

## Chapter 11

### Cares Less? Cynical Media, Cynical Public?

Much concern about the role of the news media in society has been generated by the long-term slide in public confidence in the core institutions of representative democracy including parliaments, the legal system and parties. Many accounts exaggerate the depth and breadth of the problem, there is little evidence of a widespread 'crisis of democracy'. Yet many post-industrial societies have experienced a growth in the number of 'critical citizens'. Public faith in democracy as an ideal form of government remains widespread, but at the same time citizens have become increasingly dissatisfied with the performance of representative institutions<sup>1</sup>. This phenomenon may be caused by many factors, including the failure of government performance set against expectations, the growth of new cultural values challenging traditional forms of authority, and problems of institutional effectiveness<sup>2</sup>. Recently, as discussed in Chapter 1, a wide range of journalists and scholars in the United States have blamed the news media for growing public cynicism, while in Europe many believe that the development of professional political marketing by parties has also contributed towards public mistrust. Perhaps an endless diet of stories about government corruption and public sector incompetence, coupled with party spin-doctors and glossy television marketing in election campaigns, has eroded public faith in the political process.

We can identify two claims in the videomalaise thesis. The weaker version holds that negative news erodes support for specific leaders or policies, for instance that critical coverage reduces President Clinton's popularity or evaluations of his administration. This version seems plausible; in chapter 9 we have already established that press coverage of the European Union displayed a systematic bias, providing a steady diet of negative news. Monthly trends in news coverage were significantly related to levels of public support towards the euro. But does negative news have more profound consequences, for example fuelling deeper disenchantment with the European community? The stronger version holds that a systematic pattern of political reporting, based on deep-rooted news values, undermines confidence in the political system. This chapter aims to examine the systematic evidence for these stronger claims.

### The Conceptual Framework and Measures

In analyzing the effects of the mass media, we need to distinguish between television and newspapers. Most concern about videomalaise has centered on television; for example, in the United States, as mentioned earlier, Robinson concluded that common themes used to portray public affairs on TV news were responsible for political cynicism among the public in the aftermath of Watergate<sup>3</sup>. Yet Miller et al. also found a similar relationship for newspaper readership<sup>4</sup>. In Europe, as discussed earlier, considerable concern has also focused on the political communication techniques used by parties and the decline of direct voter-party linkages. Political

communications are therefore broadly conceived in this study to examine the effects of messages emanating from both parties and the news media during campaigns.

Evidence is drawn from the 1989 and 1994 European Election surveys, the 1996 Eurobarometer, and the 1997 British Election campaign panel study (BES). Attention to campaign coverage in newspapers, TV and radio news, and party communications in the 1994 European elections was measured as follows:

*"At the European elections, we have just had, the parties and candidates campaigned for votes. Did their campaign come to your attention in any of the following ways?*

- ?? Party worker called at your home to ask for votes.*
- ?? Election leaflets put in your letterbox or given to you in the street or in shopping centers, etc.*
- ?? Advertising on behalf of the candidates or parties.*
- ?? Coverage of the campaign in newspapers.*
- ?? Coverage of the campaign on TV and radio.*
- ?? Family or friends or acquaintances discussing the European election."*

Since there was strong association between those who used information from canvassing by party workers, campaign leaflets, and party advertising, these were collapsed into a single scale of party communication activity<sup>5</sup>. The spring 1996 Eurobarometer was also used, both to replicate and confirm the results, and because this survey also measured Internet use. The analyze the effects of the news media on political support regression models were used, controlling for the usual structural and attitudinal variables already discussed in previous chapters, as well as national dummies representing societal level variations<sup>6</sup>.

We need to clarify the central concepts used as the dependent variables. Studies commonly refer to 'political trust' as if it is all of one piece, so that standard measures such as how far Americans trust public officials, provide insights into a range of attitudes towards the political system. But, as argued elsewhere, there is convincing evidence that the public often distinguishes between different levels or objects of support<sup>7</sup>. People may well prove critical of particular political leaders, like Bill Clinton, without necessarily undermining confidence in the institution of the presidency. Or they may become disenchanted with government performance, without losing faith in democratic ideals. We therefore need to disentangle public attitudes towards these different components of the political system.

[Figure 11.1 about here]

Expanding upon the classic Eastonian framework, we can distinguish theoretically between support for the political community, support for the regime (including regime principles, performance, and institutions), and support for political actors (see Figure 11.1). This framework can be conceptualized as ranging from the most diffuse

support down through successive levels to the most concrete and specific. Widespread erosion of identification with the community, such as challenges from break-away ethno-nationalist movements, or deep-rooted conflict over the core principles of the regime, are particularly serious developments which can undermine the 'glue' binding the polity together. On the other hand, short-term fluctuations in evaluations of government performance, institutions, and leaders represent a routine part of the democratic process. To see whether this conceptual framework was reflected in political attitudes, principle component factor analysis was employed to examine the intercorrelations between survey items in the 1994 European Election study, discussed below, and the results in Table 11.1 served to confirm these theoretical distinctions.

[Table 11.1]

### **National Trust**

In the conceptual framework used in this chapter the most diffuse level of support concerns identification with the political community, meaning a general willingness for citizens to cooperate together politically. The boundaries are usually conceived in terms of the nation-state, but community can be defined at supranational level, in terms of a sense of European identification, or at sub-national level, such as in terms of Basque or Scottish identities. If there is a general sense of community within the European Union then we would expect that European citizens would show considerable trust towards people in other member states, so that Germans would trust the Greeks, British and Italians, and so on, more than they would trust nationals in countries outside the Community, such as the Americans, Japanese and Russians. News coverage can be expected to play a major role in how much the public believes that they can trust people from other countries, given the role of world news transmitting images of other societies<sup>8</sup>.

Trust in people in fifteen nations was compared in the 1994 European Election Study and factor analysis examined the intercorrelations underlying these attitudes (see Table 11.1). Three dimensions clearly emerged from the analysis: trust in Northern Europeans (citizens of Luxembourg, Denmark, Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and France), trust in Southern Europeans (Spain, Portugal, Greece, Italy and this factor also loaded on France), and trust in nationals in the larger G8 world powers (Japan, Russia, America, Germany and Britain). Most strikingly, after the end of the Cold War, trust in Russians and Americans falls into one category among Europeans, rather than being divided by east and west<sup>9</sup>.

[Table 11.2 about here]

The results of the regression models, in Table 11.2, show a fairly consistent pattern across all three dimensions. Those who proved more trusting included the well-educated and more affluent social strata, men, and younger generations, while political interest proved one of the strongest indicators of national trust. The country-level dummy variables often proved significant and in the expected direction,

that is to say, those who lived in Northern Europe proved more trusting of their neighbors, and less trusting of residents in the Mediterranean Europe. Lastly, after including these controls, attention to news on television and radio, and in the papers, failed to predict national trust, while people who relied upon party channels of communication proved slightly more trusting. At the most diffuse level, therefore, a sense of European community, indicated by trust in people from other member states, was not significantly related to use of the news media.

### **Support for Democratic Ideals**

Support for regime principles concerns approval of the core values of the political system. In democratic states this dimension can be termed the 'idealist' definition of democracy, derived from classical liberal theory. Surveys can tap agreement with specific democratic values, like freedom or equality<sup>10</sup>, or more commonly measure general agreement with the idea of democracy as the best form of government. Since no suitable items were included in the 1994 European Election Study we turned to the equivalent 1989 study where support was gauged by the single 4-point item tapping whether people were for or against democracy as an idea. If news coverage commonly has a negative bias towards the political process and public affairs, then according to the videomalaise thesis those most exposed to this steady barrage of messages should prove most cynical of democratic principles. The regression models in Table 11.3 confirmed that attention to the news media was significantly correlated with support for democracy, but, contrary to videomalaise claims, the direction proved positive: the more people watched and read, the more they had faith in democratic principles.

[Table 11.3 about here]

### **Evaluations of Regime Performance**

The third level concerns evaluations of regime performance, meaning support for how government works at the level of the European Union. We used the standard indicators, including the conventional measures of 'membership' and 'benefit' discussed earlier, as well as items on unification and the dissolution of the EU widely employed in previous research. In Eurobarometer surveys these items can be supplemented by 'satisfaction with the performance of democracy in the EU', that is, how well democracy is perceived to function in practice as opposed to the ideal<sup>11</sup>. The selected five items clustered together as a distinct dimension in the factor analysis presented in Table 11.1, confirming the conceptual distinction. Videomalaise theory suggests that systematic patterns of news coverage of EU performance, blaming Brussels bureaucrats and Strasbourg politicians for sluggish economic growth, the devaluation of the euro, or a lack of a defence policy in Kosovo, as documented in Chapter 9, should reinforce public disenchantment with Europe. The simple version of this thesis is that those most exposed to the news coverage should prove most critical of the performance of the European Union. Yet, in line with the previous model, in fact we find that attention to the news media during the

European campaign was positively associated with evaluations of EU performance: those who watched or read more about European affairs proved the most pro-European (see Table 11.3).

### **Confidence in Regime Institutions**

*Critical Citizens* found that support for democracy as an ideal proved widespread in established and newer democracies, but that many postindustrial societies have experienced a substantial erosion of public confidence in traditional political institutions, particularly in parliaments. As one of the primary linkage mechanisms between citizens and the state, this development has worrying implications. Previous studies, such as those by Lipset and Schneider, compared confidence in a range of public institutions like the legal system and police, the state bureaucracy, political parties, and the military<sup>12</sup>. This approach seeks to measure generalized support for political institutions -- such as approval of the role of the White House rather than support for President Clinton, -- although in practice the dividing line between the office and incumbents can often prove fuzzy. Institutional confidence was measured in the Eurobarometer by how far people felt that they could rely upon decisions made by European agencies, including the European parliament, the European Commission, the European Court, and the Council of Ministers. Similar questions tapped confidence in the decisions of national parliaments and national governments, and responses to these latter items were intercorrelated with satisfaction with the performance of democracy at national level.

[Table 11.4 and 11.5 about here]

We examined the relationship between use of the news media and these indicators of institutional confidence. Table 11.4 shows that regular users of television and radio news, newspapers and the Internet were more likely than average to feel they could rely upon European and national institutions. With national parliaments the 'confidence gap' was around 10 percentage points for the groups most and least attentive to TV news and newspapers. In all cases the zero-order correlations proved significant and positive. In regression models controlling for structural, attitudinal and national variables, the structural variables performed as expected (Table 11.5). Above average institutional confidence tended to be found among well-educated and more affluent men. The country-level variables reflected long-standing differences in attitudes towards government, for example the Italians displayed low trust in their own government. Lastly, and most importantly, use of television, radio news, newspapers and the Internet proved consistently significant, although weak, predictors of positive institutional confidence.

### **Support for Political Actors**

At the most specific level, we also compared support for specific political actors, measured by feelings towards national leaders like

the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the French President Francois Mitterand. Leadership popularity could be expected to ebb and flow over time; the regular mid-term 'blues' have been widely observed in many countries as part of the regular electoral cycle. Dissatisfaction with leaders and policies is part of run of the mill politics that may not necessarily lead to disenchantment with the political system as a whole. It is only if party and leadership support remains persistently low over successive elections, for example in predominant one-party systems like Japan and Mexico where the same party rules for decades irrespective of elections, that public discontent can be expected to erode confidence in the broader institutions of government, and to generate the feeling that the public is powerless to influence public affairs.

[Table 11.6 about here]

The regression model run to test the effects of media attention on the popularity of national political leaders showed that none of the coefficients proved significant (see Table 11.6). The most plausible reason is that the available measures of leadership popularity were probably too limited to capture this dimension satisfactorily, and other factors were probably influencing these evaluations, such as nationality and perceptions of government performance.

#### **The Classic 'Chicken and Egg' Issue of Causality**

On the basis of this evidence we can conclude that attention to television/radio news, newspapers and party communications was either positively related to indicators of political support (in terms of support for democratic ideals, evaluations of regime performance, and institutional confidence), or else proved neutral (in terms of national trust and political leaders). At no stage across this battery of indicators did we find any evidence that media attention was significantly associated with political cynicism. The pattern is consistent with other recent research based on survey data in the United States and other post-industrial societies, which has served to question the videomalaise thesis<sup>13</sup>.

Yet admittedly the correlations we have established fail to address, still less resolve, the direction of causality in this relationship. This is the classic 'chicken-and-egg' issue that plagues communications research based on cross-sectional surveys. Following this line of reasoning, it could be argued that we still have not disproved the videomalaise case. The argument so far has implicitly assumed that people who consume more news develop a more positive orientation towards the political system. But, equally plausibly, it could be that those who are politically trusting pay more attention to news about public affairs.

When examining the effects of major structural variables, like parental class or educational qualifications, we can safely assume that the factors furthest from the 'funnel of causality' are independent of the political attitudes and behaviour we are seeking to explain, like

voting choice. In the long-term the habitual use of the media can be expected to shape political views, for example over the years regular readership of the partisan press can be expected to reinforce party choices. But although people may still habitually read the same newspaper or watch the same program for years, where there is a more competitive market, media loyalties have probably become increasingly fickle in recent decades. We have already seen how until the 1980s there were usually only two or three television channels available in most post-industrial societies. Newspapers often had a restricted local or regional distribution network. Due to technological developments, including simultaneous printing in different cities, today in most countries people pick a paper based on front-page headlines at the newsstand, as well as can more easily surfing to another channel when the news is broadcast. In the short-term, therefore, in this situation we would expect to find increased reciprocity, or a virtuous circle, between media attention and political attitudes. People can more easily choose whether to read about politics or sports, celebrities or fashion.

We lack time-series data to explore this issue on a comparative basis but we can turn to the 1997 British Election Study (BES) campaign panel survey which monitored changes in media attention and political trust during the course of the 12-month 'long' campaign<sup>14</sup>. The same people in the panel was re-interviewed four times: first in May 1996 (Wave A), then again in early April 1997 (Wave B), in late April 1997 (Wave C), then once more immediately after polling day (May 1<sup>st</sup> 1997) (Wave D). The survey monitored trust in political actors, at the specific level, measured as a 15-point scale based on agreement with three statements about parties and politicians:

- ?? *"Generally speaking those we elect as MPs soon lose touch with people pretty quickly."*
- ?? *"Parties are only interested in people's votes, not in their opinions."*
- ?? *"It doesn't really matter which party is in power, in the end things go much the same."*

In Britain, the public's response to these measures remained fairly stable from the mid-seventies until the early 1990s, but from 1991-1996 the parties and politicians were increasingly seen as out of touch with the needs of the electorate<sup>15</sup>. How far does blame for this phenomenon lie in political coverage by the news media, for example the extensive press coverage of financial scandals and sexual shenanigans that afflicted the British government during these years?

[Table 11.7 about here]

Table 11.7 shows that political attitudes became more positive during the British campaign: as polling day approached more people came to believe that parties and politicians were responsive to public concerns. The change was similar for those most and least attentive to the news, which suggests that the cause lay in the event itself: as the election approached, more people came to believe that parties and politicians were concerned about listening to the public. Changes in political trust during the campaign were independent of news habits.

Nevertheless, just as in the Eurobarometer data, the attentive public had consistently higher than average levels of political trust.

Is there any evidence from the BES panel that the direction of causality flows from political trust to media use? After all, people who believe that the parties and politicians can be believed have greater incentive to pay attention to them in the news. Respondents can be divided into two groups based on their level of trust during the early stages of the official British general election campaign. We can then examine the change during the official campaign in the proportion of each group who said that they read a newspaper or watched television news 'the previous day'. We know from aggregate figures that news use declined during the campaign<sup>16</sup>, and indeed that is what we find (see Table 11.8).

[Table 11.8 about here]

Yet the overall results proved mixed. It is true that newspaper readership did decline slightly more during the campaign among those with lower trust. But with television the opposite pattern was evident: news viewership fell slightly more for people with greater trust. The most plausible interpretation to be drawn from these results is that the relationship between media use and trust in politicians is probably reciprocal, in a virtuous circle.

If we can extrapolate from these findings to the European context, it seems plausible to suggest that people who read or viewed more about the campaign for the European parliament developed a stronger understanding and support for the European Union. In contrast those who saw little European news were less likely to believe that they could trust bureaucrats and politicians in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg. This pattern is likely to be self-reinforcing: people who know least about the EU, and have minimal trust, will probably pay little attention to the news about European affairs, on rational grounds.

### **Conclusions: The Virtuous Circle**

Drawing together what we know from the previous literature suggested three conditions that guided this research design. First, we have argued elsewhere that the concept of 'political trust' is multidimensional, so that we examined the impact of the news media on diffuse and specific levels of support. Moreover, the effects of media exposure can be expected to vary by outlet, so that we distinguished between the attentive public for television, newspapers, and the Internet, as well as between mediated and direct forms of traditional party-voter linkages. Lastly, a rigorous test of the videomalaise theory requires both cross-sectional and panel data. The former allowed us to see whether media use was correlated with political support, in a

positive or negative direction, in many countries. Panel data, available for Britain, allowed us to disentangle the causal relationship underlying the association. One reason why previous studies have produced somewhat contradictory and inconclusive results may lie in the failure to distinguish these different conditions.

The weaker version of the videomalaise case suggests that where the public is attentive to news cues, extensive coverage by the media, in a consistent direction, has the power to shape evaluations of the performance of the government and its leaders. This version does seem plausible from the available evidence already reviewed in Chapter 9 but, on the other hand, this claim raises few serious concerns. So long as there are a plurality of viewpoints in the media and society then this process is just part of the regular checks and balances in democratic politics. The stronger version of the videomalaise thesis claims that the systematic pattern of news coverage is capable of generating widespread disillusionment with the political system. In this view, if journalists commonly highlight issues like the incompetence of the Commission, the waste and extravagance of the European Parliament, and the problems of European monetary union, then people exposed to this coverage might plausibly become more mistrustful of the European community, EU institutions, and principles of integration.

Yet the stronger videomalaise claims do not seem to be supported by the evidence presented in this chapter: the attentive public exposed to most news consistently displayed the most positive orientation towards the political system, at every level. We cannot establish the direction of causality on the basis of cross-sectional surveys, any more than many previous studies using this method. But the available panel survey data available in the 1997 British Election Study (BES) allows us to trace the process of attitudinal change over time. The most plausible conclusion from the panel analysis is that attention to campaign communications and political trust are mutually reinforcing, producing a virtuous cycle.

The evidence we consider leads us to conclude that the 'stimulus-response' model at the heart of videomalaise theory, in which negative news produces a cynical public, is too simplistic. Rather than passive recipients of media messages, due to selective perception readers and viewers are actively screening, filtering and surfing news that is consistent with their prior political preferences. As a result, during the campaign for the European Parliament people who proved most disenchanted with politics screened out coverage, whereas those who already sympathized with the European project and who trusted politics were more attentive to news about EU affairs. Experimental research, discussed elsewhere, reinforces this conclusion. In a rigorous test, negative news about politics during the 1997 British campaign was found to have no short-term impact, whereas positive news did significantly boost party support<sup>17</sup>.

Applying this argument more broadly, theories of selective perception are hardly new, indeed they reflect the traditional view of political communications. But perhaps today they are more relevant than ever before. As recently as the 1960s and 1970s most people in most countries could get most of their news from one or two national

television stations, and from one or two newspapers. We have already established that in contrast post-modern communications are characterized by a rich proliferation of alternative news sources, formats and levels, with newspaper readership supplemented, not replaced, by an increasing range of television and radio stations, as well as the Internet. In competitive newspaper markets, traditional loyalties towards particular papers often appear to have declined. As a result consumers have more opportunities than ever before to find news sources most congruent with their prior interests and political predilections. The power of the news media to influence the public is therefore limited and counter-balanced by the growing power of media users to select their preferred information sources.

The cross-sectional and panel evidence we have presented therefore provides no convincing support for the stronger claims in the videomalaise case. At individual-level, users of the news media were no different, or on balance slightly more positive, in their attitudes towards the political system.

Of course it could be argued that focusing on users of the news media may still miss the mark since there could well be some diffuse effects from pervasive negative messages in the mass media that affect society as a whole. As George Gerbner argues, it is possible that the images produced by the mass media produce a 'mean world effect', in which the continuous stream of images from movies, television and the popular press convey a broad picture of corrupt public officials, a violent, crime-ridden and scary society, and a conflictual world<sup>18</sup>. If the long-term effects of the media on popular culture are pervasive, endemic and all-encompassing, then, like the air we breathe, everyone may become equally polluted, not just the news users.

This argument is considered in detail by considering trends in civic engagement in the United States in Chapter 13. Yet it is difficult to test these claims in a satisfactory manner. In the same way, if pornography or violent movies or tobacco advertising corrupt society as a whole, not just those who watch, then it is unclear how we can ever hope to refute these claims unless we can find some idyllic societies free of pornography, or violent movies or tobacco advertising. At this abstract level the logic of videomalaise theory, like Marxism or religion, becomes more a matter of faith than fact. While these claims may suit the arguments of those who favour banning pornography or violent movies or cigarette ads, this approach represents a profoundly illiberal philosophy. The more skeptical perspective would argue that if effects cannot be established at individual-level, it is incumbent upon proponents of the videomalaise thesis to demonstrate media influence at societal-level, if they can. And if the influence of the mass media on society is as diffuse as the air we breathe, so that the impact falls equally upon the attentive and inattentive, just like the rain which falls from heaven equally upon the just and unjust, then perhaps it would be more satisfactory to look at alternative and more plausible explanations for the phenomenon of the growth of critical citizens in post-industrial societies.

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (New York: Russell Sage Press, Fall 2000)

**Table 11.1: Dimensions of Political Support**

	<i>Political Community</i>			<i>Regime Performance</i>	<i>Regime Institutions</i>	
	<i>Trust Northern Europeans</i>	<i>Trust Southern Europeans</i>	<i>Trust G8</i>	<i>European Union</i>	<i>National Government</i>	<i>EU and National</i>
Trust Dutch	.823					
Trust Luxemburgers	.809					
Trust Belgians	.806					
Trust Danes	.801					
Trust British	.571		.415			
Trust Germans	.545					
Trust Greeks		.762				
Trust Portuguese		.736				
Trust Spaniards		.714				
Trust Italians		.462				
Trust French		.443				
Trust Japanese			.730			
Trust Americans			.617			
Trust Russians		.491	.506			
EU Dissolve				.738		
EU Member				.730		
EU Unify				.690		
EU Benefit				.662		
EU Demo				.457		.511
Rely Nat Demo						.798
Rely Nat Govnt						.678
Rely Nat Parl						.656
Rely Euro Parl						.
Rely Euro Council						.
Rely Commission						.
Rely Euro Court						.
French leader						
Spanish leader						
German leader						
British leader						
% of variance	23.8	6.6	3.9	5.3	4.5	1

**Note:** The coefficients are derived from factor analysis using principal component analysis with varimax rotation. Coefficients less than .40 are suppressed. See Appendix 11A for the exact wording of the items. In total the items explained 59.1% of the variance. European Election Study 1994 Eurobarometer 41.1

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (New York: Russell Sage Press, Fall 2000)

**Table 11.2: Predictors of National Trust**

<i>Trust in...</i>	<i>Northern Europeans</i>	<i>Sig</i>	<i>Southern Europeans</i>	<i>Sig</i>	<i>G8 Nationals</i>	<i>Sig</i>	<i>Other</i>
<b>STRUCTURAL</b>							
Education	.05	**	.02		.04	*	Age finished education
Gender	.05	**	.01		.03	*	Male (1)
Age	-.04	**	-.07	**	-.06	**	Age in years
Income	.11	**	.05	**	.10	**	Harmonized scale
<b>ATTITUDINAL</b>							
Political interest	.15	**	.11	**	.14	**	Interest scale
Left-Right Ideology	.01		-.04	*	.03	*	Scale: 1-10
<b>ATTENTION TO</b>							
TV/Radio News	-.02		-.01		.01		Yes (1)
Newspapers	.02		.02		.02		Yes (1)
Party Communications	.03	*	.04	*	.03	*	
<b>NATION</b>							
Belgium	.14	**	-.07	**	.07	**	
Denmark	.18	**	-.08	**	.16	**	
Germany	.13	**	-.10	**	.16	**	
Ireland	.01		-.13	**	.03		
UK	.02		-.09	**	.06	**	
Luxembourg	.08	**	-.02		.05	**	
Netherlands	.18	**	-.05	**	.14	**	
Italy	-.03		-.08	**	.09	**	
Portugal	-.01		-.01		.01		
Spain	-.01		-.02		.02		
Constant	12.4		9.5		8.8		
R2	.16		.05		.11		
N.							

**Note:** The figures represent OLS standardized regression coefficients (betas). Q2: "I would like to know about how much trust you have in people from various countries. For each please tell me whether you have a great deal of trust, some trust, not very much trust, or no trust at all?" France is excluded from the national list.

**Source:** European Election Study 1994 Eurobarometer 41.1

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (New York: Oxford University Press, Fall 2000)

**Table 11.3: Predictors of Support for Democratic Principles and the Performance of the EU**

	<i>Support for Democracy as an Ideal</i> (i)	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Support for EU Performance</i> (ii)
<b>STRUCTURAL</b>			
Education	.08	**	
Gender	.01		
Age	.05	**	
Income	.09	**	
<b>ATTITUDINAL</b>			
Political interest	-.01		
Left-Right Ideology	-.02		
<b>ATTENTION TO</b>			
<b>TV/Radio News</b>	.04	**	
<b>Newspapers</b>	.09	**	
<b>Party Communications</b>	.04	**	
<b>NATION</b>			
Belgium	-.12	**	
Denmark	-.02		
Germany	-.08	**	
Ireland	-.08	**	
Italy	-.08	**	
Luxembourg	.01		
Netherlands	-.05	**	
Portugal	.06	**	
Spain	-.08	**	
UK	-.03	*	
Constant	3.2		
R2	.08		
N.			

**Note:** The figures represent OLS standardized regression coefficients (betas). See Appendix for details. France is excluded from the dummy variables.

**Source:** (i) European Election Study 1989; (ii) European Election Study 1994 Eurobarometer.

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (N Press, Fall 2000)

**Table 11.4: Political Communications and Institutional Confidence**

<i>% 'Can Rely Upon...'</i>	<i>European Commission</i>	<i>European Parliament</i>	<i>Council of Ministers</i>	<i>National Government</i>
All	39	40	37	
TV News				
Never	32	32	29	
Sometimes	35	36	33	
Everyday	41	41	38	
Newspaper				
Never	35	36	33	
Sometimes	40	41	38	
Everyday	40	41	38	
Radio News				
Never	38	40	36	
Sometimes	38	38	35	
Everyday	41	41	38	
Online user				
No	39	40	36	
Yes	45	44	41	
Zero order correlation between media use and confidence scales (R)	.05**	.04**	.05**	.08

**Note:** Q: "Many important decisions are made by the European Union. They might be in the like yourself, or they might not. To what extent do you feel you can rely upon each of these institutions to make sure that the decisions taken by this institution is in the interest yourself? Can rely on it/ Cannot/ Don't Know." \*\* P.01

**Source:** Spring 1996 Eurobarometer 44.1bis. N. 65,178 Weighted EU15.

**Table 11.5: Predictors of Institutional Confidence**

<i>Can rely upon institutions of...</i>	<i>European Union</i>	<i>Sig</i>	<i>National Government</i>	<i>Sig</i>
<b>STRUCTURAL</b>				
Education	.05	**	.02	*
Gender	.05	**	.05	**
Age	-.01		.04	**
Income	.03	**	.02	*
<b>ATTITUDINAL</b>				
Political discuss	.04	**	.01	**
Left-Right Ideology	.04	**	.05	**
<b>ATTENTION TO</b>				
<b>TV News</b>	.04	**	.03	**
<b>Radio news</b>	.02	*	.02	**
<b>Newspapers</b>	.04	**	.03	**
<b>Internet</b>	.02	*	.02	*
<b>NATION</b>				
Austria	-.11	**	.01	
Belgium	-.02	*	-.03	**
Denmark	-.10	**	.03	**
Finland	-.10	**	-.01	
Germany	-.26	**	-.10	**
Greece	.01		.03	**
Ireland	.01		.03	**
Italy	-.05	**	-.10	**
Luxembourg	.01		.05	**
Netherlands	.01		.10	**
Portugal	-.07	**	.01	
Spain	.02	*	-.01	**
Sweden	-.15	**	-.04	**
UK	-.16	**	-.08	**
Constant	.49		.34	
R2	.09		.06	

**Note:** Q. "Many important decisions are made by the European Union. They might be in the interests of people like your self, or they might not. To what extent do you feel you can rely upon each of the following institutions to make sure that the decisions taken by this institution is in the interests of people like yourself? Can rely on it/ Cannot/ Don't Know." The figures represent OLS standardized regression coefficients (betas). France is excluded from the national dummies. \*\* P.01 See Appendix 11A for measures.

**Source:** Spring 1996 Eurobarometer 44.1bis. N. 65,178 Weighted EU15.

**Table 11.6: Predictors of Support for Political Leaders**

<i>Like...</i>	<i>Political Leadership Scale</i>	<i>Sig</i>
<b>STRUCTURAL</b>		
Education	.02	
Gender	.01	
Age	.11	**
Income	.04	*
<b>ATTITUDINAL</b>		
Political interest	.06	**
Left-Right Ideology	.06	**
<b>ATTENTION TO</b>		
TV/Radio News	-.01	
Newspapers	.03	
Party Communications	.01	
<b>NATION</b>		
Belgium	.03	*
Denmark	-.02	
Germany	.11	**
Ireland	.06	**
Italy	-.05	**
Luxembourg	.02	
Netherlands	.01	
Portugal	-.06	**
Spain	-.06	**
UK	-.05	**
Constant	-1.3	
R2	.06	

**Note:** The figures represent OLS standardized regression coefficients (betas). See Appendix 11A for scales.

**Source:** European Election Study 1994 Eurobarometer 41.1.

**Table 11.7: Changes in Political Trust by Media Attention**

Media Use/Attention	Political Trust			
	Wave A Spr 96	Wave B April 97	Wave D May 97	A:D Change
ALL	6.8	7.3	8.2	1.4
ATTENTION TO TV NEWS				
Attentive to political news	7.5	8.4	9.2	1.7
Not attentive	6.6	7.2	7.9	1.3
ATTENTION TO NEWS IN PAPER				
Attentive to political news	7.8	8.5	9.2	1.4
Not attentive	6.7	7.0	8.1	1.4

**Notes:** Cell entries are mean scale scores. The scale ranges from 1 to 15. Only respondents in all waves (ABCD) are included (N.1422). Questions on trust in politicians and parties were only asked of one-third of sample at Wave A.

**Source:** British Campaign Panel Survey 1997

**Table 11.8**

**Who Turned Off?**

Change in % who:-	Political Trust	
	Low	High
Watched TV news yesterday	-1	-7
Read newspaper yesterday	-7	-4
N	1135	285

**Note:** Only respondents in all waves (ABCD) are included (N.1422).

*Political Trust - High:* Respondents who scored 8 or more on the political trust scale in Wave B. *Political Trust - Low:* Respondents who scored 7 or less on the political trust scale in Wave B.

The change is from Wave B (early April) to Wave C (late April).

**Source:** British Campaign Panel Survey 1997.

**Figure 11.1: Conceptual Framework**

<i>Type of Political Communications Independent variables</i>		<i>Objects of Political Support Dependent Variables</i>
Attention to Television News		Political Community
Attention to Newspapers		Regimes Principles
Party Communications		Regime Performance
		Regime Institutions
		Political Actors

**Appendix 11A: Measuring Political Support in the EU**

Object	Indicators and Measures
Political Community: National Trust	<p><i>"How much do you trust [NATIONALITY]? Do you have a lot of trust, some trust, not very much trust, or no trust at all?"</i> [Italians, Germans, etc.]</p>
Regime Performance: EU and national governments	<p>Approval of the performance of the EU</p> <p><i>"Are you for or against efforts being made to unify Western Europe?"</i></p> <p><i>"Do you think your country's membership in the EU is a good thing or a bad thing?"</i></p> <p><i>"Would you say your country has benefited or not from being a member of the European Community?"</i></p> <p><i>"If you were told tomorrow that the European Community has been scrapped, would you feel very sorry about it, indifferent or relieved?"</i></p> <p><i>"How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in the EU?"</i></p>
Regime Institutions	<p>Confidence in institutions. <i>"To what extent do you feel you can rely upon [NAME OF INSTITUTION] to make sure that the decisions taken by this institution is in the interests of people like yourself?"</i></p> <p><i>European Institutions</i></p> <p>?? The European Commission</p> <p>?? The Council of Ministers</p> <p>?? The European parliament.</p> <hr/> <p><i>National Institutions</i></p> <p>?? National parliament</p> <p>?? The national government.</p> <p><i>"How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in your country?"</i></p>
Political Actors	<p>Popularity of political leaders: <i>"Here's a question about the British Prime Minister, John Major. Would you say you quite like him, or you don't particularly like him?"</i></p> <p>?? The British Prime Minister, John Major</p> <p>?? The Spanish Prime Minister, Felipe Gonzales</p> <p>?? The French President, Francois Mitterand</p> <p>?? The German Chancellor, Hermut Kohl</p>

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<sup>1</sup> See Pippa Norris. (1999) *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

<sup>2</sup> On government performance see Ian McAllister 'The Economic Performance of Governments' and also Arthur Miller and Ola Listhaug 'Political Performance and Institutional Trust.' Both in *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*, edited by Pippa Norris. Oxford University Press: Oxford. In the same source for the evidence on cultural change see Ronald Inglehart 'Postmodernization erodes respect for authority, but increases support for democracy'.

<sup>3</sup> Michael J. Robinson. 1974. 'The Impact of Televised Watergate Hearings.' *Journal of Communication*. 24(2): 17-30; Michael J. Robinson. 1975. 'American Political Legitimacy in an Era of Electronic Journalism: Reflections on the Evening News.' In *Television as a Social Force: New Approaches to TV Criticism*. Edited by Douglas Cater and R. Adler. New York: Praeger; Michael Robinson. 1976. 'Public Affairs Television and the Growth of Political Malaise: The Case of "the Selling of the President".' *American Political Science Review*. 70(3): 409-32.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Miller, Edie H. Goldenberg, and Lutz Erbring. 1979. 'Type-Set Politics: The Impact of Newspapers on Public Confidence.' *American Political Science Review*. 73: 67-84.

<sup>5</sup> The scale proved to be highly intercorrelated using Cronbach's Alpha. Equivalent, although not identical, media use measures were employed in the other surveys.

<sup>6</sup> In the regression models the country closest to the overall mean (France) was excluded.

<sup>7</sup> See Pippa Norris. 1999. 'Introduction: The Growth of Critical Citizens?' In *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*, ed. Pippa Norris. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

<sup>8</sup> There is a large literature on the concepts of nationalism and national identity. See, for example, B. Anderson. 1996. *Imagined Communities: reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso; Michael Billig. 1995. *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage; Ernest Gellner. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell. The most thorough empirical work on orientations within Europe from 1973-1990 can be found in Oskar Niedermayer and Richard Sinnott. 1995. *Public Opinion and Internationalized Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>9</sup> The factor analysis was replicated in the 1996 Eurobarometer survey and the broad pattern of national trust was repeated, confirming that this measures stable attitudes.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Dieter Fuchs. 1999. 'The Democratic Culture of Unified Germany.' In *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*, ed. Pippa Norris. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

<sup>11</sup> This item is open to alternative interpretations since it could measure both support for 'democracy' as a value (which might be expected to rise gradually over time), and also satisfaction with the incumbent regime (which might be expected to fluctuate over time). In this study we assume that this item taps public evaluation of how democracy works, as this item loaded with others measuring regime performance.

<sup>12</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset and William C. Schneider. 1983. *The Confidence Gap*. New York: Free Press.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Earl Bennett, Staci L. Rhine, Richard S. Flickinger and Linda L.M. Bennett. 1999. 'Videomalaise Revisited: Reconsidering the relation between the public's view of the media and trust in government.' *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 4(4):XXX-XXX. On the U.S. see also Pippa Norris. 1996. 'Does Television Erode Social Capital? A Reply to Putnam.' *P.S.: Political Science and Politics* XXIX(3). On Germany see Christina Holtz-Bacha. 1990. 'Videomalaise Revisited: Media Exposure and Political Alienation in West Germany.' *European Journal of Communication* 5:78-85. On Britain see Ken Newton. 1997. 'Politics and the News Media: Mobilisation or Videomalaise?' In *British Social Attitudes: the 14th Report, 1997/8*, eds. Roger Jowell, John Curtice, Alison Park, Katarina Thomson and Lindsay Brook. Aldershot: Ashgate. For a comparative study see Pippa Norris. 2000. 'Television's Contribution to Civic Malaise.' In *What's Troubling the Trilateral Democracies?* Edited by Susan J. Pharr and Robert D. Putnam. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

<sup>14</sup> Full details about the design and results of the BES campaign panel survey can be found in Pippa Norris, John Curtice, David Sanders, Margaret Scammell and Holli A. Semetko. 1999. *On Message: Communicating the Campaign*. London: Sage. It should be noted that these BES measures can also be termed 'external political efficacy', but that within the conceptual framework used in this chapter, for consistency, it seemed preferable to include them as trust in parties and politicians at the specific level.

<sup>15</sup> John Curtice and Roger Jowell. 1997. 'Trust in the Political System.' In *British Social Attitudes: the 14<sup>th</sup> report* edited by Roger Jowell et al. Aldershot, Ashgate.

<sup>16</sup> Pippa Norris et al. 1999. *On Message: Communicating the Campaign*. London: Sage.

<sup>17</sup> David Sanders and Pippa Norris. 1999. 'Does negative news matter? The Effects of television news on party images in the 1997 British general election.' In *British Elections and Parties Review, The 1997 General Election, Volume 8* edited by David Denver et al. London: Frank Cass.

Chapter from Pippa Norris "A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Societies." (NY: Cambridge University Press, Fall 2000)

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<sup>18</sup> George Gerbner. 1980. 'The Mainstreaming of America.' *Journal of Communication*, 30:10-29.