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How politics becomes news and news becomes politics. A comparative experimental study of the politics-media relationship

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How Politics Becomes News and News Becomes Politics

A comparative experimental study of the
politics-media relationship

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How Politics Becomes News and News Becomes Politics

A comparative experimental study of the
politics-media relationship

Hoe politiek nieuws wordt en nieuws politiek wordt:
Een vergelijkende experimentele studie naar
de relatie tussen politiek en media

Proefschrift voorgelegd tot het behalen van de graad van
doctor in de sociale wetenschappen: politieke wetenschappen
aan de Universiteit Antwerpen te verdedigen door Luzia HELFER

Prof. dr. Rudy B. Andeweg
Prof. dr. Peter Van Aelst

Antwerpen, 2016

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Chapter 1

The interdependent politics-media relationship

*It is early on a Tuesday morning and Nadine, a young parliamentarian, wants to get a head start on preparing for the meeting of her parliamentary party group later this morning. With a few important votes this week related to her area of specialty, she has talked to the party leadership about what she will want to emphasize during the meeting. But of course, Nadine does not only keep tabs on what is going on in her area. So she reaches for the morning newspapers. Mostly, she just reads the headlines and only from time to time quickly scans an article in more detail. Suddenly, one on her party's core issue, sustainable energy, catches her attention. Usually, the media do not devote too much attention to the issue so she reads it carefully. Once finished, she quickly scans the rest as it is getting late. There is not much new information and she gets ready to leave the house. Just as she steps out of the door, she suddenly remembers that oral question hour will be held this afternoon and that she has not yet submitted any questions. Although she knows chances are slim that her question will be selected, she makes a mental note to submit one or two questions before lunchtime. Cycling into the city, she tries to think back to what was reported in the media the past few days for inspiration because she knows that an issue that received a lot of attention from the media has a higher chance to make it into oral question hour.*¹

This fictional but prototypical example illustrates important aspects of politicians' relationship with the media. First, that politicians are news junkies. They need to be up to date on what is taking place to fulfill their role as representatives. And sometimes, information obtained through the media triggers them to take political action. However, and

¹ This example is based on the Netherlands where both parliamentary party group meetings and question hours are held on the same day.

this is a second, but just as important, point to note, politicians do not react to everything they learn through the media. The amount of information they receive is enormous and they cannot, and possibly do not want to, react to everything they learn; they have to make choices. At first sight, this seems contradictory to the close relationship between politics and media past research has found. Indeed, drawing on behavioral data – mostly parliamentary questions but sometimes also governmental outputs – studies show that political elites often adopt issues from the media (e.g. Green-Pedersen and Stubager, 2010; Soroka, 2002; Thesen, 2011; Noijs et al., 2008; Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2011; Walgrave et al., 2008). However, these studies seldom stress that in most cases, media attention is ignored and has no tangible consequences. Furthermore, agenda-setting studies show that not all issues are as likely to be transferred from the media to politics. Yet, the general mechanisms of this transfer of attention are not yet well understood. Simplified, the studies that have been conducted have resulted in a large collection of factors that influence whether media coverage has political consequences. These range from whether we are focusing on election or non-election periods, the media organization publishing the report to the type of political agenda that is influenced as for instance parliamentary debates and law proposals are differently affected by the media (see Walgrave and Van Aelst, 2006, for an overview). However, which of all these factors are more crucial and which might be less important is not clear yet.

This book contributes to the stream of literature on political agenda-setting. It zooms in on the moment a politician learns about an issue through the media and has to decide whether to pursue it or not, the selection moment. By asking national-level politicians in two countries to rate a number of news reports that are systematically manipulated in an experimental setting, I test how a number of the most important factors affect whether and how news becomes politics. Or, put differently:

***How and when do news reports trigger parliamentarians
to take political action?***

This research question is addressed in chapter 4 where a tentative hierarchy of influences is put forward. Furthermore, the innovative factorial experimental design that is applied makes it possible to isolate differences between individual politicians, for example based on their tenure or their party affiliation, and estimate interaction effects between media content and those background characteristics. Results provide evidence that the media's influence on politics is far from automatic; although on a very general level, many issues from the media receive attention in politics too, the routes through which these issues actually make it into politics likely vary; depending on the issue different politicians will react to news reports. Next to the content of the report and the background of the politician, effects of the electoral system are studied in the comparative setting of these studies which are carried out in two different countries. These findings further underline the conditionality of the media's influence on politics. In sum, the first study shows that

through paying attention to specific issues, the media can shift political attention and trigger politicians to react. One could argue that the media provide a link between what is at play in society more broadly and the issues politics pays attention to. An equally important role of the media is, however, to inform the public about what is taking place in politics, providing a link from politics to the public. Yet, political news does not emerge in a vacuum but is shaped by actors. First by journalists who produce news coverage. But journalists also need information and sources they can cite to provide this coverage; they need the politicians for their coverage. This means that while media coverage can influence politicians to take political action, this same coverage is oftentimes already actively shaped by these same politicians.

Consequently, to study how media can affect politics, it is crucial to also know how political coverage comes about in the first place. Taking into account the interdependence in the politics-media relationship can provide additional insights about the mechanisms at play in this constant interaction. Because much like politicians who are exposed to a constant stream of information from the media, journalists are bombarded with information on a daily basis. For example by politicians who try to get their stories into the media. Journalists receive press releases, they talk to each other or to politicians and maybe even have their regular sources among political staffers. But not all of this information makes it into the news and they too have to make a selection. To arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the politics-media relationship, next to studying how news becomes politics, this book investigates in a first step in chapter 3, how politics becomes news. Or, more precisely:

***How and when do press releases from political parties
get picked up by journalists?***

Generally, more is known about how journalists select messages for reporting than how politicians pick up media reports. The theory of news values put forward in 1965 by Galtung and Ruge explains why some events get covered and others not, and many scholars have built on their insights. This book contributes to this body of literature by explicitly testing the applicability of these news values in the context of West European multiparty politics with a special attention for the role of the political parties (e.g. issue ownership) and parliamentary initiatives. Moreover, it puts these influences of the message into broader context by taking into account the political system within which journalists and politicians operate. With this, the study addresses the lack of comparative studies with political journalists criticized by Donsbach and Patterson (2004, p. 253) who write that “explanatory comparative analyses [...] are virtually nonexistent, even though the field is of high scientific interest, especially where theories of news selection are concerned.” Parallel to the first, this second research question is investigated in an experimental design. Political journalists are asked to indicate the newsworthiness of a number of party press releases in a setting that is close to their everyday working conditions.

1.1. How journalists and politicians interact

In sum, this book investigates both how political coverage comes about and how such coverage influences politicians' actions. It does so by applying an experimental design where journalists and politicians are asked to indicate whether they intend to take action based on a particular message they receive. Such an approach has several advantages over trying to disentangle the close relationship between politicians and journalists in real life. When it comes to elites' relationship with the media, "there is no given distinction between cause and effect, because every element can be seen both as a cause and as an effect. For example, a report might be seen as an effect of subjects' prior behavior while also being the cause of their subsequent behavior." Kepplinger (2007, p. 8-9) Scholars have struggled to find research designs that account for this complexity. Therefore, I opt to study the influence of party communication on the media and the influence of media content on politicians in two separate studies. Although separate, both studies test the influence of a similar set of variables to see, how alike politicians and journalists are in their selection of messages. If they apply the same criteria, there might be a reinforcing mechanism present where the same stories bounce back and forth between politics and the media. With this approach this book thus provides the unique opportunity to directly compare how politics can influence the media and the media influence politics. At the same time, both the study of the media's influence on politicians and of how journalists select news themselves provides important contributions to its respective field because of the high control over contextual influences experimental design and the comparative nature of the studies carried out in two countries.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I first provide more context on how media and politics interact, before presenting a heuristic model of politics-media influence, the Politics-Media Wheel. Next to stages through which messages in both politics and media have to move, this model distinguishes three levels of influence in each sphere from the micro actor level to the most aggregate political system level. The general research design is discussed in section 1.3 before the chapter concludes with a brief overview of the book as a whole. Overall, the book and its chapters are structured into an introductory section introducing heuristic model of the politics-media relationship in subsection 1.2.1 and a next methodological chapter on the factorial survey experiment used for the studies in chapter 2. These are followed by one chapter on the selection of messages by journalists and one on how politicians select what media reports to react to. In a concluding chapter, the two studies are integrated to address how selection by journalists and politicians compare and put into the broader context (chapter 5).

1.1 How journalists and politicians interact

When asked about the influence of the media, politicians across countries agree that their influence is substantial. In a comparative study of politicians in nine Western European countries, for instance, half of them agreed that media, and not politics, determine what

is put on the political agenda (Lengauer et al., 2014). 62% of Dutch MPs agree with the statement that the mass media have too much political power (Van Aelst et al., 2008, p. 501). These studies illustrate that at least political elites believe that media have substantial power over politics and political processes. And many journalists agree that the media have more power over politics than they should (Kepplinger, 2008, p. 18).

What these studies have in common is that they asked politicians and journalists about their perceptions of media power and to report how they have behaved in the past. If, however, scholars use different methods more independent from self-reporting, for instance analyzing the content of media coverage and parliamentary proceedings, the results are not equally conclusive. Instead, these studies tend to find that the media's influence is conditional on factors such as the political context and the party. Van Aelst and Walgrave (2011) compared results from perceptive measures of media influence with more "objective" measures based on the content of media coverage and political agendas in one study. They concluded that the latter method attributed much less power to the media than the former.

The present book builds further on the findings of these quantitative political agenda-setting studies. It does so by zooming in on the individual politicians. This individual-level approach allows investigating in detail how media attention transfers to attention by politicians. On the one hand, this approach allows to integrate findings of studies investigating perceptive measures of media influence. These often argue that the individual differences between politicians, for instance their political standing, determine whether and how media influence politics (see Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006) for an overview). On the other hand, many scholars have also analyzed the media coverage and political proceedings and have thus primarily focused on how issue attention from one realm transfers to the other. These scholars argue that characteristics of the issue, for instance how well it fits the issue competition in politics, determine whether and how the media influence politics (e.g. Thesen, 2011).

The present study integrates these approaches which have in common that they both underline the conditionality of the influence of the media on politics. Media attention only occasionally leads to attention by politicians. To investigate whether and under what circumstances such an effect takes place, I set out to investigate the transfer of issue attention from the media to politics in more detail by using an experimental approach. Whether a transfer takes place broadly depends on the content of a news report of course, but also on the politician making the selection. Some politicians might be more prone to react to media coverage than others, depending on the content of the report. Put differently, I investigate how both the message (news report) and the receiver (politician) influence whether news reporting influences politics.

However, the politics-media relationship is not a one way street. Politicians are not only influenced by media coverage, they also have a great deal of influence over political

1.1. How journalists and politicians interact

news. Because we live in an era of mediated politics where “the media have become the most important sources of information and vehicle of communication between the governors and the governed” (Strömbäck, 2008, p. 230), politicians attempt to strategically influence media coverage. They know that the media are the best way to reach their voters. At the same time, journalists depend on politicians to give them the relevant information to be able to cover politics. As a result, politicians are not only influenced by media coverage, they also influence coverage themselves. These “elites are simultaneously the main sources, main targets and some of the most influenced recipients of news.” (Davis, 2003, p. 637) Therefore, both need to be taken into account and we need to further our understanding of the give-and-take which takes place between politics and the media.

Key players in this complex interaction are the individual actors, journalists and politicians. These individual actors make far-reaching choices. In both politics and media, there are always many issues competing for attention. They cannot all be attended to, because there is limited “carrying capacity” (Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988, p. 60). Politicians and journalists have to decide which issues they will address in their own political or media arena. They are the gatekeepers who determine whether an event from politics deserves coverage (journalists) or whether an issue raised in the media makes it onto the political agenda (politicians). The following chapters present the results of two separate yet closely related studies on the behavior of these actors. In the first study I investigate how journalists select political messages. In a survey, political journalists evaluated a number of experimentally manipulated party press releases. They were asked whether they would mention a specific news report at a parliamentary party group meeting and also, whether they would take political action. This shows the influence of the party sending the message and the message itself, but also the influence of the individual journalist who gauges whether a political message has a chance of making it into the news. A similar study was carried out with national-level politicians to study how media coverage can influence politicians. In their survey, politicians were asked to indicate whether they would take political action based on the information they received in brief but realistically formulated news reports. Both studies were carried out in two countries: Switzerland and the Netherlands. Both politicians and journalists do not operate in a vacuum but act in a particular political and media system. Although the countries share many characteristics (see section 2.2), there are also important differences, for instance with regards to the distribution of political power and the electoral systems. This context shapes the behavior of both journalists and politicians.

With this investigation, I hope to contribute to the existing knowledge about the politics-media relationship in several ways. First, it takes an individual level approach and zooms in on the key actors: journalists and politicians. This allows us to situate those actors within a broader structure, namely their parties and media outlets. Second,

it applies an innovative parallel design and compares how journalists are influenced by politicians and how politicians are in turn influenced by media coverage; a direct comparison between journalists and politicians. While scholars repeatedly stress the mutual influence of politics and media, studies that actually account for the complexity of the relationship are scarce (Kepplinger, 2007). Such an integrated approach is however required if we want to draw conclusions on when politics and media reinforce each other. A third contribution is the experimental design applied within this book. There are many factors that affect the politics-media relationship. Journalists can obtain information from press releases, through Twitter and other social media, or simply through personal contact with politicians. Similarly, we know that politicians consume a vast amount of news every day. How can we be sure of cause and effect? And how do those factors relate to each other? Are some maybe more important than others? One way to overcome this dilemma is through an experimental design. This approach allows us to control for many of the potential sources of influence.

1.2 A heuristic model of influence

Several scholars have underlined the symbiotic nature of the relationship between politics and media. Despite the mutual dependence between politics and media, for some it is clear that change is driven by politics and the media are not an independent source with an own agenda. Although they do have far reaching effects on many aspects of society, their primary role is to disseminate information. Sellers (2010), for instance, describes the “cycles of spin” a political message moves through in the United States Congress. According to him, political change is initiated in the political sphere, not by an independent force of the media. The party leadership, with more or less support of its rank-and-file members, decides to launch a campaign on an issue. Ideally, this content is then picked up by the press, resulting in media coverage that then feeds back into politics. Because once covered in the news, those messages feed back into politics and subsequently influence future messages, a cycle results. A reviewer summarized, “[Sellers’] book is most successful at showing the strategy, calculations, and constraints of legislative leaders as they develop and adjust their spin strategies” (Groeling, 2011, p. 140), but the book and its cycle of spin does not help us understand how the content of news coverage comes about.

Wolfsfeld, in contrast, emphasizes the media’s role in the politics-media relationship. He uses the Politics-Media-Politics (PMP) Cycle (2013; 2004) to describe how political change comes about. This was first put forward by Wolfsfeld in his 2004 book *The Media and the Path to Peace*.² He describes the role of politics and the media as symbiotic,

² The PMP Cycle itself is a development of the “political contest model” (Wolfsfeld, 1997) which “sees the contest over the news media as part of a more general struggle for political control” (Wolfsfeld and Sheaffer, 2006, p. 334).

1.2. A heuristic model of influence

based on extensive study of documents and interviews with stakeholders in peace processes in Ireland and the Middle East. However, the media are not the initial source of change. Change first takes place in politics, which gives media actors the sources they require to cover a story. This change in media coverage can in turn affect politics by, for example, accelerating political change. Referencing indexing theories (Bennett, 1996) and the cascading activation model (Entman, 2003), Wolfsfeld concludes that, when critical voices become more numerous in the political sphere, the media will at some point report on these voices too. The united front opposing change then crumbles even faster, accelerating the political change. Although informative, both Sellers' Cycles of Spin and Wolfsfeld's PMP Cycle remain too general for the purpose of the present book. More specifically, neither approach allows us to zoom in on the decision mechanisms of the individual journalists and politicians.

One author who more explicitly focuses on the individual level is Kepplinger (2007) with his so called elaborate model of reciprocal media effect. It shows how individual elites are at the same time influenced by and themselves influence media coverage. According to Kepplinger, media content influences both unobservable cognitive processes and observable behavior of elites. The observable effects can directly or indirectly be the result of media coverage. Direct effects can be linked back to the media coverage. They can be reciprocal because the media coverage might be the result of earlier behavior of those same elites. Or, in Kepplinger's words, those "subjects are not located at the end of the cascade, but rather, at its beginning" (p. 6). The behavior of the elites thus feeds back into the media and can be a cause for new media reporting, although the behavior itself was initiated by previous media coverage. On the other hand, indirect effects occur when other elites are subject to those direct effects, which then also affect other elites. For instance, one politician who reads a news report might act on it (direct effect), but he or she can also talk to another politician about this report who in turn is affected too although he or she has not read the report itself (indirect effect).

While Kepplinger's model thus shows how politicians and other elites are subject to media influence at the individual level, he, like Sellers (2010), does not take into account what takes place in the media sphere. Although he acknowledges that elites influence the content of media coverage, he does not explain how this influence takes place. Yet if we indeed want to further our understanding of how politics and media influence each other, also on the individual level, and compare how these actors decide what messages they react to, we require a model that gives more equal weight to the processes taking place in politics and the media. Building on the models I just mentioned, I introduce the Politics-Media Wheel.

1.2.1 The Politics-Media Wheel

The Politics-Media Wheel (PMW) is a heuristic model to understand the reciprocal and interdependent relationship between politics and media. It broadly identifies a number of steps through which a message has to move to affect what takes place in media or politics (see Figure 1.1). Building on the conceptualization of the politics-media relationship as a cycle (Wolfsfeld, 2004; Sellers, 2010), I use the metaphor of a “wheel”. One could envisage it almost as a “wheel of fortune” with a pointer in the middle pointing at the stage at which a message can be situated. Every time politicians react to a news story or the media publish yet another reaction by a politician or party, the wheel thus turns. For instance, when a political scandal breaks, media coverage may lead to speculation from political sources about the imminent fall of government. Such reactions give the media something to report about in turn. When these different phases follow each other rapidly, the wheel accelerates. When either side loses interest in a story and no longer reports on it or reacts to it, the wheel might simply stop to turn and messages do not move between the political and media sphere anymore. The wheel stops turning. Opposed to a cycle, the wheel metaphor emphasizes that while in some circumstances, the exchange between politics and media might be taking place in a very short period of time, in others messages take longer to move from one stage to the next and between the two spheres. In this process of politics-media influence, the individual journalists and politicians play an important role as the actors who can influence the nature of the exchange taking place.

In the sections below, I elaborate on the stages I distinguish in these processes in the media and in politics separately. The stages are largely based on the “model of models” of communication theory proposed by Greenberg and Salwen (2009, p. 68). With the goal of organizing existing models of communication, they differentiate between selection, creation, dissemination and reception. Selection, these authors write, is the most important step as “media decision makers can make their selection only from those issues, events, and ideas which are accessible.” Although this sequence originates in communication science, similar stages can broadly be identified in politics. With its conceptualization of different stages, the Politics-Media Wheel furthermore complements other theories that have been brought forward, particularly on how media influence politics. While Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006) for example focus their model more on structuring the various sources of influence, the model proposed here emphasizes the stages in the process. It also situates the first crucial selection moment in the wider process of politics-media influence. Selection is particularly central when studying journalists and politicians’ decision-making and should be distinguished from pure perception other media effects studies often focus on. Although mostly implicitly, these studies assume that perceiving a message is sufficient for it to have an effect on the recipient, for example on beliefs, attitudes or behavior (for an overview of such studies see Potter and Riddle, 2007). While perception is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the described process in either

1.2. A heuristic model of influence

sphere, selection is a necessary condition for *influence* as conceptualized here.³ If no journalist is interested in a political story and makes the decision to pursue it, the story will not become news. Similarly, if no politician deems a news report important enough to mention it to colleagues or even take action, there is no influence. Directly comparing these selection moments allows us to learn more about the politics-media relationship.

The media sphere Perception by a journalist is the first key step for politics and political action to have an effect on media. If an event does not catch the attention of a journalist, it will not be considered for selection. In fact, an unnoticed action or message from politics will not even make it into the media sphere. It is lost in between, as indicated by the small gap between the political and media spheres in the model. Some refer to this stage as the “discovery phase” (McManus, 1994, p. 88). This is an aspect of the politics-media relationship that is very hard to study, because one would have to be able to define what is a political “event” or message and what is not. Reich (2006), for instance, studied how potential stories are brought to the attention of a journalist to investigate, whether the news sources or journalists initiated news stories. He finds that sources more often than journalists initiate news coverage.

Once an issue or action has been brought to the attention of a journalist, he or she makes the decision to either select or discard the potential news story. Traditional gatekeeping studies in journalism research have focused on this moment. For instance, they compared the information journalists received in their inbox with what they then reported on. Those studies show that the majority of information is discarded at this first stage. In study of the process of news making at a local US TV station, not even half the potential news stories passed this initial filtering stage (Gant and Dimmick, 2000). Only very few messages are thus actually selected meaning that most power at this stages resides with the individual journalist. Because the first selection is a precondition for the process of newsmaking zooming in on the criteria journalists use to select those messages in this initial stage is particularly informative and can help us further our understanding of the process of politics-media influence as a whole.

Once a message is selected by the journalist, in a next stage the news production process begins. At this moment, in many newsrooms more actors become involved. For instance, the journalist presents the idea to the editor or during a meeting of the newsroom staff, who will in turn often decide whether and with what angle the story should further be pursued. Often only once a green light is given, the journalist contacts

³ Scholars sometimes refer to the selection moment in the context of theories of selective attention or theories that focus on the storage and retrieval of information (for an overview see Eilders, 2006, p. 13). In the Politics-Media Wheel which focuses on message influences on elite actors, the selection moment is however separated from this first stage. Selection here refers to a conscious decision by this elite actor to pursue (or not pursue) an issue and this decision is linked to the allocation of resources, for instance time or staff. Selective exposure or studies on the retention of messages are situated in the perception stage of the Politics-Media Wheel.

Figure 1.1: The Politics-Media Wheel (PMW)



sources and usually gathers additional information. Scholars have investigated this phase mostly through observations in newsrooms (Gant and Dimmick, 2000), sometimes also by interviewing journalists once reports were published (Reich, 2006).

Finally, the news product is the result of this process of attention, selection and production. Yet even if a story makes it into production, publication is not guaranteed which is why I distinguish between the production phase and the actual news product. In exceptional cases, if a big news story breaks or the editor considers another story more important, it might still not get published. Only a limited amount of space is available in a newspaper or a television or radio broadcast. Thus, what finally does become news always also depends on the other news that is available.

Once a news product is published, it might provide the starting point for the political “other side”. The news product might influence politicians, in fact studies show that already politicized news is more likely picked up by politicians (Sevenans et al., 2016). What happens in the political sphere is described in the next section.

The political sphere The process that takes place in the political sphere is similar to that in the journalistic sphere. In this case, the starting point is a story in the media that reaches at least one politician. Once perceived, politicians decide whether or not to allocate further resources to the issue. Politicians have to attend to a vast amount of news coverage on a daily basis if they do not want to risk being sidetracked and losing control over how an issue is both defined and resolved (Dearing and Rogers, 1996). However, although they do consume a vast amount of news on a daily basis, politicians

1.2. A heuristic model of influence

can of course not attend to all news. Therefore, politicians have to make a selection. Like in the newsmaking process, the selection moment is also key in the political sphere. To date, not many studies have zoomed in how politicians decide which specific news reports they react to and which not. A recent study analyzed the content of media reporting during a week and then asked politicians in Belgium what news stories they remembered and which they did not (Sevenans et al., 2016). The study showed that politicized news mentioning a political actor was more likely to be remembered and talked about by politicians than news that was not politicized.

If a story is deemed worthy to be pursued, a politician then often deliberates before taking action. This usually takes place among a group of actors within the party and is often not accessible to researchers. Politicians may bring up a news report for debate at a parliamentary party group meeting. In this phase, the politician or party decides whether an issue should be pursued further. Moreover, because the politician deliberates with other political actors, a news report might actually have an indirect effect on others (Kepplinger, 2007, p. 6). Although they have not read the report themselves, this politician's peers will nevertheless learn of the news report's content and might thus be influenced by it indirectly.

Finally, once a news report has moved through all these stages, it can result in political action. This observable political action is the dependent variable in most studies of media effects on politics. Political agenda-setting studies, for instance, link news reporting with political action. They show that if the media pay more attention to an issue, politics oftentimes follows and the issue gets put higher on the political agenda (for an overview see Walgrave and Van Aelst, 2006). The intermediate steps described by the wheel-model are rarely studied. One of the reasons might be that many of these stages are not easily accessible to researchers.

Overall, the main goal of the politics-media wheel is to provide an overview of the most important stages in this complex politics-media relationship. It illustrates how there are parallel mechanisms at play in the media sphere and political sphere and points to the importance of the selection moment. It does so by focusing on how political messages can influence the media on the one hand, and how news reports can influence politics on the other hand. Clearly, not all news is political and the Politics-Media Wheel only focuses on the influence of political messages on journalists. Similarly, there are always a multitude of issues, not only political, fighting for the attention from policy makers and other actors (Dearing and Rogers, 1996, p. 4). At the same time, there are always real-world developments and other actors such as lobbying groups or other third parties that might influence both journalists and politicians (e.g. Birkland 1998; Berkowitz and Adams 1990; Protess et al. 1987 but see Barnhurst and Mutz, 1997). These and many other influences provide the context within which the processes described in the Politics-Media Wheel take place. However, by focusing on the exchange between the two spheres,

the model helps isolate the processes taking place between them. After all, journalists' main source on politics will be the political actors and we also know that for politicians, the media are a key source of information (e.g. Davis, 2007, p. 185).

In the next section, I will discuss which factors can influence these decisions of journalists and politicians in turn. Building on the hierarchy of influences model (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991, 1996, 2013) put forward by Reese and Shoemaker in journalism studies, I will distinguish three levels of influence; the micro, meso, and macro levels. Particularly at the very first stage at which a selection is being made, the individual actors are key for determining whether a message moves to the next stage or not. Therefore, the discussion focuses on them.

1.2.2 Micro, meso and macro level influences

Journalists and politicians are actors who do not operate independently from their context. They are embedded in broader organizational and systemic structures of political and media systems. In order to systematize these potential sources of influence, I broadly distinguish between the individual (micro) level, the organizational (meso) level and the country (macro) level. This categorization can help identify the sources of influence in the complex politics-media relationship and has both theoretical and methodological advantages.

From a theoretical point of view, Brown (2011, p. 63) for example argues that there are several sources of influence on politicians that help us understand how mediatized politics is. Political actors' power over shaping media coverage can only be grasped if we depart from the context of the political competition and the media system, because these in turn affect the exchanges between journalists and their sources (micro) as well as the influence of media organizations (meso) in this process. Thus, to understand how politics and the media interact and to what degree politics might be mediatized, we need to take into account these different levels of influence (see also Landerer, 2013). Or, in the words of Shoemaker and Reese (2013, p. 12): "Once researchers begin to understand and express their questions and studies within a levels of analysis framework, it becomes easier to compare them to others' research, to see connections among different levels, and to generally begin a much more systematic approach" to research and in that way adding to theory building in the field.

Also from a methodological point of view, there are a number of advantages to such a levels-of-influence approach. First, distinguishing these levels can help identify appropriate research strategies (Esser, 2004) as I will discuss more elaborately later in the methodological chapter (see section 2.1). Another advantage of this levels-of-influence approach is that it allows us to more directly compare the sources of influence on the behavior of journalists and politicians. Are journalists are very different from each other in the ways they select messages? And how do they compare to politicians? Is the party

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organization more influential than the media organization? This comparison between the two actors can be found in section 5.1 in the concluding chapter. In the next paragraph the levels of influence in the selection of messages by journalists and politicians are discussed separately, because they build on different theoretical backgrounds.

Levels of influence in the selection by journalists Most scholars refer to gate-keeping theory when studying journalists' selection of news. Lewin brought forward the "theory of channels and gate keeping" in 1951 to illustrate how social change comes about in a community. More specifically, he examined the development of a population's food habits by studying individual families and described how a wife or mother determines, what the family eats. He also mentioned how the concept could be transferred to other areas, for instance "the travelling of a news item through certain communication channels in a group" (Lewin 1951, p. 187 in Stacks and Salwen, 2014, p. 76). White (1950), a scholar of Lewin's, was then the first to actually apply the concept to news making by putting forward Mr. Gate (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009a, p. 12).

Another important aspect of Lewin's theory was also that he took into account the social context within which these food habits developed. Lewin understood gatekeeping as "the outcome of a web of interconnected gates and forces within a social field, not simply as one person making decisions" (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009b, p. 77). For Lewin gatekeeping occurred at multiple levels: at the level of individuals who make personal decisions, at the level of family routines and habits, and also at the level of societal and cultural forces. However, only in a "sociological turn" from the 1980s onward, did scholars actually start to focus on influences of the organizational context rather than individual journalists as gatekeepers (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009b, p. 78). This is where the levels-of-influence approach presented here fits in the existing theories of news production.

One of the most influential models in journalism studies that distinguishes between levels of influence is the "hierarchy of influences" model put forward by Shoemaker and Reese (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991, 1996). They distinguish five levels of influence that shape how news content is constructed: individuals, routines, organizations, social institutions (e.g., sources, audiences, markets, governments) and social system (cultural congruence). This approach was later adopted by others. Esser (2004, p. 157) also distinguishes five levels of influence in journalism similar to those of Shoemaker and Reese.

The studies in this book simplify these more elaborate models of influences and distinguish between three broad levels of influence which capture the most important influences in political newsmaking. At the lowest level, the journalist's selection is influenced by his or her individual background characteristics. At this level, the influence of a journalist's political orientation or journalistic experience may be studied. On the meso level we find the organization within which the journalist operates. Studies show that different types of outlets cover different types of news stories. Journalists from weeklies select more mes-

sages that include conflict than those from daily print outlets (Kepplinger et al., 1991). The meso level incorporates both the organizational and social institutions level of the “hierarchy of influences model”. At the macro level we find the influence of the political and media systems. An experimental study of how journalists write stories underlines the importance of the context. When provided with the exact same information to write a story, American and Chinese journalists emphasize different aspects in their coverage (Zhu et al., 1997).

Levels of influence in the selection by politicians While in journalism studies a levels-of-influence approach is fairly common, such a distinction has not yet been widely applied in the study of the media’s influence on politics. However, similar levels of influence are likely at play in politicians’ selection of news; the individual politician, the party within which this politician is embedded and the broader political system. This is illustrated by how the field has developed in the past years. From a general description of influences, scholars started to focus on parties Thesen (e.g., 2012); Green-Pedersen and Stubager (e.g., 2010) and the focus has recently shifted further to studying how individual politicians’ background affect their reactions to news coverage (e.g. Sevenans et al., 2015, but see also Sheaffer, 2001). Structuring these sources of influence can help relate these findings.

To date, not many models of influence on politicians’ reactions to media coverage have been proposed. In their contingency model of media influence, Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006) identify a set of variables which can be linked to the levels of influence I distinguish here. They mention the influence of politicians’ personal traits, for instance. This includes their specialization but also, more broadly, their personality (p. 103). This matches the individual micro level. Next, Walgrave and Van Aelst discuss the influence of “internal functioning” and “political configuration” of a party, for instance the difference between opposition and government parties. Both sets of variables are part of the meso level in this study, namely the party in which the politicians are embedded. Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006, p. 102) also emphasize how these might again influence the behavior of individual politicians. Depending on their institutional position within a particular political system, politicians are exposed to varying constraints: “presidents in full-fledged presidential systems, directly elected and only accountable to the electorate, are less constrained by parties or other internal decision-making rules” (p. 102). This illustrates how these levels of influence, even the electoral system at the highest level, affect the politics-media relationship.

In sum, a levels-of-influence approach applied to the processes taking place in the media and political sphere has a number of advantages. First, it can help us identify the sources of influence on the behavior of the individual actors. Second, this approach also allows to connect these findings measured at the individual level to studies which focused

1.3. The parallel comparative research design

on a more aggregate level, for instance how political parties react to media coverage. Finally, as I hope to demonstrate in the following section presenting the research design of the studies here, this structure also points to gaps in existing research. Namely that we know little about how the political system affects how politics and media influence each other (but see Midtbø et al., 2014).

1.3 The parallel comparative research design

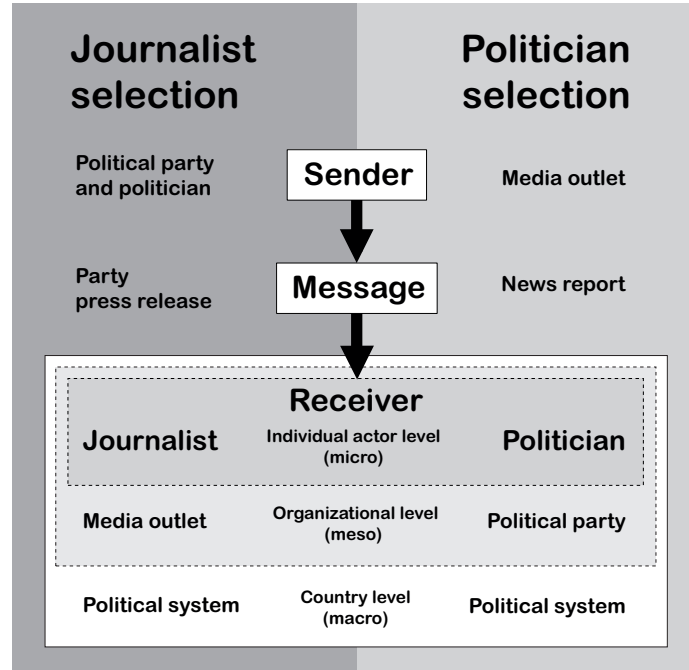
This book sets out to investigate the mechanisms according to which politics and media influence each other by focusing at the first crucial moment in which a journalist or politician receives new information from the other realm and has to decide whether to take action or not. The influences on the selection of messages can be systematized into three groups of factors; the sender, the message and the receiver. From whom a message originates (sender) and what the content is of a message are key components determining whether a journalist or politician acts on it. However, the receiver is ultimately the actor determining whether the message is selected or not, making this actor key. Because these actors are in turn embedded in a broader institutional context, next to their own individual background on a micro level, the organizations within which they are operating and the broader political system likely influence their decision making. And with this, ultimately affect the selection. This conceptualization of the influences of sender, message and receiver variables on selection is illustrated in Figure 1.2. The figure also underlines the parallel nature of the overall research design with the same basic structure applied in both selection studies.

While the systematization helps to identify potential sources of influence, the empirical study of these variables and their relationship in the politics-media relationship poses a number of challenges. First, the politics-media relationship is complex and multilayered. The goal here is to zoom in on this very first selection moment *and* isolate effects of these actors' backgrounds from the broader more aggregate level influences of the party or media organization and a country's political system. This requires creating a research design that allows for maximal control over how these messages, the party press releases journalists select and the news reports politicians select, are constructed. Relatedly, to compare the effects of specific selection criteria politicians and journalists apply, a similar set of variables should be tested with both groups of actors. Additionally, the stage in the Politics-Media Wheel compared needs to be as identical as possible. Finally, any research design is of course only useful if the data can actually be collected empirically. Journalists and politicians are elites that do not readily cooperate with researchers. In many countries, the number of members of parliament is fairly limited. Switzerland and the Netherlands, the two countries in which the present studies were carried out, have

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200 and 150 members in their Lower Houses respectively. The population of journalists regularly covering politics in these two countries is similarly limited. Therefore, a research design is required that both makes it easy for these subjects to participate with the least amount of effort and that accounts for a comparably low number of respondents.

Figure 1.2: Overview of the parallel comparative research design



The factorial survey experiment is an approach that addresses these challenges. The method is more commonly known in sociology (for an overview see Wallander, 2009) and is closely related to other multifactorial approaches such as the conjoint experiment. The influence of several variables is simultaneously tested in one design using a mixture of a within- and between-respondent design. To study how journalists or politicians select what messages they react to, they are shown fictional but realistically formulated messages within which a number of variables are manipulated. The multivariate design often makes the experiment both more interesting and more realistic for respondents. Another key component of the factorial survey is the statistically efficient design due to systematical sampling of the experimental conditions; not all conditions are shown to all respondents. Experimental conditions are sampled based on criteria of statistical efficiency and these conditions are subsequently systematically distributed across respondents. The fact that not all respondents have to evaluate all experimental conditions reduces the burden enormously and leads to significantly shorter questionnaires. These are crucial if we want to get journalists and politicians to cooperate in the survey

1.4. A brief outline of the book

and/or avoid that they quit the survey before the end.

In sum, the studies presented here zoom in on the selection moment. So far, I only briefly mentioned the comparative aspect that this study also covers. The studies were carried out in two countries, Switzerland and the Netherlands. These two countries were chosen because they are very similar with respect to their media systems and to a large extent their political systems, yet do differ with regards to a number of key aspects expected to influence the selection moments studied here. In each of the empirical chapters that follow the comparative aspect will receive more attention. By conducting the same studies in two countries influences of the political system, the macro level, can be identified. Therefore, the research design can be classified as both parallel, because it tests a similar set of variables with regards to the selection of messages by politicians and journalists, and comparative, because the studies were conducted in two countries allowing to gauge the effects of the political system.

1.4 A brief outline of the book

This book sets out to investigate how politics becomes news, and how news becomes politics. Two separate chapters address the mechanisms based on which information from politics makes it into the media, and vice versa. First, chapter 2 however lays the methodological foundations. The factorial survey experiment, a method not yet widely used in the field, is introduced and Switzerland and the Netherlands briefly presented to sketch the context.

The following chapters 3 and 4 form the core of the book. Chapter 3 illustrates how political news comes about by investigating how political journalists regularly covering national political debates select messages for reporting. Party press releases in which parties communicate on unexpected issues trigger journalists' attention findings show. The study also finds systematic variation between the two countries. Subsequently, the focus shifts to the politicians in chapter 4. Using a comparable experimental design, the factors influencing politicians' decisions to react to news reports are studied. Next to the content of the news report, politicians' parties and the political system have an important effect on the types of news reports they react to. In chapter 5 findings of the two studies are integrated and insights for the broader politics-media relationship are formulated. How similar/different are the mechanisms at play in journalistic and political selection? Finally, contributions of this book to the field as well as the potential wider applications of the factorial survey experiment for future studies are presented.

Chapter 2

Methodological challenges

The constant give-and-take taking place between politicians and journalists makes it challenging to empirically separate and study, how and when politics influences the media and vice versa. These challenges associated with the complexity of the interdependent politics-media relationship need to be addressed to be able to empirically study how politicians and journalists influence each other.

The study here focuses on the selection moment as underlined before. Focusing on one specific moment in this interaction, has the advantage that it allows to identify the crucial variables that affect these actors' decision-making at that very moment. Rich case studies describing the whole process of influence (e.g. Melenhorst, 2015; Wolfsfeld, 2004) often find it hard to generalize their findings beyond the case(s) studied. Zooming in on one specific moment of influence, however, allows studying potentially more generalizable mechanisms of influence and, more importantly, makes an empirical study more feasible.

However, even if researchers focus on one specific moment in the Politics-Media Wheel, there is still a considerable complexity due to the large number of potential sources of influence. Therefore, sender, message and receiver characteristics are differentiated as categories of influence on how these actors select messages. Furthermore, the sources of influence are systematized into individual-level, organizational-level and finally political system influences affecting these actors, from their individual experience on the job to the country's electoral system (see subsection 1.2.2). This systematization has important consequences for the research design. First, it means that a method is required that allows (statistically) separating these sources of influence which are often confounded in reality. A design should have maximal control over the contextual variables shaping the selection studied. Second, to study effects on the country level, the study needs to be carried out in more than one political system. An approach is required that can be applied across countries and still return reliable results.

In sum, even if one specific moment of influence is chosen, the decisions journalists and politicians have to make are of high complexity. Multivariate experimental research

2.1. Introducing the factorial survey experiment

designs model (part of) the complexity of such decision-making in their design (Hainmueller et al., 2014). They manipulate several variables at the same time leading to more realistic conditions, while at the same time giving the researcher maximal control over the context within which the study is carried out. The factorial survey experiment, a variant, is chosen for the studies in this book. Experimental designs are not common in the study of the politics-media relationship. Yet, they are particularly apt to establish a causal link between an (independent) event and the behavior of the relevant actors in this constant interaction. Because how else can we be sure that a politician's particular behavior is a consequence of something she or he read in the media and not from another source of information (Davis, 2007, p. 182)? Isolating cause and effect in political reporting is equally challenging and experimental approaches can thus be particularly insightful; “[experiments] guide theoretical development by providing a means for pinpointing the effects of institutional rules, preference configurations, and other contextual factors whose impact can be difficult to gauge using other forms of inference.” (Druckman et al., 2006, p. 627)

The next section first introduces the factorial survey experiment. This experimental approach is not yet widely known in communication or political science but it has a lot of potential to contribute to the field beyond the questions addressed in this book. Following this introduction, the political and media systems of Switzerland and the Netherlands are introduced with a particular focus on the political system characteristics expected to affect the politics-media relationship. In particular the differences between the two countries with regards to the distribution of political power between parties and the electoral systems are discussed. Because the same study is carried out in two countries, it contributes to filling the void of truly comparable comparative studies in the field of political communication (Esser et al., 2012, p. 140).

2.1 Introducing the factorial survey experiment

Experimental methods have become very popular in political science in the past decennia (Druckman et al., 2006). Since 1990, the number of articles published referring to experimental methods has increased tremendously. A simple search in the Worldwide Political Science Abstracts database shows that in 2011 a record 481 peer-reviewed articles using the word “experiment” in their abstract were published. 20 years earlier there had only been 8 such articles. At the same time there are methodological books being published on experimental methods in political science (see for example Druckman et al. (2011); Morton and Williams (2010)) and journals (re-)established such as the *Journal of Experimental Political Science*. Despite the popularity of the method, experimental studies

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with politicians and journalists as subjects are rather rare.¹ Many authors have pointed to the difficulty of recruiting those respondents for experimental research. For instance, when presenting results from a large number of interviews with journalists and politicians in Westminster, Davis (2007, p. 185) observed that “it is unlikely that cooperation can be gained for experimental, focus group, ethnographic, or extensive survey research.” He concludes that “the most realistic methods [of data collection] involve interviews, content analysis, participant observation, and use of other survey data.” Also Kepplinger (2007, p. 5), calling for a “theory of media effects on decision makers” writes about the desirability of experimental research to further the understanding of effects on elites, yet mentions that “it is nearly impossible to set up experimental studies. In such studies, one would have to show subjects news reports about themselves or about something in their field of activity.” Others also pointed to the difficulty of recruiting these elites into laboratory settings (Hanitzsch and Engesser, 2014).

However, even if those elites could be recruited, one of the main obstacles remains their limited numbers. Elites are by definition a small population when compared with the general public. Yet experimental designs comparing treatment and control groups in a traditional between-respondent design require a rather large number of participants. That is usually not feasible in elite research. In politics, for example, although sizes of parliaments vary between countries, there are usually no more than a couple of hundred seats available at the national level. As a consequence, the number of participants in studies with politicians and journalists is often small. Overall, the small populations combined with the difficulty of gaining access to these actors results in relatively small numbers of respondents.

This means that experimental approaches used for studies in general population samples have only limited applicability. Other more innovative approaches are better suited to conduct an experiment in the small and inaccessible populations of journalists and politicians. The factorial survey experiment provides such an avenue. It is more commonly applied in sociology to measure normative rules and attitudes (for a review see Wallander, 2009). A number of studies have also applied this design to study intended behavior, which is particularly interesting in the context of this book. Abraham and colleagues (2010) studied the probability of accepting a job offer in dual-earner partnerships, in particular the influences of the partner. Another study focused on the propensity to move into a neighborhood (Shlay, 1986). To study the politics-media relationship in this book, the main focus is on the intended behavior of journalists and politicians. What party press releases do journalists select for reporting? And similarly, what media coverage can trigger politicians to react?

¹ Experimental studies with journalists were for instance carried out by Patterson and Donsbach (1996), Hudson (1992) or Zhong and Newhagen (2009). Examples of experimental studies with politicians are Fatas Neugebauer and Tamborero (2007) with Spanish politicians or Linde and Vis (2015) with Dutch politicians. Other studies relate more to real-world experimental designs in the US context, for instance Proress and colleagues (1987) on how media, the public and politics influence each other or Clinton and Enamorado (2014) on how FOX news affects members of the Congress.

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The factorial survey experiment is a multivariate or factorial experimental approach combining a between-and within-respondent design. The multivariate design means that several variables are manipulated simultaneously, similarly to conjoint experiments (see Hainmueller et al. 2014 on the application of conjoint experiments in political science). Such a design means that the influence of several variables can be tested in one study instead of multiple independent ones, and it also means that interaction effects between variables of interest can be estimated. When politicians react to media coverage, the influence of their own background, for instance their tenure, might be moderated by the content of the news report they read; not all politicians react to the same media coverage. In a multivariate design, the *relative* influence of variables can furthermore be gauged allowing to draw up a hierarchy of influences on the phenomenon studied. This allows putting the many variables that influence how journalists and politicians select messages in perspective.

Center piece of the factorial survey experiment are so called “vignettes”. Those are descriptions of objects, situations or persons on which a respondent is asked to pass judgment. To study how politicians react to media content, they are for example shown a media report and asked, whether they would take political action based on the report. The basic assumption of the factorial survey experiment is that people’s underlying judgments guide their behavior and that this can be captured by letting them give their judgments on those vignettes (Jasso, 2006). To study what factors influence these judgments, certain aspects of these descriptions are varied. Politicians for example might be more likely to react to coverage of an issue their party regularly reacts to than others. Those manipulated characteristics are referred to as “dimensions”, in the experimental literature commonly referred to as factors or also variables. These dimensions or variables in turn can take on several values, for instance the issue crime or asylum seekers. These values are referred to as “levels” in the factorial survey terminology.

It is confusing for some that although referred to as “vignettes”, the factorial survey should be clearly distinguished from so-called “vignette studies”. Vignette studies also use short descriptions of situations or persons. In contrast to the factorial survey experiment, they however commonly use a between-respondent design with one or two manipulated factors instead of the multivariate design of factorial survey experiments. Next to the within-respondent aspect of the design, sampling of experimental conditions to create statistically efficient designs is a key component of the factorial survey experiment I will elaborate in more detail below. These characteristics distinguish the factorial survey experiment from other vignette or scenario studies which are occasionally used in political science (e.g. Hopkins and King, 2010) and journalism studies (e.g. Kepplinger et al., 1991). Because the factorial survey approach is not yet widely known in the field, the next section introduces the method in detail with the steps required from design to analyses.

2.1.1 The factorial survey from design to analyses

Designing a factorial survey experiment has its challenges. As with other experimental designs, the preparatory phase is crucial as once data is collected, the design cannot be adjusted anymore. Particularly the sampling of experimental conditions, the randomizations required for data collection and finally the statistical procedures for data analyses can add to the complexity of the design. Although a number of methodological articles have been published related to the factorial survey experiment (e.g. Sauer et al., 2011; Dülmer, 2007), only recently the first handbook that describes the method in detail was published by Auspurg and Hinz (2015). The section below introduces readers to this relatively new method in political and communication science research. The steps required from the design to the analysis of the obtained data are presented in an overview in Figure 2.1.

Define variables and their values Experimental approaches can be particularly fruitful when researchers have an idea of the factors that influence the phenomenon studied. The first step is thus to get a clear idea of the dependent and independent variables that should be investigated. For the studies here the dependent variable is the likelihood that either journalists or politicians would act based on the information they receive, either a party press release for journalists or a news report for politicians. The main question then is, which variables to include in the design. Theoretical considerations and past research guide these decisions and the relevant chapters describe the choice of variables and values listed in Table 2.1 in detail. Here, discussion focuses on the methodological considerations which are as important when drawing up a factorial survey.

First, because of the multivariate design where several variables are included at the same time variables cannot be considered in isolation. The choice of one variable potentially affects the effects that can be measured on others. Studies show for example that if there is a scandal politicians have to react publically and possibly take political action (Protess et al., 1987; Cook et al., 1983). If a variable with such strong effects as whether or not information concerns a scandal is included in the experimental design, chances are high that the effects of other variables in the design will be overpowered. In more methodological terms, such a variable runs the risk of being used as a heuristic by respondents. One way to fine-tune the influence of such a variable is to increase its number of values. While this might be challenging in case of political scandals as there are no “half scandals”, in a study with journalists the standing of the political actor could be manipulated. Studies of how often political actors are mentioned in the media often compare prime ministers with ordinary members of parliament and conclude that the minister is mentioned in the media more often. In this case, one could think about increasing the values on this variable by including party leaders as a group of actors with

2.1. Introducing the factorial survey experiment

a political standing that lies between a prime minister and an ordinary politician. By including a more fine-grained scale, the contrast between dimensions can be reduced and chances that these are used as a heuristic reduced.

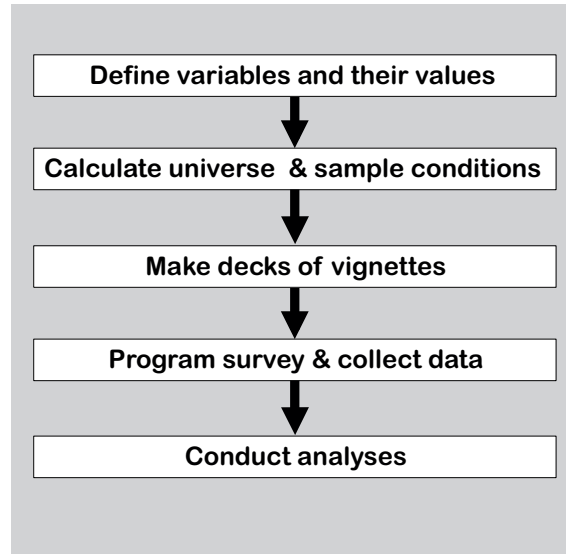
Table 2.1: Experimentally manipulated variables and values of the studies of the selection of messages by journalists and politicians

Selection by journalists	
Variable	Values
Politician’s political power	Party leader – ordinary MP
Party’s political power	Government – opposition party
Conflict	Government criticism – none
Unexpectedness	Party’s not owned – owned issue
Magnitude of political action	Law proposal – question
Selection by politicians	
Reputation outlet	Quality – popular
Negativity	Negative – positive development
Potential for conflict	Responsibility to politics – not ^a
Investigative reporting	Investigative journalism – government report
Party issue ownership	Party’s owned – not owned issue

Note. ^aConflict was originally operationalized with the following four values: responsibility to national politics, responsibility to European Union, responsibility to real world developments, no responsibility mentioned. These were later collapsed into the mentioned two categories.

Another challenge when choosing the variables and according values is the external validity of the design. While multivariate designs often make the descriptions more realistic (Hainmueller et al., 2014) and at the same time allow the researcher to include cases that might not be common in reality such as a government party member criticizing government, some combinations of variables and values might not be realistic anymore. In the study of how journalists select party messages for reporting for example, the influence of the political position of the actor sending the report and his or her party are tested. If all political positions, from the ordinary member of parliament to the (prime) minister, would be included, some impossible combinations of experimental factors would occur; opposition parties do not have ministers in government. In such situations, researchers can either choose to exclude these illogical cases and subsequently account for this situation both when sampling and analyzing the data (see below). Another strategy is to adjust the research design to make sure there are no illogical cases, the approach chosen for the studies presented in the following chapters. Instead of ministers, the influence of a political actors’ position on the selection of news by journalists was studied by contrasting ordinary politicians with their party leaders. This is also relevant from a theoretical perspective because it allows studying the influence of political power on a more fine grained level to see whether there are still differences between political positions.

Figure 2.1: Overview of steps in designing a factorial survey experiment



Calculate universe and sample conditions Once the number of levels for each of the dimensions is defined, the “vignette universe” is calculated. It consists of all possible combinations of experimental stimuli and forms the basis for the sampling of vignettes. The sampling of experimental conditions is one key aspect that distinguishes the factorial survey from other experimental designs more common in the social sciences. Usually, all possible combinations of experimental stimuli are included. However, in many cases, such a full factorial design is not statistically efficient because not all possible interaction effects between the included variables need to be estimated. They do not make sense from a theoretical perspective. Sampling of experimental conditions furthermore has the advantage of decreasing the number of conditions that need to be tested without losing precision in the estimation. The smaller number of respondents required can be particularly important when dealing with small elite populations such as journalists and politicians where resources are scarce. In agriculture, medical research or manufacturing fractional experimental designs are much more common (Gunst and Mason, 2009). For factorial surveys, sampling of experimental conditions is guided by considerations about the number of respondents and the number of vignettes each respondent should evaluate.

While many authors rely on random sampling of conditions in the existing factorial survey literature (Wallander, 2009), more advanced sampling procedures perform much better (Dülmer, 2015). In factorial survey research, strategic sampling is based on a number of theoretically pre-defined criteria, making it a form of stratified sampling. The researcher first determines which interaction effects between the tested variables make sense from a theoretical perspective to ensure that with sampling of conditions,

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the researcher has maximal control over the information that is lost. Auspurg and Hinz (2015, p. 24f) provide an elaborate account of how sampling of conditions is related to introducing correlation in the design and there is a whole body of literature on fractional factorial experimental designs (e.g. Dülmer 2007; 2015 on factorial survey experiments). Many different sampling strategies are possible depending on the goal of the research project (e.g. Gunst and Mason, 2009, for some examples). For the studies in this book, a half fraction factorial sample is chosen. It means that half of the cases of the full factorial design, all possible combinations, are sampled. The resulting sample of vignettes is both orthogonal and balanced. Balance means that each stimulus is represented an equal amount of times. In an orthogonal design, each of the combinations of values of a variable is measured the same number of times. These two criteria ensure that the correlation between variables is low leading to standard errors that are not inflated by the experimental design. The smaller standard errors in turn increase the likelihood of obtaining significant results, also when measuring small effects. Algorithms can be helpful to identify the relevant sample of vignettes; the program SAS includes an algorithm for example.

Overall, the strategic sampling of experimental conditions is a key aspect in the factorial survey research which can be particularly challenging. Particularly because fractional factorial designs are not (yet) commonly used in experimental research in the social sciences. The examples here, however, show that it can be a fruitful strategy when resources are scarce, for example due to the small respondent population. Such sampling strategies might become more widely used the more researchers are challenged by increasingly scarce resources. At the same time, some researchers call for adopting more factorial designs in the field to study decision making in a more realistic setting (Hainmueller et al., 2014).

Make decks As noted in the beginning, the factorial survey applies a within-respondent design, where multiple vignettes are shown to each respondent. At the same time, not each of the respondents receives all vignettes that were sampled, a feature of a between-respondent design. The factorial survey thus uses both characteristics of within-respondent and between-respondent designs. So-called “decks” of multiple vignettes are thus shown to each respondent.

To make decks of vignettes, the vignettes that were sampled in the previous step need to be distributed across decks. The number of vignettes presented to each respondent depends on the length of the survey and the difficulty of the task for the group of respondents. If respondents are judging very short vignettes tapping into something they do on a daily basis, more vignettes might be presented. Journalists and politicians for example have to evaluate information on a daily basis, evaluating press releases or news reports as the studies here do is therefore a relatively “easy” task. It is important to avoid fatigue effects as this causes respondents to judge vignettes only on a limited

number of variables (Sauer et al., 2011). In the studies here, political journalists are asked to rate six or seven fictional party press releases while politicians evaluate four news reports. This is well within the recommended 10 vignettes per respondent to avoid fatigue effects (Auspurg and Hinz, 2015, p. 122).

As when sampling vignettes, the distribution of the vignette samples into decks should also not be done randomly. All values of variables should be distributed orthogonally and balanced across the decks. This means that all variables and values are represented with equal frequency within a deck of vignettes making the design stronger because respondents are less likely to use a specific variable as a heuristic. If journalists were shown three press releases from one party and only one from another party, this latter single press release is likely rated differently because it is seen as “special”. In a balanced design however, a journalist receives two press releases from one party and two from another one. For the studies here, decks of vignettes were balanced on every dimension.² Ideally, decks are balanced on every variable included in the experiment.

There are a number of mathematical constraints as to the designs in which this is possible. In the politician study for example, each variable had either two or four values (see Table 2.1). To be orthogonal and balanced, decks need to be a multiple of the number of values for each variable. The smallest number of vignettes is chosen for the politician study, four vignettes per deck. A related consideration can be the expected number of respondents. Each vignette in the sample needs to be evaluated by several respondents to discern respondent from vignette effects. Generally, the more heterogeneous a group of respondents, the more often each of the vignettes should be judged. As a rule of thumb, five judgments should usually suffice for fairly homogeneous groups of respondents. However, more judgments are of course better, particularly if one expects that some groups of respondents will react differently to some manipulated dimensions. In the study of the media’s influence on politics for example, opposition parties will react more to negative reporting than government parties research shows. In the final analyses, cross-level interaction effects need to be included between the party of the respondent and the manipulated content of the report. Consequently, a sufficient number of government and opposition politicians need to have evaluated the reports. The bigger the decks, the more evaluations on vignettes are gathered per respondent. For the politician study, a response rate of around 30% is set as a goal as this comes close to what other studies have managed to achieve. Four vignettes per respondent should be sufficient to estimate results.

In sum, the size of the vignette decks is determined firstly by the number of variables and according values chosen. At the same time, the choice is also guided by considering the number of respondents and fatigue effects which might occur depending on the vari-

² The exception is the journalist study for situations where respondents receive seven party press releases. Most respondents evaluate 6 press releases in a balanced and orthogonal design.

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ables included in the design. A clear idea of the expected response rate can be helpful at this stage. Within decks, the presentation of vignettes is again randomized to control for order effects.

Program survey and collect data So far, the presentation focused on how the vignettes are drawn up balancing theoretical and statistical considerations when designing a factorial survey. Often, one has to move back and forth between the steps described so far. Next to the experimental conditions, the factorial survey experiment usually also includes questions tapping into the background of respondents. (Control) variables are measured that are expected to influence the phenomenon studied. To be able to determine whether a journalists' political orientation influences their selection of political news, information on their political orientation is needed. Similarly, to study whether politicians differ with regards to their reactions to media coverage, data on their interests or tenure need to be collected. That the factorial survey experiment explicitly models differences between respondents in their reaction to the experimental conditions is particularly important for the studies presented here. As elaborated when presenting the overall research design (see section 1.3), journalists and politicians selecting messages are expected to be influenced by factors such as their own background and their media outlet or their political party. In factorial survey experiments, variation between respondents is expected and modeled into the design (Auspurg and Hinz, 2015, p. 88).

In a factorial survey, each respondent receives a slightly different survey. First, respondents only receive one deck of vignettes, assigned randomly from all the decks that were created in the previous step. Similarly, within decks of vignettes, the order is randomized to avoid order effects. Their strength mainly depends on the complexity of vignettes and the number of dependent variables research shows (Auspurg and Jäckle, 2012). Although it is possible, including these randomizations in a paper and pencil survey is a lot of work, and not only because a different paper survey needs to be printed for every respondent. The randomizations and differences between surveys also need to be taken into account when the data are entered into the system. This process is susceptible to mistakes if not carried out carefully.

Online survey tools make this somewhat easier and the tool Qualtrics is chosen for the studies here. Next to including the randomization and a wide possible range of other survey questions, Qualtrics allows sending personalized survey links to respondents to keep track of which ones need to receive a reminder. Additionally, it is easy to collect data on a tablet computer important for data collection in the Swiss parliamentary buildings for the study of the selection by politicians. The methodological sections of the relevant chapters elaborate how data is collected for the studies.³

³ A manual on how to program a factorial survey in Qualtrics is available on my website at <http://luziahelfer.wordpress.com/manuals>

Conduct analyses Once data are collected, the responses on the vignettes need to be connected to the manipulations included in each of the vignettes again to be able to analyze the results. There are a number of different strategies that can be used for analyzing the data. First, the isolated effects of the experimental manipulations can be estimated. Because each respondent evaluates multiple stimuli in the within-respondent design, observations are not independent. Multilevel regression models can account for this clustering of observations per respondent, allowing for a correct estimation to ensure that the null-hypotheses is not incorrectly refuted. T-tests or other approaches often used to analyze experimental data are not suitable for factorial survey experiments.

Next, in a factorial survey experiment the evaluations of the vignettes depend on the background of respondents. Journalists from media outlets that are published weekly for example might be less inclined to react to a party press release than those working for a daily newspaper (Abbott and Brassfield, 1989). To model these differences between respondents, such respondent variables can be included in the multilevel regression models on a second level. Those background characteristics can either be obtained in the survey following the experimental stimuli, or from other independent sources. For the journalist survey, most of these variables are obtained in the survey while politicians' party membership or their field of specialization are from official parliamentary record. If respondents are again distributed into subgroups, for example government and opposition parties or classified in specific media organizations, more levels can be included in the regression models.

Finally, the multilevel approach also allows the estimation of interaction effects between the manipulated variables and the respondent's background. These interaction effects are particularly interesting because they show whether some respondents are affected differently by some content. Senior politicians for example react differently to media content than junior ones. It also allows studying whether opposition party politicians are indeed more likely to react to negative coverage while their government party colleagues react to positive coverage (Thesen, 2012). Overall, including interaction effects help study the conditionality of an independent variable's influence on the phenomenon at hand even further.

The parallel comparative design (see section 1.3) where the exact same experiments are carried out in two countries provide the possibility for additional analyses. While the above described analyses strategies allow to compare the influence of specific variables, analyzing the Intraclass Correlation (ICC) coefficient can provide additional insights. It is a measure for comparison across contexts. Like other correlation measures, it ranges from 0 to 1 and estimates the proportion of variance of the dependent variable due to variation among respondents. In the words of Auspurg and Hinz (2015, p. 89), "this coefficient states how much of the variance of the outcome(s) is a reflection of different respondents evaluating the vignettes." Higher values indicate that respondents are very

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similar in their evaluation of the vignettes, while lower values mean that they are less in agreement on how to evaluate the stimuli. In the concluding section of this book where the studies are compared on a more general level (see section 5.1), the ICC serves as a measure to compare between journalists and politicians and also between countries. A one-way ANOVA model was used to calculate the ICC on a baseline model only including the evaluation as the dependent variable and controlling for the cluster (respondents) with the `lone` command in Stata 13.

2.1.2 Strengths and weaknesses

Generally, a method's strengths and weaknesses depend on the phenomena being investigated: one method might be well-suited for answering one research question, but not for studying another phenomenon. Internal and external validity are the "gold standards" according to which research designs are evaluated. It usually involves trade-offs: maximizing internal validity in experimental designs often involves accepting trade-offs in external validity. For many research questions in the social sciences, the factorial survey experiment allows maximizing both. It combines maintaining control over several variables of an experiment with the possibilities of obtaining a representative sample of respondents in survey research, something that is often not possible for experimental studies (Atzmüller and Steiner, 2010). Additionally, because of the multivariate design, relatively realistic experimental conditions can be created. Before elaborating on the advantages of a factorial survey experiment however, it is important to also point out the challenges of applying such a design.

The factorial survey experiment can be challenging to set up due to the complexity of the multivariate design. Researchers require solid methodological knowledge of experimental designs and statistics. Particularly sampling the vignettes and programming the survey can be challenging (see subsection 2.1.1). Also when analyzing the data, the complexity of the within-and between-respondent design should be taken into account.

Some researchers might find it challenging that sampling of experimental conditions is not (yet) common in political science or communication science. However, there is a body of literature on sampling of experimental conditions from other fields such as psychology and even more in the natural sciences. Moreover, methodological studies on the factorial survey method are relatively scarce (for exceptions see for example Dülmer, 2015; Sauer et al., 2011). However, the recently published handbook on the method provides a concise set of recommendations on how to design a factorial survey (Auspurg and Hinz, 2015). Nevertheless, because of its use of scenarios the factorial survey is not a completely new method in the field of course and multivariate experimental designs are not new either. Even more complex multivariate designs for which only a small fraction of all experimental conditions are sampled would be able to make full use of the potential of the factorial survey experiment.

2.1. Introducing the factorial survey experiment

The factorial survey experiment has a number of advantages. One of the most important aspects is that, as emphasized earlier, a statistically efficient experimental design paired with the mixture of the within-and between-respondent design can significantly reduce the resources associated with conducting an experiment. This does not only relate to costs due to the length of surveys or the number of respondents, but also to the burden for each respondent.

Another advantages of the factorial survey already mentioned is the high internal validity. Internal validity refers to the extent to which the researcher can be sure that the inferences drawn are indeed caused by the variables she or he assumes. Do politicians indeed react to the media content they have seen, or did they obtain this information from colleagues or other sources? Because experimental design allow maximal control over the context, many researchers consider them superior to other methods, such as surveys (McDermott, 2009). Experimental designs often, however, score lower when it comes to the general applicability of the findings, the ecological validity. Subjects have to be placed in laboratory settings or have to answer in a survey and do not behave as if no one was watching them. This can lead respondents to give answers that are more socially desirable impairing the external validity of the studies. For example, journalists are not likely to say that they have a preference for some parties over others because impartiality and objectivity are the most important norms of journalistic reporting (Brown, 2011). Because of the multivariate design of factorial survey experiments, the risk of respondents showing social desirability bias is reduced compared to conventional survey items (Gaines et al., 2007; Alexander and Becker, 1978, p.95). Instead of asking journalists whether they prefer some parties over others to measure the effects of a journalists' political orientation, respondents are asked to rate a number of party press releases. The researchers' goal of measuring differences between parties is obscured because other variables are manipulated at the same time.

External and internal validity always have to be seen as a balance. In many experimental designs maximizing internal validity means making trade-offs with regard to external validity. So which is more important? "Perhaps the best way to conceptualize the balance between internal and external validity in experimental design is to think about them in a two-step temporal sequence. Internal validity comes first, both sequentially and practically" (McDermott, 2009). Factorial surveys have the advantage that these trade-offs are often relatively limited. Because several variables are manipulated simultaneously, factorial survey experiments allow constructing more realistic experimental conditions. Journalists and politicians for example are exposed to a constant stream of complex information and have to decide what to do with it. This complexity of reality can be modeled in multivariate designs (Hainmueller et al., 2014). Additionally, because data is collected through a survey, usually more respondents are willing to participate than in a laboratory setting. Particularly, elites like journalists and politicians, who are

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not likely to agree to participate in experiments, can be reached more easily with a survey. This means that experimental research with these elites becomes more feasible, and findings more generalizable because of the higher number of respondents.

While factorial surveys have clear advantages and score high on external validity because of the multivariate design, they ultimately only measure intended and not actual behavior. This is a drawback and should always be discussed by researchers. In an ideal world, researchers would be able to follow politicians or political journalists around, record all the information these actors receive and their behavior. Without considerable resources and complete cooperation of respondents, such designs are usually not possible. There are some cases where journalists collected information they received and allowed researchers to analyze the data: so called input-output gate keeping studies starting with Whites' (1950) seminal study, or more recently Gant and Dimmick (2000). Although more rare, similar studies are conducted with politicians as subjects. Orton and colleagues (2000) followed two British members of parliament for a duration of four weeks to study their information seeking behavior. Although such studies indeed measure actual behavior of those actors, their generalizability is lower because they are limited to only few cases. While in factorial surveys only intended behavior can be assessed, they do provide the advantage that data can be collected from a larger group of respondents relatively easily thus leading to considerably more generalizable findings if the project is carried out with care. This combination of factors makes the factorial survey experiment particularly suitable to study how journalists and politicians select messages, the question this book sets out to investigate.

2.2 Alike but different: Switzerland and the Netherlands

Journalists and politicians do not operate in a vacuum. The political and media system within which they are embedded provides the boundaries for their actions, for example through certain norms and values. The comparative nature of the studies presented in this book provide the unique opportunity to study how such differences affect the behavior of these actors and the politics-media relationship more broadly. Although Switzerland⁴ and the Netherlands share many characteristics, particularly with regards to their media systems, there are a number of important differences that likely influence how politicians and journalists react to each other. Two macro level political system characteristics that differ between these two countries are particularly interesting with regards to selection. First, the distribution of political power between parties affects how journalists select news coverage and also politicians' reactions to news coverage. Journalists follow the "trail of power" (Bennett, 1996; Gans, 1979) and the fact that there is no real opposition in the Swiss parliament affect how journalists select news. Second, it is particularly intriguing to investigate, how politicians as strategic actors react to different kind of news content due to differences in the electoral systems of the two countries. While there is a body of literature on legislative behavior, it has seldom been applied to study reactions of politicians to news coverage.

With this comparative approach, the studies can make important contributions to our understanding of the nature of the politics-media relationship in multiparty systems more generally. Donsbach and Patterson (2004, p. 253) already noted that despite being particularly interesting, "explanatory comparative analyses, however, are virtually nonexistent, even though the field is of high scientific interest, especially where theories of news selection are concerned. How much of the explained variance can be attributed

⁴ For Switzerland, this book focuses on the German speaking population of political journalists and politicians. There are four official languages spoken in Switzerland. German is the first language of the biggest part of the population (64.5 %) and has the biggest group of representatives in parliament. This is followed by the French (22.6%) and Italian (8.3%) speaking population. Only a small minority speaks Rhaeto-Romanic (0.5%). To draw general inferences, this study required a sufficiently large population of politicians. Consequently, I chose to focus on the German speaking members of the Swiss Lower House and the respective journalists. While in politics there is no apparent segregation between the language regions with regards to the political parties that can be voted on or the electoral system which might affect politicians' behavior, there are important differences with regards to the media systems which is more fragmented. Each language region has its own broadcasters and the newspapers often have a local focus although the major ones are read across language regions. The choice was made to focus on the biggest language group, the German speaking members of parliament and accordingly journalists of German language outlets. As underlined before, politicians and journalists are hard to reach elite populations and choosing for the biggest group makes it more likely that results can at least be generalized to this particular group and subsequently compared with the results obtained in the other country, the Netherlands. Because the electoral system expected to affect the way politicians react to media coverage is the same across language regions in Switzerland, results are expected to be generalizable to members of parliament from other language regions in Switzerland (see subsection 4.4.3).

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– technically speaking – to general patterns of human behavior and how much to specific circumstances, is an interesting question.” To be able to isolate how system level macro variables affect the complex interaction between politics and the media, focusing the studies on two countries instead of multiple ones has a number of advantages. Next to making a comparative study with hard to reach elite actors feasible, this “strategy of paired comparison” (Tarrow, 2010) can be particularly insightful. Both characteristics of the media and the political system are likely to influence the interdependent politics-media relationship. Including more diverse countries can have the advantage of many degrees of freedom, allowing the researcher to statistically test for the influence of very specific political context variables on the phenomenon studied (Tarrow, 2010, p. 239). However, such strategies are often not fruitful when it comes to investigating more complex relationships. Despite increasing degrees of freedom with more countries, also the number of confounding factors on which those countries differ increases. This can make it very difficult to draw valid causal inferences, particularly when studying the politics-media relationship. By opting for a two-country comparison, the context and its potential effects on the phenomenon studied can be better controlled.

Additionally, construct equivalence of the experimental stimuli is more likely if only a limited number of countries are chosen (Landman, 2008, p. 69). Particularly if an experimental approach is applied in a cross-country setting, drawing up experimental conditions that can be applied across contexts is challenging. For the present studies, it is particularly important that news reports and party press releases are perceived as realistic by respondents. Relatedly, respondents need to have the same understanding of the meaning of these messages. This so called construct equivalence is the minimal basis for drawing valid comparisons in comparative research (Wirth and Kolb, 2004, p. 88). Including more countries would likely mean that part of the validity of the research would have to be sacrificed (Livingstone, 2003, p. 488). For example, to study effects of party issue ownership, isolating effects of the issue itself and the party is important. If across countries, different parties would be associated with different issues each time, such a comparison would soon become obsolete because more issues would need to be included.

In sum, comparing two relatively similar countries allows an in-depth study of how the political system affects how journalists and politicians select messages instead of an investigation of many country level variables. The number of confounding variables is limited by selecting cases that are as similar as possible on a number of key characteristics and thus “capture diversity within a common framework” (Livingstone, 2003, p. 487). Comparing two cases is “an intermediate step between a single-case study, which suggests a general relationship, and a multicase analysis that tests or refines a theory” (Tarrow, 2010, p. 245). For studying how politics and media influence each other, this approach can provide particularly fruitful insights. In the next sections, the media and political

systems of Switzerland and the Netherlands are briefly presented. Both countries are part of the democratic corporatist models (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) with strong traditions as consociational democracies with weak ties between media outlets and politics. The key differences expected to influence the selection moments studied here, in particular the distribution of political power and the voting system, are discussed in more detail.

2.2.1 Media systems compared

Related to the media system and the political reporting styles, Switzerland and the Netherlands are highly similar. First, the characteristics of the media system, and in particular its relationship with the political system, in both countries are strongly alike. According to the seminal work of Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 143), Switzerland and the Netherlands both belong to the ‘democratic corporatist’ type. The printed press has a high circulation with former partisan ties that have however subsided in the past years (Bakker and Scholten, 2014). Newspapers cannot be attributed to a particular political party anymore. Like other democratic corporatist countries, the freedom of the press is highly valued and seen as an integral part of the democratic institutions. In the past years, like all media the printed press market is more and more exposed to a strong competition for readership, particularly in the fragmented Swiss system where most regions have their own publication. However, a number of newspapers are read across the country, one popular (*Der Blick*) and one considered more a quality newspaper (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*). Whether politicians are affected differently by either one of these newspapers is tested in the study of the selection by politicians (see chapter 4). Next to their considerable readership, they are chosen is because they compare best with national Dutch newspapers.

The Dutch print market is also divided into a strong national press and newspapers with a regional focus. In urban areas, national newspapers are more important, while in other areas regional newspapers are more important (Bakker and Scholten, 2014, p. 22). The present study focuses on national titles, of which the popular newspaper *De Telegraaf* has the highest circulation. There are also a number of daily newspapers that are considered more quality outlets (e.g. *NRC Handelsblad*). With its focus on comparison between countries, two newspapers were chosen that are similar to the Swiss ones mentioned before. They are expected to play a comparable role for politicians when they consume the news; they are widely read by the public and have a dedicated staff for political reporting.

With regards to broadcasting, Switzerland and the Netherlands have strong public service broadcasters. Its position is however much stronger in Switzerland than in the Netherlands. In Switzerland, it is the undisputed market leader in current affairs across language regions. The situation presents itself differently in the Netherlands. Since the market was opened up in 1990, the Dutch broadcasting market is more competitive. Since

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its foundation, the private channel RTL has been able to build a reputation with its main evening news broadcast RTL Nieuws (market share 24,1 %) aired half an hour before the main evening broadcast of the public service provider NOS (market share 34,2 %). In a re-analysis of the Hallin and Mancini classification, the relatively weak influence of public broadcasters in the Netherlands led scholars to compare the Dutch media system to that of countries such as the US (Brüggemann et al., 2014). Nevertheless, the competition has not (yet) led to a substantively different type of coverage of Dutch politics, coverage has not become dominated by criteria of sensationalism and negativity so often ascribed to the liberal media system in the UK and the US (Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

In his study of political journalists and their reporting in several European countries, Van Dalen (2010) shows that there are structural differences and divides countries into those with a more pragmatic and sacredotal culture. In another comparative study Esser and Umbricht (2013) propose a similar distinction. They distinguish between a US model of rational news analysis, an Italian model that is based on polarized reporting and a Germanic model of disseminating news with views. Both Switzerland and the Netherlands are part of a more pragmatic journalistic news culture and belong to a Germanic model in their reporting styles, in line with the characteristics associated to a democratic corporatist country (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). Although no longer recognizable nowadays, both the Swiss and Dutch printed presses have parted from their partisan affiliations relatively late (Blum, 2005; Pleijter et al., 2012). Generally, the style of political reporting in the media is very similar in both countries. In the Netherlands, the media are now looser from their former “pillarized” origins and more commercially oriented (Van der Eijk, 2000, p. 312). Since the late 1960s, reporting has become more critical of the political elite (Brants and Van Kempen, 2013; Brants and Van Praag, 2006). Similar developments have taken place in Switzerland, although commercialization trends are probably less pronounced than in the Netherlands. Research on the media coverage of politics in campaign environments of both countries indicates that although conflict and horserace coverage is on the rise, a substantial part of the reporting still focuses on actual issue positions (Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2007; Hänggli and Kriesi, 2010). Journalists’ reporting on politics is guided by the goal of providing analysis and interpretation (Van Dalen and Van Aelst, 2012, p. 520 for the Netherlands).

In sum, although the Swiss and Dutch media systems are clearly not identical, they are comparable on many aspects related to political coverage. The degree of government intervention and the reporting styles of politics are similar. As a consequence, differences in journalists’ selection of news are much more likely explained by differences in the political system, as the next section shows.

2.2.2 Political systems compared

There are a few studies that directly compare politics and political traditions of Switzerland and the Netherlands. Daalder (1971) for example identifies common factors but also differences in how the two countries developed historically, some of which are still visible today. More recently, Schenkel (2000) compared policy making on climate issues in the two countries. He shows how these countries, despite shared traditions and many similarities, take different approaches to climate policy and its formation. With regards to the politics-media relationship studied here, these contributions first underline the usefulness of such a comparative approach; the countries share many similarities but also have important differences, some of which will affect the relationship between politics and the media. I will first briefly mention the common characteristics of the two countries before discussing the differences expected to affect how journalists and politicians select messages. Table 2.2 gives an overview of several important aspects related to the political systems of the two countries.

Table 2.2: Comparison of Swiss and Dutch political systems

Characteristic	Switzerland	Netherlands
Number of chambers	2	2
Number of voting districts	26	1
Electoral system (Lower House)	proportional	proportional
Seats Lower House (total)	200 (246)	150 (225)
Turnout at national elections (year)	49% (2011)	75% (2012)
Composition of executive	“Zauberformel”	Coalition parties

Switzerland and the Netherlands are countries with a strong tradition as consensus democracies. They belong to the democratic-corporatist democracies in the widely used classification by Hallin and Mancini (2004). Countries in this group have a history of early democratization and organized pluralism with a strong welfare state and independent media. In both Switzerland and the Netherlands, there is a bicameral system in parliament where multiple parties are represented. Moreover, the executive is supported by the majority of the elected parliament, albeit in different ways. In comparison to other countries such as the US, Switzerland and the Netherlands have a balance of power between the executive and the legislative branch. With their tradition as consociational democracies, politicians in both countries search for the best compromise and focus on inclusion, in order to obtain the largest majority possible in support of legislation. Both Switzerland and the Netherlands rank among the top 10 most corporatist countries in the world (Siaroff, 1999, p. 198). There is a close relationship between interest groups and the government, which is largely based on cooperation and influence of support. In Switzerland, for instance, interest groups are already part of policy making process in the pre-parliamentary phase (Scarini, 2006,

2.2. Alike but different: Switzerland and the Netherlands

p. 496). In the Netherlands, advisory expert committees are also an integral part of the policy making process (Andeweg and Irwin, 2014, p. 172).

While the two countries share many similarities, there are a few important differences which affect the politics-media relationship. First, the electoral system and the level of control it gives parties over who gets elected. Although the legislative branch is elected through a system of proportional representation in both countries,⁵ in Switzerland the high level of federalization paired with the open list system provide a different motivational structure for national-level politicians to react to media coverage. The allocation of seats in the Dutch Tweede Kamer is based on the d'Hondt method, which results in a very high degree of proportionality by treating the whole of the Netherlands as one single electoral district (Andeweg and Irwin, 2014, p. 98). Political parties have major influence over who gets elected because of the semi-closed list system; although possible, preference votes hardly affect the outcome of Dutch elections. In contrast, in Switzerland preference votes have a big influence on election results in the open-list proportional system. Switzerland is a highly federalized country with a total of 26 cantons which serve as electoral districts within which the seats of both Chambers are allocated. These cantons have far reaching powers because according to the constitution, all functions that are not explicitly attributed to national institutions remain with them (Vatter, 2008, p. 82). For politicians, this means that they likely have different reasons to react to media coverage. While in the Netherlands they may want to make sure to toe the party line and not upset the leadership, Swiss politicians will focus on cultivating a vote at the local level and will not be as concerned with the division of labor within their party for instance. I will elaborate on this aspect in more detail in the relevant chapter later in this book (see subsection 4.2.3).

A second important difference between the Swiss and Dutch political system is expected to affect how journalists select political news. It relates to the distribution of political power between political parties in parliament, in particular to the presence of a (strong) opposition. Although in both countries executive government consists of several different parties, in Switzerland there is no “real” opposition. In Switzerland the government (*Bundesrat*) is elected by parliament on the basis of a ‘magic formula’ (*Zauberformel*). It ensures that all major parties are represented largely according to their electoral strength. Once elected for a term of four years, the Council cannot be dissolved. If a member decides to step down, a new one is chosen. As a consequence, parliamentary elections do not affect the composition of the executive directly. This is in contrast to the Netherlands, where the government is formed on the basis of a coalition of parties, which in turn appoint their ministers. If the coalition falls apart,

⁵ The Lower Houses of Switzerland and the Netherlands are both elected through proportional representation within voting districts. Because the study in this book was conducted with representatives of the Lower Houses only, differences in the electoral system of the Upper House are not relevant in this context.

parliament can be dissolved by the government. This difference in the distribution of political power also has some consequences for policy making.

An important consequence of how power is allocated between parties is the say of each of these parties over legislation. In the Netherlands, the political parties in government usually hold a majority in parliament, which means they can determine legislation (Andeweg and Irwin, 2014). In recent years, the coalition tends to be a minimal winning coalition, and always leaves several parties in opposition. In Switzerland, however, the four biggest parties in parliament are represented in government.⁶ These parties hold different positions on most issues which means they hardly ever vote unanimously. “Coalitions” are formed on the spot, depending on the issue at stake (Linder et al., 2006). Parties might agree on some issues and thus work together, while on others they are actually opponents. Hence, power is fairly evenly distributed among the major parties (Kriesi and Trechsel, 2008). Consequently, while Dutch government parties have significantly more political power than those in opposition, no clear distinction can be made in terms of political power between the main parties represented in the Swiss government. This affects journalists’ selection of political messages because they want to report what is consequential and important. As I will elaborate in more detail later in this book (see chapter 3), political actors with more power are more present in news coverage. Applied to the studies here this means that while in the Netherlands coalition parties have a distinct advantage to have their messages selected, such a mechanism is not present in the Swiss case. There, because no party has significantly more power than another, journalists weigh other message aspects more for their selection.

In sum, as traditional consensus democracies with a multi-party system, Switzerland and the Netherlands share many characteristics. They also differ in several aspects, such as electoral systems. Or the distribution of political power in parliament. These two aspects in particular are expected to have an influence on the relationship between politics and media studied here. In the relevant empirical chapters, I will formulate hypotheses relating to the selection mechanisms of politicians and journalists.

⁶ In 2003, a change has taken place when political party BDP entered the government, despite being a small party due to its split from the SVP. The subsequent shift towards a more polarized system, although still without a substantive opposition in the Swiss parliament, has led some authors to conclude that Switzerland has moved from the extreme case of consensus democracy more towards other systems that fall in this category (Vatter, 2008, p. 11).

Chapter 3

Journalists' selection: How politics becomes news

Media are key for politicians because they allow them to get their messages across to potential voters. Moreover, politicians can use news reports to influence their fellow politicians. Yet their influence over which messages get reported is limited; they are dependent on journalists as the gate keepers who determine what becomes news. This chapter investigates how political journalists decide which political messages and events they cover. Which selection criteria do they apply to political news? The theory of news values has often been used to explain both why and how events get covered. How these news values are applied by political journalists in the context of political news and whether and how the political system affects this selection is studied. Findings point to a key role of the political system when journalists evaluate political news, in particular the distribution of political power among parties. However, in contrast to common perception neither the background of the journalist nor the organizational structure within which they operate seem to have a substantial influence on the messages they select. Thus, although the political system shapes their selection, there is also evidence that political journalists across systems have a number of shared news routine when deciding which aspects of politics to cover.¹

3.1 Introduction

Although political actors can also communicate with citizens directly or via social media, the most effective way to reach a larger audience is still via mediated mass communi-

¹ Part of this chapter is published as Helfer and Van Aelst (2016). What makes party messages fit for reporting? An experimental study of journalistic new selection. *Political Communication*, 33(1), 59-77.

3.1. Introduction

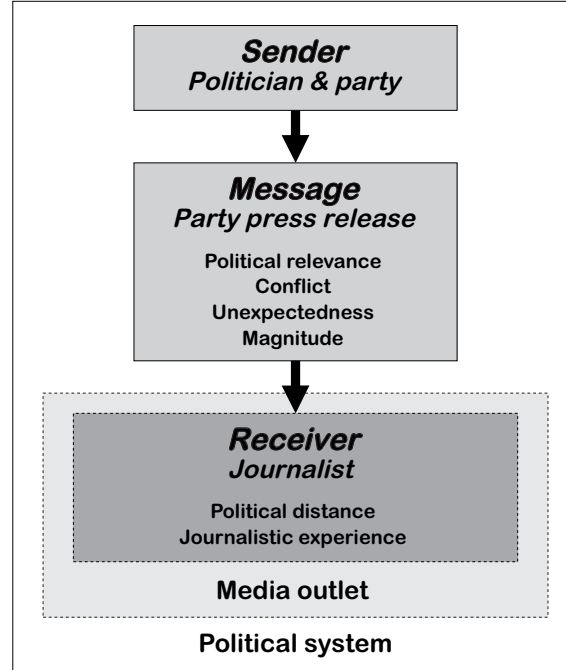
cation. Therefore political actors have professionalized their communications strategies and bombard journalists with messages on a daily basis. Only a limited number of these messages, however, will make it into the news (Berkowitz and Adams, 1990). Not only because news media have a restricted “carrying capacity,” but also because journalists want to inform (and entertain) their audience rather than please their political sources. This leads to the question of why some political messages make it into the news, while others are neglected.

One of the most important theories explaining why some events get covered and others do not is the theory of news values or news factors. It was first introduced by Galtung and Ruge (1965) in their study of foreign news coverage. They defined a set of characteristics that influenced whether an event got covered or not: the news values or news factors. Others developed the theory of news values further (e.g. Harcup and O’Neill, 2001). In the study presented here, I apply the concept of news values to examine how political journalists judge the news potential of communications by political parties. Do universal news values such as conflict and unexpectedness have a similar influence on selection, or are some more important than others?

To date, studies on news values often base themselves on content analyses. Such an approach to the study of news making and the selection of news has been criticized as limited. As Shoemaker and Vos pointed out in their review of gatekeeping studies: "Although content analysis data can tell us what becomes news, surveys can help us understand why news items exist." (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009b, p. 81). News values and news content are indeed important, but they are only one aspect that helps us understand how news is formed. The background of journalists, their beliefs and the structures within which they operate are crucial factors as I have already emphasized in the first chapter of this book (see subsection 1.2.2). The study presented here thus follows the traditions of hierarchy of influences models in the field and investigates how the background of the journalist and the organization within which she or he is embedded independently affect whether political messages are deemed newsworthy. Figure 3.1 gives an overview of the design of the study.

In particular with regards to political news, the wider context affects which messages get selected by journalists. In Figure 3.1 this is illustrated too with the political system. Specifically, parties and politicians in different systems might have different incentives to communicate with their voters via the media. More importantly, studies on journalistic reporting have shown that coverage of politics is not the same across political contexts. In a comparison of political news coverage across four Western European countries, Van Dalen (2012b) showed that in some news cultures, matters concerning the government are seen as newsworthy by definition, whereas in other cultures, political news is subject to the same evaluation criteria as other news. The study here builds on these findings by comparing how news is selected in Switzerland and the Netherlands. The two countries

Figure 3.1: The research design of the study of journalists' selection



have very similar media systems and share many similarities in the political system too (see section 2.2). The distribution of political power, however, is one important aspect in which the countries differ and which is expected to influence political news selection by journalists. This difference will affect which parties journalists deem more relevant in their selection of news as I will show later in this chapter.

To study which criteria journalists apply to select political messages, I focus on party press releases and manipulate several aspects of this message to gauge their influence on selection. Press releases are a classic example of an “information subsidy” (Gandy, 1982) that sources provide to journalists and which are still considered important for information gathering (Gershon, 2012). While political actors often attempt to get their messages into the media via the backstage, by building up informal relationships with journalists or leaking information, studies in multiple European countries also show that press releases do affect the media agenda, in particular during campaign periods (Brandenburg, 2002; Hanggli, 2012; Hopmann et al., 2012). Additionally, parties often publish press releases on a wide range of issues. Thus, using them as experimental stimuli makes the design realistic.

Experimental approaches to the study of news selection that allow discerning the influence of each factor individually are rare despite the fact that they can be particularly insightful (Shoemaker and Vos 2009b, for an exception see Kerrick et al. 1964; Patterson

3.2. Expectations

and Donsbach 1996). In experimental studies not only what does make it into the news, but also what does not become news can be studied which allows to draw a more fine-grained picture of the factors influencing this selection process. This kind of research design furthermore allow to disentangle what specific factors make messages newsworthy. Because news values mostly occur together, it can be challenging for researchers to isolate their relative influence (Donsbach and Rentsch, 2011). An experimental design can thus provide particularly interesting insights into the selection of news.

3.2 Expectations

News making involves a number of actors, starting with the source of the news. The information is conveyed to the journalist and then in many newsrooms to the editor, who decides whether a story is run and how prominently it will be placed. However, despite the involvement of other actors, the role of the individual journalist is still key (McManus, 1994). She or he is the initial gatekeeper who decides whether a story is pitched to the editor in the first place. Studies show that most stories do not even make it through this initial news gate (Berkowitz and Adams, 1990; Gant and Dimmick, 2000). Because journalists are inundated with messages on a daily basis, they have to make a selection.

As explained in section 1.3, whether a message is selected for reporting depends on three elements: the sender, the message and the receiver. Figure 3.1 shows which aspects of these elements are relevant. First, the sender of the message is either a party or a politician. The status of the party or politician, for instance whether they are in power or not, will affect whether their message is selected. Second, the content of the message that reaches the journalist is another key part in the selection. Is the information unexpected? Both the sender and the message are manipulated in the experimental study based on an extensive body of research on news values.

The theory of news values or news factors (O'Neill and Harcup, 2009) is one of the most influential concepts explaining what features make an event worth reporting (Donsbach, 2004). Although Galtung and Ruge (1965) were the first to apply the theory to the reporting of news, it was Walter Lippmann (1922) who introduced the idea of news values to the field of journalism study almost a century ago. News values refer to common views, particularly among journalists, about what is believed to be intrinsically relevant and interesting for the public. As Shoemaker and Reese (1991, p. 90) state: “news values provide yardsticks of newsworthiness and constitute an audience-oriented routine.” This means that news values concern collective routines and criteria grounded in an organizational context, which determine the news production (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Tuchman, 2003).

Although studies on news values have improved our insights into why and how certain events get reported, the approach has certain drawbacks for studying the selection mo-

ment. For example, news value studies are mainly based on content analyses. By studying characteristics of news stories, scholars can show that the presence of certain news values increases the prominence of those stories (e.g. Schulz, 1982) or determines which news values make it into the final news product (Zhong and Newhagen, 2009). Related to the steps defined in the Politics-Media Wheel (see Figure 1.1), these findings might thus be informative about the aspects journalists choose to emphasize when producing a story and the eventual news product. However, these studies tell us less about why these stories were selected in the first place (O'Neill and Harcup, 2009). Scholars have tried to overcome this limitation by so-called input-output analyses (White, 1950; Buckalew, 1969; Gant and Dimmick, 2000), meaning that the characteristics of real world events are compared with the reports about them. This implies that one can define and ideally create an exhaustive list of all events. Van Belle (2000), for instance, compared the coverage of natural disasters with official statistics on these type of events in his study of foreign news coverage. This assumption is, however, rarely met in the political arena, where it is difficult to identify a true population of news stories (Staab, 1990). This “unobserved population problem” is particularly relevant when studying the communication of political actors (Groeling, 2013). Should a comment or statement from the Prime Minister to a journalist be considered an event? Or does it only become one when other people react to it? Even when one focuses on official party communication, it remains unclear what the role is of other forms of communication and informal contacts between journalists and politicians in determining the news agenda (Hopmann et al., 2012). The factorial survey experiment (for an elaborate description see section 2.1) allows to overcome some of these shortcomings. First, by applying an experiment, the study can zoom in on the selection process taking place before the story is produced. Second, the experimental setting gives the researcher maximal control over the variables and the setting. As a consequence, perfect comparability between the events whose effects are measured is assured.

News values are thus “rational means to efficiency” McManus (1994, p. 85) that provide journalists under pressure with guiding selection criteria. The theory has however also been criticized as limited (e.g. Donsbach, 2004; Staab, 1990). Although it is often surprising how journalists agree in their evaluation of what should become news (e.g. Bennett, 1996), scholars have emphasized that the individual journalists and the broader context within which they operate matters. In a “psychology of news decisions” Donsbach (2004) for instance argues that journalists are largely influenced by their peers in their work. Others focus on the influence of the news organization and emphasize that news is not the same across news organizations. Whether a news item is produced for a print outlet or a broadcaster for instance matters, for both production and selection (Abbott and Brassfield, 1989). One of the most important models of influences on newsmaking was brought forward by Shoemaker and Reese in 1991 in their hierarchy of influences. Because the model has been introduced in detail before (see subsection 1.2.2), it suffices

3.2. Expectations

to emphasize here again that there are a number of factors that influence the work of journalists next to the news values. Therefore, next to the sender and message, influences of the receiver of the message are investigated. Influences of the sender, the message and the receiver on the selection of political news are discussed in turn in the following section.

3.2.1 Politician and party influences

Parties and politicians regularly send out party communication and the status of the actor who sends such a message is one of the most important factors influencing whether journalists select a message for reporting. This news value labeled as ‘elite status’ (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Schulz, 1982) or ‘power elite’ (Harcup and O’Neill, 2001). Although most studies focus on individual politicians, this status can also be attributed to a party. Like politicians who can hold more or less influential political positions, parties can be in more or less powerful positions. Hypotheses on both are formulated here.

Politician The political standing or power position of a politician is one of the most tested effects on presence in political news and has been found to hold across countries and media outlets (Vos, 2014). High political standing translates into presence in the media, as journalists follow the “trail of power” (Bennett, 1996; Gans, 1979). Many studies have focused on the advantage of the prime minister over other political actors in terms of quantity and favorability of the media coverage (Hopmann et al., 2011; Wolfsfeld and Sheafer, 2006). On a lower level in the political hierarchy, there is evidence that parliamentary party leaders are covered more often than ordinary MPs (Tresch, 2009). Although content analyses can tell us how much coverage an actor gets, the position of the actor might be confounded with other news values. For instance, cabinet members can announce measures with a direct impact on the public more often than the average MP. If higher political power indeed means an actor is more attractive to the media, the mechanism should hold when we check for all other aspects of the message. Thus, messages from the parliamentary party leader should have a higher chance of getting selected than a message coming from an ordinary MP.

H3.1: A message citing the parliamentary party leader is more likely selected than one citing an ordinary MP.

Political party A comparable mechanism is expected to hold for political parties. Across countries and outlets, government parties have been found to receive more media attention than opposition parties. Scholars refer to political impact as the key explanation: government parties determine policy making, whereas opposition parties are mostly restricted to the role of criticizing government (Hopmann et al., 2012). Government parties have more political power than those in opposition and decisions they make are often more relevant and consequential. This difference will also matter for the selection

of news. Journalists want to select only those messages for reporting that are relevant and important for a broader public.

H3.2: A message from a party in government is more likely selected than one from an opposition party.

The effects of the political party will however not be the same in the Netherlands and Switzerland. As elaborated before in this chapter (see also Table 2.2), only in the Dutch case are there important differences in terms of the political power between the major parties. In Switzerland power is distributed fairly evenly across parties. Consequently, the difference between parties represented in government and those in opposition is expected to only apply in the Dutch case. In that sense, the two countries provide a robustness check (see also below on effects of the receiver, subsection 3.2.3).

3.2.2 Party press release influences

The content of the party press release is expected to matter too for selection by journalists. It is the content of a report after all that they will then report on and base the news report on. Four news values that are most common and relevant in political coverage are selected and tested in the present study; relevance, conflict, unexpectedness and magnitude.

Political relevance Relevance is one of the most important news values. In the limited space available to them, journalists want to publish reports that are relevant. Therefore, they are expected to choose reports on issues they deem politically relevant at that moment. Indeed, Kepplinger, Brosius and Staab (1991) show that what a journalist thinks of an issue influences how much importance a journalist ascribes to a story. Consequently, perceiving an issue of a message as politically relevant is a precondition for reporting and is therefore listed as the first of a number of news values.

H3.3: The more politically relevant a journalist perceives the issue of a message, the more likely s/he selects that message.

Conflict There are various political instruments that allow individual members of parliament to criticize the government (Wiberg, 1994). Generally, voicing criticism is one of the main functions in a parliamentary democracy, especially for opposition parties. Besides playing an important role in the political arena, there is also strong evidence that voicing criticism and attributing responsibility for certain outcomes to specific actors plays an important role in news selection. Conflict has been found to be one of the most important news values when it comes to journalists' selection of news content (Eilders, 2002; Vliegthart et al., 2011; Groeling, 2010). Analyses show that conflict content is often identified in news, and political news in particular. It is one of the most widely

3.2. Expectations

used frames in political coverage in the United States (Neuman et al., 1992) and Europe (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000). In the present study, we want to investigate how actor-related negativity (Lengauer et al., 2012), in the form of criticism being directed at the government, affects news selection by journalists. It is expected that a message containing criticism of government has a higher chance of getting selected than a message not containing criticism.

H3.4: A message containing criticism of the government has a higher chance of getting selected than a message not containing criticism.

Unexpectedness Events that are rare and do not fit with their view of the world are more likely to trigger the interest of journalists and to be selected for coverage (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; O’Neill and Harcup, 2009). Politics is often perceived as something predictable, with parties usually communicating and siding with the already known. When something out of the ordinary happens we can expect journalists to report on it. This relates to the audience-oriented dimension of news values: the unexpected is likely to trigger the attention of the public. In the present study, we examine the surprise element of the issue a party communicates on as one possible operationalization of the news value of unexpectedness that is particularly relevant in a political context.

In recent years, the theory of issue ownership has been used to explain parties’ reaction to news coverage (Green-Pedersen, 2010; Thesen, 2012) and the amount of coverage parties obtain (Petrocik et al., 2003), which in turn affects voters and their voting choices (Walgrave et al., 2009). In sum, parties prefer to focus the political debate on their core issue. However, from a journalistic perspective, issue-ownership might have the opposite effect. Parties that communicate on the issue they own might be considered less newsworthy because people mostly already know this position. Therefore, it is expected that if a party communicates on an “unexpected” (not owned) issue the message has a higher chance of getting selected than if the party communicates on one of its core (owned) issues.

H3.5: If a party communicates on an unexpected (not owned) issue the message is more likely selected than if the party communicates on one of its core (owned) issues.

Magnitude As a final news value, I also test whether there are differences in the importance journalists attribute to specific political instruments based on their “magnitude” or potential impact (Harcup and O’Neill, 2001, p. 279). Political parties have various legislative and non-legislative parliamentary instruments that they can use to influence the political agenda and ultimately the decision-making process (Green-Pedersen, 2010; Russo and Wiberg, 2010). To my knowledge, no study has compared the newsworthiness or amount of news coverage of various political instruments. Parliamentary questions are a relatively easy, though not always very successful, tool for politicians to attract media

attention (Kepplinger, 2002). In many countries, such as the Netherlands (Van Aelst and Vliegenthart, 2014), the number of questions asked in parliaments and initiatives taken by members of parliament has increased rapidly over the past years. Only about one-fifth of parliamentary questions was covered in the newspapers and, if they were covered, the topic was mostly already at stake in the media (Van Santen et al., 2015). To study selection mechanisms, asking a parliamentary question is contrasted with submitting a bill, which requires both more time and commitment from the politician(s) or party submitting it (Schiller, 1995). These parliamentary actions are expected to affect selection by journalists differently:

H3.6: A message announcing a bill is more likely selected than a message announcing a parliamentary question.

Table 3.1: Overview of hypothesized effects on the selection by journalists

Sender effects <i>H3.1:</i> A message citing the parliamentary party leader is more likely selected than one citing an ordinary MP. <i>H 3.2:</i> A message from a party in government is more likely selected than one from an opposition party [Netherlands only]. Message effects <i>H3.3:</i> The more politically relevant a journalist perceives the issue of a message, the more likely s/he selects that message. <i>H 3.4:</i> A message containing criticism of the government has a higher chance of getting selected than a message not containing criticism. <i>H 3.5:</i> If a party communicates on an unexpected (not owned) issue the message is more likely selected than if the party communicates on one of its core (owned) issues. <i>H 3.6:</i> A message announcing a bill is more likely selected than a message announcing a parliamentary question. Receiver effects <i>H 3.7:</i> The closer the political party is to a journalists' own political position, the more likely a message is selected. <i>H3.8:</i> More senior journalists are less likely to select a message for reporting than their junior colleagues. <i>H3.9:</i> Broadcast journalists are less likely to select a message for reporting than their colleagues from print outlets. Interaction effects <i>H 3.10:</i> A message from coalition actors containing criticism of the government is more likely to be selected than one from opposition MPs [Netherlands only].

3.2. Expectations

3.2.3 Journalist and outlet influences

Three levels of influence of the receiver are investigated that were introduced in the first chapter of the book (see subsection 1.2.2). First, although different actors in a news organization are involved in selecting news, there is no doubt that the individual journalist plays an important role in this process (Reich, 2009). While producing content is a conscious process for journalists, selecting messages is based much more on “a feeling” (McManus, 1994, p. 111). This makes it particularly relevant to know whether and how the background of the journalists affects selection. Individual-level studies like the present one are best suited to investigate causal mechanisms between journalists’ background and their selection (Donsbach and Rentsch, 2011, p. 165). The media organization within which journalists are embedded constitutes the second level. It also allows comparison between print and broadcast outlets. On the most aggregate level lies the country, which allows studying whether and how a country’s political system affects selection.

Journalists’ political distance from the party News reporting is often criticized by partisans for its perceived slant. This “hostile media effect” is documented across contexts (Gunther and Liebhart, 2006). One of the explanations these critics bring forward is that the journalists’ background has a profound impact on their reporting. Journalists leaning to the left or right supposedly cover “their” parties differently making them active political players Patterson (2008). Not surprisingly, the influence of individual-level characteristics of the journalist on the news has been subject of scholarly debate (Shoemaker et al., 2001; D’Alessio and Allen, 2000).

Ties between media outlets and political parties were considered normal until only a few decades ago. Nowadays, however, non-partisan reporting is a key expectation in Swiss and Dutch media. Studies confirm that coverage in these two and many other Western European countries shows no clear bias for any political side (e.g. Tresch, 2009; Eilders, 2002; Kriesi et al., 2006). These studies are mostly based on content analyses of media outlets. Findings of studies that zoom in on the individual journalist and connect their reporting with their background come to different conclusions. Some find no evidence that journalists’ political orientation matters (e.g. Patterson and Donsbach, 1996), while others find that journalists’ opinion on an issue does affect their reporting (e.g. Kepplinger et al., 1991, p. 275). One possible explanation could be that scholars do not agree on how to measure political bias (Entman, 2007). This study thus takes a more direct approach and investigates whether journalists prefer messages from parties that are closer to their own political standing. The influence of a journalist’s political orientation might be more pronounced in the (unconscious) selection moment than in reporting, because they perceive those messages as more credible which affects their selection decision. Indeed, some scholars find that if journalists perceive sources of press releases to be more similar to them, they evaluate the report differently (Kopenhaver,

1985, p. 41). The expectation is thus that journalists are more likely to select a message from a party that is closer to their own political position than one that is further away.

H3.7: The closer the political party is to a journalists' own political position, the more likely a message is selected.

Journalistic experience A large part of those active in journalism do not receive formal training, making professional socialization an important aspect for understanding how news is selected. Journalists learn the rules of the game on the job during newsroom meetings when potential stories are discussed (Gravengaard and Rimestad, 2011). Their experience on the job will influence whether they select messages for reporting, particularly in the political arena. Firstly, journalists will want to make sure not to miss a story that others have. More junior journalists will therefore be more prone to react to party communication than their senior colleagues. Secondly, personal contacts between journalists and politicians are a key aspect to gain access to information (Davis, 2007). Less experienced journalists will not have had time to directly establish a link with potential sources of information and be more dependent on official party communication. Therefore, a systematic difference between junior and more senior reporters is expected.

H3.8: More senior journalists are less likely to select a message for reporting than their junior colleagues.

Media outlet Print media outlets follow a different logic than broadcasters. Although they use similar news values to evaluate messages that are presented to them, they operate under different constraints (e.g. Abbott and Brassfield, 1989). The type of media technology is one of the three dimensions that shape the media logic, next to the degree of professionalism and commercialism (Esser and Strömbäck, 2014, p. 17). Possibilities for sound and visuals are crucial in broadcasting, while they are less important in print for instance. As such, “media technology is never the only message, but it is always an important part of the message” (Esser and Strömbäck, 2014, p. 18) and is therefore likely to affect selection too. Journalists have more flexibility and more room to cover a story in newspapers; from a brief note of five lines to multiple stories on one single issues covering several pages. News broadcasts, on the other hand, have a more constraint format and contain fewer items than an average newspaper. This leads us to expect that overall, broadcast journalists who work for TV and radio media are less likely to select a party message for reporting than those working at print outlets. The selection criteria the two groups apply are, however, expected to be similar (Kepplinger et al., 1991, p. 283).

H3.9: Broadcast journalists are less likely to select a message for reporting than their colleagues from print outlets.

3.2. Expectations

The journalistic cultures in Switzerland and the Netherlands are very similar (for an overview see chapter section 2.2). Consequently, only minimal differences are expected between how journalists in Switzerland and the Netherlands select political party messages. In fact, news values, such as the ones tested in this study, are shared by journalists in these two countries and beyond. Because no differences are expected, no hypotheses are formulated. Only the *interpretation* of certain news values is likely to differ between the countries. The power of the political party (*H 3.2*) will only have an effect in the Netherlands where parties have differing powers depending on their coalition status. In Switzerland however, differences in political power are not as pronounced between the major parties. Therefore, the applicability of certain news values depends on the political system and they can get a different meaning depending on the context.

3.2.4 Interaction effects

Coalition membership and conflict Criticizing the government is one of the central function in politics. However, not for all parties. While it is of course normal for an opposition party to criticize the government, such criticism is seldom voiced by governing parties themselves. As elaborated above, surprise and unexpectedness is one an important news value for journalists (see subsection 3.2.2). This means that from some actors, criticism might be perceived as business as usual by journalists. It is one of the central functions of opposition parties to criticize government. Members of opposition parties can be expected to constantly voice criticism towards the government, as it is their goal to show to voters how incompetent government is handling specific issues (Thesen, 2011). Yet when a government party suddenly criticizes the actions of its government, this might come as a surprise to journalists. A government MP criticizing government potentially compromises the stability of the whole government coalition.

Consequently, the effect of voicing government criticism is conditional on who the actor is. Whether this indeed matters for journalistic selection of party press releases can be tested by including an interaction effect between the senders' party and the respective variable.

H 3.10: A message from coalition actors containing criticism of the government is more likely to be selected than one from opposition MPs.

Because in Switzerland coalitions shift constantly, it is normal for parties, also those in government, to criticize each other. Therefore, the effect is only expected to be present in the Dutch case.

3.3 Methods

In an online survey, political journalists received several short fictional, though realistically formulated, press releases from political parties. Within those press releases, variables concerning the sender and message had been manipulated. After evaluating the press releases, respondents answered questions about their background and attitudes. These are presented separately in this section, followed by information on data collection, on respondents, and on how the analysis was conducted.

3.3.1 Experimental design

Fictional press releases were used as experimental stimuli to investigate how journalists select political messages for reporting. Table 3.3 gives an overview of the variables manipulated in the press releases while Figure 3.2 shows an example of such a press release.

The fictional press release started with a mention of the party sending out the press release and an opening statement on the issue. To test for the influence of the news value of powerful elites I used actual party names to keep the fictional press releases as realistic as possible. In addition to the three parties with the most seats in the lower house of parliament, the biggest party with a clear profile on environmental issues was chosen (for an overview of Swiss and Dutch political parties see Table 2.2). From a theoretical point of view, this selection ensures that the politically most relevant parties are included in the study. Methodologically, this choice results in the selection of parties from similar party families in both countries (see Table 3.2). This is central to ensure comparability in the comparative research design between the two countries as elaborated in more detail in the methodological section (see section 2.2).

Table 3.2: Overview of the tested issues with corresponding issue owners and journalists' self-reported political relevance of issues per country

Issue	Issue owner	Switzerland		Netherlands	
		Party	Relevance	Party	Relevance
Asylum seekers	Populist right	SVP	5.7 (1.22)	PVV	5.1 (1.40)
Taxation SMEs	Liberal	FDP	3.7 (1.10)	VVD	4.3 (1.38)
Unemployment	Socialist	SP	3.1 (1.43)	PvdA	6.4 (0.82)
Sustainable energy	Greens	GPS	5.3 (1.24)	GroenLinks	3.8 (1.48)

Note. N Switzerland 84, Netherlands 67. Mean, SD in parentheses. Relevance is operationalized as momentary political relevance, 7-point scale. SMEs = small and middle sized enterprises.

In the Netherlands, the Liberals (“VVD”) and the Socialists (“PvdA”) formed the government at the time of data collection, The Greens (“GroenLinks”) and the Populist Right (“PVV”) were two of the opposition parties. In Switzerland, the Liberals (“FDP”), Socialists (“SP”), and the Populist Right (“SVP”) were part of government. So were the

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Christian Democrats (“CVP”), who we had not included in the messages. In Switzerland, the Green party (“Grüne”) did not have a minister in the government (“Bundesrat”) at the time of the field work. To test for the influence of power status of the political actor, the political leader was compared with an ordinary MP. For Switzerland, the political party leader (“Parteipräsident”) is considered the political leader, whereas in the Netherlands, it is the leader of the parliamentary party group (“fractievoorzitter”). In both countries, these actors are members of parliament. Only the positions were described in the press releases; no names were used.

Table 3.3: Overview of experimentally manipulated variables in party press release

News value	Variable(s)	Values
Power status	Party	Government – Opposition
	Actor position in party	Political leader – Ordinary MP
Conflict	Criticism of government	Present – Not present
Unexpectedness	Issue	Not owned – Owned
Magnitude	Political action	Bill – Parliamentary question

Criticism was included in the quote from the principal actor of the press release. Where no criticism was present, the sentence containing criticism was omitted to provide a neutral reference category. To make the press releases as realistic as possible we focus on criticism of the government, as responsibility for policy outcomes can mostly only be attributed to the politicians in charge. It is highly unlikely that a government party would for example criticize the opposition for a specific (negative) outcome in their country (Thesen, 2012). To test for the effect of issue ownership on news selection, I included one issue that is “owned” per party (see Table 3.2 for an overview). This selection was based on recent voter surveys in both countries (Kleinnijenhuis and Walter, 2014; Lachat, 2014). For an additional test of whether the hypothesized party issue combination applied, I also asked journalists to indicate for each issue-party-combination how strong the link was on a 7-point scale. Scores for the hypothesized combinations (e.g. social democrats and unemployment) were significantly higher than those for other combinations (e.g. social democrats and migration). In the analyses, I include this variable as a dummy indicating presence of issue ownership or not. To test whether the news value of magnitude influences selection, half of the party press releases included the announcement of a parliamentary question. To ensure functional equivalence between the countries, this was contrasted with the most consequential political action an individual MP can take; an interpellation (“Motion”) in Switzerland and a private member bill (“initiatiefvoorstel”) in the Netherlands. In the press releases, only the form of action but not the description was changed.

Of the 128 possible combinations of experimental stimuli, a half fraction factorial sample was made (for a detailed account of the method see section 2.1). The 64 press

Figure 3.2: Example of a fictional party press release shown to journalists (translated)

The Liberal Party wants to reduce taxation of small and middle sized enterprises. Today, the party leader of the Liberals will submit a question to government to ask whether innovative entrepreneurship can be supported by tax reductions. "The government completely abandoned the SMEs. These companies are the backbone of our economy and therefore need to be supported during these hard times", the party leader motivates the demand.

releases that resulted from this sample were randomly distributed into 10 decks. Each respondent was presented with only one of these decks, consisting of 6 or 7 press releases presented in randomized order. After each press release, political journalists rated on a 7-point slider scale whether they would consider the press release as the basis for a news item or not.² The formulation of the dependent variable relates to the moment of journalistic selection in the Politics-Media Wheel introduced in the introductory chapter of this book (see subsection 1.2.1). It taps into the first moment when a journalist learns about a new issue and has to decide, whether a message should be discarded or whether it merits further attention and investigation. This personal judgment of the press release forms the dependent variable of this study. Sample questionnaires in German (Switzerland) and Dutch (Netherlands) can be found in Appendix B. Overall, respondents evaluated the press releases as fairly realistic on a 7-point scale with 3.48 ($SD = 1.59$) and 4.13 ($SD = 1.31$) in Switzerland and the Netherlands respectively. Each of these 64 press releases was judged by more than 7 different journalists on average to isolate effects of the sender on selection.³

3.3.2 Journalist and outlet variables

The news value of relevance was operationalized as a journalists' perceived political relevance of the issue of the press release. After the experimental part, respondents were asked to indicate for a number of issues in line with those of the experimentally manipulated party press releases, how politically important they thought those were at the moment. Although when drawing up the survey it had been ensured that no issues were included that were judged systematically more relevant by respondents (e.g., crime), there was variation both between issues and respondents as Table 3.2 shows.

To gauge the influence receiver effects, the background of the journalist and the media outlet, additional information was gathered. These questions were also part of the survey

² The question wording in the Swiss case was as follows: "Würden Sie auf Basis dieser Medienmitteilungen einen Bericht verfassen?" and in the Dutch case "Zou u op basis van dit persbericht een nieuwsbericht maken?"

³ In the Netherlands, press releases were evaluated by between 3 and 9 different journalists ($M = 6.70$ journalists). In Switzerland those were 5 to 11 journalists ($M = 8.32$ journalists).

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following the experiment and are self-reported. The effects of a journalists' political orientation on selection was studied by including the *distance* between the journalists own political orientation and the standing of the party as an absolute measure. Journalists indicated their political orientation on a left-right scale ranging from 0 to 10. Party scores on the same scale were obtained from the most recent Chapel Hill expert survey (Bakker et al., 2012). This difference was estimated for each press release evaluated by a journalist. Finally, information on journalistic experience and gender, the control variables, was included.

3.3.3 Data and respondents

In most newsrooms in Switzerland and the Netherlands, both in broadcasting and print media, there are journalists specialized in reporting on national political developments. This is the population of journalists that was targeted for this study. Journalists who report on politics regularly also get granted access to parliamentary buildings. While this list of journalists with an access pass is publicly available in Switzerland, the equivalent Dutch list had to be compiled by searching websites of media companies (broadcasters), checking actual political coverage (mainly print) and calling newsrooms. To ensure that, for both countries, only journalists who regularly covered politics were included, respondents were asked to indicate how many of the previous 10 items that they had produced contained a national politician or party once the survey was administered. Data collection took place in June and July 2013 in both countries simultaneously. The survey took respondents approximately 12 minutes to complete. The relevant sections below provide a more detailed account of the contacted population, the data collection and the resulting respondents for each of the countries separately.

Switzerland Contact information of political journalists had been obtained from publicly available official lists of journalists who have access to parliamentary buildings. These were either journalists who had an accreditation ("Akkreditierung") because at least 60% of their full-time function is devoted to political reporting, or journalists who had an access pass ("Zutrittsberechtigung") because, for instance, they only report on politics for a part of their time. For the 241 journalists working for German speaking media, e-mail addresses were obtained by searching online or contacting the respective newsrooms. The focus of this study of German speaking journalists was discussed in detail in section 2.2 on the country selection.

Journalists were first contacted via a personalized e-mail sent from the researcher's account that contained a link to the survey at the end of May 2013. Some responded that they did not work as a journalist and were excluded.⁴ Besides e-mail (beginning

⁴ These include employees of media organizations for example working camera or sound or photographers for media outlets and press agencies.

of June), journalists were reminded personally inside the parliamentary buildings and in the journalists' centre close to parliament (June 2013). A few respondents filled in the survey on a tablet, most promised to still fill it in on their own computer.

A total of 130 journalists accessed the survey, which is approximately 55% of all journalists contacted. Only journalists who reported that at least three of their ten latest news items contained a national politician or party were included for analyses, with the average being 8.1 articles. Six journalists were excluded based on this criterion. Because some respondents did not complete the survey, results are based on the answers of a total of 84 Swiss political journalists (for an overview see Table 3.4). Most of them had an access pass to parliament (92%) and 26% ($n = 22$) were female, which is equal to the contacted population (24%). The average age (43 years, $SD = 10.97$) matches that of other studies of the journalist population in Switzerland which reported 45 years for print journalists and 43 years for others (Bonfadelli et al., 2012). The number of years of experience in journalism is comparable to that of political journalists in other Western European countries (Van Dalen, 2012a) with 16 years ($SD = 8.78$). On average, Swiss political journalists placed their political orientation at 5.22 ($SD = 1.79$) on an 11-point left-right scale.

Table 3.4: Overview of respondents (political journalists)

	Switzerland		Netherlands	
	n	percent	n	percent
Access pass to parliament buildings	77	92	41	61
Female	22	26	11	16
Age (average)	43 years		46 years	
Journalistic experience (average)	16 years		20 years	
<i>Media outlets</i>				
Print daily	31	37	20	30
Print weekly	20	24	9	13
Broadcaster	23	27	32	47
Other ^a	10	12	6	9
Number of respondents	84		67	
Response rate	36.7		31.3	
Number of observations	533		429	

Note. Rounded percentages do not add to 100%.

^aMainly journalists working for news agencies.

Netherlands Obtaining lists of political journalists was more challenging in the Netherlands. No official lists exist and those from other researchers were outdated. By searching on the websites of broadcasters and checking the authors of political newspaper coverage as well as newsrooms (phone), with the help of two student assistants I compiled a list of political journalists. This list was then checked by the head of the association of political journalists (“Parlementaire Pers Vereniging”) for accuracy.

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208 Dutch political journalists were contacted via personalized e-mails sent from the researcher’s e-mail address at the end of May 2013. Those who had not participated were reminded with another e-mail 10 days later. In a last attempt to increase response, a number of journalists were also contacted by phone. In the end, a total of 102 Dutch journalists accessed the survey, which is just over 45% of all journalists contacted. More than 85% of those completed the experimental part. Only journalists who reported that at least three of their ten latest news items contained a national politician or party were included for analyses, with the average being 7.4 articles. Six journalists were excluded based on this criterion.

This resulted in a response of 67 Dutch political journalists who had completed the whole survey (for an overview see Table 3.4). Almost two thirds of respondents had an access pass to parliament (61%). Only 16% ($n = 11$) of the respondents were female, which is lower than the population contacted (26%). The average age of respondents (46 years, $SD = 9.45$) matches that of other studies of the journalist population in the Netherlands at 44 years (Pleijter et al., 2012). The number of years of experience in journalism is comparable to that of political journalists in other Western European countries (Van Dalen, 2012a) with 20 years ($SD = 8.94$). On average, journalists put their political orientation at 5.88 ($SD = 1.35$) on an 11-point left-right scale.

Analyses As mentioned, each journalist evaluated 6 or 7 party press releases and each evaluation is treated as one case. The results reported below are based on an analysis of 962 different cases from 151 respondents (see Table 3.4). Multilevel models were used with MLE for estimation. To illustrate differences between countries and to provide the reader with a detailed account of the robustness of the findings, separate models are reported for each of the countries. Additionally, marginal effects are reported to allow for more accessible interpretation of the effects of specific variables on the selection of messages by political journalists. For a more elaborate account of the analysis strategies with data from factorial survey experiments, see the section on data analysis in section 2.1.

3.4 Results

Including several news values presents respondents with a task in line with their daily work and allows to gauge the relative influence of these factors often confounded in reality. I will discuss the influence of the sender, message and receiver variables in turn.

Overall, almost half of the times when a journalist received a press release, the press release was not likely to lead to reporting. In fact, 52% of all judgments receive a score of 3 or lower on the 7-point scale.⁵ This is in line with findings from other gate keeping

⁵ Lower values mean that the press release are not likely to lead to coverage, high values mean that

studies; most information is dismissed when it first reaches journalists. Interestingly however, there are significant differences between the two countries ($t(df)=-7.52(960)$, $p<.001$). On average, Dutch journalists were more likely to say that they would select a press release for reporting ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 1.79$) than their Swiss colleagues ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.75$).⁶ What does this mean for their selection mechanisms? Are similar aspects important in their selection of party press releases? The next section will discuss these effects based on results from linear hierarchical regression models (see Table 3.5) and subsequent calculations of marginal effects.

3.4.1 Politician and party influences

More powerful parties and politicians have more media access because political power is one of the most important news values in political reporting. First, with regards to the political actor. I expect that the higher the status of a politician cited, the more likely this press release is selected (*H 3.1*). However, results of the regression models are not in line with this expectation and this hypothesis needs to be rejected. Journalists make no significant difference between press releases citing a political party leader or an ordinary MP in party press releases. This is surprising because previous studies, mostly based on content analyses, have repeatedly shown that the political position of an actor matters for getting in the news. As I will discuss later in this chapter in section 3.5, this diverging finding is probably due to the focus on the very first selection moment of this study opposed to the news product itself.

Next to the politician cited in the report, journalists are expected to distinguish between messages coming from government and opposition parties (*H 3.2*). However, this effect depends on the political power of parties within a political system as expected. Results are indeed different for the two countries as Table 3.5 shows. In the Dutch case, messages coming from government parties have a significantly higher chance to be selected than those from opposition parties. A press release from a government party receives a much higher score, with 4.53 on the 7-point scale compared with an opposition party which only scores at 3.52 (marginal effects). Thus, by simply switching the name of the party from an opposition to a government party in the press release and maintaining the remainder of the content of the press release, chances of selection are higher. In contrast, journalists in Switzerland do not show “preferences” for specific parties. As mentioned, this is because being in government does not automatically come with more influence in the policymaking process. Also, when models are run that include the individual parties as dummy variables (not in tables), I find no difference. Swiss journalists apparently attribute more importance

journalists are likely to follow up on the press release.

⁶ Linear hierarchical regression models including all variables reported in Table 3.5 and an additional dummy variable for the country support the conclusion that Dutch journalists are more likely to select press releases for reporting than Swiss ones ($b = .97$, $p < .001$, results not in tables).

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to other aspects of the message. This hypothesis is thus supported by the findings.

Overall with regards to the news value of political power, the findings show that there is evidence that political power translates into better media access for parties, but not for the politicians representing the parties; at least in the first selection moment in the broader news making process studied here.

3.4.2 Party press release influences

Concerning the effects of the content of a party press release, the influence of a number of news values is studied. First, the relevance of a message can be seen as a precondition for sparking a journalists' interest at the first selection moment (*H 3.3*). Results show that there is a significant positive effect and the hypothesis is supported in both countries (see Table 3.5). For illustration, we can compare how a journalist evaluates a news report covering an issue that a journalist deems very politically relevant and one the journalist does not deem relevant at all. If we calculate the differences between the marginal effects, these are pronounced among both Swiss (0.66) and Dutch (1.03) political journalists.⁷ It shows that the relevance of an issue of a press release is key in the selection of political messages.

Conflict is another widely studied news value. In the experiment, I tested whether voicing criticism toward the government, an indication of political conflict, increases the chance of selection (*H 3.4*). In the results, there is no significant difference for messages that do or do not criticize the government and the hypothesis is rejected. Whether this effect might be conditional on who voices it will be discussed below. I also expected the issue communicated on by a party to matter. More specifically, a party taking a stance on an unexpected issue that it does not own increased chance of selection. Communicating on a new issue is surprising for journalists and sparks their interest (*H 3.5*), because usually, parties stick to specific issues they are known for and that speak to their voter base. In line with this expectation, this variable does have a considerable influence in both countries. Journalists are triggered by messages from parties that go beyond their usual topics. In the concluding section of this chapter (see section 4.5) I will discuss elaborately that communicating on new issues might be good for the parties to get into the media, but the strategy might not be fruitful if they want to win votes.

The last news value that was manipulated in the party press release is the magnitude of the action announced. Because journalists want to only report on the things that matter, they are expected to think that submitting a bill (Netherlands) or motion (Switzerland) is more newsworthy than asking a parliamentary question (*H 3.6*). The data show that there is a difference between the two political instruments. The press release announcing a potentially more consequential political action is more likely to get selected by journalists than a parliamentary question.

⁷ A press release on an issue perceived as highly politically relevant receives a score of 3.44 (CH) and 4.39 (NL), while one on an issue is scored at 2.78 and 3.36.

Table 3.5: Hierarchical regression model of sender, message and receiver effects

	Switzerland		Netherlands	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	3.41*** (0.60)	3.32*** (0.61)	3.07*** (0.62)	2.98*** (0.59)
<i>Sender effects</i>				
Political leader	0.03 (0.10)	0.04 (0.10)	-0.17 (0.14)	-0.17 (0.14)
Government party	0.02 (0.12)	-0.003 (0.12)	0.99*** (0.15)	1.08*** (0.21)
<i>Message effects^a</i>				
Relevance (1-7 scale)	0.11** (0.04)	0.11** (0.04)	0.11** (0.04)	0.11** (0.04)
Conflict	-0.02 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.10)	-0.06 (0.14)	0.05 (0.21)
Unexpectedness	0.60*** (0.12)	0.64*** (0.12)	0.36* (0.17)	0.36* (0.16)
Magnitude	0.30** (0.10)	0.30** (0.10)	0.30** (0.10)	0.31** (0.10)
<i>Receiver effects</i>				
Political distance	-0.06* (0.03)	-0.07* (0.03)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)
Experience in years	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.002 (0.01)	0.002 (0.01)
Gender	-0.40 (0.33)	-0.42 (0.33)	-0.05 (0.33)	-0.04 (0.33)
Media outlet [reference print (daily)]				
- Print (weekly)	-0.56 (0.37)	-0.55 (0.37)	-0.56 (0.37)	-0.55 (0.37)
- Broadcast	-0.49 (0.36)	-0.489 (0.36)	-0.49 (0.36)	-0.489 (0.36)
- Other	-0.71 (0.48)	-0.71 (0.48)	-0.71 (0.48)	-0.71 (0.48)
<i>Interaction effects</i>				
Government sender * conflict		0.21 (0.26)		0.21 (0.26)
<i>Random effects</i>				
Journalist level	1.19	1.19	.79	.78
Press release level	1.16	1.16	1.45	1.45

Note. N Switzerland 533, Netherlands 429. Answer to question “Would you create a news report based on this press release?” Model fit statistics are reported in Appendix B.

^a For operationalization of message effects see subsection 3.3.1.

#p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

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3.4.3 Journalist and outlet influences

Finally, next to the content of the sender and message, the receiver is expected to influence the selection of messages for reporting. The background of journalists possibly influences how likely they select a message and what kind of messages they prefer. Results show that the background of a journalist helps improve models; the unexplained variance does decrease if journalists' characteristics are added (see models in Appendix B) and the model improves significantly. However, only some of the tested variables are equally important.

On the individual journalist's (micro) level, the effects of three variables were tested: the first one refers to the journalists' political orientation. There is a significant difference between the political orientation of Swiss and Dutch political journalists as mentioned earlier (see subsection 3.3.3). But are journalists generally more likely to select messages from parties closer to their own political standing than those further away (*H 3.7*)? Results show there is no consistent significant effect. Only in Switzerland there is an effect in the expected direction: the bigger the distance between a journalists' own political orientation and that of a party, the less likely the message is selected for reporting. Although in the same direction, the effect is not significant for Dutch journalists.⁸ There is thus only partial support for an influence of a journalists' political orientation on news selection.

Another variable at the level of the individual journalist that was expected to influence journalists in their selection is experience. Journalists who have been working longer might be less likely to select a press release for reporting (*H 3.8*). Effects are however not significant in either country. The effect is in the expected direction in Switzerland however, while in the Netherlands the effect is positive (see Table 3.5). The fact that journalists appointed to the prestigious political beat usually have 15 or more years of experience (see Table 3.4) could be an explanation for not finding any significant effects.

Moving from the individual to the organizational level, it was expected that, due to the difference in space available for reporting, broadcast journalists might differ from its colleagues from other media outlets (*H 3.9*). Results however show no systematic

⁸ Additional analyses point to an additional indirect effect of partisanship on news selection for Dutch journalists however. When their political orientation (instead of the political distance to the party) is interacted with the judged relevance of an issue, both the interaction effect ($b = .08$, $p = .020$) and the main effect of the journalists' political orientation ($b = -.50$, $p = .015$) are significant, while relevance is not anymore ($b = -.33$, $p = .135$) [results not in tables]. This means that for issues journalists do not deem relevant, there is an effect of their political orientation on selection via their judged issue importance. Additional analyses using marginal effects confirm this interpretation and show that the more journalists place themselves on the right side of the political spectrum, the less likely they are in general to select a message for reporting they do not consider politically relevant. These effects are significant for issues scoring three or lower on the 7-point scale with lower values indicating less political importance (marginal effect is $-.23$ ($p = .042$) for an issue scoring at three). Taken together, these findings show that the effect of a journalists' political orientation on news selection might manifest itself through a "preference" for parties closer to their own standing in some cases like Switzerland, and in others more indirectly through how relevant they perceive specific issues to be such as in the Dutch case particularly when it concerns issues that are not generally perceived as politically relevant and journalists have more leeway.

significant variation between journalists working for different types of outlets. Although when comparing journalists working for daily published print outlets with those working for weekly print media and broadcasters, the effects point in the expected direction in both countries; it is more likely that a press release gets selected for reporting by a journalist working for a daily appearing newspaper for example than by a radio or TV journalist. As pointed out, these differences are not significant and thus warrant additional investigation. Additional statistical tests only revealed a significant difference between all print journalists and the remaining journalists working for broadcasters or news agencies for example in Switzerland. They were more likely to select press releases for reporting than their colleague thus showing that hypothesis 3.9 might warrant further investigation.⁹

3.4.4 Interaction effects

Voicing criticism is an important part of politics, yet, the effect might be conditional on who voices it. Journalists could be accustomed to opposition parties criticizing government, as this happens frequently. If, however, politicians from government parties criticize actions of their own government, they might be more interested (*H3.10*). The interaction effect between the government and criticism dummies is, however, not significant in either country (see Table 3.5). Indeed, although journalists distinguish between press releases from government and opposition parties, whether they voice criticism in a press release is not as important. The hypothesis is not supported.

3.5 Discussion

Following the tradition of gatekeeping theory, this study investigated why some events are reported and others ignored and zoomed in on the first moment a journalist learns about a new issue. The findings show that news values associated with both the sender and the message affect the selection of journalists than their own background. Journalists generally agree on the selection criteria of political messages. This is in line with other research. Based on an extensive content analyses of bills and related news coverage combined with a survey with the corresponding journalists, Shoemaker and colleagues (2001) concluded that the messages were more important than the individual background characteristics of journalists.

Party, politician and message effects One of the most important effects relates to the issue of the report. For journalists, it is important that they deem the issue of a press

⁹ Paired-samples t-test ($t(df) = -2.66(531)$, $p = .008$) with a mean of 3.33 ($SD = 1.71$) for print journalists and 2.92 ($SD = 1.78$) for others for Swiss political journalists.

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release politically relevant at that time. Relevance is a key news value for journalists to decide, whether to further investigating a message. Yet, although there is a common understanding that “relevant” information should be published, there is variation between journalists in their judgment of the political relevance of specific issues (see Table 3.2). For this study, issues had been included that can broadly be classified as valence issues as much as possible and that did not intrinsically differ from each other as explained in the methods section of this chapter. The unemployment issue in the Dutch case with its exceptionally high mean score ($M = 6.41$ on a 7-point scale) shows that issues that are high on the societal and political agenda are deemed relevant by a large part of journalists, while for those lower on the societal agenda, differences are more pronounced.

The news value of unexpectedness also plays a key role in selection. This was tested using party issue ownership. Although studies have found that the media in general cite parties more often in the media on “their” issues than on others (Hayes, 2008; Walgrave and de Swert, 2007), in selection this works differently. A party communicating on a “not-owned” issue was more likely to be selected for reporting than if a party communicated on an issue it “owns”. For journalists, the unexpected is more newsworthy than the expected. If parties want to catch journalists’ attention, it might be good for them to turn to issues they are not (yet) known for. However, parties have to take into consideration how this affects their electorate. If an issue the party has built a reputation on is in the media, it can win votes (Norpoth and Buchanan, 1992). Content analyses furthermore show that MPs are covered more favorably on their owned issues than others (e.g. Hayes, 2008). This means that parties have to balance two diverging interests. Communicating on unexpected issues will catch the attention of journalists. Yet, it might also leave voters confused about the issues the party stands for, which can cost votes.

The news value of political power however did not have consistent effects. The political power of the sender profoundly influences news selection by political journalists. Press releases from parties in a powerful government position, which is the case in the Netherlands, are more likely to be selected for coverage, whereas the party does not matter in the Swiss case, where power is distributed more evenly across parties. This indicates that journalists take into account the political system to determine if a party communication is worthy of their attention. Indeed, parties in government in the Netherlands have a higher impact on actual policy making than opposition parties.

There was a similar effect when taking the potential power or magnitude of the political action into account. The announcement of a bill is more likely to be selected than a parliamentary question. A bill requires more investment from politicians than questioning a minister in office. Furthermore, a bill can become a law and have a real policy impact, whereas parliamentary questions can only try to signal certain aspects of governmental politics and seldom have tangible consequences for policymakers. In their comments on the survey, journalists in both countries emphasized that it mattered to

them, whether the political action had a chance of success. Only when they thought that a proposal actually had a majority in parliament they would report on it.¹⁰ Because this often depends on the momentary political context, the experimental study was not able to capture these differences through an interaction effect between the sender and the political action however (results not in tables).

Although many did have significant effects, not all news values turned out to be relevant for how newsworthy journalists perceived party messages. Selection was not affected by the formal position of the individual politician cited in a press release although the political power of the *party* did matter. As mentioned before, this contradicts findings from content analyses that show that the status of political actors is crucial to explaining why some people are more in the news than others (Sheafer, 2001). The probably most straightforward explanation for this finding is that while content analyses focuses on the news product resulting from the news making process, the present experimental study focused on the first selection moment. These are two distinct moments in the news-making process that I also distinguish in the Politics-Media Wheel (see subsection 1.2.1). It is not beside the point to expect different considerations to matter. In a reaction to the survey, journalists also repeatedly pointed out that they would not publish a report solely on the information provided in a press release. Indeed, once their interest is triggered they start to demand further information from sources, cross-check information, include reactions from other actors, etc. With regards to the press releases used in this experimental study, it might be that there is a ‘spillover effect’ from one politician to another (Hopmann et al., 2012). When a politician of low rank sends out a report to get into the media, journalists might end up contacting the senior colleagues for quotes. This interpretation is supported by evidence from some questions also included in the survey reported here. Journalists were asked for a number of incumbents how easy it was for them to place a new issue on the media agenda. Results show that political power is the most important explanatory variable; the more powerful a politician is, the easier they have access to the media.¹¹

Besides the superiority of powerful political actors in the news, content analyses have also shown that voicing criticism and conflict are among the most important characteristics of news. The findings of my study with journalists indicate that this news value might not be that essential when it comes to selection. Criticizing the government is probably too much business as usual for journalists, and doesn’t necessarily catch their

¹⁰ After they had evaluated several party press releases 25% of all journalists that had participated in the study left a comment ($M = 185$ characters, min./max. 44/244) to the following open question: “Would you like to comment on the press releases that you have just read? If not, you may leave this field empty.”

¹¹ Controlling for politicians’ political experience and gender, Dutch and Swiss ministers are judged to have significantly easier media access than all other types of politicians. They are followed by the political leaders of the parties, Swiss political party leaders and Dutch parliamentary party group leaders, and finally ordinary politicians.

3.5. Discussion

attention. Conflict might also be inherent to party politics, and not something journalists need to highlight in their coverage (see also Donsbach and Wenzel, 2002). More surprisingly, not even press releases coming from a government party criticizing government policy sparked journalists' interest. One of the reasons might be that, in a coalition government, criticism and conflict, also among coalition parties, is all too common. Internal critique might be more newsworthy in single-party governments. Potentially, also more direct personal attacks or a more extremely formulated statement containing harsh criticism might have a significant influence on selection. This is clearly a limitation of the experimental approach of this study. Our design contrasts one variable with a neutral one. Different operationalization of those values, for example contrasting criticism with praise, might have produced different results. The same might apply to the status difference of the political actors, as opting for a comparison of ordinary MPs with ministers would have more likely produced differences, which the comparison with party leaders did not. As with any new approach, only replications of our study using an experimental approach, but with different operationalizations, will be able to give a more grounded understanding of political news selection.

Journalist influences Studies on news values using content analyses tend to conclude that journalists have a shared logic and that there is not much variation between individual journalists. The findings indeed show that neither the journalists' background nor the organization they are working for plays a crucial role in the selection process. This is in line with other studies, for example by Shoemaker and colleagues (2001). A similar argument of shared news routines could be made for the lack of effects of the news organization a journalist is working for. Because their peers are among the most important judges of professionalism (Donsbach, 2004), they have similar selection mechanisms across outlets and even countries (Bennett, 1996). Political journalists across outlets select their stories based on a very similar logic, albeit there are small differences in the overall likelihood to be inspired by a party press release in the first place – depending on the logic of the media outlet they are working for.

Another source of influence on journalistic selection that is more specific to political reporting is the journalists' political orientation. Based on the findings, there is some indication that journalists are more likely to select messages originating from parties they are politically close to. In fact, there is a significant negative effect in Switzerland and a negative but not significant one in the Netherlands. This is remarkable considering that the studies were carried out in two countries with no partisan media. Effects might be accentuated in more polarized systems such as the United Kingdom or the United States. There, journalists more strongly identify with the political leaning of their outlet (Sigelman, 1973). This in turn may affect how they select (and report) political news. The findings here are in line with previous studies. In a comparative experimental study of the reporting of news, Patterson

and Donsbach (1996) find that journalists tend to select headlines and illustrations for reporting that are in line with their partisan leaning. This indicates that the journalists' political leaning might play a role in both the selection and reporting of political news. Whether this effect is cumulative should be investigated in future studies. Research shows that journalists sometimes select some reports simply to attack them (Baum and Groeling, 2008). Also, because of the central role of impartiality in reporting, particularly in non-partisan European media (e.g. Schudson, 2011), it is not clear how the slightly higher likelihood of selecting a message from a party close to the journalists' own political orientation would actually play out in the reporting of political news. Factorial experimental approaches such as the one used here might be particularly fruitful.

To sum up, this study demonstrates that not all news values are equally important for the selection of political news. The relevance of an issue and whether a party communicates on an unexpected issue are important factors and also the political power of the sender of a message matters as well as the political action announced matter. These are all aspects that cannot be interpreted independently of the political system. These results thus indicate that for journalists, the political situation is of central importance when they select messages. There is also some indication that their own political leaning is important, at least in the Swiss case. However, the media outlet they work for does not seem to play a role in the selection of political news.

Although crucial because most stories get killed during this first instance, the selection moment is of course only the starting point. The Politics-Media Wheel illustrates that there are more stages involved before a report will ultimately be published. Studies show that, although journalists might evaluate specific events in the same way, outlets emphasize different aspects of the same story in their reporting eventually (Kepplinger et al., 1991). Consequentially, not finding differences between media outlets in the selection does not mean that there are none in the reporting. Different journalists and media outlets might emphasize different aspects of a story. However, the results do show the criteria journalists apply when they decide what political messages they will report on and which they do not. They are useful short-cuts for journalists under constant time pressure to make decisions on what to report on and what not. Future studies should further investigate the role of the short-term political situation or structural differences between political systems in comparative designs to further study how political news comes about.

Chapter 4

Politicians' selection: How news becomes politics

Studies on political agenda-setting have shown that, sometimes, issues from the media make it into politics and lead to political action (for an overview see Walgrave and Van Aelst, 2006). Indeed, in politics, there are always many issues competing for attention by politicians, and only some of them will make it onto the political agenda (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005). How do politicians select the news reports they react to? What are the criteria they apply to judge media coverage? This chapter investigates these questions more in-depth by building on past studies of political agenda-setting and agenda-building. Results show that the effect of the media on politics is not automatic. Whether a news report leads to political action largely depends on the content of the report, with the issue of a report as one of the most important variables. Both on the level of the individual politician and the party the issue is key.¹

4.1 Introduction

Today's politics is mediated. Constituents learn about what is going on in politics through the media. But not only for citizens, also for politicians media coverage has become an important source of information which has led some to see politics as mediated (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999). Through the media, politicians learn about the issues at play in society. Often, media reporting also provides them with a summary of the most important aspects of an issue. Thus, although politicians are exposed to a constant stream of information from other sources, too, (e.g. their party, interest groups or civil servants), the media are key (Davis, 2007, p. 185).

¹ Part of this chapter is published as Helfer, L. (2016). Media effects on politicians: An Individual-Level Political Agenda-Setting Experiment. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 21(2), 233-252.

4.1. Introduction

Many politicians feel that the media have more power over the political agenda than political parties or interest groups (Walgrave, 2008). Indeed, media influence has been proven extensively on various levels of policy making (e.g. Tan and Weaver, 2009, on the US state level) and on different political issue agendas (e.g. Van Noije et al. 2008 on EU integration, Joly 2014 on foreign aid), supporting the impression that the media agenda co-determines the political agenda. Scholars also refer to this effect as the political or policy agenda-setting effect: when an issue receives more attention by the media, politics will follow. However, research shows that the influence of the media on politics is not automatic. Politicians do not react to all media reports. For instance, which media outlets communicate which kinds of messages matters, and not every political agenda is equally susceptible to media influence. Moreover, different mechanisms are at play during election and non-election periods (Walgrave and Van Aelst, 2006).

This chapter investigates which criteria politicians apply to decide what news reports are valuable for their work. As explained in the introductory chapter, the selection moment when a politician first learns about an issue through a news report and when he or she has to decide whether or not this merits more attention is crucial for the whole process that follows (see subsection 1.2.1). Sometimes, the decision by an individual politician that an issue should be pursued is enough to lead to policy change in the long run. To date, studies that investigated the effect of media on individual politicians' actions focused on parliamentary questions (e.g. Van Santen et al., 2015; Thesen, 2012; Bailer, 2011; Vliegthart and Walgrave, 2011). These are an instrument that can be used by politicians with relative ease in many countries (for an overview see Russo and Wiberg 2010). Usually, they do not require approval by their party to do so, while many other political instruments do require the support of other MPs.

Politics is however characterized by a complex interaction of varying agendas and not all of them are as easily accessible for researchers. Many important political decisions are made behind closed doors, in "private" (Davis, 2007). During parliamentary party group meetings the party usually decides how to vote. Also in these settings media coverage likely has an influence on politicians' actions, possibly an even more consequential one because decisions that apply to the whole party are taken. Yet, these settings are usually not accessible to researchers.

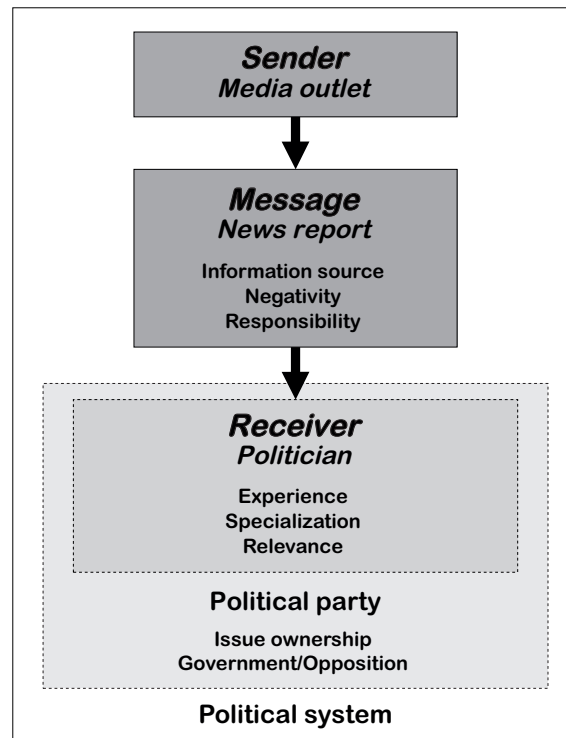
In this study, I compare how politicians select which news reports to react to in two settings: the private party group setting just mentioned and the more public setting when a politician asks a parliamentary question. In an experimental design, politicians are confronted with experimentally manipulated news reports. They are then asked to answer two questions with regards to each report. One question captures whether they would take political action on the report. The other question studies the more private setting within a party. Politicians are asked whether they would bring up a news report during a parliamentary party group meeting. Because both measures of intended

behavior use the same news reports, the results are directly comparable. With this, the study provides a first step to understand how media might influence politics also via the more indirect route of party meetings.

4.2 Expectations

Media report according to a strict logic. The theory of news values is often used to explain both which events are covered and how they are covered by journalists (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009b). As a consequence, news reports often share common characteristics, even when completely different events are covered. To test which features of a news report influence politicians' selection of news, five of the most important features common in political coverage are tested. Clearly, there are other aspects that characterize a specific news report but here we focus on a few important aspects. However, not only the content of the news report is expected to affect politicians. As I will explain below, the provenance of a message likely matters, too, as well as which media outlet publishes a report and where it obtained the information. In sum, both the sender and the message will affect the selection by politicians. Figure 4.1 gives an overview of the research design of the study.

Figure 4.1: The research design of the study of politicians' selection



4.2. Expectations

As already mentioned, politicians have to make constant decisions whether information they receive should be pursued or can be dismissed. This study focuses on the starting point of any legislative change, namely that at least one politician's interest is sparked by a news report. Not all politicians are the same, however: they belong to different political parties and come from a different personal background which influences their parliamentary activities. Consequentially, next to the sender and the message, also the receiver of a message who makes a selection will affect whether a news report has political consequences. In line with the hypothesized influences on the journalists' selection of political messages (see chapter 3 and subsection 3.2.3 in particular), these influences on the receiver are broadly situated at the individual politician's level (micro). Because those politicians are embedded in a broader institutional context, the political party (meso) and the political system (macro) should also be taken into account.

While political agenda-setting studies have investigated how media coverage can lead to political actions such as asking a parliamentary questions (e.g. Van Santen et al., 2015; Thesen, 2012; Bailer, 2011; Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2011), much less is known about how politicians might react in the more private setting of the parliamentary party group. A recent study with Finnish MPs shows that almost 50% of MPs say that issues receive attention at their parliamentary party group meeting because of media attention often or even very often (Vesa et al., 2015, p. 287). Although lower than for question hour (91.4%) and discussion in corridors (77.7%), it shows that media likely have a considerable impact on what is discussed at these meetings. Yet, to my knowledge no other study has yet investigated when and how politicians discuss media coverage at those meetings. As I hypothesize below, there are some instances where a different mechanism is expected in this more private setting. For example, because of the division of labor within a party, issue specialization probably matters more for taking political action than when they mention a report at a meeting. However, if nothing else is mentioned, the same hypotheses apply thus in both the private parliamentary party group setting and for taking political action.

4.2.1 Media outlet influences

Who publishes a news report is important for politicians because it also affects how relevant a message is perceived to be. Not all kinds of media have the same influence on politics. Studies in the European context have shown that newspapers not only influence other media outlets, but also affect the political agenda more than television (Walgrave et al., 2008). Building on these findings, this study compares different newspaper titles. Quality newspapers have been found to be able to set the agendas of other media outlets, an effect also referred to as the New York Times effect (Gans, 1979). These outlets have also been found to cover politics differently (Akkerman, 2011). However, less is known

about how they influence politics. We focus on differences between quality and popular newspaper titles. In the American context, reliable and respected news outlets have been found to be more influential on politics (Bartels, 1993). Politicians value prestigious broadsheet papers and rely more on them (Kepplinger, 2007). Likely, Dutch and Swiss politicians are no exception.

H 4.1: Politicians are more likely to react to news reports from quality newspapers than to those from popular newspapers.

4.2.2 News report influences

Next to the publisher of a news report and the source from which the information was obtained, clearly also the content of the news report will matter for politicians. Here, as with journalists (see section 3.2), news value theory provides a theoretical framework for the choice of these variables. In her overview of studies, Eilders (2006) convincingly shows how news value theory has repeatedly been used by scholars to study the selection of news by the audience. Conflict/negativity and unexpectedness are among the news values she identifies as key in the selection by audiences (Eilders, 2006, p. 11) and are tested here too.² Those news values have been found to predict political reactions to news too as will be shown below. Additionally, responsibility attribution affects party's reactions to news coverage and the study here will test its applicability on the level of the individual politician.

Negativity Media reporting is often criticized for being too negative. Negativity is an important news value (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009b) and it seems that media often report on negative developments. While some argue that this preference of the media is due to economic considerations, namely that negativity sells, others contend that this is due to more general psychological mechanisms. All humans are drawn to negative stories because those signal potential danger. In an experimental study, the physiological effects of negative news coverage was tested on a student sample (Soroka and McAdams, 2015). Indeed, the study shows that people are more reactive and attentive to negative news than they are to positive news.

In this study I investigate whether politicians are also more likely to react to coverage of negative developments than of positive ones. Politicians are, after all, expected to solve societal issues if they arise: “political actors must consider that they might be held responsible for their actions or inactions — or how these are played out in the media” (Strömbäck, 2008, p. 239). Indeed, there is evidence that politicians react more

² Other news values that matter for selection by the audience according to Eilders are the relevance/reach of a message, elite persons/prominence, continuity and unexpectedness.

4.2. Expectations

to negative developments (Soroka 2006). One reason might be that politicians want to avoid being accused of inaction (Yanovitzky, 2002). This leads us to expect that politicians make a conscious distinction in their reactions:

H 4.2: Politicians are more likely to react to news reports of a negative development than to coverage of a positive development.

Responsibility attribution In political agenda-setting studies, scholars often focus on issues from which they derive responsibility for (political) action based on issue ownership theories (Pritchard, 1992). However, news reports often also directly attribute responsibility for an outcome. Content analyses identified responsibility as one of the most important frames in political coverage (Gerhards et al., 2009; Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000). While studies have theorized about the role of responsibility attribution for parties' reactions to media coverage (see below), how it affects individual politicians is less clear. There is evidence that media stories focusing on political actors are more likely to be chosen by politicians than those that are not politicized (Sevenans et al., 2015). Therefore, I expect that politicians are more likely to take political action if a news report holds a national political actor responsible than if another actor is held responsible.

H 4.3: Politicians are more likely to react to news reports making national political actors responsible than to those that make other actors responsible.

Investigative reporting Politicians need to stay up to date on issues and can be expected to know about an official government communication before it is published in the media. And indeed, often media publish information in line with official government communication, merely indexing the official story line without using any additional material (Bennett, 1996). However, in some cases, investigative reporting by media outlets brings to light new information. In these cases, the media's influence on politics has been found to be particularly strong (Graber, 2006; Protess et al., 1987). This study tests whether politicians make a distinction between news reports that are based on official government communication and those that signal that the information has been uncovered by the media outlet.

H 4.4: Politicians are more likely to react to news reports based on information uncovered by media outlets than to official government information.

4.2.3 Politician, party and political system influences

Whether an individual member of parliament decides to react to a news report depends on the sender and the message of the report was argued in the previous section. However, also the actor making this selection, the politician, likely affects this process. There is considerable variation between politicians. When the politicians participating in this

study were asked to rank the sources of influence on their work, almost 50% of Dutch MPs put the media on the first or second rank of five. In Switzerland, only 25% of these politicians put media first or second however.³ For a substantial share of politicians, the media are thus an important player in their parliamentary work. To further our understanding of how media matter for politics, we should further investigate these differences. What explains these differences between politicians? And are there differences depending on whether the private parliamentary party group setting or a public political action is concerned? Building on Kingdon (1977) who put politicians in a broader context, next to the individual politician on the micro level, party configurations (meso) and the political system (macro) play a crucial role (see also subsection 1.2.2 for an elaboration of the levels of influence).

Parliamentary tenure (micro) Politicians with less experience have been found to be more reactive to media coverage (Landerer, 2014). One might argue that this is because they want to again obtain media coverage and know that reacting to existing media coverage is one of the most efficient ways to get into the media (Van Santen et al., 2015). One could also argue that junior members of parliament are more dependent on the media for their work. While more experienced politicians have an established network of sources, ranging from interest groups to civil servants and local governments, junior politicians are more dependent on the media for their information. A recent study with Finnish members of parliament found that age was negatively correlated with perceptions of media power (Vesa et al., 2015). Thus, a negative effect of tenure is expected: the longer a politician has been in parliament, the less likely she or he will react to media coverage. This effect is expected to apply when it comes to both taking parliamentary action and mentioning a news report at a parliamentary party group meeting.

H 4.5: Politicians with less experience are more likely to react to news reports than those with more experience.

Political relevance (micro) Simply put, politicians have to choose what issues they react to and it therefore seems intuitive that they would only react to media coverage on issues they deem politically relevant. In line with journalists who would also only select those party messages for coverage that they deem politically relevant at the time (see subsection 3.2.2), politicians are expected to do the same. Including this variable is, however, not only important from a methodological perspective ensuring a parallel research design (see also section 1.3). There are two additional reasons for including this variable. First, studies on the consequences of agenda-setting for voting show that if a

³ The survey question following the experimental part of the study asked politicians to rank a number of factors that had inspired their parliamentary work in the past year based on importance. Those were personal experiences, their party, their constituents, interest groups, and the media. For a similar question, see, for example, Walgrave et al. (2008).

4.2. Expectations

party's issue is more salient in the media, members of the public will think this issue is more important which has important effects on their voting behavior too (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). Voters of Green parties for instance often think that environmental issues are important, while those who sympathize with right-wing populist parties think that issues related to immigration are more important. Similar differences are expected between the politicians of different parties. Depending on their party, they will have different ideas about what issues are politically relevant and would thus, possibly, merit taking political action. Second, the issue of a news report is an important aspect in political agenda-setting. Studies have pointed to differences between issues in their agenda-setting powers (Soroka, 2002). However, effects of these other important aspects related to an issue can only be isolated in this study if also *individual* political relevance as perceived by the politician is included. I will elaborate below how I expect the role of the judgment of political relevance to be contingent on the electoral system.

H 4.6: Politicians are more likely to react to news reports covering an issue they think is politically relevant than to one they think is less relevant.

Issue specialization (micro) One of the most important effects that the media have is putting new issues on the political agenda. They do this sometimes through investigative reporting (e.g. Graber, 2006; Protess et al., 1987). Under normal every-day circumstances, their influence is likely to be nuanced. Studies have analyzed the role of the media on specific political issues, for instance with regards to immigration (Van der Pas, 2014b), EU integration (Noije et al., 2008) or economic issues (Soroka, 2002). These and other studies often conclude that the media's influence on the political agenda as a whole is conditional, and not deterministic. One of the reasons why the influence is conditional might be because of the division of labor within parties.

MPs are often representatives of their party in specific parliamentary committees, act as the party's spokesperson on those specific issues and largely define the party's position on the issue which gives an MP bargaining power vis à vis the party (Patzelt, 1999, p. 31). As a consequence, they are likely to react differently to news reports covering issues in which they are specialized. Often, members of a party agree that only the MP specialized in an issue will take parliamentary action on that issue. They do not want to invite other members of the party, or even beyond their own party, to react to "their" issue in parliament. Thus, issue specialization is particularly important when it comes to taking political action.

Possibly, issue specialization plays a less central role for members of parliament when they speak during parliamentary party group meetings. In this more closed setting, specialized politicians might be less likely to bring up a news report on "their" issue, for instance because they most likely already know about an ongoing issue before it reaches the media. For politicians who do not know much about an issue on the other hand, this private party setting might be a good, possibly the only, moment to raise an issue to others. If they think

something is important and merits attention by their party, they can speak up in this setting without raising flags and causing a media frenzy about divisions within their party.

In sum, issue specialization on the level of the individual politician is expected to have different effects depending on whether it concerns a private or more public setting. Therefore, two separate hypotheses are formulated below. Whether issue specialization also has different effects in the Swiss and Dutch political systems however is less clear. Some tentative expectations are formulated below in the relevant section.

H 4.7a: Politicians are more likely to take political action based on a news report that covers an issue they are specialized in than one that they are not specialized in.

H 4.7b: Politicians' issue specialization does not affect whether they mention a news report at a parliamentary party group meeting or not.

Party issue ownership (meso) Party issue ownership (Petrocik, 1996) plays a crucial role in elections (Bélanger and Meguid, 2008) and it is therefore only logical to assume that politicians will take it into account when they decide to take action.⁴ This concept is often used by scholars to explain why parties pay attention to some issues from the media and not others (e.g. Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2011; Walgrave et al., 2008). Issues in the media that fit this “issue competition game of politics” (Green-Pedersen and Stubager, 2010, p. 676), meaning that they emphasize a position the party is already taking, are more likely to make it onto the political agenda and parties have been found to be more likely to react to issues they “own” (e.g. Elmelund-Præstekær et al., 2011; Green-Pedersen, 2010). Identifying whether the issue covered in a news report is owned by a party is only possible, once the respective party has been identified. Therefore, it is treated as a characteristic of the receiver although strictly speaking, it is a combination of message and receiver characteristics.

Most likely, party issue ownership also plays a role for individual politicians in their selection of news. First, because politicians within a group often share an understanding of broad salient issues. Second, politicians were found to vote more unified on issues that are important to their party than on other issues (Traber et al., 2014). Finally, as vote-seeking actors competing against MPs from other parties, it would be rational for MPs to make sure they capitalize on existing party profiles by reinforcing existing issue ownership (Strøm, 1998). Therefore, party issue ownership is expected to have an independent effect on politicians' reactions to media reporting, in addition to the variables already discussed. Politicians are expected to be more likely to both take political action and mention a report at a meeting that covers an issue their party owns, rather than mention one their party does not own.

H 4.8: Politicians are more likely to react to news reports covering an issue their party owns than to one on an issue their party does not own.

⁴ See also subsection 3.2.2 for how party issue ownership affects selection by journalists.

4.2. Expectations

Coalition membership (meso) Another variable at the party level is coalition membership. In most parliamentary democracies, parties can broadly be divided into two groups; those in power and those with less political power. However, as explained before, the distinction is only expected to apply in the Dutch case (see subsection 2.2.2 for an elaborate account).⁵ This difference in political power potentially leads to different reactions to media coverage. It is important for coalition parties to show that they are unified. Therefore, they are less likely to react to media coverage. Depending on the margin by which they hold a majority in parliament, any deviation by a member of the party can have costly consequences and lead to a vote of non-confidence and perhaps new elections. Therefore, politicians from coalition parties are under more control from their party and less free to take action based on media coverage. A recent study by Van Vonna (2016, p. 59) comparing 15 European countries and their behavior in parliament shows a positive effect of coalition membership on politicians' party loyalty. For politicians from opposition parties, media coverage provides a good platform to advocate their issues and bring them on the political agenda largely controlled by the coalition parties. Moreover, politicians from coalition parties have more (official) information sources while their colleagues from opposition parties have to rely on the media much more.

Results from previous studies focusing on politicians' reactions to media reports confirm this expectation. When asked what inspired their work, a third of the opposition MPs say that the media play an important role, while the number of coalition politicians admitting that the media play an important role is much lower; only one fifth of those politicians claim that they are mostly inspired by the media (Walgrave et al., 2008). Politicians of opposition parties judge the media as more important than politicians of coalition parties (Van Aelst et al., 2008). In terms of their actions in parliament, politicians from opposition parties usually ask more parliamentary questions and are more likely to react to media coverage (Green-Pedersen and Stubager, 2010; Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2011; Walgrave et al., 2008). Overall, opposition politicians are thus more likely to ask parliamentary questions based on media reporting than their colleagues from coalition parties.

H 4.9a: Dutch opposition politicians are more likely to take political action based on news reports than Dutch politicians from coalition parties.

⁵ Because the effect is only expected to be present in the Netherlands, one could argue that it is an interaction effect between a party characteristic (coalition/opposition membership) and a country's political system. For clarity it is however conceptualized at the party level here, in line with the results section.

Table 4.1: Overview of hypothesized effects on the selection by politicians

Sender effects <i>H 4.1:</i> Politicians are more likely to react to news reports from quality newspapers than to those from popular newspapers. Message effects <i>H 4.2:</i> Politicians are more likely to react to news reports of a negative development than to coverage of a positive development. <i>H 4.3:</i> Politicians are more likely to react to news reports making national political actors responsible than to those that make other actors responsible. <i>H 4.4:</i> Politicians are more likely to react to news reports based on information uncovered by media outlets than to official government information. Receiver effects <i>H 4.5:</i> Politicians with less experience are more likely to react to news reports than those with more experience. <i>H 4.6:</i> Politicians are more likely to react to news reports covering an issue they think is politically relevant than to one they think is less relevant. <i>H 4.7a:</i> Politicians are more likely to take political action based on news reports cover an issue they are specialized in than one that they are not specialized in. <i>H 4.7b:</i> Politicians' issue specialization does not affect whether they mention a news report at a parliamentary party group meeting or not. <i>H 4.8:</i> Politicians are more likely to react to news reports covering an issue their party owns than to one on an issue their party does not own. <i>H 4.9a:</i> Dutch opposition politicians are more likely to take political action based on news reports than Dutch politicians from coalition parties. <i>H 4.9b:</i> Dutch coalition politicians are more likely to mention a news report in a parliamentary party group meeting than politicians from opposition parties. <i>H 4.10a:</i> In Switzerland, politicians are more likely to take political action on a news report because of perceived relevance and party issue ownership than because of individual issue specialization. <i>H 4.10b:</i> In the Netherlands, politicians are more likely to take political action on a news report because of individual issue specialization than perceived relevance and party issue ownership. <i>H 4.10c:</i> In the Netherlands, politicians are more likely to mention a news report at a parliamentary party group based on its perceived relevance than individual issue specialization or party issue ownership. Interaction effects <i>H 4.11:</i> Less experienced politicians are more likely to react to news reports of negative developments than their more experienced colleagues. <i>H 4.12:</i> In the Netherlands, opposition politicians are more likely to react to news reports of negative developments than politicians from coalition parties. <i>H 4.13:</i> In the Netherlands, opposition politicians are more likely to react to news reports making government responsible than politicians from coalition parties.

4.2. Expectations

This effect is likely to be conditional on the setting. While opposition politicians can be expected to take more political actions based on media coverage, it is not clear how coalition-opposition membership affects whether politicians mention a report at a party group meeting. Possibly, because coalition politicians are not “allowed” to react publicly, they are more inclined to bring up a news report at a parliamentary party group meeting. One indication that such an effect might be present comes from a study by Van Vonna (2016, p. 53). She shows that members of coalition parties more often disagree with their party’s position than those of opposition parties and explains this with coalition parties’ requirement to support positions of the coalition rather than of their own party (p. 44). The only setting in which politicians from government parties can (safely) voice their concerns is in parliamentary party group meetings. Therefore, a positive effect of coalition membership is expected when it comes to reacting to media coverage in parliamentary party group meetings.

H 4.9b: Dutch coalition politicians are more likely to mention a news report in a parliamentary party group meeting than politicians from opposition parties.

Electoral system (macro) One of the most important aspects of a news report refers to the issue covered. The political relevance as perceived by politicians depends on their issue specialization on the individual level and on party issue ownership on the party level. The influence of issues is expected to vary, not only across the settings of the public or more private, but also across the two countries included in this study. More specifically, re-election is seen as the primary goal of incumbents and *the* rationale explaining politicians’ behavior. The path to gain re-election is, however, different in the two countries which means other aspects are expected to matter in the Netherlands and in Switzerland with regards to politicians’ reaction to media coverage.

Concerning politicians’ propensity to take political action based on a news report, the perceived political relevance of an issue is expected to matter mainly for Swiss politicians. As already elaborated in subsection 2.2.2, what matters is that they appeal to the electorate in their own respective district. Within those voting districts, the saliency of issues often shifts, which means that politicians cannot simply build a profile based on an individual issue. Rather, they are expected to react to issues they deem politically relevant at that point. If the media cover an issue politicians think is important to the public, they are more likely to take action as well as mention the news report at a parliamentary party group meeting. Issue specialization on the other hand will be less important, the division of labor within the party is not that relevant for their re-election chances. Swiss politicians do not have to fear any consequences from their fellow party representatives even if they enter into another MPs’ (issue) territory.

H 4.10a: In Switzerland, politicians are more likely to take political action on a news report because of perceived relevance and party issue ownership than because of individual issue specialization.

For Dutch politicians, other considerations will be key. Because preference votes only play a marginal role, party and not individual electoral considerations are central (Louwerse and Otjes, 2016). Van Vonna (2016, p. 54) finds an effect of candidate selection procedures on how much politicians agree with their party line. More centralized procedures are linked with more agreement with the party. Therefore, it is expected that when reacting to media coverage, Dutch incumbents will make sure to adhere to the division of labor within their party. In other words, issue specialization will predict whether a Dutch politician will take action based on a news report. Political relevance or party issue ownership will not be as important.

The electoral system thus has an important influence to predict whether a politician will take political action based on a news report. In the more private party setting, however, electoral considerations will play a much smaller role and adhering to the division of labor in their party is probably not as important for Dutch politicians. They can act more freely and say what they think about the issues they deem relevant, leading to a more central role of the judgment of political relevance than in the more public setting.

H 4.10b: In the Netherlands, politicians are more likely to take political action on a news report because of individual issue specialization than perceived relevance and party issue ownership.

H4.10c: In the Netherlands, politicians are more likely to mention a news report at a parliamentary party group based on its perceived relevance than individual issue specialization or party issue ownership.

4.2.4 Interaction effects

In the previous sections I argued that, first, not all media content affects politicians the same way and, second, that not all politicians are equally prone to be influenced by media reporting in their actions. In several cases, I expect different aspects of the news report to be of importance depending on whether politicians would take political action, or they bring up a news report within their party at a parliamentary party group meeting. Specifically, the effects of media content might be contingent on the tenure at the level of the individual politician and on the political position of a politician's party on the party level.

Tenure and negativity Negativity is expected to play a key role for politicians as hypothesized above. However, it might affect politicians differently depending on their standing in parliament. More specifically, junior politicians' reactions to media content might be accentuated for two reasons. First, as was argued above, junior members of parliament have a less established network of sources available for their work. They rely more heavily on the media in their work. In addition, they will be eager to show that

4.2. Expectations

they are responsive and take care of problems if they arise. As a consequence, junior MPs are expected to be more likely to take parliamentary action based on a media report covering a negative development. Because of their lack of additional information sources and because they want to do well, they are much more responsive than their senior colleagues. This likely applies to both mentioning news reports at parliamentary party group meetings and taking political action.

H 4.11: Less experienced politicians are more likely to react to news reports of negative developments than their more experienced colleagues.

Coalition membership and media content Previous research on the party-level has shown that the opposition wants to use media coverage to point out the incompetence of the government, while the government wants to demonstrate their competence. They will react to positive coverage to show how well they are doing. This is an argument that has been brought forward in a study conducted in the Danish context (Thesen, 2012). Thesen showed that parties make strategic use of media coverage that can benefit them. In the present study, I am able to test some of these findings. I expect them to hold when politicians are asked whether they would take (public) political action based on a report. Likely, effects are less pronounced in the more hidden setting of the parliamentary party group meeting. Because their fellow party MPs share the perception that the government should be scrutinized (or praised), it is less important for politicians to signal this.

First, it is expected that politicians from opposition parties are more likely to take action based on a report that covers a negative development. A good way to get political power is for parties to show the incompetence of those in power at that moment. Therefore, it will be important for these parties (and the politicians of these parties) to draw attention to negative developments.

H 4.12: In the Netherlands, opposition politicians are more likely to react to news reports of negative developments than politicians from coalition parties.

Second, based on the findings by Thesen, it is also expected that opposition politicians are more likely to react to coverage that holds the government responsible in any way. If media already signal that the government is responsible, it might provide some politicians with a welcome opportunity to link them to other issues. Responsibility attribution is one of the most important frames in political reporting as shown above. The framing of the media coverage could potentially enforce the difference between reactions from coalition and opposition parties. Thus, it is expected that opposition politicians are more likely to react to coverage which holds the government responsible for a development.

H 4.13: In the Netherlands, opposition politicians are more likely to react to news reports making government responsible than politicians from coalition parties.

These expectations are formulated with regards to politicians taking action based on a news report. Whether comparable mechanisms are at play when politicians mention a

report at a parliamentary party group meeting, is not clear. Assuming that opposition politicians' main goal is to signal to the public that the government is not competent, these effects are probably less pronounced in the inner party setting.

4.3 Methods

This study asks members of the Lower Houses in the Netherlands and Switzerland to rate fictional news reports. In an online survey, they were asked to judge whether they would take political action based on the news report and whether they would mention the report if a parliamentary party group meeting was held the same day. After this experimental part, politicians were asked a number of more general survey questions, for instance on the political relevance of issues.

The methodological section (see section 2.1) introduced the factorial survey method in more detail. Below, I present an account of how the stimuli and the survey were drawn up, how respondents were contacted, and what analytical strategies were used.

4.3.1 Experimental design

Short fictional but realistically formulated news reports were used as experimental stimuli. Within these reports, a set of content variables was systematically manipulated to test the influence of the type of media outlet, the message itself and the issue at hand on politicians' reactions to news reports (see table Table 4.2 for an overview).

Table 4.2: Overview of experimentally manipulated variables in news reports

Variable	Values
Media outlet	Quality – popular
Information source	Government – investigated
Negativity	Present – not present
Responsibility attribution	Politics – other
Party issue ownership	Owned – not owned

The first variable was the origin of the report, either published by a quality or a popular newspaper. In the Swiss case, *Der Blick* is the one popular newspaper known across the German speaking part of the country, while the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* is considered a quality outlet. Those two outlets have the highest circulation numbers among the paid daily press in Switzerland with 179,000 and 115,000 readers respectively (AG, 2013). Like other daily newspapers in Switzerland, neither has a clear partisan leaning (Tresch, 2009). Comparable newspapers in the Dutch case were chosen with the popular *De Telegraaf* and the quality newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* with 544,000 and 192,000 readers respectively (Nieuwsmedia, 2013). A picture of the logo of the

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media outlet that had published the news report was included with an example of an experimental stimulus (see Figure 4.2). The source of the information covered by the news report was also manipulated. The report either claimed that the government had published the information or that it had been obtained by the media outlet itself.

Table 4.3: Operationalization of issue ownership and development in news reports

<i>Issue owner (party family)</i>	<i>Positive development</i>
Liberals	The financial deficit is smaller than predicted
Social Democrats	Fewer people are unemployed
Rightwing	Fewer immigrants with the family reunion program
Greens	Air pollution has decreased since previous year
Christian Democrats	Fewer women between 25 and 35 have had an abortion
<i>Negative development</i>	
Liberals	The financial deficit is bigger than predicted
Social Democrats	More people are unemployed
Rightwing	More immigrants with the family reunion program
Greens	Air pollution has increased since previous year
Christian Democrats	More women between 25 and 35 have had an abortion

The manipulation of negativity was closely connected to the issue used for the report. Therefore, valence issues (Stokes, 1963) were chosen. These are issues on which all the major parties prefer the same outcome. For instance, decreasing unemployment or preventing the rise of abortion rates. No party would actively advocate higher unemployment numbers or abortion rates. Table 4.3 gives an overview of the issues owned by each party and the corresponding positive or negative development formulation for each party. At the same time, to be able to test for the effects of party issue ownership, one owned issue per party was included. The measure of associative party issue ownership (Walgrave et al., 2009) was based on data from a voter survey of the most recent elections in Switzerland (Lachat, 2014) and the Netherlands (Kleinnijenhuis and Walter, 2014).

Finally, the effect of causal responsibility attribution was measured by including an actor who would be held responsible for the positive or negative development. This variable had four different values. The development was either ascribed to decisions of the highest legislative political power in the country,⁶ decisions by the European Union, or real world developments (e.g. financial deficit increases due to worldwide economic developments). One control condition where no responsible actor was mentioned, i.e. the sentence was missing, was also included. These four were collapsed into two categories for analysis: causal attribution to politics or to another actor.

After reading a news report, respondents were asked to evaluate the news reports on two aspects. To measure direct effects of media content, politicians were asked to indicate

⁶ To ensure functional equivalence in the two countries, in the Swiss case this is parliament and in the Netherlands this is government. In Switzerland a reference to the government (“Bundesrat”) which has a purely executive function would have been a reference to several parties (see for an elaboration subsection 2.2.2).

Figure 4.2: Example of a fictional news report shown to politicians (translated)



Contrary to expectations, in the past month the number of unemployed persons has decreased by 4,000. This is what research by this newspaper shows. The parliament's decision for more spending has led to more orders in various sectors; this is the most important reason for this development. In a reaction minister Johann Schneider-Ammann said: „Each person who is unemployed is one too many. Those who do not have work have to be supported to find new paid work as fast as possible.“

whether they would take political action based on a news report.⁷ To measure indirect effects of news reporting, they were also asked to rate whether they would mention the news report if, today, a meeting of their parliamentary party group would be held.⁸ The question order was randomized and for both the dependent variables, results were collected on a slider scale ranging from 1 to 7, with the starting position at 4. This was done separately for each news report that respondents received.

These five variables with two and four values resulted in 64 possible combinations of experimental stimuli. Of these, a half fraction factorial sample of 32 conditions was drawn. Those were distributed into 8 decks of 4 news reports. Within each deck, the experimental conditions were balanced again, and each respondent was presented with only one of these decks. In both countries, taking the experiment, including the subsequent survey questions, took respondents 5 to 10 minutes. Overall, MPs judged the news reports to be fairly realistic, with a mean score of 4.5 ($SD = 1.43$) on a 7-point scale.⁹

⁷ Translated wording: “Would you take parliamentary action (e.g. ask a parliamentary question) based on this news report?” Original question wording: “Würden Sie basierend auf diesen Artikel einen parlamentarischen Vorstoss machen (z.B. eine Interpellation einreichen)?” (Switzerland) and “Hoe groot is de kans dat u naar aanleiding van dit artikel zelf politieke actie zou ondernemen (bijv. Kamervragen stellen)?” (Netherlands) The examples of political action given in brackets were chosen to ensure functional equivalence in the two countries and a parallel research design with the study of the selection by journalists presented in the previous chapter. The Swiss *Interpellation* refers to a parliamentary question in the literal translation and not to the direct English translation of an interpellation, a more consequential political instrument.

⁸ Translated wording: “Would you mention this news report if, today, a meeting of your parliamentary party group was held?” Original question wording: “Würden Sie diesen Artikel zur Sprache bringen, wenn heute eine Fraktionssitzung stattfinden würde?” (Switzerland) and “Zou u dit artikel ter sprake brengen als er vandaag een fractievergadering zou worden gehouden?” (Netherlands) Because Swiss parliament is in session only a few weeks a year, to ensure equivalence politicians were asked to think about a situation in which *today* a parliamentary party group would be held.

⁹ There was no significant difference ($t(74) = -0.60$, $p = 0.553$) between scores from Swiss ($M = 4.39$) and Dutch ($M = 4.60$) politicians.

4.3. Methods

4.3.2 Politician and party variables

To study how politicians differ in their reactions to media coverage, a number of other measures were included in addition to the experimental variables. Perceived issue importance was, for instance, included in a survey part following the experimental stimuli. After they had evaluated the fictional news reports, respondents were asked in a survey to indicate how politically important a specific issue was at the moment on a 7-point Likert scale. These matched the issues used in the fictional news reports. Other variables were coded based on official parliamentary records that were publicly available. Issue specialization was coded as a dummy variable, based on parliamentary committee membership. The same approach was chosen for parliamentary experience, which was coded in years.

4.3.3 Data and respondents

Representatives elected to the Lower House in the Netherlands and Switzerland formed the population studied. The first step in the data collection process involved establishing contacts within each of the parties. In both Switzerland and the Netherlands, I held interviews with the secretary general of each party (Switzerland) or the head of press relations in each parliamentary party group (Netherlands) at the start of 2014. None of these actors holds a seat in parliament. Next to establishing a contact within a party, these interviews also provided some background knowledge to draw up the study. While I did not use those contacts for data collection among politicians in Switzerland, the situation presented itself very differently in the Netherlands. The country-specific sections below elaborate on how data were collected.

Switzerland Data were collected during three weeks during which the Swiss parliament was in session in June 2014. Previous elections had been held in 2011, the next ones were scheduled for October 2015 and campaigns had not yet started, making this a study of politicians' routine-time behavior. Politicians from the biggest four parties plus the party with a clear profile on environmental issues were contacted for this study. These were the SVP, SPS, CVP, FDP and the Greens, which together held more than 85% of seats at the time of data collection. Selecting only the MPs who were representatives of a German speaking or bilingual region resulted in a population of 125 Swiss politicians of the Lower House.

Two methods of data collection were used. First, I approached politicians directly in the parliamentary buildings. The parliamentary bureau had granted me access to the buildings during the three weeks that parliament was in session. In the lobby of the Lower House, I approached politicians directly and asked them to participate on a tablet computer ($n = 20$). With some parties, a snowballing method worked best. After an MP had participated, I would ask her or him to approach another person of their

party. As the number of MPs I was able to approach personally was limited, I also used a second method. After the first week I sent politicians I had not yet talked to an e-mail containing a link to the survey. Reminders were sent once or twice, depending on the number of MPs that had already participated from the specific party.¹⁰ Because some MPs had not filled in the complete survey, the results reported here include the responses of a total of 50 respondents. This is 39% of all politicians contacted. Both in terms of parliamentary experience ($M = 7.48$ years, $SD = 5.84$) and number of female respondents (32%), respondents reflected the population of the Swiss Lower House (experience $M = 7.6$ years, 31% female). A total of 198 evaluations of news reports were obtained, the same amount of each of the two dependent variables.

Table 4.4: Overview of number of respondents and response rates by party

Party	MPs in Lower House	Response (%)
<i>Switzerland</i>		
SVP (gov)	44	16 (36)
SPS (gov)	30	14 (47)
FDP (gov)	18	4 (22)
CVP (gov)	23	10 (43)
GPS	10	6 (60)
Total	125	50 (40)
<i>Netherlands</i>		
VVD (gov)	41	17 (41)
SP	15	3 (20)
GroenLinks	4	1 (25)
D66	12	4 (33)
CDA	13	3 (23)
CU	5	0 (0)
SGP	3	2 (67)
Total	93	30 (32)

Note. Seats in parliament at time of data collection (2014). For Switzerland only German speaking MPs included as explained in subsection 2.2.2.

Netherlands Data collection in the Netherlands proved a lot more challenging than in Switzerland. MPs in the Lower House from a total of six of the 12 parties in the Dutch government, or 62% of the 150 MPs, were contacted for the study (see Table 4.4 for an overview). Data collection took place throughout 2014. Previous elections had been held in 2012, the next ones were scheduled for 2017. Shortly after the interviews with the press officers, which were mostly held in February and March of 2014, I sent them an email containing some general information about the study, which they had agreed to forward to the MPs of their party. A few hours after this email had been forwarded,

¹⁰ There were no significant differences between responses of different modes of data collection.

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I would send MPs a personal email containing a link to the survey. A couple of weeks later, a reminder was sent to MPs. While this strategy proved to be very fruitful with the first party I had contacted (41% response rate for the VVD), the situation was very different with the other parties. These efforts led to 17 coalition MPs and only 8 MPs from opposition parties taking the survey: not enough to estimate differences between the two groups of respondents. As a last resort, a paper version of the survey was sent to 38 MPs from opposition parties that had not yet taken (part of) the survey in January 2015. This led to seven more MPs taking the survey.¹¹

Overall, 32 MPs of the Lower House participated in the survey, which equals to 34% of MPs who were contacted, or 21% of the representatives in the Dutch Lower House. Response rates varied by party (see Table 4.4). Two responses had to be excluded because they did not complete the whole survey, leading to an N of 30 for the results reported here. Respondents had 4.2 years of parliamentary experience ($SD = 3.11$), 30% ($n = 9$) were female. This distribution is comparable to the composition of the Lower House at the time of data collection with 38% ($n = 57$) female members. A total of 118 evaluations of news reports were obtained, which form the dependent variable of the study.

Analyses Results below are based on the 198 and 118 evaluations of news reports by Swiss and Dutch members of the Lower Houses respectively on two separate dependent variables (see Table 4.5). Each news report was evaluated by up to 9 different politicians allowing for independent estimations of effects of the experimentally manipulated news reports and the respondents' background.¹² For a more elaborate account of analysis strategies with factorial survey data see Figure 2.1.1. The regression models with results for each country separately are reported in Table 4.7 for Swiss data and Table 4.8 for Dutch data at the very end of this chapter. For significant variables, marginal effects are reported in the text or in tables within the chapter.

¹¹ There were no significant differences between responses in the different methods of data collection. To estimate the expected differences between government and opposition MPs it was crucial that none of these two groups consisted of substantially more respondents. I therefore chose not to contact the second party in government at the time of data collection, the PvdA. Although this strategy might have led to a higher overall response rate, the respondent groups would have been more imbalanced. This has consequences for the generalizability of the findings on coalition/opposition differences, a point I raise in the discussion section of this chapter.

¹² For Swiss data each was evaluated by between 5 and 9 different politicians, in the Netherlands most news reports by between 3 and 5 politicians. In both countries, one deck of news reports was evaluated by only one politician. Because most other news reports were judged by more respondents, effects of the experimental stimuli can still be isolated from respondent effects in the analyses.

4.4 Results

Findings show that the effects of the media outlet and content are fairly constant, both across the two settings studied as well as the two countries. In line with the argument that taking action in a public setting is potentially more costly for MPs than mentioning a news report at a parliamentary party group meetings, MPs in both countries give lower overall scores in the first case (see Table 4.5). As expected, they are less likely to take political action based on a news report than to mention the same report at a parliamentary party group meeting. The mean value of the likelihood of taking political action is the same in the two countries, although in the Netherlands there are more differences across politicians in their evaluations as indicated by the high variance. Overall, descriptives of the dependent variables show that there are many differences among politicians in their evaluations of which news reports merit their attention and have political consequences.

Table 4.5: Descriptives of the dependent variables

	Switzerland		Netherlands	
	Meetings	Taking action	Meeting	Taking action
Mean	2.69	2.53	3.69	2.53
Standard Deviation	1.82	1.66	2.09	1.77
N	198	198	117	118

Note. Dependent variable formulations: Meetings: Would you bring up the news report if today a meeting of your parliamentary party group would be held? Taking action: Would you take political action based on the news report?

4.4.1 Media outlet influences

Politicians received an article from either a quality or a popular newspaper of the respective country. Because their reporting is more credible, quality newspaper coverage was expected to be more likely to lead to political reaction than coverage in the popular press (*H 4.1*). Results only partially confirm this expectation. Swiss politicians do make this distinction, but only when it comes to taking political action. They are more likely to take political action on coverage published in the quality newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* than the popular newspaper *Der Blick*. While a news report from the quality outlet is evaluated with a score of 2.73 on the 7-point scale, the report in the popular newspaper scores lower with 2.32 estimation of the marginal effects shown. The effect is, however, not significant for mentioning a report at a parliamentary party group meeting. Additionally, no significant difference is present in the Netherlands for either talking about a report or taking action. Dutch politicians do not make a difference between reports published in the popular print outlet *Telegraaf* and those published in the quality newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*. Hypothesis 4.1 is only partially supported by the data.

Overall, effects of the sender of a news report are not consistent across countries or

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settings. While the type of media outlet has an effect on Swiss politicians' likelihood to take political action, it does not in the Dutch case.

4.4.2 News report influences

The influence of a number of news report characteristics derived from news value theory was tested. First, coverage of negative developments catches the public's attention and negativity is an important news value for journalists. Are politicians also more likely to react to news reports covering negative developments (*H 4.2*)? Results of this study show a strong effect in support of the hypothesis. Across the two countries, and both for taking action on a report and talking about it, negativity is a significant predictor. Politicians are much more likely to react to a report covering a negative development than a positive one. This is in line with expectations and earlier studies. The marginal effects of news reports covering positive and negative developments for each of the dependent variables are reported in Table 4.6. The values reported in this table illustrate the considerable effect of the type of development described in a news report on politicians' selection. For Swiss politicians, the difference between positive and negative developments is particularly relevant when it comes to taking political action based on a news report. For Dutch politicians, however, the difference between the (marginal) effects are bigger in absolute terms in the parliamentary party group setting. The different political systems provide a possible explanation for these diverging findings as I will elaborate below (see section 4.5).

MPs were expected to react more when a report is explicitly made politically relevant via the attribution of responsibility to government (Netherlands) or parliament (Switzerland) (*H 4.3*). The findings show that MPs did not make such a distinction and that the hypothesis needs to be rejected. There is no significant effect of the attribution of responsibility to national politics. There is no evidence that it makes a difference for politicians whether a news report explicitly mentions a responsible political actor.¹³ Other aspects of a news report are more prevalent in their judgment to take parliamentary action. This holds not only across countries, but also across the two dependent variables.

The media sometimes uncover new information by publishing investigative reports which can reveal unexpected information to politicians. This study looked at whether claiming that a report contained information uncovered by the media outlet, thus signaling an investigative report, made a difference for politicians (*H 4.4*). Results again show that this is not the case across the board, although small sample sizes mean that significance levels are lower. In most cases, there is no difference between reports mentioning an official

¹³ Additional analyses including each of the four operationalizations of responsibility showed a significant effect in cases where Dutch politicians were asked to take political action. When real-world developments are made responsible (as opposed to no mention of responsibility), Dutch politicians are less likely to take political action ($b = -.65$, $p = .026$, results not in tables). Effects were not significant in any other condition however.

Table 4.6: Marginal effects of the significant effect of the type of development described in news reports on Swiss and Dutch politicians' selection

	Switzerland		Netherlands	
	Meeting	Political action	Meeting	Political action
Positive	2.40	2.02	3.13	2.25
Negative	2.98	3.04	4.26	2.79

Note. Answer scale 1-7, higher values indicate higher chance of selection. Estimations based on models 1 reported in Table 4.7 and Table 4.8.

government source and those underlining that the information had been uncovered by the media outlet. Only when Dutch politicians consider taking political action based on a report this variable has a significant effect (see Table 4.8). While a news report based on an official government communication is evaluated with a score of 2.35, the same report credited to investigative reporting by the newspaper is evaluated with a score of 2.70 on the response scale by Dutch politicians. As I already mentioned, however, the variable had no effect in the parliamentary party group setting in either country.

In sum, the findings show that some aspects of news reports are more important than others. Negativity is a strong predictor for politicians' actions. The next section investigates whether different politicians are triggered by different kind of media content.

4.4.3 Politician, party and political system influences

Parliament is composed of politicians who have varying backgrounds and interests and belong to different parties. Because of this heterogeneity, it is likely that not all politicians are equally susceptible to the media's influence. This section aims to answer the question whether some politicians are more likely than others to select news reports and to react on them. To study these effects, the characteristics of the respondents were added to the hierarchical models (for a detailed account of the models see Appendix C).

Politician influences First, at the level of the individual politician, a number of variables are expected to influence selection. Research shows that senior politicians are less likely to take political action than their junior colleagues (*H4.5*). However, with regards to reactions to media coverage, the effect is not as pronounced and clear as expected. On the one hand, in Switzerland, seniority is significantly (and negatively) linked to taking political action on the basis of a report. For instance, a politician with 25 years of experience in parliament gives half the score to a news report, 1.54 to be precise, than his junior colleague who just entered parliament who scores the same news report at 2.93 on the 7-point scale. The more experienced politicians are, the less likely it is that they will take political action. This is in line with expectations. In most other conditions however, tenure does not have an effect. In the Netherlands, for instance,

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no such effect is present on the level of the individual politician. Overall, there is only partial support for this hypothesis.

Next, it was hypothesized (*H 4.6*) that the perceived political relevance of an issue will increase chances of selection. This expectation is only confirmed in the Swiss case and the hypothesis needs to be partially rejected. For Swiss politicians, how politically important they think an issue is that a news report covers at that moment, is key; both when it comes to mentioning a report at a parliamentary party group meeting and when they consider taking political action. I will discuss at the end of this section how these differences might be explained by the electoral systems of the two countries as the effects are not the same in the Netherlands.

At the level of the individual politician, issue specialization likely also plays a key role in explaining politicians' reactions to news. Politicians are expected to be more likely to react to a report covering an issue they are specialized in than to one they are not (*H 4.7a*). Issue specialization should however not affect whether they mention it at a parliamentary party group meeting (*H 4.7b*). Results are only partially in line with these expectations. In fact, the hypotheses only find support in the Dutch case but need to be rejected for Swiss politicians. There is a remarkable difference in scores for Dutch politicians. If they are specialized in the issue of a report, they score the news report at 5.44 which is relatively close to the maximal score of 7. If the same news report is on an issue they are not specialized in however, they score it at a low 2.04 estimation of marginal effects show, which is rather close to the lowest value of 1. The large effect of issue specialization in the Dutch case is also illustrated by the high beta value in the regression in Table 4.8. No such significant effect was found when it comes to raising a news report in the parliamentary party group meeting. This finding might partially be explained by the political system as I will elaborate below (see subsection 4.4.3).

Party influences So far, we see that in some cases, issue specialization and a politician's perceived political relevance of an issue make a difference. These are measured at the individual level. However, these politicians are also embedded in party structures. These parties are often known for certain issues, issues they "own". How does this party characteristic matter for individual politicians? More specifically, is there an isolated effect of party issue ownership, next to the issue specialization of the individual politician? Each respondent received two news reports on issues the party owned, and two reports on issues the party did not own.¹⁴

Results are different across the two countries and thus only partially in line with expectations. There is evidence that party issue ownership matters for mentioning a news report at a parliamentary party group (*H 4.8*). In both countries there is

¹⁴This variable was experimentally manipulated and in this study operationalized at the individual level to ensure balance in the design (see chapter section 2.1 for an elaborate account of the method).

a significant positive effect of party issue ownership. For a politician from a social democratic party, for example, when the report covers employment issues, she or he is much more likely to bring it up at a party meeting than if the report would cover the financial deficit, an issue owned by liberal parties. However, the effect of the same variable is not as consistent across countries for taking political action. On the one hand, *H 4.8* finds support because Swiss politicians are more likely to say that they would take action if a report covers an issue their party owns with almost half a point on the answer scale. However, for Dutch politicians this party level variable does not matter when they think about taking political action. They do not make a significant difference between news reports covering an issue their party owns and one their party does not own (see also results in Table 4.8). This shows that, while for Swiss politicians party issue ownership plays a key role, for Dutch politicians, its effect depends on the context (see also subsection 4.4.3). Overall, this hypothesis is thus only partially supported as it does not apply across countries and contexts.

Another important party-level variable is coalition/opposition status. Expectations are, however, not the same across the two countries and settings. While politicians from opposition parties are expected to take more political action based on news reports (*H 4.9a*), their colleagues from coalition parties are expected to bring up a news report more at internal parliamentary party group meetings (*H 4.9b*). Results are indeed in line with expectation and mainly apply to the Dutch case. Politicians from opposition parties are significantly more likely to say that they would take political action based on a news report. They score the same report at 3.06 while their colleagues from coalition parties score the reports at a low 2.12. The situation is, however, reversed in parliamentary party group meetings. There, coalition party membership actually has a *positive* effect; coalition politicians score much higher (4.33) than their colleagues from opposition parties (2.86). This difference of more than one point is substantial and supports the impression that the position of their party, either in the government or in the opposition, has an important effect on politicians' response to media coverage.

As there is no such clear distinction in terms of political power between parties represented in government and those who are not in Switzerland, the hypothesized effects were expected not to be present. However, models show a significant negative effect for coalition membership when it comes to talking at parliamentary party group meetings (see Table 4.7). Closer inspection of these results provide some tentative explanations for this finding. In fact, the only non-governmental party included in Switzerland is the Green Party (GPS), simply because all major Swiss parties are represented in government. On average, the Greens are more likely to talk about news reports at their meetings than politicians from the other parties results show. This might be due to the fact that as an opposition party, the media are an important source of information for the members of this party. Because they do not participate in

4.4. Results

government, it is more difficult for them to obtain information. Another explanation might be that the effect is confounded with party size. The Swiss Green Party is much smaller with its 15 seats than the governmental parties with their 29 to 54 seats (elections 2011). This suspicion is confirmed by additional analyses. Once models control for the number of seats (models not in tables), there is no significant effect of coalition membership anymore. Thus, the effect of coalition/opposition membership can be explained by party size in the Swiss case.¹⁵

Political system influences Finally, we turn to the effects of the political systems level on politicians' reactions to media coverage. Different expectations were formulated for the two countries on how a number of politician and party variables will interact depending on the electoral system. First, in Switzerland individual political relevance and party issue ownership were expected to play a more important role for politicians than their issue specialization (*H 4.10a*). Results are in line with this expectations as Table 4.7 shows. The division of labor within Swiss parties apparently does not play such an important role. The momentary political relevance as perceived by the politician and the more long term party issue ownership are important predictors of Swiss politicians' responses to news coverage. These effects are consistent across settings; they apply to both, raising an issue in the closed party setting and taking parliamentary action in a more publicly visible setting.

In the Netherlands, however, the effects of these politician and party variables are not as consistent across settings. We had expected issue specialization to be key and other individual and party considerations to be less important (*H 4.10b*). Findings with regards to politicians' likelihood to take political action are in line with these expectations. The division of labor within a party predicts whether a politician will react to a news report. This effect is also the most substantial in size in the model. However, a different mechanism takes place in the more closed party group setting (*H 4.10c*). In this closed setting, much like in the case of Switzerland, the political relevance of an issue and party issue ownership predict reactions to news reports. This divergent finding can be explained by the internal party workings in the Netherlands where politicians are expected to adhere to party lines and division of labor in a public setting. Within the party, however, they can act (and speak up) more freely and are not as bound by party considerations. In sum, hypothesis 4.10c is supported.

¹⁵ A similar argument could be made in the Dutch case. Yet, this is not the case across the board. When models control for the number of seats in parliament, effects of coalition/opposition membership on mentioning a news report at a parliamentary party group meeting remain significant and positive. However, effects on taking political action become not significant while party size does have a significant negative effect (results not in tables). This is not surprising considering that the Dutch coalition parties have more than twice the number of seats of the largest opposition party. Influences of government/opposition and party size variables are thus highly correlated ($r(117) = .89$, $p < .001$ for Dutch data) which can explain these findings.

Table 4.7: Hierarchical regression models of Swiss politicians' selection of news reports

	Mentioning at PPG meeting			Taking political action		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	1.630*	0.091	0.766	-0.108	-0.939	0.409
	(0.76)	(0.87)	(1.20)	(0.73)	(0.74)	(1.09)
<i>Sender effects</i>						
Media outlet	0.246	0.307	0.266	0.415*	0.490**	0.364#
	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.21)	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.20)
<i>Message effects</i>						
Negativity	0.588**	0.989**	0.52	1.019***	1.558***	0.878
	(0.20)	(0.33)	(0.62)	(0.19)	(0.31)	(0.58)
Conflict	-0.167	-0.169	0.063	0.111	0.122	-0.713
	(0.23)	(0.22)	(0.72)	(0.22)	(0.20)	(0.68)
Investigative report	0.239	0.222	0.241	-0.165	-0.196	-0.176
	(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.17)	(0.19)
<i>Receiver effects</i>						
Tenure in years	-0.026	0.001	-0.03	-0.056*	-0.02	-0.065**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Political relevance	0.194**	0.199**	0.189**	0.129*	0.122*	0.129*
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Issue specialization	0.586	0.688#	0.571	0.393	0.593#	0.449
	(0.40)	(0.39)	(0.41)	(0.37)	(0.33)	(0.36)
Party iss. ownership	0.332#	0.322#	0.330#	0.429*	0.420*	0.453*
	(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.17)	(0.19)
Coalition party	-0.978#	-1.049#	-0.937	-0.199	-0.216	-0.491
	(0.55)	(0.54)	(0.65)	(0.43)	(0.43)	(0.53)
<i>Interaction effects</i>						
Development x Tenure		-0.056			-0.074*	
		(0.04)			(0.03)	
Government x Development			0.078			0.148
			(0.65)			(0.62)
Government x Responsibility			-0.27			0.933
			(0.77)			(0.72)
<i>Random effects</i>						
Politician level	1.05	.91	1.05	.73	.73	.73
Media report level	1.38	1.36	1.37	1.31	1.28	1.30

Note. $N = 198$ from 50 Swiss Members of Parliament.

$p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

4.4. Results

Table 4.8: Hierarchical regression models of Dutch politicians' selection of news reports

	Mentioning at PPG meeting			Taking political action		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	-3.289*** (0.93)	-2.762** (1.01)	-3.139** (1.02)	-0.277 (0.85)	-0.357 (0.91)	-0.598 (0.91)
<i>Sender effects</i>						
Media outlet	0.397 (0.25)	0.316 (0.25)	0.408# (0.25)	0.18 (0.21)	0.212 (0.21)	0.158 (0.21)
<i>Message effects</i>						
Negativity	1.126*** (0.24)	0.813# (0.43)	1.022** (0.37)	0.542** (0.21)	0.480 (0.37)	0.779* (0.31)
Conflict	-0.034 (0.29)	0.004 (0.28)	-0.136 (0.44)	0.075 (0.24)	0.101 (0.24)	0.661# (0.37)
Investigative report	0.207 (0.24)	0.249 (0.24)	0.223 (0.25)	0.350# (0.20)	0.390# (0.20)	0.241 (0.21)
<i>Receiver effects</i>						
Tenure in years	0.122 (0.08)	0.084 (0.08)	0.122 (0.08)	0.105 (0.08)	0.100 (0.08)	0.105 (0.08)
Political relevance	0.354*** (0.10)	0.346*** (0.10)	0.357*** (0.10)	0.119 (0.09)	0.121 (0.09)	0.1 (0.09)
Issue specialization	0.392 (0.53)	0.463 (0.52)	0.382 (0.53)	1.064* (0.48)	1.046* (0.47)	1.159* (0.48)
Party iss. ownership	0.758** (0.28)	0.790** (0.27)	0.742** (0.28)	0.332 (0.24)	0.344 (0.23)	0.403# (0.24)
Coalition party	1.474** (0.47)	1.426** (0.46)	1.341* (0.57)	-0.942* (0.48)	-0.895# (0.46)	-0.485 (0.54)
<i>Interaction effects</i>						
Development $\times$ Tenure		0.074 (0.08)			0.015 (0.07)	
Government $\times$ Responsibility			0.17 (0.59)			-1.005* (0.49)
Government $\times$ Development			0.176 (0.49)			-0.379 (0.41)
<i>Random effects</i>						
Politician level	1.03	1.03	1.04	1.11	.00	1.10
Media report level	1.29	1.28	1.28	1.10	1.11	1.08

Note. $N = 117$ (PPG meeting) and 118 (action) from 30 Dutch Members of Parliament.
$p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Taken together, these differences between the two countries studied show that the electoral system together with the internal division of labor within a party play an important role in politicians' reactions to media coverage. As I will elaborate in the discussion section below (see section 4.5) as well as in the concluding section of this book (see section 5.2), this influence of the political system is particularly relevant in the study of the media's effects on politicians and one of the main contributions of the study presented here.

4.4.4 Interaction effects

The previous sections have shown that the content of a news report as well as the background of the politician are important aspects that explain why politicians react to media reporting. However, it is also likely that media content does not affect all politicians in the same way. A number of interaction effects were thus tested, first with an individual-level micro variable and next also with a party-level variable.

With regards to the individual politician it was expected that politicians with less experience will be more likely to react to news reports on negative developments (*H 4.11*). Analyses show that there is a significant interaction effect, but only in the Swiss case and when it comes to taking political action (see Model 2 in Table 4.7). For interpretation, a figure was plotted illustrating this interaction effect (see Figure 4.3). It shows that for senior politicians, it does not matter whether a news report covers a positive or negative development. They do not care so much whether unemployment numbers are rising or declining, at least not when the information is disclosed in a media report. For more junior politicians, however, the type of development covered in a news report is crucial. Even after one term (usually lasting four years), Swiss politicians still make a significant distinction between news reports on positive and negative developments (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9: Marginal effects of tenure depending on the development covered in a news report for Swiss politicians

Development	Positive	Negative
Tenure in years		
0	2.17	3.73
4	2.09	3.35
8	2.00	2.97
12	1.91	2.59
16	1.83	2.20
20	1.74	1.82

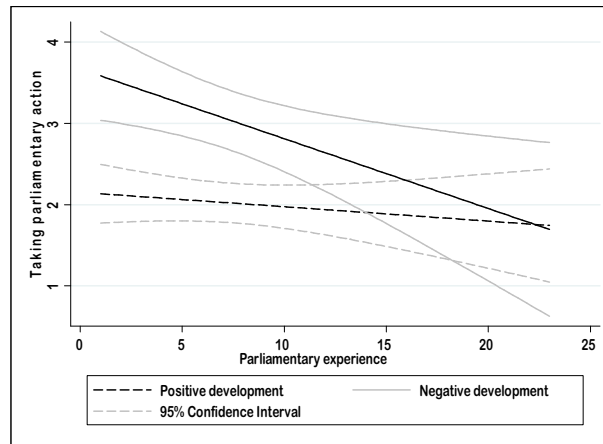
Note. Answer scale 1-7, higher values indicate higher chance of selection. Significant differences in bold. Estimations based on model 2 in Table 4.7.

However, the effects of the type of development were only conditional in the Swiss case and only when it comes to taking political action. For Dutch politicians the interaction effect was not significant in either setting (see Table 4.8). This shows that although there is some moderating effect of a politicians' background, it likely does not apply across contexts. Possibly, other country-level factors help explain the absence of such an effect. In sum, there is only limited evidence in support of *H 4.11*.

Another important variable that might moderate the effect of some media content is situated at the party level. Because the opposition will want to show to the public that the government is incompetent, they are expected to be more likely to react to media coverage of negative developments than positive ones (*H 4.12*). The interaction

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Figure 4.3: Influence of parliamentary experience on Swiss politicians' reactions to reports covering positive/negative developments



effect is however not significant in either country or setting (see models 3 in Table 4.7 and Table 4.8). Based on the results of this study, there is no indication that politicians from opposition and coalition parties would react differently to reports of negative and positive developments.

Additionally, it was expected that opposition and coalition politicians would react differently when the government was held explicitly responsible in a news report (*H 4.13*). Indeed, findings point in this direction. There is a significant interaction effect in the Netherlands. If a news report mentions that the government is responsible, opposition politicians are more likely to take parliamentary action than government ones. This is in line with expectations that opposition jumps at the possibility to underline government responsibility for issues. As expected, there are no differences between coalition and opposition members in the Swiss case.

4.5 Discussion

This study investigated the media's influence on politicians. Because there are varying political agendas that the media can influence, effects on two different dependent variables were investigated in which mechanisms of media influence might be different. First, the study asked politicians whether they would mention a news report at a parliamentary party group meeting. Second, politicians were asked to evaluate the same news reports on whether they would themselves take political action. It was expected that the more hidden party setting would bring to the fore different mechanisms of media influence than the more publicly visible political actions politicians take. To date, studies on political agenda-setting effects have indeed mainly focused on the latter political agenda, mostly due to practical reasons. The inner party setting is usually not accessible to researchers.

Because of the experimental nature of the present study, it is in a unique position to shed some light on what takes place in these settings. Through an experimental design in which politicians in Switzerland and the Netherlands were asked to systematically judge news reports, the effects of the contents of the report, the background of the politician, and the political systems themselves were investigated in both settings. Overall, findings show that the media's influence on politics is complex and characterized by a vast number of influential variables. The background of the politician and the party setting are crucial factors. At the same time, the mechanisms of media influence on politics depend on the political system.

Effects of the issue of the news report Explaining whether and why an issue makes it from the media into politics or not is the central question of political agenda-setting studies. Previous studies have shown that in politics, there are a number of useful characteristics an issue can have. Firstly, an issue can be owned by a party, or not, which has significant effects on the party's electoral success and has been found to explain parties' reactions to media coverage. Secondly, an individual politician can be specialized in a specific issue, for instance through parliamentary committee membership. Division of labor is an important aspect of parliamentary work and specialization means that a politician has built a profile on an issue within the party. Both party issue ownership and individual issue specialization are characteristics that remain largely stable over time. However, issues can also increase in relevance, both in the eyes of the public and for politicians. Therefore, a third characteristic of any issue is its perceived political relevance. In this study, this refers to how politically relevant an issue is perceived by a politician.

Because an issue can have three broad characteristics, it can be owned by a party, a politician can be specialized in an issue and an issue can be perceived as politically relevant, the question then becomes whether and in what way these three alternatively affect politicians' reaction to news. Hypotheses were formulated on the country level that tapped into this distinction and linked it to a country's electoral system (see *H 4.10a/b*). Results show that as expected, there is some variation between political systems in the relative influence of each of these aspects related to the issue of a news report.

Particularly with regards to the Dutch case where different mechanisms were found depending on the setting, the study shows that the media's effects on politics are more complex than expected. The politicians who will mention a news report at a parliamentary party group meeting are different from those who will take action based on a report. In the closed party setting, politicians who think an issue is particularly relevant at that moment will speak up. The party specialists however are less likely to mention a report. Therefore, it is likely that if enough politicians from a party signal that they think action should be taken on an issue, the politician specialized in the issue and acting as a spokesperson on that issue indeed has to. How exactly these inner party processes work can only be speculated about. Results here do, however, show that this is a fruitful route of investigation for future studies.

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These diverging mechanisms across settings in the Netherlands might be an illustration of what Kepplinger (2007) labeled direct and indirect effects of media coverage (see also section 1.2). Direct effects are observable and result directly from consumption of media coverage. Indirect effects, however, are present when one politician raises an issue with another one. The effect is indirect because the politician who is influenced by the report has not consumed the news report him- or herself. Based on the results of this study we can expect that it is plausible that some political actions are in fact a result of indirect influence. Because fellow politicians signal that an issue covered in the media is important, the specialized politician then in turn has to take action. Future studies, possibly based on interview data, could shed light on the frequency of such mechanisms.

The mechanisms of influence are much more consistent across settings in the Swiss case. In both settings, party issue ownership and the perceived political relevance of an issue play a key role. Individual issue specialization does not matter. Swiss politicians are thus likely to take action if a report covers an issue their party owns and if they consider it relevant at that point in time. One possible explanation could be that these variables are highly correlated. This is, however, not the case ($b = .11$, $p = .113$). A more substantive explanation is related to the electoral system. In Switzerland, politicians are elected in relatively small voting districts in an open list system. This means that if they want to get re-elected, Swiss politicians will have to build a profile in their respective small voting districts. The one issue they are specialized in on the national level is not that important, because they have to show that they can solve the problems that arise within their district. Consequently, it makes sense for them to react to an issue they consider politically relevant at that moment. At the same time, they benefit from their party's profile on an owned issue.

Overall, these findings show that the issue a news report covers is indeed a core aspect if we want to study the media's influence on politics. However, these issues do not have an automatic influence on politics. Rather, they influence only some politicians of some parties, depending on the politicians' background and the electoral system within which these actors are behaving. Politicians act strategically. With their re-election goal in mind they adapt to the electoral system at hand.

Seniority and opposition/coalition membership The findings above thus show that media coverage does not have an automatic influence on politicians. Rather, they make use of the coverage that fits their goals. This study also tested whether senior politicians were more or less likely than their less experienced colleagues to react to media coverage. Findings are not consistent across the two countries. While in the Swiss case, the more senior politicians are less likely to take action based on media coverage, no such effect was present in the Dutch case. A possible rather methodological explanation for this finding is the limited variation in tenure among Dutch politicians. In fact, less than 25% of the Dutch politicians that participated in the study have been in parliament

for more than 8 years, while in Switzerland almost half the respondents have been in parliament for longer. There might simply not be ample variation in the Dutch data to isolate effects of tenure. From a substantive point of view, we can conclude that in the Netherlands tenure does not affect reactions to media coverage, simply because politicians leave parliament again before these differences could develop.

The study also investigated whether opposition and coalition politicians react differently to media messages. Findings from earlier studies were confirmed when these effects were tested in the Netherlands by contrasting reactions of politicians from the government party VVD with those of the other parties. In the Netherlands, where parties in government hold considerably more political power than in Switzerland, politicians from opposition parties are indeed much more likely to take action based on media coverage. Interestingly, if we look at whether a news report would be mentioned at a parliamentary party group meeting, findings are reversed. In this case, politicians from government parties are actually more likely to mention a report. This could be explained by the fact that while they are under pressure not to react publicly, they use the opportunity in these internal party meetings to nevertheless signal to the party leadership what they think the public considers important.

It was also tested whether opposition politicians are more likely to react to some type of media coverage. Do politicians from opposition and coalition parties react to different kind of media content as Thesen (2012) found? His findings were only partially confirmed. Opposition MPs were indeed more prone to react to news reports mentioning the government as responsible. This is in line with the ongoing competition between coalition and opposition. While the latter jumps at any chance, whether provided by the media or not, to depict the government as incompetent, members of a government party will want to react when there is a chance to illustrate the opposite to the public. However, another central part of Thesen's (2012) study of reactions by parties could not be confirmed. There was no evidence that opposition and coalition MPs react differently to descriptions of negative developments, as he had found. In this study, coalition MPs were not more likely to react to reports of positive developments than opposition MPs. Rather, the pattern of opposition MPs reacting more to news reports persisted. This, of course, corroborates many more individual-level studies that have found that opposition MPs were more free in their actions, while coalition MPs are often bound by coalition agreements of their parties.

Effects of the media outlet and the message content Media content can thus have different effects on different politicians. The study, however, also tested the independent effects of the media coverage's content. Are some media messages more likely to lead to a political reaction, independent of the background of the politician? The strongest effects were found for negativity. News coverage of negative developments was more likely to trigger a political reaction than coverage of positive developments across countries and

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settings. This finding is hardly surprising. First, positive developments do not require action. Negative developments however indicate a potential problem which politicians are expected to solve. This is in line with previous studies with politicians and in line with news values theories for journalists. Media too more likely report messages on negative developments (O'Neill and Harcup, 2009).

Another important aspect of political reporting is attributing responsibility or the potential for conflict. In the context of this study, no effects were found. There are two possible explanations. In the Swiss case, because responsibility is shared across all major parties, politicians from Swiss parties will not feel responsible very quickly. Most of the time, there is another political actor they can hold responsible. Another possible explanation regarding the absence of an effect in the Netherlands is the experimental nature of the study. The news reports covered issues that are already politicized in any national context, for example unemployment, or the number of asylum seekers. Consequently, adding a sentence that underlines the responsibility of the political sphere in a setting where all are considered responsible anyway might simply not be a strong enough manipulation. Possibly, if MPs themselves would be mentioned directly, results would be very different like Kepplinger (2007) expects.

Finally, also the media outlet publishing the report and the information source did not matter. Politicians did not make a significant difference between news reports published in broadsheet or in popular newspapers in one country only. Only in the Swiss case were reports published in the broadsheet newspaper more likely to lead to political action. Although I made sure to compare quality and a popular newspaper in both countries, they might not differ to the same extent in both countries. In the Netherlands, the popular newspaper used for this study also has a good reputation in its political reporting, similar to that of quality newspapers. However, in Switzerland the two newspapers are likely perceived as much more distant from each other. The quality newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* has a longstanding reputation as being a source of information for politicians. Consequentially, the two outlets are likely to be perceived as being more distant, leading to a significant difference in politicians' reactions. In Switzerland, the respected broadsheet newspapers probably still have a considerable influence on political elites. They read those and expect others to be up to date about what is reported. Particularly when parliament is in session, politicians all consume a vast number of media outlets as the secretary general of one Swiss party told me during an interview. That no significant effect of the media outlet was found in the Netherlands, however, shows that more research is needed. To date, political agenda-setting studies have often compared print with broadcast media, but less frequently made comparisons between different print outlets. Results of this study show that, at least between different print outlets, the differences might not be as pronounced and might not travel well across countries.

Chapter 5

Linking the selection moments

The relationship between politics and the media is characterized by a complex interdependence; politicians use the media as an important source of information for their political work, and journalists need political actors to provide them with information on what is taking place in politics. Yet, both journalists and politicians have to be very selective in the information they ultimately react to. These mechanisms were investigated through a comparative experiment in two separate studies. The selection criteria journalists use to decide what merits their attention and what does not were discussed in chapter 3 and the selection criteria politicians use to decide what news reports they should react to in chapter 4. While these chapters thus unraveled the selection mechanisms separately, this chapter aims to discuss the similarities and differences found in the two studies. First, the focus is put on the actors, the journalists and politicians. Next, because the effect of a similar set of variables was tested in the parallel research design (see section 1.3), the effects of message content is compared. Overall, this direct comparison provides some insights into the mechanisms that potentially drive the interaction between politics and media.

Next, in a section on the contributions and limitations of the studies, the selection moments will be put into context. Although crucial because most information is discarded at this stage, selection is only one of several stages in the politics-media interaction. By making reference to the Politics-Media Wheel introduced earlier (see subsection 1.2.1), avenues for future research are furthermore singled out. In the final section of this chapter then, some ideas of how the experimental factorial survey method introduced in this book could be applied to answer related research questions and contribute to a more comprehensive theoretical framework are put forward.

5.1 Selection by journalists and politicians compared

Overall, the findings of the two studies point to clear differences between the selection criteria journalists apply and those politicians use. I will investigate those more systematically in the following sections. First, the actors, journalists and politicians, are compared. Are journalists more alike in their selection of messages than politicians, as news values theory would lead us to expect? Next, a comparison of the effects of the message follows. In the parallel research design introduced in the beginning (see Figure 1.2), the influence of a number of similar variables was tested in both studies and gives the unique possibility to directly compare the selection criteria. Do journalists and politicians react to different parts of a message? Are there parts of a message that trigger both journalists' and politicians' attention?

5.1.1 The actor perspective

An important contribution of this book is its focus on the actors, politicians and journalists. By means of the survey experiments carried out with both groups, maximal control over the context was obtained. This means that selection mechanisms can be compared directly from an actor perspective. First, between the two countries studied, Switzerland and the Netherlands, and next between the two groups of actors.

What part of selection patterns unraveled in the studies with journalists and politicians might be attributed to the more general selection patterns shared by these actors, and which might be attributed to differences between countries? The hierarchical regression models used to analyze the results in the previous chapters provide a more overall measure, the intraclass correlation (ICC)¹ measuring how alike (or different) a set of values is. Specifically, the amount of explained variance that can be attributed to a general selection patterns and the amount that can be attributed to the background of an individual journalist or politician can be investigated. Higher values of the ICC indicate higher levels of similarity, while lower values indicate less similarity. Thus, if the ICC value for one country is higher this indicates that selection criteria by these actors are more alike. Similarly, lower values indicate that when they are presented with a party message or a news report, there is more variation between these actors. The ICC is a measure that has been successfully applied by others who studied the politics-media relationship (Midtbø et al., 2014). Table 5.1 gives an overview of the ICC levels for each country separately.

Comparison between countries There is evidence of a shared news routine among journalists in both countries, as indicated by the relatively high levels of ICC with .53 and .44. In both countries, approximately 50% of the variance in the responses can

¹ For more information on the Intra Class Correlation see Figure 2.1.1 in chapter 2.

5.1. Selection by journalists and politicians compared

be explained by the messages the journalists received. This is a relatively high score, considering that each journalist who participated in the study received a different, albeit very similar, set of party press releases to evaluate. The high number shows that how journalists evaluate the messages can be explained by how the messages are written, for instance whether a party communicates on a known issue or not. This is an indication that journalists have a strong common understanding when deciding whether to report on a party communication or not.

Table 5.1: ICC scores of selection by journalists and politicians for both countries

Dependent variable	Switzerland	Netherlands
Selection by journalists		
News coverage	0.53 ^a [0.43; 0.64]	0.44 [0.30; 0.58]
Selection by politicians		
Talking at meeting	0.32 [0.16; 0.47]	0.31 [0.11; 0.51]
Taking political action	0.19 [0.05; 0.34]	0.48 [0.29; 0.67]

Note. Confidence intervals in brackets.

^a Results are reported for party press releases sent out by government parties only to account for political system differences in the comparison. Overall, ICC is 0.51 in Switzerland and 0.21 in the Netherlands.

Because the exact same studies were conducted in both countries, we can compare these scores more directly. First, overlapping confidence intervals show that there is no significant difference between Swiss and Dutch journalists. These findings are in line with the theory of news values explained in chapter 3. News values are routines and shortcuts that help journalists make decisions about which messages should become news and which should not. These “rational means to efficiency” (McManus, 1994, p. 85) explain that Swiss and Dutch journalists select messages in a similar fashion. A press release in which a party communicates on an unexpected issue but on a topic journalists deem politically relevant at the time, possibly mentioning the submission of a bill, is likely to be reported on by journalists the detailed findings show (see Table 3.5). Journalists’ own background hardly affects their selection; a small effect of their political leaning was found in Switzerland, but in the Netherlands neither their experience or the media outlet they work had a significant effect. It shows that journalists within a country have a shared understanding of what constitutes news. The ICC scores simply underline these findings.

In contrast to journalists, politicians show more variation in their evaluations. Overall, less of the variance in their judgments can be explained by the news reports they received. Or, put differently, more variation can be attributed to their background. ICC levels between the countries are more or less equal when politicians are asked whether they would bring up a news report at a parliamentary party group meeting. In both countries, only 30% of the variance can be explained by variations in the messages. More

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than two thirds of the variance is due to differences between politicians. However, while the ICC score is lower than for journalists, differences are more substantial when we look at the scores for taking political action in a more public setting. Moving from the hidden to the more public setting, the ICC score increases for Dutch politicians to .48. This means that in the Netherlands, members of parliament are more alike when they consider taking political action based on a report than when they think about mentioning it at a party group meeting. Detailed results indeed show that Dutch MPs express their own personal opinions more during parliamentary party group meetings as indicated by the influence of the perceived political relevance of a news report. However, once they enter parliament in a more public setting, they follow the party line and respect the internal division of labor (see section 4.4).

Swiss politicians in contrast have *less* of a shared understanding when deciding to take political action compared with mentioning a news report at a parliamentary party group meeting. The ICC decreases from .32 to .19. Possibly, in the informal setting of the parliamentary party group, Swiss MPs tend to focus their discussion on issues raised in the media that are important from a party perspective. Such discussions are, however, not binding for politicians once it comes to taking political action in parliament like in the Dutch case. Indeed, the confidence intervals of the ICC with regards to political action which barely overlap bear evidence that there is a substantial difference between the two countries. As elaborated in chapter 4, the different electoral systems of the Netherlands and Switzerland provide different incentives for politicians to react to news reports. Finding higher ICC scores in the Dutch context is in line with expectations, because these politicians are more subject to a party's control. Members of parliament usually vote in line with their party specialist (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011) and this division of labor likely also translates into political actions; only the MP who is specialized in the issue is sanctioned to take action. Furthermore, the party has a lot of power over elections due to the quasi closed list system. A Dutch member of parliament is likely to stick to the party line (Louwerse and Otjes, 2016). Swiss politicians, however, have less of a shared understanding of which news reports are relevant for taking political action, as shown by the low ICC score. Because they are elected within their respective small districts, mostly on the basis of personal (preference) votes, the party has less influence over elections. As a consequence, Swiss members of parliament take action when they deem it necessary, for instance when it concerns constituents from their own Canton. Overall, the Swiss parliament is known for the low party unity the members of parliament show in comparison with other countries, including the Netherlands (for an overview of 15 European countries see Van Vonna, 2016, p. 48).

Taken together, these differences between Switzerland and the Netherlands provide an explanation for the different ICC scores between the countries when it comes to taking political action. The fact that these same scores are almost identical in the more hidden

party group setting and then compare very differently to taking political action in the two countries underlines the importance of studying media's influence on politicians in a comparative setting. At the same time, findings underline that very different mechanisms of media influence are at play, depending on whether a more public or hidden political setting is studied. This points to the importance of studying the media's influence on different political agendas, in particular those that are often hidden from the public's eye, such as parliamentary party group meetings. The mechanisms of media influence are likely very different in these settings suggesting that media can also indirectly influence politicians' actions as suggested by Kepplinger (2007). In comparison, journalists' selection of party messages shows a less variation. Their own personal considerations seem to play a smaller role, the content of the message is more important.

Comparison between journalists and politicians The comparison at the country level has provided some insights into how the political systems shape the politics-media relationship. However, the parallel research design that focused on the comparable selection moments of journalists and politicians in the Politics-Media Wheel (see subsection 1.2.1) also allows for a more direct comparison between journalists and politicians. This gives some indication of the power either politics can have over the media or vice versa. This argument is inspired by Brown (2011, p. 62) who, in a historical account of news management strategies used by political actors, convincingly argues that when journalists adhere to a shared objectivity norm instead of being partisan, political actors have more opportunities to shape the news. Similarly, in an essay on the power of political actors over the media, Gurevitch and Blumler (1990) argue that news coverage of groups and individuals from outside the political establishment in particular will be guided by journalistic news values. In other words, selection by news values means that other actors can have access to the news, provided they play it right and adhere to those criteria. This argument can easily be applied to the selection moment studied here; a shared understanding among journalists of what messages should be selected opens up avenues for politicians to influence this selection. If journalists do not show much variation and generally agree which messages should be selected, once politicians know about these selection criteria they can influence journalists relatively easily. Results of the studies here show that journalists indeed show relatively high values of ICC (see Table 5.1) which can be explained by the news values mentioned before.

Politicians, however, are expected to be less alike in their selection than journalists. First, there is variation in parties because of their different policy focuses, as well as between politicians from the same party, for example due to their differing background or experience. Moreover, members of parliament might be driven by personal considerations more because they might base their political decisions on their personal experiences. This leads to expecting lower ICC scores overall for politicians than for journalists. Results

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indeed show that politicians seem to agree less on which reports matter in their selection than journalists. Lowest scores are reported for Swiss politicians. When it comes to taking political action, less than 20% of the variance in the evaluations of news reports by Swiss politicians can be explained by the message. With .31 and .32, the ICC is also lower for politicians than for journalists in the parliamentary party group setting in both countries. This underlines that politicians' backgrounds matter when they decide whether to politically react to news reports or not. Table 5.2 gives an overview of the specific variables of influence in politicians' and journalists' selection of messages and underlines this interpretation if journalists and politicians are compared as "receivers" or selectors of messages. For journalists, hardly any influence was found. For politicians however, their background matters greatly, but at the same time varies systematically between the countries due to their different electoral systems, as elaborated in chapter 4 and in subsection 4.4.3 in particular.

An important variable referring to politicians' and journalists' background is their experience in their respective occupation. However, neither for journalists nor for politicians parliamentary experience plays a consistent role in selection. Experience can be linked to socialization "on the job" which does not play a central role for selection of messages in the two consociational multiparty systems studied here. This can be explained by the experience these actors usually need to have obtained before they are assigned these influential positions. The political journalistic beat is prestigious and often only accessible to experienced journalists (McNair, 2000, p. 202). Indeed, on average, the political journalists who participated in this study had more than 15 years of experience on the job in both countries (see Table 3.4). Politicians too are usually not directly elected into the Lower House but they have been members of a party for many years and their socialization has taken place before they obtain their post. They are known in their party and have extensive political experience, for instance on the municipal level.² In sum, there is no strong indication that experience plays an important role for whether politicians react to news reports or journalists select a particular party message.

With regards to an overall comparison between journalists and politicians, some general conclusions can be drawn. Both when the selection by journalists and politicians is compared on the more general level using ICC scores and when zooming in on the detailed results of the studies, the evidence suggests that journalists are more alike in their selection of party messages than politicians are in their selection of news reports. Findings also show that while the meso organizational level of the party matters for a politicians' selection of news report, no systematic influence was found of the media organization the journalist works for. What are the consequences of this finding? For politicians who attempt to influence media coverage this means that, provided they adhere to these general

² Because politicians can have a different understanding of what could be counted towards their overall political experience, the present study measured political experience as a politicians' number of years as member of the Lower House.

5.1. Selection by journalists and politicians compared

Table 5.2: Overview of the results of the parallel comparative research design

Journalist selection			Dependent variable	Politician selection					
News coverage				Talking at meeting		Political action			
CH	NL			CH	NL	CH	NL		
Politician and party			Sender		Media outlet				
Politician's political power	o	o			o	o	+	o	Reputation of outlet
Party's political power	o	+							
Party press release			Message		News report				
Political relevance	+	+			+	+	+	+	Negativity
Conflict	o	o			o	o	o	o	Conflict
Unexpectedness	+	+			o	o	o	+	Unexpectedness
Magnitude of action	+	+							
Journalist			Receiver		Politician				
Actor level (micro)					Actor level (micro)				
Journalistic experience	o	o			o	o	–	o	Parliamentary experience
Political distance to party	–	o			+	+	+	o	Political relevance
Media outlet level (meso)					o	o	o	+	Issue specialization
Print-broadcast beat					Party level (meso)				
					+	+	+	o	Party issue ownership
					–	+	o	–	Party's political power

Note. + indicate positive effects, – negative effects, o no significant effects. Detailed results of the journalist selection study can be found in chapter 3 and in chapter 4 for the study of selection of news reports by politicians.

selection criteria, a large number of political journalists will select their message. While this is not the place for a normative evaluation of this shared selection by journalists, these results do contribute to addressing “the theoretical challenge [...] to explain how competing journalists making thoughtful and often very personal choices can produce such similar newsoutcomes at the end of the day” (Bennett, 1996, p. 373). Results here suggest that these choices are not as “personal” as Bennett might have assumed.

This is quite in contrast to how politicians select which news reports they will react to. Their decisions are more influenced by the political context they work in, ranging from the political system within which they operate to their own personal evaluations and motivations (for an elaborate discussion see section 4.4). With regards to the media's influence over the actions of individual politicians this allows drawing a number of tentative conclusions. First, in contrast to journalists, the influence of news reports on politicians is more diverse. While it seems that if played right, a politician can influence journalists across the board, an equally strategic journalist could not influence as many politicians at the same time. Rather, the influence a report can have on politicians depends on (a) the background of the politician him- or herself and (b) on the setting in which she or he will then mention the report. Results show that, depending on the

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country studied, party issue ownership or the individual politicians' specialization play a key role when they decide whether to react to a news report. On the party level, because not all parties "own" the same issue(s), depending on the issue covered in a news report, politicians from different parties will take action on a news report. Similarly, not all politicians within a party are affected by the same news coverage. Only those specialized in a particular issue will react (in the Netherlands) or those who consider a particular issue politically important at that time. Findings suggest that politicians likely use media coverage strategically to further their parties' agenda (through party issue ownership) or their own (through their issue specialization or personal interest). Comparable mechanisms have already been identified on the party level (Thesen, 2011; Van der Pas, 2014a) supporting this conclusion.

To summarize, while the influence of the media on politics might thus be considerable on an aggregate level and issues discussed in media and politics are related, once we shift our focus to individual politicians, they use news coverage selectively to further their own goals. They are not at the mercy of the media but rather strategically select which news reports they react to. This is in contrast to journalists whose selection is mainly influenced by the content of the party communication they receive. Although their political orientation does affect selection, the media organization they work for hardly affect their selection. This general comparison has given some insights into whether these actors have a shared understanding of what messages should be selected.

5.1.2 The news values perspective

The Politics-Media Wheel (see subsection 1.2.1) shows how messages move through either the media or the political sphere to influence each other. In some cases, messages might end up moving back and forth between politics and media because they get selected in turn by both actors. A journalist might deem an event or issue newsworthy enough to cover it. Once published, the same issue or event might lead to a politician asking a question in parliament during question hour. In turn, this action in parliament itself might, under certain circumstances, again lead to media coverage. Because the selection moments studied here are central in how messages and information moves between politics and media, directly comparing the criteria journalists and politicians use in their decision making is informative for the relationship as a whole.

Both the study with politicians and the one with journalists tested the influence of a number of message characteristics that are most important in political reporting. The theory of news values or news factors (see section 3.2) is most widely used to explain why journalists select some messages but not others. However, this theory can also be applied to study how the *audience* of these news reports, here politicians, select their messages. Although often overlooked by scholars, in their seminal article on news values Galtung

and Ruge (1965) base criteria on general psychological mechanisms that guide human attention, not only journalists'. Based on an overview of studies that extended the theory of news values to study how audiences select what news they adhere to, Eilders (2006, p. 16) indeed concludes that "there is considerable plausibility in assuming that news factors establish a relevance schema and thus guide selective attention and information processing in the audience. News factors in this perspective help to reduce complexity by directing attention to the meaningful and potentially dangerous."

To shed some light on whether and to what extent journalists and politicians apply the same selection criteria to a message, the effects of a number of news values tested in both studies are directly compared below. As Table 5.2 shows, the message characteristics tested with journalists produced significant effects more often than those tested in the selection by politicians.

Unexpectedness and party issue ownership The studies show that for both journalists and politicians, the issue that is covered in a message is the most important aspect. What a news report or a party press release is about, is crucial. From a party's point of view, the "owned" issue can be a key aspect in election campaigns, but this also holds true outside the campaign period; research shows that if a party lets another party communicate on "its" issue, this other party can weaken the issue ownership connection in the electorate (Walgrave et al., 2009). For parties, there is thus an incentive to communicate on an "owned" issue. The question is whether journalists act in the interest of the parties and select messages on issues owned by the party.

Results from the study with journalists (see chapter 3) show, however, that the unexpected is more interesting for journalists. Political journalists are more inclined to select a party press release covering an issue that is not owned by the party. A press release covering an issue the party is already known for is business as usual, and does not grab journalists' attention. This means the selection mechanism of political journalists works against parties' interests; while a party would want to gain media coverage on an "owned" issue to maintain its issue ownership position vis-a-vis the electorate, journalistic selection criteria are likely to prevent this. Political parties and journalists have diverging interests when it comes to the selection of issues for the coverage of politics. This impression is supported when we look at how politicians (and not parties) select news reports to take (public) political action on. Findings of the politician study show that for politicians, party issue ownership works similarly to the party-level mechanisms hypothesized before (see chapter 4). Unlike journalists, who get triggered by reactions on unexpected issues, politicians prefer the familiar. Party issue ownership has a positive effect on politicians across the board.

Taken together, these findings indicate that selection mechanisms of journalists and politicians are not the same with regards to party issue ownership. On the one hand there are the journalists, always on the lookout for the unexpected, who, in line with news value

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theories, would rather select party messages that cover a party communicating on a new and surprising issue. On the other hand, there are the politicians, who have an (electoral) incentive to capitalize and enforce existing party issue ownership connections and react to news reports that cover issues their party already owns. This shows that, when it comes to party issue ownership, the selection mechanisms of journalists and politicians work in opposite directions which could have a “balancing” effect in the politics-media relationship. Although the media might prefer to report on a politician taking action on an issue that is “new”, chances that this would actually happen are slim. Politicians do not have incentives to act in the way the media would like them to, at least if they put the party’s interests above their own.

The fact that in the Netherlands, a politicians’ issue specialization basically absorbs the effect of party issue ownership should not go unnoticed. It shows that while the politician might agree that the party should obtain coverage on already owned issues, once personal interests are in play members of parliament might also choose to put their own issue specialization first. Based on the results here no conclusions can be drawn as to how often the interests of the politician and the party diverge. They do however illustrate two important things. First, the tension between a politicians’ personal interests and those of his or her party might not only be present with regards to voting behavior (for a recent example see Van Vonn (2016)), but possibly also with regards to reactions to media coverage. Second, comparing the results of the Dutch study with the ones from Switzerland points to an effect of the institutional context on politicians’ reactions to media coverage. The voting system provides different motivations for strategically acting politicians to prioritize some aspects over others as the discussion in the relevant chapter has already shown (see subsection 4.4.3).

Issue relevance Relevance is one of the most central news values in explaining why some events are covered. Studies of the influence of news values have often operationalized this variable as the relevance for the audience, thus indicating an “audience orientation” in the framework of Landrer (2013). However, ‘relevance’ here is actually operationalized as how politically relevant journalists and politicians perceive an issue to be, which is more relevant for political news and reactions thereon.

In journalistic selection, the more politically relevant an issue is according to the journalist’s perception, the more likely she or he will select a message on this issue for coverage. This effect is present in both countries. In political selection as well, issue relevance plays an important role for politicians results show. However, it might not be such a core concept as it is for journalistic selection. For MPs, relevance is just one of the aspects, and it is influenced by the political system. When politicians decide (not) to take action based on a news report, Swiss MPs value the relevance of the issue, next to party issue ownership. For Dutch MPs, on the other hand, relevance does not play a significant role. Rather, their own specialization and their relation to the issue at hand is

key. When it comes to mentioning a news report at a parliamentary party group meeting, a different mechanism is at play. If an MP considers an issue to be politically relevant at that moment, he or she will be more likely to mention the report at a parliamentary party group meeting. This finding was consistent across different political contexts and when models controlled for other (possibly related) factors, such as the type of development that was described, party issue ownership, or the MPs' specialization. In that sense, members of parliament are more like journalists when they are behind closed doors: in that case, the (momentary) importance of the issue is an important aspect. Politicians discuss the relevant issues that are current at that time, however, that does not imply that they publically react. When stakes are higher and their actions might be more "costly", for instance in the case of taking political action, there are other considerations that are possibly more related to the party and the current political context that are of importance. For politicians, issue relevance is just one of several aspects, including their personal and party's broader strategic considerations relevant to choosing whether or not to take action based on a news report.

In sum, relevance does play an important role in political selection, but possibly it is not as central as in the case of journalistic selection as illustrated by the effects of other issue-related variables. This might be explained by the fact that journalists don't have strategic considerations to report on a certain issue or not. Therefore, they collectively focus on the issues they consider politically relevant at that moment. Politicians on the other hand only react to relevant issues in the news when it fits their own political agenda. As a consequence, political relevance is not a sufficient condition. This finding is in line with agenda-setting studies that stressed that different mechanisms are at play depending on the issues at stake. For instance, Tan and Weaver (2007) simultaneously testing how the public, media and policy agenda of the US Congress influence each other point out that the directions of influence depends on the issues (see also Soroka, 2002).

My study suggests that perceived political relevance at the individual actor level might partly explain why on some issues the media influence the political agenda, but not on others. Considering the importance of the news value of relevance for both the selection of messages by journalists and politicians, it would be informative to study of the individual level how politicians and journalists form these perceptions of political relevance and, in particular, how they influence each others' perception of political relevance.

Potential for conflict through criticism and responsibility attribution Conflict has been found to be one of the most important the media use. Both studies contained variables that tapped into this aspect of the politics-media relationship, albeit in a slightly different way. In the first study with journalists, a party press release criticizing government was expected to pique journalists' interest more often than one without criticism. Especially when a coalition party criticizes government, this should be an opportunity for journalists to report on a conflict. However, no evidence was found that this mattered for

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journalists in the context of this study. The variable did not have a significant influence.

For the politicians' selection, based on research by Thesen (2012) and others (e.g. Baum and Groeling, 2009; Green-Pedersen and Stubager, 2010), it was expected that when a news report held the government responsible, politicians would be more likely to mention the news report or take political action. The effect applied in the Dutch case and was, as expected, conditional on the political party. Dutch politicians from opposition parties were more likely to take action if the government is held responsible for a development than their colleagues from government parties were. In addition, a negative development could provide opposition party MPs with a window of opportunity to criticize the government, while coalition party MPs might be more inclined to point out positive aspects and thus react to reports covering positive developments. However, the interaction effect was not significant showing no systematic difference between government and opposition MPs in their reactions to news reports covering positive or negative developments.

Overall, these findings from the two studies show that conflict, at least the way it was operationalized here, does not have the same effect on the selection of journalists and politicians. One possible explanation could be methodological since conflict is a variable that is highly situational. In comments in the survey, journalists indeed pointed out that they would take into account the momentary political context when deciding whether to investigate an issue further. At the same time, the studies here explicitly focused on the everyday aspects of politics and were aimed at isolating the selection mechanisms at play in the daily politics-media relationship. The incidents of conflict that often catch the attention of the public and indicate the influence of media over politics and vice versa are, in fact, incidents: extreme statements or actions that are out of the ordinary and speak to the preference of media actors for unexpected events. The same holds true for politicians: only when the media uncover new (scandalous) information about proceedings of the government or one of its actors will politicians "get on board" and capitalize on the opportunity to scrutinize government. In a series of real-world experiments, Protess and colleagues (1987) show how policy makers sometimes adjust policy even before an investigative report is published. For everyday politics, however, conflict, or at least voicing criticism, might not be as central for either journalists or politicians as those incidents seem to imply, which might explain why no strong effects were found here.

Negativity The effects of the important news value of negativity were mainly studied with regards to politicians' selection of news. The variable was operationalized as either describing developments that are positive, such as a decrease in unemployment numbers, or negative, such as an increase in same numbers. Findings show that politicians are much more likely to react to negative developments, both in the parliamentary party group setting and with regards to taking public political action. Because politicians are the ones expected to solve problems when they arise, this is not surprising. Although this variable

was not tested in the journalist study, there is evidence across the board that negativity is also one of the most important aspects in journalistic reporting (for an overview see Lengauer et al., 2012) and an important news value in news selection (for an overview see O’Neill and Harcup, 2009). With journalists and politicians reacting more to negative developments than positive ones, one could be inclined to speak of an “accelerating” effect of negative developments. Both groups of actors will come into action when negative events are in the spotlight, either through media coverage or political actions. In theory, this attention from either politics or media could in turn fuel an already ongoing story and lead to more attention to an issue than might otherwise be warranted. Shoemaker (2006, p. 108), questioning the media’s focus on negative news, puts forward that this might well be the main function of the media; “in a democratic society, the role of the news media is not to mirror the world as it is, but rather to spotlight and draw public attention to problems and situations that need solutions and repair.” These negative problems and situations should be addressed by politicians, and results of the study here show that politicians are indeed responsive.

5.2 Conclusions

Politicians are news junkies that need to keep up with what is going on in society and some of this information influences their political work. Yet, information in the media is often already affected, and sometimes even largely determined, by politicians. Consequentially, this book set out to investigate both how political coverage comes about and how it can subsequently lead to politicians’ actions. The two separate studies on the selection mechanisms of political journalists and politicians have given important insights into what drives the decisions of these two actors. At the same time, the combination of the two studies has helped to unravel the differences and similarities between political journalists and politicians in their selection of messages. This concluding section first underlines a number of lessons that can be drawn from the studies of this book. Next, several shortcomings are addressed. Finally, I take a brief broader look at the research on the politics-media relationship and potential steps toward a theory of the influence of media on politics the field is currently largely lacking.

Both studies presented in this book focused on the selection moments in the Politics-Media Wheel (see subsection 1.2.1), the moment when politicians decide whether or not to take political action based on a news report and journalists decide whether a press release makes a chance to become a news report. This focus on the individual actors instead of the overall content produced by media outlets or political actions taken by members of parliament, provide an important contribution to the existing literature. Recently, several publications have zoomed in on the individual actors. Kepplinger (2007)

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or also Sevenans et al. (2016) conceptualize and study the politics-media influence at the individual level. Although in many countries it can be challenging to get politicians and journalists to cooperate, results of such studies contribute to the field and help our understanding of how mechanisms of influence take place. Political journalists, this study shows, are less influenced by their own background than politicians. For them, the characteristics of the message they receive is most important although their own political orientation influences their selection in some contexts. This is in line with the news value theory in journalism studies.

The studies at the individual level also add to our knowledge on the mediatization of politics as a whole. Repeatedly, scholars have raised the question whether politicians are guided by a media logic, commonly seen as a negative influence, or by a political logic. Yet, not many scholars clearly define these concepts (Landerer, 2013; but for an exception see Esser and Strömbäck, 2014, p. 14ff) and empirical studies allowing for such a clear comparison are scarce. The parallel research design, however, which tests a similar set of variables in the study of the selection by political journalists and the selection by politicians, made it possible to directly compare these actors. Results do not show evidence that the media are taking over politics. Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999) already underlined more than a decade ago that the negative view of the media's role in politics some authors refer to might be exaggerated. The findings of this book show that the interactions between both politicians and media messages, and journalists and political messages, are influenced by the political system within which their exchange takes place. For politicians, strategic considerations related to party issue ownership and their own specialization are important; they do not blindly follow the media. This is in line with findings from parties' reactions to news coverage (e.g. Van der Pas, 2014b; Green-Pedersen and Stubager, 2010; Thesen, 2011). If we want to understand the media's influence on politics, we must also take into account that these actors, parties as well as politicians, mainly react to media coverage when it fits with their own expertise (issue specialization) or with the expertise of the party (issue ownership). Moreover, there are systematic differences between the countries that can be linked to the electoral systems. However, particularly longitudinal studies could be fruitful because they would allow controlling for variables such as party strength and the effect of public approval of issues. Overall, these findings underline that "the media can trigger political attention and direct political attention to events and issues, but political logics strongly influence what type of content parties [and politicians] politicize" (Thesen, 2013, p. 196).

Also the study of the selection of messages by journalists informs the broader understanding of the mediatization of the politics-media relationship. Many studies on mediatization see journalists as the culprit in the relationship and particularly the degree to which journalists are influenced by a *political logic* has not received much scholarly attention. Political logic has been conceptualized as consisting of

three dimensions; polity referring to the institutional context, policy to the process of problem definition and politics more focused on elections and gaining support (e.g. Esser and Strömbäck, 2014, p. 14). Results of the study of the selection by journalists presented in this book show that the institutional context matters for them too. In a system such as Switzerland where all major parties are part of government and there is no strong opposition holding many seats in parliament, journalists do not make a systematic difference between government and opposition parties. Political power only plays a role when there is a real opposition present in parliament as is the case in the Netherlands. At the same time, there is evidence that the policy aspect plays affects journalists' selection. In both countries journalists make a significant difference between political instruments; a law proposal is more likely to be reported than a less consequential parliamentary question (see Table 3.5 for detailed results). These results show that future studies should maybe take a closer look at how journalists precisely operationalize the news values that guide their selection logics and possibly other stages of the news making process. With political journalists being so closely connected to what is taking place in politics as a whole, it is plausible to assume that their work is also influenced by the processes of problem definition and deliberation taking place within and between political parties. Both in personal conversations and in the comments sections of the surveys, journalists emphasized how they would take into account the political context in their work. To further our understanding of the politics-media relationship, we should thus not only focus on how media (logic) influences politics and politicians, but also how politics (and the political logic) influences media content.

Overall, the book underlines the importance of the context when studying individuals' actions and decision making. If we want to study how the media influence politics, we are well advised to look beyond the news report and take into account these actors' backgrounds and the broader context. This is not a new approach. In his account of bounded rationality, Simon (1985) already argued three decades ago that actors' decisions cannot be understood as rational if the context of these decisions is not taken into account. My two-country comparison allowed to focus on the effects of a number of political system variables. Broad generalizations cannot be made based on these findings, but they provide interesting avenues for investigating the role of the electoral systems in future studies of the media's role in politics. Are other aspects of importance for politicians in two-party systems than in multiparty systems like the ones investigated here? Or, more generally, it is the country's electoral system or maybe the nomination procedure within a party that can help us understand politicians' reactions to news coverage? Interviews with these elites could provide additional insights into the motivations that drive politicians.

This being said, it should be acknowledged that no scientific method can fully explain the exact decision-making process of these individual elites. The step-wise regression

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models reported in the appendices (see Appendix B and Appendix C) clearly illustrate that a substantial amount of residual variance remains. In less statistical terms, this illustrates that despite the high number of variables tested, there is still part of these actors' decision-making that has not been captured. This indicates that other factors that are hard to measure, such as personal experiences or personality characteristics, have an influence on the decisions taken by these actors. However, the experimental factorial survey approach has allowed keeping many of the important contextual influences as constant as possible and has allowed tackling at least some of these (potential) influences.

Limitations The choice to focus on the selection moments and the experimental approach also come with a number of limitations. Firstly, the studies focus on the selection moment only. Conclusions about the process taking place between politics and media as a whole as depicted in the Politics-Media Wheel should be drawn with care. The experimental approach allows to zoom in on a selection moment that is usually not visible and hard to study. However, this also means that other stages in the process had to be left out. To get a more complete picture of the overall mechanism of influence taking place, future studies could focus on different stages of the Politics-Media Wheel for which other methodological approaches might be more fruitful. The studies presented here can provide a "starting point" through their focus on the very first selection moment.

Second, in both studies respondents were only asked whether they intended to take action and no actual behavior was measured. Moreover, as the Politics-Media Wheel illustrates, the actual production of news reports and actually taking action only come after a message has been selected. First, resources have been allocated. Only at a later stage more actors get involved and, depending on the particular newsroom or the political party, journalists and politicians are not the only ones involved anymore. The selection moments studied here are thus only one step of a multi-layered process. It is only plausible to assume that also during deliberation/news production, more messages do not make the cut and that thus in reality, even fewer party press releases would make it into a news report and even fewer of these news reports would have any political consequences than the results here show. While the overall chances of selection the studies here measured might thus be higher than in reality, the main goal of the experimental studies was to gauge the *relative* influence of a number of key variables. Most likely, the fact that respondents were asked for intended behavior and not actual behavior did not influence the effect of specific variables. Factorial experimental designs do provide important insights into the relative influence of variables. This brings me to another important limitation.

On a related note, one might also question the generalizability of the findings due to social desirability. Particularly for politicians it is important to be aware of how they are perceived by the public. While respondents giving the answers they think the researcher would want them to give is obviously a challenge in all survey research, there

are several reasons to suggest it should not be a major concern here. The factorial survey method has been chosen precisely to alleviate the challenges associated with studying the potentially normative question of politics-media influence. As elaborated in the methods section (see in particular subsection 2.1.2), the complex factorial stimuli presented to respondents make it less likely that they would know that, for example, the researcher was interested in the difference in media access of government and opposition parties (Alexander and Becker, 1978). Moreover, if present, social desirability would have most likely affected the overall mean likelihood to (not) react to a message. The main goal of the studies was disentangling the *relative* influence of a number of message characteristics in the politics-media relationship. Although such concerns should of course be addressed, most likely these have not systematically influenced the results presented here.

Third, the experimental nature of the study means that the influence of only a selection of variables could be tested for. The factorial survey experiment with its multivariate design allowed testing more variables than generally done in an experimental study with a limited number of respondents. However, the multivariate design also means that all variables influence each other and should therefore be chosen with utmost care (see section 2.1). The variables chosen here had been identified as important influences in the politics-media relationship by previous studies, often in isolation due to practical constraints. Future studies using a similar factorial approach could test for the effects of a different set of variables or using different operationalizations. The effects of the display of negative developments, tentatively interpreted as evidence of a possible accelerating mechanism (see subsection 5.1.2) between politicians and journalists, could be explored further by comparing different levels of negativity and their respective formulations. Additionally, a research design that explicitly focuses on how not all actors react to message content in the same way, thus including interaction effects between an actor and the content, could be particularly fruitful. In my study I found that some politicians are more inclined to select some news reports over others, for example because it is related to their area of specialization. Similarly, for more experienced Swiss MPs whether a news report covers a positive or negative development is not as important as for their more junior colleagues. It would be interesting to further explore the role of politicians' socialization in the political arena, through experimental studies or interviews, to see how their view of the role of the media and their selection develops over time.

What do we then take home now from the studies presented here and how do they contribute to the field more generally? First and most importantly, the findings of this book underline the conditionality of the media's influence on politics and vice versa. The context within which this exchange takes place is key and we should try to learn more about how it affects the decisions made by the involved actors. Instead of trying to identify general mechanisms of influence in large comparative studies, we might learn more by focusing on a smaller number of countries carefully selected based on theoretical

5.2. Conclusions

considerations following Tarrow's (2010) a strategy of "paired comparison". In these cases, more qualitative approaches that make less use of predefined answer categories but focus on accumulating information and only afterwards aim to find patterns in these answers might be more appropriate.

While more insights into the factors that play a role in the politics-media relationship are important, the field could benefit greatly from a hierarchy of these sources of influence of some sort. While news value theory provides a well-established theoretical basis for journalists' selection, others have brought forward tentative theories of what media reports influence politicians (see Walgrave and Van Aelst, 2006). More information is needed on which aspects of a message are more/less important for selection in the context of political news. For journalists, party issue ownership was found to be crucial, while the political standing of the actor cited in a press release was not. Politicians' selection, however, was conditional on the institutional context and the setting within which a news report was mentioned. Factorial experimental designs can help us to distinguish the more important sources of influence from those that might be less important in some cases to further study the conditionality of these mechanisms. The studies here show that factorial designs which simultaneously test for the influence of several variables can be particularly interesting to study elite decision making.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge that conducting research with political and media elites is of course challenging. The fact that it has been feasible to collect the data for the studies in this book in two Western European countries by one single researcher does not imply that it has been easy. On the contrary. And there are many countries where politicians and journalists are a lot more reluctant to participate in research projects. But, that does not mean that we should refrain from it. I hope this book has shown that having direct access to these elites and being able to study them at the individual level is important for our field. The experimental approach has proven to provide valuable insights into the selection moments and allowed to systematically unravel (part of) how members of parliament and political journalists choose what kind of messages they deem relevant for their work. Or, put differently, how politics becomes news and news becomes politics.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Overview of the operationalizations

In line with the parallel research design (see section 1.3) the effects of a similar set of variables on the selection were investigated in the study with political journalists (see chapter 3) and politicians (see chapter 4). The table below gives an overview of the operationalizations of variables in the two studies. The according effects are reported in chapter 5, in particular in Table 5.2 which gives an overview of effects.

Table A.1: Overview of the operationalizations applied in the studies of the selection by journalists and politicians

Selection by journalists		
	Variable	Operationalization
<i>Sender</i>	Politician's political power	Party leader – ordinary MP
	Party's political power	Government – opposition party
<i>Message</i>	Political relevance	Relevant [7] to not relevant [1] issue
	Conflict	Government criticism – none
	Unexpectedness	Party's not owned – owned issue
	Magnitude of political action	Law proposal – question
<i>Receiver</i>	Journalistic experience	In years
	Political distance to party	Absolute distance
	Reporting beat	Print – broadcast beat
Selection by politicians		
<i>Sender</i>	Reputation outlet	Quality – popular
<i>Message</i>	Negativity	Negative – positive development
	Conflict	Responsibility to politics – not
	Investigative reporting	Investigative – government report
<i>Receiver</i>	Parliamentary experience	In years
	Political relevance	Relevant [7] to not relevant [1] issue
	Issue specialization	Parliamentary committee membership
	Party issue ownership	Party's owned – not owned issue
	Party's political power	Government – opposition party

Appendix B

Documentation of the study of journalists' selection

B.1 Surveys

B.1.1 Swiss journalist survey

The following figures present screen shots from the online survey administered with Swiss political journalists (desktop version) using Qualtrics. For operationalizations of the fictional party press releases see the methodological section of the respective chapter (subsection 3.3.1).

The screenshot shows a survey interface with a dark blue header bar at the top containing the University of Leiden logo and name. Below the header, the title "Politische Medienmitteilungen" is displayed. The main content area contains several paragraphs of text in German, providing instructions and information about the survey. At the bottom right, there is a grey button with the text ">>". The entire survey content is set against a white background with a dark blue footer bar at the very bottom.

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Politische Medienmitteilungen

Wir legen Ihnen hier mehrere **fiktive Medienmitteilungen** von Schweizer Parteien vor, gefolgt von einigen **allgemeinen Fragen** über politische Akteure und Themen.

Lesen Sie bitte jede Mitteilung aufmerksam, bevor Sie antworten. Beachten Sie, dass Sie innerhalb des Fragebogens **nicht zurückgehen können**, um vorherige Antworten zu verändern.

Das Ausfüllen wird etwa **10 Minuten** Ihrer kostbaren Zeit beanspruchen.

All Ihre Antworten werden **absolut anonym** behandelt.

Herzlichen Dank für Ihre Mitarbeit an unserer Befragung.

Das Forschungsteam
MA Luzia Helfer, Prof. Peter van Aelst, Prof. Rudy Andeweg
Universität Leiden (Niederlanden) und Universität Antwerpen (Belgien)

Kontakt: Luzia Helfer (l.helfer@fsw.leidenuniv.nl oder 079 658 77 84)

>>

B.1. Surveys

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Teil 1: Medienmitteilungen von Parteien

Politische Parteien verschicken manchmal Medienmitteilungen. Doch nicht all diese schaffen es auch effektiv in die Medien. Aus diesem Grund wollen wir jeweils von Ihnen wissen: Würden Sie auf Basis dieser Medienmitteilung einen Bericht für Ihr Medium verfassen?

Die hier präsentierten Medienmitteilungen sind fiktiv, wir gehen jedoch von den **heutigen politischen Kräfteverhältnissen** aus mit den entsprechenden Bundesratsparteien. Einzelne Mitteilungen sind **absichtlich etwas ungewohnt formuliert**, bitte geben Sie trotzdem eine Beurteilung ab.

Es werden Ihnen nun im ersten Teil des Fragebogens 6-7 sehr kurze Medienmitteilungen vorgelegt.

>>

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Die Grünen finden, dass die Probleme im Schweizerischen Asylwesen gelöst werden müssen. Ein Nationalrat der Grünen reicht darum heute eine Anfrage ein, um abzuklären, ob erhoben werden kann, aus welchen Ländern Asylsuchende mit gefälschten Ausweisen stammen. "Um Missbrauch bekämpfen zu können ist es zentral zu wissen, aus welchen Ländern viele missbräuchliche Asylgesuche gestellt werden", begründet der Nationalrat.

Sicher nicht

1234567

Sicher ja

Würden Sie auf Basis dieser Medienmitteilungen einen Bericht verfassen?						
---	--	--	--	--	--	--

>>

Universiteit
Leiden

Die FDP will, dass die Abgaben für Kleine und Mittlere Unternehmen reduziert werden. Heute reicht ein FDP-Nationalrat eine Motion ein, um dafür zu sorgen, dass innovative Unternehmer Steuererleichterungen erhalten. "Der Bundesrat lässt die KMU bisher total im Stich. Diese Unternehmen sind das Rückgrat unserer Wirtschaft und müssen darum in diesen schwierigen Zeiten unterstützt werden", begründet der Nationalrat.

Sicher nicht
Sicher ja

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Würden Sie auf Basis dieser Medienmitteilungen einen Bericht verfassen?							

>>

Universiteit
Leiden

Für die SVP ist es höchste Zeit, dass Arbeitslose schneller wieder einen Arbeitsplatz finden. Heute reicht der SVP-Parteipräsident darum eine Motion ein, um dafür zu sorgen, dass Arbeitgeber, die zusätzliche Arbeitsplätze kreieren, Steuererleichterungen erhalten. "Indem wir die Arbeitgeber dazu anregen, mehr Menschen anzustellen, vergrössern wir die Chance, dass Arbeitslose schnell wieder einen Arbeitsplatz finden", begründet der Parteipräsident.

Sicher nicht
Sicher ja

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Würden Sie auf Basis dieser Medienmitteilungen einen Bericht verfassen?							

>>

B.1. Surveys



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Die SP findet, dass Menschen dazu angeregt werden müssen, privat erneuerbare Energie zu produzieren. Der Parteipräsident der SP reicht darum heute eine Anfrage ein, um abzuklären, ob Private, die selber nachhaltige Energie produzieren, einen Steuervorteil erhalten könnten. "Die vom Bundesrat vorgeschlagenen Massnahmen sind nicht effektiv. Die Schweiz wird das europäisch definierte Klimaziel von 20% erneuerbaren Energien bis 2020 nur mit den von uns vorgeschlagenen Massnahmen erreichen", begründet der Parteipräsident.

Sicher nicht

1234567

Sicher ja

Würden Sie auf Basis dieser Medienmitteilungen einen Bericht verfassen?							
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>>



Universiteit
Leiden

Die Grünen wollen, dass die Abgaben für Kleine und Mittlere Unternehmen reduziert werden. Heute reicht die Co-Parteipräsidentin der Grünen eine Anfrage ein, um abzuklären, ob innovative Unternehmer Steuererleichterungen erhalten könnten. "Diese Unternehmen sind das Rückgrat unserer Wirtschaft und müssen darum in diesen schwierigen Zeiten unterstützt werden", begründet die Co-Parteipräsidentin.

Sicher nicht

1234567

Sicher ja

Würden Sie auf Basis dieser Medienmitteilungen einen Bericht verfassen?							
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>>

 **Universiteit Leiden**

Die SVP findet, dass die Probleme im Schweizerischen Asylwesen gelöst werden müssen. Ein Nationalrat der die SVP reicht darum heute eine Motion ein, um dafür zu sorgen, dass erhoben wird, aus welchen Ländern Asylsuchende mit gefälschten Ausweisen stammen. "Die Massnahmen des Bundesrats waren bisher nicht effektiv genug. Um Missbrauch bekämpfen zu können ist es zentral zu wissen, aus welchen Ländern viele missbräuchliche Asylgesuche gestellt werden", begründet der Nationalrat.

Sicher nicht Sicher ja

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Würden Sie auf Basis dieser Medienmitteilungen einen Bericht verfassen?

>>

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Fragen zu den soeben beurteilten Medienmitteilungen

Im ersten Teil des Fragebogens haben Sie soeben eine Anzahl fiktiver Medienmitteilungen beurteilt, die absichtlich sehr kurz gehalten waren.

Fanden Sie diese **realistisch in Inhalt und Aufbau**? Bitte geben Sie einen Wert, wobei '1' für unrealistisch und '7' für realistisch steht.

unrealistisch realistisch

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Die vorgelegten Medienmitteilungen waren

Haben Sie noch Anmerkungen für uns zu den Medienmitteilungen, die Sie soeben gelesen haben? Falls nicht, können Sie das Feld hier leer lassen.

Auf den folgenden Seiten noch **drei Fragen zu politischen Themen und Akteuren**.

>>

B.1. Surveys

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Teil 2: Politische Themen I

Können Sie für die folgenden Themen angeben, wie politisch wichtig diese momentan sind? Bitte beurteilen Sie jedes Thema auf einer Skala von 1 bis 7, wobei ,1' für ein sehr unwichtiges Thema steht und ,7' für ein sehr wichtiges.

	sehr unwichtig 1	2	3	4	5	6	sehr wichtig 7
Asyl und Migration	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Landesverteidigung	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Arbeitslosigkeit	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Raumplanung	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gesundheitsversorgung	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mittlere- und Kleine Unternehmen (KMU)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Nachhaltige Energie	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Verbrechensbekämpfung	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

>>

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Politische Themen II

Parteien beschäftigen sich oft mit verschiedenen Themen. Trotzdem werden manche Themen mehr mit einer bestimmten Partei verbunden als einer anderen. Bitte geben Sie auf der nächsten Seite für jedes Thema an, in welchem Masse Sie dieses mit einer bestimmten Partei verbinden.

>>


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Kleine-und Mittlere Unternehmen (KMU)

	sehr schwache Verbindung 1	2	3	4	5	6	sehr starke Verbindung 7
FDP.Die Liberalen	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grüne Partei der Schweiz	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SVP	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SP Schweiz	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Arbeitslosigkeit

	sehr schwache Verbindung 1	2	3	4	5	6	sehr starke Verbindung 7
SP Schweiz	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grüne Partei der Schweiz	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SVP	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
FDP.Die Liberalen	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Asyl und Migration

	sehr schwache Verbindung 1	2	3	4	5	6	sehr starke Verbindung 7
Grüne Partei der Schweiz	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SP Schweiz	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
FDP.Die Liberalen	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SVP	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Nachhaltige Energie

	sehr schwache Verbindung 1	2	3	4	5	6	sehr starke Verbindung 7
SP Schweiz	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SVP	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grüne Partei der Schweiz	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
FDP.Die Liberalen	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

>>

B.1. Surveys



Universiteit
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Politische Akteure

Wie oft gelingt es den folgenden Akteure Ihrer Meinung nach, ein Thema in den Medien zu platzieren?

	Nie	Selten	Ab und zu	Oft	Immer	Person kenne ich nicht
Thomas Weibel (Nationalrat, glp)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Susanne Leutenegger Oberholzer (Nationalrätin, SPS)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adrian Amstutz (Fraktionspräsident, SVP)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Martin Landolt (Parteipräsident, BDP)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hansjörg Hassler (Nationalrat, BDP)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Doris Leuthard (Bundesrätin, CVP)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Peter Schilliger (Nationalrat, FDP)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

>>



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Teil 3: Journalistischer Hintergrund

Zum Schluss möchten wir Ihnen noch einige Fragen zu Ihrem journalistischen Hintergrund stellen.

In welchem Medium werden Ihre Artikel/Beiträge veröffentlicht?
(Zeitungstitel/Radio- oder Fernsehsender/Wochenblatt/Website)

Seit wie vielen Jahren sind Sie als Journalist/in tätig?

In wie vielen der letzten 10 Artikel oder Beiträge an denen Sie (mit-)gearbeitet haben, wurde eine Schweizer Partei oder ein/e Schweizer Politiker/in genannt?

Anzahl Artikel mit Schweizer Politiker/in oder Partei

Sind Sie momentan als Journalist/in im Bundeshaus akkreditiert?

☐ Ja
☐ Nein
☐ In der Vergangenheit (bitte Zeitraum angeben)

>>



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Als Letztes noch einige kurze Fragen zu Ihrer Person.

Welches ist Ihr Geburtsjahr?

Ihr Geschlecht

☐ Männlich

☐ Weiblich

Welches ist Ihre höchste abgeschlossene Ausbildung? (z.B. Lizenziat, Bachelor/Master, Lehrerseminar)

Von politischen Auffassungen wird oft gesagt, dass sie links oder rechts sind. '0' steht für jemanden der ganz 'links' ist, '10' für jemanden der ganz 'rechts' ist. Natürlich gibt es auch Zwischenpositionen, je nach dem ob jemand mehr oder weniger 'links' oder 'rechts' ist. Wo würden Sie sich selber auf dieser Skala platzieren?

0 - Links	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 - Rechts
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

>>

Fragebogen politische Nachrichten

Sie sind am Ende des Fragebogens angekommen. Vielen herzlichen Dank für Ihre Mitarbeit.

Ihre Antworten sind gespeichert und Sie wurden auf eine externe Website weitergeleitet. Informationen, die Sie hier hinterlassen, können so nicht an Antworten im Fragebogen verbunden werden.

***Vereist**

Interesse an unseren Resultaten? Hinterlassen Sie dann hier Ihre E-mail Adresse *

Ihre Adresse wird nicht an Dritte weitergegeben

Dürfen wir Sie für ein persönliches Interview zu politischen Nachrichten kontaktieren?

Interviews frühestens im Herbst 2013

- ☐ Ja - bitte E-mail Adresse hinterlassen
- ☐ Nein

Haben Sie noch Anmerkungen zu diesem Fragebogen oder anderen Aspekten?

Vergessen Sie nicht, Ihre E-mail Adresse zu hinterlassen, falls Sie eine Reaktion wünschen.

Verzenden

B.1. Surveys

B.1.2 Dutch journalist survey

The following figures present screen shots from the online survey administered with Dutch political journalists (desktop version) using Qualtrics. For operationalizations of the fictional party press releases see the methodological section of the respective chapter (subsection 3.3.1).



The screenshot shows the introduction page of an online survey. At the top is the Universiteit Leiden logo and name. The title is 'Politieke persberichten'. The text explains that the survey consists of several fictional press releases from Dutch parties, followed by general questions about political actors and topics. It instructs participants to read each press release carefully and answer, noting that they can change their answers at any time and that the survey takes about 10 minutes. It also states that the information provided will be completely anonymous. A list of researchers is provided: Prof. Peter van Aelst, Prof. Kees Brants, Prof. Rudy Andeweg, and Luzia Helfer, MA. Contact information for Luzia Helfer is given, including an email address and a phone number. A '>>' button is located at the bottom right.

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Politieke persberichten

Wij leggen u nu meerdere **fictieve persberichten afkomstig van Nederlandse partijen** ter beoordeling voor, gevolgd door een **aantal algemene vragen** over politieke actoren en onderwerpen.

Lees elk persbericht rustig en aandachtig door, alvorens te antwoorden. U kunt binnen de vragenlijst **niet teruggaan** om een eerder antwoord te veranderen. Het invullen van de enquête duurt rond **10 minuten**.

De door u verstrekte informatie wordt **volkomen anoniem** verwerkt.

Hartelijk dank voor uw medewerking aan ons onderzoek.

Prof. Peter van Aelst
Prof. Kees Brants
Prof. Rudy Andeweg
Luzia Helfer, MA

Contactpersoon: Luzia Helfer (l.helfer@fsw.leidenuniv.nl) of 06 2650 7460)

>>



The screenshot shows the first section of the survey. It has the same Universiteit Leiden header. The title is 'Deel 1: Persberichten van politieke partijen'. The text explains that political parties sometimes send press releases, but not all are followed by the news. The survey asks participants to base their answers on the displayed press release and to create a news report for their medium. It notes that the press releases are fictional but based on the current political situation in the Netherlands, specifically mentioning the government formed by the VVD and the PvdA. It asks participants to provide answers, even for some unusual press releases. It states that this is the first part of a questionnaire with 6 to 7 very short press releases. A '>>' button is located at the bottom right.

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Deel 1: Persberichten van politieke partijen

Politieke partijen versturen soms persberichten. Maar lang niet alle persberichten halen vervolgens het nieuws. Onze vraag is daarom telkens: Zou u op basis van het getoonde persbericht een **nieuwsbericht maken voor uw medium?**

De persberichten die wij u tonen zijn fictief, maar gaan wel uit van de huidige politieke situatie in Nederland waarbij de **regering gevormd wordt door de VVD en de PvdA**. Gelieve steeds een antwoord te geven, ook als sommige persberichten wat ongewoon overkomen.

U krijgt nu in het eerste deel van de vragenlijst 6 à 7 zeer korte persberichten voorgelegd.

>>


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Volgens GroenLinks is het hoog tijd dat werklozen sneller weer een baan vinden. Vandaag vraagt een GroenLinks-Kamerlid daarom aan de regering of werkgevers die extra werkplekken creëren een belastingvoordeel kunnen krijgen. "Door werkgevers te stimuleren meer mensen aan te nemen vergroten we de kans dat werklozen snel weer een baan krijgen", beargumenteert het Kamerlid.

Zeker niet
Zeker wel

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Zou u op basis van dit persbericht een nieuwsbericht maken?							

>>


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De VVD vindt dat mensen gestimuleerd moeten worden om zelf duurzame energie op te wekken. Een Kamerlid van de VVD dient daarom vandaag een initiatiefwet in die ervoor zorgt dat een belastingvoordeel wordt gecreëerd voor particulieren die zelf duurzame energie opwekken. "De door de regering voorgestelde maatregelen zijn niet effectief. Nederland zal de doelstelling van 16% duurzame energie in 2020 alleen halen als we deze maatregel invoeren", beargumenteert het Kamerlid.

Zeker niet
Zeker wel

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Zou u op basis van dit persbericht een nieuwsbericht maken?							

>>

B.1. Surveys

 Universiteit
Leiden

De VVD vindt dat er een einde moet komen aan de problemen met de Nederlandse asielprocedure. De fractievoorzitter van de VVD dient daarom vandaag een initiatiefwet in die ervoor zorgt dat wordt geregistreerd uit welke landen asielzoekers met valse identiteitspapieren afkomstig zijn. "Het regeringsbeleid is te weinig effectief geweest. Om misbruik tegen te gaan is het belangrijk te weten vanuit welke landen veel gefraudeerd wordt", beargumenteert de fractievoorzitter.

Zeker niet 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Zeker wel

Zou u op basis van dit persbericht een nieuwsbericht maken?

>>

 Universiteit
Leiden

Volgens GroenLinks is het hoog tijd dat werklozen sneller weer een baan vinden. Vandaag vraagt de GroenLinks-fractievoorzitter daarom aan de regering of werkgevers die extra werkplekken creëren een belastingvoordeel kunnen krijgen. "De maatregelen die de regering tot nu toe heeft voorgesteld zijn onvoldoende. Door werkgevers te stimuleren meer mensen aan te nemen vergroten we de kans dat werklozen snel weer een baan krijgen", beargumenteert de fractievoorzitter.

Zeker niet 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Zeker wel

Zou u op basis van dit persbericht een nieuwsbericht maken?

>>


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De PVV vindt dat er een einde moet komen aan de problemen met de Nederlandse asielprocedure. De fractievoorzitter van de PVV dient daarom vandaag een initiatiefwet in die ervoor zorgt dat wordt geregistreerd uit welke landen asielzoekers met valse identiteitspapieren afkomstig zijn. "Om misbruik tegen te gaan is het belangrijk te weten vanuit welke landen veel gefraudeerd wordt", beargumenteert de fractievoorzitter.

Zeker niet
Zeker wel

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Zou u op basis van dit persbericht een nieuwsbericht maken?							

>>


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De PvdA wil de lasten voor ondernemers uit het midden- en kleinbedrijf verminderen. Vandaag vraagt een PvdA-Kamerlid aan de regering of belastingverlaging voor innovatief ondernemerschap mogelijk is. "Deze ondernemers vormen de ruggengraat van onze economie en moeten daarom in deze tijden niet onnodig worden belast", beargumenteert het Kamerlid.

Zeker niet
Zeker we

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Zou u op basis van dit persbericht een nieuwsbericht maken?							

>>

B.1. Surveys

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Vragen over de zojuist beoordeelde persberichten
In het eerste deel van de vragenlijst heeft u zojuist een aantal fictieve persberichten beoordeeld, die expres kort waren.

Waren de **opbouw en inhoud** van de persberichten die u zijn voorgelegd realistisch? De scoremogelijkheden vormen een schaal waarbij '1' staat voor volstrekt onrealistisch en '7' voor volstrekt realistisch.

	onrealistisch	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	realistisch
De voorgelegde persberichten waren									

Heeft u opmerkingen over de persberichten die wij net aan u voorgelegd hebben?
Zo niet dan kunt u dit veld gewoon leeg laten.

Op de volgende pagina's nog **drie meer algemene vragen** over politieke onderwerpen en actoren.

>>

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Deel 2: Politieke onderwerpen I

Kunt u voor de volgende politieke thema's aangeven in welke mate ze volgens u op dit moment politiek belangrijk zijn? Geef de onderwerpen een score op de schaal van 1 tot 7, waarbij '1' staat voor zeer onbelangrijk en '7' voor zeer belangrijk.

	zeer onbelangrijk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	zeer belangrijk
Midden- en kleinbedrijf (MKB)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Gezondheidszorg	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Asiel en migratie	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Werkloosheid	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Ruimtelijke ordening	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Defensie	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Misdaadbestrijding	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Duurzame energie	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

>>



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Politieke onderwerpen II

Partijen houden zich meestal met diverse onderwerpen bezig. Desondanks worden **sommige onderwerpen meer aan bepaalde partijen gelinkt** dan andere. Wilt u op de volgende pagina aangeven in welk mate u een onderwerp aan een bepaalde partij zou linken? '1' geeft aan dat er een zeer zwakke link is, '7' dat er een zeer sterke link is.

>>



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Werkloosheid

	zeer zwakke link 1	2	3	4	5	6	zeer sterke link 7
GroenLinks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PvdA	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PVV	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
VVD	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Duurzame energie

	zeer zwakke link 1	2	3	4	5	6	zeer sterke link 7
PvdA	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
GroenLinks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
VVD	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PVV	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

B.1. Surveys

Asiel en migratie

	zeer zwakke link 1	2	3	4	5	6	zeer sterke link 7
VVD	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PvdA	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
GroenLinks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PVV	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Midden-en kleinbedrijf (MKB)

	zeer zwakke link 1	2	3	4	5	6	zeer sterke link 7
PvdA	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
GroenLinks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PVV	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
VVD	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

>>



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Politieke actoren

Niet alle politieke actoren verschijnen even vaak in het nieuws.

Hoe vaak slagen volgens u de volgende actoren erin om een onderwerp in het nieuws te krijgen?

	Nooit	Zelden	Af en toe	Vaak	Altijd	Deze persoon ken ik niet
Linda Voortman (Kamerlid, GL)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ronald Plasterk (Minister, PvdA)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Willem Holthuizen (Partijvoorzitter, 50PLUS)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mariëtte Hamer (Kamerlid, PvdA)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Luuk Folkerts (Partijvoorzitter, PvdD)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Machiel de Graaf (Kamerlid, PVV)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sybrand van Haersma Buma (Fractievoorzitter, CDA)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Arie Slob (Fractievoorzitter, CU)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Steven van Weyenberg (Kamerlid, D66)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

>>

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Deel 3: Journalistieke achtergrond

Tot slot willen we u graag nog een aantal vragen stellen over uw journalistieke achtergrond.

In/door welke nieuwsorganisatie(s) (krant/weekblad/omroep/programma/persagentschap) worden uw berichten gepubliceerd?

Hoe veel jaren werkt u reeds als journalist?

In hoeveel van de laatste 10 artikelen/items waaraan u heeft (mee-)gewerkt werd een Nederlandse politieke partij of politicus genoemd/besproken/aan het woord gelaten?

Aantal artikelen/items met Nederlandse politicus of partij

Heeft u op dit moment een vast toegangsbewijs voor het parlement in Den Haag?

☐ Ja

☐ Nee

☐ In het verleden (graag specificeren)

>>

B.1. Surveys

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Tot slot nog een paar korte vragen over u als persoon.

In welk jaar bent u geboren?

Uw geslacht

☐ Man

☐ Vrouw

Wat is de hoogste opleiding die u succesvol heeft afgerond?

Van politieke opvattingen wordt vaak gezegd dat ze links of rechts zijn, net als van personen. "0" staat dan voor iemand die heel "links" is, "10" voor iemand die heel rechts is. Natuurlijk zijn er tussenposities in de mate waarin iemand "links" of "rechts" is. Waar zou u zichzelf op deze schaal plaatsen?

0 - Links 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 - Rechts

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

>>

Enquête politiek nieuws

U bent nu aan het einde van ons enquête. Hartelijk dank voor uw medewerking.

Uw antwoorden zijn opgeslagen en u bent nu op een externe website. De informatie die u hier achterlaat kan niet worden gekoppeld aan uw antwoorden op de vragenlijst.

Bent u nieuwsgierig naar onze resultaten? Laat dan hier uw e-mail adres achter.

Uw adres wordt alleen gebruikt om de resultaten van de studie aan u te sturen.

Mogen wij u voor een persoonlijk interview over politiek nieuws benaderen?

Interviews niet voor het najaar 2013

- ☐ Ja - graag uw e-mailadres achterlaten
- ☐ Nee

Heeft u nog opmerkingen over deze vragenlijst of aan het onderzoek gerelateerde onderwerpen?

Vergeet niet uw e-mailadres te vermelden als u een reactie wenst.

Verzenden

B.2 Detailed results

This section presents the detailed results of the hierarchical linear regression models of the studies on selection of party press releases by Swiss and Dutch journalists separately. A discussion of these results can be found in chapter 3. Results are presented according to the levels in the hierarchical regression models and groups of variables on each level as well as interaction effects are added step-wise.

Table B.1: Detailed results Swiss journalist study, step-wise linear hierarchical regression

	Model 1 CH	Model 2 CH	Model 3 CH	Model 4 CH	Model 5 CH
<i>Fixed effects</i>					
Constant	3.18*** (0.15)	2.24*** (0.32)	3.29*** (0.60)	3.41*** (0.60)	3.32*** (0.61)
<i>Experimental manipulations (level 1)</i>					
Political leader		0.03 (0.10)	0.04 (0.10)	0.04 (0.10)	0.05 (0.10)
Government party		0.02 (0.12)	-0.003 (0.12)	-0.004 (0.12)	-0.11 (0.18)
Unexpectedness		0.60*** (0.12)	0.64*** (0.12)	0.64*** (0.12)	0.64*** (0.12)
Conflict		-0.02 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.10)	0.14 (0.22)
Magnitude		0.30** (0.10)	0.30** (0.10)	0.30** (0.10)	0.31** (0.10)
<i>Respondent variables (level 2)</i>					
Relevance			0.11** (0.04)	0.11** (0.04)	0.11** (0.04)
Political distance			-0.07* (0.03)	-0.06* (0.03)	-0.07* (0.03)
Experience in years			-0.03# (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Gender			-0.52 (0.33)	-0.40 (0.33)	-0.42 (0.33)
<i>Media outlet (level 3) – reference print daily</i>					
Print weekly				-0.56 (0.37)	-0.55 (0.37)
Broadcaster				-0.49 (0.36)	-0.489 (0.36)
Other				-0.71 (0.48)	-0.71 (0.48)
<i>Interaction effect</i>					
Government sender x conflict					0.21 (0.26)
<i>Random effects</i>					
Journalist level	1.25	1.26	1.22	1.19	1.19
Press release level	1.22	1.18	1.17	1.16	1.16
AIC	1904	1883	1874	1874	1875
BIC	1917	1918	1926	1938	1944

Note. N = 533 from 84 Swiss political journalists. Answer to question “Would you create a news report based on this press release?” Unstandardized effects, standard errors in parentheses.

^a For operationalization of message effects see subsection 3.3.1.

#p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table B.2: Detailed results Dutch journalist study, step-wise linear hierarchical regression

	1 NL	Model 2 NL	Model 3 NL	Model 4 NL	Model 5 NL
<i>Fixed effects</i>					
Constant	4.02*** (0.13)	3.55*** (0.28)	2.91*** (0.61)	3.07*** (0.62)	2.98*** (0.59)
<i>Experimental manipulations (level 1)</i>					
Political leader		-0.18 (0.14)	-0.17 (0.14)	-0.17 (0.14)	-0.17 (0.14)
Government party		1.03*** (0.14)	0.98*** (0.15)	0.99*** (0.15)	1.08*** (0.21)
Unexpectedness		0.39* (0.17)	0.35* (0.17)	0.36* (0.17)	0.36* (0.16)
Conflict		-0.03 (0.14)	-0.05 (0.14)	-0.06 (0.14)	0.05 (0.21)
Magnitude		0.38** (0.14)	0.40** (0.14)	0.40** (0.14)	0.39** (0.14)
<i>Respondent variables (level 2)</i>					
Relevance			0.17*** (0.05)	0.17*** (0.05)	0.17*** (0.05)
Political distance			-0.03 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)
Experience in years			-0.002 (0.01)	0.002 (0.01)	0.003 (0.01)
Gender			-0.05 (0.33)	-0.04 (0.33)	-0.05 (0.33)
<i>Media outlet (level 3) – reference: print daily</i>					
Print weekly				-0.67# (0.40)	-0.67# (0.40)
Broadcaster				-0.39 (0.30)	-0.39 (0.29)
Other				0.04 (0.38)	0.04 (0.38)
<i>Interaction effect</i>					
Government sender x conflict					-.21 (0.30)
<i>Random effects</i>					
Journalist level	.82	.86	.82	.79	.78
Press release level	1.59	1.47	1.45	1.45	1.45
AIC	1688	1639	1634	1636	1638
BIC	1700	1672	1683	1697	1703

Note. N = 429 from 67 Dutch political journalists. Answer to question “Would you create a news report based on this press release?” Unstandardized effects, standard errors in parentheses.

^a For operationalization of message effects see subsection 3.3.1.

#p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Appendix C

Documentation of the study of politicians' selection

C.1 Surveys

C.1.1 Swiss politician survey

The following figures present screen shots from the online survey administered with Swiss members of the Lower House (*Nationalrat*) (desktop version) using Qualtrics. For operationalizations of the fictional party press releases see the methodological section of the respective chapter (see subsection 4.3.1).



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Fragebogen politische Berichterstattung

Wir legen Ihnen auf den folgenden Seiten **mehrere fiktive Zeitungsartikel** vor, gefolgt von einigen allgemeinen Fragen.

Lesen Sie bitte jeden Artikel aufmerksam, bevor Sie antworten. Beachten Sie, dass Sie **innerhalb des Fragebogens nicht zurückgehen** können, um vorherige Antworten zu verändern.

Das Ausfüllen wird **maximal 10 Minuten** Ihrer kostbaren Zeit beanspruchen.

Ihre Antworten werden **absolut vertraulich** behandelt.

Herzlichen Dank für Ihren Beitrag zu unserer Forschung.

Das Forschungsteam
MA Luzia Helfer, Universität Leiden (Niederlanden)
Prof. Peter van Aelst, Universität Antwerpen (Belgien)
Prof. Rudy Andeweg, Universität Leiden (Niederlanden)

>>

C.1. Surveys

 Universiteit
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Teil 1: Medienberichte

Wir legen Ihnen nun **vier kurze Zeitungsartikel** vor. Diese sind fiktiv, gehen jedoch von der heutigen politischen Situation aus, mit den entsprechenden Bundesratspartei.

Wir möchten Sie bitten, jeden Artikel zu beurteilen, auch wenn der eine oder andere vielleicht etwas ungewohnt formuliert ist.

>>

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Im vergangenen Monat sind entgegen den Erwartungen 4'000 Menschen mehr arbeitslos geworden. Dies zeigen die neusten Zahlen des Staatssekretariats für Wirtschaft (Seco). In einer Reaktion sagt Bundesrat Johann Schneider-Ammann: "Jeder Arbeitslose ist einer zu viel, wer keine Arbeit hat muss so schnell wie möglich zu neuer bezahlter Arbeit begleitet werden."

Klicken Sie jeweils auf den Balken um eine Beurteilung abzugeben.

	Sicher nicht				Sicher ja		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Würden Sie basierend auf diesen Artikel einen <u>parlamentarischen Vorstoss</u> machen (z.B. eine Interpellation einreichen)?							
Würden Sie diesen Artikel zur Sprache bringen, wenn <u>heute eine Fraktionssitzung</u> stattfinden würde?							

>>



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Neue Zürcher Zeitung

Der CO₂-Ausstoss ist im vergangenen Jahr in der Schweiz schneller zurückgegangen als erwartet. Durchschnittlich nahm die Luftverschmutzung um beinahe 10 Prozent ab, zeigen Recherchen dieser Zeitung. Die wichtigste Ursache ist, dass durch die von der EU beschlossenen strengeren Regeln für die Industrie sauberer produziert wird. Bundesrätin Doris Leuthard reagiert als Vorsteherin des Bundesamts für Energie und Umwelt (Bafu): "Luftverschmutzung darf nie auf die leichte Schulter genommen werden."

Berühren Sie jeweils den Balken um eine Antwort zu geben.

	Sicher nicht Sicher ja						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Würden Sie basierend auf diesen Artikel einen <u>parlamentarischen Vorstoss</u> machen (z.B. eine Interpellation einreichen)?				4			
Würden Sie diesen Artikel zur Sprache bringen, wenn heute eine <u>Fraktionssitzung</u> stattfinden würde?				4			

>>

C.1. Surveys

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Der CO₂-Ausstoss ist im vergangenen Jahr in der Schweiz schneller angestiegen als erwartet. Durchschnittlich nahm die Luftverschmutzung um beinahe 10 Prozent zu, machte das Bundesamt für Umwelt (Bafu) heute bekannt. Die wichtigste Ursache ist, dass durch die vom Parlament beschlossene Reduktion der Steuern auf Benzin mehr Haushalte ein zweites Auto angeschafft haben. Bundesrätin Doris Leuthard reagiert als Vorsteherin des Bundesamts für Energie und Umwelt (Bafu): "Luftverschmutzung darf nie auf die leichte Schulter genommen werden."

Berühren Sie jeweils den Balken um eine Antwort zu geben.

	Sicher nicht Sicher ja						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Würden Sie diesen Artikel zur Sprache bringen, wenn heute eine <u>Fraktionssitzung</u> stattfinden würde?							
Würden Sie basierend auf diesen Artikel einen <u>parlamentarischen Vorstoss</u> machen (z.B. eine Interpellation einreichen)?							

>>

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Neue Zürcher Zeitung

Die Zahl der Arbeitslosen ist im vergangenen Monat entgegen den Erwartungen um 4'000 gesunken. Dies zeigen Recherchen dieser Zeitung. Wichtigste Ursache ist die anziehende weltweite Wirtschaft, die auch in der Schweiz in diversen Branchen für mehr Aufträge sorgt. In einer Reaktion sagt Bundesrat Johann Schneider-Ammann: "Jeder Arbeitslose ist einer zu viel, wer keine Arbeit hat muss so schnell wie möglich zu neuer bezahlter Arbeit begleitet werden."

Klicken Sie jeweils auf den Balken um eine Beurteilung abzugeben.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Sicher nicht						Sicher ja
Würden Sie basierend auf diesen Artikel einen <u>parlamentarischen Vorstoss</u> machen (z.B. eine Interpellation einreichen)?							
Würden Sie diesen Artikel zur Sprache bringen, wenn <u>heute eine Fraktionssitzung</u> stattfinden würde?							

>>

C.1. Surveys

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Fragen zu den soeben beurteilten Artikeln

Im ersten Teil des Fragebogens haben Sie soeben eine Anzahl fiktiver Zeitungsartikel beurteilt, die absichtlich sehr kurz gehalten waren.

Fanden Sie diese realitätsnah bezüglich Inhalt und Aufbau?

	absolut unrealistisch	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	vollkommen reali
Die vorgelegten Artikel waren									

Haben Sie noch Anmerkungen für uns zu den Artikeln, die Sie soeben gelesen haben?
Falls nicht, können Sie das Feld hier leer lassen.

Es folgen noch einige kurze Fragen zu politischen Themen und zu Ihrer politischen Arbeit.

>>

**Teil 2/4: Politische Themen und politische Arbeit**

Können Sie für die folgenden Themen angeben, wie politisch wichtig diese ihrer Meinung nach momentan sind?

	sehr unwichtig 1	2	3	4	5	6	sehr wichtig 7
Abtreibung	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Asylsuchende	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staatshaushalt	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Arbeitslosigkeit	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Luftqualität	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Wer bestimmt die Gesetzgebung in der Schweiz?

Bitte geben Sie für jeden Bereich an, wer laut ihrer Einschätzung heute mehr Einfluss hat auf die Gesetzgebung, die schweizerische Politik oder die Europäische Union.

Wir möchten Sie bitten, dies auf Grundlage dessen wie Situation momentan laut Ihrer Einschätzung aussieht und nicht auf Basis der Situation, die Sie als wünschenswert erachten würden.

	Nationale Politik	Beide	Europäische Union	Weiss ich nicht
Abtreibung	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staatshaushalt	☐	☐	☐	☐
Arbeitslosigkeit	☐	☐	☐	☐
Asylsuchende	☐	☐	☐	☐
Luftqualität	☐	☐	☐	☐

Möchten Sie noch etwas hinzufügen?

>>

C.1. Surveys

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Was inspiriert Ihre politische Arbeit?
Wenn Sie an Ihre Vorstösse im Parlament im vergangenen Jahr denken: Was gab letztlich den Anstoss dazu?
Bringen Sie die nachfolgenden möglichen Anstösse in eine Reihenfolge vom wichtigsten zum unwichtigsten. Sie können die Einträge anklicken und auf eine andere Position verschieben.

- Bürger
- Meine politische Partei (z.B. Parteileitung, Fraktionssitzung)
- Medienberichterstattung
- Interessenverbände
- Persönliche Erfahrung

Spezialisierung in Ihrer politischen Arbeit
Manche Politiker/innen spezialisieren sich auf ein Thema, währenddessen andere sich lieber mit vielen Themen beschäftigen.

Ein Thema

Viele Them

1234567

Wo würden Sie sich auf dieser Skala platzieren?

Welches sind für Sie als Politiker/in die wichtigsten Politikbereiche? (Bitte so genau wie möglich einfüllen)

Politikbereich 1

Politikbereich 2

Politikbereich 3

>>

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Teil 3/4: (Politische) Medien

Obschon sich die meisten Medien als unabhängig verstehen, ist ihre Berichterstattung doch mehr oder weniger (unbewusst) politisch gefärbt.

Können Sie für die folgenden Zeitungstitel angeben, wo Sie diese heute auf der untenstehenden links-rechts Skala platzieren würden?

	Vollkommen links	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Vollkommen rechts	Kenne ich nicht
20 Minuten	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Die Nordwestschweiz	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Blick	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tages-Anzeiger	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Berner Zeitung	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
NZZ	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Welcher Zeitungstitel steht Ihnen politisch am nächsten?

☐ Blick

☐ Anderer, nämlich:

☐ NZZ

☐ Tages-Anzeiger

☐ Die Nordwestschweiz

☐ 20 Minuten

☐ Berner Zeitung

C.1. Surveys

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Teil 4/4: Fraktionssitzung und persönliche Informationen
Zum Schluss noch einige kurze Fragen über die Fraktionssitzungen der SP Schweiz und über Ihre eigene Rolle in diesen.

Wird während der Fraktionssitzung auch mal ein Medienbericht zur Sprache gebracht?

Niemals	2	3	4	5	6	An jeder Sitzung
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Wie oft ergreifen Sie an Fraktionssitzungen das Wort?

Niemals	2	3	4	5	6	An jeder Sitzung
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Welches ist ihr Geschlecht?

☐ Männlich

☐ Weiblich

☐ Anders

In welchem Jahr wurden Sie zum ersten Mal in den Nationalrat gewählt?

Es ist für die Aussagekraft unserer Forschung wichtig zu wissen, ob Sie als Nationalrat oder Nationalrätin diesen Fragebogen selber ausgefüllt haben.

☐ Ich bin Mitglied der Bundesversammlung

☐ Ich bin ein/e Mitarbeiter oder Mitarbeiterin eines Mitglieds

☐ Anders

C.1.2 Dutch politician survey

The following figures present screen shots from the online survey administered with Dutch members of the Lower House (*Tweede Kamer*) (desktop version) using Qualtrics. For operationalizations of the fictional party press releases see the methodological section of the respective chapter (see subsection 4.3.1).



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Enquête politieke berichtgeving

We leggen u op de volgende pagina's **meerdere fictieve mediaberichten** voor, gevolgd door een aantal meer algemene vragen.

Lees alvorens te antwoorden elk bericht rustig en aandachtig door. U kunt binnen de vragenlijst **niet teruggaan** om een eerder antwoord te veranderen. Het invullen van de enquête duurt maximaal **10 minuten**.

De door u verstrekte informatie wordt **volkomen vertrouwelijk** verwerkt.

Hartelijk dank voor uw medewerking aan ons onderzoek.
 Prof. Dr. Peter van Aelst
 Prof. Dr. Rudy Andeweg
 Luzia Helfer, MA

Contactpersoon: Luzia Helfer (l.helfer@fsw.leidenuniv.nl of 06 2650 7460)

>>



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Deel 1: Mediaberichten

U krijgt nu **4 zeer korte krantenartikelen** voorgelegd. De artikelen zijn fictief, maar gaan wel uit van de huidige politieke situatie, waarbij de regering gevormd wordt door de VVD en de PvdA.

Wij zouden u willen verzoeken steeds een antwoord te geven, ook als sommige mediaberichten wat ongewoon overkomen.

>>

C.1. Surveys

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De Telegraaf

De CO₂-uitstoot per kubieke meter is het afgelopen jaar in Nederland veel sneller gedaald dan verwacht. Gemiddeld nam de luchtvervuiling met bijna 10 procent toe, zo maakte het Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu vandaag bekend. Melanie Schulz, minister van Infrastructuur en Milieu, reageert: "Luchtvervuiling moet nooit licht worden opgenomen."

Klik ieder balkje apart aan om een antwoord te geven.

	Zeker niet				Zeker wel		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Hoe groot is de kans dat u naar aanleiding van dit artikel zelf <u>politieke actie</u> zou ondernemen (bijv. Kamervragen stellen)?				☐			
Zou u dit artikel ter sprake brengen als er vandaag <u>een fractievergadering</u> zou worden gehouden?				☐			

>>



NRC HANDELSBLAD

De CO₂-uitstoot per kubieke meter is het afgelopen jaar in Nederland veel sneller gestegen dan verwacht. Gemiddeld nam de luchtvervuiling met bijna 10 procent toe, dat toont onderzoek van deze krant aan. De belangrijkste reden is dat, als gevolg van de toegenomen welvaart, meer huishoudens een tweede auto hebben aangeschaft. Melanie Schulz, minister van Infrastructuur en Milieu, reageert: "Luchtvervuiling moet nooit licht worden opgenomen."

Klik ieder balkje apart aan om een antwoord te geven.

	Zeker niet				Zeker wel		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Hoe groot is de kans dat u naar aanleiding van dit artikel zelf <u>politieke actie</u> zou ondernemen (bijv. Kamervragen stellen)?				☒			
Zou u dit artikel ter sprake brengen als er vandaag een <u>fractievergadering</u> zou worden gehouden?				☒			

>>

C.1. Surveys

 Universiteit
Leiden

NRC  **HANDELSBLAD**

Het begrotingstekort van de Nederlandse overheid valt veel lager uit dan verwacht. Dat blijkt uit onderzoek van deze krant. De regeringsmaatregelen voor een gezonde rijksbegroting blijken te werken. "Een tekort is nooit goed voor een land", reageert minister van Financiën Jeroen Dijsselbloem op deze ontwikkeling.

Klik ieder balkje apart aan om een antwoord te geven.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Zeker niet						Zeker wel
Hoe groot is de kans dat u naar aanleiding van dit artikel zelf <u>politieke</u> <u>actie</u> zou ondernemen (bijv. Kamervragen stellen)?							
Zou u dit artikel ter sprake brengen als er vandaag <u>een</u> <u>fractievergadering</u> zou worden gehouden?							

>>


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De Telegraaf

Het begrotingstekort van de Nederlandse overheid valt veel groter uit dan verwacht. Dat blijkt uit nieuwe berekeningen van het Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. Oorzaak is dat Nederland nog steeds veel geld aan de Europese Unie moet afdragen wat tot een groter tekort leidt. "Een tekort is nooit goed voor een land", reageert minister van Financiën Jeroen Dijsselbloem op deze ontwikkeling.

Klik ieder balkje apart aan om een antwoord te geven.

	Zeker niet				Zeker wel		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Hoe groot is de kans dat u naar aanleiding van dit artikel zelf <u>politieke actie</u> zou ondernemen (bijv. Kamervragen stellen)?				■			
Zou u dit artikel ter sprake brengen als er vandaag een <u>fractievergadering</u> zou worden gehouden?				■			

>>


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Vragen over de zojuist beoordeelde mediaberichten

In het eerste deel van de vragenlijst heeft u zojuist een aantal fictieve mediaberichten beoordeeld, die expres kort waren.

Waren de opbouw en inhoud van de nieuwsberichten die u zijn voorgelegd realistisch?

	volstrekt onrealistisch				volstrekt realistisch		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
De voorgelegde mediaberichten waren				■			

Heeft u opmerkingen over de berichten die wij net aan u voorgelegd hebben?
Zo niet dan kunt u dit veld gewoon leeg laten.

Op de volgende pagina's nog een paar korte vragen over politieke onderwerpen en uw politiek werk.

>>

C.1. Surveys



Universiteit
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Deel 2/4: Politieke onderwerpen en politiek werk

Kunt u voor de volgende politieke thema's aangeven in welke mate ze volgens u op dit moment politiek belangrijk zijn?

	zeer onbelangrijk 1	2	3	4	5	6	zeer belangrijk 7
Abortus	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Begroting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Werkloosheid	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Asielzoekers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Luchtkwaliteit	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Wie bepaalt de wetgeving in Nederland?

Kunt u voor elk van de onderwerpen zeggen of volgens uw inschatting de nationale politiek of de Europese Unie meer gezag heeft?

Wij zouden u willen vragen dit te doen op basis van wat op dit moment volgens u het geval is en niet op basis van wat u graag zou willen dat het geval zou zijn.

	Nationale politiek	Allebei	Europese Unie	Weet ik niet
Abortus	☐	☐	☐	☐
Begroting	☐	☐	☐	☐
Werkloosheid	☐	☐	☐	☐
Luchtkwaliteit	☐	☐	☐	☐
Asielzoekers	☐	☐	☐	☐

Zou u hieraan nog iets toe willen voegen?

>>



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Wat inspireert u in uw politiek werk?

Hoeveel van de initiatieven die u in het voorbije jaar persoonlijk in het parlement of in de regering heeft ondernomen, waren geïnspireerd door informatie van een of meerdere van de onderstaande groepen?

Wij zouden u willen vragen deze te ordenen van meest (1) naar minst (5) belangrijk. Door op een groep te klikken kunt u deze naar een andere positie slepen.

- Mijn politieke partij (bv. partijleiding, fractieoverleg)
- Persoonlijke ervaring
- Belangen- en actiegroepen
- Burgers
- Mediaberichtgeving

Specialisatie in uw politiek werk

Sommige politici specialiseren zich in één thema, terwijl anderen er voor kiezen om met veel thema's bezig te zijn.

Ik specialiseer me in één thema Ik ben bezig met veel thema's

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Waar zou u zichzelf plaatsen op deze schaal?							

Wat zijn voor u als politicus de belangrijkste beleidsterreinen? (graag zo specifiek mogelijk invullen)

Beleidsterrein 1

Beleidsterrein 2

Beleidsterrein 3

>>

C.1. Surveys

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Deel 3/4: (Politieke) media

Hoewel de meeste media zichzelf als onafhankelijk beschouwen, is berichtgeving volgens sommigen soms toch (onbewust) gekleurd.

Kunt u voor de volgende kranten aangeven waar u deze op dit moment op onderstaande links-rechtschaal zou plaatsen?

	Helemaal links	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Helemaal rechts
Algemeen Dagblad	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
De Telegraaf	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Het Financieele Dagblad	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Metro	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
NRC Handelsblad	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
De Volkskrant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Welke krant staat volgens u het dichtste bij uw eigen politieke positie?

☐ Metro

☐ Het Financieele Dagblad

☐ De Telegraaf

☐ Algemeen Dagblad

☐ NRC Handelsblad

☐ De Volkskrant

☐ Andere, namelijk:

>>


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Deel 4/4: Fractieoverleg en persoonlijke informatie

Tot slot nog een paar korte vragen over de fractievergadering van de VVD en over uw eigen rol / functioneren daarin.

Komt er tijdens fractievergaderingen van de VVD wel eens een mediaberichtgeving ter sprake?

Nooit	2	3	4	5	6	Tijdens elke vergadering
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Hoe vaak bent u aan het woord tijdens fractievergaderingen?

Nooit	2	3	4	5	6	Tijdens elke vergadering
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Wat is uw geslacht?

☐ Man

☐ Vrouw

☐ Andere

In welk jaar bent u voor het eerst lid van de Tweede Kamer geworden?

▼

Het is voor het slagen van ons onderzoek van belang te weten, of u als Kamerlid deze anonieme vragenlijst zelf heeft ingevuld.

☐ Ik ben lid van de Tweede Kamer

☐ Ik ben een medewerker van een Kamerlid

☐ Andere

>>

C.2 Detailed results

This section presents the detailed results of the hierarchical linear regression models of the studies on selection of news reports by Swiss and Dutch politicians separately. Discussion of results can be found in chapter 4. Results are presented according to the levels in the hierarchical regression models and groups of variables on each level as well as interaction effects are added step-wise.

Table C.1: Hierarchical regression models of Swiss politicians' mentioning news reports at parliamentary party group meetings

	Model 1 CH	Model 2 CH	Model 3 CH	Model 4 CH	Model 5 CH
<i>Fixed effects</i>					
Constant	2.69*** (0.18)	0.63 (0.63)	-0.069 (0.71)	1.630* (0.76)	0.766 (1.20)
<i>Experimental manipulations (level 1)</i>					
Media outlet		0.20 (0.21)	0.25 (0.21)	0.25 (0.21)	0.27 (0.21)
Investigative report		0.24 (0.21)	0.24 (0.20)	0.24 (0.20)	0.24 (0.20)
Party issue ownership		0.44* (0.20)	0.34# (0.20)	0.33# (0.20)	0.330# (0.20)
Conflict		-0.25 (0.24)	-0.18 (0.23)	-0.17 (0.23)	0.06 (0.72)
Negativity		0.54* (0.21)	0.59** (0.20)	0.59** (0.20)	0.52 (0.62)
<i>Respondent variables (level 2)</i>					
Tenure in years			-0.03 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)
Issue specialization			0.58 (0.41)	0.59 (0.40)	0.57 (0.41)
Political relevance			0.19** (0.07)	0.19** (0.07)	0.19** (0.07)
<i>Party variables</i>					
Coalition party				-0.98# (0.55)	-0.94 (0.65)
<i>Interaction effects</i>					
Coalition party*Responsibility					-0.27 (0.77)
Coalition party*Development					0.08 (0.65)
<i>Random effects</i>					
Level politician	1.01	1.05	1.09	1.05	1.05
Level media report	1.51	1.43	1.38	1.38	1.37
AIC	782	776	773	772	776
BIC	792	803	809	811	822

Note. $N = 198$ from 50 Swiss politicians. Answer to question "Would you create a news report based on this press release?" Unstandardized effects, standard errors in parentheses.

^a For operationalization of message effects see subsection 4.3.1.

$p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table C.2: Hierarchical regression models of Swiss politicians' taking political action in reaction to a news report

	Model 1 CH	Model 2 CH	Model 3 CH	Model 4 CH	Model 5 CH
<i>Fixed effects</i>					
Constant	2.52*** (0.15)	-0.04 (0.58)	-0.26 (0.65)	-0.11 (0.73)	0.41 (1.09)
<i>Experimental manipulations (level 1)</i>					
Media outlet		0.38* (0.19)	0.42* (0.19)	0.42* (0.19)	0.36# (0.20)
Investigative report		-0.16 (0.19)	-0.17 (0.19)	-0.17 (0.19)	-0.18 (0.19)
Party issue ownership		0.50** (0.19)	0.43* (0.19)	0.43* (0.19)	0.45* (0.19)
Conflict		0.04 (0.22)	0.11 (0.22)	0.11 (0.22)	-0.71 (0.68)
Negativity		0.99*** (0.20)	1.02*** (0.19)	1.02*** (0.19)	0.88 (0.58)
<i>Respondent variables (level 2)</i>					
Tenure in years			-0.06* (0.02)	-0.06* (0.02)	-0.07** (0.02)
Issue specialization			0.39 (0.37)	0.39 (0.37)	0.45 (0.36)
Political relevance			0.13* (0.06)	0.13* (0.06)	0.13* (0.06)
<i>Party variables</i>					
Coalition party				-0.20 (0.43)	-0.49 (0.53)
<i>Interaction effects</i>					
Coalition party*Responsibility					0.93 (0.72)
Coalition party*Development					0.15 (0.62)
<i>Random effects</i>					
Level politician	.72	.79	.73	.73	.73
Level media report	1.50	1.32	1.31	1.31	1.30
AIC	760	733	730	732	734
BIC	770	760	766	771	780

Note. $N = 198$ from 50 Swiss politicians. Answer to question "Would you create a news report based on this press release?" Unstandardized effects, standard errors in parentheses.

^a For operationalization of message effects see subsection 4.3.1.

$p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table C.3: Hierarchical regression models of Dutch politicians' mentioning news reports at parliamentary party group meetings

	Model 1 NL	Model 2 NL	Model 3 NL	Model 4 NL	Model 5 NL
<i>Fixed effects</i>					
Constant	3.69*** (0.26)	-0.60 (0.80)	-2.21* (0.90)	-3.29*** (0.93)	-3.14** (1.02)
<i>Experimental manipulations (level 1)</i>					
Media outlet		0.35 (0.27)	0.40 (0.25)	0.40 (0.25)	0.41# (0.25)
Investigative report		0.21 (0.26)	0.21 (0.24)	0.21 (0.24)	0.22 (0.25)
Party issue ownership		1.25*** (0.27)	0.77** (0.28)	0.76** (0.28)	0.74** (0.28)
Conflict		-0.07 (0.30)	-0.02 (0.29)	-0.03 (0.29)	-0.14 (0.44)
Negativity		1.08*** (0.26)	1.13*** (0.24)	1.13*** (0.24)	1.02** (0.37)
<i>Respondent variables (level 2)</i>					
Tenure in years			0.06 (0.08)	0.12 (0.08)	0.12 (0.08)
Issue specialization			0.31 (0.56)	0.39 (0.53)	0.38 (0.53)
Political relevance			0.36*** (0.10)	0.35*** (0.10)	0.36*** (0.10)
<i>Party variable</i>					
Coalition party				1.47** (0.47)	1.34* (0.57)
<i>Interaction effects</i>					
Coalition party*Responsibility					0.17 (0.59)
Coalition party*Development					0.18 (0.49)
<i>Random effects</i>					
Level politician	1.15	1.23	1.24	1.03	1.04
Level media report	1.75	1.40	1.29	1.29	1.28
AIC	498	468	459	453	456
BIC	506	490	490	486	495

Note. $N = 117$ from 30 Dutch politicians. Answer to question "Would you create a news report based on this press release?" Unstandardized effects, standard errors in parentheses.

^a For operationalization of message effects see subsection 4.3.1.

$p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table C.4: Hierarchical regression models of Dutch politicians' taking political action in reaction to a news report

	Model 1 NL	Model 2 NL	Model 3 NL	Model 4 NL	Model 5 NL
<i>Fixed effects</i>					
Constant	2.52*** (0.25)	0.16 (0.69)	-1.01 (0.79)	-0.28 (0.85)	-0.60 (0.91)
<i>Experimental manipulations (level 1)</i>					
Media outlet		0.17 (0.22)	0.18 (0.21)	0.18 (0.21)	0.16 (0.21)
Investigative report		0.36 (0.22)	0.35# (0.20)	0.35# (0.20)	0.24 (0.21)
Party issue ownership		0.49* (0.22)	0.31 (0.24)	0.33 (0.24)	0.40# (0.24)
Conflict		0.14 (0.25)	0.06 (0.24)	0.08 (0.24)	0.66# (0.37)
Negativity		0.54* (0.22)	0.54** (0.21)	0.54** (0.21)	0.78* (0.31)
<i>Respondent variables (level 2)</i>					
Tenure in years			0.14# (0.08)	0.11 (0.08)	0.11 (0.08)
Issue specialization			1.18* (0.49)	1.06* (0.48)	1.16* (0.48)
Political relevance			0.13 (0.09)	0.12 (0.09)	0.10 (0.09)
<i>Party variable</i>					
Coalition party				-0.94* (0.48)	-0.49 (0.54)
<i>Interaction effects</i>					
Coalition party * Responsibility					-1.01* (0.49)
Coalition party * Development					-0.38 (0.41)
<i>Random effects</i>					
Level politician	1.21	1.23	1.21	1.11	1.10
Level media report	1.28	1.18	1.10	1.10	1.08
AIC	444	440	432	430	430
BIC	453	462	462	463	469

Note. $N = 118$ from 30 Dutch politicians. Answer to question "Would you create a news report based on this press release?" Unstandardized effects, standard errors in parentheses.

^a For operationalization of message effects see subsection 4.3.1.

$p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Nederlandstalige samenvatting

Media en politiek kunnen niet zonder elkaar. Tegelijkertijd is het een relatie die niet zonder spanning is. Vaak wordt beweerd dat politici de waan van de dag volgen en niet het algemeen belang voor ogen hebben. Tegelijkertijd wordt ook de politieke berichtgeving bekritiseerd. Van journalisten wordt gezegd dat zij voornamelijk kiezen voor sensationele en conflictueuze berichtgeving over politiek en hierdoor een slechte invloed hebben op zowel de politiek als de maatschappij. Maar is het daadwerkelijk het geval? Wat zijn precies de criteria die journalisten gebruiken om politiek nieuws te selecteren? En op basis van welke criteria beslissen politici of ze wel of niet op berichtgeving reageren? Deze vragen zijn in Nederland en Zwitserland onderzocht door middel van twee afzonderlijke experimenten: een met politieke journalisten en een met politici.

Omdat media en politiek nauw met elkaar verbonden zijn is het vaak lastig oorzaak en gevolg van elkaar te onderscheiden. Regelmatig halen politici berichten uit de media aan in een debat. Maar betekent dit dat daadwerkelijk sprake is van invloed van de media op politiek? Elites zoals politici zijn namelijk vaak zelf bron van informatie voor journalisten en het bericht waar zij op reageren hebben zij in dat geval dus in feite zelf in de media geplaatst. Om oorzaak en gevolg beter van elkaar te kunnen scheiden is voor deze studies daarom voor een experimentele benadering gekozen. Concreet zijn in een zogenaamd factoriaal design middels een “factorial survey experiment” fictieve maar realistisch geformuleerde persberichten en krantenartikelen opgesteld en vervolgens aan politieke journalisten en politici in Nederland en Zwitserland getoond. Hierbij is de invloed van de afzender van het bericht (politieke partij of krant), het bericht zelf en de ontvanger (journalist of politicus) onderzocht.

Selectie door journalisten: Hoe politiek nieuws wordt Het eerste deel van het onderzoek richtte zich op de vraag op basis van welke criteria politieke journalisten in Nederland en Zwitserland beslissen of zij een persbericht wel of niet selecteren voor berichtgeving. Hoewel er een grote hoeveelheid literatuur is over de nieuwswaardes die journalisten als ‘gate keepers’, poortwachters, gebruiken om nieuws in het algemeen te selecteren, zijn deze theorieën nauwelijks middels een experimentele opzet getest en is er weinig bekend over de vraag hoe deze theorieën worden toegepast op politieke berichtgeving. Om dit te onderzoeken zijn politieke journalisten benaderd die regelmatig over de

Nederlandse Tweede Kamer (n=67) of het Zwitserse parlement (n=84) berichten. Aan hen zijn fictieve persberichten van politieke partijen voorgelegd en zij zijn vervolgens gevraagd of zij op basis van dit persbericht een nieuwsbericht zouden maken (antwoordschaal 1-7). De resultaten tonen aan dat voor journalisten de inhoud van het persbericht en de afzender van belang zijn. Als een partij over een verrassend onderwerp communiceert dat niet tot de kern van het partijprogramma hoort vinden journalisten dat interessanter. Ook van belang is de aard van de politieke actie: een wetsvoorstel dat vaak grotere politieke gevolgen heeft dan een Kamervraag is interessanter voor journalisten. Of een partijleider of een gewoon Kamerlid wordt geciteerd blijkt echter niet van belang. Bovendien maakt het ook niet uit of er kritiek wordt geuit op de regering, of dat nou is door een regerings- of oppositiepartij. De resultaten tonen verder aan dat ook de achtergrond van de journalist invloed heeft: persberichten over onderwerpen die journalisten als meer relevant beschouwen worden sneller geselecteerd, maar er is geen effect van de politieke voorkeur van een journalist. Met betrekking tot de invloed van het politieke systeem laten de resultaten duidelijk zien dat de machtsverdeling binnen de politiek wel belangrijk is; partijen met meer macht blijken meer kans te hebben om hun persberichten geselecteerd te zien worden, ongeacht de inhoud van een bericht. De meest belangrijke bevindingen van deze studie zijn dan ook dat politieke journalisten wel rekening houden met de politieke aspecten van een bericht en niet in de eerste plaats op zoek zijn naar conflict. Tegelijkertijd moet hier ook wel worden opgemerkt dat deze studie alleen het eerste moment van het selectieproces heeft onderzocht. Welke onderdelen journalisten vervolgens benadrukken als zij daadwerkelijk een bericht maken, kan op basis van dit onderzoek niet worden gezegd. Toch geeft het comparatief design van deze experimentele studie veel inzichten in de selectie van nieuws van journalisten.

Selectie van politici: Hoe nieuws politiek wordt Om te kunnen bestuderen, in hoeverre journalisten en politici in hun selectie op elkaar lijken, is een tweede studie uitgevoerd. Studies over de invloed van de media op de politieke agenda, zogenaamde “political agenda-setting”, tonen aan dat veel onderwerpen die in de media aan bod komen vervolgens ook in de politiek worden besproken. De mechanismes waar deze invloed op gebaseerd is, zijn echter nog nauwelijks bekend. Daarom is ook voor deze studie voor een experimentele benadering op individueel niveau gekozen. Hiertoe zijn aan verkozen nationale politici in Nederland (n=30) en Zwitserland (n=50) een aantal fictieve maar realistisch geformuleerde nieuwsberichten voorgelegd en is aan hen gevraagd deze aan de hand van twee vragen te beoordelen. De eerste vraag was of zij het nieuwsbericht ter sprake zouden brengen als vandaag een fractievergadering zou plaatsvinden, de tweede was of zij op basis van het bericht politieke actie zouden ondernemen zoals bijvoorbeeld een Kamervraag stellen. De resultaten tonen aan dat politici meer geneigd zijn op negatieve dan positieve berichten te reageren. De krant die het nieuws pub-

liceert en de meer genuanceerde aspecten van de inhoud, zoals of er wel of geen kritiek wordt geuit, hebben echter nauwelijks invloed. Verder staat voor politici voornamelijk het onderwerp van de berichtgeving centraal. Afhankelijk van de context is voor politici ofwel cruciaal of het een onderwerp is dat voor de partij centraal staat, danwel reageren zij soms meer op een onderwerp waarin zij zelf gespecialiseerd zijn of kan het ook zijn dat zij vooral op een onderwerp reageren dat zij op dat moment als politiek relevant beschouwen. Wat betekent dit concreet? Dat wil ten eerste zeggen dat politici op basis van andere nieuwsberichten politieke actie ondernemen dan die ze ter sprake zouden brengen tijdens een fractievergadering die veel minder publiek is. Terwijl Nederlandse politici voornamelijk politieke actie ondernemen op basis van nieuwsberichten die over een onderwerp gaan waarin zij gespecialiseerd zijn, zullen zij tijdens een fractievergadering berichten ter sprake brengen die betrekking hebben op het voor hun partij centraal staande onderwerp of een onderwerp dat zij op dat moment als politiek relevant beschouwen. Normaal gesproken is het niet mogelijk te bestuderen wat tijdens een fractievergadering gebeurt. Dit unieke kijkje achter deze normaal gesproken gesloten deuren onderstreept echter het strategisch gedrag van politici. Bij Zwitserse politici zijn dergelijke verschillen namelijk niet gevonden. Voor hen is het, zowel als zij politieke actie ondernemen alsmede als zij een bericht in de fractie ter sprake brengen, van belang of het gaat over een volgens hen politiek relevant en voor hun partij belangrijk onderwerp. Het feit dat in Zwitserland geen verschillen zijn gevonden binnen een partij terwijl dat in Nederland juist centraal staat kan aan de hand van de verschillen in het kiesstelsel worden verklaard. In Zwitserland worden politici in hun relatief kleine kieskring gekozen en moeten zij dus vooral een beroep doen op de kiezers in hun provincie (of Kanton). In een dergelijk open-lijst systeem heeft de partij nauwelijks controle over wie wel of niet wordt gekozen. Om die reden is het vanzelfsprekend dat politici profijt willen trekken uit het profiel van de partij en aan hun kiezers willen tonen dat zij responsief zijn door te reageren op onderwerpen die zij op dat moment als politiek relevant beschouwen. Dit staat in tegenstelling tot Nederland, waar voorkeurstemmen een betrekkelijk geringe rol spelen bij verkiezingen en de partij relatief veel invloed heeft over welke politici worden gekozen. Voor Nederlandse politici is het daarom belangrijk dat zij zich aan de rolverdeling binnen de partij houden en dat zij op nationaal niveau proberen een profiel op te bouwen dat hen onderscheidt van hun collega's. Samenvattend tonen de resultaten van deze tweede studie aan dat politici strategisch reageren en daarbij rekening houden met de institutionele context waarin zij zich bewegen.

Implicaties van het onderzoek Het complexe onderzoeksdesign van de twee hier gepresenteerde studies heeft belangrijke inzichten opgeleverd over het samenspel tussen politici en journalisten. Zij bewegen zich beiden in een bepaalde institutionele context die hun gedrag beïnvloedt. Bewijzen voor de bewering dat politici mediaberichtgeving

automatisch overnemen, zijn op zijn minst beperkt. Hoewel de politiek als geheel misschien mediaberichtgeving lijkt te volgen, toont dit onderzoek aan dat het telkens andere politici zijn die op een onderwerp of bericht uit de media reageren en dat zij dat doen op basis van strategische overwegingen. Ook op methodologisch vlak zijn de studies een belangrijke toevoeging aan de bestaande literatuur. Experimenteel onderzoek met elites is zeldzaam; een reden hiervoor is dat in veel gevallen een redelijk groot aantal respondenten nodig is. Het hier gebruikte “factorial survey experiment” heeft een dergelijk design wel mogelijk gemaakt en er tegelijk voor gezorgd dat vrij realistische condities, persberichten van partijen en mediaberichten, konden worden gebruikt. Het parallelle design met vergelijkbare experimentele studies onder twee verschillende populaties die in meerdere landen op dezelfde manier konden worden toegepast, zal hopelijk andere onderzoekers inspireren.

Deutschsprachige Zusammenfassung

Die Verflechtungen zwischen Medien und Politik sind eng und nicht selten auch geprägt von Spannungen. So wird etwa PolitikerInnen vorgeworfen, sie liessen sich von kurzlebigen Medienaktualitäten leiten und verlören dadurch das Gesamtinteresse aus den Augen. Den Medien andererseits wird der Vorwurf gemacht, sie seien vor allem auf Sensationen und Konflikte aus, und diese Art der politischen Berichterstattung sei schädlich für Politik und Gesellschaft. Wie weit sind diese Vorwürfe berechtigt? Welche Kriterien sind für Journalistinnen und Journalisten bei der Themensetzung massgebend? Wovon hängt es auf der anderen Seite ab, ob Politikerinnen und Politiker aufgrund eines Medienberichts aktiv werden? Untersucht werden diese Fragen in der Schweiz und den Niederlanden mit Hilfe von zwei Experimenten: Einem Experiment mit politischen Journalisten und einem zweiten mit Politikern.

Studien zeigen, dass sich PolitikerInnen in Debatten oft auf Medienberichte berufen. Doch daraus einen Einfluss der Medien auf die Politik abzuleiten wäre zumindest verkürzt. Denn PolitikerInnen sind eine wichtige Informationsquelle für JournalistInnen, und daher ist es nicht ausgeschlossen, dass sie die Berichte, auf die sie Bezug nehmen, selber angestossen haben. Um in diesem komplexen Zusammenspiel Ursache und Wirkung auseinanderhalten zu können, wurde für die vorliegende Studie ein experimenteller Ansatz gewählt. In einem so genannten "factorial survey experiment" wurden JournalistInnen und PolitikerInnen frei erfundene aber realistisch formulierte Medienmitteilungen und Zeitungsartikel vorgelegt. Die Hypothese dabei lautete: Der Entscheid, ob eine Nachricht weiter verfolgt wird, ist abhängig vom Absender der Nachricht (Partei oder Zeitung), von Nachricht selber, sowie vom Empfänger (JournalistIn oder PolitikerIn).

Journalistische Selektion: Wie aus Politik Nachrichten werden Welche Kriterien geben in den Niederlanden bzw. in der Schweiz den Ausschlag, wenn JournalistInnen entscheiden, ob sie eine Medienmitteilung für ihre Berichterstattung berücksichtigen? Es gibt zwar eine umfangreiche Literatur zum Nachrichtenwert, dh. zu den Kriterien, die JournalistInnen als so genannte „gate keeper“ grundsätzlich bei der Auswahl von Nachrichten anwenden. Diese Theorien sind jedoch noch kaum mit Experimenten über-

prüft worden. Zudem ist wenig darüber bekannt, wie weit Nachrichtenwerte für die politische Berichterstattung relevant sind. Berücksichtigt wurden für dieses Experiment JournalistInnen, die regelmässig über die Volkskammer berichten, die „Tweede Kamer“ in Den Haag (n=67) bzw. den Nationalrat in Bern (n=84). Vorgelegt wurden ihnen fiktive Medienmitteilungen von politischen Parteien. Die Resultate zeigen, welche zentrale Rolle bei der journalistischen Selektion dem Absender und dem Inhalt der Medienmitteilung zukommt. Wenn eine Partei zu einem Thema kommuniziert, das nicht zum Kern ihres Programms gehört, sind JournalistInnen interessiert als wenn die Partei über das „eigene“ Thema kommuniziert. Eher überraschend ist, dass es keine Rolle spielt, ob in der Mitteilung ein Mitglied der Parteileitung oder ein Ratsmitglied ohne weitere Funktionen zitiert wird. Nicht zuletzt zeigt die Untersuchung, dass das politische System, insbesondere die Machtverteilung in der Politik, eine Rolle spielt. Parteien mit mehr politischer Macht haben unabhängig vom Inhalt der Nachricht bessere Chancen berücksichtigt zu werden. Nebst dem Absender der Nachricht beeinflussen auch einige Aspekte des Inhalts der Medienmitteilung die Selektionschance. So fällt die politische Aktion, die angekündigt wird, ins Gewicht: Eine einfache parlamentarische Frage, die oft keine grossen politischen Konsequenzen hat, generiert viel weniger Aufmerksamkeit als ein parlamentarischer Vorstoss. Entgegen den Erwartungen erhöht Kritik an der Regierung dagegen das Interesse der JournalistInnen kaum, selbst dann nicht, wenn sie durch eine Regierungspartei geäussert wird. Dies ist vor allem im holländischen Kontext mit Mehrheitsregierungen bemerkenswert. Die Ergebnisse zeigen ferner, dass die persönliche Einstellung der JournalistInnen eine Rolle spielt: Mitteilungen zu Themen, die ein/e JournalistIn als relevanter betrachtet, werden eher berücksichtigt. Ein Einfluss der politischen Zugehörigkeit der JournalistInnen ist nur in der Schweiz feststellbar: Je näher ein/e JournalistIn einer Partei steht, desto eher wird deren Mitteilung selektiert. Insgesamt zeigt das Experiment, dass für JournalistInnen politische Aspekte bei der Selektion im Vordergrund stehen.

Politische Selektion: Wie aus Nachrichten Politik wird Wählen PolitikerInnen ähnlich aus wie JournalistInnen wenn sie entscheiden, ob sie auf Grundlage eines Medienberichts politisch aktiv werden? Um diese Frage zu klären, wurde ein zweites Experiment durchgeführt. Im Rahmen dieser Studie wurden aktive nationale PolitikerInnen in der Schweiz (n=50) und in den Niederlanden (n=30) befragt. Ihnen wurde eine Anzahl realistisch formulierter fiktiver Zeitungsartikel vorgelegt, und sie hatten zwei Fragen zu beantworten. Erstens: Würden Sie den Artikel zur Sprache bringen, wenn am Tag des Erscheinens eine Fraktionssitzung stattfände? Zweitens: Würden Sie auf Grundlage der Informationen aus dem Artikel einen politischen Vorstoss lancieren? Wiederum wurden Einflüsse des Absenders der Nachricht, der Nachricht selber und des Empfängers unterschieden. Zuerst zum Absender: Ob eine Information von einem Boulevardblatt

wie der Blick oder von der seriösen Neue Zürcher Zeitung verbreitet wird, hat keinen Einfluss darauf, ob sie vom Politiker in den politischen Prozess eingespielen wird. Der Inhalt des Zeitungsartikels ist wichtiger. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass PolitikerInnen auf eine Berichterstattung über negative Entwicklungen eher reagieren, als wenn Positives dargestellt wird. Sehr interessant ist Einfluss der Thematik eines Artikels. Das Experiment zeigt, dass Politiker hinter verschlossenen Türen an einer Fraktionssitzung andere Berichte zur Sprache bringen als dass sie für die Öffentlichkeit sichtbar einen politischen Vorstoss lancieren. Je nach dem fällt ins Gewicht, ob ein Thema zu den Kernthemen der Partei gehört, ob es ein Spezialgebiet des Politikers betrifft, oder ob sie es momentan als politisch relevant einschätzt wird. Systembedingte Unterschiede zwischen den beiden berücksichtigten Ländern können klar nachgewiesen werden. Zu einem politischen Vorstoss lassen sich niederländische PolitikerInnen in erster Linie durch einen Medienbericht bewegen, der ein Thema behandelt, auf das sie spezialisiert sind, zum Beispiel aufgrund ihrer Kommissionsmitgliedschaft. Im Kontext in einer Fraktionssitzung ist für sie jedoch wichtig ob das Thema zu den Kernthemen der Partei gehört und ob sie es momentan als politisch wichtig erachten. Bei den schweizerischen PolitikerInnen lässt sich keine Differenzierung zwischen einer Reaktion in der Öffentlichkeit und einer Reaktion in der Fraktion feststellen. Massgebend für eine Reaktion ist für sie der Stellenwert eines Themas für die Partei und ob sie das Thema als politisch bedeutend einschätzen. Diese Unterschiede zwischen den beiden Ländern sind wahrscheinlich auf das politische System zurückzuführen: Da die PolitikerInnen in der Schweiz in relativ kleinen Wahlkreisen (Kanton) gewählt werden und Parteien kaum Einfluss haben darauf, welche Kandidaten gewählt werden, wollen PolitikerInnen für ihre Wähler sichtbar in Aktion treten. Es geht darum, vom Profil der Partei zu profitieren und zu zeigen, dass sie an den Themen dran sind, welche die Öffentlichkeit (Medien) beschäftigen. In den Niederlanden dagegen hat die Partei einen sehr viel grösseren Einfluss darauf, welche Politiker gewählt werden da Vorzugsstimmen keine bedeutende Rolle spielen. In diesem System ist es daher für PolitikerInnen wichtig, sich an die Aufgabenteilung innerhalb der Partei zu halten und in der Öffentlichkeit vor allem ein Profil zu den eigenen Kernthemen aufzubauen. Alles in allem zeigt das Experiment mit den PolitikerInnen, wie sehr sich diese strategisch verhalten und dabei den institutionellen Kontext berücksichtigen.

Bedeutung der Studie Zusammenfassend hat das komplexe Forschungsdesign der Experimente wichtige Einblicke in das Zusammenspiel zwischen PolitikerInnen und JournalistInnen möglich gemacht. Der Ländervergleich zeigt, wie wichtig der institutionelle Rahmen ist. Auch wenn die PolitikerInnen die Medienberichterstattung sehr genau verfolgen, von einem reflexartigen Reagieren darauf kann nicht die Rede sein. Auch wenn Politik als gesamtes vielleicht der Medienberichtgebung zu folgen scheint zeigen die vorliegenden Resultate, dass jeweils andere PolitikerInnen auf Medienberichte reagieren.

Dies tun sie auf Basis strategischer Überlegungen. Dies gilt auch für die JournalistInnen. Der durch das parallele Untersuchungsdesign möglich gemachte direkte Vergleich der Selektionsmechanismen zeigt zudem, dass einzelne Kriterien im Zusammenspiel zwischen JournalistInnen und PolitikerInnen eine aufschaukelnde Wirkung entfalten können, während andere Kriterien eher ausgleichend wirken.

Auch aus methodischer Sicht ergänzt das vorliegende Projekt die bestehende Literatur entscheidend. Experimentelle Studiendesigns mit Eliten sind selten. Das in dieser Studie verwendete faktorielle Fragebogenexperiment erlaubte unter sehr realitätsnahen Voraussetzungen experimentell zu forschen.

English summary

The relationship between the media and politics is close and often characterized by tensions. For example, politicians often are accused of being led by short-lived media cycles, thereby losing sight of broader societal interests. The media, on the other hand, are accused of primarily seeking out conflicts and sensational news, a type of political reporting that is detrimental to both politics and society. To what extent are these allegations justified? What criteria are decisive for journalists in selecting their reporting? And on the other hand, what factors decide whether politicians take political action on the basis of a media report? These questions are examined in the Netherlands and Switzerland by means of two experiments: an experiment with political journalists and a second one with politicians.

Studies show that politicians often refer to media reports in debates. However, this is not enough basis to assume an influence of the media on the politics. Politicians themselves are an important source of information for journalists, and therefore it might well be that they themselves have launched the reports to which they refer to in parliament. In order to be able to determine what is the cause and what is the effect in this complex interaction, the present study uses an experimental approach. In a so-called "factorial survey experiment", journalists and politicians were presented with fictional but realistically formulated party press releases and media reports. The hypothesis was that the decision of whether a message is selected by these actors depends on the sender of the message (party or newspaper), the message itself, and the recipient (journalist or politician).

Journalists' selection: How politics becomes news Based on what criteria do political journalists in the Netherlands and in Switzerland decide whether they select a party press release for reporting? There is a large body of literature on news values theory, i.e. the criteria that journalists, as so-called "gatekeepers," apply when selecting messages. However, these theories have seldomly been tested with experiments. Moreover, little is known about the relevance of news values for political news coverage specifically. This experiment was conducted with journalists who regularly report on the Second Chamber, the "Tweede Kamer" in The Hague ($n = 67$) and the "Nationalrat" in Berne ($n = 84$). They were presented with fictional media reports by political parties and asked whether they would select them for reporting. The results indicate the central role of the sender and

the content of the press release in journalistic selection. When a party communicates on a topic that is not at the core of their program, journalists are more interested than usual. However, it is rather surprising that it does not matter whether the communication cites a member of party leadership or an elected member of parliament without any further mention of function. Last but not least, the study shows that the political system, in particular the distribution of power in politics, plays a crucial role. Parties with more political power have better chances to be selected for reporting, regardless of the content of the message. In addition to the sender of the message, some aspects of the content of the media message also influence the selection process. Journalists also differentiate between the type of political action announced: a simple parliamentary question, which often has no great political consequences, generates much less attention than a law proposal. Contrary to expectations, criticism of the government, on the other hand, hardly increases the interest of journalists, even if it is expressed by a government party. This is particularly noticeable in the Dutch context with majority governments. The results also show that the personal attitude of the journalists plays a role: messages on topics that a journalist considers to be more relevant are more likely to be taken into account. However, an influence of the political orientation of the journalists can only be detected in Switzerland: the closer a journalist is to a party, the more likely he is to select that party's message. Overall, the experiment shows that political aspects are the main focus for journalists when they select messages for reporting.

Politicians' selection: How news becomes politics Do politicians use a similar set of criteria as journalists when they decide whether to act on the basis of a media report? In order to clarify this question, a second experiment was conducted. Elected national politicians were interviewed in Switzerland ($n = 50$) and in the Netherlands ($n = 30$). They were presented with a number of fictional but realistically formulated newspaper items, and asked two questions. First: Would you mention the article if a parliamentary party group (faction) meeting was held 'today'? Second: Would you take political action, such as asking a parliamentary question, based on the article? Again, influences of the sender of the message, of the message itself, and of the recipient were distinguished. The newspaper publishing the report had no systematic effect: whether an article is published by a popular tabloid newspaper or by a quality outlet has no influence on whether the politician carries an article into the political process. The content of the article is more important. The results show that politicians are more likely to react to reporting on negative developments than positive ones. Very interesting is the influence of the topic of an article. The experiment shows that politicians will mention different articles behind closed doors at a parliamentary party group meeting than they would when taking a more publically visible political action, such as asking a parliamentary question. This depends on three aspects: whether the issue is a core issue of the party, whether it is an issue the politician is specialized in, and whether s/he regards it as currently politically relevant.

There are differences between the two countries that can be explained by the different institutional context. Dutch politicians are likely to take political action based on a media report dealing with a subject they are specialized in. In the context of a parliamentary party group meeting, however, it is important for them to consider whether the issue is one of the core issues of the party, and whether they consider it momentarily politically important. Swiss politicians, however, do not distinguish between a reaction in the public sphere and a reaction in the parliamentary party group. In both cases whether an issue is a core issue of politician's parties and whether they regard the issue as politically important at that moment is decisive for a reaction. These differences between the two countries are likely to be due to the political system: as politicians in Switzerland are elected in relatively small constituencies (Cantons) and parties have little influence on which candidates are elected, so politicians want to be visible for their voters. The goal is to benefit from the party profile and show that they are on top of the issues that are relevant for the public (media). In the Netherlands, on the other hand, the party has a much greater influence on which politicians are elected as preference votes hardly influence election outcomes. In this system, it is therefore important for politicians to adhere to the division of tasks within the party and, above all, to develop a profile of their own core themes in the public sphere. All in all, the experiment with the politicians underlines that they are strategic actors who take into account the institutional context.

Importance of the study In summary, the complex research design of the experiments allows important insights into the interplay between politicians and journalists. The comparison of the countries shows how important the institutional framework is. Even if politicians follow media reporting very closely, the relation between the two is different than simple knee-jerk reaction. Even if politics as a whole might seem to follow media coverage, the results show that, depending on the issue at stake each time, different politicians react to media reports. They do so on the basis of strategic considerations. This also applies to journalists. The direct comparison of the selection mechanisms, made possible by the parallel design of the examination, also shows that individual criteria in the interplay between journalists and politicians can have reinforcing effect, whereas other criteria tend to have a balancing effect and might cancel each other out. From a methodological point of view, the present project is also an important addition to the existing literature. Experimental studies with elites are rare. The factorial survey experiment used in this study allowed experimental research to be carried out under very realistic conditions in such elite populations in two countries.

Acknowledgements

A PhD? Never! This is what I said in the summer of 2010 halfway through my Research Master in Amsterdam. Surely I enjoyed how we were pushing each other to achieve higher grades during the Research Master. But spending years working on *one* question all by myself sounded like my worst nightmare. Yet, here we are, with a book that contains years of working on the question of politics-media influence. What happened?

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Curriculum Vitae

Luzia Helfer (1984, Biel/Switzerland) relocated to the Netherlands in 2009 to pursue a Research Master degree in Communication Science at the University of Amsterdam (2011, with honors). Working as a journalist in Switzerland during her Bachelor's degree at the University of Fribourg (2007), it was analyzing viewer data for the Swiss television network 3+ that sparked her passion for data and motivated her to move abroad. From 2009 to 2016 she pursued her PhD research at Leiden University and the University of Antwerp under the supervision of Prof. Rudy B. Andeweg and Prof. Peter Van Aelst. Her study was part of a larger project lead by Prof. Peter Van Aelst financed by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research NWO [grant 452-10-016]. Her research has been published in renown journals and she has presented her work at numerous academic conferences and workshops around the world. Luzia Helfer is currently a lecturer in Communication Science at the University of Amsterdam.

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