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CHAPTER 5

When News Matters. Media Effects on Public Support for European Union Enlargement in 21 Countries.

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Abstract

First, this study tests for media effects on support for EU enlargement in a natural setting, while including actual media content in the analysis. Second, the moderation by anti-immigrant attitudes of media effects is tested, as it is argued that perceptions of ‘others’ influences how new information on enlargement is received. The study draws on a two-wave panel survey and a media content analysis in 21 countries. The results suggest there is a media effect, although not from individual exposure but from the information environment. In addition, individuals with stronger anti-immigrant attitudes are more strongly affected by a negative information environment.

What determines citizen support for EU enlargement? A considerable amount of studies explain support for EU enlargement using attitudinal factors (e.g., De Vreese et al., 2008; Jones & Bijl, 2004; Karp & Bowler, 2006; McLaren, 2007). These explanations, however, are unable to explain short-term fluctuations in opinion about enlargement. Thus, scholars also focus on how exposure to media content can change opinion towards enlargement (e.g., De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006a; Maier & Rittberger, 2008). Some of these studies test media effects in experimental settings, which may have issues of ecological validity. Other, non-experimental studies fail to make an explicit link with the actual media content the audience is exposed to. In this study we go beyond the extant literature by assessing media effects in a natural setting and by making an explicit link with media content.

Contemporary media effect theories build on the idea that effects depend on predispositions and characteristics of the audience (e.g., McQuail, 2005; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). In this chapter we argue that the way information about EU enlargement is processed depends on antecedent factors of support for EU enlargement. These factors play an important role in determining how individuals perceive the issue of EU enlargement, but also in how new information about enlargement is interpreted.

Previous studies show that identity-related factors are the strongest predictors of support for EU enlargement (De Vreese et al., 2008; McLaren, 2002). Identity factors are primarily about how individuals perceive 'us' and 'them'. We argue in this chapter that the way new information about EU enlargement is received depends on these perceptions of 'us' and 'them'. This study will thus test how identity factors moderate the effect of exposure to media content on support for EU enlargement.

The goal of this study is thus twofold. First, we will add to the body of knowledge about dynamics in support for EU enlargement by testing for media effects in a natural setting and by making an explicit link with actual media content. Thus, like previous studies using experiments, we test for the effect of exposure to specific content, but by using a survey design we avoid issues with ecological validity related to experiments. Second, where

previous studies have focused on how media effects are moderated by general information processing characteristics, we aim to show that information processing, and thus also media effects, also depends on issue specific factors, i.e. antecedent factors explaining support for enlargement. This is important because it increases our understanding of which individuals are subject to media effects and under what conditions.

For this study we draw on the data from a media content analysis during the three weeks prior to the 2009 European Parliament Elections of the European Election Studies, and a two-wave panel survey in 21 member states of the EU. By linking these datasets, we are able to explain changes in opinion by exposure to actual media content.

Our analyses show that media coverage of the issue indeed affects support for EU enlargement. The effect, however, does not depend on individual exposure to media content, but on the information environment. In addition, people with strong anti-immigrant attitudes are influenced most by negative media content. As these individuals are also those who are already more likely to be negative towards EU enlargement, we conclude that the media do not create attitudes but strengthens existing attitudes.

Theory

Four main types of arguments are used to explain attitudes towards the EU in general and support for EU enlargement in particular. First, scholars argue that citizens with higher levels of cognitive skills would be less fearful of a supranational entity (e.g., Inglehart, 1970a). Second, attitudes towards the EU are explained by utilitarian and economic considerations, arguing that support is based on rational self-interest (e.g., Gabel & Palmer, 1995). Third, as many citizens are unaware of European affairs, scholars argue that citizens use evaluations of the incumbent government as a proxy for evaluations of the EU (e.g., Franklin et al., 1995). Fourth, scholars focus on identity-related factors, explaining EU attitudes either by levels of feelings of national identity (e.g., Carey, 2002; Hooghe & Marks, 2004) or by attitudes towards immigrants (e.g., De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005).

These factors, however, do not explain possible short-term changes in citizens' attitudes towards the EU. To understand dynamics in support for EU enlargement, a small number of studies explore the effect of exposure

to media content, usually employing an experiment. In these experiments, exposure to specific media content is used to explain support for general enlargement (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003; Schuck & De Vreese, 2006), or support for accession of specific countries (De Vreese, 2004; De Vreese et al., 2011; Lecheler & De Vreese, 2010; Maier & Rittberger, 2008). All these studies demonstrate that subjects exposed to news articles in which enlargement or specific potential membership is negatively evaluated, show lower support for either enlargement or accession.

A well-known potential problem with experimental research is its limited ecological validity (e.g., Morton & Williams, 2010). Furthermore, the stimulus material may not be representative of what is found in news media. Some studies have countered this critique by combining an experiment with a media content analysis (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003; De Vreese et al., 2011; Schuck & De Vreese, 2006), thus showing that the stimulus material is not a pure artificial manipulation but is found in actual media content.

Another problem of the experimental design is the artificial setting in which subjects are exposed to the stimulus material. From a theoretical point of view, we may question whether the effects found in experimental research hold when individuals are exposed to multiple (opposing) messages or whether the effects hold over time. And from a methodological point of view, we may question what the effect is of subjects knowing they are participating in an experiment. This raises the question of whether findings can be generalized. To answer this question it would be appropriate to test whether the media effects found hold in a natural setting.

Among the studies explaining the relation between media and support for EU enlargement, there is one exception that does not use an experiment, but focuses on actual media exposure. In their study, De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2006a) combined a content analysis of Danish and Dutch news media coverage of the December 2002 European Council meeting in Copenhagen, with a two-wave panel survey. From the content analysis they concluded that (a) the Danish news media gave more attention towards the issues of EU enlargement and integration than the Dutch news media did, and (b) that while the information flow in the Netherlands was

rather balanced, in Denmark it was on average rather positive. From this they expected that more exposure to Danish news media (thus exposure to a relative intense information flow with a consistent positive bias) would lead to a more positive stance towards EU enlargement, while exposure to Dutch news media would not have any effect. And this is exactly what they found in the panel survey.

Although this is a great example of a media effect study in a natural setting, two remarks should be made. First, the study makes a connection between media content and exposure at the country level, while the authors are interested in individual exposure to media content. With the possibility of different media outlets reporting differently about a specific issue, and given that some individuals are frequent users of one outlet and other individuals of another outlet, the authors fail to model how different individuals in the same country may be exposed to different information flows. Second, because the study connects media content and exposure at the country level, De Vreese and Boomgaarden compare two cases: one with a positive information flow where there is a positive effect of exposure and one with a balanced information flow where there is no effect of exposure. Combining this with the fact that the effect they find is very small, we might wonder whether or not these two cases are sufficient to validate their conclusions. Thus, we aim to add to the body of knowledge, by testing for a media effect in a natural setting, connecting media content to exposure at the outlet level and comparing this over a considerably broader range of countries.

Why should we actually expect media content to affect support for EU enlargement? According to Norris (2000) the media is expected to influence citizens' attitudes towards a particular issue, when citizens rely on news media as one of their main sources of information for that issue. Following a similar line of reasoning, Page and Shapiro (1992) argue that the media are expected to affect citizens' perceptions of a particular issue when the issue is remote from the personal experience of citizens and they can only learn about the issue through the media. As 'very few citizens have first- or even second-hand contact with Community affairs in Brussels' (Dalton & Duval, 1986, p. 127) or, even likely, with the enlargement process, citizens need to rely on information in the media to form attitudes towards the issue. And

indeed, citizens repeatedly report to rely on television and newspapers as their main source of information about the EU (Eurobarometer, n.d.).

Following Zaller's argument (1992; 1996), we argue that for the media to affect individuals' opinions, the information presented should contain a consistent directional bias, which Zaller coined a 'one-sided information flow'. In the case of enlargement, this means that news media would consistently emphasize either positive or negative aspects or consequences of enlargement. If citizens depend on the information from the media, a one-sided information flow results in citizens perceiving the consequences of enlargement as either positive or negative. Kahneman and Tversky (1979; 1981) show that by framing consequences of an action in either positive or negative terms induces either risk-averse or risk-seeking behaviour. On a more general level, this suggests that focussing on either positive or negative aspects affects citizens' judgements. We thus argue that when citizens perceive enlargement as beneficial they will be more supportive, and when citizens perceive enlargement as disadvantageous they will be less supportive. Of course, the predicted effect depends on the consistency and on the direction of the bias of the information in the media. The more balanced the information individuals are exposed to, the less likely we are to find a media effect as opposite effects may cancel out.

Following studies that employ experiments, which focus on individual exposure, we hypothesize that individual exposure to a news media information flow affects individuals' support for EU enlargement. But given that a number of recent studies have found media effects by looking at the information that is present in a particular media system, regardless of whether respondents were individually exposed to the information (e.g., Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2007; Hopmann et al., 2010; Jerit et al., 2006), we also hypothesize that the news media information flow in a information environment affects citizens' support for EU enlargement. This leads to the following hypotheses:

- [H1a] The more a citizen is exposed to negative news about an applicant country's potential accession, the more support for its entrance decreases.

[H1b] The more negative about an applicant country's potential accession into the EU a citizen's information environment, the more support for its entrance decreases.

Contemporary literature on media effects, however, suggests that it is 'unrealistic to ignore the possibility that different individuals will react differently to media content' (Perse, 2001, p. 51). Scholars have argued that media effects are conditional upon predispositions and characteristics of individual members of the audience (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 11) as well as the (immediate) social context of these individuals (McQuail, 2005, p. 461). Literature on media effects focusing on EU attitudes also looked at the conditionality of these effects, primarily focusing on general characteristics of individuals. These general characteristics were not related to the issue at hand but to general ways of processing information (e.g., political sophistication: De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006b; political knowledge: Lecheler & De Vreese, 2010; Schuck & De Vreese, 2006). We argue, however, that it is important to focus on existing attitudes antecedent to attitudes about enlargement. These antecedent attitudes tell us how citizens perceive the issue of EU enlargement. And these specific perceptions are likely to affect how information from the media is processed.

From the main types of arguments to explain EU attitudes, scholars have demonstrated that identity factors are the most important antecedent attitudes (e.g., McLaren, 2002), of which anti-immigrant attitudes are the most important factor (e.g., De Vreese et al., 2008). Choosing the most important factor explaining EU attitudes, we thus choose to focus on how anti-immigrant attitudes condition media effects.

Studies focussing on the effect of anti-immigrant attitudes use premises from social identity theory to explain support for EU integration (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005) and support for Turkey's EU-membership (see chapter 3). They argue that at the core of the effect is that individuals with strong anti-immigrant attitudes are likely to see the world in terms of 'us' and 'them' (making them an identity factor, Sniderman et al., 2000), and evaluate 'them' negatively (Brown, 2000; Tajfel, 1982). Thus, anti-immigrant attitudes may, rather than only concern immigrants, be a measure of the

degree a person identifies with an in-group and contrasts the in-group with out-groups. In line with this, we found in chapter 3 that the individuals with strong anti-immigrant attitudes did not so much discuss the issue of Turkish potential accession in terms of immigration, but more in terms of Turkey and/or Turks being an out-group. Brewer (1999) argues that a negative bias towards 'the other' is not a result of out-group rejection, but of in-group protection in inter-group competition. And this in-group protection is why anti-immigrant attitudes are theoretically expected to moderate the effect of media evaluations on support for EU enlargement. Individuals with strong anti-immigrant attitudes have a strong perception of their in-group and the need to protect the in-group. Enlargement is likely to affect the in-group. When enlargement is negatively evaluated in the news media, accession of new countries is expected to be perceived by those with pronounced anti-immigrant attitudes as having negative consequences for the in-group. If someone feels a stronger need to protect the in-group, this individual is expected to respond more strongly to perceived negative consequences for the in-group than someone who feels less the need to protect the in-group. So, the stronger the anti-immigrant attitudes, the stronger the perception of the in-group and the more the need to protect the in-group, and following from that the stronger the effect of negative evaluations in the news media becomes. With the same distinction between individual exposure and the information environment as in the previous hypotheses, we hypothesize:

- [H2a] The stronger a citizen's anti-immigrant attitudes, the larger the effect of exposure to negative news about an applicant country's potential accession on support for its entrance.
- [H2b] The stronger a citizen's anti-immigrant attitudes, the larger the effect of a negative information environment about an applicant country's potential accession into the EU on support for its entrance.

Method

Survey

We conducted a panel survey in 21 countries¹⁵ of the EU. We make use of a panel, because we are interested in dynamics. The panel design enables us to explain support for enlargement in the second wave by exposure to media content, while controlling for support for enlargement in the first wave before the exposure, and thus modelling the dynamics of opinion. The first wave was conducted three weeks prior to the 2009 European Parliament Elections and the second wave directly after. From the TNS databases and their partners, a sample was drawn, with quota's enforced on age, gender and education to ensure representativeness. A total of 32,412 respondents participated in the first wave, which was an average response rate (AAPOR RR1) of 23% (see Appendix 5A for country specific details). All respondents were contacted to participate in the second wave, of which 22,806 indeed did.

The questionnaire was developed in English. It was then translated by TNS (who also translate the Eurobarometer surveys) into the different languages and then retranslated back into English. Irregularities and problems arising from this process were resolved by deliberation.

Variables

Support for Turkish membership. To test for media effects in support for EU enlargement, we choose to focus on the specific case of Turkey's potential EU membership. By focussing on the potential accession of a specific candidate country, the rather abstract issue of EU enlargement becomes more concrete. We choose Turkey as the candidate country of study, because apart from an economic and geo-strategic dimension, it also contains a cultural-religious dimension (De Vreese et al., 2011). This is the most contested enlargement of the EU ever (Grigoriadis, 2006), making it

¹⁵ Due to financial limitations, we were only able to include 21 of 27 member states. In selecting which countries to include, we took into consideration that the sample would include larger and smaller member states, countries from North, South, East and West, an long term and new members to the EU. The countries included are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

likely that citizens have an actual opinion on the subject and we are not measuring non-attitudes (Converse, 1970). And in relation to the moderating role of anti-immigrant attitudes, the cultural dimension makes the case of Turkish accession more interesting, because cultural and religious differences with most current EU citizens make Turks an easy group to define as an out-group.

The dependent variable is thus the degree to which citizens support or oppose Turkey's potential EU membership. For this, the respondents were asked in the second wave of the panel survey to score on a scale from 1 to 7 whether they are strongly against Turkey's membership (1) or strongly in favour (7) (see Appendix 5B for precise question wording).

As we are interested in dynamics of opinion, we will control in our models for support for Turkey's membership before exposure to media content. So the respondents were also asked in the first wave to score their support or opposition towards Turkey's membership.

Looking at the descriptive statistics in Table 5.1, one might think that nothing has changed between the two waves, as average support for Turkish membership scores is 3.06 in both waves. However, when looking at the differences between waves 1 and 2 at the individual level, it appears there is a whole lot of change. Less than half of the respondents (46.6%) gave the same answer in both waves. About a quarter of the respondents gave a more negative answer in the second wave, with 11.7% changing even more than one point on the 7 point scale. About the same number of respondents shows a change towards more support for Turkish membership.

Individual exposure to media content. To test the hypotheses regarding individual exposure to evaluations of Turkey's potential EU membership, we require a variable that links media content at the outlet level with exposure to these outlets at the individual level. To build that variable, we combine self-exposure measures in the panel survey with actual media content. In the survey we asked respondents to report how many days, if ever, in a typical week they read specific newspapers or watched specific television news broadcasts. For each country we asked respondents how often they read each of three major newspapers (of which one tabloid

Table 5.1

Descriptive statistics of variables used in analysis

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.
Support Turkish membership (wave 1)	1	7	3.06	1.93
Support Turkish membership (wave 2)	1	7	3.06	1.75
Anti-immigrant attitudes	0	6	3.10	1.52
Exclusive national identity	0	6	1.84	1.65
Government satisfaction	0	6	2.17	1.38
Economic evaluations	0	6	2.80	1.28
Individual media exposure	-0.69	0.03	-0.03	0.06
Information environment	-0.10	0	-0.02	0.03

Note: N = 22806

and two quality newspapers) and how often they watched two television news programs (one from public broadcasting and the other commercial) (for a complete list of used media outlets, see Appendix 5C).

To know what was actually the content of the media that respondents reported being exposed to, we combine this self-exposure measure with data from the media study of the 2009 European Election Study (EES).¹⁶ The principle investigators had the content of news media coded between the two waves of the panel survey by students (native speakers from each country), who were extensively trained.

The unit of analysis in the EES media dataset is articles in newspapers or items in television news.¹⁷ To combine the media data with the survey data, we need to aggregate the media data to the outlet level. To create a score for each outlet, we use a variable indicating how the potential membership of Turkey in the EU was evaluated (on a 5-point scale from very negative to very positive). We recode the variable so that it scores -2 when Turkish membership was evaluated very negatively in that article and +2 when it was evaluated very positively. When Turkey's membership was not

¹⁶ The media study is part of the European Election Study and the PIREDEU Project (Providing an Infrastructure for Research on Electoral Democracy in the European Union, www.piredeu.eu). Details about the media study can be found in Schuck, Xezonakis, Banducci, & de Vreese (2010).

¹⁷ From all editions of the selected newspapers in the three week period prior to the election were coded all stories on the front page, all stories on a randomly selected page and all stories mentioning the EU. From all editions of the selected television news all items were coded, except the weather forecast and specific sections devoted to sports.

evaluated or evaluations were balanced, we code it 0. We aggregate this to the outlet level, by calculating the mean for each outlet. Finally, for every outlet a score is calculated by multiplying the mean evaluation with the proportion of stories that mentioned Turkey's potential membership.¹⁸

In the last step constructing our individual exposure variable, we combine the outlet scores with the self-reported exposure measure by multiplying the number of days the respondent reported using a specific outlet in a typical week with the score of that outlet, and then adding up the result of the multiplications (see Appendix 5D for an example). The constructed variable is thus a combination of the mean evaluation one might have encountered and the chance of indeed encountering them, based on both visibility in each news outlet and the frequency reported exposure to each outlet. The descriptive statistics of the media variable for the respondents are shown in Table 5.1.

The information environment. Following recent studies which found media effects of the information environment on attitudes, our second media variable is the information environment in each media system. As each country has its own media system, we also define the information environment at the national level. We use the same items from the content analysis to assess mean evaluation of Turkish potential membership and visibility of the topic per outlet. We build upon Hopmann et al. (2010), who operationalize the environment as an unweighted aggregation of media content of some widely used media sources in a context, which is considered a proxy for the information in a particular media system. However, as the chance of citizens to receive the information is larger when a specific outlet containing that information has more users, it is better to weigh outlets by the number of users. With this in mind, the outlet scores

¹⁸ For television news, the proportion of stories that mentioned Turkey's potential membership was calculated over all items, as all items in a news broadcast were coded. For newspapers this could not be done, as from the newspapers a non-representative sample was coded (all articles on the front page, all articles on a random page, and all articles that mentioned the EU). To achieve a more representative sample to estimate the proportion of stories on Turkey's potential membership, the proportion was calculated including only those articles that were on the front page or on the random page.

are aggregated to the national level by calculating the mean for each country, weighing the outlets by the average use in our survey.

Anti-immigrant attitudes. The moderator in our models is anti-immigrant attitudes. We used 5 items to tap anti-immigrant attitudes, which also include the items McLaren used to measure economic and cultural threat to the in-group. The items load onto one factor (eigenvalue = 3.067, 61.3% explained variance) and we construct an index by taking the mean (Cronbach's alpha = .833).

Data analysis

Because respondents are clustered in different countries,¹⁹ we use multilevel modelling techniques to test our hypotheses. We use a lagged dependent variable method, i.e. we control in all models for support for Turkey's accession in wave 1, to enable us to assess the change during the period between the two waves (Johnson, 2005).

We start our analysis with a baseline model, where we explain support for Turkey's membership in wave 2 with support in wave 1. This baseline model is used to compare to the following models, to assess to what degree these models improve. Next, we run three models with the media variables added to the model, testing the main effects of individual exposure (H1a) and the information environment (H1b): first only individual exposure; second the information environment and third both. Finally we assess the moderation of anti-immigrant attitudes (H2a and H2b). We do so first by adding interaction variables to our models. We examine the moderation more in depth by estimating the effect sizes at different values of the moderator (Hayes & Matthes, 2009) and by plotting the marginal effects of the media variables against values of anti-immigrant attitudes.

The models we present are without any additional controls. We also estimated all models controlling for the most relevant factors from recent literature, including exclusive national identity (Hooghe & Marks, 2005), government satisfaction (Franklin et al., 1995), and economic evaluations (Gabel & Palmer, 1995). Adding these control does not lead to substantial

¹⁹ We assessed the intraclass correlation coefficient and found that with 5.8% of the variation at the national level a statistically significant part of the variation is between clusters.

differences to our conclusions, so for reasons of clarity we decided to present the results without controls²⁰.

Results

We start by testing the main effect of individual exposure to evaluations on support for Turkey's EU membership (H1a). Model 2 of Table 5.2 shows that the effect of individual exposure is not significant ($b = 0.134$, $SE = 0.178$, p (two-sided) = .452). Also, when we compare the variance of the random components of model 2 to model 1, the improvements are minimal (from $\sigma = 1.540$ in model 1 to $\sigma = 1.540$ in model 2, which is a proportion reduced variance of .000; from $\tau = 0.018$ in model 1 to $\tau = 0.017$ in model 2, which is a proportion reduced variance of .069). Performing a Chi-square test on the difference of the deviance, also shows that adding the individual exposure measure does not significantly improve the model (χ^2 ($df = 1$) = $74626.732 - 74626.212 = 0.520$; $p = .471$). This suggests that exposure to evaluative content does not affect change in support for Turkey's EU membership. Thus, we do not find support for Hypothesis 1a.

The other main effect we are interested in is the effect of information environment on change in support for Turkish accession (H1b). Model 3 of Table 5.2 shows that the coefficient is positive as expected and statistically significant ($b = 4.291$, $SE = 0.575$, p (two-sided) < .001). With the range of the information environment variable going from -0.10 to 0, the model estimates an average change in a country with the most negative observed evaluations of Turkey's potential membership (a one-sided information flow) of -.429 on a 7-point scale, compared to a country with balanced evaluations (two-sided information flow). The Chi-square test shows that adding the variable of information environment significantly improves the model (χ^2 ($df = 1$) = $74626.732 - 74599.045 = 27.687$; $p < .000$). And although again the reduction of variance at the individual level is negligible, at the country level it is quite substantial (from $\tau = 0.018$ in model 1 to $\tau = 0.004$ in model 3, which is a proportion reduced variance of .785). Thus, the more negative the information environment, the more negative the change in support for Turkey's accession. These findings support Hypothesis 1b.

²⁰ Results with the controls are available from the authors on request.

Table 5.2
Multilevel models explaining support for Turkish membership in wave 2 (no controls)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Intercept	1.157 ^{***} (0.034)	1.162 ^{***} (0.033)	1.259 ^{***} (0.026)	1.259 ^{***} (0.026)	1.704 ^{***} (0.043)	1.777 ^{***} (0.038)	1.777 ^{***} (0.038)
Support Turkish membership wave 1	0.621 ^{***} (0.004)	0.622 ^{***} (0.004)	0.622 ^{***} (0.004)	0.622 ^{***} (0.004)	0.585 ^{***} (0.005)	0.584 ^{***} (0.005)	0.584 ^{***} (0.005)
Individual exposure		0.134 (0.178)		-0.039 (0.183)	-0.523 (0.321)		-0.052 (0.389)
Information environment			4.291 ^{***} (0.575)	4.347 ^{***} (0.631)		2.439 ^{**} (0.867)	2.507 [*] (1.032)
Anti-immigrant attitudes (AIA)					-0.140 ^{***} (0.007)	-0.129 ^{***} (0.008)	-0.129 ^{***} (0.008)
Individual exposure * AIA					0.173 [*] (0.083)		-0.021 (0.107)
Information environment * AIA						0.689 ^{***} (0.192)	0.721 ^{**} (0.247)
Variance of random components							
Level 1: individual (σ)	1.540	1.540	1.540	1.540	1.497	1.496	1.496
Level 2: country (τ)	0.018	0.017	0.004	0.004	0.021	0.005	0.005
Proportion reduced variance compared to model 1							
Level 1: individual		.000	.000	.000	.028	.029	.029
Level 2: country		.069	.785	.785	-.167	.724	.724
Deviance (-2LL)	74626.732	74626.212	74599.045	74598.998	73977.560	73942.181	73941.701

Note: Standard errors within parentheses. ^{***} $p < .001$; ^{**} $p < .01$; ^{*} $p < .05$.

In model 4 of Table 5.2, both individual exposure and information environment are added to the model. Model 4 shows a similar picture as models 2 and 3. Individual exposure has no significant effect, and the effect of information environment is similar to that in model 3. Thus, again we find no support for Hypothesis 1a, but do find support for Hypothesis 1b.

We now turn to the moderation effect of anti-immigrant attitudes. We first test whether individual exposure is moderated (H2a). In model 5 of Table 5.2, we find a significant interaction effect between individual exposure and anti-immigrant attitudes ($b = 0.173$, $SE = 0.083$, p (two-sided) = .038). Thus, the strength of the effect of individual exposure varies significantly across values of anti-immigrant attitudes. The sign of the interaction is positive, as expected, as for higher values of anti-immigrant attitudes (thus being more negative towards immigrants) the effect of individual exposure becomes more positive.

In model 5 of Table 5.3 we present for different values of anti-immigrant attitudes the effect estimates based on the interaction. It shows that over the full range of anti-immigrant attitudes the estimates are not significant. Also, when plotting the marginal effects of individual exposure against different values of anti-immigrant attitudes (see Figure 5.1), we see that the marginal effect remains similar across all values of anti-immigrant attitudes. Looking at plotted 95% confidence interval, we also see that the marginal effect of individual exposure is not statistically significant at any value of anti-immigrant attitudes. These findings indicate that the effect of individual

Table 5.3

Effect of individual media exposure and information environment for different values of anti-immigrant attitudes (no controls)

	Model 5		Model 6	
	Individual exposure		Information environment	
Anti-immigrant attitudes = 0	-0.523	(0.321)	2.439**	(0.867)
Anti-immigrant attitudes = 1	-0.350	(0.256)	3.128***	(0.748)
Anti-immigrant attitudes = 2	-0.178	(0.204)	3.818***	(0.664)
Anti-immigrant attitudes = 3	-0.005	(0.177)	4.507***	(0.630)
Anti-immigrant attitudes = 4	0.168	(0.188)	5.196***	(0.652)
Anti-immigrant attitudes = 5	0.341	(0.230)	5.886***	(0.727)
Anti-immigrant attitudes = 6	0.513	(0.290)	6.575***	(0.839)

Note: Standard errors within parentheses. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

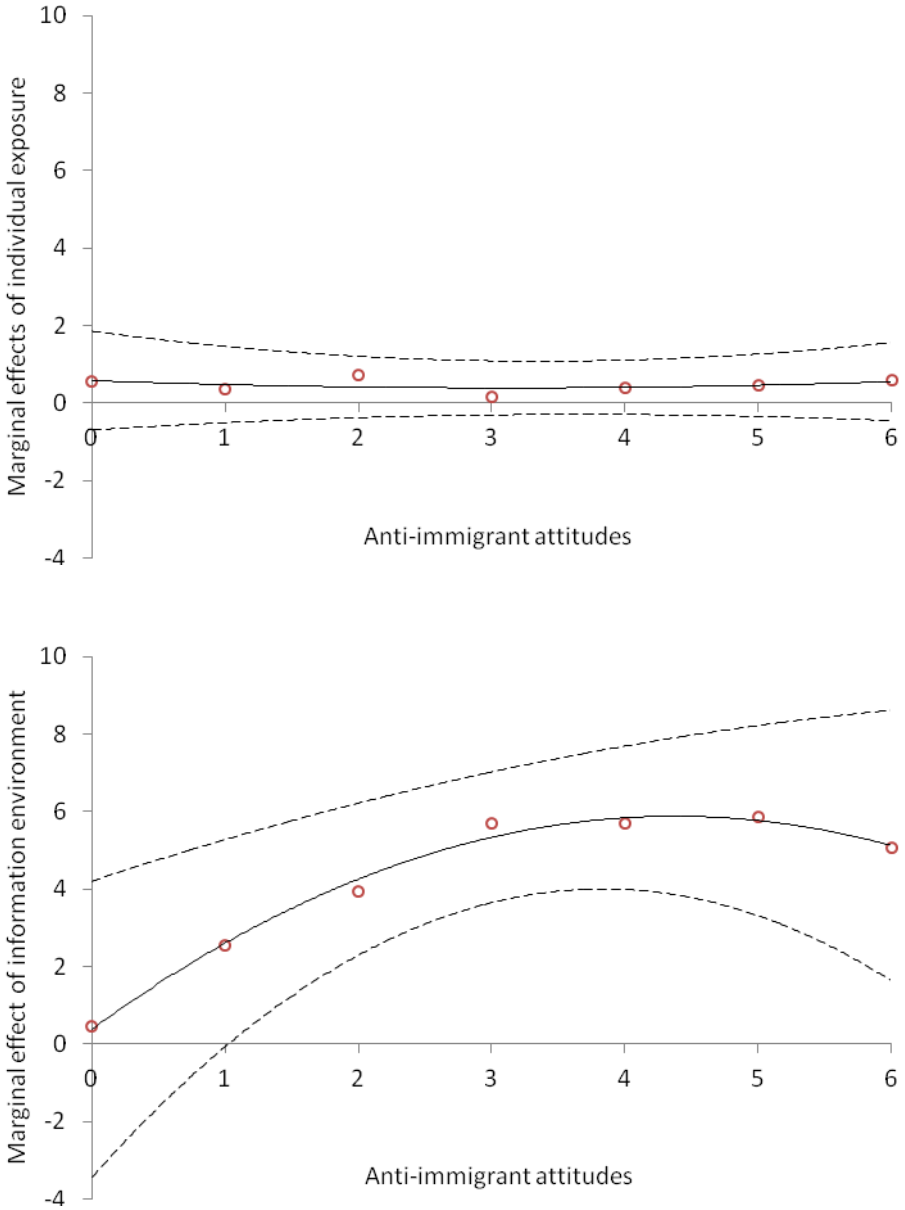


Figure 5.1. Marginal effects of individual exposure and information environment on support for Turkey’s membership in wave 2 for different values of anti-immigrant attitudes. The dashed lines indicate the lower and upper bound of the 95% confidence interval.

exposure is not moderated by anti-immigrant attitudes and thus do not support Hypothesis 2a.

Turning to the test of the moderation of anti-immigrant attitudes on the effect of the information environment (H2b), model 6 of Table 5.2 shows a significant interaction effect in the expected direction ($b = 0.689$, $SE = 0.192$, p (two-sided) $< .001$). Further examining the moderation, we see in model 6 of Table 5.3 that the estimated effect of information environment ranges from $b = 2.439$ ($SE = 0.867$, p (two-sided) $= .006$) for individuals with the lowest score on anti-immigrant attitudes, to $b = 6.575$ ($SE = 0.839$, p (two-sided) $< .000$) for individuals with the highest score on anti-immigrant attitudes. Again, with for different countries the values of the information environment ranging from -0.10 to 0 , this model indicates that, in comparison with a country that has balanced evaluations, in a country with the most negative observed information environment people with the lowest score on anti-immigrant attitudes are estimated to change on average 0.244 on a 7-point scale. Comparing those same countries, people with the highest score on anti-immigrant attitudes change on average 0.658 on a 7-point scale, which is more than twice as large as the effect of people with the least negative attitudes towards immigrants. Turning to the graph of information environment in Figure 5.1, we see that there is no (significant) marginal effect at the lowest value of anti-immigrant attitudes, that it increases as attitudes towards immigrants become more negative, and that it stabilizes at the higher values of anti-immigrant attitudes. This indicates that anti-immigrant attitudes indeed moderate the effect of the information environment, suggesting that citizens with strong negative feelings towards immigrants are on average more affected by a negative information environment and show a more negative change in support for Turkey's accession than citizens with less negative feelings towards immigrants. These findings support Hypothesis 2b.

Finally, should we test for the moderation by anti-immigrant attitudes of the effects of both individual exposure and the information environment on support for Turkey's membership at the same time, a similar picture arises (see model 7 of Table 5.2). The effect of individual exposure is not moderated by anti-immigrant attitudes, but the effect of information

environment is. We thus find no support for Hypothesis 2a, but do so for Hypothesis 2b.

Conclusion

In this study we aimed to assess whether information presented in news media affects citizens' support for EU enlargement. We hypothesized that when citizens are exposed to a consistent directional bias, citizens' perceptions of the issue are affected and through that also their opinion about the issue. We tested this by focussing on both individual exposure (H1a) and on exposure through the information environment (H1b). We also hypothesized that these media effects systematically differ across individuals. We argued that previously-held attitudes, related to the issue of EU enlargement, moderate media effects because these attitudes guide how individuals perceive the issue and how they perceive new information about the issue. We tested if anti-immigrant attitudes, arguably the most important predictor of support for EU enlargement, moderated media effects. We expected that negative evaluations in the media would affect individuals with negative attitudes toward immigrants more than others, as these individuals identify strongly with an in-group which is likely to be influenced by accession of new members. Again, we hypothesized this for both individual exposure (H2a) and exposure through the information environment (H2b). Combining a two-wave panel survey with a media content analysis in 21 countries, we found partial support for our hypotheses.

Modelling exposure to information on the individual level showed no significant effects on support for enlargement (H1a), nor was the effect moderated by anti-immigrant attitudes (H2a). However, when focussing on the information environment individuals live in, we showed that the presence of a directional bias in news media strongly predicted change in support (H1b). This means that the media are indeed an important factor in understanding dynamics in support for EU enlargement. Furthermore, we found that the effect of the information environment was moderated by anti-immigrant attitudes (H2b). But as citizens with negative attitudes towards immigrants are also those who are already more likely to be

negative towards EU enlargement, it is more likely that the media do not so much create attitudes but rather strengthen existing attitudes.

But how can we make sense of the absence of an effect of individual exposure and the presence of a strong effect of the information environment? A possible theoretical explanation can be given by looking at interpersonal communication. Katz and Lazarsfeld's 'filter hypothesis' (1955) states that through interpersonal communication, individuals learn which media messages are valid and should therefore be taken into account (Schmitt-Beck, 2003). Thus, interpersonal communication may reduce the effect of individual exposure. Interpersonal communication can also explain why the information environment has the strong impact it has. Using the classic view of the two-step flow model, information that is available does not need to be observed by each individual personally, but is eventually received by most individuals through conversations or discussion with colleagues, family or friends (Hopmann et al., 2010).

There may, however, also be methodological reasons for the difference in effects between individual exposure and the information environment. In this particular study, the relative low variation in tone between outlets led to less variation in the individual exposure score, which may suppress the effect of individual exposure. But on a more general note, others have pointed at problems with self-reported exposure measures, either through respondents not remembering or through respondents giving socially desirable answers (e.g., Prior, 2009). Because of this, measurement error is far more likely to occur when modelling individual exposure than when modelling the information environment, possibly leading to underestimation of the effect of individual exposure.

In this study we looked at support for Turkey's EU membership, but to what degree can we expect to find similar results for other applicant countries? McLaren (2007) shows that in the countries of the EU-15, the effect of attitudes towards immigrants on support for the candidate countries joining in 2004 and 2007 is similar to the effect on support for Turkey's accession. Azrout et al. (in press), however, found that in the Netherlands there was no effect of anti-immigrant attitudes on support for accession of Switzerland and they argued this was the case because the

Swiss would be perceived as part of the in-group. The degree to which we could expect our findings to hold for other countries is thus likely to depend on whether the applicant country is perceived as an out-group. Scholars have argued that 'Europe' is an invention (Delanty, 1995), with the boundaries of Europe often being defined on many different grounds (Liotta, 2005). Among those, religion has often played an important role (e.g., Redmond, 2007). With rising Islamophobia (Poynting & Mason, 2007) and the general public and political acceptance of Huntington's 'clash of civilization' thesis (Marranci, 2004), religion may indeed explain why Turkey is easily perceived as an out-group in all 27 (Christian) member states. However, also the division between Roman Catholics and Protestants on one side and Greek and Slavic Orthodox Christian on the other has been noted to be of importance (Liotta, 2005) and may explain the findings of McLaren. But with countries on both sides of the Christian schism both as current EU member states and applicant countries, future enlargements are likely to show differences within the EU in the degree to which the applicant countries are perceived as an out-group, and thus how citizens of EU member states react to media information about these applicant countries.

Another interesting observation in this particular case is the virtual absence of positive news. Although we found that in all countries the information flow was either one-sided negative or two-sided, we found about as many positive as negative changes in support for Turkish accession. How can we account for that? The survey was executed before and after the European Parliament election campaign. Although visibility of the EU in the news is relatively low, key events such as elections strongly increase the visibility of the EU (Boomgaarden, Vliegenthart, De Vreese, & Schuck, 2010; Peter & de Vreese, 2004). Following Inglehart's cognitive mobilization hypothesis, it may be that the increase in visibility of the EU in the news makes the EU and the issue of enlargement less unknown and through that less frightening, resulting in more support for both the EU and enlargement.

Finally, concluding that the information environment does not create attitudes but tends to strengthen existing ones does not mean that evaluations in the media cannot have important societal implications. First,

by strengthening existing attitudes, the media are able to politicize an issue, making it more important and, in case of position issues (see Stokes, 1963), potentially widening the gap between different positions. Second, as history has shown that national referenda on EU issues have often been decided with minimal-winning majorities (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006b), even small effects of exposure to specific media content can make an important difference.