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

Peter, J.

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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.\(^1\) 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 millennium (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,\(^2\) 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 & Sinnott, 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,
In 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.

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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

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.

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4 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.\footnote{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.}

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.
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. 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. 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.

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

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
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.
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}

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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.
Why the coverage may matter

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,\textsuperscript{10} 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.\textsuperscript{11} 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 \textit{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

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{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.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.
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

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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 explicated 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 losing 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.