Public images of right-wing populist leaders: the role of the media

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A growing number of studies investigate explanations for right-wing populist parties' electoral success. This dissertation adds to this knowledge by looking at factors that are central to today's mediated and personalized politics. With regard to the key role of right-wing populist leaders for their party's success, the relationship between media and populism, and the extent to which mass media coverage of right-wing populist leaders shapes the public images of these leaders, the findings of the four studies show that these parties are not in a league of their own, as is often assumed.
PUBLIC IMAGES OF RIGHT-WING POPULIST LEADERS: THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA
Public Images of Right-Wing Populist Leaders:

The Role of the Media

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Introduction

During the last few decades several new right-wing populist parties have entered the political stage. They did so, however, with varying success: some are now important political players, while others disappeared quickly. Several explanations have been put forward to account for these differences in electoral success (Arzheimer & Carter, 2006; Carter, 2005; Eatwell, 2003; Golder, 2003; Van der Brug, Fennema, & Tillie, 2005). Extant literature has focused on demand-side theories such as socio-structural explanations (Arzheimer & Carter, 2006), protest vote (Betz, 1994) and ideological vote (Van der Brug, Fennema, & Tillie, 2003) models, but in recent years more and more attention has been paid to internal and external supply-side factors (Mudde, 2010) as these are crucial in determining the electoral breakthrough of new parties (Carter, 2005; Coffé, 2005; Eatwell, 2003).

However, no one systematically pays attention to supply side factors that are central to the current mediatized political environment. In this setting, it are the mass media that can ‘make or break’ these new parties, which forces the latter to adapt to the context of alleged mediatization and personalization and bring their leaders up to the fore. This dissertation fills this void and looks at the role of political leaders, their representation in the media, and how this affects their public image and electoral support.

It, first of all, investigates the extent to which the popularity of right-wing populist parties is dependent on the public image of their leaders. Party leaders are often thought to be particularly important for right-wing populist parties, as their political programs are usually limited and their party organizations weak and highly centralized. Consequently, it has been argued that these parties need a strong leader to lead the party organization internally and bring across the message and image of the party (e.g., Carter, 2005; Eatwell, 2003; Kitschelt, 2007; Pappas, 2008; Weyland, 2001). Moreover, in today’s mediatized and personalized democracies it is assumed that party leaders play a crucial role in determining a party’s image, not the parties themselves. Second, because most citizens cannot retrieve their information about politicians from personal encounters, public images of right-wing populist party leaders must derive from how they appear in the mass media: it is through the mass media that voters learn about the political candidates, and it can therefore be expected that the media affect voters’ perceptions of candidates (Benoit, Hansen, & Verser, 2003; Kleinnijenhuis, Van Hoof, Oegema, & De Ridder, 2007; Mendelsohn,
1996) This thesis therefore focuses on media appearances of right-wing populist leaders and investigates the role of the mass media in shaping their public image. Finally, throughout this dissertation right-wing populist parties are studied in comparison with mainstream parties. In doing so, we are able to assess whether these parties are as different as is oftentimes assumed.

Figure I.1 summarizes the conceptual framework of this thesis: it investigates the extent to which the media coverage of right-wing populist party leaders, in terms of prominence, populism and authoritativeness, affect public perceptions of right-wing populist party leaders, in terms of their perceived effectiveness and legitimacy, and how this in turn affects the preference for these parties. The key concepts are expounded below.

**Figure I.1: Conceptual Framework of the Thesis**

![Diagram of conceptual framework]

*The public image of right-wing populist leaders*

This dissertation focuses on two aspects in the public image of party leaders: *effectiveness* and *legitimacy*.

As for effectiveness, most electoral research indicates that voters make a reasoned choice when they vote, which means that they take into account the consequences of their choice (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998) and prefer party leaders who are able to reach certain goals (Van der Brug et al., 2005). We make a distinction between two types of goals: that a message is heard (expressive goals) and that policies are affected (pragmatic goals). Voters who value pragmatic goals
find it important that a party leader is influential and thus take into consideration whether they think a party leader is able to affect public policies – through participation in government or by being effective as an opposition party. The prime goal of expressive voters is that their voice will be heard. For them it is important that a politician is publicly visible, can be heard in public discussions and sets the media agenda.

We also know that voters in general prefer party leaders who do not intend to radically change or overthrow the democratic representational system (Van der Brug et al., 2005). However, because of the (fascist) anti-democratic and anti-constitutional legacy of some right-wing populist parties (Carter, 2005), these parties may be identified with the extreme right, which could lead voters to assess some right-wing populists as illegitimate. Even though potential voters for these party leaders may be critical of the political establishment, most of them will not want to see the democratic system endangered. It is therefore important for right-wing populist party leaders “(1) to make clear that they belong neither to the political establishment nor to the camp of anti-democratic forces; (2) to make credible that they do oppose the political elite – but the political elite only and not the liberal democratic system” (Schedler, 1996, p. 302).

The media coverage of right-wing populist leaders

When studying the content of the media appearances of right-wing populist leaders, this dissertation distinguishes between three dimensions that can theoretically be expected to affect their public image: prominence, populism and authoritativeness.

First of all, prominence is important (i.e., Ellinas, 2010), especially for new right-wing populist parties. Within the context of mediatization of politics (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999), party leaders, right-wing populist or mainstream, must at least appear in the mass media in order to make themselves known by the electorate. It is, moreover, generally assumed that more prominent news messages, i.e., news messages that “are allotted more print space or time in broadcasting” (Watt, Mazza, & Snyder, 1993, p. 415) exert a larger influence on issue (or actor) salience, “that is, the ease with which these issues can be retrieved from memory.” (Scheufele, 2000, p. 300) Therefore, when it comes to these right-wing populist parties and new parties in general, the more prominent a politician is in the mass
media, the greater the likelihood that voters will know him or her (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2009; Hopmann, Vliegenthart, De Vreese, & Albæk, 2009).

Furthermore, by employing a particular populist style or rhetoric these leaders might try to attract attention and improve their newsworthiness. Characteristic of a populist style is the use of “highly emotional, slogan-based, tabloid-style language” (Mazzoleni, 2003, p. 5) which combines “...verbal radicalism and symbolic politics with the tools of contemporary political marketing to disseminate (...) ideas among the electorate” (Betz, 1998, p. 2). Characteristic of the populist message is its hostility to representative politics and the established order and its identification with the united/our/ordinary people. As a result, when populists engage in politics they employ the language of the common man in order to eschew the ‘elitist’ complex language of representative politics. (Canovan, 1999; Mudde, 2007; Taggart, 2000). We conceptualize populism as the combination of these style elements and the substantive rhetoric.

However, even though ‘being populist’ might be an effective strategy in gaining (media) attention, these leaders at the same time do not want to be designated as ‘clowns’, and be authoritative, or knowledgeable. Since voters (partially) base their electoral preference on ideological grounds, it is also essential for party leaders to get their ideological message across and be able to convey their position on a set of core issues. Moreover, voters will prefer a party leader who is also able to convince others, especially within parliament or within the broader political realm. To be authoritative in this interpretation is thus highly related to being persuasive: to what extent can the party leader convince voters that he or she has a strong case, i.e., is credible (Hovland & Weiss, 1951)?

In sum, this means that right-wing populist party leaders have to find a very delicate balance between being somewhat unusual and provocative – or populist, in style – (in order to guarantee newsworthiness and therefore prominence) and at the same time must assure they are taken seriously (to guarantee authoritativeness).

This dissertation builds on extant literature that focuses on mediatisation and personalization, media and populism, and the right-wing populist party family. The next paragraphs present a short overview of this literature. We then give an overview of the main research questions, after which the Dutch case is presented.
and our data are introduced. The introduction ends with an outline of this dissertation.

**Mediatization & personalization**

It is within what is often called an “audience democracy” (Manin, 1997), or “the third age of political communication” (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999) that right-wing populist parties enjoy their electoral success. This political context has its own rules, characterized among other things by tendencies of mediatization and personalization, to which these parties, as well as their mainstream competitors, have to adapt.

Central are the mass media, whose relay or mediation function indirectly bridges the distance between different actors. Today, “the media’s publishing capacity enables citizens to observe the political discourse and thus contributes to the mediation of politics.” (Schulz, 2004, p. 91). As the mass media “have become the most important source of information and vehicle of communication between the governors and the governed” (Strömbäck & Shehata, 2010, p. 576), both the people and the elite are dependent upon the media for information about the other side.

In a context in which the mass media increasingly constitute a dominant source of information in society (Strömbäck & Shehata, 2010) the mediatization of politics describes the process in which “political institutions are increasingly dependent on and shaped by mass media” (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999, p. 247). Parties have to accommodate to the way the media operate (Schulz, 2004): they have to take news values into account in their day-to-day work (Galtung & Ruge, 1965), deal with the fact that media select and frame events and build and set the agenda, adapt themselves to “a media logic” (Altheide & Snow, 1979; Brants & Van Praag, 2006) by adopting the language of commercial media, and try to stage or fashion events in order to get media attention (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999). As a consequence, political marketing is very important for all political parties: their spin doctors have to come up with media strategies to achieve the media coverage they need in order to connect with their voters.

Another consequence of this adaptation to the media’s storytelling techniques (Strömbäck & Shehata, 2010), as well as the increasing dealignment of party systems (Kriesi, in press), is that politics is assumed to be ‘personalizing’. Personalization is a
process that refers to two phenomena, namely “a stronger focus on candidates/politicians instead of parties, institutions or issues; and a change in the criteria for the evaluation of politicians, from features regarding their professional competence and performance to features concerning non-political personality traits.” (Kriesi, in press, p. 2) Even though the empirical evidence regarding this personalization of politics-thesis is still inconclusive as results are mixed (Adam & Maier, 2010; Karvonen, 2010; King, 2002; Kriesi, in press; McAllistar, 2007), it is within this context that one might expect parties to rely increasingly on the performance of their leaders. As party leaders are the primary representatives of their party in the public realm their image becomes a guidance in the voting booth (McAllistar, 2007; Mughan, 2000), an image that is to a large extent formed by their performance in the mass media.

It is against this theoretical background that right-wing populist parties have enjoyed varying degrees of success. This thesis therefore focuses on the public image and media coverage of party leaders, instead of the parties themselves, and investigates the extent to which this public image affects their electoral success. Moreover, because of the mediatisation of politics we look deeper into the role of the media in shaping this image.

**Media & populism**

According to Ellinas (2010, p. 220) mediatization and personalization not only results in more attention for leadership in general,

“it rewards a certain kind of leadership, elevating telegenic populists to a position of power and control within the party. (…) market pressures compel media outlets to continuously search for political actors that are likely to generate public interest and attract new audiences. Media spotlights tend to reward good public performers, especially those with an unconventional rhetorical style like Haider, who can stir controversy by breaking taboos or attacking the establishment.”

Similarly, Mudde (2004, p. 553-554) argues that the independence from political parties and the commercialization of mass media have created a perfect stage for populist actors “who found not just a receptive audience, but also a highly
receptive medium”. This is supposedly especially the case among the tabloid media (Mazzoleni, 2008, p. 52) that focus to a greater extent on the “eccentric aspects of social reality” and as a consequence “give passionate attention to what happens in the usually animated precincts of populist movements”. The specific style of populist leaders connects to what Mazzoleni (2008) calls “media populism”. However, it is important to note that evidence for this thesis is lacking (Akkerman, 2011).

By giving them media access (illustrated by e.g., Mazzoleni, Stewart, & Horsfield, 2003; Rydgren, 2004; Statham, 1996) the media “confer legitimacy and authority to political newcomers and (...) dispel voter doubts about their electoral viability” (Ellinas, 2010, p. 210). Yet, Mudde (2007) in this regard also argues that the media can be both a “friend and foe” (p. 248) of these new parties, by either granting them positive media coverage, which can be crucial for their electoral breakthrough (Art, 2007; Deutchman & Ellison, 1999; Mudde, 2007), or by being highly critical of them (Art, 2007; Mudde, 2007).

Along these lines, empirical research has indicated that there are several ways in which the media can ‘make or break’ right-wing populist parties. Based on the so-called ‘issue ownership thesis’, the salience of right-wing populist topics in the media such as immigration or integration, islam, and crime can contribute to the electoral success of these parties, as is shown by Walgrave and de Swert (2004) and Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart (2007). Moreover, following agenda setting theory, it can be argued that the salience of parties or their leaders in the news increases party support (Hopmann, Vliegenthart, De Vreese, & Albaek, 2010). Results in this regard are, however, inconclusive as in some cases visibility of right-wing populist parties or their leaders does lead to more popular support (Koopmans & Muis, 2009; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2001), and in other cases, such effects were not found (Muis, 2009; Van der Pas, de Vries, & Van der Brug, in press).

However, the mass media can also be hostile to these parties by ‘demonizing’ them or using a cordon sanitaire. Again, previous research has lead to equivocal results: two studies on the framing of, and the substantial coverage of Pim Fortuyn in the mass media come to divergent conclusions. Bosman and d’Haenens (2008) conclude that one Dutch newspaper demonized Fortuyn, whereas Schafraad, Scheepers, and Wester (2010) find no evidence for this proposition. On the other hand, two studies on the German far right do point in the same direction and
conclude that the populist radical right in Germany (and Austria) is victim of a cordon sanitaire of the (tabloid) press (Art, 2007; Schafraad, Scheepers, & Wester, 2008).

A final strand of research focuses on the specific style or discourse populists allegedly use to attract attention and appeal to their electorate. Although only a handful of scholars have tried to describe this communication style so far, and methods differ widely, there are some recurring themes. Populists try to celebrate and appeal to the people (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; McCarthy, 2001; Vossen, 2010), denunciate the elite (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Vossen, 2010), and use ‘language of the streets’ (Albertazzi, 2007) or adopt a ‘folksy style’ (Vossen, 2010).

Even though a number of scholars have examined the relationship between media and populism in the last decade, a number of very relevant questions remain unanswered. First of all, while several scholars describe the specific populist style and discourse of populist leaders, none of them has investigated to what extent the mass media are really receptive to this and give these leaders the opportunity to use this style in the mediated contact with their voters. Does the populist style really connect to media populism, and are there differences between outlets in this regard, as Mazzoleni (2008) assumes? Second, one would assume that the way political leaders appear in the mass media predominantly determines the electorates’ image of these leaders, especially within the context of the mediatization of democracy. In research on (right-wing) populism it is often assumed that the specific style used by right-wing populists appeals to their potential voters, yet this has never been directly tested by means of empirical research. Third and finally, several studies show that the media contribute substantially to either the success or failure of right-wing populist parties (Bosman & d’Haenens, 2008). However, in most cases these parties are studied in isolation and it is therefore unclear whether mass media effects occur because of the special character of these parties, or whether the effects are somehow generic for all parties, right-wing populist or mainstream. This dissertation will shed light on these new questions.
Differences with mainstream parties

This dissertation also connects to a debate that features prominently in the literature on right-wing populist parties: are these parties really different from their mainstream, or established, counterparts, or is it just more of the same?

First of all, extant literature argues that we need different theories to study these parties, as they differ from mainstream parties in their political position at the extreme right of the political spectrum, their ambiguous attitude towards the political establishment and/or constitution, and in their harsh opposition to immigration (Betz, 1994; Ignazi, 2002; Zaslove, 2008). Accordingly voters for these parties are intrinsically different: they do not base their electoral preference on substantial grounds, but use their vote as a sign of protest (Betz, 1994). Moreover, these parties are assumed to have different, charismatic party leaders who present themselves as outsiders. The populist style and rhetoric they use contains the key traits of media logic (Plasser & Ulram, 2003) and can therefore lead to disproportional media attention (Mudde, 2007), which makes these parties more dependent on the mass media than others (Mazzoleni et al., 2003).

Yet, there are also reasons to expect these parties not to be so different, as party leaders are crucial for all parties in today’s personalized politics, and all political parties have to adjust themselves to the mediatization of democracy. Mudde (2004) even substantiates the claim that the populist discourse has become mainstream in the politics of contemporary democracies and that right-wing populism “should be seen as a radical interpretation of mainstream values, […] more akin to a pathological normalcy” (Mudde, 2010, p. 1167) instead of a ‘normal pathology’ (Scheuch & Klingemann, 1967). Scientific evidence also points into this ‘six and two threes’-direction, as support for right-wing populist parties is motivated by the same ideological and pragmatic considerations as support for other parties is (Van der Brug, Fennema, & Tillie, 2000; Van der Brug et al., 2003), leader effects are of the same magnitude or smaller (Van der Brug & Mughan, 2007), and government participation of these parties is “a relatively ordinary phenomenon” (de Lange, 2008, p. 224). Moreover, it can also be argued that these right-wing populist parties and their leaders cannot afford to be too deviant in order for them to be taken seriously.
In this dissertation we directly address the alleged differences or similarities between right-wing populist and mainstream parties. We do so in two ways. First, by incorporating mainstream parties in the analyses and comparing between the two we are able to investigate whether right-wing populist parties really are in a league of their own. In extant literature, it is often assumed that right-wing populist parties are successful because they are different. To test whether this is actually the case it is most important to include predictors of party support and image formation that are specific to these parties, as well as predictors that are generic to all parties. We therefore do not only incorporate measurements of the perceived legitimacy of right-wing populist leaders in our analyses, but also perceptions of effectiveness. The latter is especially assumed to be important for all leaders: voters prefer party leaders that are influential. If our analyses show that party support for right-wing populist parties is not predicted by perceived effectiveness, whereas party support for mainstream parties is, this indicates a different voter-party relationship. Similarly, with regard to media coverage we do not only look at the extent to which right-wing populists are portrayed by using a populist style. We also incorporate measurements of authoritativeness, as we assume all voters base their vote choice to a large degree on ideological grounds and therefore want to be convinced by arguments, not (only) by a striking populist style.

Research questions

The above leads to four key research questions this dissertation aims to answer. First of all, following the personalization of politics thesis the first study investigates the important role of party leaders for these parties:

1. To what extent does the perception of right-wing populist party leaders affect the electoral preference for these parties?

   Second, the second study sheds more light on the relationship between media and populism and examines the extent to which the populist style connects to media populism:

2. How are these right-wing populist party leaders portrayed by the mass media? Is it true that certain outlets are more receptive to the populist style because of media populism?
Third, in study 3 and 4 we investigate the extent to which the picture the mass media paint of right-wing populist leaders forms the electorates’ image of these leaders:

3. To what extent and how does the portrayal of right-wing populist leaders in the mass media affect the perception of these leaders?

And finally, as stated above, all studies look at the differences between right-wing populist and mainstream parties:

4. Does the role of political leaders, their media performance, and the relationship with voter support differ between right-wing populist and mainstream parties, and if so, how?

The Dutch case

This thesis focuses on the Dutch case, where four, ideologically similar, new right-wing populist parties participated in the elections of 2006. Two of these parties, Pim Fortuyn’s renamed party Lijst Vijf Fortuyn (LVF: ‘List Five Fortuyn’), led by Olaf Stuger, and Hilbrand Nawijn’s Partij voor Nederland (PVN: ‘Party for the Netherlands’) were quite unsuccessful. Marco Pastors’ EenNL (‘One NL’) did not fail until Election Day. Only Geert Wilders’ Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV: ‘Party for the Freedom’) experienced electoral success, winning nine seats in parliament in 2006, and 24 in 2010. This thesis investigates whether the public image of the leaders and their representation in the media helps to explain why only one of these four new parties was successful and the others were not.

All four parties satisfy the two most important criteria Mudde (2007) outlines for defining right-wing populist parties. They all addressed nativism in their programs by, for instance, proposing to halt immigration, sending back sentenced immigrants or fundamentalists, and promoting or defending the Dutch identity or culture. All parties can, moreover, be considered to be populist. They all propose measures to simplify the representative democratic order by, for example, decreasing the scope of the government, reducing the number of seats in parliament or in the senate (or abolishing the latter), and introducing more direct democratic measures (i.e. referenda). As the ideological differences between the parties are very small it is unlikely that voters would be aware of these differences. We therefore assume that differences in success have to be attributed to other ‘supply side factors’ such as leader performance and media appearances.
This single-country study allows us to “know more about less” (Gerring, 2007) and shed light on causal mechanisms we cannot study in a comparative context when cases are too heterogeneous to collapse. The four Dutch right-wing populist parties, and the PVV of Geert Wilders in particular, constitute an outstanding case to study the factors explaining the success and failure of new right-wing populist parties. As the four parties under study seemingly appeared out of nowhere they are even more dependent upon their media performance than mainstream parties. Media performance for these parties determines if they can get their message to the voter in the first place. Moreover, these parties have or had no real party structure or membership and are formed around their leader, which gives these leaders a central role in constituting the image of these parties. Both considerations make ‘the Dutch case’ a most likely case (Gerring, 2007) to find media and leader effects.

**Data**

This dissertation uses three data collections to explore the role of the mass media in the image formation of leaders of right-wing populist parties.

A panel survey study was collected by TNS NIPO in collaboration with the University of Amsterdam and the Dutch newspaper the Volkskrant, within the framework of the 2006 ASCoR Election study. With these survey data \( n = 382 \) the influence of the public image of right-wing populist party leaders on the electoral preference formation for these parties is established.

Second, a comprehensive quantitative content analysis conducted within the framework of the 2006 ASCoR Election Study \( n = 1,001 \) sheds more insight in the appearance of these leaders in the mass media. We include seven national newspapers (three broadsheet, two tabloids, and two freelies), three evening news programs (one public news program, and the two main private news programs), the two main public TV current affairs programs, and five infotainment programs (four public, one private).

To assess the effects of the media coverage of right-wing populist leaders on their perception by the electorate, the panel data and the content analysis are linked so that the individual exposure to the media coverage can be estimated: “these variables were constructed by bringing together data on exposure to specific news
media outlets with a content analysis of the volume and tone of news (…) in each (…) outlet” (De Vreese & Semetko, 2004, p. 708).

Finally, we test the same causal relationships, but this time using an on-line survey experiment (n = 3,125). A disadvantage of the content analysis and panel survey design is that we are dependent upon the journalistic coverage of, in this case, right-wing populist leaders. It is therefore difficult to fully distinguish between media effects and reality: right-wing populist party leaders are not only presented differently by the mass media, they objectively differ in style, personality and capacities, which in turn affects their media coverage. An experimental set-up can overcome these problems by directly manipulating the stimuli. Because we make use of an online representative sample of the Dutch electorate of the LISS Household Panel we are able to look deeper into moderation effects and investigate whether and to what extent different voters receive the populist message differently.

**Outline of the dissertation**

Figure I.2: Outline of the Dissertation

A key component of the conceptual framework of this thesis is the public image of political leaders. This study focuses on two important aspects of this public image: legitimacy and effectiveness. The dissertation traces the model in Figure I.2 backwards. Chapter 1 focuses on legitimacy and effectiveness as independent variables, explaining party preference. After establishing that legitimacy and effectiveness are important predictors of party preference, we shift our focus to explaining the role of the media in contributing to legitimacy and effectiveness.
Chapter 2 deals with the measurement of the independent variables – prominence, populist rhetoric, populist style and authoritativeness – and describes how leaders of (right-wing populist) parties are portrayed in the mass media. We compare between parties and media outlets.

In chapter 3 and 4 mass media effects are estimated, once in a real-life setting and once in an on-line experiment. In chapter 3 the panel study and the content analysis are combined. It demonstrates the extent to which perceptions of right-wing populist party leaders are affected by the media coverage of these leaders. The chapter shows whether right-wing populist party leaders are (more than their established counterparts) dependent on the mass media.

In the final empirical chapter of this dissertation, chapter 4, the media effects found in chapter 3 are investigated more thoroughly using an experimental set-up with a large-n representative sample of Dutch voters. This allows us to conduct a strong causal test and examine the effects of the populist style or rhetoric and authoritativeness on the perception of a right-wing populist leader on the short term. Moreover, we test the role of possible individual-level moderators in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of why and whether certain individuals are more prone to be affected by (specific) right-wing populist communication strategies.

Since the four empirical chapters were originally written in the form of articles, they can be read as stand alone papers. As a consequence there is some overlap between the theoretical introductions of the four studies. However, the chapters do investigate different elements of the model outlined in figure I.2.

In the concluding chapter we elaborate on the theoretical and political implications of the four studies.
PUBLIC IMAGES OF RIGHT-WING POPULIST PARTY LEADERS: PERCEPTIONS OF LEGITIMACY AND EFFECTIVENESS

An almost identical chapter was published in Party Politics¹.

Abstract

In the last two decades several right-wing populist parties have risen in Western Europe. Some of these parties have been very successful in elections, whereas others have been rather unsuccessful. Some scholars have argued that this success depends in part on the extent to which voters perceive these parties (and their leaders) as legitimate (not violent or undemocratic) and as effective. However, no studies exist that test the effect of these public perceptions on electoral support. We fill this void by proposing operationalizations of voters’ perceptions of parties in terms of legitimacy and effectiveness. These operationalizations were employed to measure public perceptions of leaders of two right-wing populist parties and leaders of four established parties that participated in the Dutch national parliamentary elections of 2006. The analyses of these data (n = 382) demonstrate the significance of measuring public images directly and show that legitimacy and effectiveness are important predictors of support for right-wing populist parties. Prior research showed that voters evaluate right-wing populist parties largely by the same criteria as they use to evaluate other parties. Our study demonstrates that this is only true when voters consider a right-wing populist party as effective and legitimate.


The ordering of the author names represents the relative contribution to the publication. The first author has contributed most.
Introduction

In the last two decades we have witnessed a rise of anti-immigration or right-wing populist parties, especially in Western Europe. Some of these parties have been very successful in national elections, whereas others have been rather unsuccessful in attracting votes. Because of their location at the far right of the political spectrum (Ignazi, 2002; Lubbers, 2000: 82), their ethnocentric (Rydgren, 2005) or xenophobic stance (Betz, 1998; Jackman & Volpert, 1996; Schain, Zolberg, & Hossay, 2002), their resentment against immigrants and/or opposition to the immigration policies of the government (Carter, 2005; Fennema, 1997) and their anti-constitutional or anti-democratic (Carter, 2005), anti-political establishment (Schedler, 1996), anti-party or anti-elitist appeal (Hainsworth, 2000; Schain et al., 2002), these parties generally have been treated as unique species within political party and voting literature.

Recently, a number of articles and books have been published that attempt to explain differences in their electoral success (Carter, 2005; Eatwell, 2003; Golder, 2003; Van der Brug, Fennema, & Tillie, 2005). Carter (2005) and Golder (2003) make a typology of different types of (radical) right-wing populist parties and show that some types are more successful than others. Particularly neo-Nazi parties and parties classified as extreme right turn out to be unsuccessful at elections. Their explanation is that while some voters are willing to support a party when they agree with their policies on immigration, most voters are not willing to support a party that they see as undemocratic. Yet, this explanation has not yet been tested.

Van der Brug et al. (2005) similarly argue that voters are only willing to support a right-wing populist party if they see it as a ‘normal’ party. By a normal party, they mean that it has to be seen as legitimate (or democratic), and effective (which means that it is able to affect policies). This is in line with Eatwell’s (2003) claim that extreme right parties tend to gather strength when they are perceived as legitimate and when voting for them is seen as in some way efficacious. However, Eatwell (2003) does not test his assumption and Van der Brug et al. (2005) rely on very indirect measures of voters’ perceptions of right-wing populist parties as ‘normal’ parties.

With this study we aim to fill two gaps in the existing studies of right-wing populist parties. First of all, we develop direct measures of voters’ perceptions of
these parties’ images in terms of legitimacy and effectiveness, since such measures do not exist yet. Second, we estimate the extent to which these images affect voters’ propensity to support these parties.

We focus on the perceived effectiveness and legitimacy of political leaders rather than parties. The right-wing populist parties in this study hardly have a party organization. The leaders are better known than the parties. In fact, when we asked questions about these parties in the questionnaire, we put the names of the party leaders in brackets behind the names of the parties, fearing that many respondents would only know the leaders and not the parties. Since the parties were founded recently and lack a strong party organization, we expect the success of such parties to depend to a large extent on the leaders’ ability to attract media attention. Moreover, the public image of these parties can be expected to be very closely linked to the image of their leaders. For these reasons it was decided to focus on the perceived image of leaders rather than parties in this study.

To investigate this, we chose the Dutch national parliamentary elections of 2006, in which no less than four right-wing populist parties participated. We acknowledge that this may limit the opportunity to generalize the results to other elections and countries. However, by focusing on one country and one election we avoid the specific problems of cross-national surveys in explaining the extreme right vote (Hooghe & Reeskens, 2007). Moreover, this case study gives us the opportunity to do a more in-depth analysis and test our new concepts and operationalizations at the same time. We collected data on the two right-wing populist parties that were sufficiently visible during the election campaign – the Party for Freedom (PVV) of Geert Wilders and One Netherlands (EenNL) of Marco Pastors (see for an analysis of the election campaign Kleinnijenhuis, Scholten, Van Attenveldt, Van Hoof, & Krouwel, 2007) – and on four established parties. This provides us with two bases for comparison: between the two right-wing populist parties, and between right-wing populist parties on the one hand and established parties on the other.
The party perspective: Legitimacy and effectiveness as necessary conditions for party support

The success or failure of right-wing populist parties has mainly been explained by focusing on demand and/or supply-side theories. Whereas individual-level causes such as socio-structural variables, protest votes and ideological votes can partially account for varying levels of electoral success, according to Eatwell (2003) we should be careful in treating these factors not solely as necessary but also as sufficient conditions. Following Eatwell (2003) and Carter (2005) we argue that supply-side explanations, and more specifically the characteristics of parties, may be just as important in explaining differences in these parties’ success. When we want to learn why certain parties – right-wing populist or not – are more or less appealing to voters, we should not only focus on the traits of voters, but also look at the features of these parties:

Populist radical right parties must be put at the center of research on the phenomenon. Populist radical right parties are not just dependent variables, passively molded by structural factors, but they are also independent variables, actively shaping part of their own destiny. (Mudde, 2007, p. 293)

In her book on the extreme right in Western Europe, Carter (2005) concludes that party characteristics – such as ideology, party organization and leadership – explain these differences in electoral fortunes. She differentiates between several kinds of extreme right parties – neo-Nazi, neo-fascist, authoritarian xenophobic, neo-liberal xenophobic and neo-liberal populist parties – and finds that parties that outright reject the existing democratic system are far less successful than parties that accept the system but propose reforms. Additionally she finds that extreme right parties “are more likely to experience success if a strong level of internal party discipline exists within them that minimizes dissent, and that fosters internal party cohesion and coherence” (Carter, 2005, p. 65). In the same way Eatwell (2003) comes to the conclusion that voters have to believe that they can affect the political process: it has to be efficacious to vote for a certain party. Obviously, discussion and dissent within the party stand in the way of this goal.
These findings are in line with recent studies, which explain voting for right-wing populist parties with the analytical tools of a rational choice model (e.g. Norris, 2005; Van der Brug & Mughan, 2007; Van der Brug, Fennema, & Tillie, 2000). Applying the Downsian (1957) conception of rationality as purposeful behaviour, these studies expect voters to choose parties on the basis of ideological and pragmatic considerations. The overwhelming majority of voters, including potential voters for right-wing populist parties, support the basic principles of democracy. For ideological reasons, they probably only support parties that they perceive to be legitimate; that is, parties that do not pose a danger to the political system. For pragmatic reasons, we expect voters to also take into account whether they perceive a party to be effective. Why vote for a party if it is not able to achieve anything?

This line of argumentation is, however, not limited to right-wing populist parties: it is rational for all voters who prefer all kinds of parties – whether right-wing populist or mainstream – to take ideological and pragmatic considerations into account and opt for parties that are legitimate and effective. In pursuing this line of thought we follow Van der Brug et al. (2000) and argue that there are no a priori reasons to expect differences between voters’ motives for supporting right-wing populist parties on the one hand and mainstream parties on the other: voters have to evaluate parties as being legitimate and effective for them to have a considerable chance at electoral success. However, whether a party is objectively legitimate and effective is not the issue, what counts is whether the individual voter evaluates the party in this way.

We assume that voters in general prefer parties that do not intend to radically change or overthrow the democratic representational system. We expect no problems in this regard for most parties: we presume that voters perceive most parties to be legitimate even though they do not prefer them on the basis of other considerations such as ideological differences. In the case of certain right-wing populist parties this may not be so. Because of their (fascist) anti-democratic and anti-constitutional legacy (Carter, 2005) many people think that some of these more radical right-wing populist parties pose a threat to the democratic system. Many of the activities of anti-fascist and anti-racist organizations are directed against these parties. Even though potential voters for these parties may be critical of the political establishment, most of them will not want to endanger the democratic system. So, even if a group of citizens agrees with the parties’ platforms on issues such as
migration, many of them will not support the party if they feel it poses a threat to democracy. It is therefore important for right-wing populist parties:

(1) to make clear that they belong neither to the political establishment nor to the camp of anti-democratic forces; (2) to make credible that they do oppose the political elite – but the political elite only and not the liberal democratic system. (Schedler, 1996, p. 302)

The findings of Carter (2005) support this idea: she finds that parties that reject outright the existing democratic system are less successful than parties that only forward smaller institutional changes.

In the same regard voters have to believe that their vote will be effective: they will want to vote for a party that is able to reach certain goals. We may consider two types of goals: (1) that a message is heard (expressive goals); and (2) that policies are affected (pragmatic goals). Parties can thus be effective in different ways, and as such they may appeal to different types of voters. However, we expect that parties which are ineffective in both ways, not able to affect policies and not effective in the public debate, will not have much appeal to any voters. That is why we assume that parties that are thought to be ineffective will be less preferred.

Again, this argumentation holds for all parties, but for right-wing populist parties additional grounds apply. Many of these parties act as outsiders and oppose mainstream parties. We do not contend that this may have positive effects on their electoral chances, but do acknowledge that this strategy might gain results in terms of media attention. However, when parties pursue this scheme, they “have to gain anti-establishment credentials” (Schedler, 1996, p. 298) and at the same time convince voters that they can be effective. This might be a mission impossible, since policy influence – especially in systems of proportional representation – is often dependent upon compromise and cooperation between several (mainstream) parties; the same parties they have been criticizing.

Additionally, the populist nature of these parties can lead to instability. Because they are often organized around a ‘charismatic’ leader, with the centralization of these parties as a result, “authority . . . will perish with the individual with which it is associated” (Taggart, 2000, p. 102). Carter (2005, p. 65) in this regard argues that these strong leaders “exert the kind of total control that is often essential in parties
of the extreme right”, while Betz (2002, p. 210) claims that it is this internal coherence and effective leadership which is necessary for radical right-wing parties to constitute an effective challenge to mainstream parties. In the Netherlands we have seen the perfect example of dissent, chaos and factionalism in the List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) after the assassination of its leader. Without Pim Fortuyn himself no one took control over the party, party leadership and policy proposals changed at the blink of an eye and, more importantly, the LPF proved itself to be extremely unreliable as a coalition partner in the government. The government of which it was a member fell after only 83 days, mainly due to the chaos and internal struggles within the LPF. Because of these recent experiences, Dutch voters are expected to place much emphasis on the effectiveness of parties and their leaders.

The public image of party leaders, in terms of legitimacy and effectiveness, can affect party support in two ways. First of all, these attributes can have a direct effect. The more a politician is seen as effective and the more he or she is seen as legitimate, the more likely it is that voters will consider a vote for his or her party. But interaction effects can also play a role. There may be an interaction effect with ideological voting. We expect voters to evaluate a party only in terms of its policies if they consider the party effective and legitimate. As a result, the effect of ideological considerations on party preference is assumed to be (partially) dependent upon perceived effectiveness and legitimacy.

In general it can be said that the more a voter believes that a party leader can represent their interests – by not overthrowing the democratic system and being influential in the political debate – the more they will be inclined to emphasize the factors that cause them to give a higher preference to the party, or the more ‘trust’ a voter has in a politician, the more he or she will see eye to eye with him or her.

**The research setting**

In this study we focus on the Dutch case where in November 2006 four parties characterized as right-wing populist competed in the elections, of which two, the PVV (Party for the Freedom) led by Geert Wilders and EenNL (One Netherlands) led by Marco Pastors, were sufficiently visible. The Dutch case is particularly interesting because of the great electoral success of the List Pim Fortuyn in the elections of 2002, when this newly formed party, organized around its
assassinated leader, Pim Fortuyn, won 26 seats in parliament. The instant success of this party – in spite of the loss of seats in the elections of 2003 – propelled immigration and integration to the top of the political agenda. As a result, several other politicians claim to be heirs of the legacy of Pim Fortuyn and have founded their own parties in the hopes of following in his footsteps. The LPF (now called LVF – List Five Fortuyn) as well as the Party for the Netherlands (PVN) and EenNL are the parties most influenced by Pim Fortuyn. Even though the three groups participated on their own in the elections, they do not differ that much ideologically. They all came out of the original Pim Fortuyn movement and have split into separate parties because of pragmatic or personal reasons and conflicts. Geert Wilders’ PVV – the only right-wing populist party that won seats in the elections – has a different background. He has separated himself from the right-leaning liberal VVD because of its position in the debate on Turkey joining the EU. Additionally, he is considered to be the most radical in his opinions, talking about the ‘islamization’ of the Netherlands and a ‘tsunami of Muslims’. In this chapter we focus on the two parties whose leaders were quite visible in the mass media during the 2006 election campaign: the PVV and EenNL. Bos and Van der Brug (2010) demonstrate on the basis of a content analysis of mass media that the leaders of these parties, Wilders and Pastors, received substantial media coverage during the campaign. However, Wilders was better known, judging by the percentages of nonresponse on survey questions about him (see below). This is probably because he has been in national politics for a longer time. The percentage of non-response on questions about leaders of established parties ranges between six and eight percent. In the case of Wilders this is also seven percent, whereas in the case of Pastors it is 25 percent. Even though a substantial group of voters does not answer questions about him, we think that the number of respondents who do know him is still large enough to include Pastors in the analyses.

The parties of Wilders and Pastors can be considered right-wing populist parties, or anti-immigration parties as they address nativism in their programs (Mudde, 2007) and have in common “resentment against migrants and the immigration policy of their governments” (Fennema, 1997, p. 474). With regard to their attitude towards the political establishment, democratic values and/or democratic institutions these parties are similar as well: they are anti-establishment, anti-party or anti-elitist and both propose to abolish the senate.
Data and research methods

It is within this Dutch context that we investigate whether the legitimacy and effectiveness of right-wing populist party leaders are necessary, yet not sufficient, factors in explaining the level of right-wing populist party support. The first methodological issue to discuss is how one measures party support. In electoral research this is normally by vote choice, but this is problematic in the case of our study, where we compare between six parties, three of which are very small. Under these circumstances, estimation by the usual multinomial logit/probit and conditional logit/probit methods is not feasible because the small number of votes for some parties makes estimates of their effect parameters unreliable (Van der Brug & Mughan, 2007; Van der Eijk, Van der Brug, Kroh, & Franklin, 2006). This is why studies using these methods usually restrict their analysis to larger parties in the election (Whitten & Palmer, 1996). Our focus on smaller populist parties denies us this option and makes it necessary to employ a different methodology.

Fortunately, party support can be measured in other ways. Rabinowitz and Macdonald’s (1989) directional theory of issue voting, for example, has thermometer scores as its dependent variable. We measure party preference by asking respondents to give each party a score (from 1 to 10) according to their likelihood of ever voting for it. It is stated as follows:

Could you indicate what the chances are that you will one time vote for the following party? If you think you will never vote for this party, fill in a 1; if it is very possible that you will once vote for this party, fill in a 10. You can of course also fill in any number in between.

We prefer this measure over the thermometer scores, because it is even more strongly (indeed, almost deterministically) related to the vote (Tillie, 1995; Van der Eijk et al., 2006). The measure has been used extensively to analyse electoral behaviour in various national (Schmitt, 2001; Van der Brug & Mughan, 2007; Van der Eijk et al., 2006) as well as cross-national studies (e.g. Van der Brug, Franklin, & Toka, 2008; Van der Eijk & Franklin, 1996).

There are two advantages of having party preference measures for all parties. First, it overcomes the ‘small n’ problem endemic to studies of small populist
parties. Second, it allows the comparison of voter preferences across the range of competing parties by reordering the data in a stacked form so that the unit of analysis is the respondent–party combination. In the stacked data matrix one respondent is represented by as many cases as there are parties included in the analysis. In this case these are the PVV of Geert Wilders and the party EenNL of Marco Pastors on the one hand and the four most important mainstream parties on the other. The design of the analysis of the stacked data matrix is similar to conditional logit, since the independent variables indicate relationships between voters and parties rather than between voter characteristics (see also Tillie, 1995; Tillie & Fennema, 1998; Van der Brug & Mughan, 2007; Van der Brug et al., 2000; Van der Eijk & Franklin, 1996; Van der Eijk et al., 2006, for examples in electoral research).

As predictors of party preference we will make use of direct measures of legitimacy and effectiveness of party leaders, each of which was measured with two variables on seven-point scales. Each question was asked for the leaders of all parties, right-wing populist parties as well as mainstream parties. Legitimacy was measured with the following two items:

(1) To reach their goal some politicians are willing to ignore important democratic rules, while others will comply with these democratic rules under all circumstances. Below you see a number of current politicians. Could you tell me whether you think that they have always complied with the democratic principles and that they always will?

(Responses could vary from 1 – Doesn’t care about democratic rules, to 7 – Always complies with the democratic rules.)

(2) Sometimes people think a certain politician or party is dangerous. They are afraid that when that politician rises to power he or she will pose a threat to democracy. Others are of the opinion that this will not be the case. Below you will see a number of politicians. Imagine a situation in which this politician has risen to power – do you think that this politician would then pose a threat to democracy?
(Responses could vary from 1 – If he/she rose to power he/she would pose a real threat to democracy, to 7 – If he/she rose to power he/she would definitely not pose a threat to democracy.)

Both measures are related to democratic rules and procedures or the democratic system and therefore refer to the concept of legitimacy as defined in the theoretical part of this chapter. Whether politicians would indeed pose a threat to democracy depends of course on their power. One could imagine a neo-Nazi party that wants to overthrow democracy, but which poses no threat to democracy because it is very small. Since we do not want to measure whether they actually pose a threat to democracy, but whether they are seen as anti-democratic and therefore potentially dangerous should they grow larger, we added the phrase ‘imagine that this party has risen to power’. We believe this is something that respondents can relate to.

The two effectiveness measures refer to the extent to which party leaders can have an influence in the political field and are worded as follows:

(1) Some politicians have great influence on governmental policy; others do not have a lot of influence. Could you indicate for each of the following politicians whether you expect they will exert little or a lot of influence after the elections?

(Responses could vary from 1 – Will probably have little influence on policy, to 7 – Will probably have a lot of influence on policy.)

(2) Some politicians you don’t hear from, whereas other politicians are highly significant in public discussions on matters that are relevant in society. How visible and significant have the following politicians been in public debates?

(Responses could vary from 1 – Not visible and significant in public debates at all, to 7 – Very visible and significant in public debates.)

Effectiveness is thus conceptualized by taking past and future behaviour into account. The first question about influence on public policy is phrased in prospective terms, because some parties did not have much opportunity to affect policies because they were only recently founded. The question about their
influence on public debates was phrased retrospectively because all politicians had the opportunity to participate in public debates. Factor analysis and reliability analysis shows that the two scales are well measured.\textsuperscript{vi}

We also control for (traditional theories of) ideological, pragmatic and protest voting. The proximity of party and voter on a left–right scale is the strongest predictor of the vote for most right-wing populist parties, in particular the more successful ones (Van der Brug et al., 2000). Here it is measured as the distance between a voter’s position on a 10-point left–right scale and the perceived position of a party on that same scale ($1 = \text{left}; 10 = \text{right}$). Because of the central role of the immigration issue in the ideology of right-wing populist parties, we also use a measure that asked respondents to what extent immigrants should adapt themselves to the Dutch culture: respondents who score high on this variable adopt an assimilationist stance, while respondents who score low adopt a multiculturalist stance ($1 = \text{Immigrants and ethnic minorities should be able to stay in the Netherlands and be able to keep their own culture}; 7 = \text{Immigrants and ethnic minorities should adjust themselves to the Dutch culture}$).

Following Downs (1957), we believe that besides ideological considerations other factors play a role when it comes to voting: voters have to take the actions of other voters into account and think about the chance of the ideologically closest party winning. Van der Brug et al. (2000) find that voters for right-wing populist parties also take on a more pragmatic or tactical approach in the sense that it is rational for them to vote for a party that is not necessarily ideologically closest, but one that is (or can be) more powerful in parliament (also see Niemi, Whitten, & Franklin, 1992; Tillie, 1995). These pragmatic considerations are added to the model by taking into account the party’s standing in the last polls before the elections of 2006 as a proxy for party size. For this variable we used the mean number of seats predicted by three different polling agencies.

A third explanation of support for right-wing populist parties is the protest vote model. Right-wing populist parties take an anti-political establishment (Schedler, 1996), antiparty or anti-elitist approach (Hainsworth, 2000; Schain et al., 2002), blame mainstream political parties and elites for problems in society and argue that these mainstream parties and elites have lost the connection with ‘the people’. Consequentially, it is thought that these parties attract dissatisfied, cynical, alienated voters. The empirical study of Van der Brug and Fennema (2003) shows
mixed results in this regard. Only smaller right-wing populist parties attract protest votes, whereas larger and more established parties appeal to ideological and pragmatic voters. On the whole, voters for right-wing populist parties do seem to be more cynical of political institutions (Knigge, 1998; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2000, 2001), but the direction of this relation remains something to be investigated (Norris, 2005). To control for protest votes we use seven items that measure attitudes towards politicians. The overall measure – the sum of the value on these items – has to be seen as a political trust/political cynicism concept. Finally, we control for several socio-structural variables, such as age, gender, education, income, social class and occupation.

By creating the stacked data matrix, the dependent variable ‘party preference’ becomes generic, which means it has no party-specific meaning. As a consequence, we cannot use the original independent variables in our analyses. Social class could have a positive effect on the support for party A (meaning that it is more popular among the higher classes) and a negative effect on support for party B (a party that is more popular among lower classes). In the stacked data matrix these effects would neutralize each other, thus leading to the invalid conclusion that social class has no effect on the popularity of parties. The reordering of the data into a stacked form, therefore, requires us to transform the independent variables. We do so by linear transformations of the original independent variables, which are not party-specific: political trust/cynicism, the immigrant issue and the socio-structural variables. Before doing so, the categorical variables education, income, social class and occupation were recoded into dummy variables to account for the possibility that specific parties are most popular among intermediate categories (the middle classes, or people with medium levels of education). The technical details of the procedure are explained in Appendix A.

We employ survey data collected by the Netherlands Institute for Public Opinion (NIPO), using individual respondents in their internet panel, which is a randomly drawn sample from a large pool of potential respondents. This ‘pool’ forms a representative sample of the Dutch adult population in terms of various demographics, and political attitudes and behaviours. Data from NIPO has been the basis for numerous academic studies (e.g. Kleinnijenhuis & Fan, 1999; Van der Brug, Semetko, & Valkenburg, 2007). Respondents were interviewed in the weekend before the elections of 22 November 2006 ($n = 382$). After the elections
the same respondents were asked which party they voted for. We have used this variable to construct a weight variable, even though an unweighted sample almost perfectly reflected the election results.\textsuperscript{viii} Out of this somewhat small sample we did not want to lose any respondents, which is why we resorted to multiple imputation of missing data. The procedure for handling missing data and other technical details are further discussed in Appendix A.

Below we present the results of two sets of analyses. In the first set, the preference for each party will be regressed on the explanatory variables by means of a regression analysis. In the second, we analyse preferences for all parties and include dummy variables to distinguish the right-wing populist parties from established parties. Interaction effects between this dummy variable and predictors tell us whether these predictors have a stronger or weaker effect on preferences for right-wing populist parties than on preferences for established parties. All interaction effects are calculated by not using the original variables, but their deviations from the mean (Jaccard, Turrisi, & Wan, 1990).

\textbf{Results}

Whether our measures of legitimacy and effectiveness are really of importance with regard to the party preference for right-wing populist parties depends on the extent to which there are differences in public perceptions. In Table 1.1 the means and standard deviations are displayed for our central variables – legitimacy and effectiveness – and our dependent variable – party preference. In general, the mean perceptions of legitimacy and effectiveness and the mean party preferences were lower for the right-wing populist parties than for the mainstream parties. Moreover, Marco Pastors, the party leader of EenNL, was thought to be more legitimate and effective according to the average voter than his rival Geert Wilders, even though the latter has been more successful in the elections, something that is illustrated by the higher party preference for the PVV.

When we take a look at the standard deviations, there seems to be more agreement among voters about the extent to which Marco Pastors and, to a lesser extent, Geert Wilders are a threat to democracy than there is about the party leaders of the mainstream parties. Both findings are in line with our assumption that it is more difficult for right-wing populist parties to appear legitimate and/or effective.
The perceived effectiveness of Geert Wilders, on the other hand, seems more controversial.

Table 1.1: The Distribution of the Central Variables: Means and Standard deviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PVV</th>
<th>EenNL</th>
<th>CDA</th>
<th>PvdA</th>
<th>VVD</th>
<th>Groen-Links</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy</td>
<td>2.891</td>
<td>3.512</td>
<td>3.803</td>
<td>3.941</td>
<td>3.433</td>
<td>3.491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.061)</td>
<td>(0.047)</td>
<td>(0.075)</td>
<td>(0.079)</td>
<td>(0.075)</td>
<td>(0.079)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>2.776</td>
<td>3.172</td>
<td>4.599</td>
<td>4.564</td>
<td>3.999</td>
<td>3.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.077)</td>
<td>(0.064)</td>
<td>(0.045)</td>
<td>(0.048)</td>
<td>(0.069)</td>
<td>(0.069)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party preference</td>
<td>2.054</td>
<td>1.707</td>
<td>4.619</td>
<td>4.817</td>
<td>4.211</td>
<td>3.460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.123)</td>
<td>(0.093)</td>
<td>(0.189)</td>
<td>(0.189)</td>
<td>(0.182)</td>
<td>(0.169)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Standard deviations are given within parentheses; These are the weighted results; The measures of legitimacy and effectiveness are measured on a 7-point scale (1-7), whereas party preference is measured on a ten-point scale (1-10).

Even though the results in Table 1.1 show us that several party leaders are certainly perceived differently when it comes to levels of legitimacy and effectiveness, this cannot be regarded as evidence for our assumption that the perceptions of these party leader characteristics are as important for right-wing populist parties as they are for mainstream parties.

Therefore we will now turn our attention to the results of a regression analysis with robust standard errors, which are given in Table 1.2 for six parties. Although we cannot compare the regression coefficients directly – since the models are not nested – we can see which predictors are significant for the preference formation for each party and which variables are important predictors of party preference in general.
Table 1.2: Predictors of Party Preference: Preliminary Analysis (Regression Analysis with robust standard errors)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Right-Wing Populist Parties</th>
<th></th>
<th>Mainstream Parties</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PVV</td>
<td>EenNL</td>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>PvdA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demographics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.107 (0.237)</td>
<td>-0.314 (0.196)</td>
<td>-0.026 (0.358)</td>
<td>-0.129 (0.331)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.106 (0.008)</td>
<td>-0.007 (0.006)</td>
<td>0.022 (0.012)</td>
<td>-0.018 (0.011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio-structural variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-0.031 (0.018)</td>
<td>-0.019 (0.014)</td>
<td>0.051 (0.032)</td>
<td>0.016 (0.027)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.001 (0.099)</td>
<td>0.031 (0.087)</td>
<td>-0.308 (0.162)</td>
<td>-0.090 (0.137)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social class</td>
<td>0.008 (0.156)</td>
<td>-0.097 (0.138)</td>
<td>-0.541 (0.278)*</td>
<td>-0.167 (0.221)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>0.005 (0.076)</td>
<td>0.017 (0.014)</td>
<td>-0.005 (0.130)</td>
<td>0.162 (0.093)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideological and protest votes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-right distance</td>
<td>-0.203 (0.056)**</td>
<td>-0.140 (0.045)**</td>
<td>-0.575 (0.067)**</td>
<td>-0.675 (0.072)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant issue</td>
<td>0.336 (0.079)**</td>
<td>0.117 (0.056)*</td>
<td>0.090 (0.119)</td>
<td>-0.003 (0.136)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political trust / cynicism</td>
<td>-0.077 (0.026)**</td>
<td>-0.049 (0.020)**</td>
<td>0.047 (0.042)</td>
<td>-0.034 (0.043)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy</td>
<td>0.162 (0.037)**</td>
<td>0.120 (0.029)**</td>
<td>0.248 (0.048)**</td>
<td>0.237 (0.049)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>0.194 (0.036)**</td>
<td>0.099 (0.031)**</td>
<td>0.307 (0.078)**</td>
<td>0.341 (0.073)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy * Left-right distance</td>
<td>-0.031 (0.013)*</td>
<td>-0.018 (0.009)*</td>
<td>-0.049 (0.020)**</td>
<td>-0.036 (0.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness * Left-right distance</td>
<td>-0.045 (0.016)**</td>
<td>-0.009 (0.012)</td>
<td>-0.044 (0.026)</td>
<td>-0.048 (0.024)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intercept</strong></td>
<td>3.582 (1.145)**</td>
<td>3.094 (0.904)**</td>
<td>4.942 (1.937)**</td>
<td>4.549 (1.480)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>0.3248</td>
<td>0.1643</td>
<td>0.3238</td>
<td>0.4042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001
The current analysis shows that legitimacy and effectiveness not only had a strong effect on electoral support for right-wing populist parties, but also on support for all established parties, except for the liberal VVD. In Table 1.2 there are no systematic differences between the right-wing populist parties on the one hand and the established parties on the other in the effects of these variables. The evaluation of the party leader had a remarkable and strong impact, as expected. Legitimacy and effectiveness were strong predictors of party preference, as indicated by the high significance levels of these coefficients.

As could be expected on the basis of the voting literature, left–right distance is a strong predictor of preference for all parties. The effect was also strong, yet less significant, in the case of the right-wing populist party that was unsuccessful in the 2006 elections, EenNL. The importance of the immigration issue for the preference for the PVV, as well as EenNL, confirms earlier findings. Moreover, this issue sets these parties apart from the other parties, the effect being significant and positive, which suggests a more assimilationist stance of proponents of this party. The negative – yet non-significant – effect of this item on the preference for the majority of the mainstream parties on the other hand indicates a multiculturalist stance. The analysis also shows that voters that were more cynical about the political establishment show a higher preference for right-wing populist parties.

Finally, the effects of the socio-structural variables are for the most part insignificant, which is no striking result.

With regard to the estimated interaction effects, we see that both were significant in the case of the PVV, which indicates that ideological considerations constituted a larger effect when party leader Geert Wilders was deemed more legitimate and more effective.

As for the other parties, it is hard to draw general conclusions. For some parties (EenNL, CDA and GroenLinks) the effect of left–right distance was larger when the party leader was perceived as more legitimate, whereas for the PvdA we find that ideological approximation constituted a larger effect when Wouter Bos was thought to be more effective.

The analyses presented in Table 1.2 do not allow us to compare the effects between the different party leaders, because the separate models are not nested. We now turn to analyses of the stacked data matrix, which do allow such comparisons. These are presented in Table 1.3, in which the intra-individual variance is explained.
by using four different models. In the base model a considerable proportion of the individual party preference was explained ($R^2 = 0.3898$) by testing the usual explanations for the right-wing populist party vote. Part of the explanatory power of the model stemmed from the fact that the intercept of the regression model is (significantly) lower in the case of right-wing populist parties, which indicates that on the aggregate level the electoral preference for these parties is lower, even when controlling for the theoretically relevant predictors of party support. In general it can be said that ideological, pragmatic and protest votes explain an important part of the individual party preference.

The results of the second model confirm the findings of our first analysis: legitimacy and effectiveness are important predictors of propensities to support parties. When adding these variables to the model, the proportion of explained variance increases by more than five percent. Moreover, the effects of the two measures remained large and significant in all three remaining models. Even though it could be argued that the idea that the party leader can be influential after the elections – the effectiveness aspect – is similar to the pragmatic voting hypothesis, this result suggests otherwise. Voters seem to differentiate between the power a party has in parliament, as reflected in the expected number of seats, and the trust they place in the party leader for being effective. Again, the socio-structural variables show no striking results.

In Model III we tested whether not only the intercept of the regression model differed when it comes to the preference for right-wing populist parties, but whether this is also true for the slope. In other words: could it be that not only the mean party preference for these parties differs, but the effects as well? The two significant interaction coefficients and the 3.2 percent increase in the proportion of explained intra-individual variance indicate that this is the case. The effects of ideological proximity and perceived legitimacy were (somewhat) smaller in the case of right-wing populist parties than they were in the case of mainstream established parties. However, the effect of perceived effectiveness does not differ significantly in the case of right-wing populist parties.
Table 1.3: Fixed Effects Model on Generic Party Preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Model I</th>
<th>Model II</th>
<th>Model III</th>
<th>Model IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.636 (0.311)*</td>
<td>0.487 (0.299)</td>
<td>0.258 (0.292)</td>
<td>0.247 (0.289)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.659 (0.143)***</td>
<td>0.562 (0.138)***</td>
<td>0.443 (0.134)***</td>
<td>0.452 (0.133)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-structural variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.461 (0.104)***</td>
<td>0.423 (0.099)***</td>
<td>0.405 (0.097)***</td>
<td>0.389 (0.096)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social class</td>
<td>0.328 (0.137)*</td>
<td>0.279 (0.132)*</td>
<td>0.330 (0.130)**</td>
<td>0.303 (0.128)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.312 (0.247)</td>
<td>0.184 (0.237)</td>
<td>0.094 (0.231)</td>
<td>0.165 (0.228)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>0.579 (0.101)***</td>
<td>0.533 (0.097)***</td>
<td>0.528 (0.094)***</td>
<td>0.520 (0.093)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological, protest and pragmatic votes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-right distance</td>
<td>-0.571 (0.028)***</td>
<td>-0.446 (0.029)***</td>
<td>-0.595 (0.032)***</td>
<td>-0.598 (0.032)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant issue</td>
<td>0.388 (0.114)***</td>
<td>0.246 (0.110)*</td>
<td>0.363 (0.107)***</td>
<td>0.353 (0.106)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political trust / cynicism</td>
<td>0.664 (0.177)***</td>
<td>0.498 (0.172)**</td>
<td>0.325 (0.167)*</td>
<td>0.341 (0.167)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party size</td>
<td>0.035 (0.005)***</td>
<td>0.035 (0.005)***</td>
<td>0.035 (0.005)***</td>
<td>0.037 (0.005)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy</td>
<td>0.158 (0.025)***</td>
<td>0.204 (0.028)***</td>
<td>0.218 (0.028)***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>0.250 (0.028)***</td>
<td>0.298 (0.033)***</td>
<td>0.312 (0.034)***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions with dummy right-wing populist party</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWP * Left-right distance</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.512 (0.055)***</td>
<td>0.518 (0.055)***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWP * Legitimacy</td>
<td>-0.074 (0.038)*</td>
<td>-0.090 (0.037)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWP * Effectiveness</td>
<td>-0.078 (0.041)</td>
<td>-0.115 (0.041)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction effects with left-right distance (LRD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy * LRD</td>
<td>-0.039 (0.007)***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.037 (0.008)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness * LRD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dummy for RWP</td>
<td>-1.640 (0.162)***</td>
<td>-1.640 (0.155)***</td>
<td>-1.640 (0.151)***</td>
<td>-1.660 (0.149)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>3.414 (0.145)***</td>
<td>3.414 (0.139)***</td>
<td>3.414 (0.135)***</td>
<td>3.273 (0.135)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-square within individual</td>
<td>0.3898</td>
<td>0.4400</td>
<td>0.4728</td>
<td>0.4868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-square between individuals</td>
<td>0.0266</td>
<td>0.0761</td>
<td>0.0807</td>
<td>0.0887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall R-square</td>
<td>0.3141</td>
<td>0.3667</td>
<td>0.3946</td>
<td>0.4086</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Number of observations = 2292, number of individuals 382; *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

In Model IV we test whether the effect of ideology (left–right distance) depends on the extent to which one considers the party leader to be more or less legitimate and/or effective. The interpretation of higher-order interactions is not straightforward, because one has to take into account the main effects and lower-
order interactions as well. In order to facilitate the interpretation, Table 1.4 presents the regression coefficients of left–right distance, estimated separately for right-wing populist parties and mainstream parties, at different values of legitimacy and effectiveness.

![Table 1.4: Effect of Left-Right Distance on Party Preference](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legitimacy/Efficiency</th>
<th>Right-wing populist Party</th>
<th>Mainstream Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>0.101 (0.065)</td>
<td>-0.451 (0.045)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>-0.078 (0.047)</td>
<td>-0.599 (0.032)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>-0.258 (0.062)***</td>
<td>-0.748 (0.045)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>0.036 (0.057)</td>
<td>-0.489 (0.043)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>0.081 (0.047)</td>
<td>-0.598 (0.032)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>-0.197 (0.064)**</td>
<td>-0.707 (0.047)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Number of observations = 2292, number of individuals 382; *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

If we look first at the results for the four established parties, we see that left-right distance always had a strong effect. However, the results also show that these ideological considerations are contingent upon levels of perceived legitimacy and effectiveness.

The more legitimate and effective a party leader is thought to be, the stronger the effect of left–right distance on the preference for his/her party. Things are different, however, for right-wing populist parties. The effect of left-right distance on party preference is insignificant when the party leader is deemed less or only moderately legitimate or effective. However, when voters perceive a party leader as posing no threat to democracy or as effective they do evaluate his party by ideological considerations.

**Robustness of findings**

In this section we explore two possible threats to the robustness of our findings. First, our results are based on a somewhat small sample (n = 382). In order not to lose any data, we employed a method for imputation of missing data. Monte Carlo simulations demonstrate that imputation of missing data decreases the likelihood of obtaining biased results and is therefore to be preferred over listwise deletion of missing data (King, Honaker, Joseph, & Scheve, 2001). One could wonder, however, whether our results depend on the use of imputation of missing
data. Therefore, we also estimated the models in Table 1.3 with listwise deletion. The results are very similar to those using imputation. All parameters have the same sign and the effects are largely of the same magnitude. In all models listwise deletion yields a higher proportion of explained variance than imputation. However, because of the lower sample size, the standard errors tend to be larger, so that two effects are no longer significant: the main effect of political trust and cynicism (in Models III and IV) and the interaction effect between anti-immigrant parties and legitimacy (in the same models). The former is not central to the topic of this study. The latter is central to the topic of our research. The results obtained by listwise deletion are more in line with one of our main conclusions: that there are only minor differences between the determinants of support for right-wing populist parties and determinants of support for other parties (see below). Yet, since the relevant literature advises the use of imputation, and because we run the risk of making a type-II error (i.e. concluding wrongfully that effects are not significant), we interpret the interaction effect as significant.

A second decision that could potentially have affected our results is the choice to exclude the SP (a radical left-wing party) from the analyses. We wanted to compare right-wing populist parties with established parties. Since the SP, as well as the right-wing populist parties, are often considered ‘populist’ (see e.g., Mudde, 2007, p. 48), we decided not to include the SP in the group of established parties. In order to assess the consequences of this decision for our findings, we also estimated the models in Table 1.3 with the SP included in the group of established parties. Inclusion of the SP never altered the signs of the effects, nor the significance of any of the relevant variables. So, we may conclude that our results do not depend in any way on the decision to exclude the SP.

**Conclusions and discussion**

Recently, a lot of research has been conducted on factors that explain differences in support for right-wing populist parties. Three types of factors have been distinguished in the literature: (1) the demand side; (2) the competitive context (sometimes also referred to as the opportunity structure); and (3) characteristics of the parties themselves. The third factor has been rather under-studied. Yet, as argued by Mudde (2007, p. 293), in order to explain the (lack of) support for these
parties we should put them at the centre of our explanations, since they are ‘actively shaping part of their own destiny’. Our study contributes to the literature by focusing on two characteristics of the leaders of these parties, which affect support for their parties: legitimacy and effectiveness. We have measured citizens’ perceptions of these characteristics in a representative survey of the Dutch population and demonstrate that both characteristics contribute significantly to the support for these parties.

Existing studies have shown that neo-Nazi, extreme right or neo-fascist parties are much less successful than more moderate right-wing populist parties (Carter, 2005; Golder, 2003). The explanation has always been that this is because voters will not support a party that they perceive as undemocratic or too extremist. So far, this interpretation has not been tested, but it now finds support in the results of our study, which show that the legitimacy of party leaders contributes to support for the party.

Similarly we have found evidence for the idea that it is important for right-wing populist parties, just as it is for mainstream parties, to be seen as effective in the public debate and in affecting public policies. We have been able to test these theories because of the introduction of our direct measures of perceived legitimacy and effectiveness. Our new measures have proven useful and demonstrate the importance of directly measuring the public image of party leaders and/or parties, thereby taking into account the role of the parties themselves in shaping their electoral success (Mudde, 2007).

In the literature on right-wing populist parties, much emphasis used to be placed on their unique character. Right-wing populist parties differ from established parties in their political position at the extreme or far right of the political spectrum, their ambiguous attitude towards the political establishment and/or constitution, and in their harsh opposition to migration and integration policies. However, from the fact that these parties are in many ways different from established parties, we should not conclude that the party–voter relationship is different as well. Recent research shows that voters for right-wing populist parties base their decisions largely on the same kinds of considerations as voters for established parties do (see also Mughan & Paxton, 2006; Norris, 2005; Swyngedouw, 2001; Van der Brug & Mughan, 2007; Van der Brug et al., 2000). The results of our analysis generally support this view.
The analyses showed that legitimacy and effectiveness are important factors in explaining party preference for right-wing populist parties as well as mainstream parties. The effects of our central variables on party support turned out to be somewhat weaker for right-wing populist parties than for established parties. The differences are small, however. There is support for the proposition that right-wing populist parties attract voters who are more cynical and dissatisfied. However, the effects are small. Especially in the case of the most successful right-wing populist party, Geert Wilders’ PVV, it is hardly significant. The most prominent distinction between right-wing populist parties and their established counterparts is their stance – and the position of their voters – on the immigration issue. Yet, the determinants of support for right-wing populist parties are very similar.

There is one aspect, however, in which our study prompts us to amend results from previous research, which showed that supporters of right-wing populist parties arrive at their party choice through the same ideological and pragmatic considerations that lead others to vote for established parties (Ivarsflaten, 2005; Van der Brug & Mughan, 2007; Van der Brug et al., 2000, 2003, 2005). Our study showed that this is only the case when right-wing populist parties are seen as legitimate and effective. If citizens see a right-wing populist party as legitimate, they will evaluate it by the same standards they use to judge other parties. Whether that will make the party successful in elections will depend on the distribution of voters and the competition from other parties. However, our analyses strongly suggest that being seen as legitimate and effective are necessary, but not sufficient, preconditions for being successful.
Notes

1 He adds the condition that there is a notable loss of trust in the mainstream parties.

2 The other two right-wing populist parties (LVF and PVN) were less visible during the election campaign, and consequently less known by the electorate.

3 This is illustrated by the fact that in the World Value Survey of 1999-2002 87.7% of the respondents agreed (strongly) with the statement “Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government”.

4 The established parties in our analyses are the Christian democratic party CDA, the social-democrats PvdA, the liberal VVD and the Green party GroenLinks. We did not ask the appropriate questions of other parties, except for the Socialist Party (SP). We decided, however, not to include the SP in the analysis. We want to compare right-wing populist parties with established parties. Many observers consider the SP as well as the right-wing populist parties to be populist, however (see e.g., Mudde 2007, p. 48). Differences in the effect of effectiveness and legitimacy could possible stem from the populist nature of these parties. If this is the case, and if the SP is indeed populist, the inclusion of the SP could lead us to underestimate the differences between right-wing populist parties and established parties. In the final part of the results section we discuss analyses which show that the conclusions are not affected substantively by including the SP in our analysis.

5 The question wording is difficult to translate. The Dutch phrase refers to “bepalend in het publieke debat”.

6 The factor loadings of the latent variable legitimacy on the two items are 0.836 and Cronbach’s alpha is 0.570. The factor loadings of the latent variable effectiveness on the two items are 0.915 and Cronbach’s alpha is 0.806.

7 We used a battery of statements with an answer scale from 1 = completely agree to 4 = completely disagree. Examples of statements that were included are: Politicians promise more than they can deliver; Ministers and junior-ministers are primarily self-interested; Friends more important than abilities to become MP; Parties are only interested in my vote and not in my opinion; Politicians do not understand what matters to society; Politicians are capable to solve important problems; Most politicians are competent people who know what they are doing.

8 The sample was almost representative in terms of party choice. Non voters are underrepresented, however.

9 This can be explained by the fact that there was dissent in the VVD about the party leader. Even though Mark Rutte was elected as the official party leader, follow-up Rita Verdonk was very popular. Moreover, after the elections it became clear that Rita Verdonk received more votes than Mark Rutte did.
Chapter 2

MEDIA COVERAGE OF RIGHT-WING POPULIST LEADERS

This chapter was published in Communications. The European Journal of Communication Research.

Abstract

This chapter focuses on how leaders of new right-wing populist parties are portrayed in the mass media. More so than their established counterparts, new parties depend on the media for their electoral breakthrough. From a theoretical perspective, we expect prominence, populism, and authoritativeness of the party leaders’ media appearance to be essential for their electoral fortunes. We used systematic content analyses of 17 Dutch media outlets during the eight weeks prior to the 2006 national elections (n = 1,001) and compared the appearances of four right-wing populist and seven mainstream party leaders. This chapter makes two contributions to the existing literature: First, we develop valid and reliable indicators of authoritativeness and populism and apply them to a systematic content analysis. Second, we show that more successful right-wing populist leaders were more prominent during the election campaign and that the most successful right-wing populist leader also appears more authoritative in the news.


The ordering of the author names represents the relative contribution to the publication. The first author has contributed most.
Introduction

We have witnessed a rise of right-wing populist parties over the last decades. Various explanations have been put forward for this development. Recently, a number of scholars have studied the relationship between the media agenda and the electoral success of these parties (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2007; Mazzoleni, Stewart, & Horsfield, 2003; Walgrave & De Swert, 2004). However, until very recently (Vliegenthart & Boomgaarden, 2008), no attention has been paid to the media coverage of the parties themselves or of the leaders of these parties. In this chapter we close this gap by looking at the media coverage of right-wing populist leaders. While we do not estimate the effects of media coverage on the political preference for these parties, we do however contribute to the literature by identifying three aspects in the media coverage of these leaders that are theoretically related to their success: prominence, populism, and authoritativeness. We develop a procedure to measure these concepts by means of a systematic content analysis. Moreover, we make comparisons on three levels. As a first step to explore whether media coverage in terms of prominence, populism, and authoritativeness contributes to success, we compare the coverage of successful and unsuccessful politicians. Second, to assess the assumed distinctiveness of these leaders (as addressed in Van der Brug & Mughan, 2007), we compare these right-wing populist leaders with their mainstream competitors. Finally, we contrast “elite media,” which “tend to be more aligned with the status quo” and “are more likely to try to appear unbiased,” with “tabloid media,” which “are more likely to be sensitive to ratings and to seek mass audiences” (Mazzoleni, 2003: 8). The latter are thought to contribute more to the rise and encouragement of populist discourse.

Due to decreasing party membership, decreasing importance of ideologies in politics, and increasing diffusion of mass media, it has been argued that the role of party leaders has become increasingly important (Mény & Surel, 2002; Mughan, 2000). Leaders of right-wing populist parties are even more important because many of these parties were founded recently and, partially as a result of that, they lack a strong party organization and depend heavily on their founders. Moreover, it has recently been argued that the success (and failure) of these parties can be partially attributed to the public image of their leaders (Bos & Van der Brug, 2010),
which, in turn, conceivably derives from how these leaders are portrayed in the media.

It may prove difficult for these leaders to appear prominent in the media. Because they are new parties, they do not have the kind of media access that leaders of established parties have, neither on the basis of formal positions (as ministers or spokespersons of opposition parties) nor on the basis of established contacts with journalists. Their capacity to get their message across in the media therefore depends largely on their newsworthiness. In order to get media attention, these politicians will have to be somewhat unusual in their behavior, style, or in terms of their messages. They might employ populist rhetoric or style to get the attention they want. By exploiting their novelty and outsider position, their news value can in fact become very high, thereby assuring prominence. However, because of their radical standpoints, it could be more difficult to get attention from more light-hearted media outlets. Moreover, if they behave too outlandishly in their efforts to get media attention, they may be subject to ridicule, which threatens their ‘authoritativeness.’ Therefore, it can be very difficult for these political outsiders to appear both prominent as well as authoritative in the media. They will have to reach a very delicate balance between being somewhat unusual and provocative – or populist – (in order to guarantee newsworthiness and therefore prominence) and at the same time must assure they are taken seriously as a party (to guarantee authoritativeness). We expect that right-wing populist leaders who are able to reach that balance (i.e., who are both more authoritative and more populist) will be most successful.

**Prominence, authoritativeness, and populism**

When studying the content of the media appearances of right-wing populist leaders, we distinguish three dimensions. The first dimension is prominence, the amount of media attention a politician is able to garner (Watt, Mazza & Snyder, 1993). Within the context of the mediatization of politics (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999), party leaders, right-wing populist or mainstream, must appear in the mass media in order to make themselves known to the electorate. Particularly new parties, such as many of these right-wing populist parties, cannot rely solely on reputation and therefore need the mass media to provide them with a stage. Without sufficient
coverage, chances are high that voters will be unaware of their existence, let alone their ideological positions, and electoral gain is very unlikely. As Lippmann (1954) states, “… what each man does is based not on direct and certain knowledge, but on pictures made by himself or given to him.” (p. 25) Moreover, it is also assumed that more prominent news messages (i.e., news messages that “are allotted more print space or time in broadcasting” (Watt et al., 1993, p. 415)) exert a larger influence on issue (or actor) salience: “that is, the ease with which these issues can be retrieved from memory.” (Scheufele, 2000, p. 300) Finally, it can also be argued that according to the Two-Step Flow of Communications (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944), media consumers who do not read a specific newspaper or watch a specific TV-program can still be influenced indirectly by means of interpersonal communication about newspaper articles or programs on radio or TV. Accordingly, the more prominent a politician is in the mass media, the greater the likelihood that voters will know him or her. Furthermore, the more voters who know a politician, the greater the likelihood that he or she will be successful electorally. We therefore expect more successful right-wing populist leaders to be more prominent than less successful right-wing populist leaders (H1a).

With regard to the comparison with mainstream leaders, we believe multiple processes might play a role. First of all, it could be argued that right-wing populist leaders are expected to be more prominent because of their newsworthiness (Mazzoleni et al., 2003). On the other hand, public logic (Brants & Van Praag, 2006), by which media identify with the public good and the agenda is set by political parties, makes journalists focus on the parties whose positions count, thereby leading to more prominence for the political players that can make a difference (i.e., the leaders of potential governing parties). Because of the forces pulling at both ends of the continuum, we expect the prominence of mainstream and right-wing populist party leaders to be distributed according to their electoral success (H1b). The extra attention right-wing populist leaders are alleged to have due to their newsworthiness is cancelled out as a result of public logic. Moreover, following Stewart, Mazzoleni and Horsfield (2003), we expect right-wing populist leaders to appear more prominently in tabloid media than in elite media (H1c): Whereas tabloid media appear to pay more attention to populist parties in their early growth phase, the elite media wait until the establishment phase or the electoral success phase of the party. Accordingly, we expect that tabloid media give more
prominence to right-wing populist leaders than mainstream leaders; we also assume that this relationship works the other way around for elite media. These expectations will especially hold in cases where these right-wing populist parties are in their early growth phase.

The second dimension we distinguish is populism. Populism can be characterized by its style or by its substance. Characteristic of a populist style is the use of “highly emotional, slogan-based, tabloid-style language” (Mazzoleni et al., 2003, p. 5) which combines “...verbal radicalism and symbolic politics with the tools of contemporary political marketing to disseminate (...) ideas among the electorate” (Betz & Immerfall, 1998, p. 2). Characteristic of the populist message is its hostility to representative politics and the established order and its identification with the united/our/ordinary people. As a result, when populists engage in politics they employ the language of the common man in order to eschew the ‘elitist’ complex language of representative politics. (Canovan, 1999; Mudde, 2007; Taggart, 2000).

We conceptualize populism as the combination of these style elements and the substantive rhetoric. First, we look at the two core aspects of the populist ideology: its anti-establishment appeal and the celebration of the homeland. “The most general characteristic of populist parties is that they consider the political establishment as technically incompetent and morally corrupt. Populist parties (...) assume that the common man is basically good and his opinions are always sound, whereas the political elite is – by its very nature – selfish and dishonest” (Fennema, 2005, p. 10). Second, regarding the populist style, we distinguish between three aspects: The first aspect is that populists are reluctantly political, which is the consequence of their ambivalence toward representative politics (Taggart, 2000). The only reason they engage in politics is because of a perceived extreme crisis, in the case of right-wing populism usually the immigration problem. We therefore expect their leaders to refer to a (perceived) crisis situation. A second aspect of the populist style is “straightforwardness, simplicity and clarity,” “the clarion calls for populism” (Taggart, 2000, p. 97). Populists like simple and strong language. Accordingly, we do not foresee them to hesitate in bringing their message across. They will also emphasize decisiveness and fast and strong measures and use intense language. Finally, the third aspect of the populist style is the emphasis on the strong (charismatic) party leader. Generally, populist movements are organized around a central leader, without whom the party organization would fall apart. Moreover,
these leaders often have authoritarian traits: they refer to themselves as the crisis manager and have an ambivalent relation to democratic leadership (Taggart, 2000). We therefore argue that party leaders who adopt a populist style will be more likely to present themselves as problem managers or be presented as such.

Because we assume voters for right-wing populist parties prefer leaders who adopt a populist style and rhetoric, we expect the more successful leaders of these parties to have a higher position on the populism dimension than less successful leaders of right-wing populist parties (H2a). Additionally, we anticipate differences between these leaders and their mainstream competitors: We assume that mainstream party leaders appear less populist than right-wing populist leaders; for the media it is the populist nature, the populist style and/or the populist message, of these leaders that is newsworthy (H2b). Finally, because of the propensity of tabloid media to display “media populism,” “responsiveness to popular tastes and demands” (Mazzoleni, 2003, p. 8), and to pay more attention to newsworthy aspects of everyday politics, we expect them to be more interested in the populist style and the populist message than elite media (H2c). We do no expect any differences between the two groups of party leaders.

The third dimension we focus on in the coverage of right-wing populist leaders is authoritativeness. Authoritativeness refers to how knowledgeable a politician is about the political topics discussed and, as a result, it is dependent on the issue at stake. In general, we assume that voters base their electoral preference (partially) on substantial grounds. Consequently, it is essential for party leaders to get their ideological message across; they must be able to convey their position on a set of core issues. More importantly, voters want to vote for a party leader who is also able to convince others, particularly within parliament or the broader political realm. To have authoritativeness in this regard is thus highly related to being persuasive: To what extent can the party leader convince voters that he or she has a strong case, i.e., is credible (Hovland & Weiss, 1951)? Because of the association of the two fields, we take a closer look at the area of persuasive communication to conceptualize authoritativeness.

Based on extant research, we argue that party leaders are more authoritative when they use arguments and when they elaborate on their viewpoints. This seems to be the minimum requirement. As O’Keefe (1998) maintains, “advocates whose viewpoints are more fully articulated might be perceived as more credible (more
MEDIA COVERAGE OF RIGHT-WING POPULIST LEADERS

trustworthy and more competent), since receivers could reason that an advocate willing to be so explicit about the supporting materials must be especially honest and well-informed; such enhanced credibility then might make for greater persuasive effectiveness.” However, what constitutes a good argument is not that clear. For instance, O’Keefe (1998) and Allen and Burrell (1992) find that ‘more complete arguments’ or ‘arguments with higher quality of evidence’ are more persuasive. In this chapter we look at three aspects: reference to facts, reference to figures, and information-source citation. The first two aspects are the result of an attempt to objectively determine the quality or the completeness of an argument. Although experimental evidence is inconclusive as to whether quantitative evidence is convincing (O’Keefe, 1998, 2002; Reynolds & Reynolds, 2002), reference to figures can be seen as evidence of the substantial knowledge of the source. Moreover, some message receivers are easier won over by narrative evidence or examples (O’Keefe, 2002; Reynolds & Reynolds, 2002), which is why we also define reference to facts as an aspect of authoritativeness. As for the latter, (a meta-analysis of) experimental research has shown that testimonial assertion evidence increases the persuasiveness and perceptions of credibility of information sources (O’Keefe, 1998; Reinard, 1998; Reynolds & Reynolds, 2002): when referring to other sources as evidence, one’s own credibility is enhanced. Moreover, reference to scientists, opinion leaders, or experts, for example, can also be seen as evidence of substantive knowledge on the topic.

Finally, literature on fear-arousing appeals or threat appeals has prompted us to look at the extent to which party leaders propose solutions to the problems raised. Threat appeals are “those contents of a persuasive communication which allude to or describe unfavourable consequences that are alleged to result from failure to adopt and adhere to the communicator’s conclusions” (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953, p. 60). We assume that politicians who bring up problems and do not come up with suggestions to overcome them are perceived to lack knowledge on the issues addressed. Moreover, the literature on fear arousal also teaches us that what is persuading when talking about threats is the change in attitudes and/or behaviors recommended by the message source (Mongeau, 1998) or the proposed solution to a problem.

Because we assume that voters will prefer party leaders that are more authoritative, we expect more successful right-wing populist leaders to have a higher
position on the authoritativeness dimension than their less successful competitors (H3a). However, we also expect mainstream leaders to score higher on this dimension than right-wing populist leaders (H3b). We assume journalists pay particular attention to right-wing populist leaders when they are atypical and we expect them to shift their attention to other politicians if these right-wing populist leaders no longer behave extraordinarily. Moreover, right-wing populist leaders who want to appear authoritative will have to adjust their rhetoric and, to some extent, be more like the political elite they criticize. Finally, we expect the quality press to give party leaders in general more freedom to express their opinions substantively (H3c). Because of their tendency to reflect the values and views of the established elite, and because they are under public pressure to assume civic responsibilities, we expect the quality press to pay more attention to these arguments than tabloid media, whose main goal is profit and not journalistic quality. We again expect no differences between mainstream leaders and right-wing populists in this regard.

**Research setting**

Right-wing populist parties have entered the political stage across Europe. Our study is conducted in the Netherlands, where the 2006 election campaign provides an excellent case to test our theoretical expectations. Four ideologically similar right-wing populist parties participated in this election, two of these parties, Pim Fortuyn’s renamed party Lijst Vijf Fortuyn (LVF: ‘List Five Fortuyn’), led by Olaf Stuger, and Hilbrand Nawijn’s Partij voor Nederland (PVN: ‘Party for the Netherlands’) were quite unsuccessful. Marco Pastors’ EenNL (‘One NL’) did not fail until Election Day. Only Geert Wilders’ Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV: ‘Party for the Freedom’) experienced electoral success, winning nine seats in parliament.

Rita Verdonk is an exceptional case: She attempted to become the leader of the established liberal VVD with a populist message, but failed to be nominated by her party members by a very small margin. In the 2006 national election, however, she received more votes than her own party leader Mark Rutte and more than any of the (other) right-wing populists.

All of these party leaders satisfy the two most important criteria Mudde (2007) outlines for defining right-wing populist parties. They all addressed nativism or ideology in their programs by, for instance, proposing to halt immigration, sending
back sentenced immigrants or fundamentalists, and promoting or defending the Dutch identity or culture. All leaders can moreover be considered to be populist to the extent that they all propose measures to simplify the representative democratic order by, for example, decreasing the scope of the government, reducing the number of seats in parliament or in the senate (or abolishing the latter), and introducing more direct democratic measures (i.e. referenda).

The ideological differences between the four right-wing populist parties are very small and it is very unlikely that voters would be aware of differences between the programs of these parties. Rita Verdonk from the VVD also campaigned on the same types of issues. Consequently, it is highly improbable that differences in success are related to the substance of the political programs. Furthermore, it is quite plausible that differences in success are related to the amount and the nature of the media attention that they received.

Content analysis

This section presents the results of a content analysis of the 2006 election campaign. We use systematic content analyses of 17 Dutch media outlets—seven newspapers, three news programs, two current affairs programs, and five infotainment programs—from September 27th 2006 until the elections on November 22nd in the same year to examine the way in which right-wing populist party leaders are portrayed in the mass media.

Data

As part of the ASCoR Election Study we carried out a content analysis of Dutch newspapers, national TV news, current affairs programs, and infotainment programs. We included seven national newspapers: De Volkskrant, NRC Handelsblad, and Trouw are broadsheet newspapers and represent the Dutch national quality press. De Telegraaf and Algemeen Dagblad represent the national tabloid press. We also incorporated the two largest freely distributed newspapers into the analysis: Metro and Sp!ts. In addition, we also analyzed the most widely watched Dutch public evening news program, NOS Journaal (Nederland 1: 20.00–20.25), the main private news programs, RTL Nieuws (RTL 4: 19.30–19.55) and Hart van Nederland (SBS 6: 19.00–19.20), and the main public TV current affairs programs, NOVA Den Haag vandaag/ Nederland Kiest and Eén Vandaag. Finally,
we included the main Dutch public TV infotainment programs Pauw & Witteman, De Wereld Draait Door, Max & Catherine, and Lijst Nul as well as the commercial broadcast Jensen.

The content analysis was conducted for news articles and TV items published or broadcasted within the eight weeks prior to the 2006 Dutch national elections (between September 27th and November 22nd 2006). We included all news and current affairs programs during this period. Infotainment programs were only coded when party leaders were mentioned or interviewed. For the newspaper articles we conducted a search in LexisNexis, the online newspaper database, using keywords related to the election campaign and additional economic keywords for other research purposes. We took a systematic sample of the newspaper articles found and coded 41% of the articles in our target population.

Because of a shortage of newspaper articles in which right-wing populist leaders were coded as one of the actors, we coded all of the articles in which Geert Wilders, Marco Pastors, Hilbrand Nawijn, and Olaf Stuger spoke about substantive matters. As a result, we coded an additional 38 items. These items were only used to estimate the positions of the right-wing populist leaders on the populism and authoritativeness dimensions and were not included in the description of the content analysis data below.

For the purpose of this chapter, all newspaper articles coded as campaign news were included. For the TV news programs and the current affairs programs all campaign items were incorporated. Items in infotainment programs were included when party leaders were interviewed and the item satisfied the definition of campaign news. Items that did not meet these requirements were not used for the analyses in this chapter. In total, we used 2,209 items: 1,505 newspaper articles, 413 TV news items, 230 items in current affairs programs, and 61 items in infotainment programs. For 1,001 items the selected party leaders were coded as (one of the) main actor(s): 615 newspaper articles, 201 TV news items, 132 current affairs items, and 53 infotainment items.

11 Dutch native speakers conducted the coding. The unit of analysis and the coding unit was the individual news story, characterized by a distinct overall issue focus. We included 74 items in a post-test and conducted an additional post-test on 35 items for indicators of authoritativeness and populism. This extra post-test was performed by two of the coders and one of the authors. The reliability estimates of
the various used measures are given below. We report percent agreement for nominal variables or, if possible, Krippendorf’s alpha for ratio variables. Overall, we find that the reliability of our measures was generally acceptable for our new measures (Lombard, Snyder-Duch & Bracken, 2002).

**Operationalizations**

Prominence. For each campaign item up to five different actors could be coded, including party leaders (campaign news: agreement = 81.64 %). In the present study we only look at actors coded as party leaders, with the exception of Rita Verdonk, who was a minister and the runner-up on the list of the VVD at the time of the election. Therefore, we only included cases in which Jan-Peter Balkenende appeared in his role as party leader, not when acting as prime minister. One or more party leaders were coded as actors in 1,001 different items. In total, 1,796 actors were coded as party leaders (agreement = 69.56 %). For each actor the amount of attention within the item was coded by looking at the total number of words (newspaper) in the article (agreement = 91.43 %, Krippendorff’s alpha = 0.97) or the length of the TV item (TV news and current affairs programs) (alpha = 0.88), and the page on which the article appeared (agreement = 98.19 %, alpha = 0.99), the consecutive number in the TV program (agreement = 79.48 %), or the reference in the leader (agreement = 87.47 %). For infotainment programs the amount of attention for a party leader is measured by coding the situation in which he or she appeared: as the main guest in the show, as one of the guests sitting at the table during the entire show, as one of the guests sitting at the table during a part of the show, or as part of a (short) video clip.

To measure the impact of the coverage of the party leaders we constructed a formula, based on Vliegenthart (2007) and Watt. et al. (1993), to calculate the prominence of the appearance of a party leader in a item. See Appendix B for the formula.

Party leaders’ style and rhetoric: authoritativeness and populism. Whenever party leaders were coded as actors in campaign items, we also coded whether they took a position on some topic (agreement = 66.84 %). In the cases in which they did (497 cases of the 1,001 items), we coded indicators of authoritativeness and
populism. The indicators were formulated as statements and measured on dichotomous response scales (0 = No, 1 = Yes).

To investigate the extent to which these variables constitute scales, we produced a stacked data matrix in which the party leader-item combination is the unit of analysis. Because the items are dichotomous, the most well known method for testing the unidimensionality of the scales, factor analysis, is not preferred (Van Schuur, 2003). A more appropriate method for these data is Mokken scaling, which is a probabilistic version of the better-known Guttmann scale (e.g., Jacoby, 1991; Mokken, 1971; Van Schuur, 2003).

Table 2.1: Populism Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>( \pi_i )</th>
<th>( H_i )</th>
<th>( Z )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the party leader depict the current or future situation as being critical?</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>12.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the party leader use intensifiers such as ‘surely’, ‘certainly’?</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>11.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the party leader present him/herself as a manager or probleem solver or is he or she presented as such by others?</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>14.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the party leader place emphasis on decisiveness and fast and strong measures or is he or she presented as being decisive?</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>15.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the party leader use hedges and hesitations?</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>6.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-scale items*: Does the party leader criticize all other parties/the established political order/the large established parties?</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the party leader mention the ‘man in the street’, the ‘common man’?</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Item coefficient: value when item is added to five-item scale; \( n = 497 \).

We operationalized the populism dimension by measuring whether a certain party leader refers to a critical situation (agreement = 85.76 %), emphasizes decisiveness and fast and strong measures or is presented as such (agreement = 77.97%), presents him/herself as a manager or is presented as such (agreement = 75.43%). Additionally, we measured whether the party leader in question used intensifiers such as ‘surely’ and ‘certainly’ (agreement = 80.34%) and whether he or she used hedges and hesitations (agreement = 71.16%). The last item was recoded so that 0 = hedges and hesitations and 1 = no hedges and hesitations. The Mokken scale analysis shows that these items (\( n = 497 \)) form a medium scale (\( H = 0.46 \), \( Z = 18.75 \)). The additional two items referring to the ideological core of populism, criticism of the established political class (agreement = 94.77 %), and mentioning the man in the street (agreement = 88.36 %), do not fit the scale; our concept of
populism appears to be multidimensional. Table 2.1 gives the results of the scaling analyses.

Five items were developed to measure ‘authoritativeness’: whether the party leader in question uses arguments (agreement = 78.12%), refers to facts (agreement = 52.33%) and/or figures (agreement = 91.04%) and/or other sources (agreement = 96.018%), and by coding whether the party leader proposes solutions for perceived problems (agreement = 74.08%). Because of low intercoder reliability results we have excluded the second item from the scale. The Mokken scale analysis shows that the four remaining items form a medium scale (H = 0.45, Z = 10.53). Table 2.2 gives the results of the scale analysis.

### Table 2.2: Authoritiveness Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>( \pi_i )</th>
<th>( H_i )</th>
<th>( Z )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The party leader refers to scientists/opinion leaders/other sources or persons to ground his/her opinion.</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>5.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The party leader uses figures to ground his/her opinion.</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>9.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The party leader comes up with possible (policy) solutions for observed problems.</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>7.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The party leader uses arguments to ground his/her opinion.</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>7.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \( n = 497 \)

### Results

#### Prominence

Table 2.3 presents the prominence of the various party leaders. In general it can be said that Rita Verdonk, Geert Wilders, and Marco Pastors received far more attention in newspapers than the other two right-wing populist leaders, Olaf Stuger and Hilbrand Nawijn. Moreover, if we look at the prominence within the article, Geert Wilders is the most prominent.

The analysis of the coverage of the party leaders in the various television programs reveals very similar results. If we compare the various right-wing populist leaders with regard to their overall prominence, we see that Rita Verdonk’s prominence was highest, which is a result of the number of items in which she was one of the main actors. Of the party leaders, Geert Wilders appeared most prominent on TV, followed by Marco Pastors. Since the more successful right-wing
populist leaders (Verdonk, Wilders, and Pastors) were most prominent in the news, these results are largely in line with our first hypothesis H1a. However, the differences between the various right-wing populist party leaders \( (F = 0.144, df = 4) \) regarding their average prominence are not significant; we therefore do not find support for H1a. If we compare the prominence measures of the mainstream leaders with the right-wing populist party leaders, we find that the former were more prominent in the news than the latter, in newspapers as well as on TV. While these results are in line with our hypothesis H1b, the differences are again not significant \( (F = 1.818, df = 1)^{xi} \).

### Table 2.3: Prominence of Party Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Leaders</th>
<th>Average prominence per article (SD)</th>
<th>Prominence newspapers</th>
<th>Average prominence per TV item (SD)</th>
<th>Prominence Television</th>
<th>Average prominence (SD)</th>
<th>Overall prominence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream Party Leaders</td>
<td>1.02 (0.86)</td>
<td>128.36</td>
<td>1.04 (0.99)</td>
<td>85.46</td>
<td>1.03 (0.91)</td>
<td>213.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-Wing Populist Leaders</td>
<td>0.96 (0.78)</td>
<td>20.17</td>
<td>0.86 (0.70)</td>
<td>13.16</td>
<td>0.92 (0.75)</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita Verdonk</td>
<td>0.89 (0.90)</td>
<td>110.74</td>
<td>0.86 (1.35)</td>
<td>55.17</td>
<td>0.87 (0.86)</td>
<td>165.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geert Wilders</td>
<td>1.02 (0.79)</td>
<td>42.85</td>
<td>0.82 (0.79)</td>
<td>21.87</td>
<td>0.91 (0.73)</td>
<td>64.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marco Pastors</td>
<td>0.93 (0.76)</td>
<td>26.95</td>
<td>0.95 (0.80)</td>
<td>20.97</td>
<td>0.94 (0.77)</td>
<td>47.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilbrand Nawijn</td>
<td>0.80 (0.87)</td>
<td>7.16</td>
<td>1.51 (0.93)</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>0.97 (0.90)</td>
<td>11.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olaf Stuger</td>
<td>0.93 (0.93)</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.75 (0.51)</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>0.82 (0.65)</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.00 (0.86)</td>
<td>1089.96</td>
<td>1.00 (0.95)</td>
<td>706.01</td>
<td>1.00 (0.90)</td>
<td>1795.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \( n = 1,001 \).

**Populism**

As expected, the simple scores of the various party leaders on the populism style dimension (Table 2.4) show that, on average, the leaders of the right-wing populist parties scored higher on this dimension \( (M = 1.36, SD = 1.24) \) than their mainstream counterparts \( (M = 1.29, SD = 1.27) \). However, they did not differ significantly \( (F = 0.318, df = 1, p = 0.573) \). We therefore do not find unconditional support for H2b\(^{xi} \). Geert Wilders, the most successful right-wing populist leader, scored highest of all party leaders: he appeared as the most populist and was the only leader that was significantly more populist than his mainstream competitors: \( F \)
= 2.839, \( df = 1 \) (\( p = 0.93 \)). However, the differences between the five right-wing populist leaders with regard to their populist style are not significant (\( F = 1.860, df = 4 \)), although they score differently on this dimension: Marco Pastors scored much lower, with Rita Verdonk and Hilbrand Nawijn occupying the middle positions. Although the direction of our findings support our hypotheses H2a and H2b, the differences are not significant.

### Table 2.4: Placement of the Party Leaders on the Populism Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party leader</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream Leaders</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-Wing Populist Party Leaders</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita Verdonk</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geert Wilders</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marco Pastors</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilbrand Nawijn</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olaf Stuger</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 2.5 we present the scores of the various party leaders on the two ideological populism concepts. Overall we find that only two right-wing populist leaders have criticized representative politics, Geert Wilders and Marco Pastors, thereby lending support to hypothesis H2a. Moreover, the latter popular party leader did that significantly more than the former (\( F = 9.066, df = 1, p = 0.03 \)) and the differences between the various right-wing populist leaders are significant (\( F = 6.964, df = 4, p = 0.00 \)). However, these leaders do not differ significantly from mainstream leaders in this regard (\( F = 0.112, df = 1, p = 0.738 \)). The other ideological component of populism, referring to the common man, was also found in Rita Verdonk’s media appearances. Nevertheless, right-wing populist leaders do not differ significantly in this regard (\( F = 1.154, df = 4, p = 0.334 \)). On the other hand, we do find that rightwing populist party leaders refer to the common man more frequently than mainstream party leaders (\( F = 3.576, df = 1, p = 0.059 \)), which supports H2b\textsuperscript{iii}. Overall, the results with regard to the populist ideology dimension are somewhat contradictory.
Table 2.5: Placement of Party Leaders on Two Populism Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party leader</th>
<th>$t_1$</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>$t_2$</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream Leaders</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-Wing Populist Party Leaders</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita Verdonk</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geert Wilders</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marco Pastors</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilbrand Nawijn</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olaf Stuger</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Authoritativeness**

Table 2.6 shows the various party leaders’ positions along the authoritativeness dimension. The results show that the leaders of the four right-wing populist parties ($M = 0.94$, $SD = 1.10$) scored significantly lower on this dimension than leaders of mainstream parties ($M = 1.26$, $SD = 0.96$): $F = 7.929$ ($df = 1$) is significant at the .01 level. This lends support for H3b. The three less successful right-wing populist leaders, Nawijn, Pastors, and Stuger, appeared particularly less authoritative in the mass media. Moreover, we find that Wilders presented himself as more authoritative by using more substantial arguments: He scores relatively high on the authoritativeness dimension and does not differ significantly from his mainstream counterparts in this respect ($F = 0.038$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.845$). These findings also support hypothesis H3a: More successful right-wing populist leaders appear more authoritative. However, the differences among the five right-wing populist leaders are not significant ($F = 1.554$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.190$).
Table 2.6: Placement of the Party Leaders on the Authoritatively Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party leader</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream Leaders</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-Wing Populist Party Leaders</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita Verdonk</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geert Wilders</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marco Pastors</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilbrand Nawijn</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olaf Stuger</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.7 presents the differences between outlets on the three dimensions. As for the prominence of the party leaders in the various outlets, we find that all party leaders, both right-wing populist and mainstream, received the most attention in current affairs programs. However, in the case of the right-wing populist party leaders, the differences are not significant. Because of the nature of Dutch current affairs programs, which are public broadcasts and have a highly educated audience, it seems plausible to categorize them as elite media. The overall results therefore show that mainstream as well as right-wing populist party leaders seem to garner more prominence in elite media (current affairs programs and broadsheet newspapers) than in tabloid media (tabloid and free newspapers and infotainment programs). Moreover, differences between party leader types were insignificant within media outlets. These results lend no support for hypothesis H1c, wherein we expected more prominence in tabloid media than elite media for right-wing populist leaders.

Regarding the populist style covered in the various media outlets, hypothesis H2c cannot be supported. Party leaders’ positions were highest in current affairs programs, and not in tabloid and free newspapers or infotainment programs as expected. Moreover, there are differences between the two types of leaders: whereas differences between the media outlets were not significant for mainstream party leaders, they were for right-wing populist leaders. Additionally, if we look at differences between outlets with a similar purpose and target audience, we find that current affairs programs pay significantly more attention to the populist style of right-wing populist party leaders than broadsheet newspapers and news programs do. This can probably be explained by the fact that current affairs programs have
more room for politicians to voice their political opinions, as opposed to news programs and newspapers in which time or space is usually limited.

Table 2.7: Prominence, Authoritativeness and Populism: Differences Between Outlets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>TV</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Broadsheet</td>
<td>Tabloids &amp; Free newspapers</td>
<td>News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prominence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream Party Leaders</td>
<td>1.27  (1.11)b</td>
<td>0.69 (0.51)a</td>
<td>0.78 (0.70)a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-Wing Populist Leaders</td>
<td>1.12  (1.01)a</td>
<td>0.63 (0.44)b</td>
<td>0.67 (0.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.25 (1.13)c</td>
<td>0.68 (0.50)a</td>
<td>0.75 (0.68)a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Populism</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream Party Leaders</td>
<td>1.14  (1.15)</td>
<td>1.27 (1.11)</td>
<td>1.22 (1.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-Wing Populist Leaders</td>
<td>1.48  (1.38)a</td>
<td>1.10 (1.01)a</td>
<td>1.07 (0.92)a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.26 (1.20)a</td>
<td>1.23 (1.04)a</td>
<td>1.23 (1.23)a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authoritativeness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream Party Leaders</td>
<td>0.96  (0.85)ac</td>
<td>1.11 (0.98)ac</td>
<td>1.32 (0.85)ax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-Wing Populist Leaders</td>
<td>0.75  (0.93)a</td>
<td>1.31 (1.14)a</td>
<td>0.64 (0.93)ay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0.92 (0.92)ac</td>
<td>1.14 (0.98)ac</td>
<td>1.23 (0.88)a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. a,b,c Different superscripts indicate a significant difference between media outlets (p<0.05): all tests are one-tailed; x,y Different superscripts indicate a significant difference between leader types (p<0.05): all tests are one-tailed; n = 1,001.

Example: In the last row we find that with regard to the level of authoritativeness of the party leaders there are no significant differences between broadsheet newspapers, tabloids and free newspapers, and news programs. Authoritativeness levels are significantly higher in current affairs programs as compared to all of the other outlets. Finally, authoritativeness levels are significantly lower in infotainment programs as compared to tabloids and free newspapers, news programs and current affairs programs. Authoritativeness levels do not differ on a significant level between infotainment programs, and broadsheet newspapers.
In terms of the authoritativeness of the various party leaders, H3c is partially supported: while they were placed highest on the authoritativeness dimension in ‘elitist’ current affairs programs, they were placed lowest in ‘tabloid’ infotainment programs. Moreover, we did not find large differences between leader types, as expected.

**Conclusions and discussion**

This study contributes to the literature on right-wing populist parties in several ways. We proposed three aspects in the media appearance of right-wing populist leaders that are important for their public image and therefore possibly for their electoral fortunes: prominence, populism, and authoritativeness. We developed a procedure to measure these concepts with a comprehensive content analysis; a Mokken scale analysis has shown that our indicators do indeed form unidimensional scales, thereby fulfilling standard criterions to test their construct validity.

Moreover, with regard to the prominence of the various political leaders, our hypotheses are partially supported, although the results do not differ significantly in all cases: More successful right-wing populist leaders are the most prominent and are somewhat less prominent in the news than mainstream leaders. However, as for the differences between media outlets, our results contradict the results of Stewart et al. (2003), who find that tabloid media pay more attention to right-wing populist leaders in their early growth phase. We however find no differences between the various media outlets. Several explanations can be put forward for this finding. First, it could be possible that this finding is limited to the Dutch context. In the Dutch media landscape tabloid media are less prominent than in some other countries. The tabloid newspapers – de Telegraaf and the Algemeen Dagblad – are much more broadsheet than, for example, the Sun. Moreover, it is possible that after the Fortuyn revolt Dutch mainstream media have paid more attention to the populist voice. A comparison over time might shed more light on this issue. Another explanation could be that this finding is not dependent upon the Dutch context, but that the tabloid media outlets pay less attention to right-wing populist politicians because of their extremist opinions. Perhaps they want to present more light-
hearted news and distance themselves from heavy issues such as immigration and crime.

The scale analysis also shows that a particular populist style or rhetoric exists. Non-ideological style components are essential to this populism dimension: The strength of the leadership is emphasized and the directness of the language is key. The alleged two central tenets of populist ideology and rhetoric (Walgrave & De Swert, 2004), criticism of the established political class and reference to the common man, do not belong to this dimension.

However, if we do look at the populism dimension as well as the two central ideological populism items, we find support for our hypotheses that more successful right-wing populist leaders appear to be more populist and that right-wing populist leaders score higher on these concepts than mainstream leaders. The differences regarding the latter distinction are small, which indicates an attempt of mainstream party leaders to fit the media logic by using populist ideological elements, since this populist style matches “quite closely certain key features of present-day mass communications,” such as “pressures on media organizations to compete by attuning their fare to popular tastes, concerns, priorities, understandings, and language [...] and [...] the emotive, sensational, hard-hitting, plain-seeking, say-it-as-it-is, black-and-white styles of tabloid journalism” (Blumler, 2003, p. xvii). Another explanation for this finding could be media populism (Mazzoleni et.al., 2003), that is, the propensity of mass media to focus on populist rhetoric and ideology, because it fits media logic, for mainstream leaders as well as right-wing populist leaders. In terms of media populism, our findings also point to something interesting: In general it is not the tabloid media, but the Dutch quality or elite media, such as broadsheet newspapers and public broadcast current affairs programs, that pay (more) attention to populist elements in the rhetoric of party leaders. Overall, by comparing the media coverage of right-wing populist leaders with the coverage of mainstream leaders in this chapter, we have found that the alleged central populist tenets are not exclusively confined to (right-wing) populists, as is generally assumed (e.g., Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Mazzoleni et al., 2003; Taggart, 2000).

The various items constructed to measure authoritativeness mainly refer to (the content of) the arguments used. This operationalization was inspired by persuasion literature. This chapter indicates that these theories on support
articulation (O’Keefe, 1998), sequential arguments (Allen & Burrel, 1992), or fear appeals (Mongeau, 1998) are not only applicable in experimental or effects research on persuasive communication, but are also very useful to strengthen our knowledge about the coverage of party leaders, right-wing populist or mainstream, and to be able to differentiate between their argument strength. The scale analysis provides information about the argumentational chain of party leaders in general. There seems to be an order in the extent to which certain arguments are used, with the lesser used arguments nested in the usage of the more frequently expressed arguments. Following our results and hypotheses regarding this dimension, we argue that Authoritativeness could be a very relevant concept in the study of right-wing populist parties, as opposed to the vague notion of the charismatic leader often referred to in the literature (Van der Brug & Mughan, 2007). Moreover, what sets the most successful right-wing populist leaders apart from the less successful ones is ‘Authoritativeness.’ On this dimension, his/her position approaches ‘normality’: the average score of mainstream leaders. Therefore, what distinguishes him from his direct competitor is not his anti-establishment position (Fennema, 2005), but rather that which makes him more similar to the establishment.

Overall, these findings support our hypothesis that in order to be successful, a right-wing populist leader must reach a delicate balance between appearing unusual and populist or anti-establishment in order to gain news value, on the one hand, and still appearing authoritative, or part of the establishment, on the other.

Future research has the task of testing whether our results can be extended to other countries or contexts. By focusing on the Netherlands we were able to conduct an in-depth analysis of the style and rhetoric employed by Dutch political leaders. Future studies could compare right-wing populist leaders in different phases of their existence or established party leaders in other political contexts, e.g. in contexts in which right-wing populists are ostracized or employ populist or authoritative style components. While we are aware that there may be other aspects of the party leaders’ style or rhetoric that could have been included, we believe we have focused on the most important ones. We also look forward to seeing whether the unexpected results we have found regarding the differences between the various media outlets hold in other media systems. Finally, future research should investigate the effects of exposure to right-wing populist leaders in the news on
sympathy toward and electoral support for these leaders vis-a-vis more mainstream political leaders.
Notes

1 http://academic.lexisnexis.nl/uva/

We ordered the newspaper articles chronologically and by outlet. The articles published within four weeks before the elections (n = 3,368) we assigned the numbers 1 to 3 and the articles published within the four weeks prior to that we assigned the numbers 1 to 9 (n = 2,958). We started coding the articles with number 1 and subsequently coded 2 and 3. Of the articles published in the four weeks prior to the elections we coded 49% (n = 1,735) and of the remaining articles we coded 17% (n = 508).

We coded items as campaign news when they were presented as such, or when they satisfied one of the following criteria: presence of a national party leader; events within the framework of the elections; reference to the elections, election programs or election campaigns; or the (present or future) government, its composition or structure, is the subject of the news story.

In this chapter we included all right-wing populist leaders that competed in the 2006 elections, Geert Wilders, Marco Pastors, Olaf Stuger and Hilbrand Nawijn, and all leaders of parties that are generally assumed to be part of the establishment, Jan-Peter Balkenende (CDA), Wouter Bos (PvdA), Mark Rutte (VVD), Femke Halsema (GroenLinks), Alexander Pechtold (D66), Andre Rouvoet (ChristenUnie) and Bas van der Vlies (SGP).

In our codebook the first variables are preconditions for the latter: for instance, only when an item was coded as campaign news, actors had to be coded. Moreover, it was only when the same party leaders coded as actors were coded to take a standpoint that the various variables that constitute our central concepts had to be coded. As a result, of the 74 items that were in our posttest, only 16 could be used to estimate the reliability of our central measures. Consequently, some variables were constants, which is why we cannot calculate Cohen’s Kappa.

We excluded two right-wing party leaders that did not compete in the elections, from the analysis: Mat Herben and Michiel Smit.

Because of the ratio level of the variable it is undesirable to compute percent agreement.

In the literature the attention for the actor within the item is sometimes included in the formula as well. Because the results are similar when we exclude these variables, we have chosen to not account for the attention for the actor for reasons of simplicity.

We used the program MSPWIN 5.0 (Molenaar, Van Schuur, Sijtsma, & Mokken, 2002) to perform the scale analysis.

According to Mokken, the coefficient $H$ (homogeneity of the items) has to be .30 or higher to be a scale. When $H$ is higher than .50 it is a strong scale.
xi In the comparison between right-wing populist party leaders on the one hand and mainstream party leaders on the other, we did not include Rita Verdonk, because she was not the leader of a party at that moment in time. However, if we do incorporate Rita Verdonk in the group right-wing populist leaders we find that the difference between the two groups is significant ($F = 6.162, df = 1$).

xii If we include Rita Verdonk in the group of right-wing populists, results do not change.

xiii If we incorporate Rita Verdonk into the group right-wing populist leaders, the difference between these leaders and the mainstream party leaders becomes insignificant.

xiv If we include Rita Verdonk in the group of right-wing populists, results do not change.

xv If we include Rita Verdonk in the group right-wing populist leaders, results do not differ much for populism and authoritativeness figures. As for prominence, we find more significant differences between the several outlets.

xvi For the purposes of this table we have recalculated the prominence scores of the party leaders by leaving the average circulation and average number of viewers ($\text{circ}(a)$ and $\text{view}(a)$) out of the equation.
Chapter 3

HOW THE MEDIA SHAPE PERCEPTIONS OF RIGHT-WING POPULIST LEADERS

This chapter was published in Political Communication¹.

Abstract

It is often argued that right-wing populist party leaders are dependent on the media for their public image, which in turn is key for their electoral success. This study tests this assumption by comparing the effects of the media coverage of 2 Dutch right-wing populist leaders with the effects of the coverage of leaders of established parties, in a real-life setting, by tracking campaign developments in the Dutch 2006 national election campaign. We combine panel survey data (n = 401) with repeated measurements of the party leaders’ public images with a systematic content analysis of 17 media outlets (with a total of 1,001 stories), on the basis of the media consumption of individual respondents. Our results show significant effects of the content of media coverage on the public image of political leaders. However, only in 1 case (out of 10) is there a significant difference between right-wing populist party leaders and leaders of other parties in the strength of media effects. It thus seems that leaders of right-wing populist parties are just as dependent upon the media as leaders of other parties. The findings are discussed in the light of extant research on right-wing populist parties and media populism.

Introduction

Party leaders play an important role for all political parties. They are the most visible representative of the party in the media, and as such they determine to a large extent their party’s image among the public and other politicians. While this is true of all parties, there are two theoretical reasons to expect that party leaders are particularly important for right-wing populist parties. The first reason is that these parties are new. Within the context of the mediatization (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999) and popularization of politics, leaders of new parties are even more dependent upon the media to provide them with a platform than leaders of more established parties that are better known by the public. Through image management (McNair, 1995) and adaptation to the media logic, right-wing populist party leaders seek the attention of the media, especially in the insurgent phase of their party (Stewart, Mazzoleni, & Horsfield, 2003).

A second, somewhat related reason is that these parties are very loosely organized around the central leader. Many of these parties do not even organize formally as parties, which is in line with their antiparty rhetoric (e.g., Mudde, 2007; Taggart, 2000). Due to the oftentimes ad hoc formation of these parties, their political programs are usually limited and their party organizations weak and highly centralized. Consequently, these parties need a strong leader not only to lead the party internally, but also to bring across the message and image of the party (e.g., Carter, 2005; Eatwell, 2003; Kitschelt, 2007; Pappas, 2008; Weyland, 2001). In order to be successful electorally, these right-wing populist party leaders do not only have to be known by the public, they also need voters to have a positive image of them (Bos & van der Brug, 2010); they need to be perceived to be effective and legitimate.

In order to get media attention, leaders of right-wing populist parties have to be somewhat extraordinary in their behaviour, style, or in their messages: “It is a truism that the media simply cannot ignore what is newsworthy, and clearly newsworthy are the politicians who defy the existing order, with their abrasive language, public protests, and emotive issues” (Mazzoleni, 2003, p. 6-7). Thus, on the one hand, they might employ populist rhetoric or a populist style (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). On the other hand, these leaders also have to appear authoritative by displaying their knowledge on issues addressed. Recent research has indicated that successful right-wing populist leaders have managed to reach a delicate balance
between appearing unusual and populist, or anti-establishment, to gain news value and still appear authoritative (Bos, van der Brug, & de Vreese, 2010).

However, whether right-wing populists really are dependent upon the media for their public image, and whether they differ from mainstream party leaders in this respect, has never directly been tested. In this chapter, we address this scientific gap by testing the effects of the media coverage of right-wing populist leaders on changes in the perception of these leaders in a dynamic setting by tracking campaign developments. We contribute to extant research in several respects. First of all, we add to the growing research field on right-wing populist parties by taking a closer look at media effects on perceptions of leaders of these parties. Second, we do not only look at one specific aspect in the coverage of these leaders, such as prominence, visibility, or tone of coverage, but build a parsimonious model including three dimensions in the depiction of these leaders: their prominence, their authoritativeness—which refers to how knowledgeable a politician appears to be—and the extent to which they use a populist style or adhere to populist ideology.

Third, we draw on previous research on the public image of right-wing populist leaders in which two aspects were found that are important for their electoral success: effectiveness and legitimacy (Bos & van der Brug, 2010). All (new) party leaders, right-wing populist or mainstream, have to be perceived to be effective (i.e., able to affect policies or influence the public debate) in order to be seen as a serious political contestant. However, right-wing populists also need to be perceived to be legitimate, not posing a threat to democracy, because they in particular run the risk of being identified with the extreme right. In this chapter, we use effectiveness and legitimacy as dependent variables and explain over-time variations by looking at media coverage. And finally, by connecting the results of an extensive content analysis with panel survey data, we test media effects in a real-life setting by studying people as they encounter information on a daily basis (De Vreese & Semetko, 2004).

In sum, in this chapter we answer the following research question: To what extent are perceptions of right-wing populist party leaders, in terms of their perceived effectiveness and legitimacy, affected by the media coverage of these leaders, in terms of prominence, populism, and authoritativeness? The conceptual model is shown in Figure 3.1.
As a research venue, we use the Dutch national parliamentary elections of 2006, in which several right-wing populist parties participated. We employ panel survey data in which perceptions of two right-wing populist party leaders and four mainstream party leaders are measured twice, 2 months prior to and the night before the elections. These are Geert Wilders (Freedom Party) and Marco Pastors (One Netherlands), Jan Peter Balkenende (Christian democratic CDA), Wouter Bos (labor party PvdA), Mark Rutte (liberal party VVD), and Femke Halsema (green party GroenLinks). To assess media coverage, we use systematic content analyses of 17 media outlets for the 8 weeks before the elections, with a total of 1,001 stories.

The media dependency of right-wing populist party leaders

Most citizens never meet a politician in real life. They acquire their image of political leaders through the mass media, either directly or indirectly by means of interpersonal communication about newspaper articles or programs on radio or TV. Within the context of mediatization (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999), all political parties and their party leaders are thus dependent upon the media for the dissemination of their ideas and the shaping of their image (Sheafer, 2001).

However, common wisdom and an abundance of literature on the right-wing populist party family could lead us to believe that right-wing populist party leaders...
rely even more than mainstream party leaders on the media for their image (Mazzoleni, Stewart, & Horsfield, 2003). Especially because they are often new to the political spectrum, they need the media to be known by the electorate; (positive) media coverage is crucial for their electoral breakthrough (see, for instance, Art, 2007; Deutchman & Ellison, 1999; Mudde, 2007). Moreover, the strong charismatic populist leaders, whom these parties are known for, can exert a larger influence on changes in their image than other, mainstream party leaders. Their (party) populist style shares the key traits of media logic, including personalization, emotionalization, and an anti-establishment attitude (Plasser & Ulram, 2003), and can therefore lead to exaggerated media attention from which they can profit (Mudde, 2007).

On the other hand, research on the right-wing populist party family has shown that these parties and their electorates do not differ that much from mainstream parties. Support for right-wing populist parties is motivated by the same ideological and pragmatic considerations as support for other parties (Mudde, 2007; van der Brug, Fennema, & Tillie, 2000, 2003), leader effects are of the same size and sometimes even smaller (van der Brug & Mughan, 2007), and government participation of these parties is “a relatively ordinary phenomenon” (de Lange, 2008, p. 224). And there is a media-centric reason not to expect larger media effects for right-wing populists compared to mainstream party leaders: “while the media at times pander to racial stereotyping, in general they are hostile to the extreme right” (Eatwell, 2003, p. 60).

In this chapter, we test the effects of the media on the image of right-wing populist party leaders and make a comparison with mainstream party leaders to see which of the two views holds: Are right-wing populist party leaders more or equally dependent on the mass media compared to mainstream leaders? We look at two aspects of the image of party leaders: effectiveness and legitimacy.
Most electoral research indicates that voters make a reasoned choice when they vote, which means that they take into account the consequences of their choice (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998). Therefore, they prefer party leaders who are able to reach certain goals (van der Brug, Fennema, & Tillie, 2005). We make a distinction between two types of goals: that a message is heard (expressive goals) and that policies are affected (pragmatic goals). Voters who value pragmatic goals find it important that a party leader is influential and thus take into consideration whether they think a party leader is able to affect public policies through participation in government or by being effective as an opposition party. The prime goal of expressive voters is that their voice will be heard. For them it is important that a politician is publicly visible, can be heard in public discussions, and sets the media agenda. Perceived effectiveness of party leaders is important for right-wing populists as well as mainstream leaders (Bos & van der Brug, 2010).

We also know that voters in general prefer party leaders who do not intend to radically change or overthrow the democratic representational system (Bos & van der Brug, 2010; van der Brug et al., 2005). However, because of the (fascist) antidemocratic and anti-constitutional legacy of some right-wing populist parties (Carter, 2005), these parties may be identified with the extreme right, which could lead voters to assess some right-wing populists as illegitimate. Even though potential voters for these party leaders may be critical of the political establishment, most of them will not want to see the democratic system endangered. It is therefore important for right-wing populist party leaders “(1) to make clear that they belong neither to the political establishment nor to the camp of antidemocratic forces; (2) to make credible that they do oppose the political elite—but the political elite only and not the liberal democratic system” (Schedler, 1996, p. 302).
Party leaders’ media coverage: Prominence, authoritativeness, and populism

To appear effective and legitimate, right-wing populist party leaders need the media as a platform. Eatwell (2003) argues that to appear legitimate, an important role is reserved for “the party . . . , especially its leaders and ‘intellectuals,’” in constructing discourse (p. 69). And to appear effective, access to the media is key to create the impression that a party leader can affect policy or the public debate (Eatwell, 2003).

It is generally argued and found that media coverage of political candidates or of campaigns in general affects candidate support: It is through the mass media that voters hear and see the political candidates, and it can therefore be expected that the media have an effect on a voter’s perception of candidates (see, for instance, Benoit, Hansen, & Verser, 2003; Domke et al., 1997; Kleinnijenhuis, van Hoof, Oegema, & de Ridder, 2007; Mendelsohn, 1996). In this chapter, we focus on two important aspects of media coverage of political candidates: visibility or prominence and candidate attributes.

First of all, agenda-setting theory predicts that media salience issues affect the public salience of issues. This logic also extends to political candidates, so the salience in the media can affect the public salience of candidates (Kiousis & McCombs, 2004; McCombs & Shaw, 1972): Party leaders who are less prominent in the mass media will have a hard time convincing voters that they and their standpoints matter. Additionally, especially in a (Western European) multiparty context, each voter’s knowledge about the issues and the characteristics of the various, often ideologically similar politicians is dependent upon their ability in gaining media attention, as research has shown (Hopmann, Vliegenthart, de Vreese, & Albaek, 2010; Oegema & Kleinnijenhuis, 2000; Semetko & Schoenbach, 1994). Party leaders have to compete for the attention of the media as well as the voter.

Moreover, according to the second-level agenda-setting theory, the media do not only tell us who to think about, but also how to think about them (McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey, 1997). By making certain attributes, properties, qualities, or characteristics of political candidates more salient, the media shape candidate image or evaluation (Funk, 1999; Kiousis, 2005; McCombs et al., 1997).
In this chapter, we look at argumentation style and rhetoric as cognitive elements of candidate characteristics (Ghanem, 1997) and argue that the effects of these attributes on candidate perception can vary across candidates (Funk, 1999), most specifically between two types of politicians: right-wing populist and mainstream party leaders. In examining the content of the media appearances of right-wing populist leaders, we distinguish between three dimensions that can theoretically be expected to affect their public image: prominence, populism, and authoritativeness.

Prominence

The first, and most important, dimension is prominence, the amount of media attention for a politician (Watt, Mazza, & Snyder, 1993). It is generally assumed that more prominent news messages, that is, those that “are allotted more print space or time in broadcasting” (Watt et al., 1993, p. 415), exert a larger influence on issue (or actor) salience, “that is, the ease with which these issues can be retrieved from memory” (Scheufele, 2000: 300). Therefore, when it comes to these right-wing populist parties and new parties in general, the more prominent a politician is in the mass media, the greater the likelihood that voters will know him or her (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2009; Hopmann et al., 2010). Additionally, prominence makes a small party relevant for voters: When they get more attention, they are possibly perceived as a party that is taken seriously and able to get in power, which is why we expect voters to be more positive about party leaders’ effectiveness when they are more prominent in the media. Moreover, it can be argued that party leaders are in a certain way legitimized by mass media when they pay more attention to them: “any media coverage advantages contentious political figures; it enhances their visibility and furthers their ends, by producing some kind of public legitimation” (Stewart et al., 2003, p. 236). This leads to the following hypothesis: More prominent right-wing populist party leaders are perceived to be more effective (H1a) and more legitimate (H1b) than less prominent right-wing populist party leaders.

Populism: Rhetoric and Style

The second dimension we distinguish is populism, which has two components: a populist style and a populist rhetoric (or substance). Research has shown that substantive aspects of populists’ rhetoric have to be set aside from populist-style
elements of media coverage (Bos et al., 2010). In this study, we therefore include both aspects of populism.

The populist rhetoric consists of an anti-establishment appeal or anti-elitism and the celebration of the heartland, which is, according to Taggart (2000), a place “in which, in the populist imagination, a virtuous and unified population resides” (p. 95). Populism “considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite,’ and . . . politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people” (Mudde, 2004, p. 543). We assume that right-wing populist party leaders who are able to gain “anti-establishment credentials” (Schedler, 1996, p. 298) by being anti-elitist will have a hard time appearing effective (H2a) and legitimate (H2b). By criticizing the elite, they position themselves outside the main realm of politics. As a result, it will be more difficult for them to appear to be able to be effective in politics. Additionally, the problem with an oppositional stance toward mainstream politics is, as noted before, that party leaders have to be able to make clear that they only oppose the elite and not the democratic system.

Moreover, we have no clear expectations with regard to the effects of appeals to the “heartland.” On the one hand, we could expect a positive effect from appeals to the “heartland” on effectiveness and legitimacy, since talking about the “common man” through human interest stories could appeal to voters. On the other hand, appeals to the heartland could be perceived as populist rhetoric, which can have a negative effect on the public image of right-wing populists. Therefore, we pose the following research question (RQ1): What is the effect of right-wing populist party leaders’ appeals to the heartland on the perceived effectiveness and legitimacy of right-wing populist party leaders?

In addition to these substantive components of populism, we also include populist style elements in our models. Populists, and their followers, claim to be reluctant politicians who only engage in politics because of a perceived extreme crisis. In the case of right-wing populism, problems related to immigration are at the heart of this perceived crisis (Mudde, 2004; Taggart, 2000). This corresponds with what Albertazzi (2007) calls “dramatisisation”: the “need to generate tension in order to build up support for the party . . . by denouncing the tragedies that would befall the community if it were to be deprived of its defences” (p. 335). We therefore expect their leaders to refer to a (perceived) crisis situation. Other aspects of the
populist style are “ordinariness” (Stewart et al., 2003, p. 228); “straightforwardness, simplicity, and clarity” (Taggart, 2000, p. 97); “man in the street communication styles” (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 2); and “friend versus foe” rhetoric (Weyland, 2001): Populists use simple and strong language. Accordingly, we foresee them not to hesitate in bringing their message across, and to emphasize decisiveness and fast and strong measures and use intense language. A final aspect of the populist style is the emphasis on the strong (charismatic) party leader. Generally, populist movements are organized around a central leader, without whom the party organization would fall apart (e.g., Weyland, 2001). Moreover, these leaders often have authoritarian traits: They refer to themselves as crisis managers and have an ambivalent relation with democratic leadership (Taggart, 2000). As a result, we argue that party leaders who adopt a populist style will, more than others, present themselves as problem managers or be presented as such.

In general, we expect right-wing populists who are presented in a more populist style to be perceived as more effective (H3a). The use of clear and simple language and the emphasis on strong leadership will lead voters to have more confidence in the effectiveness of the party leader (Dewan & Myatt, 2008). On the other hand, we expect right-wing populist party leaders who are depicted as using a populist style to also be perceived to be less legitimate (H3b), since voters will associate their populist style with their right-wing ideologies and antidemocratic appeal.

**Authoritativeness**

The third dimension we focus on is authoritativeness, which refers to how knowledgeable a politician is about the political topics discussed. Because voters base their electoral preference (partially) on substantial grounds, it is essential for party leaders to get their ideological message across; they have to be able to convey their position on a set of core issues. Moreover, voters will prefer a party leader who is also able to convince others, especially within parliament or within the broader political realm. To be authoritative in this interpretation is thus highly related to being persuasive: To what extent can the party leader convince voters that he or she has a strong case (i.e., is credible; Hovland & Weiss, 1951)? We argue that party leaders are more authoritative when they use arguments and when they elaborate on their viewpoints (O’Keefe, 1998).
In this chapter, we look at two aspects of arguments: reference to statistics and information-source citations. Even though experimental evidence is inconclusive as to whether quantitative evidence is convincing (O’Keefe, 1998, 2002; Reynolds & Reynolds, 2002), the first aspect can be seen as evidence of the substantial knowledge of the source. As for the second, when referring to other sources as evidence, one’s own credibility is enhanced (O’Keefe, 1998; Reinard, 1998; Reynolds & Reynolds, 2002), and it can also be seen as evidence of substantive knowledge on the topic. Finally, we look at the extent to which right-wing populists propose solutions to the problems raised and assume that politicians who bring up problems and do not offer suggestions to overcome them are perceived to have a lack of knowledge on the issues addressed. Landau et al. (2004) find that “when reminders of one’s vulnerability and mortality are highly salient” (p. 1137), support is higher for leaders who are able to help people manage their fears. Overall, we assume that right-wing populist party leaders who are presented as being more authoritative in the mass media are perceived as more effective (H4), since a party leader who appears to be more knowledgeable will also be more able to convince others in parliament and/or in public debate.

**Differences between party leaders**

Finally, by comparing the effects of media coverage variables on the perception of two right-wing populist leaders with the perception of four mainstream party leaders, we also assess the difference between the two leader types. As argued above, there are two views on this: On the hand it is expected that right-wing populist party leaders are more dependent on the media, whereas on the other hand could expect no differences. Correspondingly, we pose a second research question (RQ2): Are there any differences between the effects of the media on the image of right-wing populist leaders compared to mainstream leaders?

**Research setting**

Our study was conducted in The Netherlands, where the 2006 election campaign provides an excellent case to test our theoretical expectations. Several ideologically right-wing populist parties participated in these elections. In this study, we focus on the leaders of two of these parties for which we have data available: Marco Pastors (EenNL, or “One NL”), who was not successful electorally, and Geert Wilders (Partij voor de Vrijheid, or “Freedom Party”), who won nine seats in
parliament and is still successful to date. Both parties were new to the political scene in 2006, which provides an excellent test for the media dependency thesis: It is in times of electoral breakthrough that these parties are assumed to be more dependent upon the media and possible media effects are assumed to be more pronounced (Mudde, 2007).

Both parties satisfy the two most important criteria Mudde (2007) draws up for defining right-wing populist parties. They address nativism in their programs by proposing a halt to immigration, sending back sentenced immigrants or fundamentalists, and promoting or defending the Dutch identity or culture. Moreover, both leaders can be considered to be populist because they proposed measures to simplify the representative democratic order by decreasing the government, bringing back the number of seats in parliament or in the senate (or abolishing the latter), and introducing more direct forms of democracy such as referenda. It is this populist nature that sets this party family apart from right-wing extremist parties such as separatist or neo-nazi parties.

However, these parties and their leaders should not be categorized as extremist or fringe parties. In fact, the right-wing populist party family is the only new successful European party family since the Second World War (Mudde, 2007); some of these parties have been very successful, and in some cases they even participated in government coalitions. Moreover, unlike in the United States, where there are dual spaces of communication and fringe parties make use of nonmainstream outlets, in the European proportional representation systems these right-wing populist parties not only represent a large part of the constituency, they also compete with mainstream parties in the same electoral market and therefore make use of the same mass media outlets.

Method

In this study we use two types of data. First, we employ two-wave panel survey data to assess the changes in the public image of (right-wing populist) party leaders, and second, we use content analysis data to investigate the media coverage of these leaders. We combine these two studies in one analysis and follow Barabas and Jerit (2009) in their approach, which “(1) incorporates media content in the analysis, (2)
conducts intra-individual comparisons to limit omitted variable bias, and (3) studies people as they naturally encounter information” (p. 73).

**Panel data**

The survey data set we used was collected by TNS NIPO in collaboration with the University of Amsterdam and *de Volkskrant*. These data were gathered in the period of the 2006 Dutch parliamentary elections. The first respondents were approached in February 2006 (n = 1,115; response rate: 66%). In this study, two subsequent measurement time points were used: September 2006 (n = 870; recontact rate: 78%) and November 2006 before election day (n = 703; recontact rate: 81%). The data were gathered using computer-assisted self-interviewing. Our data are by and large representative of the Dutch population. Appendix D shows that our respondent data mirror census data in terms of age, gender, and education. Because our main dependent variables were only measured for a subsection of the panel, we could only use 401 of the 703 respondents. Considering this somewhat small sample, we did not want to lose more respondents due to item nonresponse, which is why we resorted to multiple imputation. For this we used Amelia II, a computer program developed by Honaker, Joseph, King, Scheve, and Singh (1998; see King, Honaker, Joseph, & Scheve, 2001).

To test the unidimensionality of our scales, we employed a method known as Mokken scaling, which is a probabilistic version of the better known Guttman scale (e.g., Jacoby, 1991; Mokken, 1971; Van Schuur, 2003). Descriptives of the main variables are shown in Appendix C.

Our two dependent variables are direct measures of the effectiveness and legitimacy of all party leaders included in the analysis, each of which was measured with two variables on 7-point scales at two points in time. Mokken scale analysis showed that effectiveness forms a strong scale ($H = 0.79$ at $t - 1$ and $H = 0.76$ at $t1$) and legitimacy forms a medium scale ($H = 0.38$ at $t - 1$ and $H = 0.30$ at $t1$).

Our key explanatory variable is “media exposure,” which is a summary score of the exposure to the various media outlets included in the analysis, measured on a 5-point scale ranging from never to (almost) daily. We use this variable to estimate the individual exposure to the media coverage of the party leaders included in the analysis. In addition, we used several control variables. First of all, we controlled for party preference, a variable measured with a 10-point scale ranging from *I will never...*
vote for this party to highly likely that I will once vote for this party. To control for Internet campaigning, we included a measure of the extent to which respondents used the Internet to obtain political news. Moreover, because the social context is often demonstrated to have a separate impact apart from media effects (Beck, Dalton, Greene, & Huckfeldt, 2002; Mendelsohn, 1996), we controlled for the extent to which respondents talked to family or friends about politics in the last 7 days (measured on the same 5-point scale). Finally, because preference for and perceptions of right-wing populist parties may be influenced by ideological standpoints, we incorporated two ideological items. The first one is left–right distance, which is measured as the distance between a voter’s position on a 10-point left-right scale and the perceived position of a party on that same scale (1 = left, 10 = right). We also included an item that tapped the position of the respondent on the immigration issue, ranging from Immigrants and ethnic minorities should be allowed to stay in The Netherlands while keeping their own culture (1) to Immigrants and ethnic minorities should adjust themselves fully to the Dutch culture (7).

Analysis

We reordered the data in a stacked form so that the unit of analysis is the respondent–party leader combination. Our data set of 401 respondents contains evaluations of six political candidates, so the stacked data matrix has 2,406 (6 x 401) entries. This data reordering makes it possible to employ a research design that simultaneously accounts for inter-individual variation and intra-individual variation in the evaluations of different leaders. In the new stacked data matrix, one respondent is represented by as many cases as there are party leaders included in the analysis. In this case, these are the right-wing populists Geert Wilders and Marco Pastors on the one hand and the four most important established party leaders on the other. In the design of the stacked data matrix, the independent variables indicate relationships between voters and parties rather than between voter characteristics (for examples of the implementation of this method, see van der Brug et al., 2000; van der Brug & Mughan, 2007; Walgrave, Varone, & Dumont, 2006).

We propose the following simple regression model:

\[ Public\_Image_t = a + b1Public\_Image_{t-1} + b2Media\_Coverage + b3Control\_Variables + e, \]
which states that the public image of a leader, in terms of his perceived effectiveness and legitimacy, is first of all a function of his public image at $t-1$. By controlling for public image at $t-1$, there are no theoretical reasons to include time-invariant demographic control variables. Second, we include several control variables (party preference, immigration issue, political Internet use, and interpersonal communication) and individual exposure to media coverage, in terms of the authoritativeness, populism, prominence, and populist ideology of the party leader and the extent to which he refers to immigration topics. Since the nature of the stacked data matrix violates the assumptions of the ordinary least squares model, we employ a fixed-effects model in Stata, which is generally used for dealing with longitudinal or panel data (for an overview, see Hsiao, 2003).

**Content analysis**

We conducted a systematic content analysis of 17 Dutch media outlets—12 mainstream media outlets (seven newspapers, three news programs, two current affairs programs) and five infotainment programs—from the end of September 2006 until the Dutch national elections of November 22 of the same year ($n = 1,001$). We included all news and current affairs programs during this period. Infotainment programs were only coded when party leaders were mentioned or interviewed. For the newspaper articles, we conducted a search in Lexis Nexis, the online newspaper database, with keywords relating to the election campaign. We took a systematic sample of the newspaper articles found and coded 41% of the articles in our target population. Eleven Dutch native speakers conducted the coding. The unit of analysis and coding unit was the individual news story, characterized by a distinct overall issue focus. We included 74 items in a posttest and conducted an additional posttest on 35 items for indicators of authoritativeness and populism. Overall, we found that the intercoder reliability of our new measures was acceptable (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002), with percentage agreement ranging from 66.84 to 98.19.

**Measures.** As for prominence, for each party leader the amount of attention within the item was coded by looking at the total number of words (newspaper) in the article or the length of the item (TV news and current affairs programs), as well as the page on which the article appeared, the consecutive number in the TV program, or the reference in the leader. For infotainment programs, the amount of
attention for a party leader was measured by coding the situation in which he or she appeared: as the main guest on the show, as one of the guests sitting at the table during the whole show, as one of the guests sitting at the table during a part of the show, or as part of a (short) video clip. To measure the impact of the coverage of the party leaders, we constructed a formula to calculate the prominence of the appearance of a party leader in an item, based on Vliegenthart (2007) and Watt et al. (1993).xiii

Whenever party leaders were coded as actors in campaign items, we also coded whether they discussed substantive issues. In these cases (n = 534), we coded indicators of authoritativeness and populism. The indicators were formulated as statements and measured on dichotomous response scales.

We operationalized “populist style” by measuring whether a certain party leader referred to a critical situation, emphasized decisiveness and fast and strong measures or was presented as such, and presented him- or herself as a manager or was presented as such. Additionally, we measured whether the party leader in question used intensifiers such as “surely” and “certainly” and whether he or she used hedges and hesitations. The Mokken scale analysis showed that these items form a medium scale (H = 0.46).xiv Two additional indicators of populist rhetoric, “anti-elitism” (operationalized by coding whether party leaders critiqued the established political order) and “heartland” (operationalized by coding whether the party leader mentioned the man in the street, or the common man) were included in the analysis as separate variables.

The following items were developed to measure “authoritativeness”: whether the party leader in question used arguments, referred to statistics and/or other sources, and by coding whether the party leader proposed solutions for perceived problems xv. The Mokken scale analysis showed that these items form a medium scale (H = 0.45).

Because of the possible association of immigration and integration news with extreme right ideology and thus a possible threat to democracy, we also need to control for media coverage of topics that have been a taboo in the past. In the last decade, The Netherlands has seen drastic changes in the public discourse on the topic: Salience has increased and the multiculturalist view has lost its support, while there is more attention to Islam as a threat (Roggeband & Vliegenthart, 2007). Therefore, we include a final variable, “immigration topics,” which was measured
by coding the five most important policy topics related to each actor in a news item. For each party leader, we coded the percentage of items in which immigration and/or integration was one of the main topics the party leader referred to. By including this variable, we control for possible spurious effects of style or rhetoric variables associated with substantial coverage.

Linking survey data to content data. For each respondent, media exposure was weighted on the basis of the media coverage variables, divided by total media exposure to all of the outlets, thus computing individual exposure to the various media coverage variables. We did this for all media coverage variables. As an example, we show the construction of the populism variable:

\[
\text{Populism}_{\text{party leader}} = \frac{\text{Populism}_{\text{party leader outlet}} \cdot \text{Media exposure}_{\text{outlet i}}}{\sum \text{Media exposure}_{\text{outlet ij}}}
\]

which represents the individual respondents’ exposure to the populist style of the various party leaders. These weighted media exposure variables are thus contingent on the media outlets each respondent uses, as well as on the amount of prominence, populist rhetoric and style, and authoritativeness of each party leader in each outlet (see Appendix C for the descriptives)\(^{xvi}\).

**Results**

First of all, Appendix C shows individual media exposure\(^{xvii}\) to the prominence, populist rhetoric, populist style, and authoritativeness of the various party leaders. If we take the most successful right-wing populist, Geert Wilders, as an example and compare him with the most successful mainstream party leader, Jan-Peter Balkenende, we see that the latter is perceived as more prominent: The average individual media exposure to news items in which Balkenende appears is 12.71, whereas it is −10.46 for news items in which there is attention to Wilders. On the other hand, we find that our respondents are more often exposed to the populist style of Wilders (\(M = 0.32\)) than they are to the populist style of Balkenende (\(M = −0.39\)). And the same goes for authoritativeness: Respondents are more often exposed to the authoritativeness of Wilders (\(M = 0.31\)) than they are to the authoritativeness of Balkenende (\(M = 0.03\)). Overall, we see that the differences
between and within the two types of party leaders are substantial. We, however, cannot draw any conclusions about the media dependency of right-wing populists based on these differences. In order to do so, we have to look at the relationship between the weighted media coverage variables and the perceived effectiveness and legitimacy of the various party leaders.

Moreover, the descriptives (see Appendix C) for our main variables show that perceived effectiveness and perceived legitimacy vary substantially over the various politicians. On average, we see that perceived effectiveness as well as perceived legitimacy is lowest among right-wing populists. Moreover, they also vary over time and change during the course of the campaign: For all party leaders except Balkenende, perceived effectiveness is lower at the end of the campaign, whereas perceived legitimacy is generally higher except for Halsema (Greens). The variation in the dependent variables is also illustrated by the explained variance of the simple autoregressive model, in which effectiveness and legitimacy are only explained by their lagged values. The overall explained variance of this model is .596 for effectiveness at $t_1$ and .382 for legitimacy at $t_1$, which illustrates that other factors than the lagged value of the dependent variable can have an impact, such as media coverage variables.

Table 3.1 presents the effects of media coverage on the perceived effectiveness of party leaders. In the base model, we find a significant positive effect of party preference on the dependent variable: The higher the preference for the party in question, the greater the positive change in effectiveness. In Model 2, we find significant effects of three of our media coverage variables. First of all, the more prominent a political leader appears in the mass media, the greater the positive change in effectiveness. Moreover, we find a negative effect of the coverage of party leaders using a populist style and a positive effect from the depiction of an authoritative style. Finally, party leaders who are presented as making more appeals to the heartland are perceived to be less effective.

In Model 3, the interactions with the dummy right-wing populist party leader are given, which forms a test for our hypotheses. After all, our hypotheses focus on the effects of the media coverage of right-wing populist leaders on the perception of these leaders. First, overall, we find that our media coverage variables lead to a 7.9% increase in the intra-individual explained variance and a 6.0% increase in the overall explained variance. Moreover, our findings support H1a,
which stated the expectation that more prominent right-wing populist party leaders are perceived to be more effective: The main effect is significant, and there is no significant effect of the interaction with the dummy right-wing populist leader. This implies that the effect running from prominence to effectiveness is positive and significant for all party leaders, mainstream or right-wing populist.

Table 3.1: Fixed Effects Regression Analysis Predicting Perceived Effectiveness at t1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model I</th>
<th>Model II</th>
<th>Model III</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respondent Characteristics</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness t-1</td>
<td>0.696 (0.023)**</td>
<td>0.460 (0.025)**</td>
<td>0.443 (0.026)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Preference t-1</td>
<td>0.143 (0.023)**</td>
<td>0.135 (0.021)**</td>
<td>0.132 (0.021)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-right distance</td>
<td>0.085 (0.038)</td>
<td>0.022 (0.021)</td>
<td>0.015 (0.028)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Issue</td>
<td>0.573 (0.589)</td>
<td>0.697 (0.544)</td>
<td>0.745 (0.541)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Internet Use</td>
<td>0.527 (0.652)</td>
<td>0.432 (0.588)</td>
<td>0.474 (0.557)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Communication</td>
<td>0.196 (0.336)</td>
<td>-0.083 (0.303)</td>
<td>0.190 (0.317)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media Coverage</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prominence</td>
<td>0.088 (0.007)**</td>
<td>0.071 (0.011)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist rhetoric: Anti-elitism</td>
<td>0.438 (0.946)</td>
<td>1.247 (1.365)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist rhetoric: Heartland</td>
<td>-3.678 (1.595)*</td>
<td>-3.059 (2.357)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist style</td>
<td>-0.712 (0.226)**</td>
<td>-1.352 (0.390)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritativeness</td>
<td>0.877 (0.375)*</td>
<td>1.300 (0.608)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWP leader</td>
<td>-0.259 (1.460)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interactions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWP leader * Prominence</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.048 (0.127)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWP leader * Anti-elitism</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.081 (1.945)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWP leader * Heartland</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.825 (3.236)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWP leader * Populism</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.987 (0.746)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWP leader * Authoritativeness</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.414 (0.832)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>2.426 (0.197)**</td>
<td>4.317 (0.213)**</td>
<td>4.669 (0.273)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-square</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within</td>
<td>0.624</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td>0.703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between</td>
<td>0.315</td>
<td>0.259</td>
<td>0.248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>0.561</td>
<td>0.617</td>
<td>0.621</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, standard deviations in parentheses; *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<0.001.

However, H2a (right-wing populist party leaders who are anti-elitist have a hard time appearing effective) receives no support. We find no negative effect from anti-elitism, as expected, but a small, positive yet insignificant effect and no
significant interaction effect; whether right-wing populist leaders are more or less anti-elitist in the media thus has no effect on the extent to which they are perceived to be effective. As for our second populist rhetoric variable, we can answer RQ1 (“What is the effect of right-wing populist party leaders’ appeals to the heartland on the perceived effectiveness and legitimacy of right-wing populist party leaders?”): There is no significant effect from appeals to the heartland on the effectiveness (no significant main effect and no significant interaction effect) of right-wing populist party leaders (as well as mainstream party leaders).

H3a, which stated that right-wing populists who are presented in a more populist style are perceived to be more effective, is also not supported: We do not find a positive effect of populism on effectiveness. Instead, we find that mainstream party leaders who are presented with a populist style in the mass media are perceived to be less effective ($B = -1.352, SE = 0.282, p < .001$). However, this is not the case for right-wing populists: The positive interaction for these party leaders indicates that when they are perceived as more populist, this has a small, positive yet insignificant effect on the change in their perceived effectiveness ($B = 0.634, SE = 0.500$).

Finally, we do find support for H4, which stated that right-wing populist party leaders who are presented to be more authoritative in the mass media are perceived to be more effective: We find a positive significant main effect and no significant interaction effect, which indicates that for all party leaders, whether right-wing populist or mainstream, being authoritative has a positive effect on their perceived effectiveness.

The results of the fixed effects analysis on the perceived legitimacy of party leaders are given in Table 3.2. The first model indicates that changes in legitimacy are again affected by party preference. In the second model, we find one significant effect from our media coverage variables: The more prominent a party leader is during the election campaign, the more legitimate he or she is perceived to be.

In the third model, we include reference to immigration topics as a control variable, because we assume that perceptions of legitimacy might also be affected by the extent to which party leaders are identified with taboo, or extreme right, topics such as immigration topics. Inclusion of this variable renders the effect of prominence insignificant. Overall, in the fourth model, we find that inclusion of our
Finally, because we find no significant interactions between the dummy “right-wing populist party leader” and our media coverage variables (see Model 4), we can conclude that the observed effects in Model 3 are the same for all party leaders, right-wing populist or mainstream. We can now review our hypotheses. First of all, due to the insignificant main effect of prominence on perceived legitimacy, we do not find support for H1b: Right-wing populist party leaders who are more...
prominent in the mass media are not perceived to be more legitimate. Similarly, we find no support for our hypotheses regarding anti-elitism (H2b) and populist style (H3b). We expected a negative effect running from anti-elitism and populist style to perceived legitimacy, and instead we find no significant effects, positive or negative, for mainstream party leaders or right-wing populists. And RQ1 can be answered: There is no significant effect of appeals to the heartland on the perceived legitimacy (no significant main effect and no significant interaction effect) of right-wing populist party leaders (as well as mainstream party leaders).

Finally, RQ2 asked, “Are there any differences between the effects of the media on the image of right-wing populist leaders compared to mainstream leaders?” The answer is short: There are no differences but one—the effect of populist style on the change in perceived effectiveness, which is negative for mainstream leaders and positive yet insignificant for right-wing populists. The assumption held in one part of the literature that right-wing populist party leaders are more dependent upon the media is not substantiated by the results: We do not find larger media effects for these leaders, and among all of the media effects tested we find only one significant difference with mainstream leaders, which is what can be expected by chance.

**Discussion**

This study tested the extent to which the image of right-wing populist leaders is affected by mass media coverage. As do all party leaders, right-wing populists need the mass media to provide them with a stage from which they can convey their ideas to the public, but also, by displaying a certain style, to create an image that has a positive effect on their public perception. In this chapter, we tested whether and to what extent the media are “friend or foe” (Mudde, 2007, p. 253) of these party leaders in a real-life setting combining an extensive content analysis with two-wave panel data. We find significant effects of right-wing populists’ depiction in the media on the public’s perception of these leaders. In other words, how politicians are portrayed in the media “does matter and can be pivotal” (Iyengar & Simon, 2000, p. 150): Media coverage shapes candidates’ images by making certain political candidates and/or their attributes more salient.

This study confirms Mudde’s (2007) assumption that the media are both friend and foe at the same time. By linking the immigration issue to right-wing populist
leaders, they exert a *negative* effect on perceived legitimacy. This perceived legitimacy, however, is important for the electoral chances of these parties (Bos & van der Brug, 2010; Schedler, 1996; van der Brug et al., 2005): Most voters are not willing to support a party that is not supportive of liberal democracy. In the literature on this party family, two sources are identified that affect the legitimization of these parties: mainstream political parties and the mass media (see, for instance, Art, 2007; Bale, 2003; Van Spanje & van der Brug, 2007). By paying attention to right-wing populist parties, their leaders, and their main issues, the mass media indicate what is politically salient and thereby legitimize them. Yet, we find the opposite: By paying attention to right-wing populists and linking them to immigration topics, these parties are instead associated with radical ideas. The common political wisdom that says “*any* publicity is good publicity,” particularly popular among right-wing populist politicians (Mudde, 2007, p. 252), thus does not hold in this case.

It is, however, not inconceivable that reference to immigration topics does have a positive effect on other dependent variables such as support. After all, it has been found that higher salience of immigration topics increases public salience of these topics, and it is theorized that due to the issue ownership hypothesis parties that are associated with these topics are more preferred (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2007; Walgrave & De Swert, 2004).

However, this study shows simultaneously that the media can also be a friend of right-wing populist leaders. In order to have electoral success, it is important for them to appear to be influential, or effective (Bos & van der Brug, 2010; van der Brug et al., 2005). Our results show that to be seen as effective, whether in parliament or in the public debate, prominence, first of all, is key. This confirms our expectations: In order to be influential, party leaders need to be visible. Prominence makes a small and new party relevant for voters. When party leaders receive a large amount of attention, their party and its message are taken seriously: They are one of the parties that may get in power, or they are at least in sight of a number of seats in parliament. Hence, if voters want to influence the political game, voting for these parties is rational and will not lead to a lost vote.

Moreover, we find effects of argumentation style: It is not only the amount of attention for a party leader that is important, it also matters *how* the party leader is portrayed, as stated in the second-level agenda-setting theory. We find that right-wing populist leaders who appear to be more authoritative by displaying their
knowledge on the topics discussed are perceived to be more effective. This confirms our expectation that right-wing populists, besides being extraordinary (in order to be newsworthy), also have to try to appear as “normal” as possible by elaborating on their viewpoints (see also Bos et al., 2010).

Furthermore, using a populist style does not harm right-wing populists, yet it does not help them either. And this is the one media effect that differs for right-wing populist leaders on the one hand and mainstream leaders on the other: We find a significant positive interaction effect between populist style and the dummy right-wing populist leader. Whereas mainstream party leaders are evaluated negatively when they act in a populist manner, right-wing populist leaders are not punished for it. This is a striking result, especially in the light of the populist zeitgeist in which “populist discourse has become mainstream in the politics of western democracies” (Mudde, 2004, p. 542): The populist rhetoric and style is more and more adopted by mainstream leaders, possibly in the hope of positively affecting their image and, subsequently, increasing their electoral success. And it also sheds light on the important question posed in the literature: How is the populist discourse received among voters (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007)? A possible explanation could be that voters associate populism with populist leadership, and therefore if mainstream leaders act in a populist manner it may be seen as strategic and insincere behavior, which is subsequently evaluated negatively. This finding also shows that the effects of the same attribute—populist style—can vary across different political candidates (Funk, 1999).

One would expect that the simple and direct populist style, containing appeals to the “average Joe,” could strike a chord with potential supporters of populist parties. Albertazzi (2007), for instance, finds that the discourse of right-wing populist parties depends on the nature of their constituency: The style is adapted to fit the needs of the heartland. Yet, even though we do not find evidence for a direct effect, it is very well possible that using a populist style or using populist rhetoric positively affects media attention, which in turn affects public perception of these leaders. That is, due to “newsroom populism” (Plasser & Ulram, 2003) or media populism (Mazzoleni, 2003), the media “happen to be allied to populist movements by engaging with people’s moods, catering to their entertainment needs, and harping negative stories” (Stewart et al., 2003, p. 233). By being anti-elitist, dramatizing, using simple and strong language, and emphasizing strong or
charismatic leadership, right-wing populists use rhetorical and style aspects that cater to the needs of many media outlets, thereby ensuring prominence (Mudde, 2007). And it is mainly through prominence in the media that voters acquire a positive image of these leaders, by perceiving them to be more effective.

On a critical note, it could be argued that our model cannot fully distinguish between media effects and reality: These party leaders are not only presented differently by the mass media, they objectively differ in style, personality, and capacities, which in turn affects their media coverage. Since we do not have “objectified” measures of the “real” authoritativeness of the party leaders or their “real” degree of populist style, we cannot empirically disentangle reality from the media coverage of reality. It seems safe to assume that citizens obtain almost all of their information about the populist style and authoritativeness of a politician via mass media. Our study presents effects of the way politicians are portrayed in the mass media. When interpreting these effects, we should realize that politicians are themselves in large part responsible for how they appear in the mass media, and therefore they are largely the agents of their own success or failure.

Our analyses show that the public image of right-wing populist leaders is mainly positively affected by prominence in the mass media. This prominence is often ensured by being extraordinary, or populist, and by being provocative, bringing up issues such as immigration and integration. Whereas the first strategy does not harm these leaders and seems wise in order to guarantee prominence, the latter is more problematic. How these results hold for leaders of right-wing populist parties beyond the insurgent phase of their career should be pursued in future research.

Because these parties are often new and have a less stable electoral base, it is sometimes argued that they depend more than other parties upon the media for the formation of their image. On the other hand, research on right-wing populist parties indicates few differences between right-wing populist and mainstream parties. In our study, we tested both views and, overall, find no evidence for the assumption that right-wing populists are more dependent on the media than others: There are no differences between right-wing populists and leaders of mainstream parties when it comes to the extent to which they depend on the mass media. This finding connects to the idea that right-wing populist parties should not be perceived as representing a “normal pathology” (Scheuch & Klingemann, 1967) but a
“pathological normalcy” (Mudde, 2010): “The populist radical right constitutes a radicalization of mainstream views,” which consequentially means that these parties should be studied by using concepts and theories of mainstream political science. For instance, van der Brug et al. (2000, 2003), van der Brug and Mughan (2007), and Bos and van der Brug (2010) demonstrate that voters for right-wing populist parties are just as rational as voters for any other (mainstream) party. They base their vote on the same ideological and pragmatic considerations and are not more than others persuaded by charismatic, effective, or legitimate leaders.

Moreover, de Lange (2008) shows that the government participation of right-wing populist parties can be studied by using universal coalition formation theories. Similarly, our results (again) show that preference formation does not differ between voters for right-wing populist parties and voters for mainstream parties. Furthermore, we find no evidence for the assumption that voters are attracted to these leaders because they are different: Their populist style or rhetoric does not elicit any positive evaluations. In fact, they are judged by the same criteria as other party leaders are. The only thing that distinguishes right-wing populist leaders from others is their strategy in gaining media attention: Their populist style resonates with media logic and does not put off voters. However, that certain parties use different media strategies does not make them intrinsically different than any other party with regard to their relationship with voters. In other words, right-wing populist parties are not in a league of their own, as is often assumed.
Notes

i The other two right-wing populist parties (LVF and PVN) were less visible during the election campaign, and consequently less known by the electorate. Consequently, we were not able to incorporate these leaders in the media effects analysis.

ii See http://gking.harvard.edu/amelia. Amelia produced five data sets in which missing values were imputed under different assumptions. For our analysis in Stata, we made use of Ken Scheve’s MI program to automatically compute the quantities of interest and the standard errors. An analysis of the unimputed data matrix leads to very similar results and the same substantial conclusions.

iii We used the program MSPWIN 5.0 (Molenaar, Van Schuur, Sijtsma, & Mokken, 2002) to perform the scale analysis.

iv Legitimacy was measured with the following two items:

1. To reach their goal some politicians are willing to ignore important democratic rules, while others will comply with these democratic rules under all circumstances. Below you see a number of current politicians. Could you tell me whether you think that they have always complied with the democratic principles and that they always will? (Responses could vary from 1 [doesn’t care about democratic rules] to 7 [always complies with the democratic rules].)

2. Sometimes people think a certain politician or party is dangerous. They are afraid that when that politician rises to power he or she will pose a threat to democracy. Others are of the opinion that this will not be the case. Below you will see a number of politicians. Imagine a situation in which this politician has risen to power—do you think that this politician would then pose a threat to democracy? (Responses could vary from 1 [If he/she rose to power he/she would pose a real threat to democracy] to 7 [If he/she rose to power he/she would definitely not pose a threat to democracy].)

Effectiveness was measured with two items as well:

1. Some politicians have great influence on governmental policy; others do not have a lot of influence. Could you indicate for each of the following politicians whether you expect they will exert little or a lot of influence after the elections? (Responses could vary from 1 [will probably have little influence on policy] to 7 [will probably have a lot of influence on policy].)

2. Some politicians you don’t hear from, whereas other politicians exert a lot of influence on public debates. How important have the following politicians been in the public debate? (Responses could vary from 1 [does not shape the public debate at all] to 7 [shapes the public debate to a large extent].)

v According to Mokken, the coefficient $H$ (homogeneity of the items) has to be .30 or higher to be a scale. When $H$ is higher than .50, it is a strong scale.
Because they are very often included as important explanatory variables, we additionally ran analyses in which we included measures of political interest and political knowledge. However, because we controlled for the lagged variable, the effects of these variables on the dependent variable were not significant, which is why we left them out of the analyses presented in this chapter.

To create the stacked data matrix, the generic independent variables had to be linearly transformed. As a result, their effects are positive.

We deliberately omitted Socialist Party (SP) leader Jan Marijnissen from the analysis, even though this party had great electoral success, the main reason being the populist nature of the party. We want to compare right-wing populist party leaders with leaders of established parties. Since the SP is often considered to be a left-wing populist party, we could have biased the results by including it in the group of established parties. We did, however, estimate our models with the SP included in the group of established parties, but this did not change the results substantively.

For more extensive information on the nature of the content analysis data, see Bos et al. (2010).

See http://academic.lexisnexis.nl/uva.

Because of a shortage of newspaper articles in which right-wing populist leaders were coded as one of the actors, we coded all of the articles in which Geert Wilders and Marco Pastors spoke about substantive matters. As a result, an extra 42 items were coded. These items were only used to estimate the positions of the right-wing populist leaders on the populism and authoritativeness dimensions.

See chapter 2 for a more detailed description of the intercoder reliability check and the results.

See chapter 2 for the formula.

The additional items referring to the ideological core of populism, anti-elitism, and heartland do not fit the scale.

In the original scale, we also included an item that measured whether the party leader referred to facts. However, due to low intercoder reliability results, we had to exclude the item from the scale.

Because the content analysis data are limited and provide only limited variance, we unfortunately cannot test interactions between the various aspects of the media coverage of right-wing populist leaders.

These variables are centered around their mean in order to use them in interaction terms.

The interactions are calculated not by using the original variables, but their deviations from the mean (Jaccard, Turrisi, & Wan, 1990).
We understand combining the two very different right-wing populist party leaders Geert Wilders and Marco Pastors into one dummy called “right-wing populist party leader” might raise questions with the reader. Tests did confirm, however, that including a dummy for each right-wing populist party leader individually did not change the results. We did not choose for this solution, because we believe that including two dummies and thereby doubling the number of interactions in our analysis would not lead to a substantive addition and would make the presentation of our results even more complex.

It can be argued that audience segmentation can have a polarizing effect; that is, media effects can differ between left-wing and right-wing parts of the electorate in such a way that the overall effect is insignificant. We have, however, tested for this and found that media effects are the same for audience members from all ideological backgrounds.
Chapter 4

AN EXPERIMENTAL TEST OF THE IMPACT OF STYLE AND RHETORIC ON THE PERCEPTION OF RIGHT-WING POPULIST AND MAINSTREAM LEADERS

Manuscript under review

Abstract

It has often been argued that the communication strategies used by right-wing populists are key to their appeal to voters. However, prior studies found only rather limited across-the-board effects of communication strategies that employ a populist style and rhetoric. Across-the-board effects were only found for party leaders who appear to be more authoritative. In this study we focus on the conditionality of the effects of different communication strategies on the perceived effectiveness and the perceived legitimacy of one right-wing populist, and one mainstream leader. We use an experimental setup with a large-N representative sample of Dutch voters (n = 3,125). The results show that the effects of populist communication strategies differ for the lower educated, the politically cynical, and the less efficacious. These groups of voters are more susceptible to persuasion by the populist style of the right-wing populist party leader. Results are discussed in the light of research on (right-wing) populism.

1 A revised version of this manuscript, co-authored by Wouter van der Brug and Claes de Vreese, is under review.
Introduction

The growth of right-wing populist parties during recent decades, especially in Western Europe, has fostered research on this ‘exceptional’ and relatively new party family. Among the various research themes touched upon within this field are the potential pivotal role of party leaders for their parties’ success (Bos & Van der Brug, 2010; Van der Brug & Mughan, 2007), and the impact and role of the mass media (e.g., Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2007; Koopmans & Muis, 2009). A third related theme combines these insights and draws on the specific populist rhetoric and style of these right-wing populist party leaders (Albertazzi; 2007, Bos, Van der Brug & De Vreese, 2010; Hawkins, 2009; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007) and the effects this supposedly has on the way they are perceived or evaluated (Bos, Van der Brug & De Vreese, 2011; Mazzoleni, Stewart & Horsfield, 2003).

This study digs deeper into this topic, and focuses on the “reception of the populist discourse among voters” (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007, p. 337). We know that certain parts of the electorate are more attracted to right-wing populist parties, but the exact mechanism at work is not clear. This chapter looks at this question and in doing so focuses particularly on education, political cynicism and political efficacy as moderators of communication strategy effects. We investigate whether the lower educated, the politically cynical and the less efficacious are more susceptible to the populist style and rhetoric.

We use an approach that has not been used before in the field of research on right-wing populism: an experiment. This allows us to establish the impact of three separate communication strategies. We focus on the effects of 1) the populist style, 2) the populist rhetoric and 3) authoritativeness (i.e., the extent to which a leader appears to be knowledgeable about the topics discussed) on the extent to which party leaders are perceived to be effective (i.e., able to affect policies or influence the public debate) and legitimate (not posing a threat to democracy). We make a comparison between a right-wing populist and a mainstream party leader. The experimental set-up contributes to the literature in three ways. First of all, the direct manipulation and specification of the three communication strategies allows us to conduct a strong causal test. Prior ‘in viva’ studies had to rely upon the communication strategies that politicians have actually used. Yet, we cannot know what the consequences would have been had they followed a different strategy.
How would the public react if a mainstream politician uses populist rhetoric? We cannot test that if mainstream leaders do not follow that strategy. An experiment, on the other hand, does provide the opportunity to manipulate the content of news messages and hence provides us with more opportunities to test the effects of media content. Secondly, this study gives us the opportunity to isolate and disentangle the individual effects of the three strategies. And finally, and most importantly, we can now examine the effects of possible individual-level moderators to gain a more in-depth understanding of why and whether certain individuals are more prone to be affected by (specific) right-wing populist communication strategies.

This study employs a 2x2x2x2 factorial design: absence and presence of populist style, rhetoric and authoritativeness varies and the main political actor varies over sixteen conditions: we use the party leader of the Dutch right-wing populist PVV as well as the chairman of the – mainstream – liberal VVD. This setup takes into account all possible interactions between the three different strategies and allows us to determine whether the effects differ between right-wing populist and mainstream party leaders. We use an online representative sample of 3,125 members of the LISS Household Panel which were randomly assigned to each of the sixteen experimental groups. The results show that the three communication strategies do indeed resonate with particular parts of the (right-wing populist) electorate.

**Communication strategies and perceptions of leaders**

In this chapter we focus on three communication strategies used by right-wing populist and mainstream party leaders, that are assumed to affect perceived effectiveness and legitimacy (Bos et al., 2011).

*Populist rhetoric, style and authoritativeness*

The *populist rhetoric* consists of an anti-establishment appeal or anti-elitism, and the celebration of the heartland, which is, according to Taggart (2000), a place “in which, in the populist imagination, a virtuous and unified population resides” (p. 95). Populism “considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’ and (...) that
politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people” (Mudde, 2004, p. 543).

Research has shown that these substantive components of populism have to be set aside from populist style elements (Bos et al., 2010). Mainstream parties more easily adopt the presentation style of populists than the more substantive elements of their rhetoric. Populists, and their followers, claim to be reluctant politicians, who only engage in politics because of a perceived extreme crisis. (Mudde, 2004; Taggart, 2000). This corresponds with what Albertazzi (2007) calls “dramatization”: the “need to generate tension in order to build up support for the party (…) by denouncing the tragedies that would befall the community if it were to be deprived of its defences.” (p. 335) Another aspect of the populist style is “ordinariness” (Stewart et al., 2003, p. 228), “straightforwardness, simplicity and clarity”, (Taggart, 2000, p. 97), “man in the street communication styles” (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 2) and “friend versus foe” rhetoric (Weyland, 2001): populists use simple and strong language. A final aspect of the populist style is the emphasis on the strong (charismatic) party leader. Generally, populist movements are organized around a central leader, without whom the party organization would fall apart (e.g., Weyland, 2001). Moreover, these leaders often have authoritarian traits: they refer to themselves as the crisis manager and have an ambivalent relation with democratic leadership (Taggart, 2000).

The third communication strategy we focus on is authoritativeness, which refers to how knowledgeable a politician is about the political topics discussed. Because voters base their electoral preference (partially) on substantial grounds, it is essential for all party leaders to get their ideological message across; they have to be able to convey their position on a set of core issues (Bos et al., 2010). Moreover, voters prefer a party leader who is also able to convince others, especially within parliament or within the broader political realm. To be authoritative in this interpretation is thus expected to be highly related to being persuasive: to what extent can the party leader convince voters that he or she has a strong case, i.e., is credible (Hovland & Weiss, 1951)? We argue that party leaders are more authoritative when they use arguments and mention ‘facts’ when they elaborate on their viewpoints (O’Keefe, 1998). They can refer to statistics or other sources. A final aspect is the extent to which right-wing populists propose solutions to the problems raised: politicians who bring up problems and do not come with
suggestions to overcome them are perceived to have a lack of knowledge on the issues addressed. Landau et al. (2004) find that “when reminders of one’s vulnerability and mortality are highly salient” (p. 1137) support is higher for leaders that are able to help people manage their fears.

Perceived effectiveness and legitimacy

We focus on two dependent variables concerning the public perception of the politicians covered in the experiment and draw on previous research on the public image of right-wing populist leaders in which two aspects were found to be important for their electoral success: effectiveness and legitimacy (Bos & Van der Brug, 2010).

Most electoral research indicates that voters make a reasoned choice when they vote, which means that they take into account the consequences of their choice (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998). Therefore, they prefer party leaders who are able to reach certain goals (Bos & Van der Brug; 2010, Van der Brug et al., 2005). Perceived effectiveness of party leaders is important for right-wing populists as well as mainstream leaders (Bos & Van der Brug, 2010) in order to be seen as a serious political contestant.

We also know that voters in general prefer party leaders who do not intend to radically change or overthrow the democratic representational system (Bos & Van der Brug, 2010; Van der Brug et al., 2005); they have to be perceived to be legitimate. However, because of the (fascist) anti-democratic and anti-constitutional legacy of some right-wing populist parties (Carter, 2005), these parties may be identified with the extreme right, which could lead voters to assess some right-wing populists as illegitimate. Even though potential voters for these party leaders may be critical of the political establishment, most of them will not want to see the democratic system endangered. It is therefore important for right-wing populist party leaders “(1) to make clear that they belong neither to the political establishment nor to the camp of anti-democratic forces; (2) to make credible that they do oppose the political elite – but the political elite only and not the liberal democratic system” (Schedler, 1996, p. 302).
An experimental test of the effect of communication strategies on leader perception

In political science research the prominence and impact of experiments has grown in recent decades (Druckman, Green, Kuklinski, & Lupia, 2006). However, within the field of research on right-wing populism and/or media populism such a strong causal test has never been conducted. It is clear that right-wing populist leaders adopt a different approach of presenting themselves by using an idiosyncratic style or rhetoric (Bos et al., 2010; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007), and it is oftentimes assumed that this populist style and rhetoric is a decisive factor in determining the success, and the perception, of these politicians. At the same time research has shown that voters for these parties evaluate their leaders in the same way voters for mainstream parties do (Bos & Van der Brug, 2010), and that they have to appear to be authoritative, i.e., persuasive or knowledgeable, to be perceived to be effective, just as leaders of mainstream parties do (Bos et al., 2011). An experimental setup allows us to conduct a strong causal test and estimate communication strategy effects directly by means of experimental manipulation.

The moderating role of educational level, political cynicism, and political efficacy

The use of an extensive survey experiment enables us to take a closer look at the conditional effects of the three communication strategies under investigation. We know from extant research that media or communication effects are oftentimes moderated by background variables. Moreover, with regard to right-wing populist parties (and their leaders) the question is still up in the air whether the specific populist style and rhetoric appeals to certain people specifically (e.g., Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). Therefore our main aim is to explore the extent to which these communication strategy effects are conditional upon individual-level characteristics of voters. In research on the support for right-wing populist parties several key background variables are used as explanations for the electoral success of these parties. It is, however, not clear why these specific voters feel more attracted to these parties. In this study we investigate whether this is the case because they are more susceptible to populist communication strategies.

In research on the demand-side explanations for right-wing populist party success there are several indications that the lower educated feel attracted to right-
wing populist parties. The ‘insecurity’ thesis supposes that the lower educated are more affected by the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial capitalist society (e.g., Betz, 1994), globalization, and mass immigration, and have therefore become “insecure about various aspects of their life (…) They seek salvation in the ‘simple messages’ of the populist radical right, which promises a clear identity and protection against the changing world” (Mudde, 2007, p. 223). Another reason is that, unlike individuals who received more education, their “populist radical right attitudes” are not replaced by “democratic’ or ‘tolerant’ values” (Mudde, 2007, p. 217). Moreover, in their statements right-wing populists oftentimes refer to the common man and try to speak their language. Albertazzi (2007), for instance, finds that the populist style is adapted to fit the needs of the heartland. And the heartland is typically occupied by the “man in the street”, “Average Joe”, “the ordinary man” who is often not that highly educated. It is therefore plausible that the populist style and rhetoric resonates more with the lower educated.

Moreover, in general, right-wing populist parties take an anti-political establishment (Schedler, 1996), antiparty or anti-elitist approach, blame mainstream political parties and elites for problems in society and argue that these mainstream parties and elites have lost the connection with ‘the people’. Consequentially, it is argued that these parties attract people who hold negative attitudes towards the political establishment (political resentment) (Betz, 1994). And indeed, voters for right-wing populist parties seem to hold strong anti-establishment sentiments (Knigge, 1998; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2000; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2001; Norris, 2005), or, are highly cynical. Consequentially, it is possible that “a populist discourse only attracts voters who already felt deserted by the political elites” (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007, p. 337), i.e. voters who show higher levels of political cynicism.

It has also been argued that it are mainly the politically inefficacious, i.e. the ones that have feelings of powerlessness, that feel attracted to populism (Belanger & Aarts, 2006) and it could therefore also be assumed that it are those voters are therefore also more affected by the populist style and discourse.

These considerations lead us to expect that a populist style and discourse will mainly exert effects on the lower educated, the cynical, and the less efficacious. Main effects, or across the board effects, will be estimated, but in the case of populist
style and discourse we do not expect these to exist. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H1a: The effect of populist rhetoric on perceived effectiveness is positive for the lower educated, the more politically cynical and the less politically efficacious.

H1b: The effect of populist rhetoric on perceived legitimacy is positive for the lower educated, the more politically cynical and the less politically efficacious.

H2a: The effect of populist style on perceived effectiveness is positive for the lower educated, the more politically cynical and the less politically efficacious.

H2b: The effect of populist style on perceived legitimacy is positive for the lower educated, the more politically cynical and the less politically efficacious.

Finally, we have no reason to expect the effect of authoritativeness to be moderated by education, cynicism or efficacy. This generic communication style is assumed to appeal to all voters, which is corroborated by a recent study that shows positive across-the-board effects for authoritativeness, on the perceived effectiveness of mainstream as well as right-wing populist leaders (Bos et al., 2011). So, the last hypothesis is:

H3: Being authoritative positively affects the perceived effectiveness of the right-wing populist or mainstream leader.

**Differences between party leaders**

By comparing the effects of communication strategies on the perception of one right-wing populist leader with the perception of one mainstream party leader, we also assess the difference between the two leader types. It could be argued, that the first four hypotheses only hold for the right-wing populist party leader. When he uses a populist style or rhetoric it is congruent with his political standing. However, it is not clear how using a populist rhetoric or populist style affects the perceived effectiveness and legitimacy of the mainstream leader. Is there no effect? And if there is an effect, in which direction? And how does this resonate among different groups of voters? Finally, as recent research suggested we expect no differences between both leader types when it comes to the effect of
authoritativeness. Because we have no ground for a hypothesis in this regard, we pose a research question:

**RQ1:** Are there any differences between the effects of the three communication strategies on the image of the right-wing populist leader compared to the mainstream leader?

**Experimental setup**

To investigate the effects of the style and rhetoric on the perception of and support for right-wing populist and mainstream leaders, we conduct an online survey experiment among a representative sample of Dutch citizens. This has several advantages over laboratory experiments: the experimental setting reflects the everyday life of the respondents more closely and scores higher on mundane realism, which ensures higher external validity, and the non-obtrusive environment minimizes the experimenter effect and social desirability effects (Arceneaux, 2010, McDermott, 2002).

**Design**

In a between-subjects, post-test only experimental survey design, we randomly assigned individuals to one of sixteen conditions. To gain further insight in the effects of populist style, populist rhetoric, and authoritativeness on the perceived legitimacy and effectiveness of (right-wing populist and mainstream) politicians, we presented respondents with one of sixteen versions of a short realistic news item on one right-wing populist leader - Geert Wilders, the party leader of the Dutch right-wing populist party PVV – and one liberal political leader – Stef Blok, the chairman of the Dutch liberal VVD. These two political leaders were chosen because they only differ in one regard, their political orientation, whereas other characteristics, such as their political position, and there standing on the policy topic in the news item, are comparable. Absence and presence of populist style and rhetoric and authoritativeness varies. Our 2x2x2x2 experimental setup results in sixteen conditions, illustrated in Table 4.1.
Table 4.1: Experimental Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Wilders</th>
<th>Blok</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Style</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritativeness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Style + Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Style + Authoritativeness</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Rhetoric + Authoritativeness</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Style + Populist Rhetoric + Authoritativeness</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample

In this chapter use is made of data of the LISS (Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social sciences) panel administered by CentERdata (Tilburg University, The Netherlands). The LISS panel data were collected by CentERdata through its MESS project funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research. The LISS panel is a representative sample of Dutch individuals who participate in monthly Internet surveys. The panel is based on a true probability sample of households drawn from the population register. Since this is an effects study, the representativeness of the sample for the Dutch population is not an important issue. Yet, the fact that we have a probability sample ensures that we have sufficient variation in the moderating variables education, cynicism and efficacy. Households that could not otherwise participate are provided with a computer and Internet connection. A longitudinal survey is fielded in the panel every year, covering a large variety of domains including work, education, income, housing, time use, political views, values and personality.

All LISS panel members aged 16 years and older were selected to participate in the survey. A total of 4,851 individuals completed the survey. The response rate was 70.3% (AAPOR RR1). In order to ensure independency of observations we only used those respondents that were the first member of their household to complete the survey. Moreover, we only included participants who spent at least 5 seconds reading the stimulus text. This left us with 3,125 respondents.
Experimental procedure

The procedure of the experiment is as follows. First, all respondents completed a short pre-test questionnaire, including possible moderators of the main effects, with items on populism, political cynicism and political knowledge. Then, participants read one news article in which the content was manipulated so as to contain (combinations of) populist rhetoric, populist style and authoritativeness (see Appendix E for texts of the news items). Third, participants received a post-test questionnaire asking for possible mediators, and the perception of one of the two politicians, including items on the perceived effectiveness and legitimacy of Geert Wilders and Stef Blok. A between condition randomization check on age, gender and left-right self-placement performed at the outset of the analysis revealed successful randomization with no between-group differences. The treatment and control groups did not differ with regard to educational level ($F(15,3102) = 1.439$, $p = 0.120$), political cynicism ($F(15,3109) = 0.835$, $p = 0.638$), and political efficacy ($F(15,2830) = 0.638$, $p = 0.846$), our pre-intervention moderator variables.

Stimulus material

The stimulus material consisted of one news article per condition on the intention of the recently formed government to build a new nuclear power station. In the story either Geert Wilders or Stef Blok showed his approval of this policy plan displaying authoritativeness and/or a populist style and/or using a populist rhetoric. The news article is constructed, which ensures a high amount of control: “the use of real news coverage would minimize the commensurability across conditions” (Lecheler et al, 2009, p. 407). Through the consultation of journalists we made the effort to give the articles the language and structure of Dutch news coverage so as to achieve realistic experimental conditions (Gaines, Kuklinski, & Quirk, 2007). Moreover, the constructed article is based on real journalistic coverage and official party documents. Basic information is kept similar between the conditions: the first few sentences are identical. Also, the number of sentences is identical. The manipulations were inserted in the texts by adding words to some of the sentences. One paragraph in the news story points to varying levels of populist rhetoric and style, and authoritativeness. The operationalization of these
communication strategies is based on Bos et al. (2010). The stimulus material is presented in Appendix E.

**Manipulation check**

In a pilot study among college students \( (n = 493) \), participants, after the reading the stimulus material, were asked to indicate on a 10-point scale to what extent the politician in the article a. used sources to substantiate his opinion; b. used figures to ground his opinion (a. and b. indicating authoritativeness); c. used exaggerations; d. formulated his opinion without making differentiations (c. and d. indicating populist style); e. criticized leftist activists; f. talked about the common man, or the man in the street (e. and f. indicating populist rhetoric). Even though the manipulation check showed successful manipulation (F-tests showed significant differences between the expected condition and the control group on the anticipated variables⁹), we manipulated the difference between the populist style condition and the populist rhetoric condition even stronger in the final experiment.

**Measures**

Our two dependent variables are direct measures of the effectiveness and legitimacy of both party leaders included in the analysis, each of which was measured with two items on 10-point scales. Cronbach’s alpha for Effectiveness was .779. The items are summarized in an index \((M = 11.95, SD = 3.67)\). Cronbach’s alpha for Legitimacy was .623. These items are also summarized in an index \((M = 11.13, SD = 4.18)\).

**Moderators**

Educational level was measured with an item tapping educational level on a 6-point scale \((M = 3.56, SD = 1.52)\). Political Cynicism was measured with four items tapping political cynicism on a 10-point scale. The items are summarized in a factor score \((M = 0.00, SD = 1.00)\) ranging from -3.02 to 2.38. Confirmatory factor analysis also showed that the four items load on the same factor, factor loadings range from .747 to .837, and Cronbach’s alpha for Political Cynicism was .809. External Political Efficacy was measured with three items tapping external political efficacy on a 2-point scale. The items are summarized in a factor score \((M = 0.00, SD = 1.00)\) ranging from -0.88 to 1.67. Confirmatory factor analysis also
showed that the three items load on the same factor, factor loadings range from .750 to .864, and Cronbach’s alpha for External Political Efficacy was .766. All three variables were centred around their mean in order to use them in interaction terms.

**Results**

The mean analysis for perceived effectiveness shows no significant mean differences \((F(7,3108) = 0.879, p = 0.522)\). Similarly, the mean analysis for perceived legitimacy shows no significant mean differences \((F(7,3108) = 0.697, p = 0.674)\). Comparable results are found for the perception of both leaders separately.

In table 4.2 we proceed with a regression analysis in which the three communication strategies of the 2x2x2x2 experiment are included as separate variables: the direct effects of the three communication strategies on the perceived effectiveness of Stef Blok and Geert Wilders are given. And whereas the first two models reveal no significant effects from our independent variables, the third model shows that when we take a closer look at the difference between the two party leaders we find a significant interaction between the dummy ‘Wilders’ and ‘authoritativeness’. This indicates that when Blok displays his knowledge on this specific topic it positively affects the extent to which respondents perceive him as effective \((B = 0.453, SE = 0.162)\), whereas when Wilders is authoritative this has no significant effect on his perceived effectiveness \((B = 0.079, SE = 0.159)\). H3 is therefore only supported for the mainstream leader. In the fourth model we find that the effect of using a populist rhetoric is moderated by populist style, *but this moderation differs between Wilders and Blok*. A further examination of the significance of the simple slope (see Jaccard, Turrisi, & Wan, 1990) of populist rhetoric on effectiveness for different levels of populist style and party leader (see Table 4.3) indicates that using a populist rhetoric has no significant positive or negative effect on the perceived effectiveness of Wilders, irrespective of him using a populist style. However, it does have a significant positive impact on the perceived effectiveness of Blok, *provided that* he also uses a populist style \((B = 0.520, SE = 0.235)\).
### Table 4.2: Regression Model Predicting Perceived Effectiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model I</th>
<th>Model II</th>
<th>Model III</th>
<th>Model IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>11.827 (0.131)***</td>
<td>11.838 (0.146)***</td>
<td>9.734 (0.162)***</td>
<td>9.875 (0.180)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritativeness</td>
<td>0.225 (0.131)†</td>
<td>0.225 (0.131)†</td>
<td>0.453 (0.162)**</td>
<td>0.445 (0.162)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Style</td>
<td>-0.022 (0.131)</td>
<td>-0.045 (0.188)</td>
<td>0.035 (0.162)</td>
<td>-0.259 (0.232)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td>0.051 (0.131)</td>
<td>0.029 (0.183)</td>
<td>0.218 (0.162)</td>
<td>-0.057 (0.224)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Style + Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.045 (0.263)</td>
<td>0.578 (0.325)†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.169 (0.227)***</td>
<td>3.923 (0.252)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Authoritativeness</td>
<td>-0.374 (0.227)†</td>
<td>-0.373 (0.227)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Populist Style</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.265 (0.227)</td>
<td>0.252 (0.325)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Populist Rhet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.364 (0.227)</td>
<td>0.126 (0.317)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Populist Style * Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.012 (0.455)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.251</td>
<td>0.252</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients; Standard errors between brackets.; †p<0.10, <0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001; n = 3,115.

### Table 4.3: Simple Slope of Populist Rhetoric on Effectiveness for Different Values of “Party leader” and “Populist Style”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Populist Style</th>
<th>Wilders</th>
<th>Blok</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Populist Style Absent</td>
<td>0.069 (0.225)</td>
<td>-0.057 (0.224)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Style Present</td>
<td>-0.365 (0.226)</td>
<td>0.520 (0.235)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients; Standard errors between brackets; †p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 4.4 shows the direct effects of populist rhetoric and populist style on perceived legitimacy. Again, when we look at the differences between the two party leaders in model III we find that style effects vary. Using a populist style negatively affects the perceived legitimacy of Blok ($B = -0.404, SE = 0.200$), yet it
has no significant effect on the perceived legitimacy of Wilders ($B = 0.293, SE = 0.197$).

### Table 4.4: Regression Model Predicting Perceived Legitimacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model I</th>
<th>Model II</th>
<th>Model III</th>
<th>Model IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>11.306 (0.129)****</td>
<td>11.327 (0.148)****</td>
<td>12.845 (0.171)****</td>
<td>12.871 (0.195)****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Style</td>
<td>-0.110 (0.150)</td>
<td>-0.156 (0.214)</td>
<td>-0.404 (0.201)*</td>
<td>-0.461 (0.286)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td>-0.230 (0.150)</td>
<td>-0.274 (0.209)</td>
<td>-0.124 (0.201)</td>
<td>-0.177 (0.277)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Style + Pop Rhet</td>
<td>0.090 (0.299)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.111 (0.402)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders</td>
<td></td>
<td>-3.106 (0.242)****</td>
<td>3.122 (0.278)****</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Populist Style</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.697 (0.281)*</td>
<td>0.733 (0.402)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td>-0.176 (0.281)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.143 (0.392)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Populist Style *</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.071 (0.563)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td>0.118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients; Standard errors between brackets; *p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.001; n = 3,115

In Table 4.5 we turn to our first moderated effect. The simple slope of populist rhetoric on effectiveness for different educational levels shows that there is no significant effect of populist rhetoric on the perceived effectiveness of Blok or Wilders, for the people with low or average education. However, for the highly educated we find a positive effect of populist rhetoric on the perceived effectiveness of Blok, and no significant effect on the perceived effectiveness of Wilders\(^{viii}\). This goes against our expectation that the effect of using a populist rhetoric would be positive among the lower educated (H1a).

In Table 4.6 we see that using a populist style only negatively affects the perceived legitimacy of Blok for people with an average or higher than average education. However, it is only for the lower educated that we find a positive effect from populist style on the perceived legitimacy of Wilders. These findings are in line with our expectation that the effect of using a populist style on legitimacy would be positive among the lower educated (H2b).
Table 4.5: Simple Slope of Populist Rhetoric on Effectiveness for Different Values of “Party leader” and “Educational Level”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Wilders</th>
<th>Blok</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Educational Level</td>
<td>-0.032 (0.224)</td>
<td>-0.164 (0.229)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Educational Level</td>
<td>-0.162 (0.158)</td>
<td>0.203 (0.161)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Educational Level</td>
<td>-0.292 (0.224)</td>
<td>0.569 (0.228)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients; Standard errors between brackets; †p<0.10 *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

As for the moderating effect of political cynicism, the results show a larger negative effect from populist style on the perceived legitimacy of Blok for the less and average cynical. The people that are highly cynical on the other hand display a weak positive effect from populist style on the perceived legitimacy of Wilders. Again, these results are in line with our expectation that the effect of populist style on legitimacy would be positive for the politically cynical (H2b).

Table 4.6 also shows that external political efficacy moderates the effect of populist style on legitimacy. Only the less efficacious are positively affected by the populist style of Wilders. These findings again lend support for H2b: The effects of populist style on perceived legitimacy are more positive for the lower educated, the more politically cynical and the less politically efficacious.

We are now able to answer our RQ1 on the differences (and similarities) between the two party leaders when it comes to the structure of our results, and the overall answer has to be that effects are often in the opposite direction. With regard to the main effects, our analyses show no effects of the three communication strategies on the perceived effectiveness and legitimacy of Wilders, whereas we do find several significant strategy effects on the public image of Blok: positive and negative. Moreover, with regard to the conditionality of the communication strategy effects, results show that whereas the populist style has more positive effects on the perceived legitimacy of Blok among the lower educated, the cynical and the less efficacious, the effects of this populist communication strategy are not significant within these groups of voters, while it does when it comes to the perceived legitimacy of Wilders. In other words, the results lend support to H2b for Wilders, but not for Blok. Moreover, for Blok we do find the opposite from what we expected: for the higher educated and the less cynical we
find significant negative effects from populist style on perceived legitimacy. Finally, whereas using a populist rhetoric only has a positive effect on the perceived effectiveness of Blok among the highly educated, it has the most negative effect, although not significant, on the perceived effectiveness of Wilders within the same group.

Table 4.6: Simple Slope of Populist Style on Legitimacy for Different Values of “Party Leader”, and “Educational Level”, “Political Cynicism”, and “External Political Efficacy”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wilders</th>
<th>Blok</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Education Level</td>
<td>0.791 (0.278)**</td>
<td>-0.154 (0.285)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Education Level</td>
<td>0.274 (0.197)</td>
<td>-0.417 (0.200)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Education Level</td>
<td>-0.242 (0.279)</td>
<td>-0.681 (0.283)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Political Cynicism</td>
<td>-0.030 (0.282)</td>
<td>-0.598 (0.276)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Political Cynicism</td>
<td>0.279 (0.196)</td>
<td>-0.428 (0.200)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Political Cynicism</td>
<td>0.588 (0.274)*</td>
<td>-0.257 (0.285)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low External Political Efficacy</td>
<td>0.723 (0.288)*</td>
<td>-0.351 (0.300)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium External Political Efficacy</td>
<td>0.276 (0.205)</td>
<td>-0.385 (0.210)†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High External Political Efficacy</td>
<td>-0.171 (0.291)</td>
<td>-0.419 (0.296)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients; Standard errors between brackets; †p<0.10 *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Discussion

In this study we directly tested the effects of three communication strategies used by a right-wing populist and a mainstream leader on the perceived effectiveness and legitimacy of these leaders in an on-line survey experiment. We argued that it is highly unlikely that communication style effects are across-the-board, and designed a study in which conditional effects could be tested. We focused on three moderators: education, political cynicism and political efficacy. We tested the effects of three aspects of communication strategies: the use of a populist style, the use of populist rhetoric and authoritativeness. We discuss the conclusions for each of these in turn.
The results show that using a populist style does positively affect the perceived legitimacy of right-wing populist party leaders, but only for the lower educated, the politically cynical, and the less politically efficacious. In other words: exactly those voters that are overrepresented among the supporters of right-wing populist parties are positively affected by the specific populist style these politicians use. Clearly, populists are successful in appealing to these groups of voters when using a populist style.

These findings are also in line with theories and research on political communication effects. The cognitive framework model for instance proposes that that the higher educated have more effective defence mechanisms against media influences, and are therefore less affected by media messages (Iyengar, Peters, & Kinder, 1982; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). The lower educated, on the other hand, are more susceptible to media effects, such as agenda-setting and priming effects. And Dancey (in press) argues, and finds supportive evidence for this claim, that political cynicism can colour how individuals interpret information. Finally, it has been found that more motivated, (politically) engaged citizens are more prone to pursue a central route to evaluating information (Chong and Druckman, 2007; Dancey, in press) and resist the information in a media message, whereas the less efficacious are “more likely to use uncritically the considerations that have been made accessible through exposure” (Jackson, 2011, p. 81).

Yet, even though there are effects of populist style, our analyses do not show any effect of the populist rhetoric. As our “populist rhetoric” manipulation resembles the operationalization of “thin populism” in the Jagers and Walgrave (2007) study, we can now answer the ‘reception question’ they pose in their conclusion by stating that our analyses do not show any positive reception of the right-wing populists ‘thin populism’ by voters, whether their attitudes align with the populist frame or not. Moreover, we do find a positive effect of populist rhetoric on the perceived effectiveness of the mainstream leader among the highly educated. A possible explanation is that there is a third-person effect at work: the higher educated, i.e., the possibly more rational voters, might be more apt to believe that others will be persuaded by the populist rhetoric.

That we do not find any (main or conditional) effects of using a populist rhetoric on the image of the right-wing populist leader, is striking, however. There are two possible explanations for this. The first is that effects might be more long-
term and need repeated exposure in order to build up. And a second explanation relates to the fact that attitudes towards Wilders might be too established to find significant effects: there is a “ceiling” to the effects we may find. Whereas our mainstream leader, Stef Blok, is relatively new to the Dutch political front stage: he was elected as the chair of the parliamentary fraction of the VVD as late as October 2010, Geert Wilders, the leader and founder of the right-wing populist PVV, on the other hand, has been the centre of (media) attention since he left the VVD in September 2004. It is therefore plausible that attitudes towards Wilders are more established, which leads to smaller effect sizes.

As for authoritativeness our results only corroborate the findings of Bos et al. (2011) when it comes to the perceived effectiveness of Blok: when he appears to be more knowledgeable he is perceived to be more influential. In general we can say that the effect of authoritativeness is fairly across the board, although it might differ across party leaders (Funk, 1999), whereas a populist style is received differently by different types of voters. On a critical note it could be argued that survey experiments have many limitations (Gaines et al., 2007), such as a lack of external validity. However, an important asset of this particular study is that it builds on a previous study in which long-term effects were examined in a real-life setting (Bos et al., 2011). That the current results point in the same direction shows the robustness of our findings.

We similarly find no direct effect of using a populist style or rhetoric on the perceived effectiveness and legitimacy of the right-wing populist party leader: “using a populist style [or rhetoric] does not harm right-wing populists, yet it does not help them either” (Bos et al., 2011, p. 197). They argue that whereas no direct effect is found, using a populist style and rhetoric may indirectly positively affect the perception of right-wing populist leaders by ensuring prominence in the mass media. And we add to this knowledge with the finding that using a populist style is positively received by some voters.

With regard to the differences between the two leader types, findings point into opposite directions. And even though our results differ in some ways from the ones Bos et al. find, conclusions are in line: “Whereas mainstream party leaders are evaluated negatively when they act in a populist manner, right-wing populist leaders are not punished for it” (2011, p.197), a striking result in the current “populist zeitgeist” in which “populist discourse has become mainstream in the
politics of western democracies” (Mudde, 2004). And again, we can add to this knowledge: while we find that indeed potential voters for right-wing populist parties are more susceptible to the populist style when used by a right-wing populist party leader, this is not the case for mainstream leaders. The lower educated, the politically cynical and the less efficacious are not more susceptible to a populist style when they use it. To take it even further: these mainstream leaders are punished for it, by those voters that make up an important part of their constituency: the higher educated and the less cynical.

Finally, we want to address one important point. This experiment shows that even a minimal manipulation of a limited number of words results in significant effects, especially among certain groups. This is a significant indication that repeated and consistent use of populist communication strategies can possibly lead to even stronger effects, particularly among parts of the electorate that are susceptible to it.
Notes

1 Some authors mention a third aspect of the populist rhetoric: exclusionism. This element is not included in this study, because it is not an element of populist rhetoric per se, but it is typical for radical right-wing populists. This conceptualisation has also been labelled ‘thick’ populism (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007).

2 We have no reason to expect authoritativeness to affect perceived legitimacy.

3 The data were collected in February 2011.

4 Dependent upon the condition.

5 F(3,492) varies from 6.057 to 80.786, p=.000.

6 For the exact wording of the items, see Appendix E.

7 A further examination of the interaction effect between populist style and populist rhetoric shows that populist style is not moderated by the presence or absence of populist rhetoric, i.e., the simple slope of populist style does not significantly differ from zero for all values of populist rhetoric and the dummy Wilders.

8 The extended tables on which table 4.5 and 4.6 rest are given in Appendix F. We also tested whether interactions had an “inverted U-shape distribution”, i.e., whether style effects were different or larger for the average educated. This yielded no significant results.

9 That we find similar effects for the lower educated, the politically cynical and the less efficacious is probably (partially) due to the fact that these variables are correlated.
Conclusion

A growing number of studies investigate explanations for right-wing populist parties’ electoral success. This dissertation adds to the knowledge on the emergence of right-wing populist parties by looking at factors that are central to today’s mediatised and personalized politics. We investigate the key role of right-wing populist leaders for their party’s success, shed more light on the relationship between media and populism and examine the extent to which the portrayal of right-wing populist leaders in the mass media shapes the electorate’s images of these leaders. Additionally, we do not study these parties in isolation and treat their exceptional character as a given, but address this assumption directly by comparing them with mainstream parties. The findings of our studies indicate that the media play a significant role in shaping the success of new right-wing populist parties and their leaders. However, we have not found any clues indicating that this only holds true for these parties, and not for mainstream parties. This concluding chapter presents our main findings, discusses implications and proposes directions for future research.

Summary of findings

Chapter one tested the assumption that voters are only willing to support a right-wing populist party if they see it as a ‘normal’ party (Van der Brug, Fennema, & Tillie, 2005), i.e., a party that is perceived as legitimate (democratic) and effective (able to affect policies and the public debate). To do so we used direct measurements of the legitimacy and effectiveness of right-wing populist party leaders and examined the extent to which these factors significantly affect the preference for these parties. The stacked data analysis in which we compared between two right-wing populist parties and four established parties and modelled the intra-individual variation, demonstrated that the public image of right-wing populist party leaders contributes significantly to the support for these parties. The results showed that supporters of right-wing populist parties indeed arrived at their party choice through the same ideological and pragmatic considerations that lead others to vote for established parties, but only if they were perceived as normal parties.
Chapter two focused on how leaders of new right-wing populist parties are portrayed in the mass media. We assumed that these political outsiders have to reach a very delicate balance between being somewhat unusual and provocative – or populist – (in order to guarantee newsworthiness and therefore prominence) on the one hand and at the same time must assure they are taken seriously as a party (and guarantee authoritativeness). We used systematic content analyses of the appearances of four right-wing populist and seven mainstream party leaders in 17 Dutch media outlets during the eight weeks prior to the 2006 national elections. We assessed their prominence, populism (populist style and populist rhetoric) and their authoritativeness. The results showed that more successful right-wing populist leaders were more prominent during the campaign. Moreover, we found that more successful party leaders appeared to be more populist and that right-wing populist party leaders scored higher on these concepts than mainstream leaders. It is, however, striking that differences regarding the latter distinction were small. Finally, we found that what set the most successful right-wing populist leader apart from the less successful ones was his authoritativeness. So what distinguished him from his direct competitor was not his extraordinariness, but rather what made him more similar to established party leaders.

In chapter three we connected the first and the second chapter by estimating the effect of the appearance of right-wing populist party leaders in the mass media on the extent to which they were perceived as legitimate and effective. Again, we made the comparison with mainstream party leaders and tested the assumption that right-wing populist leaders are more than their mainstream counterparts, dependent on the media for their image. The content analysis and panel survey design showed significant effects of the content of media coverage on the public image of political leaders, and the differences between right-wing populist party leaders on the one hand and mainstream leaders on the other, were small. Moreover, we found that the media could exert positive and negative effects on the public image of right-wing populist leaders. First of all, we found that when right-wing populist party leaders were linked to the immigration issue, this negatively affected their perceived legitimacy. Secondly, we found that right-wing populist leaders who were more prominent in the mass media and who appeared to be more authoritative were perceived as being more effective. Finally, we found that the idiosyncratic style used by right-wing populists, did not harm them, but did not help them either.
In the fourth chapter we tested the effects of the three populist communication strategies – populist style, populist rhetoric, and authoritativeness – on the perception of right-wing populist party leaders more directly with an experimental setup. This allowed us to look at moderation effects and investigate whether specific voters might feel more attracted to these parties because they are more susceptible to their communication strategies. The results showed that the three communication strategies do indeed resonate with particular parts of the (right-wing populist) electorate. Using a populist style positively affected the perceived legitimacy of the right-wing populist party leader, but only for the lower educated, the politically cynical and the less politically efficacious. However, we found no (positive or negative) effect of using the populist rhetoric on the perception of the right-wing populist leader. And we did find a positive effect of populist rhetoric on the perceived effectiveness of the mainstream leader, among the higher educated. The effect of authoritativeness appeared to be fairly across the board, although it differed between the two party leaders: it was only when the mainstream leader tried to be authoritative, that it had a positive effect on his perceived effectiveness.

Discussion

The results of this dissertation contribute to a number of debates in the literature on the personalization and mediatisation of (populist) politics, the relationship between media and populism, and the presumed peculiarity of right-wing populist parties. Each of these topics will be discussed here.

Populist leadership as personalized politics

The personalization of politics thesis describes, among other phenomena, a stronger focus on party leaders instead of parties, and a key role for leader characteristics in determining voters’ preferences for these parties (i.e., Kriesi, in press). For new right-wing populist parties additional reasons apply. As new parties with weak and highly centralized party organizations, they need a strong leader to lead the organization and bring across the message of the party. Moreover, because they are known for their idiosyncratic style and behaviour, and are “astute exploiters of personalization” (Akkerman, 2011, p. 934), it is assumed the mass media tend to focus more on these populist party leaders than they do on mainstream party leaders (Art, 2007; Plasser & Ulram, 2003). Or, to put it differently, attention for
individual politicians is in the latter case supposedly more dispersed, also because these parties usually have stronger party organizations and can draw from a larger pool of political talents.

Our analyses show that the perception of their party leaders is indeed a key determinant for the preference of right-wing populist parties. Being perceived as a ‘normal’, i.e., legitimate and effective, party leader is a necessary condition for being successful. These results are in line with the proposition that party leader characteristics are one of the key determinants in the voting booth, in addition to ideological considerations (McAllistar, 2007; Mughan, 2000). Party leader performance is thus an important supply side factor (Mudde, 2010).

However, the results also show that this is not more the case for populist parties than for mainstream parties. As the Dutch new right-wing populist parties, and the PVV of Geert Wilders in particular, constitute a most likely case to find leader effects for right-wing populist parties, these results suggest strongly that populist politics is not more personalized than mainstream politics, even though there appears to be a widespread academic and public perception that this is the case. This finding connects to research by Van der Brug and Mughan (2007) who similarly find no disproportionate leader effects for right-wing populist parties. Kitschelt (2007) solves this puzzle by stating that “Certain leadership styles among radical right-wing parties may be an expression, not a net addition to the programmatic message of the party. The party leadership and the organisational structure of a party serve as a signalling device to its voters, underlining the credibility and commitment of the party to its stated objectives” (p. 1195).

With regard to personalization in the mass media the results of our content analysis similarly show that right-wing populist party leaders are indeed prominent in the news, but, again, not disproportionately compared to mainstream party leaders. It is often argued that the mass media, and in particular tabloid or popular media (Mazzoleni, Stewart, & Horsfield, 2003) would pay more attention to “media-genic” (Mudde, 2007, p. 253) right-wing populist leaders because of their newsworthiness (Plasser & Ulram, 2003), as personalization is a shared trait of media and party populism (Mudde, 2007). Yet, like Akkerman (2011) we find no support for this assumption.

One reservation needs to be made. This thesis departed from the idea that politics is ‘personalizing’. It was for that reason, and because of the central role of
right-wing populist leaders play within and for their parties, that we looked at perceived characteristics of party leaders instead of perceived characteristics of parties, and at prominence of party leaders instead of parties. To investigate whether personalization is taking place we should also have included perceptions and media coverage of parties, and make a direct comparison, preferably in a longitudinal setup. As we have not done that, the first two chapters of this dissertation can and should not be taken as a test of personalization. However, that also was not our intention.

Finally, we do find that visibility in the media is key in determining the image of right-wing populist leaders, as expected. In chapter 2 we have seen that the most successful right-wing populist leader is indeed the one that is most prominent in the news. And the results of the content analysis and panel survey design also demonstrate the importance of ‘having airplay’: being visible in the news has a key impact on the extent to which these leaders are perceived as being effective. As the mass media are the most important “vehicle of communication” (Strömbäck & Shehata, 2010) between parties and their electorate, media visibility is a prerequisite in order to be successful. Moreover, in the case of right-wing populist parties it can also be argued that, by granting them attention, the mass media legitimize these parties in the eyes of the electorate (Ellinas, 2010), which makes voters more likely to vote for them. These findings connect to previous research and show that it is not only by paying attention to right-wing populist topics, such as immigration, integration, islam and crime (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2007; Walgrave & De Swert, 2004) that the mass media can indeed ‘make or break’ right-wing populist parties, but also by paying attention to these parties and their leaders in the first place (Koopmans & Muis, 2009; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2001). However, this does not mean that media prominence always leads to an increase in public support: when negative reactions in the media outshine positive attention electoral support can erode (Muis, 2009).

A delicate balance: media strategies or appeal to the voter

If prominence is so important for the electoral breakthrough of right-wing populist parties, the next question is: how can right-wing populists gain this prominence? In mediatized politics it is key to adapt to media logic (Altheide & Snow, 1979; Brants & Van Praag, 2006), or ‘media populism’ (Mazzoleni, 2008),
and take news values into account. Populism can therefore be used as a media strategy (Kazin, 1995) as it matches “quite closely certain key features of present-day mass communications” such as “pressures on media organizations to compete by attuning their fare to popular tastes, concerns, priorities, understandings, and language (...) and (...) the emotive, sensational, hard-hitting, plain-seeking, say-it-as-it-is, black-and-white styles of tabloid journalism” (Blumler, 2003, p. xvii).

The results of our content analysis indeed show that right-wing populists gain prominence in the mass media, and we also find mass media attention for the populist style, and less for the populist rhetoric, of these party leaders. When a certain media strategy connects to present-day news values, this should also be represented in the mass media. Because the results do not show much attention for populist rhetoric, it could be argued that the substantive aspects of the populist message are less popular among journalists. This dissertation shows that it is the simplistic language, or the populist style, that strikes a chord with media logic, not the populist rhetoric.

However, it has also often been assumed that the populist communication strategy is not only a means to attract media attention, it is also supposed to strike a chord with the potential constituency of these parties (Albertazzi, 2007). The results of the content analysis show that the populist style is indeed a characteristic that sets more successful right-wing populists apart from less successful ones. Yet, when we look at the media effects analysis we find no positive effect over the course of an election campaign: using a populist style or employing a populist rhetoric does not have a positive impact on the image of right-wing populist leaders. The survey experiment adds a caveat to this. There we do find a positive reception of the populist style by voters, but only by certain parts of the electorate: the lower educated, the cynical, the less efficacious. This does indicate that the ‘simplistic language’ populists use indeed strikes a chord with parts of their constituency.

That the populist style and rhetoric do not have a widespread positive impact does not make them bad media strategies. It will, after all, lead to prominence (Ellinas, 2010; Mazzoleni, 2008; Mudde, 2004) which is key for right-wing populist party success. However, in the future we should be careful in treating the populist style and rhetoric as an appeal to the voter. It is, at best, a populist marketing tool (Busby, 2009), of which the populist style seems to be the most effective.
With regard to their media appearance, right-wing populists might employ a second media strategy, maybe not to achieve airplay, but more to strike a chord with the electorate, and make sure to appear authoritative (or knowledgeable) in the media. The content analysis shows that indeed the most successful right-wing populist leader is also the one that is the most authoritative in the mass media. And the results of the media effects analysis add to this: here it is shown that a right-wing populist party leader also has to be taken seriously by the electorate, and has to be ‘normal’ in order to be perceived positively. This finding refines the image of the right-wing populist electorate: apparently these voters attach significance to the content of the populist message and are not just swayed by the populist protest rhetoric (Bergh, 2004; Betz, 1994; Ignazi, 2003).

However, the results of the survey experiment point into a different direction. Whereas we find a positive impact in chapter 3, chapter 4 finds no effect of the authoritativeness of right-wing populist leaders on their image, not even for certain parts of the electorate. This might be due to the experimental setup as this is only a minimal one-shot manipulation. Maybe only the repeated exposure to the authoritativeness of right-wing populist leaders exerts a strong, significant effect as the one we have found in chapter 3, which tested the effects of an entire election campaign.

**Differences & similarities**

This dissertation also studied the alleged distinctiveness of right-wing populist parties by directly comparing them with mainstream parties. This connects to a prominent debate in extant literature on the right-wing populist party family. On the one hand there is a strand of literature that argues that we need different theories to study these parties, as they differ from mainstream parties in their issues and in the organization of their parties (Betz, 1994; Ignazi, 2002; Zaslove, 2008). Accordingly, voters for these parties are also assumed to be intrinsically different (e.g., Betz, 1994). On the other hand, there is the strand of research that assumes that mainstream and right-wing populist parties are not poles apart and that the latter “should be seen as a radical interpretation of mainstream values, […] more akin to a pathological normalcy” (Mudde, 2010, p. 1167) instead of a ‘normal pathology’ (Scheuch & Klingemann, 1967). The results of our four studies connect to the last body of research.
First of all, with regard to the electoral preference for these parties, the results of the first study show that it is the extent to which right-wing populist parties are perceived as ‘normal’ parties that is key in determining their electoral success. So it is not the idiosyncracy (e.g., charisma: Van der Brug & Mughan, 2007) of these leaders that shapes their future, it is the extent to which they are perceived as legitimate and effective. Moreover, the results also support the view that voters for right-wing populist parties base their decisions largely on the same kind of considerations as voters for other parties do, as the party-voter relationship is similar (Mughan & Paxton, 2006; Norris, 2005; Swyngedouw, 2001; Van der Brug, Fennema, & Tillie, 2000; Van der Brug & Mughan, 2007).

Second, with regard to the portrayal of right-wing populist and mainstream leaders in the mass media there are several striking results. First of all, our content analysis shows that mainstream leaders also are portrayed using a populist style, which could be interpreted as a strategy to connect to media populism (Mazzoleni et al., 2003). However, it are, as expected, the right-wing populists that score the highest on populist style as well as populist rhetoric, which distinguishes them from their mainstream counterparts. This finding shows that right-wing populist party leaders do stand out with their communication strategies (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Mazzoleni et al., 2003; Taggart, 2000). Secondly, regarding the authoritativeness of right-wing populist and mainstream leaders, we find that what sets the most successful right-wing populist apart from the less successful ones is his authoritativeness: on this dimension his score approaches ‘normality’, the average score of mainstream leaders: what distinguishes him from his direct competitor is not his anti-establishment position (Fennema, 2005), but rather that which makes him more similar to the establishment.

Third and finally, we have also compared mainstream and right-wing populist party leaders in our media effects analysis and in our survey experiment. The media effects analysis shows no evidence for the assumption that right-wing populists are more dependent on the media than others (Mazzoleni et al., 2003): There are no differences between right-wing populists and leaders of mainstream parties when it comes to the extent to which they depend on the mass media. There is, however, one important difference: whereas mainstream leaders are evaluated negatively when they act in a populist manner, right-wing populists are not punished for it. And the survey experiment confirms these findings and shows that when a
mainstream politician uses a populist style this negatively affects his perceived effectiveness, especially among his own electorate: the highly educated, the less cynical, and the efficacious.

Overall, the results of the four studies show two characteristics in which right-wing populist parties and their leaders are extraordinary. The first is their extensive use of the populist style and rhetoric as communication strategies. And the second is the reception of this style by the overall electorate in general, and their own constituency in particular. We interpret this as a different (effective) communication strategy on the part of these parties: nothing more, nothing less.

**Directions for future research**

This dissertation has made several contributions to the literature on (right-wing) populist parties, by studying factors that are central to the current age of mediatisation and personalization, as substantiated above. We hope this will be a point of departure for further research on these topics, and give some first leads below.

First of all, it can be argued that the operationalization of our explanatory variable populist rhetoric is lacking an indicator, such as ‘exclusionism’. In fact, in one of the main studies in the field of media and populism (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007) the ‘populist communication style’ contains three elements: reference to the people, an anti-establishment appeal, and homogeneity/exclusionism. However, because we wanted to compare between right-wing populists and mainstream politicians we felt it would be more useful to make use of the concept of ‘thin’ instead of ‘thick’ populism, and exclude the most ideological part (also see Cranmer, 2011). In future research it could be useful, nevertheless, to include this ideological element and investigate to what extent mainstream parties have incorporated this into their messages, to what extent the mass media adopt this, and how this is received by voters.

An issue that relates to this is the distinction between media populism and political populism. Because we have only included the mass media’s coverage of (populist) leaders and have only investigated the extent to which the media portray them as populists, we cannot distinguish between media and political populism. We are therefore unable to know whether for instance mainstream politicians are
actually using populism as a strategy, or as a style in their outgoing messages, or whether it are the media who single out certain aspects in their communication. Future research could look into this, by comparing unmediated messages of politicians with messages that appear in the media.

Another line of research that connects to this is the longitudinal aspect. The content analysis of the Dutch 2006 election campaign shows that mainstream leaders have, some more than others, adopted a populist style. It might be interesting to investigate when, for instance, mainstream parties started to adopt this style, whether this practice increases over time, whether populism in that regard spreads and ‘becomes mainstream’ (Mudde, 2004), and in what regard we see differences between media outlets.

Finally, and most importantly, the role of political leaders, their media performance and how this affects their electoral support was studied in a singly-country research setting. This ensures high validity, the opportunity to do more in-depth research, and it overcomes the problem of heterogeneity of cases (Gerring, 2007). Yet, the Dutch case constitutes a most likely case so that we do not know whether our results would be replicated in other settings. Moreover, it could be considered a limitation that we have primarily studied one election campaign in one country. The Dutch case is, after all, an exceptional case in which we subsequently witnessed the success of two different new right-wing populist parties, first Pim Fortuyn’s LPF in the elections of 2002, and then Geert Wilders’ PVV in 2006. Even though these parties can be considered right-wing populist, they do differ from other “national populist parties” in various respects (Vossen, 2011). Finally, it could be argued that our results are influenced by specific Dutch circumstances, such as the Fortuyn revolt and the subsequent assassination of Fortuyn, or the specific Dutch media landscape. It would, therefore, be interesting to see whether our results would uphold in a comparative setup, studying more countries, more parties, and studying these parties during election campaigns and in non-election periods (Van Aelst & De Swert, 2009). A comparative study would also give the opportunity to ask new questions, such as whether there are differences between different media systems or between countries with more or less commercialized media? Do we find different leader effects when we compare more and less flamboyant or media-genic (Mudde, 2007) right-wing populist party leaders? Do we
find differences between new parties and parties that have been around for some time? These are only some of the questions that can, and should, be raised.

Despite these limitations we are confident this thesis makes an important contribution to extant literature on right-wing populist parties by studying factors that are central to the current mediatized political environment. With regard to the key role of right-wing populist leaders for their party’s success, the relationship between media and populism, and the extent to which mass media coverage of right-wing populist leaders shapes the public images of these leaders, the overall conclusion has to be that these parties are not in a league of their own, as is often assumed.
References


## Appendix

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Creating a stacked matrix

The analyses presented in Table 3 were conducted on a stacked data matrix. This way of structuring the data allows us to assess whether the determinants of preferences for a specific party are different from the determinants of preferences for the other parties. This research design is a variant of regression in time and space (Stimson, 1985). The created stacked dataset gives us the opportunity to combine the analysis of interand intraindividual variation by considering each preference score given by each respondent as a different case to be explained. In the matrix each respondent is thus represented by as many cases as there are parties included in the analysis (see Figure 1).

To create such a data reordering the non-party-specific variables, such as age and gender or political trust, first have to be linearly transformed with the following procedure (see also Tillie, 1995; Tillie and Fennema, 1998). First, in the original data matrix party preference for each party is regressed on each of these explanatory variables separately (categorical variables first have to be transformed into dummy variables). The predicted preference scores, the $\hat{y}$-hats, are saved. These predicted values are linear transformations of the original independent variable. Since linear transformations are allowed and do not threaten the validity of the results, we may replace the original independent variable by these $\hat{y}$-hats. These predicted scores contain two components: a component that consists of the explanatory power of the independent variable in question, and a component that reflects the popularity of the party in question that is generated on other grounds than by the independent variable. By eliminating the second component (which is done by centring the predicted scores) the remainders can be considered to reflect only variations caused by differences in the independent variable. These predicted and centred values ($\hat{y}$-hats) are saved and stacked to yield a generic independent variable. As a consequence, the effects of these variables on generic party preference will be positive.
We did not want to lose any respondents from our rather small sample, which is why we resorted to multiple imputation. For this we used Amelia II, a computer program developed by Honaker, Joseph, King, Scheve and Singh. Amelia produces five datasets in which missing values were imputed under different assumptions. These datasets were analysed separately. Through simple calculations the overall point estimate of the regression coefficients and the standard errors of these parameters were computed by the procedure developed by King et al. (2001). King et al. (2001) demonstrate on the basis of Monte Carlo simulations that multiple imputation methods (such as theirs) produce parameter estimates that contain less
bias and are more efficient than estimates that use listwise deletion. Their program produces results that are as good as alternative methods for multiple imputation. For our analysis in Stata® we made use of Ken Scheve’s MI program to automatically compute the quantities of interest and the standard errors.

Fixed-effects approach

The structure of the stacked data matrix violates the assumptions of the OLS model. To avoid autocorrelation, heteroskedasticity and heterogeneity of the dependent variable (Tillie and Fennema, 1998; Van der Eijk et al., 2006), we employ a fixed-effects model in Stata®. The substantive reason to apply this model is that it reflects optimally the causal process that generates preferences for different parties. The independent variables, including individual assessments of candidate traits, determine for each respondent how he or she evaluates each party. Therefore, we want to explain the intra-individual variation, which is what a fixed-effects model allows us to do.

A fixed-effects model is similar to conditional logit or LSDV (Least Squares Dummy Variable) regression. This approach is generally used to estimate panel data effects. In this case we are not dealing with data for each respondent (i) measured at t times, but we have data in which each respondent (i) is measured at p times, where p is the party component. We model:

\[ y_{ip} = X_{ip} B + u_i + \varepsilon_{ip} \]

which allows us to take the individual unobserved effect \( u_i \) – the effect of the individual party-invariant unobservables – into account. The fixed-effects approach is most suitable for this purpose, because of the general assumption that the individual error component \( u_i \) (as opposed to the random error component \( \varepsilon_i \)) and the \( X \) regressors can correlate (Gujarati, 2003; Hsiao, 2003). A pooled regression (an OLS regression on the stacked data matrix) would assume that there is no correlation across individuals, nor across parties for any individual. This would ignore the individual effect \( u_i \), which generates correlation between the values of \( (u_i + \varepsilon_{i1}) \) … \( (u_i + \varepsilon_{ip}) \) for each individual I, which leads to omitted variable bias. Consequentially, pooled regression does not make best use of the data:
Ignoring the individual or times-specific effects that exist among cross-sectional or timeseries units but are not captured by the included explanatory variables can lead to parameter heterogeneity in the model specification. Ignoring such heterogeneity could lead to inconsistent or meaningless estimates of interesting parameters. (Hsiao, 2003: 8)
The original regression equation is $y_i = a + b \times x_i + e_i$. In this equation the predicted value $\hat{y}_i = a + b \times x_i$. By substituting $a + b \times x_i$ with $\hat{y}_i$ in the equation, the new regression equation (using the $\hat{y}_i$ as predictors of party utility) becomes: $y_i = \hat{y}_i + e_i$. If one would estimate this new regression (using the $y$-hat as an estimator of $y$), the estimate of the intercept will be 0, the estimated slope will be 1, and $e_i$ (which forms the basis for the computation of explained variance) is unaltered. When stacking the $y$-hats on top of each other in the stacked matrix, the newly constructed independent variable is not the predicted value ($y$-hat), but the deviation of the $y$-hats from their mean for each party. This still encapsulates the variance in party utility caused by the independent variable, but prevents differences among parties in the average level of utilities from being incorporated in the newly created independent variable. Such differences among parties in average utilities are caused by other factors besides $x_i$, and should hence not contribute to the variance in the newly created predictor. This procedure is also advocated by Iversen (1991) and by Snijders and Bosker (1999). For a more elaborate discussion, see van der Eijk and Franklin (1996, Chapter 20).

See [http://gking.harvard.edu/amelia/](http://gking.harvard.edu/amelia/)

The results of the fixed effects regression on the several imputed datasets show that the individual effect is significant ($\rho \approx .24$).

We have performed the Hausman test on model IV in one of our Multiple Imputation datasets, because it is not possible to carry out the test on the several imputed datasets simultaneously. The null hypothesis – that the fixed effects approach and the random effects approach do not differ significantly – had to be rejected. Consequentially it is better to use the fixed effects approach since the estimates of the random effects approach are significantly biased with high probability.
Appendix B  Chapter 2 – Prominence measures

For newspapers we use the following formula:

\[ p(leader)_{\text{newspapers}} = \sum p(leader_a) \]

\[ = \sum_{a \in \text{articles}} \frac{\text{total}(w)}{\text{mean}(w)} \cdot f_{\text{newspapers}} \cdot \text{circ}(a) \]

\[ \text{average}_{p(leader_a)} \]

Where \( p(leader)_{\text{newspapers}} \) is the prominence for the party leader within newspapers within the period under study, which is dependent upon the attention for the party leader within each newspaper article \( p(leader_a) \). The latter is based on the total number of words in the article divided by the mean number of words \( \left( \frac{\text{total}(w)}{\text{mean}(w)} \right) \), the article salience \( f_{\text{newspapers}} \), which has a value of 2 if the article is on the frontpage and 1 otherwise and \( \text{circ}(a) \), which is the circulation of the newspaper (in 2006) in which the article is published divided by the mean circulation of the included newspapers. The total is divided by the average prominence so as to achieve a mean of 1.

A similar formula was designed to assess the prominence of the party leaders in TV items and items in current affairs programs:

\[ p(leader)_{\text{TVitems}} = \sum p(leader_I) \]

\[ = \sum_{I \in \text{news&currentaffairs_items}} \frac{\text{total}(t)}{\text{mean}(t)} \cdot f_{\text{TVitems}} \cdot \text{view}(a) \]

\[ \text{average}_{p(leader_I)} \]

Where \( p(leader)_{\text{TVitems}} \) is the prominence for the party leader within news and current affairs programs within the period under study, which is dependent upon the attention for the party leader within each TV item \( p(leader_I) \). The latter is based on the total time of the item divided by the mean time \( \left( \frac{\text{total}(t)}{\text{mean}(t)} \right) \), the item salience \( f_{\text{TVitems}} \), which has a value of 2 if it is the first item and/or the item is mentioned in the lead and 1 otherwise and \( \text{view}(a) \), which is the mean number of viewers for the TV program divided by the mean number of viewers for all news and current affairs programs included in the analysis. The total is divided by the average prominence so as to achieve a mean of 1.
Because of the different measurement of attention for party leaders in items in infotainment programs, a partly dissimilar formula was constructed to measure the prominence of party leaders in these items:

\[ p(\text{leader})_{\text{infotainment}} = \sum_{\text{inf}} p(\text{leader}_{\text{inf}}) = \sum_{\text{inf} \in \text{infotainment items}} \frac{fp_{\text{infotainment}} \cdot \text{view}(a)}{\text{average} p(\text{leader}_{\text{inf}})} \]

Where \( p(\text{leader})_{\text{infotainment}} \) is the prominence for the party leader within infotainment programs within the period under study, which is dependent upon the attention for the party leader within each infotainment item \( p(\text{leader}_{\text{inf}}) \). The latter is based on the item salience \( fp_{\text{infotainment}} \), which has a value of 2 if the party leader is visible during the whole program and 1 otherwise and \( \text{view}(a) \), which is the mean number of viewers for the TV program divided by the mean number of viewers for all infotainment programs included in the analysis. The total is divided by the average prominence so as to achieve a mean of 1.

Because of the division of each prominence measure by its mean we are able to compare the various prominence measures. Moreover, we can create an overall prominence measure by adding the distinctive measures.
Table C.1: Descriptives of main variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Media coverage variables</th>
<th>Perceptions of party leaders</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prominence</td>
<td>Criticism</td>
<td>Heartland</td>
<td>Populism</td>
<td>Authoritiveness</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-Wing Populist Party Leaders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>t-1</td>
<td>t1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geert Wilders</td>
<td>-10.46 (1.18)</td>
<td>-0.02 (0.06)</td>
<td>0.05 (0.08)</td>
<td>0.32 (0.27)</td>
<td>0.32 (0.31)</td>
<td>5.67 (3.05)</td>
<td>5.63 (3.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marco Paslos</td>
<td>-11.68 (0.80)</td>
<td>0.03 (0.08)</td>
<td>0.06 (0.07)</td>
<td>-0.19 (0.31)</td>
<td>-0.21 (0.24)</td>
<td>5.14 (2.79)</td>
<td>4.92 (2.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>-11.07 (1.18)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.08)</td>
<td>0.07 (0.08)</td>
<td>0.06 (0.30)</td>
<td>0.06 (0.39)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream Party Leaders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>t-1</td>
<td>t1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J-P Balkenenda</td>
<td>12.71 (7.42)</td>
<td>-0.06 (0.04)</td>
<td>-0.04 (0.03)</td>
<td>-0.39 (0.13)</td>
<td>0.03 (0.22)</td>
<td>10.71 (2.73)</td>
<td>11.27 (2.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wouter Bos</td>
<td>16.01 (6.22)</td>
<td>0.09 (0.08)</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.02)</td>
<td>0.12 (0.31)</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.17)</td>
<td>10.97 (2.19)</td>
<td>10.93 (2.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Rutte</td>
<td>0.72 (4.14)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.06)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.05)</td>
<td>0.30 (0.25)</td>
<td>0.09 (0.17)</td>
<td>9.10 (2.73)</td>
<td>8.48 (2.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Femke Halsema</td>
<td>-7.31 (2.45)</td>
<td>-0.02 (0.03)</td>
<td>-0.06 (0.00)</td>
<td>-0.16 (0.29)</td>
<td>-0.20 (0.24)</td>
<td>7.94 (2.75)</td>
<td>7.75 (2.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>5.53 (11.13)</td>
<td>0.00 (0.08)</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.04)</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.37)</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.23)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0.00 (12.01)</td>
<td>0.00 (0.08)</td>
<td>0.00 (0.07)</td>
<td>0.00 (0.38)</td>
<td>0.00 (0.29)</td>
<td>8.29 (3.51)</td>
<td>8.17 (3.55)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Entries are means, standard deviations in parentheses. The media coverage variables were centred around their means to avoid multicollinearity, so that their means are always 0.
Appendix D  Chapter 3 – Survey characteristics

The table shows that our respondent data mirror census data by and large in terms of age, gender and education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dataset, n = 703</th>
<th>Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-34</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>40.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Census data concern 2006; Reference data were obtained from “Gouden Standaard”, which is the reference instrument of the Dutch Market Research Association (MOA); These reference data are collected by the Dutch National Statistics Institute (CBS); Not all columns add up to 100 percent because of rounding to decimal places.
[Wilders (PVV)/ Blok (VVD)] supports governmental plan for new nuclear power station

The Hague – [PVV-leader Geert Wilders/VVD-chairman Stef Blok] is happy with the decision of the cabinet to build a new nuclear power station. He supports the change in course wholeheartedly. The previous cabinet resisted the build of nuclear power stations explicitly.

**Control condition**

“This cabinet ends the expensive climate policy and will pursue a sound energy policy”, said [Wilders/Blok].

The [PVV/VVD] politician stresses the urgency of solving the energy problem: “the fossil fuels run out and the Netherlands are increasingly dependent upon oil from the Middle East and Russia”. Windmills are too heavily subsidized and don’t make enough profit, according to him.

Wilders/ Blok: "We do our best for Borssele II. Nuclear power stations are the future.”

**Populist style**

“It’s time. This cabinet ends the way too expensive climate policy and will pursue a decent energy policy”, said [Wilders/Blok].

The [PVV/VVD] politician says we are “on the verge of disaster” when it comes to solving the energy problem: “the fossil fuels run out and the Netherlands are not able to do without oil from the Middle East and Russia”. Windmills “only turn on subsidies” and are unprofitable, according to him.

Wilders/ Blok: "I devote myself for 200% to Borssele II. We are not living in the Tsjernobyl era anymore. Nuclear power stations are the future.”
**Populist rhetoric**

“This cabinet ends the expensive climate policy of the leftist elite and will pursue a sound energy policy”, said [Wilders/Blok].

The [PVV/VVD] politician stresses the urgency of solving the energy problem: “the fossil fuels run out and the hardworking Dutchmen are increasingly dependent upon oil from the Middle East and Russia”. Windmills cost the taxpayer too much subsidy and don’t make enough profit, according to him.

[Wilders/ Blok]: "We do our best for Borssele II, unlike the subsidized climate fundamentalists. Nuclear power stations are our future.”

**Authoritativeness**

“This cabinet ends the expensive climate policy and will pursue a sound energy policy. A measure that saves half a billion on the governmental budget”, said [Wilders/Blok].

The [PVV/VVD] politician stresses the urgency of solving the energy problem: “research of TU Delft shows that fossil fuels will run out within decades, which leaves the Netherlands increasingly dependent upon oil from the Middle East and Russia”. Windmills cost two billion euro’s in subsidy annually and don’t make enough profit, according to him.

[Wilders/ Blok]: "We do our best for Borssele II. Nuclear power stations are the future: there is enough raw material to run the whole world on nuclear energy for thousands of years.”

**Populist style + populist rhetoric**

“It’s time. This cabinet ends the way too expensive climate policy of the leftist elite and will pursue a decent energy policy”, said [Wilders/Blok].

The [PVV/VVD] politician says we are “on the verge of disaster” when it comes to solving the energy problem: “the fossil fuels run out and the hardworking Dutchmen are not able to do without oil from the Middle East and Russia”. Windmills “only turn on subsidies from the taxpayer” and are unprofitable, according to him.

[Wilders/ Blok]: "I devote myself for 200% to Borssele II, unlike the subsidized climate fundamentalists. We are not living in the Tsjernobyl era anymore. Nuclear power stations are our future.”
Populist style + authoritativeness

“It’s time. This cabinet ends the way too expensive climate policy and will pursue a decent energy policy. A measure that saves half a billion on the governmental budget”, said [Wilders/Blok].

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[Wilders/Blok]: "I devote myself for 200% to Borssele II. We are not living in the Tsjernobyl era anymore. Nuclear power stations are the future: there is enough raw material to run the whole world on nuclear energy for thousands of years.”

Populist rhetoric + authoritativeness

“This cabinet ends the expensive climate policy of the leftist elite and will pursue a sound energy policy. A measure that saves half a billion on the governmental budget”, said [Wilders/Blok].

The [PVV/VVD] politician stresses the urgency of solving the energy problem: “research of TU Delft shows that fossil fuels will run out within decades, which leaves the hardworking Dutchmen increasingly dependent upon oil from the Middle East and Russia”. Windmills cost the taxpayer two billion euro’s in subsidy annually and don’t make enough profit, according to him.

[Wilders/Blok]: "We do our best for Borssele II, unlike the subsidized climate fundamentalists. Nuclear power stations are our future: there is enough raw material to run the whole world on nuclear energy for thousands of years.”

Populist style + populist rhetoric + authoritativeness

“It’s time. This cabinet ends the way too expensive climate policy of the leftist elite and will pursue a decent energy policy. A measure that saves half a billion on the governmental budget”, said [Wilders/Blok].

The [PVV/VVD] politician says we are “on the verge of disaster” when it comes to solving the energy problem: “research of TU Delft shows that fossil fuels will run out within decades, which leaves the hardworking Dutchmen not able to do
without oil from the Middle East and Russia”. Windmills “only turn on two billion euro in taxpayers’ subsidies annually” and are unprofitable, according to him.

[Wilders/ Blok]: "I devote myself for 200% to Borssele II, unlike the subsidized climate fundamentalists. We are not living in the Tsjernobyl era anymore. Nuclear power stations are our future: there is enough raw material to run the whole world on nuclear energy for thousands of years.”
Appendix F  Chapter 4 – Overview variables

Pre-test measures

**Education**

Six levels of education from lowest to highest (Dutch originals): (1) primary school, (2) intermediate secondary education, (3) higher secondary education/preparatory university education, (4) intermediate vocational education, (5) higher vocational education, (6) university.

**Political cynicism**

Political Cynicism was measured with the following four statements (Dutch originals) rated from 1 to 10 with higher values indicating more agreement: “Politicians consciously promise more than they can deliver”, “Ministers and junior Ministers are primarily self-interested”, “In enabling someone to become a member of Parliament, friends are more important than abilities”, “Politicians do not understand what matters to society”.

**External political efficacy**

External Political Efficacy was measured with the following four statements (Dutch originals); rated from 1 (“that is not true”) to 2 (“that is true”): “Public officials don’t care much what people like me think”, “Political parties are only interested in my vote, not in my opinion”, “People like me don’t have any influence on governmental policy”.

Post-test measures

**Effectiveness**

Effectiveness was measured with the following two items (Dutch originals); asked on a scale from 1 to 10 with higher values indicating more complicity: “Some politicians, whether or not part of the government, have great influence on governmental policy; others do not have a lot of influence. Could you indicate for [Geert Wilders/Stef Blok] whether you think he exerts a little or a lot of influence?”
(Responses could vary from (1) “Has very little influence on policy”, to (10) “Has a lot of influence on policy”), “Some politicians you don’t hear from, whereas other politicians exert a lot of influence on public debates. How important is [Geert Wilders/Stef Blok] in the public debate?” (Responses could vary from (1) “Does not shape the public debate”, to (10) “Shapes the public debate to a large extent”).

**Legitimacy**

Legitimacy was measured with the following two items (Dutch originals); asked on a scale from 1 to 10 with higher values indicating more complicity: “To reach their goal some politicians are willing to ignore important democratic rules, while others will comply with these democratic rules under all circumstances. Could you tell me whether you think that [Geert Wilders/Stef Blok] has always complied with the democratic principles? (Responses could vary from (1) “Doesn’t comply with the democratic rules”, to 10 “Always complies with the democratic rules”); “Sometimes people think a certain politician or party is dangerous. They are afraid that when that politician rises to power he will pose a threat to democracy. Others are of the opinion that this will not be the case. Do you think that [Geert Wilders/Stef Blok] could pose a threat to democracy? (Responses could vary from (1) “He could pose a real threat to democracy” to (10) “He could definitely not pose a threat to democracy”).
## Appendix G  Chapter 4 - Additional tables

Table G.1: Moderated Model with Educational Level as a Moderator; DV = Effectiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model I</th>
<th>Model II</th>
<th>Model III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>9.733 (0.161)*****</td>
<td>9.736 (0.161)*****</td>
<td>9.739 (0.161)*****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritativeness</td>
<td>0.465 (0.162)**</td>
<td>0.460 (0.162)**</td>
<td>0.455 (0.161)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Style</td>
<td>0.027 (0.162)</td>
<td>0.029 (0.162)</td>
<td>0.035 (0.161)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td>0.206 (0.162)</td>
<td>0.203 (0.162)</td>
<td>0.195 (0.161)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders</td>
<td>4.163 (0.226)*****</td>
<td>4.169 (0.226)*****</td>
<td>4.156 (0.226)*****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Authoritativeness</td>
<td>-0.389 (0.226)*†</td>
<td>-0.393 (0.226)*†</td>
<td>-0.374 (0.226)*†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Populist Style</td>
<td>-0.237 (0.226)</td>
<td>-0.241 (0.226)</td>
<td>-0.245 (0.226)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td>-0.398 (0.226)</td>
<td>-0.374 (0.226)*†</td>
<td>-0.355 (0.226)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational level</td>
<td>0.182 (0.053)*****</td>
<td>0.113 (0.081)</td>
<td>0.028 (0.102)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Education</td>
<td>0.113 (0.074)</td>
<td>0.110 (0.074)</td>
<td>0.280 (0.145)*†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritativeness * Education</td>
<td>0.095 (0.074)</td>
<td>0.200 (0.106)*†</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Style * Education</td>
<td>-0.028 (0.075)</td>
<td>-0.128 (0.106)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pop Rhet * Education</td>
<td>0.074 (0.074)</td>
<td>0.241 (0.106)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Auth * Education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-0.205 (0.149)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Pop Style * Education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.196 (0.149)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Pop Rhet * Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.327 (0.149)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.261</td>
<td>0.261</td>
<td>0.262</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients; Standard errors between brackets; *p<0.10  
*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001; n = 3,109.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model I</th>
<th>Model II</th>
<th>Model III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>12.852 (0.171)**</td>
<td>12.851 (0.170)**</td>
<td>12.851 (0.170)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Style</td>
<td>-0.418 (0.201)*</td>
<td>-0.409 (0.201)*</td>
<td>-0.412 (0.201)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td>-0.137 (0.201)</td>
<td>-0.140 (0.201)</td>
<td>-0.135 (0.201)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders</td>
<td>-3.107 (0.242)**</td>
<td>-3.115 (0.241)**</td>
<td>-3.119 (0.241)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Populist Style</td>
<td>0.694 (0.281)*</td>
<td>0.691 (0.281)*</td>
<td>0.697 (0.281)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td>-0.152 (0.281)</td>
<td>-0.149 (0.281)</td>
<td>-0.157 (0.281)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Level</td>
<td>0.181 (0.066)**</td>
<td>0.283 (0.090)**</td>
<td>0.304 (0.110)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Education</td>
<td>-0.328 (0.092)**</td>
<td>-0.322 (0.092)**</td>
<td>-0.363 (0.156)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Style * Education</td>
<td>-0.258 (0.092)**</td>
<td>-0.173 (0.132)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Rhet * Education</td>
<td>0.034 (0.092)</td>
<td>-0.089 (0.132)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Pop Style * Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.167 (0.185)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Pop Rhet * Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.242 (0.185)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.121</td>
<td>0.123</td>
<td>0.123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients; Standard errors between brackets; *p<0.10  
*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001; n = 3,109
Table G.3: Moderated Model with Political Cynicism as a Moderator; DV = Effectiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model I</th>
<th>Model II</th>
<th>Model III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>9.751 (0.161)***</td>
<td>9.752 (0.161)***</td>
<td>9.751 (0.161)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritativeness</td>
<td>0.419 (0.161)**</td>
<td>0.418 (0.162)**</td>
<td>0.416 (0.162)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Style</td>
<td>0.017 (0.161)</td>
<td>0.017 (0.162)</td>
<td>0.020 (0.162)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td>0.220 (0.161)</td>
<td>0.216 (0.161)</td>
<td>0.215 (0.161)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders</td>
<td>4.143 (0.225)***</td>
<td>4.142 (0.226)***</td>
<td>4.140 (0.226)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Authoritativeness</td>
<td>-0.342 (0.226)</td>
<td>-0.337 (0.226)</td>
<td>-0.342 (0.226)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Populist Style</td>
<td>-0.243 (0.226)</td>
<td>-0.241 (0.226)</td>
<td>-0.238 (0.226)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td>-0.364 (0.226)</td>
<td>-0.364 (0.226)</td>
<td>-0.361 (0.226)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Cynicism</td>
<td>-0.464 (0.080)***</td>
<td>-0.396 (0.128)**</td>
<td>-0.423 (0.161)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Political Cynicism</td>
<td>0.636 (0.113)***</td>
<td>0.636 (0.113)***</td>
<td>0.701 (0.232)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritativeness * Political Cynicism</td>
<td>-0.097 (0.113)</td>
<td>-0.214 (0.160)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Style * Political Cynicism</td>
<td>-0.040 (0.113)</td>
<td>0.113 (0.159)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Rhet * Political Cynicism</td>
<td>0.000 (0.113)</td>
<td>0.024 (0.160)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Auth * Political Cynicism</td>
<td>0.230 (0.227)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Pop Style * Political Cynicism</td>
<td>-0.305 (0.226)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Pop Rhet * Political Cynicism</td>
<td>-0.053 (0.227)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>0.260</td>
<td>0.260</td>
<td>0.260</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients; Standard errors between brackets; *p<0.10, †p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001; n = 3,115.
Table G.4. Moderated Model with Political Cynicism as a Moderator; DV = Legitimacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model II</th>
<th>Model III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>12.843 (0.169)***</td>
<td>12.844 (0.169)***</td>
<td>12.845 (0.169)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Style</td>
<td>-0.430 (0.199)*</td>
<td>-0.428 (0.199)*</td>
<td>-0.430 (0.199)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td>-0.119 (0.199)</td>
<td>-0.118 (0.199)</td>
<td>-0.120 (0.199)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders</td>
<td>-3.098 (0.240)***</td>
<td>-3.098 (0.240)***</td>
<td>-3.097 (0.240)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Populist Style</td>
<td>0.721 (0.279)**</td>
<td>0.706 (0.279)*</td>
<td>0.705 (0.279)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td>-0.182 (0.279)</td>
<td>-0.171 (0.279)</td>
<td>-0.169 (0.279)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Cynicism</td>
<td>-0.700 (0.098)***</td>
<td>-0.732 (0.138)***</td>
<td>-0.691 (0.168)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Political Cynicism</td>
<td>0.602 (0.139)***</td>
<td>0.599 (0.139)***</td>
<td>0.513 (0.243)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Style * Political Cynicism</td>
<td>0.239 (0.139)†</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.171 (0.197)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Rhet * Political Cynicism</td>
<td>-0.164 (0.139)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.181 (0.197)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Pop Style * Political Cynicism</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.138 (0.279)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Pop Rhet * Political Cynicism</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.034 (0.279)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.132</td>
<td>0.133</td>
<td>0.132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients; Standard errors between brackets; †p<0.10 *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001; n = 3,115.
Table G.5: Moderated Model with External Political Efficacy as a Moderator; DV = Effectiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model I</th>
<th>Model II</th>
<th>Model III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>9.688 (0.170)**</td>
<td>9.706 (0.170)**</td>
<td>9.703 (0.170)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritativeness</td>
<td>0.490 (0.170)**</td>
<td>0.490 (0.170)**</td>
<td>0.492 (0.170)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Style</td>
<td>0.076 (0.170)</td>
<td>0.062 (0.170)</td>
<td>0.067 (0.170)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td>0.243 (0.170)</td>
<td>0.232 (0.170)</td>
<td>0.229 (0.170)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders</td>
<td>4.263 (0.238)**</td>
<td>4.244 (0.238)**</td>
<td>4.245 (0.238)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Authoritativeness</td>
<td>-0.443 (0.238)†</td>
<td>-0.440 (0.238)†</td>
<td>-0.441 (0.238)†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Populist Style</td>
<td>-0.336 (0.238)</td>
<td>-0.323 (0.238)</td>
<td>-0.329 (0.238)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td>-0.388 (0.238)</td>
<td>-0.378 (0.238)</td>
<td>-0.373 (0.238)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Political Efficacy</td>
<td>0.374 (0.085)**</td>
<td>0.275 (0.131)*</td>
<td>0.298 (0.166)†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * External Political Efficacy</td>
<td>-0.194 (0.118)</td>
<td>-0.198 (0.118)*</td>
<td>-0.248 (0.234)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritativeness * Ext. Pol. Efficacy</td>
<td>0.316 (0.118)**</td>
<td>0.287 (0.170)†</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Style * Ext. Pol. Efficacy</td>
<td>-0.040 (0.118)</td>
<td>-0.175 (0.170)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Rhet * Ext. Pol. Efficacy</td>
<td>0.069 (0.118)</td>
<td>0.040 (0.170)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Auth * Ext. Political Efficacy</td>
<td>0.056 (0.237)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Pop Style * Ext. Pol. Efficacy</td>
<td>0.259 (0.237)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Pop Rhet * Ext. Pol. Efficacy</td>
<td>-0.207 (0.237)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.257</td>
<td>0.258</td>
<td>0.258</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients; Standard errors between brackets; †p<0.10 *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001; n = 2,840.
### Table G.6: Moderated Model with External Political Efficacy as a Moderator; DV = Legitimacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model II</th>
<th>Model III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>12.821 (0.179)**</td>
<td>12.821 (0.179)**</td>
<td>12.820 (0.179)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Style</td>
<td>-0.383 (0.210)$^†$</td>
<td>-0.378 (0.210)$^†$</td>
<td>-0.385 (0.210)$^†$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td>-0.150 (0.210)</td>
<td>-0.156 (0.210)</td>
<td>-0.149 (0.210)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders</td>
<td>-3.122 (0.253)**</td>
<td>-3.122 (0.253)**</td>
<td>-3.121 (0.253)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Populist Style</td>
<td>0.656 (0.294)*</td>
<td>0.651 (0.294)*</td>
<td>0.661 (0.294)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Populist Rhetoric</td>
<td>-0.122 (0.294)</td>
<td>-0.120 (0.294)</td>
<td>-0.129 (0.294)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Political Efficacy</td>
<td>0.593 (0.105)**</td>
<td>0.648 (0.146)**</td>
<td>0.661 (0.179)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * External Political Efficacy</td>
<td>-0.621 (0.146)**</td>
<td>-0.621 (0.146)**</td>
<td>-0.638 (0.251)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Style * External Political Efficacy</td>
<td>-0.249 (0.146)$^†$</td>
<td>-0.034 (0.210)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Rhet * External Political Efficacy</td>
<td>0.127 (0.146)</td>
<td>-0.102 (0.210)</td>
<td>-0.411 (0.293)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Pop Style * Ext. Pol. Efficacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.438 (0.293)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilders * Pop Rhet * Ext. Pol. Efficacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R$^2$</td>
<td>0.127</td>
<td>0.128</td>
<td>0.129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients; Standard errors between brackets; $^†p<0.10$ $^*p<0.05$, $^{**}p<0.01$, $^{***}p<0.001$; n = 2,840.
Summary

Over the past decades several new right-wing populist parties have entered the political stage in the Netherlands, as well as in other Western Democracies. They did so with varying success: some are now important political players, while others disappeared quickly. Several explanations have been put forward to account for these differences in electoral success. In this dissertation we pay attention to supply side factors that are central to the current mediatised political environment. In this setting, it are the mass media that can ‘make or break’ these new parties, which forces the latter to adapt to the context of alleged mediatisation and personalization and bring their leaders up to the fore. This dissertation therefore looks at the role of political leaders, their representation in the media, and how this affects their public image and electoral support. More specifically, it investigates the extent to which the media coverage of right-wing populist party leaders, in terms of prominence, populism and authoritativeness, affects public perceptions of right-wing populist party leaders, in terms of their perceived effectiveness and legitimacy, and how this in turn affects the preference for these parties.

Chapter one tested the assumption that voters are only willing to support a right-wing populist party if they see it as a ‘normal’ party, i.e., a party that is perceived as legitimate (democratic) and effective (able to affect policies and the public debate). To do so we used direct measurements of the legitimacy and effectiveness of right-wing populist and mainstream party leaders and examined the extent to which these factors significantly affect preferences for these parties. The stacked data analysis demonstrated that the public image of right-wing populist party leaders contributes significantly to the support for these parties. The results showed that supporters of right-wing populist parties indeed arrived at their party choice through the same ideological and pragmatic considerations that lead others to vote for established parties, but only if they were perceived as normal parties.

Chapter two focused on how leaders of new right-wing populist parties are portrayed in the mass media. We argued that these political outsiders have to reach a very delicate balance between being somewhat unusual and provocative – or populist – (in order to guarantee newsworthiness and therefore prominence) on the one hand and at the same time must assure they are taken seriously as a party (and guarantee authoritativeness). The results of an extensive content analysis showed
that more successful right-wing populist leaders were more prominent during the campaign. Moreover, we found that more successful party leaders appeared to be more populist and that right-wing populist party leaders scored higher on these concepts than mainstream leaders. Finally, we found that what set the most successful right-wing populist leader apart from the less successful ones was his authoritativeness (i.e., how knowledgeable a politician appears to be): what distinguished him from his direct competitor was not his extraordinariness, but rather what made him more similar to established party leaders.

In chapter three we estimated the effect of the appearance of right-wing populist party leaders in the mass media on the extent to which they were perceived as legitimate and effective. We tested the assumption that right-wing populist leaders are more than their mainstream counterparts, dependent on the media for their image. The content analysis and panel survey design showed significant positive and negative effects on the public image of right-wing populist leaders. First of all, we found that when right-wing populist party leaders were linked to the immigration issue, this negatively affected their perceived legitimacy. Secondly, we found that right-wing populist leaders who were more prominent in the mass media and who appeared to be more authoritative were perceived as being more effective. Finally, we found that the idiosyncratic style used by right-wing populists, did not harm them, but did not help them either. These findings connect to previous research and show that the mass media can indeed ‘make or break’ right-wing populist parties, not only by paying attention to right-wing populist topics, but also by paying attention to these parties and their leaders in the first place.

In the fourth chapter we tested the effects of three populist communication strategies – populist style, populist rhetoric, and authoritativeness – on the perception of right-wing populist party leaders more directly with an experimental setup. This allowed us to look at moderation effects and investigate whether specific voters might feel more attracted to these parties because they are more susceptible to their communication strategies. The results showed that using a populist style positively affected the perceived legitimacy of the right-wing populist party leader, but only for the lower educated, the politically cynical and the less politically efficacious. However, we found no (positive or negative) effect of using the populist rhetoric on the perception of the right-wing populist leader. The effect of authoritativeness appeared to be fairly across the board, although it was only
when the mainstream leader tried to be authoritative, that it had a positive effect on his perceived effectiveness.

The most important theoretical implications of these findings are threefold.

First of all, with regard to the personalization thesis, both the first and the second study show no indication that populist politics is more personalized than mainstream politics. After all, the results of the first study show that party leader performance is an important supply side factor in determining the preference for right-wing populist parties, but not more than for mainstream parties. And the results of the content analysis similarly show that right-wing populist party leaders are indeed prominent in the news, but, again, not disproportionately compared to mainstream party leaders.

Second, our results show that the populist communication strategy, or more specifically, the populist style, is not only a means to attract media attention, it also strikes a chord with the potential constituency of these parties: the lower educated, the politically cynical and the less efficacious. However, the content analysis and the media effects analysis also show that a right-wing populist party leader also has to be taken seriously by the electorate. This finding refines the image of the right-wing populist electorate: apparently these voters attach significance to the content of the populist message and are not just swayed by the populist protest rhetoric. Overall, these findings do indicate that right-wing populist party leaders have to reach a delicate balance between using a populist style in order to gain prominence on the one hand, and appear authoritative, in order to be taken seriously, on the other hand.

Third, and finally, this dissertation also studied the alleged distinctiveness of right-wing populist parties by directly comparing them with mainstream parties. With regard to the electoral preference for these parties, the results of the first study show that it is the extent to which right-wing populist parties are perceived as ‘normal’ parties, as opposed to their idiosyncracy, that is key in determining their electoral success. Yet, the content analysis shows that right-wing populist party leaders do stand out with their communication strategies: even though mainstream leaders are also portrayed in the mass media using a populist style, it are, as expected, the right-wing populists that score the highest on populist style as well as populist rhetoric, which distinguishes them from their mainstream counterparts. On the other hand, we also find that what sets the most successful right-wing populist
apart from the less successful ones is his authoritativeness: on this dimension his score approaches ‘normality’, the average score of mainstream leaders. Similarly, the media effects analysis shows no evidence for the assumption that right-wing populists are more dependent on the media than others. There is, however, one important difference between the two leader types: whereas mainstream leaders are evaluated negatively when they act in a populist manner, right-wing populists are not punished for it. And the survey experiment confirms these findings and shows that when a mainstream politician uses a populist style this negatively affects his perceived effectiveness, especially among his own electorate: the highly educated, the less cynical, and the efficacious.

Overall, the results of the four studies show two characteristics in which right-wing populist parties and their leaders are extraordinary. The first is their extensive use of the populist style and rhetoric as communication strategies. And the second is the reception of this style by the overall electorate in general, and their own constituency in particular. We interpret this as a different (effective) communication strategy on the part of these parties.

That the results of the survey experiment do not corroborate this, might be due to the one-shot manipulation as opposed to the repeated exposure in an election campaign.
Nederlandse samenvatting

In de afgelopen decennia is een aantal rechts-populistische partijen op het politieke toneel verschenen, zowel in Nederland als in andere westers democratieën. Ze deden dat met wisselend succes: sommige zijn nu belangrijke politieke spelers, terwijl andere snel verdwenen. Er zijn verschillende verklaringen naar voren gebracht voor deze verschillen in electoraal succes. In dit proefschrift wordt aandacht besteed aan factoren die centraal staan in het huidige gemediatiseerde politieke klimaat. In deze context zijn het de massamedia die deze nieuwe partijen kunnen 'maken of breken'. Dit dwingt deze partijen zich aan te passen aan mediatisering en personalisering en hun leiders naar voren te schuiven. Dit proefschrift kijkt dan ook naar de rol van politieke leiders, hun aanwezigheid in de media, en hoe deze invloed heeft op hun imago en electorale steun. Meer specifiek onderzoeken we de mate waarin de media-aandacht voor rechts-populistische partijleiders, qua prominentie, populisme en gezaghebbendheid, de publieke perceptie van rechts-populistische partijleiders beïnvloedt, wat betreft de waargenomen effectiviteit en legitimiteit van deze leiders, en hoe deze op zijn beurt van invloed is op de voorkeur voor deze partijen.

We maken hierbij gebruik van data verzameld tijdens de campagne voor de Nederlandse verkiezingen van 2006. Daarnaast hebben we meer recent een on-line survey experiment uitgevoerd onder leden van het Nederlandse LISS Household Panel.

Hoofdstuk een test de veronderstelling dat kiezers alleen maar bereid zijn om een rechts-populistische partij te steunen als ze deze zien als een 'normale' partij, dat wil zeggen een partij die wordt gezien als legitiem (democratisch) en effectief (in staat om beleid en het openbaar debat te beïnvloeden). Om dit te doen gebruikten we directe metingen van de legitimiteit en effectiviteit van twee rechts-populistische en vier mainstream partijleiders en onderzochten we de mate waarin deze factoren van invloed zijn op de voorkeuren voor deze Nederlandse partijen. De stacked data analysis toonde aan dat het imago van de rechts-populistische partijleiders aanzienlijk bijdraagt aan de electorale steun voor deze partijen. De resultaten geven aan dat de aanhangers van rechts-populistische partijen hun partijkeuze inderdaad baseren op dezelfde ideologische en pragmatische overwegingen als die anderen ertoe brengen om te stemmen op gevestigde partijen, maar alleen als deze rechts-populistische partijen werden gezien als normale partijen, dat wil zeggen als legitiem en effectief.
Hoofdstuk twee richt zich op de vraag hoe leiders van nieuwe rechts-populistische partijen worden geportretteerd in de media. We betoogden dat deze politieke buitenbenen een precair evenwicht moeten bereiken. Zij zullen zich enerzijds enigszins ongebruikelijk en provocerend – ofwel populistisch – moeten uittalen, om nieuwswaarde en derhalve prominentie te garanderen. Anderzijds is het van belang dat ze serieus worden genomen als partij, en dienen ze gezaghebbendheid uit te stralen. De resultaten van een uitgebreide inhoudsanalyse van de Nederlandse verkiezingscampagne van 2006 toonden aan dat de meer succesvolle rechts-populistische leiders een prominentere rol hadden tijdens de campagne dan de minder succesvolle. Bovendien vonden we dat meer succesvolle rechts-populistische partijleiders populistischer bleken en dat de rechts-populistische partijleiders hoger scoorden op zowel populistische stijl als populistische retoriek dan mainstream leiders. Ten slotte vonden we dat de meest succesvolle rechts-populistische leider onderscheiden kan worden van de minder succesvolle door zijn gezaghebbendheid (dat wil zeggen, hoe deskundig een politicus lijkt te zijn). Met andere woorden: wat hem onderscheidde van zijn directe concurrent was niet zijn uitzonderlijkheid, maar eerder wat hem meer vergelijkbaar maakte met gevestigde partijleiders.

In hoofdstuk drie schatten wij het effect van het optreden van rechts-populistische partijleiders in de massamedia op de mate waarin zij werden gezien als legitiem en effectief. We testten de veronderstelling dat rechts-populistische leiders meer dan hun gevestigde tegenhangers, afhankelijk zijn van de media voor hun imago. Het onderzoeksontwerp waarin de inhoudsanalyse van de verkiezingscampagne uit het tweede hoofdstuk werd gekoppeld aan het survey onderzoek uit het eerste hoofdstuk toonde significant positieve en negatieve media-effecten aan op het imago van rechts-populistische leiders. Allereerst vonden we dat wanneer rechts-populistische partijleiders werden gekoppeld aan het immigratieprobleem, dit hun vermeende legitimiteit in negatieve zin aantast. Ten tweede vonden we dat rechts-populistische leiders die meer op de voorgrond traden in de media en die meer gezaghebbend bleken werden beschouwd als meer effectief. Tenslotte vonden we dat de eigenzinnige stijl die door rechts-populisten wordt gebezigd, hen niet schaadt, maar ook niet sterker maakt. Deze bevindingen sluiten aan bij eerder onderzoek en laten zien dat de massamedia wel degelijk rechts-populistische partijen kunnen 'maken of breken', niet alleen door aandacht te
besteden aan rechts-populistische thema's, maar ook door aandacht te besteden aan deze partijen en hun leiders.

In het vierde hoofdstuk testten we de effecten van drie populistische communicatiestrategieën – populistische stijl, populistische retoriek, en gezaghebbendheid – op de perceptie van rechts-populistische partijleiders meer direct in een experimenteel onderzoek. Dit gaf ons de mogelijkheid om te kijken naar modererende effecten en te onderzoeken of bepaalde kiezers zich meer aangetrokken voelen tot deze partijen omdat ze vatbaarder zijn voor hun communicatiestrategieën. De resultaten toonden aan dat het gebruik van een populistische stijl een positief effect heeft op de gepercipieerde legitimiteit van de rechts-populistische partijleider, maar alleen voor de lager opgeleiden, de politiek cynici en degenen met minder politiek zelfvertrouwen. Echter, we vonden geen (positieve of negatieve) effecten van het gebruik van populistische retoriek op de perceptie van de rechts-populistische leider. Het effect van gezaghebbendheid leek redelijk stabiel te zijn over de hele linie, al was het alleen wanneer de gevestigde leider probeerde om gezaghebbend te zijn, dat het een positief effect had op zijn waargenomen effectiviteit.

De belangrijkste theoretische implicaties van deze bevindingen zijn drieledig.

In de eerste plaats met betrekking tot de personalisatiethese, geven zowel de eerste als de tweede studie geen enkele aanwijzing dat populistische politiek meer gepersonaliseerd is dan gevestigde politiek. Immers, de resultaten van de eerste studie tonen aan dat de prestaties van de partijleider een belangrijke factor zijn in het bepalen van de voorkeur voor rechts-populistische partijen, maar niet meer dan voor gevestigde partijen. En uit de resultaten van de inhoudsanalyse blijkt eveneens dat rechts-populistische partijleiders inderdaad prominent in het nieuws aanwezig zijn, maar, nogmaals, niet onevenredig veel in vergelijking met gevestigde partijleiders.

Ten tweede, onze resultaten laten zien dat de populistische communicatiestrategie, of meer specifiek de populistische stijl, niet alleen een middel is om media-aandacht te trekken, deze vindt ook aansluiting bij de potentiële achterban van deze partijen: de lager opgeleiden, de politiek cynici en degenen met minder politiek zelfvertrouwen. Echter, uit de derde studie blijkt dat een rechts-populistische partijleider ook serieus genomen moet worden door het electoraat. Deze bevinding nuanceert het beeld van de rechts-populistische kiezers: blijkbaar
hechten deze kiezers belang aan de *inhoud* van de populistische boodschap en worden ze niet alleen geleid door de populistische protestretoriek. Over het geheel genomen wijzen deze bevindingen erop dat rechts-populistische partijleiders een delicaat evenwicht moeten bewaren tussen het gebruik van een populistische stijl, om bekendheid te krijgen enerzijds, en gezaghebbend te lijken, om serieus genomen te worden, anderzijds.

Ten derde en tenslotte wordt in dit proefschrift ook het vermeende onderscheidend vermogen van rechts-populistische partijen onderzocht door een directe vergelijking te maken met gevestigde partijen. Zo tonen de resultaten van het eerste hoofdstuk aan dat de mate waarin rechts-populistische partijen worden gezien als 'normale' partijen, in plaats van als eigenaardige partijen, de sleutel is tot hun electorale succes. Uit de inhoudsanalyse blijkt echter dat rechts-populistische partijleiders zich onderscheiden met hun communicatiestrategieën: ook al worden gevestigde partijleiders ook geportretteerd in de media met een populistische stijl, het zijn, zoals verwacht, de rechts-populisten die het hoogst scoren op populistische stijl en populistische retoriek, wat hen onderscheidt van hun gevestigde tegenhangers. Aan de andere kant vinden we ook dat wat de meest succesvolle rechts-populist onderscheidt van de minder succesvolle zijn gezaghebbendheid is: op deze dimensie benadert zijn score 'normaliteit', de gemiddelde score van gevestigde partijleiders. De media-effectanalyse staat bovendien niet te veronderstellen dat rechts-populisten meer afhankelijk zijn van de media dan anderen. Er is echter een belangrijk verschil tussen de twee typen partijleiders: terwijl gevestigde partijleiders negatief worden geëvalueerd wanneer zij zich uitleten op een populistische manier, worden rechts-populisten hiervoor niet gestraft. Het experiment bevestigt deze bevindingen en laat zien dat wanneer een gevestigde politicus een populistische stijl gebruikt dit een negatieve invloed heeft op hoe effectief hij wordt geacht, vooral onder zijn eigen kiezers: de hoger opgeleiden, de minder cynisch en, degenen met een hoger politiek zelfvertrouwen.

In het algemeen tonen de resultaten van de vier studies twee kenmerken aan waarin rechts-populistische partijen en hun leiders buitengewoon zijn. Het eerste is het uitgebreide gebruik van populistische stijl en retoriek als communicatiestrategieën. En de het tweede is de ontvangst van deze stijl door het totale electoraat in het algemeen, en hun eigen electoraat in het bijzonder. Wij
interpreteren dit als een andere (effectieve) communicatiestrategie van de kant van deze partijen, niets meer en niets minder.
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