



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

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

Elenbaas, M.

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Elenbaas, M. (2013). Dynamics of political information transmission: How media coverage informs public judgments about politics.

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <http://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

Acknowledgments

In essence, this dissertation is really an applied reiteration of an old and more general argument, articulated by such eminent scholars as Michael Delli Carpini in political science and Martha Nussbaum in the field of philosophy and law (to only name two): the argument that people need opportunities in order to flourish as citizens and, more generally, as human beings. When it comes to my own “flourishing” during the past four years as a Ph.D. student, I do not believe that I am in a position to make any judgments, at least when it comes to making judgments about my work – I happily leave that to others. I can say, however, that this has been, on many levels, a very educational and hence meaningful time for me, so my overall reflective judgment of this period is one of satisfaction and contentment, which I guess qualifies as an indication that I did flourish in one way or another. Looking back, with my future projects and goals in mind, pursuing a Ph.D. was just what I needed to do. I am grateful, then, to have had the opportunity to actually pursue a Ph.D. in the first place, and I thank the Amsterdam School of Communication Research (ASCoR) at the University of Amsterdam, and in particular my main advisor Claes de Vreese, above all for providing this opportunity.

Of course, I also thank the members of my dissertation committee, including Hans Beentjes, Moniek Buijzen, Peter Neijens, Markus Prior, and Klaus Schönbach, for their involvement with and critical scrutiny of my work, and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research for funding the larger European politics research project which my own “Dynamics of Political Information” project was part of. Several outstanding colleagues and I worked together on this larger project, and I have been lucky to receive supervision from no less than three of them: Claes de Vreese, Hajo Boomgaarden, and Andreas Schuck. Over the years, this exceptional trio provided me with crucial feedback on my work (or whatever rambling theoretical argument it was that I had written up in a document and sent their way). Claes reminded me time and time again of the virtues of boldness and optimism. Hajo’s devil’s advocate approach let me identify my papers’ main analytical concerns long before reviewers could raise them. And Andreas inspired me to try and be as theoretically rigorous as

he is, as nothing beats a good theory. These are just examples, and each supervisor's unique contributions to this project were manifold. I hope it suffices to say that I thank all three advisors for helping me improve my dissertation on numerous occasions.

The other colleagues whom I had the pleasure of working with on the larger project are Rens Vliegthart, Joost van Spanje, Rachid Azrout, Judith Möller (currently a Ph.D. candidate but in the early period the best research assistant we could wish for), and, last but not least, Pieterjan "No Sweat" Desmet, who joined us from Belgium (still a country!) a bit later on. I thank all of them for their hard work on this giant project, especially during the data collection phase, and for their significant contributions, which I benefitted greatly from. Without exception, they were always available to answer my questions, comment on my research, or help me out in some other form. I'm especially grateful to Rens, and to Joost, for important bits of extra Ph.D. supervision. During work, our research group had many pleasant meetings and interesting discussions, and on more than one occasion after work did we enjoy a fine dinner in a type of restaurant that only a connoisseur like Claes could pick. (On that note I must also thank Claes for really delivering on the culinary part of my academic education.)

I had the privilege, furthermore, of working closely with Andreas Schuck, and also with Georgios Xezonakis, Susan Banducci, and Marketa Bilska from Exeter University, UK, during the preparation, training, and execution phases of the media content analytical part of the project. I wish to thank Georgios, Susan, and Marketa for all that they have done to get the content analysis on track, for their great teamwork in training the "Exeter group" of coders, and for their hospitality and care during my stay in Exeter. I also thank them (and Jeff Karp) for introducing me to South West England, which is beautiful, and I look forward to returning there and doing some further exploring in the future. Back in Amsterdam, many hours were spent hours on recruiting, housing (!) and training the other half of an incredibly large group of young and talented coders, who came from all over the European continent to work with us. In many ways, this was an unforgettable, and sometimes surreal, experience, and we certainly had a lot of fun. I'm not sure if Andreas would say that the various intercoder-reliability tests we conducted were "fun" to do, but despite the dazzlingly challenging nature of this task (I'm looking at you, Krippendorff's alpha), I really enjoyed our teamwork and gained a lot of relevant insights in the process. I thank Georgios for contributing from Exeter a significant share of the work involved in these tests. I also thank all coders who participated, mostly with great enthusiasm and conscientiousness. I am particularly thankful, of course, to those who content analyzed the Dutch media outlets for the European Summit project, and to those who

coded the Danish, Dutch, German and UK media for the European Elections project. By doing so, each of them made an important contribution to this dissertation.

During my time at ASCoR and the University of Amsterdam, I received help from various places and colleagues. The Ph.D. Club, led first by Rens Vliegenthart and later Sophie Lecheler and Andreas Schuck, provided a very useful platform for discussing papers, theories, and methods of analysis. I learned a lot from the input of other students and the numerous papers that were presented and discussed there. I want to thank the three conveners, Rens, Sophie and Andreas, as well as all participating Ph.D. students during the past four years: Maud Adriaansen, Rachid Azrout, Christian Baden, Tom Bakker, Linda Bos, Mark Boukes, Pieterjan Desmet, Anouk van Drunen, Harmen Groenhart, Yael de Haan, Malte Hinrichsen, Fadi Hirzalla, Marijn van Klingeren, Sanne Kruikemeier, Judith Möller, Rosa van Santen, Janet Takens, Damian Trilling, Moniza Waheed, and Anke Wonneberger. My office mates, too, all have been great company without exception: Sophie, Maud, Malte, Moniza, and later Rachid, Pieterjan, and Judith. In this context, I should also mention Annemarie Walter, a fellow Ph.D. student and respected colleague from the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR). Finally, I want to thank the ASCoR, Graduate School of Communication, and faculty staffs for providing consistent support on all kinds of organizational matters crucial to my progress as a Ph.D. student: Maaïke Prangma, Elske Verkruijsse, Esther Nipperus, Kathleen Hair, Margriet Smit, Ardy Grefhorst, and Danny van der Poel. I especially want to thank Elske Verkruijsse, who took great care of most of my many administrative requests.

I have benefitted a lot from personal exchanges with academics from other institutions. I particularly enjoyed hanging out with – and learned a lot from – Adam Shehata, one of the most talented young scholars and nicest people I have met in the political communication community. I was lucky enough to meet with William “Chip” Eveland, Lance Holbert, David Tewksbury, Markus Prior, and Shanto Iyengar, who all made time for me and gave highly valuable advice on my papers. I am especially indebted to those scholars whose work has had a profound intellectual influence on this dissertation, many of whom I haven’t been able to meet and thank in person: Michael Delli Carpini, Scott Keeter, Jason Barabas, Jennifer Jerit, James Kuklinski, Paul Quirk, Scott Althaus, Markus Prior, Shanto Iyengar, and James Druckman. Intellectually, this dissertation rests heavily on their shoulders, and I cannot imagine what would come of it hadn’t I been able to simply borrow from, and expand on, their groundbreaking contributions to political information research.

A special word of thanks goes out to Andreas Schuck. Over time, Andreas’s role as co-advisor has extended well beyond commenting on my research and papers, and it is no

exaggeration to say that our lengthy and frank conversations over coffee, and more generally his “holistic” approach to co-supervising a Ph.D. project, have made a huge difference for the better. I am deeply grateful for his time, listening ear, and help, all of which he didn’t have to afford me, but still did. We’re no longer colleagues, but we nevertheless should, I suggest, maintain our now traditional “coffee break” in the future.

During the past four years, I could not have done without the unlimited love and support from my family and friends. My parents, who are my greatest examples in life, contributed in so many ways that it’s impossible to capture here their positive influence on my work. I also thank my other mother, doña Dirce, for giving me so much love and care. And I thank, for all the direct and indirect ways of helping and caring, and for their friendship and spirit, Maaïke, Karen, Favad, Joost, Nane, Edgard, Elrik, Timo, Rogier, Carola, Gustavo, Simone, Didi, Aura, Jeroen, Sâmia, Alexandre, Flávia, Cecilia, Mariana, JJ, and Miranda. I want to especially thank Dirce, Nane, Edgard, and, of course, my favorite nephew Elrik, for going out of their way in creating the best provisional work environment possible for me, and for putting up with me as I worked long hours on this dissertation in their home. I’m sure I’ve frequently and severely violated Brazilian customs, but I’m deeply thankful for their great, great care during my stay there. My dissertation is in a better shape because of them. Of course, I thank Karen and Maaïke for supporting me and this project as paranymphs. And to Timo and Rogier I hereby formally pledge to put down my books and raise my glass (with them) more often, especially in our upcoming fifteenth year of solid friendship.

Finally, and most of all, I thank my wife Erika. To this day I believe I would have been completely lost, perhaps even unable to finish this dissertation at all, if it wasn’t for her unremitting love and encouragement. I thank her for her patience; for inspiring and motivating me each single day; for believing in me even when I didn’t; and for carrying me through the darkest and most miserable moments of this project. She has been, and continues to be, the sunshine in my life. It is for these reasons that I dedicate this dissertation to her.

Needless to say, none of the aforementioned persons carry responsibility for any possible errors in this dissertation – only I do.

Matthijs Elenbaas,

Amsterdam, November 2012