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Content

Acknowledgements	6
I. General Introduction	8
1. Contribution and Research Questions: Sources, Effects and Perceptions of Media Bias 12	
Research questions.....	12
Structure of the thesis.....	16
2. Overview of manuscripts compiled in this thesis	17
II. Theoretical Framework.....	18
1. Defining Bias and Setting the Benchmark.....	19
2. Sources of Media Bias	21
3. Media Effects on Political Attitudes and Behavior.....	23
4. Different Types of Media Bias	25
Defining Visibility Bias	26
Defining Tonality Bias.....	27
Defining Agenda Bias.....	29
5. Objective and Subjective Media Bias	31
6. Summary of research questions and hypotheses.....	34
III. The Case: Austria	36
1. A highly concentrated media market.....	37
2. Symptoms of political parallelism	38
3. The Election of 2013: Campaign and Aftermath.....	41
IV. Data and Methods	44
1. Media Side	45
2. Supply Side	47
3. Demand Side	49
V. Study#1: Party Advertising in Newspapers: A Source of Media Bias?	52

1. Introduction.....	53
2. Newspaper Advertising and Media Bias.....	56
3. Party Newspaper Ads in Austria and the 2013 Election.....	59
4. Data and Methods	61
5. Results.....	63
6. Discussion	70
7. Appendix to Study#1	73
VI. Study#2: One Bias Fits All? Three Types of Media Bias and Their Effects on Party Preferences.....	78
1. Introduction.....	79
2. Bias and Balance.....	81
Three Types of Media Biases: Visibility, Tonality, Agenda	81
Moderators of Media Bias Effects	83
3. The Case: Austria.....	85
4. Data and Method.....	86
Visibility Bias	88
Tonality Bias	89
Agenda Bias	90
Analyses and Model Specifications	91
5. Results.....	94
6. Conclusion	99
7. Appendix to Study#2	102
VII. Study#3: Are Perceptions of Candidate Traits Shaped by the Media? The Effects of Three Types of Media Bias.....	104
1. Introduction.....	105
2. Three Types of Candidate Bias.....	106
3. Political and Non-political Candidate Traits.....	108

4. Bias Moderating Bias.....	109
5. Context: The Austrian Media and Party Systems	110
6. Data and Method.....	111
Visibility Bias	112
Tonality Bias	113
Agenda Bias	113
Measuring Perceived Traits and Bias Exposure	114
7. Results.....	116
8. Conclusion	123
9. Appendix to Study#3	126
VIII. Study#4: Lying Press: Three Levels of Perceived Media Bias and their Relationship to Political Preferences.....	128
1. Introduction.....	129
2. Objective versus Perceived Media Bias.....	130
3. Perceived Media System Bias: A Question of Extremism or Right-Wing Ideology?	131
4. Perceived Media Outlet Bias: A Partisanship of Audiences?	132
5. Perceived Outlet-Party Bias: A Hostile Media Phenomenon?	133
6. The Case of Austria	134
7. Data and Methods	135
Three levels of analysis, three types of perceived media bias and three dependent variables	135
Analyses and model specifications	136
8. Results.....	137
Perceived Media System Bias.....	138
Perceived Media Outlet Bias	141
Perceived Outlet-Party Bias.....	143
9. Conclusion	146

10. Appendix to Study#4	148
IX. Overall Summary and Discussion	150
1. Summary of results and their contribution.....	150
Summary and conclusions of Study#1.....	151
Summary and conclusions of Study#2.....	152
Summary and conclusions of Study#3.....	154
Summary and conclusions of Study#4.....	155
Overall contribution in reference to the principal research question	156
2. Limitations and future research	158
X. References	160
Abstract / Zusammenfassung	184
Abstract.....	184
Zusammenfassung.....	184

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I. General Introduction

In 2016, the Brexit vote in the UK as well as the Austrian and U.S. presidential election have been strongly polarizing events with arguably surprising outcomes that led mainstream media to call into question their own work. If media were not called “crooked” already during, there certainly was talk of “propaganda” and “false equivalence” in the wake of these events (Campbell, 2016; DiePresse, 2016; Helmore, 2016; Patterson, 2016). While one side rants that they are being manipulated and lied to by biased mainstream media, the other side feels betrayed as trusted news sources may have mislead them about the probability of and inadvertently contributed to Brexit and the Trump election.

This public distrust in mass media’s work and integrity comes at a time where in order to learn about political candidates, parties or their policies, voters nearly exclusively rely on information provided by the media (Altheide and Snow, 1979; Crouch, 2004; Donsbach, 1993; Meyer, 2001). Arguably, voters have become more independent of their party ties and make more independent political choices (Van der Meer et al., 2013). Direct contact between citizens and political actors has become rare and long-term sociological determinants of voting behavior lost a lot of their political weight and predictive power (Dalton, 2013). Instead, media are the core arena for public political debates (Bennett et al., 2004; Ferree et al., 2002; Helbling and Tresch, 2011) and therefore the main source for political information (Schulz, 1994; Geese et al., 2009). Through the mediation and (re-)interpretation of real-life events, policy issues and positions (McCombs, 2005), media will influence voters’ political knowledge, attitudes and voting behavior (e.g., Hopmann et al., 2010). With media’s potential power comes great responsibility, and with that come voters and politicians increasingly accusing media of partisanship and biased reporting, especially during election campaigns (e.g., Dostal, 2015; The Economist, 2016; Wagner, 2005).

Some scholars prefer to use the term of political balance rather than bias, since *bias* suggests that the distortion of media reporting is caused deliberately (Groeling, 2013; Hopmann et al., 2017). More generally, however, the concepts of *political balance* (Hopmann et al., 2017), *political bias* (Hopmann et al., 2011; Mancini, 2012; Murphy, 1998), *news bias* (Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012; Gilens and Hertzman, 2000), *ideological bias* (Hackett, 1984; Covert and Wasburn, 2007), *partisan bias* (D’Alessio and Allen, 2000), or as in the

context of this dissertation simply *media bias* (Groeling, 2013; Niven, 2003; Reeves, 1997), are often used interchangeably and all refer to a misbalance of media reporting based on ideological proximity and political favoritism. While it is one central task of the media to supply voters with balanced and objective information on all relevant political issues and actors (Strömbäck, 2008), when media outlets are politically biased, this task cannot be guaranteed anymore (Donsbach, 1997) and it may raise serious questions about the performance of the respective media (McQuail, 1992) and their role in democracy (Druckman and Parkin, 2005).

When studying the nature of media bias and its effects in more detail, this thesis argues that it is important to disaggregate this broader concept into different sub-types, which refer to different aspects of the journalistic product such as actor salience, actor valence, or issue content (D'Alessio and Allen, 2000). In the literature, three sub-types of biases are commonly identified but rarely studied conjointly: visibility bias, tonality bias, and agenda bias. While visibility bias deals with the salience of political parties or candidates in the news, tonality bias measures how these actors are evaluated, and agenda bias investigates which issues parties are able to address in media coverage. Particularly agenda bias has been argued to be very difficult to measure and remains thus understudied (Brandenburg, 2005; D'Alessio and Allen, 2000; Hopmann et al., 2011).

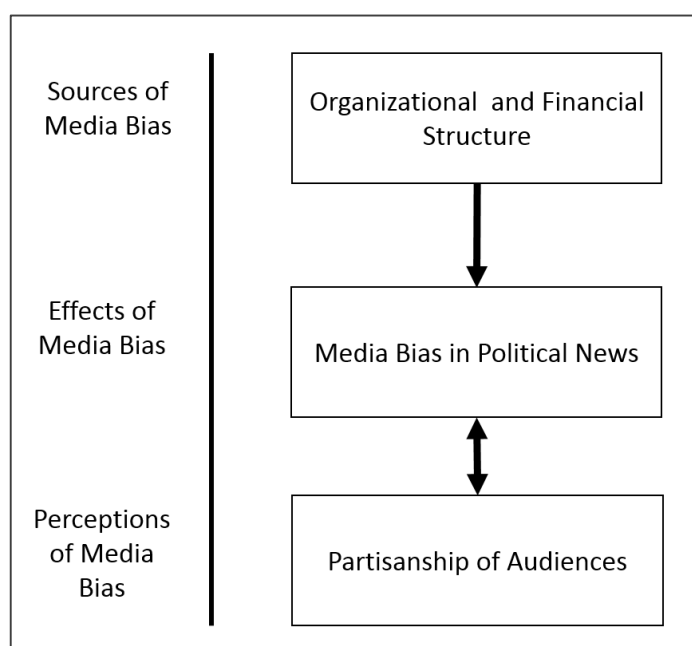
The U.S. political communication literature focuses on the malign effects of biased media and their inherent dangers of turning into echo chambers (Sunstein, 2009). Partisan news is argued to serve as an “engine of polarization” (Mutz, 2006: 233), increasing ideological extremity (e.g., Sunstein, 2009), partisans’ affective polarization (Lelkes et al., forthcoming) and interparty animosity (Iyengar et al., 2012), thus heightening in-group favoritism and out-group animosity (e.g., Greene, 2012). However, Dilliplane (2011) also argues that biased media may increase political participation, which in turn can be seen as positive. This literature, nonetheless, has to be seen within its context of the reemergence of blatantly partisan media in the United States in the 1990s, which is a counterfactual to the trend in central European countries like Austria and Germany.

While the large bulk of the literature investigating the effects of partisan media on political behavior is still focused on the United States (i.e. Covert and Wasburn, 2007; Doll and Bradley, 1974; Hofstetter and Zukin, 1979), the generalizability of these findings outside the U.S. context and particularly for Austria and other European multiparty systems is unclear.

The more similar the party and media system, the more probable it will be that findings are generalizable. However, both the U.S. media and party system are very different from most European countries. An important characteristic allowing to compare and group different countries and their media systems is their degree of political parallelism, also party-press parallelism (see Brüggemann et al., 2014; Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Lelkes, 2016; Seymore-Ure, 1974). Political parallelism is “the degree to which the structure of the media system paralleled that of the party system” (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 27). In political parallelism, particularities of the media system and of the political system thus go hand in hand. In the literature it is often reduced to media bias, its most basic component, i.e. “the extent to which different media reflect distinct political orientations in their news and current affair reporting, and sometimes also their entertainment content” (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 28).

On the analytical level, the theory of political parallelism adds two key aspects to the analysis of media bias and its effects, namely its sources and its perceptions (see Figure 1). First, sources of media bias: Financial, organizational as well as individual connections such as corporate ownership, advertising revenues and journalists’ political orientation or ties may imply first indicators towards a link between media organizations and politics and a possible source of media bias (e.g., Akhtar and Pratt, 2017; Di Tella and Franceschelli 2011; Gilens and Hertzman, 2000; Kim, 2008; Lengauer and Hayek, 2012; Young 2006). Of course, these connections should become less important as deregulation processes open media markets to commercialization, but can still be relevant in countries where such connections were once strong (see Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 28f; Lengauer 2006). Second, perceptions of media bias: Media are said to adapt their content based on their readers’ preferences (Wring and Deacon, 2010), while consumers may reduce cognitive dissonance through selective media exposure, consuming mainly outlets that share their political views (see Festinger, 1957; Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010). This thesis furthermore argues that partisanship of audiences can be expressed both through media exposure as well as media perceptions, meaning that news outlets will not only have an audience that shares their political views. On top of that, these partisan audiences will also tend to perceive them as being more objective in their reporting.

Figure 1: Media bias as a dimension of political parallelism



Although there are many other dimensions of political parallelism, media bias, as the content dimension of political parallelism, remains the most important one, since it is theoretically either the consequence or prerequisite of all other dimensions and can directly influence voting behavior. Particularly in a time when accusations such as “*media bias*”, “*fake news*” or “*lying press*” become more frequent and some voters lose their faith in mainstream media, it is important that we revisit the concept of media bias, try to understand more about its possible sources, the way it affects political attitudes and behaviors and how it is actually perceived by the public. Both politics as well as the public rely on media to communicate their agenda to the other. This research provides a deeper understanding of what both sides should be attentive to, when concerned about media bias as well as what actually may not be that much of a problem when it comes to media bias in political news reporting.

Therefore, the **overall research question** addressed in this dissertation is:

What are the sources, effects and perceptions of different types of media bias in political news coverage?

This cumulative dissertation will focus conceptually as well empirically on media bias, the media content level of political parallelism. It will investigate possible sources, different effects as well as perceptions of media bias during both campaign and routine periods in

traditional mass media in Austria, while addressing shortcomings of hitherto existing media bias literature, aiming at producing findings and knowledge generalizable for other multiparty systems in Europe and beyond.

1. Contribution and Research Questions: Sources, Effects and Perceptions of Media Bias

As described above this cumulative dissertation is set within the three dimensions of political parallelism and focuses on sources, effects and perceptions of media bias. Its key contributions to political communication research will be laid out subsequent to the research questions below.

Research questions

The first dimension of political parallelism deals with organizational, financial and individual ties between political actors and the media. Since this cumulative dissertation seeks to better understand the sources of media bias, the first research question addressed in the following section is:

RQ1. To what extent do political advertisers influence media bias?

This dissertation examines the effects of a specific and understudied subset of financial and organizational influences on media bias, namely that of party advertising in newspapers. In fact, political actors are argued to influence media coverage by exerting “advertiser pressure” (Hays and Reisner 1991), pushing for more favorable news coverage (Soley and Craig 1992). Giving in to such advertiser pressures can result in systematic distortion of the news and would violate journalistic norms such as objectivity and autonomy, which are key elements of professional self-perceptions in journalism in many of today’s Western democracies (e.g., Hallin and Mancini 2004; Deuze 2005).

While there are manifold studies empirically investigating corporate advertisers’ influence on news reporting (e.g., Andresen, 2008; Gambaro and Puglisi, 2015; Hagen et al., 2014; Poitras and Sutter, 2009; Rouner et al., 2009), empirical evidence of such influence by

political advertisers is still sparse, often anecdotal and varies strongly in its findings (e.g., Young, 2006; Di Tella and Franceschelli, 2011; Lengauer and Hayek, 2012). Unclear findings, however, do not keep public debate particularly in Austria from regularly accusing news media of being manipulated by parties' advertising spending (Dossier, 2015; DiePresse.com, 2015; DerStandard.at, 2016; Kossdorff and Sickinger, 1996; Sickinger, 2009).

Building on the insight that political actors may try to influence news content through advertisement spending, this dissertation makes three key contributions concerning the nature and sources of media bias. First, this research will be among the first to investigate financial and organizational ties between media and politics in the form of party news advertising and its effects on media bias. Second, it will be the very first to study party advertisements as a source of the three different sub-types of media bias individually (see D'Alessio and Allen, 2000), as well as to inspect possible differences between media genres, since tabloids have been argued to be more strongly susceptible to advertising pressures (Martin and Souder 2009). Third, it will help to clear up a quite heated debate that has been going on particularly in Austria over the last few years. This thesis therefore contributes substantively to our understanding of how successful political advertisers actually are in influencing news producers and media content, how skeptical the public should be of such particular financial ties between politics and media in election times and how urgent political action from a democratic and journalistic perspective actually may be in this regard.

Once we have analyzed political advertising as a possible source of media bias, we can further test the actual impact of media bias on political attitudes and behavior in more detail. Therefore, the second research question to be addressed is:

RQ2. To what extent do different types of media bias influence political behavior?

The core dimension of political parallelism theory is bias in media content and its effects. Of course, media bias is important because it can have substantial effects, for example, on audiences' evaluations of party leaders (e.g., Lenz and Lawson, 2011; Prior, 2006), on vote intention (e.g., Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012), or on both (Druckman and Parkin, 2005). However, when studying the effects of media bias, this thesis argues that it is important to disaggregate this broader concept into its different sub-types, which refer to different mechanisms of media effects such as agenda setting, second level agenda setting, or priming.

Research on the influences of media bias only focuses on one or two sub-types of bias. Overall, most research tends to particularly disregard agenda bias, even though it is potentially increasing voters' uncertainty of and even misperceptions about party positions, which in turn may result in declining voter support (Brandenburg, 2005). Furthermore, we know relatively little about how consistent these different types of bias are and how and under what circumstances they jointly affect political behavior.

Building on the insight that media bias can be broken down to at least three different sub-types, this dissertation makes three key contributions concerning a better understanding of the effects of media bias. First, this research is among the first to investigate media bias based on its three different sub-types and to present a comprehensive methodology to do so, both for individual parties as well as lead candidates. Second, it is the first to examine the distinct and combined effects of each type of media bias on voters' party preferences as well as candidate trait perceptions. Its emphasis on agenda bias therein is particularly novel. Third, this thesis explicitly considers the possibility that effects of these three different types of bias are not universal. On the one hand, key moderating factors on the level of individual voters that this thesis looks at are their level of political sophistication and their partisan identification (Fournier et al., 2004). More precisely, it will identify which type of media bias affects which type of voter more strongly. On the other hand, information-processing theory (Coleman and Wu 2015) suggests that effects of media bias may be different based on the kind of perceptions or attitudes that are being affected (e.g., political and non-political candidate traits). Findings in this regard will also imply practical implications for campaigning politicians and parties. To conclude, by addressing the multidimensionality of media bias effects and its moderators in a multi-party setting, this thesis substantially adds to the literature on bias effects of political news coverage on political attitudes and behavior, thereby addressing one of the core questions in political communication research.

Once we have a notion of what effects of media bias are and how they are limited and reinforced, this thesis aims to also take a look at what audiences actually perceive as biased news coverage. More precisely the final research question addressed in this thesis is:

RQ3. To what extent can political attitudes explain perceived media bias?

Hallin and Mancini (2004: 28) argue “political parallelism is also often manifested in the partisanship of audiences, with supporters of different parties or tendencies buying different

newspapers or watching different TV channels.” This thesis adds to this discussion by arguing that political parallelism will not only coincide with a partisanship of media audiences based on media exposure but based on media perceptions as well, particularly based on perceived media bias, i.e. with supporters of different parties or tendencies perceiving media bias of newspapers and TV channels differently. This is important because the belief that media supply voters with balanced and objective information on relevant political issues and actors is key to the media’s perceived trustworthiness (McQuail, 1992). Nevertheless, and quite alarmingly, news media are often accused of partisanship and biased reporting, particularly during election campaigns and even more so since the rise of right-wing, populist and extremist politics, movements and parties across Europe and the United States in recent years (e.g., Gasser, 2016; The Economist, 2016).

Although research on media perceptions is increasing, research on the sources of perceived media bias is still scarce, particularly outside of the United States (e.g., Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012; Hopmann et al., 2015). Furthermore, previous studies mostly investigated perceptions of the media system in general (e.g., Eveland and Shah, 2003; Lee, 2010; Tsfati and Cohen, 2005), while only more recent work distinguishes between media genres and formats and finds that explanatory factors for individuals’ perceptions clearly differ between these (e.g., Hopmann et al., 2015). This is particularly relevant when studying perceived media bias in multi-party systems, where media outlets may potentially be biased towards not just one out of two, but a multitude of parties.

Building on the insight that media bias has turned into a strongly partisan accusation and a rallying cry for voters with extreme attitudes in recent years, this dissertation makes two key contributions concerning our understanding of how political attitudes may influence media bias perceptions. First, this research is among the first to investigate if media bias perceptions in a European multi-party system are equally politically imbalanced as in the United States or instead driven by both extremes of the ideological spectrum. This thesis therefore contributes to better defining the problem of increasing distrust in media. Second, it is the first to examine to what extent the relationship between political preferences and media bias perceptions differ on different levels of analysis, namely (1) perceived media system bias, (2) perceived outlet bias and (3) perceived beneficiaries of said outlet bias (i.e. what parties in particular are perceived to be favored in media coverage). Keeping in mind that voters’ distrust in mass media can lead to them becoming less trusting of other democratic institutions (Tsfati and

Cohen, 2005), this thesis aims to identify to what extent perceived media bias is a burden distributed equally over all media outlets and media genre, and if not so, it will discuss what this means both for the respective media in particular as well as democracy and social cohesion in general. This thesis therefore contributes substantively to our understanding of the multidimensionality and political dependency of perceived media bias as well as to the discussion of how to deal with it.

Hence, the central aim of this cumulative dissertation and its three research questions is (1) to investigate the sources of media bias in media content, (2) to extensively study the effects media bias may have on different types of voters and political behavior, (3) to better understand the relationship between media bias perceptions and political preferences. It does so by examining media content and political behavior in Austria, a country with a democratic-corporatist media system and a partisan history that provides a reference point for many European countries and breaks with mostly binary analysis of media bias in two-party systems (see further below for more information).

Structure of the thesis

On a general level, the overall research question will be answered by testable expectations derived from the three dimensions of political parallelism, however, always focusing on their connection to media bias. These general assumptions represent the main starting point for empirical analyses in the manuscripts compiled in this thesis (see Table 1 below): (1) Media bias will be influenced by organizational and financial ties between media and politics (Study#1). (2) Media bias will influence political attitudes and behavior (Study#2 and Study#3). (3) Perceived media bias will be influenced by political preferences (Study#4).

To that end, the structure of the present cumulative thesis will be as follows. After giving a short overview of the compilation of manuscripts in this thesis, it provides a review of central concepts and theory when dealing with the sources and effects of media bias. This discussion is also used to revisit and specify above-mentioned general assumptions. The next chapter will then describe the case, its media and party system, in more detail. After that, an overview of data used for this study I given. This section is then followed by the original

manuscripts (labeled Study#1 to Study#4). The thesis concludes with a discussion of the overall results and their implications in a final summary section.

2. Overview of manuscripts compiled in this thesis

This cumulative thesis is based on four individual studies that have been written in collaboration with other authors (Study#1, Study#2, and Study#3) and by the author alone (Study#4). Published manuscripts appeared in peer-reviewed journals ranked in the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI). Study#4 remains unpublished at this time as it is still under review (see Table 1).

Table 1: Overview of manuscripts compiled in thesis

Study#1 (Status: published)
Eberl, J.-M., Wagner, M., & Boomgaarden, H. G. (2016). Party Advertising in Newspapers: A Source of Media Bias?. <i>Journalism Studies</i> , published online before print October 6, 2016, 1-21.
DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2016.1234356
Study#2 (Status: published)
Eberl, J.-M., Boomgaarden, H. G., & Wagner, M. (forthcoming). One Bias Fits All? Three Types of Media Bias and Their Effects on Party Preferences. <i>Communication Research</i> , published online before print November 19, 2015, 1-24.
DOI: 10.1177/0093650215614364
Study#3 (Status: published)
Eberl, J.-M., Wagner, M., & Boomgaarden, H. G. (2016). Are Perceptions of Candidate Traits Shaped by the Media? The Effects of Three Types of Media Bias. <i>The International Journal of Press/Politics</i> , 22(1), 111-132.
DOI: 10.1177/1940161216674651
Study#4 (Status: submitted manuscript)
Eberl, J.-M. (submitted). Lying Press: Three Levels of Perceived Media Bias and their Relationship with Political Preferences.

II. Theoretical Framework

Bias, some argue, is best understood through its opposite, commonly referred to as objectivity, a rather broad quality criterion of news reporting that consists of many different aspects such as accuracy and realism, separation of fact and opinion, as well as the avoidance of slant (McQuail, 1992). Others argue that the opposite of bias is “the truth” (Baron, 2006: 4). Such a definition only makes sense when dealing with clear facts, clear rights and wrongs. Presenting all sides of a debate and treating them as equal, although one is based on fact and the other’s argument is purely fictional, will lead to false equivalency from media producers. In politics, however, what is right and what is wrong – and thus what would have to be described as biased media coverage by that definition – is still more often defined by ideology than empirical evidence.¹ Therefore media bias is “often in the eye of the beholder” (Norris, 2009: 336). In order to arrive at a better operational and less normative definition, some scholars argue that the opposite of bias is not necessarily objectivity but neutrality or balance (Hopmann et al., 2011; Hopmann et al., 2017). Still, defining and afterwards operationalizing the concept of media bias remains a challenge in political communication research (D’Alessio and Allen, 2000).

This chapter is structured as follows: First, I will go into depth about the problems of defining media bias. Second, I will discuss different theories about sources of media bias. Third, I will give a brief overview of media effects research. Fourth, I will describe three mechanisms through which media bias in particular may influence political attitudes and behavior. The final section of this chapter then deals with sources of perceived media bias.

¹ Particularly in times of increasing right-wing populism various fact-checking sites have emerged and every major news organization seems to have a fact-checking team of their own (see Graves, forthcoming). Defining bias as mediation and reproduction of false information may thus just as well become more relevant in the coming years.

1. Defining Bias and Setting the Benchmark

Following a very simple definition, an unbiased news report is a neutral or balanced report, thus one that is not strongly slanted in favor or against any political side. Such a definition might sound plausible in political systems or decisions, where there are only two sides to an issue or campaign. It becomes, however, more difficult once policy or elections are more complex and have several sides that are relevant to the public.

Another way to define bias is to say that all sides should be equally represented according to some kind of benchmark for balance or neutrality. In this view, bias is the extent to which media reporting deviates from such a benchmark. However, operationalizing media bias remains a challenge mainly because it is difficult to determine the most appropriate benchmark as reference point to distinguish between balanced/neutral and biased reporting. While in some countries (e.g., France) or for many public broadcasters in Western democracies, there are regulatory rules clearly defining what balanced news coverage of party politics is supposed to look like (Kaid and Strömbäck, 2008), many other countries and media do not have such strict political regulations of their news content (Hopmann et al., 2017).

In the United States the benchmark for defining bias is often rather implicitly defined by treating both candidates and major parties equally (i.e. coverage should be split fifty-fifty). Determining bias toward one or the other party or candidate is “fairly easy” in such a system compared to systems with many competitors (Hopmann et al., 2011: 241). Hopmann et al. (2017) argue that in Western democracies there are two main approaches to assessing balanced news coverage. “One is regulative, and the other is based on professional journalism’s routines and norms” (Hopmann et al., 2017: 93).

A strictly normative definition of balance may expect media to treat all parties in a multiparty system equally, which means equal in terms of space as well as criticism. However, from a regulative perspective visibility of political actors in the news should be guided by their proportional size in the electorate, while tone of such coverage should always remain neutral (Hopmann et al., 2017). From a journalistic perspective, however, parties’ standing in the polls and particularly the changes in their standing should define the type of coverage they get (Hopmann et al., 2017: 96f). These two approaches have indeed different perspectives on defining what political balance in media coverage should incorporate, they are however not

mutually exclusive. More importantly, these different approaches underline that it makes sense to compare coverage – at least partly – to benchmarks of parties or candidates at a given point in time, because what balanced reporting actually is might not only vary from one election to the next but also over the course of an election itself.

This means as well that the so-called incumbency bonus that government candidates and parties often enjoy in the news (Semetko and Boomgaarden, 2007), increased coverage for new parties, celebrity candidates or very little coverage for fringe parties should not be misunderstood as political media bias. This kind of over- or underrepresentation of particular political actors in news coverage rather reflects what Hofstetter (1976) termed “structural bias”. Structural bias is a distortion of news content that is not driven by the partisan leaning of a news outlet or its editors, but by the structure of political reality and journalistic routines itself. Another example of structural patterns in media coverage would be an outlet that tends to criticize all parties and candidates equally strongly compared to an outlet that tends to be very positive towards all parties and candidates. Quality newspapers may tend to be generally very critical of all political actors, since they rather define themselves as democratic watchdogs (see Skovsgaard 2014). Some media outlets might generally leave less space to parties or their issues, or be overall more skeptical of them, not due to partisan but rather due to genre or format influences. As described above, such patterns are not ideologically driven but rather reflect media routines and the balance of power in the political system (Hopmann et al. 2011; van der Wurff and van Cuilenburg 2001). In short, political or partisan media bias is different from structural patterns in coverage – deemed structural media bias –, which exist if coverage is similar for all parties or candidates within one media outlet or similar for one party or candidate across all media outlets (see van Dalen 2012).

In what seems to be a way of including both the regulative as well as the journalistic approach, Druckman and Parkin (2005) decide for the average coverage of all parties and candidates as the key benchmark for balance in political news coverage. Such a benchmark would be party- or candidate-specific and would, for example, be allowed to vary based on a political party’s or candidate’s function in government, their standing in the polls or their performance during the campaign. That way, the benchmark itself is set by the diversity of the media system and its various approaches to balance in political news coverage. Although this approach has strong underlying assumptions, described in more detail in the studies below, this benchmark allows for analyzing both campaign as well as routine periods of political

media coverage (although the latter is done less frequently, see Van Aelst and de Swert, 2009; Green-Pedersen et al., forthcoming) and considers such above mentioned structural differences and dynamics in the coverage of political actors that may arise because of their standing in the polls or their status in government etc.

Summing up, political reality in general but even more so political reality in multi-party systems is not balanced fifty-fifty. Different approaches to journalistic objectivity acknowledge that it might not always make sense and that it even may be outright wrong to treat all sides of an argument as equal. Instead, a proper benchmark to political bias or balance in media coverage has to take into account the actual differences in democratic importance and performance of political actors, as well as their newsworthiness (Hopmann et al., 2017: 94).

Media coverage on different parties and candidates will never be perfectly balanced in multi-party systems. It will always lend more visibility to some actors over others or criticize some more than others (e.g., Green-Pedersen, forthcoming). However, political media bias is then defined as each outlets deviation from the average coverage of these political actors in all other media outlets in a media system, therefore removing any structural privileges some actors may receive over others. As “absolute non-distortion is impossible” (Gans, 1979: 304), the notion of media bias is nevertheless valid and rooted in this relational perspective to the set benchmark, where any differences that remain are deemed to be imbalances of political or partisan nature.

2. Sources of Media Bias

While this thesis has shown how media bias in political news coverage can be defined and what it has to be compared against, relatively little has been said about the actual sources of bias. In the following, this dissertation will present three different approaches to identifying the actual sources of media bias.

Baron (2006: 4) lists several sources of media bias rather on the micro-level, i.e. within individuals’ actions. He argues that bias could be the result of the personal, broader ideological or more particular partisan leaning of owners, editors or journalists. Patterson and

Donsbach (1996) concluded the same after they performed a survey-experiment with journalists in five Western democracies and found that bias in their reporting was congruent with their individual political leaning. Another example would be Kim (2008), who found that news organizations' endorsements of U.S. presidential election candidates are affected by the political preferences of these organizations' owners. However, sometimes bias may also be the consequence of fabricated information or result from circumstances where information was deliberately hidden or distorted by sources external to a news outlet (Baron, 2006:4). Conversely, Bennett (1996: 44) strongly disagrees with the micro-level source of media bias as it contradicts core journalistic values, arguing that media bias can "seldom be explained as the result of journalists routinely injecting their partisan views into the news. To the contrary, the avoidance of political partisanship by journalists is reinforced, among other means, by the professional ethics codes of journalists, by the editors who monitor their work, and by the business values of the companies they work for."

On a meso-level, Gentzkow and Shapiro (2006) argue that it is less individual editors or journalists that push their political agenda, but that media bias is more related to a market logic, i.e. a result of audiences that want to read content congruent to their own political opinions (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2006). It can thus be seen as driven by the demand side of the media market. However, the argument can also be turned around, as Baron (2006) explains. To maximize its profits a news organization may tolerate bias as long as it brings new audiences (see also Hackett, 1984: 239). It would have the highest bias, when in competition with a news organization with an opposing bias, but would probably have to decrease its bias, when in competition with a less biased news organization (Baron, 2006: 3).

Finally, and most convincingly, Hallin and Mancini (2004: 28) understand media bias as something more complex and at the core of political parallelism theory. They write that media bias can neither only be reduced to some individuals' deliberate actions nor only to a supply and demand oriented market logic. Instead, they argue that media bias is rather the result of a complex combination of the mirroring of the political views of individual journalists and editors, framing conditions set up by editorial guidelines, organizational and financial ties between media outlets and political actors, as well as general journalistic orientations and practices in a country. Without contradicting the micro- or meso-level argument, Hallin and Mancini (2004) thus argue that media bias can have a multitude of sources on different levels

of influence: e.g., the journalists (micro), the financial ties of news organizations (meso) as well as journalistic norms in a country (macro).

Among the diverse sources of media bias particularly party newspaper advertising – which can be seen as mixture of an organizational and financial tie between politics and media, located on a meso-level of sources of media bias – has been left understudied. Scholars have argued that parties may try to influence media content through advertising in newspapers (Kossdorff and Sickinger, 1996: 76; Sickinger, 2009: 408), thereafter pushing for favorable media coverage for the advertiser. This theory was largely confirmed – however, primarily for corporate advertisers – by surveys among editors and journalists (e.g., Soley and Craig, 1992; Gerhardt et al., 2005; Hanitzsch et al., 2010) as well as several content analyses (e.g., Andresen, 2008; Hagen et al., 2014; Gambaro and Puglisi, 2015). A similar mechanism between media bias and political advertisers would lead us to the following hypotheses (H):

H1.1: The higher a party's advertising share in a media outlet, the more favorable the media bias for that party in that media outlet.

H1.2: The effects of party ads on media content are stronger in tabloids than in middle-market or quality newspapers.

In particular, Study#1 investigates whether parties exert advertising pressure on media content producers through advertising and can thereby influence their visibility bias, tonality bias or agenda bias. Moreover, this study looks at whether these effects differ between media genres (= sources of media bias).

3. Media Effects on Political Attitudes and Behavior

Studying media effects on voters focuses on effects based on exposure to different and sometimes partisan news outlets. Media effects research is located on the micro-level of media effects research; meaning effects dealing with change, stabilization or formation of emotions, knowledge, opinions, attitudes or behavior of individuals that are caused by mass media either directly (i.e. by media exposure) or indirectly (e.g., by social interaction with people exposed to media) – even irrespective of media outlet differences. Understanding how

these media effects (such as agenda setting, framing or priming) work is essential for understanding the political processes of modern societies.

When investigating media effects in general, researchers most commonly examine the following three characteristics or content properties of news coverage and their specific influences on media audiences. First, there is the salience of issues, events or actors in the news. Concerning political news coverage, salience in the news media is argued to influence audiences' perceived importance of that issue, event or actor (= agenda setting; e.g., McCombs and Shaw, 1972; McCombs, 2005). Salience can also increase audiences' knowledge about the object of news coverage (= learning; e.g., Eveland and Scheufele, 2000; de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006) as well as shift the criteria by which specific objects are evaluated and with which they are being associated (= priming; e.g., Druckman, 2004; Iyengar and Kinder, 1987). Second, there are other criteria media effects studies examine, namely which specific aspects of an issue or event news coverage focuses on, and, for example, how this may influence how a problem is perceived and trigger emotional reactions towards such problem (= framing or second-level agenda setting; e.g., Scheufele, 1999; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). Third, researchers may look at the tone of media coverage and how it influences changes in beliefs, attitudes or even behavior (= persuasion; e.g., Popkin, 1994). Note, however, that while these different criteria and mechanisms help to categorize and organize media effects and their research, they are not always mutually exclusive. In fact, particularly among media bias research, the concepts of "affective priming" (Sheafer, 2007) or "valence-framing" (de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2003) are sometimes used synonymously with that of persuasion.

However, media effects are not universal, particularly when it comes to effects on political attitudes and behavior. The cognitive hypothesis, for example, predicts that voters who are not highly educated and not much involved or interested in politics, are most susceptible to media effects (e.g., van Kempen, 2007). Because the argument and information repertoire of these voters is smaller, it makes them more susceptible to new information in general and media coverage in particular. Partisans, on the other hand, or very involved and sophisticated voters who have already developed resistance mechanisms that keep them from blindly accepting any new information, particular information incongruent to their own beliefs (see Fournier et al., 2004; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; McLeod et al., 2009; Valkenburg and Peter, 2013; Zaller, 1992).

In 1993, Bartels was among the first to discuss what has become a central issue of media effects research, namely why the findings of many studies in political communication seemed to support the paradigm of *minimal effects* of media coverage on political attitudes, cognitions and behavior. Zaller (2002) then attributes media effects scholars' struggle with minimal and non-significant effects to shortfalls in statistical power in the field of communication effects research in general. In a similar way, Holbert et al. (2010: 17) argue (among other things) that political communication shouldn't fixate on persuasion (i.e. attitude change), commonly studied in the form of vote choice, but expand more strongly on questions of attitude formation or attitude reinforcement in order to break with the cycle of minimal effects and non-findings.

In particular, media bias effects studies in this thesis focus on agenda setting, (valence-)framing and priming as mechanisms of media bias effects (see Study#2 and Study#3). Furthermore, this thesis particularly acknowledges that media bias effects may be moderated, either by characteristics of voters (Study#2) or by that of the object of media bias effects (Study#3) as well as by the relationship between different types of media bias (Study#3). Finally, this thesis takes up the suggestion from the minimal effects discussion and decided against a binary dependent variable such as vote choice, instead investigating party preferences (Study#2; e.g., van der Eijk et al., 2006) and candidate trait perceptions (Study#3; e.g., Kinder et al., 1986; Funk, 1996); non-ipsative measures potentially allowing for more variation.

4. Different Types of Media Bias

Besides defining a benchmark for political media bias and therefore differentiating it from structural bias, media bias in political news coverage can be investigated on the basis of both actors (e.g., Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012) as well as issues (e.g., Takens et al., 2010). This dissertation argues, that it is important to disaggregate this broader concept of media bias into different sub-types, particularly when interested in media bias effects on political attitudes and behavior.

These different sub-types refer to different aspects of the journalistic product such as actor salience, actor valence, or issue content, as well as different mechanisms of media effects such as agenda setting, second level agenda setting, or priming. In the literature, three sub-types of biases are commonly identified: (1) Visibility bias (e.g., Semetko, 2009), also referred to as coverage bias (e.g., D'Alessio and Allen, 2000). (2) Tonality bias, also referred to as statement bias (e.g., D'Alessio and Allen, 2000) or presentation bias (e.g., Groeling, 2013). (3) And agenda bias (e.g., Brandenburg, 2005), also referred to as gatekeeping bias (e.g., D'Alesio and Allen, 2000) or selectivity bias (e.g., Groeling, 2013). While the first sub-type of bias deals with the salience of political parties or candidates in the news (hence: visibility bias), the second measures how positively or negatively these actors are portrayed (i.e. the tone of media coverage; hence: tonality bias), and the third links parties' agendas to policy issues addressed in media coverage in the context of issue ownership theory (hence: agenda bias).

Most of the literature on media bias focuses on one type of bias only (e.g., Beck et al., 2002; Fournier et al., 2004; Oegema and Kleinnijenhuis, 2000; Takens, Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2015). As it has become easier to gather the relevant data, more recent studies tend to include two types of biases in their analyses in order to measure media bias effects more accurately (e.g., Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012; Lengauer and Johann, 2013). However, by and large these studies only investigate visibility bias and/or tonality bias in one or another form, generally leaving out agenda bias. Brandenburg (2003; 2005; 2006) was one of the first to systematically analyze agenda bias and compare it to visibility bias and tonality bias in his case studies of election coverage in Ireland and the United Kingdom. Only over the last years have studies now begun to include all three types of bias while investigating their effects on political behavior (Eberl et al., forthcoming-a; Eberl et al., 2017; Geers and Bos, forthcoming).

Defining Visibility Bias

Political parties or candidates can be more or less visible in media coverage as they compete for journalists' and the public's attention (Hopmann et al., 2012; Hopmann et al., 2010; Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996). Visibility, here, can be defined in many ways. Çarkoğlu et al. (2014) as well as Druckman and Parkin (2005), for example, define visibility through the number of direct quotes or sound bites from the competing candidates. Others use the amount

of photographs depicting the competitors (Kenney and Simpson, 1993; Waldman and Devitt, 1998). Most commonly, however, the number of news stories, candidate or party mentions, or other ways of quantifying written coverage are used (see D'Alessio and Allen, 2000).

There is visibility bias in a media outlet when a political party or candidate is the subject of an undue amount of coverage (i.e. quotes, sound bites, photographs, articles etc.) compared to the chosen benchmark for political balance. As announced before, the benchmark would be the coverage of other parties and candidates as well as that of other outlets during the same period of analysis. This type of bias is therefore defined by the *relative* amount of coverage devoted to each political actor in each medium.

Such party and candidate visibility is important and influential because it is a necessary condition to make voters even aware of a particular party and to make them consider it as a viable alternative (Geers and Bos, forthcoming). Similarly, only through media salience will voters even learn about a candidate's characteristics and a party's policy positions. In fact, visibility of political actors is a precondition for electoral democracy. Their visibility in media coverage will increase their accessibility to audiences, influencing subsequent political judgments (Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012; Norris et al., 1999; Kioussis and McCombs, 2004), especially because voters tend to infer a party's political importance from its media salience (Miller and Krosnick, 2000).

Kioussis (2005), for example, finds strong correlations between U.S. presidential candidate traits as depicted in the media and their salience in public opinion. Indeed, studies combining media content data with voter surveys have found that the mere visibility of parties and candidates in voters' media diets is an important factor influencing their party preferences, candidate support, vote choice and even vote switching (e.g., Geers and Bos, forthcoming; Hopmann et al., 2010; Oegema and Kleinnijenhuis, 2000; Semetko and Schönbach, 1994; Vliegenthart and Van Aelst, 2010).

Defining Tonality Bias

While visibility bias is only concerned with the quantity of coverage, tonality bias deals with its quality. Quality, here, means evaluations in, favorability or tone of media coverage. In rare instances tonality bias is measured by the favorableness of pictures in news stories (e.g.,

Barrett and Barrinton, 2005; Waldman and Devitt, 1998), since there is of course a substantive difference between the photograph of a presidential candidate being cheered by a crowd of supporters and an unflattering close-up of his or her face comparing them to a buffoon. The large bulk of the literature, however, looks at the favorableness of tone of single sentences or entire news articles (e.g., Boomgaarden and Semetko 2012; Çarkoğlu et al.; 2014; Geers and Bos, forthcoming; Hopmann et al., 2010).

There is tonality bias in a media outlet when a political party or candidate is the subject of an undue amount of (un-)favorable coverage (i.e. criticism, pictorial treatment etc.) compared to the chosen benchmark for political balance. Again, the benchmark in this dissertation is set as the average tone of coverage of other parties and candidates as well as that of other outlets during the same period of analysis. This type of bias is therefore defined by the *relative* favorability of each political actor in each medium.

In what tone media cover political actors is important, because in providing evaluations of them and their performance, media can frame political actors as being either good or bad politicians (or parties), thereby influencing voters' perceptions of these actors and ultimately perhaps influencing their voting behavior. Among other sources, such evaluative tone can come from a journalist's mediation, assessment or interpretation of a party's standing in the polls, their campaign performance, candidates' performances in debates, supporters' praise or political rivals' accusations (Geers and Bos, forthcoming: 4). While Sheaffer (2007) calls this process affective priming, de Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003) call it valence-framing. The idea is that journalists highlight positive or negative aspects of an object in the media, consequentially affecting the salience of these aspects in the public's mind. In that sense, the tonality of coverage is important because it can provide the media audience with templates, peripheral cues and shortcuts for understanding politics (Zaller, 1991).

For example, Druckman and Parkin (2005) argue that audiences' inferences about candidates are rather automatically made from positive or negative descriptions in texts instead of complex thought processes of weighing issue positions and candidate qualifications. More generally, research has shown that the tone of media coverage both positive and negative will affect voters' evaluations of affected parties and candidates (e.g., Beck et al., 2002; Boomgaarden et al., 2012; Hopmann et al., 2010). Finally, studies investigating both visibility bias and tonality bias find that visibility bias is less pronounced, that tonality bias has a greater impact on voting behavior or even that these biases are not necessarily consistent

in their effects (Brandenburg, 2005; Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012; Norris et al., 1999). It has, however, also been theorized that visibility bias may regulate or multiply the effects of tonality bias (e.g., Balmas and Sheafer, 2010; Midtbø, 2011).

Defining Agenda Bias

Although this dissertation focuses on actor-based biases, issue-based bias is somewhat reflected in the third type of bias also known as agenda bias (sometimes referred to as gatekeeping bias) as it links parties to specific policy issues. Agenda bias refers to the extent to which political actors appear in the public domain in conjunction with the policy issues they wish to emphasize or upon which they have issue ownership. Hence, it is not just important how often political actors appear in the media (visibility bias), or how they are evaluated (tonality bias). It is also crucial whether political actors are allowed to present their own policy positions and talk about their preferred issues in media coverage (Brandenburg, 2005). Again, there are very different ways of how past research grasped this concept. Sometimes the level of analysis in media coverage is the article level (e.g., Albæk et al., 2010), sometimes the sentence level (e.g., Brandenburg, 2006). However, Hopmann et al. (2011) argue that irrespective of the level of analysis it is much more important to find a proper approximation of parties' preferred issues, i.e. policy issues parties or candidates wish to emphasize in news coverage or on which they have issue ownership. To that end, some researchers have used party press releases (Brandenburg, 2005; 2006; Hopmann et al., 2012), others election manifestos (Asp, 2006), a combination of several types of party communication (Hopmann et al., 2009) or instead perceived competence ownership (Geers and Bos, forthcoming). Agenda bias is probably the most complex type of media bias in political news coverage, rarely investigated and often argued to be very difficult to operationalize (e.g., Brandenburg, 2005; D'Alessio and Allen, 2000; Hopmann et al., 2011).

There is agenda bias in a media outlet when a political party's or candidate's agenda in that outlet's media coverage is particularly congruent or incongruent to that political party's or candidate's preferred agenda (i.e. in campaign communication or based on issue ownership assessments) compared to the chosen benchmark for political balance. Again, the benchmark can be set as the average agenda congruence of other parties and candidates as well as that in

other outlets during the same period of analysis. This type of bias is therefore defined by the *relative* agenda congruence of each political actor in each medium.

Thus, parties and candidates should not only want to be salient and covered favorably in the media, but they should also want the media agenda to be congruent with their own agenda, so that they can define the policy criteria based on which they will be evaluated by voters (Brandenburg, 2005; Hopmann et al., 2011). Since agenda bias stems from a journalist's or editor's decision to select or ignore specific news stories, as a result only giving a voice to some actors and their policy positions (Covert and Wasburn, 2007; White, 1950), this type of bias combines gatekeeping, agenda setting and priming with issue ownership theory. On the one hand, news content producers are an independent filter than can suggest to news audiences the specific issues on which they should assess parties (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987). The effect of the media agenda will then depend on whether these issues favor or hurt these parties. On the other hand, parties will choose their campaign agenda carefully, highlighting issues that they are perceived to be competent on, that they "own", and that are important to them and/or their voters (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994; Petrocik, 1996), and they try to communicate that issue agenda and reinforce their issue ownership foremost through the media (Walgrave and De Swert, 2007). For example, a government party will want to talk about the economy in the media when it is doing well in order to prime that issue among voters (Druckman, 2004). In such a case, where a party emphasizes issues that it thinks will be advantageous to it at the polls, the party will benefit if the mediated party agenda (i.e. issues which the party is linked to in media coverage) is close to its agenda in party communication (Brandenburg, 2005).

Although, there are little to no findings on the actual effects of agenda bias (i.e. the effects of congruence between a party's issue agenda in media and its issue agenda in party communication), issue ownership research has shown that media coverage in general can influence issue ownership perceptions, which will in turn affect voting behavior (Bos et al. forthcoming; Dahlberg and Martinsson, 2015; Geers and Bos, forthcoming; Tresh et al. 2015; Walgrave and De Swert, 2007).

Summing up, media bias can be measured in many different ways. The three most common empirical notions of media bias are visibility bias, tonality bias and agenda bias.

With regard to the above-cited literature on media effects in general and media bias effects on political behavior in particular, we can thus expect:

H2.1: The more favorable a party's media bias in voters' media repertoire, the higher their preference for that party.

H2.2a: Media bias effects on voters decrease with voters' level of political sophistication

H2.2b: Non-partisans are more likely to be affected by media bias than partisans ...

H2.2c: ... but partisanship may also be reinforced by media bias toward the favored party.

H3.1: The more favorable a party leader's media bias in voters' media repertoire, the more positive their perception of that party leader's traits.

H3.2a: The effect of tonality bias is positively related to visibility bias, with the effect of tonality bias at zero when visibility bias is at its lowest value.

H3.2b: The effect of visibility bias is positively related to tonality bias, with the effect of visibility bias negative when tonality bias is at its lowest value and positive when tonality bias is at its highest value.

Study#2 and Study#3 investigate whether and under what circumstances the three different types of media bias will affect political behavior, i.e. party preferences and candidate perceptions. Moreover, these studies look at moderating factors of media bias within voters, within the interrelation of different types of media bias, as well as within the object of media effects, i.e. different trait perceptions (= effects of media bias).

5. Objective and Subjective Media Bias

Political bias can be *objective*, in the sense that it can be measured empirically on the basis of how issues and actors are actually presented and discussed in media coverage. If researchers find political media coverage to be unbalanced, slanted or treating particular parties or issues differently than they are supposed to (based on each researcher's definition and benchmark), then, we can quasi objectively (although rather empirically) speak of bias. However, political

bias can also be *subjective*, in the sense that audiences *perceive* the news as favoring some parties or ideologies over others. While what scholars may normatively and empirically identify as unbalanced or biased news may be very different from or at least only a fragment of what individuals perceive as such, objective and subjective media bias are of course not mutually exclusive and do sometimes coincide (e.g., Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012). That said; while sources of objective media bias may be manifold, sources of subjective media bias still remain relatively elusive.

Of course, actual media bias in political news reporting can be seen as one of the sources of perceived media bias. Particularly in the United States, the accusation of a liberal media bias has persisted for a long time. Evidence of a relationship between this perception and actual media content is, however, mixed. Longitudinal studies by Lott and Hassett (2004) and Groseclose and Milyo (2005) found a rather robust and over time liberal bias in U.S. media. Conversely, meta-analyses of several media bias studies over the last decades by D'Alessio and Allen (2000) could not find any evidence for this accusation.

Somewhat more promising is the research on the hostile media phenomenon in this regard. A large bulk of the literature argues that audiences will perceive bias on the level of single newspaper articles almost always as hostile, even when media content itself is perfectly balanced (e.g., Vallone et al., 1985). Gunther et al. (2001) argue that this has to do with partisans, very involved audiences and voters with extreme attitudes perceiving their own political attitudes and viewpoints as more credible, correct and newsworthy. Reporting that gives equal space or at least any space to several rivaling arguments will then always be perceived as biased or hostile by them.

Particularly voters who vote for extreme parties or who hold extreme attitudes will rather perceive media to be biased (e.g., Reinemann and Fawzi, 2016; Tasfati and Capella, 2003), since their ideological position is by definition far away from any reporting that tries to reflect several sides of an argument. Studies also find that the accusation of biased media is particularly expressed by voters on the right and extreme right side of the ideological spectrum (e.g., Beck et al., 2002; Eveland and Shah, 2003; Lee, 2010).

Finally, Hopmann et al. (2015) open the debate about the level of analysis on which media perceptions should be measured on and how this may affect findings. While the bulk of the literature looks at the level of the entire media system (e.g., Eveland and Shah, 2003; Lee,

2010; Tsfati and Cohen, 2005), Hopmann et al. (2015) found that not only are there differences in media perceptions between tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, but also that effects of game-framed news content on media perceptions differed between both media genres.

Coming back to political parallelism theory and the partisanship of audiences, the above-cited findings lead us to expect that particularly supporters of different political extremes will not only buy different media outlets, but also perceive them differently. Perceived media bias will be driven by political attitude extremity, but outlets may be perceived differently by different of audiences based on their individual political preferences. We can thus expect:

H4.1a: Perceptions of a biased media system will be stronger among ideological extremists compared to more moderate individuals.

H4.1b: Perceptions of a biased media system will be stronger among right-leaning than among left-leaning individuals

H4.2: The effect of political preferences differs based on the political orientation of individual media outlets.

H4.3: The probability of naming a party as being favored in the media coverage of a particular news outlet decreases with an individual's general preferences toward that party.

In particular, Study#4 investigates the relationship between extreme political preferences perceived outlet bias and whether the effects of these attitudes differ between media outlets and genres as well as how strongly effects are moderated by actual media exposure (= perceptions of media bias).

6. Summary of research questions and hypotheses

Table 2 below summarizes the hypotheses collected in the preceding section as well as their relation to the research questions and the specific studies addressing them. Note that these hypotheses and their underlying assumptions are described in more details in the individual manuscripts.

Table 2: Overview of research questions and general expectations

Study#	Research questions and Hypotheses	
1, 2, 3, 4	Overall research question	What are the sources, effects and perceptions of different types of media bias in political news coverage?
1	RQ1	To what extent do political advertisers influence media bias?
2, 3	RQ2	To what extent do different types of media bias influence political behavior?
4	RQ3	To what extent can political attitudes explain perceived media bias?
1	H1.1	The higher a party's advertising share in a media outlet, the more favorable the media bias for that party in that media outlet.
1	H1.2	The effects of party ads on media content are stronger in tabloids than in middle-market or quality newspapers.
2	H2.1	The more favorable a party's media bias in voters' media repertoire, the higher their preference for that party.
2	H2.2a	Media bias effects on voters decrease with voters' level of political sophistication.
2	H2.2b	Non-partisans are more likely to be affected by media bias than partisans ...
2	H2.2c	... but partisanship may also be reinforced by media bias toward the favored party.
3	H3.1	The more favorable a party leader's media bias in voters' media repertoire, the more positive their perception of that party leader's traits.
3	H3.2a	The effect of tonality bias is positively related to visibility bias, with the effect of tonality bias at zero when visibility bias is at its lowest value.
3	H3.2b	The effect of visibility bias is positively related to tonality bias, with the effect of visibility bias negative when tonality bias is at its lowest value and positive when tonality bias is at its highest value.
4	H4.1a	Perceptions of a biased media system will be stronger among ideological extremists compared to more moderate individuals.
4	H4.1b	Perceptions of a biased media system will be stronger among right-leaning than among left-leaning individuals.
4	H4.2	The effect of political preferences differs based on the political orientation of individual media outlets.
4	H4.3	The probability of naming a party as being favored in the media coverage of a particular news outlet decreases with an individual's general preferences toward that party.

III. The Case: Austria

Whether in media content or in voters' perceptions, by and large most studies on media bias focus on the United States, a two-party system (i.a. Covert and Wasburn, 2007; Doll and Bradley, 1974; Eveland and Shah, 2003; Hofstetter and Zukin, 1979; Lee, 2005; Lee, 2010; Watts et al., 1999). As argued previously, these findings may not necessarily be applicable to most European media and political systems. In most European countries media outlets are or have been strongly tied to political parties (Brüggemann et al., 2014; Hallin and Mancini, 2004). On the one hand this may lead to outlets exhibiting media bias more frequently or strongly. At the same time this bias will be dispersed over many different parties. On the other hand, one may expect voters remembering historical ties between media and politics, influencing their perceptions of an outlet's bias. In this regard, the case of Austria is an important contribution to media bias research as it can be used as a reference point for many European countries.

With a little more than eight million inhabitants, Austria is one of the smaller countries in Europe. In Hallin and Mancini's (2004) seminal work "Comparing Media Systems" Austria is assigned to the North/Central European or democratic-corporatist model of media systems, although Karmasin et al. (2011) see it rather as a border-crosser between the democratic-corporatist and the polarized pluralist model (also known as the Mediterranean model). Its media system is similar to that of other European countries such as Germany, Great Britain and Switzerland (Brüggemann et al. 2014). Among other dimensions, this categorization is strongly based on the degree of political parallelism, i.e. the interrelation between politics and journalism.

This chapter will now go into depth about aspects of the case that are most relevant to this thesis. First, it discusses the make-up of the Austrian media market. Second, it examines key symptoms of political parallelism. Third, it will give an overview of the last Austrian national election and its aftermath.

1. A highly concentrated media market

Austria has a strong newspaper market and public broadcasting sector, which are also important characteristics of democratic-corporatist media systems (Brüggemann et al. 2014; Hallin and Mancini, 2004). Particularly when gathering news about politics, Austrians still strongly rely on printed newspapers, followed by television news, while online media are – although growing in importance – still far behind (see Table 3).

Table 3: Use of media type for political information on a daily basis

	AUTNES Post-Election Survey 2008 (n = 1165)	AUTNES Post-Post- Election Survey 2009 (n = 1203)	AUTNES Post-Election Survey 2013 (n = 1504)
Newspapers	46%	48%	41%
TV	44%	47%	35%
Online	8%	7%	14%

Note: Data shown are from the AUTNES Post- Election Survey 2008, the AUTNES Post-Post-Election Survey 2009 and the AUTNES Post-Election Survey 2013.

Another important characteristic of the newspaper as well as TV landscape in Austria is that it is characterized by a strong concentration in terms of media ownership as well as market shares (Magin, 2013). Still just a few years ago, the newspaper *Neue Kronen Zeitung* reached almost 40% of the population, which is an exceptionally high share compared to other Western democracies. *Neue Kronen Zeitung* has been the biggest Austrian newspaper for decades now and does not seem to be getting serious competition any time soon.

Although in recent years the major tabloid's daily reach has slightly decreased, press concentration in Austria is still the highest in all of Europe and particularly characterized by the dominance of tabloids (Thiele, 2009). In 2015/16, for example, the combined daily reach of all supra-regional tabloid newspapers in Austria was of 53%. In Germany, where *Bild* is the only supra-national tabloid newspaper its daily reach only comes to 14.3% in 2016 (Media-Analyse, 2016). Magin and Stark (2015) go as far as to argue that the strength of tabloids and the pressure they exert on the print media market in Austria pushes quality newspapers to resort to stronger tabloidization.

On the Austrian television sector, the public broadcaster with its channels *ORF1* and *ORF2* long had a monopoly. The only real competition were television stations from neighboring Germany (Steinmaurer, 2009). Domestic commercial television stations started to become relevant only after the new millennium – later than in most European countries – and still only hold a weak position compared to the public service broadcaster (Karmasin et al., 2011). Today, the Austrian television market counts four public broadcasting stations (i.e. *ORF1*, *ORF2*, *ORF III* and *ORF SPORT+*) and four noteworthy commercial stations (i.e. *ATV*, *ATV2*, *PULS4* and *ServusTV*). The *ORF* stations had a total market share of 37.2% in 2013, while that of *Puls4*, *ATV* and *ServusTV* was only of 3.5%, 3.4% and 1.5%, respectively.

While the internet penetration in Austria has been quite high for a while now, the online news consumption is still comparatively low and characterized by most read online news outlets being spin-offs of their offline counterparts (Plasser and Lengauer, 2010; Steinmaurer, 2009). Some outlets even share the same editorial staff (e.g., *Der Standard*, *Heute*). Online media thus still seem to be of secondary importance on the Austrian media market – although new technologies and social media will most probably strongly shift the market in the years to come.

2. Symptoms of political parallelism

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), three models of media systems and journalism cultures can be distinguished in Western democracies. There is the Liberal Model (e.g., United States and Canada), the Democratic Corporatist Model (e.g., Germany and Austria) and the Polarized Pluralist Model (e.g., Italy and France). One of the main differences between these Models is their degree of political parallelism, where the Liberal Model has the lowest, whereas the Polarized Pluralist Model has the highest degree. Hallin and Mancini (2004: 282) argue that all media systems are converging to the Liberal Model. Today, this argument is being challenged (e.g., Umbricht and Esser, 2016).

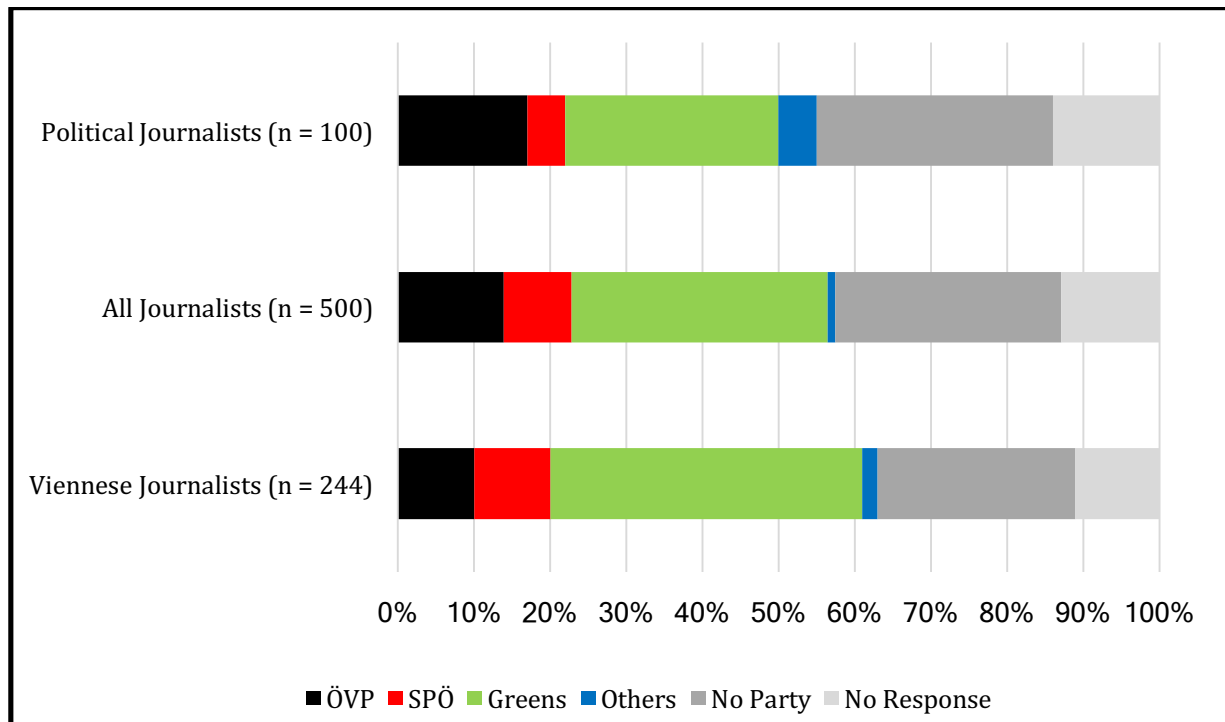
Although political bias is defined as one of the four key characteristics of political parallelism, Hallin and Mancini (2004) did not conduct a systematic analysis of political bias to validate their assumptions. However, what is known is that there is a high level of readiness

for political intervention in public broadcasting and an overall closeness between political actors and journalists in Austria compared to other European countries (Plasser and Lengauer, 2012). Tight political control over Austrian media paired with weak media accountability instruments (Karmasin et al., 2011) may then very well also result in strong political bias. Similarly, more recent research finds that political parallelism in the Austrian media system is a little above the European average, particularly when it comes to print media (Lelkes, 2016).

This may still come as a surprise since the only actual partisan newspaper left in Austria today is the *Neues Volksblatt* (owned by the People's Party). The last newspaper owned by the Social Democratic Party, the *Klagenfurter Tageszeitung* shut down in 2013. Both are regional newspapers with very small readerships. All remaining Austrian newspapers tend to define themselves as open to diverse viewpoints and as being independent of any political influences. A cross-national survey among journalists even finds that Austria exhibits ideal-typical journalistic values concerning "non-involvement, detachment, monitoring the government, as well as providing political and interesting information to motivate the people to participate in civic activity" (Hanitzsch et al. 2011: 281).

Still, Austria has a long tradition of grand coalitions between Social Democrats (SPÖ) and the People's Party (ÖVP) and the resulting historical anchoring of these political parties in the Austrian society should not be underestimated. Such historical anchoring makes explicit links between journalists and political actors inevitable (Plasser and Lengauer, 2012). All Austrian political parties furthermore implicitly rely particularly on newspapers since newspaper ads have long been and still are an important means of communication and campaigning to them (Kossdorff and Sickinger, 1996). In fact, in the 2013 election, newspaper advertising was Austrian parties' most important form of campaigning, accounting for about one-third of all campaign expenses (Austrian Court of Audit, 2013). This is also why financial and organizational links between politics and media in the form of political advertising in newspapers is regularly a matter of public concern in Austria (Lengauer and Hayek, 2012).

Figure 2: Journalists' party identification (in percent)



Note: Data shown are based on Kaltenbrunner et al. (2008; 2010). Question wording: Which of these parties do you feel closest to?

Of course, Austrian journalists are not apolitical. According to studies by Kaltenbrunner et al. (2008, 2010) Austrian journalists in general as well as political journalists in particular see themselves clearly more to the left of the ideological spectrum than the rest of the population. On a scale from 0 (= left) to 100 (= right), political journalists place themselves on average on 40.5, all journalists on 41.9, but the Austrian population on 50.8. Political journalists therefore also tend to be more to the left than any other journalists. Furthermore, half of Austria's political journalists feel close to a political party (51%), which is only a little bit less than for all journalists (58%). Surprisingly, the major parties SPÖ and ÖVP do not play that much of a role for individual journalists. In either group, most journalists feel closest to the Greens. Besides smaller differences between political journalists and all journalists, there also seem to be differences compared to journalists in specific regions of the country. Viennese journalists, for example, tend to feel much closer to the two left-wing parties SPÖ and Greens than any other group. Generally, far-right parties such as the Freedom Party (FPÖ) or the Alliance for the Future Austria (BZÖ) as well as the only far-left party in Austria, the Communists (KPÖ), are not very popular with Austrian journalists and were summarized under the category "others" (see Figure 2).

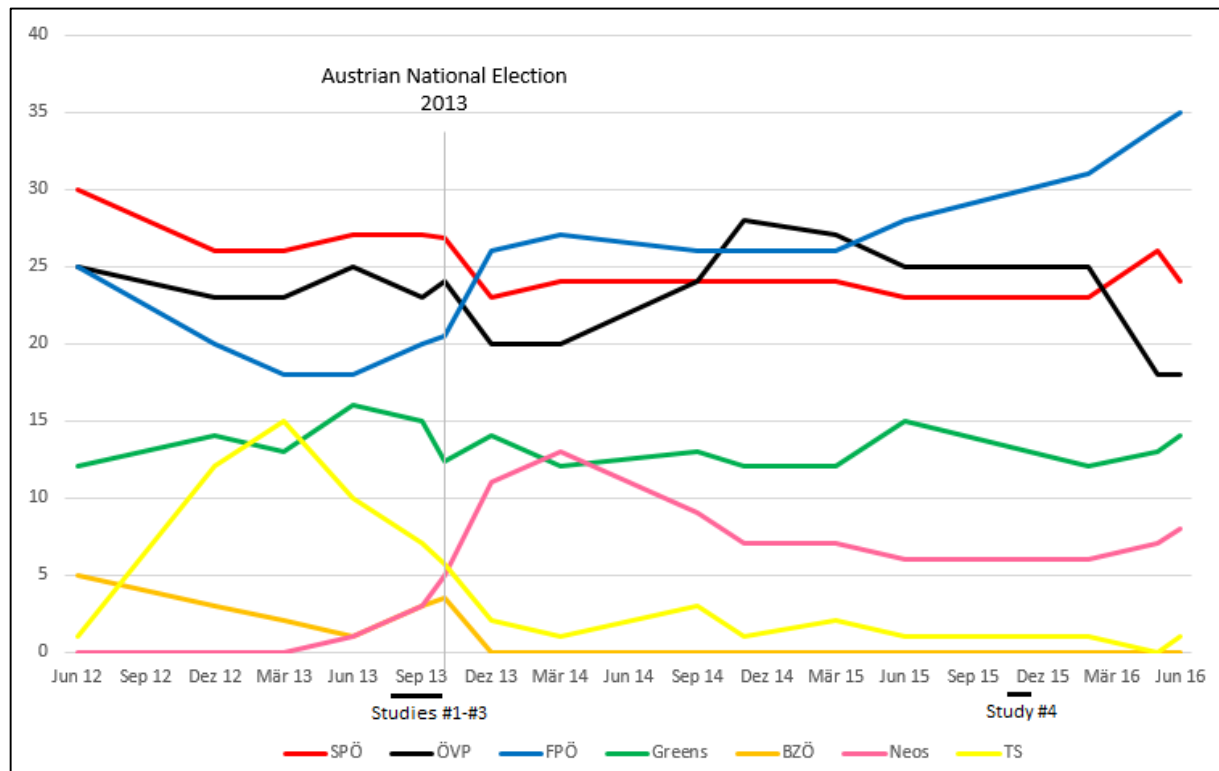
Summing up, although politically leaning a little to the left, Austria's journalists exhibit ideal-typical journalistic values based on journalists' own perceptions. However, studies also show that political actors tend to (or try to) interfere in journalistic news production on a regular basis, creating an environment of overall closeness between journalists and politicians. What remains uncertain is to what point such personal or organizational ties actually influence media content in a way that noticeably distorts political coverage and even influences political attitudes or behavior.

3. The Election of 2013: Campaign and Aftermath

While three of the four manuscripts in this cumulative dissertation are set around the Austrian national election campaign of 2013, one is set during a non-election period two years later (see Figure 3). However, both periods 2013 and 2015 can be qualified as quite volatile but significant for recent Austrian politics.

While Austria is a multiparty system with a long tradition of grand coalition governments (with only a few exceptions), the results of the 2013 Austrian national election were far from certain beforehand. Following a European trend, the ties between citizens and parties had weakened in recent years (van Biezen et al., 2012). This manifested itself in the run-up to the 2013 election through wild speculations both by the media and in parties' campaign communication on possible and politically probable coalition governments (Eberl et al., 2014). In fact, it looked as if SPÖ and ÖVP wouldn't be able to get enough votes to renew the grand coalition for another legislative period. Then, in the actual election, both traditional major parties shrunk to a record low, while the right-wing populist party FPÖ gained increasing voter support (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Election results and opinion polls between June 2013 and February 2016



Note: Data shown are based on 14 opinion polls by ATV Österreich Trend conducted between June 2012 and June 2016, as well as the results of the Austrian National Election 2013 annotated in the graph. Furthermore, annotated in the graph are the periods of investigation for Study#1 to Study#3 and that of Study#4.

The actual volatility of the electorate manifested itself even further in one party getting voted out of parliament, while two other parties were voted in. More specifically, FPÖ's offspring party (BZÖ) lost parliamentary representation, while a liberal party (NEOS) unexpectedly entered the political playing field. Furthermore, the Team Stronach, led by a business tycoon and already represented in parliament before the election thanks to party-switchers, participated in the national election for the first time but fell far short of poll-based expectations due to the party-leader's questionable campaign and media performance (Dolezal and Zeglovits, 2014; Dolezal et al., 2014).

After the 2013 election, as quickly as Team Stronach (TS) gained voter support and increased media attention before the election, it lost both again after election results were rather moderate and its leader Frank Stronach decided not to take part in his political project anymore. The newcomer NEOS stabilized in the polls somewhere a little above their results from Election Day. SPÖ and ÖVP got barely enough votes in 2013 to renew the grand

coalition for another five years. After that their ratings plummeted quickly and instead FPÖ strongly surged in the polls. This shift was intensified through Europe's 2015 refugee crisis. Later on, in 2016, something unprecedented happened when for the first time in Austria since the Second Republic neither a candidate from the SPÖ nor one from the ÖVP got into the second round at the presidential elections. Instead the presidential election(s) were a polarizing face-off between Norbert Hofer from the FPÖ and Alexander Van der Bellen, an independent candidate who was financially and organizationally strongly supported by the Greens (Zeglovits et al., 2016).

Summing up, the 2013 Austrian national election was only almost an “earthquake election” since the major traditional parties SPÖ and ÖVP still could secure their combined majority by a tiny margin, although opposition parties gained a lot of voter support (Dolezal and Zeglovits, 2014). This election is a perfect testing ground for the present thesis, since high electoral volatility suggests increasing competition between parties as well as on the newspaper advertising market (e.g., Ennser-Jedenastik, 2015). In such a setting one may also expect more leeway for media effects (e.g., Geers and Bos, forthcoming). After the election, the FPÖ and other right-wing parties and movements across Europe gained support in the polls and among voters, resulting in a resurgence of accusations of liberal media bias particularly in the context of immigration and asylum policy (e.g., Gasser, 2016); which makes this period a perfect setting for Study#4, i.e. the investigation of the relationship between political preferences and perceived media bias.

IV. Data and Methods

The data used in the four manuscripts of this dissertation are provided almost entirely by the Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES) and were generated during its second funding period between 2013 and 2015. AUTNES is financed by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) (S10903-G11) and describes itself as a national research network engaged in the comprehensive social science analysis of Austrian national elections.

AUTNES, of which this dissertation's author was a member of, is subdivided into three research groups in the aim of providing a fully integrated study of the “demand side” (voters), the “supply side” (political parties and candidates), as well as of the “media side” (media coverage) of the 2013 Austrian national election. This thesis builds on this integrative design as it uses AUTNES media, party and voter data in studies #2 and #3 and AUTNES media and party data in Study#1. Only Study#4, which is not set during the 2013 national election but in a routine phase (inter-election period) in 2016, is restricted to voter data alone (see Table 4).

Table 4: Overview of data used in manuscripts

Study #	Media Side	Supply Side	Demand Side	Other
1			<i>None</i>	Media FOCUS Research data of party newspaper ads
2	AUTNES Coding of Election Coverage	AUTNES Coding of Party Press Releases	AUTNES TV-Debates Panel Study	<i>None</i>
3				<i>None</i>
4	<i>None</i>	<i>None</i>	AUTNES Inter-Election Survey	<i>None</i>

Note: The AUTNES data used are Eberl et al. (2016), Müller et al. (2016), Kritzinger et al. (2014) and Kritzinger et al. (2016).

The methods of data collection used for this thesis were either manual content analysis and/or online surveys. All steps of data preparation and analysis for this thesis have been conducted using the statistical software Stata. Primary methods of data analysis were either linear or

logistic regressions (for further model specifications please consider data and methods sections in the manuscripts below).

1. Media Side

The media analysis data provided by the AUTNES Media Side project is used for the manuscripts #1 to #3 of this thesis. The content analysis includes all media coverage on political actors in eight newspapers between August 19 and September 29, 2013, that is, the six weeks prior to Election Day (Eberl et al., 2016).

All content analyses of media coverage in this thesis focuses on newspapers, as they still play an important role in the Austrian media system and were voters' most important source for political information during the 2013 election. Although the Austrian public broadcaster's TV news has large audiences and could therefore also have been included, its private counterparts do not, which makes substantive comparisons between the different channels' newscasts impossible.

The media sample contains a wide variety of different types of newspapers selected on the basis of circulation figures, genre as well as national and regional distribution. The media outlets under study were the quality newspapers *Der Standard*, *Die Presse*, and *Salzburger Nachrichten*, the tabloids *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, *Österreich*, and *Heute*, as well as the mid-range newspapers *Kurier* and *Kleine Zeitung*. All of these media outlets are under private ownership and have no explicit partisan ties (see Table 5).

Media content was analyzed using manual content analysis, combining elements of the NET-method for Semantic Network Analysis (Van Atteveldt, 2008) and political claims analysis (Koopmans and Statham, 1999). Therefore, the units of analysis in this study were political claims. A claim is a statement made by an actor (speaker) about a political issue (issue) and/or another actor (addressee), including the expression of criticism, responsibility, or support (Helbling and Tresch, 2011). This means that two types of claims were coded: 1. Claims where an actor spoke about or acted toward a political issue; i.e. "We (speaker) want better healthcare (issue)" – here, coders coded the speaker, the issue and the evaluative statement or action from one toward the other (support). 2. Statements or actions from one actor to or about another actor; i.e. "The social democrats (speaker) do not want to collaborate

with the Freedom Party (addressee) regarding social policy” – here, coders coded the speaker, the addressee and the evaluative statement or action from one toward the other (criticism).

Table 5: Overview of newspapers under study

Outlets	Genre	Founding Year	Publisher	Daily Reach 2009	Daily Reach 2013	Daily Reach 2015/16
Der Standard	Quality	1988	Standard Verlags-gesellschaft m. b. H.	5%	6%	5%
Die Presse	Quality	1946	Styria Media Group AG	4%	4%	4%
Heute	Tabloid/Fre e	2004/5	AHVV Verlags GmbH	12%	14%	13%
Kleine Zeitung	Mid-Range	1904	Styria Media Group AG	12%	11%	12%
Kurier	Mid-Range	1945	Mediaprint	8%	8%	8%
Neue Kronen Zeitung	Tabloid	1900	Mediaprint	39%	34%	31%
Österreich	Tabloid/Hy brid	2006	Mediengruppe "Österreich" GmbH	10%	10%	9%
Salzburger Nachrichten	Quality	1945	Salzburger Nachrichten Verlagsgesellschaft m.b.H. & Co. KG	4%	4%	3%

Note: Data shown in this table are from Seethaler (2005) and Verein Arbeitsgemeinschaft Media-Analysen (2009; 2013; 2015/16).

Inter-coder reliability scores (Krippendorff's α) are based on a subset of claims in news stories ($n = 1,123$) coded by the seven coders. The scores for the variables subject actor (speakers), object actor (addressees), evaluative statements or actions, and issue codings were .85, .78, .76, and .80, respectively. The recording unit, the claim, is small and has clear relational properties, that is, claims distinguish between speakers, issues, addressees as well as evaluations (Helbling and Tresch, 2011). These properties are important for measuring the three different types of media bias in this thesis. While the number of articles in which a party or its candidates appear is used to measure visibility bias, evaluative statements or actions toward these actors on the claim level are used to compute tonality bias. Issues addressed by political actors on the claim level are used in combination with party press release data to measure agenda bias (see method-sections in manuscripts #1 to #3 for more detail).

Table 6: Overview of media data

Outlet	Articles	Sentences
Der Standard	562	3,534
Die Presse	674	4,358
Heute	551	3,055
Kleine Zeitung	1,071	6,192
Kurier	958	5,739
Neue Kronen Zeitung	1,183	6,039
Österreich	1,556	8,548
Salzburger Nachrichten	415	2,588
Total	6,970	40,053

Note: The AUTNES media data shown are Eberl et al. (2016). Shown are only claims by or addressed toward a political party or candidate as well as articles including at least one of such claims.

Shown above is the largest sample of media coverage used in the following analyses (Study#2). Only claims by or addressed toward a political party or candidate were of relevance, generating a subsample of about 7,000 articles and 40,000 claims (see Table 6). Due to its central importance to three of the four manuscripts as well as to the computation of all three types of media bias, the media data could probably be called the core dataset of this thesis. However, to actually measure all three types of media bias, as well as its sources and effects on voters, an integrated design with data from political parties and surveys are needed as well.

2. Supply Side

The content analysis data provided by the AUTNES Supply Side project is also used for the manuscripts #1 to #3 of this thesis. The content analysis includes all press releases sent out by any party that held seats in parliament either before or after the election, which includes SPÖ, ÖVP, FPÖ, Greens, BZÖ, TS, and NEOS. Again, the data focuses on the period between August 19 and September 29, 2013 (Müller et al., 2016).

The analysis of party press releases is similar to that of media coverage as it registers the author as well as policy issues addressed in these press releases. Coding can thus be compared to the above-mentioned speaker-issue claim coding. However, for each press release only one claim was coded. Here, agreement across the six coders was based on a subset of press

releases (n = 100) and arrived at values of .99 and .70 (Krippendorff's α) for the identification of subject actors and issue codings. Again, satisfying inter-coder reliability score standards.

This information is then used to compare the parties' agenda in party communication with parties' mediated agenda in media coverage. Higher congruence between both party agendas in one outlet compared to other outlets is indicative of a favorable agenda bias for that party in that first outlet (see method sections in manuscripts #1 to #3 for more detail). Overall, approximately 1,900 party press releases from six parties were coded (see Table 7).

Table 7: Overview of party communication data

Party	Press Releases	Newspaper Ads
SPÖ	503	203
ÖVP	457	260
FPÖ	533	135
Greens	171	169
BZÖ	128	105
TS	130	377
NEOS	30	61
Total	1,952	1,310

Note: The AUTNES press release data shown are Müller et al. (2016). Newspaper ad data were provided by Media FOCUS Research.

Another source of party communication are parties' newspaper ads. They are used specifically in Study#1 to investigate possible influences on media bias. Data have been provided by Media FOCUS Research. To measure advertiser pressure (Hays and Reisner 1991; Soley and Craig, 1992) only meta-data is needed, i.e. advertiser (party), date of publishing and the newspaper in which the ad was published. Data from seven media outlets were used in this thesis: *Der Standard*, *Die Presse*, *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, *Österreich*, *Heute*, *Kurier* and *Kleine Zeitung*. Overall, approximately 1,300 party newspaper ads were published in these newspapers during the 2013 election (see Table 7). Most ads were bought in the two largest tabloids *Heute* (362) and *Neue Kronen Zeitung* (265), then came *Kleine Zeitung* (213), *Österreich* (173), *Kurier* (137), *Der Standard* (63) and *Die Presse* (97).

3. Demand Side

Study#2, Study#3 and Study#4 in this dissertation rely on online-survey conducted by the AUTNES Demand Side project (see Table 8). While studies measuring media bias effects on party preferences and candidate perceptions (Study#2 and Study#3) rely on a panel survey conducted during the Austrian national election of 2013 (Kritzing et al., 2014), the media bias perceptions study (Study#4) is entirely based on a cross-sectional survey during an inter-election period in late 2015 (Kritzing et al., 2016). Importantly, all analyses using these survey data include either a large amount of control variables (Study#4) or in addition to that a pre-election measurement of the dependent variable (Study#2 and Study#3), eliminating potential confounding factors in very conservative regression models.

Table 8: Overview of survey data

Study #	Dataset	Waves	Sample
2	AUTNES TV-Debates Panel Study	1 and 3	1,285
3	AUTNES TV-Debates Panel Study	1, 2 and 3	911-927
4	AUTNES Inter-Election Survey	1	1,243-1,460

Note: The AUTNES survey data show are Kritzing et al. (2014) and Kritzing et al. (2016).

Study#2 relies on two waves and Study#3 on three waves of a four-wave online-panel survey of the Austrian population eligible to vote, which was conducted during the Austrian national election of 2013. Respondents were drawn randomly from an already existing opt-in online access panel based on key demographics in terms of representing the target population. The profile of the panel was largely in line with the overall population with minor discrepancies concerning age and region that reflect the usual patterns of such online surveys (Kritzing et al., 2014). After dropping cases with missing values for the relevant variables for each of the studies, the remaining subsample contained either 1,285 respondents (Study#2) or between 911 and 927 respondents (Study#3), depending on the candidate trait under investigation.

Data collection for the cross-sectional online survey used in Study#4 took place between October 14 and November 25, 2015, during a non-election period in Austria. Respondents for the cross-sectional online survey were drawn randomly from the same opt-in online access panel described above. However, since the survey was part of a longitudinal election panel, 591 fresh respondents were added to address the low initial response rate of 49.4%. Again, the

profile of the final sample was largely in line with the overall offline population concerning socio-demographic criteria (Kritzing et al., 2016). Conditional on the level of analysis, the remaining subsamples used for the analyses contained between 1,243 and 1,460 respondents.

The next chapters represent the original manuscripts compiled in this cumulative thesis (labeled Study#1 to Study#4). Overall results as well as their implications for the overarching research questions are summarized in the final section.

V. Study#1: Party Advertising in Newspapers: A Source of Media Bias?

Co-authored with Markus Wagner and Hajo G. Boomgaarden

Abstract

Journalists increasingly fear that their work may be influenced by advertisers' interests. While studies have found that commercial advertisers exert pressure on news producers, equivalent research on political advertising is scarce. Using a rigorous methodological approach, we investigate whether party advertising led to three different forms of media bias in newspaper coverage of the Austrian general election in 2013. We combine data on party newspaper advertising ($N \approx 1300$), party press releases ($N \approx 1900$) and coverage in seven newspapers ($N \approx 4200$). There are no statistically significant effects of party advertising on media bias, though there is indicative evidence of differences between media genres. Our findings advance the study of advertiser pressure in the field of political journalism and political communication and clarify a heated public debate.

Keywords: advertiser pressure, media bias, newspaper advertisements, political advertising, political campaigns

1. Introduction

Political newspaper advertisements (ads) regularly cause public debate: they prompt concerns about whether they are ethically appropriate and about the potential pressure they place on journalists and editors. As a case in point, in Austria in 2008, the Social Democrats' lead candidate (and later chancellor) Werner Faymann was accused of having misused ads from state-owned companies to support his personal campaign. More generally, the Social Democratic party was suspected of trying to buy favorable coverage in tabloid media through advertising. As a result, the Austrian Parliament initiated a committee of enquiry in 2010 (see Lengauer and Hayek, 2012). Although the charges were eventually dropped, legislation was enacted to make political advertising more transparent. Nevertheless, public debate surrounding the newspaper advertising expenses of parties and government bodies continues (Dossier, 2015; DiePresse.com, 2015; DerStandard.at, 2016). Despite circumstantial evidence, any link between political advertising and subsequent news coverage has yet to be empirically established.

On a more general level indeed the question remains whether political actors may use their advertising expenditure to influence journalists or editors and “buy” more positive media coverage. In addition to the (innocuous) aim of reaching voters directly through advertising in news outlets, parties and politicians may thus also hope to influence how they are covered in those media. There is some recent evidence for the occurrence of such influences. For example, Di Tella and Franceschelli (2011) found a negative correlation between the four main Argentinian newspapers' coverage of corruption scandals involving the government and government's advertising spending in the respective outlets between 1998 and 2007. Similarly, Young (2006) reveals that in the run-up to the 2004 Australian elections, media organizations were less likely to report criticism of government advertising if they themselves received substantial income from such advertising.

By exerting “advertiser pressure” (Hays and Reisner, 1991), individual parties and governments may try to influence media coverage by pushing for more (and more positive) coverage and by preventing disadvantageous news stories (i.e. soft censorship) (Soley and Craig, 1992). It is also argued that media reliance on advertising revenue has a negative impact on political diversity in the coverage of politics more generally (e.g., Curran, 1977;

McChesney, 1999), thereby working against the democratic ideal of creating a well-informed public (Strömbäck, 2005). It appears that it is not without reason that journalists report being increasingly fearful about advertisers' influence on their work (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996; Haas and Steiner, 2002). However, empirical evidence of such influence is still sparse and often anecdotal (Hackett and Uzelmann, 2003), even more so when it comes to political organizations as advertisers.

Surveys among journalists show that they experience pressure from commercial advertisers, but that these are not perceived to influence coverage. In particular, journalistic norms may mitigate the impact of advertiser pressure: many “journalists believe that they are nobler, more pure, and more altruistic than anyone associated with advertising and that advertisers should never be able to influence content of news stories” (DeLorme and Fedler, 2005: 7). In Belgium, although (political) journalists are sometimes approached by their editors, their newspaper's marketing department or even by the actual advertisers, the perceived influence on their work remains minimal (De Smet and Vanormelingen, 2011). Giving in to advertiser pressures would violate the key journalistic norms of objectivity and autonomy, which are key elements of professional self-perception in journalism in many of today's Western democracies (e.g., Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Deuze, 2005). When the advertiser is a party or politician, the violation would be even worse as it would combine political as well as economic influences on journalism (see Hanitzsch et al., 2010).

From an economic perspective, we thus have reasons to assume that advertisers influence media coverage, but from a journalistic norms perspective advertiser pressure should remain ineffective. Recent studies based on content analyses tell nuanced stories about advertiser influence: studies on corporate advertisers present findings ranging from no influence (e.g., Poitras and Sutter, 2009; Rouner et al., 2009), mixed (e.g., Andresen, 2008), to substantial influence (Hagen et al., 2014; Gambaro and Puglisi, 2015) of ad placement on editorial content, while research on political advertisers, while scarce, also varies in its findings (e.g., Young, 2006; Di Tella and Franceschelli, 2011; Lengauer and Hayek, 2012). Overall, how successful political advertisers (e.g., political parties) actually are in influencing news producers and media content to their advantage remains understudied.

Our study examines the effect of a specific subset of advertising, namely party advertising. We do so by analyzing media coverage in the 2013 Austrian national election campaign. Austria is to be seen as a “most likely” (Eckstein, 2000: 149) case for an influence

of party ads on election news coverage for four reasons: (1) political parallelism is relatively high in the Austrian newspaper sector (Lelkes, 2016): there are explicit links between journalists and political actors (Plasser and Lengauer, 2012), there is a tendency towards a partisanship of media audiences and, most importantly, media outlets reflect distinct political views in their reporting, favoring specific parties or ideologies over others (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 27–28); (2) newspaper ads have long been and still are an important means of communication and campaigning for Austrian parties (Kossdorff and Sickinger, 1996); (3) political advertising in newspapers is regularly a matter of public concern; and (4) there are important tabloid outlets that have been the focus of recent public discourse concerning the influence of party advertising (Lengauer and Hayek, 2012), with tabloids generally argued to be more strongly susceptible to advertising pressures (Martin and Souder, 2009). We focus on a single election campaign as our study uses evidence from an integrated research design that combines data from an extensive media content analysis of seven national newspapers and data from party press releases as well as newspaper ads of seven political parties.

Our outcome variable is the extent to which media coverage is biased towards one party or another. Unlike existing studies, we consider three different sub-types of media bias: visibility bias, tonality bias and agenda bias (Brandenburg, 2005; Eberl et al., forthcoming-a). We define visibility bias as the relative salience of parties in the news, tonality bias as the relative evaluation of these parties in an outlet and agenda bias as the extent to which parties are able to address their favored issues in media coverage relative to others. While there is research on the nature and effects of media bias (Berkel, 2006; Brandenburg, 2005; Takens et al., 2010; Lenz and Lawson, 2011; Eberl et al., forthcoming-a), little empirical research deals with potential sources of media bias (e.g., Patterson and Donsbach, 1996). This is because such research requires large quantities of precise data on rather complex processes.

In addition to our substantive contribution to our understanding of how party ads may influence media coverage, our study thus also makes a key methodological contribution. Our models of party advertising effects on media coverage are based on very detailed measures of the content of media coverage as well as of party communication. These measures have the added benefit of allowing us to tightly control for potential confounders of advertiser influence. Moreover, this paper is the first to examine possible effects of party ads on editorial content on both a day-to-day basis as well as over a whole election campaign. In sum, this paper presents a rigorous method of testing for advertiser influence in a “most likely” setting.

Overall, this study does not find any substantive influence of party advertising on media coverage. However, there is some evidence of differences between the effects of party ads in different media genres, perhaps indicating different media routines when it comes to dealing with such advertiser pressures (Shoemaker and Reese, 2013). In reaching these conclusions, this paper sketches a comprehensive picture of political advertising as a possible source of media bias during the Austrian parliamentary election campaign of 2013, thereby addressing an understudied question in journalism and political communication research and making important steps towards clarifying a heated public and scholarly debate through empirical rigor.

2. Newspaper Advertising and Media Bias

For political parties, the greatest advantage of newspaper ads is that they transport a party's message directly, unfiltered and thus in an unmediated form to the potential voters (Vavreck, 2001). Research on campaign ads confirms their persuasive effects (Goldstein and Ridout, 2004; Kaid, 2004; Kaplan et al., 2006; Franz and Ridout, 2007; Gerber et al., 2011; Schmuck and Matthes, 2015). Thus, it makes sense for parties to be very strategic and place advertising based on the specific readership of a media outlet (Groseclose and Milyo, 2005; Ridout et al., 2012). For one, advertisers may be willing to pay more to reach specific demographic groups and untapped electorates. For another, parties may also tailor the messages of their ads to the outlet: as a recent study shows, Austrian parties consider readership characteristics such as partisan leaning and issue priorities when deciding on their ad placements (Ennser-Jedenastik, 2015).

In addition to the direct effect of advertising on readers, scholars also argue that parties follow a second strategy when advertising in newspapers: influencing media content (Kosssdorff and Sickinger, 1996: 76; Sickinger, 2009: 408). Based on research in marketing and media economics, it is argued that advertisers attempt to exert pressure on media content producers, thus jeopardizing journalistic and editorial freedom in a media environment that is increasingly oriented towards a profit-centered logic (Pointner, 2010). Indeed, surveys among editors and journalists (e.g., Soley and Craig, 1992; Gerhardt et al., 2005; Hanitzsch et al., 2010) as well as several content analyses examining explicitly the relationship between

corporate advertising in newspapers seem to confirm this theory (e.g., Andresen, 2008; Hagen et al., 2014; Gambaro and Puglisi, 2015). For example, Soley and Craig (1992) interviewed 147 editors at daily newspapers in the United States, 90 per cent of whom said that they experienced advertisers trying to interfere in their work. A detailed account of journalists in Belgium shows that the mechanism of such interference could be direct – from someone within the newspaper (the editor-in-chief) or from outside (the advertiser) – as well as indirect, through self-censorship (De Smet and Vanormelingen, 2011). While the exact timing of such interactions is still unclear, research often treats advertiser pressure as a long-term mechanism (Hagen et al., 2014). Alternatively, advertiser pressure, particularly if it is indirect, could also be taking place on a short-term basis. For example, when writing their news stories, journalists might still have in mind ad placements in their newspaper from the day before, consciously or unconsciously influencing their slant and news selection. Similarly, the cross-national study by Hanitzsch et al. (2010) found that in some cases advertisers or political actors do not even have to explicitly ask for more favorable coverage because journalists know who advertises in their newspaper and sometimes adjust their reporting in anticipation of advertisers' interests. Studies in the United States (Choi and Park, 2011) and Italy (Gambaro and Puglisi, 2015) found that newspapers consider advertisers when selecting press releases for media coverage, which again may happen on a long-term or rather on an ad hoc basis. While our study cannot directly address the mechanism at play (internal versus external or direct versus indirect), our empirical analysis does consider both long-term influences over the entire campaign period and short-term ad hoc pressure.

When investigating the effect of party ads on media coverage, at least three types of media bias need to be considered. First, tonality bias builds on the fact that positive or negative aspects of an object may be highlighted in the media, increasing the salience of these evaluations in the public's mind. Tonality bias exists when these evaluations are systematically more or less favorable towards one party compared to other parties and other media outlets. Second, visibility bias exists when one political party is the subject of an undue amount of media coverage (high or low) compared to other parties and other media outlets. Party visibility in the media is important because it is a necessary condition for voters to even learn about parties and their policy plans. The third type of media bias is based on issue agendas. Parties choose their issue agenda carefully, highlighting issues that they are perceived to be competent on, that they "own" and that are important to their voters (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994). In this sense, positive agenda bias exists if parties can

present their own policy positions and talk about their preferred issues in the media. Negative agenda bias is present if parties are connected to issues they try to avoid. Particularly in Austria, all three forms of media bias have been found to affect party preferences (Eberl et al., forthcoming-a) as well as candidate trait perceptions (Eberl et al., 2017). Combining newspaper ads and political media bias literature, we therefore expand previous claims concerning advertiser pressure to all three types of media bias by arguing that:

H1: The higher a party's advertising share in a media outlet, the more positive the visibility bias (H1a), the tonality bias (H1b) as well the agenda bias (H1c) towards the party in that media outlet.

The strength of the influence advertisers have on journalists and media coverage will depend on two factors: the actual pressure advertisers can exert and the media routines protecting journalists against such pressure (Martin and Souder, 2009; Nyilasy and Reid, 2011). In Austria and Germany, tabloid media tend to have both more advertising space and fewer advertisers than quality media, leaving each individual advertiser with relatively more influence over the newspapers' advertising income (Reinmann and Kreibe, 2012). Although newspapers typically separate their advertising department from the news department to protect against such outside influences (DeLorme and Fedler, 2005), surveys among journalists in Austria and Germany have found that tabloids' own advertising departments as well as individual advertisers regularly interfere in the process of news production (Reinmann and Schopf, 2012). Free dailies are likely to be more prone to such pressures (Kolb and Woelke 2010); such newspapers are mostly tabloids [e.g., *Heute* (Austria), *Metro* (The Netherlands), *20 Minuten/minutes/minutos* (Switzerland, France, Spain)] and rely solely on advertising income.

In contrast, there is less evidence for advertiser influence for middle-market and quality newspapers (Lengauer and, Hayek 2012; Lagetar and Mühlbauer, 2012; Reinmann and Schopf, 2012). This may be because advertising and editorial departments are kept separate but also because journalists working for quality newspapers take their function as a democratic watchdog and informer of the public more seriously (Skovsgaard, 2014). Moreover, Austrian quality newspapers receive large amounts of press subsidies relative to

their readership and company size, making them less reliant on advertisers. The large tabloid *Neue Kronen Zeitung* receives the least subsidies in relation to its readership and company size, while the free dailies *Heute* and *Österreich* receive none at all (RTRKommAustria, 2013). Hence, we argue that:

H2: The effects of party ads on media content are stronger in tabloids than in middle-market or quality newspapers.

3. Party Newspaper Ads in Austria and the 2013 Election

Austria has a democratic-corporatist media system (Hallin and Mancini 2004). Political actors are relatively willing to engage in political intervention, and there is an overall closeness between political actors and journalists (Plasser and Lengauer 2012). In addition, media accountability instruments are weak (Karmasin et al. 2011) and, overall, political parallelism in the Austrian newspaper sector is above the European average (Lelkes 2016). In this context, it is important to note that Austrian parties use a lot of their resources to buy print ads: in the 2013 election, newspaper advertising was parties' most important form of campaigning, accounting for about one-third of all campaign expenses (Austrian Court of Audit, 2013).

Table 9: Party ad descriptives by media outlet

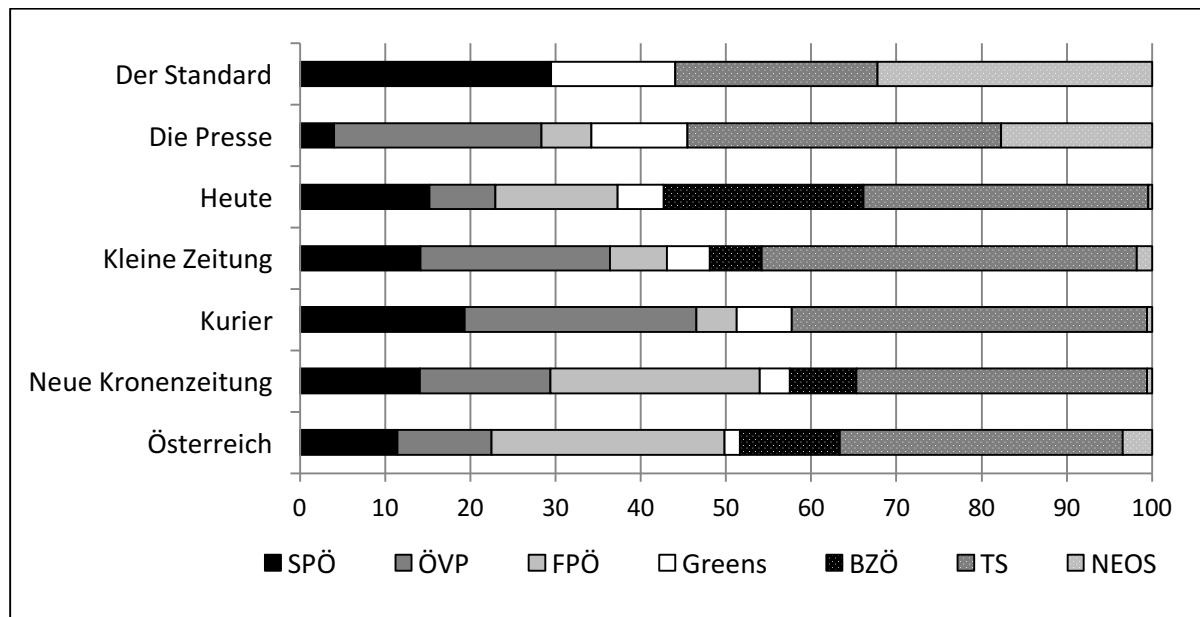
	Type of newspaper	Daily reach of outlet in %	Party advertising		
			Number of ads	Amount in Euro	Share in %
Der Standard	Quality	5.5	63	341,121	3.8
Die Presse	Quality	3.8	97	637,743	7.1
Heute	Tabloid*	13.8	362	1,478,417	16.5
Kleine Zeitung	Middle-market	11.2	213	1,170,393	13.1
Kurier	Middle-market	7.6	137	1,078,171	12
Neue Kronen Zeitung	Tabloid	34.3	265	2,936,377	32.8
Österreich	Tabloid**	10	173	1,311,092	14.6
Total			1,310	8,953,314	100

*Notes: Calculations based on Media Focus Research (2013) data as well as Verein ARGE Media-Analysen. The advertising value is based on the official list of prices for ads of specific sizes and placements in the respective media outlets during the election period of 2013. * Refers to a free daily newspaper. ** Refers to a partly-free daily newspaper.*

As can be seen from Table 9, overall advertising expenditure during the parliamentary election of 2013 was largely proportional to each outlets' daily reach among readers. More ad space was bought in those newspapers with the largest readerships. However, Figure 4 shows that parties diverged from this overall proportionality: parties clearly took into account more than just the number of readers as they do not all advertise to an equal extent in each newspaper. While some parties advertised in all seven newspapers (e.g., SPÖ, Grüne (Greens) and Team Stronach), others left out some outlets in their campaign strategy. This party- and media-specific ad distribution leaves us with an optimal testing ground for investigating advertiser influence, since some parties should – in theory – have largely equal influence in several newspapers, while other parties would have strong advertiser influence in some outlets and none in others.²

² The 2013 election was the first contested by two new parties that ended up gaining representation in parliament, NEOS (a liberal party) and Team Stronach (led by a business tycoon). Both seem to have shaken up the political advertising market. Team Stronach spent more than half of its considerable campaign budget on ads. Together they bought around half of the advertising shares in two media outlets (*Die Presse* and *Der Standard*).

Figure 4: Party ad spending in newspapers 2013 (in per cent)



Notes: Calculations based on Media Focus Research (2013) data. Shares based on the outlet specific gross advertising values of party ads. SPÖ = Social Democrats, ÖVP = People's Party, FPÖ = Freedom Party, Grüne = Greens, BZÖ = Alliance for the Future of Austria, TS = Team Stronach

4. Data and Methods

In addition to the above data on 1310 party ads collected by Media FOCUS Research³, this study combines media content and party press release data. The media analysis consists of all media coverage of political actors in seven newspapers (Eberl et al., 2016).⁴ The data on party communication, used to measure agenda bias (see below), comprises all party press releases sent out by parties that were in office before or after the election of 2013 (Müller et al., 2016).

³ The authors thank the Media FOCUS Research Ges.m.b.H. for providing the party advertising data.

⁴ We focus our analysis on newspapers, as they are the most important media for political advertising in Austria and still play an important role in the Austrian media system in general. Television news is still dominated by public broadcasting. However, regulations prohibit political ads on public broadcast networks, making substantive comparisons to commercial broadcasters impossible.

All data cover the period between 19 August and 29 September 2013, i.e. the six weeks prior to Election Day.

The media sample contains a variety of different types of outlets selected on the basis of circulation figures, genre and distribution area. Media content was analyzed using manual content analysis of political claims on a sentence level (Koopmans and Statham, 1999). A claim is a statement made by an actor about a political issue and/or actor, including the expression of criticism, responsibility or support.⁵ These characteristics are important for measuring different types of media bias. For the following analysis only claims by or addressed towards a political party or candidate were of relevance, generating a subsample of about 38,900 claims in 4200 articles.⁶ Our analysis of party communication is focused on policy issues addressed in party press releases.⁷ Overall, approximately 1900 party press releases from six parties⁸ were coded [SPÖ (Social Democrats), ÖVP (People's Party), FPÖ (Freedom Party), Greens, BZÖ (Alliance for the Future of Austria) and Team Stronach]).

First, we measure the overall visibility for each party as defined by the relative amount of articles in which a party or candidates from that party are a speaker or addressee in at least one of the claims included. Second, we measure tonality through positive and negative statements about political actors. Third, to measure agenda congruence, this study uses parties' press releases as an approximation of the respective parties' favored issue agenda. More specifically, we estimated bivariate correlations between the policy issues addressed in campaign communication (i.e. the party agenda) with the policy issues the parties address in media coverage (i.e. the mediated party agenda). These correlations represent the agenda congruence between each party and each media outlet. The higher the correlation, the more congruent both agendas are, the better for the party (Brandenburg, 2005).

⁵ Inter-coder reliability scores (Krippendorff's α) between seven coders are at 0.85 (speakers), 0.76 (evaluative statement), 0.78 (addressee) and 0.80 (issue) (N = 1123).

⁶ For each article, only claims in the title, the lead and the first paragraph were coded.

⁷ Here, inter-coder reliability scores (Krippendorff's α) between six coders are at 0.99 (speakers) and 0.70 (issue) (N = 100).

⁸ NEOS have to be excluded from the agenda bias analysis since they only sent out about a dozen press releases during the election campaign.

As stated above, the exact mechanism through which advertisers may influence journalists and editorial content is not known. We believe that to investigate this relationship empirically both aggregate effects (aggregation to the level of the whole campaign) as well as short-term effects (daily analysis) have to be considered. Although we use linear regression analyses throughout, the two levels of analysis differ in their computational complexity and require different specifications for the dependent variables (media biases).

In the aggregate analysis, we need more complex measures of media bias as the party \times medium unit data structure ($N = 49$) does not allow for more fully specified models. For example, some media outlets generally leave less space to parties or their issues, or might be overall more skeptical of parties due to genre or format specificities. To consider such structural differences between media outlets, the average visibility, tonality and agenda congruence of all parties in each media outlet during the period of analysis is a key benchmark (Druckman and Parkin, 2005; Eberl et al. forthcoming-a). Moreover, some parties may be more visible than other parties overall, or may have genuinely run a more newsworthy election campaign (Van Dalen, 2012). As the aggregate analysis does not allow for party fixed effects, we rescale the dependent variables accordingly. To compute the bias measures, the visibility, tonality and agenda congruence measures are thus rescaled twice: first, based on the average visibility, tonality and agenda congruence values in each outlet (to allow for comparisons between outlets) and then based on the average values of each party across all outlets (to allow for comparisons between parties). To ensure comparability between the different forms of bias, all aggregate-level values were then standardized to range from -1 to 1 , where a party would have a bias of zero (balanced/neutral) when its visibility, tonality or agenda congruence is equal to the mean visibility, tonality or agenda congruence of that specific party across all media outlets.

5. Results

First, we present the bias values as rescaled in order to enable comparisons between media outlets (i.e. after the first rescaling step). Using these measures, our results show that media outlets differed in important ways in their coverage of political parties and their issues in the 2013 Austrian election campaign (see Table 10). Note that these measures are relative to the

average bias in the respective outlets and can tell us which party is evaluated best, is most present or has the most congruent agenda in each medium. A positive tonality bias of 0.03 for the SPÖ in *Österreich* means that, in this newspaper, this party is evaluated 3 percentage points more positively compared to the average evaluation of all other parties in that outlet.

Table 10: Media bias descriptives

Tonality Bias								
Parties		Der Standard	Die Presse	Heute	Kurier	Kleine Zeitung	Neue Kronen- zeitung	Österreich
	SPÖ	-0.09	-0.1	-0.14	-0.14	-0.13	-0.01	0.03
	ÖVP	-0.19	-0.04	-0.01	-0.14	-0.13	-0.16	-0.1
	FPÖ	-0.15	-0.1	-0.2	-0.09	-0.18	-0.13	-0.05
	Grüne	0.05	0.01	-0.12	-0.01	0.12	-0.07	-0.01
	BZÖ	-0.11	0.05	0.1	0	0.1	-0.1	-0.16
	TS	0.02	-0.17	-0.2	-0.2	-0.07	0.05	-0.16
	NEOS	0.48	0.35	0.56	0.56	0.3	0.42	0.45
Visibility Bias								
Parties		Der Standard	Die Presse	Heute	Kurier	Kleine Zeitung	Neue Kronen- zeitung	Österreich
	SPÖ	0.15	0.17	0.14	0.16	0.14	0.14	-0.16
	ÖVP	0.14	0.13	0.13	0.11	0.1	0.14	0.13
	FPÖ	-0.02	-0.04	-0.01	-0.01	0	-0.04	-0.01
	Grüne	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.03	-0.03	0	-0.03
	BZÖ	-0.08	-0.08	-0.08	-0.08	-0.06	-0.08	-0.09
	TS	-0.05	-0.06	-0.06	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04
	NEOS	-0.12	-0.1	-0.13	-0.12	-0.12	-0.12	-0.13
Agenda Bias								
Parties		Der Standard	Die Presse	Heute	Kurier	Kleine Zeitung	Neue Kronen- zeitung	Österreich
	SPÖ	0.15	0.39	-0.15	0.29	-0.04	0.02	0.46
	ÖVP	0.08	-0.1	0	-0.02	-0.23	-0.01	-0.07
	FPÖ	-0.71	-0.58	-0.11	-0.65	-0.16	-0.08	-0.08
	Grüne	0.5	0.53	0.36	0.47	0.28	0.43	0.35
	BZÖ	-0.07	-0.47	-0.26	0.02	0.17	-0.19	-0.26
	TS	0.06	-0.19	0.16	-0.11	-0.02	-0.17	0.01

Note: SPÖ = Social Democrats, ÖVP = People's Party, FPÖ = Freedom Party, Grüne = Greens, BZÖ = Alliance for the Future of Austria, TS = Team Stronach, NEOS = Liberals.

The following patterns are discernible. First, visibility bias is very weak. There is no strong deviation in any direction. This bias type thus leaves little variation allowing for an influence

of party ads. Second, there is variation between outlets in terms of tonality bias, and this variation broadly meets face validity. For example, the largest party's (SPÖ) tonality is most positive in *Österreich*, followed by the *Neue Kronen Zeitung*. This is in line with studies on tonality bias during earlier Austrian elections, though it is worth noting that the SPÖ did not purchase a particularly large amount of ad space in these outlets in 2013 (see Figure 4). However, the smallest party's (BZÖ) most positive values are in *Heute*, the newspaper in which they bought most ads, and in *Kleine Zeitung*, which has a regional focus on Carinthia, where the BZÖ long governed. Third, differences between parties and outlets are strongest for agenda bias. For example, the right-wing FPÖ is primarily allowed to address its own issues in tabloid media, while the Greens have their most positive agenda bias score in the quality media (*Die Presse* and *Der Standard*).

Note that the structural differences between parties, such as the fact that NEOS are evaluated far better than all other parties but at the same time least visible in all media outlets, or that the Greens have a positive agenda bias throughout, are adjusted for in the following analyses through rescaling relative to the average bias for each party in all media outlets as described above.

Our first set of analyses includes the whole election campaign coverage from 19 August until 29 September. We thus relate the aggregate ad shares of each party in each medium (as a measure from 0 to 1, where 1 stands for all party ads in one outlet) with their actual bias values in these outlets. This form of analysis only allows us to make weak causal claims, as the exact direction of relationship remains untested.

Table 10: OLS – Aggregate analysis of party ads and media coverage

Dependent variable: Bias	Model 1 Tonality Bias	Model 2 Visibility Bias	Model 3 Agenda Bias
Ad Share	0.003 (0.054)	-0.002 (0.007)	0.043 (0.120)
Constant	-0.0004 (0.010)	-0.0002 (0.001)	-0.007 (0.024)
R ²	0.0001	0.001	0.003
N of observations	49	49	42

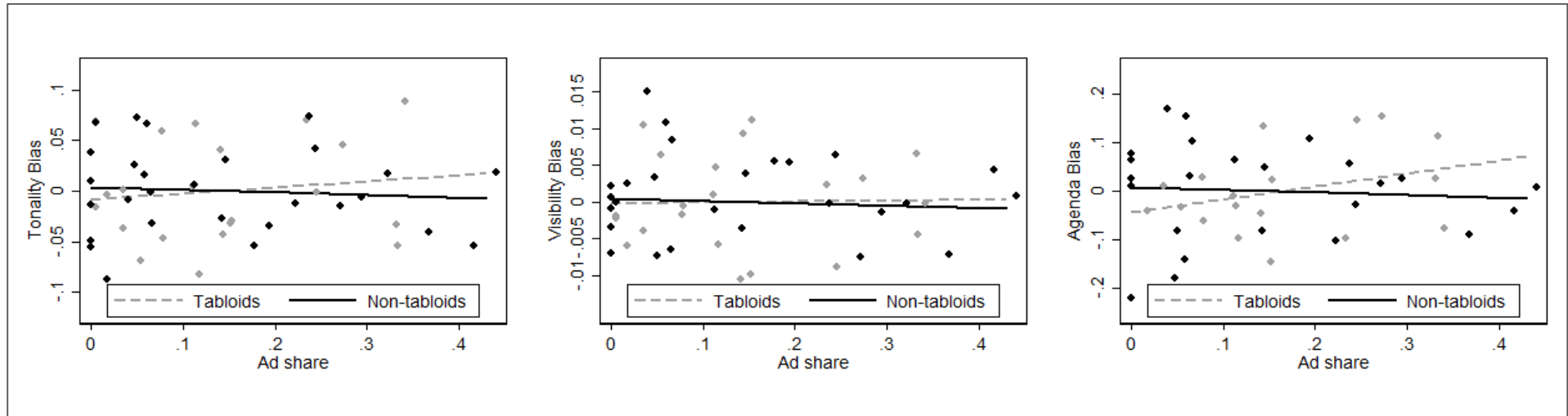
Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; Ad shares are computed based on Media Focus Research (2013) data. Shares are based on the outlet specific gross advertising values of party ads.

As can be seen in Table 11, no overall relationship between party ads and media coverage is discernible. The coefficient is very low and not statistically significant, and the explained variance is almost zero.⁹ We also find very similar results when excluding the two new parties from the analysis or when using data only starting on 1 September (by which time all parties, including Greens and NEOS, had started their newspaper ad campaigns) (see Appendix Study#1, Table 13 and Table 14). At the aggregate level, H1a–H1c are thus not confirmed.

To test H2, we re-ran Models 1–3, this time including an interaction term differentiating tabloid media (*Neue Kronen Zeitung*, *Österreich* and *Heute*) from all other outlets (see Appendix Study#1, Table 15). While there seem to be some differences in the relationship of party ads and tonality bias as well as agenda bias between media genre, they are minimal and should thus not be overstated, since none of these linear predictions show statistically significant differences (see Figure 5). Again, we find very similar results when using slightly different models (see Appendix Study#1, Table 16 and Table 17).

⁹ Outlet-specific analyses confirm this finding: only for the *Neue Kronen Zeitung* is there a statistically significant positive relationship between party ads and tonality bias ($\beta = 0.003$, $p = 0.048$); only *Österreich* shows a positive relationship between party ads and visibility bias ($\beta = 0.001$, $p = 0.043$); and for no medium is there a significant relationship between party ads and agenda bias. Of course, these outlet-specific tests are weak, as they are based on seven observations only.

Figure 5: Predicted levels of bias conditional on ad share and media genre



Notes: Ad shares computed based on Media Focus Research (2013) data. Shares based on the outlet specific gross advertising values of party ads. Bias values used are both rescaled on the outlet level as well as on the party level. The dashed line indicates the linear prediction of the effect of ad shares on media bias for tabloid media, while the solid line indicates the linear prediction for all other media outlets (middle-market and quality media).

Next, we consider short-term effects where our unit of analysis is the individual campaign day. We run this model because the aggregate-level model does not allow us to identify causal connections. Most importantly, parties may very well decide only to advertise in newspapers of which they know that they are favorable to their campaign. In contrast, our daily analyses are better able to identify a potential causal relationship between ad placement and media content as we theorize that the tone or visibility of a party on any given day (t_0) is influenced by this party's ad placement one day prior ($t - 1$). This analysis rather addresses the ad hoc, short-term and possibly indirect mechanism of self-censorship caused by advertiser pressure.

The models in our daily analyses are constructed as follows. For each day, ad placements are compared to the tonality and visibility of each party in each outlet. (Since the unit of analysis is daily media coverage, it is not possible to measure agenda bias in a meaningful way.) In these models, we use as our main outcome variable the raw values of media bias, i.e. the visibility, tonality and agenda congruence values before outlet- and party-specific rescaling. This is because the larger number of cases ($N = 1813$) allows for a more fully specified model with a larger number of control variables. Since the distribution of our main independent variable – ad placement – is rather skewed, we use a dummy variable that takes the value of 1 to indicate that a party placed at least one ad in a specific newspaper on the previous day.

We compute two models for each form of bias measurable on this low level of aggregation. For each, one model includes only the main effects, while the other introduces an interaction with the media genre – here operationalized as quality media (*Der Standard* and *Die Presse*), middle-market media (*Kurier* and *Kleine Zeitung*) and tabloid media (*Neue Kronen Zeitung*, *Österreich* and *Heute*). Furthermore, we use the simplified bias measures (tonality and visibility) as we control for medium–party or party and genre fixed effects in the models. These fixed effects control for the fact that some parties are generally more visible or always evaluated better or worse than others, irrespective of ad placement. Additionally, we include day-specific fixed effects to control for confounding real-world events, which makes this a very conservative model of party ad effects (see Table 12).

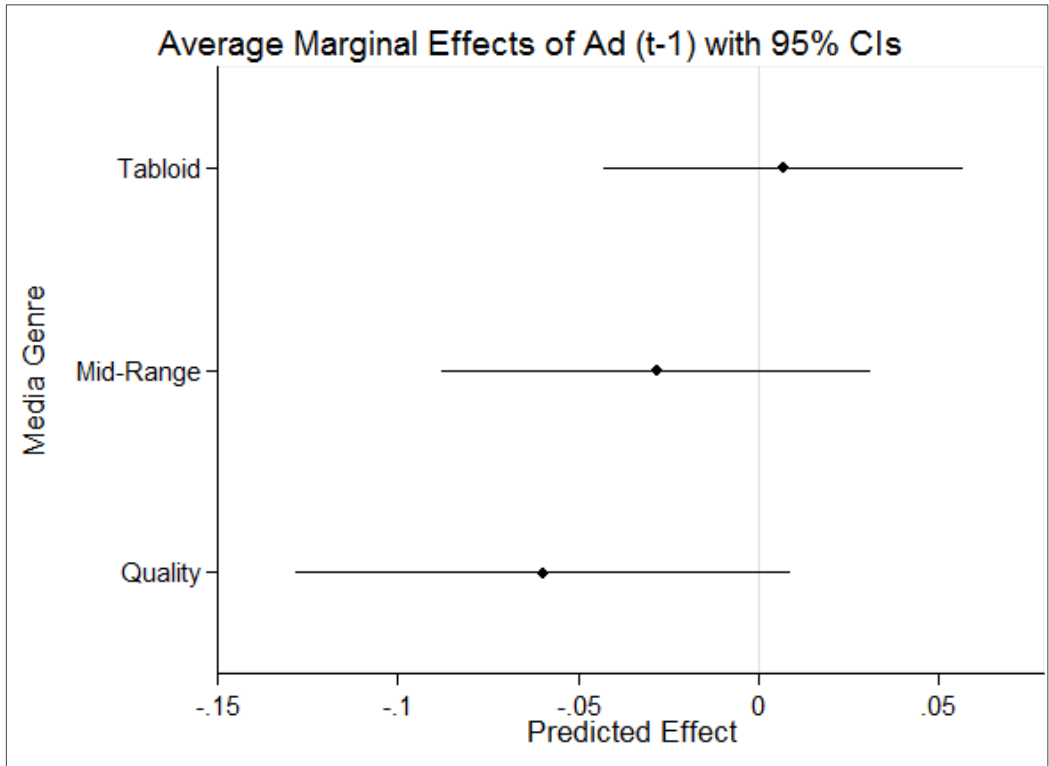
Table 11: OLS – Daily analysis of party ads on media coverage

Dependent variable: Bias (t0)	Model 1 Tonality	Model 2 Tonality & Interactions	Model 3 Visibility	Model 4 Visibility & Interactions
Ad Dummy (t-1)	-0.021 (0.021)	-0.059 ⁺ (0.035)	0.001 (0.013)	0.018 (0.022)
Tonality (t-1)	-0.006 (0.024)	0.022 (0.024)	0.007 (0.015)	0.004 (0.015)
Visibility (t-1)	0.011 (0.036)	0.0002 (0.035)	0.061** (0.023)	0.093*** (0.023)
Ad*Media Genre				
Ad*Middle-Market	-	0.031 (0.044)	-	-0.029 (0.028)
Ad*Tabloid	-	0.067 (0.041)	-	-0.022 (0.026)
Medium-Party fixed effects	YES	NO	YES	NO
Party fixed effects	NO	YES	NO	YES
Date fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES
Constant	-0.188** (0.079)	-0.195*** (0.061)	-0.028 (0.046)	0.003 (0.032)
R ²	0.15	0.13	0.76	0.75
N of observations	1813	1813	1813	1813

*Note: Standard errors in parentheses; *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ⁺ $p < 0.1$*

Again, no significant effects of party ads on tonality or visibility could be discerned. Furthermore, differences between media genres are not statistically significant, but marginal effects in Figure 6 show, once more, that there appear to be some tentative genre-specific differences in the relationship between party ads and tonality. For all three genres, the marginal effects are very close to zero; however, at least for quality media, they show a tendency to be negative. This difference can be explained by the fact that quality media may particularly be inclined to self-regulate or even be overcautious when dealing with newspaper advertising (Lagetar and Mühlbauer, 2012). Quality newspapers' independence from political parties is key to their trustworthiness and reliability (McQuail, 1992). No effects of advertising could be found for party visibility in media coverage.

Figure 6: Marginal effects of ad placement on tonality dependent on media genre



Note: Effects based on Model 2, Table 12.

The lack of significant effects for both visibility and tonality persists when excluding the two new parties from the analysis or when using data only starting with 1 September (see Appendix Study#1, Table 18 and Table 19). Any relationship between party ads and media content therefore remains tentative at best.

6. Discussion

This study has examined the effect of party newspaper ads on media coverage, a source of media bias that has so far remained understudied in the field of journalism. Because of a relatively high political parallelism in newspapers, disproportionately large campaign expenses on newspaper ads and several political scandals involving political advertising, Austria presented itself as a “most likely” case to find evidence for the relationship of interest.

Our analysis is based on a rigorous daily and aggregate analysis as well as on three types of media bias. Although descriptive results largely show face validity, the results do not hold up under thorough statistical testing, hence our hypotheses cannot be confirmed. While newspapers in Austria do advocate for specific policies and parties (Lelkes, 2016) and biased news coverage did influence political behavior during the Austrian election of 2013 (Eberl et al., forthcoming-a), parties do not appear to gain better media coverage in terms of visibility, tonality and agenda congruence due to their advertising expenditure (H1a–H1c). Moreover, we only have weak evidence for a small such effect for tabloids; results are strongest for tonality bias. Similarly, there is some evidence that in quality media ad placement on a specific day even tends to lead to a more negative evaluation of that party on the next day (H2). Overall, media bias cannot be sufficiently explained by party ad placement on an aggregate or daily level of analysis. Any relationships between ad placement and media bias as well as differences between media genres we found were rather minimal.

Examining advertiser influence is particularly important during election campaigns, as this is the period in which citizens pay most attention to politics and reach electoral decisions. However, this period of analysis also has its drawbacks. During an election campaign, all parties enjoy relatively high media salience, with manifold favorable and unfavorable news stories, which makes it difficult to measure the actual effect particular ad placements may have had. This may also be an important reason why it is comparably more difficult to find effects on media coverage when dealing with party ads than with ads by private corporations. While the influence of politics on media content may be different in routine periods (Walgrave and Van Aelst, 2006), political parties spend much less on ads during such times. Although it may be an ambitious task, future research should nonetheless aim for a long-term analysis of party – as well as government – sponsored ads and media coverage that includes both election as well as non-election periods.

We would also encourage future research to focus on tonality and agenda bias, which may be influenced by diverse sources such as journalists' ideology (e.g., Patterson and Donsbach, 1996) or journalistic routines in news selection processes (e.g., Haselmayer et al., 2015). In contrast, visibility bias seems to be less important in election coverage in contemporary Western democracies (Brandenburg, 2005; Eberl et al., forthcoming-a).

Of course, we do not completely dismiss the possibility that political advertisers may exert pressure on media content producers. Alarmingly, the wall of separation between

editorial and advertising is in a state of constant decline, particularly concerning online media but also more broadly (Witschge and Nygren, 2009). So while political advertiser pressure might not be strong at the moment, it may increase in the years to come. Further qualitative interviews, particularly with political journalists of both quality and tabloid media, as well as party secretaries, could still help shed some additional light on this relationship. Then again, the mechanisms at work could also be completely different and even more elusive, as a recent study by the Austrian Ethics Council for Public Relations suggests that journalists blackmail advertisers and not the other way around (Faber-Wiener and Einwiller, 2016). At this point, however, public debate about parties' newspaper advertising during election periods appears exaggerated, even in Austria. In fact, should influencing journalistic content actually be a central aim of Austrian parties' advertising, then this study shows that its success rate is minimal at best. It seems more plausible that any political media bias is rather the result of a more complex combination of the political views of each individual journalist, editorial guidelines, individual, organizational and financial ties between media and politics, as well as general journalistic orientations and practices (see Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

Finally, the strong interdependency of political actors (i.e. parties or government bodies) and media organizations through advertising placements is nonetheless potentially dangerous as it may compromise freedom of press and facilitate illegal financing of political parties at the expense of taxpayers (Sickinger, 2002). Hence, not having found any substantial influence of political parties' ads on editorial content does not mean that the practice per se should remain unchallenged. However, it should be kept in mind that advertising revenue in general is critically needed for the sustainability of some media outlets.

7. Appendix to Study#1

Table 12: OLS – Aggregate analysis of party ads and media coverage (new parties excluded)

Dependent variable: Bias	Model 1 Tonality Bias	Model 2 Visibility Bias	Model 3 Agenda Bias
Ad Share	0.064 (0.081)	-0.008 (0.014)	0.145 (0.193)
Constant	-0.007 (0.012)	0.001 (0.002)	-0.016 (0.028)
R ²	0.02	0.01	0.02
N of observations	35	35	35

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; Ad shares are computed based on Media Focus Research (2013) data. Shares are based on the outlet specific gross advertising values of party ads. Team Stronach and NEOS are excluded from the analysis.

Table 13: OLS – Aggregate analysis of party ads and media coverage (sub-sample starting September 1st)

Dependent variable: Bias	Model 1 Tonality Bias	Model 2 Visibility Bias	Model 3 Agenda Bias
Ad Share	-0.019 (0.059)	-0.003 (0.007)	0.005 (0.146)
Constant	0.003 (0.011)	0.0004 (0.001)	0.0008 (0.028)
R ²	0.002	0.004	0.000
N of observations	49	49	42

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; Ad shares are computed based on Media Focus Research (2013) data. Shares are based on the outlet specific gross advertising values of party ads.

Table 14: OLS – Aggregate analysis of party ads and media coverage in tabloid and non-tabloid media (all parties)

Dependent variable: Bias	Model 1 Tonality Bias & Interaction	Model 2 Visibility Bias	Model 3 Agenda Bias
Ad Share	-0.024 (0.066)	-0.003 (0.009)	-0.051 (0.145)
Ad Share*Tabloid	0.084 (0.117)	0.004 (0.016)	0.317 (0.266)
Constant	0.003 (0.013)	0.0004 (0.002)	0.007 (0.029)
R ²	0.01	0.002	0.04
N of observations	49	49	42

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; Ad shares are computed based on Media Focus Research (2013) data. Shares are based on the outlet specific gross advertising values of party ads.

Table 15: OLS – Aggregate analysis of party ads and media coverage in tabloid and non-tabloid media (new parties excluded)

Dependent variable: Bias	Model 1 Tonality Bias	Model 2 Visibility Bias	Model 3 Agenda Bias
Ad Share	-0.009 (0.098)	-0.008 (0.018)	0.020 (0.238)
Ad Share*Tabloid	0.266 (0.177)	-0.004 (0.032)	0.447 (0.430)
Constant	0.004 (0.014)	0.0005 (0.002)	0.001 (0.001)
R ²	0.10	0.02	0.05
N of observations	35	35	35

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; Ad shares are computed based on Media Focus Research (2013) data. Shares are based on the outlet specific gross advertising values of party ads. Team Stronach and NEOS are excluded from the analysis.

Table 16: OLS – Aggregate analysis of party ads and media coverage in tabloid and non-tabloid media (sub-sample starting September 1st)

Dependent variable: Bias	Model 1 Tonality Bias	Model 2 Visibility Bias	Model 3 Agenda Bias
Ad Share	-0.078 (0.071)	-0.005 (0.009)	-0.127 (0.169)
Ad Share*Tabloid	0.193 (0.127)	0.006 (0.016)	0.515 (0.306)
Constant	0.011 (0.014)	0.001 (0.002)	0.018 (0.033)
R ²	0.05	0.01	0.07
N of observations	49	49	42

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; Ad shares are computed based on Media Focus Research (2013) data. Shares are based on the outlet specific gross advertising values of party ads.

Table 17: OLS – Daily analysis of party ads and media coverage (new parties excluded)

Dependent variable: Bias (t0)	Model 1 Tonality	Model 2 Tonality & Interactions	Model 3 Visibility	Model 4 Visibility & Interactions
Ad Dummy (t-1)	-0.034 (0.025)	-0.051 (0.045)	0.001 (0.017)	0.025 (0.031)
Tonality (t-1)	-0.018 (0.029)	0.015 (0.028)	0.001 (0.020)	-0.004 (0.020)
Visibility (t-1)	-0.003 (0.038)	-0.013 (0.038)	0.045 ⁺ (0.027)	0.080** (0.027)
Ad*Media Genre				
Ad*Middle-Market	–	0.028 (0.053)	–	-0.050 (0.037)
Ad*Tabloid	–	0.040 (0.051)	–	-0.022 (0.036)
Medium-Party fixed effects	YES	NO	YES	NO
Party fixed effects	NO	YES	NO	YES
Date fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES
Constant	-0.186* (0.076)	-0.191** (0.057)	-0.038 (0.053)	-0.008 (0.040)
R ²	0.14	0.11	0.72	0.71
N of observations	1295	1295	1295	1295

*Note: Standard errors in parentheses; ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ⁺ $p < 0.1$. Team Stronach and NEOS are excluded from the analysis.*

Table 18: OLS – Daily analysis of party ads on media coverage (sub-sample starting September 1st)

Dependent variable: Bias (t0)	Model 1 Tonality	Model 2 Tonality & Interactions	Model 3 Visibility	Model 4 Visibility & Interactions
Ad Dummy (t-1)	-0.029 (0.030)	-0.085 ⁺ (0.045)	0.012 (0.019)	0.050 ⁺ (0.029)
Tonality (t-1)	-0.012 (0.030)	0.028 (0.029)	0.012 (0.019)	0.009 (0.018)
Visibility (t-1)	0.034 (0.045)		0.068* (0.029)	0.101*** (0.028)
Ad*Media Genre				
Ad*Middle-Market	–	0.055 (0.052)	–	-0.084* (0.039)
Ad*Tabloid	–	0.086 ⁺ (0.053)	–	-0.044 (0.034)
Medium-Party fixed effects	YES	NO	YES	NO
Party fixed effects	NO	YES	NO	YES
Date fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES
Constant	-0.276** (0.093)	-0.211** (0.062)	0.035 (0.059)	0.022 (0.039)
R ²	0.18	0.15	0.76	0.75
N of observations	1232	1232	1232	1232

*Note: Standard errors in parentheses; ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ⁺ $p < 0.1$*

VI. Study#2: One Bias Fits All? Three Types of Media Bias and Their Effects on Party Preferences

Co-authored with Hajo G. Boomgaarden, and Markus Wagner

Abstract

Bias in political news coverage may have a profound influence on voter opinions and preferences. However, the concept of media bias actually encompasses different sub-types: Visibility bias is the salience of political actors, tonality bias the evaluation of these actors, and agenda bias the extent to which parties address preferred issues in media coverage. The present study is the first to explore how each type of bias influences party preferences. Using data from the Austrian parliamentary election campaign of 2013, we combine an online panel survey ($n = 1,285$) with measures of media bias from content analyses of party press releases ($n = 1,922$) and media coverage in eight newspapers ($n = 6,970$). We find substantial effects on party preferences for tonality bias and agenda bias, while visibility bias has no clear impact. Voters who are less politically sophisticated and lack a party identification are more susceptible to bias, and media bias can also reinforce existing partisan identities.

Keywords: content analysis, election coverage, media bias, media coverage, media effects

1. Introduction

In Western democracies, the mass media can have a crucial influence on how citizens relate to and engage with politics (Altheide and Snow, 1979). Normatively speaking, citizens need to know at least a little about politics, parties, and candidates in order to be able to make effective and informed electoral decisions (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996). Importantly, they gain this knowledge above all from the mass media: For better or for worse, the media are the core arena for public political debates (Ferree et al., 2002) and citizens' main source of political information (Norris, 2000). Therefore, one central responsibility of the media arguably is to supply voters with balanced and objective information on relevant political issues and actors (Strömbäck, 2008).

The media often fall short of this ideal, and indeed they are regularly accused of partisanship and biased reporting, especially during election campaigns. Media reporting that lacks balance because it favors some political positions and political actors over others has been described using a large number of terms and concepts, including ideological bias (Hackett, 1984), media bias (Reeves, 1997), news bias (Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012), partisan bias (D'Alessio and Allen, 2000), and political bias (Hopmann et al. 2011). In such politically biased reporting, issues and actors are presented and discussed in an unbalanced and slanted way. Most studies that consider media bias focus merely on what it reveals about media content (Berkel, 2006; Brandenburg, 2005; Hofstetter and Buss, 1978; Takens et al., 2010). However, media bias is also important because it can have substantial effects on recipients' political interest, knowledge, attitudes, and even vote choice (McCombs, 2005). Accordingly, several recent studies investigate the effects of media bias on evaluations of party leaders (e.g., Lenz and Lawson, 2011; Prior, 2006), on vote intention (e.g., Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012), or on both (Druckman and Parkin, 2005).

In studying the effects of media bias, it is important to disaggregate this broader concept into different sub-types, which refer to different aspects of the journalistic product such as actor salience, actor valence, or issue content. In the literature, three sub-types of biases are commonly identified: visibility bias (also referred to as coverage bias), tonality bias (also referred to as statement bias), and agenda bias (also referred to as gatekeeping bias or selectivity; D'Alessio and Allen, 2000). While visibility bias deals with the salience of political parties or candidates in the news, tonality bias measures how these actors are evaluated, and agenda bias investigates which issues parties are able to address in media

coverage. Most of the literature on influences of media bias focuses on one type of bias only (Beck et al., 2002; Fournier et al., 2004; Oegema and Kleinnijenhuis, 2000; Takens et al., 2015). However, some recent studies have included two types of biases in their analysis in order to measure media bias effects more accurately (Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012; Lengauer and Johann, 2013). Overall, most research tends to disregard agenda bias, even though it is potentially important in increasing uncertainty and even misperceptions about party positions, which in turn may result in a decline in voter support (Brandenburg, 2005).

Building on the insight that media bias can have three different forms, this study makes three key contributions. First, this article is the first to examine the distinct effects of each type of media bias on party preferences. Our emphasis on agenda bias is particularly novel. Second, our model of media bias effects is rigorous as it leverages a multi-wave panel survey with detailed exposure measures to study changes in party preferences over an election campaign. The model also tightly controls for potential confounders of media influence. Our measures of media bias are based on extensive content analyses of newspaper coverage and party press releases. Third, we explicitly consider the possibility that media effects are not universal and examine two key moderating factors so far understudied in bias effects studies: political sophistication and partisan identification (Fournier et al., 2004). Overall, this study sketches a comprehensive picture of media effects during election campaigns in a European multi-party system and substantially adds to the literature on bias effects of political news coverage on voting, thereby addressing one of the core questions in political communication research.

In order to address these gaps, this study presents evidence from an integrated research design that combines data from an extensive media content analysis of eight national newspapers with data about party press releases of six parties and a panel survey carried out during the Austrian national election campaign of 2013. We will investigate how the three types of media bias influence voters' party preferences, while examining how voter characteristics such as political sophistication and partisanship moderate their effects.

2. Bias and Balance

Bias is best understood through its opposite, commonly referred to as objectivity, a rather broad quality criterion of news reporting that consists of many different aspects such as accuracy and realism, separation of fact and opinion, as well as the avoidance of slant (McQuail, 1992). Bias can be investigated on the basis of both issues (e.g., Takens et al., 2010) and actors (e.g., Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012). In this article, we focus on actor-based bias as our aim is to explain voters' support for political parties. Nevertheless, issue-based bias is reflected in our concept of agenda bias, which is related to issue-based conceptualizations of bias.

In order to arrive at a better operational definition, some scholars argue that the opposite of bias is not necessarily objectivity but neutrality or balance (Hopmann et al., 2011). An unbiased news report is a neutral or balanced report, thus one that is not strongly slanted in favor or against any political side. All sides should be equally represented according to some kind of benchmark for balance or neutrality. Conversely, in this view, bias is the extent to which media reporting deviates from this benchmark. The literature describes three types of actor-based biases that may affect voters' party preferences: visibility bias, tonality bias, and agenda bias. In the next section, we describe each type of bias in turn and explain why each type is important for understanding voter attitudes or behavior.

Three Types of Media Biases: Visibility, Tonality, Agenda

Actors can be more or less visible in the media as they compete for media attention (Hopmann et al., 2012; Hopmann et al., 2010; Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996). There is visibility bias in a medium when a political actor is the subject of an undue amount of coverage compared to other actors and other outlets. This type of bias is therefore defined by the *relative* amount of coverage devoted to each political actor in each medium. Of course, we should not expect all political actors to receive equal amounts of coverage: Some actors will be covered more because of their media viability (King, 2002) or because of journalistic news values such as relevance (e.g., incumbency bonus) and novelty (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Harcup and O'Neill, 2001; Semetko and Boomgaarden, 2007). However, these factors should

influence all media outlets equally (van Dalen, 2012), and in this study, we focus on relative levels of media bias within one political and media system. Hence, our interest lies in the extent to which some media outlets devote disproportionately more coverage to some actors than other outlets do.

Such party and candidate visibility is important and influential because it is a necessary condition for voters to even learn about candidate characteristics and party policy positions. Furthermore, the visibility of political actors in media coverage will increase their accessibility to audiences, influencing subsequent political judgments (Kiouisis and McCombs, 2004), especially because voters tend to infer a party's political importance from its media salience (Miller and Krosnick, 2000). Studies combining media content data with voter surveys have indeed found that the mere visibility of parties and candidates is an important factor influencing vote choice (Oegema and Kleinnijenhuis, 2000; Semetko and Schönbach, 1994). We thus expect that *the more visible a party is in voters' media repertoire, the higher their preference for that party* (Hypothesis 1a [H1a]).

Tonality bias measures whether evaluations present in media coverage are systematically more favorable to one political party compared to other parties. The media can frame actors as being either good or bad politicians (or parties), and thereby provide evaluations of them and their performance. Whereas visibility is a purely quantitative measure, tonality therefore adds a qualitative aspect by considering *how* political actors are covered. The tonality of coverage is important because it can provide the media audience with templates for understanding politics. For instance, valence-framing suggests that positive or negative aspects of an object are highlighted in the media, consequentially affecting the salience of these aspects in the public's mind (de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2003). Similarly, Druckman and Parkin (2005) argue that audiences' inferences about candidate traits are rather automatically made from positive or negative descriptions in texts. Studies investigating both visibility and tonality bias conclude that these biases are not necessarily consistent in their effects, with tonality bias identified as having a greater impact (Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012; Norris et al., 1999). We thus expect that *the more favorable the tonality toward a party is in voters' media repertoire, the higher their preference for that party* (Hypothesis 1b [H1b]).

Agenda bias refers to the extent to which political actors appear in the public domain in conjunction with the topics they wish to emphasize. Agenda bias therefore stems from a

journalist's or editor's decision to select or ignore specific news stories, as a result only giving a voice to some actors and their policy positions (Covert and Wasburn, 2007; White, 1950). Hence, it is not just important how often political actors appear in the media (visibility bias), or how they are evaluated (tonality bias). It is also crucial for understanding voter preferences whether political actors are allowed to present their own policy positions and talk about their issues in the media (Brandenburg, 2005). Although agenda bias is still actor-driven, it also reflects issue-based bias, in that it captures the extent to which politicians and parties are connected to the specific issues they favor. Parties choose their issue agenda carefully, highlighting issues that they are perceived to be competent on, that they "own," and that are important to their voters (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994; Petrocik, 1996). Parties and candidates thus not only want to be present in the media, but they also want the media agenda to be congruent with their own agenda, and therefore define the issue-based criteria based on which they will be evaluated by voters (Brandenburg, 2005; Hopmann et al., 2011). For example, a government party will want to talk about the economy in the media when it is doing well in order to prime that issue among voters (Druckman, 2004). In sum, news content producers can suggest to news audiences the specific issues on which they should assess parties (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987). The effect of the media agenda will depend on whether these issues favor or hurt parties. Because our assumption is that parties emphasize issues that they think will advantage them at the polls, parties will benefit if the mediated party agenda is close to the party agenda (Brandenburg, 2005). Hence, our third hypothesis is that *the more congruent a party's agenda is with its mediated issue agenda in voters' media repertoire, the higher their preference for that party* (Hypothesis 1c [H1c]).

Moderators of Media Bias Effects

Media effects do not to occur across the board but are different for different types of recipients (McLeod et al., 2009; Valkenburg and Peter, 2013; Zaller, 1992). In this study, we focus on two key moderators of the effects of media bias on party preferences: political sophistication and partisanship.

First, political sophistication is defined as a voter's capacity to understand and utilize political information (Zaller, 1992) and can be seen as a combination of its three key drivers: media attention, political interest, and education (Smith, 1989). Following the literature, the

moderating effect of political sophistication may not always be straightforward. Some level of political attention is needed to even be aware of media coverage about politics and thus to be affected by media at all. Hence, some studies find that paying close attention to election coverage may increase the effects of its content (Delli Carpini, 2004), although existing evidence in this direction is mixed (Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012). Furthermore, the media context has to be factored in: Outside of intense election periods and when there is little access to countervailing information, even highly sophisticated voters may be open to media influence (Zaller, 1992).

Concerning media effects during election campaigns, the majority of studies agree that political sophistication is important because it makes voters less susceptible to media effects (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995; Fridkin et al., 2007; Hillygus and Jackman, 2003). Arguably, such sophistication increases an individual's ability to make an informed decision when evaluating whom to vote for (Gomez and Wilson, 2007). A greater interest in politics helps voters to better organize and filter whatever information or coverage they are confronted with in order to assess its validity and finally accept or reject the message (Luskin, 1990; Zaller, 1992). Similarly, more educated voters tend to be less easily influenced by media coverage as they have the communication skills and background knowledge to process and interpret new information while taking into account prior evidence and the information source itself (Johansen and Joslyn, 2008). Conversely, less sophisticated voters are said to be less alert to their political environment, more easily persuaded by mere symbolic display, and less resistant to manipulation from political elites such as parties and media. Especially during periods of intense information flows, such as parliamentary election campaigns, less sophisticated voters are thus most susceptible to media messages (Zaller, 1992). Hence, we expect that *media bias effects on voters decrease with voters' level of political sophistication* (Hypothesis 2a [H2a]).

A second key moderating factor is partisanship.¹⁰ Most citizens have little knowledge of political parties, policies, or events and come into contact with politics only through media

¹⁰ Partisanship is of course correlated with the time-of-voting decision, a factor several studies focus on (Fournier et al., 2004; Hillygus and Jackman, 2003; Hopmann et al., 2010). Arguably, being undecided is a precondition for campaign effects. However, in this study, we focus on partisanship, which is likely to strongly determine whether voters are undecided.

coverage (Fridkin et al., 2007). This is arguably less strongly the case with partisans, voters that strongly identify with specific parties and their candidates, societal values and ideology. Studies find that partisans generally tend to be less affected by campaigns as their voting behavior is determined by long-term factors such as their partisan identification (Fournier et al., 2004). Moreover, partisans' desire to maintain prior beliefs leads them to process counter-attitudinal information selectively by paying less attention to it or trying harder to find reasons to dismiss it (Taber and Lodge, 2006). So, partisans tend to ignore or reject information dissonant with their own political views, especially if it comes from media they perceive to be biased in favor of the opposing parties (Beck et al., 2002; Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012; Fournier et al., 2004). In addition, partisan behavior such as selective media exposure makes it even more unlikely that media coverage will change a partisan's overall preference (Bennett and Iyengar, 2008). Yet, there may still be room for media effects among partisans: By activating and reinforcing partisan identities, media coverage may renew and strengthen partisans' initial vote intentions (e.g., Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995; Dilliplane, 2014). This leads us to the following two hypotheses: *Non-partisans are more likely to be affected by media bias than partisans* (Hypothesis 2b [H2b]), but *partisanship may also be reinforced by media bias toward the favored party* (Hypothesis 2c [H2c]).

3. The Case: Austria

Most studies on media bias focus on the United States, a two-party system (i.a., Covert and Wasburn, 2007; Doll and Bradley, 1974; Hofstetter and Zukin, 1979). Determining the effects of bias toward one or the other party or candidate is “fairly easy” in such a system compared to systems with many competitors (Hopmann et al., 2011: 241). However, the findings from these studies are not necessarily applicable to most European media and political systems, where media outlets are— at least historically—more strongly tied to political parties and where media bias is more common albeit dispersed over different parties (Brüggemann et al., 2014; Hallin and Mancini, 2004). Nevertheless, only few studies systematically analyze media bias in multi-party systems (e.g., Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012; Hopmann et al., 2010; Takens et al., 2010). Our study of Austria is an important contribution in this regard. Here, newspapers generally refrain from taking clear partisan stances and communicating

them publicly such as in endorsements. Most newspapers explicitly state in their editorial policy that they adhere to the standards of impartiality and diversity of opinions.

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), Austria has a democratic-corporatist media system (comparable to Germany), with a high level of readiness for political intervention and an overall closeness between political actors and journalists (Plasser and Lengauer, 2012). From a more technical perspective, the Austrian media landscape can be qualified as analytically manageable and diverse at the same time. It has several newspapers (quality, tabloid, regional, and free), all with relatively high circulation figures, as well as a growing television sector (Aichholzer et al., 2014).

Politically, Austria has a long tradition of grand coalition governments between Social Democrats (SPÖ) and the People's Party (ÖVP). However, the results of the 2013 Austrian national election were far from certain beforehand, and the results meant that the two traditional major parties shrunk to a record low, while a right-wing populist party (FPÖ) gained increasing voter support. Its offspring party, the BZÖ, lost parliamentary representation, while the NEOS (a liberal party) and the Team Stronach (led by a business tycoon) entered parliament for the first time (Dolezal and Zeglovits, 2014). In sum, the Austrian election of 2013 can be characterized as a volatile election. Overall, examining a country with a democratic-corporatist media system and a partisan history provides a reference point for many European countries and breaks with mostly binary analysis of media bias in two-party systems.

4. Data and Method

Data collection for this research took place within the interdisciplinary framework of the Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES). Its integrated design combines media content, party communication, and survey data. The media analysis consists of all media coverage on

political actors in eight newspapers (Eberl et al., 2016).¹¹ The data on party communication comprise all party press releases sent out by the six parties that were in office during the last legislative period (Müller et al., 2016). Both types of content data were linked to the general population using an online access panel survey (Kritzinger et al., 2014). All data focus on the period between August 19 and September 29, 2013, that is, the 6 weeks prior to Election Day.

The media sample contains a wide variety of different types of outlets selected on the basis of circulation figures, genre as well as national and regional distribution.¹² All media outlets are under private ownership and have no explicit partisan ties.¹³ Media content was analyzed using manual content analysis of political claims on a sentence level (Koopmans and Statham, 1999). A claim is a statement made by an actor about a political issue and/or actor, including the expression of criticism, responsibility, or support.¹⁴ The recording unit is small and has clear relational properties, that is, claims distinguish between speakers, issues, addressees as well as evaluations (Helbling and Tresch, 2011). These properties are important for measuring different types of media biases. For the following analysis, only claims by or addressed toward a political party or candidate were of relevance, generating a subsample of about 7,000 articles and 40,000 claims.

¹¹ We focus our analysis on newspapers, as they still play an important role in the Austrian media system. While the Austrian public broadcaster's TV news has large audiences, its private counterparts do not, which makes substantive comparisons impossible.

¹² The media outlets under study were the quality newspapers *Der Standard*, *Die Presse*, and *Salzburger Nachrichten*, the tabloids *Kronen Zeitung*, *Österreich*, and *Heute*, as well as the mid-range newspapers *Kurier* and *Kleine Zeitung*.

¹³ In fact, there is only one state-owned newspaper in Austria (*Wiener Zeitung*), and this has rather low circulation figures.

¹⁴ Inter-coder reliability scores (Krippendorff's α) are based on a subset of claims in news stories ($N = 1,123$) coded by seven coders. The scores for the variables subject actor (speakers), object actor (addressees), evaluative statements, and issue codings (before aggregation) were .85, .78, .76, and .80, respectively.

Our analysis of party communication is based on party press releases, in particular on the policy issues addressed in these press releases.¹⁵ This information is used to compare the party with the media data and measure agenda bias (see below). Overall, approximately 1,900 party press releases from six parties were coded (SPÖ, ÖVP, FPÖ, Greens, BZÖ, and Team Stronach).

Third, these data were linked to the first wave (45 to 32 days before election day) and third wave (last 4 days before the election) of a four-wave online-panel survey of the Austrian population eligible to vote. Respondents were drawn randomly from an already existing opt-in online access panel based on key demographics in terms of representing the target population. The profile of the panel was largely in line with the overall population with minor discrepancies concerning age and region that reflect the usual patterns of such online surveys (Kritzing et al., 2014). After dropping cases with missing values for the relevant variables, the remaining subsample contained 1,285 respondents.

Visibility Bias

To determine visibility bias, we first need to measure visibility per se. We treat a party as visible in an article if the party itself or candidates from the party are a speaker or addressee in at least one of the claims included. The overall visibility for each party is then defined by the relative amount of articles in which the party is present.

The next step is to define when and to what extent there is a bias in terms of the visibility of parties. Operationalizing media bias remains a challenge (D'Alessio and Allen, 2000), mainly because it is difficult to determine the most appropriate reference point to distinguish between balanced/neutral and biased reporting. Hopmann et al. (2011) argue that coverage should be compared to benchmarks of parties at a given point in time, for example, the amount of their campaign communication or their standing in polls, because what balanced reporting is might vary from one election to next. Although this logic considers the relative nature of balance, it does not yet allow for comparison across diverse media outlets. Some

¹⁵ Here, we measured agreement across the six coders based on a subset of press releases and arrived at values of .99 and .70 (Krippendorff's α) for the identification of subject actors and issue codings (before aggregation; $n = 100$).

media outlets might generally leave less space to parties or their issues, or be overall more skeptical of them, not due to partisan but rather due to genre or format influences. To consider differences between parties as well as media outlets, the average visibility of all parties in each media outlet during the period of analysis is a key benchmark (Druckman and Parkin, 2005). Our bias measure therefore captures whether party visibility is biased in comparison to what is typical for that outlet.

Visibility bias is then computed as the deviation of each party's specific visibility from the average visibility of all other parties in that outlet. An example can illustrate this approach. If Party A has a visibility of 50% in the outlet under study, and the mean visibility of all other parties in that outlet is 35% (i.e., each of the other parties is visible in just over a third of articles), then the visibility bias of Party A in that outlet is thus +15%. Our measurements of bias in election coverage therefore take into account differences between parties as well as between media outlets. We thus construct a benchmark for balance for each party-medium combination.¹⁶

Tonality Bias

Most studies count positive and negative statements about political actors and then aggregate these to create a measure of tonality (D'Alessio and Allen, 2000).¹⁷ Similarly, we follow Berkel (2006) and Lengauer and Johann (2013) and measure tonality toward a party based on the claims coded within articles, specifically their evaluation (positive +1, negative -1) and addressee (i.e., party; D'Alessio and Allen, 2000). As with visibility bias, we then take the average party tonality in that outlet, with tonality bias computed as the deviation of each

¹⁶ This means that to be able to compare potentially dissimilar media outlets' coverage (e.g., *CNN*, *MSNBC*, and *Fox News*) in a multi-party system, we therefore decided against a normative or absolute baseline for bias (e.g., 50/50) and chose a relative one instead. Hence, bias measures are computed as an outlet-specific deviation from its own typical coverage.

¹⁷ While some studies distinguish between evaluations and explicit election endorsements, or differentiate between different types of evaluative statements based on their origin (e.g., real-world events, success in polls; Kahn and Kenney, 2002; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2007; Takens et al., 2015), we include all different types of evaluations in one tonality measure to capture a generalizable and overall effect.

party's specific tonality from the average tonality of all parties in that outlet. To ensure comparability between visibility and tonality bias, both have been standardized to range from -1 to 1, where a party would have a bias of 0 (balanced/neutral), when its visibility or tonality is equal to the mean visibility or tonality across all parties in that media outlet.¹⁸

Agenda Bias

The operationalization of agenda bias is somewhat more challenging. In order to know which news stories have been selected as well as deselected by journalists, one would have to know the universe of news stories at a given point in time (D'Alessio and Allen, 2000). To allow for an operationalization of agenda bias, this study uses parties' campaign communication as an approximation of the potential universe of news stories (Brandenburg, 2005; Hopmann et al., 2011; Hopmann et al., 2012). We compare the policy issues addressed in campaign communication (i.e., the party agenda) with the policy issues the parties address in media coverage (i.e., the mediated party agenda).

For each press release and for each party claim, we coded the main issue at a low level of aggregation (750 issues). We then collapsed these issues into 15 broader issue categories based on issue ownership categorizations by Hayes (2008) as well as Meyer and Müller (2013).¹⁹ Statements on issues that did not fit into one of these policy fields as well as statements concerning campaigning or coalition formation were not considered. This leaves us with a subsample of 12,857 party-issue-units in media reporting and 1,523 party-issue-units in party communication. Agendas were measured in terms of percentage distributions of these party-issue units across the 15 policy fields.

Then, we estimated bivariate correlations between party agendas and the mediated party agendas. These correlations represent the agenda congruence each party experiences in each media outlet. The higher the correlation, the more congruent both agendas are (Brandenburg,

¹⁸ The two measures do not correlate strongly at the level of media outlets ($r = -.27$, $p = .054$).

¹⁹ These issues are (1) economy, (2) budget and taxes, (3) employment, (4) social welfare, (5) agriculture, (6) education, (7) law and order, (8) infrastructure, (9) environment, (10) individual right and societal values, (11) European integration, (12) foreign affairs and defense, (13) immigration, (14) fighting political misconduct and corruption, and (15) government reforms.

2005; Harris et al., 2006; Kim et al., 2011). Again, to measure the bias and not just outlet specificities, for each outlet the mean agenda congruence of all other parties was subtracted from each party's specific agenda congruence value and then standardized to range from -1 to 1, here -1 stands for both agendas being not congruent at all and +1 stands for both agendas being identical.²⁰

Analyses and Model Specifications

The literature on media effects has long struggled with the challenge that these effects might be minimal (Bennett and Iyengar, 2008; Holbert et al., 2010). However, this may have something to do with the commonly used dependent variable such as vote choice, which does not allow for much variation in a country with rather stable voting behavior (Hopmann et al., 2010; van der Eijk et al., 2006). In this study, we therefore use a more detailed dependent variable, namely, the propensity to vote (ptv) for each party on a scale from 0 (*very unlikely*) to 10 (*very likely*), a non-ipsative measure of party preferences. This measure allows for more variation across voters and across time, even more so when considering smaller and newer parties. In addition, working with ptv scores as our dependent variable allows us to analyze a voter's score for all parties, and thus consider the possibility that media bias affects evaluations of all existing alternatives and not just the one party (Pardos-Prado and Dinas, 2010; van der Eijk et al., 2006).

Our stacked data analyses include a large amount of individual-level control variables such as age (in years), gender (0/1, 1 = male), late deciding (0/1), party identification (0/1), left-right self-placement (0-10),²¹ and media use (additive index of days per week spent reading each news outlet, theoretical range of 0-49). Following the works of Smith (1989), Zaller (1992), and Highton (2009), we measure the theoretical concept of political sophistication (0-9) in approximation only by using an additive index of political interest (0-3), attentiveness to the election campaign (0-3), and level of formal education (0-3). Both

²⁰ Correlations between agenda bias and tonality bias ($r = .22$, $p = .125$) as well as agenda bias and visibility bias ($r = .14$, $p = .345$) at the level of media outlets are small and indicate that the different types of biases in fact measure different underlying aspects.

²¹ We enter left-right self-placement as a series of binary indicator variables, so that those answering "don't know" or refusing a response are not dropped from the analysis.

party identification and political sophistication are first used as control variables but later as subgroup determinants. These non-party-specific variables are transformed to the centered predicted values associated with each party in the stacked data, a procedure outlined in van der Eijk et al. (2006). Including all these variables in one model guarantees a conservative measurement of media bias effects, eliminating potential confounding factors.

It is important to capture the effects of political media bias and not just of structural biases. Political media bias exists when any one specific party has a disproportionally higher or lower value in one outlet compared to all other outlets (not compared to other parties). Structural bias exists when a party receives more or less – and more or less favorable – coverage solely due to institutional or contextual factors such as incumbency or historical legacies. This is potentially problematic in an analysis if, say, a party has a positive visibility bias across all outlets and higher levels of party preferences that are both caused by the party’s historical strength. To capture the effects of political media bias rather than that of such structural bias, we include fixed effects for each party. Once fixed effects are included, the remaining effect of our bias measures on party preferences reflects politically biased media coverage rather than structural differences between party coverage in the media.

For each individual, we measure exposure to media bias by using their reported media consumption for each of the eight media outlets on a scale from 0 to 7, where 0 stands for never reading a specific outlet and 7 stands for reading this outlet every day of the week (see Table 20).

Table 19: Respondents’ self-reported media consumption (in %).

Days per week	Newspapers							
	Der Standard	Die Presse	Salzburger Nachrichten	Kurier	Kleine Zeitung	Neue Kronen Zeitung	Österreich	Heute
Less frequently	80.5	82.9	91.3	73.3	82.9	47.3	73.6	73
1 day	6.6	6.1	2.4	6.9	2	11.9	7.7	4.8
2 days	3.4	2.9	1.3	4.9	2.1	6.4	3.4	4.4
3 days	2.7	1.7	0.9	3.2	1.7	4.4	4	4.4
4 days	2	1.4	1.1	2.4	1.4	2.8	2.9	2.4
5 days	1.7	1.2	0.8	1.8	1.1	3.1	3.9	7.8
6 days	1.4	1.3	0.7	1	0.7	2.4	1.6	1.4
7 days	1.9	2.6	1.6	6.5	8.2	21.8	2.9	1.9

Note: Data from Kritzinger et al., 2014.

Respondents reported that media consumption in our study largely reflects circulation figures, with *Salzburger Nachrichten* being the least and *Kronen Zeitung* being the most read newspaper (Aichholzer et al., 2014). Furthermore, 21% of our respondents stated that they never read any newspapers, while on average respondents read at least two newspapers at least once per week. Using these data, we computed voter i 's bias exposure toward party j based on their use of different media outlets k :

$$bias_{ij} = \sum_1^k (use_{ik} \times bias_{jk}) / \sum_1^k use_{ik}$$

As we do not expect news bias effects on voters who said they had not been exposed to any of the media outlets under study, we assigned these respondents a bias exposure value of 0 (balance) to keep them in the analysis and account for a theoretically correct model specification.²²

Importantly, our analyses also include a pre-election measurement of the ptv score (0-10), turning it into a very conservative model of party preferences. We therefore assess the changes in ptv scores in the last 6 weeks of the election and are thus able to disentangle media bias effects from effects due to selective media exposure (e.g., Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010) as the lagged dependent variable controls for the extent to which people who support/oppose parties choose media that reflect their views (self-selection). In combination with the suite of control variables, this two-pronged strategy is very conservative, going beyond many media effects studies.²³

To test the general effects of the different types of media biases (H1a-H1c), we conducted a linear regression model with standard errors clustered by respondents. As some of our independent variables of interest have been subjected to a linear transformation and can therefore not be interpreted meaningfully beyond their statistical significance (see van der Eijk et al., 2006), we repeated these analyses separately for the subgroups of lower, moderately and highly politically sophisticated voters (H2a), as well as for partisans, non-partisans, and partisan subgroups (H2b and H2c) to test the second set of hypotheses.

²² It should be noted that excluding these cases did not substantially change any of the results below. If anything, bias effects were stronger in the smaller sample.

²³ While experimental studies would of course provide a stronger handle on causality, such research is obviously limited by external validity concerns (see Lynch, 1982).

5. Results

Our evidence shows that media outlets differed in their coverage of political parties and their issues in the 2013 Austrian election campaign in important ways (see Appendix Study#2, Table 24). First, visibility bias follows a similar pattern in most media outlets, with larger and government parties more visible than smaller opposition parties. In our sample, the strongest positive deviation from the balanced benchmark was in favor of the government party SPÖ, while the strongest negative deviation from the balanced benchmark is against the BZÖ, which was also the party that lost parliamentary representation during this election. This phenomenon can be seen as reflecting the status quo division of power as well as an incumbency bonus (e.g., Semetko and Boomgaarden, 2007). Second, there is a stronger variation between outlets in terms of tonality bias. For example, in the tabloid newspaper *Österreich*, the Social Democrats have the highest positive score, whereas in the liberal quality newspaper “Der Standard” this place goes to a much smaller party, the Greens. These results are in line with past studies on bias in Austria (Lengauer and Johann, 2013). Third, some parties (e.g., the Greens) are more successful in mediating their policy agendas than others (e.g., the FPÖ), a finding consistent with that of Hopmann et al. (2012). Nevertheless, the variation *between* media still suggests that agenda bias is considerable. Finally, when there is a positive visibility bias, it does not automatically follow that there is also a positive tonality bias and positive agenda bias – and vice versa. Only in very few party-medium units do all three types of biases point in the same direction. This underlines the importance of studying all three types of media biases simultaneously, as examining just one aspect provides a misleading picture of the extent and nature of bias. The existence of various and diverse forms of media bias also means that it is worth considering their distinct effects on party preferences.

A second requirement for media bias effects is that these preferences did indeed shift over the course of the campaign. More than half of all ptv scores changed during the last 6 weeks under study: 26% sank, while 29% increased. In our sample, only 4% of all respondents did not change *any* of their ptv scores. Hence, change in ptv scores was frequent and widespread.

Our main concern now is to what extent these changes were caused by the media bias voters were exposed to. To answer this question, we turn to a multivariate analysis of the ptv scores. We first test the effects of each bias type separately, and then include all three types in one model (Table 21).

Table 20: Linear Regression for Media Bias Effects on ptv for a Party

Dependent variable: ptv (Wave 3)	Model 1 visibility	Model 2 tonality	Model 3 congruence	Model 4 all
Pre-ptv (Wave 1)	0.669*** (0.014)	0.668*** (0.014)	0.668*** (0.014)	0.667*** (0.014)
Visibility bias	0.493 (0.364)	—	—	0.462 (0.369)
Tonality bias	—	0.901 [†] (0.488)	—	0.996* (0.497)
Agenda bias	—	—	0.509* (0.203)	0.463* (0.201)
Controls included	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.429*** (0.082)	0.371*** (0.070)	0.392*** (0.070)	0.442*** (0.083)
R^2	.54	.54	.54	.54
n of observations	7,577	7,577	7,577	7,577
n of clusters	1,285	1,285	1,285	1,285

Note. Standard errors in parentheses; centered predicted values associated with each party for each of the voter-specific control variables; control variables are age, gender, late deciding, political sophistication, left-right self-placement, partisanship, media use; model includes non-nested dummy variables for parties. Standard errors clustered by respondents. ptv = propensity to vote. [†] $p < .1$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

If H1a were correct, there would be a positive effect of visibility bias on party preferences. However, this effect cannot be confirmed, as the effect of visibility bias is positive but not statistically significant. We have seen that visibility is strongly related to the size and relevance of parties, and we control for these effects in all these models with party dummies. Holding these factors constant, visibility bias does not seem to be an important factor in determining party preferences.

However, there is strong evidence for a positive effect of tonality bias on ptv scores (H1b). As can be seen from Models 2 and 4, the effects of tonality bias are stable. Considering only the most complete model, we can say that for a standard deviation (= 0.06) increase in tonality bias, we expect the ptv score to increase by 0.06 points. In other words, there is a statistically significant effect, even if, as previously theorized (Klapper, 1960), this effect is comparatively small. Nonetheless, being exposed to media coverage that portrays a specific party positively indeed increases a voter's ptv for this particular party.

Finally, agenda bias has a positive and significant effect on ptv scores (H1c). For a standard deviation (= 0.21) increase in the agenda bias, we expect the ptv score to increase by 0.10 points. H1c can thus be confirmed. When a party's agenda is congruent with its mediated party agenda, this positively influences the voters' willingness to vote for that party.

Summing up, during the 2013 Austrian national election campaign, two of three types of biases actually had an overall effect on voters. Note that these models are very conservative by controlling for the ptv scores before the campaign and a range of possibly confounding factors such as party-specific factors or overall media use. These tight controls explain why the effects that we show are relatively small in magnitude, as large media bias effects should not be expected in the short time frame studied here. In addition, testing the effects of visibility bias, tonality bias, and agenda bias in one model indeed disentangles the effects of each. These results underline the importance of considering all types of media biases when considering media effects during election campaigns.

As media bias effects may be heterogeneous, we also test for differences in media effect strength between the following groups: voters with little, moderate, and high political sophistication; and partisans and non-partisans. Voters with high political sophistication are expected to be more resistant to media effects (H2a). To test this hypothesis, we divided voters into three political sophistication groups approximately equal in size; voters with a score between 0 and 3 were defined as less sophisticated, voters with scores of 4 and 5 defined as moderately sophisticated, and those with scores of 6 to 9 defined as highly sophisticated. Table 22 suggests that less politically sophisticated voters are indeed much more susceptible to tonality bias. In this sub-group, a standard deviation (= 0.06) increase of tonality bias may increase the ptv scores by about 0.29 points. These effects are in fact strikingly different from those for moderately or highly sophisticated voters.

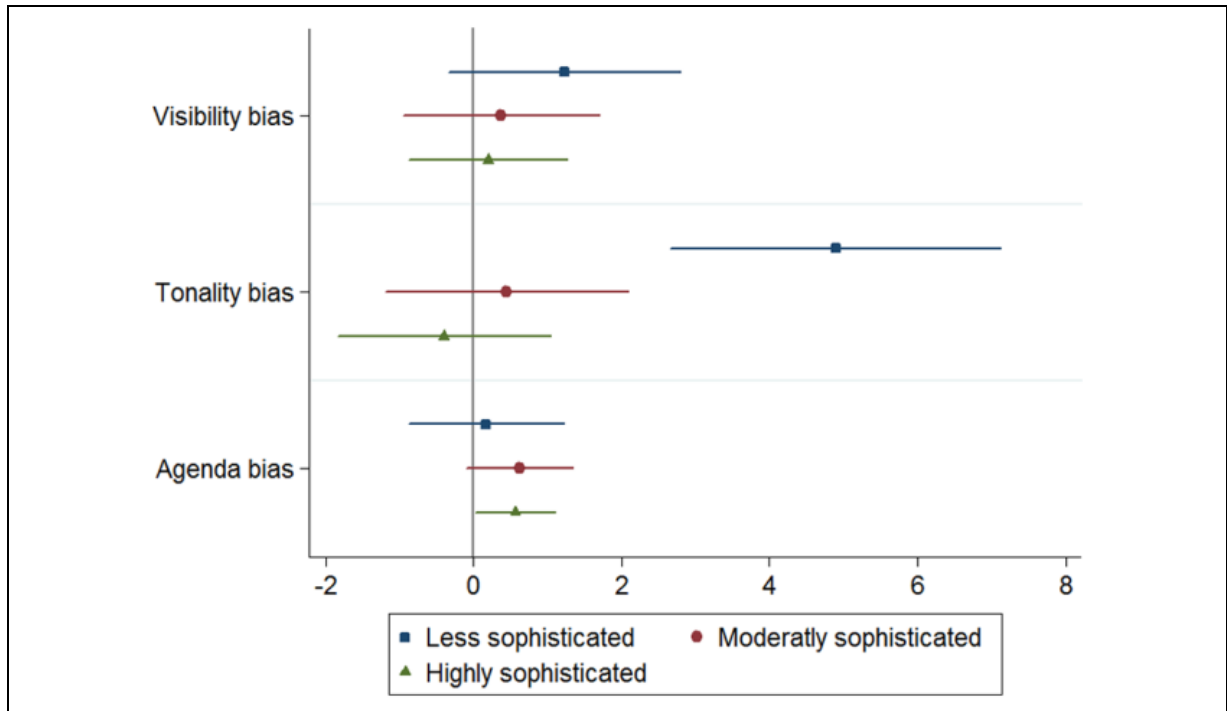
However, there are no clear differences in the effects of other types of biases. While the effects of visibility bias tend to be larger for less sophisticated voters and the effects of agenda bias tend to increase with political sophistication, these tendencies are not large enough to be statistically distinguishable (Figure 7). Political sophistication thus moderates the effects of media bias when it comes to evaluations in media coverage but not when considering the visibility of parties or their mediated policy agenda.

Table 21: Linear Regression for Media Bias Effects on ptv for a Party Within Subgroups of Politically Sophisticated Voters

Dependent variable: ptv (Wave 3)	Less sophisticated	Moderately sophisticated	Highly sophisticated
Pre-ptv (Wave 1)	0.598***	0.632***	0.727***
Visibility bias	-0.035	-0.025	-0.025
Tonality bias	1.228	0.375	0.203
Agenda bias	-0.796	-0.673	-0.545
Controls included	4.895***	0.447	-0.399
Constant	-1.133	-0.835	-0.733
	0.173	0.626 [†]	0.567*
	-0.53	-0.364	-0.123
	Yes	Yes	Yes
	0.756***	0.346*	0.184
	-0.209	-0.138	-0.123
R^2	0.44	0.48	0.63
n of observations	1,435	2,723	3,419
n of clusters	245	462	578

Note. Standard errors in parentheses; centered predicted values associated with each party for each of the voter-specific control variables; control variables are age, gender, late deciding, left-right self-placement, partisanship, media use; model includes non-nested dummy variables for parties. Standard errors clustered by respondents. ptv = propensity to vote. [†] $p < .1$. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 7: Effects of media bias for each subgroup of politically sophisticated voters



Note. Effects calculated based on Table 22.

Our last set of models (Table 23) first test H2b by considering whether non-partisans (Model 1) are more susceptible to media bias than partisans (Model 2). The effects of tonality bias are clearly stronger for non-partisans than for partisans. Among non-partisans, we expect the ptv score to increase by 0.11 points for a standard deviation (= 0.06) increase in tonality bias. Again, visibility bias and agenda bias do not seem to differ strongly between both groups (see also Figure 8). Focusing on the effects of tonality bias, we can confirm that non-partisans tend to be more affected by media bias than partisans (H2b).

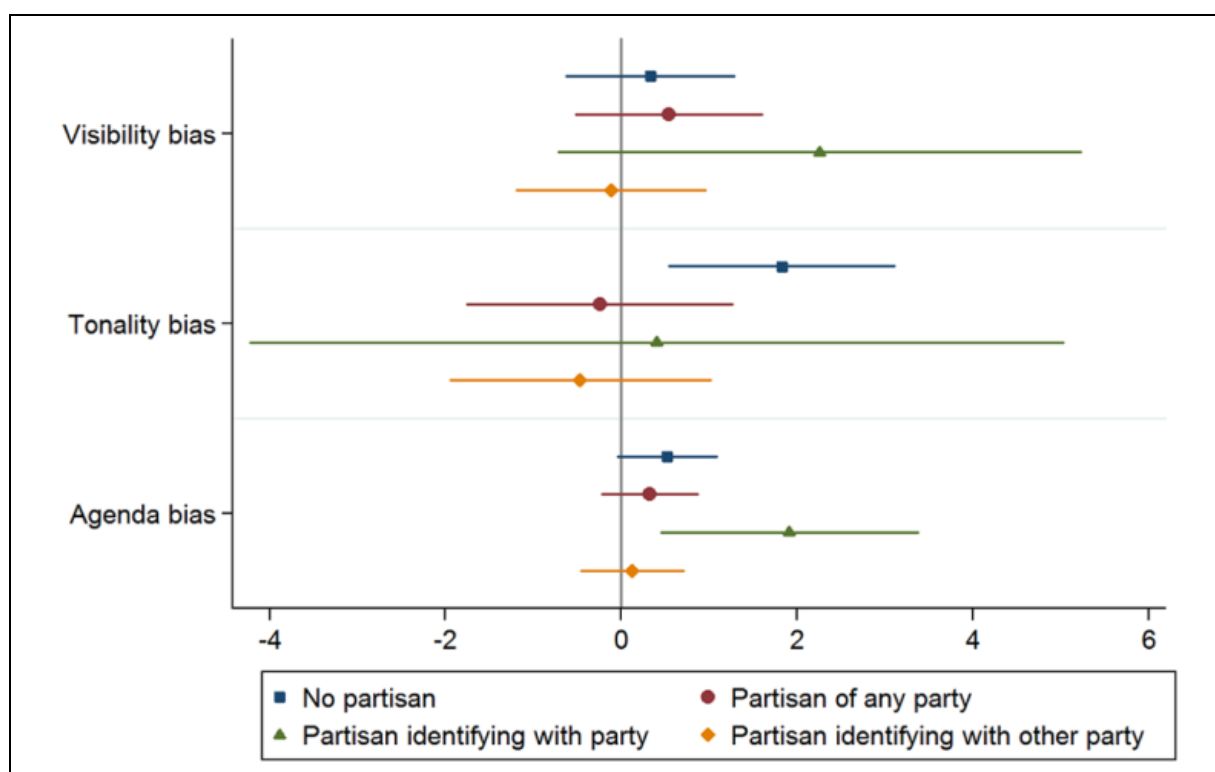
Table 22: Linear Regression for Media Bias Effects on ptv for a Party Within Subgroups of Partisan and Non-Partisan Voters

Dependent variable: ptv (Wave 3)	No partisan	Partisan of any party	Partisan identifying with party	Partisan identifying with other party
Pre-ptv (Wave 1)	0.620*** (0.019)	0.731*** (0.021)	0.494*** (0.077)	0.640*** (0.029)
Visibility bias	0.330 (0.488)	0.542 (0.542)	2.258 (1.514)	-0.114 (0.548)
Tonality bias	1.830** (0.654)	-0.241 (0.769)	0.402 (2.355)	-0.465 (0.753)
Agenda bias	0.524 [†] (0.287)	0.323 (0.277)	1.914* (0.750)	0.126 (0.298)
Controls included	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.634*** (0.116)	0.215 [†] (0.112)	3.221* (1.252)	0.268* (0.106)
R^2	.45	.64	.32	.45
n of observations	4,403	3,174	498	2,676
n of clusters	746	539	498	535

Note. Standard errors in parentheses; centered predicted values associated with each party for each of the voter-specific control variables; control variables are age, gender, late deciding, political sophistication, left-right self-placement, media use; model includes non-nested dummy variables for parties. Standard errors clustered by respondents. ptv = propensity to vote. [†] $p < .1$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Finally, we disaggregate the subgroup of partisans ($n = 539$) for a more detailed analysis. The first group (Model 3) only contains observations where partisans are asked about the party preferences toward their favored party. We expect a positive effect of media bias here, since partisans are said to react to bias when it is directed toward their preferred party. The second group (Model 4) contains observations of the same respondents but in relation to their preferences toward all other parties. As they are expected to already have made up their minds about the opposing parties, no systematic effects are expected here (H2c).

Figure 8: Effects of media bias for each subgroup of partisan voters



Note. Effects calculated based on Table 23.

Figure 8 confirms this hypothesis. The results suggest that the effects of agenda bias in particular are larger when media bias is addressed toward partisans' own party. For a standard deviation increase (= 0.20) in agenda bias toward a partisan's preferred party, we expect the ptv score to increase by 0.38 points. In this case, we can detect no differences considering tonality bias. Standard errors for visibility bias are also too high to allow us to make substantive claims. However, there is evidence that partisans are activated by media effects concerning their party's agenda. It is possible that partisans respond to the fact that their party is addressing policy issues that are important to them, thus reminding them what policy they stand for and why they felt close to this party in the first place (H2c).

6. Conclusion

Our study has found strong evidence of media bias effects on voters. Specifically, voters update their party preferences in response to the tonality of the media coverage they are

exposed to. They also evaluate parties more favorably if those parties addressed their own favored topics more prominently in media coverage. The effects of tonality and agenda bias are stable across models, so they hold even if other types of media biases are controlled for. Moreover, we found that agenda bias might be even more relevant than tonality bias. This provides further support for the argument that we need to include agenda bias as a key form of media bias in future studies, even if this bias is often difficult to operationalize (Brandenburg, 2005; Hopmann et al., 2011).

In contrast, the visibility of parties seems to be of little relevance. Our examination of bias present in coverage indicated that visibility patterns largely follow patterns of party size and relevance, so there is little outlet-specific variation. When analyzing the effects of media bias in a multi-party system, the usefulness of visibility bias therefore has to be questioned. This accords with the findings of previous studies, where the effect of visibility bias was weak compared to that of tonality bias or agenda bias (Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012; Norris et al., 1999). However, while the visibility of parties may not be that relevant in the short period of the election campaign itself, its potential long-term effects in terms of the production and reproduction of political legitimacy should not be underestimated (Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993).

Considering the moderating factors of media bias, respondents who were less politically sophisticated as well as non-partisans exhibited larger effects of tonality bias, therefore confirming earlier theories and findings (Fournier et al., 2004; Hillygus and Jackman, 2003; Luskin, 1990). Moreover, partisans seem to be particularly susceptible to positive media bias toward their preferred party that reaffirms their partisan identity (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995).

The overall effects of media bias are unsurprisingly relatively small, reflecting several key aspects of our empirical approach. Most importantly, our models capture a short time frame and include strong controls for prior influences on party preferences as well as for party-specific changes. Hence, finding any effect on preferences at all is important, given the design of the study. The potential long-term effects of media bias may be larger than the short-term effects we have focused on. Moreover, there may also be additional indirect media effects captured by the two-step flow of communication (e.g., Katz, 1957) as each individual's social environment is also affected by media bias (Hopmann et al., 2010). The direct effects we study are a necessary condition of such broader media bias effects, and our

narrower approach of course potentially underestimates overall bias effects. We also did not have sufficient data points from television or online media coverage to include them meaningfully in the analysis. The potential for media effects online and on television is at least as great as in the print media, and biases may work in different ways. Future research should therefore examine media bias effects in other types of media. Finally, remember that we focus on media bias effects rather than overall media effects. While broader inter-media campaigns may influence voters in important ways, these effects were not considered, as they do not fall under the definition of media bias. Studying indirect and long-term effects and comparing media bias to overall media effects are, however, important tasks for future research.

Overall, the prevalence of tonality bias and agenda bias effects during the last 6 weeks of this election campaign has strong implications for the role of media in democracy. Normative democratic theory demands that citizens be minimally informed (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996). However, political information is not necessarily unbiased and neutral. As a result, the increase in media choice and fragmentation (Prior, 2007) may lead not just to a less equal distribution of political knowledge (e.g., Prior, 2005) but also to a polarization of the electorate. Yet, it is important to note that Austrian newspapers tend to incorporate relatively high standards of journalistic objectivity concerning the visibility of political actors, comparable to normative benchmarks such as reflexive diversity (van der Wurff and van Cuilenburg, 2001). Hence, future research should aim to establish the relationship between media fragmentation, media bias, and media effects. This research should make sure to consider all types of media biases – visibility bias, tonality bias, and agenda bias – since one bias certainly does not fit all.

7. Appendix to Study#2

Table 23: Media bias descriptives

Visibility Bias		Media							
		Der Standard	Die Presse	SN	Heute	Kronen Zeitung	Kurier	Österreich	Kleine Zeitung
Parties	SPÖ	0.214	0.335	0.212	0.236	0.234	0.296	0.287	0.264
	ÖVP	0.247	0.268	0.33	0.229	0.276	0.213	0.237	0.198
	FPÖ	-0.088	-0.117	-0.13	-0.043	-0.108	-0.064	-0.066	-0.044
	Grüne	-0.067	-0.081	-0.063	-0.058	-0.044	-0.104	-0.103	-0.106
	BZÖ	-0.214	-0.234	-0.208	-0.202	-0.212	-0.209	-0.231	-0.17
	TS	-0.148	-0.17	-0.141	-0.163	-0.147	-0.132	-0.124	-0.142
Tonality Bias		Media							
		Der Standard	Die Presse	SN	Heute	Kronen Zeitung	Kurier	Österreich	Kleine Zeitung
Parties	SPÖ	-0.01	-0.037	-0.127	-0.042	0.061	-0.046	0.111	-0.078
	ÖVP	-0.118	0.022	-0.11	0.087	-0.094	-0.042	-0.027	-0.084
	FPÖ	-0.075	-0.044	0.014	-0.112	-0.064	0.009	0.025	-0.138
	Grüne	0.132	0.068	0.122	-0.028	0.004	0.091	0.067	0.175
	BZÖ	-0.034	0.11	0.155	0.202	-0.028	0.095	-0.087	0.149
	TS	0.104	-0.119	-0.054	-0.108	0.12	-0.107	-0.089	-0.024
Agenda Bias		Media							
		Der Standard	Die Presse	SN	Heute	Kronen Zeitung	Kurier	Österreich	Kleine Zeitung
Parties	SPÖ	0.146	0.389	0.062	-0.152	0.022	0.287	0.456	-0.04
	ÖVP	0.083	-0.097	-0.036	0.002	-0.008	-0.021	-0.067	-0.225
	FPÖ	-0.714	-0.577	-0.421	-0.106	-0.084	-0.646	-0.075	-0.159
	Grüne	0.498	0.526	0.326	0.358	0.433	0.467	0.347	0.275
	BZÖ	-0.072	-0.469	-0.319	-0.256	-0.194	0.019	-0.257	0.172
	TS	0.059	-0.194	0.387	0.155	-0.168	-0.107	0.005	-0.024

Note: SPÖ = Social Democrats, ÖVP = People's Party, FPÖ = Freedom Party, Grüne = Greens, BZÖ = Alliance for the Future of Austria, TS = Team Stronach.

VII. Study#3: Are Perceptions of Candidate Traits Shaped by the Media? The Effects of Three Types of Media Bias

Co-authored with Markus Wagner, and Hajo G. Boomgaarden

Abstract

Media coverage can influence how citizens think about their political leaders. This study explores how three types of media bias (visibility bias, tonality bias, and agenda bias) affect voter assessments of politicians' traits. Bias effects should be stronger for political traits (such as competence) than for non-political traits (such as likability). Biases may also interact in their effects: Specifically, visibility bias should moderate the impact of tonality bias. Combining media, party, and survey data through manual content analysis of newspaper coverage ($N = 2,680$) and party press releases ($N = 1,794$), as well as a three-wave voter survey ($n = 927$) during the 2013 Austrian election campaign, we find substantial effects of tonality bias and agenda bias on political trait perceptions. The effects are less clear for non-political trait perceptions. Although visibility bias has no direct impact, there is evidence that it moderates effects of tonality bias on candidate perceptions.

Keywords: election campaign, media bias, media effects, political perceptions

1. Introduction

Political competition is increasingly personalized, even in parliamentary systems that traditionally and institutionally place parties at the center. This personalization has been observed in terms of campaigns (e.g., Aarts et al., 2011; Garzia, 2011; Karvonen, 2010; Reinemann and Wilke, 2007), media coverage (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000; van Santen and van Zoonen, 2009), and vote choice (King, 2002; McAllister, 2007; A.H. Miller et al., 1986; Takens et al., 2015). As few voters personally interact with leaders, their perceptions of candidates mainly result from exposure to news coverage (Bos et al., 2011), which influences their knowledge about and attitudes toward a candidate (Balmas and Sheafer, 2010; Lenz and Lawson, 2011).

Importantly, media effects on candidate perceptions will not be politically neutral if news coverage is politically biased, in that political candidates are presented and discussed very differently in different news outlets. Such bias is likely to be common. Although the normative ideal of objective media reporting requires that the media cover each candidate in an unbiased way (Strömbäck, 2008), the implementation of this norm nonetheless varies greatly between different types of media and journalism cultures in different countries (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Hanitzsch et al., 2011).

While media bias is often treated as a single phenomenon, it is important to disaggregate it into three different subtypes: visibility bias, tonality bias, and agenda bias (Brandenburg, 2005). In this study, visibility bias is based on the salience of party leaders, tonality bias on the evaluation of these candidates, and agenda bias on the extent to which they are able to address their favored issues in media coverage. Only recently have studies investigating bias effects on party preferences in multiparty systems included two (Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012; Hopmann et al., 2010) or even three types of bias (Eberl et al., forthcoming-a). Overall, most research tends to disregard agenda bias, mainly because of measurement difficulties (D'Alessio and Allen, 2000), even though it potentially influences perceptions about candidates' issue positions (Brandenburg, 2005) and has been shown to be a predictor of party preferences (Eberl et al., forthcoming-a). The present study asks how the three forms of media bias influence voters' perceptions of candidate traits.

In considering the effects of visibility, tonality, and agenda bias, this study makes four key contributions. First, this paper is the first to examine the distinct effects of each type of media bias on perceptions of party leaders' personality traits. Second, we explicitly consider the possibility of interactions between different types of bias, specifically, the multiplying effect of visibility bias. Third, we are the first to examine how these media bias effects may differ for two political, performance-oriented and two non-political, personality-oriented candidate traits on the basis of information processing theory (Coleman and Wu, 2015). Finally, our case adds to research that breaks with the analysis of media bias in two-party systems (see Hopmann et al., 2011) and can be used as a reference point for many European countries.

Our model takes advantage of an integrated research design using data from an extensive content analysis of six national newspapers as well as all press releases sent out by five parties during the 2013 Austrian national election campaign. These data are then combined with a three-wave panel survey containing detailed media exposure measures to study short-term changes in candidate trait perceptions over the last six weeks of the election campaign. In sum, we use a precise, conservative measurement of media effects that enables us to disentangle political bias effects from effects based on selective exposure or structural bias.

Overall, this study paints a comprehensive picture of candidate-based media effects during election campaigns in a European parliamentary democracy with a democratic-corporatist media system. We add substantially to the literature on bias effects of news coverage on voter perceptions of political leaders, thereby moving beyond studies on vote choice (Holbert et al., 2010: 16f). In our conclusion, we reflect on important implications of our study for future research in this core area of political communication.

2. Three Types of Candidate Bias

We define political media bias as the extent to which coverage of a candidate is better or worse in one outlet compared with coverage of all other candidates in that outlet and coverage

of that candidate in all other outlets.²⁴ We distinguish three types of media bias in candidate – in our case party leader – coverage: visibility bias, tonality bias, and agenda bias.

Visibility bias exists when one party leader is the subject of an undue amount of coverage (high or low) compared with other leaders and other media outlets. It, therefore, captures whether coverage of a leader is higher or lower compared with (1) coverage of other leaders in that outlet and (2) coverage of the same leader in other outlets. Candidate visibility is important and influential because it is a necessary condition for voters to learn about candidates and their characteristics. This will influence subsequent political judgments (Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012; Kioussis and McCombs, 2004; Norris et al., 1999), especially as voters infer political importance from media salience (J.M. Miller and Krosnick, 2000). Kioussis (2005) finds strong correlations between U.S. presidential candidate traits as depicted in the media and their salience in public opinion. We expect this association to be causal:

Hypothesis 1a (H1a): *The more visible a party leader is in voters' media repertoire, the more positive their perception of that party leader's traits.*

The second type of media bias concerns valence, that is, the tonality of news coverage, a specific aspect of second-level agenda setting (Becker and McCombs, 1978). Positive or negative aspects of an object are highlighted in the media, increasing the salience of these evaluations in the public's mind (Druckman and Parkin, 2005). Tonality bias exists when

²⁴ Political bias is different from structural patterns in coverage, which exist if coverage is similar for all candidates within one media outlet or similar for one candidate across all outlets (van Dalen, 2012). An example of structural patterns within a medium would be an outlet that tends to criticize all candidates equally. Examples of structural patterns across outlets include incumbency and size bonuses (e.g., Brandenburg, 2005; Semetko and Boomgaarden, 2007). However, such patterns are not ideologically driven and not necessarily normatively problematic but rather reflect media routines and the balance of power in the political system (Hopmann et al., 2011; van der Wurff and van Cuilenburg, 2001).

evaluations toward one candidate are systematically more or less favorable compared with (1) other candidates in the same outlet and (2) the same candidate in other outlets. We expect that,

Hypothesis 1b (H1b): *The more favorable the tonality toward a party leader is in voters' media repertoire, the more positive their perception of that party leader's traits.*

The third type of media bias concerns issue agendas. Candidates choose their issue agenda carefully and strategically (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994). While candidates want the media to transmit this agenda, journalists are largely autonomous in selecting news stories and connecting party leaders to issues. In this sense, positive agenda bias may exist if candidates can talk about their issues and positions in the media (Brandenburg, 2005); negative agenda bias is present if candidates are connected to issues they try to avoid. For example, when the economy is doing badly, opposition leaders will want to talk about the economy to prime that issue among voters (Druckman et al., 2004; Vavreck, 2009). For governing parties, talking about legislation that the candidate's party just got through parliament may increase perceived assertiveness and leadership qualities. Overall, candidates will want *their* agenda (as made visible in party communication) to be reflected in the media. Hence, our third hypothesis is that,

Hypothesis 1c (H1c): *The more congruent a party leader's policy agendas (in party communication and in the media) are in voters' media repertoire, the more positive their perception of that party leader's traits.*

3. Political and Non-political Candidate Traits

Our hypotheses concern how media bias in coverage affects perceptions of candidate traits. To study this question, we need a conception of what these traits are. We build on Kinder et al. (1980), Kinder (1986) and Funk (1996) and focus on four key characteristics: competence,

leadership, integrity, and empathy. These character traits can further be classified into two groups: political or “role-near” traits, for example, competence and leadership, and non-political or “role-distant” characteristics, for example, likability, empathy, or attractiveness (Brettschneider 2002; W.E. Miller and Shanks 1996).

We turn to dual processing theories (Chaiken 1980; Petty and Cacioppo 1986) to tentatively consider differential effects of media bias on political and non-political traits. Political trait perceptions are more likely to be based on factual and more rational information, for instance, about politicians’ past performance (e.g., actual policy decisions) or future plans (e.g., policy proposals) that indicate competence and leadership qualities. Such information is likely to be processed more systematically (Heuristic Systematic Model) or centrally (Elaboration Likelihood Model). Conversely, voters’ perceptions of non-political traits, such as attractiveness or trustworthiness, are more affective types of candidate assessment and thus based on information that is processed heuristically (HSM) or peripherally (ELM; Coleman and Wu 2015; Todorov et al. 2002). Systematic as well as heuristic information processing have been shown to foster similar agenda-setting effects. However, systematic processing is more strongly influenced by the written content of media coverage and may thus be more conducive to media bias effects, while heuristic processing generally results in more unstable effects (Boomgaarden et al. 2016; Bulkow et al. 2013). As we can only tentatively argue that the evaluation of political candidate traits may be based on systematic and that of non-political traits on heuristic information processing, we pose the following research question:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): *Do different types of bias have similar effects on the different types of character traits?*

4. Bias Moderating Bias

The relationships between different forms of bias remains understudied as only one or two forms of bias are investigated in most studies. However, attribute agenda-setting theory suggests a particularly close relationship between visibility and tone. On the one hand, increased salience of positive or negative depictions of a candidate should increase the

accessibility of this valenced representation of the candidate in the minds of recipients (e.g., Balmas and Sheaffer, 2010). On the other hand, a positive or negative tonality bias that is based on relatively little coverage should have little effect on voter perceptions compared with tonality bias that is based on a relatively high amount of coverage. In other words:

Hypothesis 2a (H2a): *The effect of tonality bias is positively related to visibility bias, with the effect of tonality bias at zero when visibility bias is at its lowest value.*

At the same time, it may also be that the effect of media visibility depends on tonality. If both biases are positive, both their effects should theoretically be positive. However, when a polarizing candidate in a politically slanted medium gets extensive, but strongly unfavorable media attention, political psychologists would argue that negative effects outweigh the positives (Lau, 1982). Politicians will try to avoid blame in media and are thus not interested in coverage (visibility) at any cost (Midtbø, 2011). This means that visibility bias should not always have positive effects. Instead,

Hypothesis 2b (H2b): *The effect of visibility bias is positively related to tonality bias, with the effect of visibility bias negative when tonality bias is at its lowest value and positive when tonality bias is at its highest value.*

5. Context: The Austrian Media and Party Systems

Most studies on media bias focus on the United States, a two-party system, with only a few studies systematically analyzing bias in multiparty systems (see D'Alessio and Allen, 2000 and Hopmann et al., 2011 for reviews). In the 2013 Austrian parliamentary elections, seven parties fielded candidates nationwide. While one party was voted out of the parliament, another two were voted in for the first time. This relatively large number of parties makes

determining the effects of candidate media bias in a multi-party system such as Austria far from “easy” (Hopmann et al., 2011: 241).

Austria has a democratic-corporatist media system with a high press circulation, a strong public broadcasting sector (Hallin and Mancini, 2004), similar in many ways to larger European countries such as Germany or Great Britain (Brüggemann et al., 2014). Newspapers are still the most important source of political information for the Austrian voter. Media use in Austria is similar to that in many other European countries but different from that in the United States (see Bennett and Iyengar, 2008): Austrian citizens still report that they rely on traditional mass media outlets to find information about politics, although they do increasingly make use of nonmainstream news sources and information provision via social media.

A cross-national survey among journalists finds that Austria exhibits ideal-typical journalistic values concerning “non-involvement, detachment, monitoring the government, as well as providing political and interesting information to motivate the people to participate in civic activity” (Hanitzsch et al., 2011: 281). However, this does not mean that news coverage is not politically biased at all (see Eberl et al., forthcoming-a), but that it is a complex and not always conscious phenomenon (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). In fact, political parallelism in the Austrian newspaper sector has been classified as slightly above the European average (Lelkes 2016). We discuss the generalizability of our findings to other contexts in the conclusion.

6. Data and Method

The integrated design of this study combines media content, party communication, and survey data. The media analysis includes all coverage of the leaders of the five parties that were in

parliament before and after the election in six newspapers (Eberl et al., 2016).²⁵ The data on party communication comprise all press releases sent out by the same five parties (Müller et al., 2016). To link both types of content data to a three-wave online access panel survey (Kritzing et al., 2014), the content analysis data were split in correspondence with the survey waves into two subsets for the periods from August 19 to September 8 and from September 9 to September 29, 2013 (Election Day). The media sample contains the quality newspapers *Der Standard* and *Die Presse*, the tabloids *Kronen Zeitung* and *Österreich* as well as the midrange newspapers *Kurier* and *Kleine Zeitung*. The sample was selected on the basis of circulation figures, genre, as well as national and regional distribution. Media content was analyzed using manual content analysis of political claims in the title, lead, and first paragraph of each article (Koopmans and Statham, 1999). A claim is an action or statement by an actor about a political issue and/or actor. It may include the expression of criticism or support.²⁶ For the following analysis, only claims by or addressed toward one of the five lead candidates were included, generating a subsample of about 2,680 articles and 13,104 claims.

Visibility Bias

The visibility of each leader is defined by the relative amount of articles in which the candidate is a speaker or an addressee in at least one of the claims included. To compare newspapers with different formats, we use outlet-specific benchmarks (Druckman and Parkin, 2005; Eberl et al., forthcoming-a). Visibility bias is then computed as the deviation of each candidate's visibility from the average visibility in that outlet of the remaining four party leaders. We thus construct a benchmark for balance for each party-medium combination, leaving us with a bias measure that has a theoretical range from -1 (the candidate appears in none of the articles, while the other candidates are present in all articles) to $+1$ (the candidate appears in every single article, while no other candidate is covered). For example, if one

²⁵ It was not possible to include coverage by Austrian television news. Although this content was analyzed, there were not enough news stories that included the front-runners to allow meaningful comparisons to the newspaper content.

²⁶ Inter-coder reliability scores (Krippendorff's α) are based on a subset of claims ($N = 1,123$) coded by seven coders. The scores for the identification of speakers, addressees, evaluative statements, and issues were .85, .78, .76, and .80, respectively.

candidate were to appear in 50 percent of all articles in one outlet, and all other party leaders each only appear in 35 percent of all articles in that outlet, the visibility bias of the first candidate would be +0.15 and that of all others at -0.04. This normalization procedure ensures comparability between potentially very dissimilar media formats in a multiparty setting.

Tonality Bias

We measure the tonality toward each candidate as an average based on expressions of support (+1) and criticism (-1) on the sentence level (D'Alessio and Allen, 2000). Tonality bias is then computed as the deviation of each candidate's specific tonality from the average tonality of the other four candidates in that outlet. This rescaling procedure ensures comparability between outlets, as some outlets may be more critical of all candidates (van Dalen, 2012). Tonality bias is standardized to a theoretical range from -1 (the candidate is evaluated only negatively, while all other candidates are evaluated only positively) to +1 (the candidate is evaluated only positively, while all other candidates are evaluated only negatively), where a party leader has a bias of 0 (balanced/neutral) when its tonality is equal to the mean tonality across the four other front-runners in that media outlet.

Agenda Bias

The operationalization of agenda bias is based on two data sources: media coverage and press releases.²⁷ Altogether, the five parties sent out 1,794 press releases. Agenda congruence is assessed by comparing the issues parties address in campaign communication with the issues their leading candidate addresses in media coverage. For each press release and for each candidate claim, we assigned the issue to one of fifteen issue areas.²⁸ Non-policy statements

²⁷ Agreement across six coders was based on a subset of press releases and arrived at values of .99 and .70 (Krippendorff's α) for the identification of speakers and issues ($N = 100$).

²⁸ These issues are economy, budget and taxes, employment, social welfare, agriculture, education, law and order, infrastructure, environment, individual rights and societal values, European integration,

(e.g., campaigning) are not considered. This leaves us with a subsample of 2,414 candidate-issue units in media reporting and 1,517 party-issue units in party communication. Agendas were measured in terms of percentage distributions across the fifteen policy fields. To measure agenda congruence with each media outlet, we estimated bivariate correlations between party agendas in press releases and candidate agendas in media coverage (Brandenburg, 2005). Finally, for each outlet, the mean agenda congruence of the four other candidates was subtracted from each candidate's agenda congruence value, where at -1 , the candidate's agendas are perfectly incongruent, while those of all other candidates are mirrored perfectly, and at $+1$, the candidate's agendas are perfectly congruent and all other candidates' agendas in that outlet are completely incongruent.

Measuring Perceived Traits and Bias Exposure

Trait perceptions and bias exposure were measured in an online panel survey of a sample of the Austrian population eligible to vote, where respondents were drawn randomly from an opt-in online access panel based on key demographics. The profile of the panel was largely in line with the overall population, with minor discrepancies concerning age and region (Kritzing et al., 2014). After dropping cases with missing values for relevant variables, the remaining subsamples contained between 911 and 927 respondents, depending on the trait evaluation. While our bias measures consider all five parties, data restrictions in the survey mean that we can only test effects on candidate trait assessments for the leaders of the three major parties, which were Werner Faymann (Social Democrats), Michael Spindelegger (People's Party), and Heinz-Christian Strache (Freedom Party).

Our survey measures perceptions of competence, assertiveness, likability, and honesty. Competence and assertiveness unmistakably belong to the group of political candidate traits as they relate to policy expertise and leadership qualities (e.g., Funk, 1996; Tenscher, 2013). Our second pair of traits is less clearly related to political performance. Although likability is oriented toward the personal character of a candidate, honesty refers to credibility, morals, and trust (Druckman et al., 2004). Van Aelst et al. (2011) describe the latter as hybrid

foreign affairs and defense, immigration, political misconduct and corruption, and government reforms.

characteristics that fall into both camps as they can relate to personal as well as political matters.

Respondents were asked to rate each of the candidates on a scale from either 0 to 10 (for likability) or 1 to 4 (for competence, assertiveness, and honesty); the lower the score, the lower the candidate's rating. All traits were rescaled to range from 0 to 1. We also combined all candidate traits into a summary additive index (ranging from 0–1).

We measured each individual's exposure to media bias using their reported media consumption for each media outlet on a scale from 0 to 7, where 0 stands for never reading a specific outlet and 7 stands for reading this outlet every day of the week. We computed voter i 's bias exposure toward candidate j based on their use of different media outlets k :

$$bias_{ij} = \sum_1^k (use_{ik} \times bias_{jk}) / \sum_1^k use_{ik}$$

As we have a three-wave survey, our model allows for causal claims concerning how media bias exposure since $t - 1$ affects voters' candidate trait perceptions at t . To that end, our model includes a lagged measure of candidate trait evaluations. Media bias exposure measures based on the first three weeks of data are then used to explain changes in trait perceptions from survey wave 1 ($t - 1$) to survey wave 2 (t). Similarly, media bias measures from the last three weeks of the election campaign are used to explain changes in trait perceptions from wave 2 ($t - 1$) to wave 3 (t). Both these three-week data sets are stacked into one larger data set, providing a more reliable and precise model of media bias effects.

Our stacked data analyses also control for many possible confounders, such as age (in years) and gender (0/1, 1 = male). We also include variables measuring the level of formal education (0–3), political interest (0–3), and the attentiveness to the election campaign (0–3), late deciding (0/1), party identification (0/1), and Left-Right self-placement (0–10),²⁹ as political sophistication, the time of vote decision, and partisanship have been shown to affect susceptibility to media bias (Fournier et al., 2004; Zaller, 1992). To ensure that the bias effects we estimate are based on the actual media content and not just on media exposure in general, we control for political print media use (additive index of days per week spent

²⁹ We enter Left-Right self-placement as a series of binary indicator variables so that those answering *don't know* or refusing a response are not dropped from the analysis.

reading each news outlet, theoretical range of 0–49). Finally, we include measures of political television, radio, and online news exposure, all with a range of 0 to 4. These nonparty-specific variables are transformed to the centered predicted values associated with each candidate in the stacked data (see van der Eijk et al., 2006).³⁰

Finally, we include fixed effects for each of the three candidates, which control for candidate-specific structural differences, that is, overall differences in exposure to candidates across all respondents. For instance, some candidates may be more visible than others as they are incumbents.

Including lagged measurements, a large set of control variables as well as these candidate fixed effects in a single model guarantees a very conservative measurement of media bias effects, eliminating many potentially confounding factors. To test the general effects of the different types of media bias, as well as candidate trait specificities (H1a–H1c), we estimated linear regression models for each candidate trait as well as the candidates’ overall image index, with standard errors clustered by respondent. Then, we reran these analyses to test the moderating effects of visibility bias by including interaction terms between the different forms of candidate bias (H2a and H2b).

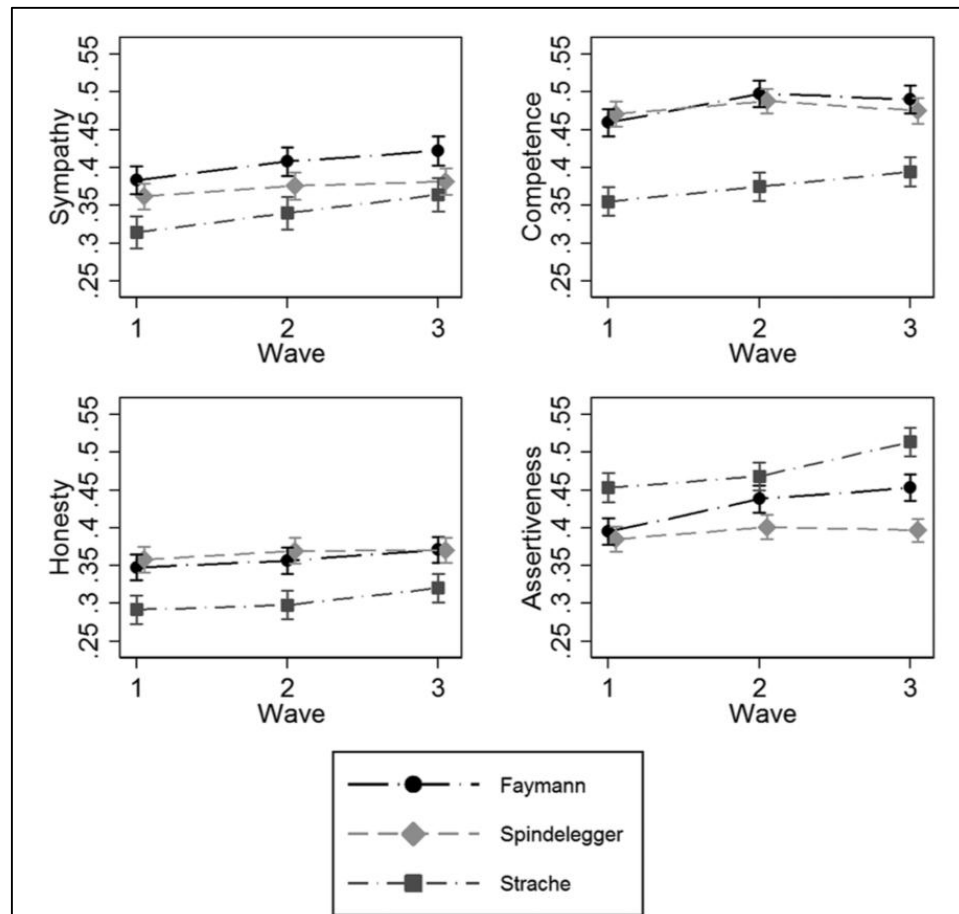
7. Results

We begin by providing descriptive information regarding candidate trait perceptions. Figure 9 shows that all three candidates left a rather bad impression, regardless of the perceived trait. While for most traits Faymann and Strache increase their scores over the course of the election, Spindelegger’s trait perceptions are more stable. Looking more closely at the third-wave measurement (only a few days before the election), Faymann’s unique feature is his likability. Strache, while perceived as least honest and least competent, was seen as most assertive. Spindelegger had no unique positive feature, although his lack of assertiveness distinguished him from the other candidates. Concerning differences between the traits, few short-term dynamics can be witnessed regarding the likability trait; this also applies to

³⁰ This procedure was done separately for the two three-week data sets from waves 1/2 and waves 2/3.

competence and honesty. The most dynamic trait is assertiveness.³¹ In sum, changes are small, with an increase or decrease by a maximum of about 5 percentage points from one wave to the next.

Figure 9: Candidate assessment dynamics



Note: Figure shows candidate-specific mean character trait scores with 95 percent confidence intervals.

To detect media bias effects, it is a prerequisite that outlets actually differ in their coverage of each party leader. However, our evidence suggests that during the 2013 Austrian election campaign (see Appendix to Study#3, Table 27), visibility bias follows a similar pattern in most media outlets and in both time periods, indicating weak political bias. The chancellor is most visible, followed by the vice-chancellor, and the opposition leader Strache. Conversely,

³¹ Correlations between pre- and post-measurements are at .77 for likability, .67 for honesty, .71 for competence, and .61 for assertiveness.

there is strong variation between outlets, election weeks, and candidates in terms of tonality bias. For example, Faymann has a very positive score in the tabloid newspaper *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, whereas the quality newspapers *Der Standard* and *Die Presse* tend to criticize all candidates equally, confirming theories on journalistic norms (McQuail, 1992). Moreover, variation between outlets again suggests that agenda bias is considerable. Providing face validity, the strongest negative agenda bias score is for the right-wing front-runner Strache in the liberal quality newspaper *Der Standard*, while the most positive score is in the conservative quality paper *Die Presse*. Finally, only rarely do all three types of bias point in the same direction for one candidate in one outlet. In many cases, bias scores as well as rank orders between candidates also differ in the first and the last three weeks of the election, supporting our precise three-wave measurement of trait perceptions to properly assess media bias effects.

Table 24: Linear Regression of Media Bias Effects on Candidate Assessments

Dependent Variable: Post-Trait Measure	Non-political Traits		Political Traits		Summary Index
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Likability	Honesty	Competence	Assertiveness	Image
Trait	0.772***	0.623***	0.659***	0.568***	0.795***
measure $t - 1$	-0.013	-0.014	-0.015	-0.014	-0.01
Visibility	0.044	0.019	-0.046	-0.024	-0.021
Bias	-0.05	-0.055	-0.055	-0.058	-0.036
Tonality	-0.022	0.034	0.069**	0.071*	0.039*
Bias	-0.03	-0.026	-0.025	-0.028	-0.018
Agenda	0.030[†]	0.027	0.052**	0.057*	0.034*
Bias	-0.018	-0.02	-0.018	-0.024	-0.013
Controls included	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Constant	0.096***	0.141***	0.177***	0.239***	0.101***
	-0.007	-0.008	-0.009	-0.01	-0.006
R^2	0.65	0.48	0.52	0.4	0.69
N of observations	5,447	5,398	5,421	5,366	5,261
N of clusters	927	919	923	917	911

Note: Standard errors in parentheses and clustered by respondents. [†] $p < .1$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

The main concern now is to what extent media bias may have caused trait perceptions to change and if these effects are stronger for one group of traits than for the other. To answer this question, we turn to the multivariate analysis (Table 25).

Following H1a, we expect a more positive effect of visibility bias on political than on non-political candidate trait perceptions. However, no significant impact of visibility bias on any trait can be confirmed. This is likely due to the fact that visibility is strongly related to party size and candidate relevance, leaving little substantive variance between outlets. Visibility bias does not seem to be an important factor in determining changes in candidate trait perceptions by itself.

There is stronger evidence for a positive effect of tonality bias on candidate trait assessments. Statistically significant effects are present for the political traits as well as for the overall candidate image. For a standard deviation ($= 0.13$) increase in tonality bias, we expect an increase by about 0.01 points in perceived competence and assertiveness. Tonality bias influences perceived competence and assertiveness, even if this effect is relatively small in the short time period we study.

Similarly, we also find significant effects of agenda bias on political trait assessments and the summary index. For a standard deviation ($= 0.16$) increase in agenda bias, we expect political trait scores to increase again by about 1 percentage point. Respondents therefore tend to evaluate a candidate's competence, assertiveness, and overall image more positively when a candidate has the opportunity to prime his or her favorite issues.

In sum, we only find partial support for H1a to H1c. These first results, however, support our assumption that media bias effects may differ between political and non-political candidate traits (RQ1). While visibility bias effects are never statistically significant, both tonality bias and agenda bias significantly affect political trait perceptions as well as the overall candidate image but not, however, non-political trait perceptions.³²

Our second set of hypotheses (H2a–b) concerns potential interaction effects with visibility bias. To investigate this relationship, we add interaction effects between visibility

³² Similar results were found by stacking the data set once more and interacting visibility bias, tonality bias, and agenda bias each with a dummy specifying the trait type (interactions are significant at $p = .001$, $p = .034$, and $p = .058$, respectively). See Appendix to Study#3, Table 27 for details.

bias and tonality bias as well as visibility bias and agenda bias.³³ Only competence perceptions show tendencies in support of our hypotheses (see Table 26)

A closer look at this interaction effect between visibility bias and tonality bias on candidate competence perceptions (see Figure 10) confirms the multiplying effects of visibility bias (H2a). The more visible a candidate, the stronger the effect of tonality bias ($p = .085$). The effect of tonality bias is indistinguishable from 0 when visibility bias is at its lowest value. Visibility bias, thus, may act as a multiplier of negative or positive tonality. For example, a standard deviation increase in tonality bias ($= 0.13$) for very visible candidates will increase the competence score by 0.03 points; this is three times its effect in a model without interaction terms. Similarly, the effect of visibility bias turns negative when tonality bias is negative (see Figure 11). At the most negative tonality bias exposure of -0.37 , a standard deviation increase in visibility bias ($= 0.08$) will lead respondents to decrease their competence perceptions by 0.02 points. The pattern is not quite as stark as expected in H2b, but we do see that the direction of the effects of visibility bias on candidate competence perceptions at least somewhat depend on the tonality of media coverage (H2b).

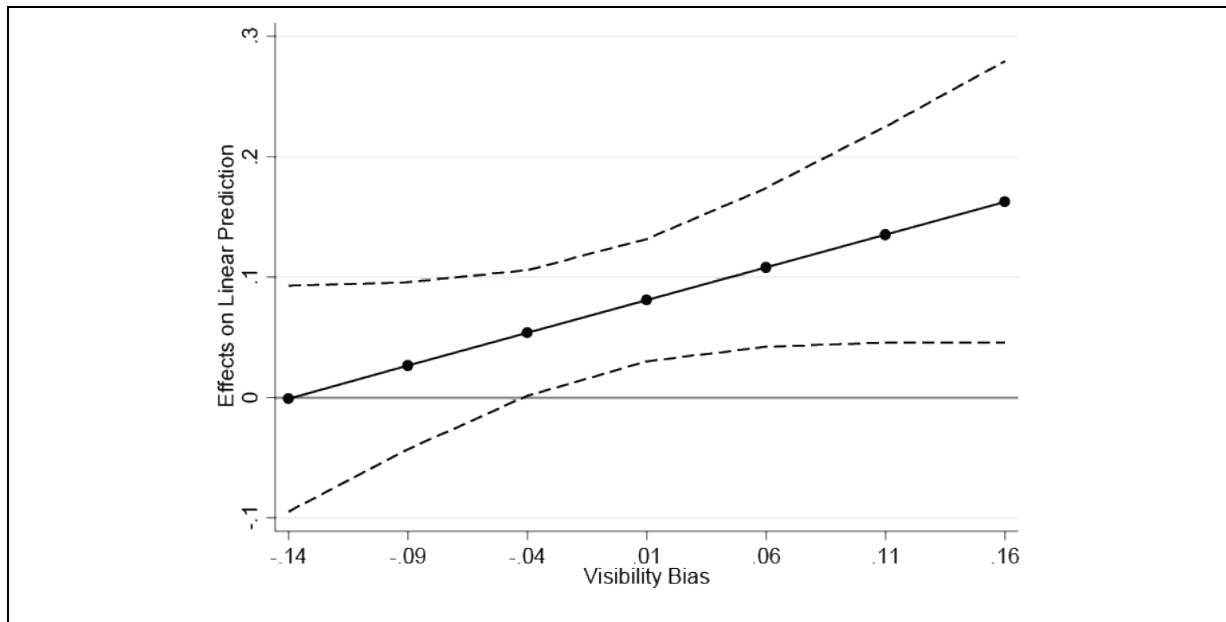
³³ Although not specifically hypothesized, the interaction between visibility bias and agenda bias was added to show a more complete picture of effects.

Table 25: Linear Regression of Media Bias Effects on Candidate Assessments (Interactions)

Dependent Variable: Post-Trait Measure	Non-political Traits		Political Traits		Summary Index
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Likability	Honesty	Competence	Assertiveness	Image
Pre-trait measure	0.772***	0.623***	0.659***	0.568***	0.795***
Visibility Bias	-0.013	-0.014	-0.015	-0.014	-0.01
Tonality Bias	0.045	0.033	-0.054	-0.021	-0.02
Agenda Bias	-0.05	-0.056	-0.055	-0.058	-0.036
Visibility × Tonality	-0.025	0.034	0.075**	0.069*	0.038*
Visibility × Agenda	-0.026	-0.026	-0.025	-0.029	-0.019
Tonality × Agenda	0.03	0.031	0.049**	0.058*	0.035*
Visibility × Tonality × Agenda	-0.018	-0.02	-0.018	-0.023	-0.013
Controls included	-0.16	-0.463	0.545[†]	-0.197	-0.075
Constant	-0.32	-0.336	-0.316	-0.342	-0.225
	0.24	-0.363	-0.123	0.027	0.003
	-0.221	-0.251	-0.259	-0.293	-0.174
	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
	0.104***	0.137***	0.146***	0.240***	0.101***
	-0.007	-0.008	-0.009	-0.01	-0.006
R^2	0.65	0.48	0.52	0.4	0.69
N of observations	5,447	5,398	5,421	5,366	5,261
N of clusters	927	919	923	917	911

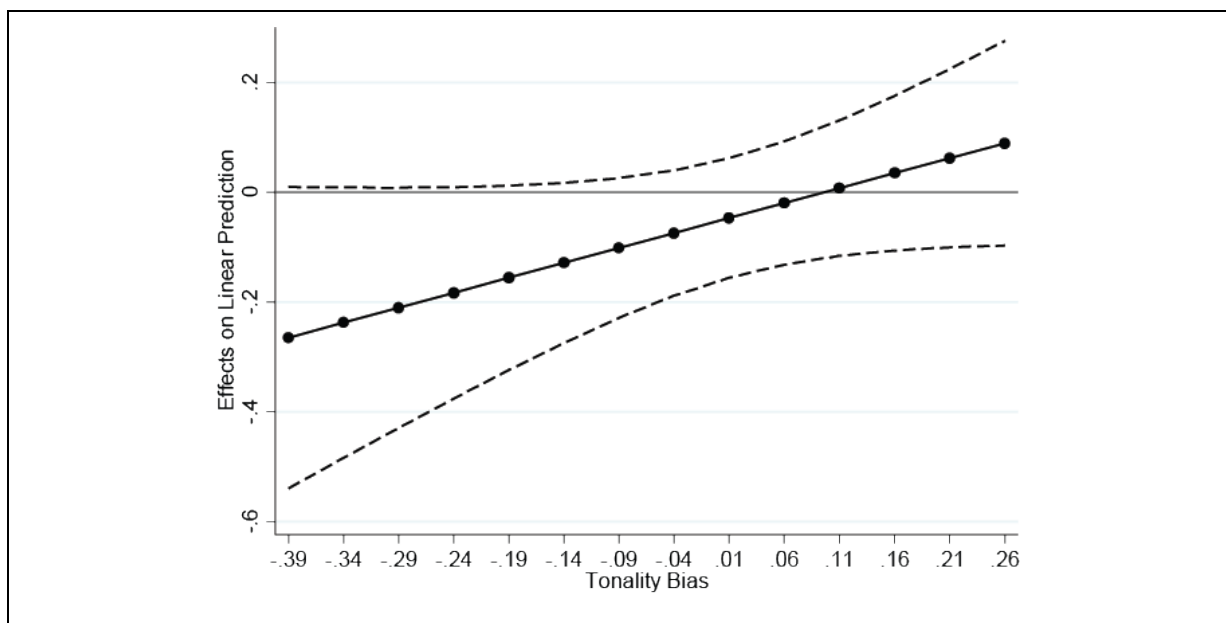
Note: Standard errors in parentheses and clustered by respondents. [†] $p < .1$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 10: Marginal effects of tonality bias on candidate competence depending on changes in visibility bias with 95 percent confidence interval



Note: Graph is computed based on Model 3 in Table 26.

Figure 11: Marginal effects of visibility bias on candidate competence depending on changes in tonality bias with 95 percent confidence interval



Note. Based on Model 3 in Table 26.

8. Conclusion

Our study has found evidence of media bias effects on candidate trait perceptions, and in particular, on those traits that are more politically relevant (H1a–c). Specifically, voters update their assessments of candidates' competence and assertiveness in response to valenced portrayals of candidates in the media. Voters also perceive candidates' political traits and overall image more favorably if those candidates are able to address their own favored topics relatively more prominently in media coverage, thereby probably priming the specific issues on which they want their political aptitude to be assessed (Druckman et al., 2004). Visibility bias had no direct effects on candidate perceptions, in line with previous studies on the United Kingdom and Germany (Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012; Norris et al., 1999). However, there was evidence that visibility bias moderated the effects of tonality bias concerning competence perceptions (H2a–b). The moderating impact of visibility is in line with attribute agenda-setting theory (Balmas and Sheafer, 2010; Kiousis et al., 1999). Moreover, if tonality bias is negative, more visibility somewhat worsens the impact of media coverage for that candidate, which is in line with past studies showing that bad candidate impressions in media coverage will affect voters more than good ones (Wu and Coleman, 2014).

The magnitude of the effects of candidate bias in our study can be described as relatively small in terms of explanatory power (Bennett and Iyengar, 2008), which is to be expected given several key aspects of our empirical approach. Most important, our model captures two short time frames of three weeks each during which media effects could accumulate. In addition, we estimated a very conservative model by including strong controls for prior influences on candidate perceptions, selective media exposure as well as for candidate-specific differences. Hence, finding any media effects on changes in candidate trait perceptions at all in the two very short time frames during one election is important given the design of the study. While we cannot speak to notions of reinforcement versus conversion effects in this study (Holbert et al., 2010), future research should consider whether effects of different forms of bias have more diverse effects for different subgroups of the electorate. Moreover, future research should also extend the work in this study by examining downstream effects of media bias on vote choice based on changes in candidate perceptions (e.g., Takens et al., 2015); finding such an influence would underline the importance and impact of media bias in candidate coverage.

Our study focused on applying a careful and thorough research design regarding one election in one country, naturally raising the question of the comparative applicability of the present findings. We believe that some of our findings are likely to apply across a variety of contexts. For example, our theoretical claims concerning the greater effects on political traits and the moderating impact of visibility bias are not specific to the Austrian case. Hence, we would expect similar patterns to hold elsewhere, irrespective of the specific media system and media-citizen relationship in each country. However, testing this claim is up to future research.

Other aspects of our findings are likely to be more dependent on the electoral and institutional context. For example, voter familiarity with candidates varies greatly by electoral context. We found no direct effect of visibility bias, but this may be partly due to the fact that candidates in our study were quite well known to the public already. Visibility may play a more important role in situations where political actors need to establish themselves in the public arena (e.g., Vliegenthart et al., 2012). In addition, the size of the effects of media bias may vary depending on the institutional context: For instance, candidate-specific media bias effects may be greater in more candidate-centered systems, such as Ireland or the United States (e.g., Lawson et al., 2010).

The media context will also affect the portability of our findings. For one, our study focused on printed newspapers. However, it is likely that effects differ between types of media, as television news and more visual information may more strongly affect traits that are based on heuristic information processing (see Boomgaarden et al., 2016). Moreover, different media systems are characterized by different levels of political parallelism, polarization, and consumer trust. Austria is rather typical of other European multiparty contexts, increasing the likely comparative applicability of our study. Nevertheless, research on motivated reasoning leads us to expect media bias effects to be greater if polarization is higher, media trust is greater, and parallelism is more pronounced (e.g., Levendusky, 2013, J.M. Miller and Krosnick, 2000, van Kempen, 2007).

Our findings suggest three important aspects future studies need to consider in assessing the media influences on perceptions of candidates and probably political objects more generally: (1) there are different types of bias, which (2) have stronger effects on political than non-political traits, and (3) interact with each other. Hence, future research should try to include as many different types of bias as possible. For instance, agenda bias, which is rarely considered, had relatively clear effects in our study. At the very least, researchers need to be

aware of and acknowledge the fact that different types of bias can have different effects. In particular, the lack of direct effects of visibility bias implies that researchers should expect greater direct impact from tonality and agenda bias. Second, future studies should conceive of candidate traits as multidimensional. Our study suggests that it is likely that media coverage influences political dimensions more than non-political traits. Finally, future research should check for interactions between types of media bias, particularly concerning visibility bias.

To conclude, this study also has three practical implications for campaigning politicians and parties.

1. Well-known candidates should be more concerned about the type of coverage they receive than about the amount of coverage. Our focus on tonality contrasts with prior studies, which tend to attach a lot of weight to assessments of visibility of actors in the public realm (e.g., Oegema and Kleinnijenhuis, 2000).
2. Parties should tailor their increasingly personalized campaigns more strongly to competence and leadership qualities as this is where effects of news coverage are more likely to occur (Druckman et al., 2004).
3. Campaigns should avoid deemphasizing policy goals and ideology completely as agenda bias matters for candidate perceptions. Overall, researchers and practitioners would benefit from acknowledging the complexity of trait perceptions, media bias, and their interplay.

9. Appendix to Study#3

Table 26: Candidate Bias Descriptive Statistics (First Three Weeks/Last Three Weeks)

	Newspapers					
	<div> <div>Neue</div> <div>Kronen</div> <div>Kleine</div> </div>					
	<i>Der Standard</i>	<i>Die Presse</i>	<i>Zeitung</i>	<i>Kurier</i>	<i>Österreich</i>	<i>Zeitung</i>
Visibility Bias						
Candidates						
Faymann	0.09/0.13	0.13/0.10	0.13/0.20	0.10/0.11	0.06/0.17	0.13/0.09
Spindelegger	0.01/0.02	0.07/0.19	0.04/0.03	0.09/−0.03	0.11/0.04	0.12/0.01
Strache	−0.06/−0.06	−0.10/−0.07	−0.09/−0.14	−0.10/−0.03	−0.06/−0.01	−0.10/−0.03
Tonality Bias						
Candidates						
Faymann	−0.06/0.10	0.06/0.04	0.20/0	0.04/0.04	0.21/0.14	0.30/−0.14
Spindelegger	−0.05/0.03	−0.13/0.08	−0.02/−0.28	0.01/−0.05	−0.14/−0.06	0.03/0.04
Strache	−0.05/0.03	0/0.05	−0.37/0.08	−0.18/0.12	0.02/−0.02	−0.22/−0.16
Agenda Bias						
Candidates						
Faymann	0.39/−0.05	−0.37/0.01	0.18/0.14	0.37/−0.24	0.21/0.04	−0.04/0.04
Spindelegger	−0.54/0.28	0.18/−0.08	0.04/−0.04	−0.01/−0.25	−0.16/−0.17	−0.21/−0.40
Strache	−0.51/−0.64	−0.33/0.48	0.11/−0.03	−0.23/−0.26	0.16/−0.24	−0.32/0.38

Note. The table shows bias measures from the first and last three weeks of the campaign, which are separated by a forward slash (/).

Table 27: Linear Regression of Media Bias Effects on Candidate Assessments (Stacked Traits Model)

Dependent Variable: Post-Trait Measure	Model 1	Model 2
Trait measure $t - 1$	0.622*** (0.010)	0.622*** (0.010)
Visibility Bias	-0.015 (0.042)	0.063 (0.048)
Tonality Bias	0.059** (0.018)	0.022 (0.025)
Agenda Bias	0.047** (0.014)	0.021 (0.019)
Political Trait (0/1)	0.043*** (0.003)	0.048*** (0.003)
Visibility Bias \times Political Trait	—	-0.116** (0.036)
Tonality Bias \times Political Trait	—	0.055* (0.026)
Agenda Bias \times Political Trait	—	0.040[†] (0.021)
Controls included	YES	YES
Constant	0.142*** (0.006)	0.137*** (0.006)
R^2	.48	.48
N of observations	16,185	16,185
N of clusters	925	925

*Note. Standard errors in parentheses and clustered by respondents. [†] $p < .1$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.*

VIII. Study#4: Lying Press: Three Levels of Perceived Media Bias and their Relationship to Political Preferences

Abstract

In the context of decreasing media trust as well as the rise of populist movements in many Western Democracies, this study sets out to revisit the relationship between political preferences and perceived media bias. It investigates perceived bias of the entire media system, perceived bias of individual outlets, as well as perceived beneficiaries of this favorable coverage. Analyses are based on an online survey in Austria in 2015 (n~1,460) and compare citizens' perceived biases towards eight newspapers and television outlets. Results show that media system bias in Austria is strongly related to right-wing but not to left-wing extremism. Furthermore, there are not only differences between single outlets but also between media genres, as particularly tabloids are less afflicted by right-wing perceptions of bias. Finally, we find evidence that perceived outlet bias is strongly related to out-group derogation, irrespective of actual outlet exposure.

Keywords: perceived media bias, media credibility, hostile-media phenomenon

1. Introduction

Over the last decades, citizens' trust in mainstream media has been declining in many developed countries (see Bennett et al., 2001; Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Kiouisis, 2001). This is alarming, since citizens who do not trust the media are not only less open to being informed by them (Miller and Krosnick, 2000; Tsfati, 2003), they may also become less accepting of democratic decisions and trusting of democracy itself (Tsfati and Cohen, 2005). Key to the media's perceived trustworthiness is the belief that they supply voters with balanced and objective information on relevant political issues and actors (McQuail, 1992). However, news media are often accused of partisanship and biased reporting, especially during election campaigns. Such bias can be both objective, in the sense that issues and actors *are* actually presented and discussed in an unbalanced and slanted way, as well as subjective, in the sense that audiences *perceive* the news as favoring some parties or ideologies over others. In this study, we will investigate perceived media bias in more detail based on three different levels of analysis.

Previous studies mostly investigated perceptions of the media in general or the media system (e.g., Eveland and Shah, 2003; Lee, 2010; Tsfati and Cohen, 2005), while only more recent work distinguishes between media genres and formats and finds that explanatory factors for individuals' perceptions clearly differ between them (e.g., Hopmann et al., 2015). This is particularly relevant when studying perceived media bias in multi-party systems, where media outlets may potentially be biased towards not just one out of two but also a multitude of parties. In addition to assessing system biases and aiming for a more multidimensional understanding of perceived media bias, it is thus important to have a more fine-grained measure of perceived media bias, focusing on the level of single media outlets. Finally, an even more specified question would not only ask about the bias of particular news outlets, but it would also ask about the nature of the perceived bias, i.e. which parties in particular the outlets are perceived to be favoring.

While research explaining media trust is growing (e.g., Lee, 2010; Tsfati and Ariely, 2014), research on the sources of perceived media bias is still scarce, even more so outside of the United States (e.g., Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012; Hopmann et al., 2015). Studies focusing on individual-level factors predicting media bias perceptions stress the explanatory value of ideological and political preferences. Some studies suggest that when bias is perceived it is likely to be seen as hostile against one's own political views (e.g., Vallone et

al., 1985; Giner-Sorolla and Chaiken, 1994). Other studies suggest that perceived media bias is higher particularly for conservative or right-leaning citizen (e.g., Eveland and Shah, 2003; Lee, 2010). The recent reverberation of the battle cry “lying press” (*Lügenpresse*) throughout the political and media landscape in European multi-party systems as well as United States has turned media bias into a strongly partisan accusation (Dostal, 2015; The Economist, 2016).

Building on this insight, this study makes three key contributions to this field of research. First, it investigates to what extent media bias perceptions in a European multi-party system are equally politically imbalanced as in the United States or instead driven by both sides of the ideological spectrum. Second, it particularly addresses differences in media bias perceptions based on citizens’ political preferences as well as different media genres. Finally, it discusses implications of these findings for journalism and democracy.

In order to address these gaps, this study investigates and compares the effects of ideological and party preferences on perceived media bias on three different levels of analysis: (1) perceived bias of the media system in general, (2) perceived bias of specific news outlets and (3) perceived beneficiaries of outlet specific bias. This study is the first to map influences on perceived media bias in Austria, a country for which we have some knowledge about objective media bias and political ties between media and politics (e.g., Eberl et al., forthcoming-a; Eberl et al., forthcoming-b; Lelkes, 2016); however, we know relatively little about citizens’ perceptions of media bias. Analyses draw on a cross-sectional online survey carried out in a routine (i.e. non-campaign) period in 2015.

2. Objective versus Perceived Media Bias

One approach to understanding perceived media bias is to turn to news content itself. If citizens perceive media to be biased in favor or against any specific party or ideology, it is fair to assume that this perceived bias may originate from the visibility and tone towards these parties or candidates or the treatment of these parties’ policy issues in media coverage itself. Particularly in the United States, the accusation of a liberal media bias – i.e. media coverage in general being slanted in favor of liberal candidates, parties and policies – has persisted for a long time, however, meta-analyses could not find any evidence for this accusation in US-

media coverage (D'Alessio and Allen, 2000). Instead, Watts et al. (1999) argue that this belief in a biased media system is continuously reproduced and reinforced by an increase in the media's self-coverage about allegations of a liberal bias and not actual biased coverage itself.

Any studies seeking to match bias perceptions with actual bias in news content have to set some sort of a normative benchmark of what balanced or neutral news is (e.g., Hopmann et al., 2011). However, what scholars may normatively and empirically identify as unbalanced or biased news may be very different from or at least only a fragment of what individuals perceive as such. Instead, citizens may use partisan and other in-group cues as well as personal day-to-day experiences to infer reality and compare it to its depiction in media coverage (e.g., Mutz and Martin, 2001). The relationship between objective and perceived media bias is thus uncertain at best, and it seems that individual-level differences in perceptions may be of greater relevance than actual media content (Eveland and Shah, 2003).

3. Perceived Media System Bias: A Question of Extremism or Right-Wing Ideology?

Political attitudes and ideology strongly influence citizens' media perceptions. Gunther (1988) argues that the intensity of political attitudes, particularly attitude extremity, is an important predictor of perceived bias. Following this argument, this would mean that citizens both from the left and the right ideological extremes should have more negative perceptions of news coverage. Similarly, Reinemann and Fawzi (2016) argue that citizens who distrust the media and accuse them of being systematically biased are the same citizens who tend to vote for populist and extremist parties. Tsfaty and Capella (2003) shed some light on possible mechanisms driving the extremes on both sides towards media skepticism, which is related to perceived media bias (Kohring and Matthes, 2007). They find that in the United States extremists both left- and right-wing are more strongly exposed to non-mainstream media, which in turn negatively affect their trust in mainstream media. A very similar indirect relationship between ideological extremism and trust in media was found in Israel (Tsfaty and Peri, 2006), a multi-party system in which movements and parties with extreme positions both from the left and the right ideological spectrum play a more important role. In light of these

findings the first hypothesis is that *perceptions of a biased media system will be stronger among ideological extremists compared to more moderate individuals* (H1a).

However, literature on media perceptions is often focused on the United States and the alleged “liberal bias” of mainstream media, where mainstream media is used synonymously for the media system in general. Studies then find that this accusation of media bias is particularly expressed by voters with a strong Republican party identification as well as more generally voters that are on the right of the ideological spectrum (e.g. Beck et al., 2002; Eveland and Shah, 2003; Lee, 2010). Although the general argument of attitude intensity or extremity remains the same, findings here suggest that predominantly right-leaning voters are more prone to perceive the media system as biased. Given the production and reproduction of the accusation of liberal media bias in the form of the “Lügenpresse” accusation by recent right-wing populist, right-extremist and so-called alt-right movements across Europe and the US (e.g., Gasser, 2016; The Economist, 2016), an alternative hypothesis is that *perceptions of a biased media system will be stronger among right-leaning than among left-leaning individuals* (H1b).

4. Perceived Media Outlet Bias: A Partisanship of Audiences?

Believing the media system as a whole is biased may be very different from perceiving specific news outlets to be biased. In fact, there are at least three reasons why media outlets may show distinct political news coverage. First, some outlets may tend towards political advocacy by taking a clear political stance at the risk of alienating readers who do not share the same ideology. Second, they may decide in favor of commercialization, where neutral or balanced reporting is required in order to remain open to all political audiences and thus be more profitable (see Hackett, 1984: 239). The third and somewhat hybrid option is for news corporations to continuously vary their news content in response to economic pressures, technological developments, and audience preferences, which may encourage political bias but will not be restricted to one specific party or ideology (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010).

Content analyses in Europe as well as in the United States show that news outlets often differ in their coverage of parties and candidates during election campaigns (e.g., Druckman

and Parkin, 2005; Takens et al., 2010; Eberl et al., forthcoming-a). While D'Alessio and Allen (2000) found no evidence of a liberal media bias in the United States in their meta-analysis, this does not mean that there is no relationship between perceived bias and objective bias on the level of single outlets. In fact, Boomgaarden and Semetko (2012) found a modest relationship between the actual content of specific news outlets and audiences' perceptions of it in the case of Germany. Following political parallelism theory (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 28) distinct political news content should generate a partisanship of audiences mirroring the political bias of media content. This partisanship of audiences can be expressed both through media exposure as well as media perceptions, meaning that news outlets will not only have an audience that shares their political views. On top of that these partisan audiences will also rather tend to perceive them as being more objective in their reporting. We therefore have to *expect the effect of political preferences to differ based on the political orientation of individual media outlets* (H2).

5. Perceived Outlet-Party Bias: A Hostile Media Phenomenon?

Knowing which partisans perceive a media outlet to be biased will already convey an idea of the perceived political leaning of a news outlet, especially when biased reporting is understood as something exclusively objectionable. However, asking about the beneficiary of an outlet's bias (i.e. which party is actually perceived as being favored) is again potentially very different from perceived outlet bias, especially in a multi-party system, where party preferences may be complex and diverse and where citizen may not only prefer one and dislike another, but prefer and dislike several parties – even from different sides of the ideological spectrum.

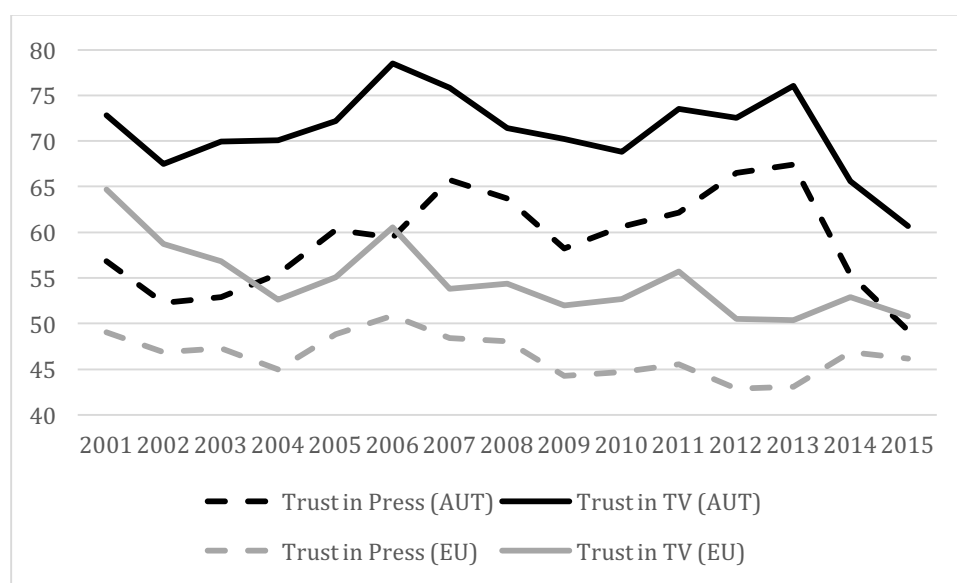
Although recent literature discusses evidence that sometimes even partisans may admit to perceiving congenial media bias (Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012), the large bulk of the literature argues that audiences will perceive bias almost always as hostile (e.g., Vallone et al., 1985; Hansen and Kim, 2011). Gunther et al. (2001) argue that this has to do with partisans seeing their own political attitudes and viewpoints as more credible, correct and newsworthy, which makes balanced reporting that gives equal space to several arguments seem by definition biased and hostile. All these studies focus on partisans, a concept that is becoming

less and less relevant in multi-party systems with increasing numbers of swing voters. To better fit the context of multi-party systems, this study therefore takes the focus away from partisans as such and puts it on party preferences, *expecting that the probability of naming a party as being favored in the media coverage of a particular news outlet decreases with an individual's general preference for that party (H3)*.

6. The Case of Austria

By and large research dealing with perceived media bias and related concepts focuses on the United States (e.g., Eveland and Shah, 2003; Lee, 2005; Lee, 2010; Watts et al., 1999). This study is an important contribution in this regard, since perceiving media bias in a two-party system towards either one or the other party/candidate is by definition much less complex than media bias perceptions in a multi-party system such as Austria.

Figure 12: Media trust in Austria and Europe, in per cent (2001-2015)



Source: Data shown is based on Eurobarometer from 2001 to 2015.

Austria has a democratic-corporatist media system with a strong newspaper market and public broadcasting sector, similar to larger European countries such as Germany or Great Britain (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). Political parallelism in the Austrian media system is a little above

the European average, particularly when it comes to print media (Lelkes 2016). Nonetheless, overall media trust in Austria has been well above the European average over the past decades (see Figure 12). However, there was a strong decline in media trust after the last general election in 2013, about the same time when the Austrian far-right FPÖ started taking the lead in national polls and another right-wing populist party, the Team Stronach (TS) was elected into parliament. Although media trust in Austria is still high, the apparent downward trend is striking.

7. Data and Methods

Data collection took place between October 14 and November 25, 2015, during a non-election period in Austria. Respondents for the cross-sectional online survey were drawn randomly from an existing opt-in online access panel based on key demographics in terms of representing the target population. Since the survey was part of a longitudinal election panel, 591 fresh respondents were added to address the low initial response rate of 49.4%. The profile of the final sample was largely in line with the overall offline population with minor discrepancies concerning age and region that reflect the usual patterns of such online surveys (Kritzing et al., 2016). Conditional on the level of analysis and the dependent variable in question, the remaining subsamples used for the analyses contained between 1,243 and 1,460 respondents.

Three levels of analysis, three types of perceived media bias and three dependent variables

Since this study investigates perceived media bias on three different levels, three different measures are used as dependent variables. First, we measure perceived *media system bias* by asking respondents how much they agree with the statement “Austrian media are biased” (1-4, “completely agree” to “completely disagree”). After dropping cases with missing values for the relevant independent variables, the remaining subsample contained 1,352 respondents. Second, to measure perceived *media outlet bias*, we asked respondents whether news

coverage in each out of seven outlets³⁴ was slanted in favor of any parties or their politics (0/1). Finally, on the level of perceived *outlet-party bias*, respondents who perceived outlets to have a favorable slant towards specific parties or their politics, where asked which of the six parties that held seats in the national parliament were being favored (0/1). Respondents were allowed to identify a slant towards more than one party. For the analysis of perceived outlet-party bias the data has been stacked by parties.

Analyses and model specifications

The main independent variables include ideological self-placement on the left-right scale (0-10), as well as a squared form of the variable to account for ideological extremism. Also included is the propensity to vote (ptv) for each of the six political parties on a scale from 0 to 10 as a measure of party preferences.

The analyses include a large number of control variables that are, however, not the focus of this paper. Sociodemographic variables as well as interest in politics have been shown to impact media perceptions, although the significance and direction of the effects vary sometimes greatly between studies (e.g., Eveland and Shah, 2003; Tsfati and Ariely, 2014). Therefore, age (in years), gender (0/1, 1 = female), formal level of education (1-4) and political interest (1-4) are included. There appears to be a positive relationship between the media use of traditional (print, television and radio) and mainstream sources and trust in media in general (e.g., Tsfati and Ariely, 2014; Tsfati and Capella, 2003; Hopmann et al., 2015). This is why we included newspaper media use (1-5), TV news use (1-5), radio use (1-5) and online news use (1-5)³⁵ in our perceived *media system bias* analysis, as well as a variable that controls for social media use in general (0/1). In the perceived *media outlet bias* and *outlet-party bias* models, social media use was also included, media use, however, was

³⁴ The media sample contains a variety of different types of outlets selected on the basis of circulation figures, format and genre. The outlets under study are the quality newspapers *Der Standard* and *Die Presse*, the tabloids *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, *Österreich*, and *Heute*, as well as the public broadcasting news shpws *Zeit im Bild 1* and *Zeit im Bild 2*.

³⁵ All these media use variables were scaled as (1) “close to daily”, (2) “several times a week”, (3) “several times a month”, (4) “less frequently” and (5) “never”.

measured as exposure to the individual outlet on a scale from 0 to 7, where 0 stands for never reading or watching a specific outlet and 7 stands for reading or watching this outlet every day of the week. Furthermore, research on media perceptions finds a strong positive relationship with trust in, cynicism towards or satisfaction with democracy and government (Lee, 2005; Lee, 2010; Tsfaty and Cohen, 2005). We again expect a similar relationship to perceived media bias and therefore also included a variable measuring satisfaction with democracy (1-4, “very satisfied” to “not satisfied at all”).

Summing up, including this large amount of control variables ensures a precise and conservative estimate of the relationship between political preferences and perceived media system bias, perceived outlet bias as well as perceived beneficiaries of their bias.

8. Results

Generally speaking perceived media system bias in our sample is quite high, as can be expected for a country with relatively high political parallelism (Lelkes 2016). In fact, close to 75 per cent of all respondents agree at least a little with the statement that “Austrian media are biased” (mean = 2.8). Perceived bias of single outlets is less pronounced with strong variation between news outlets. With only 23.2 (*Die Presse*) and 25.3 (*Der Standard*) per cent of respondents, quality newspapers are perceived least biased, followed by the public broadcasting television programs *Zeit im Bild 1* (34.1 %) and *Zeit im Bild 2* (32.9 %). Most respondents perceived bias within the tabloid newspapers *Heute* (37.3 %), *Österreich* (42.2 %) and *Neue Kronen Zeitung* (59.6 %). Finally, the governing SPÖ is perceived to be most strongly favored in the public broadcasting program *Zeit im Bild 2*, whereas the ÖVP is most strongly associated to the conservative broadsheet *Die Presse*. On the level of perceived outlet-party biases, the FPÖ’s most favorable slant is for example seen in the tabloid *Neue Kronen Zeitung* and the Greens in the progressive broadsheet *Der Standard*. More generally, only few respondents perceive favorable coverage for the smallest parties NEOS and TS.

Perceived Media System Bias

The first level of analysis concerns why respondents perceive the media system to be biased. In a first regression, the effects of cofounders are estimated (see Model 1, Table 29). In contrast to previous studies such as Eveland and Shah (2003) and Lee (2005), we find that perceived media system bias is greater for older respondents ($p < 0.001$). We cannot find evidence that perceived media system bias is gender-dependent. We can confirm, however, that respondents with increased interest in politics are more likely to perceive the media system as biased ($p < 0.001$). The use of traditional print, TV or radio media for political information gathering as well as social media use do not relate to an increased perception of a biased media system, while there is a small effect for online media ($p = 0.086$). Finally, we do find the theorized strong negative relationship ($p < 0.001$) between democratic satisfaction and perceived media system bias (e.g., Lee, 2005). All effects remain robust throughout the different models.

In a second step, ideological left-right self-placement and ideological extremism are added (see Model 2, Table 29). We find evidence that voters who place themselves on the right of the ideological spectrum perceive the media system to be more biased than other voters (H1b).³⁶ For each one-point move to the right on the ideological scale, respondents' perceived media system bias ($SD = 0.89$) would increase by 0.07 points (see Figure 13). Ideological extremism (H1a), however, does not seem to be a relevant predictor on this level of analysis.

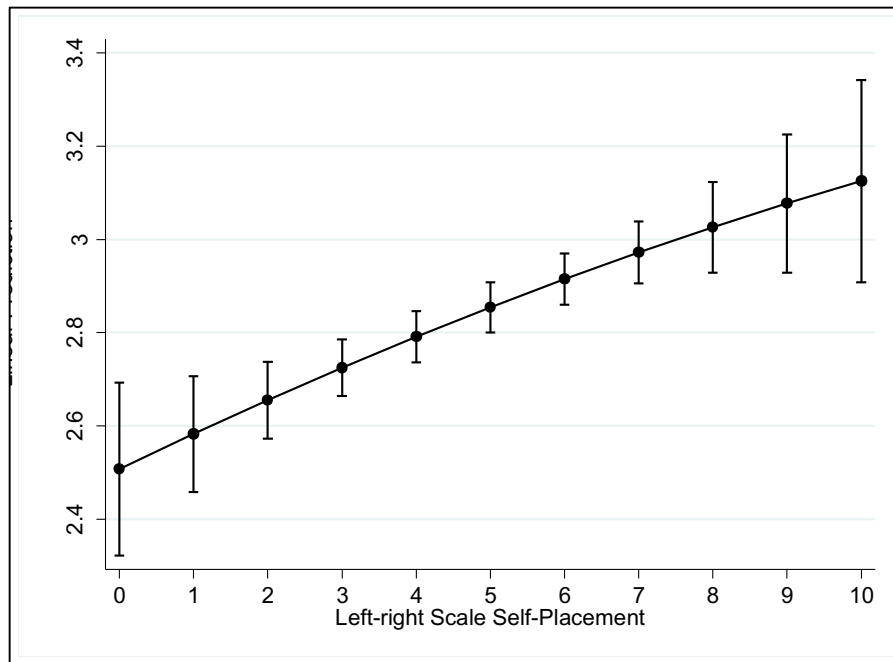
³⁶ If only the Left-Right Scale without the squared term is added to the regression, the effect of the Left-Right-Self-Placement is at $\beta = 0.062$ with $p < 0.001$.

Table 28: Linear regression for the effects of political preferences on perceived media system bias

Dependent variable: Perceived Media System Bias (1-4)	Model 1: Baseline	Model 2: Add Ideology & Extremism	Model 3: Add Party Preferences
Age (16-85)	0.008*** (0.002)	0.008*** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.002)
Gender (0/1, 1 = female)	-0.038 (0.047)	-0.007 (0.047)	0.002 (0.047)
Education (1-4)	0.032 (0.026)	0.040 (0.026)	0.070** (0.026)
Political Interest (1-4)	0.135*** (0.033)	0.139*** (0.033)	0.132*** (0.033)
Print Use (1-4)	0.023 (0.023)	0.027 (0.023)	0.029 (0.023)
TV Use (1-4)	-0.030 (0.027)	-0.034 (0.027)	-0.035 (0.027)
Radio Use (1-4)	0.003 (0.022)	-0.0005 (0.021)	-0.001 (0.021)
Online Use (1-4)	0.040⁺ (0.023)	0.045* (0.023)	0.042⁺ (0.023)
Social Media Use (0/1)	0.011 (0.052)	0.025 (0.052)	0.043 (0.051)
Democratic Satisfaction (1-4)	-0.347*** (0.029)	-0.300*** (0.030)	-0.211*** (0.033)
Left/Right Scale (0-10)		0.077* (0.039)	0.035 (0.041)
Extremism (L/R ²)		-0.001 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.004)
PTV SPÖ (0-10)			-0.023** (0.008)
PTV ÖVP (0-10)			-0.010 (0.007)
PTV FPÖ (0-10)			0.020* (0.008)
PTV Grüne (0-10)			-0.024** (0.008)
PTV TS (0-10)			-0.0002 (0.012)
PTV NEOS (0-10)			0.003 (0.008)
Constant	2.776*** (0.174)	2.260*** (0.214)	2.406*** (0.225)
R ²	0.14	0.16	0.18
N of observations	1,352	1,352	1,352

*Note: Standard errors in parentheses; *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ⁺ $p < 0.1$*

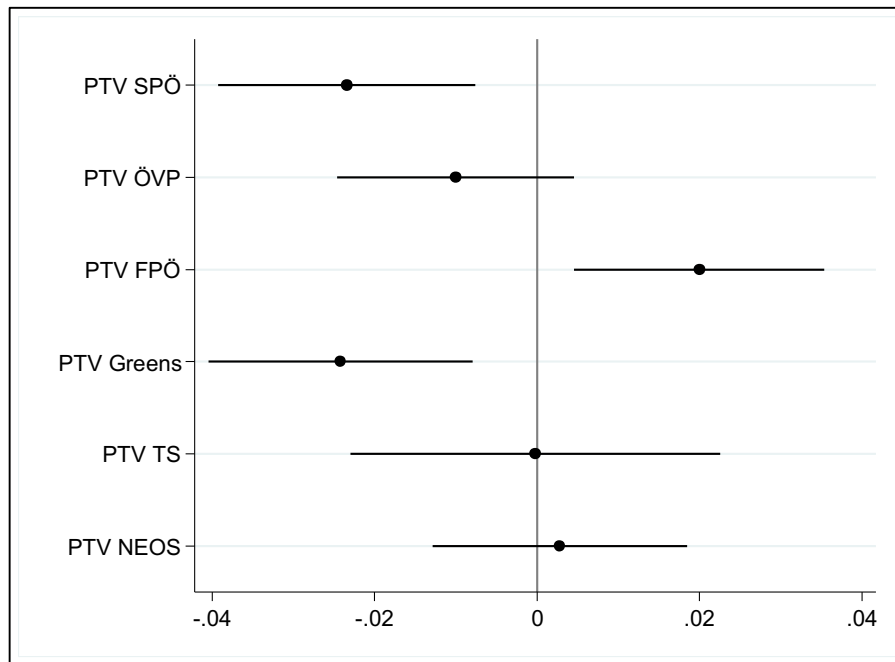
Figure 13: Predicted level of perceived media system bias depending on left-right scale self-placement



Note: Predicted levels are computed based on Model 2 in Table 29.

In a third model, preferences for each party are added (Model 3, Table 29). While effects of ideology now disappear, it becomes apparent that there is a strong relationship between the perception of media system bias and preferences towards (i.e. the propensity to vote for) either the SPÖ, the Greens or the FPÖ. Respondents who have a high propensity to vote for the SPÖ or the Greens are less likely to perceive Austrian media as biased ($\beta = -0.023$, $p = 0.004$ and $\beta = -0.024$, $p = 0.004$, respectively). In contrast, respondents who lean towards the FPÖ are likely to perceive Austrian media generally as biased ($\beta = 0.02$, $p = 0.011$). Preferences towards other parties show no statistically significant effects (see Figure 14). In this regard, the relationship between party preferences and media system bias does seem to be driven by the extreme right of the political party system (H1b).

Figure 14: Effects of party preferences on perceived media system bias



Note: Effects are computed based on Model 3 in Table 29.

Perceived Media Outlet Bias

Descriptive analyses already showed that there are strong differences between single outlets when it comes to perceived media bias. Similarly, effects of control variables (see Table 30) also somewhat differ from the earlier models. The impact of age is now less relevant, whereas men clearly have a tendency to perceive individual outlets to be more biased than women (see Lee, 2005; Eveland and Shah, 2003). Education and political interest has similar positive effects on perceiving bias as before. In the case of *Der Standard* ($p = 0.058$), *Österreich* ($p = 0.009$), *Heute* ($p < 0.001$) and *Zeit im Bild 2* ($p = 0.047$), exposure to these outlets does tend to increase the probability of perceiving them as biased. The use of alternative media sources such as social media only really plays a role in the case of *Der Standard* ($p = 0.034$). Finally, while democratic satisfaction is a strong predictor for bias perceptions of quality media coverage (broadsheets and public broadcasting emissions), it is not or less so for tabloids.

Table 29: Logistic regression for the effects of political preferences on perceived media outlet bias

Dependent variable: Perceived Outlet Bias (0/1)	Quality Newspapers		Tabloid Newspapers			Public Broadcaster (TV)	
	Model 1: Der Standard	Model 2: Die Presse	Model 3: Kronen Zeitung	Model 4: Österreich	Model 5: Heute	Model 6: ZIB	Model 7: ZIB 2
Age (16-85)	.005 (.004)	.006 (.004)	.007 (.004)	-.001 (.004)	-.005 (.004)	.009* (.004)	.009* (.004)
Gender (0/1, 1 = female)	-.269* (.129)	-.334* (.130)	-.340** (.114)	-.305** (.112)	-.488*** (.114)	-.360** (.125)	-.282* (.125)
Education (1-4)	.418*** (.074)	.353*** (.075)	.244*** (.065)	.278*** (.064)	.217** (.065)	.064 (.072)	.110 (.072)
Political Interest (1-4)	.465*** (.086)	.385*** (.085)	.436*** (.072)	.428*** (.073)	.430*** (.074)	.492*** (.083)	.553*** (.085)
Outlet Use (1-7)	.060⁺ (.032)	.019 (.034)	-.053 (.022)	.072** (.028)	.101*** (.027)	.034 (.025)	.054* (.027)
Social Media Use	.300* (.142)	.169 (.142)	.041 (.125)	.213⁺ (.123)	.179 (.126)	.103 (.135)	.217 (.136)
Democratic Satisfaction (1-4)	-.366*** (.090)	-.246** (.091)	-.053 (.081)	-.144⁺ (.079)	-.151 (.080)	-.337*** (.087)	-.339*** (.088)
Left/Right Scale (0-10)	-.122 (.111)	-.296** (.104)	-.039 (.099)	-.246* (.096)	-.172⁺ (.096)	.082 (.112)	.114 (.113)
Extremism (L/R2)	.014 (.010)	.027** (.010)	-.003 (.009)	.032** (.009)	.018⁺ (.009)	-.005 (.010)	-.010 (.010)
PTV SPÖ (0-10)	-.002 (.022)	-.012 (.023)	-.038⁺ (.020)	-.034⁺ (.019)	-.058** (.020)	-.031 (.021)	-.039⁺ (.023)
PTV ÖVP (0-10)	.005 (.021)	-.047* (.021)	-.006 (.018)	-.010 (.018)	-.017 (.018)	-.010 (.020)	-.002 (.022)
PTV FPÖ (0-10)	.037⁺ (.021)	-.007 (.022)	-.047* (.019)	-.023 (.018)	-.059** (.023)	.103*** (.020)	.104*** (.020)
PTV Grüne (0-10)	-.090*** (.023)	-.040⁺ (.023)	-.011 (.020)	.020 (.019)	-.010 (.019)	-.101*** (.023)	-.111*** (.023)
PTV TS (0-10)	.046 (.032)	.001 (.034)	-.071* (.028)	-.088*** (.029)	-.055⁺ (.030)	.041 (.030)	.030 (.031)
PTV NEOS (0-10)	-.023 (.023)	-.060** (.023)	.036⁺ (.022)	.030 (.021)	.024 (.019)	.005 (.022)	.008 (.022)
Constant	-2.13*** (.593)	-1.04 ⁺ (0.578)	-0.31 (0.515)	-0.91* (0.505)	-0.21 (0.511)	-1.74** (0.580)	-2.25*** (0.587)
R ²	0.10	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.17	0.18
N of observations	1,597	1,597	1,596	1,596	1,597	1,586	1,595

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ⁺ $p < 0.1$

Turning to the political preferences, the clear relationship on the level of the media system bias appears to be much more complicated on the level of single outlets. Respondents' self-placement on the left-right scale reveals evidence for the ideological extremism argument concerning *Die Presse* (although a little skewed to the ideological left), *Österreich* (a little skewed towards the ideological right) and *Heute*. In these cases, ideological extremists are more likely to perceive these media outlets as biased than moderates. Otherwise, ideology per

se does not seem to be helpful in predicting perceived outlet bias, when also controlling for party preferences (see Appendix to Study#4, Figure 18).³⁷

Party preferences do clearly drive perceived outlet biases (see Table 30). However, effects differ strongly between single media outlets and mirror expected ideological leanings of the outlets based on recent content analyses (see e.g., Eberl et al., forthcoming-a). The perceived bias of the progressive broadsheet *Der Standard* tends to increase with preferences towards the right-wing FPÖ ($p = 0.074$) and decreases with preferences towards the Greens ($p < 0.001$). Somewhat similar effects can be found for public broadcasting outlets often accused of leftist bias by the FPÖ (Die Presse, 2016). Conversely, perceived bias for the libertarian-bourgeois broadsheet *Die Presse* significantly decreases with respondents' preferences towards the People's Party ($p = 0.028$), Liberals ($p = 0.009$) and somewhat even the Greens ($p = 0.080$). Respondents preferring rather working-class oriented parties such as the Social-Democrats (SPÖ), FPÖ or Team Stronach (TS) perceive the Austrian tabloids *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, *Österreich* and *Heute* as less biased. Unsurprisingly these tabloids are regularly accused of adjusting their coverage in favor of or having organizational ties to SPÖ and FPÖ (Plasser and Seeber, 2010; Maan and Schmid, 2016).

Perceived Outlet-Party Bias

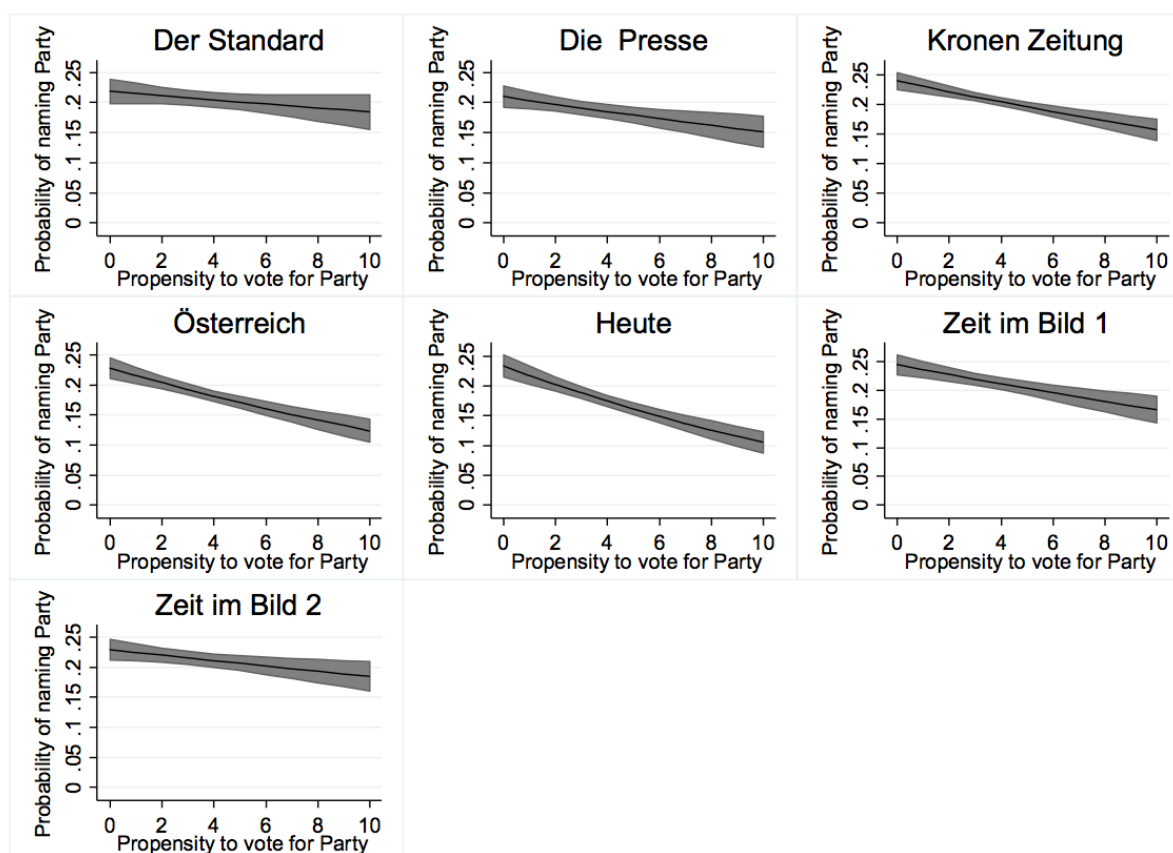
This final section takes a closer look at the perceived beneficiaries of each outlet's bias. The intention is now to find out to what point preferences for a party influences the probability of naming that party as being favored by a media outlet. Results show that for nearly every outlet, respondents will have a higher probability of perceiving a party they dislike as being favored than a party they like (not significant for *der Standard*, $p = 0.015$ for *Zeit im Bild 2*, $p =$

³⁷ When excluding party preferences from the model, right-leaning voters are more likely to perceive the progressive quality newspaper *Der Standard* as well as the public broadcaster programs *ZiB 1* and *ZiB 2* to be more biased. For the conservative quality newspaper *Die Presse* and the tabloids *Österreich* and *Heute* both voters from the extreme left and extreme right are more likely to perceive them as biased. There is, however, no statistically significant relationship between ideological preferences and bias perceptions for the largest tabloid *Neue Kronen Zeitung* (see Appendix Study#4, Figure 17).

0.003 for *die Presse* and $p < 0.001$ for *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, *Österreich*, *Heute* as well as *Zeit im Bild 1*). Overall, effects seem to be less pronounced for quality newspapers and public broadcasters (see Figure 15 and Appendix Study#4, Table 31).

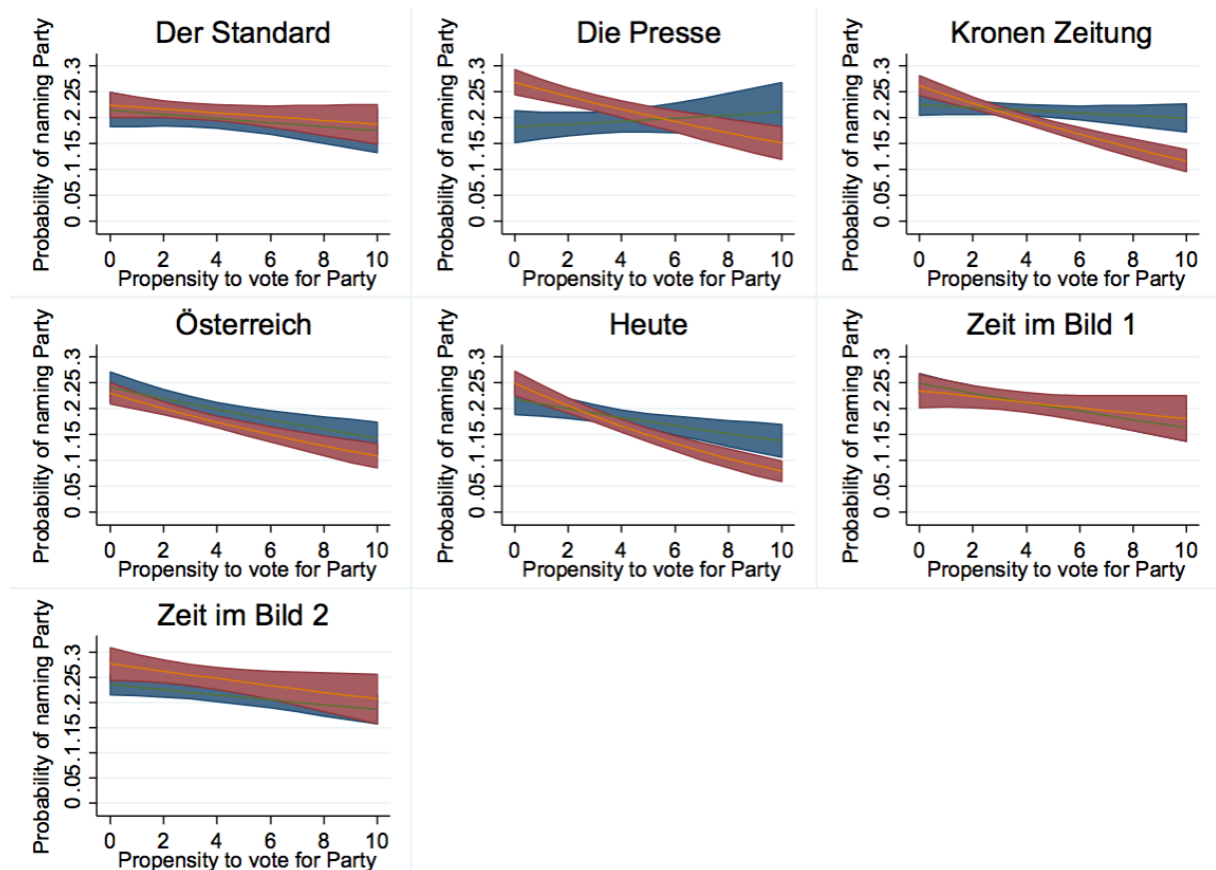
In an attempt to investigate in how far this effect is moderated by media content, where audiences may try to reduce cognitive dissonance through selective media exposure, consuming mainly outlets or information consonant to their own political views (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010; Wagner, forthcoming) and thus perceiving only outlets to be biased that they themselves do not use, analyses were run again separately for readers and non-readers (see Figure 16). Aside from *Die Presse* – where there is a positive relationship between party preferences and the probability of naming a party as being favored for readers, but a negative one for non-readers – and *Neue Kronen Zeitung* – where party preferences do not relate to perceived outlet-party bias for readers – results do not differ strongly between readers and non-readers.

Figure 15: Predicted probabilities of naming a party to be perceived as favored in a media outlet depending on voters' general preferences towards that party



Note: Effects are computed based on models in Appendix Study#4 Table 31.

Figure 16: Predicted probabilities of naming a party to be perceived as favored in a media outlet depending on voters' general preferences towards that party and outlet use



Notes: Blue = Readers. Red = Non-Readers.

Summing up, results show strong evidence that the probability of naming a party to be favored in a media outlet increases with respondents' dislike of that party (H3) and that these effects are somewhat stronger for tabloid newspapers. Furthermore, and with only a few exceptions, there is also evidence that this process is not based on a mechanism of selective exposure, since differences between readers and non-readers are not so pronounced. This is additional indication for perceived outlet-party bias being more strongly related to individual's political perceptions than to actual cues from news content.

9. Conclusion

This study is the first to analyze effects of political preferences on perceived media bias based on three different levels of analysis, using one dataset with the aim of revisiting core assumptions about their relationships with political preferences. It is also the first to give such overview in the context of a multi-party system with above average political parallelism, an increasingly right leaning electorate and strongly decreasing trust in media over the last few years.

On the level of perceived *media system bias*, results show that neither leftist nor conservative but particularly extreme-right will rather perceive the media system to be biased (H1b). On the level of individual media outlets there are strong differences concerning the relationship between political preferences and perceived *media outlet bias* (H2), reflecting a partisanship of audiences, which one would expect based on genre and/or outlets' expected political leaning. Finally, results confirmed that citizen will rather perceive media to be biased against than in favor of their own views and preferences (H3) and that this mechanism seems largely independent of actual media content and appears to be largely based on in-group cues and pre-existing expectations about each outlet.

In sum, three different mechanisms can be witnessed on the three levels of perceived media bias. While media system bias is strongly related to right-wing ideology and party preferences, right-leaners seem to be less skeptical of tabloids. Although differences in the perceptions of different media outlets exist, outlet-party bias is strongly related to out-group derogation, as parties that respondents prefer are less likely to be perceived as favored in the news. When explaining media bias perceptions it is thus important to take into account or at least to be aware of these different levels of analysis and of how strongly they may influence findings.

Although research on the hostile media phenomenon suggests that media content is subordinate to political preferences, the interplay between media content and media perceptions in general should be investigated once more particularly with the rise of fake news in social media (e.g., Marchi, 2012). Future studies dealing with this relationship should invest in examining the causal mechanism in more detail and with more diverse measures for each level of perceived media bias. While it makes sense to argue that political preferences affect our perceptions of media, coverage also affects political preferences and media

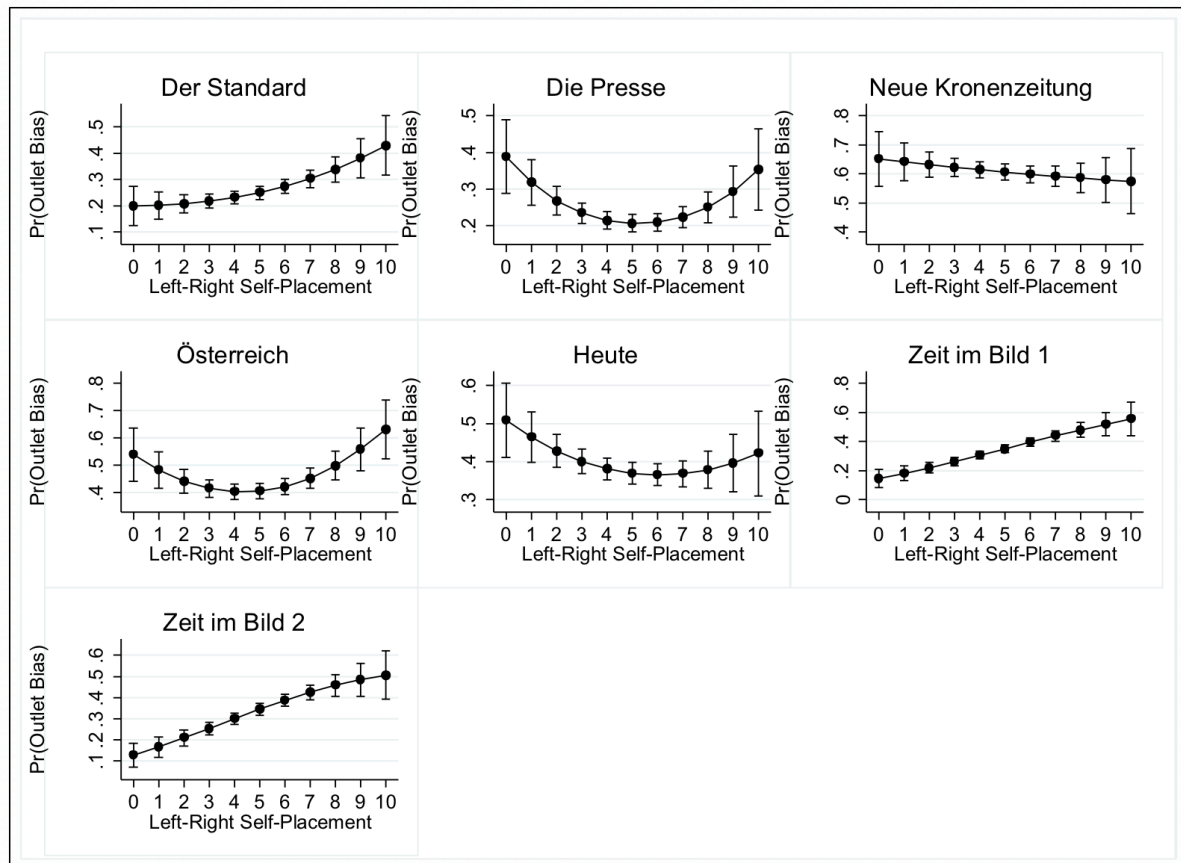
perceptions (see “media malaise theory”, e.g., Robinson, 1976; Bennett et al., 1999) and probably so on different levels.

The political imbalance of perceived media bias witnessed in this study is generally new for multi-party systems but a consequence of the rise of extreme-right and populist-right movements in Western democracies. Negative perceptions of mainstream media, the decrease in media trust as well as any rise in perceived media bias are thus strongly driven by a very specific group of citizens and possible cues – such as distrust in “Lügenpresse” – they receive from right-wing parties and sympathizing alternative online news sources (Reinemann and Fawzi, 2016). On the one hand, findings that differences between media genres do play an additional role in understanding the nature of perceived media bias (see also Hopmann et al., 2015) underline that European tabloids may have a responsibility as they are still able to reach these voters. Tabloids’ contribution to public discourse about media bias, or lack thereof, should be studied in more detail. On the other hand, as perceptions between readers and non-readers do not differ strongly but instead political preferences seem to be the main driving force, journalists have a difficult task in terms of regaining the trust of audiences that would rather see their content censored than balanced. Finally, responsibility also lies within the party system to increase citizens’ trust or at least not to further citizens’ distrust in the media system³⁸; particularly so, since trust in the free and independent media can be seen as a cornerstone for a working democracy (Tsfati and Cohen, 2005).

³⁸ In Austria, particularly the FPÖ has been found to spread false and fake news via social media as well as to act upon that information in the form parliamentary inquiries (Schmid, 2016). In turn, such behavior of a leading political party can increase voters’ insecurity about what information to trust and the independence of mainstream media.

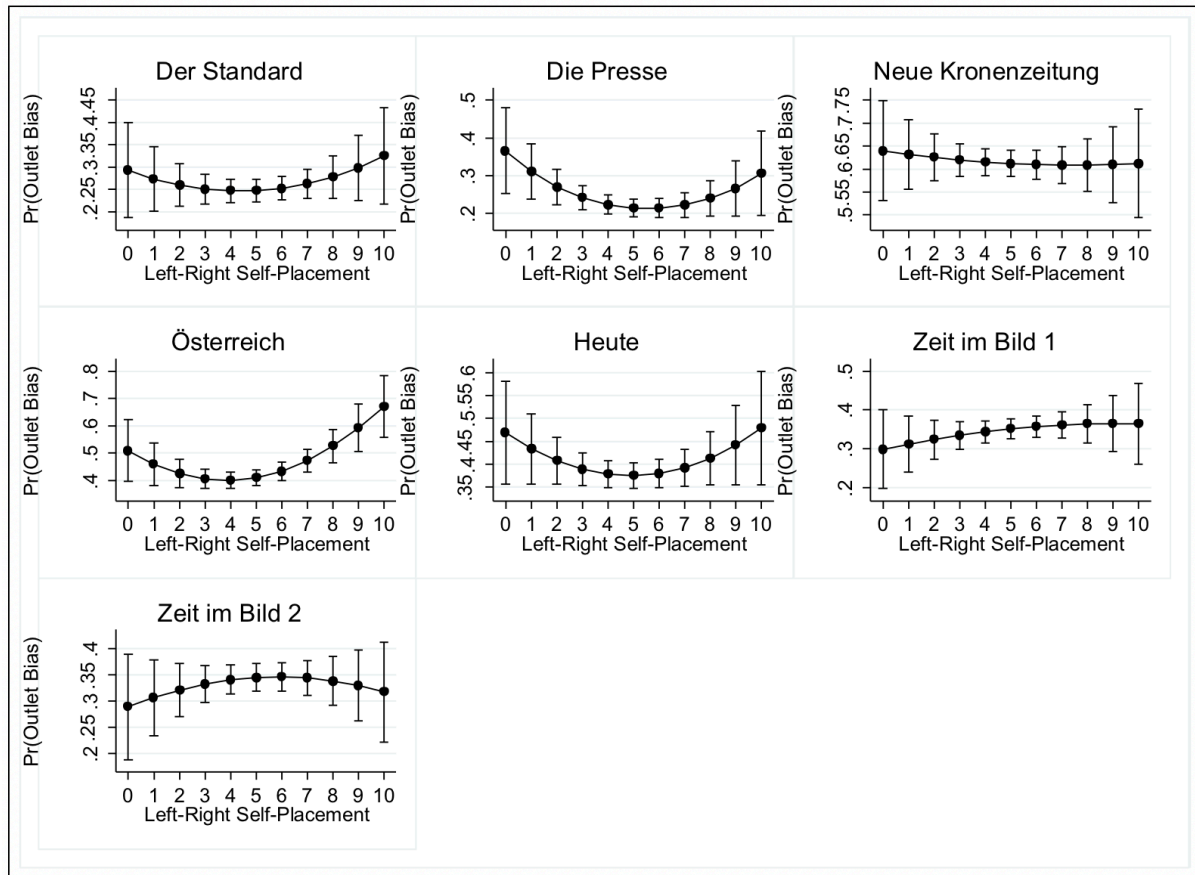
10. Appendix to Study#4

Figure 17: Marginal effects of ideological self-placement on perceived media outlet bias – without party preferences



Note: Effects are computed based on models in Table 30 but without party preferences (i.e. propensity to vote).

Figure 18: Marginal effects of ideological self-placement on perceived media outlet bias



Note: Effects are computed based on models in Table 30.

Table 30: Logistic regression for the effects of party preferences on the probability of naming a party to be perceived as favored in a media outlet

Dependent variable: Perceived party favoritism (0/1)	Model 1: Der Standard	Model 2: Die Presse	Model 3: Kronen Zeitung	Model 4: Österreich	Model 5: Heute	Model 6: ZIB	Model 7: ZIB 2
PTV	-.029 (.019)	-.067** (.023)	-.080*** (.015)	-.102*** (.017)	-.133*** (.019)	-.090*** (.021)	-.050* (.021)
Controls included	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.26* (0.126)	-1.17*** (0.160)	0.94*** (0.100)	0.52*** (0.114)	0.73*** (0.131)	1.75*** (0.140)	1.54*** (0.135)
R ²	0.28	0.38	0.34	0.31	0.32	0.44	0.44
N of observations	2,497	2,275	5,909	4,215	3,766	3,332	3,254
N of cluster	417	380	986	704	628	556	543

*Note: Standard errors in parentheses; centered predicted values associated with each party for voter-specific control variables. Standard errors clustered by respondents. ptv = propensity to vote for the party. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.*

IX. Overall Summary and Discussion

The present work has focused on the sources and effects of different types of media bias in the midst and wake of the Brexit, Trump and Austrian presidential campaigns; during a time when “mainstream” media in Europe as well as the United States have been under heavy fire for either having a left wing or a populist right bias. In this context, the thesis set out to systematically investigate sources, effects and perceptions of media bias. While each single chapter (or study) in this cumulative thesis enquires into different aspects of media bias, together they contribute to a better understanding of the sources and effects of different aspects of this phenomenon. In doing so, this thesis has tried to investigate empirically testable implications following from theoretical conjectures about different dimensions of political parallelism (Hallin and Mancini, 2004), i.e. how media interact with politics as well as what effect its relationship to voting audiences may be. Moreover, it made use of several sources of data, the majority of which in an integrative fashion, combining up to three different kinds of sources (i.e. media, party and voter data) in one study.

This last chapter summarizes the compiled findings; it discusses their relation to previous research, their implications, as well as limitations and potential pathways for future research.

1. Summary of results and their contribution

Overall, this dissertation has presented a detailed account of sources, effects and perceptions of media bias, of which the following particularly novel aspects and findings can be put forward:

- While a party’s advertising shares in a newspaper do not seem to positively influence bias towards that party in the respective newspaper in any statistically meaningful way during an election campaign, there is weak evidence that, should such a relationship exist, it would be more probable in tabloids than in quality or mid-market newspapers (see Study#1).

- Of the three sub-types of bias studied in three of the four manuscripts, visibility bias – by itself – did not seem to play a very relevant role during the 2013 Austrian national election. Parties' advertising shares did not influence it, nor did it have any substantial impact on voters' party preferences or candidate perceptions (see Study#1 to Study#3). Visibility bias, however, should not be ignored when it comes to testing multiplying (i.e. interaction) effects on other types of bias (see Study#3).
- Particularly agenda bias should no longer be ignored as it exhibited some of the strongest effects out of all three sub-types of bias when it comes to predicting changes in party preferences or candidate trait perceptions (see Study#2 and Study#3).
- Media bias has been shown to have very different effects depending on characteristics of voters (e.g., level of political sophistication) as well as depending on the object of media bias (e.g., type of candidate trait) under investigation (see Study#2 and Study#3). In particular, when concerned about minimal effects, considering different types of bias, different media genres, different types of voters and different objects of media bias effects might hold promise (see Study#1 to Study#4).
- There is a political imbalance in perceived media bias, meaning that it is strongly driven by voters with right-wing populist preferences. However, this negative perception of media is not shared equally over all media genres. Particularly, tabloid media seem to be perceived more positively by right-wing populist voters than by any other group of voters and may therefore be key to regaining their trust in mainstream media (see Study#4).

Summary and conclusions of Study#1

Study#1 (Eberl et al., forthcoming-b) deals with sources of media bias and investigates one particular dimension of political parallelism, namely organizational and financial ties between media and politics (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). This is the first study to systematically look at the relationship between party advertising shares as a source of different types of media bias (see **Research Question 1**). It did so by using manual content analysis data from party newspaper advertisements, party press releases as well as political media coverage during the Austrian national election campaign of 2013. Analyses were done both on a mid-term (election campaign) and a short-term (daily) level. Furthermore, differences between media genres were of particular interest.

In general, the findings do not support the notion that party advertising shares are used to systematically influence media bias in political news reporting (Kossdorff and Sickinger, 1996; Sickinger, 2009). This also goes against findings from studies analyzing the effects of corporate advertising of media content (e.g., Soley and Craig, 1992; Hagen et al. 2014). Yet, there are some noteworthy media genres differences that are in line with expectations (e.g., Kolb and Woelke, 2010; Reinmann and Kreibe, 2012). First, there is at least weak evidence for a small effect of party advertising on media bias for tabloids; results are strongest for tonality bias. Second, there is some evidence that in quality media ad placement on a specific day even tends to lead to a more negative evaluation of that party on the next day. Overall, however, media bias cannot be sufficiently explained by party ad placement in newspapers (see **Research Question 1**).

In sum, this study investigated the relationship between party newspaper advertising and media bias based on theoretical conjectures from political parallelism and corporate advertising literature. While it found differences between media genres and between sub-types of media bias, there was not enough evidence to assume systematic influence of political actors on news production through the means of advertiser pressure (e.g., Hays and Reisner, 1991). However, non-findings may be related to the fact that elections are a period with heightened public awareness for the relationship between politics and media. During such periods, media may go to great lengths to not be perceived as biased (Lagetar and Mühlbauer, 2012). When further studying the relationship between party newspaper advertisements and media bias and on the basis of this study's findings it is therefore recommended that researchers (1) always include all three sub-types of media bias as effects may be stronger for some than for others, (2) particularly differentiate between different media genres and (3) do test for alternative mechanisms at play (e.g., short-term/long-term).

Summary and conclusions of Study#2

Study#2 (Eberl et al., forthcoming-a) deals with effects of media bias and therefore investigates another dimension of political parallelism more thoroughly, namely media content and its effects. This is the first study to systematically look at the particular effects of different types of media bias (visibility bias, tonality bias and agenda bias) on party preferences of different sub-groups of voters and presented a comprehensive methodology to

do so (see **Research Question 2**). In particular, it did so by using survey data from an online panel as well as manual content analysis data from political media coverage and party press releases during the last six weeks of the Austrian national election campaign of 2013. Importantly, all analyses include a pre-election measurement of the dependent variable as well as a suite of control variables, turning it into a very conservative model of party preferences, going beyond many media effects studies.

In general, this study has found strong evidence of tonality bias and agenda bias effects on voters. In contrast, the visibility of parties seems to be of little relevance. Considering the moderating factors of media bias, respondents who were less politically sophisticated as well as non-partisans exhibited larger effects of tonality bias, therefore confirming earlier theories and findings (Fournier et al., 2004; Hillygus and Jackman, 2003; Luskin, 1990). Of a more surprising note, even partisans who have already strongly formed and more resistant political attitudes (see Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; McLeod et al., 2009; Valkenburg and Peter, 2013; Zaller, 1992) are not exempt from the effects of agenda bias, reaffirming their partisan identity (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995).

In sum, this study investigated the effects of three sub-types of media bias on different groups of voters' party preferences based on theoretical conjectures from media bias and media effects literature. Similar to previous studies, it found no strong indication of visibility bias (see Brandenburg 2005). Effects of tonality bias as well as agenda bias, however, were non-negligible considering particular groups of voters. In fact, agenda bias might be even more relevant than tonality bias. When further studying media bias effects on political attitudes and behavior and on the basis of this study's findings it is therefore recommended that researchers (1) need to include agenda bias as a key form of media bias in future studies, even if this bias is often difficult to operationalize (Hopmann et al., 2011) and (2) should bear in mind that different types of bias will affect different sub-groups of voters differently, which (3) is an important avenue when paired with a non-ipsative measure of political preferences to try to counter the research field's tendency for minimal and non-significant results (Bennett and Iyengar, 2008; Holbert et al., 2010).

Summary and conclusions of Study#3

Study#3 (Eberl et al., 2017) follows up on Study#2 and deals with the effects of the different sub-types of media bias on candidate trait perceptions (see **Research Question 2**). In doing so, it is the first study to systematically examine the effects of the three types of bias on voters' candidate perceptions. It particularly looks at how different types of media bias may interact as well as how the object of media bias effects, namely the type of candidate trait (i.e. political and non-political traits) may moderate results. It did so by using survey data from a three-wave online panel as well as manual content analysis data from party press releases as well as candidate-specific political media coverage during the last six weeks of the Austrian national election campaign of 2013. Analyses were set up to measure small changes in voters' perceptions of political and non-political traits of three leading candidates over two very short periods of time and included strong controls for prior influences on candidate perceptions, selective media exposure as well as for candidate-specific differences.

In general, this study found strong evidence of tonality bias and agenda bias effects on voters' perceptions of political candidate traits as well as their overall image. Non-political candidate traits were not affected by any of the three types of media bias. In line with attribute agenda-setting theory (Balmas and Sheaffer, 2010; Kioussis et al., 1999) visibility bias, however, moderated the effects of tonality bias concerning competence perceptions, namely multiplying them. Similarly, when tonality bias is negative, more visibility somewhat worsens the impact of media coverage for that candidate. No such dynamic was found with a positive tonality bias, which is in line with past studies showing that bad candidate impressions in media coverage will affect voters more than good ones (Wu and Coleman, 2014).

In sum, this study investigated the effects of three sub-types of media bias on voters' perception of political as well as non-political candidate traits based on theoretical conjectures from media bias, media effects and personalization literature. Core findings from Study#1 could be reproduced using candidate-specific media coverage and political attitudes. They were expanded with findings concerning the relationship between types of bias as well as the differentiation between two types of candidate traits. When further studying media bias effects on perceptions of political candidates and on the basis of this study's findings it is therefore recommended that researchers (1) acknowledge all three types of media bias in political news coverage, (2) consider that particularly visibility bias may only have indirect effects on political perceptions and behavior (i.e. in interaction with other types of bias) and

(3) conceive of candidate traits as multidimensional as this study suggests that it is likely that media coverage influences political dimensions more than non-political traits (see also Druckman et al., 2004).

Summary and conclusions of Study#4

Study#4 (Eberl, unpublished) deals with a third dimension of political parallelism, namely the partisanship of media audiences with respect to media perceptions (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). This is the first study to systematically investigate political preferences as sources of perceived media bias on three different levels of analysis (see **Research Question 3**). In particular, it did so by using data from an online survey during a non-election period in Austria in 2015. Analyses were done on the level of perceived media system bias, perceived media outlet bias as well as perceived beneficiaries of that media outlet bias.

In general, this study found that neither leftist nor conservative but particularly extreme-right voters rather perceive the media system to be biased. In line with an assessment by Reinemann and Fawzi (2016), the issue of perceived media system bias is therefore strongly politically imbalanced and mainly concerns a very specific sub-group of voters. On the level of individual media outlets, a partisanship of audiences is reflected, as there are strong differences concerning the relationship of political preferences and perceived media outlet bias, which one would expect based on outlets' political leaning or media genre. In fact, particularly tabloid outlets seem to be less of a target of right-wing voters' negative media perceptions. Furthermore, results confirmed that citizens will rather perceive media to be biased against than in favor of their own political views, that this mechanism seems independent of actual media content and that it thus appears to be largely based on in-group cues and pre-existing expectations about each outlet (e.g., Vallone et al., 1985; Hansen and Kim, 2011).

In sum, this study investigated the relationship between political preferences and perceived media bias based on theoretical conjectures from media perceptions literature. It unveiled three different mechanisms on three levels of perceived media bias. First, media system bias is strongly related to right-wing ideology and party preferences. Second, right-leaners seem to be less skeptical of tabloids and differences in the perceptions of different media outlets do exist and reflect expected leanings of media content. Third, whom voters perceive to benefit of outlet bias is strongly related to out-group derogation. When further

studying media bias perceptions and on the basis of this study's findings it is therefore recommended that researchers (1) be aware of these different levels of analysis and of how they may influence findings and (2) should invest in examining the causal mechanism between political preferences and perceived media bias in more detail and with more diverse measures for each level of analysis.

Overall contribution in reference to the principal research question

What can these separate pieces of results tell us about the overall research question: "What are the sources, effects and perceptions of different types of media bias in political news coverage?" And how will they help us to lead are more fact-based public debate about media bias in upcoming political disagreements in Austria and beyond?

First, having found that – counter to popular belief in Austria (Dossier, 2015; DiePresse.com, 2015; DerStandard.at, 2016; Kossdorff and Sickinger, 1996; Sickinger, 2009) – political parties do not seem to be able to substantially influence media bias in political news coverage during election campaigns clarifies a somewhat heated public debate in this regard in Austria (see Study#1). While findings do not rule out such a relationship completely and disclose worrisome patterns in regard to tabloid outlets, public distrust in the use of newspaper advertisements as campaign communication seems exaggerated. Should the goal of influencing media content actually have been a driving force behind large amounts of parties' ad investments during the 2013 Austrian election, then it would be best for political leaders to rethink future expenditures in this regard. However, Hallin and Mancini's (2004) understanding that media bias in political news coverage may be the result of a more complex intertwining of different dimensions of political parallelism that is of a more long-term nature seems more convincing. Moreover, findings also suggest that, although news coverage may be politically imbalanced, causes of such political imbalance may not necessarily have to be a deliberate distortion of the news, calling into question the usefulness of the term *media bias* for future research and public debate (see Hopmann et al., 2017). Finally, irrespective of political parties' actual advertiser pressure, the sheer amount of newspaper advertising and the resulting interdependency of media and politics in election times remain questionable. Particularly with regard to tabloid media, policy makers and concerned members of the public should beware of alternative mechanisms at work. In fact, recent allegations suggest that

tabloid-journalists may themselves be blackmailing advertisers and not the other way around (Faber-Wiener and Einwiller, 2016), falling back into unethical and old pre-war habits of Viennese “Revolver-Journalism” (Lasky, 2002: 374).

Second, having mapped out in a comprehensive way that political media bias differs from structural media bias, that it is a multidimensional concept and that particularly agenda bias can under specific circumstances be a fairly potent form of media bias compared to tonality bias or visibility bias, provides a broad overview of the nature of media bias and when and where to expect its effects (see Study#1 to Study#3). For political actors, findings advise that besides salience and tone, focusing on their respective policy agenda when communicating through mass media – although somewhat self-evident – is of particular importance, especially when it comes to questions of mobilizing their partisans and more politically sophisticated voters, or improving their perceived aptitude for political offices. Results even suggest that political actors may selectively focus on pushing for more favorable coverage concerning different aspects of news coverage (i.e. tone/agenda congruence) depending on their target groups’ level of political sophistication in order to increase electoral support. Similarly, for journalists trying to keep their campaign coverage balanced, findings suggest that they should pay particular attention to the issues they cover parties and candidates on. However, it is only fair to note that having found no mentionable visibility bias in Austrian newspapers means that these outlets tend to incorporate relatively high and laudable standards of journalistic objectivity concerning the visibility of political actors, comparable to normative benchmarks such as reflexive diversity (see van der Wurff and van Cuilenburg, 2001) and a regulative approach to political balance (see Hoppman et al., 2017).

Third, this dissertation examined the nature of one rather different type of media bias, namely *perceived* media bias. It provided the somewhat disconcerting evidence that perceived bias is strongly driven by political preferences and particularly extreme-right voters, which is a group of voters that has been increasing in many European countries over the last years. On the upside, this suggests that media content itself may have little to do with these voters’ media perceptions and journalists should not be too strongly concerned with any alleged deterioration of their practices. In fact, found differences in perceptions suggest that media in Austria are neither all “liberal” nor all “mainstream”. Still, these voters’ distrust in the media system risks to disenfranchise them on the long run (see Tsfaty and Cohen, 2005) and what starts with voters from the extreme-right can expand to all voters, once the discourse about

biased media has been normalized. In order to counteract the respective voters' discontentment with media coverage, particularly academia, politics as well as the general public should call out public officials spreading said generalized allegations about media slant. Finally, journalists – both broadsheet and tabloid – should try to be more transparent about their journalistic practices and decisions to offer skeptics the possibility to reassess their attitudes (see Wegner, 2016).

2. Limitations and future research

In this final section, some of the limitations of the present dissertation are addressed and an outline of paths, which future research in this field could explore is given. One might ask whether or not this dissertation has sufficiently addressed and taken into account all relevant aspects concerning the sources and effects of media bias. The short and obvious answer is “no”. The studies compiled here have only touched parts of the issue. Further research may thus reanalyze and extend the research questions and hypotheses presented here (see Table 2).

On a more general note, a main venue for future research should be a focus on non-election periods (see Green-Pedersen et al., forthcoming; Van Aelst and de Swert, 2009; Walgrave and Van Aelst, 2006). First, present findings indicated that visibility patterns largely follow patterns of party size and relevance, hence that there was little outlet-specific variation. However, while the visibility of parties may not be that relevant in the short period of the election campaign itself, its potential long-term effects in terms of the production and reproduction of political legitimacy should not be underestimated (Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993). This, however, has less to do with question of political media bias rather than structural bias. Second, campaign periods are a time of heightened public awareness (i.e. media, politics and voters) for media bias. One might also expect any relationship between party advertising and media coverage could be stronger in non-campaign periods, since there would be less public attention for any such ties between media and politics.

Another important venue has to be the expansion of media bias research to online news and social media. Although print media are still by and large the primary source of political information in Austria (see Table 3), this fact may change in the near future. And although

some newspapers share the editorial staff for online and print reporting, there are slight differences in political news coverage between online outlets and their traditional counterparts (see Jacobi et al., 2016). Moreover, social media are still pretty much a black box, when it comes to media bias research both theoretically and empirically (see Bakshy et al., 2015). How can we accurately measure with what content voters are confronted in their personalized newsfeeds? And what part of the news production cycle is actually biased: the news itself, the algorithm that filters the news or ones social (media) environment?

A particular strength of this thesis was that it built on particularly thorough research designs regarding the sources and effects of bias during two small periods of analysis (2013 and 2015) in one single country, however, naturally raising the question of the comparative applicability of the present findings. Of course, most of the present findings are likely to apply across a variety of contexts. For example, the methodological instructions for measuring different types of bias or the theoretical claims concerning moderating factors to media bias effects are not specific to the Austrian case. Hence, similar patterns are expected to hold elsewhere, irrespective of the specific media system and media-citizen relationship in each country. However, testing this claim in countries with stronger or weaker political parallelism is up to future research.

Finally, there are many other possible sources of media bias still open for investigation. There is also not enough research on the relationship between objective and perceived media bias (e.g., Boomgaarden and Semetko, 2012) and we still know little about long-term or indirect effects of these three types of media bias (e.g., Hopmann et al., 2010) or what the actual downstream effects of media bias on vote choice are, based on changes in party preferences or candidate perceptions (e.g., Takens et al., 2015).

To conclude, future research in political communication should bring about a fruitful marriage of theory and methodological progress to eventually uncover even more of the true sources, nature and impact of media bias.

X. References

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Abstract / Zusammenfassung

Abstract

This cumulative dissertation investigates sources, effects and perceptions of media bias in political news coverage. In particular, this research focuses on (1.) the relationship between party advertising and media bias, (2.) the effects of media bias on voters' party preferences and (3.) on voters' perceptions of candidate traits as well as (4.) the relationship between party preferences and voters' perceptions of media bias.

Study#1 finds no strong evidence for party newspaper ads' influencing media coverage, there are, however, noteworthy media genres differences. Study#2 and Study#3 find strong evidence for diverse effects of three types of media bias (visibility bias, tonality bias and agenda bias). While tonality bias and agenda bias have direct effects on party preferences and candidate trait perceptions, visibility bias is mainly moderating the effects of tonality bias. Effects of media bias differ between groups of voters and types of candidate traits. Study#4 suggests that perceptions of media bias are independent of actual news content, politically imbalanced and strongly driven by extreme right voters.

Overall, the results of these studies have implications for our understanding of media bias, its sources, impact and perceptions. Finally, the discussion of the findings provides practical implications for journalism and politics.

Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende kumulative Dissertation untersucht Ursprung, Effekten und Wahrnehmung von Medien-Bias in politischer Berichterstattung. Der Fokus liegt dabei (1.) auf dem Zusammenhang zwischen politischen Inseraten und Medieninhalten, (2.) dem Effekt von Medien-Bias auf Parteipräferenzen und (3.) Kandidatenwahrnehmungen und (4.) dem Zusammenhang zwischen politischen Präferenzen und subjektiven Medien-Bias.

Studie#1 findet keinen Zusammenhang zwischen Parteiinseraten und Medieninhalten, allerdings gibt es auffallende Unterschiede zwischen Mediengenres. Studie#2 und Studie#3 zeigen umfangreiche Effekte von drei Typen von Medien-Bias (Sichtbarkeits-, Tonalitäts- und Agenda-Bias) auf. Während Tonalitäts- und Agenda-Bias direkte Effekte auf

Parteipräferenzen und Kandidatenwahrnehmungen haben, ist Sichtbarkeits-Bias in erster Linie ein Moderator von Tonalitäts-Bias. Effekte von Medien-Bias unterscheiden sich zudem zwischen verschiedenen Wählergruppen und Typen von Kandidateneigenschaften. Studie#4 legt nahe, dass subjektiver Medien-Bias unabhängig von eigentlichen Medieninhalten, politisch unausgeglichen und vor allem bei rechts-außen WählerInnen ausgeprägt ist.

Zusammenfassend tragen die Ergebnisse zum Verständnis von Ursprung, Effekt und Wahrnehmung von Medien-Bias bei. Zudem werden praktische Schlussfolgerungen der Ergebnisse für Journalismus und Politik diskutiert.