Why European tv news matters: a cross-nationally comparative analysis of tv news about the European Union and its effects

Peter, J.

Citation for published version (APA):
Why European TV News Matters

A cross-nationally comparative analysis of TV news about the European Union and its effects
WHY EUROPEAN TV NEWS MATTERS

A cross-nationally comparative analysis of TV news about the European Union and its effects

Academisch Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam op gezag van de Rector Magnificus prof. mr. P. F. van der Heijden
ten overstaan van een door het college voor promoties ingestelde commissie, in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Aula der Universiteit

op maandag 7 april 2003, te 13.00 uur

door Jochen Peter
geboren te Hanau, Duitsland
Promotiecommissie:

Promoter: prof. dr. H. A. Semetko

Overige Leden: prof. dr. C. van der Eijk
prof. dr. G. Mazzoleni
prof. dr. P. Neijens
dr. V. Price
prof. dr. K. Schönbach

Faculteit der Maatschappij- en Gedragswetenschappen
Preface

Most of the data used for this derive from a study that was funded by The Dutch Organization for Scientific Research (Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek, NWO). Moreover, the Amsterdam School of Communications Research ASCoR supported my Ph. D. project from 1998-2002. I wish to thank these two institutions sincerely. In particular, I am grateful to Sandra Zwier of ASCoR who always had a sympathetic ear for my suggestions and helped me to solve many of the problems a foreigner is confronted with.

Holli Semetko supervised the project and I thank her for her generous support throughout the past four years. She often trusted my ideas more than I did and left me the intellectual freedom to further develop them. Much of this book would not exist without her. Susan Banducci and Jeff Karp helped me in many respects. They read drafts, were my technical support, and provided first aid when statistical models had collapsed. I thank Wouter van der Brug and Martin Kroh for a lot of helpful discussions about statistical problems. Always relaxed and supportive, they made me aware of several shortcomings, but also of strong aspects of my analyses. I am grateful to Klaus Schönbach and Cees van der Eijk for the many challenging and inspiring talks. I have probably learned more about social science in the "Balmoral" and the "Atrium" by talking to them than from several books I have read. My office mate Floor Arts patiently supported me in my continuous struggle with some of the last mysteries of life – the Dutch language and software from Seattle. Last but not least, I would like to thank Edmund Lauf and Claes de Vreese. Many of my ideas evolved in the collaboration and discussions with the two of them. Edmund always reminded me of the fact that social science is first and foremost a craft and had an admirable willingness to discuss even my occasionally somewhat unorthodox ideas and problems. We did not solve all of the problems, but at least we know now what to explore in the next 122 years or so. Claes and I collaborated as Ph. D. students in a larger project. In the past four years, we spent several Sunday afternoons in unheated university buildings cleaning data sets or writing papers. It is not least his insights, optimism, and contagious get-up-and-go that made it a pleasurable experience.

I dedicate this book to the memory of my grandmother Toni Kraus who died in October 2001.

Jochen Peter
List of contents

Chapter 1: Why the television news coverage of the EU may matter................................. 1
  1.1 Concepts and definitions.......................................................................................... 3
  1.2 Requirements for studying media effects on opinions and fears about the EU .......... 5
    1.2.1 Content analysis of the television coverage of the European Union ............... 6
    1.2.2 Linking EU coverage to opinions and fears about the EU at the individual level... 7
    1.2.3 Cross-nationally comparative perspective – the primacy of explanation ........... 9
  1.3 Another look at media effects - country characteristics as moderators .................. 13
  1.4 Structure and content of the book ........................................................................... 19

Part I: Television coverage of the EU.......................................................... 23

Chapter 2: Television coverage of the EU in the 1999 European election campaign ...... 24
  2.1 Previous research on the television coverage of European election campaigns ......... 25
    2.1.1 Formal characteristics – amount and prominence of EU coverage ............... 26
    2.1.2 Substantive characteristics – visibility, audibility, and evaluation of EU represen­
        tatives.................................................................................................................. 31
  2.2 Method .................................................................................................................... 37
    2.2.1 Procedure and measures................................................................................... 37
    2.2.2 Data analysis ................................................................................................. 42
  2.3 Results – European elections in television news .................................................... 44
    2.3.1 Formal characteristics – sometimes visible, but never prominent .................... 44
    2.3.2 Substantive characteristics – older member states lack interest ....................... 48
  2.4 Discussion – covering a 'non issue' ........................................................................ 53
    2.4.1 Formal characteristics – unimportant visibility ................................................. 54
    2.4.2 Substantive characteristics – third-order coverage of a second-order event ....... 56
  2.5 Summary .................................................................................................................. 58

Chapter 3: Television coverage of the EU in routine and summit periods......................... 59
  3.1 Research questions and expectations ...................................................................... 60
    3.1.1 Formal characteristics – amount and prominence of coverage ....................... 60
    3.1.2 Substantive characteristics – visibility of EU actors, evaluation, and depicted
        performance of the EU ....................................................................................... 64
  3.2 Method .................................................................................................................... 68
    3.2.1 Procedure and measures................................................................................... 68
    3.2.2 Data analysis ................................................................................................. 72
  3.3 Results – Non-election periods in television news .................................................... 73
    3.3.1 Formal characteristics – somewhat like the moon .......................................... 73
    3.3.2 Substantive characteristics – in search of faces, positivity, and success ............ 75
  3.4 Discussion – not covering an issue .......................................................................... 79
    3.4.1 Formal characteristics – invisible importance ................................................. 79
    3.4.2 Substantive characteristics – slightly negative, not successful, and a little bit absurd. 82
  3.5 Summary and outlook ............................................................................................. 84
Part II: ... and its effects ................................................................. 85

Chapter 4: The impact of the amount of EU coverage on the perceived importance of European integration depends on the nature of elite opinion .................................................. 86

4.1 Agenda-setting, elite opinion, and political interest ........................................... 88
4.2 Method .............................................................................................................. 92
  4.2.1 Procedure and measures .............................................................................. 92
  4.2.2 Data analysis .............................................................................................. 97
4.3 Results – polarized elite opinion elicits agenda-setting effects ......................... 100
4.4 Discussion – bringing context (back) in ........................................................... 105
4.5 Summary ......................................................................................................... 109

Chapter 5: The influence of the tone of EU coverage on support for European integration depends on the consonance of the entire coverage ................................................. 110

5.1 What we always wanted to know about media effects, but never cared to investigate .... 112
5.2 Method .............................................................................................................. 116
5.3 Results – consonant coverage affects support for European integration .............. 118
5.4 Discussion – a long return ................................................................................ 124
5.5 Summary ......................................................................................................... 128

Chapter 6: The influence of performance depictions of the EU on support for the EU and for European integration depends on trade relations ................................................. 129

6.1 Pocketbook supporters, cognitively mobilized and otherwise .................................. 131
6.2 Method .............................................................................................................. 133
  6.2.1 Sample ........................................................................................................ 133
  6.2.2 Measures .................................................................................................... 134
    6.2.2.1 Independent variables – modeling accumulated declining effects .......... 134
    6.2.2.2 Dependent and control variables ............................................................ 140
  6.2.3 Data analysis .............................................................................................. 141
6.3 Results – it’s the trade relations, yet in a curious way ........................................ 142
6.4 Discussion – pocketbook supporters? Cognitively mobilized? And otherwise? .... 148
6.5 Summary ......................................................................................................... 152

Chapter 7: The impact of EU coverage on fears about European integration depends on a country’s size and wealth ................................................................. 153

7.1 Who is afraid of Europe? .................................................................................... 154
7.2 Method .............................................................................................................. 157
7.3 Results – Who is afraid of Europe? ..................................................................... 160
7.4 Discussion – the not quite expected influence of television coverage ................. 166
7.5 Summary ......................................................................................................... 169
### List of tables

Table 2.1: Influences on the amount and the prominence of European election coverage .... 47
Table 2.2: Influences on the visibility and audibility of EU representatives in election coverage .................................................. 52
Table 2.3: Influences on the evaluation of EU representatives in election coverage ........ 53

Table 3.1: Share of EU stories in political coverage in routine and summit periods .......... 73
Table 3.2: Average prominence of EU stories in routine and summit periods compared to political non-EU stories ........................................................................ 74
Table 3.3: Influences on the amount and prominence of EU coverage .................................... 74
Table 3.4: Share of EU officials in all actors in the EU coverage during routine and summit periods ........................................................................ 75
Table 3.5: Evaluation of the EU in the EU coverage during routine and summit periods .... 76
Table 3.6: Average performance depiction of the EU in the EU coverage during routine and summit periods ........................................................................ 76
Table 3.7: Influences on the visibility of EU officials in the EU coverage .................................... 77
Table 3.8: Influences on the evaluation and the performance depiction of the EU in the EU coverage ........................................................................ 78

Table 4.1: Impact of the amount of EU coverage on the perceived importance of European integration per country ................................................. 100
Table 4.2: Interaction effect of amount of EU coverage, nature of elite opinion, and political interest on the perceived importance of European integration ........................................................................ 102

Table 5.1: Impact of various cross-level interactions on support for European integration ........................................................................ 119

Table 6.1: Exemplification of the (t-i) component of the power of the decay term .......... 136
Table 6.2: Impact of performance depictions, trade relations with the EU, and cognitive mobilization on EU support ........................................................................ 143
Table 6.3: Impact of performance depictions, trade relations with the EU, and cognitive mobilization on support for European integration ........................................................................ 144
Table 6.4: Influence of performance depictions on support for the EU and for European integration at different values of trade relations and cognitive mobilization .... 145

Table 7.1: Interaction effects of tone towards the EU and various country characteristics on fears about European integration ................................................. 162
Table 7.2: Interaction effects of performance depictions of the EU and various country characteristics on fears about European integration ........................................................................ 163
Table 7.3: Specific influence of tone towards the EU and performance depictions as conditional on various country characteristics ................................................. 164
Technical Appendix B

Table B1: Background information and figures European election campaign content analysis

Table B2: Country characteristics relevant to content and effects analyses dealing with the European election campaign

Table B3: Background information and figures content analysis EU coverage during routine and summit periods

Table B4: Country characteristics relevant to content and effect analyses dealing with the EU coverage during routine and summit periods

Table B5: Inter-trainer and trainer-coder reliabilities (content analysis routine and summit periods)

Table B6: Inter-coder reliabilities of the categories used (content analysis routine and summit periods)

Table B7: Comparison of the sub-sample with the excluded sample
List of figures

Figure 2.1: Number of election stories in the two weeks prior to election day ........................................44
Figure 2.2: Share of various story types in political coverage .................................................................45
Figure 2.3: Average prominence of various story types ........................................................................46
Figure 2.4: Visibility of EU and non-EU representatives in election coverage ......................................48
Figure 2.5: Audibility of EU representatives and non-EU representatives in election coverage ..........49
Figure 2.6: Evaluation differential of EU and non-EU representatives in election coverage ...............50

Figure 4.1: Interaction effect of amount of EU coverage and nature of elite opinion on the perceived importance of European integration .................................................................103

Figure 5.1: Interaction effects of consonance/dissonance and tone of coverage on support for European integration ........................................................................................................120
Figure 5.2: Influence of tone of coverage on support for integration as conditional on consonance/dissonance and visibility of EU representatives ..................................................122

Figure 6.1: Memory decay depending on different decay factors ............................................................138
Figure 6.2: Influence of performance depictions on support for the EU and for European integration as conditional on trade relations .................................................................146
Figure 6.3: Influence of performance depictions of the EU on support for further integration as conditional on trade relations and cognitive mobilization .......................................148

Figure 7.1: Proportions of people being afraid of... ............................................................................161

Technical Appendix B

Figure B1: T-Values of the influence of tone of coverage on support for European integration as conditional on consonance/dissonance and visibility of EU representatives ..................200
Figure B2: T-values of the influence of performance depictions on support for integration as conditional on trade relations and cognitive mobilization .............................200
List of abbreviations used

A Austria
B Belgium
B (FL) Belgium (Flanders)
B (WA) Belgium (Wallonia)
DK Denmark
DV Dependent variable
E Spain
EU European Union
E(E)C European (Economic) Community
EP European Parliament
F France
FIN Finland
G Germany
GR Greece
I Italy
IRL Ireland
NL The Netherlands
P Portugal
SW Sweden
UK United Kingdom
Why the television news coverage of the EU may matter

The European Union (EU) presents the peaceful reconciliation of formerly hostile nation states. As the unification of politically, economically, and culturally diverse countries, European integration is a development of unprecedented historical dimension. Since its start as the European Coal and Steel Community in 1953, the EU and its institutional predecessors have undergone enormous changes. Nine more European countries have joined the EU in the past 30 years, a common European market and a common currency have been realized. In 2004, probably the most ambitious task of the EU is to begin – the stepwise integration of Central and Eastern European countries, which will eventually increase the EU's current population from 370 million people to more than 480 million. In short, European integration matters.

The growing importance of the EU, however, cannot be separated from something less tangible, yet equally powerful – people's opinions, but also their fears and concerns about the EU. For example, since its peak at the beginning of the 1990's, EU citizens' support for the EU and European integration has steadily declined and only slightly recovered with the start of the new millenium (Eurobarometer 51-56). In national referenda, EU citizens rejected crucial EU treaties (e.g., most recently the Danish euro referendum in 2000). Violent clashes have surrounded summits of EU heads of government (e.g., Nice, 2000 and Gothenburg, 2001). In both EU member states and applicant countries, the planned eastward enlargement of the EU raises fears and concerns about an economically and politically unbalanced European super-state (Economist 2002, October 26a). The times when national elites solely decided upon European integration backed by a sleepy public's 'permissive consensus' are over. An ever bigger European Union has woken up considerable numbers of EU citizens. What has shown to be important in the past decade or so, will probably become even more important in the future: further European integration is conditional on what people think and feel about European integration.

This raises the simple, yet important question of what shapes people's opinions and fears about the EU and European integration. Citizens' opinions about the EU in particular

---

1 Obviously, hopes that citizens connect with the EU may also be relevant to the future development of the EU. However, because fears may lead to opposition to the European project, it seems more pressing to investigate them instead of hopes.

2 As of November 2002, EU applicant countries were: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia for accession in 2004; Bulgaria and Romania for accession in 2007; and Turkey for which not entry date has been fixed yet.
have received considerable scholarly attention, most notably from political science. Research has identified a variety of impacts on, for example, people's support for the EU. These explanations range from utilitarian considerations and economic conditions, cognitive mobilization, and political values to party cues and elite opinion (for overviews, see: Gabel, 1998a; McLaren, 2002; Niedermayer & Sinnot, 1995). Strikingly, however, one potential influence has largely been ignored: the media. In modern societies, the media are seen as one of the major influences on people's opinions (e.g., Noelle-Neumann, 1984; 1991; for review, see: Glynn, Herbst, O'Keefe, & Shapiro, 1999). More specifically, the media are often considered the most important means of information for citizens about politics (e.g., Entman & Bennett, 2001; Kepplinger, 1992; Sarcinelli, 1998). This may even more apply to the type of politics as remote and abstract as EU politics (e.g., Blumler & Thoveron, 1983; Schulz, 1983b). When EU citizens are asked about their preferred sources of information about the EU, a vast majority consistently mentions the mass media. And of all mass media, television is continuously named as the most often consulted source when people look for information about the EU (Eurobarometer 51-56). This suggests that the media in general and television in particular may affect what people think and feel about the EU. Assuming that a political-economic institution such as the EU is primarily covered in the news, it is especially television news coverage that may be of interest here.

Although it seems plausible to assume television news to affect people's opinions and fears about the EU, we know little about television news coverage of the EU and its effects. Quickly, a lot of questions arise: Where is Europe located on the news map? How visible is it in television news? Are there differences between networks and countries? To what extent are EU politicians visible? Is the EU favorably or unfavorably covered? Is the EU portrayed as successful achiever or as symbol of quarreling inefficiency? And possibly more important, are there certain systematic patterns underlying the coverage? Is there more coverage in countries that are favorable towards the EU? Is the news coverage more favorable towards the EU in countries whose citizens are dissatisfied with their domestic governance? Is the EU more often portrayed as being successful in countries that are economically dependent on EU than in countries that are not?

Equally many questions can be raised with respect to the effects of EU coverage on what people think and feel about the EU. Does more EU coverage lead people to regard European integration to be more important? Does more positive coverage increase citizens' support for the EU? To what extent is citizens' support for European integration influenced by favorable or unfavorable depictions of the EU's performance? And what about people's fears generated by European integration – are they alleviated by positive EU coverage? These questions render obvious what the overarching goals of this book are. First, it needs to be investigated how the EU is covered in television news. Only a profound analysis of the coverage EU provides a sound base for the second general goal of this book – the investigation of whether television news coverage influences what EU citizens think and feel about the EU.

Due to their focus on the relationship between the EU and European integration on the one hand and media coverage on the other, these two overarching goals locate this book in
political communication. With origins in both the disciplines of communication science and political science, political communication is interdisciplinary and it is the interdisciplinary character of this investigation that defines its overall theoretical orientation. There is a growing body of research from other social scientific disciplines on people's opinions about the EU (e.g., Hewstone, 1986, Niedermayer & Sinnot, 1995). However, the potential effects of EU media coverage on people's opinions and, even more so, on their fears and concerns about the EU have hardly been studied. Conversely, there is considerable research crediting media coverage an important role in the formation, perception, and change of opinions (e.g., Noelle-Neumann, 1984, 1991; for summarizing theoretical accounts, see Olien, Donohue, & Tichenor, 1995; Schoenbach & Becker, 1995). However, the impact of media on opinions and fears about the EU has rarely been investigated. This book tries to fill this research gap. At the end of the book, political scientists will find an answer to the question whether they might benefit from integrating the media in their studies on opinions and fears about the EU. And at the end of this book, communication scientists, too, will find an answer to the question whether they might benefit from extending their research to analyses of EU coverage and to studies on how media affect what people think and feel about the EU.

1.1 Concepts and definitions

The key concepts of the preceding introductory section were European integration, European Union, EU coverage, opinions and fears, and effects. Although most people may have a sense of what the terms generally imply, it should be briefly stated what they specifically mean in this book. By European integration the gradual transfer of national sovereignty to the European Union is meant. In this process, a common market and a common currency have been accomplished accompanied by a number of common policies, most notably a common agricultural policy. European integration ultimately also aims at a close cooperation of the various member states in terms of a common foreign, defense and security policy and a close cooperation between the member states in judicial and interior matters. Because the EU member states have given up a certain degree of sovereignty, the current European Union is thus more cohesive than a confederation of states, that does not affect the sovereignty of the member states. Because, however, the EU member states remain sovereign, the current EU is less integrated than a federation of states such as the United States of America or Germany. EU coverage refers to the aggregate of television news stories that address EU affairs, EU institutions, or EU politicians or deal with events at the EU level (e.g., European elections, EU summits). EU affairs comprise the making, implementation, or administration of EU policies. In principle, this can also take place at the domestic level, but the particular news story has to clearly link it to the EU, EU politicians, EU institutions, events at the EU level, or European integration.

The term opinion is primarily used as a summarizing term for the more specific concepts investigated in later chapters. Although it is thus more of structuring than of theoretical value, some brief conceptual remarks seem in order. Scholars agree that opinions are less enduring than, for example, attitudes (e.g., Glynn et al., 1999; Perloff, 1993; Price, 1992). Because research has demonstrated how unstable opinions about the EU are (Saris,
1997), the opinion concept seems to be more appropriate than the attitude concept when dealing with people's orientations towards the EU. However, when I talk about opinions in this book, I do not imply that they necessarily present the result of thoughtfulness and deliberation as some scholars argue (e.g. Fleming, 1967; Perloff, 1993). There are two reasons for this. First, in scholarly practice, the opinion concept is often employed in the sense of a more affective attitude (Glynn et al., 1999; McGuire, 1985) and the distinction between more rational opinions on the one hand and more affective attitudes on the other is not firm. Or as Price (1992) sums it up, "[a]nalysts are often reluctant to accord too much calculation and thoughtfulness to opinions, which sometimes seem to reflect intense feeling rather than cool deliberation" (p. 48). Second, in the past two decades, evidence has accumulated that cognitions cannot be separated from affects. What we think is to some extent always linked to what we feel and this may be assumed to apply to opinions about the EU as well. Whether, for instance, people consider the EU a good or a bad thing, may thus also have an affective component.

Fear is an emotion and as such more complex than, for example, good or bad feelings or likes and dislikes. Because the concept will be outlined with respect to European integration in Chapter 7, it may suffice to say that fears of European integration do not imply intense feelings with physical manifestations. Moreover, fears as investigated in this book are neither comparable to fears of concrete objects such as snakes or spider nor do they resemble diffuse forms of anxiety. Fears in this book refer to non-rational concerns about something which may potentially have unpleasant consequences and is hard to control, i.e. European integration.

A more detailed notion of media effects on people's opinions and fears about the EU can only be defined with respect to the particular opinion or fear investigated. Therefore, it may suffice to refer to the classic causality principle as the basic underlying principle of media effects as they are conceptualized and investigated in this book. First, coverage and the particular opinion or fear are found to be associated, second the coverage precedes the particular opinion or fear, and third it can be ruled out that the relationship is spurious. This simplified conceptualization of media effects should not be equated with a crude stimulus-response model, which will become clear later. However, this also means that more elaborate concepts of media effects that include reciprocal processes and more complex assumptions about the reception of news will not be taken into account (e.g., Früh & Schönbach, 1982; Früh, 1991; Price & Tewksbury, 1997). As will be explicated later, the simplified conceptualization of media effects in this book is also a necessary result of our lack of knowledge about whether and how television coverage affects opinions and fears about the EU and European integration.

---

3 A critical, but instructive introduction into this issue is provided in the tenth chapter in Fiske and Taylor (1991). For a more general reasoning why affects should not be overlooked when dealing with what is usually considered cognitive processes, see e.g. Robert Zajonc's work (e.g., 1980, 1999, 2000). For an interesting application in political research, see Ragsdale (1991).
1.2 Requirements for studying media effects on opinions and fears about the EU

Why the coverage may matter

Our lack of knowledge about media effects in the EU context derives mainly from the fact that research on opinions (and fears) about the EU has largely neglected the media. A nearly 1000 pages long "Europe handbook" published in Germany does not devote a single section, let alone a chapter to media and their (potential) effects (Weidenfeld, 1999). In other, more empirical, works one does not find media-related chapters either (e.g., Niedermayer & Sinnot, 1995). What one does find instead are statements like the following: "Europe is a kaleidoscopic supranational reality whose symbolic construction in each of its various territories is tinged with the values of the local cultural and political referents. The role of communication in this process is far more decisive than politicians and journalists often appear to let on in the course of their dialectical wrangling" (Diaz-Nosty, 1997, p. 12). Put more simply, Europe still consists of culturally and politically different systems. In bringing Europe closer together, the media matter. May matter, I am tempted to add. Diaz Nosty's statement is by no means supported by our current empirical knowledge. We do not know much about media effects on opinions (and fears) about the EU, let alone about their integrative or disintegrative function.

Although other authors also presume the media to affect in particular opinions about the EU (e.g. Gelleny & Anderson, 2000; Gerhards, 2000; Hewstone, 1986), they are aware of the speculative character of their ideas and, more importantly, of the methodological requirements of properly investigating media effects. As early as in 1986, Hewstone explicitly requested: "It seems (...) that (...) a marriage between precise coding [i.e., content analysis, JP] and attitudinal measures with a powerful statistical modeling technique would be a highly original contribution to the literature" (p. 220). With emphasis on the content analysis of media coverage, Gerhards (2000) recently joined this request: "Overall, our analyses show that our empirical knowledge about transnationalization in general and about the Europeanization of national public spheres in particular is very limited. (...) Especially cross-nationally comparative investigations are missing" (p. 302, my translation). Taken together, Hewstone and Gerhards call for three things: first, a thorough content analysis, which is, second, linked to survey data about opinions (and fears) about the European Union and third, approached from a cross-nationally comparative perspective. Bearing in mind Hewstone's (1986) psychological, individual level-oriented study, one may add a fourth requirement: the study is preferably located at the individual level of analysis to rule out the possibility of ecological or other aggregation fallacies (Alker, 1969; Robinson, 1950).

Clearly, these four requirements are not easy to meet. As a result, hardly any existing study on the impact of media on opinions about the EU is, at the same time, multi-methodological, cross-nationally comparative, and situated at the individual level of analysis. In what follows, I give a brief overview of existing research on the four aspects just identified.

- Interestingly, some authors in the book by Niedermayer and Sinnot refer to the media in their reasoning (for example Wessels, 1995a, 1995b, or Aarebrot, Berglund, and Weninger, 1995). However their evidence of media influence is anecdotal. Media effects are also often assumed, but rarely investigated in studies dealing with the influence of cognitive mobilization on EU-related opinions (e.g., Inglehart, 1970; McLaren, 2001; Wessels, 1995b). The link between cognitive mobilization and media influence will be dealt with in the sixth chapter.
Because the two requirements of the linkage of content analysis and survey data and the choice of an individual level of analysis are related, I collapse the two. The goal is to sketch the state of art. Specific findings of the various studies are discussed in later chapters where they can more comprehensively be linked to the empirical questions of this book.

1.2.1 Content analysis of the television coverage of the European Union

One needs to know what the coverage is like, if one wants to adequately study media effects. Given, however, the lack of existing research on the topic, content analyses of the television coverage of the EU may also be studies in their own right. The few existing content analyses of the television coverage of the EU are confined to EU key events such as elections of the European Parliament (Kevin, 2001; Leroy & Siune, 1994; McQuail & Bergsma, 1983; Reiser, 1994; Schulz, 1983a/c; Siune, 1983), the 1999 introduction of the euro (de Vreese, Peter, & Semetko, 2001), or crucial summits of the heads of government (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Lately, EU-related issues such as the economic coverage have also been content analyzed (Gavin, 2000). Theoretically, the focus lies on the framing concept (e.g., Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; de Vreese et al., 2001), on notions of EU affinity of EU member states (e.g., Leroy & Siune, 1994), or on Habermas' public sphere concept (e.g., Kevin, 2001). Methodologically, the studies are mostly quantitative content analyses, although more narrative accounts have also been attempted (Kevin, 2001). Commissioned by the Unit for Public Opinion and Research of the European Union, there has also been a longitudinal analysis of the television coverage of the EU for the period between 1995 and 1997 (European Commission, 1995/1997; see also Norris, 2000). Unfortunately, the procedure of the study, category definitions, and inter-coder reliabilities remain unclear so that the scientific character of the study is questionable.

Although (or because) the studies are topically limited, they seem to agree that television coverage of the EU clusters around European key events, with relatively low levels of coverage before and shortly after such events. This is also true for longer lasting events such as European election campaigns. However, there are hardly any more general results that can be found in existing research on the television coverage of the European Union. Nearly all of the content analyses are rich in specific findings, yet lack generalizability. Partly, this may result from the specific topic of investigation – television and the EU. Both television and the EU are in continuous transition. The television systems and the European Economic Community that the researchers of the 1979 European election campaign had encountered were completely transformed in the mid 1990s. Whereas there was virtually no commercial television in 1979, it became increasingly influential in nearly all European countries in the 1990s. Whereas the European Economic Community of the late 1970s comprised nine countries, a much more influential and powerful European Union encompassed 15 European countries by the mid-1990s. Such changes do not facilitate finding the bigger picture when talking about Europe on the television screen.

5 Though not dealing with television news and thus not being relevant to this study, the encompassing cross-national content analyses of newspapers (Diaz Nosty, 1997) and of print magazines (Sievert, 1998) are worth mentioning.
However, there may be a second reason why existing research on the television coverage of the European Union is difficult to generalize. All existing content analyses have been confined to exclusively descriptive accounts of the EU coverage (see especially the content analysis of the 1979 European election campaign in Blumler, 1983). To emphasize, descriptions of the coverage are important, especially in such an understudied area as the coverage of the EU. However, particularly in cross-national content analyses, merely descriptive accounts of the coverage may run the risk of increasing confusion instead of reducing complexity. Existing content analyses of EU coverage sometimes tend to merely accumulate facts. But if research on the coverage of the EU aims at the generalizability of its results, then it should try to make inferences beyond the immediate data. And, equally important, it should also seek to explain what is underlying the coverage. Although all current attempts to explain what shapes EU coverage will necessarily have a tentative character, they seem relevant to understanding the television coverage of the EU given our lack of knowledge about factors impinging upon that sort of coverage. As a consequence, this book does not only aim at a profound description of the television coverage of the EU. It also tries to initially explain what may shape the coverage.

1.2.2 Linking EU coverage to opinions and fears about the EU at the individual level

The linkage of content analysis and survey data at the individual level imposes heavy requirements on both the design of a study and data gathering and analysis (and the demands are multiplied in cross-national research). From the point of view of research economy, one may thus ask whether the use of media exposure and media attention measures in surveys does not suffice. A lot of studies have employed media exposure and media attention measures with respect to more general media effects (e.g., Drew & Weaver, 1990; McLeod & McDonald, 1985; Moy, Pfau, & Kahlor, 1999) or EU-related cognitions and attitudes (e.g., Cayrol, 1983, 1991; Holtz-Bacha & Norris, 2001; Schoenbach, 1983). Although the reliance on media exposure and media attention measures may often be dictated by practical circumstances, it is not without its problems. With respect to media effects on political efficacy and trust, Miller, Goldenberg, and Erbring (1979) have succinctly outlined the deficits of exposure measures:

"Directional, evaluative media research (...) has suffered from the methodological problems inherent in a failure to distinguish between reliance on a medium and exposure to a message, or between exposure in general and exposure to particular message content. (...) But no analysis of the relationship between media exposure (or reliance) and political attitudes can really answer questions about media impact on political efficacy or trust, because such an analysis can only assume, without empirical evidence, that there is something about the media content to which people have been exposed that affects individual attitudes. (...) The measurement of media content is essential if one wishes to demonstrate conclusively that political evaluations may become more negative as a direct consequence of news reporting that is critical of political institutions." (p. 68)
The compelling demonstration of media effects, then, presupposes that one establish the content people are actually exposed to.\(^6\) Miller, Goldenberg, and Erbring (1979) were among the first to link content analysis and survey data at the individual level. Since then, this linkage has been applied to identify and explain a variety of media effects: agenda-setting effects (e.g., Erbring, Goldenberg, & Miller, 1980; Rössler, 1997; Schönbach & Eichhorn, 1992), knowledge gaps (Kleinnijenhuis, 1991), political alienation (Wolling, 1999), the effects of campaign coverage (Dalton, Beck, & Huckfeldt, 1998) or of contentious issues (Kepplinger, Brosius, & Staab, 1991), just to mention a few. In other words, the connection of content analysis and survey data at the individual level to investigate media effects is nothing new. However, if the effects of television coverage on opinions about the EU were studied at all, then content analytic and survey data were usually linked at the aggregate level of analysis (Maier, Maier, & Brettschneider, 2002; Norris, 2000). Only recently have researchers begun to examine media effects on opinions about the EU by individual-level linkage of content analysis and survey data (Banducci, Karp, & Lauf, 2001).

Typically, both individual and aggregate-level analyses suggest that media coverage in general and television coverage in particular may influence opinions about the EU or EU politics.\(^7\) At the aggregate level, Maier, Maier, and Brettschneider (2002) and Norris (2000) have demonstrated that the tone in news stories about the introduction of the euro altered support for the new European currency. Norris (2000) also found that the tone of euro coverage affected support for the EU – more negative coverage was associated with lower levels of support. At the individual level of analysis, Banducci, Karp, and Lauf (2001) confirmed this finding with respect to the influence of the general tone of EU coverage on support for further European integration. Although the findings are consistent, one should not forget that analyses at the aggregate level do not easily permit drawing conclusions about individual effects, because one might run the risk of being trapped in ecological or other aggregation fallacies (Alker, 1969; Robinson, 1950). In other words, aggregate-level demonstrations of an association of media coverage and changes in opinions cannot be used to compellingly establish that individuals who were exposed to particular contents indeed changed their opinion in the direction of the aggregated opinions. In the worst case, the aggregate-level analysis may suggest, for example, a positive association between media coverage and aggregated opinions while all individual-level analyses yield negative relationships. This is not to say that aggregate-level analyses are second-rate analyses, especially since the dangers of ecological fallacy have been put into perspective (see the articles in Dogan & Rokkan, 1969; King, 1997). Nevertheless, it remains logically necessary that the actual effect of media coverage be demonstrated at the individual level (Esser, 1999). Only if it has been established that an individual changes his/her opinions in line (or in contrast to) the media content he/she is actually exposed to, we can speak about media effects with some certainty.

---

\(^6\) For a similar reasoning with respect to electoral research, see Semetko (1996).

\(^7\) Because the impact of EU coverage on fears of European integration has not yet been investigated (see Chapter 7), I restrict this paragraph to opinions about the EU. The basic reasoning, however, also applies to the investigation of fears.
1.2.3 Cross-nationally comparative perspective – the primacy of explanation

What has been said about the linkage of content analysis and survey data, applies even more to the aforementioned requirement of a cross-nationally comparative design: it puts heavy demands on the investigation. Conducting a study in multiple countries, does not merely multiply the necessary effort by the number of countries investigated. Apart from rendering practical questions of funding, planning, and coordinating essential, cross-nationally comparative studies also challenge the researcher in that they underlie a slightly different logic than single-country studies. Facing the increased financial, practical and intellectual effort of cross-nationally comparative studies, the question has to be raised why and when to go comparative at all. Erwin Scheuch (1989) has warned that comparative research suffers from "collective amnesia in methodology" (p. 148) and that "methodological discussions [in comparative research, JP] are often reinventing what has been forgotten" (p. 148). Given the sometimes enthusiastic embrace of comparative research in political communication (Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990, see below), some more general remarks about the rationale for comparative research in political communication seem in order. This will be followed by a definition of cross-nationally comparative research and a rationale why this book takes a cross-nationally comparative perspective. As a starting point, cross-nationally comparative research may be defined as research that deals with a "specific kind of comparison – the comparison of large macrosocial units" (Ragin, 1987, p. 1), in the context of this book: countries.

As mentioned above, Gerhards (2000) requests further studies on the coverage of European affairs to be cross-national. At first sight, this seems plausible because cross-national research may help establish potential country differences in the coverage of EU affairs. Such goals are often backed by Gurevitch and Blumler's (1990) rationale for comparative research as an "essential antidote to naive universalism" (p. 308) and an "effective antidote to unwitting parochialism" (p. 309). Gurevitch and Blumler (1990) also attribute comparative research the "capacity to render the invisible visible" (p. 309) and consider the "reliance on purely single-country scholarship (...) almost perversely provincial" given the "dramatic globalization of the flow of political messages" (p. 310). Driven by this "comparative spirit" (Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990, p. 319), the two authors ask researchers to "Let all comparative flowers bloom" (p. 319), predicting that "much of the future promise of political communication scholarship lies with comparative research" (p. 306).

Strange, then, that not a single really influential study in the area of political communication has been based on comparative research since Gurevitch and Blumler published their article in 1990: in the latest review of political communication research, comparative research is tellingly still called "promising" (McLeod, Kosicki, McLeod, 2002, p. 219). McLeod et al.'s encompassing overview does not contain a single section on comparative research or its achievements. Other researchers have been somewhat more outspoken in characterizing comparative research in political communication. Swanson (1992) calls it "still a cottage industry" (p. 20). Blumler, McLeod, and Rosengren (1992) refer

---

8 In other works on comparative research similar formulations can be found. Dogan and Pelassy (1990) call comparative research the "escape from ethnocentrism" (p. 5) and the "engine of knowledge" (p. 8).
to it as a field "increasingly active, wide-ranging, and productive, but also rather probing and preliminary" (p. 4). Gurevitch and Blumler's (1990) "rationale" for going comparative distracts from such issues. No scholar would deny that research must be alert to naive universalism and unwitting parochialism. However, cross-national research should not prematurely be associated with all what is desirable in research and thus, eventually, with good research. There can be poor comparative research – as there can be and has been good single-country research. Attributing to cross-national research values that basically all research of empirical-analytical origin endorses does not present a rationale for going comparative.

"Comparing is controlling" – and therefore analysis and explanation at multiple levels

The rationale for going comparative lies in the substantive issues and requirements of the research question. Not each and every research question needs to be investigated in a comparative fashion in order not to be 'perversely provincial'. On the contrary, a lot of research on, for example, affective or cognitive reactions to media coverage can perfectly be done in single-country studies. "[O]ne is under no obligation to compare (seriously) unless the reason is control" (Sartori, 1994, p. 16, emphasis in the original). Or, in short: "[C]omparing is controlling" (Sartori, 1994, p. 16). If control can be established by, for example, experimental designs or statistical analyses and if this is sufficient according to theoretical considerations of the research question, then no comparative research or comparative control is necessary. If, however, there are theoretical reasons to assume that, for example, particular system- or, more specifically, country-level factors may affect distributions of or relationships between variables, then they should be included in the design of the study – then it is warranted to go (cross-nationally) comparative.

The decision to control for system-level factors is inextricably linked to explanatory considerations. When a researcher controls for system-level factors, this typically implies that the system-level factors are considered potential influences on distributions of or relationships between variables. Thus, system-level factors become important components of the explanation of distributions of or relationships between variables. Put differently, "comparative research consists not of comparing but of explaining" (Przeworski, 1987, p. 35). In the area of cross-nationally comparative research, this means that the "notion that 'nations differ' [be replaced] by statements formulated in terms of specific variables" (Przeworski & Teune, 1970, p. 30). In other words, going cross-nationally comparative requires the researcher to specify the explanatory value of country characteristics above and beyond the mere reference to the country name as explanation (and moreover forces him/her to leave behind mere descriptive orientations). Differences between the French and the English in their EU support cannot be explained by referring to their "Frenchness" or "Englishness". Cross-nationally comparative research presents a meaningful contribution to social science in general and political communication in particular, if it exploits the increased explanatory power of cross-nationally comparative approaches. And the explanatory power of cross-nationally comparative approaches is increased because system-level factors can be included.
Why the coverage may matter

The fact that system-level factors can be part of the explanation defines another important property of comparative research – analysis and explanation proceed at multiple levels. To give a fictitious example, even after controlling for competing explanations, it has been found that individuals who watched more news about the EU perceived European integration to be more important in country A, while this pattern did not obtain in country B. In both countries, the findings have been established at the individual level of analysis, but their contradictory character suggests that something that distinguishes the two countries at the system (i.e., country) level may interfere with the observed relationships. After it has been identified which system-level factor might explain the different results, the analysis includes this system-level factor – and proceeds no longer only at the individual, but also at the system-level of analysis. It, then, becomes clear how (cross-national) comparative research can be defined: comparative research is about controlling and, thus, about explaining and inherently proceeds at multiple levels of analysis and explanation. In other words, comparative research must not stop with establishing differences between systems, valuable though this may be at early stages in a research program. Comparative research ultimately aims at more powerful explanations by including system-level factors. With respect to political communication, Gurevitch and Blumler (1990) have described the core of cross-nationally comparative research as follows: "It is not (...) just a matter of fielding common instruments in as many societies as possible and seeing what emerges. Nor is it even a matter of simply trying to ascertain how selected phenomena compare and contrast in different countries. It is rather (...) a matter of trying to take account of potentially varying macro-social system-level characteristics and influences on significant political communication phenomena" (p. 306).

Going comparative – going explanatory

As a consequence of the above considerations, it becomes obvious that Gerhards’ (2000) call for cross-nationally comparative research should not merely be justified with the goal of establishing country differences or similarities concerning distributions of or relationships between variables. It is paramount to investigate the causes of country differences or similarities by referring to characteristics that distinguish the countries. This is even more pressing if one tries to study television news EU coverage and its potential influence on what people think and feel about the EU. Strictly speaking, neither the analysis of television coverage of the EU nor the investigation of media effects on opinions and fears about the EU needs to be approached cross-nationally comparative unless it can be assumed that country-level factors may explain potential country differences. Thus, it is the primacy of explanation that pervades both cross-nationally comparative research and the study of both EU television coverage and its effects.

Cross-nationally comparative research that adheres to the primacy of explanation is frequently conducted in political science studies on opinions about the EU or voting decisions (e.g., Anderson, & Reichert, 1996; Franklin, van der Eijk, & Oppenhuis, 1996; Rohrschneider, 2002). However, in content analyses of the coverage of the EU and in studies on media effects on opinions (or fears) about the EU, the picture looks different. As outlined
in section 1.2.1, content analytic research on the coverage of the EU has not paid much attention to explanatory approaches. More specifically, this translates into the fact that systemic or country characteristics are sometimes discussed as potential explanations, but are never investigated (e.g., McQuail & Bergsma, 1983; Leroy & Siune, 1994; Siune, 1983). In response to the above stated request that research focus on the why of coverage besides and beyond the what of coverage, this book seeks to investigate whether country characteristics impinge upon the coverage of the EU besides describing the properties of the coverage.

Given the small number of studies dealing with media effects on opinion and fears about the EU from a cross-nationally comparative perspective, it is not surprising that only recently scholars have begun to exploit the increased explanatory potential of cross-nationally comparative research by including country characteristics besides individual-level characteristics as explanations (Banducci et al., 2001). Generally, however, both research on media effects on opinions about the EU and the broader field of communication studies seem to be oblivious of the multilevel nature of cross-nationally comparative research. In their introduction to a special issue of Communication Research on "matters micro and macro", Ritchie and Price (1991) stated: "[C]rossing levels in communication research is somewhat like the weather – something everyone talks about but no one does anything about" (p. 138). Given the very low share of cross-level or, more specifically, cross-nationally comparative approaches in the latest review of political communication research (McLeod et al., 2002), Ritchie and Price are probably still right. Generally, this is troublesome because the micro-macro linkage presents one of the most fundamental issues in all social scientific disciplines (e.g., in sociology: Alexander, Giesen, Münch, & Smelser, 1987; in political science: Eulau, 1986; in social psychology: Doise, 1986; in educational science: Oosthoek & van den Eeden, 1984) and sophisticated theoretical accounts of multilevel approaches to communication phenomena have been proposed (McLeod, Pan, & Rucinski, 1995; Pan & McLeod, 1991; Price, Ritchie, & Eulau, 1991). Specifically, the lack of adequately addressing matters micro and macro in comparative studies in political communication is deplorable because investigations at multiple levels are inherent to cross-nationally comparative research.

The lack of cross-nationally comparative research that integrates micro-macro (and, thus cross-level) relationships as explanations is also discernable in media effects research. Scholars from other research traditions (most notably Cultural Studies) have heavily criticized more quantitative, empirical-analytical media effects research for ignoring explanations located at another than the micro level (e.g., Morley, 1989; Lewis, 1992). Although the critique of Cultural Studies scholars is not tenable in its generality, it yet points to a

---

9 There are a number of influential studies in the empirical-analytical tradition which have focused on explanations from levels other than the individual level, for example research on the two-step flow of information and opinion leaders (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, Gaudet, 1944; for a review Weimann, 1995), Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur's dependency model (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976; Ball-Rokeach, 1985), the hostile media phenomenon (Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985; Giner-Sorolla & Chaiken, 1994), attempts to integrate opinion formation as individual-level cognitive process in social identification theory (Price, 1988, 1989) or more recent studies focusing on effects of social networks (e.g., Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1987; Schmitt-Beck, 2000; Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001; Sotirovic & McLeod, 2001). – It should also be noted that a number Cultural Studies scholars would reject the notion of explanation and the possibility to detect general patterns of human behavior.
shortcoming in the empirical-analytical tradition of media effects research. The social embedding of individuals is often not taken into account. As a consequence, it is often uncritically taken for granted that media effects can fully be explained with individual-level variables. Linkages between the micro and macro level, between individuals and their social context are frequently ignored. If one defines the country in which an individual lives as social context, then it becomes clear that the linkage between micro (or individual) level characteristics and macro (or country) level characteristics may help to initially tackle this shortcoming. Moreover, it may help to start applying the richness of social scientific thinking to the study of media effects.

The deficits and problems outlined in the preceding paragraphs clearly call for a more stringent application of the logic of cross-nationally comparative research and of its explanatory potential to communication and media effect studies. The two overarching goals of this book can then be specified as follows:

- The television coverage of the EU will not only be described; I will also try to initially explain the coverage from a cross-nationally comparative perspective by referring to substantive characteristics that distinguish EU countries. This is the first overarching goal.

- The second overarching goal is to investigate the potential effects of television coverage on citizens' opinions and fears about the EU by employing explanations that combine individual-level characteristics with country-level characteristics. By doing so, this book also attempts to shed new light on the conceptualization of media effects.

The logic of the attempt to initially explain the coverage of the EU, amongst others, with country characteristics is straightforward and does not need a general introduction (the specific reasoning will be elaborated upon in Chapters 2 and 3). However, the logic of whether and how country characteristics may impinge upon the potential effects of television coverage on opinions and fears about the EU requires some more reasoning. I will start with some general considerations and will subsequently specify them with respect to the topic of this book.

1.3 Another look at media effects - country characteristics as moderators

The investigation of potential effects of television coverage on opinions and fears about the EU is based upon the assumption that general and generalizable patterns of media influence exist and can be identified. Typically, media effects research aims at patterns that are independent of the particular person, group, or country investigated. Moreover, the logic of and the reasoning about media effects is inextricably linked to the individual level of observation and analysis, most notably in research rooted in psychology (e.g., studies on cognitive and affective media effects such as media priming or mood management). The assumption of generalizable media effects and the primacy of the individual level of analysis in media effects research entails that the researcher clearly outlines why cross-nationally comparative research and thus country characteristics as additional explanations are
necessary. If (single-country) research has, by means of replication, validly and reliably demonstrated the existence of a certain pattern of media effects, the researcher wishing to go cross-nationally comparative has to give a rationale what country characteristics may add to the explanation of the media effect pattern in question. This rationale does not have to be formulated in terms of a broad, elaborated theory, but may be expressed in terms of theoretical propositions as Price et al. (1991) emphasize (see also Hannan's, 1971, related concept of 'auxiliary' theories). Theoretical propositions as statements that link two or more concepts in a causal relationship are essential for the cross-level explanations aimed at in cross-nationally comparative research. However, if it is not specified which country characteristics might impinge upon the pattern and, consequently, need to be controlled, then going cross-nationally comparative may quickly become arbitrary. In other words, there is no need to test whether a general phenomenon such as, for example, knowledge gap differs across countries unless it is outlined in theoretical propositions which country characteristics may affect the phenomenon and how this influence works. Or, in more general terms, as long as a media effects phenomenon can be examined with individual-level variables in a theoretically encompassing fashion, cross-nationally comparative research and, thereby, country level variables are not necessary.

However, if there is reason to assume that a particular country characteristic may indeed influence a media effect pattern, the particular country characteristic needs to be included in the analysis. As argued in section 1.2.2, the individual level is the preferred level of analysis in effects studies. Preserving this level of analysis results technically in a pooled sample. This means that the individuals from the various countries are combined into one total data matrix including the country-level characteristic. Depending on theoretical considerations, the country characteristic can have either a competing or a moderating relationship with the media effect pattern in question. This shapes how the country characteristic is included and modeled in the analysis and how the findings need to be interpreted. What follows, is essentially based on the logic of third-variable control with the country characteristic as third variable.

1. The country characteristic as "competitor". If theory suggests that a particular country characteristic may affect a particular dependent variable in addition to or instead of particular media contents (i.e., the independent variable), it is additionally included in the analysis. Three outcomes are possible:

a) The media effect pattern in question remains unaffected when including the country characteristic. The country characteristic exerts no influence. In other words, even if one controls for a characteristic in which the various countries differ, the original media effect

---

10 This also includes the replication of a particular effect in (single-country) studies that are conducted independently of one another in different countries. One may also think of replication of an effect in a cross-nationally comparative study. However, in this case at least some tentative presumptions about which country characteristics need to be controlled for should guide the investigation.

11 By effect pattern it is meant that a particular media content (i.e., the independent variable) affects a particular effect variable (i.e., the dependent variable). In this study, the effect variable comprises various opinions and fears about the EU and European integration.
remains stable and the researcher can be confident that the media effect pattern is unaffected by the country characteristic included in the analysis.

b) The country characteristic makes an impact on the dependent (i.e., the "effect" variable) in addition to the media variable. In other words, both the media variable and the country variable influence the dependent variable independently of each other. For example, one may find that a certain ideological slant in coverage leads to particular ideological positions. Additionally, the predominant ideology in countries may affect ideological positions.

c) The original media effect pattern disappears, this is the media-(coverage) related variable loses its impact. Instead, the country characteristic affects the dependent variable. This shows that the original media effect pattern was spurious. The country characteristic influences both the media-(coverage) related variable and the dependent variable. Take again the example that a certain ideological slant in coverage leads to particular ideological positions. However, when controlling for the ideology of countries, one may now find that it is the predominant ideology that shapes both the slant of coverage and ideological positions. In other words, contrary to original assumptions, it is not the ideological slant of coverage that affects people's ideological position, but the predominant ideology in a country.\(^\text{12}\)

2. The country characteristic as "moderator". Theory may suggest that a particular country characteristic modifies the effect pattern. Technically, an interaction term between the country characteristic and the media (or independent) variable is included in the analysis. If the theory-based expectations are confirmed, this interaction term will exert a considerable influence on the dependent variable. Thus, the effect pattern does not obtain equally across the whole range of the country characteristic, but depends on values of this country characteristic. The country characteristic conditions whether or to what extent the media (or independent) variable affect the effect (or dependent) variable. Three basic outcomes are possible:

a) The effect pattern holds only at particular values of the country characteristic and not at others.

b) The effect pattern becomes stronger at particular values of the country characteristic and weaker at other values.

c) The effect pattern holds at particular values of the country characteristic and reverses at other values.

\(^{12}\) In principle, the disappearance of the original effect pattern can point to a mediating function of a country characteristic. However, in the specific case of media effects, such mediating functions of country characteristics are often logically impossible or highly unlikely.
The basic outcomes are visualized in Figures 1.1 to 1.3 and refer to the following example.

Single-country research might have demonstrated that the evaluation of the euro in the media (i.e., the independent variable) affects citizens' approval of the new currency (i.e., the dependent variable). However, one may presume that membership to the group of countries that joined the new currency (i.e., the country characteristic as moderator) may condition this effect. Assuming further that for citizens of euro-member countries the euro has become reality, they will not be affected by the tone of coverage whereas their counterparts in countries that have not joined the euro-zone yet will be influenced by the coverage.

A perfect confirmation of this expectation would be outcome a). In the case of outcome b), citizens from countries having introduced the euro would be influenced less strongly than citizens from countries not having introduced the euro yet. Outcome c) may entail that euro-country citizens oppose the tone of coverage possibly suspecting to be manipulated while citizens from non-euro countries respond in the expected way to the coverage.
Why the coverage may matter

Whether a county characteristic is considered to compete with or to moderate an effect pattern depends on underlying theory. However, the research goals of the two strategies also differ slightly. Treating country characteristics as competing explanation of an effect pattern ultimately aims at the generalization of the effect from one country to many. The purpose of this strategy is to demonstrate that an effect remains unchanged even when potentially influential country characteristics are controlled for. Treating country characteristics as moderating explanation eventually aims at the modification of an effect pattern. The purpose of this strategy is to show that an effect changes under the influence of particular country characteristics. The research goals of the two strategies, in turn, depend on the development stage of a discipline. Disciplines with elaborated theories may try to maximize the generality of their theories by demonstrating that predictions based on the theories are independent of country characteristics. Communication science (or political communication, for that matter) as a young discipline is preoccupied with developing and elaborating such theories. As an indirect consequence, all effect analyses in this book are concerned with the modification of effect patterns by country characteristics.

Besides this general reason for conceptualizing country characteristics as moderators of effect patterns, there is a specific reason that lies in the nature of the research object – the potential influence of television coverage on opinions (and fears) about the European Union. For example, in the majority of her analyses, Norris (2000, p. 201) does not find, across all countries, an identical relationship between the tone of EU coverage and public opinion about the EU. Norris attempts to demonstrate that a particular tone of coverage has the same effect in all countries. However, she does not take into account that the influence of a particular tone of coverage may not be the same across all countries, but may depend on the variation of particular country characteristics. In its extreme, this may lead to the result that a particular tone has positive effects in some countries and a negative effect in others depending on the particular value of the country characteristic in question. If this is not taken into consideration (e.g., with interaction terms) in the (pooled) analysis across countries, the diverging effects may neutralize one another. As a consequence, no overall main effect may be visible.

Of course, this is only a suggestion for more elaborate analyses and one should in the first place accept the possibility that there were simply no media effects in Norris’ (2000) analyses. Nevertheless, when dealing with something as complex as media effects on opinions and fears about the EU from a cross-nationally comparative perspective, simple generalizations of media effect patterns across all countries may not be without their problems, despite their intuitive appeal. The member states of the EU have acceded to the EU at different times for different reasons, their share in EU power distributions varies as does

---

13 This does not imply that generalization and modification are mutually exclusive. The emphasis lies on whether a researcher in the first place attempts to demonstrate that effects are independent of or dependent on particular country characteristics.

14 The fact that theorizing in communication science is very much 'work in progress', is best visible in the discussions that evolved around the probably most frequently investigated concept of communication science, agenda-setting. Critics have focused on the weak theoretical foundation of agenda-setting, which cumulates in Iyengar and Kinder’s (1987) reproach: "Agenda-setting may be an apt metaphor, but it is no theory" (p. 3). Other scholars such as Kosicki (1993) and Brosius (1994) put their criticism more tentatively, but also point out the lack of theoretical development in agenda-setting.
their dependency on the EU in terms of economic welfare, and the integration of the population in decisions taken at the EU level differs from country to country. Expecting that, for example, a positive tone of coverage towards the EU leads to more support for the EU equally among all citizens across all EU countries neglects the various country characteristics that may play a role here.

Banducci et al. (2001) have recently shown to what extent country characteristics as moderators of effect patterns can enhance our understanding of how media affect support of the EU. The scholars found that positive coverage of pro-EU governments influences support of the EU positively only if elite opinion in those countries was EU supportive. If elite opinion about the EU was polarized in a particular country, then positive coverage of the government did not affect whether people supported the EU. Banducci et al.'s (2001) findings demonstrate the important moderating role of elite opinion (a characteristic at the country level) for media effects to occur. Given the scarcity of research on media effects on opinions and fears about the EU, the general logic and implications of this conceptualization of media effects is of considerable substantive interest – especially for refining concepts of media effects from a cross-nationally comparative perspective. Moreover, Rohrschneider (2002) and Steenbergen and Jones (2002) have most recently successfully applied the general idea of treating country characteristics as moderators of relationships in other research on opinions about the EU. This suggests that cross-nationally comparative research on opinions about the EU increasingly tends to focus on moderated or conditional influences, which dovetails with more advanced conceptualizations of media effects.

In sum, the state of both research on media effects in political communication and of research on media effects in the EU context suggests that it may be beneficial to conceptualize media influence on what people think and feel about the EU as modified, conditional impact. In a cross-nationally comparative approach, this means that the main focus lies on the interaction of characteristics of television coverage and country characteristics in their effect on opinions and fears about the EU. Obviously, the specific reasons for conceptualizing media effects as moderated by country characteristics depend on the particular research questions. Because of their specificity, these considerations will be explicated in the context of the particular studies, thus in Chapters 4 to 7.

In the preceding section, I have outlined why and when it is useful to go comparative. In this section, I have specified how media effects may be investigated from a cross-nationally comparative perspective. Moreover, I have explicited which strategy is employed in this book for the cross-nationally comparative investigation of media effects. Much of what has been said in the preceding three sections had to be kept general in order to adequately present the underlying logic and dimensionality of cross-nationally comparative research when studying media effects on opinions and fears about the EU. In what follows, I will specify the reasoning of the preceding sections with respect to the remaining chapters of the book after having outlined the structure of the book.
1.4 Structure and content of the book

In line with its two overarching goals, this book has two main parts. Part I deals with the television coverage of the EU and encompasses two studies. Part II centers upon the effects of television coverage on opinions and fears about the EU and comprises four studies. To present a broad view on EU coverage and its effects, both parts adhere to the principles of topical variety and theoretical pluralism. As a result, prominent topics and important concepts in the field of either EU or media effects research have been chosen. Topically, European election coverage (Chapter 2) and EU citizens' support for the EU and European integration (Chapters 5 and 6) have attracted relatively much attention in previous research. Theoretically, agenda-setting (Chapter 4) and Noelle-Neumann's (1973) consonance concept (Chapter 5) have been chosen from media effect research; the concept of utilitarian motivations of EU support has been selected from political science research (Chapter 6). In other words, this book tries to be specific in the choice of its approaches and general in its attempt to link television coverage of the EU to opinions and fears about the EU.

The theoretical pluralism of the content part is, of course, also an acknowledgment of the scattered state of the field. As has been sketched above and will become more obvious later, our knowledge about what shapes EU coverage amounts to rather little currently. Therefore, investigations of the EU coverage will rather have to proceed stepwise by testing various potential influences on EU coverage instead of aiming at encompassing explanations. The theoretical pluralism of the effect part may be at odds with trying to find a unifying model or even a theory of how television coverage impinges upon opinions and fears about the EU. However, the fact that, in the various chapters of the effects part, specific theories are favored over one overarching theory inevitably results from the state of art in both EU-related and more general research on media effects.

Because this book enters largely understudied territory, effects must first be established before potentially unifying approaches can be proposed. What is more, existing media effect concepts, models, or theories are connected with specific fields of research and may not lend themselves to the study of media effects on opinions and fears about the EU. They deal with phenomena that are currently unlikely to happen in the EU context (e.g., spiral of silence), are based on characteristics of the coverage that are unrealistic with respect to the EU (e.g., cultivation approach), or are simply thematically unrelated (e.g., media entertainment-related approaches). If approaches are sufficiently general, the nature of the effect itself is usually either specific (e.g., agenda-setting effects) or not compatible with cross-nationally comparative research (e.g., media priming). Specific effects only shed a spotlight on the unknown territory of media effects on opinions about the EU and lend themselves, in this context, rather to one study than to a whole book (e.g., see the agenda-setting study in Chapter 4). If approaches to media effects are sufficiently general (e.g., media priming), they are typically based on psychological processes. As a result, they can usually be studied appropriately at the individual-level. This, in turn, is at odds with the logic of comparative research. In sum, the state of research on both the coverage of the EU and its effects suggests that the goal of a unifying overall model or even of a theory of how television coverage affects opinions and fears about the EU seems both unrealistic and premature. As a
result, a more modest – step-by-step – approach is chosen in this book. Structurally, this reflects in the set-up of the various chapters as studies in their own right. Theoretically, this translates in an overall pluralist approach to the topic.

**Content of the book**

As outlined in the preceding sections, this book tries to shed new light on the basic parameters of television coverage of the EU and its underlying patterns (Part I). Moreover, the potential effects of television coverage on opinions and fears about the EU are to be investigated (Part II). In both parts, I try to exploit the increased explanatory potential offered by cross-nationally comparative research. As a result, the book may help to structure our knowledge about European news and the (re-)conceptualization of media effects from a cross-nationally comparative perspective.

Part I focuses upon the coverage of the EU and EU affairs during the 1999 European election campaign (Chapter 2) and during routine and summit periods throughout 2000 (Chapter 3).

As Chapter 2 will show, there were striking differences between the various EU member states in the coverage of the 1999 European election campaign. This concurs with previous research (e.g., Blumler, 1983; Leroy & Siune, 1994) and requires explanation. Here, the advantages of cross-nationally comparative research may come in. Some EU countries had already participated in European elections, others were still novices – did the novelty of the event impinge upon the amount of election coverage? In some countries, the EU was contentious among parties, in others this was not the case – did this contentiousness affect the coverage? Some countries may connect high hopes with the EU because there was widespread dissatisfaction with domestic governance – did this dissatisfaction with domestic democracy impact upon the amount and tone of EU coverage? These and other questions will be examined and answered in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 will demonstrate the paradox of the invisible importance of EU coverage. Moreover, the facelessness of the EU in the coverage will be shown. Are there any patterns discernible underlying the country differences? Again, this is where a cross-nationally comparative perspective may broaden our horizon. To what extent did the just mentioned contentiousness of the EU and (dis)satisfaction with domestic governance impact upon how the EU is covered in routine and summit periods? Did the degree of EU support of a particular country affect the coverage? Chapter 3 will try to answer these questions.

Part II deals with the effects both of the coverage of the European election campaign (Chapters 4 and 5) and of the coverage in routine and summit periods (Chapters 6 and 7) on opinions and fears about the EU.

Chapter 4 starts with the question of whether the amount of EU coverage influences people's judgments of the importance of European integration, thereby centering upon agenda-setting effects. Previous EU-related research has never dealt with the perceived importance of European integration. Conversely, agenda-setting has not really been investigated from cross-nationally comparative perspective. Do agenda-setting effects also
occur for issues such as EU politics that are less likely to be top issues on the media agenda? Is agenda-setting really a general phenomenon as is often implicitly assumed or does its occurrence depend on country characteristics such as the nature of elite opinion about a particular issue? Chapter 4 tackles these questions.

Chapter 5 centers upon a substantive characteristic of coverage, its tone, and the effect on support for European integration. This simple relationship is investigated in the context of Noelle-Neumann's (1973) concept of powerful mass media, a concept that calls for cross-nationally comparative research, but has never been investigated from that perspective. Does the tone of coverage impact upon citizens' support for European integration? And, more importantly, is this potential impact enhanced when coverage as a whole is consonant in its tone towards the EU? In answering such questions, Chapter 5 may not only tell us something about the power of media in the EU context, but may also address some important questions about the general conditions for media to exert influence.

Scholars have found EU citizens to be, to some extent, pocketbook supporters of the EU. When their country depends on the EU and is well off, EU citizens support the EU more strongly than when this is not the case. If citizens are in such a specific way utilitarian (and responsive to their country context), do they also use more general cues about the performance of the EU from television in their support for the EU? And, more interestingly, do specific and general utilitarian orientations interact? In other words, do citizens reject cues from television coverage if they can "afford to"? And what about the allegedly most faithful disciples of European integration, the cognitively mobilized – how do they respond to television coverage? Chapter 6 has more.

Chapter 7 addresses a largely neglected aspect of European integration – people's fears about European integration. Facing probably the most ambitious and risky step in European integration – the eastward enlargement of the EU – such emotions towards the EU should no longer be ignored. Fears about European integration, for example about loosing cultural identity, may depend on country characteristics, for example a country's size, and deserve to be studied in a cross-nationally comparative fashion. However, they may also be increased or reduced by unfavorable or favorable media coverage. Chapter 7 starts with commonsensical expectations, investigates the interaction between country characteristics and the content people watched and ends with findings not quite expected.

Chapter 8 addresses the broader issues raised in this book. It discusses the limitations of the various studies thereby showing some avenues for further research. Moreover, the chapter points out the practical and theoretical implications of the two parts of the book. Where is Europe located on the television screen? Can EU citizens, in principle, inform themselves sufficiently about EU affairs from television news coverage? Do EU politicians have to be afraid of EU coverage? To what extent can a cross-nationally comparative perspective enhance our conceptualization of media effects? Chapter 8 gives an answer.

At the end of Chapters 2 to 7, the main findings are briefly summarized for readers wishing a quick overview. However, it is important to note that the chapters are organized in
pairs. Chapter 3 is based on Chapter 2, Chapter 5 is based on Chapter 4, and Chapter 7 is based on Chapter 6.

The analyses in the second part of this book typically include interaction effects. The investigation of the interaction effects draws heavily on the procedures developed by Aiken and West (1991) and Jaccard, Turrisi, and Wan (1990). Unfortunately, these procedures have not fully been implemented in scholarly practice. Moreover, the analyses in this book slightly extend the procedures by Aiken and West and Jaccard et al. As a consequence, Technical Appendix A has been added to this book. In that Technical Appendix, the logic of investigating interaction effects and, more specifically, of post hoc probing interaction effects is outlined with respect to the various analyses presented in Chapters 4 to 7.
Part I

Television news coverage of the EU

This part attempts, first, to establish the basic parameters of television news coverage of the European Union and, second, to identify patterns underlying the coverage. To offer an encompassing picture of how television news reports about Europe, news coverage is investigated during three different periods: during the 1999 European election campaign (Chapter 2) and during summit and routine periods throughout 2000 (Chapter 3). As has been mentioned in section 1.2.2, without a detailed account of the coverage, it is not possible to comprehensively study effects of television coverage on opinions and fears about the EU and European integration.

There is also a more general rationale for focusing on the content of the coverage as a study in its own right. In modern democracies, media generally play a crucial role in bringing politics to citizens (e.g., Entman & Bennett, 2001; Kaase, 1998; Marcinkowski, 1998; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Wilke, 1998) and they may be particularly relevant to bridging the gap between usually abstract and remote EU politics and EU citizens (Blumler & Thoveron, 1983; Schulz, 1983b). Television news may be important in this process due to its widespread use for information about the EU (Eurobarometer 51-56). However, there is little research on whether television news provides people with the possibility to, in principle, inform themselves sufficiently about EU politics. European parliamentary elections are a key event of democracy at the EU level presenting EU citizens' only chance to express a direct opinion on European matters. Chapter 2 will show to what extent television news transmits this key event of democratic participation at the EU level to EU citizens and whether EU citizens have, in principle, the opportunity to inform themselves about EU affairs from television news. Politics has increasingly become Europeanized (e.g., Gerhards, 2000; Lepsius, 1990; Wessels, 1997) and the changes in the political landscape of the EU have been fundamental. Chapter 3 will illustrate whether television coverage conveys this large-scale development to EU citizens. The two chapters, then, will tell us to what extent processes of enormous political relevance are represented in television coverage. Both chapters approach the television coverage of the EU from a cross-nationally comparative perspective. At the current stage of research, this perspective seems the most appropriate as outlined in Chapter 1. However, the choice of a cross-nationally comparative perspective also entails that other comparative aspects (e.g., comparisons across time, comparison between election and non-election coverage) will not be the focus of the two chapters.

Because this analysis of the television coverage of the EU does not only aim the description of the basic parameters of coverage, but also at an initial explanation of what may shape the coverage, both chapters adhere to the same structure. First, the basic parameters will be described. Second, in a more explanatory account, I will attempt to detect patterns underlying the coverage.
Television coverage of the EU in the 1999 European election campaign

Although several studies have investigated the television coverage of European election campaigns (Blumler, 1983; Leroy & Siune, 1994; Reiser, 1994), two aspects of that type of coverage have largely been ignored. The first concerns two simple, yet important formal characteristics – the relative amount and the relative prominence of EU coverage. Without exception, existing studies on the television coverage of the European election campaign have limited the analysis to the coverage of the EU (Blumler, 1983; Leroy & Siune, 1994; Reiser, 1994). Although at first sight plausible, this implies that EU stories (or communicator speeches) can only be compared to other EU stories (or communicator speeches). As a result, analyses are precluded which center upon the relative amount of EU coverage, i.e., on the share of EU coverage in the entire coverage, or on the relative prominence of EU coverage, i.e., the average prominence of EU coverage as compared to the average prominence of the entire coverage. Ultimately, the reduced form of analysis employed in previous research disables broader views on the importance of European election campaign coverage and renders it difficult to put EU coverage into perspective.

A second shortcoming of existing research on the coverage of European election campaigns revolves around the coverage of EU representatives. In this chapter, the category EU representatives does not only encompass members of EU institutions such as the European Commission or the European Parliament, but also persons who are clearly associated with EU institutions or EU parties. Whereas, at the national level, researchers have paid great attention to the television coverage of politicians,15 no study to date has addressed how EU representatives are covered in television news. This lack of knowledge about the coverage of EU representatives seems even more puzzling because it is the candidates who are at the heart of every democratic election. More specifically, although research on national general elections has increasingly focused on questions of personalization and candidate images (e.g., for France and the US: Kaid, Gerstlé, & Sanders, 1991; for Germany: Kindelmann, 1994; Schönbach, 1993; for Italy: Mazzoleni, 1996; Mazzoleni & Roper, 1995), we do not even know to what extent EU representatives are visible in television news.16 Apart from that, several studies have demonstrated the importance of soundbites and quotes in elections (Hallin, 1992; Russomano & Everett, 1995). However, little is known about the

15 For an overview of the German research see Holtz-Bacha (1996); for the Netherlands: Kleinnijenhuis, Oegema, de Ridder, & Ruigrok (1998); for Italy: Mazzoleni & Roper (1995); and for studies including multiple countries: Norris, Curtice, Sanders, Scammell, & Semetko (1999); Schoenbach, de Ridder, & Lauf (2001), Semetko, Blumler, Gurevitch, and Weaver (1991).

16 Reiser (1994) is the only one who deals with the coverage of politicians, but focuses on German top politicians rather than on EU representatives.
Coverage of the 1999 European election campaign

audibility of EU representatives. Similarly, it is unclear whether and how EU representatives are evaluated in television coverage. This is striking given that evaluations of politicians have become an important aspect in content analyses of the television coverage of national politicians (e.g., for Germany: Kepplinger & Rettich, 1996; for Germany and the Netherlands: Kleinnijenhuis, Maurer, Kepplinger, & Oegema, 2001; for Spain: McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, & Llamas, 2000).

The two research lacunae identified in the two preceding paragraphs define the two goals pursued in this chapter. First, the formal characteristics of the television coverage of the European election campaign are investigated in relation to the remaining coverage. Only such a relative view can enhance our understanding of the importance of European election coverage. Second, the coverage of EU representatives will be studied with respect to more substantive characteristics. The focus lies on the visibility, audibility, and evaluation of EU representatives.

2.1 Previous research on the television coverage of European election campaigns

The coverage of European election campaigns has not yet attracted great attention among scholars. With the exception of the first European parliamentary elections in 1979, researchers have only selectively attempted to study how European elections are covered in the news (for the 1989 campaign in Belgium and Denmark, see Leroy & Siune, 1994; for the 1989 campaign in Germany, see Reiser, 1994; for the 1999 campaign, see Kevin, 2001). Moreover, the studies are, to some extent, very much tied to the special period they investigate and, hence, hard to compare. The political context of 1979 European elections when only nine European countries belonged to the then European Economic Community was very much different from the 1999 election when 15 European Union member states elected their representatives for the European Parliament. Moreover, not only has the EU undergone enormous changes since 1979, but so have the media systems in the various countries (Semetko, de Vreese, & Peter, 2000). While, for example, commercial television did not exist in many European countries in 1979, Leroy and Siune (1994) and Reiser (1994) included commercial program providers along with public broadcasters in their analysis of the 1989 European elections. As a result of the lack of comparability of the studies, lengthy discussions of their findings would be digressing in this chapter. Instead, I will use the studies to sketch the broader picture in which the following analyses are located.

---


18 For two reasons, I do not compare the findings in this chapter with the results found by Kevin (2001). First, Kevin's study is more concerned with narrative structures of news texts and as such difficult to align with the quantitative approach chosen in this chapter. Second, Kevin's reasoning originates, to some extent, in Habermas' notion of a European public sphere. This puts a very different spin on how the coverage of European elections is approached.
2.1.1 Formal characteristics – amount and prominence of EU coverage

The first goal of the chapter is to describe the formal characteristics of the television coverage of the European election campaign in comparison to the remaining coverage. The key terms are defined as follows. *European election campaign coverage* encompasses news stories whose main topic is the European election campaign (e.g., candidates, parties, polls). European election campaign coverage is to be distinguished from EU-related coverage. EU-related coverage comprises both coverage of EU topics other than the European election (e.g., EU enlargement) and coverage with some reference to the EU. Finally, both European election coverage and EU-related coverage have to be distinguished from the remaining political coverage, i.e., the coverage dealing with political topics which lack any reference to the EU. By *formal characteristics*, I mean the amount and the prominence of the European election campaign coverage. The prominence of a story is defined by its length, placement, and presentational effort put in it (Watt & van den Berg, 1981). The differentiation of the political coverage into three types of coverage permits to locate European election coverage on the broader canvas of political coverage. The prominence concept permits, due to its integrative character, a more parsimonious approach to the study of formal characteristics than the separate treatment of its components would do. This seems especially useful in a cross-nationally comparative setting with a lot of different countries.

As to the *amount* of election campaign coverage, previous research consistently found the coverage to peak only in the week before the election day (Leroy & Siune, 1994; Siune, 1983; Reiser, 1994). This finding held in all of the countries. Because previous studies were limited to EU- or European election-related content items, the results of these studies are inconclusive as to how visible the campaign was in comparison to other political coverage. Thus, it is difficult to specify clear expectations of the results. As a consequence, the first set of research questions has to be kept more general. It focuses, first, on whether television coverage of the European election campaign peaks in the week prior to the election day (referred to as research question la) and, second, on how visible the coverage of the European election campaign is in comparison to EU-related and other political coverage (research question lb).

The *prominence* of European election coverage has not been investigated yet. This also goes for measures such as length, placement, or visualization of news stories. Only Leroy and Siune (1994) and Reiser (1994) reported that news stories on the election campaign virtually never became top stories in Belgian, Danish, and German television news outlets. Given that the position of a story is to some extent correlated with its length, this finding tentatively suggests that election campaign stories may be less prominent in television news coverage than other political stories, at least in the three countries mentioned. However, because further evidence is lacking, the second research question, too, is kept open and reads:

---

19 Political coverage is used as summarizing term and may also comprise economic stories if they have political implications (e.g., stories about taxes, unemployment, welfare policy). This is an appropriate comparison standard for EU coverage that typically has political or political-economic implications due to the political-economic nature of the EU.

20 This is not explicitly stated by Siune (1983) but can be concluded from table 1 in Siune (1983, p. 226).
How prominent is the coverage of the European election campaign in comparison with EU-related and other political coverage?

Potential influences

The research questions about the amount and the prominence of European election campaign coverage will be addressed in a cross-nationally comparative fashion. Although there may be comparable overall trends in news coverage of most or all EU countries, it seems unlikely that the amount and prominence of the coverage will be identical in all EU member countries. For example, although the overall amount of coverage of the 1979 European election was rather low in all countries, there were notable country differences as, for example, table 1 in Siune's study (1983, p. 226) suggests. This raises the question why such differences emerge. Previous research has only described the differences (e.g., McQuail & Bergsma, 1983; Schulz, 1983a) or attempted to identify the overall similarities in the broader picture of election coverage (Siune, 1983). Undoubtedly, for such an under-researched issue as coverage of the EU, descriptive accounts are indispensable. However, merely descriptive cross-national accounts occasionally run the risk of increasing confusion instead of reducing complexity. Moreover, they ignore one of the big advantages of cross-national research – the increased explanatory power compared to single-country studies. What is also needed, then, is an initially explanatory approach to European election coverage as already outlined in the first chapter.

Because the research field is small and tends to be exclusively descriptive, potential explanations of country differences in European election coverage can be derived only indirectly from existing content analyses. However, related research from communication and political science has also formulated valuable suggestions on what may impinge on the coverage of the EU. These two sources will be used to specify potential influences on the amount and prominence of European election coverage on television. For the coverage of the 1989 European election campaign, Leroy and Siune (1994) found that, both in Belgium and Denmark, public broadcasting channels devoted three times as much time to the European election campaign than did their private counterparts. Although Leroy and Siune's study is confined to only two European countries, their result suggests that the public or commercial nature of a television channel affects the amount of coverage. Single-country studies have found a similar pattern for the amount of political coverage (e.g., for Germany: Pfetsch, 1996; for the Netherlands: Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; as tentative overview: Heinderyckx, 1993). Hence, it can be expected that public broadcasting channels will present more news on the European election campaign than private channels. With respect to the placement of European election campaign news, Leroy and Siune (1994) provided evidence that both public broadcasting and private channels virtually never presented stories about the European election as top news. For Germany, Reiser (1994) obtained the same result. Assuming that the findings concerning the placement of an European election story can be transferred to the more encompassing prominence concept, the available evidence thus tentatively suggests that

21 Given the rudimentary state of research on EU coverage, the terms explanation or explanatory do not refer to law-like causal relationships that compellingly preclude any other influence on EU coverage. Rather, they refer to the detection of patterns underlying the coverage.
Part I - Chapter 2

Public broadcasting and private channels may not differ in terms of how prominently they present a news story about the European election campaign.

A second potential impact on the amount and prominence of European election campaign coverage may come from the novelty of European elections in a particular country. The studies of the first European election in 1979 (Blumler, 1983) could not take this factor into account, but since 1979 four more European elections have taken place and the 15 EU member states vary in how often they have participated in such an election. The rationale why the novelty of European elections may affect the amount and prominence of European election coverage comes from research on news values. News value research has suggested that the novelty or surprising character of an event influences news selection (e.g., Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Schulz, 1976; for general discussions of the news value of novelty, see: Bennett, 1996; Gamson, 1992). A European election campaign is not a surprising event. Nevertheless, journalists may judge European elections very differently depending on whether the electorate of a particular country has acquired the possibility to vote only recently (e.g., Austria, Finland, and Sweden) or two decades ago (e.g., France, Italy, or the Netherlands). As a result, the novel character of the European elections might lead to more media attention in the newer member states of the EU than in the original member countries. Thus, it can be expected that the television outlets in newer EU member states will cover the European election campaign with more and more prominent stories than television outlets in long-term member countries.

A third influence on how much and how prominently a European election campaign is covered may derive from whether elite opinion about the EU is polarized or consensual in a particular country. By elites the political elites in terms of political parties are meant. It can be assumed that anti-EU parties contribute to polarized elite opinion. Based on more general reflections on the Europeanization of national public spheres, Gerhards (2000) has formulated a similar assumption. Due to the lack of research on the subject, however, a more specific reasoning seems necessary. Results of communicator research in particular seem relevant in this respect. In-depth interviews with journalists have revealed that European elections are occasionally considered to be a "non-issue" (de Vreese, 2001, p. 168). The (alleged) non-issue character of European elections and, thus, its missing newsworthiness may be associated with the lack of one of the core news values – conflict (de Vreese, 2002). Because the news values of conflict plays a crucial role in news selection in general (e.g., Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Schulz, 1976) and in EU coverage in particular (de Vreese et al., 2001; de Vreese, 2002), conflict and disagreement may be assumed to increase the amount of European election coverage. Particularly during an election campaign, the candidates and their parties (i.e., national political elites) can be considered the originators of potential disagreement and conflict. The ones who are most likely to stir up conflict are candidates and parties that are explicitly opposed to the EU. Consequently, I expect that outlets in countries with polarized elite opinion about the EU will display more stories about the European election campaign than outlets in countries where elite opinion is consensual. Existing research is silent about the relationship between conflict and the prominence of a particular story. However, just

---

22 At the fringes of a party spectrum, there may be small parties that oppose the EU, but remain largely unnoticed by the public. These parties are not meant here.
Coverage of the 1999 European election campaign

because of the occasionally criticized non-issue, abstract, and inaccessible character of EU policy and events (Meyer, 1999; de Vreese, 2001, 2002), polarized elite opinion and, thus, conflict may also lead to more prominent coverage. Therefore, I expect that stories on the European election campaign will be more prominent in outlets of countries where elite opinion is polarized than in outlets of countries where elite opinion is consensual.

A fourth factor impinging upon the amount and prominence of European election campaign coverage may be satisfaction with domestic democracy. This clearly requires some more elaborate reasoning. One may immediately ask which role satisfaction with democracy plays in this context. Satisfaction with domestic democracy refers to general attitudes towards democratic governance and has been connected to the well-functioning and maintenance of democratic systems (e.g., Lipset, 1959; Powell, 1982, 1986). In line with this, scholars have established close relationships between citizens' (dis)satisfaction with democracy and apparent weaknesses of democratic institutions (Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Dalton, 1996; Huntington, 1974; Jennings & van Deth, 1989). More specifically, Anderson and Guillory (1997) have shown the link between election outcomes and citizen's satisfaction with democracy. Thus, one may tentatively conclude that satisfaction with democracy plays a role when it comes to deciding about democratic institutions or, more general, when it comes to elections.

Even if one accepts this, one may question why an attitude towards domestic democracy may be relevant here. First, there is a large body of research that has demonstrated the domestic foundations of EU-related matters. For example, scholars have established that European elections are, as "second-order elections" (Reif & Schmitt, 1980), driven by domestic concerns (e.g., Marsh & Franklin, 1996; Oppenhuys, van der Eijk, Franklin, 1996; Reif, 1984). Similarly, studies on referenda held over the Maastricht treaty showed a link between domestic political considerations and vote choice (e.g., Franklin, Marsh, & McLaren, 1994; Franklin, van der Eijk, Marsh. 1995). Second, attitudes towards the European Union have been found to be considerably affected by citizens' experiences with domestic political reality (e.g., Anderson, 1998; Sanchez-Cuenca, 2000). What is more, even satisfaction with democracy at the EU level is very much driven by people's satisfaction with domestic democracy (e.g., Rohrschneider, 2002). If, then, judgments about domestic democracy build important foundations of EU-related attitudes, satisfaction with domestic democracy may be relevant to EU-related matters.

Even if the preceding line of argument may seem plausible, the question arises why satisfaction with domestic democracy should be specifically related to the European Parliament and European election campaigns. Judgments about one's satisfaction with certain things always result from comparisons with other things (e.g, Sulls & Wills, 1991). The decline of satisfaction with democracy in the aftermath of the Cold War (Kaase & Newton, 1995) has been associated with the missing opportunity of downward comparisons with communist regimes and their institutions (Kaase, 1995). Nowadays, other political systems and their institutions may serve as comparison standard, for example the EU and the European Parliament (for a similar argument, see Eichenberg & Dalton, 1993). This may be especially true during the election campaign for the European Parliament. Put differently, because
satisfaction with domestic democracy is inherently comparative, the European Parliament may become particularly salient as a comparison standard during election campaigns. Depending on how great the satisfaction with domestic democracy is, the European Parliament may be a projection place for hopes of a better functioning democracy.

Even if one accepts the reasoning in all previous paragraphs, the question remains why European election coverage should be affected by satisfaction with domestic democracy. Media coverage in general does not operate in a virtual space, but responds – to some extent – to real-world developments. This may also apply to coverage of EU affairs and European election campaigns in particular. If democracy in a country does not function well, high hopes may be connected with the EU and especially its democratic core institution, the European Parliament – and this will be reflected in the overall coverage in terms of more attention devoted to the EU. Conversely, if democracy in a country works well, the EU and the European Parliament lack their promising character – and this will be reflected in less attention devoted to the EU. In other words, the political relevance of the European Parliament varies across countries according to satisfaction with domestic democracy: the higher the dissatisfaction with domestic democracy in a country, the greater the political relevance of the European Parliament. The relevance aspect of events or issues has been identified in basically all research on news values (e.g., Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Schulz, 1976; Staab 1990). The more relevant events or issues are to a country and its citizens, the more frequently and the more prominently they are reported about in the television outlets. Consequently and finally, if satisfaction with domestic democracy defines the political relevance of the European Parliament and the pertinent elections, one can expect that the amount and the prominence of the European election campaign increases as levels of satisfaction with domestic democracy decrease.

To summarize, the basic model to initially explain the amount and prominence of European election campaign coverage consists of four variables: the public broadcasting or private nature of television outlets, the novelty of European elections, the nature of elite opinion, and the degree of satisfaction with domestic democracy in a particular country. Because this is the first analysis of its kind done in EU-related research, a parsimonious, but theoretically grounded model is favored over a more exploratory inclusion of let's-see-what-happens variables. Moreover, it will become clear later why this approach is also statistically necessary.

However, two aspects of this analysis should be noted. First, as briefly mentioned above, the analysis is based on the assumption that EU coverage – to some extent – responds to events and developments outside the media system. Several studies have demonstrated that factors external to the media system may affect media coverage, for example social and economic factors (e.g., Gross & Merritt, 1981; Sparkes, 1978). Moreover, theories of news selection at least partly assume that there is a 'world out there' which affects coverage (see for reviews, Shoemaker, 1987; 1991; Staab, 1990). This is not to reject the notion of media coverage constructing reality, but at the present stage of research on influences on EU coverage, it seems justified to keep initial structuring attempts simple and parsimonious.23

23 There is plenty of research from diverse intellectual traditions pointing out to what extent media coverage
A second aspect of the above proposed analysis concerns the fact that outlet- or journalist-related variables (e.g., money spent on foreign/EU coverage, used news agencies, journalists' opinions about the EU) will not be investigated. On the one hand, there is a practical reason for this. Either such data are not available from (all of) the various outlets investigated in this chapter because the outlets consider this important strategic information or such data simply do not exist. For example, there are no comparable surveys among journalists in all 15 EU countries about their opinions on the EU and its coverage. On the other hand, it is not necessarily the task of cross-national studies to investigate potential influences based on differences of TV outlets or journalists. Such influences can, in the first place, more efficiently be investigated in single-country studies and subsequently be transferred to the cross-national level. However, such single-country studies have not been undertaken yet.

2.1.2 Substantive characteristics – visibility, audibility, and evaluation of EU representatives

The second goal of this chapter deals with the coverage of EU representatives. To recall, by EU representatives, not only members of EU institutions such as the European Commission or the European Parliament are meant, but also persons who are clearly associated with EU institutions or EU parties. This is, a candidate running for the European Parliament is defined as an EU-representative, which seems a useful extension for European election campaigns. The analysis of EU representatives will be based upon the coverage of the European election campaign. To be able to put the coverage of EU representatives into perspective, it is paramount to compare it to the coverage of non-EU representatives. Consequently, the following analyses are always conducted in a relative manner, i.e., as comparison between EU representatives and non-EU representatives.

The main focus of the analysis of EU representatives lies on their visibility, audibility, and evaluation. Although the visibility of political actors is routinely investigated in single-country content analyses (e.g., Kepplinger, 1998; Semetko & Schoenbach, 1994), research on previous European elections has not devoted much attention to the coverage of EU representatives. For example, the study of the 1979 European parliamentary elections was mainly concerned with actors as originators of speech acts (Blumler, 1983). Because one actor can be the originator of multiple speech acts, the occurrence of particular actors within a particular news item cannot be reconstructed from the publications. What is more, the modifiers or even creates reality, see for example: Baudrillard (1978, 1994), Kepplinger (1992), Lippmann (1965, first published 1922), Merten, Schmidt, & Weischenberg (1994). Moreover, the notion of coverage responding to real-world influences is not without its epistemological problems and ideological implications (e.g., Shoemaker, 1987; Kepplinger 1989c; Schulz, 1976). However, to adequately discuss this issue is far beyond the scope and purpose of this book.

It would also be possible to study the occurrence of EU representatives in EU-related coverage. However, because the focus in an election study lies on the election coverage, such an analysis seems digressing in this chapter. Moreover, given that only the election period was investigated, the generalizability of results referring to EU-related coverage (i.e., non-election coverage) is limited.
publications do not distinguish between EU representatives and non-EU representatives (e.g., Siune, 1983; for the 1989 election campaign Leroy & Siune, 1994).

The latter aspect also affects the reinterpretation of existing research in terms of the audibility of EU representatives. Whereas one may argue that the number of 'communicator speeches' to some extent indicates how often EU representatives were quoted and, thus, audible, such a reconstruction is not possible because of the lacking distinction between EU representatives and non-EU representatives. What existing research does tell is that "the only legitimate speakers for European matters seemed to be journalists and politicians of national origin" (Leroy & Siune, 1994, p. 60; for a similar finding, see McQuail & Bergsma, 1983). Given, however, that citizens in the various EU countries elect their national representatives for the European Parliament, this finding is rather unsurprising. Apart from that, the finding does not help to specify expectations as to whether EU representatives are more or less visible and audible than non-EU representatives because, in this chapter, national candidates for the European Parliament can represent the EU. Due to the inconclusive character of existing research, the third set of research questions, too, is kept open. The focus lies, first, on the question of how visible EU representatives are compared to non-EU representatives (research question 3a). Second, it is asked how audible EU representatives are compared to non-EU representatives (research question 3b).

What is true for matters of visibility and audibility of EU representatives, also applies to the evaluation of EU representatives in European election campaign coverage: there is a striking scarcity of research. This may be related to the general lack of research on the valence of EU coverage. The few existing studies have found EU news coverage to be predominantly neutral (Leroy & Siune, 1994; Reiser, 1994; Siune, 1983). However, when evaluations occurred, a negative slant was reported (Leroy & Siune, 1994; Reiser, 1994). This dovetails with Norris' (2000) results based on a secondary analysis of the EU coverage in the period from 1995 to 1997. With respect to the general trend in evaluations of national politicians, various studies have provided evidence that the depiction of political representatives in the news is mostly neutral. However, when evaluations occurred, they tended to be predominantly negative (e.g., Kepplinger, 1998; Kepplinger & Rettich, 1996; Wilke & Reinemann, 2001). Due to its emergence in both EU coverage and the coverage of national politicians, I expect this pattern also for the coverage of EU representatives. To check whether a certain tendency in the evaluation of EU representatives is the result of a general evaluative tendency of (political) actors within a particular country, the evaluation of EU representatives is compared with the evaluation of other actors within a particular country. The fourth set of research questions comprises two questions: first, do negative evaluations prevail when EU representatives are evaluated (research question 4a)? And, second, is the evaluative direction the same for EU representatives and non-EU representatives (research question 4b)?
Potential influences

What drives potential country differences in the coverage of EU representatives? It has been repeated several times in the course of this chapter that existing research does not provide much guidance. To some extent, this is not so much of a problem as far as explanations of the visibility and audibility of EU representatives are concerned. Visibility and audibility of EU representatives are conceptually comparable (and probably empirically related) to the general amount of European election coverage. As a result, largely the same explanatory model will be applied. Only the more general variable satisfaction with domestic democracy will be replaced with the more specific variable trust in political parties.

It has been described in detail in section 2.1.1 why the public broadcasting or commercial nature of outlets, the novelty of an election campaign, and the polarization of elite opinion about the EU may impinge upon the amount and prominence of European election coverage. Given the comparability of the concepts amount of coverage on the one hand and visibility and audibility of EU representatives on the other, the rationale for including the three just mentioned independent variables is largely the same. Only the expectations concerning their specific impact will hence be outlined briefly. Next, the presumed influence of trust in political parties will be explicited thoroughly.

• Because public broadcasting television outlets devote more space to European election coverage than private outlets (Leroy & Siune, 1994; Reiser, 1994), it may be assumed that both the visibility and audibility of EU representatives is higher in public broadcasting than in private outlets. This results from the fact that more and longer stories also mean more space for the coverage of EU representatives.

• If European elections campaigns generally constitute a novel scenario, then EU representatives may constitute novel actors at the political stage. Consequently, it can be expected that EU representatives will be more visible and more audible, the less often a particular country has participated in European elections.

• It is most probably the members of anti-EU parties who articulate controversial opinions about the EU. If the existence of anti-EU parties and, thus, polarized elite opinion about the EU can be assumed to increase the potential of conflict and controversy during European elections, then members of such parties will play a crucial role during European elections. As a result, I expect that EU representatives will be more visible and more audible in outlets from countries with polarized elite opinion than in outlets from countries without consensual elite opinion.

Whereas the amount and prominence of coverage may be affected by the level of satisfaction with democracy in a particular country, potential influences on the visibility and audibility of EU representatives relate probably more to attitudes towards politicians or parties. Research has shown that dissatisfaction with politicians and parties is one of the components of broader notions of distrust in government (Citrin, 1974; Citrin & Green, 1986; Erber & Lau, 1990). Distrust in government, in turn, has been particularly linked to television coverage (yet with mixed results, e.g., Becker & Whitney, 1980; Holtz-Bacha, 1990a,b; Miller & Reese, 1982; Pinkleton, Weintraub Austin, Fortman, 1998; Robinson, 1976). Interestingly, scholars have
conceptualized television coverage exclusively as cause of distrust in government and, thus, in politicians and parties. However, no study has elaborated upon the possibility that television coverage to some extent reflects already existing distrust in politicians and political parties. Generally, distrust in parties has been found to slow down or even paralyze political activities (e.g., Howitt & Wintrobe, 1995; Rose, 1995) and it may be assumed that distrust in politicians and parties (as a widespread negative feeling) also reduces the extent to which politicians and parties are covered.

The paralyzing effects of distrust in political parties may also extend to the visibility and audibility of EU representatives. The domestic foundations of EU-related judgments and behavior have been empirically demonstrated in different contexts (e.g., Anderson, 1998; van der Eijk & Franklin, 1996; Franklin, van der Eijk, Marsh, 1995). More importantly, European election campaigns are heavily dominated by domestic parties (e.g., Leroy & Siune, 1994; McQuail & Bergsma, 1983) because a truly European party system does not exist (Mair, 2000) and because EU citizens elect candidates of domestic parties for the European Parliament. Thus, distrust in (domestic) parties may also be influential in European election campaigns. If, then, distrust in domestic parties may generally reduce the amount of coverage of parties and pertinent politicians and if domestic parties and pertinent candidates for the European Parliament play an important role in European election campaigns, then it can be expected that distrust in domestic parties reduces the visibility and audibility of candidates for the European Parliament or, more generally, of EU representatives.

Provided the above factors affected the visibility and audibility of EU representatives, the relationships between the independent and the dependent variables might yet be more intricate. To some extent, the visibility of EU representatives may also be shaped by the number of EU stories. The more election stories there are, the higher the chance of EU representatives to be covered. Put differently, even if one or more of the aforementioned four factors impinges upon the visibility of EU representatives, it might be that they influence the visibility of EU representatives only indirectly through the number of election stories. In this case, the impact of one or more of the factors would be mediated by the number of election stories. The same applies to the potential influence of the factors on audibility. As to audibility, however, it may be the visibility of EU representatives, which directly affects the audibility of EU representatives. The more often EU representatives are depicted, the higher the chance that they are quoted. Again, one would expect a mediating influence. The above factors affect in the first place the visibility of EU representatives and subsequently make an impact, via the visibility of EU representatives, upon audibility.

Baron and Kenny (1986) formulated three conditions that must be met if a particular variable (i.e., number of election stories/visibility EU representatives) mediates the effect of independent variables (i.e., the explanatory factors) on a dependent variable (i.e., visibility/audibility). I formulate the three conditions with respect to mediated effects on audibility. However, because it needs to be tested first whether the mediating impact of election stories on EU representatives exists, the model for mediated effects on audibility is limited to the visibility of EU representatives.

25 The influence of the factors on audibility is potentially also mediated by the number of election stories. This would logically follow from a mediated influence of the factors on the visibility of EU representatives. However, because it needs to be tested first whether the mediating impact of election stories on EU representatives exists, the model for mediated effects on audibility is limited to the visibility of EU representatives.
visibility/audibility of EU representatives. First, one or more explanatory factors have to affect visibility (audibility) of EU representatives. Second, the explanatory factor(s) that affected visibility (audibility) must also influence the number of election stories (visibility of EU representatives), i.e., the presumed mediating variable. Third, when the impact of both the explanatory factors and number of election stories (visibility of EU representatives) on the visibility of EU representatives (audibility of EU representatives) is investigated simultaneously, an effect of the number of election stories (visibility of EU representatives) has to be found, while the original effect of the explanatory variable(s) has to disappear (or, at least, has to diminish considerably).

**Evaluation of EU representatives**

The identification of potential influences on the evaluation of EU representatives requires a different reasoning and cannot so easily follow the line of argument developed for the explanation of the amount/prominence of coverage. In his study of the German television coverage of the 1989 European elections, Reiser (1994) found that public broadcasting television outlets were more negative than commercial television outlets. Given that Reiser also included references to political actors, this finding can be interpreted as initial evidence that the difference between publicly or commercially funded outlets may matter in terms of the evaluation of EU representatives. More generally, there has been concern about crucial differences between the political news reporting in public broadcasting and commercial television (Blumler, 1997, 1999). The political coverage of private channels is assumed to be trivialized, shallow, and more concerned with entertainment than with information (see, however, also Brants, 1998, 1999; Bruns & Marcinkowski, 1996; Schatz, Immer, & Marcinkowski, 1989). This suggests that also European election coverage and the evaluation of EU representatives may look differently depending on whether the coverage is broadcast in a public broadcasting or a private outlet. Based upon Reiser’s (1994) specific finding and assuming that this result reflects the coverage of other EU member states as well, I expect that EU representatives will be more negatively covered in public broadcasting channels than in private channels.

I have argued above that the polarization of elite opinion about the EU introduces controversy and conflict to the European election campaign of a particular country. Because controversy and conflict are linked to positive or negative evaluations of issues or persons, the number of evaluations of EU representatives will probably be higher in countries with polarized elite opinion about the EU. Research has shown that evaluations do not necessarily come from the journalists, but from other sources in a news story, for example opposing politicians whose evaluative remarks are quoted (Hagen, 1993). Thus, candidates of anti-EU parties may introduce a more controversial, criticizing tone in the campaign and, thereby, the number of negative evaluations of EU representatives increases. Consequently, I expect that EU representatives are more negatively evaluated when elite opinion is polarized than when elite opinion is consensual.
As trust in domestic parties may influence the visibility and audibility of EU representatives, it may also affect the evaluation of EU representatives. In various analyses, Kepplinger (1998) has demonstrated the relationship between negative evaluations of politicians in news and people's negative perceptions of politicians and political parties. Although there was no clear evidence of the causal direction, Kepplinger interpreted his findings in terms of the media causing public distrust of politicians and parties among the population. However, assuming again, first, that news coverage is to some extent responsive to widespread (dis)trust in parties, second, that this response materializes in the news coverage, and, third, that distrust in domestic parties matters in European election campaigns, I expect that the evaluation of EU representatives will be more negative, the more distrust there is in political parties.

With respect to evaluations of EU representatives, one may argue that general support for or opposition to the EU may be influential beyond and despite the domestic foundations of such judgments. It appears plausible to investigate whether outlets in EU-skeptic countries depict EU representatives more critically than do outlets in EU-supportive countries. However, given that the election campaign for one particular EU institution, the European Parliament, is investigated, general judgments of the EU might not sufficiently overlap with evaluations of the European Parliament. Therefore, a more specific potential impact is to be identified. Previous research has reported that distrust in democratic institutions is, amongst others, related to negative evaluations of politicians (Citrin, 1974; Citrin & Green, 1986; Erber & Lau, 1990). Unfortunately, research is silent about whether trust in EU institutions in general or trust in the European Parliament in particular is associated with evaluations of EU representatives. For the purpose of this analysis, I therefore assume that the relationship between evaluations of politicians and trust in institutions generalizes to the relationship between the evaluation of EU representatives and trust in the European Parliament. Further, if this relationship is reflected in the media coverage of EU representatives, one can expect that distrust in the European Parliament is associated with more negative coverage of EU representatives.

In sum, as potential influences on the visibility and audibility of EU representatives, I will investigate the public broadcasting or private character of television outlets, the number of elections in which a country has participated, the polarization of elite opinion about the EU, and trust in political parties. As to factors impinging upon the evaluation of EU representatives, I will use a similar model in which the variable of number of elections will be replaced with the more specific variable of trust in the European Parliament.
2.2 Method

2.2.1 Procedure and measures

This chapter draws on a content analysis of the television news coverage conducted for the two weeks prior to the June 1999 European Elections. In contrast to previous content analyses of European election campaigns (e.g., Blumler, 1983), only the two weeks prior to the election day were analyzed because existing research has shown that the election coverage clusters shortly before the election day (Leroy & Siune, 1994; Reiser, 1994; Siune, 1983). Per country, the main evening news outlet of both the most widely watched public broadcasting and private channel were selected. Because Belgium is divided into Dutch-speaking Flanders and French-speaking Wallonia, evening news of the two most widely watched Dutch- and French-speaking channels were included. As an acknowledgment of the bicultural nature of Belgium, the Dutch- and French-speaking channels are analyzed separately throughout this chapter. Given that no private channels exist in Austria or were of no importance in Ireland in 1999, only the public broadcasting channel with the largest reach was included in these two countries. Because only a minority watches the Greek public broadcasting channel, ET1, (Seri, 2002), a second private channel was analyzed in Greece. Due to its limited reach in comparison to networks in other countries, the Luxemburger channel was not part of the analysis. For further information on the outlets investigated see Table Bl in Technical Appendix B.

The single news story (defined as semantic entity with at least one topic delimited from another story by a change of topic) presented the unit of analysis. Overall, 5,477 stories were coded. 2,747 of them were political stories (defined as stories explicitly mentioning politics and/or sufficiently depicting political actors). Of the political stories, 1,808 stories were analyzed with respect to the visibility, audibility, and evaluation of EU representatives. Detailed information about the number of stories coded in the various countries can be found in Technical Appendix B in Table B1.

The news stories were coded by 37 native speakers who were trained during six weeks before coding, tested for inter-coder reliability, and supervised throughout the whole coding period. For each country, the stories were randomly assigned to the coders. Because in cross-national comparative content analyses, differences between the countries can be the unintended result of lacking coordination of the various country groups (Peter & Lauf, 2002), the coder trainers of the country groups were in daily contact to coordinate the coding in the country groups and to resolve problems. Moreover, the majority of the coding was centrally done at the University of Amsterdam to keep the coding process as comparable as possible.

Because the period of investigation was heavily dominated by stories about the Kosovo war and because the focus of the study lay on the coverage of the European election campaign, Kosovo stories were only coded if they clearly referred to the EU. This explains the difference between the total sum of political stories (n = 2,747), which includes all Kosovo stories, and the reduced sample of 1,808 stories, which includes Kosovo stories only if they clearly referred to the EU.

The Italian, Greek, Portuguese, and Spanish coders worked at their home institutions in Genoa, Athens, Lisbon, and Madrid. However, coder trainers had visited all country groups and intensively trained the coders at...
For the reliability test, coders of all country groups had to code at least 18 randomly selected television stories per channel\textsuperscript{28}. The reliabilities are reported when discussing the relevant measures.

Levels of analysis

Three different levels of analysis have to be distinguished in order to understand the operationalization of the concepts below. The story level constituted the level of analysis for the study of the formal characteristics of election coverage. For the analysis of the coverage of EU representatives, the data file was disaggregated so that the single actor constitutes the unit of analysis instead of the single story (where up to six actors could be coded). Because of irregularities in the coding of an essential actor-related category, Portugal had to be excluded from this analysis, resulting in 6,533 actors overall. For the analysis of potential impacts on the coverage, the data were aggregated such that each outlet constituted the unit of analysis and, thus, one case in the analysis. The outlet level was chosen as level of analysis because the influence of public broadcasting vs. private channels is to be investigated. Moreover, the outlet seems to be the most appropriate unit of analysis when trying to detect the patterns underlying the coverage because it seems questionable how the single news story as unit of analysis may be affected by country characteristics. The particular country, in turn, may not be an appropriate unit of analysis for the research questions. The research questions center upon patterns of television coverage, which in the first place is located at the outlet and not at the country level. Overall, 29 television outlets were included in the analysis (see Table B1 in Technical Appendix B for a detailed listing of the outlets). The two private Greek outlets had to be collapsed to keep the analysis with the remaining countries comparable which eventually resulted in 28 outlets for analysis\textsuperscript{29}.

Measures – formal characteristics

Stories about the election campaign were operationalized as stories whose main topic dealt with the election (e.g., potential outcome, turnout) or the election campaign (e.g., profiles of candidates, party strategies) and explicitly referred to the EU. A story was classified as EU-related story if the topic centered upon EU events or EU issues other than the European elections (e.g., EU enlargement, euro) or if the topic was explicitly linked to the EU. All remaining political stories that did not meet these criteria constituted the remaining political coverage. The inter-coder reliabilities were measured as the average agreement between the coders (e.g., Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998). The average inter-coder agreement was 98\% for story topic and 92\% for link to the EU.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{28} For Germany, only 12 stories were coded. No reliabilities were assessed for Spain but the coding was carefully monitored throughout the coding process. Danish news was coded by one coder only. The coding was, however, closely checked by the coder trainer.

\textsuperscript{29} This modification is also necessary because of missing bulletins within the Greek outlets.

\textsuperscript{30} The reliability score for story topic refers to the recoded topic as it is used in this chapter.
The prominence of the stories was operationalized by drawing upon a formula, which Watt and van den Berg developed and validated in 1981 and which Watt, Mazza and Snyder modified in 1993. The formula is:

$$P = \frac{TL_{Bulletin} - ST_{Story}}{TL_{Bulletin}} + \frac{L_{Story}}{AL_{Story/Bulletin}} + (A \cdot F \cdot 0.5)$$

where

- $P$ = Prominence of particular news story
- $TL_{Bulletin}$ = Total length of the particular bulletin coded (in seconds)
- $ST_{Story}$ = Starting time, i.e., time from the start of the bulletin to the beginning of the particular story (in seconds)
- $L_{Story}$ = Length of the particular story coded (in seconds)
- $AL_{Story/Bulletin}$ = Average length of the stories in the bulletin coded (in seconds)
- $A$ = Anchor present (coded 1, if yes)
- $F$ = Film material/Video material present (coded 1, if yes)

Note that the presence of an anchor has been added to the formula by Watt et al. (1993). This is an acknowledgement of the fact that some outlets (e.g., the German ones) present short news blocks in which no anchor introduces the story. In the formula used by Watt et al. (1993), this has not been taken into account and would lead to an overestimation of the prominence of such short news stories. The first term of the right hand side of the formula taps the position of a particular news story. For the first story in a bulletin, $ST_{Story}$ equals zero so that the first term becomes one. The less well a news story is placed in a bulletin, i.e., the more time passes before the beginning of the particular news story, the smaller the numerator and, consequently, the first term becomes. The second term of the right hand side of the formula describes the length of a particular story relative to the average length of all stories within the particular bulletin. The longer a story is compared to the average story, the greater the second terms becomes. The third term of the right hand side of the formula captures the effort with which a story is presented. Only stories that are introduced by an anchor and are visualized with film/video material (i.e., no stills) receive the full score. In line with Watt's formula, this term is multiplied by 0.5 in order not to overrepresent the visual component in the overall prominence measure. In sum, stories are the more prominent, the earlier they begin in a bulletin, the longer they are, and if they are introduced by an anchor and visualized by film material. Because of its relative nature, the measure also permits comparisons between different television outlets.

In the content analysis, the length of each story in a particular bulletin was measured in seconds. The sum of the length of all stories represents the total length of a particular bulletin ($TL_{Bulletin}$) and by cumulating the length of stories within a particular bulletin the starting time of a particular story within a bulletin ($ST_{Story}$) was computed. The average story length within a bulletin is simply the mean of the stories broadcast within that bulletin. The
presence of an actor and of film material were coded as dichotomous categories. The reliabilities were for length (metric variable) $r = .98$ and 95% for both the anchor category and the film material category.

Measures – coverage of EU representatives

Visibility of EU representatives and other actors was measured as the number of appearances of story actors in different stories. Up to six actors could be coded per story, but the same actor was coded only once per story. To qualify as a story actor, a person, group, or institution had to be either depicted and mentioned at least once, or quoted and verbally mentioned, or mentioned verbally at least twice. If more than six actors in a news story qualified as potential actors, the actors to be coded were selected in terms of their importance for the story (operationalized as amount of information given about a particular actor, frequency of being mentioned, and visual presence). For each actor, it was coded whether the actor was, as an individual or group, related to the EU or to any other level than the EU (e.g. regional, domestic, or world level). For the analysis, the individual and the group code for both EU-related and EU-unrelated actors were collapsed. For the coding of the actors as EU-related or EU-unrelated, the average inter-coder agreement was 99%. The audibility of EU and other political representatives was assessed by counting the number of times they were directly quoted within a story. The average inter-coder agreement for this category was Pearson’s $r = .89$ (metric variable).

Evaluation of EU representatives and other actors was assessed by coding explicit judgments of story actors. The coding categories were 0 (neutral), 1 (unfavorable), 2 (mixed), and 3 (favorable). To address the fourth set of research questions and to operationalize the dependent variable for the explanatory analyses, I computed per country the difference between the number of favorable and the number of unfavorable evaluations of both EU representatives and other actors (further referred to as evaluation differential). The evaluation differential is based upon absolute figures because, as will become clear later, the absolute number of evaluations was very low and percentages would grossly distort the outcomes. The evaluation differential was also preferred to the mean evaluation. Kepplinger and Maurer (2001) have recently demonstrated that the evaluation differential is more comparable to people’s perceptions of evaluative tendencies in the media than the mean evaluation and seem, thus, in effect-oriented studies more appropriate. The inter-coder reliabilities measured as the average agreement between the coders was 80%.

Measures – explanatory analysis

As described above, the outlet level was chosen for the explanatory analysis. This implies that the dependent variables are aggregated to the level of the particular outlet. The aggregation of measures such as the number of election stories, the visibility, audibility, and evaluation of EU representatives raises certain problems because the outlets vary considerably in their length and in the number of stories broadcast. For example, the fact that fewer election stories are broadcast in outlet A than in outlet B may partly result from the fact that outlet B lasts
three times as long as outlet A and broadcasts nearly twice as many stories per bulletin. To account for such differences, one may compute percentages, for example the share of election stories in the political coverage. This, however, entails two serious problems. First, as will become clear later, the absolute figures are very low in certain analyses so that percentages become not only meaningless, but also lead to enormous distortions. Second, computing percentages introduces an upper boundary to a measure that may not have an upper boundary when based on absolute figures. This transformation may have serious consequences for the dependent variable, which may no longer be predictable with linear functions as it approaches the floor or the ceiling. Logistic transformations could solve this problem, yet are usually difficult to interpret. Moreover, the distortion problem with low absolute figures would still not be solved.

Consequently, the dependent variables number of election stories, visibility, audibility, and evaluation of EU representatives have to be based on absolute figures while the differences between the outlets have to be accounted for differently. To emphasize, when using these absolute figures (i.e., the sum of election stories, the sum of EU actors, the sum of their quotes, and the above describe evaluation differential), a large number of, for example, election stories could result rather from the fact that a particular outlet generally broadcasts a lot of stories than from more substantive reasons. Likewise, a large number of EU representatives may be the consequence of an outlet generally covering more actors (or from more election stories, but this problem is tackled below). A higher number of quotes of EU representatives could be the result of generally more quotes in an outlet (or of more EU representatives covered, see below) and a large evaluation differential might result from a higher number of EU representatives covered. If this is not taken into account in explanatory analyses, spurious effects may emerge. Therefore, it is necessary to include specific control variables in the explanatory model. In the case of the number of election stories as dependent variable, this is, per outlet, the number of the remaining stories broadcast. When the number of EU representatives is the dependent variable, this is the number of the remaining actors. When the dependent variable is the audibility of EU representatives (i.e., the number of their quotes), the control variable would be the number of the remaining actors being quoted.31 And in the case of the evaluation of EU representatives, this is the number of EU representatives covered. The prominence measure is inherently relative which alleviates the problem.

The independent variables were operationalized as follows. Satisfaction with domestic democracy, trust in parties, and trust in the European Parliament were retrieved from Eurobarometer 51. The Eurobarometer 51 survey was conducted between March 12 and May 4, 1999, among at least 1,000 citizens of 15 years of age or older in all EU countries. The period of investigation precedes the content analysis (done at the end of May, begin of June), which is important for the analysis. Because in both East and West Germany more than 1,000 people were interviewed, the data for Germany were weighted according to the population size in the two parts of Germany. The British data are based on the 1,040 interviews

31 The total number of stories (including election stories), the total number of actors (including EU representatives), and the total number of quotes (including quotes from EU representatives) cannot be used as control variables because they dependent variables would partly be regressed on themselves.
completed in England, Scotland, and Wales. It has been argued above that, due to deeply entrenched cultural differences, Belgium should be split into Flanders and Wallonia. As a result, the relevant measures were separately computed for the two Belgian communities (see for the same procedure, e.g., Ackaert, de Winter, & Swyngedouw, 1996; van der Eijk, Franklin, & Oppenhuis, 1996; Franklin, van der Eijk, & Oppenhuis, 1996).

For each country (in Belgium: for each community), the mean satisfaction with domestic democracy and the proportion of trust in parties and in the European Parliament were computed. Before, the measures had been recoded such that higher values indicated more satisfaction with domestic democracy (measured on a four-point scale), or more trust in parties and the European Parliament (both measured as dichotomy). "Don't know" answers were excluded from analysis. The values for the particular countries are documented in Technical Appendix B in Table B2. Table B2 also documents in how many European elections a particular country has already participated. The consensual or polarized nature of elite opinion about the EU was operationalized via the existence of a sufficiently visible anti-EU party. An anti-EU party was defined as party that had, in a survey among experts (Ray, 1999), received on average a score of 2 (opposed to European integration) on a seven-point scale.32 Because the influence of a sufficiently visible anti-EU party is to be assessed, parties had to have gained at least 5% of the votes in the latest general election (assessed with reference to the year 1999). In other words, a party which has been rated as extremely opposed to European integration, but which has received less than 5% of the votes in the latest elections would not indicate the existence of a sufficiently visible anti-EU party. The pertinent country would thus not be considered to have polarized elite opinion.

2.2.2 Data analysis

Mediated effects analysis for visibility and audibility of EU representatives

In section 2.1.2, I have outlined the possibility that the effects of the explanatory factors on visibility and audibility of EU representatives are mediated. More specifically, I have specified the three conditions that must be met to find evidence of mediated effects. To analyze the three conditions for the presumed mediating effect of the number of election stories (visibility of EU representatives) on visibility (audibility) of EU representatives, I estimated three regressions as suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986). In the first regression model, the visibility (audibility) of EU representatives was regressed on the four explanatory factors plus the control variable. This regression model is the base line model and indicates if there are any effects of the presumed explanatory factors at all.33 In the second regression

---

32 The results from Ray's 1996 survey are used.
33 The emphasis in this analysis is on whether the impact of the explanatory factors is mediated. Of course, the control variable (e.g., the visibility of non-EU representatives) cannot logically be mediated (e.g., by the number of election stories). However, in order to rule out from the very beginning the possibility of spurious effects of the explanatory variables, the control variable is included already in the first model. This procedure is efficient in that it presents the most rigid test of the prerequisites of mediating effects. If no effects emerge in the base-line model, there will be no mediating influence, either.
model, the presumed mediating variable number of election stories (visibility of EU representatives) was regressed on the explanatory factors. In the third regression model, I regressed the visibility of EU representatives (audibility) on the explanatory factors and the number of election stories (visibility of EU representatives).

Problems with significance testing in the explanatory analyses

Given the selection of the outlets and taking into account that the variables for the explanatory analysis are located at the outlet and the country level, two problems with statistical inference arise. First, a selection of the main evening news of the most widely watched public broadcasting and private channel per country does not constitute a random sample. However, this selection of television outlets represents the television coverage of a country reasonably well (see for information on all of the countries the thorough overviews in Hans-Bredow-Institut, 2002, and European Journalism Centre, 2002). Even if, however, the selection may thus be considered appropriate for a cautious use of significance tests, inferences from the selection are, second, impeded by the fact that, across the entire selection of outlets, the outlets are not completely independent of one another. Because outlets were selected within a particular country, the two outlets within the particular country are not independent of each other across the entire selection of outlets. Such hierarchies and, thus, dependencies in the data structure lead to an underestimation of the standard error and a higher chance of a type-1 error, if the data analysis does not account for the hierarchical data structure (e.g., Kreft & de Leeuw, 1998; Snijders & Bosker, 1999; Steenbergen & Jones, 2002).

What, then, are the consequences for the explanatory analysis? A first solution may be to do without significance tests. However, it is difficult to decide when an effect is meaningful without having criteria clearly established by significance tests. A second solution might be to analyze the data with multi-level techniques. This is clearly not possible with the power of the data at hand (e.g., Kreft & de Leeuw, 1998; Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, Congdon, 2000; Snijders & Bosker, 1999). A third solution may be based on a very cautious interpretation of the meaning of significance tests accompanied by an alternative modeling of the hierarchical data structure. In terms of the cautious interpretation of the meaning of the significance tests, significance tests will predominantly be used as indication of the robustness of potential effects. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the posed questions relate only to the television coverage of the 1999 European election campaign. In other words, potential effects cannot be taken as evidence of general influences in the media coverage of the EU. In terms of an alternative modeling of the hierarchical data structure, I chose the so-called 'sandwich' estimator of the standard error (Huber, 1967; White, 1980). This sort of standard error takes into account that cases (i.e., outlets) are not independent of one another, but cluster within a country and corrects the standard error accordingly. This also entails that the critical t-value is

34 For additional information on Denmark, Finland, and Sweden, see Hujanen (2000); on the Netherlands: Brants and Neijens (1998), van Praag and van der Eijk (1998); on Germany: Pfetsch (1996); on Italy: Mazzoleni (2000); on the UK: Norris et al. (1999).
35 This is also the reason why no significance tests are presented for the descriptive analyses.
assessed with number of clusters (i.e., countries) minus one degrees of freedom. For fourteen countries, the pertinent degrees of freedom are 13.

2.3 Results – European elections in television news

Analogously to the setup of the research questions section, the analyses of both the formal characteristics and the EU representatives will start with a descriptive account and will be followed by the more explanatory analyses.

2.3.1 Formal characteristics – sometimes visible, but never prominent

The first research question asked whether television coverage of the European election campaign peaked in the week prior to election day. Because in the Greek content analysis, several days were missing for the week prior to election day, Greece had to excluded from this particular analysis. As can be seen in Figure 2.1, in all countries except Portugal, Spain, and Flanders, the number of stories about the European election campaign slightly increased in the week immediately before election day. In none of the countries, however, did the number of stories shoot up markedly in the week before election day, with the exception of Italy and Finland. Rather, it seems that the number of stories broadcast in the penultimate week before election day 'affected' the coverage in the week immediately prior to election day. This is confirmed when regressing the number of stories broadcast in the week immediately before election day on the number of stories broadcast in the penultimate week before the elections. The unstandardized coefficient of 1.1 ($SE = .21; \beta = .71$) with a constant of 1.5 indicates that, with each additional story broadcast in the penultimate week, the number of stories broadcast in the week immediately before the elections increased by

![Figure 2.1: Number of election stories in the two weeks prior to election day](image)

*Note.* Countries are ordered by number of election stories in the last week.
one. This is only a small increase although the predictive power of the amount of coverage in the penultimate week before the elections is very strong. In other words, when the coverage of the election campaign had been low two weeks prior to the election, it remained low in the week immediately preceding election day. Conversely, when there had been much campaign coverage in the penultimate week, there was also much coverage in the week before the election. This suggests that the countries generally differed in whether the Election campaign was considered an issue (e.g., in France, Italy, Portugal, Finland, Sweden, and Denmark) or whether it was largely ignored (e.g., Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany, and Flanders).

The aforementioned results illustrate the (non-)development of the amount of election coverage across the two weeks preceding the election. However, the results do not tell us anything about the visibility of election coverage relative to other types of coverage (research question 1b). Thus, how visible was the coverage of the European election campaign in comparison to EU-related and other political coverage? As Figure 2.2 shows, there was a considerable difference between EU countries. In Scandinavian and Mediterranean countries (except Spain) plus Austria, the election coverage had a share of at least 13% in the entire political coverage. Opposed to this group of countries were the UK, Spain, both parts of Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Germany. Geographically put, in the center of the EU and on the islands, election coverage amounted to not more than a share of 6% in the entire coverage, with the coverage being virtually absent in the Netherlands, Germany and Flanders. However, in all of the countries except Portugal and France, the share of EU-related coverage in the entire political coverage was greater than the share of election coverage. Moreover, in all of the countries the remaining political stories constituted the majority of the entire political coverage. In other words, the coverage of the European election campaign was present in a narrow majority of EU countries, but was most of the time less visible than EU-related coverage. EU-related coverage was present in all countries, but was generally less visible than the remaining political coverage.

Figure 2.2: Share of various story types in political coverage

Note. Countries are ordered by the share of election stories. Absolute figures for entire political coverage are documented in Table B1 in Technical Appendix B.
The amount of EU coverage only partly represents the character of coverage. In an extreme case, it may be that there are a lot of stories about the election, but all of them are very short and placed at the end of a bulletin. Consequently, election stories would not figure prominently in the coverage. Thus, how prominent was the coverage of the European election campaign in comparison with EU-related and remaining political coverage? One can see in Figure 2.3 that election coverage was on average less prominent than EU-related or remaining political coverage, the exception being Portugal, Denmark, and Wallonia. However, EU-related stories figured more prominently than remaining political stories in the majority of the countries. Although, in sum, the European elections were not covered prominently, affairs that relate to or evolve around the EU largely were. If one compares the prominence of the EU stories across the various countries, there appear to be more similarities than differences. The fact that Portuguese election stories were by far more prominent and German election stories by far less prominent than election stories in the remaining countries may be the result of some country-specific reporting, notably very long stories in Portugal and very short ones in Germany. Overall, however, the prominence of election stories was similar across the various countries.

**Figure 2.3: Average prominence of various story types**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>P</th>
<th>DK</th>
<th>B (WA)</th>
<th>SW</th>
<th>NL</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>FIN</th>
<th>B (FL)</th>
<th>GR</th>
<th>IRL</th>
<th>G</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Election</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-related</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remaining political</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Countries are ordered by prominence of election stories. Absolute figures for entire political coverage are documented in Table B1 in Technical Appendix B.

**Influences on the amount and prominence of election coverage**

The descriptive analysis of the formal characteristics of European election campaign coverage has demonstrated notable differences in the amount of election coverage across the countries. Conversely, a striking homogeneity of the prominence of election coverage was found. However, the descriptive analyses provide hardly any insight into what may influence the formal characteristics of election coverage. As outlined above, I presumed four factors to play
a role – the character of an outlet as publicly or commercially funded, polarization of elite opinion, the number of elections in which a country has participated, and satisfaction with domestic democracy. Table 2.1 shows that the four factors generally explain the amount of election coverage well. As expected, public broadcasting outlets broadcast more election stories than private outlets. This was true even when controlling for outlet differences in terms of the number of remaining stories broadcast. Also in line with my expectations, polarized elite opinion about the EU increased the number of election stories. Conversely, but also as expected, the amount of election coverage decreased as levels of satisfaction with domestic democracy increased. Put differently, dissatisfaction with domestic democracy was conducive to the visibility of the election campaign in the news. The effect found for the number of elections in which countries had already participated did not turn out to be 'robust', yet was in the predicted direction.

Table 2.1: Influences on the amount and the prominence of European election coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amount (N = 28)</th>
<th>Prominence (N = 28)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public broadcasting outlet</td>
<td>5.48*</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.34)</td>
<td>(.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of European elections</td>
<td>-0.91</td>
<td>-.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.37)</td>
<td>(.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarized elite opinion</td>
<td>14.55*</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.89)</td>
<td>(.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with domestic democracy</td>
<td>-12.28*</td>
<td>-.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.98)</td>
<td>(.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of remaining stories broadcast</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>35.16</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R square .56 .08

*p < .05 (t-test, two-tailed)

Note. Cell entries are unstandardized multiple regression coefficients, robust standard errors in brackets.

Data sources: Eurobarometer 51, Content analysis 1999 European election campaign
To the extent to which the model predicted the amount of election coverage well, it failed to explain the prominence of election coverage. It had not been expected that public broadcasting and private television outlets would differ as to how prominently they present election stories. However, there was no empirical evidence of any of the expected influences, either.

2.3.2 Substantive characteristics – older member states lack interest

Research question 3a focused upon the visibility of EU representatives in election coverage as compared to the visibility of non-EU representatives. As a first look at Figure 2.4 shows, EU representatives were more visible than non-EU representatives in 8 of the 14 countries. In terms of whether EU representatives outnumbered non-EU representatives, the Scandinavian countries formed a unit, whereas the Mediterranean countries split up in two groups with Italy and Spain covering EU representatives more often than non-EU representatives and France and Greece where EU representatives were less often covered.\textsuperscript{36} That is, while the election campaign was strongly covered in Greece and not in Spain, EU representatives dominated what little coverage there was in Spain, yet hardly appeared on Greek television. It is also worth noting that non-EU representatives appeared slightly more often than EU representatives in the French coverage of the election campaign, although the campaign itself was fairly well covered in French television news (see Figure 2.2). In the remaining countries except Austria, EU representatives were by and large invisible. In Wallonia, Ireland, the UK, and in Germany, non-EU representatives outnumbered the few EU representatives.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure2.4.png}
\caption{Visibility of EU and non-EU representatives in election coverage}
\end{figure}

\textit{Note.} Countries are ordered by visibility of EU representatives. Figures indicate the number of appearances.

\textsuperscript{36} The fact that, in Greece, so many non-EU representatives were covered is, to some extent, related to the fact that Greek news stories are long, which generally increases the chance of actors being covered.
If one compares the number of EU representatives across countries, it becomes clear that the visibility of EU representatives varied considerably. Whereas, for example, nearly 100 EU representatives were covered in French television in the two weeks preceding election day, overall only one EU representative occurred in German television outlets. As was true for the relative amount of election coverage, the group of countries where EU representatives are to some extent visible (i.e., where more than 40 EU representatives appeared) again consisted of Scandinavian and Mediterranean countries plus Austria, but without Spain.

Were EU representatives more audible than non-EU representatives, were they more often quoted (research question 3b)? Figure 2.5 reveals that, if actors were quoted at all, the majority of quotes seemed to come from EU representatives. This applied especially to the Scandinavian-Mediterranean group of countries including Austria, but excluding Greece. In the remaining countries, EU representatives were by and large silent or less often quoted (Wallonia, the Netherlands, Greece, and the UK). If one focuses only on the audibility of EU representatives across countries, it is again the Scandinavian-Mediterranean group of countries plus Austria (except Greece) where statements of EU representatives were broadcast at all, of course differing in their frequency. For the countries that do not belong to this group, the voicelessness of the EU representatives seems to be the logical consequence of the little coverage of EU representatives (or of the little coverage of the campaign, for that matter).

![Figure 2.5: Audibility of EU representatives and non-EU representatives in election coverage](image)

*Note.* Countries are ordered by the audibility of EU representatives. Figures indicate the number of quotes.

Although the visibility and audibility of EU representatives indicate that television news pays attention to them, the two measures do not tell anything about the evaluations in the coverage. News coverage is usually considered not to be evaluative and this also applied to the election coverage of EU representatives. Across all countries, 78% of the election
coverage of EU representatives and 76% of the election coverage of non-EU representatives was neutral, with by and large not much difference between the particular countries. More important, therefore, appears the question whether negative evaluations prevailed when there were evaluations (research question 4a) and, furthermore, whether the evaluative direction was the same for EU representatives and non-EU representatives (research question 4b).

Figure 2.6 shows the evaluation differential between positive and negative evaluations for both EU representatives and non-EU representatives. In the majority of the countries, negative evaluations slightly outnumbered positive evaluations. Only Spanish coverage depicted EU representatives positively. In the UK, Ireland, Germany, and Flanders there were no evaluations of EU representatives at all or they equalized each other. When one compares the evaluation of EU representatives with the evaluation of non-EU representatives, it shows that, in none of the countries, the evaluative direction of the two groups diverged. In most of the countries, both EU representatives and non-EU representatives were negatively evaluated. There was no evidence that the evaluative direction of the two groups was in any way opposed.\footnote{Strictly speaking, Figure 2.6 does not allow to compare whether the two groups were \textit{more or less} negatively evaluated because a difference between the evaluation differential of EU representatives and non-EU representatives may to some extent result from differences in the absolute number of occurrences of the two actor groups. However, due to the small number of actors and, thereby, evaluations in several countries, percentage-based measures would be meaningless.}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure2_6.png}
\caption{Evaluation differential of EU and non-EU representatives in election coverage}
\end{figure}

\textit{Note.} Countries are ordered by direction and size of the evaluation differential for EU representatives.
Influences on visibility, audibility, and evaluation of EU representatives

The descriptive analyses have shown notable differences in the coverage of EU representatives, both with respect to their visibility and audibility. However, as argued above, the description of country differences generally calls for explanations. Thus, the key question in this section is: to what extent can the four explanatory factors introduced in section 2.1.2 explain the country differences when controlling for outlet differences in terms of varying numbers of actors covered in election stories? As model 1 for visibility of EU representatives in Table 2.2 shows, the number of elections in which a country has participated affected the visibility of EU representatives. In other words, with each additional European election in which a country had participated, the number of EU representatives dropped by 11 representatives. None of the other predictors exerted a meaningful impact on the visibility of EU representatives.

Was the effect of the number of elections mediated by the number of election stories? To recapitulate, to find a mediating influence of the number of election stories on the visibility of EU representatives, two further conditions must be met. First, the effect of number of elections has also to occur when number of election stories is the dependent variable. Second, when controlling for number of election stories, the already described impact of number of elections has to disappear. As model 2 in Table 2.2 shows, the number of elections in which a country had participated did not influence the number of election stories. The second condition for mediated effects is thus not met. Model 3 with visibility of EU representatives as dependent variable finally also displays that the number of election stories broadcast did not mediate the influence found in model 1 – the influence of number of elections remained unaffected by the inclusion of number of election stories in the model. Most importantly, the number of election stories did not exert a meaningful influence on the visibility of EU representatives. In sum, the analysis of what impinges upon the visibility of EU representatives has produced a clear finding. The visibility of EU representatives decreased with an increasing number of elections. This effect is direct and unmediated by the number of election stories.

What was found for the influences on the visibility of EU representatives, also applied to their audibility. The audibility of EU representatives also diminished with the number of elections in which countries have participated. Additionally, there was an effect of the control variable audibility of non-EU representatives, which suggests that there may be general tendencies whether actors are quoted or not. More important, however, is again the question of whether the effect of number of elections is mediated by another variable, in this case the visibility of EU representatives. Following the logic of analysis described above, two more regression models were estimated to test whether the conditions of a mediating impact of visibility of EU representatives were met. Model 2 for the audibility analysis in Table 2.2 indicates that the visibility of EU representatives (i.e., the presumed mediator) was indeed affected by the number of elections. Thus, the second condition for a mediating influence of the visibility of EU representatives was met. The third condition states that the influence of number of elections has to disappear while an effect of the visibility of EU representatives must occur when both variables are included in the same model. Model 3 for the audibility
Table 2.2: Influences on the visibility and audibility of EU representatives in election coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Visibility analysis</th>
<th>Audibility analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N = 26)</td>
<td>(N = 26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility EU representatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of election stories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility EU representatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>14.66</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>4.75*</td>
<td>19.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>15.05</td>
<td>-8.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of European elections</td>
<td>-11.27*</td>
<td>-11.74*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>(8.93)</td>
<td>(7.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>(1.99)</td>
<td>(7.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>(8.90)</td>
<td>(4.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarized elite opinion</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>-9.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>(19.67)</td>
<td>(15.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>13.94*</td>
<td>10.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>(5.20)</td>
<td>(11.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust in political parties</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>-2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>(40.47)</td>
<td>(44.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>-29.87*</td>
<td>-14.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>(13.05)</td>
<td>(38.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility non-EU representatives</td>
<td>32.32</td>
<td>-9.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>(.65)</td>
<td>(8.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>(.13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>(.53)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audibility non-EU representatives</td>
<td>.32*</td>
<td>.89*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>(.39)</td>
<td>(.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>(.41)</td>
<td>(.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number election stories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility EU representatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>44.97</td>
<td>49.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>11.39</td>
<td>51.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>45.82</td>
<td>22.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>44.97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R square</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p ≤ .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001 (t-test, two-tailed). Cell entries are unstandardized multiple regression coefficients, robust standard errors in brackets.

Data sources: Eurobarometer 51, Content analysis 1999 European election campaign
analysis in Table 2.2 shows that this was the case. An extremely strong effect of the visibility of EU representatives emerged, while the impact of number of elections completely disappeared. In conclusion, this suggests that the number of European elections in which a country has taken part only indirectly affects the audibility of EU representatives via the visibility of EU representatives.

The descriptive analysis of the evaluation of EU representatives revealed a mostly negative direction, yet with varying intensity across the countries. Can the explanatory factors account for the varying intensities when controlling for the number of covered EU representatives? Table 2.3 indicates that this was not the case. None of the predictors showed a robust effect on the evaluation of EU representatives, although at least the effect of public broadcasting outlets was in the predicted direction.

Table 2.3: Influences on the evaluation of EU representatives in election coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation of EU representatives (N = 26)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public broadcasting outlet                -2.62 (1.65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarized elite opinion                   -1.88 (1.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust in political parties                -4.05 (4.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust in European Parliament              .12 (.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of EU representatives              -.04 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant                                  -4.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R Square                                  .33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Cell entries are unstandardized multiple regression coefficients, robust standard errors in brackets.

Data sources: Eurobarometer 51, Content analysis 1999 European election campaign

2.4 Discussion – covering a "non-issue"

Most of the questions raised in this chapter, most of the reasoning developed, and most of the analyses presented differ from how existing research has investigated the coverage of European election campaigns. Conceptually, this was to a large extent the result of an underdeveloped and incoherent field of research providing little guidance. Analytically, new strategies of analyzing cross-national content data had to be developed because previous content analyses had exclusively remained descriptive, ignoring explanatory analyses. To what extent, then, do the findings in this chapter confirm or challenge previous research? To what extent can the findings enhance our understanding of the how television news covers European election campaigns and provide new directions for future research?
2.4.2 Formal characteristics – unimportant visibility

The European election campaign was most visible in the final week before election day. However, the number of stories about the campaign increased only slightly in the final week compared to the penultimate week before the elections. What is more, the number of stories broadcast in the penultimate week before the elections proved an outstanding predictor of how many stories would be in television news in the final week. This finding to some extent runs counter to Leroy and Siune's (1994) result for the 1989 election campaign, namely that "the television campaign (...) only gathered momentum in the final week when an overwhelming majority of EC items was broadcast" (p. 58) (see for similar findings: Reiser, 1994; Siune, 1983). Admittedly, the findings may hardly be comparable because Leroy and Siune (1983) only focused on Belgium and Denmark, Reiser solely on Germany and Siune only on the nine countries that were members of the EEC in 1979. However, it is important to note that the election coverage in the 1999 campaign obviously followed a different pattern. The question was not whether the coverage would accumulate in a particular country in the final week before the elections. The question was rather whether there was coverage at all in a particular country. If there was coverage, then the election campaign was visible in both weeks before election day. If there was no coverage, then this did only marginally change in the final week. Put differently, in several countries, most notably Flanders, Germany, and the Netherlands, the elections were considered a "non-issue", as for example a leading journalist in the Netherlands remarked (de Vreese, 2001, p.168; for in-depths interviews with English and Danish journalists, see de Vreese, 2002).

As a result of the varying number of election stories in the EU member countries, the share of election coverage in the entire political coverage differed considerably between countries. In the vast majority of countries, the relative amount of election coverage was lower than the relative amount of EU-related coverage and both types of coverage were outnumbered by the remaining political coverage. This is certainly a result of the scope of three types of coverage – election coverage is more specific than EU-related coverage and both are more specific than remaining political coverage. It is hence more important to note that, in terms of the relative amount of election coverage, the EU was separated. In a Scandinavian-Mediterranean group including Austria, the campaign was visible and had a considerable share in political coverage. In the remaining countries plus Spain, the campaign tended to be ignored. This is even more striking when bearing in mind that the latter group encompasses countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, countries usually regarded as important protagonists of further European integration. The fact that a political key event at the EU level was neglected in a several countries should, however, not be prematurely attributed to an importance gap of the EU in these countries. Election stories and EU-related stories usually had a share of more than 20% in the political coverage, with the exception of the UK and the Netherlands. Moreover, the lack of election coverage may result from specific events dominating the then news situation, such as the dioxin scandal in Belgium or, more generally, the peace agreement reached for the Kosovo war at the EU summit in Cologne.

However, these specific aspects cannot explain the bigger picture of obvious country differences in the amount of election coverage. The explanatory analyses revealed that the
Coverage of the 1999 European election campaign

public broadcasting or private character of an outlet, polarization of elite opinion, and satisfaction with domestic democracy affected the amount of election coverage. The fact that the European elections mainly took place in public broadcasting outlets may add some fuel to the lingering discussion about the differences between public broadcasting and private news reporting. Most studies on the divergence or convergence of public broadcasting and private channels are based on single country analyses (e.g., for Denmark: Powers, Kristjandottir, & Sutton, 1994; for Germany: Pfetsch, 1996; Bruns & Marcinkowski, 1996; for the Netherlands: Brants & Neijens, 1998; van Praag & van der Eijk, 1998; for Sweden: Hvitfelt, 1994). The heterogeneous findings may result from the fact that the studies are methodologically hardly comparable. Responding to Brants' (1998) call for really comparative (and comparable) content analyses, the analysis of the visibility of EU representatives in election coverage has elicited differences between public broadcasting and private channels in a comparative setting. It is beyond the scope and the goal of this chapter to integrate this finding into the normative discussions about the quality of news reporting. However, the result suggests the public broadcasting outlets paid more attention to bringing something as abstract and as remote as the EU and as the European Parliament to EU citizens than did private outlets. If it is true that voters depend on media information to come to halfway sensible voting decisions, then private outlets may not have taken this task seriously as far as the European elections are concerned.

Polarized elite opinion augmented the share of election news in the political coverage. Generally, the presence of conflict and disagreement is a key factor in news selection (e.g., Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Schulz, 1976) and journalists consider conflict pivotal in their decision of whether to cover an EU event or issue (e.g., de Vreese, 2002). One can assume that the polarization of elite opinion as created by the existence of anti-EU parties introduces this factor into an election campaign. Apart from that, polarized elite opinion and the existence of an anti-EU party may more generally stand for a more developed interest or need to discuss EU matters. For example, in Germany, Ireland, and the Netherlands, a visible anti-EU party does not exist and the amount of coverage rather mirrors permissive disinterest in European elections than a critical, yet caring approach to this key event of European politics. Whether citizens of the various EU countries care about the EU and feel the need to discuss European matters, cannot be assessed with the EU support measures routinely gauged in the Eurobarometers. Besides, other country-specific factors may be relevant here, for example the possibility to decide about EU issues in referenda (Gerhards, 2000). Despite these difficulties, it may be worth thinking about to what extent countries differ in their need to discuss EU matters and whether this shapes both the existence of visible anti-EU parties and the amount of election coverage.

Dissatisfaction with domestic democracy turned out to increase the amount of election coverage while satisfaction with domestic democracy rather reduced election coverage. Several studies have shown that EU-related attitudes and behavior have their foundations in domestic politics (e.g., Anderson, 1998; Franklin et al., 1994; Sanchez-Cuenca, 2000). Obviously, this mechanism is of more general nature and its impact resonates far further than public opinion, thus also applying to the television coverage of European elections. It can be assumed that the EU becomes politically more relevant in countries in which domestic
governance functions less well. If citizens are dissatisfied with democratic processes and governance in their country, they may project their hopes of better governance onto the EU and especially its democratic core, the European Parliament. The thus increased political relevance trickles down to the media and materializes in more coverage of the EU. This reasoning also implies that the influence of satisfaction with domestic democracy may be mediated by other variables. To investigate this was beyond the scope of this analysis, but might be a fruitful task for further research. In any case, the finding demonstrates that we should not ignore the domestic and national context when attempting to understand the European and supra-national.

Prominence

In nearly all of the countries, election stories figured less prominently than EU-related stories and stories about other political matters. Bearing in mind that the coverage was comparatively visible in the Scandinavian and Mediterranean countries plus Austria, one may characterize the election campaign as being of unimportant visibility in these countries. In the remaining countries, the low amount of the coverage as such was even 'undercut' by its lacking prominence. It nearly seems as if television outlets, most notably the Irish and German ones, tried everything to keep the European elections out of citizens' awareness.

The explanatory analysis of potential influences on prominence also elicited homogenous results – in the sense that none of the presumed influences explained anything. To a large extent, this results from the lacking variance in how prominent election coverage was across the countries and outlets. However, the predictors employed may also be too general to explain the perceived importance of election events that eventually translates in the prominence of news stories. Medium-inherent factors or journalistic routines and attitudes might possibly serve as much more powerful predictors, but could not be included in the analysis as outlined above.

2.4.2 Substantive characteristics – third-order coverage of a second-order event

In the majority of countries, EU representatives were more visible in political news than non-EU representatives, thus giving the EU to some extent a face in the European election campaign. However, there was also a large group of countries in which the EU somewhat resembled a faceless dwarf. Obviously, the repeated experience of an election impaired the coverage of EU representatives. EU representatives seem to lose newsworthiness with each additional experience of European elections. The "second-order" character of European elections noted after the first European elections (van der Eijk & Franklin, 1996; Reif & Schmitt, 1980) thus culminates in the coverage of EU representatives. A repeatedly boring second-order event has led to third-order coverage of EU representatives. Conversely, a lack of experience with European elections led to more coverage of EU representatives as could be seen in the countries having acceded to the EU only lately. In these countries, EU representatives presented to some extent still something novel. In line with research on news values (e.g., Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Schulz, 1976), the novelty of the EU representatives may subsequently have increased the coverage. Given that in five 'old' member states of the EU,
Coverage of the 1999 European election campaign

not more than ten EU representatives appeared in the two most-widely watched television outlets in the hot phase of a European key event, one may start to question whether, in these countries, television news plays a role at all in mediating EU representatives to the represented citizens. One may also question whether, in these countries, EU citizens may be able to sufficiently inform themselves about the European elections and EU representatives on the basis of television news. This question seems worrying when taking into account that television is the preferred means of information for EU citizens (Eurobarometer 51-56). If the coverage of EU representatives in 2004 follows the same pattern as its predecessor in 1999, one can expect a notable decrease of EU representatives covered in the newer EU member states.

The influence just described was not mediated by the number of election stories broadcast. In other words, the broadcasting of a lot of election stories does not imply that a lot of EU representatives occur in these stories. The size of the media stage does not affect the occurrence of EU representatives. The most obvious examples for the tendency to cover the election campaign without focusing on EU representatives were the French and Greek outlets. In these outlets, stage and plot were European, but the actors were not. Apparently, a different logic is applied when deciding whether to cover the election campaign as compared to the decision whether to cover EU representatives.

Whether and to what extent EU representatives were audible, depended heavily on the occurrence of EU representatives. This is intuitively plausible and not a very sizzling finding. Nevertheless, two aspects of this result are worth mentioning. First, the effect of the number of EU representatives on their audibility was unusually strong. Thus, once covered, EU representatives are likely to be quoted. Second, the experience with previous European elections again made an impact, albeit mediated. Put differently, EU representatives in traditional EU member states are not only disadvantaged in their chance of being covered compared to their counterparts in newer EU member countries. They are, as a result, also damned to search for other carriers for their messages than television news.

The evaluation of the EU representatives was mostly neutral. However, when evaluations occurred, they were predominantly negative in the majority of countries. This applied not only to EU representatives, but also to non-EU representatives. This finding concurs with previous research from single-country content analyses (e.g., Kepplinger, 1998; Kepplinger & Rettich, 1996; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2001; Wilke & Reinemann, 2001). Obviously, the evaluation of EU representatives follows the same rules as the coverage of other political actors in different settings. Thus, the slightly negative slant in the coverage of EU representatives is not the result of hostility targeted at EU representatives. As suggested by Kepplinger and Weissbecker (1991), the negative depiction of EU representatives may rather derive from a generally slightly negative orientation in news reporting (see also: Westerstahl & Johansson, 1986; Wilke, 1984). The presumption that negative approaches towards the EU or the European Parliament do not interfere with the evaluation of EU representatives is further supported by the lacking influence of trust in the European parliament on the evaluation of EU representatives. The expected more negative evaluation of EU representatives in public broadcasting outlets did not turn out to be robust, although being
in the predicted direction. This suggests that Reiser's (1994) findings can only be seen as snapshot of the German coverage of the 1989 European elections. In general, however, it would have been more desirable to demonstrate what shapes evaluations of EU representatives instead of saying what does not. Clearly, more research is needed in this respect.

2.5 Summary

In sum, how can the coverage of the 1999 European election campaign be characterized? Four very broad generalizations may be made:

1. The campaign was virtually absent on Irish, English, and German television. It only took place in a Scandinavian-Mediterranean group of countries plus Austria. However, it seems as if the fate of European election coverage lies somewhere between complete invisibility and unimportant visibility: even in the countries where the campaign was visible, it remained less prominent than other events.

2. There is more coverage of the European elections, if (a) elite opinion is polarized, if (b) citizens are dissatisfied with domestic governance, and if (c) public broadcasting outlets become aware of the election.

3. The experience of previous European election campaigns acts as deterrent for the renewed coverage of EU representatives.


5. The generally slightly negative evaluation of EU representatives is the result of a generally negative slant in news reporting that also applies to the evaluation of non-EU representatives.

Although these findings might enhance our understanding of European election coverage and may show new directions of further research, they cannot compensate for (another) big gap in current research – our complete lack of knowledge of how the EU is covered in periods other than election campaigns. To gain an encompassing insight into how television news covers the EU, it is also important to study EU coverage during summit and routine periods. This will be dealt with in the following chapter.
Television coverage of the European Union in routine and summit periods

Although nearly 70% of the EU citizens watch television news every day, we know little about the everyday coverage of the EU in television news. As outlined above, the few existing content analyses of the television coverage of the EU are confined to EU key events such as elections of the European Parliament (e.g., Blumler, 1983) or the 1999 introduction of the euro (de Vreese et al., 2001). Only Norris (2000) tried to describe the television coverage in non-election periods. By reanalyzing data gathered from 1995 to 1997 in a study on the European Union in the press and in television (European Commission, 1995/1997), she concludes that EU coverage is generally scarce and only peaks around the summits of the heads of government. However, the reports Norris (2000) reanalyzes do not outline such essentials as the procedure of the study, category definitions, and inter-coder reliabilities so that it remains questionable whether the study meets basic social scientific standards. Therefore, it seems necessary to check Norris' findings especially with respect to the divergence between the coverage of summit and other, non-summit, non-election periods which will be further referred to as routine periods. Moreover, some more substantive categories will extend the breadth of the analysis.

This chapter is set up similar to the previous chapter. In a first step, I will focus on the formal characteristics of EU coverage during routine and summit periods. The amount and the prominence of EU coverage will be investigated in comparison with the amount and the prominence of the political coverage that does not deal with the EU. Amount and prominence of EU coverage present important indicators of the size and location of Europe on the landscape of political news. Moreover, they define the frame of all analyses of more substantive categories. In a second step, three substantive categories will be investigated, both for routine and summit periods: the visibility of EU officials, the evaluation of the EU as a whole, and the depicted performance of the EU. The visibility of EU officials (i.e., members of EU institutions or persons appointed by the EU) will be analyzed because the coverage of EU officials, as a more specific group than EU representatives, is generally understudied. The same is true for the evaluation of the EU as a whole. Often, the valence of the EU coverage is deduced from the explicit evaluation of their representatives (see the preceding chapter). However, this procedure may neglect what news conveys as explicit judgments of the EU in its entity. In a further extension of existing research, I will deal with the depiction of the general performance of the EU. Single-country content analyses have demonstrated that the media more strongly emphasize the failure of political actions than their success (e.g., Kepplinger, 1998). Bearing in mind that the EU is often considered the epitome of
bureaucratic inefficiency and tedious negotiations (Angres, Hutter, & Ribbe, 2000), it seems useful to study how the performance of the EU, i.e., the success or failure of EU politics, is depicted in television news.

As far as its analytic procedure is concerned, this chapter is again structured like its predecessor. First, the two formal and three substantive characteristics of routine coverage and summit coverage will be described. The descriptive account will be followed by explanatory analyses that seek to render the broader patterns of EU coverage visible. The study draws on data from a content analysis done in five EU member states: Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK. As I have argued in section 2.1.1, it is difficult to include data on country-specific news styles in an explanatory analysis of EU coverage. If, further, it cannot be ruled out that country-specific news styles do affect EU coverage, then it is beneficial to select countries that are at least similar in their media system and some broad indicators of news styles (or at least less dissimilar than other EU countries). The media system of all five countries consists of strong public broadcasting and private networks (Siune & Hulten, 1998) and their news styles tend to be similar, particularly in comparison with Southern European countries (Heinderyckx, 1993). Conversely, in the European election study, the five countries have proven sufficiently different in terms of the variables to be investigated: the amount and valence of EU coverage and the visibility of EU officials. Moreover, the five countries differ in a series of factors that might influence the coverage.

3.1 Research questions and expectations

In what follows, I will briefly specify the research questions for the descriptive part of the chapter, followed by an outline of what may influence formal and substantive characteristics. Much of the reasoning is comparable to section 2.1 so that I will offer a more compressed reasoning.

3.1.1 Formal characteristics – amount and prominence of coverage

As outlined in section 1.1, coverage of the EU can be defined as coverage that sufficiently addresses EU affairs, EU institutions and politicians, or events at the EU level. This definition encompasses stories dealing with obvious EU issues (e.g., EU enlargement, common agricultural policy). However, the definition also integrates stories about issues not inherently associated with the EU (e.g., immigration, defense) if EU policies or EU institutions or EU politicians are essential components of the story. This extension seems necessary because research has shown that both domestic politics (e.g., Gerhards, 2000) and the coverage of domestic issues have become Europeanized (e.g., Gavin, 2000). Stories that do not fit in this definition make up the political non-EU coverage.\footnote{Like in Chapter 2, the term political coverage is used as summarizing term. Recall that it may also comprise economic stories if they have political implications. Consequently, political coverage seems to be an appropriate comparison standard for EU coverage that typically has political or political-economic implications.} Routine periods are periods in which no prescheduled European key event such as European elections, EU referenda, or EU summits
are held. However, it may encompass meetings of the council of ministers. Summit periods consist of the days before, during, and after the meetings of EU heads of governments, which typically take place four times a year. The definition of the prominence of coverage is identical to the one given in section 2.1.1.

As mentioned above, Norris (2000) found in her secondary analysis of Euromedia data that the little coverage of the European Union only peaked in summit periods. This pattern was also reported for the coverage of another EU key event, the 1999 introduction of the euro (de Vreese et al., 2001). As a result, it can be presumed that there will be more EU coverage in summit than in routine periods. The first set of research questions, then, focuses first on the share of EU coverage in the political coverage (research question 1a) and, second, on whether the share of EU coverage in the political coverage is higher in summit periods than in routine periods (research question 1b).

Like all following research questions, the two research questions mentioned are addressed in a cross-national fashion. Although existing research is too scarce to help specify country differences, I will – where possible – try to give a rough notion of what such differences might look like. As to potential country differences in the amount of EU coverage, the aforementioned study on the 1999 introduction of the euro (de Vreese et al., 2001) may provide some first insights. The study, which was partly based on routine news, found that Danish news devoted more time to the euro than did British, German, and Dutch news. If this was purely the result of Denmark not having joined the euro-zone, then one could have expected a similar pattern for British news. However, this was not the case. The finding also dovetails with the results from Chapter 2 where Denmark consistently showed high amounts of coverage. Consequently, I expect the coverage of European affairs to have a greater share in the political coverage on Danish television than in the television news of the other countries.

The prominence of EU stories has for the first time been investigated in the preceding chapter and the findings there may serve as a first orientation point. Election stories were typically less prominent than other stories. If this applies to the coverage of an important EU event, it may be also expected for EU coverage in comparison with non-EU coverage both during routine and summit periods. Whether EU coverage is more prominent in summit periods than in routine periods, is an open question. With respect to country differences, only German television coverage of the elections stood out as markedly less prominent than the election coverage in the remaining three countries. If anything, country differences may then be expected only in terms of the German coverage. The second set of research questions centers upon whether, first, EU coverage is less prominent than non-EU coverage (research question 2a) and, second, whether EU coverage is more prominent in summit periods than in routine periods (research question 2b).
Potential influences

One of the potential influences on the amount and prominence of EU coverage has already been implicitly discussed – summit versus routine periods. Drawing on Norris' (2000) results, the expectation has been raised above that there will be more EU coverage in summit periods than in routine periods. It goes without saying, however, that a potential influence of the period of coverage may turn out as spurious when controlled for other potential influences. As the analyses in the second chapter have shown, there were also some other factors impinging upon the amount of election coverage. Due to the lack of comparable analyses with respect to EU coverage, I will develop the explanatory model based on the considerations and findings in the second chapter.

The number of European election stories was affected by the public broadcasting nature of an outlet, satisfaction with domestic democracy, and polarization of elite opinion. Public broadcasting outlets devoted more stories to the European elections than private outlets. Given the debates about the news styles of public broadcasting versus private outlets and their presumed effects (see exemplary the debate between Brants (1998, 1999) and Blumler (1999)) along with the lack of cross-nationally comparative empirical evidence, it seems important to include this predictor as a potential influence on the amount and prominence of EU coverage. In line with the findings of the preceding chapter and some more general studies on the differences between public broadcasting and private outlets in political news reporting (e.g., for Germany: Gerhards, Grajczyk, & Klingler, 1999; Pfetsch, 1996; for Britain: Norris et al., 1999), I expect that there will be generally more EU coverage in public broadcasting outlets than in private outlets. Based on the results of the second chapter, however, I expect that public broadcasting and private outlets will not differ in how prominently they cover the EU.

Opinions about the EU usually have their foundation in domestic politics (e.g., Franklin et al., 1994). Satisfaction with domestic democracy in particular has proven a powerful predictor (Anderson, 1998). Therefore, satisfaction with democracy may be relevant to the investigation of EU matters. Although I have outlined in detail why satisfaction may play a crucial role for the amount of coverage of European elections (and found empirical evidence for it), some further explication is necessary as to why satisfaction with domestic democracy might also shape the amount of EU coverage in non-election periods. I start here where the reasoning in section 2.1.1 turns to the importance of satisfaction with domestic democracy for election coverage and the European Parliament and try to generalize the line of argument to general EU coverage and the EU as a whole.

Because satisfaction judgments are based on comparisons with comparison standards (e.g., Sulls & Wills, 1991), it can be assumed that, in the aftermath of the Cold War, the EU may serve as a comparison standard when domestic governance is evaluated. Conversely, the domestic political system may be used as comparison standard when the EU is to be judged. In any case, there is a comparative relationship between the domestic political system and the EU. Contrary to an election campaign with the European Parliament being salient, it is probably the EU as a whole that is most salient during routine periods and also during the few
summit periods. If, then, there is a comparative relationship between satisfaction with domestic democracy and the EU, the EU may become more politically relevant, the greater a country's dissatisfaction with its domestic democracy is (and vice versa). Because (political) relevance is an important news value, higher political relevance of the EU is reflected in more and longer news stories. Thus, I expect the amount and prominence of EU coverage to increase as satisfaction with domestic democracy decreases.

Polarized elite opinion can be assumed to introduce conflict into EU politics, which is typically perceived as inaccessible, overly bureaucratic, and abstract (Meyer, 1999). Conflict is an important news value in news coverage in general (e.g., Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Schulz, 1976) and in EU coverage in particular (de Vreese, 2002). The analysis of impact factors on the amount of election coverage has demonstrated that polarized elite opinion increased the amount of European election coverage. Assuming that general EU coverage follows the same logic, I expect that there will be more EU coverage in countries with polarized elite opinion as compared to countries with consensual elite opinion. As far as the prominence of EU coverage is concerned, the election study suggests that polarized elite opinion is not influential. In want of other evidence, I expect that this will also apply to coverage of the EU in routine and summit periods.

Given the special country selection – two rather EU-skeptical countries and three rather EU-supportive countries – it might be advisable to also include the level of EU support in the various countries as a control variable. Though I have outlined the domestic foundations of EU-related opinions, it cannot be ruled out that positive or negative public opinion about the EU shapes coverage of the EU apart from and beyond the remaining explanatory factors. In line with studies pointing out that news coverage focuses more strongly on negative aspects than on positives ones (e.g., Keplinger & Weissbecker, 1991; Westerstahl & Johansson, 1986; Wilke, 1984), I expect that less support of the EU leads to more emphasis on the contentious and controversial, in other words: negative aspects of the EU and, consequently, to more coverage.

In sum, the explanatory model for both the amount and prominence of EU coverage encompasses five potential impact factors – the outlet as belonging to a public broadcasting or a private network, period of coverage (summit versus routine), levels of satisfaction with domestic democracy, nature of elite opinion, and levels of public EU support in the various countries.
3.1.2 Substantive characteristics – visibility of EU officials, evaluation and depicted performance of the EU

In contrast to the preceding chapter, the focus in this chapter does not lie on EU representatives, but on EU officials. In the preceding chapter, for example domestic candidates running for the European Parliament were integrated in the group of EU representatives because of the special topic under investigation, the European election campaign. This extension is no longer useful when analyzing general EU coverage during routine and summit periods. For these, only members of EU institutions (e.g., European Commission, European Parliament, European Central Bank) or persons appointed by the EU such as Javier Solana can be regarded as representing the EU. These persons are called *EU officials* in order to also express the difference between the two definitions linguistically. Evaluations of the EU refer to explicit judgments of the EU as a whole and can have favorable, unfavorable, or ambivalent meaning. The depicted performance of the EU refers to the extent to which EU politics is reported as success or failure. In a broader sense, it refers to whether EU politics is depicted as efficiently completed achievement or inefficient quarreling without results. Thus, success and failure refer to effective achievements or problems in everyday EU politics. More abstract conceptualizations of future plans or programmatic ideas such as a constitution for Europe are not meant here. The main focus lies on the EU’s record in terms of translating goals into action (or at least into successfully completed negotiations).

As far as the countries of the present sample are concerned, EU representatives have been found to outnumber non-EU representatives only in Denmark and, at a very low level, in the Netherlands. However, as outlined in the previous paragraph, in this chapter the focus lies on the (more restricted) group of EU officials. As a consequence, even in Denmark and the Netherlands the visibility of EU officials in television news may be reduced in comparison to non-EU officials. Especially during summits of the domestic EU heads of government, EU officials may be covered only infrequently. As the findings of the second chapter suggest, this pattern can be expected for all countries in the sample. More generally, the third set of research questions focuses, first, on whether EU officials are less visible than non-EU officials (research question 3a) and, second, on whether EU officials are less visible in summit than in routine periods (research question 3b).

The valence of EU coverage has consistently been found to be predominantly neutral and this also applied to the tone towards EU institutions or the EU as a whole (Leroy & Siune, 1994; Reiser, 1994; Siune, 1983). However, when *evaluations* indeed occurred, early studies found different evaluative tendencies than more recent investigations. During the 1979 European election campaign, themes that concerned EU institutions tended to be more positive than negative (Siune, 1983). This was true for all countries that had been members of the then European Economic Community. During the 1989 European election campaign, however, Danish television coverage displayed a slightly negative evaluation of the then European Community (Leroy & Siune, 1994). Although being more positive in its evaluation of the European Community, Belgian television coverage took a slightly negative stance toward the European Single Act. For the mid 1990’s, Norris (2000) reports a generally slightly negative slant in news coverage of the EU. This may be an indicator that the evaluations of
the institutional configurations preceding the EU became less positive in the past twenty years. Assuming that this tendency has continued, I expect that the coverage of the European Union will have a slightly negative direction. Existing research is silent about whether evaluations may have a different direction in summit periods than in routine periods. Previous studies are equally inconclusive with respect to country differences. However, based on the results of the second chapter, it may be assumed that the overall evaluative direction will be negative in all countries.

The fourth set of research questions focuses, first, on whether evaluations of the EU tend to be predominantly negative, when they appear (research question 4a). Second, it will be asked whether evaluations of the EU have a different direction in summit periods in comparison with routine periods (research question 4b).

The depicted performance of the EU has not yet been studied. Popular-scientific works in particular often sketch the EU as technocratic giant wasting enormous sums of money on ridiculous attempts of harmonization (Angres et al., 2000). Kepplinger (1998) found that Germany's leading newspapers depicted national institutions and the political system as incapable of achieving solutions or as increasing the problems by flawed decisions. In other words, the depicted failure of political actions clearly outnumbered their depicted success; the performance of the German political system was negatively depicted. It remains an open question whether this applies to the EU as well and to what extent this differs between countries. However, it can be argued that performance depictions during summit periods may be more positive (or less negative) because summits typically serve to reach agreements. The fifth set of research questions comprises two questions – first, whether the performance of the EU is positively or negatively depicted (research question 5a) and, second, whether the EU's performance is more positively depicted in summit periods than in routine periods (research question 5b).

Potential influences

The analysis of potential influences on substantive characteristics of election coverage has shown that more specific predictors such as trust in political parties or trust in the European Parliament did not have an impact. On the contrary, the analyses by and large revealed that predictors either affected both formal characteristics and substantive characteristics or did not have any influence. Due to this result and for reasons of analytic parsimony, I will apply the explanatory model outlined in section 3.1.1 for formal characteristics to the analysis of the substantive characteristics as well. In other words, I will investigate whether the three substantive characteristics are affected by: the period of coverage (summit versus routine), EU support, satisfaction with domestic democracy, the nature of elite opinion, and the outlet as belonging to a public broadcasting or a private network. In what follows, the expectations will be specified separately for each of the three substantive characteristics.

I expect the pattern of influence on the visibility of EU officials to be as follows:

- As could be seen in the election study, public broadcasting outlets generally put more emphasis on election coverage. This might also translate into the attention given to EU
officials. Consequently, I expect that EU officials are more visible in public broadcasting outlets than in private outlets.

- I have argued above that EU officials are less likely to occur in summit periods because summits of the heads of governments are dominated by domestic politicians. As a result, I assume EU officials to be more visible in routine than in summit periods.

- If conflict and controversy create newsworthiness and if members of anti-EU parties are likely to articulate controversial opinions on the EU, then these – domestic – politicians have a good chance of being covered. This, in turn, reduces the chances of EU officials occurring in a news story especially given their inaccessibility (Gerhards, 1993; Meyer, 1999). Thus, the existence of an anti-EU party and, thus, polarized elite opinion may impede the visibility of EU officials.

- The final argument in my reasoning about the importance of satisfaction with domestic democracy was that lower degrees of this type of satisfaction increase the political relevance of the EU. In turn, a higher political relevance of the EU manifests itself in more attention to the EU and, as a consequence, in more coverage. This reasoning may also hold for the visibility of EU officials as embodiments of a potentially better political system. Thus, the greater the dissatisfaction with domestic democracy in a particular country, the more politically relevant EU officials are. And the more politically relevant they are, the more visible they become in television news coverage. Consequently, the visibility of EU officials increases with lower levels of satisfaction with domestic democracy.

- If less public EU support leads to a focus on controversial issues, then these controversial issues may be predominantly discussed at the domestic and not at the EU level. This, in turn, reduces the chances of EU officials being covered. Conversely, higher levels of support may increase the visibility of EU officials.

Analogous to the reasoning concerning the visibility of EU representatives in section 2.1.2, the just presumed effects may be mediated by the number of EU stories. The more frequently the EU is covered, the higher, in principle, the chance of EU officials to be covered. To establish this causally more complex pattern of influence, recall that three conditions must be met according to Baron and Kenny (1986). First, the aforementioned predictor variables indeed influence the visibility of EU officials. Second, the predictor variables affecting the visibility of EU officials also influence the number of EU stories broadcast. Third, when controlling for the number of EU stories broadcast (i.e., the mediating variable), the original impact of the predictor variables disappears or clearly diminishes.

The aforementioned five predictors may affect the evaluation of the EU as follows:

- In Chapter 2, public broadcasting outlets were not found to be more critical of EU representatives than private outlets. This suggests that public broadcasting and private outlets may also not differ with respect to the evaluation of the EU.
Coverage of the EU in routine and summit periods

- If Norris' (2000) finding holds that coverage of the EU peaks in summit periods and if it is true that the coverage has a slightly negative slant, one may expect that the evaluation of the EU is more negative in summit periods than in routine periods.

- Assuming that members of anti-EU parties voice criticism of the EU, the evaluation of the EU may be more negative in countries where elite opinion is polarized.

- Given that higher levels of dissatisfaction with domestic democracy may increase the hopes associated with the EU and, thereby, its political relevance, evaluations of the EU may be presumed to become more positive as satisfaction with domestic democracy decreases. Conversely, the EU may be judged more negatively, the greater the satisfaction with domestic democracy is.

- Because support for the EU and evaluation of the EU are intertwined, higher levels of EU support will result in more positive evaluations of the EU.

And, finally, the expected pattern of influences on the depicted performance of the EU:

- If public broadcasting channels did not significantly differ from private ones in terms of evaluations of EU representatives, then it is unlikely that they will differ from private outlets in terms of the comparable measure of depicted performance of the EU.

- It has been mentioned above that summits typically serve to reach agreements and to finalize decisions. In this sense, summits are associated with successful political action. As a result, the performance of the EU may be depicted more positively in summit than in routine periods.

- Anti-EU parties are likely to point out the failures and negative sides of the EU. If the existence of an anti-EU party and, thus, polarized elite opinion increases EU coverage because of more conflict in debates about the EU, then there will also be more focus on the shortcomings and failures of the EU.

- The greater political relevance of the EU in countries with high levels of dissatisfaction with democracy and potentially resulting hopes associated with the EU will lead to more attention to the positive aspects of EU decision-making. Likewise, the performance of the EU will be depicted more negatively when levels of satisfaction with domestic democracy are higher.

- The more the EU is supported, the more attention will be given to its success. Conversely, lower levels of EU support lead to a more critical approach to the EU and, thus, to a focus on the failures and problems of the EU. In other words, the performance of the EU will be depicted more positively, the higher the EU support is in a particular country.
3.2 Method

3.2.1 Procedure and measures

For the period between February 2000 and December 2000, per country the main evening news outlet of the most widely watched public broadcasting and private channel were content analyzed (see Table B3 in Technical Appendix B for detailed information). For the summit periods in March (Lisbon), June (Feira), October (Biarritz), and December (Nice), the three days preceding the summit, the two summit days and the two days following the summit were content analyzed, thus in total 28 days.\(^{39}\) The routine periods consisted of a natural week sampled in the months without summit, resulting in 49 days of coverage (i.e., seven months à seven days). For routine periods, the weeks were rotated monthwise (i.e., first complete week in April, second complete week in May etc.).

The coding proceeded in two steps. First, all stories of a bulletin were coded with respect to formal characteristics, its political character, and EU references. In a second step, EU stories were coded with respect to more substantive categories such as actors, EU evaluation, and success and failure. A news story was generally defined as a semantic entity with at least one topic delimited from another story by a change of topic, and this constituted the unit of investigation in the content analysis.\(^{40}\) The news stories were coded by teams of native speakers from the five countries who had been trained several weeks before coding and were supervised throughout the whole coding period. All training and coding took place centrally at the University of Amsterdam from December 2000 to July 2001.

The reliability testing followed a procedure that tries to take into account the various pitfalls of cross-national content analyses (Peter & Lauf, 2002). Because the coders were trained in country groups and were supervised by different coder trainers, it was checked in the first place that the coder trainers sufficiently agreed in their understanding of the coding protocol in order to avoid artifactual country differences as the result of variations in the training. Thus, before the coder trainers started training the coders, the coder trainers had to take an inter-trainer reliability test which showed that the trainers agreed in their coding (for detailed information, see Table B5 in Technical Appendix B). Given that the coder trainers came from different countries, the inter-trainer reliability test was assessed on randomly selected English news stories. After the trainers had trained the coders, in each country group the inter-coder reliabilities were assessed along with the reliabilities between coders and coder trainer.\(^{41}\) The test between coders and coder trainers serves to control to what extent the

\(^{39}\) Actually, 11 days surrounding the summits in March, October, and December were content analyzed. For reasons of comparability with the routine periods, I chose to include only seven days in the analysis. Moreover, as will become clear later, some analyses have to be based on absolute figures instead of percentages so that results from an eleven-day period would be no longer comparable with results from a seven-day period.

\(^{40}\) If coders were in doubt whether a new news story had begun, they were instructed to start coding a new news story whenever the anchor reappeared. This, of course, did not apply to interviews or talks in which the anchor was involved but which pertained to the previous story.

\(^{41}\) The reliabilities between coders and coder trainers could not be assessed for the French group because none of the coder trainers was a French native speaker. The Dutch EU stories were coded by a coder trainer and checked by another one to establish inter-"coder" agreement.
training was successful and to what extent the coders code what they are supposed to code. Furthermore, assuming sufficient levels of agreement, such a test links the various country groups and ensures the comparability of the reliabilities and the coding between the country groups. In line with the two-step procedure of the coding, the reliability tests were first performed on a random sample of all stories including non-political, political, and EU stories. At least 31 stories were coded per country. For EU stories (coded in a second step), a second reliability test was conducted in which at least 12 randomly selected stories were coded per country. The reliabilities of all measures used in this study are documented for both trainer-coder and inter-coder reliability test and separately for each country in Table B5 and B6 in Technical Appendix B.

Levels of analysis

Similar to the European election content analysis, three different levels of analysis have to be distinguished. These three levels are important to understand the operationalization of the concepts below. The descriptive account of the number and prominence of EU stories and the evaluation and performance depictions of the EU are based upon the story level of analysis. Visibility of EU officials is investigated at the level of the particular actor. In other words, the actor and no longer the story (in which up to six actors could be coded) constitutes a single case. Technically, this implies a disaggregation of the data from the higher story level to the lower actor level. Overall, 1,389 actors were coded. For the explanatory analysis, the coverage of a particular outlet in a particular month was the level of analysis. Thus, for each of the ten outlets it was studied what the coverage looked like in February, March, April etc. In other words, for each of the ten outlets, the coverage in each of the eleven months can be traced. The outlet level was chosen for analysis because the focus of the analyses lies on the EU coverage of particular outlets across countries (for a more elaborate reasoning, see 2.2.1). The coverage of the particular outlets was split up into the various points of time in order to investigate whether the coverage differs between summit and routine periods after controlling for other potential influences. Technically speaking, the data were aggregated such that the coverage of each particular outlet in a particular month constituted the case for further analysis. With 10 outlets and 11 months content analyzed, this led to 110 cases.

Measures – formal characteristics

EU stories were defined as stories in which EU policies, EU events, EU institutions, or EU decision-making were mentioned in at least two complete, independent sentences. The inter-coder agreement was 99% in Germany and 100% in the remaining countries. Political stories were operationalized as stories in which regional, national, EU, or international politics and/or politicians and/or political institutions/organizations were mentioned verbally at least once and depicted at least once. In stories without film material, they had to be mentioned at least twice or had to be mentioned and shown in a picture. The inter-coder reliabilities for the

---

42 The disaggregation of the data set allows more elaborate statistical analyses than the multiple response option offered in statistical software packages.
pertinent categories were between 91% in the Netherlands and 100% in the UK. As described in section 2.2.1, the prominence measure is based on the length of a news story and the appearance of an anchor and of visuals. The measure of length of news stories was straightforward and coded in seconds. Coders were instructed to also include concluding remarks of the anchor when stopwatching the length of a news story. The appearance of an anchor introducing or just reading out a particular story and of visuals accompanying a story were assessed with dichotomous categories. Coders perfectly agreed in their coding decisions concerning the three categories.

Measures - substantive characteristics

In line with the definition given above, EU officials were operationalized as members of EU institutions or persons appointed by the EU (e.g., the so-called "three wise men" negotiating with Austria about the lifting of the EU sanctions). All remaining actors who did not fit in this definition were collapsed in the category of non-EU actors. In each story, up to six different actors could be coded with the same actor coded only once. To qualify as an actor, a person, group or institution had to be either depicted and mentioned (or quoted) at least once. For stories without film material, a person, group, or institution had to be mentioned verbally at least twice or mentioned once and shown in a picture. The main actor was chosen in terms of his/her/its importance in the story (operationalized as amount of information given about him/her/it, frequency of being mentioned, degree of visibility, and number of quotes). The remaining five actors were coded in order of appearance. The inter-coder agreement ranged between 74% in the UK and 96% in France.

The evaluation of the EU was assessed as explicit judgment of the EU in the news story. It was ensured that the EU was explicitly mentioned and that the evaluation clearly referred to the EU. The coding categories were 0 (neutral), 1 (unfavorable), 2 (mixed), and 3 (favorable). As dependent variable for the explanatory analyses, I computed, for each week analyzed and per outlet, an evaluation differential by subtracting the number of unfavorable evaluations from the number of favorable evaluations of the EU. The inter-coder reliabilities were between 83% in Germany and 100% in Denmark and the UK. The depicted performance of the EU was operationalized as difference between the degree of depicted success in a particular story and the degree of depicted failure. The depiction of success was gauged on a four-point scale with the anchors 1 (No utility, success, progress discernable) and 4 (Breakthrough, major success, major progress). The depiction of failure was also measured on a four-point scale with the anchors 1 (No damage, failure, lack of success discernable) and 4 (Extreme damage, failure, lack of success, very serious problems). Similar operationalizations were previously applied in content analytic research (Eilders, 1997; Schulz, 1976; Staab, 1990). For the computation of the depicted performance, the value of one was subtracted from each of the values of the two categories so that the value one became zero, two became one etc. As a result, the depicted performance as difference between the degree of success and the degree of failure could range between +3 meaning very successful performance and −3 meaning very unsuccessful performance. Inter-coder agreement was between 80% and 91% for depicted success and between 78% and 93% for depicted failure.
Measures - explanatory analysis

In section 2.2.1, I have outlined the statistical problems associated with the operationalization of dependent variables in cross-nationally comparative analyses of television content data. To recapitulate, percentage-based measures may account for outlet differences (such as different numbers of stories broadcast), but might no longer be linearly predictable and tend to gross distortions when based on low absolute figures. Especially the latter problem is paramount in the present case with the coverage of ten outlets measured at 11 different points of time. The alternative use of absolute figures requires some control measure in the explanatory analysis to avoid spurious effects because, for example, a high number of EU stories may only be the result of an outlet generally covering a lot of stories in its bulletins.

With respect to the dependent variables, this means the following. The number of EU stories broadcast, operationalized as the sum of EU stories broadcast by a particular outlet at a certain point of time, will be controlled for the number of the remaining stories broadcast by the particular outlet at that point of time. The number of EU officials covered, operationalized as the sum of EU officials covered by a particular outlet at a certain point of time, will be controlled for the number of the remaining actors covered by the particular outlet at that point of time. The evaluation of the EU measured as the difference between positive and negative evaluations of the EU across stories will be controlled for the number of EU stories broadcast by a particular outlet at a certain point of time – it might be possible that a large difference is rather the result of more EU stories broadcast than of a particular evaluative tendency. For the same reason, the performance depiction of the EU is controlled for the number of EU stories broadcast by a particular outlet at a certain point of time. The prominence measure gauged as the mean prominence of EU stories at a certain point of time is inherently relative and takes outlet differences into account. Therefore, no control variable is needed for the analysis of that measure.

The independent variables were operationalized as follows. In order to account for variations in countries' EU support and satisfaction with domestic democracy within the period of investigation, the relevant values were computed from three Eurobarometer surveys: Eurobarometer 52 (conducted in October and November 1999), 53 (April and May 2000) and 54.1 (November and December 2000). Thus, I added three different sets of values of the two variables to the content analysis data. For February and March, I added the data obtained from the October/November 1999 Eurobarometer. For the period April until October, I added data computed from the April/May 2000 Eurobarometer, and for November and December, I added data retrieved from the November/December 2000 Eurobarometer. Overall, there was not much variation in EU support and satisfaction with domestic democracy in the five countries. Nevertheless, adding data from three different points of measurement may increase the precision of the predictors. EU support was operationalized with the question "Generally speaking, do you think that [your country's] membership of the European Union is...? and the response categories 1 (A good thing), 2 (A bad thing) and 3 (Neither good nor bad). The

---

43 Because in both East and West Germany at least 1000 respondents had been interviewed, the German data were weighted according to the population size of the two parts of Germany. The British data do not include the Northern Irish respondents.
response categories were recoded such that 1 meant a bad thing, 2 neither good nor bad, and 3 a good thing. Don’t know answers were excluded from the analyses. Satisfaction with domestic democracy was gauged with the question “On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in [your country]?” where the anchors were 1 (very satisfied) and 4 (not at all satisfied). For the analysis, the scale was reversed. Don’t know answers were eliminated from analysis.

The polarized or consensual nature of elite opinion was assessed via the existence of a sufficiently visible anti-EU party. To identify anti-EU parties, Ray’s (1999) expert survey was used. Anti-EU parties had to have an average score of 2 or lower (opposed to European integration) on a seven-point scale. Moreover, they had to have gained at least 5% of the votes in the latest general election, which was assessed with reference to the year 2000. Whether a story was broadcast in a summit or a routine period, was tapped with a dichotomous variable where summit periods were coded as one. All country-specific values of the measures discussed above are documented in Table B4 in Technical Appendix B.

3.2.2 Data analysis

Mediated influences

To investigate patterns of influence, number and prominence of EU stories, visibility of EU officials, EU evaluation, and EU performance depictions were regressed on the five predictors plus the pertinent control variable. The presumed mediating effect of the number of EU stories on the visibility of EU officials was analyzed following the procedure outlined in section 2.2.2. Thus, three regression models were estimated: (1) visibility of EU officials regressed on the six predictors, (2) number of EU stories regressed on the six predictors, and (3) visibility of EU officials regressed on the six predictors plus the number of EU stories.

Problems with significance testing in the explanatory analyses

Section 2.2.2 outlined which problems arise when aiming at a cross-nationally comparative analysis of content data. In a nutshell, the problems are associated with the sample and especially with the hierarchical data structure, which may lead to an underestimation of the standard error in regular OLS regressions and, consequently, to a higher chance of a type-1 error. Again, it should be emphasized that the selection of outlets does not present a random sample, yet can be considered to represent the television coverage within the particular countries well (Hans-Bredow-Institut, 2002; European Journalism Centre, 2002). Moreover, it does not seem advisable to completely make do without significance testing as it otherwise becomes very difficult to decide when to consider an effect robust. Therefore, I consider the significance of an effect as an indicator of its robustness noting that further inferences to a larger universe outside the five countries investigated are problematic.

The explanatory analyses presented in the second chapter took into account the hierarchical data structure by using the ‘sandwich’ standard error (Huber, 1967; White, 1980).
This seems also appropriate for the present data structure with its 11 measurements for each of the ten outlets. Put differently, the corrected standard error takes into account that the 11 measurements of the television coverage are clustered within a particular outlet and are, thus, not independent of one another. This also entails that the critical \( t \)-value is assessed with number of clusters (i.e., outlets) minus one degrees of freedom. For ten outlets, the pertinent degrees of freedom are nine.

3.3 Results – non-election periods in television news

3.3.1 Formal characteristics – somewhat like the moon

What was the share of EU stories in political news (research question 1a)? Table 3.1 shows that, during routine periods, the share of EU stories in political news was not higher than 5%, except in Denmark. During summit periods, the share of EU stories increased to 10-11%, Denmark again presenting an exception (research question 1b). The findings thus suggest that the EU is more visible in summit than in routine periods. EU coverage thus seems to be a cyclical phenomenon, appearing predominantly in summit periods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU stories</th>
<th>Non-EU stories</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>EU stories</th>
<th>Non-EU stories</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Further information on absolute figures can be found in Table B3 in Technical Appendix B.

Were EU stories less prominent in the bulletins than non-EU stories as had been predicted based upon the results of the election study (research question 2a)? The answer is "no" as Table 3.2 shows. Both in routine and summit periods, EU stories were at least as prominent as political non-EU stories. In most of the cases, EU stories were even more prominent than political non-EU stories. Only German EU stories broadcast in routine periods were less prominent than non-EU stories. The prominence of EU stories broadcast in summit periods was higher than the prominence of EU stories broadcast in routine periods in Denmark, Germany, and the UK (research question 2b). In France and the Netherlands the prominence of the EU stories did not vary by the period of coverage.
What influenced the amount of EU coverage? As one can see in Table 3.3, summit periods clearly led to more EU coverage than routine periods. This finding is robust even when outlet differences are controlled for by including the number of the remaining stories as control variable. Higher levels of satisfaction with domestic democracy were also associated with more EU coverage. Conversely, the amount of EU coverage was unaffected by the public or commercial character of outlets, the nature of elite opinion and EU support. Three of the five predictors also turned out to affect the prominence of EU coverage (see Table 3.3). Public broadcasting outlets tended to cover EU affairs more prominently than did private outlets. Furthermore, summit periods led to a higher prominence of EU coverage than routine periods. Additionally, the prominence of EU coverage increased with rising levels of satisfaction with domestic democracy whereas it was unaffected by a country's level of support for the EU. Polarized elite opinion had no impact, either. Generally, however, the explanatory power of the model was lower for the prominence than for the amount of EU coverage.
Table 3.3: Influences on the amount and prominence of EU coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amount (N = 110)</th>
<th>Prominence (N = 110)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public broadcasting outlet</td>
<td>2.31 (1.60)</td>
<td>.68** (.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarized elite opinion</td>
<td>4.50 (2.76)</td>
<td>.32 (.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summit period</td>
<td>5.90*** (.82)</td>
<td>.76** (.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with domestic</td>
<td>25.97** (8.00)</td>
<td>1.98* (.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>democracy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU support</td>
<td>-7.00 (4.02)</td>
<td>-.42 (.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of remaining stories</td>
<td>-.03 (.05)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broadcast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-48.71</td>
<td>-3.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R square</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001 (t-test, two-tailed)

Note. Cell entries are unstandardized multiple regression coefficients, robust standard errors in brackets.

Data sources: Eurobarometer 52-54, Content analysis EU coverage in summit and routine periods

3.3.2 Substantive characteristics – in search of faces, positivity, and success

As far as EU coverage was concerned, were EU officials less visible than actors not working for the EU (research question 3a)? Table 3.4 shows that this was clearly the case. In the majority of countries, not even one in ten actors who appeared in EU coverage was an EU official. Only during routine periods, were EU officials slightly more visible in French, Dutch, and German coverage, but were still outnumbered by non-EU actors (however, note the generally low number of actors covered at all). With the exception of the Danish coverage, EU officials were less visible in summit periods than in routine periods, which was in line with the expectations (research question 3b).
Table 3.4: Share of EU officials in all actors in the EU coverage during routine and summit periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Routine</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Summit</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EU officials</td>
<td>Non-EU actors</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>EU officials</td>
<td>Non-EU actors</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Total N refers to the number of actors. The absolute number of EU stories can be found in Table B3 in Technical Appendix B.

Research question 4a asked whether evaluations of the EU tended to be negative when they appear. Table 3.5 indicates that the EU was mostly neutrally depicted. When, however, the EU was evaluated, a negative slant predominated in both routine and summit periods, with the exception of the two weakly positive evaluative directions in German and British routine coverage. In answer to research question 4b, this also indicates that the evaluative direction in summit and routine periods did not differ. Put differently, there was almost always a slightly negative slant in explicit evaluations of the EU regardless of whether EU routine politics or extraordinary EU events were covered. This applied to the vast majority of the countries investigated.

Table 3.5: Evaluation of the EU in the EU coverage during routine and summit periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Routine</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Unfavorable</td>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
<td>Favorable</td>
<td>Evaluation differential</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Summit</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Unfavorable</td>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
<td>Favorable</td>
<td>Evaluation differential</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Cell entries refer to the number of EU stories. This is, the evaluation of the EU refers to the story as a whole.
Given that the EU was predominantly evaluated negatively, how was the EU’s performance depicted (research question 5a)? In both routine and summit periods, the average depicted performance of the EU was negative (Table 3.6). EU stories focused more on failure than on success, the only exceptions being the French coverage during summit periods and the British coverage during routine periods. Contrary to my expectations (research question 5b), in the Danish and the Dutch coverage, the EU’s performance was depicted even more negatively during summit periods, with this tendency weakly present also in the German and the British coverage. Only French television depicted the EU as more successful during summit periods than during routine periods.

Table 3.6: Average performance depiction of the EU in the EU coverage during routine and summit periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Routine</th>
<th>Summit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td>-.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>-1.09</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>-.30</td>
<td>-.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>-.48</td>
<td>-.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. The absolute number of EU stories can be found in Table B3 in Technical Appendix B.*

Influences on the visibility of EU officials and evaluation and performance depictions of the EU

Of all the influences presumed to shape the visibility of EU officials, only the public broadcasting character of an outlet proved to be a robust predictor (Model 1, Table 3.7). Public broadcasting outlets more frequently covered EU officials than did commercial outlets. None of the other presumed influences affected the visibility of EU officials (with exception of the control variable, which mainly indicates the varying number of EU stories and, thus, actors). More important is the question whether the influence of public broadcasting outlets on the visibility of EU officials was mediated by the number of EU stories broadcast. As we know from Table 3.3 (i.e., identical to model 2 to be estimated for the mediation analysis), there were not more EU stories in public broadcasting outlets than in private ones. In other words, the second condition for mediating effects was not met – the potentially mediating variable was not affected by the variable that was presumed to exert a mediating impact. Consequently, if the presumed mediator, the number of EU stories, was included in the model (Model 3, Table 3.7), the effect of public broadcasting television remained sufficiently strong and robust though it diminished somewhat. Thus, the effect of public broadcasting television was not mediated by the number of EU stories broadcast. However, it should be noted that the number of election stories affected the visibility of EU officials in addition to the influence of the public broadcasting nature of an outlet.
Table 3.7: Influences on the visibility of EU officials in the EU coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Visibility of EU officials (N = 110)</th>
<th>Visibility of EU officials (N = 110)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public broadcasting outlet</td>
<td>.84* (.31)</td>
<td>.59* (.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarized elite opinion</td>
<td>.01 (.38)</td>
<td>-.14 (.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summit period</td>
<td>-.33 (.49)</td>
<td>-.37 (.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with domestic</td>
<td>.14 (.95)</td>
<td>-.42 (.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>democracy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU support</td>
<td>.84 (.83)</td>
<td>.78 (.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of non-EU actors in</td>
<td>.06* (.02)</td>
<td>-.09 (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU stories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of EU stories broadcast</td>
<td></td>
<td>.58* (.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-2.09</td>
<td>-.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R square</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p ≤ .05 (t-test, two-tailed)

Note. Cell entries are unstandardized multiple regression coefficients, robust standard errors in brackets.

Data sources: Eurobarometer 52-54, Content analysis EU coverage in summit and routine periods

The explanatory analysis of the evaluation and the performance depiction of the EU can be summarized quickly. None of the predictors influenced evaluations of the EU as Table 3.8 shows. This was also true with respect to performance depictions.
Table 3.8: Influences on the evaluation and the performance depiction of the EU in the EU coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Evaluation (N = 110)</th>
<th>Performance depiction (N = 110)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public broadcasting outlet</td>
<td>.11 (.16)</td>
<td>-.01 (.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarized elite opinion</td>
<td>.04 (.20)</td>
<td>-.09 (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summit period</td>
<td>-.21 (.14)</td>
<td>.20 (.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with domestic</td>
<td>.73 (.75)</td>
<td>.03 (.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>democracy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU support</td>
<td>-.69 (.41)</td>
<td>-.49 (.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of EU stories broadcast</td>
<td>-.10 (.05)</td>
<td>-.02 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R square</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Cell entries are unstandardized multiple regression coefficients, robust standard errors in brackets.
Data sources: Eurobarometer 52-54, Content analysis EU coverage in summit and routine periods

3.4 Discussion – not covering an issue

3.4.1 Formal characteristics – invisible importance

With the exception of the Danish coverage, only one in ten political stories dealt with EU affairs in summit periods, in routine periods this was even less. The Danish exceptionalism in term of EU coverage is to some extent due to the euro referendum held in September 2000, thus exactly in the period of investigation. However, even in the months after the referendum, there was still more EU coverage in Denmark than in other countries, as post hoc analyses (not shown) revealed. Moreover, Danish television coverage of EU affairs had also stood out in routine news coverage after the 1999 introduction of the euro (de Vreese et al., 2001).
Thus, there is reason to believe that EU affairs are differently approached in Denmark as reflected, amongst other things, in the amount of EU coverage.

Both the descriptive and the explanatory analysis revealed that there is generally little EU coverage and that it only peaks around the summits of the EU heads of government. Both types of analyses also confirmed that EU coverage is more prominent during summit periods than during routine periods. EU summits lead to a change of the placement, length, and presentation of EU stories. The EU, then, is somewhat like the moon: though of major influence on the ebb and flow of Europe, it is only cyclically fully visible. These findings confirm and extend Norris’ (2000) secondary analysis of the Euromedia data (European Commission 1995/1997) and may generally serve as rule of thumb when dealing with the dynamics of EU coverage. In the light of news values research, however, the finding that coverage peaks around EU summits is hardly surprising. Summits of the heads of government provide a lot of news values such as prominent, powerful actors and important issues, which can be boosted by conflicts among the actors (see the Nice summit).

More important, therefore, seems the question of whether the EU is indeed visible if, during summit periods, only one in ten political stories is European, whereas, during routine periods, this is even less than one in 20 (except in Denmark). This rate would be even smaller if compared to all stories, not just political ones. Such findings may inevitably lead to the question of how little is enough accompanied by probably endless discussions about comparison standards and statistical analyses. However, several scholars have clearly shown that both the economy and politics have been increasingly Europeanized (e.g., Gerhards, 2000; Lepsius, 1990; Wessels, 1997), with parts of national sovereignty transferred to the EU. For example, EU legislation has become more and more important, EU law overrules national law, EU institutions have become increasingly differentiated, their meetings more numerous, the European Commission controls the implementation of EU legislation, and EU member states can be sanctioned by the EU, just to name a few aspects of Europeanization. It would be close to dogmatic blindness to claim that such complex and omnipresent processes can be adequately represented in a maximum of one out of ten political stories. With the exception of Denmark, the implications, ramifications, and complexities of the EU are largely invisible in television coverage.  

This finding dovetails with more recent studies on the communication policy of the European Commission and, more generally, the diagnosis of a communication deficit of the EU (Gramberger, 1997; Meyer, 1999). Based on a longitudinal study of the development of the Commission’s public relations, Gramberger (1997) argues that since the 1950s the European Commission has tried to withhold information from public scrutiny, which is in part due to the concern that public awareness of EU affairs would endanger support for further integration. Along these lines, Meyer (1999) suggests that the Commission’s communication deficit results from poorly coordinated communication activities devalued as minor tasks and

---

44 One could argue that the EU may not be presented as the main topic of a story, but might be referred to in stories, for example, about domestic issues. However, even if one checks whether the EU or its officials and institutions were just mentioned, the overall picture does not change. The EU is hardly mentioned in stories that do not deal with European affairs.
from inadequate staffing. Apart from that, it seems generally hard for journalists to cover EU affairs because EU decision-making is complex, lacks transparency, and is usually kept away from the public eye. In other words, the lack of being communicated may be connected with the EU's lack of communicating.

However, a crucial qualification has to be made. EU coverage was by and large more prominent than the remaining political coverage – and this applies to routine and summit periods alike. The EU may be invisible, but it is not unimportant. In other words, it is an invisible importance that characterizes the coverage of the EU. If the EU is covered, it is covered prominently – the backdrop being that the EU is rarely covered. This result runs counter to the paradox of the 'unimportant visibility' of European election coverage identified for many countries in the preceding chapter. It seems as if the EU has to choose between quantitative or qualitative media attention.

Two factors shaped both the number and the prominence of EU stories: summit periods (discussed above) and satisfaction with domestic democracy within a particular country. Higher levels of satisfaction with domestic democracy were associated with more visible and more prominent coverage of EU affairs – in contrast to the expectations and the results of the European election study. Two explanations are possible. First, the result depends partly on the special selection of countries and the specific period of investigation. Denmark had by far the most EU stories that were usually also prominently covered and Danes were the most satisfied with their domestic democracy. Moreover, the satisfaction measure became, in the majority of the countries, somewhat more positive at the end of the period of investigation when also the EU coverage peaked in the context of the Nice summit. A second explanation could be that the direction of the impact of satisfaction with domestic democracy is conditional on whether or not EU citizens have the chance of deciding about EU politics. If EU citizens have a say in EU politics and, thereby, in another form of governance (as is typically the case during European elections), dissatisfaction with domestic democracy may be the incentive for television outlets to cover this alternative more strongly, both in terms of the number and the prominence of EU stories. If EU citizens cannot participate in EU politics (as is typically the case in routine and summit periods), then dissatisfaction with domestic democracy may lead television outlets to focus on dissatisfying domestic governance. Clearly, further research with a bigger sample of countries and at different points of time is needed. However, even if the direction of the influence of satisfaction with domestic democracy is not clarified yet, the concept as such has proven its explanatory potential, which concurs with research from political science (e.g., Anderson, 1998; Rohrschneider, 2002).

Public broadcasting outlets did not report more frequently about the EU than did private outlets. However, the EU was more prominently covered in public than in private television. In other words, the visibility of EU affairs was equally low in both public television and commercial television, but public outlets attributed more importance to EU affairs than did commercial television. Thus, EU affairs are less important in private television than they are in public television. This finding has an important consequence for the old, but still unresolved debate about differences or similarities between public and private television. The debate has either been based on proper empirical data and been confined to the
national context (e.g., exemplary the German discussion: Bruns & Marcinkowski, 1996; Pfetsch, 1996; Schatz, Immer, & Marcinkowski, 1989) or the debate has taken on a more international flavor at the expense of adequate data (e.g., the discussion between Blumler, 1997, 1999, and Brants, 1998, 1999). This study demonstrates in a cross-nationally comparative fashion that public television differs from private television in the importance attributed to a crucial development in Europe. More specifically, the study shows that the tradeoff between empirical depth and cross-national breadth can be avoided – in favor of promising results. Future research might try to further investigate why public and private outlets differ in the amount and prominence of EU coverage depending on whether election or non-election periods are studied. Such an investigation might also benefit from conducting the study presented in this chapter in other EU member states, preferably Mediterranean countries or countries that acceded to the EU only lately.

Unlike in the preceding chapter, polarized elite opinion did not influence the amount of EU coverage. This may simply be the result of a different period of investigation and of a reduced selection of countries. However, it seems also plausible that polarized elite opinion especially about something as remote as EU politics comes only to the fore in decisive periods such as election campaigns. Moreover, elite opinion was operationally defined as the existence of a sufficiently visible anti-EU party. Obviously, anti-EU parties will be the most proactive in a campaign for the European Parliament. Their faces will be seen, their voices will be heard best during such an campaign and this may ultimately affect the coverage. Conversely, in non-election periods, anti-EU parties and with them elite opinion about the EU may be less salient and, thereby, less influential on EU coverage. However, future research on this subject should not abandon the concept as potential impact on EU coverage. As outlined in section 2.4.1, consensus or polarization of elite opinion may indicate more general lines of how the EU is approached in particular countries. Investigating this could be both an interesting and original contribution to our knowledge about what shapes the coverage of the EU.

### 3.4.2 Substantive characteristics – slightly negative, not successful, and a little bit absurd

In terms of its officials, the EU is faceless. Given the power of an institution such as the European Commission, it is amazing how absent its officials were in the television coverage of EU(!) affairs. The coverage conveys the impression that EU politics is decided upon by anyone, but definitely not by EU officials. EU coverage resembles a play without its inherent protagonists. Theorists of modern drama would not hesitate to call it absurd; scholars of the EU would probably term it the stepwise degradation of EU politics in television coverage. It has also been shown that, during European elections, a second order event is accompanied by third-order coverage of EU representatives. During non-election periods, a third-order issue has produced fourth-order coverage of EU officials. The only problem is that EU officials are not fifth-class politicians.

The fact that EU officials are hardly visible in television news may again be associated with the EU's general communication deficit. Especially for television as a medium forced to
visualize and personalize, the coverage of an issue may largely depend on whether the issue can be visualized and to what extent politicians or officials are accountable for decisions. Meyer (1999) points out that political accountability is obfuscated by Member States to circumvent public scrutiny. If the media are provided with information about who advocated what, this information cannot be attributed to politicians, but to unnamed diplomatic sources. However, as Meyer (1999) argues, "without the personalization of political debate and decisions, political accountability remains invisible" (p. 633) – a conclusion which is accurately mirrored by the findings.

It seems that public television tried to render the unaccountable accountable more often than did private television: there were more EU officials on public television than on private television. This effect was direct although the number of EU stories broadcast also strongly influenced the visibility of EU officials. Keeping in mind that EU coverage was more prominent on public television than on commercial television, the division of the EU in television has come full circle. The EU, its policies and officials are considered more important in public television. Exclusive viewers of private television outlets will be confronted with the EU as a marginalized, nearly invisible, and faceless institution. In terms of the five countries investigated, this result may be of even more political relevance given that none of the other potential influences affected the visibility of EU officials. In all five countries, it largely depended on public-broadcasting television whether the EU was depicted as an accountable, personalized agent instead of as an inaccessible, technocratic abstractum.

In terms of its valence, EU coverage has a slightly negative slant. However, in the vast majority of cases, the EU is depicted neutrally. This finding dovetails with results from the European election study and confirms earlier research (Leroy & Siune, 1994; Norris, 2000). Moreover, the finding indicates a trend in news reporting of the EU, which, in turn, concurs with general trends of news coverage. Overall, news reporting is neutral. When, however, evaluations occur, they tend to be negative (e.g., Kepplinger & Weissbecker, 1991; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2001; Reinemann & Wilke, 2001). Therefore, it does not seem justified to attribute the negative slant in EU coverage to hostility towards the EU. Rather, the EU is covered like other political institutions – usually neutral, yet in sum slightly negative. Although this finding is clear-cut, it could not be explained with any of the factors presumed to affect the evaluation of the EU. Interestingly, not even a country's support for the EU or satisfaction with domestic democracy translated into a particular tone towards the EU. This suggests that the evaluation of the EU depends on factors located in journalists' opinions about the EU.

In terms of how the performance of the EU was depicted, the coverage focused more strongly on failures and problems of EU politics than on achievements and success. What Kepplinger (1998) has reported for the coverage of the German political system thus also applies to the coverage of the EU. However, with none of the predictor exerting a robust influence, the explanation of the EU's depicted performance remained very much just an attempt. What has been said in the preceding paragraph about future explanation of the evaluation of the EU is probably also true for the depicted performance of the EU – the real causes may lie in what journalists think about the EU.
3.5. Summary and outlook

Where does all of this leave us? Five broad aspects are worth pointing out:

1. The coverage of EU affairs in routine and summit periods is characterized by invisible importance. Usually there are only a few stories, but they are prominently presented in the bulletin.

2. EU affairs are more prominently presented in public broadcasting outlets than in private outlets.

3. Country-specific developments such as satisfaction with domestic democracy are conducive to how frequently and how prominently EU affairs are reported.

4. Public television outlets more frequently cover EU representatives than do private outlets. Overall, however, the EU is largely presented as faceless, as an institution without officials.

5. Both the evaluation of the EU and the depicted performance of the EU are negative. However, it remains unclear what shapes this tendency in EU news reporting.

As argued above, an analysis of how television news covers the EU is an investigation in its own right. The implications of the findings, which I sketched in the discussion section of this and the preceding chapter, may confirm this. However, before one can turn to the bigger picture of Europe on the television screen (see Chapter 8), it is paramount to study a probably even more important question: whether EU coverage affects opinions and fears about the EU and European integration. For example, Chapter 2 showed notable differences in how often the European election campaign was covered in the various countries. Do the varying amounts of election coverage make a difference in, for instance, the perceived importance of European integration? Chapter 2 also demonstrated a slightly negative coverage of EU representatives. Does this negative slant of EU coverage affect EU citizens' support for European integration? In this chapter, it was found that the EU's record is typically depicted negatively. Do the negative depictions of the EU diminish people's support for the EU? Such questions will, amongst others, be investigated in the following second part of this book.
Part II

... and its effects

Our reasoning about media coverage occasionally implies presumptions about media effects and sometimes our reasoning about media effects implies presumptions about media coverage. The first is the case when findings of content analyses serve as base to infer media effects. The latter is the case when scholars try to establish media effects by relying, in survey-based research, only on media exposure measures. This book tries to avoid such problems by linking properties of the EU coverage established in the two preceding chapters to people's opinions and fears about the EU. This will be done at the individual level of analysis. Thereby, this book fulfils three of the requirements that should be met when investigating the impact of media coverage on opinions and fears about the EU as outlined in Chapter 1. Also in Chapter 1, a fourth requirement of such investigations, the cross-nationally comparative perspective, has been found to be justified if country characteristics are used as additional explanations. In section 1.3, I have given a rationale why treating country characteristics as moderators of effect patterns may be an appropriate strategy – as a consequence both of recent trends in research and the peculiarities of the topic, i.e., media effects on opinions and fears about the EU. Much of the reasoning there had to be kept general because the interplay of country characteristics and effect patterns can only be specified with respect to the particular research question. The analyses in this second part try to apply the general strategy outlined in section 1.3 to specific research issues.

The following four chapters are linked to the two preceding ones in a simple way. Chapters 4 and 5 study the effects of features of the Election campaign coverage (see Chapter 2). More specifically, Chapter 4 starts with a simple formal characteristic of coverage, its amount, and deals with its effects on importance perceptions of the EU. Chapter 5 turns to more substantive properties of the European election campaign coverage, the tone towards and visibility of EU representatives and their impact on EU citizens' support for further integration. Chapters 6 and 7 investigate the impact of a part of the non-election coverage described in Chapter 3. More specifically, Chapter 6 studies to what extent the depicted performance of the EU influences support for the EU and European integration. Chapter 7 investigates whether performance depictions of the EU and the tone towards the EU augment or diminish fears and concerns about European integration. Chapters 4 to 6, then, focus on opinions about the EU, Chapter 7 centers upon fears of European integration.
The impact of the amount of EU coverage on the perceived importance of European integration depends on the nature of elite opinion

Along with broader notions of the EU as a public and published institution, scholars have begun to study how the EU communicates itself to the media (Gramberger, 1997; Meyer, 1999) and how it is communicated by the media (Gerhards, 2000). The underlying reasoning is that EU citizens should be able to inform themselves about the EU. Given the abstract nature of EU politics, the media play a key role in bringing EU politics to EU citizens. However, the EU’s relationship with the media seems to be characterized by a communication deficit – not only in terms of the EU not adequately conveying its policies to the media (Meyer, 1999), but also in terms of the media not adequately conveying EU policies to the citizens (Gerhards, 2000). The lack of EU coverage has been by and large corroborated with respect to the visibility of the EU in routine and summit periods (see Chapter 3), but with respect to the election period striking differences between the various EU member countries emerged. The European election campaign took place in the coverage of the Scandinavian and Mediterranean countries including Austria, whereas it was virtually invisible in the remaining countries. This offers the opportunity to investigate a simple, yet important question. Does the mere amount of EU coverage influence opinions about the EU? Or, more specifically, does the mere amount of EU coverage affect EU citizens’ perceptions of how important further EU integration is? The first goal of this chapter is to address this question.

The link between the amount of media coverage and the perceived importance of issues has been abundantly demonstrated in agenda-setting research (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; for reviews see: Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Eichhorn, 1995; Rössler, 1997). Simply

It has been outlined in section 1.1 that the studies in this book try to investigate the influence of EU coverage on opinions about the EU. In terms of agenda-setting, the use of the term opinion may be conceptually problematic. However, three aspects should be taken into consideration. First, as emphasized in section 1.1, the use of the term opinion has primarily a summarizing function in this book. Second, agenda-setting scholars emphasize the telling people what to think about character of agenda-setting and claim to focus on cognitive processes such as the accessibility of problems. However, it is unclear to what extent importance perceptions of problems as the most often used operationalizations of agenda-setting really tap the cognitive accessibility of problems, which one would rather have to assess with response latency measures (for a similar reasoning, see: Scheufele, 2000). One could also argue that the perception of the most important problem facing the country is close to an expression of an opinion. Third, a lot of research on (public) opinion phenomena is related to the perception of own or other people’s opinions, for example in research on the looking-glass perception or other perceptual biases (for an overview, see Glynn et al., 1999). Hence, it seems justified to subsume importance perceptions under the broader term opinion.
Effects on the importance of European integration

put, the amount of coverage that media devote to a particular issue can shape to what extent individuals consider the particular issue important. The agenda-setting function of the media has been found to hold with respect to a variety of issues using different study designs. However, it is unclear whether this mechanism also applies to the perceived importance of European integration. There may be two reasons for this research gap. First, agenda-setting is biased towards domestic problems. The most commonly used operationalization of the public agenda explicitly asks for the 'most important problem facing the country' (Rössler, 1997; Smith, 1980). Although international events such as a war may surface on both the media and public agenda (Funkhouser, 1973), it is rather unlikely that a remote, abstract, and supra-national issue such as European integration makes it on the two agendas. Second, media coverage of European integration and EU politics is usually less visible or less prominent than other political coverage as the preceding chapters have shown. Agenda-setting, however, is predominantly concerned with top issues. Given the findings of the preceding chapters, this may almost always result in the issue of European integration being at the bottom of the media agenda, if anything. More generally, the preoccupation of agenda-setting research with top issues may lead to ignoring less powerful, yet also meaningful effects. Therefore, in their often cited overview of agenda-setting, Rogers and Dearing (1988) have requested that "future scholars of the agenda-setting process should include issues and events that receive much less media attention (ranging down to those that are hardly mentioned in the media) and that may only barely register on the public agenda" (p. 567). This request dovetails with the peculiarities of research on EU coverage. Thus, because the primary goal of this chapter is to investigate whether the amount of EU coverage shapes the perceived importance of European integration, it will be accompanied by an approach that pays attention to the peculiarities and problems of studying the effects of a less visible supra-national issue.

The second goal of this chapter results from another request by Dearing and Rogers (1996) in their review of the agenda-setting literature. The two scholars explicitly call for "more research in a wider variety of countries" (p. 98) in order to enhance our understanding of agenda-setting. Of course, this should not be confused with a call for yet another study demonstrating the occurrence of agenda-setting effects in countries other than the US. What is at stake here, is the potentially moderating role of country-level characteristics in agenda-setting processes. In other words, what has been outlined in section 1.3 as basic strategy of the effect analyses in this book, may be of particular relevance to the agenda-setting concept. To date, it has not been convincingly investigated whether country characteristics interact with individual media reception in their effect on agenda-setting. Although the explanatory power of such cross-level interactions has theoretically been discussed more than ten years ago (Pan & McLeod, 1991; Price et al., 1991), cross-level interactions have not yet been applied in agenda-setting research. Agenda-setting research has been stunningly attentive to explaining the dangers of different levels of analysis, but it has been remarkably oblivious of analyzing the possibilities of different levels of explanation. Thus, the second goal of this chapter is to investigate cross-level interactions in agenda-setting from cross-nationally comparative perspective.

Research on agenda-setting and on the EU have only a few things in common. One of them is that political interest is considered an important influencing factor. Scholars in both
strands of research maintain that political interest affects the citizens' sensitivity or resistance to either issues in the news or opinions about the EU (e.g., Anderson, 1998; Hewstone, 1986; MacKuen, 1984; Schoenbach & Semetko, 1992). This suggests that it may be worth bringing these two lines of research together. Moreover, news about European affairs is often argued to be abstract and remote (e.g., Meyer, 1999). Given that political interest, as sub-element of broader notions of political expertise, has been found to positively influence news reception (Fiske, Lau, & Smith, 1990), the study of political interest may also be useful for initial insights into the reception of news about EU affairs. As a result, the third goal of this chapter is to investigate whether political interest modifies the presumed effect of the amount of EU coverage on the perceived importance of European integration.

In sum, this chapter investigates whether the amount of EU coverage affects the perceived importance of further European integration. Employing a cross-nationally comparative perspective, the chapter focuses on the question of whether the presumed effect of the amount of EU coverage is conditioned by (a) country characteristics and (b) political interest.

4.1 Agenda-setting, elite opinion, and political interest

If existing studies have focused on media effects on the perceived importance of issues, they have not dealt with European integration (for an exception, see: Schönbach, 1981). And if studies have dealt with European integration, they have hardly focused on media effects. There is a simple reason for this. Research dealing with the perceived importance of issues is usually located in communication science and thus less concerned with EU issues. Research concerned with EU issues is usually located in political science and thus predominantly interested in 'political' explanations of perceptions of the EU. As a consequence, the existing literature unfortunately can only provide rough guidance as to expectations. The key question is whether the coverage of a remote, abstract issue such as EU politics can be expected to affect the perceived importance of European integration at all. In a study conducted around the first European parliamentary elections in 1979, Schönbach (1981) found that higher exposure to television news led people to perceive further European integration to be more important. Unfortunately, the actual media coverage was not assessed. Further evidence in order to presume media effects on the importance perceptions of European integration derives from a strand in agenda-setting research that centers upon the character of issues. Several agenda-setting studies have documented that unobtrusive issues (i.e., issues that most people cannot experience directly) led to stronger agenda-setting effects than obtrusive issues (i.e., issues that most people can experience directly) (Erbring, Goldenberg, & Miller, 1980; Smith, 1988; Weaver, Graber, McCombs, & Eyal, 1981; Winter, Eyal, & Rogers, 1982; Zucker, 1978). Because unobtrusive issues can only be experienced through the media, the coverage has a greater potential to shape people's perceptions of the issues. Assuming that, to the vast majority of EU citizens, EU politics is unobtrusive, the expectation is that a greater amount of EU coverage will be associated with higher perceived importance of European integration.\(^{46}\)

\(^{46}\) There is also agenda-setting research demonstrating that obtrusive issues lead to more pronounced agenda-
The emphasis here lies on differing amounts of EU coverage and differing levels of perceived importance. This is an important modification of traditional agenda-setting research. Usually, the ranking of various issues on the media agenda is compared with the ranking of various issues on the public agenda. Along with the crude categorical assessment of the importance of issues as either important or unimportant, this procedure often leads to a preoccupation with top-issues. If one really wants to investigate whether less prominently covered issues affect perceptions of importance as suggested by Rogers and Dearing (1988), it is in the first place necessary to study (potentially) differing levels of media coverage of a particular issue along with (potentially) differing levels of perceived importance of the particular issue. Moreover, such an analysis requires an individual level of analysis. The disaggregation of analyses is another desideratum of research (Dearing & Rogers, 1996) which helps circumvent the danger of ecological fallacy. To summarize, only a focus on the coverage of one particular issue together with a more nuanced assessment of the importance of this issue at the level of individuals presents an appropriate test of the presumed association between coverage and importance perceptions (for a similar reasoning, see: Schoenbach, 1991).

In general, research on the association between media coverage and the perceived importance of issues has largely neglected cross-nationally comparative approaches and explanations combining variables from different levels. Although studies in different countries exist (Edelstein, Ito, & Keplinger, 1990), the comparative character of these investigations remains confined to repeating the same analyses in each country and checking the results for differences between the various countries. However, the primary task of going comparative is to detect and ultimately explain phenomena that could not be detected or explained in single-country analyses. This, in turn, requires that the stage of naive comparativism be left and that country names be replaced with proper variables as suggested by Przeworski and Teune (1970). Put differently, we already know that agenda-setting exists in a variety of countries (for overviews, see Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Rössler, 1997). Hence, yet another replication of agenda-setting does not seem necessary. Cross-nationally comparative research may enhance our understanding of the concept by showing that substantive characteristics on which countries differ condition the agenda-setting process.

Concerning a presumed association between the amount of media coverage and the perceived importance of European integration, such a conditioning influence may come from consensus or polarization in elite opinion on European integration. It is important to note that setting effects (Demers, Craff, Choi, Pessin, 1989). This is theoretically integrated with the cognitive priming hypothesis stating that personal experience cognitively primes or sensitizes people to messages about a particular issue. Other researchers have conceptualized obtrusiveness of an issue as characteristic of the recipient rather than as predetermined characteristic of the issue (e.g., Lasorsa & Wanta, 1990), which is in line with the concept of a person's issue sensitivity (Erbring, Goldenberg, & Miller, 1980; summarizing: Rössler, 1997). Although the turn from a message-oriented to a recipient-oriented perspective is an important advancement in agenda-setting research, it is of limited use for the problem of this study. It is not plausible to assume that, among all EU citizens, there are very much differing degrees of issue sensitivity. The vast majority is not even slightly sensitized to EU issues, as for example the consistently low awareness levels of EU institutions show (Anderson, 1998; Janssen, 1991).

Of course, this is not to say that there were no analyses at the individual level. Particularly, the still conceptually and methodologically outstanding study by Erbring et al. (1980) must be mentioned in this respect.

---

47 Of course, this is not to say that there were no analyses at the individual level. Particularly, the still conceptually and methodologically outstanding study by Erbring et al. (1980) must be mentioned in this respect.
the nature of elite opinion is conceptualized here as macro-level phenomenon. By elite a country's political elite is meant, consisting in this chapter of the political parties in national parliaments. Elite-driven approaches have their foundations in Converse's (1964) important work and have recently been advanced by Zaller (1990, 1992). In research on the EU, they have been used to explain public support for European integration or EU-related opinions (e.g., Eichenberg & Dalton, 1993; Inglehart, 1970; Janssen, 1991; McLaren, 2001; Wessels, 1995b). The basic notion is that citizens form their opinions about European integration by relying on cues they get from political parties (for empirical evidence, see for example: van der Eijk & Franklin, 1991; Wessels, 1995b). Linking this notion to media influence on support for European integration, Banducci, Karp, and Lauf (2001) found the nature of elite opinion on European integration to be an important moderator of media coverage. Depending on whether elite opinion was consensual or polarized, the amount and tone of party coverage had opposing effects. Although support for European integration and perceived importance of European integration are conceptually and psychologically different, the powerful conditioning impact of nature of elite opinion reported by Banducci et al. (2001) suggests that the basic pattern may also hold for the interplay of media coverage and perceptions of importance. However, before expectations can be specified, the two components of the presumed moderator – its consensual or polarized nature and its elite character – must be disentangled.

The moderating influence of both elite opinion on the one hand and consensus or polarization on the other have only been tentatively discussed in agenda-setting research. Rogers and Dearing (1988, Figure 1) mention interpersonal communication among elites as one of the influences on the agenda-setting process. Apparently, it is self-evident to the authors that political elites play an important role in shaping the perception of political issues because they do not further elaborate on this aspect. Besides the media, it is the political elites that define problems and potential solutions and, thereby the importance of issues. McCombs and Gilbert (1986) have discussed the polarization of issues as influence increasing agenda-setting effects. Although the authors present only one empirical study as evidence, it seems plausible to assume that polarization of an issue (or, in this study, of the parties that argue about an issue) increases the perceived importance of an issue. Polarization of an issue suggests that the issue is meaningful and evolves around a problem that needs to be solved. This may particularly apply to an issue as remote and abstract as European integration. Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996) and Duch and Taylor (1997) have pointed out that consensus among elites reduces the chances of European integration to become a prevalent issue in elections. What may be obvious for the choice of election topics, may also apply to citizens' importance perceptions. Citizens interpret elite consensus in the sense that solutions to an issue have been found and that the issue is consequently less threatening and, thus, less important.

48 However, particularly in political science-based research, there are several studies demonstrating how political elites try or indeed influence issue definitions and opinion processes, e.g., Caldeira (1987); Erikson, McIver, & Wright (1987); Erikson, Wright, & McIver (1989); Franklin & Kosaki (1989); Holzhacker (1999); Marshall (1987).
The considerations outlined in the preceding paragraphs lead to the following expectations: The basic association between greater amounts of EU coverage and greater perceived importance of European integration depends upon whether elite opinion on European integration is consensual or polarized. In other words, to what extent (individual) exposure to EU coverage influences importance perceptions is conditioned by the (contextual) nature of elite opinion. If elite opinion is consensual, greater levels of EU coverage will not increase the perceived importance of European integration. However, if elite opinion is polarized, greater levels of EU coverage will be associated with greater perceived importance of European integration. One conceptual confusion should be avoided here. Chapter 2 has shown that polarized elite opinion on European integration is conducive to EU coverage. One could thus conclude that greater perceived importance of European integration is merely the result of higher amounts of EU coverage in countries with polarized elite opinion. Such a conclusion implicitly takes only the country-level into account and ignores the cross-level character of the expected interaction. What is more, this conclusion neglects the core of the proposed cross-level interaction: if the amount of coverage an individual is exposed to is kept constant (i.e., at identical levels of EU coverage), individual perceptions of the importance of European integration will differ depending upon the nature of elite opinion.

The third goal of this chapter is to investigate whether political interest modifies the presumed effect of the amount of EU coverage on importance attributed to European integration. More specifically, it will be studied whether political interest moderates the two-way interaction between amount of EU coverage and nature of elite opinion. Politically more interested persons are usually found to be more supportive of the EU than politically less interested persons (e.g., Anderson, 1998; Rohrschneider, 2002). Similarly, several agenda-setting scholars have reported that the politically more interested are more susceptible to agenda-setting effects (MacKuen, 1984; MacKuen & Coombs, 1981; Schoenbach & Semetko, 1992; Wanta, 1997; Williams & Semlak, 1978; yet see also: Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; McLeod, Becker, & Byrnes, 1974; Weaver et al., 1981). Zaller (1992, especially pp. 16-21, 275) has pointed out that political awareness, a concept closely related to political interest, affects people's responsiveness to elite opinion: the politically more aware are more likely to receive cues from elite opinion, most notably from consensus or polarization of elite opinion. Consequently, the politically more aware may be presumed to refer to these cues when judging the importance of issues.  

Assuming that the aforementioned results from EU and agenda-setting research can be transferred to the topic of this chapter and that Zaller's (1992) findings also hold for the moderating influence of political interest, the following pattern may be expected. Recall that agenda-setting effects are presumed to occur only if elite opinion is polarized. If (a) this is indeed the case, if (b) the politically interested are more sensitive to elite opinion, and if (c) the politically interested are more susceptible to agenda-setting, then agenda-setting effects will be most pronounced among the politically interested in countries with polarized elite opinion. Put differently, hardly any agenda-setting effects are expected if elite opinion is

---

49 This presumption does not imply that the politically aware adjust to the views that elites hold on the issues in question.
consensual. If anything, consensus among elites may cue the politically interested in the sense that European integration is not important. As a consequence, in countries with consensual elite opinion, the politically more interested will not differ much from the politically less interested with respect to the effects of the amount of EU coverage on perceived importance of European integration. Essentially, there will be no agenda-setting effects if elite opinion is consensual.

However, if elite opinion if polarized, the politically more interested may be expected to respond more sensitively than the politically less interested to the cues that disagreement among political elites conveys. As a result, the amount of EU coverage will have the strongest effects on perceived importance of European integration among the most politically interested. Conversely, the least politically interested will probably not be able to adequately interpret the cues from elite opinion (for a similar reasoning, see Zaller, 1992). As a consequence, the politically least interested may hardly respond to the amount of EU coverage, agenda-setting effects may not occur in this group. Technically speaking, a three-way interaction between amount of EU coverage, nature of elite opinion, and political interest is expected.

4.2 Method

4.2.1 Procedure and measures

This chapter links the content analysis of the television news coverage of the June 1999 European election campaign to post-election surveys carried out in all EU member states immediately after the European elections. How the content analysis was designed and conducted, has been described in section 2.2.1. Note that the Luxemburger television channel was not included in the content analysis. Due to irregularities in the coding of a crucial category and for consistency reasons with the next chapter, Portugal also has been excluded from the analysis. To assess citizens' perceptions of the importance of further European integration along with a number of control variables, the surveys carried out in the EU member states immediately after the European elections were used. The computer-assisted telephone interviews were conducted from June 14 to July 8, 1999 and were in each country based on a nationally representative random sample of people older than 18 years of age.

In any interaction, it is crucial to decide about the focal independent variable. In this chapter, this is the amount of EU coverage. Further, it is important to decide which of the other interacting independent variables is first-order moderator and which is second-order moderator. In this book, country characteristics are conceptualized as first-order moderators (here: nature of elite opinion). Therefore, political interest is a second-order moderator. However, with a different theoretical focus, it would also be possible to consider political interest as first-order moderator and nature of elite opinion as second-order moderator.

The surveys are part of the 1999 European Election Study (EES). The EES is funded by grants from the University of Amsterdam, the Dutch National Science Foundation (NWO), the German Federal Press and Information Agency, the CIS (Spain), the University of Mannheim, Germany, and Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland. Fieldwork was carried out by a consortium of European survey organizations directed by IPSOS, Germany. Neither the original collectors of the data nor their sponsors bear any responsibility for the analyses or interpretations published here.

In Italy, a telepanel was used instead of telephone interviews. The Spanish sample is a quota sample.
The sample size was at least 1000 respondents in Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and the UK and at least 500 respondents in Austria, Belgium, Finland Greece, Ireland, and Sweden. The response rates varied between 28% in Greece and 59% in Denmark (see Table B2 in Technical Appendix B for detailed information). These response rates are low, but this may not necessarily bias the results as Keeter, Miller, Kohut, Groves, and Presser (2000) have recently demonstrated.

Measures – dependent and independent variables

As outlined above, the perceived importance of European integration needs to be assessed slightly differently than is usually done with the "most-important-problem" question. In the post-election survey, EU citizens were asked: "Thinking about European integration, is this compared to other important topics in <your country> a topic of great importance, some importance, little importance or no importance at all?" The multiple response categories allow a more nuanced view on people's perception of the importance of European integration than is possible with the "most-important problem" question with its top-issue (and singular) bias. The variable was inversely coded so that 4 means great importance.

The amount of EU coverage was operationalized as the cumulated frequency of both EU stories and EU-related stories. Both types of stories were weighted by the prominence of the particular story (for explication of the prominence measure, see section 2.2.1). EU stories were stories that either dealt with the European election campaign or other EU topics such as EU enlargement or the euro. EU-related stories were characterized by referring explicitly to the EU, EU politics, or EU institutions. Including the latter type of stories is an acknowledgement of the fact that EU-related coverage had a large share in the coverage in the two-week period of investigation as Figure 2.2 has shown. Omitting this additional media information about the EU, would not appropriately mirror the EU-related information people actually received from television news during the period of investigation.

However, it is obvious that EU stories and EU-related stories cannot be treated equally in terms of their potential impact on importance perceptions. In order to adequately represent the relation of EU-related to elaborate EU stories, EU-related stories were multiplied by 0.5. The weighting of the stories by their prominence has been requested by a number of scholars who argued that people not only receive cues of the importance of issues by the frequency with which they occur, but also by the length, placement, or presentation of stories in a bulletin (Brosius, 1994; McCombs, 1981; McCombs & Gilbert, 1986). The nature of elite

53 3708 respondents participated in the survey (telepanel) in Italy.
54 Moreover, it should be taken into account that the computation of the response rates is based on a very conservative definition of the net sample which includes the relatively high amount of losses of respondents who could not be contacted at all. The fact that no contact at all was made with the person to be interviewed might, however, also indicate corporate lines, fax numbers etc., i.e. quality-neutral losses. A less conservative definition of the net sample would have resulted in higher response rates.
55 Note that this operationalization deviates slightly from the operationalization in the second chapter where stories on the election campaign and other EU topics were in two different categories. However, in this chapter such an operationalization seems no longer appropriate.
56 Multiplication with values between 0.3 and 0.75 did not change the basic pattern of results.
opinion on European integration was gauged as the existence of a sufficiently visible anti-EU party (see section 2.2.1 for the detailed operationalization). The question for political interest was: "To what extent would you say you are interested in politics? Are you very interested, somewhat interested, a little interested or not at all interested?" Response categories were again recoded such that higher values indicate greater interest.

Measures – control variables

A number of control measures were included in the analysis. The basic aim is to present a test as rigorous as possible for media measures to exert influence. In other words, only if factors that have been shown to affect opinions about further European integration are included and media measures are yet influential, one can be confident not to have found spurious effects. The set of control variables was created with respect to findings from both agenda-setting research and studies on opinions about European integration. As result of a review of agenda-setting research, Rössler (1997, pp. 283-284) distills an explanatory model that includes, amongst others, the following variables: age, gender, education, media use and exposure, and need for orientation. Research on the antecedents of opinions about European integration has focused on utilitarian motives (e.g., Gabel & Palmer, 1995; Gabel, 1998a; McLaren, 2002), party cues (e.g., Franklin et al., 1994, 1995), or the position on the left-right spectrum (e.g., Budge, Robertson, & Hearl, 1987; Inglehart, Rabier, & Reif, 1987; McLaren, 2002).

I include five more control variables of varying specificity: attentiveness to news about the European Union, interpersonal communication, support for the European Union, support for further European integration, and the level of conflict in the coverage. Attention to media content is argued to be an essential additional measure complementing exposure and should therefore not be omitted from analyses (Drew & Weaver, 1990; McLeod & McDonald, 1985). Interpersonal communication can be regarded as protection against media messages and should be controlled for (e.g., Lazarsfeld, Berelson, Gaudet, 1944; and more recently, Schmitt-Beck, 2000). The two support measures were included because it cannot be assumed that opinions about the EU and European integration present a coherent, consistent, and logical entity. What has been found for political opinions in general (e.g., summarizing: Zaller & Feldman, 1992), may even more apply to EU-related opinions as Anderson (1998) has argued. Moreover, virtually all measures of knowledge, awareness, and information about European integration employed in Eurobarometers consistently show that EU citizens know fairly little about what is going on at the EU level (e.g., Anderson, 1998; Holtz-Bacha & Norris, 2001; Janssen, 1991). This suggests that people may rather answer questions instead

57 Rössler (1997) also includes other variables such as the size and structure of a person's personal network, issues sensitivity, strength of personality, political knowledge, or communicative style. Because the analysis presented here is a secondary analysis, these variables were not available.

58 In his review and test of various influences on support for the EU, Gabel (1998a) also identifies cognitive mobilization (e.g., Inglehart, 1970; Janssen, 1991) as an impact factor on EU support. However, it remains questionable to what extent his operationalization captures cognitive mobilization rather than people's involvement in political conversation. Involvement in political talks does not necessarily imply engagement and mobilization. As will become clear later, a very similar measure is used in this chapter, yet simply as operationalization of interpersonal communication.
of revealing preferences trying to rationalize and render consistent the little they know about
European integration. Therefore, it seems justified to include the two support measures even
though the two may not have a causally clearly unidirectional relationship with importance
perceptions. The emergence of potential media effects is only robust, if the alternative
explanation of rationalized answers is controlled for. Finally, the level of conflict in the
coverage was also controlled for. One could argue that polarized or consensual nature of elite
opinion primarily shapes the level of conflict in the stories, but does not drive the pattern
specified above. To preclude this, the level of conflict in the coverage has to be controlled for.

The measurement of age and gender was straightforward. The comparative measuring
of education, however, generally presents a problem because the educational systems in the
various countries are dissimilar. To ensure comparability, it was asked how old respondents
were when they stopped full-time education. For respondents still studying their age at the
time of the interview was coded. In order to avoid a distortion of the education measure
through people who were relatively old when they stopped full-time education, the maximum
age at which people stopped full-time education was set at 26. This is by and large the age
around which the majority of students in the various countries have completed a university
degree. The use of television and newspapers was gauged as the number of news
outlets/newspapers a respondent watches/reads. The number of outlets/newspapers used was
computed as the sum of news outlets/newspapers a respondent mentioned in response to the
open-ended question "Which channels or television news programs [newspaper or
newspapers] do you watch [read] regularly?" Exposure to television and newspapers was
operationalized by asking people "(Normally), how many days of the week do you watch
television/read a newspaper?" Need for orientation could not be gauged in the traditional way
suggested by Weaver (1977). However, the question "Do you think you are sufficiently well
informed or not sufficiently well informed about the politics of the European Union" may be
assumed to tap at least the uncertainty component of Weaver's concept. The dichotomous
response categories were inversely coded so that 0 is equal to not sufficiently well informed.

Following operationalizations by Gabel (1998a), utilitarian motives were gauged with
two measures: respondent's current work situation and their subjective class. Respondent's
current work situation was dichotomously coded into people being in or out the labor force
(e.g., retired, unemployed, in school). Respondents could place themselves in one of five
social classes ranging from 1 (working class) to 5 (upper class). The cues people receive from
parties stances on European integration were measured as follows. It was assessed how likely
people were to vote for a particular party, which respondents could indicate on a ten-point
scale where 1 equaled not at all probable and 10 equaled very probable. If respondent's self-
reported likelihood of voting a particular party was 6 or higher, it was assumed that they
receive cues about the party's stance on European integration. In a further question,
respondents placed the particular party's position towards European integration on a 10-point
scale with the anchors 1 (unification has already gone too far) and 10 (unification should be
pushed further). This estimation was subsequently taken as a particular respondent's party
cue. If respondent were likely to vote for two or more parties, the mean of the estimated party

---

59 The income measure could not be included because it was not assessed in Italy.
positions was computed and taken as party cue. If a respondent was not likely to vote for any of the parties, it was assumed that he/she received only vague cues from parties about further European integration. The respondent was assigned to a middle category. Respondents’ self-perceived position on the left-right spectrum was assessed with their self-placement on a ten-point scale where 1 meant left and 10 means right.

Respondents’ attention to news about Europe was tapped with the question "How much attention do you pay to news about Europe? A lot, some, a little, or none?" The answers were inversely coded so that 4 equals a lot. Citizen's interpersonal communication about EU affairs was assessed with the question "[During the two or three weeks before the European election], how often did you talk to friends or family about the election? Often, sometimes, or never?" The response categories were recoded such that 3 means often. Diffuse support for the European Union was assessed with the question "Generally speaking, do you think that <your country’s> membership of the European Union is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad?" Recoding of the response categories led to a scale where 1 equals a bad thing, 2 equals neither good nor bad, and 3 equals a good thing. Specific support for European integration was operationalized with the question "Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say that it already has gone too far. What is your opinion?" Response categories ranged from 1 (unification has already gone too far) to 10 (unification should be pushed further). The level of conflict in the coverage was assessed with the explicit mentioning of conflict or disagreement in the EU stories and EU-related stories and then summed across all days per outlet. Inter-coder agreement was 79%. Similar to the operationalization of amount of coverage, the conflict measure was weighted by the prominence of the particular story. If conflict occurred in EU-related stories, the conflict measure was multiplied by 0.5 in order to represent the relation between EU stories and EU-related stories.

**Missing values**

Trying to specify a model as rigorously as possible to test media effects usually comes at the cost of an increased number of missing values. The traditionally applied listwise deletion of missing values subsequently leads to a deletion of all respondents if they did not answer only one of the relevant questions. This entails not only a loss of valuable information, but also a severe selection bias which has been shown to be as big a threat to the validity of inferences as omitted variables (King, Honaker, Joseph, & Scheve, 2001). Given that about 50% of the respondents would be lost applying the above specified model, it seems necessary to impute the missing values. Therefore, I tried to logically reconstruct non-responses by using related information provided by the remaining answers in the questionnaire. For example, if a respondent had not placed himself/herself on the left-right scale, but had indicated the likelihood of voting particular parties, his/her left-right position could be concluded from where he/she had placed the particular party on the left/right scale. Similarly, political interest was estimated from people’s participation in political events, attention to European news was deduced from people’s exposure to European election news, news exposure from media use etc. In general, this procedure led to a reduction of missing cases ranging between 30% and
Effects on the importance of European integration

70% for the particular variables. The remaining unsolvable missing cases were replaced either by mean substitution (for metric variables) or were recoded the most frequent value (for dichotomies). The replacement of missing values with substantive values was only done for the control variables. In order to minimize the danger of arbitrary data modification, the dependent variable was excluded from this procedure. This also goes for the two support measures because they will be used as key independent and as dependent variable in Chapter 5.

4.2.2 Data analysis

Because the survey sample comprised 500 respondents in Austria, Belgium, Finland, Greece, Ireland, and Sweden and 1,000 respondents in Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK and 3,708 in Italy, the data were weighted. The total sample (without Luxembourg and Portugal) was 12,748 respondents. Acknowledging the bicultural character of Belgium, the country was split in its Flemish and Wallonian part resulting in overall 14 'systems' for analysis. The samples of each of the 14 systems were subsequently weighted such that the each system had the same sample size while the original total sample size was preserved, systems with a larger sample size were weighted down (usually with a factor around 0.9) and systems with a smaller sample size were weighted up (usually with a factor around 1.8).

The amount of EU coverage was assessed with the content analysis, weighted by story prominence as explained above and was subsequently added, per country, to each respondent who regularly watched one or both of two news outlets content analyzed. For example, in Britain those respondents who watched BBC 9 o'clock news or ITN's News at 6:30 or both were assigned the pertinent EU coverage measures. This means that, per country, three different values were assigned. Because not all respondents regularly watched one or both of the outlets, the overall sample sized reduced to 8,432 respondents. However, the selected sample did not meaningfully deviate from the original sample. Additionally, to each of the 14 country samples it was added whether elite opinion was consensual (coded as 0) or polarized (coded as 1) in the particular country.

Multilevel modeling...or not?

The measurement of elite opinion at the country level introduces the problem of modeling hierarchical data structures into the analysis. In the data analysis sections of the preceding chapters, I have already discussed the basic problem associated with hierarchical data structures: the underestimation of the standard error and, thus, the greater risk of type-1 errors, especially in regular OLS regressions. The problem applies to the present analysis, too.

---

60 Dividing the total sample of 12,748 respondents by 14 countries results in a 'typical' sample size of 910.57. This is subsequently divided by the actual number of respondents per country to obtain the weighting factor for each country.

61 In Austria, no commercial broadcasting exists. In Ireland, the commercial channel was basically meaningless when the study was carried out.
Within the pooled sample (i.e., all respondents from all countries together in one overall sample), the countries form clusters and the respondents sampled within a particular country are no longer independent of one another. The underestimation of the standard error becomes particularly manifest in variables that are located at the country-level (i.e., the nature of elite opinion) and their interaction with other (individual-level) variables (i.e., the presumed cross-level interaction between the nature of elite opinion and the amount of EU coverage an individual is exposed to).

In a recent issue of the *American Journal of Political Science*, Steenbergen and Jones (2002) have suggested multilevel models as one remedy to the problem. In the next issue of the journal, Rohrschneider (2002) applied multilevel models to Eurobarometer analyses with cross-level interactions explicitly referring to Steenbergen and Jones' article. This suggests that multilevel models may increasingly define the state of art in analyses of EU-related investigation topics. Without any doubt, the problem described above and in preceding chapters deserves great attention and the theoretical section of Steenbergen and Jones' (2002) work will quickly become essential reading for comparativists interested in more appropriate modeling of comparative data. However, the concrete application of multilevel models to EU-related investigation topics and, what is more, to the peculiarities of data sampled in the 15 EU countries is not without its problems. Three concerns have to be raised.

1. In cross-national comparative EU research, necessary prerequisites of sampling contextual data are not met. Multilevel models originated in educational sciences with their typical multi-stage sampling. For example, in a first step schools are randomly sampled, in a second step classes are randomly sampled, and in a third step pupils are randomly sampled. Obviously, this sampling technique hardly applies to any comparative political science or communication science data. Typically, the countries or, more generally, the contextual units are not randomly sampled. This problem may be less pressing if all 15 EU countries (i.e., the contextual units) are used and if inferences do not aim at a larger universe than the EU (which may be assumed for EU-related questions). Then, however, the question arises whether the concern about the underestimation of the standard error really presents such a threat and whether the problem could not much more parsimoniously be resolved with existing corrections of the standard error.

2. Multilevel models are data intensive and EU data with its 15 contextual units lack sufficient power to adequately study cross-level interactions. All multilevel scholars agree that "sufficient power to test hypotheses about cross-level interactions and variance components hinges on the availability of sizable numbers of contextual units" (Steenbergen & Jones, 2002, p. 234; see also: Kreft & de Leeuw, 1998; Raudenbush et al., 2002; Snijders & Bosker, 1999). As a rule of thumb, sufficient power starts with 20-25 contextual units, otherwise the robust standard errors cannot be computed (e.g., in the commonly used software HLM).

3. "Multilevel models also place a hefty premium on valid and reliable measurements. Bad measures in multilevel models 'get worse' because such a heavy demand is placed on the data in terms of estimating coefficients and variance components" (Steenbergen & Jones, 2002, p. 234). Several of the survey measures employed here resemble Eurobarometer
measures. Eurobarometer surveys have been criticized for various methodological shortcomings (Saris & Kaase, 1997) and it seems questionable whether the traditional Eurobarometer questions meet the requirements of multilevel models. More generally, it seems that applications of multilevel models to Eurobarometer data suffer from a misbalance between cutting-edge statistical methodology of the 21st century and measurement techniques of the 20th century. In other words, it seems paramount that the design and measurement of comparative studies be improved along with the advancement of statistical tools. Furthermore, if multilevel models are applied, then the sampling techniques must be integrated more thoroughly in the models than has been done thus far. Eurobarometer surveys are typically based on multistage probability samples. This probably affects the estimation of parameters in the same fashion as the clustering of respondents within countries.

Although the three concerns raised should not be mistaken for a general rejection of multilevel modeling, they may explain why the value of multilevel models seem questionable when it comes to analyses of Eurobarometer data or comparable data like in this chapter. It is Steenbergen and Jones (2002) who "caution researchers against 'blindly' using these models in data analysis" (p. 234). Instead, they "urge them to consider the full range of methods for handling clustered data" (p. 234). Among the methods Steenbergen and Jones suggest is the 'sandwich' standard error (Huber, 1967; White 1980), which I have already applied in the analyses in Chapters 2 and 3. Therefore, I will keep on using this correction of the standard error in the case of clustered data. In other words, multiple regression models are estimated in which the standard error is corrected in terms of the clustering of the data. This also entails that the critical t-values are assessed on the basis of number of clusters (i.e., countries) minus one degrees of freedom. Particularly for individual-level effects, the significance of the results may thus be slightly underestimated.

**Post hoc probing of interaction effects**

In section 4.1, several interaction effects have been proposed. In this and the following chapter, the conditional effects that represent the essence of interaction effects will be post-hoc probed for significant difference from zero. Several scholars have suggested this procedure (e.g., Aiken & West, 1991; Jaccard, Turrisi, & Wan, 1990). However, because their important suggestions have not sufficiently been adopted in current research, I outline in Technical Appendix A the basic logic of their suggestions and explain the relevant formulas. Sections A1 and A2 in Technical Appendix A are particularly relevant to the understanding of this chapter. Moreover, they present the foundation for the interaction analyses of the following chapters. For the investigation of the interactions, the metric variables amount of EU coverage and political interest are centered around their mean to avoid multicollinearity problems (Aiken & West, 1991; Jaccard et al., 1990).
4.3 Results – polarized elite opinion elicits agenda-setting effects

The first goal of this chapter was to test whether EU citizens who watched more EU coverage also perceived further EU integration to be more important.\(^{62}\) If one analyzes the various countries separately as a first approach to the problem (see Table 4.1), no clear pattern emerges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.1: Impact of the amount of EU coverage on the perceived importance of European integration per country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unstandardized multiple regression coefficient (standard error)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flanders (n = 182)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece (n = 134)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark (n = 716)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom (n = 457)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany (n = 662)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy (n = 1,663)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands (n = 639)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallonia (n = 110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland (n = 287)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain (n = 363)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden (n = 362)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France (n = 577)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *p < .05. The coefficients presented in the table are controlled for all variables outlined in section 4.2.1. The analyses could not be done for Austria and Ireland where only one public broadcasting outlet was analyzed and where the measure of amount of coverage thus lacks variance.

Data sources: EES 1999, Content analysis 1999 European election campaign

Both positive and negative effects occurred, yet if significant, effects were predominantly positive, except in the Netherlands. In other words, there is only very tentative evidence of a homogeneous influence of the (weighted) amount of EU coverage on importance perceptions. This suggests that country characteristics such as the nature of elite opinion may moderate whether the amount of EU coverage affects importance perceptions.

Was there evidence that the nature of elite opinion on further European integration conditioned whether the amount of EU coverage impacted upon importance perceptions? As model 1 in Table 4.2 shows, a significant interaction between the nature of elite opinion and the amount of coverage emerged (b = .005, \(p < .05\)). If one plots the predicted values of the model (see Figure 4.1), it becomes more easily comprehensible how the nature of elite opinion conditioned the influence of amount of coverage. For computational reasons, the values of the weighted amount of coverage are centered. The sample mean of this variable is zero. Negative values indicate an amount of coverage below the sample mean, positive values

\(^{62}\) For reasons of linguistic ease, I will keep on using the terms *watching more EU coverage* and *amount of EU coverage* although they do not fully reflect the operationalization of the concept which weights the number of EU stories by its prominence.
indicate an amount of coverage above the sample mean. If elite opinion on further integration was polarized, higher amounts of EU coverage were indeed associated with perceptions of further EU integration as more important. However, if elite opinion was consensual, higher amounts of EU coverage seemed to be related to perceptions of European integration as less important.

To see whether this first impression is statistically tenable, the simple slopes (i.e., the slope of each line in Figure 4.1) have to be tested as to whether they differ significantly from zero. This entails computing a standard error for each simple slope (see for more information, section A2 in Technical Appendix A). The necessary values for the computation of the standard error of the simple slopes were obtained from the variance/covariance matrix, which would be too large to be documented here. The standard error of the simple slope when elite opinion is consensual (i.e., the variable equals zero, subscript: \(e=0\)) or polarized (i.e., the variable equals 1, subscript \(e=1\)) is:

\[
SE_{e=0} = (8.6 \times 10^{-6} + 2 \times 0 \times (-6 \times 10^{-6}) + 0^2 \times (5.2 \times 10^{-6}))^{1/2} = 2.93 \times 10^{-3}
\]

\[
SE_{e=1} = (8.6 \times 10^{-6} + 2 \times 1 \times (-6 \times 10^{-6}) + 1^2 \times (5.2 \times 10^{-6}))^{1/2} = 1.34 \times 10^{-3}
\]

The simple slopes at the two values of elite opinion are:

\[
SL_{e=0} = -0.002 + 0.005 \times 0 = -0.002
\]

\[
SL_{e=1} = -0.002 + 0.005 \times 1 = 0.003
\]

The t-values are obtained by dividing the slope by its standard error:

\[
t_{e=0} = \frac{-0.002}{2.93 \times 10^{-3}} = -0.68 \text{ (n.s.)}
\]

\[
t_{e=1} = \frac{0.003}{1.34 \times 10^{-3}} = 2.24 \text{ (p < .05)}
\]
Table 4.2: Interaction effect of amount of EU coverage, nature of elite opinion and political interest on the perceived importance of European integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1 (n = 7,481)</th>
<th>Model 2 (n = 3,662)</th>
<th>Model 3 (n = 7,481)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-.001 (.032)</td>
<td>-.020 (.046)</td>
<td>-.002 (.031)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.001 (.001)</td>
<td>.001 (.001)</td>
<td>.001 (.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.002 (.004)</td>
<td>.007 (.005)</td>
<td>.002 (.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In labor force (1 = yes)</td>
<td>-.039 (.016)*</td>
<td>-.050 (.031)</td>
<td>-.040 (.017)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective social class</td>
<td>.035 (.018)</td>
<td>.028 (.020)</td>
<td>.036 (.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal communication</td>
<td>-.023 (.022)</td>
<td>-.032 (.020)</td>
<td>-.023 (.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party cues</td>
<td>-.009 (.015)</td>
<td>-.001 (.020)</td>
<td>-.001 (.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-right position (10 = right)</td>
<td>-.013 (.005)*</td>
<td>-.010 (.006)</td>
<td>-.013 (.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for the EU</td>
<td>.320 (.041)***</td>
<td>.281 (.054)***</td>
<td>.318 (.041)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for European integration</td>
<td>.001 (.001)</td>
<td>.001 (.001)</td>
<td>.001 (.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political interest</td>
<td>.041 (.019)*</td>
<td>.063 (.024)*</td>
<td>s. b.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for orientation</td>
<td>-.097 (.046)</td>
<td>-.144 (.049)*</td>
<td>-.096 (.046)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention to EU news</td>
<td>.196 (.030)***</td>
<td>.203 (.024)***</td>
<td>.198 (.028)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV exposure</td>
<td>.005 (.006)</td>
<td>.015 (.009)</td>
<td>.006 (.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper exposure</td>
<td>-.009 (.008)</td>
<td>-.022 (.010)</td>
<td>-.009 (.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of TV news outlets</td>
<td>-.010 (.020)</td>
<td>-.040 (.119)</td>
<td>-.001 (.019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of newspapers</td>
<td>-.013 (.018)</td>
<td>-.018 (.033)</td>
<td>-.011 (.020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict in EU coverage</td>
<td>.001 (.003)</td>
<td>-.001 (.003)</td>
<td>.001 (.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of EU coverage</td>
<td>-.002 (.003)</td>
<td>-.001 (.003)</td>
<td>-.002 (.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarized elite opinion</td>
<td>.010 (.104)</td>
<td>.045 (.123)</td>
<td>.029 (.108)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political interest</td>
<td>.084 (.034)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Two-way interaction effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite opinion X</td>
<td>.005 (.002)*</td>
<td>.006 (.002)*</td>
<td>.005 (.002)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount EU coverage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political interest X</td>
<td>.001 (.001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount EU coverage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite opinion X</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.116 (.049)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Three-way interaction effect</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite opinion X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount EU coverage X</td>
<td>-.001 (.001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>1.643</td>
<td>1.661</td>
<td>1.528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R square</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; ***p < .001

Note. Cell entries are unstandardized multiple regression coefficients. Robust standard errors in brackets.

Data sources: EES 1999, Content analysis 1999 European election campaign.
In this post-hoc probing, the effect of the amount of coverage a person is exposed to on individual importance perceptions as moderated by a particular context characteristic is investigated. As a consequence, the degrees of freedom for the assessment of the critical t-value can be determined on the basis of the individual respondents. With 7,459 degrees of freedom, the critical t-value is +1.96 (for positive values) or -1.96 (for negative values) for a coefficient to be significant at the 5% level. Consequently, the slope when elite opinion is consensual (subscript $e=0$) is not significant while the slope is significant when elite opinion is polarized. In other words, if people watch more EU stories in countries in which European integration is contentious among parties, they consider European integration to be important. However, if people watch more EU stories in countries in which elite opinion about European integration is consensual, their importance perception of EU integration remains unaffected. Thus, the post hoc statistical probing of the interaction term has revealed that the initially visually detected negative relationship between amount of EU coverage and

---

63 Even if the significance testing is done at the basis of 13 degrees of freedom (number of countries minus one), which is in line with the original analyses in Table 4.2, the effect when elite opinion is polarized is still significant at better than the .05 level. However, setting the degrees of freedom to 13 presents a very rigorous test, which seems in this post hoc probing of the interaction effect not appropriate given the conceptualization of the effects as individual-level effects.
importance perception in countries with consensual elite opinion was random. However, the traditional agenda-setting pattern holds in countries with polarized elite opinion.

One could argue that the preceding analysis does not present the most rigorous test possible because respondents in the sample may have received their information about the EU from other television outlets as well. In order to preclude this, only those respondents have to be selected who exclusively watch one or both of the two outlets. However, even with this restricted sample, the findings remain consistent as model 2 in Table 4.2 demonstrates. This also applies to the post-hoc statistical probing of the slopes, which is not documented here for reasons of space.

The third goal of this chapter was to investigate whether political interest moderated the interaction effect of amount of EU coverage and nature of elite opinion on importance perceptions. A three-way interaction effect was expected. Was there evidence that the politically most interested tended to stronger agenda-setting effects than the politically least interested if elite opinion was polarized? The answer is a clear no. Model 3 in Table 4.2 indicates that the interaction between the nature of elite opinion and amount of EU coverage was not conditional on levels of political interest ($b = -0.001$, n.s.). In other words, little coverage remains little coverage and much coverage remains much coverage regardless of whether politically more or politically less interested persons are confronted with it. No matter how strong individuals' political interest was, the original interaction effect between amount of EU coverage and nature of elite opinion remained unaffected. This is, much EU coverage augmented the perceived importance of further EU integration if elite opinion was polarized, but had no effect if elite opinion was consensual irrespective of levels of political interest.

Though not the focus here, one aspect of Model 3 in Table 4.2 is noteworthy in order to avoid confusion. The significant effect of political interest ($b = 0.084$, $p < .05$) must not be interpreted in the sense of a main effect. Similarly, the interaction effect between elite opinion and political interest ($b = -0.116$, $p < .05$) must not be interpreted in the sense of a traditional two-way interaction. When (higher-order) interactions are included in a model, the lower order effects do not present constant influences across all levels of the remaining variables, which is typically the case for main effects (Aiken & West, 1991; Jaccard et al., 1990). Rather, they indicate the conditional effect at the mean of moderating metric predictors (zero for centered ones) or at the value zero of moderating dichotomous predictors. In other words, the more politically interested persons are, the more important they consider European integration if elite opinion is consensual and EU coverage is at its sample mean. The interaction effect between elite opinion and political interest means that, if the amount of EU coverage is at its mean, political interest exerts a positive influence when elite opinion is consensual and has a negative effect when elite opinion is polarized. Clearly, this interaction effect would have to be post hoc probed. However, given that amount of coverage is the focal independent variable in this chapter, further elaboration on this problem would be digressing.
4.4 Discussion – bringing context (back) in

This chapter has shown that what is probably the simplest category of television coverage of EU affairs – its amount – matters. Bridging the gap between the two neighboring disciplines of communication and political science, the findings may be useful for both research on agenda-setting and studies on opinions about the EU. The chapter advances agenda-setting research in that it documents agenda-setting effects concerning an issue that receives less media attention than the top issues usually investigated in agenda-setting research. More importantly, by adopting a cross-nationally comparative perspective, the chapter was able to show that agenda-setting effects are not homogenous across countries. The effect of the amount of coverage on importance perceptions was conditional upon the nature of elite opinion in the various countries. The chapter may contribute to research on opinions about the EU in that it demonstrates that television coverage matters. Moreover, it shows that elite opinion may not only impact upon support for European Union, but can also function as an important moderator of perceptions of the importance of European integration. Four main conclusions can be drawn.

First, agenda-setting research benefits from a cross-nationally comparative perspective. Agenda-setting has been investigated with respect to many recipient and media variables and has been found to depend on a variety of factors (Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Eichhorn, 1995; Rössler, 1997). Nevertheless, scholars who warned that agenda-setting may not be spatially indifferent remained largely unnoticed (e.g., Merten, 1991). Evidence of agenda-setting processes in various countries seemed to corroborate a more universal character of agenda-setting. However, this accumulation of single evidence from different countries cannot substitute for a cross-nationally comparative test of agenda-setting. This chapter has shown with respect to a particular issue – EU politics – studied during an identical period of time that there was no homogenous, directionally consistent association between the amount of EU coverage and importance perceptions of European integration across the 14 systems. Higher amounts of EU coverage were not necessarily related to greater perceived importance of further European integration. What, however, moderated (and clarified) the initially confusing pattern was the contextual variable nature of elite opinion: polarized elite opinion was conducive to the traditional agenda-setting pattern, while no agenda-setting effect occurred when elite opinion was consensual.

There is nothing new or spectacular about including country-level (or more general: contextual/systemic) variables as moderators in an explanatory model if within-country (or more general: within-context/system) analyses have elicited contradictory results. Przeworski and Teune described the basic procedure already in their seminal work on the logic of comparative research in 1970. This chapter demonstrates that cross-nationally comparative research and cross-level interactions can enhance our understanding of agenda setting. Agenda-setting is not only dependent upon certain recipient and media characteristics, it is also affected by the larger country context. Country characteristics can, as shown, include the nature of elite opinion. It also seems plausible that characteristics of the media system may play a role. In a cross-national study of agenda-diversity, it was recently found that the number of problems respondents considered very important depended on the number of
television outlets watched (Peter & de Vreese, 2003). The authors concluded that it may be worth investigating cross-nationally to what extent a media systems' external diversity may shape agenda-setting processes. In sum, these first findings suggest that agenda-setting research may derive new insights by being approached from a cross-nationally comparative perspective.

Second, agenda-setting research may reveal interesting effects when focusing on issues that are not breaking news. The bias in agenda-setting towards the investigation of top-issues implies structural similarities among the top issues. Top issues typically share the news values of controversy, relevance, surprise, or important persons and it is consequently virtually impossible for people not to find such issues important (at least as far as impersonal, abstract issues are concerned). This may even result in a ceiling effect and the disappearance of agenda-setting effects (Brosius & Kepplinger, 1990). With less frequently covered issues, the structure of issues and the response of the audience may be more versatile. In other words, there may be much more variation in audience response to the amount of coverage if the coverage does not impose the issue upon the recipient.

The findings suggest that the response may be shaped by the nature of elite opinion about an issue. Whether people react in their importance perceptions to higher amounts of coverage of a generally less visible issue depends on the contentiousness of the issue among political elites. This finding was obtained when the level of conflict in EU coverage was controlled for. Thus, it is not the conflict-loaded character of the coverage that (indirectly) would shape citizens perceptions of the importance of the EU. Rather, it is the cues people get from polarization or consensus among elites that lead them to respond to media coverage more sensitively. Political elites disagreeing about European integration seem to sensitize citizens to the issue. Political elites agreeing about European integration seem to numb them. The conclusion is clear: if the EU aims at sleepy (but possibly permissive) citizens, any confrontation among political elites should be avoided. If the EU aims at caring (but possibly critical) citizens, then public arguments among elites should be encouraged. Whether European integration is perceived as a soporific and unimportant fait accompli or as an exciting and important development depends largely on elite discourse.

Third, elite opinion about European integration is not only a powerful influence on what people think about Europe, it also conditions whether they think about Europe at all – and this might have far-reaching consequences. Typically, research has conceptualized the influence of elite opinion as having a direct impact on people's support for European integration (e.g., Eichenberg & Dalton, 1993; Janssen, 1991; Wessels, 1995b). Recently, researchers have successfully begun to investigate indirect forms of elite opinion affecting support for European integration (Banducci et al., 2001). This chapter takes the moderating influence of elite opinion further (or some may say: back) to importance perceptions. It may be an interesting question for future research to investigate whether the two findings concerning the moderated influence of media coverage on importance perceptions and support are related. As Miller and Krosnick (2000) have shown, the perception of issues as important conditions whether media coverage affects further judgments. If (a) elite opinion moderates agenda-setting effects, if (b) elite opinion moderates the effects of coverage on support for
European integration, and if (c) agenda-setting conditions media effects on other judgments (e.g., support), then media effects on support for European integration should be most pronounced among citizens in countries with polarized elite opinion and considerable amounts of EU coverage. Disentangling the various relationships may not only enrich our understanding of the antecedents of support for European integration but also about the ramifications of agenda-setting.

However, isn't the strong moderating role of elite opinion somewhat miraculous? Isn't elite opinion also conveyed by the media? Can, in other words, the moderating role of elite opinion more rigidly and parsimoniously be captured with characteristics of the media coverage? It would be ignorant to argue against the fact that media and television in particular are the most important source of information about the EU. However, there are also more direct sources of information about the EU (e.g., meetings, talks with EU representatives), especially during European election campaigns. More importantly, the substantive key variable of conflict in EU coverage was controlled for along with a lot of other media measures such as the number of outlets and newspapers people used and the degree of media exposure. In non-experimental designs, this presents a strong barrier against spurious effects. Undoubtedly, one can argue that EU coverage was substantively different in countries with polarized EU opinion. However, it is not very likely that, in these countries, the journalists or actors in the news stories blatantly told people how important European integration is whereas they did not do so in countries with consensual elite opinion. What seems more likely is that polarized elite opinion both shapes and results from a more general contentiousness of the EU as already mentioned in Chapter 2. Admittedly, this is a vague concept reminiscent of a component of the spiral of silence theory, the extent to which an issue is morally loaded (Noelle-Neumann, 1984). Nevertheless, it may be useful to include an adequately operationalized sociotropic measure in future surveys asking people to what extent they perceive European integration to be contentious in elite opinion.

Fourth, political interest does not moderate the conditional influence of EU coverage on importance perceptions if elite opinion is polarized. Politically more interested people do not differ from politically less interested persons in their response to the amount of EU coverage in countries where agenda-setting effects were found, i.e., countries with polarized elite opinion. This finding is at odds with several agenda-setting studies and runs, to some extent, counter to some patterns established in political science research. However, three aspects should be borne in mind. First, political interest as operationalized in this chapter tapped subjective political interest and may hence be subject to socially desirable distortions. Second, in this chapter political interest referred to general political interest. Specific political interest in EU affairs might prove a more powerful predictor. Third and most importantly, political interest as a concept referring to a person's sensitivity to political information may be inferior to other concepts such as political knowledge. Several studies have demonstrated that political knowledge outperforms related concepts when news reception is to explained (e.g., Fiske et al., 1990; Krosnick & Milburn, 1990; Price & Zaller, 1993) and also strengthens the stability of attitudes (Zaller, 1990). Future research may therefore include political knowledge measures in addition to political interest measures to investigate this issue further.
This chapter has linked television coverage to importance measures in 14 EU systems and applied this to questions related to agenda-setting research at the individual level. Although the results provide new insights, there are at least two problems – first, the problem of stringent causal reasoning and, second, the problem of the time lag between the assessment of the media agenda and the individual agenda. The first concern applies to the fact that the study is based on a content analysis linked to a cross-sectional survey of people. This does not permit a clear reasoning that the media coverage changed individual importance perceptions. In terms of stringent causal reasoning, a baseline measure of respondents' importance perceptions assessed before the content analysis was conducted would have been required. In other words, although the importance measures were collected after the content measures, it cannot be ruled out that there is merely a correlation between the media coverage and importance perceptions. Causally even more troublesome, it might be that journalists correctly picked up people's perceptions of the importance of European integration and adjusted the coverage accordingly. Assuming further that importance perceptions are stable and did not change over the period of investigation, there could have been actually effects of people's importance perceptions on the amount of EU coverage. Similar problems have been widely discussed in agenda-setting research and scholars tried to solve them with cross-lagged panel correlation designs (e.g., Tipton, Haney, & Baseheart, 1975) or time series analyses (e.g., Brosius & Keppinger, 1990). However, such analyses are typically done at an aggregate level and are thus subject to ecological fallacy (for summary, see: Rössler, 1997). Moreover, it does not seem feasible to apply such designs to comparative studies with 14 systems. In sum, this chapter can, strictly speaking, provide only evidence of an association between television coverage of the EU and individual importance perceptions. However, given the tradeoff between comparative research at an individual level of analysis and internally more valid, yet still problematic designs, the findings of this chapter seem encouraging.

A second concern may relate to the time lag between media coverage and people's response. Several studies have investigated the optimal time lag for agenda-setting effects to occur (e.g., Winter & Eyal, 1981; Wanta & Hu, 1994). Tentatively, one may conclude that, for non-local television news, the optimal time lag lies somewhere between one and two weeks when the analysis is to be conducted at the individual level (Rössler, 1997). This suggests that for the respondents interviewed between June 21 and July 4 the agenda-setting effects should be the strongest, which may introduce somewhat of a bias into the sample. Conversely, one may argue that the design of this study does not take into account forgetting about media contents and assumes that people perfectly remember what they have watched some time ago. Watt et al. (1993) and Zhu et al. (1993) have suggested an effect decay curve to take memory decay into account, but investigated it only at the aggregate level of analysis. Unfortunately, such modeling was not possible in this chapter due to systematically missing data, but will be applied in the sixth and seventh chapter. However, it must be clearly stated that time lag problems and unrealistic assumptions about cognitive processes plague the vast majority of studies in the field and it is by no means clear to what extent they deteriorate the findings.

---

64 In the Italian sample no date of interview was collected because the survey is based on a telepanel.
4.5 Summary

This chapter focused on the question of whether the amount of EU coverage affects the extent to which EU citizens perceived European integration to be important. Investigating this question from a cross-nationally comparative perspective, led to the following findings:

1. Analyzing the various EU countries separately, no homogeneous effect was found across the countries. Only in the minority of countries, more EU coverage led to an increase in the perception of how important European integration is.
2. The occurrence of the agenda-setting pattern depended on the nature of elite opinion about the issue in question. The more EU stories people watched in countries in which elites disagreed about European integration, the more important they considered European integration. If elite opinion about European integration was consensual, this pattern did not occur.
3. Political interest did not influence the basic relationship between amount of coverage and the perceived importance of European integration as moderated by elite opinion.

This chapter has only dealt with the amount of coverage and has left aside more substantive aspects of EU coverage. Of course, this leads to the question of whether not only the amount of EU coverage, but also its content matters. In the second chapter, it has been shown that EU representatives were typically negatively evaluated. Does this affect citizens’ opinions about European integration? This question will be explored in the next chapter.
The influence of the tone of EU coverage on support for European integration depends on the consonance of the entire coverage

In contrast to the preceding chapter, this chapter deals with a more substantive characteristic of EU coverage – its tone.\textsuperscript{65} With few exceptions (Banducci et al., 2001; Norris, 2000), the consequences of a favorable or unfavorable tone of EU coverage on opinions about European integration have not been studied. What is more, with the exception of Banducci et al.'s (2001) study, we know hardly anything about whether and how the tone towards EU representatives affects people's opinions about further European integration.\textsuperscript{66} However, research has shown that especially the coverage of political actors plays an important role in shaping citizens' opinions about political issues. A more negative coverage of politicians has often been found to be associated with more negative opinions about the political elite and more cynicism about politics (e.g., Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Kepplinger, 1998; Valentino, Buhr, & Beckmann, 2001; Valentino, Beckmann, & Buhr, 2001). This suggests that it may be worth studying whether the tone towards EU representatives impinges upon people's opinions about European integration. As a result, this chapter focuses on the tone of EU coverage in terms of the evaluations of EU representatives.

When dealing with the tone of coverage, a relatively old, yet strikingly under-researched concept lends itself to cross-nationally comparative investigation: Noelle-Neumann's (1973) consonance concept. In an article that has been described as the turning point from the phase of limited effects to the rediscovery of powerful mass media (e.g., Donsbach, 1991; McQuail, 1994; Severin & Tankard, 1997), Noelle-Neumann (1973) defines consonance as "a large extent of similarity in the presentation of certain material in all the media" (p. 78). And as Noelle-Neumann (1973) explicitly states, "[c]onsonance (...) increases the effects of mass media" (p. 79). With respect to this chapter, consonance can be specified as a large extent of similarity in the evaluation of EU representatives across media. Whether evaluations are negative or positive is secondary; the emphasis lies on the fact that the media are all positive or negative. Noelle-Neumann's basic idea is that if all media evaluate an issue or persons similarly, citizens hardly have a chance not to be exposed to that information.

\textsuperscript{65} The terms \textit{tone} and \textit{evaluation} are used interchangeably in this and the following chapters.
\textsuperscript{66} Recall that by EU representatives not only EU officials are meant (e.g., members of the European Commission), but also people who are clearly associated with the EU (e.g., national ministers when they are members of the EU's council of ministers).
According to Noelle-Neumann (1973), this presents an ideal situation for media to exert powerful effects.

A comparable idea has recently been raised by Norris (2000): "If most news about the Community [i.e., the EU; JP] is overwhelmingly negative – for example, if there is a steady stream of Euroskeptic headlines (...) – and the public takes its cues from the news media, then that plausibly could contribute towards a growing disconnect between European leaders and the public" (p. 184). Three aspects are worth considering here. First, consonance as the same tune played by the media of, for example, a particular country calls for cross-nationally comparative research, but has only been studied in single-country studies (Noelle-Neumann, 1973).67 If one wants to demonstrate clearly whether consonant media coverage increases media effects, one needs to show that dissonant coverage hampers media effects. Second, Norris (2000) does investigate her hypothesis in a cross-national setting, but does not integrate it in the theoretically interesting consonance concept. And third, both the consonance concept and the specific effects of evaluations in EU coverage on people's opinions about the EU are strikingly under-researched areas. Consequently, the first goal of this chapter is to link, in a cross-nationally comparative setting, Noelle-Neumann's idea of more powerful media effects of consonant coverage to the presumed impact of EU coverage on opinions about further European integration.

Intuitively, one would presume that more favorable coverage of EU representatives leads to more favorable opinions about European integration and vice versa. Equally intuitively, however, one would presume that a potential influence of the tone of coverage of EU representatives depends on sufficient numbers of EU representatives covered. Thus, a crucial question is when the tone of coverage of EU representatives begins to affect people's opinions. Norris (2000, p.183) explicitly mentions a sufficient amount of coverage to be an important condition for effects to emerge, but investigates it only implicitly by focusing exclusively on the most visible issues in her effect analysis. Moreover, Norris (2000) does not show whether the amount of coverage conditions the influence of the tone of coverage. In this chapter, it seems therefore necessary to test whether the visibility of EU representatives (i.e., the number of EU representatives covered) moderates the effect of the tone of coverage on people's opinions about European integration. It is the second goal of this chapter to investigate this.

Noelle-Neumann's (1973) reasoning about powerful media effects of consonant coverage rests upon the assumption that, in such situations, people's protective mechanism of selective perception is eliminated. In the context of coverage of EU representatives and opinions about European integration, this would mean that both EU supporters and EU opponents react in the same way to the tone of coverage if the coverage as whole evaluates EU representatives in the same way, i.e., consonantly. The concept of selective perception as a protective mechanism against media messages entails a lot of important antecedents and

---

67 The consonance concept can also be investigated in comparative settings other than cross-nationally comparative ones, for example when consonant and dissonant coverage is compared at the regional level. However, Noelle-Neumann's (1973) reasoning is implicitly located at the country level. Therefore, it seems appropriate to investigate the consonance concept in a cross-nationally comparative setting.
ramifications and is difficult to investigate (for reviews, see Donsbach, 1991; Zillmann & Bryant, 1985a). Nevertheless the concept may be worth studying, as an initial attempt, in the context of media effects on opinions about European integration. Due to the general lack of research concerning media effects on opinions about the EU, even such basic notions of effect-augmenting or effect-diminishing mechanisms have not been examined. Thus, it is the third goal of this chapter to test whether EU citizens indeed lose their protective mechanism of selective perception when media coverage is consonant.

It has been mentioned at different parts of this book that the studies presented in this second part also seek to shed some new light on the conceptualization of media effects by approaching the issue form a cross-nationally comparative perspective. This chapter revisits one of the core issues of communication science, the debate about minimal (Klapper, 1960), not-so-minimal (Iyengar, Peters, & Kinder, 1982), or powerful media effects (Noelle-Neumann, 1973). More specifically, this chapter tackles the often speculated upon, but hardly investigated question of whether evaluations in the media affect opinions about the EU. Thus, at the end of this chapter, two important questions will be answered: Do evaluations in the media influence opinions about the EU? And, is there evidence of the notion of powerful mass media from a cross-nationally comparative perspective?

5.1 What we always wanted to know about media effects, but never cared to investigate

Noelle-Neumann's idea of powerful media effects if coverage as a whole is consonant seems to be so plausible that researchers apparently did not care to empirically test it. To date, there has been little research investigating to what extent consonant media coverage indeed exerts the powerful influence it is presumed to exert. Noelle-Neumann's (1973) own empirical analyses are suggestive at best and are methodologically problematic. Content analysis and survey data were very loosely linked at the aggregate level and the content data were gathered at only one point of time while the survey data were longitudinal. Because no control measures were included, the association found may thus be spurious. Along with the fact that Noelle-Neumann did not investigate media effects when coverage is dissonant, the methodological and statistical shortcomings also seriously impede causal reasoning. In other words, Noelle-Neumann's analyses (1973) do not present adequate evidence of more powerful media effects if coverage is consonant.

The problematic methodological translation of the idea leads to a second problem. The compelling demonstration of media effects requires that the analysis be conducted at the individual level to rule out the possibility of ecological or other aggregation fallacies (Robinson, 1950; Dogan & Rokkan, 1969). Noelle-Neumann (1973) changes unsystematically between the individual and the aggregate level – she reasons at the individual level, but analyzes at the aggregate level. However, if one accepts the primacy of the individual level of analysis in studies of media effects, then the analysis of the consonance concept has to be slightly specified. It goes without saying that no individual is exposed to the

68 This becomes most obvious in the macro-level linkage of content analysis and trend surveys while the logic of powerful media effects is explained with individual selective processes (see below).
entire media coverage in a given country. He/she will only use particular outlets. As a consequence, the consonance of coverage has to be conceptualized as a 'surrounding', contextual factor. The basic question is whether the individually received coverage of a particular outlet exerts a stronger effect if the 'surrounding' coverage as whole (i.e., the coverage of all media in a country) is consonant. More specifically, this chapter asks whether the particular tone of coverage that individuals get from the outlet(s) they use affects opinions more strongly if the tone of the coverage as a whole is consonant with this particular tone. Thereby, this chapter focuses on the effects of television news coverage as being potentially conditional on the consonance or dissonance of the 'surrounding' entire coverage (including newspapers coverage).

A third more theoretical limitation of Noelle-Neumann's idea may come from conceptually related research on the effectiveness of propaganda and persuasive messages. The power of propaganda during World War I and II has usually only been assumed or has been inferred indirectly. Rarely, however, it has been empirically demonstrated. Furthermore, the "success" of propaganda may result from the fact that propaganda is typically received in situations of high social control, coercion, or even terror (see Bramsted's, 1965, analysis of Nazi propaganda). Empirical studies on propaganda or, more generally, on the effects of persuasive messages on opinions by and large showed that propaganda is "contingently effective rather than invariably effective" (Brown 1958, p. 306). Hovland's early studies in the US army (Hovland, Lumsdaine, & Sheffield, 1965), his studies at Yale (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953) or more recent approaches to persuasive communication, most notably McGuire's (1968, 1976) information processing theory and Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) elaboration likelihood model, all agree that media messages do not have homogeneous across-the-board effects (for review, see: Perloff, 1993). Rather, the power of media depends on a variety of situational and personal factors. More importantly, the various studies point out that people may learn the basic information present in the messages, but may not change their opinions or even behavior accordingly (Hovland et al., 1965; McGuire, 1968; for review, see Perloff, 1993).

If one transfers these findings to the idea of powerful media effects of consonant coverage, it becomes clear that such effects should not be taken for granted, particularly not when controlling for other competing influences. Although Noelle-Neumann (1973) does not elaborate on it, her idea implies that people do not only learn from the media, but that they also adjust their opinions to the tone of coverage. All this renders it even more important to establish whether there is evidence of powerful media effects on opinions if coverage as a whole is consonant as opposed to weak or no effects if coverage is dissonant. Concerning potential effects of the tone of coverage of EU representatives on opinions about European integration, this means that it is crucial to demonstrate two points. First, the tone of television coverage of EU representatives affects citizens in countries where coverage of EU representatives as whole is consonant while it has no or a very weak influence on citizens in

---

69 However, it should be kept in mind that, in the EU countries investigated, consonance of the coverage as whole does not originate in centrally organized control of media coverage.

70 For example, one of Noelle-Neumann's (1973) examples refers to the opinion about the recognition of the Oder-Neisse-Line as definite German eastern border.
countries where that coverage is dissonant. Second, citizens surrounded by consonant coverage adjust their opinion about European integration to the tone of coverage of EU representatives. If the coverage is consonantly positive, opinions about European integration will be more positive than when the coverage is consonantly negative. Technically speaking, I expect an interaction between the (contextual) consonance/dissonance of coverage as a whole and the tone of coverage in the outlet(s) an individual is exposed to.

The idea that consonance increases media effects does not specify how much media coverage there must be for such effects to emerge. Clearly, a minimum of coverage is required. However, do effects immediately start even at small amounts of coverage if only the coverage as a whole is consonant? Or is there, even if coverage is consonant, a certain critical mass of media coverage after which the tone of coverage affects opinions? With respect to potential consequences of EU coverage, Norris (2000) explicitly states: "The news media need to provide reasonably extensive coverage of each issue" (p. 183). Unfortunately, she does not specify what she means by 'reasonably extensive'. More importantly, because content analysis and survey data could only be linked at the aggregate level, Norris (2000) was not able to investigate to what extent differing amounts of coverage of EU issues impede or enhance the effects of the tone of coverage. Findings for example from agenda-setting research, however, suggest that the same increase in the amount of coverage can lead to different effects. In other words, effects may look very different when coverage is low as compared to when coverage is high (e.g., Brosius & Kepplinger, 1992; Neuman, 1990).

Applying this consideration to the aforementioned interaction between consonance/dissonance of the coverage as a whole and tone of coverage, this means the following. Assuming that the tone of coverage of EU representatives positively affects people's opinions only in countries with consonant media coverage, it can be expected that the tone of coverage will not influence opinions about European integration if EU representatives are hardly visible in the coverage. However, the more visible EU representatives are, the stronger the effect of the tone on opinions will be. Put differently, there is no homogenous effect of the tone of coverage of EU representatives on opinions about European integration. The impact of the tone of coverage of EU representatives rather depends on the visibility of EU representatives. Greater visibility of EU representatives will boost the effect of the tone of coverage while lower visibility will rather impede this effect. Technically speaking, this presents a three-way interaction effect between the tone of coverage in the outlet(s) an individual is exposed to, the consonance/dissonance of the coverage as a whole, and the visibility of EU representatives.

The idea of increased effects through consonance derives its power from the assumption that individuals have nearly no chance to protect their opinions by selection processes when they are surrounded by consonant coverage. The omnipresence of the same enables messages to circumvent selective barriers (Noelle-Neumann, 1973, 1977a, 1977b). Noelle-Neumann's reasoning concerning the power of consonant television coverage is very

---

71 Based on different theoretical considerations, it would also be possible to conceptualize visibility of EU representatives as first-order moderator and consonance/dissonance as second-order moderator. However, in this study the focus is on consonance/dissonance as first-order moderator.
Effects on support for European integration

much linked to the particular situation in Germany in the late 1960's and early 1970's with only two public-broadcasting networks and highly politicized public debates (see especially her reasoning in 1977a). Moreover, the barriers of selective processes are more complex than conceptualized by Noelle-Neumann (e.g., 1977a, 1977b) ranging from selective exposure via selective attention/perception and selective comprehension/interpretation to selective retention (e.g., Donsbach, 1991; Zillmann & Bryant, 1985b). The variety of selective barriers renders it difficult for messages to get through unfiltered. Though not with respect to traditional selection mechanisms, also Zaller (1992) has shown how important it is to take into account people's resistance to information if it is inconsistent with their predispositions.

Despite this criticism, Noelle-Neumann's basic idea nevertheless deserves attention particularly given the immense lack of research. The complexity of selective processes and their potential circumvention in situations of media consonance cannot be tested in only one study. However, as a first step it will be investigated whether the selective barrier of an individual's support for the EU is surmounted by media messages in a consonant media environment. Support for the EU is only a proxy for the more complex selective barriers described above, but studies from diverse research areas consistently document that support for politicians, parties, or political groups determines whether and how media messages are received (e.g., Moy, Pfau, & Kahlor, 1999; Valentino, 1999; Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985). Given additionally the finding that people seek information consistent with their opinions (for review see: Cotton, 1985), one would expect that EU supporters are influenced by a positive tone to the EU, while EU opponents are affected by a negative tone. However, if the tone of EU coverage is consonantly negative or consonantly positive across the media, EU supporters may permanently be confronted with negative messages and EU opponents may permanently be confronted with positive messages. Therefore, one would expect that EU supporters and EU opponents do not differ in their reaction to the tone of coverage. Both EU supporters and EU opponents will display increasing support for EU integration if the tone of coverage is consonantly positive. Both groups will show decreasing support for EU integration if the tone of coverage is consonantly negative. Technically speaking, I expect that individual EU support will not moderate the cross-level interaction between the tone of EU coverage in the outlet(s) and individual is exposed to and the consonance of the coverage as a whole. In other words, there will be no significant three-way interaction between these two variables and individual EU support.
5.2 Method

Procedure and measures

Like the study presented in the preceding chapter, also this study draws on the content analysis conducted for the two weeks prior to the European election day and the post-election survey. Information on design and procedure of the content analysis can be found in section 2.2.1. Design and procedure of the survey are described in section 4.2.1. For the same reasons outlined in section 4.2.1, Luxembourg and Portugal could not be included in the analysis, while Belgium was split in its Flemish and Wallonian part resulting in 14 systems for analysis. This chapter draws on the analysis of the television coverage, but also refers to the analysis of the most prestigious newspapers to receive a more encompassing notion of the dissonance or consonance of the coverage as a whole in a particular country. For each country, the front-page of the most prestigious newspaper was analyzed. The front-page presents the most important part of each newspaper and gives a good overview of what a particular newspaper considers important. The most prestigious newspaper of each of the various countries was chosen because it can to some extent be considered representative of a country’s newspaper coverage and may moreover influence the coverage in other newspapers (Dearing & Rogers, 1996). The newspapers analyzed are documented in Table B2 in Technical Appendix B.

Measures – dependent and independent variables

People’s opinion towards European integration was gauged with the question “Some say European integration should be pushed further. Others say that it has already gone too far. What is your opinion?” Response categories ranged from 1 (unification has already gone too far) to 10 (unification should be pushed further). The tone of coverage of EU representatives was measured as the difference between positive and negative evaluations of EU representatives (for further information on the operationalization and validity of the measure, see section 2.2.1). Whether an actor was an EU representative, was operationalized in the same way as outlined in section 2.2.1. Both measures, the tone of coverage of EU representatives and the number of EU representatives covered, were centered around their mean to avoid multicollinearity problems in the analysis of interaction effects (Aiken & West, 1991; Jaccard et al., 1990).

Whether the coverage in a particular country was consonant or dissonant in its tone towards EU representatives, was assessed by checking, per country, the direction of the tone in three outlets – in the evening news of the most widely watched public broadcasting and commercial channel and in the most prestigious newspaper. If the direction in all of the three outlets was identical (i.e., either positive, neutral, or negative) the coverage in the particular country was defined as consonant. If only one of the three outlets deviated in its tone from the

72 Due to the focus of the effects of television coverage throughout this book, the effects of the tone in newspaper coverage were not investigated.
Effects on support for European integration

117
tone of the remaining two outlets (e.g., two outlets are negative, one is neutral), the coverage in the particular country was defined as dissonant (for further information, see Table B2 in Technical Appendix B).

Measures – control variables

The logic of which control variables to select was the same as outlined in section 4.2.1. The basic goal is to present a model that includes all variables which have already been found to affect opinions about European integration in order to present the most rigorous conditions possible for media effects to occur. In line with this, the set of control variables includes nearly all the variables which previous research has been found to be meaningful (for a detailed reasoning, see section 4.2.1). Need for orientation and the amount of conflict in EU coverage were eliminated from the model because they pertained to the specific agenda-setting question investigated in the previous chapter. Instead, satisfaction with domestic democracy was included as control variable because Anderson (1998) has demonstrated its important role in predicting opinions about the EU. The operationalization of the various control measures is identical to the one described in section 4.2.1. Satisfaction with domestic democracy was assessed with the question "On the whole are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in <your country>". The response categories ranged from 1 (very satisfied) to 4 (not at all satisfied) and were inversely coded.

Data analysis and treatment of missing values

For the analyses presented in this chapter, the same weighting procedure of the data was used as outlined in section 4.2.2. Similarly, only those respondents were selected who watched at least one or both of the two television outlets content analyzed. As a consequence, the overall sample size was 8,432 respondents (for further information, see section 4.3.2). The selected respondents were assigned the respective media measures, i.e. the tone of coverage and the number of EU representatives covered in a particular outlet. Moreover, each respondent in a particular country received a value indicating whether he/she received information in a media environment where the tone towards EU representatives was consonant (coded as one) or dissonant (coded as zero).

In order to avoid further shrinkage of the sample, missing values of the control variables were reconstructed from information available in other answers by a respondent. This procedure is described in section 4.2.1. Whenever this was no longer possible, the missing values were replaced with the mean (for metric variables) or with the most frequent value (for dichotomous variables). Missing values of variables capturing EU-related opinions were not replaced because these variables may be hard to reconstruct from other variables in the data set. Moreover, because these variables usually present key variables in the analyses of this book, artificial relationships could be created in the data set.
The expected cross-level interaction between the country-level factor consonance/dissonance and the tone of coverage an individual was exposed to creates the same problem with the estimation of the standard error as outlined in section 4.2.2. In section 4.2.2, I have already given a rationale why multi-level modeling does not make sense with the data at hand. Therefore, I follow the logic of analysis used in the preceding chapters. The hierarchy in the data set along with the statistical clustering of respondents in the countries will be taken into account by correcting the standard error with Huber (1967) and White's (1980) 'sandwich' estimator. Recall that the critical $t$-values are assessed on the basis of number of clusters (i.e., countries) minus one degrees of freedom, thus thirteen. This may lead to a slight underestimation of the significance of individual-level effects.

**Probing three-way interaction effects with metric variables**

Whenever one or more moderating metric variables are involved in an interaction effect, particular problems arise with post-hoc testing for significance. Aiken and West (1991) suggest a particular procedure for interaction effects with moderating metric variables. However, the procedure does not seem to be without an arbitrary moment and may, in the worst case, somewhat distort the results of the post-hoc testing. In section A3 of Technical Appendix A, it is described where the problems specifically lie and how they are tackled in this chapter. The entire post-hoc probing in this chapter follows the logic outlined there.

**5.3 Results – consonant coverage affects support for European integration**

The first goal of this chapter was to establish whether media effects are more powerful if coverage is consonant than if coverage is dissonant. More specifically, the tone of television coverage of EU representatives was expected to affect people's opinions about European integration only if the overall tone of coverage was consonant with the specific tone of coverage an individual receives. It was further presumed that, in this case, citizens adjust their opinion about European integration to the tone of coverage. Was there evidence of this pattern? Model 1 in Table 5.1 shows that indeed a significant interaction between the tone of coverage of EU representatives and consonance/dissonance of a coverage emerged ($b = .066$, $p < .05$). Plotting the two-way interaction reveals that, as predicted, the tone of coverage affected opinions about European integration positively if the overall tone of coverage within a particular country was consonant (Figure 5.1). A more positive tone of coverage of EU representatives was associated with more favorable opinions about European integration. Conversely, a more negative tone of coverage was related to less favorable opinions about European integration. Figure 1 also suggests that, when coverage was dissonant, a more positive tone of coverage was associated with less favorable opinions about European integration. Before further elaborating on these findings, it seems advisable to probe the two simple slopes of whether they differ significantly from zero.
### Table 5.1: Impact of various cross-level interactions on support for European integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control variables</th>
<th>Model 1 (n = 6,976)</th>
<th>Model 2 (n = 6,976)</th>
<th>Model 3 (n = 6,976)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-.283 (.077)**</td>
<td>-.279 (.077)**</td>
<td>-.285 (.076)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.009 (.002)**</td>
<td>-.009 (.002)**</td>
<td>-.009 (.002)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.044 (.018)*</td>
<td>.043 (.018)*</td>
<td>.043 (.017)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In labor force (1 = yes)</td>
<td>-.133 (.097)</td>
<td>-.150 (.096)</td>
<td>-.134 (.010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective social class</td>
<td>.084 (.048)</td>
<td>.092 (.046)</td>
<td>.084 (.048)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal communication</td>
<td>-.005 (.035)</td>
<td>-.009 (.035)</td>
<td>-.003 (.035)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party cues</td>
<td>1.208 (.218)***</td>
<td>1.180 (.224)***</td>
<td>1.207 (.219)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-right position (10 = right)</td>
<td>-.056 (.027)*</td>
<td>-.055 (.025)*</td>
<td>-.055 (.027)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU support</td>
<td>1.480 (.061)***</td>
<td>1.458 (.067)***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction dom. democracy</td>
<td>.012 (.088)</td>
<td>.001 (.087)</td>
<td>.014 (.090)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political interest</td>
<td>-.030 (.083)</td>
<td>-.027 (.080)</td>
<td>-.030 (.083)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention to EU news</td>
<td>.231 (.045)***</td>
<td>.237 (.048)***</td>
<td>.233 (.045)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV exposure</td>
<td>.086 (.031)*</td>
<td>.090 (.032)*</td>
<td>.086 (.031)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper exposure</td>
<td>-.018 (.029)</td>
<td>-.013 (.029)</td>
<td>-.020 (.030)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of TV news outlets</td>
<td>.060 (.020)**</td>
<td>.029 (.021)</td>
<td>.061 (.021)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of newspapers</td>
<td>-.111 (.081)</td>
<td>-.116 (.081)</td>
<td>-.110 (.081)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility of EU representatives</td>
<td>.002 (.004)</td>
<td>.002 (.003)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone of EU coverage</td>
<td>-.028 (.026)</td>
<td>-.008 (.025)</td>
<td>-.031 (.027)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility of EU representatives</td>
<td>.003 (.005)</td>
<td>.003 (.005)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU support</td>
<td>.009 (.197)</td>
<td>.146 (.206)</td>
<td>-.009 (.197)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consonance</td>
<td>.066 (.026)*</td>
<td>.052 (.026)*</td>
<td>.069 (.026)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone X Consonance</td>
<td>.004 (.008)</td>
<td>.004 (.008)</td>
<td>.004 (.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility X Consonance</td>
<td>.002 (.001)*</td>
<td>.002 (.001)*</td>
<td>.002 (.001)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone X EU support</td>
<td></td>
<td>.038 (.028)</td>
<td>.026 (.100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU support X Consonance</td>
<td>.003 (.001)*</td>
<td>.003 (.001)*</td>
<td>.003 (.001)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Note.** Cell entries are unstandardized multiple regression coefficients. Robust standard errors in brackets. Data sources: EES 1999, Content analysis 1999 European election campaign**
The post hoc probing for significance of this two-way interaction with a dichotomous and a metric variable follows the logic outlined in section A2 in Technical Appendix A. In other words, first the slope is computed, then the pertinent standard error, and by dividing the slope by its standard error, the pertinent $t$-value is obtained. For the simple slope, the $(b_1 + b_2Z)$ term in equation E 1.1 (see section A2 in Technical Appendix A) is replaced with the coefficients obtained from model 1 in Table 5.1. For the standard error, the variables in equation E 2 (see section A2 in Technical Appendix A) are replaced with values obtained from the estimated variance/covariance matrix of the regression coefficients (not documented here for reasons of space). This gives the following $t$-values (the subscript $c=0$ means dissonance and the subscript $c=I$ means consonance):

$$t_{c=0} = -0.0279/0.026 = -1.07 \text{ (n.s.)}$$

$$t_{c=I} = 0.038/0.01 = 3.8 \text{ (p<0.001)}$$

Figure 5.1: Interaction effect of consonance/dissonance and tone of coverage on support for European integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone (centered)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissonance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. To compute the values for this figure, all control variables from model 1 in Table 5.1 were set to their mean.

The statistical post-hoc probing shows that the effect of tone of coverage only significantly differs from zero if the coverage as a whole is consonant. Conversely, if the coverage as a whole is dissonant, the effect is not significantly different from zero. Put differently, by

---

73 This effect remains significant even when setting the degrees of freedom to thirteen (i.e., number of clusters minus one) as was done in the original analysis in Table 5.1. However, as argued in section 4.2.2, this is at odds with the conceptualization of the effects as individual level effects moderated by a particular context characteristic.
Effects on support for European integration

plotting and, more important, by statistical post hoc probing for significance, evidence has been found that the tone of television coverage of EU representatives exerts more powerful effects under conditions of consonance than under conditions of dissonance.

This leads to the second main question of this chapter – did the visibility of EU representatives additionally moderate this two-way interaction? Technically speaking, was there a significant three-way interaction between the tone of coverage, consonance/dissonance, and the visibility of EU representatives? To recapitulate, it was expected that greater visibility of EU representatives would boost the effect of the tone if coverage as a whole was consonant whereas it would basically disappear at low levels of visibility of EU representatives. Model 2 in Table 5.1 indeed indicates a significant three-way interaction between the three variables ($b = .003, p < .05$).\(^{74}\)

In order to facilitate the understanding of the three-way interaction, first the simple slopes are computed for all combinations of the variables number of EU representatives and consonance/dissonance by replacing the variables in the term $(b_1 + b_3Z + b_5W + b_7ZW)$ of equation E 3.1 (see section A3 in Technical Appendix A) with substantive values from model 3 in Table 5.1. Afterwards, the slopes are to be plotted as suggested in the preceding section. The main goal of this plot is to visualize, across the whole spectrum of the (second-order) moderating variable (i.e., visibility of EU representatives, to what extent the slope (i.e., the influence) of the tone of coverage changes depending on the visibility of EU representatives – investigated separately for the (first-order) moderating variable, i.e., the consonance or dissonance of the coverage as a whole. We know from Figure 5.1 that, if the coverage as a whole is consonant, positive coverage of EU representatives is associated with more favorable opinions about European integration and vice versa. If the number of EU representatives covered indeed moderates this effect in line with the above mentioned expectation, the effect (shown as the slope in the figure to be plotted) should be smaller at low number of EU representatives covered and should increase as the number of EU representatives becomes larger.

Figure 5.2 shows the simple slopes (i.e., the influence of the tone of coverage) conditional on the number of EU representatives covered, separately for consonant and dissonant coverage. Note that the values representing the number of EU representatives are values centered around the sample mean because the computations in the regression analysis and the subsequent computations of the slopes and standard errors were based on such values. Thus, zero indicates the average number of EU representatives across all outlets in the analysis. Negative values indicate that the number of representatives was below the sample mean, positive values indicate that the number of EU representatives was above the sample mean. As expected, the influence of the tone of coverage was very close to zero if the coverage as a whole was consonant and if EU representatives were hardly visibly. However, the impact of the tone of coverage becomes stronger, as the visibility of EU representatives becomes larger.

\(^{74}\) The original two-way interaction between tone and consonance becomes slightly weaker when including the three-way interaction between tone, consonance, and visibility (Model 2, Table 5.1). However, the reduction of the effect size is not strong enough to call the original two-way interaction spurious.
increased. This suggests that greater visibility of EU representatives augmented the effect of the tone of coverage towards EU representatives while low visibility diminished it.

However, it should be taken into account that this pattern was not significant across the whole spectrum of the moderating variable visibility of EU representatives. To probe each slope for significant difference from zero, the pertinent standard errors were computed using equation E 4 (see section A3 in Technical Appendix A). Dividing each slope shown in Figure 5.2 by its standard error gives the $t$-values. As can be seen in Figure 5.2, the positive influence of tone of coverage on opinions on European integration was significant only in an area between $-26$ and $+64$. Within a certain area of the visibility of EU representatives,

---

Figure 5.2: Influence of tone of coverage on support for integration as conditional on consonance/dissonance and visibility of EU representatives

![Graph showing the influence of tone of coverage on support for integration as conditional on consonance/dissonance and visibility of EU representatives.](image)

---

75 The various $t$-values of the slopes being conditional on the two moderating variables are visualized in Figure B1 in Technical Appendix B.

76 This is based on a critical $t$-value of $\pm 1.96$ at 6,952 degrees of freedom and thus an alpha level of .05. Two cautionary remarks are in order here. First, the critical $t$-value would be $\pm 2.16$ when setting the degrees of freedom to thirteen (number of clusters minus one) as done in the overall analysis in Table 5.1. The range within which visibility of EU representatives moderates the effect then extends from $-25$ to $+52$. However, this procedure does not appropriately take into account the conceptualization of effects as individual-level effects (see 4.2.2). Second, Jaccard et al. (1990) point out that the computation of multiple $t$-tests (one for each simple slope) introduces the problem of inflated type-I error rates across the multiple tests. This can be alleviated by using the Bonferroni correction, i.e., dividing the alpha level of .05 by the number of tests performed. Given that there were 38 different values of the moderating variable visibility of EU representatives, 38 $t$-tests were performed resulting in an alpha level of (.05/38) or roughly .001 (for reasons of visualization, Figure 2 presents the slopes across the whole range of the visibility variable although only 38 values indeed occurred). Note that, in the case of the Bonferroni correction for 38 $t$-tests, the significant area extends only from $-18$ to $+22$. However, Jaccard et al. (1990, p. 89, footnote 3) themselves note that this approach is conservative. Moreover, it should be taken into account that there is not only a type-I error, but also a type-II error in empirical research. Given that, in this book, interaction effects are more rigorously tested than it is usually done and given the little existing knowledge about the subject of this book, the chance of a type-II error should not be forgotten when
increasing visibility of EU representatives boosted the 'positive' effect of tone of coverage of EU representatives on support for European integration if the media coverage was consonant. In other words, if the entire coverage was consonant in its coverage of EU representatives and if the number of EU representatives covered was neither very low nor very high, greater visibility of EU representatives boosted the impact of the tone of coverage of EU representatives on opinions about European integration while lower visibility reduced this impact. The more (the less) EU representatives were covered, the more (the less) strongly both a positive and a negative tone shaped people's opinions about European integration (note that the interpretations refer to simple slopes with a positive sign). When the tone was negative and a lot of EU representatives were covered, the impact of the tone of coverage on opinions was stronger (i.e., opinions were less favorable) than when the tone was negative but when not so many EU representatives were covered. Conversely, when the tone was positive and a lot of EU representatives were covered, the impact of the tone of coverage on opinions was stronger (i.e., opinions were more favorable) than when the tone was positive but when few EU representatives were covered. Note that outside the specified area, the number of EU representatives did no longer significantly augment or diminish the impact that the tone of coverage exerted on opinions about European integration. As one can see in Figure 5.2, at very low or very high numbers of EU representatives, the extent to which the tone of coverage impacted upon opinions about European integration no longer depended on the visibility of EU representatives. This suggests a floor- and a ceiling-effect for the moderating influence of visibility of EU representatives on the interaction between the tone of coverage and the consonance/dissonance of the entire coverage.

With respect to dissonant coverage, a positive effect emerged (roughly) below the mean number of covered EU representatives and a negative effect occurred above the mean. However, given that, for dissonant coverage, no significant effect of the tone of coverage was found in the analysis of the original two-way interaction, it seems pivotal to have a look at the significance of the simple slopes. Figure 5.2 also shows that the visibility of EU representatives moderated the impact of the tone of coverage on opinions about European integration if coverage as a whole was dissonant and the numbers of EU representatives exceeded 53. Put differently, if coverage was dissonant, high numbers of EU representatives increased the negative effect of the tone of coverage on opinions about European integration. This is, a positive tone was associated with a less favorable opinion while a negative tone was associated with a more favorable opinion.

The third goal of the chapter centered upon the question of whether the protective mechanism of selective perception is circumvented when coverage as a whole is consonant in their tone towards EU representatives. More specifically, it was expected that EU supporters and EU opponents would not differ in their response to the tone of coverage. As model 3 in Table 5.1 shows, there was no significant three-way interaction between the tone of coverage, consonance/dissonance of coverage, and individual support for the EU ($b = -.035$, n.s.).

\[\text{deciding about additional corrections of the results.}\]

\[\text{If the Bonferroni correction for the alpha level is used (see above), these simple slopes are no longer significant. This also applies to when the degrees of freedom are set to thirteen.}\]
originally found impact of the tone of coverage in consonant media environments applied to EU supporters and EU opponents alike. Although, in general, EU supporters were clearly more favorable towards further EU integration than EU opponents (see the strong effect of EU support in model 1 and 2), EU supporters and EU opponents reacted in the same way to the tone of coverage in a consonant media environment: the more positive the coverage, the more favorable (or less unfavorable) the opinion about further European integration. Conversely, the more negative the coverage was, the more unfavorable (or less favorable) the opinion about integration turned out to be.

5.4 Discussion – a long return

Nearly thirty years after what is considered a turning point in media effects research – the return to the concept of powerful mass media – there is now some first empirical evidence of the power of media in consonant media systems. Moreover, there is no initial evidence to support the presumption that the tone of media coverage shapes opinions about the EU. Admittedly, a study linking content analysis and survey data in 13 European countries (14 systems) is facilitated by the current technological infrastructure. Nevertheless, it is striking that our return to one of the key concepts of powerful media influence has taken such a long time and that a potential impact on opinions about the European Union has been so often referred to and so rarely been investigated.

When push comes to shove

A particular tone in the coverage may shove people's opinions about European integration into a certain direction, but the people are only pushed in this direction when the media are consonant. Of course, this does not, in the thirteen countries of the sample, imply coercion or indoctrination. Nevertheless, it seems to be difficult for citizens in countries with consonant media coverage to escape from the omnipresent, steady, and unidirectional tone of this coverage. Moreover, as presumed by Noelle-Neumann (1973), there was evidence that EU supporters and EU opponents reacted in the same way to the tone of coverage. Whereas their protective mechanism of selective exposure and selective perception may be strong enough to resist being shoved in a certain direction, they may lack power to resist being pushed in this direction. No matter what people generally think about the EU, they are by and large equally susceptible to the tone of coverage – a more positive tone leads to more favorable opinions and a more negative tone leads to less favorable opinions about European integration.

This finding is simple and may run counter to results based on more complex models of media effects advanced throughout the past decades. However, just because Noelle-Neumann's (1973) basic idea has never been adequately tested, it might be that we have lost track of simple, but parsimonious explanations of media effects. To avoid any misunderstandings, neither the findings nor the reasoning presented here advance a crude stimulus-response model. The emphasis is on the conditions (like consonance) under which media messages affect opinions more easily. As the results have shown, there is no evidence whatsoever that a positive or negative tone always and everywhere results in a positive or
negative opinion about European integration — it simply depends on, for example, the consonance of coverage. Moreover, there may be much more complex processes involved than what could be captured with the measure of individual EU support that lead people to accept or reject media messages. However, that said, the findings also tentatively suggest that media effects research might not only benefit from refined and complex individual-level concepts of media effects, but also from paying attention to the bigger picture of communication — for example the consonance of coverage.

There are several aspects of the investigation of consonance and the circumvention of selective perception that need to be addressed briefly. First, the consonance or dissonance of the coverage as a whole was operationalized with only three outlets. This does not rule out that the remaining outlets within a particular country were dissonant. However, it should be taken into account that the most important news bulletin of the most widely watched public and commercial channel and the most prestigious newspaper were content analyzed. It is unlikely that other news outlets belonging to the same channel or network deviate from the outlet analyzed. Moreover, the public and the commercial channel selected represent the television landscape and its coverage characteristics fairly well (Hans-Bredow-Institut, 2002; European Journalism Centre, 2002). As to the representativity of the most prestigious newspaper, research has documented a process called intra-media agenda-setting (Dearing & Rogers, 1996). Prestigious newspapers set the agenda and presumably also the tone for other outlets. In sum, it would have been desirable to include more outlets per country in order to determine the consonance or dissonance of the entire coverage. However, in a study comprising thirteen systems, this quickly collides with the feasibility of a study.

A second shortcoming of the effect analysis may concern the fact that the design does not provide internally valid evidence that the tone of coverage indeed changes the opinions about European integration. A baseline measure gauged before the assessment of the media coverage would have been helpful. Strictly speaking, the findings allow only to talk about an association between the tone of coverage and opinions about European integration. This is a common problem of cross-sectional field studies and of non-experimental designs. To gain internally valid evidence, experiments are most appropriate, but it is nearly impossible to investigate macro-level variables like the consonance of the coverage as a whole in experiments. In other words, not only the classic tradeoff between internal and external validity is involved when discussing how to investigate the key issues of this chapter most adequately. What is more, such discussions inevitably have to center upon questions of how cross-level interactions can be investigated without sacrificing too much causal rigor. It would be beyond the scope of this chapter to elaborate upon this issue. Moreover, it should be taken into account that there is neither a strong tradition of studying the interplay of variables at different levels of analysis nor any proper research of the consonance-powerful media effects idea. A lot of effect studies rely on media exposure measures instead of linking survey data to the actual content recipients receive. In this respect, this chapter presents conceptually and methodologically an advancement to previous research although future studies clearly need to tackle the aforementioned problems of internal validity.
A third deficit of this chapter may relate to the investigation of whether individuals' selective exposure and perception is circumvented when the coverage as a whole is consonant. I have pointed out above that individual support for the EU can only be considered a proxy for the more complex selective mechanisms involved in the exposure and attention to and interpretation and retention of media messages. Even if one accepts this caveat, one may ask to what extent the result of lacking differences between EU supporters and EU opponents in the effects of the tone of coverage really proves the circumvention of selective mechanisms. It may simply be that support for the EU is a weakly developed and incoherent opinion accompanied by a lack of knowledge about EU affairs. This combination, in turn, may only serve as a weak protection against opposing messages.

Zaller (1992) has pointed out that political awareness (or knowledge) presents an important prerequisite for people to become, in the first place, aware of the fact that information contradicts their predispositions. And only if people are aware of an inconsistency between information and their predispositions will they subsequently resist the information. Indeed, a consistently high number of don't-know answers along with low levels of knowledge about the EU and awareness of its institutions in Eurobarometer surveys (e.g., Anderson, 1998; Janssen, 1991) may be seen as evidence of the fact that many EU citizens may lack sound, elaborate cognitions about the EU that could protect them. Moreover, Saris (1997) has shown in a survey experiment that people's opinions about EU politics can easily be swayed with simple manipulations of the information provided in survey questions. In sum, although the findings in this chapter seem to confirm Noelle-Neumann's (1973) idea of the circumvention of individuals' selective mechanisms in consonant media, it cannot be ruled out that the specific topic of this investigation was conducive to the results. Therefore, future research should try to test the mechanism with issues where citizens can be expected to display more elaborate cognitive protection.

When evidence comes to speculation

The finding that the tone of coverage of EU representatives affects citizens' opinion about further European integration dovetails with an emerging, yet small, strand in research on media effects on opinions about the EU. Although with different thematic orientations, both Norris (2000) and Banducci et al. (2001) have reported evidence of the tone of EU coverage affecting people's opinion on EU matters. Interestingly, both studies emphasize that the effects depend on particular conditions – sufficient visibility of EU issues in Norris' (2000) study, elite opinion as contextual variable in Banducci et al.'s (2001) investigation. This chapter integrates these two findings by demonstrating that the interaction between a contextual variable, the consonance of the coverage as a whole, and the tone of coverage to which individuals are exposed depends itself on the visibility of EU representatives. It is worth noting that a floor effect occurred for very low numbers of EU representatives covered while a ceiling effect was obtained for very high numbers of EU representatives. Apparently, the effect of the tone of coverage cannot be diminished by virtually invisible EU representatives nor can it be boosted by very visible EU representatives. If coverage as a whole was dissonant, a negative effect of the tone of coverage occurred at very high numbers
of EU representatives. Two aspects should be kept in mind. First, the simple slopes found were only marginally significant at better than the 5% level. Second, no effect occurred for dissonant coverage with respect to the two-way interaction between tone and consonance/dissonance of coverage as a whole. Therefore, this effect should be regarded with some caution.

However, the fact that, within a certain area, higher numbers of EU representatives boosted the effect of the tone of coverage in consonant media environments may have curious, yet important implications for the future communication policy of the EU. It has been shown in the second chapter that, in most of the EU countries, the overall tone towards EU representatives is slightly negative (see particularly Figure 2.6). Further, in consonant media systems, a more negative tone of coverage leads to less favorable opinions about European integration. Ironically, if this effect augments with more visible EU representatives, it can be concluded that the communication deficit of the EU (e.g., Meyer, 1999) may not necessarily be bad for the future of European integration. In other words, if public support for European integration is to be secured, a communication policy that aims at a general increase of media visibility of EU representatives may be counter productive, particularly in countries whose media tend to a consonantly negative coverage of the EU. Without a doubt, EU citizens must have the chance to inform themselves adequately about EU matters via the media, particularly on television. However, this desirable request may, in some countries, come at the cost of declining public support for the European enterprise – another form of the dialectic of enlightenment, if you will.

This chapter has focused on the coverage of EU representatives. Although the amount of coverage of EU representatives is much lower than the amount of coverage that top domestic politicians receive, effects on citizens' opinion about European integration could be detected. This suggests that media effects research may benefit from considering the particular coverage of political actors as predictors of more general opinions about politics. Many scholars have described the increasing personalization of politics for various countries (e.g., Kaid et al., 1991; Kindelmann, 1994; Schönbach, 1993; Mazzoleni, 1996). Therefore, it seems pivotal to check whether this affects more general opinions about politics. Research that does so usually focuses on questions of citizens' trust in politics and politicians (see especially more recent research in the framing paradigm, e.g., Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Valentino et al., 2001). However, the findings of this chapter suggest that the effects of the coverage of political actors might have greater ramifications than previously documented in research.

In conclusion, this chapter suggests that simple conditions may enable media to exert powerful effects. In this respect, the context may be as important as the individual. Moreover, in research on the EU, let's not forget the media. We may now enter a stage where what we always assumed about media effects, but never cared to investigate, may be empirically documented.
5.5 Summary

This chapter centered upon the question of whether support for European integration is affected by the tone of coverage of EU representatives. More specifically, it was investigated whether this influence was moderated by the consonance or dissonance of the coverage as a whole. There were three main findings:

1. If the media in a particular country evaluated EU representatives consonantly, then these evaluations positively affected people's opinions about further European integration. If the media in a particular country evaluated EU representatives dissonantly, then no effect of the coverage emerged.

2. If the evaluation of EU representatives was consonant and if the number of EU representatives covered was neither very low nor very high, greater visibility of EU representatives boosted the impact of the tone of coverage of EU representatives on opinions about European integration while lower visibility reduced this impact. Simply put, the effect of both positive and negative evaluations on people's opinion about European integration became stronger as the number of EU representatives covered increased.

3. There was no evidence that cognitive selection mechanisms protected EU citizens from the influence of consonant media coverage. When the coverage is consonant, media seem to exert a powerful influence.

In this and the preceding chapter, it could be shown that both formal and substantive characteristics of the 1999 European election campaign influenced people's opinions about European integration. In line with the basic strategy of treating country characteristics as moderators of effect patterns, it turned out that the effect patterns depended on country characteristics. Put differently, there were no homogeneous effects in all EU countries. Effects depended on the specific country context, for example polarized elite opinion and consonant media coverage. The basic strategy employed in this book for analyzing media effects also sheds new light on prominent approaches in media effects research, agenda-setting and the consonance concept.

In the following two chapters, I will turn to the effects of the coverage described in the third chapter. The next two chapters will explore largely unknown territory: the effects of performance depictions of the EU and, especially in Chapter 7, fears of European integration. Moreover, I present a slightly more sophisticated link between media coverage and opinions taking into account results from cognitive psychology about memory decay.
The influence of performance depictions of the EU on support for the EU and for European integration depends on trade relations

Stereotypical examples about the inefficiency of EU officials quarreling over the curvature of bananas or the adequate size of cucumbers belong to the standard toolkit of EU critics. In the third chapter, we have seen that the outcomes of EU politics are, on balance, depicted as failures rather than as successes. This raises the question of whether EU citizens react to such depictions when it comes to supporting the EU or European integration. The basic idea is that EU citizens may consider depictions of the EU's performance in a general utilitarian way when judging whether the EU and European integration are 'worth' being supported. The logic of this idea is simple. If the EU performs well, then it is worth being supported; if it performs badly, it is not worth being supported. Although the idea fits in with a prominent strand in current research on the EU – utilitarian accounts of support for the EU and European integration –, no study to date has investigated this.

Utilitarian accounts point out the importance of economic considerations and conditions for citizens' opinion about the EU (for encompassing works in this tradition, see: Anderson, 1995; Gabel, 1998b). Simply put, EU citizens tend to more strongly support the EU and European integration whenever they personally are well off (e.g., Anderson & Reichert, 1995; Duch & Taylor, 1997; Gabel & Palmer, 1995) or, more important for this chapter, whenever the economic conditions in their country are good (e.g., Anderson & Kalthenthaler, 1996; Eichenberg & Dalton, 1993; Gabel & Whitten, 1997; Inglehart & Rabier, 1978). However, if EU citizens apparently consider something as specific as economic conditions in their decision to support the EU, then it can be assumed that they may also in a more encompassing way be utilitarian or outcome-oriented when it comes to support for the EU. People may not only "calculate" the specific economic benefits and costs of being a member of the EU, but they may also monitor the more general outcomes of EU policies, which gives them more general cues about the performance of the EU. When the EU generally performs well, when the success of its policies outweighs their failures, citizens will

---

78 One could argue that opinions about the EU and European integration are essentially the same. However, it should be taken into account that the EU embodies a supranational entity whereas European integration is a process. Moreover, opinions about the EU refer to the presence while opinions about European integration (often called further integration in questionnaires) refers to the future. As a consequence, it may be that somebody supports the institution EU in its present form, but rejects further European integration. Conversely, a person may support further European integration, but may oppose the EU as institution. Therefore, opinions about the EU are kept apart from opinions about European integration.
support it more strongly than when the EU generally performs less well, when the failures of its policies predominate over their success. Thus, along with economic calculations, people may also judge from a more encompassing point of view on the outcomes of EU policies whether being a member of the EU "pays off", whether it is in general terms advantageous to belong to this supranational institution.

The idea that support for politicians and institutions is based on their overall performance is not new (e.g., Himmelweit, Humphreys, Jaeger, & Katz, 1981; Weatherford, 1987). Strikingly, however, it has hardly been investigated with respect to support for the EU. What is more, the role of the media in the depiction of the performance of the EU has never been examined. EU citizens clearly depend on information from the media, most notably from television (Eurobarometer 51-56), to assess whether EU policies are successful. Furthermore, there is considerable evidence of how crucial media are in shaping assessments of politicians' performances (e.g., Goidel, Shields, & Peffley, 1997; Krosnick & Brannon, 1993; Pan & Kosicki, 1997). Taken together, this calls for an investigation of whether media depictions of the success or failure of EU policies affect support for the EU and further European integration. More specifically, given the consistent empirical evidence that EU support depends on economic conditions, it seems paramount to test whether EU performance depictions contribute to EU support in addition to economic conditions or whether the two interact. The two preceding chapters have demonstrated how crucial the interaction between individual media exposure and contextual factors is for explanations of EU-related opinions. As a consequence, it is the first goal of this chapter to not only investigate whether support for the EU and for further European integration are affected by EU performance depictions in the media. The possible influence of EU performance depictions will also be studied next to and in interaction with the potential impact of economic conditions.

Processing information about abstract and remote issues such as the EU and economic conditions clearly requires greater cognitive skills. Inglehart (1970) argues that cognitive mobilization improves an individual's capacity to receive and absorb messages about remote political communities such as the EU. To this might be added abstract issues as the economy. Like Inglehart (1970), subsequent research on the cognitive mobilization hypothesis has not examined media influence, either, although it is a key component of the hypothesis (e.g., Gabel, 1998a; Gabel & Palmer, 1995; Janssen, 1991; McLaren, 2001, 2002). Media content is only assumed, but never clearly related to the notion of cognitive mobilization. Therefore, it seems necessary to investigate whether cognitively mobilized citizens indeed respond more sensitively to media coverage as Inglehart (1970) contends. More specifically, it will be studied whether the above presumed interplay between media depictions of the performance of the EU and economic conditions affects support for the EU and for European integration differently among cognitively mobilized people as opposed to people not cognitively mobilized. Detecting and disentangling potential relationships is the second goal of this chapter.

This chapter, then, pulls together three strands of research on opinions about the EU – one that has been frequently investigated (the economic foundations of support for the EU), one that has been occasionally studied (cognitive mobilization), and one that has rarely
attracted scholarly attention (media effects on opinions about the EU). By doing so, the chapter may provide insights into, first, how broad the utilitarian basis of EU support is, second, whether the media play a role in this process, and third, whether there are systematic differences among EU citizens. Most of these issues have never been examined before (or not in this combination). Consequently, the chapter may enrich our thinking about the antecedents of opinions about the European Union. Apart from that, the chapter may contribute to what has been the major conclusion of the two preceding chapters – that television coverage of the EU matters.

6.1 Pocketbook supporters, cognitively mobilized and otherwise

The first goal of this chapter is to investigate (1) the potential effects of economic conditions, (2) media depictions of the EU's performance and, most importantly, (3) their potential interaction on further support for the EU and further European integration. The rationale for the first two points is obvious, the third point requires some more reasoning. First, there is abundant evidence that the state of economy determines the fate of politicians and governments in general (e.g., Anderson, 1995; Eulau & Lewis-Beck, 1985) and of the EU in particular (e.g., Anderson & Kalthenthaler, 1996; Gabel & Whitten, 1997). Among a variety of economic indicators, Eichenberg and Dalton (1993) have found trade relations with the EU to be one of the most powerful predictors of EU support. Support for the EU was consistently higher in countries with strong trade relations with the EU than in countries whose trade was less dependent on the EU. Although Eichenberg and Dalton's (1993) analysis was confined to the aggregate level of analysis, I expect the basic pattern to be replicated at the individual level. Second, there is also strong evidence that media shape how citizens assess the performance of politicians and governments and how this subsequently affects support for politicians and governments (e.g., Goidel et al., 1997; Kepplinger, 1998; Krosnick & Brannon, 1993; Pan & Kosicki, 1997). The more successful the depiction or the perception of the performance of politicians was, the stronger the support. I also expect this pattern with respect to the influence that the coverage of the EU's performance exerts on support for the EU and on support for further integration.

Third, the two preceding chapters have shown that media effects on support for the EU may best be explained with interactions between contextual variables and the actual media content to which an individual is exposed. No study to date has tackled this issue with respect to performance depictions and economic indicators, but the consistent pattern of the preceding chapters may also be presumed in the context of this chapter. If a country's trade depends strongly on the EU as a trade partner, the citizens of this particular country may, in their EU support, also be more sensitized to media depictions of the general performance of the EU. In television performance depictions of the EU, they may receive information about the achievements and the output of the EU in everyday politics, in other words information that is useful for general utilitarian judgments. Because people realize how important the existence

---

79 For linguistic reasons, the term *trade relations with the EU* is used in this chapter although, more precisely, it would have to be called *trade relations with the remaining 14 EU countries*. 
of the EU is for them and their country, they may also pay attention to more general cues of the success or failure of the EU and subsequently take this into account in their support for the EU. Conversely, if a country's trade depends less strongly on the EU as trade partner, citizens from such countries may also find cues about the EU's performance and the outcome of EU policies to be less important. As a consequence, media depictions of the EU's record may hardly affect their support for the EU and for European integration. In the extreme, these citizens may base their support for the EU on abstract long-term values and qualities of the EU (e.g., peace in Europe, global stability) and may even oppose utilitarian depictions of success/failure in everyday politics. Technically speaking, I expect an interaction effect between the strength of trade relations and the media depiction of the performance of the EU on support for the EU and European integration.

The second goal of this chapter focuses on potential differences between the cognitively mobilized and cognitively less mobilized in terms of the effects proposed in the preceding paragraphs. Inglehart's (1970) basic hypothesis is that higher cognitive mobilization results in an enhanced ability to process, for example, media information about the EU. Inglehart (1970) tends to automatically associate more elaborate processing skills with increased support for the EU because, according to his perception, media coverage in the 1960's was by and large positive towards the EU. However, Inglehart (1970) neither proves this nor does he test it adequately (actually, his analysis is based on the measure of whether people possess a TV set). In subsequent studies on the hypothesis, the media component has not been studied, either (e.g., Gabel, 1998a; Gabel & Palmer, 1995; Janssen, 1991; McLaren, 2001, 2002).

Despite (or just because of) this gap in research, Inglehart's hypothesis seems useful for this chapter, particularly with respect to the complex interplay of trade relations and depictions of the EU's record. If cognitive mobilization indeed enhances people's responsiveness to more complex information, then the effects proposed above should be most pronounced among the cognitively mobilized. More specifically, if people in countries whose trade depends strongly on the EU can be assumed to be sensitized to depictions of the EU's performance and if this sensitivity is heightened among the cognitively mobilized, then these people should respond more strongly to media depictions of the EU's record when deciding whether to support the EU or further integration. Thus, the effect that people in countries with strong trade relations with the EU react more strongly to performance depictions should hold for the cognitively mobilized. Analogously, the cognitively mobilized in countries whose trade is less dependent on the EU may base their support for the EU and European integration less on utilitarian considerations and, thus, also less on the EU's depicted performance. Instead, they may focus more on abstract and universal considerations of the EU's value. In other words, the basic pattern outlined above for the two-way interaction between trade relations and performance depictions is expected to emerge for those with higher levels of cognitive mobilization.

However, for those with lower levels of cognitive mobilization the picture may be different. If cognitive mobilization enhances the processing and understanding of both trade relations and depictions of the EU's record, then people with lower levels of cognitive
mobilization should not be so sensitive to whether the EU is predominantly portrayed in terms of success or failure – even if they live in countries whose trade strongly depends on the EU. They may not differ from their counterparts living in countries with weaker trade relations with the EU. Irrespective of the extent to which a country’s trade depends on the EU, people low in cognitive mobilization will be hardly affected by depictions of the EU’s record in their support for the EU. In other words, the pattern outlined above for the interaction between trade relations and performance depictions will not hold for those with lower levels of cognitive mobilization. Technically speaking, if the pattern of effects is conditional upon cognitive mobilization, a three-way interaction between trade relations, performance depictions, and cognitive mobilization should emerge.

6.2 Method

6.2.1 Sample

To assess how the performance of the EU is depicted in the media, this study draws on the content analysis conducted in Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK for the period between December 4 and 14, 2000. With respect to the main focus of this chapter, this selection of countries also provides sufficient variation in the key variables. In Denmark and the UK, support for the EU and further integration and trust in European institutions is traditionally lower than in the three remaining countries. The trade relations with the EU also vary markedly, with Denmark, France and the Netherlands being more dependent on trade with other EU countries than the UK and Germany (see Table B4 in Technical Appendix B). Finally, as I have argued at the beginning of Chapter 3, this sample may be advantageous because the countries are to some extent similar in characteristics that cannot easily be controlled, but might be influential, for example the basic structure of the media system and reporting styles (see for further information, Siune & Hulten, 1998; Heinderyckx, 1993). Further information on the design and procedure of the content analysis can be found in section 3.2.1. It may suffice here to point out that, per country, the main evening news of the most widely watched public broadcasting and commercial network were content analyzed (see Table B3 in Technical Appendix B for further information).

To assess support for the EU and for European integration, Eurobarometer 54.1 was used. In each of the five countries, at least 1000 people were interviewed. It is important to note that the interviewing period in the five countries overlaps with the period of investigation of the content analysis. To link, at the individual level, measures of EU support and trust as tightly as possible to the content measures, respondents from the five countries were selected according to two criteria. First, they had to be interviewed between December 5 and 15, 2000. Second, they had to watch television news everyday. This selection has two advantages. If a

---

80 The summit of EU heads of government took place from December 7 to December 9. Note that only 7 of the 11 days were included in the analyses presented in Chapter 3.
81 The exact figures are: Denmark (n = 1,000), France (n = 1,003), Germany (2,027; 1,013 in West Germany and 1,014 in East Germany), the Netherlands (n = 1,004), and the UK (n = 1,058).
respondent meets the two criteria, one can track with some certainty the news content the respondents have seen in the day(s) before they were interviewed. Moreover, exposure, processing, and retention of media content can – at the individual level – be modeled in line with results from cognitive psychology.

However, these advantages may come at the cost of a potentially important disadvantage. The sample size of the sub-sample is reduced to 789 cases and this sub-sample may, in the worst case considerably and meaningfully, deviate from the excluded sample. When comparing the sub-sample to the excluded sample, even small differences will become statistically significant, given the large sample size of overall 6,092 cases. Therefore, it is more important to check whether the two samples deviate substantively in the variables relevant to this chapter. As Table B7 in Technical Appendix B shows, there were, as expected, some statistically significant differences between the two samples. Respondents in the sample relevant to this chapter (i.e., the sub-sample) were slightly older, better educated, and less often occupied as low status employees. They were slightly more exposed to newspapers and radio, talked more often about politics, were somewhat more cognitively mobilized, and tended to be slightly more to the right politically. Moreover, their opinions about the EU were slightly more favorable. However, none of these differences were large nor did the two samples differ in any of the variables directionally. What is more, the variance in the sub-sample was not diminished. If the variance diminishes considerably in a sub-sample, this may affect a variable's potential to exert an influence. However, this was clearly not the case in the sub-sample relevant to this chapter. In sum, the sample of the respondents who watch television news daily and who were interviewed between December 5 and 15 did not differ from the excluded sample in ways that it would be inappropriate for the purpose of this investigation.

6.2.2 Measures

6.2.2.1 Independent variables – modeling accumulated declining effects

The depiction of the performance of the EU was operationalized as the difference between the degree of success depicted in an EU news story and the degree of failure (for further information, see section 3.2.1). This was done for each of the 11 days in the period of investigation and each country separately. Based on results from cognitive psychology and communication science, this measure was refined as follows. First, longer stories, stories at the beginning of a bulletin, and visually enriched stories are recalled better (Davis &

---

82 Admittedly, the link was tighter if it could be established which particular channel the respondents watched the day(s) before being interviewed. Unfortunately, as is often the case with secondary analyses, this measure was not available in Eurobarometer 54.1. However, even if a particular respondent did not watch any of the two channels content analyzed, it can be assumed that he received similar coverage from other channels given that the two channels are fairly representative of the television news coverage in the particular countries (generally: Hans-Bredow-Institut, 2002; European Journalism Centre, 2002; for Denmark: Hujanen, 2000; for Germany: Gerhards, Grajczyk, & Klingler, 1999; for the Netherlands: Brants & Neijens, 1998; van Praag & van der Eijk, 1998; for the UK: Norris et al., 1999).
Robinson, 1986; Edwardson, Grooms, & Pringle, 1981; Edwardson, Grooms, & Proudlove, 1976; Gunter, 1979, 1987; Price & Czilli, 1996; Renckstorf, 1980). Therefore, the performance depiction measure, which is assessed for each particular story, was weighted (i.e., multiplied) by the prominence of the particular EU story. Recall that the prominence measure encompasses the length and the placement of a story and the extent to which it is visualized (for further information, see section 2.2.1). If there were multiple EU stories per day, the weighted performance depictions were summed.

Second, television content measures are often treated as if respondents perfectly recalled what they watched on television. Put differently, the content measure is not modified according to findings from cognitive psychology that show that received information is usually forgotten rather rapidly if not (re)activated. More specifically, research has consistently shown that memory decays exponentially (for a review, Baddeley, 1999). Most information is quickly forgotten after exposure, but the decay slows down as time progresses. Watt et al. (1993), Zhu et al. (1993), and recently Selb (2001) have modeled such processes in the realm of agenda-setting and focused on the decay of the amount of information. However, no study to date has applied this basic process to the substance or, more specifically, the valence of information. Two aspects seem important here. First, scholars found that the exponential decay of memory by and large applies to many types of learned material (Baddeley, 1999). Second, also evaluative information or even emotional events are eventually forgotten (Pillemer, 1984; for review, see: Reisberg, 1997). This may be reflected in the conventional wisdom that positive information becomes less positive over time as negative information becomes less negative. Therefore, I assume that the notion of exponentially decaying memory can also be applied to more substantive characteristics of news coverage such as performance depictions.

For the specific case of performance depictions, I further assume that favorable and unfavorable depictions of the EU neutralize each other not only within a particular news story but also across stories and, eventually, across time. In other words, a particular news story that, on balance, portrays the EU as successful may be neutralized by another news story that, on balance, portrays the EU as not successful. Across time, the same pattern applies, but depends on how much of the original information is remembered. That is, the information presented in a favorable news story broadcast four days ago will be less strongly present in a person’s memory than information in an unfavorable news story broadcast only one day ago. The balance would consequently be slightly unfavorable. Generally, it should be noted that this approach only presents a starting point of modeling media effects in a way which is more in line with results from cognitive psychology. It cannot be ruled out that there are a variety of moderating or mediating influences not investigated yet that might render the just sketched model more complex (e.g., involvement with the topic, prior knowledge, intensity of attention, depth of processing).

Actually, strong emotions connected with information can slow the process of forgetting (Yullie & Tollestrup, 1992). However, the valence of information presented in television news (e.g., evaluations, performance depictions) is usually much weaker and less involving than (personal) emotional events. Therefore, it can be assumed that the forgetting of the valence of news information may by and large follows the decay pattern of neutral pieces of information.
Mathematically, decay of memory can be expressed as exponential function:\(^8\)

\[ PD_t = PD_i \cdot e^{-k(t-i)} \]  \hspace{1cm} (E 6.1)

where

- \( PD_t \) is the remembered performance depiction at time \( t \)
- \( PD_i \) is the original performance depiction at the point of time \( i \) (i.e., when the performance depiction was received)
- \( e^{-k(t-i)} \) is the natural logarithm base (i.e., 2.718) raised to the negative power of the decay constant \(-k\) which is multiplied by the difference between the point of time \( t \) when the performance depiction is remembered and the point of time \( i \) when the information was received.

Note that, in this chapter, the metric of \( t \) and \( i \) is days. The very first day of the period of investigation defines the starting point for both \( t \) and \( i \) and is assigned the value zero (see Table 6.1). Depending on how many days have passed since that starting point, \( t \) and \( i \) carry values from 1 to \( m \). This is, if a person received the performance depiction on the third day of the period of investigation (\( i = 2 \)) and remembers the performance depictions on the fifth day (\( t = 4 \)), \( t-i \) becomes 2. When the person remembers the performance depictions on the sixth day (\( t = 5 \)), \( t-i \) becomes 3 etc. Hence, the larger the difference between \( t \) and \( i \) gets, the bigger the power \( e^{-k(t-i)} \) becomes. As a result, the term \( e^{-k(t-i)} \) becomes smaller. Note that on the very first day of the period of investigation (\( t \) and \( i \) equal zero) the term \(-k(t-i)\) becomes zero and \( e^{-k(t-i)} \) becomes one. However, now the important question arises of what the value of the constant \( k \) is.

Table 6.1: Exemplification of the \((t-i)\) component of the power of the decay term

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point of time when PD is received</th>
<th>Point of time when PD is received</th>
<th>Dec 4</th>
<th>Dec 5</th>
<th>Dec 6</th>
<th>Dec 7</th>
<th>Dec 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Point of time when PD is received</td>
<td>Dec 4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dec 5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dec 6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dec 7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dec 8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Table entries indicate the result from \( t-i \).*

\(^8\) For didactic reasons, the notation in this chapter differs from the notation in Watt et al. (1993).
Determining the decay factor $k$

The crucial component of the exponential memory decay formula is the decay constant $k$. Because the formula is to model decay, $k$ carries a negative sign. The more negative $k$ becomes, the more rapid the decay. As Figure 6.1 shows, if $k$ equals, for example, $-0.35$, about 30% of the original information is forgotten after one day. Conversely, if $k$ equals, for example, $-0.75$, more than 50% of the original message are forgotten after one day. No study to date has investigated the decay rate for information received from television. As a matter of fact, the few studies modeling recall with memory decay curves typically experiment with different decay rates (e.g., Watt et al., 1993; Selb, 2001). However, there is evidence that memory for television news is restricted, with a lot of the news items not recalled immediately after exposure (Davis & Robinson, 1986; Gunter, 1987; Katz, Adoni, & Parness, 1977; Neuman, 1976). This suggests a relatively strong decay. More specifically, it has been shown for a variety of contents that about two-thirds of the original information is forgotten after two days (Baddeley, 1999; Parkin, 1999). Assuming that this applies to the recall of television news as well, one can easily compute the pertinent decay factor. If 33% of the original information is recalled after two days, equation E 6.1 can be specified as $e^{-2k} = 0.33$. Taking the natural logarithm of both sides and solving for $k$ gives the decay factor:

\[
\ln e^{-2k} = \ln 0.33 \\
-2k \ln e = \ln 0.33 \quad (\text{because generally } \ln e^x \text{ equals } x \ln e) \\
k = -(\ln 0.33/2) \ln e \\
k = -0.55
\]

Note that there are potential influences on the decay factor, for example, the nature of content, the involvement and prior knowledge of the recipient, previous thematization of an issue in the news, the specific viewing situation etc. Currently, none of such influences has been investigated with respect to their impact on memory decay. Thus the decay factor of $k = -0.55$ can only be seen as a rough approximation to the "real" decay factor. Nevertheless, it seems more desirable to work, from the very beginning, with one factor instead of judging the appropriateness of particular decay factors post hoc on the basis of the significance of the results.
Accumulated declining effects

The preceding paragraphs referred to the decay of memory for only one particular piece of information or, more specifically, one particular performance depiction. However, in the course of time, people are obviously confronted with multiple pieces of information or performance depictions of the EU (note that one story carries only one performance depiction). Moreover, it has to be taken into account that, on a particular day, there may be multiple EU stories and, hence, multiple performance depictions. Across the various days and for each particular day, the performance depictions are thus summed. In other words, information accumulates and decays at the same time (Watt et al., 1993; Selb, 2001). The general mathematical expression of accumulated declining effects is:

$$PD_t = \sum_{j=1}^{n} PD_{ij} \cdot e^{-k(t-i)}$$  \hspace{1cm} (E 6.2)

where

- $PD_t$ represents the accumulated, but declining performance depictions remembered at time $t$
- $PD_{ij}$ is the original performance depiction in the $j$th story at the point of time $i$ (i.e., when the performance depiction was received) and
- $e^{-k(t-i)}$ is the natural logarithm base (i.e., 2.718) raised to the negative power of the decay constant $k$ which equals -0.55. This constant is multiplied by the difference between
the point of time $t$ when the performance depiction is remembered and the point of time $i$ when the information was received.

As outlined above, the original information (i.e., the performance depiction) itself is weighted by the prominence of the story. Consequently, equation E 6.2 has to specified as:

$$PD_t = \sum_{j=1}^{n} P_{ij} \cdot PD_{ij} \cdot e^{-k(t-i)}$$  \hspace{1cm} (E 6.3)

where

$P_{ij}$ is the prominence of the $j$th story on the $i$th day.

Depending on the number of stories $n$ at the $i$th point of time, the product of $P_{ij}, PD_{ij}$ and the decay term is summed. Note again that the sum of the information that decays in memory warrants the accumulation of information.

To illustrate, in this study television content broadcast during a period of 11 days (Dec 4 to Dec 14) is used. Moreover, respondents interviewed between Dec 5 and 15 have been selected. The period of investigation then extends from Dec 4 to Dec 15. For the $(t-i)$ component of the power of the decay term in E 6.3, this means the following (for reasons of illustration, Table 6.1 only covers the period from Dec 4 to Dec 8). For respondents interviewed on Dec 5 (i.e., when the performance depiction is remembered), $t-i$ in E 6.3 is 1 for the performance depictions watched on Dec 4 (see Table 6.1). Consequently, the exponential power is $-k(t-i) = -0.55 \times 1 = -0.55$. If, for example, the depicted performance in a story (broadcast and received on Dec 4) was slightly positive (i.e., +2) and the prominence of the particular story was 2.5 (i.e., the average in summit periods, see Chapter 3), the remembered weighted information on Dec 5 would be $2.5 \times 2 \times 2.718^{-0.55} = 2.88$. If the respondent was interviewed on Dec 6 (i.e., $t-i = 2$, see Table 6.1), the remembered performance depiction (of the original performance depiction broadcast and received on Dec 4) would be $2.5 \times 2 \times 2.718^{-1.1} = 1.66$ (the decay term is $-0.55 \times 2 = -1.1$). Let us assume further that, on Dec 5, the respondent received additional information. The depicted performance of the EU was fairly negative (-3) and the story was prominent (3). Bearing in mind that the respondent is interviewed on Dec 6 (i.e., for the story broadcast and received on Dec 5, $t-i$ equals 1, see Table 6.1), the recalled information is $(-3) \times 3 \times 2.718^{-0.55} = -5.19$. Of course, this adds to the decaying information received on Dec 4, thus $1.66 + (-5.19) = -3.53$. In other words, the number $-3.53$ represents the accumulated declining amount of information about the depicted performance of the EU in television news. This can be continued for the whole period, this is, respondents interviewed on Dec 15 are assumed to have received the accumulated declining information of the 11 days before.
Trade relations and cognitive mobilization

A particular country's trade relations with the EU were computed by dividing the sum of imports from and exports to EU countries by the sum of the total import and export figures of the particular country. The resulting percentage measure varied between 66% for Denmark and 54% for the UK. In other words, Denmark is more dependent on the EU in its trade relations than is the UK. For the computation the 1999 trade figures were used (OECD, 2002).

Cognitive mobilization was operationalized with the question "When you hold a strong opinion, do you ever find yourself persuading your friends, relatives or fellow workers to share your view? Does this happen often, from time to time, rarely or never?" The response categories were recoded such that the anchors were 1 (never) and 4 (often). All independent variables were centered around their mean to avoid multicollinearity problems when investigating interaction effects (Aiken & West, 1991; Jaccard et al., 1990).

6.2.2.2 Dependent and control variables

General support for the EU was measured with the question "Generally speaking, do you think that <your country>’s membership of the European Union is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad?" The answers were coded such that 1 meant bad, 2 neither good nor bad, and 3 good. Support for further integration was operationalized as people’s desired speed of building Europe and was gauged with a seven-point scale with the anchors 1 (standstill) and 7 (runs as fast as possible).

To the extent that it is possible in a secondary analysis, control variables were included which have proven influential in previous research on support for the European Union. Given that the chapter focuses on the interplay of trade relations and performance depictions, it is crucial to control for individual characteristics that may also affect utilitarian considerations of EU support. In particular, this is the occupational situation of respondents (e.g., Anderson & Reichert, 1995; Gabel & Palmer, 1995, Gabel, 1998a) and their perceived benefit from the EU (e.g., Gelleny & Anderson, 2000). Further, the following variables have been found to influence support for the EU: left-right position (e.g., Budge et al., 1987; Inglehart et al., 1987), satisfaction with domestic democracy (e.g., Anderson, 1998), and education (e.g., Inglehart, 1970; Inglehart et al. 1991). Because this chapter deals with the potential impact of television news coverage, it seems appropriate to control for the exposure to news in other media as well, in particular to radio and newspapers. Finally, age and gender were included as control variables because women and the elderly have been found to be more opposed to European integration (e.g., Anderson, 1998; Janssen, 1991; Gabel, 1998a).

The occupational situation was measured by creating three dummy variables for self employed people (e.g., farmer, fishermen, shop owners), lower status employees (e.g., skilled...
Effects on support for the EU

manual worker, service jobs), and higher status employees (e.g., general and middle management). People not being in the labor force presented the reference category. The perceived benefit from the EU was assessed with the question "Taking everything into consideration, would you say that <your country> has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Union?" The dichotomous response categories were inversely coded so that 0 equaled not benefited and 1 equaled benefited. Left-right position was operationalized with people's self-assessed position on a ten-point scale where 1 was left and 10 right. Satisfaction with domestic democracy was measured with the question "On the whole are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in <your country>?" The variable was recoded such that 4 meant very satisfied. To assess the level of formal education, respondents were asked at which age they had stopped full-time school. Four groups were created: people who stopped at the age of 15 or earlier, people who stopped between 16 and 19 years of age, people who were older than 20 and, as residual category, those who were still studying. To measure to what extent people expose themselves to newspaper and radio news the response categories with the anchors 1 (everyday) and 5 (never) were inversely coded so that 5 meant everyday. The measurement of age and gender was straightforward.

6.2.3 Data analysis

Weighting of data, treatment of missing cases and of hierarchical data structures

Because the number of respondents from the five countries differed in the selected sub-sample, respondents from the various countries were weighted such that the share of respondents from each country in the total sub-sample was equal. In other words, given the total sub-sample size of 789 respondents, each country was weighted up (like France and the UK) or down (like Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands) to 157.8 respondents (789 divided by 5). The weighting factors ranged from 0.55 for the Netherlands to 5.44 for the UK.

Bearing in mind the small sample size, it is desirable not to lose any respondents due to missing values. Therefore, whenever missing cases occurred in the control variables, they were replaced either by mean substitution (for metric variables) or the most frequent category (for dichotomous variables). Generally, there were only a few missing cases across the variables. Only for the perceived benefit from the EU, there were 128 don't know answers. Given that the distribution of this variable also deviated in the selected sub-sample from the original sample, the recoding of the don't know answers to the most frequent category (i.e., the benefited category) may lead to some bias in the sample. Therefore, I checked all analyses presented in the results section for two treatments of the missing values - first, for the recoding to the most frequent category and second for the recoding to the opposite category (i.e., not benefited). The latter recoding consistently reduced the strong effect of the variable slightly. Moreover, it even slightly increased the effect sizes of the influences investigated in

86 The number of respondents per country was: Denmark (n = 254), France (n = 47), Germany (n = 171), the Netherlands (n = 288), and the UK (n = 29).
this chapter. Because it can thus be concluded that neither way of recoding substantively affects the key questions of this chapter, I decided, for consistency reasons, to recode the don't know answers to the most frequent category (although the effects are thus slightly weaker).

As outlined in detail in section 4.2.2, hierarchical data structures in general and cross-level interactions entail the problem of underestimated standard errors if usual OLS regressions are estimated. However, the statistically most advanced approach to hierarchical data structures – multi-level models – requires an amount of power in the data that the current data set with its 789 cases and its five contextual units does not have. In other words, for simple practical reasons, multi-level modeling cannot be applied to the data at hand, the theoretical reasons for not employing multi-level models in this chapter notwithstanding. Therefore, like in all preceding chapters, the correction of the standard error is done with the 'sandwich' estimator of the standard error (Huber, 1967, White, 1980). Recall that the critical t-value is determined on the basis of number of clusters (i.e., countries) minus one degrees of freedom, resulting in four degrees of freedom. The significance of the individual-level effects may thus be underestimated.

Post hoc probing of two- and three-way interaction effects with metric variables

In this chapter, an interaction between three metric variables is expected – trade relations, performance depiction, and cognitive mobilization. The post hoc probing is basically an extension of the procedure outlined in section A3 in Technical Appendix A, which is shortly described there in section A4. All three variables were centered around their mean to avoid multicollinearity problems.

6.3 Results – it's the trade relations, yet in a curious way

With respect to the first two goals of this chapter, it was in the first place expected that stronger trade relations and more positive depictions of the EU's general performance would lead to more support for the EU and for further integration. As models 1 in Tables 6.2 and 6.3 show separately for each of the two dependent variables, there was no significant influence whatsoever of the two independent variables. However, if an interaction term between the two independent variables was included, the picture became clearer (see models 2 in Tables 6.2 and 6.3). For both EU support (Table 6.2) and support for further integration (Table 6.3), a significant interaction effect between trade relations and performance depiction emerged. What do the interactions mean? It was expected that, in countries that strongly depend on the EU for their trade, citizens follow performance depictions of the EU more sensitively and build them into their support for the EU and for European integration. Conversely, in countries that depend less strongly on the EU for trade, citizens may form these opinions independent of or even contrary to performance depictions.
Table 6.2: Impact of performance depictions, trade relations with the EU, and cognitive mobilization on EU support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 739)</td>
<td>(n = 739)</td>
<td>(n = 739)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-.066 (.043)</td>
<td>-.080 (.051)</td>
<td>-.096 (.052)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.002 (.003)</td>
<td>-.002 (.002)</td>
<td>-.002 (.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.084 (.057)</td>
<td>.090 (.058)</td>
<td>.091 (.057)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>.142 (.135)</td>
<td>.134 (.142)</td>
<td>.142 (.138)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower status employees</td>
<td>-.008 (.079)</td>
<td>.009 (.075)</td>
<td>.018 (.076)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher status employees</td>
<td>.085 (.095)</td>
<td>.103 (.084)</td>
<td>.102 (.086)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper exposure</td>
<td>.048 (.018)</td>
<td>.047 (.020)</td>
<td>.047 (.019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio exposure</td>
<td>.024 (.027)</td>
<td>.019 (.030)</td>
<td>.021 (.030)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political talk</td>
<td>-.038 (.012)</td>
<td>-.026 (.041)</td>
<td>-.021 (.030)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive mobilization</td>
<td>.037 (.012)*</td>
<td>.027 (.009)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-left position (10 = right)</td>
<td>-.012 (.029)</td>
<td>-.009 (.030)</td>
<td>-.009 (.031)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction domestic democracy</td>
<td>.059 (.079)</td>
<td>.074 (.074)</td>
<td>.075 (.074)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefited from EU (1 = yes)</td>
<td>.933 (.112)***</td>
<td>.927 (.106)***</td>
<td>.931 (.111)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance depiction</td>
<td>-.005 (.010)</td>
<td>-.017 (.004)*</td>
<td>-.015 (.004)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade relations</td>
<td>-1.16 (1.09)</td>
<td>-1.693 (.796)</td>
<td>-1.635 (.761)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive mobilization</td>
<td></td>
<td>.008 (.012)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way interactions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance X Trade</td>
<td>.470 (.090)**</td>
<td>.448 (.101)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance X Cog. mobilization</td>
<td></td>
<td>.003 (.007)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive mobilization X Trade</td>
<td></td>
<td>.174 (.518)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three-way interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance X Cog. mob. X Trade</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.71 (.084)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>1.332</td>
<td>1.304</td>
<td>1.359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R Square</strong></td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

*Note. Cell entries are unstandardized multiple regression coefficients. Robust standard errors in brackets.

*Data sources: EB 54, Content analysis EU coverage during routine and summit periods*
Table 6.3: Impact of performance depictions, trade relations with the EU, and cognitive mobilization on support for European integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1 (n = 733)</th>
<th>Model 2 (n = 733)</th>
<th>Model 3 (n = 733)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.029 (.160)</td>
<td>-0.015 (.175)</td>
<td>-0.044 (.216)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.019 (.011)</td>
<td>-0.014 (.010)</td>
<td>-0.012 (.009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.055 (.110)</td>
<td>0.084 (.129)</td>
<td>0.109 (.136)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>-0.002 (.250)</td>
<td>-0.034 (.288)</td>
<td>0.005 (.223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower status employees</td>
<td>-0.280 (.386)</td>
<td>-0.221 (.391)</td>
<td>-0.163 (.364)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher status employees</td>
<td>-0.024 (.260)</td>
<td>0.026 (.249)</td>
<td>0.010 (.233)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper exposure</td>
<td>0.003 (.031)</td>
<td>-0.002 (.032)</td>
<td>-0.015 (.036)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio exposure</td>
<td>-0.041 (.038)</td>
<td>-0.046 (.034)</td>
<td>-0.016 (.035)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political talk</td>
<td>-0.069 (.214)</td>
<td>-0.060 (.210)</td>
<td>-0.086 (.224)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive mobilization</td>
<td>0.157 (.161)</td>
<td>0.152 (.160)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-left position (10 = right)</td>
<td>-0.062 (.044)</td>
<td>-0.044 (.045)</td>
<td>-0.044 (.044)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction domestic democracy</td>
<td>-0.019 (.044)</td>
<td>0.025 (.138)</td>
<td>0.043 (.124)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefited from EU (1 = yes)</td>
<td>1.22 (.030)**</td>
<td>1.186 (.041)**</td>
<td>1.23 (.067)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance depiction</td>
<td>0.004 (.037)</td>
<td>-0.034 (.027)</td>
<td>-0.030 (.025)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade relations</td>
<td>0.887 (4.53)</td>
<td>-1.340 (2.76)</td>
<td>-1.711 (2.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive mobilization</td>
<td>1.493 (.326)*</td>
<td>1.586 (.309)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way interactions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance X Trade</td>
<td>1.493 (.326)*</td>
<td>1.586 (.309)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance X Cog. mobilization</td>
<td>-.014 (.009)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive mobilization X Trade</td>
<td>-4.287 (.575)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three-way interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance X cog. mob. X Trade</td>
<td>-.485 (.143)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.888</td>
<td>4.127</td>
<td>4.318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R Square</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01; *** p < .001

Note. Cell entries are unstandardized multiple regression coefficients. Robust standard errors in brackets.

Data sources: EB 54, Content analysis EU coverage during routine and summit periods.

Table 6.4 shows the simple slopes along with the standard errors and the significances. Note that the measure of trade relations is centered around the sample mean. The simple slopes indicate the influence of the EU performance depictions to which individuals were exposed on EU support or on support for further integration. This influence is conditional on the trade relations of the particular countries with the EU. For each of the two dependent variables, the
**Table 6.4: Influence of performance depictions on support for the EU and for European integration at different values of trade relations and cognitive mobilization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Trade relations (centered)</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.063</td>
<td>-.056</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EU support (DV)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade X performance</th>
<th>-.047***</th>
<th>-.043***</th>
<th>-.004</th>
<th>-.001</th>
<th>.011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.007)</td>
<td>(.007)</td>
<td>(-.004)</td>
<td>(.005)</td>
<td>(.006)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**European integration (DV)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade X performance</th>
<th>-.128***</th>
<th>-.118***</th>
<th>.008</th>
<th>.015</th>
<th>.054</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.025)</td>
<td>(.025)</td>
<td>(.033)</td>
<td>(.034)</td>
<td>(.040)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Three-way interactions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade X performance X low cog. mobilization</th>
<th>-.106***</th>
<th>-.099***</th>
<th>-.015</th>
<th>-.010</th>
<th>.016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.016)</td>
<td>(.016)</td>
<td>(.026)</td>
<td>(.027)</td>
<td>(.034)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade X performance X medium low cognitive mobilization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-.090***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(.023)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade X performance X medium high cognitive mobilization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-.073*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(.036)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade X performance X high cog. mobilization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(.050)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Note. Cell entries are simple slopes. Standard errors in brackets.
Data sources: EB 54, Content analysis EU coverage during routine and summit periods.

*Trade X performance* rows indicate that the slope became less negative and eventually turned positive as a country's trade relations depend more strongly on the EU. However, only for the countries being less dependent on the EU was this influence significant. Put differently, the less a country depended on the EU for trade, the more negatively the depicted performance of the EU affected people's support for the EU and for further integration. As a matter of fact, in such countries more negative depictions of the EU's record resulted in higher levels of support. People from countries with stronger trade dependencies on the EU tended to be positively affected by performance depictions, yet this effect was not significant. The results rather suggest that people were not affected by media depictions of the EU's record if they live in countries with medium or high EU trade dependencies.
The descriptions of the results in the preceding paragraph are based on the trade relations values of the five countries investigated here. However, because trade relations is treated as continuous variable in the analysis, one may, for reasons of illustration, slightly extend the range of this variable. Figure 6.2 shows the simple slopes (i.e., the influence of the depicted EU performance) as dependent on varying levels of trade relations. Note that, for computational reasons, centered values of the trade relations variables have to be used. Negative values indicate values below the sample mean, positive values indicate values above the sample mean. As was already obvious from Table 6.4, the influence of the depicted performance turns positive as EU trade dependencies increase. This is especially true for the impact of performance depictions on support for further integration. Note again that, in this chapter, there is no evidence of a significantly positive influence of media depictions on any of the two dependent variables, Figure 6.2, tentatively suggests that, ceteris paribus, there might be, in principle, a positive influence if only trade dependencies are sufficiently large.

As to the third goal of this chapter, the potential additionally moderating influence of cognitive mobilization, it was expected that performance depictions would more strongly influence the cognitively mobilized in countries whose trade depends on the EU. However, for countries less dependent on the EU, it was expected that the cognitively mobilized would be hardly or even negatively affected by performance depictions. It was expected that those with lower levels of cognitive mobilizations would be hardly influenced by media depictions irrespective of the extent to which their country's trade depends on the EU. Models 3 in Tables 6.2 and 6.3 show that a significant three-way interaction between trade relations, performance depictions, and cognitive mobilization occurred for only one of the two dependent variables – support for further integration \( (b = -0.485, p < 0.05, \text{Table 6.3}) \). Generally, three-way interactions are very abstract and call for post hoc probing. Due to the small value...
range of trade relations and cognitive mobilization, I will first specify the meaning of the three-way interaction by looking at the simple slopes and their significances in a table. I will then demonstrate the more general way of plotting the simple slopes of three-way interactions with metric variables in a three-dimensional surface diagram.

The section "Three-way interactions" in Table 6.4 shows, for support for further European integration, the simple slopes (i.e., the influence of performance depictions) as dependent on both varying levels of trade relations and varying levels of cognitive mobilization. In contrast to the expectation, the general pattern found for the two-way interaction between trade relations and performance predictions did not hold for the highly cognitively mobilized, but for those low or medium low in cognitive mobilization. As trade dependencies increased, the influence of performance depictions became less negative and even positive in the case of the cognitively low mobilized in countries with high trade dependencies. Again, however, the influence was only significant in countries with lower levels of trade relations with the EU. In such countries, more negative depictions of the EU's record led to more support for European integration. With respect to countries being more dependent on the EU, this negative influence tended to diminish, yet these effects were not significant.

There was a more or less equally negative effect across all levels of trade relations for those at medium high levels of cognitive mobilization. For the highly cognitively mobilized, the influence of media depictions became more negative in countries with stronger trade relations with the EU – contrary to the expectations. In other words, if people are highly cognitively mobilized, negative depictions of the EU's record resulted in more support for further integration, the more a country's trade depends on the EU. Note that this logic cannot be extended to countries whose trade depends less on the EU because the simple slopes found for these countries were not significant. In sum, the general expectation that cognitively mobilized people would adjust their support for European integration to the depicted performance of the EU and that this would particularly happen at higher levels of trade dependency, turned out to be just the opposite. What is more, in countries with lower trade dependencies on the EU, those low in cognitive mobilization reacted to depictions of the EU's record as did, in countries with higher trade dependencies on the EU, those high in cognitive mobilization – less favorable depictions of the EU resulted in more support for European integration.

Some readers may find a graphical representation of three-way interactions more easily comprehensible. Therefore, I will briefly show how the slopes of three-way interactions can be plotted, thereby generalizing the procedure suggested in section 5.3 to three-way interactions with three metric variables. However, given the limited range of the variables in

---

87 In this post hoc probing, setting the degrees of freedom to four (countries minus one) as done in the original analysis (Table 6.3) would result in all effects at medium high levels of cognitive mobilization being no longer significant at better than the .05 level. Applying the Bonferroni correction and lowering the alpha level to .01 (.05/5) would entail that the effects at medium high levels of cognitive mobilization which are significant at better than the .05 level would no longer be significant. All remaining effects would not be affected by the two adjustments. However, note also the discussions of the assessment of degrees of freedom and the implications of lowering the alpha level in Chapters 4 and 5.
this chapter, I extend their range slightly for illustrative reasons. Figure 6.3 shows the simple slopes as dependent on levels of cognitive mobilization (x-axis) and levels of trade relations (z-axis). Values at both axes are centered for computational reasons. Negative values indicate low levels of the two variables; positive values indicate high levels. Connecting the various simple slopes results in a surface (simply think of a sail). Metaphorically speaking, this sail is pulled in different directions by the interacting variables. If there is a significant three-way interaction, the sail should have the characteristic twisted shape – the ends of the same side are always at different levels (i.e., have different simple slopes, indicated on the y-axis). For example, the side defined by a negative value of cognitive mobilization is at a low level (i.e., very negative) at negative values of trade relations (z-axis) and at a high level (i.e., positive) at positive values of trade relations. This pattern is discernable for all of the remaining three sides of the surface or sail.

Figure 6.3: Influence of performance depictions of the EU on support for further integration as conditional on trade relations and cognitive mobilization

6.4 Discussion – pocketbook supporters? Cognitively mobilized? And otherwise?

This chapter has pulled together three strands of research and has shown that only their conditioning interplay explains public support for the EU and for European integration. More specifically, the findings presented in this chapter advance our knowledge about the antecedents of opinions about the EU in two respects. First, television coverage of the EU

\[88\] Similarly, the t-values of the simple slopes can be plotted in a three-dimensional surface diagram to identify the areas where the simple slopes are (not) significant. Figure B 2 in Technical Appendix B shows the t-values in a graph where the axes are identical to the ones in Figure 6.3. It is fairly easy to see that particularly the slopes (i.e., the influence of performance depictions) were not significant for the cognitively less mobilized in countries with higher trade dependencies on the EU. Moreover, there is an area – the cognitively more mobilized in countries with less trade dependencies – where the influence was not significant, either.
matters, yet again this depends on contextual factors, particularly on trade relations with the EU. Unlike in previous research, economic conditions did not directly affect support for the EU (e.g., Anderson & Kalthenthaler, 1996; Eichenberg & Dalton, 1993; Gabel & Whitten, 1997; Inglehart & Rabier, 1978), but conditioned the impact of the depiction of the EU's record in television news. Second, cognitive mobilization makes a difference, yet differently than previous research suggests. The highly cognitively mobilized and the less cognitively mobilized differ under the same economic conditions, but they may be strikingly similar under different economic conditions. In sum, as the many qualifying buts and yets in the preceding sentences show, this chapter is primarily about the conditions under which media effects on opinions about the EU emerge. Thus, this chapter challenges all implicit or explicit assumptions about across-the-board media effects on opinions about the EU.

Bearing in mind the results of the fourth and fifth chapter, it would have been surprising to find the same strength and direction of media effects across all countries investigated. Once more, the interaction between a contextual factor – trade relations – and the individually received coverage brings about media effects. Unexpectedly, however, these effects were only significant if trade relations with the EU were low. In such cases, people supported both the EU and further integration more strongly if television news depicted the performance of the EU less favorably. These findings have two implications – first, with respect to the ramifications of utilitarian considerations on EU-related opinions and, second, with respect to the character of media effects in general and in the EU context in particular.

With respect to the ramifications of utilitarian considerations, the finding suggests that the relative independence of specific utilitarian orientations towards the EU (as expressed in trade relations) leads to the opposite interpretation of more general outcome-oriented depictions of the EU (as expressed in the depiction of the EU's record). The less their country's trade depends on the EU, the more citizens of such countries may be able to "afford" rejecting general utilitarian cues about the EU's record. Although the data cannot provide evidence in this respect, it might be presumed that such citizens focus more on abstract, universal long-term qualities and values of the EU, for example that the EU may warrant long-lasting peace in Europe or that the EU may be an unprecedented experiment in the integration of formerly hostile nation states. It should be noted that, in these interpretations, the focus lies on the effects of negative depictions of the EU. This is in line with Chapter 3 in which it was shown that the depiction of the EU's performance is on balance negative. However, the negative effect of performance depictions found in Table 6.4 also implies that more favorable depictions of the EU's record result in less positive opinions about the EU. Again, citizens from countries that are relatively independent of the EU economically might oppose such depictions because they may associate them with abstract and universal negative qualities of the EU – for example, a centralized and uncontrollable governance, the EU as an octopus that pervades and destroys all national sovereignty, or the EU as a threat to national and regional identities.

With respect to the character of media effects in general, the aforementioned finding provides tentative evidence of opposition effects elicited by media coverage. Admittedly, to have full evidence of such effects, an adjustment effect should have occurred for respondents
from countries whose trade more strongly depended on the EU. Nevertheless, when attempting to broaden our horizon of media effects conceptually and empirically, it is an important finding that, under certain conditions, respondents consistently opposed television depictions of the EU’s performance in their support for the EU and for European integration. Implicitly and sometimes even explicitly, much of our reasoning is based upon the notion of the equidirectionality of content and effect. Simply put, it is often assumed that positivity causes positivity and negativity causes negativity. The possibility that – under certain conditions – positivity may cause negativity and negativity may cause positivity is often ignored. As far as media effects on opinions about the EU are concerned, the finding suggests that we might have to specify expectations about the desired or undesired effects of media coverage on opinions about the EU. The results of this and the preceding chapters have suggested that we have to carefully check contextual characteristics before we are able to say anything about the effects of media coverage. What may elicit favorable effects in one country, may have no or even unfavorable effects in another.

The most striking findings of this chapter concern the influence of cognitive mobilization on support for further European integration and trust in EU institutions. The results suggest that Inglehart’s (1970) original conception of the interplay of cognitive mobilization, media coverage, and support for further European integration is in its generality not tenable, for two reasons. First, contrary to what Inglehart’s (1970) hypothesis had predicted, the cognitively mobilized opposed the depicted performance of the EU in their support for further integration if they lived in countries whose trade depended more strongly on the EU. In other words, the cognitively mobilized did not adjust to the tone of coverage in their support for European integration as Inglehart (1970) contends. Second, highly cognitively mobilized people from more EU trade-dependent countries and less cognitively mobilized people from less EU trade-dependent countries reacted similarly to performance depictions. Thus, different economic conditions may ironically result in the same media effect pattern for people with very high or very low levels of cognitive mobilization.

The explanation of this pattern requires some backing from research other than on cognitive mobilization. Inglehart’s (1970) reasoning that the cognitively mobilized have more elaborate skills to acquire and process media information has been confirmed in related research on opinion leaders (e.g., Richmond, 1977; Weimann, 1994). Moreover, Levy (1978) has found opinion leaders, i.e., the cognitively mobilized, to use television news particularly for cognitive orientation. Put differently, the cognitively mobilized may use information from television news more sophisticatedly than the cognitively less mobilized. This also implies that they might accept the basic information, but reject its valence, for example with respect to depictions of the EU’s performance in terms of success or failure. There is evidence that the cognitively more mobilized (or the more knowledgeable and the better educated, for that matter) learn more from the news (e.g., Price & Zaller, 1993), but are generally less easy to influence (e.g., Rhodes & Wood, 1992). Consequently, they may also tend to reject messages more frequently. But why didn’t the highly mobilized in countries with less strong trade dependencies also reject the performance depictions? At the outset of this chapter, it was argued that specific utilitarian orientations as trade dependencies sensitize people also to cues of more general utilitarian nature, such as general performance depictions. These orientations
may have activated the cognitively mobilized in the sense that they opposed the television news depictions of the EU's general performance in their support for further European integration.

However, it is still unclear why those low in cognitive mobilization from countries with less pronounced trade dependencies also tended to oppose depictions of the EU's performance in their support for European integration. If one assumes that the cognitively less mobilized are not sophisticated news users, then one may tentatively conclude that they might not have received or comprehended much of it. In their articulation of support for European integration, they may instead have relied on diffuse cues, for example the generally positive connotation of European integration. Given that most of the depictions of the EU's performance had a negative slant, this may have caused the negative relationship. Conversely, the cognitively less mobilized in countries with stronger trade dependencies on the EU may have been a little more attentive to the news depictions of the EU's record so that the mechanism just described did not come into full play. Future research will find a lot of interesting issues in disentangling these relationships and in explaining them more compellingly than it is possible at the present stage of research. However, the unexpected direction of the results demonstrates how little we still know not only about the relationship between cognitive mobilization and susceptibility to television coverage, but also about the breadth of media effects.

Like its predecessors in Chapters 4 and 5, this chapter suffers from the problem that a baseline measure of the various dependent variables before media exposure was not available. Causally compelling demonstrations of media effects are therefore hampered. However, this chapter has modeled media effects in line with knowledge from cognitive psychology about recall processes and applied it at the individual level of analysis. This has hardly been done in research and, given the low number of respondents, the found effects may also result from this more realistic (yet still tentative) modeling of media effects. A second problem of this chapter may be related to the fact that only five countries were investigated. This may render inferences to countries problematic whose trade depends more or less strongly on the EU. Future researchers should try to sample as many EU countries as possible to gain more robust evidence of the interplay of media coverage and economic conditions. What seems paramount, is to include countries that acceded to the EU only recently because in such countries utilitarian considerations can be assumed to be prevalent. Finally, researchers may want to investigate the above processes for a period longer than two weeks. This will not only increase the variety (and variance) of media content with which respondents are confronted, but will also render the findings more independent of special events.

In conclusion, this chapter has also demonstrated how important television coverage may be for what citizens think about the EU. If the results of this chapter can be replicated, preferably in a larger setting, then not only research on support for the EU and for European integration, but also communication research will face a number of interesting and challenging tasks.
6.5 Summary

In the framework of utilitarian foundations of opinions about the EU, this chapter focused on the interplay between depictions of the EU's performance, economic conditions in terms of trade relations, and cognitive mobilization. The two main findings were:

1. If a country's trade relations with the EU were low, citizens' support for the EU and European integration increased as depictions of the EU's performance became less favorable. This effect disappeared as trade relations with the EU became stronger.

2. People high in cognitive mobilization opposed the depicted performance of the EU in their support for further integration when living in countries whose trade depended more strongly on the EU. The least cognitively people reacted similarly, but only if they lived in countries with less pronounced trade dependencies on the EU.

Thus far, all effect chapters have centered upon opinions about the EU and European integration. However, in order to receive an encompassing impression of how EU citizens approach the EU and which role television coverage plays in this process, it seems advisable not to ignore citizens' emotions about European integration. The following chapter investigates the extent to which television coverage impinges upon fears about European integration. Because this is an unconventional research topic, the following chapter is organized slightly differently than its predecessors with their from-content-to-effects reasoning. The next chapter starts with a rationale why fears about European integration may be a subject worth studying. It subsequently turns to media content and then follows the traditional set-up of an empirical study.
The impact of EU coverage on fears about European integration depends on a country's size and wealth

Until the 1970s, there seemed to be evidence both from practical experience and academic research that citizens of the then European Community provided a what has been called 'permissive consensus' for European integration (see especially Lindberg & Scheingold, 1970; also: Hallstein, 1972; Slater, 1982). Citizens appeared to agree quietly with decisions of national elites about further European integration. Since then, a number of referenda in various member countries have revealed considerable public opposition against pivotal steps of further European integration. Research has paid attention to the fading of permissive consensus and turned to investigations of the influences on public support for the EU (for review, see Gabel, 1998a). However, if one observes more recent key EU events such as EU summits, there seems to be a striking new component to public support for or public opposition to European integration. Citizens no longer wait for referenda or European elections to express their dissatisfaction with EU politics, but demonstrate their opinions publicly. Most of this public demonstration of dissatisfaction with EU politics may be limited to radical groups usually located at the fringes of the political spectrum as the clashes around the summits in Nice and Gothenburg have shown. Nevertheless, this publicly voiced protest may indicate deeply rooted doubts or even fears about further integration that are not sufficiently considered when talking about public support for further integration or the lack thereof. What is more, such doubts or fears may not be confined to radical protest groups but, in less radical form, may be widespread among large parts of the population. As research has started to investigate the antecedents of general public support for European integration after public opposition to the EU had been voiced in referenda, it might now be an appropriate time to start focusing on people's doubts and fears about the EU. This is the general goal of this chapter.

Fears about further European integration may be related to economic, political, and cultural issues. These fears are largely rooted in the character of the European enterprise itself, which aims at uniting economically, politically, and culturally diverse countries formerly hostile to one another. Just because of such differences, for example people from more wealthy countries may fear that they finance less wealthy countries. Citizens from less powerful countries may be afraid of being dominated by powerful countries. Inhabitants of smaller countries may be concerned about their national identity and culture in an ever closer and more powerful European "super state". However, if the media are central to creating a European identity as some argue (Diaz-Nosty, 1997), then the question arises as to whether
the media may also diminish or increase fears about European integration. As the second and third chapter and the relatively limited television coverage of the EU have shown, it is unlikely that the media create the type of hype that would lead to irrational panic among the population (see for interesting examples of media hypes and irrational behavior: Cantril, Gaudet & Hertzog, 1940; Kepplinger & Roth, 1978). Nevertheless, it is possible that the tone towards the EU or its depiction as successful or unsuccessful may enhance or reduce fears about European integration. For instance, if the performance of the EU is generally depicted as unsuccessful, fears in richer countries about financing the EU may not be reduced. As this and the aforementioned example show, many fears about European integration are linked to country characteristics, such as a country's wealth, size, or political power. In the preceding chapters, I have demonstrated the importance of cross-level interactions for establishing effects of EU coverage on opinions about the EU. As a consequence, the tone of EU coverage and performance depictions of the EU will be related to country characteristics in order to study potential media effects on fears about European integration. This is the specific goal of this chapter.

This chapter, then, continues the basic approach to identifying media effects by cross-level interactions, which has been demonstrated in the preceding chapters. Moreover, this chapter tries to shift the focus of EU research from the classic dependent variables such as support for the EU and for European integration to a grossly neglected phenomenon – people's fears about European integration. People's fears about European integration may be of equal importance to the future of the European project as their opinions about it. And if such fears can be linked to television coverage, at least a first step has been taken in the direction of explaining them.

7.1 Who is afraid of Europe?

As far as fears about European integration are concerned, existing research provides little guidance. Monographs on the empirical study of public opinion about the EU do not devote a single chapter to the issue (e.g., Reif & Inglehart, 1991; Niedermayer & Sinnot, 1995). Only few studies deal with related issues such as perceptions of the EU as threat to cultural and national identity (Deflem & Pampel, 1996; McLaren, 2002). This may derive from the fact that questions on fears about European integration have been included in Eurobarometer surveys only since 1995. Another reason may be that research in political science or political communication typically does not deal with fears, but rather with unfavorable or favorable opinions about political and economic developments. In non-psychological research, the study of fear phenomena rather belongs to the stream of research that deals with media entertainment (e.g., Cantor, 1994). Obviously, when watching a news story about the EU, people are highly unlikely to show typical physical fear reactions such as a higher heart beat or sweaty hands. Nor will they shiver when they hear the word European integration. Nevertheless, as people may worry about the effects of particular political decisions at the national level (e.g., reforms of the health or pension system, social welfare cuts), they may be disturbed by decisions and developments at the European level. How do people living in a country of five million citizens react when they hear that countries with 50 million or more
Effects on fears of European integration

inhabitants want their numeric power to be adequately represented in decision processes? What does it mean to people from wealthy countries if the EU is to expand to include countries whose gross domestic product per head is only a fraction of theirs? What does it mean to people whose culture is shared by less than 10 million people if, in the long run, more than 100 million people are to be integrated in the EU?

These questions have two things in common. First, they are unpleasant to raise and to contemplate, and, second, the outcome of the development they center upon – European integration – is not fully controllable. If one accepts that fears evolve around (potentially) unpleasant and uncontrollable developments, then one may conclude that something as fear about European integration may indeed exist. Note that this sort of fear is neither as concrete as specific fears about, for example, snakes or spiders nor as diffuse as different forms of anxiety. Fear, in this chapter, refers to people being disturbed by what they perceive as potentially unpleasant outcomes of European integration that are uncontrollable for them. The fact that people cannot control European integration derives on the one hand from limited possibilities of democratic control and participation in EU decision-making. On the other hand, people's fears may be a result of the sheer dimension of European integration. This process takes place at a remote supra-national level, eventually seeks to unite an entire continent and 470 million people previously divided by two World Wars and the subsequent clash of ideologies in the Cold War.

As already mentioned, fears about European integration can center upon economic, political, and cultural issues. Economically, there have been widespread discussions about the imbalance in the EU between wealthy and less wealthy countries (Kreile, 1999). The basic concern has been that richer countries financially only contribute to the EU while they do not receive anything material in return. With the prospect of the relatively weak Central and Eastern European economies being integrated in the EU, this concern may manifest itself as a fear that richer countries will have to pay even more for poorer countries. Politically, European decision-making with the occasional right to veto as protection of smaller countries has been criticized as being inefficient (Kreile, 1999; Wessels, 1999). In the face of the reform of decision processes in the EU and the enlargement of the EU with big Central European countries such as Poland, citizens in smaller countries may fear that they and their countries lose power in the EU. Culturally, the EU has tried to protect the rights of regional minorities and their identity (Hofmann, 1999). But citizens from smaller countries may also feel that an ever closer and ever bigger EU threatens their national culture. Even if it is questionable whether there is a new wave of nationalism in Europe (Brubaker, 1996), the more recent success of nationalist parties in various European countries may point to the fact that some people fear their national identity to be undermined by European integration.

Although, as already outlined, these three fears may partly result from the structure of the EU, it is unclear whether television coverage reduces or enhances the fears. As has been shown in Chapters 5 and 6, the tone of coverage and performance depictions of the EU may affect support for the EU. Do they influence the three fears above? Given the complete lack of research in this area, I start with two basic assumptions based on the lessons learned from the preceding chapters. First, both the tone of coverage towards the EU and the depicted
performance of the EU will not affect the citizens in the various countries and their fears equally. Rather, because the three aforementioned fears are linked to specific country characteristics, the effect of the two features of coverage will be conditional on these specific country characteristics. Second, though they may be logically related, tone of coverage and performance depictions may have a different impact upon the three fears. As demonstrated in the fifth chapter, under certain conditions, people may adjust to the tone of coverage in their support for the EU. Conversely, people opposed, under special conditions, depictions of the EU's performance in their support for the EU (see Chapter 6). This generally suggests that, under certain conditions, a positive tone towards the EU might reduce fears about European integration while, under different conditions, a depiction of the EU as successful might increase such fears.

Based on these two assumptions about the basic effect pattern, the following expectations can be specified. The fear that rich countries finance the EU and have to pay more for other countries in the wake of further European integration is related to a country's wealth. Assuming that this fear is more pronounced in richer countries, a more positive tone towards the EU can be expected to reduce this fear. The extent to which a positive tone reduces the fear will be most pronounced in the richest countries. However, at lower levels of national wealth, the tone of coverage will hardly influence this fear. The rationale for expecting this pattern primarily comes from the findings in Chapter 5 where the tone of coverage and its effect on support for European integration were in the same direction. For EU citizens, the tone of coverage seems to be the most general cue about whether the EU is a good or a bad thing and citizens adjust their opinions accordingly. Because the tone of coverage provides these general cues, one may also presume that it pacifies citizens from rich countries and their fear of financing the EU. If the EU is generally something positive and generally works well, then richer countries do not have to be afraid of financing the EU.

As argued in Chapter 6, performance depictions of the EU provide outcome-oriented cues of the functioning of the EU in terms of pragmatic achievements and are thus more focused than cues derived from the tone of coverage. Bearing this and the findings of Chapter 6 in mind, the influence of performance depictions on fears may differ from the effects of the tone of coverage. More specifically, I expect that, in richer countries, more favorable depictions of the performance of the EU will boost the fear about more wealthy countries financing the EU. In less wealthy countries, this effect will be the opposite. More favorable depictions of the EU's record will lead to a diminished concern about richer countries financing the EU. As shown in the sixth chapter, the depiction of the EU as successful does not necessarily result in more favorable opinions about the EU, but might, under certain conditions, be associated with the notion of an ever bigger Europe and ever bigger inherent problems. Assuming that this basic mechanism also applies to fears about European integration, citizens from more wealthy countries may consequently regard success of the EU as a potential indication that, from their point of view, an inherent problem of the EU – i.e., richer countries financing the EU – becomes more pressing. Being less concerned with this problem, citizens from less wealthy countries may consider success of the EU as evidence of the fact that inherent problems such as the financing of the EU are alleviated, too. If performance depictions of the EU become negative, this pattern turns around, with citizens
from wealthy countries being less worried and citizens from less wealthy countries being more worried. Technically speaking, I expect two interaction effects – first, between the wealth of a country and the tone towards the EU and, second, between the wealth of a country and performance depictions of the EU.

The two fears that European integration might lead to a *loss of power for smaller member states* and that it might *harm national cultures* are connected with the size of a country. For both fears, I expect an effect pattern similar to the one outlined in the preceding two paragraphs. As greater wealth defined greater concern with respect to richer countries financing the EU, smaller countries are associated with greater levels of the two fears just mentioned. Assuming, then, that the two fears are more pronounced in smaller countries, a more positive tone of coverage will reduce the two fears in such countries as a more negative tone will augment the two fears. With increasing country sizes, the tone of coverage will hardly affect the fears of a loss of power and identity because such fears can be presumed to be less pronounced in bigger countries. These expectations are again based upon the assumption that the tone of coverage provides citizens with general cues about the EU being a good or bad thing, which subsequently quiets fears.

With respect to performance depictions of the EU, I expect that, in small countries, both the fear about small countries losing power and the fear about losing one's own culture will increase with more favorable depictions of the EU's record. Depictions of success (which, to emphasize this again, refer to pragmatic achievements of everyday politics and not to the realization of visionary ideas) may convey to citizens of smaller countries the impression that their interests are ignored. They may simply feel overwhelmed by a dominant European super state that, on top of it all, is even successful. This expectation of a negative effect of coverage in smaller countries also implies that the pattern turns around as performance depictions become negative. In this case, citizens from smaller countries may no longer see their power and identity being threatened by a European super-state and will consequently be less worried about a loss of power and identity. Citizens from bigger countries can generally be assumed neither to be prone to the fear about small countries losing power nor to be inclined to the fear about losing one's own identity. As a result, performance depictions of the EU will hardly influence them. Technically speaking, I expect an interaction effect between country size and both the tone towards the EU and performance depictions of the EU on the fears about power and identity loss.

### 7.2 Method

*Sample and measures*

The data sources and much of the modeling in this chapter is identical to the study presented in the sixth chapter where they have been described in detail. In summary, the study was conducted in five countries: Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, United Kingdom. It draws, per country on a content analysis of the main evening news bulletin of the most widely watched public-broadcasting and commercial channel (for further information, see Table B3
in Technical Appendix B). These content data are combined with survey data from Eurobarometer 54.1. From the five countries, those people were selected who (a) were interviewed between Dec 5 and Dec 15 and who (b) watch TV news everyday. This resulted in a sample size of 789 respondents.

For the following reasons, the five countries form an appropriate sample for the questions at hand. It is desirable to keep constant potentially influential factors such as the media system and reporting styles (see for further information, Siune & Hulten, 1998; Heinderyckx, 1993). The five countries also differ markedly in the contextual variables expected to moderate the influence of television coverage. Although none of the five countries is a poor country, there are notable differences in the gross-domestic product per head ranging from 21,400 US Dollar per head in France to 30,000 US Dollar per head in Denmark. In terms of their country size two smaller countries – Denmark (5.3 million inhabitants) and the Netherlands (15.9) – meet three bigger countries – the UK (59.8), France (58.9), and Germany (82.2) (Figures refer to 2000 and are based on OECD, 2002. See also Table B4 in Technical Appendix B).

The linkage of survey and content analysis data at the individual level of analysis along with the selection of a particular group of respondents has two advantages and one disadvantage. With some certainty, one can track which news content a particular respondent has watched on the day(s) before he/she was interviewed. Moreover, as shown in section 6.2.2.1, exposure, processing, and retention of media content can be modeled in line with results from cognitive psychology as accumulated declining effects. The disadvantage may be that the sub-sample with its 789 cases deviates, in the worst case considerably and meaningfully, from the excluded sample with its 6,092 cases. Therefore, it was checked whether values of the various fears in the sub-sample substantively deviated from the values of the fears in the excluded sample. As argued in section 6.2.1, the focus is less on the significance of the differences than on the substantive meaning of the differences. With sample sizes of more than 6,000 cases, even small differences will become statistically significant. As Table B7 in Technical Appendix B shows, there was not much difference between the two samples with respect to the two fears that European integration might lead to bigger countries financing the EU and to a loss of national culture and identity. Respondents in the excluded sample were significantly less afraid that smaller countries might lose power in the wake of European integration. However, the difference was only six percentage points so that it appears reasonable to state that the two samples did not differ to an extent which would have rendered an analysis of the two goals of this chapter impossible.

Measures – dependent and independent variables

The three fears mentioned above were measured with the question "Some people may have fears about the building of Europe, the European Union. Here is a list of things which some people say they are afraid of. For each one, please tell me if you – personally – are currently afraid of it, or not?" The wording of the fears was: "A loss of power for smaller Member States", "Richer countries paying more for the others", and "The loss of our national identity
Effects on fears of European integration

and culture". The response categories were 1 (currently afraid of it) and 2 (not currently afraid of it). They were inversely coded and assigned the values zero and one so that fearful respondents were coded as 1. Don't know answers were excluded from the analysis because their meaning is hard to interpret.

The tone of coverage was operationalized as the difference between positive and negative evaluations of the EU and has been described in detail in section 3.2.1. To assess the depiction of the performance of the EU, the difference between the degree of success depicted in an EU news story and the degree of failure was computed (for further information, see also section 3.2.1). These computations were done for each of the 11 days in the period of investigation and each country separately. As described in section 6.2.2.1, the two content measures were first weighted by the prominence of the particular story and subsequently modeled in terms of accumulated declining effects. The computation procedures and the decay factor were identical to what has been outlined in detail in section 6.2.2.1. Note that also the basic assumptions remain the same. First, it is assumed that both positive and negative evaluations of the EU and favorable and unfavorable depictions of the EU neutralize each other not only in a particular story, but also across stories and across time. Second, the accumulated declining effects model does not only apply to the amount of stories about particular issues (as in Watt et al., 1993), but also to substantive information with a potentially positive or negative loading, such as evaluations or performance depictions. Across time, positive information loses positivity and negative information loses negativity.

As measure of the wealth of a country, the gross domestic product per head was used (in 1,000 US dollar). This measure has also been employed in previous research on the EU (e.g., Eichenberg & Dalton, 1993). The measure of the size of a country was straightforward (in 1,000,000 inhabitants). Because the fear of a loss of power for smaller EU states refers to power distributions within the EU, I did not use the size of a country as contextual variable, but the number of seats in the European Parliament. The number of seats is a translation of the size of a country, but may more directly tackle power distributions within the EU.

Measures – control variables

Given the lack of research on the issue, nearly the same control variables were employed as in the preceding chapter. This is based upon the assumption that fears about further integration may to some extent be related to support for the EU. Thus, the set of control variables encompassed gender, age, education, occupational situation, class partisanship, exposure to newspaper and radio news, interpersonal political communication, and cognitive mobilization. Because, in answering, respondents may align their fears of European integration with their general support for European integration, the model controls for support for European integration. The rationale for doing so is that research has shown that citizens' opinions about the EU may not only lack a sound foundation (e.g., Anderson, 1998; Janssen, 1991), but are also susceptible to external cues, for example from the questionnaire (Saris, 1997).
Weighting of data, treatment of missing cases and hierarchical data structures

The weighting procedure was identical to the one described in section 6.2.3. Whenever missing cases occurred in control variables, they were replaced either by mean substitution (for metric variables), were coded to middle categories (for nominal or ordinal variables) or the most frequent category (for dichotomous variables). Generally, there were only a few missing cases across the variables. As outlined in section 6.2.3, for the simple lack of sufficient data power (789 cases, 5 contextual units), the hierarchical data structure cannot be modeled with multi-level models. Therefore, the correction of the standard error is done with the 'sandwich' estimator of the standard error (Huber, 1967; White, 1980).

Interaction effects in logistic regression

Because the dependent variables in this chapter are dichotomies, logistic regression models will be estimated. The more complex interpretation of the findings of logistic regression may especially apply to interaction effects. Section A5 in Technical Appendix A outlines how interaction effects are modeled in logistic regressions and how they can be interpreted. Moreover, the post hoc probing of interaction effects is explained. The metric variables involved in the interaction were centered around their mean following a suggestion by Jaccard (2001) for logistic regressions.

7.3 Results – Who is afraid of Europe?

The reasoning in section 7.2 was based on certain common-sense assumptions – that more wealthy countries would be more afraid of richer countries financing the EU and that smaller countries would worry more about smaller countries losing political power and, more generally, about a loss of national identity. Before turning to the core analyses, it is therefore useful to check whether these assumptions were correct by having a look at the distribution of the dependent variables.

Figure 7.1 reveals some unexpected results. The population of the most wealthy country (by the GDP/head standard) – Denmark – was the least afraid of richer countries financing the EU, while in the "less" wealthy countries this fear was more pronounced. Smaller countries did turn out to be the most worried about potential power losses. Nevertheless, there was also a considerable proportion of people in France and the UK, thus bigger countries, that was afraid of a power loss for smaller countries. Finally, inhabitants of two big countries, France and the UK, turned out to be the most worried about a loss of their national identity and culture. The three remaining countries – the biggest European one, Germany, and two smaller ones, Denmark and the Netherlands – did not differ much in their

---

80 For consistency reasons, the analyses presented in Figure 7.1 are based on the sub-sample described above although percentages may be problematic in the case of the French (n = 47) and the British sample (n = 29). However, the findings do not substantively deviate from the overall sample, with two notable exceptions. The fear of a power loss for smaller states was nine percentage points higher in the original German sample and the fear of an identity loss was 14 percentage points lower in the original French sample. However, the deviations do not affect the general pattern.
fear of losing national identity and culture. This check of the assumptions suggests that the key component of the effect analyses, the cross-level interactions, may ultimately look different than originally expected.

As to the fear of richer countries paying more for others, I expected that a more positive tone towards the EU would reduce this fear in richer countries while it would hardly have any impact in less wealthy countries. Conversely, with respect to performance depictions of the EU, I expected that more favorable performance depictions of the EU would boost this fear in richer countries, while they would reduce this fear in less wealthy countries. Table 7.1 shows that there was indeed a significant interaction between a country's wealth and the tone of coverage. However, no significant interaction emerged in the case of performance depictions (Table 7.2). What does the interaction between wealth and tone of coverage mean? In order to answer the question, four different values were computed: the simple slopes at the five different values of national wealth, the pertinent standard errors (to obtain the z-value and thus the significance), the odds ratio of each simple slope, and the percentage change in the odds for a one-unit change in the focal independent variable (for presentation and interpretation of results of logistic regressions, see Pampel, 2000). The findings can be seen in Table 7.3.
Table 7.1: Interaction effects of tone towards the EU and various country characteristics on fears about European integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control variables</th>
<th>Richer countries paying more for others (n = 734)</th>
<th>Loss of power for smaller states (n = 729)</th>
<th>Loss of national identity and culture (n = 755)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-.043 (.239)</td>
<td>.164 (.226)</td>
<td>.409 (.175)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.009 (.012)</td>
<td>.016 (.007)*</td>
<td>.006 (.011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.047 (.282)</td>
<td>-.115 (.119)</td>
<td>-.152 (.132)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>.192 (.738)</td>
<td>-.053 (.364)</td>
<td>-.236 (.485)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower status employees</td>
<td>-.594 (.533)</td>
<td>-.028 (.361)</td>
<td>-.231 (.416)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher status employees</td>
<td>-.725 (.582)</td>
<td>.031 (.361)</td>
<td>-.739 (.580)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper exposure</td>
<td>.150 (.123)</td>
<td>.034 (.098)</td>
<td>-.032 (.054)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio exposure</td>
<td>-.163 (.122)</td>
<td>.114 (.161)</td>
<td>.068 (.153)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political talk</td>
<td>-.024 (.129)</td>
<td>-.068 (.219)</td>
<td>.183 (.233)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive mobilization</td>
<td>.123 (.070)</td>
<td>.062 (.209)</td>
<td>.138 (.158)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-right position</td>
<td>.138 (.031)</td>
<td>-.003 (.080)</td>
<td>.073 (.043)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support EU integration</td>
<td>-.202 (.079)*</td>
<td>-.217 (.120)</td>
<td>-.254 (.059)***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key variables</th>
<th>Richer countries paying more for others (n = 734)</th>
<th>Loss of power for smaller states (n = 729)</th>
<th>Loss of national identity and culture (n = 755)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tone</td>
<td>-.036 (.016)*</td>
<td>.181 (.045)***</td>
<td>.104 (.040)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP/head</td>
<td>-.157 (.021)***</td>
<td>-.012 (.006)*</td>
<td>.015 (.006)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seats EP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country size</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactions</th>
<th>Richer countries paying more for others (n = 734)</th>
<th>Loss of power for smaller states (n = 729)</th>
<th>Loss of national identity and culture (n = 755)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tone X</td>
<td>-.026 (.008)**</td>
<td>007 (.001)***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP/head</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seats EP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country size</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Constant 1.244 - .378 - .170
log likelihood -449.936 -425.667 -461.847
Pseudo R Square .09 .16 .11

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001
Note: Cell entries are unstandardized logistic regression coefficients. Robust standard errors in brackets. Data sources: EB 54.1. Content analysis EU coverage during routine and summit periods.
Table 7.2: Interaction effects of performance depictions of the EU and various country characteristics on fears about European integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control variables</th>
<th>Richer countries paying more for others (n = 734)</th>
<th>Loss of power for smaller states (n = 729)</th>
<th>Loss of national identity and culture (n = 755)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-.032 (.248)</td>
<td>.131 (.251)</td>
<td>.400 (.172)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.008 (.012)</td>
<td>.016 (.004)***</td>
<td>.006 (.012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.075 (.283)</td>
<td>-.155 (.122)</td>
<td>-.175 (.146)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>.189 (.739)</td>
<td>.076 (.228)</td>
<td>-.166 (.533)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower status employees</td>
<td>-.559 (.537)</td>
<td>.033 (.395)</td>
<td>-.217 (.429)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher status employees</td>
<td>-.648 (.592)</td>
<td>.103 (.084)</td>
<td>-.748 (.556)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper exposure</td>
<td>.154 (.120)</td>
<td>.037 (.083)</td>
<td>-.033 (.059)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio exposure</td>
<td>-.163 (.127)</td>
<td>.090 (.169)</td>
<td>.067 (.156)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political talk</td>
<td>-.043 (.140)</td>
<td>.006 (.235)</td>
<td>.256 (.247)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive mobilization</td>
<td>.144 (.066)*</td>
<td>.047 (.221)</td>
<td>.132 (.159)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-right position</td>
<td>.142 (.031)***</td>
<td>.002 (.078)</td>
<td>.069 (.041)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support EU integration</td>
<td>-.207 (.138)**</td>
<td>-.224 (.091)*</td>
<td>-.259 (.065)***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Key variables            |                                                  |                                          |                                                  |
| Performance depiction    | -.034 (.027)                                      | .189 (.059)**                           | .136 (.030)***                                  |
| GDP/head                 | -.204 (.020)***                                   |                                           |                                                  |
| Seats EP                 | -.017 (.007)*                                     |                                           |                                                  |
| Country size             |                                                  |                                           | .010 (.004)*                                     |

| Interactions             |                                                  |                                          |                                                  |
| Performance X GDP/head   | -.003 (.003)                                      |                                           |                                                  |
| Performance X Seats EP   | .004 (.001)**                                     |                                           |                                                  |
| Performance X Country size | .004 (.001)***                                 |                                           |                                                  |

| Constant                 | 1.142                                             | -.540                                   | -.397                                            |
| log likelihood           | -449.202                                          | -434.657                                | -458.536                                         |

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Note. Cell entries are unstandardized logistic regression coefficients. Robust standard errors in brackets.

Data sources: EB 54.1, Content analysis EU coverage during routine and summit periods
Table 7.3: Specific influence of tone towards the EU and performance depictions as conditional on various country characteristics

**Richer countries paying more for others (DV)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>GDP/Head in 1,000 US$ (centered)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple slope</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard error</td>
<td>.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odds ratio</td>
<td>1.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Odds ratio-1)*100</td>
<td>3.601</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Loss of power for smaller states (DV)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>Seats in EP (centered)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple slope</td>
<td>-.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard error</td>
<td>.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odds ratio</td>
<td>.870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Odds ratio-1)*100</td>
<td>-12.975</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Performance depiction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>Seats in EP (centered)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple slope</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard error</td>
<td>.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odds ratio</td>
<td>1.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Odds ratio-1)*100</td>
<td>.682</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Loss of national identity and culture (DV)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>Country size (centered)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple slope</td>
<td>-.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard error</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odds ratio</td>
<td>.962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Odds ratio-1)*100</td>
<td>-3.812</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>Country size (centered)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple slope</td>
<td>-.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard error</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odds ratio</td>
<td>.995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Odds ratio-1)*100</td>
<td>-4.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001
Note. Cell entries are simple slopes. Standard errors in brackets.
Data sources: EB 54, Content analysis EU coverage during routine and summit periods
In the section of Table 7.3 titled "Richer countries paying more for others", the simple slopes at the five different values of national wealth can be found. Note that values of national wealth are centered around the mean. A first inspection shows that the slopes turn from positive to negative as the countries become richer. However, only one of the slopes passes conventional levels of significance. Put differently, only at the highest value of national wealth was there a significant influence of the tone of coverage on people's fear about richer countries financing the EU. Because the simple slope refers to the dependent variable as logged odds and because logged odds are not readily accessible, the regression coefficients are transformed into odds ratios. This also entails the transformation of the dependent variable into odds, which are much easier to interpret. Thus, for the significant odds ratio of .83, this means that the odds of being afraid of rich countries financing the EU reduced by a multiple of .83 with a one-unit increase of the tone of coverage. Because the odds ratio can easily be expressed as percentage change, one can also say that the odds of having this fear reduced by 16.9% with a one-unit change of the tone of coverage. Less technically (but also somewhat less precisely) put, in the wealthiest country, more positive coverage of the EU led people to be less afraid of the fact that rich countries might finance the EU. In less wealthy countries, no such influence was obtained.

With respect to the fear that small countries lose power, it was expected that a more positive tone of coverage would diminish this fear in smaller countries while the tone of coverage would leave inhabitants of bigger countries unaffected. As to the impact of performance depictions, I expected that more favorable depictions would boost the fear in smaller countries whereas citizens from bigger countries would be hardly influenced. There were significant interactions between both the tone of coverage (Table 7.1) and performance depictions (Table 7.2) and the size of a country (operationalized as seats in the European Parliament). In the section "Loss of power for smaller states - tone" of Table 7.3, the simple slopes at different values of a country's power in the EU (i.e., number of seats) can be seen. The increasingly negative slopes at lower country size values seem to indicate that the fear was reduced with a more positive tone towards the EU, yet these slopes did not pass conventional significance levels. However, contrary to the expectations, people's fear about smaller countries losing power intensified with more positive coverage, the bigger the country was. This effect was highly significant. Put in the language of logistic regression and odds ratios, one can see that, for example, in the second largest country the odds of being afraid of smaller countries losing power increased by a multiple of 1.4 (rounded) or by 39.6% with each one-unit change of the tone of coverage. In the third largest country, this percentage increase was 38.7%. In the biggest country, this increase was 51.3%. Put in simplified form, the bigger a country, the more its inhabitants worry about smaller countries losing power if the EU is positively evaluated in television news.

As far as the influence of performance depictions was concerned, a similar pattern emerged. The slopes in the section "Loss of power for smaller states - performance depictions" of Table 7.3 became larger with greater country sizes, contrary to the expectations. However, only at bigger country sizes (operationalized as number of seats in the EP), the slopes were significant. In terms of the odds ratios, this means, for example, for the third largest country that the odds of worrying about smaller countries losing power increased
by a multiple of 1.31 or by 31.4% with performance depictions getting more favorable by one unit. For the two bigger countries, the fear increased by a multiple of 1.32 (31.9%) and by a multiple of 1.38 (38%). In other words, citizens from bigger countries feel more disturbed about smaller countries losing power, the more successfully the EU is portrayed in television news.

The expectations concerning the impact of the tone of coverage and performance depictions on the fear of losing national culture and identity were similar to the ones concerning the fear about smaller countries losing power. It was expected that, in smaller countries, more positive coverage would reduce the fear and more favorable performance depictions would boost the fear, while bigger countries would remain largely unaffected. Were the findings again contrary to the expectations? There were significant interactions between both the tone of coverage (Table 7.1) and performance depictions (Table 7.2) and country size. The meaning of the two interactions is clarified, when looking at the "Loss of national identity and culture" section of Table 7.3. The pattern is similar to what has been described with respect to the fear about smaller countries losing power. With increasing country sizes, people worried more about their national culture being threatened, the more positive the tone of coverage became. There was indeed a (predicted) negative influence of the tone of coverage, yet this effect was not significant. Technically speaking, the tone of coverage getting one unit more positive increased the odds of being afraid of losing national identity, for example, by a multiple of 1.17 (or by 17.3%) in the third largest country. In the biggest country, the tone of coverage getting one unit more positive increased the odds by a multiple of 1.28 (or by 27.8%). In other words, as country sizes increase, citizens worry more about losing national identity, the more positive the EU is evaluated in television news.

This pattern also applied to the influence of performance depictions (Table 7.3). The influence was not significant in the smallest country. However, as country sizes became bigger, so did the influence of performance depictions on citizens fear of losing national identity. To give just one example, in the biggest country, performance depictions getting more favorable by one unit increased the odds of being afraid of losing national identity by a multiple of 1.31 or by 31.3%. More conveniently put, with increasing country sizes, citizens are more concerned about losing national identity and power, the more successfully television news portrays the EU.

7.4 Discussion – the not quite expected influence of EU coverage

This chapter has tackled a new research area and the results were largely contrary to the expectations. It was not expected that, with increasing country size, more positive evaluations would boost people’s fear about smaller countries losing power and about a loss of national culture. Nor was it anticipated that that the two fears (originally expected to be more pronounced in smaller countries) would increase in bigger countries as both the tone of coverage and performance depictions became more favorable. The only finding being halfway in line with the expectations was that the fear of richer countries financing the EU reduced as the tone of coverage became more positive. However, significant evidence of this was only
Effects on fears of European integration

found in the largest country. Therefore, it seems more pressing to focus on the surprising pattern concerning the fear about loss of power and culture. I will first center upon the influence of both performance depictions and tone of coverage and will then deal with the strikingly worried inhabitants of big countries.

It concurs with findings from the sixth chapter that what citizens think may be in contrast with depictions of the EU's performance. In line with this pattern, it was found that more favorable performance depictions led people in bigger countries to be more afraid of a loss of identity and of smaller countries losing power. Given that performance depictions may provide people with cues about the functioning of the EU in terms of its pragmatic achievements, citizens may be confronted with the vision of a remote, uncontrollable super-state which successfully exists somewhere 'up there' between Brussels and Strasbourg, but pays little attention to national, regional, local, or even personal needs and worries. Depictions of success and progress of an abstract entity may evoke notions of the cold, rational, bureaucratic super-state that probably resembles what Orwell and Huxley have described in 1984 and Brave New World. That said, one should keep in mind that the performance depictions of the EU usually had a negative slant (Chapter 3). The above finding also implies that less favorable performance depictions are associated with less pronounced fears. Ironically, then, the EU may benefit from this negative feature of the coverage. However, whether this result extends to different periods of time and all EU countries, needs to be further explored.

Unlike the results concerning performance depictions, the findings concerning the tone of coverage cannot be integrated with outcomes presented earlier in this book. Why does a more positive tone evoke fears? First of all, it is important to note that a more positive tone does not necessarily boost fears about European integration as the results concerning fears about richer countries financing the EU have shown. This suggests that it might be the nature of the fear that shapes the influence. Both the fear of losing national culture and the fear of small countries losing power evolve around non-economic issues. Bearing in mind that the current EU originated as a primarily economic institution and that economic changes are probably the most tangible for most EU citizens (e.g., no customs, no border control, new currency), one may presume that people have not yet advanced much beyond the Treaty of Maastricht. Whereas political and intellectual elites are busy building an ever closer European Union, European citizens still live in the European Economic Community. The sometimes described horizontal multi-speed Europe across countries has possibly its counterpart in a vertical multi-speed Europe across various segments of the population. If the tone in television towards the European Union is positive and if people are moreover confronted with a potential loss of national power and national culture, this vertical multi-speed Europe with its divergent character may come into play. As a consequence, citizens may feel threatened by positive evaluations that indicate an ever closer, but also pervasive and octopus-like European Union that jeopardizes national power and identity. Again, it should be kept in mind that EU coverage usually has a slightly negative slant (see Chapter 3) and that fears are less pronounced with less positive coverage. And again, this finding calls for more research. However, the pattern of results suggests that media coverage might work differently than one would intuitively expect.
The second unexpected result was that the just described influence of coverage increased with the size of a country. With more positive tone and more favorable performance depictions, citizens from bigger and more powerful countries were more afraid than citizens from smaller countries that European integration would lead to a loss of national identity and to a power loss for smaller countries. At first sight, this finding is paradoxical. Why do the citizens from more powerful and bigger countries react more strongly to the coverage and why do they worry more? One explanation may refer to what one might call the coping-with-power experience. As psychological research has shown (Lader & Mathews, 1968; Wolpe, 1958, 1973), fears generally only diminish or disappear, if people learn to cope with fears as a result of having mastered fearful situations. Similarly, inhabitants from smaller and less powerful countries have continuously been confronted with bigger and more powerful countries that may threaten their national power and culture. Smaller countries continuously cope with power. Conversely, this experience may be less present in bigger countries (at least not to the extent that it is present in smaller countries). In terms of the fear of losing national identity and culture, one just has to spend a random evening watching Danish or Dutch television and another watching English, French, or German television. It is highly unlikely that viewers of English, French, and German television are confronted with any other language than the one spoken in the country, with all movies and quotes dubbed. Conversely, English is the dominant language in entertainment programs on Danish and Dutch television. In other words, citizens from smaller countries may have experienced much more often than citizens from bigger countries that national power and culture are not continuously threatened by bigger and more powerful countries, which may especially apply to the EU context. Citizens from bigger and more powerful countries on the other hand lack this coping-with-power experience and this may be why they are afraid of losing their national identity and worry about small countries potentially losing power.

As far as effects of television new coverage on fears are concerned, this chapter has produced results that may inspire future research. Obviously, the findings call for replication in a larger number of countries (especially less wealthy ones) and in a different, more extended period of investigation. Both EU and media effect research may benefit from including also EU applicant countries in such studies. In these countries, accession to the EU is contested (Economist, 2002, October 26b, p. 27) and fears about European integration may surface among considerable proportions of the population. When including applicant countries in future studies, much of what this chapter could only tentatively point to might come to the fore more clearly, namely that evaluations or performance depictions of the EU may have contrary effects depending on the specific country context. Given the scope and meaning of such findings, this would be an important contribution to research on the EU and media effects alike.

With the enlargement of the EU to Central and Eastern Europe, EU citizens' fears about European integration will increase, at least in the beginning. The Economist (2002, October 26a, p. 25) called the applicant countries "the second-class compartment" and their inhabitants "second-class citizens", and pointed out that the poorest countries entering the EU in the past were by far richer than the current applicants. Moreover, the applicant countries can neither expect huge sums of money nor a big boost in private investment – EU budgets
are already strained and much foreign investment has already arrived. If fears evolve around potentially unpleasant and uncontrollable developments as defined in section 7.1, then the time is ripe to put fears about European integration along with potential media influences on our research agenda.

7.5. Summary

This chapter tackled a more emotional aspect of European integration – fears about European integration – and related it to evaluations and performance depictions of the EU. Three findings emerged:

1. In the wealthiest country, more positive coverage of the EU led people to be less afraid of the fact that rich countries might finance the EU. In less wealthy countries, no such influence occurred.

2. The more positively the EU is evaluated in television news and the bigger a country is, the more citizens worry about smaller countries losing power. This pattern also emerged for performance depictions of the EU.

3. The more positively the EU is evaluated in television news and the bigger a country is, the more citizens are afraid of losing national identity and culture. A similar pattern obtained for performance depictions of the EU.
8

Why the television news coverage of the EU matters

The first goal of this book was to identify, from a cross-nationally comparative perspective, the basic parameters and underlying patterns of EU coverage in television news. The second goal was to study the effects of this coverage on EU citizens' opinions and fears about the EU by employing explanations that combine individual-level and country-level characteristics. By doing so, it was also attempted to gain new insights into the conceptualization of media effects. To tackle the goals, six studies were conducted in which specific (sub-)research questions were investigated. This chapter moves away from the specific results of the six preceding chapters to an integrative general view on main the topic of this book - the television coverage of the European Union and its effects. The specific findings have been summarized at the end of each chapter; the implications of these findings have been discussed in the respective discussion sections and do not need to be repeated here. Instead, this chapter focuses on the bigger picture. I will start the section on both the EU coverage and on its effects by outlining limitations to what can be inferred from the data used and analyzed in this book. This set-up may not only be of help for future researchers but may also render more comprehensible the general conclusions subsequently drawn.

8.1 Europe on the television screen – the bigger picture

The investigation of television news coverage of the EU proceeded in two steps: a descriptive first step in which the basic parameters of EU coverage were identified and a more explanatory second step in which the underlying structure of EU coverage was revealed. This was based on two content analyses: one conducted in 14 EU member states during the 1999 European election campaign and another carried out in five EU countries over an eleven-month period throughout 2000. Content analyses of such scope are always based on compromises. What may be theoretically desirable, may be organizationally and financially infeasible. And what may be organizationally and financially possible, may be methodologically problematic. As a result, two general limitations can be identified. Moreover, one basic limitation of the explanatory analyses needs to be discussed.
8.1.1 Limitations

The following two problems may limit inference from the two content analyses. First, the investigation of just one public and one private outlet may not sufficiently represent the television news landscape of a particular country. However, several analyses have suggested that this selection of outlets may be a sensible approximation to the television coverage in a particular country (Hans-Bredow-Institut, 2002; European Journalism Centre, 2002). Second, the study of EU coverage in routine and summit periods (Chapter 3) was based on only five countries. This was the result of integrating an across-time perspective in the investigation, analyzing eleven months in 2000. It has been mentioned in the Chapter 3 why these countries had been selected. However, the fact that reporting in the five selected countries seems to be more similar in comparison to some Mediterranean countries (e.g., Greece with long bulletins and a lot of stories), may limit the generalizability of the findings of Chapter 3 (for differences between Northern and Southern European reporting styles, see Heinderycks, 1993). In short, the results presented in Chapter 3 may not be generalized to all EU member states as long as future research has not established similar patterns especially in Mediterranean countries.

The basic limitation of the explanatory analysis may result from the fact that characteristics of journalists such as attitudes towards EU politics or work routines and further characteristics of the outlets such as organizational constraints or financial resources could not be included in the analysis. As a consequence, it may be that the current models are under-specified. With respect to the analyses presented in Chapter 2 and 3, it may be worth investigating how many journalists deal, per outlet, with EU politics or how much money networks invest in the coverage of EU affairs. Moreover, it might be worthwhile to study how the journalists who report about EU affairs for a particular outlet approach the topic. The fact that characteristics of journalists were not taken into account may also have some broader implications. Based on existing literature (see the discussion at the end of section 2.1.1), I assumed that coverage responds to some extent to contextual characteristics and processes, i.e., in the context of this book: to domestic characteristics and processes. However, there are also scholars who emphasize that journalists may be important mediators or even transformers of such characteristics and processes (e.g., Keppinger, 1989c, 1992; Schulz, 1976; Shoemaker, 1987, 1991). As a consequence, journalists may create a reality that does not necessarily correspond fully with the reality in which they are embedded. The relationships between the 'world out there' and media reality are complex and cannot be discussed here. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that the explanations of EU coverage put forward in this book may be causally more intricate and may include various reciprocal relationships. The (values of) the contextual variables may not only affect the EU coverage, but may, in turn, be influenced by the coverage.

These limitations present important qualifications of the explanatory analyses in this book. However, it should be kept in mind that there was a simple reason why journalistic

---

90 For additional information on Denmark, Finland, and Sweden, see Hujanen (2000); on the Netherlands: van Brants and Neijens (1998), van Praag and van der Eijk (1998); on Germany: Pfetsch (1996); on Italy: Mazzoleni (2000); on the UK: Norris et al. (1999).
variables could not be included in the explanatory analyses. Research has produced interesting and important insights through in-depth interviewing of leading journalists about their take on Europe (e.g., de Vreese, 2002 for Denmark, the Netherlands, and the UK). But such data (a) do not exist for all countries investigated in this book, (b) are often not comparable, and (c) do not readily lend themselves to statistical analyses. Consequently, there is an unavoidable 'black box' in the analyses presented in this book. Nevertheless, the analyses may advance the field in turning our attention away from establishing differences to looking for the underlying patterns. The first chapter illustrated that previous research has merely accumulated specific country differences in the EU coverage without attempting to tackle general explanatory issues. Chapters 2 and 3 have changed what has been the predominant close-up view to a broader panorama perspective. And this bigger picture is to be looked at now.

8.1.2 Basic parameters of the television news coverage of the EU

In television news, the EU is located somewhere between invisible importance and unimportant visibility. If a key event such as the European elections remains virtually unnoticed in several EU member states; if, in other periods, a maximum of one in ten political news stories deals with the EU; if EU officials rarely appear in stories about the EU, then EU citizens can hardly build a sound opinion on what happens "up there in Brussels and Strasbourg" on the basis of the information available in the main evening news. Although there are some outlets and some countries in which EU coverage takes up a greater share of the political coverage, the overall picture of news about Europe resembles that of some blue and yellow stains on a broad canvas. These stains may form some clusters around particular topics or events, yet an overall pattern is not discernable.

Television news coverage neglects a large-scale development in Europe that may shape the future of Europe more than did other developments after the Second World War. About ten years after the Treaty of Maastricht with its goal of an ever closer EU and in the face of the eastward enlargement of the EU, potential discussions about whether five or seven or nine percent of EU coverage are sufficient are literally out of dimension. A project as encompassing as European integration is not adequately mediated if European elections are ignored in several EU member countries and if, in non-election periods, only EU summits attract media attention. What is more, if the EU's visibility comes at the cost of its presentational importance (unimportant visibility) and if the EU's presentational importance comes at the cost of its visibility (invisible importance), then the EU is always somehow underrepresented in television coverage. The discrepancy between the relevance of real-world developments to citizens and their representation in the media is a recurring pattern of media coverage and not confined to the EU. It has been demonstrated with respect to the coverage of issues as diverse as crime (Fishman, 1978; Funkhouser, 1973), race relations, poverty, environmental pollution (Funkhouser, 1973), and new technologies (Keplinger, 1989a, 1992). Nevertheless, the discrepancy between the importance of the EU for an entire continent and its representation in television news coverage may not necessarily reduce worries about the future of European integration. If EU citizens' orientation about politics depends on information from the media, television coverage of the EU is of not much help to EU citizens.
On the map of television coverage, the EU resembles an unknown territory in which the EU citizen may find him/herself lost. It seems that EU citizens have to orient themselves about the whereabouts of the EU by solely relying on the position of the sun while they urgently also need a compass.

Several scholars have discussed the emergence of a European public sphere (Habermas, 1994, 1997; Kunelius & Sparks, 2001). Although such notions may be desirable and theoretically challenging, the data presented in the second and third chapter tell us something else: there is no European public sphere. Traces of a European public sphere may exist in some international elite media and in issue-specific circles of political, economic, or cultural elites (Schlesinger, 1997, 1999), but not in mainstream national television news coverage. Given that television is the primary source of information for the vast majority of EU citizens, it is questionable how EU citizens can inform themselves adequately about EU affairs by relying on television news coverage. What is more, even more cautious notions of a europeanized national public sphere are not tenable (see for a similar conclusion: Gerhards, 2000). It has become obvious that the media do not adequately represent the power shift from the national to the European level. This is not only reflected in the sheer amount of coverage devoted to European affairs, it is also demonstrated by the fact that news stories seem to be either exclusively about the EU or do not deal with the EU at all. The interplay of domestic and European politics is hardly represented. The Europeanization of television coverage is an admirable goal, but far from becoming reality. And television, it seems, has never left the nation state.

So, where is the good news? Well, not in the news coverage of the EU. The EU itself, its performance and its representatives are depicted with a negative slant. This dovetails with findings from previous research (Norris, 2000). There is no evidence, however, that the EU or EU politics are depicted more negatively than other political institutions or politics in general. EU coverage instead appears to follow the characteristics of general coverage, which is slightly negative. One may argue that it is not the role of journalism to praise the Lord and sing Hallelujah. As the so-called fourth estate in modern democracies, the media need to point out the shortcomings and failures of politics. However, it is striking that, nearly without exception, in all countries and at different periods of time the coverage had a negative slant. Although it should be kept in mind that the largest part of the coverage was neutral, the consistent negative tendency in EU news is conspicuous. The findings concerning the 1979 European election coverage showed a relatively positive embrace of the then EEC (Blumler, 1983). The results presented earlier in this book seem to indicate a fundamental change in how EU affairs are approached in television news coverage.
8.1.3 Patterns underlying the television news coverage of the EU

In contrast to previous research, this book has emphasized that the analysis of television coverage of the EU must not stop with descriptive accounts. Consequently, I have tried to detect some more general patterns underlying EU coverage and have focused on some tentative explanations of what may shape the coverage. In line with other research on the EU, EU coverage is affected by domestic characteristics. Satisfaction with domestic democracy and, during the European election campaign, opinions of national political elites about the EU appear to influence EU coverage. Admittedly, the two may only be symptoms of more profound domestic processes that have not been investigated in this book. Nevertheless, they point to the fact that the domestic pervades the European – not only in European elections, but also in European coverage. If we want to understand how frequently the EU is covered, we need to look at domestic developments.

In trying to detect what shapes EU coverage, the integration of domestic processes and national characteristics is crucial for a simple reason. Journalistic work is essentially about illustrating and exemplifying what abstract politics means to the citizens (e.g., von LaRoche, 1992). Whether EU politics is found newsworthy at all and how it is subsequently illustrated and exemplified, depends heavily on the domestic context. If the EU is considered a fait accompli about which no political party bothers to argue, there will hardly be any coverage. In this case, the EU is presented as a silent, unspectacular reality to the citizens of the particular country. Conversely, if domestic governance causes dissatisfaction in particular countries and if European governance can be influenced in elections of the European Parliament, then the European election campaign means something to the citizens of such countries and will be reported. Much of the influence of such domestic processes still presents a puzzle as Chapters 2 and 3 showed with the opposing influence of satisfaction with domestic democracy. Nevertheless, the findings presented here begin to structure a dispersed and to some extent inconclusive field and may serve as a starting point for future research.

As we face the European elections in 2004, the finding that long-term member states of the EU seem to be tired of European elections deserves some further attention. In election campaigns, it is pivotal for citizens to receive some information about candidates and their positions, for example from television news coverage. Consequently, it seems troublesome that the coverage of EU representatives decreases with each successive European election. In a "second-order election" (Reif & Schmitt, 1980; van der Eijk & Franklin, 1996), EU representatives are treated like third-order actors. It will be interesting to see in the 2004 elections whether some more recent EU entrants will adjust to this overall pattern. In the worst case, EU representatives will more or less disappear from the screen in television news. There is, of course, more to television than news, and citizens may have the chance to see EU representatives in election spots or in election specials. Nevertheless, for both citizens and EU candidates in traditional EU countries there may be some simple advice with respect to the forthcoming European elections: Don't rely on television news. Citizens trying to inform themselves about EU representatives may therefore want to look for alternative sources of information. Candidates for the European Parliament should try to "get across" in outlets
other than television news or media other than television – even if campaign managers may tell them otherwise.

Whether a news outlet belonged to public or commercial television affects how frequently and how prominently television outlets report about the EU. Viewers of commercial television news outlets are less likely to be confronted both with news about European election campaign and, in non-election periods, with EU officials. Moreover, in non-election periods, private television presents EU affairs as less important than does public television. In their accumulation, then, the findings render obvious a more general picture: the EU seems to be rather small in television coverage, but in commercial television it somehow resembles a dwarf – and this poor little creature does not even have a face. Of course, there are countries in which the amount of EU coverage on public and commercial television coverage does not differ much. However, taking the findings of the two studies together, it becomes clear that private television puts less emphasis on the coverage of EU affairs.

This has two broader implications. First, debates about differences between public and private television sometimes tend to be theoretically overdetermined and empirically underdetermined (see detailed discussions in sections 2.4.2 and 3.4.2). Although limited to EU coverage, the studies in the second and third chapter put some empirical flesh on the theoretical bones of these debates. Moreover, the studies make a plea for strictly separating fact from fiction by demonstrating that, despite the claimed convergence of public and private television, notable differences between the two types of television exist. Second, the differences in the EU coverage between public and private television are in contrast to the alleged (or desired) power of television in particular and of media in general to integrate Europe (Diaz-Nosty, 1997). While aspects of the EU are at least occasionally discernable in public television, they are only presented in reduced form in private television. And if aspects of the EU are only rudimentarily present, television coverage (at least coverage on private television) can hardly integrate Europe.

8.2 Europe on the television screen – and its effects

It has already been mentioned above that what is theoretically and methodologically desirable often collides with what is financially and organizationally feasible, particularly in cross-nationally comparative research. This applies to the second overarching goal of this book – the investigation of the effects of television EU coverage. However, studying media effects cross-nationally also entails a number of general problems. These problems present important qualifications of the effects found in Chapters 4 to 7. They may also be relevant to future research, particularly given that some of these problems have hardly been acknowledged in existing research.
8.2.1 Limitations

Five general limitations of the effect studies presented in this book can be identified. The first two limitations refer to the general problem of internal validity in non-experimental effects research, which is multiplied in a cross-nationally comparative context. Limitation three concerns the problem of comparability in cross-nationally comparative approaches to media effects; the fourth limitation is related to the precise explication of contextual influences, the fifth limitation refers to what we can learn about media effects by linking survey and content analytic data. Taken together, the five limitations may help to critically assess the methodological and conceptual precision of the effect patterns detected in Chapters 4 to 7 and essentially qualify the accuracy of the causal inference in those chapters.

1. None of the effect studies could establish a baseline measure of the opinions and fears in question. This hampers causal reasoning in that it cannot compellingly be demonstrated that the coverage indeed led to opinion formation or change. Clearly, a panel design would have been preferable to tackle this issue and is desirable for any study investigating media effects in a non-experimental design. However, two points should be kept in mind. First, conducting a panel study in 14 systems (as would have been desirable for the studies in Chapters 4 and 5) with a reasonable number of respondents and linking it to a properly done content analysis requires enormous organizational and financial resources. In other words, limited resources always lead to a tradeoff between enriching cross-nationally comparative perspectives on the one hand and internal validity on the other. In this book, the cross-nationally comparative aspect was favored over methodological issues of internal validity because cross-nationally comparative perspectives on media effects are underrepresented in media effects research. Second, in the most extreme case, all relationships that have been conceptualized with media coverage as cause may turn out to be reciprocal. However, even this presents an advancement over previous research that has not yet established the relationships found in this book.

2. All effects studies focused on a single country characteristic at a time as moderator of effect patterns. This derived from the lack of previous research to draw upon, which precludes elaborate theoretical hypothesizing without running the risk of indulging in mere speculation. However, countries are obviously characterized by many more features than the ones employed in the various analyses. What is more, the characteristics may offer alternative explanations or act as additional moderators. Consequently, some of the patterns found might be more complex or, in the worst case, spurious. Such possibilities, however, can only be assessed by future research.

3. It cannot fully be ruled out that the content features systematically differ across countries despite the meticulous and identical application of operational definitions. For example, evaluations classified as positive in different countries might differ in their intensity across countries or may systematically be presented differently. Although the operational definitions of the various content categories always referred to explicit assertions, the quality of the assertions may yet differ. For example, journalists in one country may be blunt in their evaluations, whereas journalists in another country may be explicit, yet less
plain in their assertion. In the extreme, people in a particular country may be exposed to a qualitatively different type of, for example, evaluations than their counterparts in another. This touches upon the recurring issue in cross-nationally comparative research whether, in different countries, particular concepts can be operationalized with identical indicators or whether equivalent indicators have to used instead (Dogan & Pelassy, 1990; Przeworski & Teune, 1970). In the analyses of this book, identical indicators were used because there was no indication from previous research that, for the measures employed, identical indicators would be inappropriate. Moreover, it was ensured that the measures were identically applied. Particularly in cross-national studies with a lot of different people being involved in the coding process at different places, a lack of comparability may result from idiosyncratic understanding of operational definitions (for an elaborate reasoning, see Peter & Lauf, 2002). In the content analyses presented here, most of the work was centrally done in Amsterdam and carefully coordinated between the various country groups. It, therefore, seems unlikely that the content measures lack comparability or that content properties differed beyond the operationalizations in the coding scheme. However, even despite such precautions, such differences cannot be precluded with total certainty.

4. The finding that contextual (or more specifically country) characteristics are important moderators of effect patterns will probably be embraced by most social scientists who are not methodological individualists. However, if the findings are not to convey the miraculous impression of social alchemy, it is important to specify how context or, in this book, country characteristics impinge upon individuals. In the various chapters, I have tried to formulate theoretical propositions how and why country characteristics may be relevant to effect processes following suggestions by Pan and McLeod (1991) and Price et al. (1991). Although such specific reasoning is necessary to outline the particular relationships between individual and contextual variables, it cannot substitute for a general account of how country characteristics impinge upon individual opinions. Apparently, such a general account takes more than one book to be explicated, but some tentative suggestions can be made here. Because of the conceptual problems surrounding research on emotions (or fears, for that matter) as to whether they are independent of cognitions (for summary, see Taylor & Fiske, 1991, chapter 10), I restrict the following considerations to opinions.

In line with recent cognitive conceptualizations of how individuals reason (for a review, see Higgins, 1996), I assume that opinions are largely based upon what is cognitively accessible in an individual's mind. That is, individuals may not always express the same opinion. This rather depends on which cognitions are in the forefront of their mind. One can further distinguish between temporary and chronic accessibility. Temporarily accessible cognitions disappear after a certain period of time if not further activated or used. Chronically accessible cognitions, in turn, belong to a person's cognitive toolkit and are routinely employed when this person judges something (provided the cognition is thematically applicable). I further assume that objective country characteristics must have been transformed into cognitions, this is, they must in principle be available in an individual's memory. If an individual is asked, for example, whether he/she is afraid that smaller countries may lose power in the wake of European integration, his/her cognition
Chapter 8

(or, more precisely unit of knowledge) about the size of his/her country is activated, thereby becomes more easily accessible and is eventually likely to be taken into account when answering. However, in answering, individuals may not only incorporate cognitions that are rendered temporarily accessible. They may also refer to some chronically accessibly cognitions (note that such processes can be unconscious). In terms of an institution that originated as the European Economic Community and that is predominantly economically tangible (e.g., no customs, new currency), this may be economic cognitions, for example whether a country is better off without the EU (see Chapter 6). When judging the importance of European integration, people may rely on the cognitive cues they get from elite discourse about the EU and draw conclusions about the importance of an issue from the contentiousness of the issue (see Chapter 4). Finally, only particular cognitions may be available and accessible to citizens if media coverage is consonant. Provided that consonant coverage persists over a longer period of time, consonant coverage would lead to chronic accessibility of particular cognitions (see Chapter 5).

All these processes are probably more intricate than just outlined. However, they could initially be investigated without too much effort. Particularly sociotropic measures seem important in this respect, i.e., measures that tap an individual's perception of his social context. Clearly, such measures are not necessary when certain perceptions can be taken for granted, for example perceptions of a country's size. However, they may be very helpful when measuring to what extent people perceive their country's trade to be dependent on the EU or to what extent elite opinion is polarized. Analytically, such measures are beneficial in that they are located at the individual level. Conceptually, such measures imply that one person's context may not be another person's one. In other words, like most of the analyses that include country characteristics, the analyses in this book are based on the assumption that the country context is the same for all individuals in the particular country. Objectively, this may be correct. However, the subjective logic of how individuals form their opinions may look very differently and may depend on differences in perceptions of the context (for a detailed outline of this problem, see van Egmond, 2003).

5. The idea that there are differences in how individuals perceive and receive contextual information may also apply to the link between media content and individuals or, technically, between content analysis and survey. Although different ways of linking content to individual opinions and fears were used in this book (Chapters 4 and 5 versus Chapters 6 and 7), they were based on the same assumption: that individuals perceive and receive the content as identified in the content analysis. The content measures used in the book were not so intricate that major discrepancies are likely to occur. Moreover, the measures were designed such that they are in line with findings from reception research (e.g., the evaluation differential). Nevertheless, the equivalence of content broadcast and content received has not been proven and is questionable in a number of respects. Kepplinger (1989b) has pointed out that a link between content analysis and survey may be aggravated by two more problems. First, because content analyses typically center upon discrete elements of coverage, the link between single content measures and survey
questions may ignore the broader picture of coverage, which, though diffuse, may be relevant to the recipient. Second, the reception of particular contents may depend on recipient characteristics, for example education or attention. These aspects call for reception research as the missing link between content analysis and effects research. Particularly in the context of EU coverage with its remote and abstract character, such research may be beneficial not only in terms of fundamental research, but also in terms of practical changes in the coverage. The studies presented in this book cannot solve this problem and future research will show to what extent they were based on flawed assumptions.

However, given Coombs' (1964) dictum that "we buy information with assumptions" (p. 5), the studies in this book may at least tentatively increase our knowledge about two important issues. First, the studies may inform us about the effects of television coverage of the EU on opinions and fears about the EU. Second, the studies may advance our knowledge about how media effects on opinions and fears can be conceptualized. The first aspect has several implications for both general research on the EU and the practice of communicating Europe; the second aspect is of primary interest to media effects research in both the EU context and otherwise.

### 8.2.2 Effects on opinions and fears about the EU

Television coverage affects opinions and fears about the EU. However, one should hasten to add, not always and not everywhere. The notion that the same properties of EU coverage elicit the same effects all over Europe is both theoretically questionable and empirically untenable. The crucial factor in bringing about media effects is specific country characteristics. Greater amounts of EU coverage increase the perceived importance of the EU if national elite opinion is polarized, but they fail to do so if elite opinion is consensual. The tone of coverage affects people's opinion towards European integration if the coverage as a whole is consonant, but it lacks any effect if the coverage as a whole is dissonant. Only if a particular country was less dependent on trade with the remaining EU countries do citizens from the given country oppose the negative performance depictions of the EU in their opinion about the EU; if trade dependencies were strong, no effects were obtained. Citizens from bigger EU countries became more afraid of losing cultural identity in the wake of European integration as the tone of EU coverage becomes positive; citizens from smaller countries do not. There is no unified Europe in terms of media effects.

However, even if notions of hypodermic needle television in Europe have to be rejected, the influence of television coverage should not be ignored, either. Scholars of opinions about the EU have largely treated media coverage as something to speculate about in conclusion sections, but rarely considered it worth being investigated in its own right. The studies in this book have demonstrated that television coverage matters for how people think and feel about the EU. *Ex post*, one may argue that this is not surprising because EU citizens rely on the media and especially television as the biannual Eurobarometer surveys consistently show. Still, then, the question remains why so few have bothered to include the
media as potential influences on opinions and fears about the EU in their analyses. If we ultimately strive for increasing our knowledge about what affects people's opinions and fears about the EU, then television coverage in particular and media coverage in general should no longer be ignored.

Integrating media coverage in explanations of opinions and fears about the EU may be sensible even if there is little coverage as the analyses in Chapters 4 to 7 have shown. The intuitive presumption that only a lot of coverage affects people's thinking may not be justified with respect to EU coverage. Admittedly, the effects found were not strong. However, effects were established despite controlling for basically all competing explanations of opinions about the EU that previous research has identified. The findings suggest that the conceptualization of media effects as moderated by country characteristics may be a crucial component in the search for media influence on opinions and fears about the EU. Moreover, as Chapters 6 and 7 have shown, more advanced modeling of effects, which takes into account forgetting of information, may help to identify media influence. In sum, the effect studies in this book point to the fact that it is not necessarily "big" coverage that brings about effects. When trying to investigate media effects on opinions and fears towards the EU, it seems more important to look for an appropriate approach than to search for the ideal situation for media effects to occur.

The fact that media effects on opinions and fears about the EU depend on specific country characteristics renders them difficult to predict. What is more, statements about which property of coverage will have which effect can only be formulated with precise respect to country characteristics. Although this insight may sound simple once stated, it has far-reaching consequences. First, debates about the communication deficit of the EU are always connected with the notion that media information about the EU is crucial to enable citizens to competently participate in politics. On normative grounds, this notion is hard to reject because, in modern democracies, citizens should in principle be able to inform themselves about political processes. Implicitly, however, this notion is based upon the across-the-board assumption that more EU coverage somehow increases participation. If one considers people's perception of the importance of European integration a necessary condition for participation at the EU level, then Chapter 4 teaches a more specific lesson. More coverage does not necessarily affect people's importance perceptions — it depends on country characteristics, in this case the nature of elite opinion. Second, organizational and financial constraints may sometimes force campaigners to launch the same campaign all over Europe. However, this 'One Europe, one campaign' approach may have no or even opposed effects depending on specific country characteristics. As McDonald's offers milk and a McKroket in the Netherlands and La petite crudité in France, campaigners should be sensitive to country characteristics when trying to maximize the effect of their campaign.

The context dependency of media effects on opinions and fears about the EU becomes intricate when it comes to the evaluative features of coverage, in this book the tone towards EU representatives and the EU and depictions of the EU's performance in terms of success or failure. Here, I focus on the more practical implications; the theoretical implications will be dealt with in the following section. Common sense would have it that positive evaluations
elicit positive opinions and negative evaluations elicit negative opinions. However, as Chapter 5 has shown, this simple equidirectionality of content and effect only emerges if media in a particular country report consonantly about the EU. In the two remaining studies, the pattern of results was more complex. Depending on specific country characteristics (see Chapters 6 and 7), the effect of depictions of the EU's performance was usually in contrast to the valence of the depiction. Unfavorable depictions had a positive influence, favorable depictions had a negative impact. The same was true for the impact of general evaluations of the EU. It goes without saying that the effects found are also conditional on the opinion or fear in question and need to be studied with respect to a wider array of opinions and fears.

Having these caveats in mind, do EU officials then have to worry about bad coverage? The answer is "yes", if there is a consistently negative tone in a consonant media system – in this case, no coverage is good coverage. The answer is "no", if the coverage in a country is dissonant. Ironically, EU officials do not have to be afraid of television coverage, either, if the EU's performance is depicted unfavorably. Tentatively, the findings suggest that citizens may be resistant to or even opposed to unfavorable depictions of the EU's record – and the depictions are usually slightly unfavorable as Chapter 3 has shown. That said, the findings also suggest that citizens may start worrying about a successful EU. These patterns need to be investigated with respect to other potentially moderating country characteristics. Additionally, scholars should study whether various country characteristics interact (see above). Nevertheless, there seems to be no reason for the EU or EU officials to impede television coverage. If the communication deficit results from EU officials' fears of losing support (Gramberger, 1997; Meyer, 1999), the findings presented in this book demonstrate that such fears may usually be exaggerated, correct though they may be under the condition of consonantly negative coverage.

8.2.3 Implications for the conceptualization of media effects

Complementary to such practical implications, the findings also have several theoretical implications and may shed a slightly different light on the conceptualization of media effects. This aspect is, in this book, inextricably linked to the logic of comparative research and the possibility to include country characteristics as additional explanations. The introduction, therefore, emphasized the potential of cross-nationally comparative research and outlined in general terms the basic strategy of considering country characteristics as moderators of effect patterns. Subsequently, this strategy was applied to one of the best researched concepts in media effects research, agenda-setting, and to an idea which is considered a turning point in media effects research, Noelle-Neumann's (1973) consonance concept. Further, this strategy was used when studying the interplay between media coverage and a prominent notion in political science research on opinions, the dependency of EU support on economic conditions. Finally, the strategy was extended to the largely ignored field of media effects on citizens' fears about European integration. All of these studies have provided evidence of one basic proposition: context matters.
The idea that context matters is not new. Nevertheless, in the empirical-analytical tradition of media effect research, it has to some extent never really become en vogue. If studies extended their scope to the context of the individual, then they usually centered upon the concept of interpersonal communication, thereby indirectly tapping social groups as context, for example in research on the two-step flow of information and on opinion leaders (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, Gaudet, 1944; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; for a review Weimann, 1995), in attempts to link cognitive processes and social identification theory (Price 1988, 1989) or in Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur's dependency model (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976; Ball-Rokeach, 1985). However, the whole spectrum of contexts in which the individual is embedded has rarely been studied in its additional explanatory potential (for a more elaborate outline of this aspect, see Pan & McLeod, 1991; McLeod et al., 1995). Cross-nationally comparative research in the field has at least been aware of an influence of the country context, but has often not adequately translated this insight into empirical research as illustrated in the first chapter. In sum, the fact that contextual factors were ignored along with the low exploitation of the potential of cross-nationally comparative research has lead to the unusual situation that a step back had to be taken before a step forward could be made.

In other words, this book does not claim to revolutionize social-scientific thinking. But it does not reinvent the wheel, either. The contextualization of media effects pursued in this book by means of cross-nationally comparative research has helped to achieve two things – first, to modify or to confirm the character of established concepts and, second, to shed some new light on the general nature of media effects. Agenda-setting and the consonance concept are established concepts in media effects research and have been around for about 30 years – agenda-setting, introduced by McCombs and Shaw in 1972; the consonance idea advanced by Noelle-Neumann in 1973. However, none of them was able to walk on its cross-nationally comparative leg. The consonance idea calls for cross-nationally comparative research – but has never been investigated in this fashion. Scholars of agenda-setting have repeatedly called for cross-nationally comparative research (Rogers & Dearing, 1996) – but have done little about it. As this book shows, agenda-setting is obviously conditional on the contentiousness of an issues within a particular country. This is a simple finding, yet could only be established with cross-nationally comparative research. The tone of coverage may shove people in a certain direction, but push comes to shove only if the media within a particular country are consonant. Again, this is a simple result that could only be achieved by means of cross-nationally comparative research.

The conceptualization of country characteristics as a moderating influence on effect patterns implies an important extension of the nature of media effects. As abstractly shown in the first chapter and illustrated in Chapters 4 to 7, media effects are allowed to vary across countries. In other words, it is conceptually possible that effects emerge in some countries and not in others or, what is more, that they have a particular direction in one country and an opposing one in another. The latter adjustment/opposition pattern has not fully been considered yet in effects research. Typically, notions of media effects assume equidirectionality between properties of the content and the effect. More coverage causes more of a particular effect as, for example, in the concepts of agenda-setting, cultivation, or knowledge gap; a particular tone in coverage causes a change of public opinion in this
particular direction as, for example, in the spiral of silence concept. To avoid any misunderstanding, the assumption of equidirectionality often makes sense and it requires careful theoretical reasoning why in addition to adjustment effects also opposition effects should emerge. However, some interesting studies have shown that, under certain conditions, people may come to quite contrary conclusions after exposure to the same media content. People may count different numbers of fouls in a football match depending on which team they support (Hastorf & Cantril, 1954), they may interpret anti-racist cartoons or chauvinist persons very differently depending on whether they themselves are prejudiced or not (Kendall & Wolff, 1949; Vidmar & Rokeach, 1974), or they may identify different biases in news depending on their partisanship (Vallone et al., 1985). If one takes these results from the level of reception to the level of potential effects, one may conclude that the dominant equidirectionality notion may be too narrow and possibly preclude interesting and important effects. Chapters 6 and 7, in particular, have shown that a specific direction in coverage may elicit contrary reactions. The results did not show a clear adjustment/opposition effect pattern. Nevertheless, they may illustrate that effects research may benefit from conceptualizing effects as conditional on the characteristics of countries or, more generally, of contexts.

In sum, the effects part of this book has shown that bringing context (back) in by means of cross-nationally comparative research may enhance our current understanding and future conceptualization of media effects. What is more, it may encourage researchers to broaden their view from micro-level variables to contextual variables. This may not only sharpen our view on media effects, it may also help to include the richness of social-scientific thinking in the study of media effects. At which level of the micro-macro continuum (Eulau, 1977, 1986) the contextual variables are located, is very much linked to theoretical concerns. In conjunction with its cross-nationally comparative perspective, this book has focused on the "big" context and on country characteristics, but equally interesting research issues may be related to "smaller" contexts and group or network characteristics. Regardless of which contextual unit or level is chosen, however, it seems important to not only talk about communication as cross-level discipline, but to translate it into research. More than ten years ago, Ritchie and Price (1991) criticized that "the popularity of the refrain that 'communication crosses levels'" (p. 137) was not adequately mirrored by empirical research activities. Though not necessarily with respect to cross-nationally comparative research, the authors call for more empirical cross-level studies. If, with respect to cross-nationally comparative research on media effects, Chapters 4 to 7 can respond to this request, then the second part of this book has done its job.

91 The results of some of these studies may also be interpreted in terms of assimilation/contrast effects. However, opposition or adjustment to media messages as found in Chapters 6 and 7 is conceptually different from assimilation and contrast effects which typically require an anchor or reference point toward or from which judgments are displaced.
As I write this, the European Commission threatens Portugal and Germany with sanctions, Polish farmers worry about their country's potential entry into the EU in 2004, and my neighbor finds everything hideously expensive since the introduction of the euro. Some days ago, the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, called the stability pact "stupid". At the December 2002 Copenhagen summit, the final decision about the date of the eastward enlargement of the EU will be taken, and my barber cannot understand why somebody writes a whole book on "something boring like Europe" (hmm...). Last night, a German economics professor warned on television that the euro might be the ruin of Europe, in 2004 a new European Parliament is going to be elected, and I am slightly amused by a friend of mine whose hobby as of late it is to obtain one exemplar of the eight different euro coins from each of the twelve countries that introduced the euro.

Theses arbitrary examples may illustrate that the EU shapes and pervades life in Europe today and will probably do so even more in the future. This insight is not so sizzling. However, this book has shown that television coverage may play an important role in this process. If the reader by now knows a little more about the television coverage of the European Union and its effects, then this book has achieved its goal. The book also promised political scientists an answer to the question of whether they should include media coverage in their investigations about the EU; and it promised communication scientists an answer to the question of whether they should include the EU in their media studies. Admittedly, it was a long journey through the media landscape of Europe and several obstacles had to be surmounted before the view became clear. At the beginning of this journey, I emphasized that Europe matters. At the end of this journey, I think I may add: television, too.
Technical Appendix A

Post hoc probing of interaction effects
Although several books have been published on interaction effects in multiple OLS and logistic regression (Aiken & West, 1991; Jaccard, Turisi, & Wan, 1990; Jaccard, 2001), the comprehensible presentation and explication of interaction effects still presents a problem in scholarly practice. Once a significant interaction effect has been found in the original regression estimation, its meaning is usually difficult to understand, particularly for the reader. The key problem is to outline how the influence of a particular independent variable is moderated by another independent variable. In other words, it has to be made clear how the influence of a particular independent variable changes at different values of another independent variable. More importantly, it has to be established whether these conditional influences indeed present influences or are merely random. Therefore, scholars agree that, besides the plotting of the interaction, there should also be a statistical post hoc probing of the interaction term (Aiken & West, 1991; Jaccard et al., 1990). More specifically, it should be tested whether the various influences of a particular variable as conditional on another variable differ significantly from zero. This does not create many problems in terms of dichotomous variables, but raises some issues when metric variables are involved in the interaction. Before this problem can be outlined, some basic equations and terminology have to be introduced.

A1 Basic equations and terminology

In the case of an interaction between two variables, the basic equation is

\[ Y = b_0 + b_1X + b_2Z + b_3XZ + \varepsilon \]  

(E 1)

where \( Z \) is the variable whose values condition the influence of \( X \) on \( Y \). This is signified by the multiplicative term \( XZ \). The equation can be restructured as:

\[ Y = (b_1 + b_3Z)X + b_2Z + b_0 + \varepsilon \]  

(E 1.1)

Note that the slope of \( X \), i.e. the influence of \( X \) on \( Y \), is now expressed as \( (b_1 + b_3Z) \). Consequently, the slope (or influence) is not constant, but varies by the different values of \( Z \). This type of slope, which depends on values of another independent variable (here: \( Z \)), is further referred to as simple slope following the terminology used by Aiken and West (1991). The variable that is moderated (here: \( X \)) is called the focal independent variable. The independent variable whose values determine the simple slope (here: \( Z \)) is called the moderating variable. In the case of interactions between more than two variables, it is helpful to talk about first-order moderating variable, second-order moderating variable, etc.
A2 Post hoc probing of an interaction between a metric and a dummy variable

In Chapter 4, a significant interaction effect between the amount of coverage (metric variable) and the nature of elite opinion (dummy variable) is expected. In other words, the $b_3$ coefficient in E 1 is expected to be significant. Assuming such a significant overall interaction effect occurs, what does this mean substantively? In a first step, the interaction should be plotted (see Figure 4.1). One can easily do this by replacing the variables in E 1 with the values obtained from the estimated regression model (Model 1, Table 4.2). Of primary importance are the values of the moderating variable Z. If, like in Chapter 4, the nature of elite opinion as polarized or consensual is a dummy variable, two equations are computed, one for elite opinion being consensual (i.e., Z equals 0) and one for elite opinion being polarized (i.e., Z equals 1). The results define the two lines in Figure 4.1. Typically, the plot facilitates the understanding of the interaction considerably (see Figure 4.1).

Statistical post hoc probing

In a next step, it should be tested whether the newly obtained simple slopes of the two lines differ significantly from zero. To establish this, post hoc statistical testing of the significance of the simple slope $(b_1+b_3Z)$ in E 1.1 is necessary. In other words, for particular values of Z it is tested whether the simple slope differs significantly from zero. In the example with its two values of Z, this is comparatively easy. In Chapter 4, one can compute the simple slope by plugging the respective regression coefficients from the multiple regression output (Model 1, Table 4.2) into the term $(b_1+b_3Z)$, once for Z being zero and once for Z being 1. This gives the simple slopes for the two values of Z. However, how do we get a t-value to check whether each simple slope differs significantly from zero? The t-value is obtained by dividing the unstandardized regression coefficient by its standard error. What is then needed, is the standard error of each of the two simple slopes. The standard error can be computed for each of the simple slopes using the following formula (Aiken & West, 1991, p. 16; for the derivation of this formula, see pp. 24-26):

$$S_b = (s_{11} + 2Zs_{13} + Z^2s_{33})^{1/2} \quad \text{(E 2)}$$

where

- $S_b$ is the standard error of the simple slope
- $s_{11}$ is the variance of coefficient $b_1$ in E 1,
- $s_{13}$ is the covariance between coefficients $b_1$ and $b_3$ in E 1 and
- $s_{33}$ is the variance of coefficient $b_3$ in E 1

The variances/covariances of the coefficients can be obtained from the estimated variance/covariance matrix of the predictors in a multiple regression. The values have to be substituted in equation E 2, once with Z being zero and once with Z being one (for the
example of consensual or polarized elite opinion in Chapter 4). With the two already computed slopes as numerator, the obtained two standard errors are subsequently used as the denominator to compute the two \( t \)-values, one for \( Z \) being zero and one for \( Z \) being one. The obtained \( t \)-values can finally be checked for significance in a \( t \)-table. The degrees of freedom are computed with \( (n - k - 1) \) where \( n \) is the number of cases and \( k \) is the number of predictors, not including the regression constant.

A3 Post hoc probing of three-way interaction effects with one metric moderating variable

In Chapter 5, a three-way interaction between the tone of coverage, consonance/dissonance of the entire coverage, and the visibility of EU representatives is expected. Visibility of EU representatives is a metric second-order moderating variable (the dummy variable consonance/dissonance is the first-order moderating variable). With a moderating metric variable, the problem arises that each of the possible values of a metric variable differently conditions the effect of the focal independent variable on the dependent variable. This renders the plotting of the interaction difficult, but, more importantly, it creates severe problems for the post hoc statistical testing of the interaction term. In principle, for every single value of the moderating metric variable, the interaction has to be tested for a significant difference from zero. Because this is cumbersome work, Aiken and West (1991) therefore suggest to select three values of the metric variable – its mean, and one standard deviation below and above the mean – and to test the interaction at these three values for significance. This is a pragmatic solution, yet introduces an arbitrary moment to the post hoc statistical probing of the interaction term. As one can easily imagine, the specific interaction may become significant or not significant at other values of the moderating metric variable (e.g., two standard deviations below or above the mean). In other words, with a little bit of creative reasoning, findings may easily be made significant. Therefore, a slightly different procedure of post hoc probing interactions with metric variables may be useful.

I stick to the example of the three-way interaction between tone of coverage, consonance/dissonance, and visibility of EU representatives (Chapter 5). To review, the basic idea of the three-way interaction between the tone of coverage of EU representatives, consonance/dissonance, and visibility of EU representatives was that the effect of tone of coverage (i.e., the focal independent variable) in consonant media systems (i.e., the first-order moderating variable) depends upon the visibility of EU representatives (i.e., the second-order moderating variable). More generally, a regression equation with a three-way interaction effect can be expressed as:

\[
Y = b_0 + b_1X + b_2Z + b_3W + b_4XZ + b_5ZW + b_6XW + b_7XZW + \varepsilon \tag{E 3}
\]

where \( XZW \) represents the three-way interaction. Note that all lower-level interactions must be included in the equation for statistical control reasons. The equation can be restructured as:
Let \( X \) represent the tone of coverage, \( Z \) consonance/dissonance and \( W \) the visibility of EU representatives. It becomes obvious in the term \((b_1 + b_4Z + b_5W + b_7ZW)\) that the impact of the tone of coverage \( X \) depends upon consonance/dissonance \( Z \) and the visibility of EU representatives \( W \). In other words, different values of \( Z \) and \( W \) result in different slopes at the same value of \( X \) – the influence of \( X \) on \( Y \) thus varies by the values of \( Z \) and \( W \). This has a simple implication for the plotting of the interaction effect. Because the simple slope expressed with the term \((b_1 + b_4Z + b_5W + b_7ZW)\) varies by different values of \( Z \) and \( W \), one can compute the slope for as many values of \( Z \) and \( W \) as possible and plot them. One can then see how the simple slope (i.e., the influence of \( X \) on \( Y \)) changes as \( W \) and \( Z \) change. More specifically, given that consonance/dissonance \( Z \) is a dummy, one can easily discern how the influence of the coverage depends on the visibility of EU representatives if coverage as a whole is either consonant or dissonant.

As mentioned above, Aiken and West (1991) suggest to plot the interaction for selected values of the metric variable, typically the mean, and one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the mean. For the specific case to be investigated in this chapter, this would mean to plot the original two-way interaction between tone of coverage and consonance/dissonance three times – once for the mean visibility of EU representatives, once for the visibility of EU representatives at one standard deviation below the mean, and once for the visibility of EU representatives at one standard deviation above the mean. This may give an initial impression of how the original interaction changes at different levels of visibility of EU representatives. However, as said above, this also entails a moment of arbitrariness and unnecessarily limits our view on the spectrum of the moderating influence of the second-order moderating variable (i.e., visibility of EU representatives). Therefore, I suggest to plot the simple slopes of \( X \) for both consonance and dissonance (i.e., the two values of \( Z \)) at all different levels of the visibility of EU representatives (i.e., different values of \( W \)). This has also the positive side-effect that the number of figures needed is reduced from three to one (see Figure 5.2).

An even more pressing problem of Aiken and West’s (1991) procedure of selecting three values is associated with the post hoc statistical probing for significance if the moderating variable is metric. Recall that the slope of each line in an interaction graph has to be tested for significant difference from zero. As mentioned above, if only the lines based on three values of the moderating variable are graphed, this may distort the findings because automatically only the simple slopes depending on the selected values are probed for significance. Selecting other values of the metric variable may considerably improve or deteriorate the significance of results. As a consequence, it seems necessary to take the whole spectrum of values of the moderating metric variable into account. In other words, for each possible slope (which varies by the moderating variable), the pertinent standard error has to be computed to eventually get the pertinent \( t \)-value. Admittedly, this requires some work.
because the standard statistical software does not give the values. The formula to compute the standard error of a particular slope of \( Y \) on \( X \) at particular values of \( Z \) and \( W \) is (Aiken & West, 1991, p. 54):

\[
S_b = \left[ s_{11} + Z^2 s_{44} + W^2 s_{55} + Z^2 W^2 s_{77} + 2Zs_{14} + 2Ws_{15} \\
+ 2ZW s_{17} + 2ZW s_{45} + 2WZ^2 s_{47} + 2W^2Zs_{57} \right]^{1/2}
\]

(E 4)

where
- \( s_{11} \) is the variance of coefficient \( b_1 \) in E 3
- \( s_{44} \) is the variance of coefficient \( b_4 \) in E 3
- \( s_{14} \) is the covariance of coefficient \( b_1 \) and coefficient \( b_4 \) in E 3
- \( s_{15} \) is the covariance of coefficient \( b_1 \) and coefficient \( b_5 \) in E 3

etc.

Plugging the respective values for \( Z \) and \( W \) in E 4 gives the standard errors for each combination of \( Z \) and \( W \). Dividing the slope for a particular combination of \( Z \) and \( W \) by the standard error of this particular combination of \( Z \) and \( W \), gives the \( t \)-value of the particular slope. The computed \( t \)-values can finally be checked for significance in a \( t \)-table. The degrees of freedom are computed with \((n - k - 1)\) where \( n \) is the number of cases and \( k \) is the number of predictors without the regression constant. Thus, in contrast to Aiken and West (1991), not only the slopes at three selected values of the moderating variable are probed for significance, but this is done for the slopes at all possible values of the moderating variables. Moreover, it may be helpful to plot the \( t \)-values. This procedure may give a satisfying overview of the areas where the influence of the moderating variable on the two-way interaction is significant (see Figure B1 in Technical Appendix B).

A4 Post hoc probing of interaction effects with exclusively metric moderating variables

In Chapter 6, there are three metric variables – trade relations, performance depiction, and cognitive mobilization. This takes the problem mentioned in the preceding section to its extreme. However, the strategy outlined in the preceding sections can be extended to this problem. First, all simple slopes that result from the varying values of the first and second-order moderating variable (here: trade relations and cognitive mobilization) are computed and may be plotted. Next, for all of these simple slopes standard errors are computed using equation E 4. Finally, the \( t \)-values for each of the simple slopes are computed. It may be useful to plot the simple slopes. Given that three-metric variables are involved, a third dimension has to be added when plotting the simple slopes. This results in three-dimensional surface diagram (see Figure 6.3).
Post hoc probing of interaction effects between metric variables in logistic regression

All preceding sections referred to interaction effects in OLS regressions. However, in Chapter 7, interaction effects between metric variables (e.g., country size and tone of coverage) on a dichotomous dependent variable were hypothesized. How can the basic strategy of statistical post hoc probing of interaction effects developed above for OLS regressions be transferred to logistic regressions? Two aspects should be taken into account. First, scholars usually agree that interaction effects in logistic regressions can be modeled and treated like interaction effects in OLS regressions (e.g., DeMaris, 1992; Menard, 1995; Pampel, 2000). Second, Jaccard (2001) has recently suggested several ways of presenting interaction effects in logistic regression. However, he focuses very much on the plotting of interaction effects with the dependent variable as logged odds. Although logged odds lend themselves nicely to plots, they lack an intuitive meaning and may be substantively inaccessible. Dependent variables as odds, in turn, do not lend themselves to plots, yet are easier to interpret (see for a similar reasoning, Pampel, 2000). Because the plotting of interaction effects in logistic regression is apparently not without its problems and because the focus of the strategy outlined in this book lies on the post hoc testing for significance rather than on plots, I do without plotting interaction effects in logistic regression. Instead, I focus on the statistical post hoc probing of significance. In order to extend the basic strategy of the preceding sections to interactions effects, it has first to be shown that interaction effects in logistic regressions are comparable to interaction effects in OLS regression. This is usually presupposed in the literature, but may be worth demonstrating, especially for readers less familiar with logistic regression and interaction effects. Second, I briefly describe the computation of the standard error of the simple slopes.

The general function of logistic regression with logged odds as dependent variable is:

\[ \ln(P/1-P) = b_0 + b_1X + b_2Z + b_3XZ + \varepsilon \] (E 5)

where

- \( \ln(P/1-P) \) is the logged odds of the dependent variable

These terms can be simplified such that it becomes more obvious that the slope of \( X \) (i.e., the influence of \( X \) on the dependent variable) is conditional on values of \( Z \). Equation 5 thus becomes:

\[ \ln(P/1-P) = (b_1 + b_3Z)X + b_0 + b_2Z + \varepsilon \] (E 5.1)

Because the dependent variables as logged odds in equations 5 and 5.1 lack substantive meaning, the dependent variables is transformed into odds by exponentiation. In other words,
each side is taken as an exponent to the natural logarithm base. Because the logarithm of a number as an exponent equals the number itself (the logarithm of $e^x$ equals $X$), exponentiation leads to the odds of the dependent variable.

$$P/1 - P = e^{(b_1 + b_2 Z) X + b_0 + b_2 Z} + \varepsilon \quad (E \; 5.2)$$

Because generally the exponential of $X+Y$ equals the exponential of $X$ times the exponential of $Y$ (i.e., $e^{x+y} = e^x \times e^y$), E 5.2 can be rewritten as:

$$P/1 - P = e^{(b_1 + b_2 Z) X} \times e^{b_0} \times e^{b_2 Z} + \varepsilon \quad (E \; 5.3)$$

Note that the simple slope $(b_1 + b_2 Z)$ is identical to the simple slope in E 1.1 and, thus, in OLS regressions. Of course, this also means that the impact of $X$ on the dependent variable is conditional on values of $Z$ and that interactions in logistic regression can be treated like interactions of metric variables in OLS regression. Thus, replacing the coefficients and the conditioning variable $Z$ with values gives the effect of a one-unit change in $X$ on the dependent variable. The main difference between logistic and OLS regression is, however, that, in logistic regression, the dependent variable is expressed in odds and that the coefficients present the power to which the natural logarithm base is raised. Hence, substituting the values for $b_1$ and $b_2$ and for (selected) $Z$'s, gives the factor by which the odds of the dependent variable change for a given $Z$ when $X$ increases by one unit (see Pampel, 2000). For example, in Chapter 7, the tone of coverage represents the focal independent variable $X$ and country size represents the moderating variable $Z$. First, the logistic regression coefficients for $b_1$ and $b_2$ (i.e., the logistic regression coefficients for tone and the interaction between tone and country size) need to be replaced with the values from the estimated logistic regression model. Next, selecting values of the moderating variable $Z$ (i.e., country size) and raising the natural logarithm base to the power of the $(b_1 + b_2 Z)$ term gives the factor by which the odds of the particular fear change for the selected country size when $X$ (i.e., the tone) becomes more positive by one unit.

Again, the question arises whether the simple slope $(b_1 + b_2 Z)$ differs significantly from zero at different values of $Z$. In logistic regression, dividing the logistic regression coefficient by its standard error gives a z-value that tells whether and at which significance level a coefficient is significant. As Hosmer and Lemeshow (2000, pp. 33-42) have outlined in detail, the standard errors of the coefficients can be computed with values from the estimated variance/covariance matrix of the logistic regression coefficients. This procedure is identical to the one described in section 2 so that, in the case of a two-way interaction, equation E 2 may be used to compute the standard error of the various simple slopes. In other words, the same computational procedure as in OLS regressions can be used in logistic regressions to obtain the specific standard errors of the simple slopes and, thereby, the z-values. These values can subsequently be looked up for at which level they are significant.
Technical Appendix B

Additional tables and figures
Table B1: Background information and figures European election campaign content analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Channels analyzed</th>
<th>Missing days*</th>
<th>Coding place</th>
<th>Number of stories</th>
<th>Political stories</th>
<th>Pol. stories further coded</th>
<th>Number of actors pol. stories</th>
<th>Number EU representat. pol. stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>ORF &quot;ZiB&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>VTR &quot;Het Journaal&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>3/6</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VTM &quot;Nieuws&quot; (co)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>La Une &quot;JT Mcteo&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>10/6</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RTL &quot;Le Journal&quot; (co)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>TV1 &quot;TV-Avisen&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>29/5</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TV2 &quot;Nyhederne&quot; (co)</td>
<td>27/5</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Yle &quot;Finish News&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MTV3 &quot;News&quot; (co)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>TF1 &quot;Le Journal&quot; (co)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F2 &quot;Le Journal&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>ARD &quot;Tagesschau&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RTL &quot;RTL Aktuell&quot; (co)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Antenna &quot;Ta Nca Tou&quot; (co)</td>
<td>8/6-13/6</td>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mega &quot;Kentriko delto&quot; (co)</td>
<td>1/6, 6+7/6, 9-13/6</td>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ET1 &quot;News&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>1/6, 6+7/6, 9-13/6</td>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>RTE1 &quot;News (21:00)&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>3/6, 7/6</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Rai Uno &quot;TG1&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canale5 &quot;TG5&quot; (co)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>NOS &quot;Het Journaal&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>31/5, 1/6</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RTL &quot;Nieuws&quot; (co)</td>
<td>1/6</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>RTP1 &quot;News&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Lisbon</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>coding irregularities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SIC &quot;News&quot; (co)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Lisbon</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>TVE1 &quot;Telediario&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Madrid</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Telev &quot;Telecino&quot; (co)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Madrid</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>TV2 &quot;Rapport&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TV4 &quot;Nyheterna&quot; (co)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>BBC &quot;Nine o'clock news&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>28+29/5</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ITV &quot;News at 6.30&quot;</td>
<td>30+31/5-99, 6/6-99</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These days were missed because of country specific holidays, altered broadcasting schedules, or bulletins not broadcast on particular days of the week.
Table B2: Country characteristics relevant to content and effects analyses dealing with the European election campaign

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Newspaper analyzed</th>
<th>Response rate survey</th>
<th>Number of European elections in 1999</th>
<th>Polarized nature of elite opinion</th>
<th>Consonant coverage</th>
<th>Proportion of people trusting parties</th>
<th>Proportion of people trusting EP</th>
<th>Mean Satisfaction with domestic democracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>&quot;Die Presse&quot;</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>2.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium – Flanders</td>
<td>&quot;De Standard&quot;</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (–)</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium – Wallonie</td>
<td>&quot;La Libre Belgique&quot;</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>&quot;Morgenavisen Jyllands.&quot;</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (–)</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>&quot;Helsingin Sanomat&quot;</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>&quot;Le Monde&quot;</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (–)</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>&quot;Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung&quot;</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>&quot;Kathimerini&quot;</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>&quot;Irish Independent&quot;</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (–)</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>&quot;Corriere della Sera&quot; Telepanel</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>84.1</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>&quot;NRC Handelsblad&quot;</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>&quot;Publico&quot;</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>&quot;El Pais&quot;</td>
<td>Quota sample</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (+)</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>&quot;Dagens Nyheter&quot;</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>&quot;Guardian&quot;</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
1 European Union online (2002)
2 Ray (1999), own definition, see main text
3 Eurobarometer 51
Table B3: Background information and figures content analysis EU coverage during routine and summit periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outlets analyzed</th>
<th>Missing days</th>
<th>Entire coverage</th>
<th>Political coverage</th>
<th>EU coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Routine (N)</td>
<td>Summit (N)</td>
<td>Routine (N)</td>
<td>Summit (N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV1 &quot;TV-Avisen&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV2 &quot;Nyhederne&quot; (co)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TF1 &quot;Le Journal&quot; (co)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>912</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2 &quot;Le Journal&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARD &quot;Tagesschau&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTL &quot;RTL Aktuell&quot; (co)</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOS &quot;Het Journaal&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTL &quot;Nieuws&quot; (co)</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC &quot;Nine o'clock news&quot; (pb)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITV &quot;News at 6.30&quot; (co)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table B4: Country characteristics relevant to content and effect analyses dealing with the EU coverage during routine and summit periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Polarized elite opinion(^1)</th>
<th>Mean EU support months 2-3/4-10/11-12 2000(^2)</th>
<th>Mean satisfaction with democracy 2-3/4-10/11-12 2000(^3)</th>
<th>Trade relations with EU (1999)(^5)</th>
<th>GDP/head in 1,000 US$ (2000)(^3)</th>
<th>Country size in million people (2000)(^3)</th>
<th>Seats in EP (2000)(^4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2.38/2.30/2.3</td>
<td>2.90/2.98/2.93</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2.45/2.38/2.35</td>
<td>2.50/2.59/2.65</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2.54/2.30/2.38</td>
<td>2.59/2.52/2.65</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>82.2</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2.74/2.70/2.68</td>
<td>2.86/2.90/2.75</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2.40/2.03/2.07</td>
<td>2.73/2.61/2.80</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Ray (1999), own definition see main text
\(^2\) Eurobarometer 52-54
\(^3\) OECD (2002)
\(^5\) OECD (2002)
\(^4\) European Union online (2002)
Table B5: Inter-trainer and trainer-coder reliabilities (content analysis routine and summit periods)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Entire coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inter-trainer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Stories, selection</td>
<td>26 English stories, randomly selected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anchor</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsfilm</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>not assessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local/regional</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU level</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU pol ment.</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About EU</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU stories</th>
<th>11 English stories, randomly selected</th>
<th>20 Danish stories, randomly selected</th>
<th>20 German stories, randomly selected</th>
<th>11 English stories, randomly selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU mentioned</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU evaluation</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success/progress</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damage/failure</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table B6: Inter-coder reliabilities of the categories used (content analysis routine and summit periods)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>England</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Coders</td>
<td>2 coders</td>
<td>4 coders</td>
<td>5 coders</td>
<td>5 coders</td>
<td>4 coders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Stories, selection</td>
<td>45 stories</td>
<td>37 stories</td>
<td>36 stories</td>
<td>35 stories, randomly selected</td>
<td>31 stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anchor</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsfilm</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local/regional level</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National level</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU level</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International level</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About EU</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### EU stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>England</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Coders</td>
<td>4 coders</td>
<td>2 coders</td>
<td>3 coders</td>
<td>5 coders</td>
<td>2 coder trainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Stories, selection</td>
<td>20 stories, randomly selected 8% of entire material</td>
<td>12 stories, randomly selected 23% of entire material</td>
<td>15 stories, randomly selected 21% of entire material</td>
<td>20 stories, randomly selected 16% of entire material</td>
<td>15 stories, randomly selected, 20% of entire material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU mentioned</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU evaluation</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success/progress</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damage/failure</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-sample</td>
<td>Excluded sample</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52% (330.6)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>44 (21.0)</td>
<td>49* (24.8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2.2 (0.83)</td>
<td>2.3* (0.75)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>30%*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low status employees</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High status employees</td>
<td>3.9 (1.88)</td>
<td>4.3* (1.57)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper exposure</td>
<td>1.8 (0.39)</td>
<td>2.0 (0.36)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio exposure</td>
<td>2.4 (0.92)</td>
<td>2.5* (0.89)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political talk to friends</td>
<td>2.4 (0.92)</td>
<td>2.5* (0.89)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive mobilization (T = right)</td>
<td>3.2 (1.37)</td>
<td>3.3 (1.49)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-right position (T = right)</td>
<td>2.7 (0.61)</td>
<td>2.8 (0.58)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction domestic democracy</td>
<td>2.3 (0.59)</td>
<td>2.6* (0.56)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefited from EU (T = yes)</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>66%*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support EU</td>
<td>4.3 (2.83)</td>
<td>4.2 (2.41)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for further integration</td>
<td>4.3 (2.83)</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power loss of smaller states (T = yes)</td>
<td>50%*</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richer countries paying more (T = yes)</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* P < .05

Variance of metric variables in brackets.
Figure B1: T-values of the influence of tone of coverage on support for European integration as conditional on consonance/dissonance and visibility of EU representatives

Figure B2: T-values of the influence of performance depictions on support for integration as conditional on trade relations and cognitive mobilization
References


References


The Economist (2002, October 26b). The Irish agree; now will everyone else kindly do the same? p. 27.


van Egmond, M. (2003). *Rain falls on all of us (but some manage to get more wet than others): How political context may affect the individual decision to vote*. Amsterdam: unpublished doctoral dissertation.


References


References


media. Studies from the election year 1994] (pp. 80-100). Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.


References


References


Samenvatting in het Nederlands

Hoewel meer dan 60% van de Europese burgers televisienieuws gebruikt om informatie over de Europese Unie te verkrijgen, is de televisieverslaggeving over de EU nog nauwelijks onderzocht. Bovendien weten we weinig over de effecten van de berichtgeving. Deze studie onderzoekt daarom (a) hoe televisienieuws in de verschillende Europese landen bericht over de EU en (b) welke effecten dit heeft op de meningen over de Europese eenwording, maar ook op de angst hiervoor.

De resultaten laten zien dat televisieverslaggeving over de EU zich kenmerkt door onzichtbare belangrijkheid óf door belangrijke onzichtbaarheid. Wanneer de berichtgeving over de EU prominent is, is er meestal weinig berichtgeving. Is er veel verslaggeving, dan is de berichtgeving in de regel onopvallend. Over het algemeen is de EU verslaggeving het meest duidelijk zichtbaar rond de ontmoetingen van de Europese leiders. In bijna alle Europese landen is de verslaggeving over de EU licht negatief. Bovendien is er meer verslaggeving over de EU te zien op publieke dan op commerciële zenders. Binnenlandse ontwikkelingen en berichtgeving over de EU zijn aan elkaar gerelateerd: wanneer de bevolking ontevreden is over de nationale democratie en wanneer de politieke elites het oneens zijn over de EU, neemt de hoeveelheid berichtgeving over de EU toe, in ieder geval tijdens Europese verkiezingen. Bovendien toonden jongere lidstaten van de EU meer interesse voor de Europese verkiezingen dan oudere lidstaten. Wellicht worden Europese verkiezingen in oudere lidstaten als tweederangs evenement gezien, hetgeen tot derderangs berichtgeving leidt.

Er is geen verenigd Europa wat betreft media effecten. De berichtgeving over de EU beïnvloedt de opinies over, maar ook de angst voor de Europese eenwording – echter niet altijd en overal in gelijke mate. Welke uitwerking de berichtgeving over de EU heeft, hangt af van specifieke landenkenmerken. Als politieke partijen in een land verschillende opvattingen hebben over de EU, heeft de hoeveelheid verslaggeving een effect op de waargenomen belangrijkheid van de Europese eenwording. Hoe meer verslaggeving, hoe hoger de waargenomen belangrijkheid en omgekeerd. Wanneer politieke partijen het eens met elkaar zijn, treedt dit effect niet op. Positieve berichtgeving over de EU heeft een positieve uitwerking op meningen over Europa en negatieve berichtgeving een negatieve uitwerking. Dit is echter alleen zo wanneer de berichtgeving in de media van een land eenstemmig positief of negatief berichten. Is dit niet het geval dan heeft de verslaggeving deze invloed niet. Alleen inwoners van landen die qua handel niet van de EU afhankelijk zijn, verzetten tegen negatieve beschrijvingen van het prestatievermogen van de EU. Bij inwoners van landen die afhankelijk zijn van de EU, was dit niet het geval. Bij overwegend negatieve berichtgeving werden inwoners van grote lidstaten minder bang voor een verlies van culturele identiteit; in kleine EU landen was er geen effect.

Hoewel er dus geen sprake is van een homogeen effect van televisienieuws op opinies over Europa, moet de berichtgeving over Europa in televisie nieuws niet worden verwaarloosd. Eerder onderzoek heeft nauwelijks aandacht besteed aan de vraag in hoeverre televisieberichtgeving over de EU de meningen van de Europese burgers beïnvloedt. Dit boek toont aan waarom toekomstige studies juist wel aandacht aan deze vraag zouden moeten schenken.
European citizens depend on the media and most notably on television news to form opinions about European integration. Yet what we know about Europe in the news amounts to rather little. Where is Europe located on the news map? How visible is it in television news? Is the EU portrayed as a successful achiever or as a symbol of quarreling inefficiency? Equally little is known about the effects of the coverage. Does EU coverage influence the extent to which European citizens consider European integration important? Does more positive coverage increase citizens' support for the EU? And what about people's fears generated by European integration - are they alleviated by positive EU coverage? Drawing on a rich array of data, this book describes how European television covers European integration and identifies underlying patterns. Moreover, it shows that previous accounts of people's opinions and fears about European integration have largely neglected one particular influence - television news coverage.

Jochen Peter is an Assistant Professor and Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Amsterdam School of Communications Research at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands.