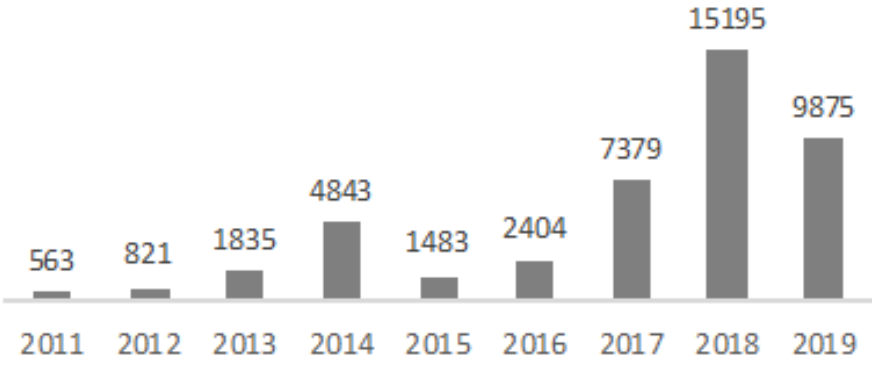


Figure 3. *Network of @Mentions and Retweets*

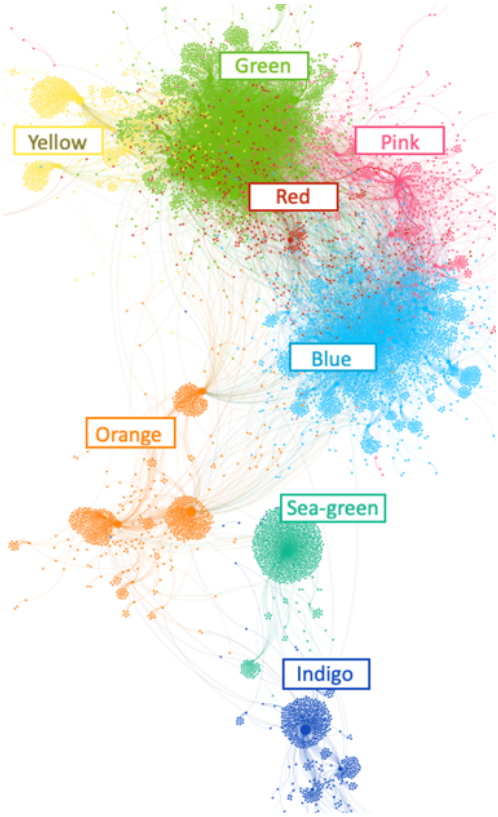
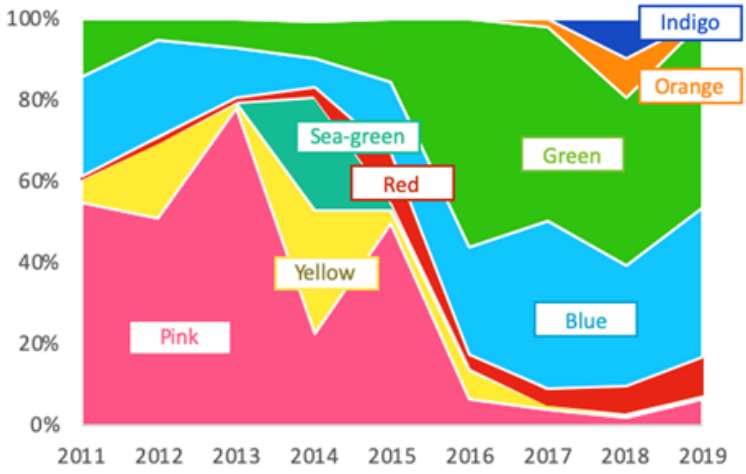


Figure 4. *Relative Activity of Clusters Between 2011 and 2019*

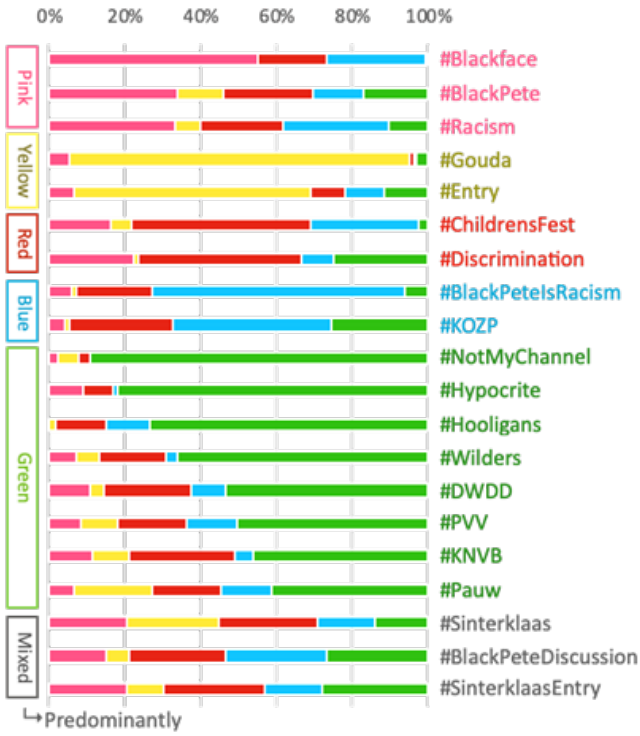


To analyze the contents of their tweets , we looked at the use of hashtags by the five largest clusters (Figure 5). We merged the smallest clusters because their small size could have created a distorted picture.

Combining the results from the analyses, the following conclusions regarding the groups on Twitter can be drawn:

- The medium sized pink cluster that was active in the early years used hashtags such as #BlackPete, #Blackface, and #Racism relatively often. A typical Tweet was sent by Anouk (a well-known Dutch rock singer): "Tomorrow in #PenW [a Dutch talk show] to explain to stupid rightwing viewers why Black Pete is racism."
- The yellow cluster, which was also small and active early on, had a specific local perspective. People criticized the protests during the entry of #SaintNicolas in #Gouda [a Dutch city] in 2014: "Getting out of hand here in Gouda. Anti-Pete protesters shout ’Sinterklaas does not exist’ and ’Black Pete is racism’ to children." The tweets get a lot of backing from supporters of Black Pete.
- The (small and early) sea-green cluster was characterized by a large number

Figure 5. *Relative use of Hashtags by Clusters*



of retweets that focused on sooty Pete: "Black Petes are black because they come through a chimney to deliver presents, has nothing to do with racism or discrimination." People that wanted to maintain Black Pete considered Sooty Pete a great solution for the problem. However, people that wanted to abolish Black Pete were not satisfied with this solution. When they responded, they were told "not to whine."

- The blue cluster was one of the two large groups that was active as of 2017. This group mainly consisted of opponents of Black Pete. The discussion about Black Pete was broadened to racism and discrimination (#BlackPeteIsDiscrimination and #Blackface): "everyday racism is omnipresent, while at the same time the existence of racism is passionately denied. Black Pete is going to disappear; what remains is the question of why racism is denied."
- The green cluster was the other large cluster that was active as of 2017. People in this group were saying that they were fed up with the (media) attention for "a small group" of opponents of Black Pete: "We are getting tired of these arrogant woke people." People in this group denied any racism and wanted to preserve traditions and "national" culture.
- The small red cluster was positioned between the blue (mainly against Black Pete) and green (mainly in favor of Black Pete) cluster. Like the orange cluster, both opponents and supporters could be found here. One of the responses to a tweet that referred to a book on the issue said: "Unfortunately, people are not very good with facts." The hashtags #Discrimination and #ChildrensFest were used relatively often.
- In the small orange cluster that was active in 2017, both posts in favor as well as against Black Pete could be found. As in the other groups, the Tweets for the preservation of Black Pete were widely acclaimed, while the tweets against Black Pete could count on a lot of criticism.
- The indigo cluster was comparable to the orange cluster. The difference is that the accounts were mostly located in Belgium.

In sum, in different moments in time, different groups expressed their thoughts (and counterthoughts) regarding Black Pete differently. Additionally, we also saw a role for opinion leaders in all groups. These people, celebrities, media personalities, and politicians either consciously took a position in the debate and/or were criticized for the position they (presumably) had.

Discussion and Conclusion

The current study adopted a framework that explains polarization as a thought construct in which people constantly express themselves about the identity of others. The consequence is that people drift apart in opposing groups (Brandsma, 2016).

The central question of the study was how this framework relates to a social

media case of polarization. To answer this question, we examined a corpus of social media (Twitter) data regarding the case of Black Pete in The Netherlands. This way, we were planning on validating the framework. However, the results showed that the framework and the case cannot be compared directly. Brandsma's framework is a conceptual framework of polarization, while the social media case we examined reflects an empirical reality. For example, in Brandsma's model, the groups drift further and further apart, while on social media, the two groups are always in close contact with each other. Because of the difference in perspective (theoretical versus empirical) both images can coexist even though they seem to contradict each other.

At the same time, some results in our empirical case cannot be merged with Brandsma's framework. For example, Brandsma placed identity at the core of the framework. However, in our results, the issue itself was equally important. The process started with a group of people that addressed the issue of the menacing and insulting role of Black Pete in the Dutch Sinterklaas feast. Subsequently, two groups emerged: people that want to abolish Black Pete and people that want to maintain the Black Peter tradition. The difference between the two groups was broader than just their identity (us vs. them). Their position was also related to the issue itself (maintain or abolish Black Pete). The causal relationship between identity and position that Brandsma assumes could not be substantiated by our research. It is not clear whether people base their opinion on their identity or whether they derive their identity from the opinions they express. Alternatively, opinion and identity could possibly reinforce each other. Based on our results, the latter seems most likely. The chance to have a specific opinion is most likely correlated to membership to a specific group. At the same time, people derive their identity from sharing opposing opinions.

A second reason why we think that content does matter is related to Brandsma's third law. It says that polarization is a dynamic system of feelings. He argues that facts or arguments are less important. Our data shows that facts and arguments are important. They are the vehicle through which the debate is shaped. Facts and arguments provide both content for the debate as well as the basis for identity.

When looking at roles, we also saw some similarities as well as differences between Brandsma's framework and social media data. The results of our analysis showed groups that were in favor of abolishing the tradition of Black Pete while other groups were in favor of maintaining it. Additionally, we saw early groups (pink and yellow) and later groups (blue, orange, sea green and indigo). At first sight, these results seem to be in accordance with what Brandsma suggests, as there are different groups that have different opinions and there are pushers and joiners that follow in the late stage. However, it is less clear whether the social media data validates Brandsma's framework.

First, the people who were active early in the process were not necessarily pushers. Their role resembled the role of agenda setters more. The agenda setters place the issue on the public agenda by addressing an inequality (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). This is a role that Brandsma does not recognize in his framework. In

this light, it might be useful to understand polarization in terms of the diffusion of innovation (Rogers, 1995), in this case, the way a new idea spreads in a community, with a focus on opinion leaders and on differences between early adopters and other groups as commonly distinguished in diffusion of innovation research.

Second, within the bubbles of proponents and opponents, we saw representatives of the opposite opinions. Different-minded people actively sought out each other. They were interacting with their opponents. Even though content was the vehicle, this interaction was not aimed at dialogue but at underlining and reinforcing their own identity. This is in accordance with Brandsma. Also, as social media show, pushers and joiners are not separate groups. A distinction between the two roles is hard to make.

The third group that Brandsma mentions is the silent middle. Our results shows that the silent middle is also quiet and almost nonexistent on social media. Tweets that were shared usually were quite opinionated, thereby representing pushers and joiners rather than the silent middle. The role of bridge builders and/or scapegoats was also not clearly visible. However, we did see that there was a distinct role for celebrities, media personalities, and politicians. As a kind of opinion leaders, they either consciously took positions themselves (fueling the discussion by doing that) and/or were criticized for the position they (presumably) had. In sum, we saw the following roles on social media in the process of polarization:

- Agenda setters: people that, early in the process, address a subject or wrongdoing
- Fuelers (pushers and joiners in the Brandsma framework): people who fuel the discussion by sharing facts and arguments
- Opinion leaders: well-known celebrities, media personalities, or politicians that consciously take or are challenged/pushed to take positions in the discussion.
- Silent middle: people that do not actively contribute to the discussion

Based on the above, we conclude that the Brandsma framework addresses important theoretical mechanisms. At the same time, it does not cover the whole process of polarization from an empirical point of view. In order to better understand it, we define four core starting points that explain how polarization can emerge from an empirical point of view:

- Polarization is a process of change (comparable to the diffusion of an innovation).
- Identity and attitude towards a subject are strongly connected.
- There is interaction both within and between the groups
- Facts and arguments are the vehicle through which us-them thinking is shaped.

Although these starting points do not necessarily exclude Brandsma's laws, they provide a different starting point for possible game changers. Using his framework as a basis, Brandsma mentions four game changers: change the target audience, change the subject, change position, and change the tone. The first idea, to not focus on the pushers, but to strengthen the (silent) middle, seems problematic, as the silent middle is named that way for a reason: they are silent. The silent middle will not speak up. Even when they do, it is very likely that they will be mocked by fuelers (i.e., pushers and joiners). Addressing them will not be helpful to reduce polarization.

The other game changers Brandsma mentions focus on what to communicate. The advice is to use a frame that is rooted in the center and allows dialogue, to focus on the issue, and to change the tone. While this approach may soften the debate somewhat, it does not take the sting out of the polarization process. The reason is that according to our results, polarization is rooted in both facts and arguments as well as identity. To reduce polarization, communication efforts should address both. Instead of focusing on a different issue (which Brandsma suggests), we would like to suggest focusing what underlies both the issue as well as identity. Looking at polarization as a process of change, reducing polarization should focus on implementing change in a way that allows people to maintain (or develop) their identity regarding the issue. To realize this, it is important to identify the values that underlie the identity in both groups. Change should be routed in these values. To change, people still have to step outside their comfort zone, but they can change without having to compromise their identity. Given the fact that opinion leaders could play a central role in the communication network, they can play an active role in expressing these common values (rather than their opinions), for example, "we all value the relevance of Sinterklaas for children," "we all understand the role Sinterklaas plays in our culture and society," or "we all want other people to respect each other." In addition, we need to realize that change takes time.

In addition, proponents of abolishing Black Pete want to be treated equally. Opponents of abolishing Black Pete, in essence, also want people to be treated equally. Both groups want to be able to celebrate Sinterklaas without being mocked or marginalized. The challenge is to realize change regarding the issue without losing a sense for the underlying values that people have. Using these values, the identity of all groups can further develop.

Limitations and Future Research

As this is a single case study, it has severe limitations when it comes to the possibility to generalize the results to other cases. These limitations relate to specific cultural and political setting as common in Dutch society, although some of the issues at stake, like cultural and natural identity and race discrimination, are recognized in other societies as well. Also, the high national public profile of the debate can be an issue. Future research could focus on studying alternative, less prominent, local cases to see if similar patterns emerge.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank students from de Honours academy (2019) and Ton Baetens and Lea Klarenbeek as well as the reviewers for their valuable contributions to the paper.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure

The author has no conflicts of interest to disclose.

Funding

The author has no sources of funding to disclose.

Research Ethics Statement

This material is the Author's own original work, which has not been previously published elsewhere. The paper reflects the authors' own research and analysis in a truthful and complete manner. The paper properly credits the meaningful contributions of co-authors and co-researchers. The results are appropriately placed in the context of prior and existing research.

Authorship

Lidwien van de Wijngaert: research concept and design, collection and/or assembly of data, data analysis and interpretation, writing the article, critical revision of the article, final approval of the article.

References

Araujo, T., & Neijens, P. (2020). Unobtrusive measures for media research. In *The International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology*, 1–7. Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119011071.iemp0049

Bail, C. A., Argyle, L. P., Brown, T. W., Bumpus, J. P., Chen, H., Hunzaker, M. F. & Volfovsky, A. (2018). Exposure to opposing views on social media can increase political polarization. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 115*(37), 9216–9221. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1804840115

Brandsma, B. (2016). *Polarisatie; inzicht in de dynamiek van wij-zij denken.* [Polarization: Insight in us-we thinking]. Schoonrewoerd: BB in Media.

Bruns, A. (2019). It's not the technology, stupid: How the 'Echo Chamber' and 'Filter Bubble'metaphors have failed us. *International Association for Media and Communication Research*. https://eprints.qut.edu.au/131675/

De Dreu, C. (2009). Het nut van polarisatie in politiek en samenleving: een sociaal-psychologische verkenning [The utility of polarization in politics and society: a socio-psychological exploration]. In Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling (Ed.), *Polarisatie: Bedreigend en verrijkend* [Polarization: threatening and enriching] (pp. 140–152).

Domke, D., Shah, D.V., & Wackman, D. B. (1998). Media priming effects: Accessibility, association, and activation. *Communications Abstracts, 21*(6), 51–74. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/10.1.51

Fiorina, M. P., Abrams, S. J., & Pope, J. C. (2010). *Culture war? The myth of a polarized America*. Longman.

Holmes, J. W., & McNeal, R. S. (2016). Social media, participation, and attitudes: Does social media drive polarization? In T. Deželan & I. Vobič (Eds.), *(R) evolutionizing political communication through social media* (pp. 1–21). IGI Global.

King, A. A., & Anderson, F. D. (1971). Nixon, Agnew, and the "silent majority": A case study in the rhetoric of polarization. *Western Speech, 35*(4), 243–255.

Lendering, J. (2008). *Saint Nicholas, Sinterklaas, Santa Claus*. Retrieved from: https://web.archive.org/web/20110513114942/https://www.livius.org/ne-nn/nicholas/nicholas_of_myra3.html#New

Lord, C. G., Ross, L., & Lepper, M. R. (1979). Biased assimilation and attitude polarization: The effects of prior theories on subsequently considered evidence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 37*(11), 2098–2109. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.37.11.2098

Masip, P., Suau, J., & Ruiz-Caballero, C. (2020). Incidental exposure to non-like-minded news through social media: Opposing voices in echo-chambers' news feeds. *Media and Communication, 8*(4), 53–62. https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v8i4.3146

McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1993). The evolution of agenda-setting research: Twenty-five years in the marketplace of ideas. *Journal of Communication,*

43(2), 58-67.

Ministry of General Affairs (2018). *Moet dat nou zo?! Communicatie in tijden van onbehagen* [Does it have to be like this?! Communication in times of unease.]. Ministry of General Affairs. https://www.communicatierijk.nl/documenten/publicaties/2019/02/28/moet-dat-nou-zo.

Ratheiser-van der Velde, M. J. (2018). Crossing ideological borders: How to contribute to depolarization within society and on a global level? *World of Media Journal of Russian Media and Journalism Studies, 1*, 35–48. https://doi.org/10.30547/worldofmedia.1.2018.3

Rodenberg, J., & Wagenaar, P. (2016). Essentializing Black Pete: Competing narratives surrounding the Sinterklaas tradition in the Netherlands. *International Journal of Heritage Studies, 22*(9), 716–728. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2016.1193039

Rogers, E.M. (1995). *Diffusion of innovations* (4th ed.). The Free Press.

Söderberg, B. (2017). *Inside the echo chamber: A qualitative study on anti-immigration internet media, political polarization and social trust in a fragmented digital landscape* [Master thesis, Södertörns Högskola].

Suler, J. (2005). The online disinhibition effect. *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies, 2*(2), 184–188.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin, & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–37). Brooks/Cole.

Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1981). The framing of decisions and the psychology of choice. *Science, 211*(4481), 453–458. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4613-2391-4_2

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research design and methods third edition. Applied social research methods series, 5*. Sage Publications

Wilson, A. E., Parker, V. A., & Feinberg, M. (2020). Polarization in the contemporary political and media landscape. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences, 34*, 223–228. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cobeha.2020.07.005