

HIS MASTER'S VOICE: YES OR NO?

A research report on dominating influences of mass media content in the Netherlands *)

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*Die herrschende Gedanken sind
die Gedanken der Herrschenden
Karl Marx*

1. Introduction

The authors of this paper firmly believe that the ultimate goal of sociologists should not be sociology (in terms of knowledge) but society. In our opinion sociologists must explain to people the society they live in in order to help them change it.

Most social scientists will agree with our judgement that in most societies there is no equal distribution of power and influence. In our complex neo-capitalistic societies it appears even more difficult to determine where the power to decide vital questions is concentrated. Our study addresses this very problem.

The possession of information is one of the instruments for the exercise of power including the means to reach, inform and instruct those who are expected to obey. It is of course not accidental that the first thing a new government, legal or illegal, does is to ascertain control of the broadcasting agencies. Thus by investigating dominating influences on the messages of the mass media, we are investigating patterns of power.

*) A different version of this paper was read at the VIIIth World Congress of Sociology, Research Committee on Mass Communication, August 19-24, 1974, Toronto, Canada.

A Dutch translation of the above article was published in the political journal *TE ELFDER URE*, 1976, vol.23, number 1. It was followed by a selection of the critical comments the article had received and completed with annotations and further explications (all in Dutch) from the side of the authors.

At the department of sociology at Groningen university, under the auspices of which this study was carried out, there has been some tradition of research on mass media in which the senior author participated. A brief review follows.

In his master's thesis DE GRAAF¹⁾ applied a number of aspects of the concept of 'objectivity' (neutrality, representativeness, etc.) to the contents of a sample of the Dutch daily newspapers. We compared the telex output of the leading Dutch press agency, the ANP²⁾, which serves all these papers, with the contents of these papers. He focused his interest on factual news: every telex item providing facts about the Tet-offensive in Vietnam was parsed into single sentences. Next he scored each of these sentences in a number of ways such as pro- or anti-American, degree of sensationalism, etc. Subsequently he analysed the reports in the sampled Dutch papers, again parsed into single sentences and in this way could establish patterns of selection by the editors. The most interesting finding was, that the Telegraaf, by far the largest Dutch daily, scored lowest on all but one of the six developed objectivity scales.

In 1969 MEYNEN⁴⁾ researched the effects of press concentration, when the NRC⁵⁾, by many in Holland considered a quality paper, and the above mentioned Telegraaf, which in this context might perhaps best be called a 'boulevard'-paper, decided on intensive technical and commercial co-operation. Apart from some small convergencies there was only one highly significant tendency: Meynen established that during the first year of concentration the NRC treated VIPS in a more Telegraaf-like manner.

In 1972 the present project started with the senior author as a project-leader. We will go into some detailed description of the development of the research process in the third section. First we will concentrate on some theoretical considerations.

2. The theory of the influence of the mass media

The ruling thoughts are the thoughts of the rulers; Marx argued and one

need not be an out and out Marxist to perceive the relevance of the quote addressing the question: How are opinions distributed in society? Or, to put it in another way: Has every opinion an equal chance to draw the attention of other members of society, independent of the social position of the persons who voice it? We shall try to answer these questions at least partially.

In modern societies the mass media are necessary instruments to voice opinions. Focusing our attention on the contents of the mass media, we have the chance to find some answers. First we have to deal with a somewhat more general question: Do mass media actually influence people in their opinions and beliefs?

On that question experts disagree greatly. Let us outline the for us most relevant classical and newly developed theories.

In 1960 KLAPPER⁷⁾ published his 'The Effects of Mass Communication' in which he gave an overview of the research done in this field. He states that communication research done so far strongly indicates that persuasive mass communication is in general more likely to reinforce the existing opinions of its audience than to change such opinions. Minor attitude changes appear to be more likely than conversion and a less likely effect than reinforcement is.

The lack of communication effects results from psychological processes such as selective exposure, selective perception and retention. Group norms are also inhibitors. Finally, opinion leaders influence people to a far greater extent than mass communications and their messages do. STAR and HUGHES, in contrast, showed that mass communication effects were delayed rather than immediate. An intensive mass media campaign to improve attitudes towards the United Nations bore no significant fruits before a number of weeks had passed.

Not until the sample was interviewed again, significant changes were established.

Having been exposed to the presentation, people turned to a set of opinion leaders for confirming evidence. Therefore, the attitude change was more the result of the interpersonal contact with these opinion leaders than of the direct influence of the media. This

mechanism has become known as the two-stage flow of communication¹⁰⁾.

The above examples are typical for those researchers who ascribe only a small or indirect influence to mass media in the field of changing opinions. Recently however, the voices of those who assume the mass media to have a very substantial impact - and a bad one - to boot, have gained greater prominence.

The latter theories are of a more macro-level, the former more individual-centered. On the one hand there are those theories which argue that the mass media just reflect the wishes, expectations and attitudes which already exist among the general public¹¹⁾. On the other hand, other authors state that the mass media actually must anticipate the desired changes in public opinion, because they are thought to influence, structure and channel the general view of the recipients. The members of society are not able to isolate themselves from the influence of mass communication: the wishes, desires and expectations of most members of society are virtually imposed on them¹²⁾.

ENZENSBERGER¹³⁾ who, as far as we know, introduced the term 'Bewusstseinsindustrie' - consciousness industry, stressed together with ADORNO¹⁴⁾ and HORKHEIMER¹⁵⁾, the mass character of the media: the large scale production of nonmaterial goods by the media. Mass production is the major aspect of mass society, which consists of a collection of isolated, alienated individuals, a prey to the industrial products and exhibiting mass behavior with all the traits of irrationality, stupid imitation and instinctive instead of rational actions. Assuming for the moment the mass media have influence, directly or indirectly, we then ask how and with what purpose the mass media are used. In this content the concept of 'manipulation' is critical. Here we follow GEISLER's¹⁶⁾ in his 'Massenmedien, Basiskommunikation und Demokratie'. Very diverse definitions exist. Thus PORTMANN¹⁷⁾, who in his 'neutral' definition provides such a broad meaning to the concept that even the pressure of socio-cultural norms on children and adolescents is included. In mass media research, however, manipulation often is conceived of as a consciously biased or even forged production of events, so that in this definition the concept especially

is an elaboration of the relation between sender, message and reality. In sociology yet another definition is used: contrary to power, which is exercised by commands, manipulation is carried on without commands. The manipulator decides but he takes care not to create resistance among those for whom his decisions are relevant, worse, manipulation includes mechanisms that work at a subconscious level. Consider PACKARD's¹⁸⁾ 'hidden persuaders'. And lastly there often is the aspect that the manipulated person is tempted by feelings, thoughts, actions, which are contrary to his true needs. As PLACK¹⁹⁾ states the phenomenon: Manipulation is the steering of people by means they are not conscious of, towards goals which are not theirs yet suggested that they are.²⁰⁾

In any good detective story the motive is of the highest importance. What can the motive be for the manipulative use of the mass media and to whom is it valid? According to Adorno and Horkheimer, mass culture has a real political implication: the consolidation of the social status quo through the stimulation of the consumer conformism²¹⁾ and the mass media play an important role in this process. But who will profit from this?

Adorno and Horkheimer again see mass culture as an appendage to the distribution of economic power. The mass media are that important because by their conformistic, stereotype mass entertainment they help to steer the people and thereby to stabilize the existing system with the big industries in power. In this context it is interesting to mention brief Adorno's ideas about the intellectual level of the media contents. He reminds us of the opinion of movie-makers, that the level of an eleven year old should be pursued²²⁾.

RIESMAN²³⁾ arrives at a somewhat different conclusion. In his vision the media are building up an image of pseudo-tolerance (a) to keep circulation high, (b) to avoid criticism from the side of influential groups, and (c) to prevent losses in heavy competition. This tolerance actually is caused by the large scale structure of the media business. It is more profitable not to increase competition too much. Riesman strongly argues against a conspiracy model, there is a pluralism of veto groups and that's why it is virtually possible, that by means of the media also an autonomous development of the personality is achieved. In fact, Riesman argues, the mass media give more attention

to, for instance, politics, than the general public desires, though the impact of these program is small in comparison with entertaining and advertising programs. With respect to a pluralism of voices, the American SCHATTSCHEIDER made the immortal remark, that in the pluralistic heaven the hymns are sung with a heavy upperclass accent....²⁴⁾

If one agrees with Riesman that we can distinguish three functions of the mass media: information, entertainment and advertising, it is clear that the latter oppose the enlightenment function of information and commentary programs rather than contribute to it.

HOLZER²⁵⁾ is of the opinion that in the end the real informative contributions hardly come to full fruition.

Besides the views of these authors, most of them known as 'critical', it is interesting to note, that also more 'positivistic' sociologists such as LAZARSFELD and MERTON²⁶⁾ have their doubts about the social functioning of mass media. The state: Since the mass media are supported by great business concerns geared to the current social and economic system, the media contribute to the maintenance of that system. These media do not only continue to affirm the status quo, but in the same measure, they fail to raise essential questions about the structure of society. Hence by leading toward conformism and by providing little basis for a critical appraisal of society, the commercially sponsored mass media indirectly but effectively restrain the cogent development of a genuine critical outlook²⁷⁾.

Klapper thinks, that the stimulation to adjustment of the recipient is restricted to the entertainment products and that the political reports and commentaries may act contrarily²⁸⁾.

We shall conclude this section with a GEISLER summary²⁹⁾:

1. In the mass media not all relevant social groups get the opportunity to voice their opinions but only a small clique. This may be the WRIGHT MILLS' power elite³⁰⁾ but also the ruling class in more Marxist terms, i.e. the big businessmen.
2. Though some authors assume a small or at best an indirect influence from the mass media, many others, especially those from the so-called Frankfurter group, are convinced that the mass media do have a real impact on the opinions and attitudes of the general public.
3. The goal of the people whose opinions are voiced with a disproportionate

tional magnitude is to maintain the status quo in the society in which they occupy the more favorable positions.

We realize that we omitted many interesting questions, for instance: What has this to do with democracy? For the moment we cannot go into this, but we refer to Geissler, Adorno, Habermas and Lasswell. ³¹⁾

3. The project

After extensive discussions within the research group, it was decided that answers would be sought to the following questions:

- a) to what extent is the content of the media in agreement/disagreement with the opinions and interests of the economic elite?
- b) if this agreement is found, are those who control the greater part of our society the same as those who control the media?
- c) what is the intellectual level of media content?

Subsequently we shall describe in how far these, still rather general questions, were reduced to increasingly specific ones, however, first we must answer the question: In The Netherlands, who are the most powerful?

3.1. The economic elite

In 1968 MERTENS, president of the national roman-catholic trade union the NKV ³²⁾ made a remark which almost caused a furore in the Netherlands. He stated that in this country power is in the hands of a relatively small number of people, say 200. Since then the "200 of Mertens" are a standard expression. Mertens himself mentioned only a few of his 200, leaving it's specification to more professional detectives (social scientists).

There had already been some publications on the distribution of power in the Netherlands. BARUCH ³³⁾ wrote about the international relations of the big enterprises with headquarters in the Netherlands. DE BOER ³⁴⁾ published about the 'commissaris' (member of the board) function and its interconnections among enterprises. VINKE ³⁵⁾ analysed the common characteristics of directors and commissioners and so contributed to

the knowledge of the proprietarial and deciding elite. BEISHUIZEN³⁶⁾ was the first to use a stock investor's handbook³⁷⁾ to provide a systematic view of the power distribution on the basis of these data, producing a list of 81 top officials with four or more decisive functions in commercial, industrial and financial circles.

In 1971 a prepublication appeared of the already notorious report of MOKKEN and STOKMAN³⁸⁾ called: Influence structures of political and economic elites^{*}). These authors do not limit themselves to the personalistic approach to the concept of power, where power is merely conceived as a personal attribute, but their approach includes the connections of all enterprises in which the person has a function.

The series of connections starting from one concern, carried by its individual top functionaries to other concerns in the economic system are of the greatest importance. In this way, similarly to DE BOER's results, MOKKEN and STOKMAN found a very important position of the large financial enterprises. Particularly the AMRO-bank³⁹⁾ appears to hold a very central position in the Dutch economy, followed by the ABN⁴⁰⁾ and the NMB⁴¹⁾. Besides these undertakings with clearly demarcated financial activities some 50 industrial enterprises were classified, the first five being Unilever, Philips, Shell, Akzo⁴²⁾ and Hoogovens.

In our project this list and also the list of the 50 top persons played an important role. The names and the professional backgrounds of these topfunctionaries as well as the names of the top enterprises are connected with the major part of the opinions we were able to find later on.

There was only one important exception: we included a number of opinions as voiced by the Groningen economist HARTOG⁴³⁾ who is considered by many to be the spokesman of big business in the Netherlands.

^{*}) Dutch title: Invloedstructuren van politieke en economische elites.

3.2. The opinions of the economic rulers

Having found a number of the members of the economic power elite our next problem was to register their opinions. We decided to start with the leading business journals as our main source and to analyze them during the period January 1970 till April 1973.

The following business magazines were chosen:

- a. De Werkgever (The Employer), which was then the official bi-weekly journal of the NCWV⁴⁴). (The Netherlands Christian Union of Employers). circulation was 7,300.
- b. De Nederlandse Onderneming (The Dutch Firm), which was the weekly journal of the VNO⁴⁵), the union of Dutch entrepreneurs, about 10,000 circulation.
- c. Het Financieel Dagblad (Financial Daily) an independent morning daily paper; circulation of about 20,200.

Another source of the opinions of the economic elite was the report 'Zo denkt de werkgever erover!' (The Employer's View) which deals with a survey among a sample of Dutch employers in 1969 by MAKROTEST⁴⁷), a wellknown marketing agency in the Netherlands.

From HARTOG's works we took his 1969 publication: Politieke politiek (political politics)⁴⁸). He chose this title to distinguish from economic politics, the latter field being his specialty. The booklet deals point by point with a large number of issues: left- and right-wing politics, neo-marxism, anarchism and student revolt, pacifism, pressure groups, meritocracy, consumer society.

Lastly we used interviews with a number of the leading commercial and industrial functionaries from the Mokken and Stokman list⁴⁹), as published in some popular political weeklies.

The next problem was, how to establish the opinions of the selected informants. We decided to screen the last issues of the sources for short, clear, explicit quotations by persons from the above mentioned lists. These quotations were to deal with social, economic or political

topics and every one should represent a clear ideological position.

After a very careful search we started with more than 1100 quotations which were recorded on files. After elimination of the replications and those which did not contain a clear position, about 900 quotations remained.

Naturally it was impossible to use these quotations without further advise to facilitate the comparisons which were to be made with the contents of the media, we decided to prepare an elaborate register of keywords. This register was produced in three phases to which three different persons contributed. The first person searched for the keywords he thought necessary to summarize the topic(s) of the quotation. The second replicated, independently, the first. The third analyst first made a list of all the keywords the other two had devised. Next he decided on the ultimate keywords each quotation was labelled with and the cross-references that would be included in the register. The register contained about 300 keywords and more than 350 cross-references were included.

After the keyword register had been produced and the quotations were thus grouped around these keywords, it was possible to check the quotations on internal consistency. If a keyword included quotations that were clearly contrary on some topic, the keyword and its quotations had to be removed, because they could not distinguish with regard to our problem. Strikingly, there was hardly any need for removal of quotations: the correspondence was overwhelming.

It would be helpful for the subsequent analysis to assess globally the content of the quotes. To provide an idea of the kind of keywords which were included we give a few examples. The keyword 'inflation' was labelled on 43 quotations and cross-references were made towards: price policy, wage policy, social-economic policy, expenditure cut. 'Governmental regulation' was another keyword referring to 41 quotations. Its cross-references were social-economic policy, wage policy, price policy, taxes, competition, collectivism, private versus public sector, government programs, protectionism, selective investment tax, conjunctural policy.

With a view to the later use in the analysis a survey of what was included in the whole of quotations would be very convenient. Therefore the researchers prepared summaries of the quotes for each keyword. These summaries represented the main themes of the pertinent quotes. A summary of the above mentioned keywords follows: 'Inflation' is problem number one. The government has to direct its attention mainly to this problem. The rise of wages and collective expenditures are the most important factors....the employees the most guilty....'Governmental regulation' in the form of preventive control (of fusion or closing of enterprises) is a violation of a just division of responsibilities. Of course: if the goal would be investment promotion or strenghtening of the national position in the competition....Government should not occupy the chair of the entrepreneur....The concern under guardianship of the government means the end of democracy....

Of course it is very hard to say much about the absolute value of this set of quotations. The way of collecting had of course many subjective components, which were perhaps only partly canceled by the independent treatment by each analyst. Fortunately, we could compare our result with that of somebody else. In an almost classical article BERNSTEIN⁵⁰ wrote about the political ideas of selected American business journals. He concluded that most of their opinions can be summarized in five propositions:

1. Government activity which is imposed by the sampled journals is labelled 'welfare socialism' and communism is regarded as the logical and probably inevitable outgrowth of socialism.
2. Excessive government spending and deficit financing undermine the integrity of the dollar, violate principles of sound business management and produce inflation. Government spending in excess of revenues is regarded as sapping the vitality of free enterprise.
3. The root cause of corruption is the extension of government spending and the expansion of government programs. Government is seen as standing somehow outside of, and opposed to, society. The governmental activities in the field of economic promotion and regulation are regarded as the source of widespread fraud and corruption in public life.

4. Government is inefficient and bureaucratic. The public servant is characterized as incompetent and lazy and as wasting the tax dollar. Government controls effecting economic mobilization are described as confusing and unfair.
5. Governmental regulation is bad but probably here to stay; there is a widespread fear of the alleged evil consequences of governmental control in economic affairs⁵¹⁾.

Bernstein himself recognizes within these propositions at least one basic contradiction:

On the one hand, government action which interferes with the harmonious natural economic order is deplored; but on the other hand, specific government actions which aid private business interests are welcomed. The general opposition to economic programs of the government does not prevent those journals from approving those public programs which benefit business interests. The dichotomy is expressed in two ways:

1. Governmental programs in support of prices are considered bad. Fair trade laws which permit the fixing of minimum resale prices are, however, good.
2. Government controls upset the natural economic laws of supply and demand but restrictive labor legislation or public promotion of business interests is justified in the terms of public interest⁵²⁾.

When we compared the Bernstein conclusion with our list of summaries we found that they were very much alike. Also, the interval inconsistencies were found in the Dutch sample. Hence, our findings replicated findings by another scientist, which greatly increases our confidence in their validity.

3.3. The interests of the economic elite

The next question we tried to answer in our project was that after the interests of the ruling economic circles. In our view, the opinions they voice are but one aspect, their real interests another. We spent much time searching for an explicit theory allowing to specific deduc-

tions open to empirical validation. Special attention was given to the authors of the critical school of sociology (Habermas, Adorno, Marcuse and others) but our success was limited their theories being too vague. One exception to this conclusion was mentioned before: the economic elite has an interest in the preservation of the status quo*

3.4. Yet another operationalization: readability

To assess the intellectual level of the contents of the media i.c. our sample of newspapers we decided to use the DOUMA⁵⁴⁾ version of the FLESCH⁵⁵⁾ Reading Ease Formula. The Douma adaptation for the Netherlands results in a scale with values starting with the 4th grade level (score 1) up to university level (score 7). As the reader will probably know, the Flesch formula is based on the number of syllables per word and the number of words per sentence within a certain text. For its validity and reliability we refer to the literature on this subject.

3.5. The chosen media population and subpopulations, the sampling

For reasons of convenience we restricted our sample to the 10.01.72 till 09.30.73 year's production of the 8 daily newspapers with national (rather than local) circulation in the Netherlands**. They are:

* Our earlier question stated before: "Are those who control the greater part of society the same as those who control the media?" we can as yet not answer. Though we recognize the importance we attempted to solve the content-analytic problem first.

** In par. 4.2. we give further information explaining type of paper and readership characteristics.

Het Algemeen Dagblad	circulation	304,000
NRC/Handelsbald		91,200
Het Parool		170,000
Telegraaf/Nieuws van den Dag		505,900
Trouw		106,200
De Tijd		65,000
De Volkskrant		228,500
De Waarheid		84,500

Additionally, we decided to further restrict our sample to opinion and editorial articles, only concerned with a number of social, economic and/or political subjects. Therefore articles on sport, the arts, entertainment, factual reporting and advertisements were not considered.

This sample, then, was used to answer our major questions concerning the determining sources of influence and the contents thereof. The readability test was applied to an even more restricted yet divergent sample, namely, the longest articles about domestic and foreign politics as well as sports which occurred in each newspaper during the specified period of time.

The sampling was done in two stages. First, using a computerized pseudo random number procedure, 480 daily publications were selected for each of the newspapers and the before mentioned period of time. Second, of each daily publication, all obvious opinion articles were included. The latter were defined as follows: articles and essays are self-contained structures of information, produced generally by either the newspaper or an independent agent or agency. Opinion (rather than news) articles are either editorials, other kinds of commentaries, or articles which provide background information.

3.6. The schedules for the content analysis

As the sampling was carried out on two stages, two coding schemes for the final analysis were necessary: one for the level of the issue, the other for each separate article.

The schedule for the daily issue included among others the following variables: week-day, month, month-day, total number of pages, advertising space, total space pictures, total space sports, economics, finance and social-economic policy, and the three readability scores mentioned before.

The coding scheme for the separate articles included such variables as: length of the article, presence of pictures, width of headline, signed/unsigned, theme of the article according to a list of 19 topics, page number, and the possibility to score the correspondence of the contents of the article with up to 12 of the quotations from the provided book with the vast number of quotations that were collected in the prior phase. The analyst did so by summarizing the contents of the article by one or more of the keywords of the register and in this way traced the relevant quotes.

One of the following scores was to be given to the article concerned with the quotation traced via the keywordregister: distinctively opposite (1), with opposite tendency (2), unclear, irrelevant (3), corresponding in tendency (4), distinctively corresponding (5).

3.7. Some remarks on the process of analysis

After intensive instruction the content analysis was executed by a group of 17 students, who participated in parts of the project. Because of the diverse decision moments in the process where subjective factors might play an important role, the authors of this paper carefully checked the validity and reliability of this part of the content analysis. This check analysis was performed independent of the original analysis.

- a) The check-sample. Because of a suspected relationship between the lapse of the time during which the analysts performed the analysed and their reliability, the checksample was stratified with regard to this variable: of each analyst four analyzed newspaper issues were included into the checksample selected in such manner that the timelapse was neatly split into three equal intervals. In this way

we got a checksample of 87 issues containing in total 250 analyzed 'opinion' articles.

- b) This checksample of issues was, completely and independently re-analyzed by a check-analyst. Therefore, the check analyst made his own selections of 'opinion' articles. Then, the correspondence in the selections between the original phase and the check phase was established overall and per analyst. Based on the checksample, the overall correspondence was 77% to begin with and the correspondence per analyst ranged from 50 to 100%. Three of the 16 analysts had a correspondence score lower than 60%, the other 13 had much higher scores.
- c) As mentioned above, the analyst had to compare the statements expressed in the sampled articles with those in the source book of quotations from the economic elite. We compared the number of relevant quotations found by the original analyst with those registered by the check analyst. The mean numbers were 4.8 and 3.0 respectively. Among the analysts, the average number of found quotations in each analyst deviated somewhat from the average found by the check analyst: 6 analysts showed a difference of more than 3.0 between their average and that of the check analyst. Thus, the majority of 'errors' in finding relevant quotations was a minority of first analysts. Furthermore, those 6 analysts who performed the worst in this regard included the three who performed badly at the test mentioned as b-check.
- d) Lastly, we used the degree of similarity between the scores on the theoretically most important questions (the ones about the substantial direction of statements in the article in the newspaper compared with the direction of the corresponding statements in the source book) as a check on the reliability of the analysis process. As noted before, the possible scores ranged from 1 to 7. The average check score and the average original score differed 1.203 points with a standard deviation of 1.067. We crosstabulated the distribution of 'errors' by analyst, newspaper, and number of quotations per article. To maximize improvement of the correspondence between check analysis and original analysis we tried out several

combinations of those variables. We found that if we replaced 1) the work done by the six analysts mentioned under c) and 2) all articles in which the original analysts reported to find no comparable quotations in the source book, the average amount of 'errors' would decrease to 2.23% for each of the six categories of the main questions. So by partially re-analyzing the whole sample along these lines we could estimate the reproducibility to be $(100 - 6 \times 2,23) =$ minimally 87%.

Accordingly, the reliability of our coding seems well within the limits of most content analytic efforts. The results were therefore punched into punch cards for subsequent statistical analysis*.

4. Some results

This section will contain first a short description of the sample as a whole. The details of each newspaper in the sample will be reported subsequently. Owing to some minor mistakes made with the filling out of the schedules, punching errors, etc., this first analysis had to be performed on a total of 468 issues of the national dailies mentioned earlier. We checked whether these issues were distributed, according to the totals in the population, over the days of the week, the months and the different newspapers. Only insignificant deviations were found in this respect.

4.1. The sample as a whole

In our sample the mean total number of pages for each daily was 20.5 of which on the average 7.48 pages were used for regular advertisements, and the text advertisements used 1.42 pages. The mean coverage with non-commercial pictures was 2.05 pages whilst for sports an amount

* After the filling out of the schedules for analysis had been terminated the results were punched into IBM punch cards: one for the issue as a whole and one for each of the up to 12 opining articles per issue that the analysts came across. For those issues (most of them) that carried less than 12 articles completing dummy cards were produced so that the CYBER computer at Groningen University by means of the WESP⁵⁷⁾ program could be used for statistical analysis.

of 2.34 pages was used, which leaves roughly 7 pages for other informational and editorial text. Of the advertisements, the mean space used by large companies as identified in the Mokken and Stokman list was 1.40 pages. Of the 7 remaining editorial pages on the average 4.37 pages were used for economic and financial problems, social-economic government policy and other politics, domestic or foreign. This leaves an average of 2.63 pages for entertainment, arts, accidents, etc.

Table 1 summarizes a number of characteristics of the sample of the 8 national dailies. It must be noted that the column 'Other editorial space' was not measured inductively but calculated from the preceding columns. The papers are identified by the first three characters of their proper name.

Table 1. Some characteristics of the 8 national daily paper in the sample.

Paper	Circulation x 1,000	Number of issues in the sample	Number of pages	Total pages advertisements	Total text advertisements	Total ads large companies	Total space pictures	Total space sports	Other editorial space	Total space for economics, finance, social-economics, other politics
				A v e r a g e p e r i s s u e						
AD	304.0	59	29.1	13.59	1.61	1.49	2.32	3.52	8.06	3.98
NRC	91.2	56	19.6	4.45	1.44	1.00	2.35	1.30	10.06	6.99
PAR	170.0	60	25.6	11.35	1.66	1.87	2.50	3.19	6.90	3.70
TEL	505.9	60	30.7	15.70	1.87	1.65	2.29	2.99	7.85	4.02
TRO	106.2	56	17.6	4.32	1.36	1.03	1.92	2.05	7.95	4.56
TYD	65.0	59	15.4	2.39	1.07	1.06	1.96	2.34	7.64	4.85
VOL	228.5	61	19.9	7.05	1.59	1.46	1.83	2.09	7.34	4.31
WAA	84.5	57	6.0	0.38	0.38	0.00	0.92	1.12	3.20	2.86
over										
all	194.4	58.5	20.5	7.48	1.42	1.40	2.05	2.34	7.22	4.37
N	-	468	467	462	463	460	456	462	-	460

In table 2 we repeat the last three columns of table 1 but this time the figures are calculated as proportions of the (average) total number of pages of the paper.

Table 2. Some characteristics of the 8 national dailies in the sample (related to the size of the paper).

Paper	Number of pages	Space for sports	Other ed. space	Economics finance social-ec. politics
AD	29.1	.12	.28	.14
NRC	19.6	.07	.51	.36
PAR	25.6	.12	.27	.14
TEL	30.7	.09	.26	.13
TRO	17.6	.12	.45	.26
TYD	15.4	.15	.50	.31
VOL	19.9	.11	.37	.22
WAA	6.0	.19	.53	.48
over all	20.5	.11	.35	.21

Concerning these a number of reflections are required. We note that there is a large dispersion in the average number of pages per issue, ranging from 6.0 to 30.7 pages. Similar variation can be noted for pages, sold for (regular) advertisements: their totals range from 0.38 to 15.70. Concerning space used for sports, we see that even when expressed in absolute space the variability in the number of pages dedicated to sports is much less. The figures in the column 'Other editorial space' and in the last column 'Economics, etc.' show that in this respect the "thin" papers often offer more if not much more space than the "fat" ones; even in absolute number of pages.

Table 2 shows that, in relative terms, some "thinner" papers offer twice or thrice as much space as to economic, financial, domestic and foreign political problems. Of course, these are the problems in which we were interested from the beginning.

4.2. The newspapers considered separately

With the help of the tables 1 and 2, a short description of each paper separately is now provided.

- Het Algemeen Dagblad (AD), motto: Onafhankelijk (Independent), a 'fat' morning paper, published in Rotterdam, containing many ads, much space for sports and displaying only less than average interest in politics.
- NRC-Handelsbald (NRC), motto: Lux et Libertas, middlesize Rotterdam evening paper containing few advertisements and displaying very little interest in sports but, absolutely as well as relatively, extensive interest in politics.
- Het Parool (PAR), motto "Vrij, onverveerd (Free, fearless), 'fat' Amsterdam evening paper containing many ads and displaying much attention for sports. Other editorial space below average and relatively little interest in politics.
- De Telegraaf (TEL), motto: Grootste krant van Nederland (Largest paper of the Netherlands), 'fat' Amsterdam morning paper with many, many ads and displaying considerable interest in sports and no more than average, hence relatively little, interest in politics.
- Trouw (TRO), a Protestant morning paper, published in Amsterdam. A small to middle sized paper containing few advertisements and displaying relatively little interest in sports but with much space, both absolutely and relatively, devoted to politics, especially foreign.
- Tijd (TYD), motto: Dieu et mon Droit, known to be Roman Catholic, Amsterdam evening paper, containing very few advertisements. A 'thin' paper devoting as much space to sports as any other, hence relatively much more, and expressing a lot of attention towards politics.

- De Volkskrant (VOL), a formerly Roman-Catholic, considerably sized Amsterdam morning paper containing an average number of advertisements expressing relatively little interest in sports and average interest in social, economic, and political problems.
- De Waarheid (WAA), Volksdagblad voor Nederland (Netherlands people's daily) a communist, very 'thin' Amsterdam morning paper containing a negligible amount of ads, but expressing relatively much interest in sports and very much attention towards political problems.

4.3. The collected articles

As stated before within the sampled issue, the analysts were instructed to trace all the obvious opinion articles on the topics of the previously mentioned list. This produced a number of 1107 articles with an average of 2.37 articles per issue.

We checked the distribution of these articles over the day of the week: table 3 contains the results:

Table 3. Average number of opinion articles for each issue and weekday.

monday	1.6
tuesday	2.3
wednesday	2.5
thursday	2.8
friday	2.5
saturday	4.2

The observed inequality in distribution did not come as a great surprise: on Monday, political opinion is pushed aside by the abundance of sports and sportnews during the weekend. The Saturday issue (there are no Sunday papers in the Netherlands) is provided with much more space than any other daily issue and consequently there is also far more space available for political news, comments, and opinion articles.

Table 4 lists the (average) number of articles found per paper, the number of quotations used per article per paper, the average length of the articles and the number of articles involved. It is interesting to note, that the largest average number of opinion articles are not from the thickest papers, but from the NRC and the Waarheid. In the absence of further detailed investigation a decisive conclusion with respect to the quality of these papers remains as yet preliminary. At the same time, these articles are connected with the highest average number of quotations. The shortest selected opinion articles are to be found in the Telegraaf and the Algemeen Dagblad (AD).

Table 4. Frequencies of opinion articles found in the sample and of quotations used; average length of the articles.

Paper	Number of opiniating articles per issue	Number of quotations per article	Average length of the articles in pages	Number of articles involved
AD	2.1	2.23	.131	109
NRC	4.5	3.32	.247	230
PAR	2.1	2.62	.192	109
TEL	2.6	2.82	.127	143
TRO	2.0	2.27	.201	100
TYD	2.4	3.17	.291	134
VOL	2.1	2.23	.190	112
WAA	3.1	3.93	.222	170
Over all	2.26	2.86	.200	1107

4.4. The main hypothesis: the agreement scores

Having reported some descriptive results of our investigation we now must answer the main question; what is the degree of the agreement/disagreement between articles and quotations?

Table 5 provides an answer.

Table 5. Average agreement/disagreement scores and their variance.

Paper	Agreement/ Disagreement scores (average per article)	Variance of the scores
AD	3.85	0.79
NRC	3.24	1.05
PAR	3.30	0.98
TEL	4.20	0.72
TRO	2.70	1.05
TYD	2.62	1.04
VOL	2.32	0.84
WAA	1.76	0.88
over all N	2.99 1107	

With values ranging from (1) opposite to (5) markedly corresponding, the overall score is at the midpoint.

Furthermore, when considering the values (1) to (5) as integers, the two very large newspapers (TEL and AD) score most to the right on the political spectrum and the smallest (WAA) as expected, the most to the left, NRC and TRO score slightly right and left from the middle. The former roman-catholic VOL scores, behind the communist WAA, most to the left and the once called socialist PAR even more to the right than the NRC.

Almost as interesting as the mean score is the variance of the scores for each newspaper. We note, that NRC, TRO and TYD have the highest, while the lowest dispersion is not found with the WAA, but with AD and TEL, the right-wing scoring newspapers.

In sum: in their opinion articles, four of the eight national dailies in the Netherlands score in agreement with the opinions of the business leaders and the other four score in disagreement with them. Of course it is not fortuitous, that among the four, which more or less agree with the business leaders, two papers have the largest circulation. In terms of circulation the business supportive constitute two thirds of the total circulation, while the disagreeing four do not reach even one third.

With the exception of one smaller newspaper, the NRC, which had a high dispersion on the agreement scores, the disagreeing four in general show more variance, while the agreeing three vary less.

No doubt, further research is required to analyze the causes of this variation in variance. The agreement scores might be topic determined. Hence, one paper might deal with a greater variety of topics than another which in turn would produce greater variance about its average agreement-disagreement score.

Finally, there is yet one interesting feature. If we supplement the data of table 1 with those of table 5, we note a clear tendency: the amount of advertisements positively correlates with the circulation numbers. In this respect there was only one exception, VOL changed places with PAR. Taking into consideration the results of table 5 too, we come to the hypothesis, that in cases when the circulation numbers approach each other, the degree of agreement with business opinions favors advertizing.

4.5. The intellectual level of the contents of the newspapers

To test the intellectual level of newspapers we have at our disposal only a very limited operationalization: the Flesch and Douma readability

formula. As noted before the latter was applied to some specified articles in the sampled issues, i.e. the leading article, the longest articles on domestic politics, foreign politics and sports respectively.

Table 6 shows the distribution of the mean scores on this scale. Calculating the overall readability score we find 6.49: i.e. on the average the level of difficulty would be between upper high school and university level. As this seems rather high, we, consequently, have at least our doubt about the absolute value of the formula for texts in Dutch. After all the formula was originally developed for English texts.

Though Dutch newspapers may be difficult to read in general, it seems most implausible that it would require some University education to cope with their content. However, this is not to say that the difference among the scores have no meaning either. It seems most plausible that articles on sports require significant lower reading abilities than articles on politics. The fact is that NRC and VOL score high even on sports does not surprise us either.

Table 6. Readability of articles on various topics and overall.

Paper	Leading article	Longest article on home politics	Longest article on foreign politics	Longest article on sports	Overall
	average readability score per issue				
AD	6.5	6.4	6.5	5.7	6.28
NRC	6.9	6.7	6.9	6.4	6.72
PAR	6.7	6.5	6.8	5.6	6.40
TEL	6.7	6.3	6.8	5.6	6.35
TRO	6.7	6.6	6.8	5.9	6.50
TYD	6.7	6.5	6.7	5.8	6.45
VOL	6.6	6.7	6.8	6.1	6.55
WAA	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.1	6.65
Over all	6.7	6.6	6.8	5.9	6.49

5. Some remarks on the possible generalization of the results

The research design of this project confronted one major problem from the beginning: how to establish the opinions of the economic leaders. We thoroughly discussed a number of procedures but found most without sufficient guarantees for reliability and validity. Interviewing a sample from the Mokken and Stokman list, for example, was rejected because we feared distorted responses from the interviewees. As stated before, the internal consistency of the quotations finally used and their correspondence with those found elsewhere, strengthened our belief that we were on the right track. The same is true for the results of our analysis, i.e. quotation materials, and their use by analysts and check-analysts. Being insiders in the Dutch situation and familiar with: we can vouchsafe for the obvious veracity of most of our findings: our confidence in instruments has been greatly reinforced. Concerning the actually sample, of course, had to limit ourselves in a number of ways. Being interested in all media, we confined ourselves to the opinion parts of the editorial columns on political, social and economic topics of the 8 national daily newspapers in the Netherlands. We will discuss these limitations one by one.

Analyzing only the obvious opinion articles we omitted other contents of the sampled issues. We do, however, not believe, that this restriction critically affects our conclusions. If in newspapers any critical, non-conformistic opinions are to be expected, that must be in the materials we analysed and not in factual reports, articles on sports, the arts, entertainment, traffic accidents, etc. Most media experts including the afore mentioned Klapper agree on this.

No other evidence being available the restriction of our sample to the national dailies seems to us, not to be a real disadvantage either. We can hardly believe that the regional press, would provide largely different results. After all, their financial structure is quite similar. Perhaps the popular political weekly magazines in the Netherlands would give a different results. On the other hand, the equally or even more popular home and ladies' journals can hardly be expected to differ from the national dailies in their business supporting opinions.

With respect to other media i.e, radio and television, one must realize that in Holland radio and television are, for large parts, not commercially organized, but controlled by organs, whose members either come from state or private institutions, voluntary associations, etc. This might, will make a large difference. For the moment, the question whether our results could be generalized to other media too, is yet to be settled.

Finally, to generalize beyond the national boundaries produces other difficulty. The authors are aware, that because of the limited area in which the Dutch language is spoken, no Dutch newspaper can really be compared with specimen as Le Monde, The New York Times, The Times, Die Frankfurter Zeitung, Der Neue Züricher, and maybe the Christian Science Monitor. On the other hand, there is much evidence, that in many of the other capitalistic societies the non-quality papers out-balance the few of very high quality that equivalent or even worse findings would hold for example France, England, Germany and the United States.

6. Summarizing conclusions

The results of our investigation can perhaps best be summarized as follows:

1. Randomly drawing a daily issue out of all national dailies, in the Netherlands, the chance that one encounters opinions which agree with those of the leading economic circles is twice as high as the chance that one comes across opinions which disagree with those circles.
2. If the newspaper happens to be a "fat" one, one does not receive more, or more diverse information. One gets more advertisements, that's true.
3. The intellectual level of the contents of the national dailies in the Netherlands is probably high with an exception for sports. The reading ease of the business supporting papers is larger than

that of the more critical ones.

4. Circulation appears to dominate the choice of the newspaper for advertizing purposes. If circulation becomes more alike a more 'agreeing' paper seems to be preferred over a more 'disagreeing' one.
5. With respect to the theories referred to in the opening section of this paper, the results of the investigation support those theories, which state that in the media the voice of the economic upper class is heard more clearly than the voice of their opponents.
For the business elite the competition on the opinion playground is a home game with the big newspapers as paid cheerleaders.
6. On the other hand, the theory which claims that the massmedia produce a masscharacter in such a way, that the intellectual quality is necessarily adjusted to as large and low a part of the consumers' market as possible, does not apply to the national daily newspapers in the Netherlands.
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