



How the Media Shape Perceptions of Right-Wing Populist Leaders

Linda Bos , Wouter van der Brug & Claes de Vreese

To cite this article: Linda Bos , Wouter van der Brug & Claes de Vreese (2011) How the Media Shape Perceptions of Right-Wing Populist Leaders, *Political Communication*, 28:2, 182-206, DOI: [10.1080/10584609.2011.564605](https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2011.564605)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2011.564605>



Published online: 29 Apr 2011.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 7377



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 34 View citing articles [↗](#)

How the Media Shape Perceptions of Right-Wing Populist Leaders

LINDA BOS, WOUTER VAN DER BRUG, and CLAES DE VREESE

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

Keywords populism, media effects, leadership, right-wing populist parties, electoral behavior

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

A second, somewhat related reason is that these parties are very loosely organized around the central leader. Many of these parties do not even organize formally as parties,

Linda Bos is a PhD candidate in the Amsterdam School of Communication Research at the University of Amsterdam. Wouter van der Brug is Professor of Political Science in the Department of Political Science at the University of Amsterdam. Claes de Vreese is Professor of Political Communication in the Amsterdam School of Communication Research at the University of Amsterdam.

Address correspondence to Linda Bos, Amsterdam School of Communication Research, University of Amsterdam, Kloveniersburgwal 48, 1012 CX, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. E-mail: L.Bos@uva.nl

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

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

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

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

In sum, in this article we answer the following research question: To what extent are perceptions of right-wing populist party leaders, in terms of their perceived effectiveness and legitimacy, affected by the media coverage of these leaders, in terms of prominence, populism, and authoritativeness? The conceptual model is shown in Figure 1.

As a research venue, we use the Dutch national parliamentary elections of 2006, in which several right-wing populist parties participated. We employ panel survey data in

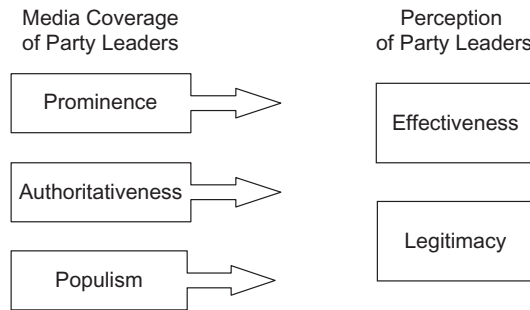


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

which perceptions of two right-wing populist party leaders and four mainstream party leaders are measured twice, 2 months prior to and the night before the elections. These are Geert Wilders (Freedom Party) and Marco Pastors (One Netherlands), Jan Peter Balkenende (Christian democratic CDA), Wouter Bos (labor party PvdA), Mark Rutte (liberal party VVD), and Femke Halsema (green party GroenLinks). To assess media coverage, we use systematic content analyses of 17 media outlets for the 8 weeks before the elections, with a total of 1,001 stories.

The Media Dependency of Right-Wing Populist Party Leaders

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

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

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

“while the media at times pander to racial stereotyping, in general they are hostile to the extreme right” (Eatwell, 2003, p. 60).

In this article, we test the effects of the media on the image of right-wing populist party leaders and make a comparison with mainstream party leaders to see which of the two views holds: Are right-wing populist party leaders more or equally dependent on the mass media compared to mainstream leaders? We look at two aspects of the image of party leaders: effectiveness and legitimacy.

Party Leaders’ Effectiveness and Legitimacy

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

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

Party Leaders’ Media Coverage: Prominence, Authoritativeness, and Populism

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

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

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

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

Prominence

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

Populism: Rhetoric and Style

The second dimension we distinguish is populism, which has two components: a populist style and a populist rhetoric (or substance). Research has shown that substantive aspects

of populists' rhetoric have to be set aside from populist-style elements of media coverage (Bos et al., 2010). In this study, we therefore include both aspects of populism.

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

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

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

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

Authoritativeness

The third dimension we focus on is authoritativeness, which refers to how knowledgeable a politician is about the political topics discussed. Because voters base their electoral preference (partially) on substantial grounds, it is essential for party leaders to get their ideological message across; they have to be able to convey their position on a set of core issues. Moreover, voters will prefer a party leader who is also able to convince others, especially within parliament or within the broader political realm. To be authoritative in this interpretation is thus highly related to being persuasive: To what extent can the party leader convince voters that he or she has a strong case (i.e., is credible; Hovland & Weiss, 1951)? We argue that party leaders are more authoritative when they use arguments and when they elaborate on their viewpoints (O'Keefe, 1998).

In this article, we look at two aspects of arguments: reference to statistics and information-source citations. Even though experimental evidence is inconclusive as to whether quantitative evidence is convincing (O'Keefe, 1998, 2002; Reynolds & Reynolds, 2002), the first aspect can be seen as evidence of the substantial knowledge of the source. As for the second, when referring to other sources as evidence, one's own credibility is enhanced (O'Keefe, 1998; Reinard, 1998; Reynolds & Reynolds, 2002), and it can also be seen as evidence of substantive knowledge on the topic. Finally, we look at the extent to which right-wing populists propose solutions to the problems raised and assume that politicians who bring up problems and do not offer suggestions to overcome them are perceived to have a lack of knowledge on the issues addressed. Landau et al. (2004) find that "when reminders of one's vulnerability and mortality are highly salient" (p. 1137), support is higher for leaders who are able to help people manage their fears. Overall, we assume that right-wing populist party leaders who are presented as being more authoritative in the mass media are perceived as more effective (H4), since a party leader who appears to be more knowledgeable will also be more able to convince others in parliament and/or in public debate.

Differences Between Party Leaders

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

Research Setting

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

be more dependent upon the media and possible media effects are assumed to be more pronounced (Mudde, 2007).

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

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

Method

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

Panel Data

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

To test the unidimensionality of our scales, we employed a method known as Mokken scaling, which is a probabilistic version of the better known Guttman scale (e.g., Jacoby,

1991; Mokken, 1971; Van Schuur, 2003).² Descriptives of the main variables are shown in Appendix A.

Our two *dependent* variables are direct measures of the effectiveness and legitimacy of all party leaders included in the analysis, each of which was measured with two variables on 7-point scales at two points in time.³ Mokken scale analysis showed that effectiveness forms a strong scale ($H = 0.79$ at $t - 1$ and $H = 0.76$ at $t1$) and legitimacy forms a medium scale ($H = 0.38$ at $t - 1$ and $H = 0.30$ at $t1$).⁴

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

Analysis

We reordered the data in a stacked form so that the unit of analysis is the respondent–party leader combination. Our data set of 401 respondents contains evaluations of six political candidates, so the stacked data matrix has 2,406 (6×401) entries. This data reordering makes it possible to employ a research design that simultaneously accounts for inter-individual variation and intra-individual variation in the evaluations of different leaders.⁶ In the new stacked data matrix, one respondent is represented by as many cases as there are party leaders included in the analysis. In this case, these are the right-wing populists Geert Wilders and Marco Pastors on the one hand and the four most important established party leaders on the other.⁷ In the design of the stacked data matrix, the independent variables indicate relationships between voters and parties rather than between voter characteristics (for examples of the implementation of this method, see van der Brug et al., 2000; van der Brug & Mughan, 2007; Walgrave, Varone, & Dumont, 2006).

We propose the following simple regression model:

$$\begin{aligned} Public_Image_{t1} = & a + b_1 Public_Image_{t-1} + b_2 Media_Coverage \\ & + b_3 Control_Variables + e, \end{aligned}$$

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

Content Analysis

We conducted a systematic content analysis of 17 Dutch media outlets—12 mainstream media outlets (seven newspapers, three news programs, two current affairs programs) and five infotainment programs—from the end of September 2006 until the Dutch national elections of November 22 of the same year ($n = 1,001$).⁸ We included all news and current affairs programs during this period. Infotainment programs were only coded when party leaders were mentioned or interviewed. For the newspaper articles, we conducted a search in Lexis Nexis, the online newspaper database,⁹ with keywords relating to the election campaign. We took a systematic sample of the newspaper articles found and coded 41% of the articles in our target population.¹⁰ Eleven Dutch native speakers conducted the coding. The unit of analysis and coding unit was the individual news story, characterized by a distinct overall issue focus. We included 74 items in a posttest and conducted an additional posttest on 35 items for indicators of authoritativeness and populism.¹¹ Overall, we found that the intercoder reliability of our new measures was acceptable (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002), with percentage agreement ranging from 66.84 to 98.19.

Measures. As for prominence, for each party leader the amount of attention within the item was coded by looking at the total number of words (newspaper) in the article or the length of the item (TV news and current affairs programs), as well as the page on which the article appeared, the consecutive number in the TV program, or the reference in the leader. For infotainment programs, the amount of attention for a party leader was measured by coding the situation in which he or she appeared: as the main guest on the show, as one of the guests sitting at the table during the whole show, as one of the guests sitting at the table during a part of the show, or as part of a (short) video clip. To measure the impact of the coverage of the party leaders, we constructed a formula to calculate the prominence of the appearance of a party leader in an item, based on Vliegenthart (2007) and Watt et al. (1993).¹²

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

We operationalized “populist style” by measuring whether a certain party leader referred to a critical situation, emphasized decisiveness and fast and strong measures or was presented as such, and presented him- or herself as a manager or was presented as such. Additionally, we measured whether the party leader in question used intensifiers such as “surely” and “certainly” and whether he or she used hedges and hesitations. The Mokken scale analysis showed that these items form a medium scale ($H = 0.46$).¹³ Two

additional indicators of populist rhetoric, “anti-elitism” (operationalized by coding whether party leaders critiqued the established political order) and “heartland” (operationalized by coding whether the party leader mentioned the man in the street, or the common man) were included in the analysis as separate variables.

The following items were developed to measure “authoritativeness”: whether the party leader in question used arguments, referred to statistics and/or other sources, and by coding whether the party leader proposed solutions for perceived problems.¹⁴ The Mokken scale analysis showed that these items form a medium scale ($H = 0.45$).

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

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

$$Populism_{party_leaderi} = \frac{Populism_{party_leaderi_outleti} \cdot Media_exposure_{outleti}}{\sum Media_exposure_{outletij}},$$

which represents the individual respondents’ exposure to the populist style of the various party leaders. These weighted media exposure variables are thus contingent on the media outlets each respondent uses, as well as on the amount of prominence, populist rhetoric and style, and authoritativeness of each party leader in each outlet (see Appendix A for the descriptives).¹⁵

Results

First of all, Appendix A shows individual media exposure¹⁶ to the prominence, populist rhetoric, populist style, and authoritativeness of the various party leaders. If we take the most successful right-wing populist, Geert Wilders, as an example and compare him with the most successful mainstream party leader, Jan-Peter Balkenende, we see that the latter is perceived as more prominent: The average individual media exposure to news items in which Balkenende appears is 12.71, whereas it is −10.46 for news items in which there is attention to Wilders. On the other hand, we find that our respondents are more often exposed to the populist style of Wilders ($M = 0.32$) than they are to the populist style of Balkenende ($M = -0.39$). And the same goes for authoritativeness: Respondents are more often exposed to the authoritativeness of Wilders ($M = 0.31$) than they are to the authoritativeness of Balkenende ($M = 0.03$). Overall, we see that the differences between and within the two types of party leaders are substantial. We, however, cannot draw any conclusions

about the media dependency of right-wing populists based on these differences. In order to do so, we have to look at the relationship between the weighted media coverage variables and the perceived effectiveness and legitimacy of the various party leaders.

Moreover, the descriptives (see Appendix A) for our main variables show that perceived effectiveness and perceived legitimacy vary substantially over the various politicians. On average, we see that perceived effectiveness as well as perceived legitimacy is lowest among right-wing populists. Moreover, they also vary over time and change during the course of the campaign: For all party leaders except Balkenende, perceived effectiveness is lower at the end of the campaign, whereas perceived legitimacy is generally higher except for Halsema (Greens). The variation in the dependent variables is also illustrated by the explained variance of the simple autoregressive model, in which effectiveness and legitimacy are only explained by their lagged values. The overall explained variance of this model is .596 for effectiveness at $t1$ and .382 for legitimacy at $t1$, which illustrates that other factors than the lagged value of the dependent variable can have an impact, such as media coverage variables.

Table 1 presents the effects of media coverage on the perceived effectiveness of party leaders. In the base model, we find a significant positive effect of party preference on the dependent variable: The higher the preference for the party in question, the greater the positive change in effectiveness. In Model 2, we find significant effects of three of our media coverage variables. First of all, the more prominent a political leader appears in the mass media, the greater the positive change in effectiveness. Moreover, we find a negative effect of the coverage of party leaders using a populist style and a positive effect from the depiction of an authoritative style. Finally, party leaders who are presented as making more appeals to the heartland are perceived to be less effective.

In Model 3, the interactions¹⁷ with the dummy right-wing populist party leader are given, which forms a test for our hypotheses.¹⁸ After all, our hypotheses focus on the effects of the media coverage of *right-wing populist leaders* on the perception of these leaders. First, overall, we find that our media coverage variables lead to a 7.9% increase in the intra-individual explained variance and a 6.0% increase in the overall explained variance. Moreover, our findings support H1a, which stated the expectation that more prominent right-wing populist party leaders are perceived to be more effective: The main effect is significant, and there is no significant effect of the interaction with the dummy right-wing populist leader. This implies that the effect running from prominence to effectiveness is positive and significant for all party leaders, mainstream or right-wing populist.

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

H3a, which stated that right-wing populists who are presented in a more populist style are perceived to be more effective, is also not supported: We do not find a positive effect of populism on effectiveness. Instead, we find that mainstream party leaders who are presented with a populist style in the mass media are perceived to be *less* effective

Table 1
Fixed effects regression analysis predicting perceived effectiveness at $t1$

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Respondent characteristics			
Effectiveness $t - 1$	0.696 (0.023)***	0.460 (0.025)***	0.443 (0.026)***
Party preference $t - 1$	0.143 (0.023)***	0.135 (0.021)***	0.132 (0.021)***
Left-right distance	0.085 (0.038)	0.022 (0.021)	0.015 (0.028)
Immigration issue	0.573 (0.589)	0.697 (0.544)	0.745 (0.541)
Political Internet use	0.527 (0.652)	0.432 (0.588)	0.474 (0.557)
Interpersonal communication	0.196 (0.336)	-0.083 (0.303)	0.190 (0.317)
Media coverage			
Prominence		0.088 (0.007)***	0.071 (0.011)***
Populist rhetoric: Anti-elitism		0.438 (0.946)	1.247 (1.365)
Populist rhetoric: Heartland		-3.678 (1.595)*	-3.059 (2.357)
Populist style		-0.712 (0.226)**	-1.352 (0.390)**
Authoritativeness		0.877 (0.375)*	1.300 (0.608)*
RWP leader			-0.259 (1.460)
Interactions			
RWP Leader × Prominence			0.048 (0.127)
RWP Leader × Anti-elitism			-1.081 (1.945)
RWP Leader × Heartland			1.825 (3.236)
RWP Leader × Populism			1.987 (0.746)*
RWP Leader × Authoritativeness			-1.414 (0.832)
Intercept	2.426 (0.197)***	4.317 (0.213)***	4.669 (0.273)***
R²			
Within	.624	.696	.703
Between	.315	.259	.248
Overall	.561	.617	.621

Note. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard deviations in parentheses.

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

($B = -1.352$, $SE = 0.282$, $p < .001$). However, this is not the case for right-wing populists: The positive interaction for these party leaders indicates that when they are perceived as more populist, this has a small, positive yet insignificant effect on the change in their perceived effectiveness ($B = 0.634$, $SE = 0.500$).

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

The results of the fixed effects analysis on the perceived legitimacy of party leaders are given in Table 2. The first model indicates that changes in legitimacy are again affected by party preference. In the second model, we find one significant effect from our media coverage variables: The more prominent a party leader is during the election campaign, the more legitimate he or she is perceived to be.

In the third model, we include reference to immigration topics as a control variable, because we assume that perceptions of legitimacy might also be affected by the extent to which party leaders are identified with taboo, or extreme right, topics such as immigration topics. Inclusion of this variable renders the effect of prominence insignificant. Overall, in the fourth model, we find that inclusion of our media coverage variables leads to a 3.9% increase in the intra-individual explained variance and a 2.9% increase in the overall explained variance.

Finally, because we find no significant interactions between the dummy “right-wing populist party leader” and our media coverage variables (see Model 4), we can conclude that the observed effects in Model 3 are the same for all party leaders, right-wing populist or mainstream. We can now review our hypotheses. First of all, due to the insignificant main effect of prominence on perceived legitimacy, we do not find support for H1b: Right-wing populist party leaders who are more prominent in the mass media are not perceived to be more legitimate. Similarly, we find no support for our hypotheses regarding anti-elitism (H2b) and populist style (H3b). We expected a negative effect running from anti-elitism and populist style to perceived legitimacy, and instead we find no significant effects, positive or negative, for mainstream party leaders or right-wing populists. And RQ1 can be answered: There is no significant effect of appeals to the heartland on the perceived legitimacy (no significant main effect and no significant interaction effect) of right-wing populist party leaders (as well as mainstream party leaders).¹⁹

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

Discussion

This study tested the extent to which the image of right-wing populist leaders is affected by mass media coverage. As do all party leaders, right-wing populists need the mass media to provide them with a stage from which they can convey their ideas to the public, but also, by displaying a certain style, to create an image that has a positive effect on their public perception. In this article, we tested whether and to what extent the media are “friend or foe” (Mudde, 2007, p. 253) of these party leaders in a real-life setting combining an extensive content analysis with two-wave panel data. We find significant effects

Table 2
Fixed effects regression analysis predicting perceived legitimacy at $t1$

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Respondent characteristics				
Legitimacy $t - 1$	0.522 (0.027)***	0.458 (0.030)***	0.425 (0.030)***	0.418 (0.028)***
Party preference $t - 1$	0.190 (0.021)***	0.157 (0.019)***	0.149 (0.019)***	0.145 (0.019)***
Left-right distance	0.051 (0.021)*	-0.010 (0.034)	-0.024 (0.024)	-0.032 (0.026)
Immigration issue	0.496 (0.674)	0.562 (0.656)	0.624 (0.644)	0.611 (0.644)
Political Internet use	-0.038 (0.699)	0.055 (0.644)	0.144 (0.662)	0.113 (0.631)
Interpersonal communication	0.703 (0.502)	0.568 (0.519)	0.707 (0.486)	0.709 (0.532)
Media coverage				
Prominence		0.030 (0.012)*	0.012 (0.007)	0.007 (0.010)
Populist rhetoric: Anti-elitism		0.011 (0.888)	-0.433 (0.946)	-0.139 (1.536)
Populist rhetoric: Heartland		-3.588 (2.500)	-0.930 (1.405)	-1.472 (2.470)
Populist style		-0.203 (0.187)	0.122 (0.204)	0.114 (0.431)
Immigration topics			-3.229 (0.526)**	-3.661 (4.235)
RWP leader				-3.580 (2.026)
Interactions				
RWP Leader \times Prominence				-0.242 (0.154)
RWP Leader \times Anti-elitism				-1.338 (2.845)
RWP Leader \times Heartland				3.635 (3.101)
RWP Leader \times Populism				-0.001 (0.811)
RWP Leader \times Immigration Topics				3.040 (4.446)
Intercept	4.280 (0.245)***	4.795 (0.248)***	5.106 (0.270)***	5.170 (0.471)***
R^2				
Within	.429	.453	.467	.471
Between	.226	.215	.218	.216
Overall	.376	.393	.405	.407

Note. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard deviations in parentheses.

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

of right-wing populists' depiction in the media on the public's perception of these leaders. In other words, how politicians are portrayed in the media "does matter and can be pivotal" (Iyengar & Simon, 2000, p. 150): Media coverage shapes candidates' images by making certain political candidates and/or their attributes more salient.

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

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

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

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

Furthermore, using a populist style does not harm right-wing populists, yet it does not help them either. And this is the one media effect that differs for right-wing populist leaders on the one hand and mainstream leaders on the other: We find a significant positive interaction effect between populist style and the dummy right-wing populist leader. Whereas mainstream party leaders are evaluated negatively when they act in a populist manner, right-wing populist leaders are not punished for it. This is a striking result, especially in the light of the populist zeitgeist in which "populist discourse has become

mainstream in the politics of western democracies” (Mudde, 2004, p. 542): The populist rhetoric and style is more and more adopted by mainstream leaders, possibly in the hope of positively affecting their image and, subsequently, increasing their electoral success. And it also sheds light on the important question posed in the literature: How is the populist discourse received among voters (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007)? A possible explanation could be that voters associate populism with populist leadership, and therefore if mainstream leaders act in a populist manner it may be seen as strategic and insincere behavior, which is subsequently evaluated negatively. This finding also shows that the effects of the same attribute—populist style—can vary across different political candidates (Funk, 1999).

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

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

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

Because these parties are often new and have a less stable electoral base, it is sometimes argued that they depend more than other parties upon the media for the formation of their image. On the other hand, research on right-wing populist parties indicates few differences between right-wing populist and mainstream parties. In our study, we tested both views and, overall, find no evidence for the assumption that right-wing populists are more dependent on the media than others: There are no differences between right-wing populists and leaders of mainstream parties when it comes to the extent to which they depend on

the mass media. This finding connects to the idea that right-wing populist parties should not be perceived as representing a “normal pathology” (Scheuch & Klingemann, 1967) but a “pathological normalcy” (Mudde, 2010): “The populist radical right constitutes a radicalization of mainstream views,” which consequentially means that these parties should be studied by using concepts and theories of mainstream political science. For instance, van der Brug et al. (2000, 2003), van der Brug and Mughan (2007), and Bos and van der Brug (2010) demonstrate that voters for right-wing populist parties are just as rational as voters for any other (mainstream) party. They base their vote on the same ideological and pragmatic considerations and are not more than others persuaded by charismatic, effective, or legitimate leaders.

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

Notes

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

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

3. Legitimacy was measured with the following two items:

1. To reach their goal some politicians are willing to ignore important democratic rules, while others will comply with these democratic rules under all circumstances. Below you see a number of current politicians. Could you tell me whether you think that they have always complied with the democratic principles and that they always will? (Responses could vary from 1 [*doesn't care about democratic rules*] to 7 [*always complies with the democratic rules*].)
2. Sometimes people think a certain politician or party is dangerous. They are afraid that when that politician rises to power he or she will pose a threat to democracy. Others are of the opinion that this will not be the case. Below you will see a number of politicians. Imagine a situation in which this politician has risen to power—do you think that this politician would then pose a threat to democracy? (Responses could vary from 1 [*If he/she rose to power he/she would pose a real threat to democracy*] to 7 [*If he/she rose to power he/she would definitely not pose a threat to democracy*].)

Effectiveness was measured with two items as well:

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

- 1 [will probably have little influence on policy] to 7 [will probably have a lot of influence on policy].)
2. Some politicians you don't hear from, whereas other politicians exert a lot of influence on public debates. How important have the following politicians been in the public debate? (Responses could vary from 1 [does not shape the public debate at all] to 7 [shapes the public debate to a large extent].)
4. According to Mokken, the coefficient H (homogeneity of the items) has to be .30 or higher to be a scale. When H is higher than .50, it is a strong scale.
5. Because they are very often included as important explanatory variables, we additionally ran analyses in which we included measures of political interest and political knowledge. However, because we controlled for the lagged variable, the effects of these variables on the dependent variable were not significant, which is why we left them out of the analyses presented in this article.
6. To create the stacked data matrix, the generic independent variables had to be linearly transformed. As a result, their effects are positive.
7. We deliberately omitted Socialist Party (SP) leader Jan Marijnissen from the analysis, even though this party had great electoral success, the main reason being the populist nature of the party. We want to compare right-wing populist party leaders with leaders of established parties. Since the SP is often considered to be a left-wing populist party, we could have biased the results by including it in the group of established parties. We did, however, estimate our models with the SP included in the group of established parties, but this did not change the results substantively.
8. For more extensive information on the nature of the content analysis data, see Bos et al. (2010).
9. See <http://academic.lexisnexis.nl/uva>.
10. Because of a shortage of newspaper articles in which right-wing populist leaders were coded as one of the actors, we coded all of the articles in which Geert Wilders and Marco Pastors spoke about substantive matters. As a result, an extra 42 items were coded. These items were only used to estimate the positions of the right-wing populist leaders on the populism and authoritativeness dimensions.
11. See Bos et al. (2010) for a more detailed description of the intercoder reliability check and the results.
12. See Bos et al. (2010) for the formula.
13. The additional items referring to the ideological core of populism, anti-elitism, and heartland do not fit the scale.
14. In the original scale, we also included an item that measured whether the party leader referred to facts. However, due to low intercoder reliability results, we had to exclude the item from the scale.
15. Because the content analysis data are limited and provide only limited variance, we unfortunately cannot test interactions between the various aspects of the media coverage of right-wing populist leaders.
16. These variables are centered around their mean in order to use them in interaction terms.
17. The interactions are calculated not by using the original variables, but their deviations from the mean (Jaccard, Turrisi, & Wan, 1990).
18. We understand combining the two very different right-wing populist party leaders Geert Wilders and Marco Pastors into one dummy called "right-wing populist party leader" might raise questions with the reader. Tests did confirm, however, that including a dummy for each right-wing populist party leader individually did not change the results. We did not choose for this solution, because we believe that including two dummies and thereby doubling the number of interactions in our analysis would not lead to a substantive addition and would make the presentation of our results even more complex.
19. It can be argued that audience segmentation can have a polarizing effect; that is, media effects can differ between left-wing and right-wing parts of the electorate in such a way that the overall effect is insignificant. We have, however, tested for this and found that media effects are the same for audience members from all ideological backgrounds.

References

- Albertazzi, D. (2007). Addressing the people: A comparative study of the Lega Nord's and Lega dei Ticinesi's political rhetoric and styles of propaganda. *Modern Italy*, 12, 327–347.
- Albertazzi, D., & McDonnell, D. (2008). *Twenty-first century populism: The spectre of Western European democracy*. Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Art, D. (2007). Reacting to the radical right: Lessons from Germany and Austria. *Party Politics*, 13, 331–349.
- Bale, T. (2003). Cinderella and her ugly sisters: The mainstream and the extreme right in Europe's bipolarising party systems. *West European Politics*, 26(3), 67–90.
- Barabas, J., & Jerit, J. (2009). Estimating the causal effects of media coverage on policy-specific knowledge. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53, 73–89.
- Beck, P. A., Dalton, R. J., Greene, S., & Huckfeldt, R. (2002). The social calculus of voting: Interpersonal, media, and organizational influences on presidential choices. *American Political Science Review*, 96, 57–73.
- Benoit, W. L., Hansen, G. J., & Verser, R. M. (2003). A meta-analysis of the effects of viewing U.S. presidential debates. *Communication Monographs*, 70, 335–350.
- Boomgaarden, H. G., & Vliegenthart, R. (2007). Explaining the rise of anti-immigrant parties: The role of news media content. *Electoral Studies*, 26, 404–417.
- Boomgaarden, H. G., & Vliegenthart, R. (2009). How news content influences anti-immigration attitudes: Germany, 1993–2005. *European Journal of Political Research*, 48, 516–542.
- Bos, L., & van der Brug, W. (2010). Public images of leaders of anti-immigration parties: Perceptions of legitimacy and effectiveness. *Party Politics*, 16, 777–799.
- Bos, L., van der Brug, W., & de Vreese, C. (2010). Media coverage of right-wing populist leaders. *Communications*, 35, 141–163.
- Carter, E. (2005). *The extreme right in Western Europe: Success or failure?* Manchester, England: Manchester University Press.
- de Lange, S. (2008). *From pariah to power: The government participation of radical right-wing populist parties in West European democracies*. Antwerp, Belgium: University of Antwerp.
- de Vreese, C. H., & Semetko, H. A. (2004). News matters: Influences on the vote in the Danish 2000 euro referendum campaign. *European Journal of Political Research*, 43, 699–722.
- Deutschman, I. E., & Ellison, A. (1999). A star is born: The roller coaster ride of Pauline Hanson in the news. *Media Culture Society*, 21, 33–50.
- Dewan, T., & Myatt, D. P. (2008). The qualities of leadership: Direction, communication, and obfuscation. *American Political Science Review*, 102, 351–367.
- Domke, D., Fan, D. P., Fibison, M., Shah, D. V., Smith, S. S., & Watts, M. D. (1997). News media, candidates and issues, and public opinion in the 1996 presidential campaign. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 74, 718–737.
- Eatwell, R. (2003). Ten theories of the extreme right. In P. Merkl & L. Weinberg (Eds.), *Right-wing extremism in the twenty-first century* (pp. 45–70). London, England: Frank Cass.
- Funk, C. L. (1999). Bringing the candidate into models of candidate evaluation. *Journal of Politics*, 61, 700–720.
- Ghanem, S. (1997). Filling in the tapestry: The second level of agenda setting. In M. McCombs, D. L. Shaw, & D. H. Weaver (Eds.), *Communication and democracy: Exploring the intellectual frontiers in agenda-setting theory* (pp. 3–14). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Honaker, J., Joseph, A., King, G., Scheve, K., & Singh, N. (1998). Amelia II: A program for missing data [Computer software]. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Department of Government.
- Hopmann, D. N., Vliegenthart, R., de Vreese, C. H., & Albaek, E. (2010). Effects of election news coverage: How visibility and tone influence party choice. *Political Communication*, 27, 389–405.
- Hovland, C. I., & Weiss, W. (1951). The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 15, 635–650.

- Hsiao, C. (2003). *Analysis of panel data*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Iyengar, S., & Simon, A. F. (2000). New perspectives and evidence on political communication and campaign effects. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 51, 149–169.
- Jaccard, J., Turrisi, R., & Wan, C. K. (1990). *Interaction effects in multiple regression*. London, England: Sage.
- Jacoby, W. G. (1991). *Data theory and dimensional analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Jagers, J., & Walgrave, S. (2007). Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties' discourse in Belgium. *European Journal of Political Research*, 46, 319–345.
- King, G., Honaker, J., Joseph, A., & Scheve, K. (2001). Analyzing incomplete political science data: An alternative algorithm for multiple imputation. *American Political Science Review*, 95, 49–69.
- Kiousis, S. (2005). Compelling arguments and attitude strength: Exploring the impact of second-level agenda setting on public opinion of presidential candidate images. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 10(2), 3–27.
- Kiousis, S., & McCombs, M. (2004). Agenda-setting effects and attitude strength: Political figures during the 1996 presidential election. *Communication Research*, 31, 36–57.
- Kitschelt, H. D. (2007). Growth and persistence of the radical right in postindustrial democracies: Advances and challenges in comparative research. *West European Politics*, 30, 1176–1206.
- Kleinnijenhuis, J., van Hoof, A. M. J., Oegema, D., & de Ridder, J. A. (2007). A test of rivaling approaches to explain news effects: News on issue positions of parties, real-world developments, support and criticism, and success and failure. *Journal of Communication*, 57, 366–384.
- Landau, M. J., Solomon, S., Greenberg, J., Cohen, F., Pyszczynski, T., Arndt, J., . . . Cook, A. (2004). Deliver us from evil: The effects of mortality salience and reminders of 9/11 on support for President George W. Bush. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30, 1136–1150.
- Lombard, M., Snyder-Duch, J., & Bracken, C. C. (2002). Content analysis in mass communication: Assessment and reporting of intercoder reliability. *Human Communication Research*, 28, 587–604.
- Lupia, A., & McCubbins, M. D. (1998). *The democratic dilemma: Can citizens learn what they need to know?* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Mazzoleni, G. (2003). The media and the growth of neo-populism in contemporary democracies. In G. Mazzoleni, J. Stewart, & B. Horsfield (Eds.), *The media and neo-populism: A contemporary comparative analysis* (pp. 1–20). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Mazzoleni, G., & Schulz, W. (1999). “Mediatization” of politics: A challenge for democracy? *Political Communication*, 16, 247–261.
- Mazzoleni, G., Stewart, J., & Horsfield, B. (Eds.). (2003). *The media and neo-populism: A contemporary comparative analysis*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- McCombs, M., Llamas, J. P., Lopez-Escobar, E., & Rey, F. (1997). Candidate images in Spanish elections: Second-level agenda-setting effects. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 74, 703–717.
- McCombs, M., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36, 176–187.
- McNair, B. (1995). *An introduction to political communication*. London, England: Routledge.
- Mendelsohn, M. (1996). The media and interpersonal communications: The priming of issues, leaders, and party identification. *Journal of Politics*, 58, 112–125.
- Mokken, R. J. (1971). *A theory and procedure of scale analysis*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Mouton.
- Molenaar, I. W., Van Schuur, W., Sijtsma, K., & Mokken, R. J. (2002). *MSPWIN 5.0*. Groningen, The Netherlands: ProGAMMA.
- Mudde, C. (2004). The populist zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition*, 39, 542–564.
- Mudde, C. (2007). *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Mudde, C. (2010). The populist radical right: A pathological normalcy. *West European Politics*, 33, 1167–1186.

- Oegema, D., & Kleinnijenhuis, J. (2000). Personalization in political television news: A 13-wave survey study to assess effects of text and footage. *Communications*, 25, 43–60.
- O’Keefe, D. J. (1998). Justification explicitness and persuasive effect: A meta-analytic review of the effects of varying support articulation in persuasive messages. *Argumentation and Advocacy*, 35, 61–75.
- O’Keefe, D. J. (2002). *Persuasion: Theory and research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pappas, T. S. (2008). Political leadership and the emergence of radical mass movements in democracy. *Comparative Political Studies*, 41, 1117–1140.
- Plasser, F., & Ulram, P. A. (2003). Striking a responsive chord: Mass media and right-wing populism in Austria. In G. Mazzoleni, J. Stewart, & B. Horsfield (Eds.), *The media and neo-populism: A contemporary comparative analysis* (pp. 21–43). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Reinard, J. C. (1998). The persuasive effects of testimonial assertion evidence. In M. Allen & R. W. Preiss (Eds.), *Persuasion: Advances through meta-analysis* (pp. 69–86). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Reynolds, R. A., & Reynolds, J. L. (2002). Evidence. In J. P. Dillard & M. Pfau (Eds.), *The persuasion handbook: Developments in theory and practice* (pp. 427–444). London, England: Sage.
- Roggeband, C., & Vliegthart, R. (2007). Divergent framing: The public debate on migration in the Dutch parliament and media, 1995–2004. *West European Politics*, 30, 524–548.
- Schedler, A. (1996). Anti-political establishment parties. *Party Politics*, 2, 291–312.
- Scheuch, E. K., & Klingemann, H. D. (1967). Theorie des Rechtsradikalismus in westlichen Industriegesellschaften [Theory of right wing radicalism in Western industrial societies]. *Hamburger Jahrbuch für Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik*, 12, 11–19.
- Scheufele, D. A. (2000). Agenda-setting, priming, and framing revisited: Another look at cognitive effects of political communication. *Mass Communication & Society*, 3, 297–316.
- Semetko, H. A., & Schoenbach, K. (1994). *Germany’s “unity election”: Voters and the media*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Sheafer, T. (2001). Charismatic skill and media legitimacy: An actor-centered approach to understanding the political communication competition. *Communication Research*, 28, 711–736.
- Stewart, J., Mazzoleni, G., & Horsfield, B. (2003). Conclusion: Power to the media managers. In G. Mazzoleni, J. Stewart, & B. Horsfield (Eds.), *The media and neo-populism: A contemporary comparative analysis* (pp. 217–237). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Taggart, P. (2000). *Populism*. Buckingham, England: Open University Press.
- van der Brug, W., Fennema, M., & Tillie, J. (2000). Anti-immigrant parties in Europe: Ideological or protest vote? *European Journal of Political Research*, 37, 77–102.
- van der Brug, W., Fennema, M., & Tillie, J. (2003). Protest or mainstream? How the European anti-immigrant parties developed into two separate groups by 1999. *European Journal of Political Research*, 42, 55–76.
- van der Brug, W., Fennema, M., & Tillie, J. (2005). Why some anti-immigrant parties fail and others succeed: A two-step model of aggregate electoral support. *Comparative Political Studies*, 38, 537–573.
- van der Brug, W., & Mughan, A. (2007). Charisma, leader effects and support for right-wing populist parties. *Party Politics*, 13, 29–51.
- Van Schuur, W. (2003). Mokken scale analysis: Between the Guttman scale and parametric item response theory. *Political Analysis*, 11, 139–163.
- Van Spanje, J., & van Der Brug, W. (2007). The party as pariah: The exclusion of anti-immigration parties and its effect on their ideological positions. *West European Politics*, 30, 1022–1040.
- Vliegthart, R. (2007). *Framing immigration and integration: Facts, parliament, media and anti-immigrant party support in The Netherlands*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Free University.
- Walgrave, S., & De Swert, K. (2004). The making of (issues of the) Vlaams Blok: The media and the success of the Belgian extreme-right party. *Political Communication*, 21, 479–500.

- Walgrave, S., Varone, F., & Dumont, P. (2006). Policy with or without parties? A comparative analysis of policy priorities and policy change in Belgium, 1991 to 2000. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13, 1021–1038.
- Watt, J. H., Mazza, M., & Snyder, L. (1993). Agenda-setting effects of television news coverage and the effects decay curve. *Communication Research*, 20, 408–435.
- Weyland, K. (2001). Clarifying a contested concept: Populism in the study of Latin American politics. *Comparative Politics*, 34, 1–22.

Appendix A: Descriptives of Main Variables

Party leader	Media coverage variables					Perceptions of party leaders			
	Prominence	Criticism	Heartland	Populism	Authoritativeness	Effectiveness $t - 1$	Effectiveness $t1$	Legitimacy $t - 1$	Legitimacy $t1$
Right-wing populist party leaders									
Geert Wilders	-10.46 (1.18)	-0.02 (0.06)	0.05 (0.08)	0.32 (0.27)	0.32 (0.31)	5.87 (3.05)	5.63 (3.08)	6.43 (2.79)	6.46 (2.78)
Marco Pastors	-11.68 (0.80)	0.03 (0.08)	0.08 (0.07)	-0.19 (0.31)	-0.21 (0.24)	5.14 (2.79)	4.92 (2.46)	6.53 (2.70)	7.07 (2.65)
Average	-11.07 (1.18)	0.01 (0.08)	0.07 (0.08)	0.06 (0.39)	0.06 (0.39)				
Mainstream party leaders									
J.-P. Balkenende	12.71 (7.42)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.39 (0.13)	0.03 (0.22)	10.71 (2.73)	11.27 (2.31)	10.17 (3.06)	10.27 (2.97)
Wouter Bos	16.01 (8.22)	0.09 (0.08)	-0.03 (0.02)	0.12 (0.31)	-0.03 (0.17)	10.97 (2.19)	10.93 (2.26)	9.78 (2.90)	9.97 (2.86)
Mark Rutte	0.72 (4.14)	-0.01 (0.06)	0.01 (0.05)	0.30 (0.25)	0.09 (0.17)	9.10 (2.73)	8.48 (2.60)	9.37 (2.90)	9.67 (2.62)
Femke Halsema	-7.31 (2.45)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.06 (0.00)	-0.16 (0.29)	-0.20 (0.24)	7.94 (2.75)	7.75 (2.92)	9.72 (2.71)	9.72 (2.71)
Average	5.53 (11.13)	0.00 (0.08)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.37)	-0.03 (0.23)				
Total	0.00 (12.01)	0.00 (0.08)	0.00 (0.07)	0.00 (0.38)	0.00 (0.29)	8.29 (3.51)	8.17 (3.55)	8.66 (3.24)	8.86 (3.15)

Note. Entries are means with standard deviations in parentheses. The media coverage variables were centered around their means to avoid multicollinearity, so their means are always 0.

Appendix B: Survey Characteristics

Characteristic	Data set (%) (<i>n</i> = 703)	Census (%)
Gender		
Male	50.1	49.0
Female	49.9	51.0
Age		
18–34	22.2	27.3
35–44	22.5	20.6
45–54	19.6	18.3
55–64	16.6	15.6
65+	19.1	18.3
Education		
Lower	33.7	32.0
Middle	38.6	40.1
Higher	27.7	28.0

Note. The table shows that our respondent data mirror census data by and large in terms of age, gender, and education. Census data are from 2006. Reference data were obtained from the “Gouden Standaard,” which is the reference instrument of the Dutch Market Research Association. These reference data are collected by the Dutch National Statistics Institute. Not all columns sum to 100% because of rounding to decimal places.