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Dynamics of political information transmission: How media coverage informs public judgments about politics

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Appendix A: Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Chapter 4 – Data Sources

Panel Survey

The panel survey was administered by TNS-NIPO. (NIPO [Nederlands Instituut voor de Publieke Opiniepeiling] joined TNS [Taylor Nelson Sofres] in 1999 and was rebranded to TNS-NIPO in 2003.) The TNS-NIPO database, from which our sample was randomly drawn, is nationally representative and draws on telephone, face-to-face, and online recruitment. About two weeks prior to the December 2008 EU summit, TNS-NIPO randomly selected and invited 2,400 persons aged 18 and older from an online panel of nearly 144,000 citizens to fill out an online questionnaire. A total of 1,394 individuals completed the questionnaire, yielding an AAPOR RR1 response rate of 58 percent. Respondents completed the pre-summit questionnaire between November 29 and December 4, 2008. One day after the final day of the summit, TNS-NIPO re-contacted these 1,394 respondents, requesting them to fill out a second questionnaire. The post-summit survey was launched on December 13, the day after the final summit day, and continued until December 17, 2008. The 1,127 respondents who also completed the second questionnaire form our sample. It includes 588 women (52 percent) and 539 men between the ages of 18 and 83 ($M = 49.50$, $SD = 16.10$).

The sample is by and large representative of the Dutch adult population in terms of key sociodemographics. Census data from 2008 on age, gender, and education were obtained from Statistics Netherlands, the Dutch national statistical institute. Our sample deviates from the Dutch adult population by -4.5 , $+3.3$, and $+1.2$ percentage points for individuals aged 18 to 39, 40 to 64, and 65 or above, respectively. The average absolute deviation on age is 3.0 percentage points. On gender, the deviation is $+1.6$ percentage points for women. On education, the deviations are $+6.8$, -2.8 , and -4.1 percentage points for individuals with low (primary school and lower vocational or high school low variant), medium (medium vocational or high school high variant), and high (BA/ higher vocational or MA/ post-graduate) levels of education attained, respectively. The average absolute deviation on education is 4.5 percentage points.

Media Sources and Content Data

The list of national television sources includes five hard news and current affairs programs (*EenVandaag*, *RTL Nieuws*, *NOS Journaal*, *Netwerk*, *NOVA*) and five soft news and infotainment programs (*EditieNL*, *RTL Boulevard*, *De Wereld Draait Door*, *Hart van Nederland*, *Pauw & Witteman*). The list of national newspapers includes five paid newspapers (*de*

Volkskrant, *NRC Handelsblad*, *Trouw*, *Algemeen Dagblad*, *De Telegraaf*), and three free dailies (*Spits*, *Metro*, *De Pers*). The total sample of outlets comprises the country's most consulted mass sources of political information.

In our content analysis, broadsheet-sized newspapers were coded from page 1 to 5; tabloid-sized newspapers from page 1 to 9. The television programs were coded from start to finish. The period of content analysis corresponds with the time period between the two waves of the panel survey. Four trained coders who conducted the content analysis also coded a random sample of 20 news stories as part of an intercoder-reliability test. This test was conducted using Krippendorff's alpha as a measure of intercoder-reliability, and demonstrated reliable levels of agreement for identifying relevant news stories (all alphas > 0.70).

Appendix B: Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Chapter 4 – Survey Questions

Elite Performance Judgments (U = Utilitarian Dimension; D = Democratic Dimension)

“Here is a list of statements about the European Union. For each statement, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree. (U1) The EU fosters peace and stability; (U2) Dutch membership of the EU is a good thing; (U3) The Netherlands benefits from membership of the EU; (U4) I personally benefit from Dutch membership of the EU; (D1) The decision-making process in the EU is transparent; (D2) The EU functions well as it is; (D3) The EU is wasting a lot of tax money; (D4) The EU functions according to democratic principles.” All items were presented in randomized order.

Performance-Relevant Information

“We would like to ask you six questions about the European summit in Brussels that took place this week.

(1) What have the EU member states agreed on the number of commissioners in the European Commission? (a,*) Every member state continues to hold the right to delegate a commissioner to the European Commission. (b) From now on, member states will not be allowed to automatically delegate a commissioner to the European Commission. (c) No decision was taken on this issue at the EU Summit. (d) From now on, every member state is allowed to delegate two commissioners to the European Commission. (e) Don't know.

(2) Which decision did the Irish government take on the Treaty of Lisbon? (a,*) The Irish government has decided to hold a referendum on the treaty in 2009. (b) The Irish government has asked the Irish parliament to take a decision on the treaty. (c) The Irish government has definitively rejected the treaty. (d) The Irish government has not taken any decision on the treaty. (e) Don't know.

(3) What have the EU members agreed on the issue of CO₂ emissions? (a) They have not taken any decision on this issue. (b,*) They have agreed that CO₂ emissions should be reduced by 20% in 2020. (c) They have decided that the Netherlands does not have to take part in the EU's efforts to reduce CO₂ emissions. (d) They have agreed that CO₂ emissions in 2020 should be equal to the current emissions. (e) Don't know.

(4) What have the EU member states agreed on the production of renewable energy? (a) They have agreed that the production of renewable energy should have increased by 80% in 2020. (b) They have not taken any decision on this issue. (c,*) They have agreed that the production of renewable energy should have increased by 20% in 2020. (d) They have decided that the

Netherlands does not have to take part in the EU's efforts to produce renewable energy. (e) Don't know.

(5) Which country was initially strongly opposed to measures proposed in the EU's climate plan? (a) The Netherlands. (b) Spain. (c) Austria. (d,*) Poland. (e) Don't know.

(6) What have the EU member states agreed on the EU's economic recovery plan? (a) They have agreed to cut down on EU spending with €200 billion. (b) They have decided that the Netherlands does not have to take part in the EU's economic recovery plan. (c,*) They have agreed to jointly stimulate their economies for a total amount of about €200 billion. (d) They have not taken any decision on this issue. (e) Don't know."

(* denotes the correct answer)

Questions and substantive response categories were presented in randomized order.

General Political Information

"The next few questions are about COUNTRY'S and European politics.

(1) Maxime Verhagen belongs to which political party? (a) PvdA. (b, *) CDA. (c) VVD. (d) Christenunie. (e) SP. (f) Don't know.

(2) Which political party has the most seats in the national parliament? (a, *) CDA. (b) PvdA. (c) SP. (d) PVV. (e) VVD. (f) Don't know.

(3) What is the name of the current Speaker of the national parliament? (a) Mariëtte Hamer. (b) Frans Weisglas. (c) Henk Kamp. (d) Nebahat Albayrak. (e, *) Gerdi Verbeek. (f) Don't know.

(4) What job or political office does Wouter Bos currently hold? (a, *) Minister of Finance. (b) Minister of Social Affairs. (c) Minister of Foreign Affairs. (d) Minister of Education. (e) Minister of Economic Affairs. (f) Don't know.

(5) What is the name of the current President of the European Commission? (a) Javier Solana. (b) Jean-Claude Juncker. (c) Nicolas Sarkozy. (d) Hans-Gert Pöttering. (e, *) José Manuel Barroso. (f) Don't know.

(6) Which country currently holds the Presidency of the EU? (a) Germany. (b) Czech Republic. (c, *) France. (d) Slovenia. (e) Portugal. (f) Don't know.

(7) What is the name of the Dutch Euro Commissioner? (a, *) Neelie Kroes. (b) Frans Timmermans. (c) Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. (d) Frits Bolkestein. (e) Ben Bot. (f) Don't know. (8)

What is the current number of member states of the European Union? (a) 15. (b) 22. (c) 25. (d, *) 27. (e) 29. (f) Don't know."

(* denotes the correct answer)

Questions and substantive response categories were presented in randomized order.

Political Interest

“Generally speaking, how interested would you say you are in politics?” Responses were coded on a scale ranging from 1 (“very little interest”) to 7 (“very high interest”).

Media Source Reliance

“Television news viewing ratings and newspaper circulation numbers have declined a lot throughout the years. Nowadays, about 1 in every 10 Dutch watches the national news on TV on a typical weekday. And about 1 in 10 Dutch reads a paid newspaper on a typical weekday. How about you? How many days in a typical week do you watch the following television programs? [Respondents shown list of programs] And how many days in a typical week do you read the following newspapers? [Respondents shown list of papers]” Both lists of sources (see Appendix A) were presented in randomized order.

Sociodemographics

Age was measured in years ($M = 49.50$, $SD = 16.10$). Education was measured with six categories representing (1) primary school; (2) high school, lower variant; (3) lower vocational education; (4) high school, higher variant; (5) BA or higher vocational education; and (6) MA or post-graduate education ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.64$). Income was measured as the gross annual household income on a 1-27 scale ranging from less than €4,000 to more than €272,500 ($M = 14.90$, $SD = 2.55$).

Appendix C: Chapter 3 – Political Information Acquisition Questions by Country

Country	Question	Survey period
Netherlands, United Kingdom	Company fined by EU for anti-competitive practices	May 14-15, 2009
Netherlands	Lead candidate for PVV in European elections	May 15-16, 2009
United Kingdom	Lead candidate for UKIP in European elections	May 15-16-2009
Netherlands	Lead candidate for PvdA in European elections	May 16-17, 2009
United Kingdom	Lead candidate for Labour in European elections	May 16-17, 2009
Denmark	Politician speaking about European elections at annual Venstre conference	May 18-19, 2009
Germany	Prominent German MEP defected to other party	May 18-19, 2009
Netherlands	Prominent Dutchman endorsing VVD in European elections	May 18-19, 2009
United Kingdom	Party considering leaving party alliance in European Parliament	May 18-19, 2009
All	Country with highest absence rate among MEPs during last five years	May 19-20, 2009
Denmark	Party accused by Juni-listen of stealing their voters in European election campaign	May 21-22, 2009
Germany	European Court ruling about pharmacy chains such as DocMorris in Germany	May 21-22, 2009
Netherlands	Party at present most likely to deliver next Dutch Commissioner	May 21-22, 2009
Denmark	Lead candidate for Social Democrats in European elections	May 22-23, 2009
Germany	Lead candidate for SPD in European elections	May 22-23, 2009
All	Opening of national borders for migrant workers from Poland	May 23-24, 2009
All	Politician prohibited from opening first session of newly elected European Parliament	May 24-25, 2009
Denmark	Number of Danish seats in European Parliament after elections	May 25-26, 2009

(continued)

Country	Question	Survey period
Germany	CDU politician most likely nominated for next German Commissionership	May 25-26, 2009
Netherlands	Reason for returning €550 million to the Netherlands by Commissioner Kroes	May 25-26, 2009
United Kingdom	Number of UK seats in European Parliament after elections	May 25-26, 2009
All	External country clashing with the EU on energy policy	May 26-27, 2009
Denmark	Meaning of Denmark's East Agreement (<i>Oestaftale</i>) with the EU	May 27-28, 2009
Germany	Official CDU position on Turkish EU membership in European election campaign	May 27-28, 2009
Netherlands	Dutch party proposing European Parliament boycott of unregistered lobbyists	May 27-28, 2009
United Kingdom	Pledge for Labour MEPs commanded by prime minister Gordon Brown amid declaration scandal	May 27-28, 2009
All	Member state opposing stronger regulation of EU banking sector	May 28-29, 2009
All	Number of [country] seats in European Parliament after elections	June 1-2, 2009
All	Lead candidate for [country's] social democratic party in European elections	June 2-3, 2009
Denmark	Name of new Swedish party about to be elected to European Parliament	June 3-4, 2009
Denmark, Germany	Country at most advanced stage of negotiations with EU about future membership	June 4-5, 2009
Denmark	Three parties forming electoral pact in European elections	June 5-6, 2009
All	Party alliance taking most seats in the European Parliament after the elections	June 8-14, 2009

Note. All surveys are separate cross-sections.