



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

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

Helper, L.

Citation

Helper, L. (2016, December 9). *How politics becomes news and news becomes politics. A comparative experimental study of the politics-media relationship*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/44701>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/44701>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/44701> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Helfer, L.

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

Issue Date: 2016-12-09

How Politics Becomes News and News Becomes Politics

**A comparative experimental study of the
politics-media relationship**

Cover

Seton Beggs | Studio BAR

Typesetting

Luzia Helfer using L^AT_EX and inspired by a template by Cynthia van Vonno

Figures by Christof Scheidegger | Atelier Scheidegger

Print

Print Service Ede

© 2016 Luzia Helfer. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanic, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission in writing from the proprietor.

© 2016 Luzia Helfer. Alle rechten voorbehouden. Niets uit deze uitgave mag worden verveelvoudigd, opgeslagen in een geautomatiseerd gegevensbestand, of openbaar gemaakt, in enige vorm of op enige wijze, hetzij elektronisch, mechanisch, door fotokopieën, opnamen, of op enige andere manier, zonder voorafgaande schriftelijke toestemming van de rechthebbende.



**Universiteit
Leiden**
Sociale Wetenschappen

How Politics Becomes News and News Becomes Politics

**A comparative experimental study of the
politics-media relationship**

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van
de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof.mr. C.J.J.M. Stolkers,
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties
te verdedigen op vrijdag 9 december 2016
klokke 10:00 uur

door

Luzia Helfer
geboren te Biel/Bienne in Zwitserland in 1984

Promotoren

Prof. dr. Rudy B. Andeweg

Prof. dr. Peter Van Aelst, Universiteit Antwerpen & Universiteit Leiden

Promotiecommissie

Prof. dr. Joop van Holsteijn

Dr. Michael Meffert

Dr. Rosa van Santen, Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid

Prof. dr. Rens Vliegenthart, Universiteit van Amsterdam

Prof. dr. Stefaan Walgrave, Universiteit Antwerpen



Faculteit Sociale Wetenschappen
Departement Politieke Wetenschappen

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 stussen 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

Contents

List of Figures	iii
List of Tables	v
1 The interdependent politics-media relationship	1
1.1 How journalists and politicians interact	4
1.2 A heuristic model of influence	7
1.2.1 The Politics-Media Wheel	9
1.2.2 Micro, meso and macro level influences	13
1.3 The parallel comparative research design	16
1.4 A brief outline of the book	18
2 Methodological challenges	19
2.1 Introducing the factorial survey experiment	20
2.1.1 The factorial survey from design to analyses	23
2.1.2 Strengths and weaknesses	30
2.2 Alike but different: Switzerland and the Netherlands	33
2.2.1 Media systems compared	35
2.2.2 Political systems compared	37
3 Journalists' selection: How politics becomes news	41
3.1 Introduction	41
3.2 Expectations	44
3.2.1 Politician and party influences	46
3.2.2 Party press release influences	47
3.2.3 Journalist and outlet influences	50
3.2.4 Interaction effects	52
3.3 Methods	53
3.3.1 Experimental design	53
3.3.2 Journalist and outlet variables	55
3.3.3 Data and respondents	56
3.4 Results	58
3.4.1 Politician and party influences	59

Contents

3.4.2	Party press release influences	60
3.4.3	Journalist and outlet influences	62
3.4.4	Interaction effects	63
3.5	Discussion	63
4	Politicians' selection: How news becomes politics	69
4.1	Introduction	69
4.2	Expectations	71
4.2.1	Media outlet influences	72
4.2.2	News report influences	73
4.2.3	Politician, party and political system influences	74
4.2.4	Interaction effects	81
4.3	Methods	83
4.3.1	Experimental design	83
4.3.2	Politician and party variables	86
4.3.3	Data and respondents	86
4.4	Results	89
4.4.1	Media outlet influences	89
4.4.2	News report influences	90
4.4.3	Politician, party and political system influences	91
4.4.4	Interaction effects	97
4.5	Discussion	98
5	Linking the selection moments	103
5.1	Selection by journalists and politicians compared	104
5.1.1	The actor perspective	104
5.1.2	The news values perspective	110
5.2	Conclusions	115
	Bibliography	121
	A Overview of the operationalizations	139
	B Documentation of the study of journalists' selection	141
	C Documentation of the study of politicians' selection	163
	Nederlandstalige samenvatting	187
	Deutschsprachige Zusammenfassung	191
	English summary	195
	Acknowledgements	199
	Curriculum Vitae	201

List of Figures

1.1	The Politics-Media Wheel (PMW)	11
1.2	Overview of the parallel comparative research design	17
2.1	Overview of steps in designing a factorial survey experiment	25
3.1	The research design of the study of journalists' selection	43
3.2	Example of a fictional party press release shown to journalists (translated)	55
4.1	The research design of the study of politicians' selection	71
4.2	Example of a fictional news report shown to politicians (translated) . . .	85
4.3	Influence of parliamentary experience on Swiss politicians' reactions to reports covering positive/negative developments	98

List of Tables

2.1	Experimentally manipulated variables and values of the studies of the selection of messages by journalists and politicians	24
2.2	Comparison of Swiss and Dutch political systems	37
3.1	Overview of hypothesized effects on the selection by journalists	49
3.2	Overview of the tested issues with corresponding issue owners and journalists' self-reported political relevance of issues per country	53
3.3	Overview of experimentally manipulated variables in party press release .	54
3.4	Overview of respondents (political journalists)	57
3.5	Hierarchical regression model of sender, message and receiver effects . .	61
4.1	Overview of hypothesized effects on the selection by politicians	79
4.2	Overview of experimentally manipulated variables in news reports	83
4.3	Operationalization of issue ownership and development in news reports .	84
4.4	Overview of number of respondents and response rates by party	87
4.5	Descriptives of the dependent variables	89
4.6	Marginal effects of the significant effect of the type of development described in news reports on Swiss and Dutch politicians' selection	91
4.7	Hierarchical regression models of Swiss politicians' selection of news reports	95
4.8	Hierarchical regression models of Dutch politicians' selection of news reports	96
4.9	Marginal effects of tenure depending on the development covered in a news report for Swiss politicians	97
5.1	ICC scores of selection by journalists and politicians for both countries .	105
5.2	Overview of the results of the parallel comparative research design . . .	109
A.1	Overview of the operationalizations applied in the studies of the selection by journalists and politicians	139

List of Tables

B.1	Detailed results Swiss journalist study, step-wise linear hierarchical regression	160
B.2	Detailed results Dutch journalist study, step-wise linear hierarchical regression	161
C.1	Hierarchical regression models of Swiss politicians' mentioning news reports at parliamentary party group meetings	182
C.2	Hierarchical regression models of Swiss politicians' taking political action in reaction to a news report	183
C.3	Hierarchical regression models of Dutch politicians' mentioning news reports at parliamentary party group meetings	184
C.4	Hierarchical regression models of Dutch politicians' taking political action in reaction to a news report	185