

**The European Public Sphere, Identification, and Support for EU
Membership: Results of a Quantitative Multilevel Analysis
of Media and Survey Data**

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Abstract

The goal of this study is to find out whether the emergence of a European public sphere (EPS) contributes to a diffusion of identification with the European Union (EU), as well as to a diffusion of the idea of European integration. The EPS is conceptualized as an entity resting on Europeanized national public spheres. The media is seen as the most important place where Europeanized communication manifests itself. As an example of Europeanized public spheres, data on the coverage of the 2004 European Parliament election is used. The data set involves measures on EU salience in the media and tone of the messages, and is analyzed together with individual level data from the 2004 European Election Study. Using a multilevel regression analysis, a positive, significant effect was found between the tone of the media context and the idea of EU membership. Cross-level interaction effects reveal that EU salience significantly increases the effect of social class on identification with the EU and on membership support. Class affiliation is found to differentiate people in their support of the idea of EU membership more in the presence of negative EU coverage, but less when coverage is positive. While the quantitative analysis suggests that direct links between EPS and identification as well as membership support seem to be rather weak, the picture looks different when interaction effects are considered. Therefore, the study provides empirical evidence that the diffusion of identification with the EU and the idea of EU membership support is one likely consequence of the emergence of an EPS.

1. Introduction

The goal of this study is to find out whether the emergence of a European public sphere (EPS) contributes to a diffusion of identification with the European Union (EU), as well as to an increase of support for the idea of EU membership. It seeks to contribute to the understanding of diffusion processes by concentrating on an internal diffusion process within the EU. For this purpose, media coverage data from 2004 is analyzed together with individual level data on EU support and identification. The public sphere deficit of the EU is considered part of a larger democratic deficit and is seen as a potential reason for the low support of people for their developing supranational community. Accordingly, the paper seeks to comment on the question if an emerging EPS is *good* for the EU in the sense that it contributes to a diffusion of support for European integration and individual level identification with the EU.

Between 1991 and 2004, the share of people who support the EU membership of their country decreased from 71 to 48 percent.¹ The rejection of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for the EU by polls in France and the Netherlands in 2005 indicates that people disagree with the way of how politicians across Europe want to unify the continent. Even though a number of factors unrelated to the Treaty are held responsible for the failed referendum on the revised version in Ireland in 2008, the event still discloses the negative sentiments confronting the EU. The eventual endorsement of the constitution by the Irish people in October 2009 does not change much about the more general phenomenon of Euroskepticism across the continent.

With Brussels increasingly influencing policies in the community's member states, people may be skeptical about the growing power of an entity that is hardly directly accountable to them. Despite efforts to create an institutional setting adequate to the increasing decision making powers of Brussels, scholars have mentioned a democratic deficit in journal articles starting from around the 1980s (for overviews see: Weiler et al. 1995 or Siedentop 2001). The democratic deficit is only one branch of criticism. Closely linked to this debate is the argument that an EPS is missing, without which no democratic entity is truly viable. A public sphere, whether on the national or EU level, provides the crucial link between those who govern and those who are governed. It is where authorities need to explain their actions and campaign for support. In the absence of a public sphere, people and politics may grow apart, with rising discontent being only one of the likely consequences. Therefore, it would be rather surprising if the EU worked in spite of the lack of an EPS.

Notions of a public sphere range from a liberal concept on the one hand (e.g. Luhmann 1971, 1990; Neidhardt 1994) to an ambitious deliberative approach on the other hand (e.g. Habermas 1990). Providing a tangible access to the concept, Neidhardt (2001: 502) identifies it as a place where speakers act as sources of information, where a large number of people serve as an audience, and where a mediator or mediating body establishes the flow of information between the former and the latter. A modern public sphere becomes manifest primarily in the mass media. This is in particular true for the EPS, since events at the EU level are hardly directly observable (Gerhards 2000, Schlesinger and Kevin

¹ Eurobarometer data from http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/; figure is based on 15 EU member states and on people who said that EU membership of their country is a "good thing".

2000). Unsurprisingly, people consistently consider the mass media their key source of political information (Peter and de Vreese 2003).

This paper follows the conceptualization of an EPS resting on Europeanized national public spheres.² This notion of a public sphere is in line with Neidhardt's approach: European actors (speakers) reach national recipients (audiences) through national mass media (the mediating body). For its quantitative approach, Europeanization is for the given purpose understood first and foremost in a quantitative sense: as visibility of European issues in the media and their connectedness, involving primarily synchrony of issue cycles.

Past research has already provided some insights into how an emerging EPS might affect the link between citizens of the EU and their community. Yet, studies that directly link media coverage with public opinion data suffer from major shortcomings, such as only looking at the aggregate level or only considering one country. For instance, Norris (2000) finds a positive correlation between tone of coverage (about the European Monetary Union (EMU) and attitudes (towards the EMU) at the aggregate level. Dalton and Duval (1986) find a relationship at the individual level in the UK. Among the rare cross country individual level analyses, Peter (2004) used data from 13 EU countries and related that to a data set on EU coverage on television prior to the 1999 European Parliament elections. He revealed that a consistently positive bias of EU coverage increases people's EU support. Higher salience of the EU amplifies this effect. While Banducci and Semetko (2003) primarily investigate the effect of EU salience on turnout, a similar analysis has not been conducted in regard to identification with the EU. A major methodological shortcoming of these studies working with context level data on one hand (media content) and individual level data on the other hand is that they do not particularly model the hierarchical structure of the data. I will address this shortcoming with the present paper.

Any study that takes media content as an independent variable and people's attitudes on a certain issue as dependent variable faces a problem of endogeneity: there are good theoretical reasons why people do not only pick up cues from the media, but that the media is influenced to quite some extent by sentiments of those who consume its content. Acknowledging this two-way relationship, this analysis will only consider one direction of it, i.e. the one in which the causal arrow runs from media to attitudes.

In a first part, theoretical considerations on how media content relates to attitudes will be introduced. On this basis, four hypotheses will be derived: two addressing a direct relationship between media content and individual level attitudes and two addressing interaction effects. In a next step, the conceptual and methodological approach will be outlined. Finally, the results of regression analyses modeling direct relationships between media and attitudes will be reviewed, before models including interaction terms will be presented.

² Contrary to the overly demanding concept of a single pan-European public sphere (Kielmanssegg 1996, Grimm 1995), the consent developed that an EPS can rest on Europeanized national public spheres. Trenz (2004: 292) subsumes: "the visibility of communication is the necessary precondition of the public sphere..." He adds "the connectivity of communication with reference to European politics is the minimal requirement of the European public sphere" (ibid.; accentuation by Trenz). This conceptualization introduces the important point that the appearance of European topics in the evening news of one country is not enough for an EPS that rests on the Europeanization of national public spheres: there needs to be a certain amount of synchrony of issue cycles across Europe.

2. Media Effect on EU Support and Identification

The goal of this study is to investigate whether and how an emerging EPS contributes to a diffusion of identification with the EU and to EU support. This differentiation of attitudes toward the EU has its roots in earlier works on the relationship between citizens and a political system that separate an evaluative support dimension from an affective attachment to or identification with a system. Almond and Verba (1963) propose differentiating between cognitive, affective, and evaluative orientations towards a system. The affective and evaluative dimensions appear again in Easton's (1965) typology of support modes. Weßels (2007: 290) suggests affective support contains an element of self-ascription, membership, and identification. In their model that was developed explicitly for a setting that exceeds the nation state, Lindberg and Scheingold (1970) specifically propose to separate what they call "identitive" and "systemic" support. It is this line of differentiation between EU support as an evaluative category and identification as an affective EU attachment, which is applied in this analysis.³

Among the many influences known to drive support for European integration, the media is of particular interest in this paper. Three of the most prominent and most well-researched mechanisms on how the media affects attitudes are agenda-setting, priming, and framing (see Kinder 2003 for an overview). The standard interpretation for all three effects can be described this way (Kinder 2003: 378): "communications highlight some aspects of politics at the expense of others; when citizens notice such communications, relevant parts of their memory are automatically activated; those bits and pieces of activated memory are thereby rendered accessible; and accessible constructs and information exercise disproportionate influence over the opinions and evaluations that citizens express". The more often a particular topic is picked out as a central theme by the media, for example, an expensive bureaucracy in Brussels, the more frequently people encounter it. Subsequently, a node "EU" in someone's mind becomes connected to a node "expensive bureaucracy" and this association becomes strengthened each time this topic pops up in the media environment of an individual. The EU could then be connected to many concepts or ideas, but one of the most easily accessible nodes will most likely be a negative one about costs – which can eventually lead to someone thinking of the costs as a central problem. Agenda setting refers to the close connection of topics covered by the media and those problems citizens consider the most important ones. When evaluating politicians, people can use a number of actions and traits they can base their opinion on. Priming refers to a process that describes that people tend to use information about someone that is most accessible, i.e. that has been primed (covered) most often. Instead of a provision of new information, framing refers to how a political issue is portrayed, i.e. which aspects are linked together and which are left out. In this way, it is a particular perspective that is made accessible.

³ The treatment of EU identity as a concept which can be explained in a linear model simplifies both the concept and its relationship with other variables, such as national identity: Hooghe and Marks (e.g. 2004) allude to the fact that it is crucial in this context if someone has an exclusive or inclusive national identity, since this affects the extent to which a person develops an attachment towards the EU. Nevertheless, this paper refrains from an even more complex set up of the model.

These mechanisms rest first and foremost on processes operating outside of conscious awareness. Alternatives to automatic processing dwell on much more thoughtful, conscious mechanisms. Kinder (2003: 378) exemplifies this with framing: “the argument is that by singling out certain features of an issue or event, frames imply which considerations to take into account, but the final arbiter is the citizen, who *chooses* which of the available considerations are relevant and who *decides* how important each consideration should be”. However, since people can only consider accessible information, accessibility remains a key process even from this point of view. In the following part, hypotheses will be derived on the basis of these processes.

Main Hypotheses

In this paper, the influence emanating from media’s issue selection and issue portrayal is operationalized by studying the salience (low to high) of EU issues in the media and the overall tone (negative to positive) of the coverage. Inglehart (1970) noted that Europe is an entity with which people hardly have any direct contact. He suggested that with increasing cognitive mobilization (i.e. political awareness and education), familiarity with European integration rises, a feeling of being threatened by it decreases and eventually, a citizen’s ability to identify with a supranational political community grows just as well as support levels. This relationship found consistent empirical support (Inglehart 1970, Inglehart, Rabier, Reif 1987, Janssen 1991). Salience is expected to affect attitudes on the EU along a similar line of reasoning: everything else held constant, the more salient the EU is in the media, the higher should people’s familiarity with the community be; applying Inglehart’s suggestion from this perspective, salience should increase identification with the EU, as well as EU support.

Taking also the mechanism of accessibility into account, salience, can be understood as the frequency with which someone takes up cues reminding him or her of the supra-national community he or she is part of. Subsequently, more communication providing an awareness of this group can be hypothesized to increase identification with the EU. If it is really a feeling of distrust that explains little identification in the case of unfamiliarity, it is most likely this emotional support dimension that is affected most by higher familiarity and higher salience. A positive relationship between salience and support is expected because encountering more EU related information means that one can more easily learn about the EU, e.g. about advantages going along with EU membership. At the same time, EU related coverage can help minimize prejudices on which people might base their negative stance.

H 1: A higher salience of EU issues in the media increases the level of identification with the EU and support for it among individuals.

Tone, as qualitative dimension of media messages, can be seen in two ways. One way is to view tone as a negative, positive, or neutral *trait* of a media message. If information, which is inextricably connected to evaluations, is broadcasted, it is only this positive (negative) information that enters someone’s knowledge store and eventually becomes the basis on which an individual

constructs attitudes and opinions. Precisely speaking, the underlying mechanism is that a positive (negative) news environment strengthens only the associations between positive (negative) considerations in regard to a certain concept, such as the EU. Consequently, this bias exerts an influence when constructing evaluations. Another explanation is to regard tone as a particular framing of information. The emphasis of media messages on one frame rather than another, such as European integration having primarily negative instead of positive consequences, makes negative information rather than positive more accessible in connection with this concept. In an extreme case, there might not even be negative or respectively positive considerations. Either way, the mechanisms suggest a positive relationship between tone of media reporting on EU issues and EU identification, as well as EU support: one can expect both identification and support to be higher where media content is more positive.

H 2: A more positive portrayal of EU issues in the media increases identification with the EU and EU support among individuals.

Individual-Level Variables, Controls, and Interaction Effects

After more than two decades of research on support for European integration, quite a lot of factors have been found to be influential. One needs to control at least for government support (e.g. Franklin et al. 1995), value orientation (Inglehart 1970a, Inglehart and Reif 1991), left-right orientation (Inglehart et al. 1987), cognitive mobilization (Inglehart 1970), and utilitarianism (Gabel 1998, McLaren 2006). In the given context, one also needs to take newspaper and television consumption into account, in order to ensure that effects really stem from the media context differences and not from variation in media consumption.

Among the individual level variables, so-called egocentric utilitarianism shall be investigated further. Studies considering utilitarianism in this context look at costs and benefits of EU membership for individuals and how this affects a person's attitudes towards integration.⁴ The notion that those who benefit or are likely to benefit from European integration should be stronger supporters of the process, whereas those who lose (or are likely to do so) should be more opposed to it was uttered early (e.g. Inglehart, Rabier and Reif 1987) and analyzed successively (e.g. Gabel and Palmer 1995). The theory assumes that economic policies of the EU entail different costs and benefits for different people in the EU and that they are both realizing this fact and determining their position towards integration accordingly. The liberalization of EU labor markets and provisions for the free movement of capital are expected to have an effect on people depending on their occupation and human capital. People with lower level job-skills are more easily replaceable by companies moving elsewhere or hiring "foreign" (non national) workers (McLaren 2006: 32). On the other hand, people with more developed job skills and specific knowledge can be expected to find better-paid jobs more easily across Europe. Both McLaren (2006) and Gabel (1998) find considerable empirical support for this theory.

⁴The literature (e.g. McLaren 2006) differentiates between egocentric and sociotropic utilitarianism; this study only focuses on the egocentric version.

An alternative method for charting the characteristics that differentiate people in their perception of how much the EU goes along with costs and benefits for them due to their occupation is the concept of social classes.⁵ In Weber's perspective, resources, which can be utilized either on the product or the labor market, are the criterion according to which classes⁶ need to be differentiated: "Class situation is, in this sense, ultimately market situation"(1968: 928). This paper follows the broader conceptualization of egocentric utilitarianism as a reflection of class differences. Depending on social class, people are assumed to have different considerations in their minds when deciding to what extent the EU is beneficial for them. If the EU is more salient in a media environment, it could deliver more information about opportunities to some, while others receive more cues about risks. Salience could therefore amplify the differences in EU support and EU identification between people from different social classes. Thus, the interaction between salience and social class is expected to be positive.

H 3: A higher salience of EU issues in the media causes a stronger impact of class affiliation on individual level EU support and identification with the EU.

Finally, a negative interaction between the tone of media reporting and social class is expected: the more positive media coverage of EU issues, the less are people in different social classes assumed to differ in their identification with the EU and in their EU support. In higher classes, EU identification and support tends to be higher. In a context of negative cues on the EU, those in higher classes might however still be able to appreciate benefits of the EU regardless of what a particular coverage says, while those in lower classes might find their skeptic position on the EU confirmed by the media. Hence, in a country characterized by negative EU coverage, class differences should be reflected in a gap in EU identification and support. However, in a country with much more positive cues on the EU, those in higher classes can be assumed to keep their high level of EU support, while support and EU identification in lower classes increases. If people in lower classes are more susceptible to news media arguments, they might also more easily pick up a positive position from the media. Those with an actually skeptical position on the EU might find it much harder to keep it if there is a constant flow of relatively positive cues on the EU.

H 4: A more positive tone of EU issues in media reporting causes a smaller impact of class affiliation on individual level EU support and identification with the EU.

3. Data, Conceptualization, and Method

Although several data sets provide information about the dependent variable, the European Election Study⁷ (EES) seems to be particularly well suited. That is because its fieldwork started as early as one day after the

⁵ See Appendix for question wording.

⁶ Weber (1968: 927) defines classes in the following way: "(1) a number of people have in common a specific causal component of their life chances, insofar as (2) this component is represented exclusively by economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunities for income, and (3) is represented under the conditions of the commodity or labor markets".

⁷ Data collection coordinated at the Mannheim Centre for European Social Research.

elections. The number of respondents is 500 for Cyprus and Greece and approximately 1000 for all other countries. Due to missing data, the analysis is based on only 22 out of the 25 EU member states in 2004.

EU support as one of the dependent variables is thought to rest on rational judgment, taking into account costs and benefits going along with EU membership. According to the common conceptualization of regime support in the literature (e.g. Weßels 2007: 291), the following question is considered to capture this aspect: “Generally speaking, do you think that [country] membership in the EU is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad?” The EES provides a second question that is regarded to be driven by a cost-benefit analysis of the EU. It asks people about their confidence that decisions by the EU are in their interest.⁸ The two items are merged into an additive index ranging from one to six.⁹ EU identification is operationalized as an additive index combining a question that asks respondents “do you ever think of yourself not only as a [county] citizen, but also as a citizen of the EU” and a second item that prompts the extent to which people are proud to be a citizen of the EU.¹⁰

Turning to the independent variables, a media content analysis (de Vreese et al. 2006) covered the period of the final two weeks before the 2004 European Parliament (EP) elections in almost all EU member states. The publicly available data involves the share of EU related stories in relation to all news stories in newspapers and on television. The operationalization of salience is based on an index for which the two values of each country are added and divided by two to capture the average salience of the EU in the media. Regarding the measurement of tone, the overall value for each EU member state provided by de Vreese et al. (2006) will be used. The collectors of the data allude to that quite a share of the news that mentioned the EU did so in a neutral way (ibid.: 493). The messages that did contain evaluations were rated on a score ranging from -1 (consistently negative evaluations) to +1 (consistently positive evaluations). Next the average tone of the information available to citizens in each country was calculated, which provides interval scaled data.

Using data on the media coverage of EP elections is in line with the conceptualization of the EPS as applied in this analysis. In election campaigns, candidates and parties have an exceptionally high interest to communicate to the electorate (Weßels 2005). The former seek the support of the latter, making the candidates the “speakers” in the conceptualization of Neidhardt. In order to make an informed decision, the electorate is asked to listen to what candidates and parties offer; the electorate becomes the audience. The crucial link is the mass media. Even though it might be domestic actors speaking to a national audience, EP campaigns contribute to a Europeanization of national public spheres: the reason for speakers and audience to communicate is a uniquely European one. And by definition media coverage of EP elections prior to the election-day makes an EU-level issue visible, while at the same time the synchrony of the coverage is ensured. That is because one and the same EU level issue is covered at the exact same period in time.

⁸ The complete question wording can be found in the Appendix.

⁹ The two items show a Pearson’s r correlation of 0.402 (sign. at $p < .001$)

¹⁰ Pearson’s r correlation of identification and proudness is 0.56 (sign. at $p < .001$).

Turning to individual level variables, cognitive mobilization is constructed as an index variable consisting of education and interest in politics.¹¹ According to the concept of egocentric utilitarianism, the EU entails different costs and benefits for different groups of people. Given Weber's (1968) suggestion that class captures people's opportunities on the job market, this paper considers the broader concept of social class.¹² The EES provides a measure based on the self reported class affiliation of each respondent on a five point scale.

The crucial methodological problem results from merging context level with individual level data. In contrast to individual level variables such as cognitive mobilization or social class, there are only 25 different countries in the EU – and thus only 25 different values for the context variables. The data analysis needs to take into consideration that people in the same country share the same media context: i.e. that there are not as many different media contexts as individual level cases, since the latter are nested within the former. One way to cope with this problem is using the standard OLS regression, while calculating robust standard errors as suggested by Huber (1967) and White (1980). However, such a model assumes that individual level predictors have the same effect across the whole sample. Yet, this analysis particularly expects an individual level predictor for support – social class – to vary depending on the Europeanization on national public spheres. Furthermore, an OLS regression based on pooled data neglects that the mean of a dependent variable in some contexts is higher than in others.¹³

An alternative approach to analyze data from an individual and a context level are hierarchical or multilevel models. They do not only cope with problems connected to the multilevel structure of such data sets, but can specifically model the hierarchical structure – and such things as different effect strengths of individual level variables depending on context. Firstly, random-intercept-random-slope models will be used to test hypotheses one and two. Secondly, slopes-as-outcome models will be employed to test the remaining hypotheses.¹⁴ Random intercept models can account for a dependent variable having different means in different contexts; random slopes additionally model different effect strengths of individual level independent variables in different contexts. Employing slopes-as-outcome models allows testing for how much of the effect strength differences of individual level variables can be explained by context level predictors (cf. Luke 2004, Langer 2004, Hans 2006, and Snijders and Bosker 1999).

¹¹ The two items show a Pearson's r correlation of 0.193, significant at $p < .01$.

¹² Jones (1975) provides a more thorough examination of the relevance of occupation for Weber's class concept.

¹³ Peter (2003, 2004) argues that multilevel analysis is not applicable in the given case. This rests primarily on the fact that multilevel analysis requires a certain minimum number of context level cases, usually at least 20 to 25 (Peter 2003: 707). For the time period analyzed by Peter (2004), the campaign before the 1999-EP elections, this condition was certainly not met (level two cases = 15). The given analysis however, deals with 25 EU member states, making multilevel analysis very well possible from this point of view.

¹⁴ All equations can be found in the Appendix.

4. Explanation of identification with the EU and EU support

An analysis of variance reveals that there is significant variation at the context level: country level differences account for 9 percent of the variation of support and 13 percent when it comes to EU identification.¹⁵ In a first step one can explore if the country level variation in support levels and identification across the EU can be attributed to country (i.e. context-) level differences, such as the media's coverage of EU issues. In a next step, it will be tested to what extent variation of the impact of social class on EU identification and support in different countries can be explained by the media context.

The variation of the media context reveals great differences across the EU: The average salience of EU on television and in the newspapers is 8.5 percent, with a standard deviation of 3.36; Belgium is characterized by the minimum value of 3.3 percent, while the EU is most salient in Greece with a value of 15.3 percent. The tone of EU coverage varies between -0.2 in Greece and 0.1 in Cyprus. The European wide mean of -0.07 already indicates the negative bias of media coverage. And indeed, one finds that in almost all countries the tone is negative, except for Slovenia, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Cyprus. The standard deviation of tone is .07.

Table one presents the results for two models: the coefficients in the left column refer to the model with identification as dependent variable; the right column refers to the model with EU support as dependent variable. The relevant R^2 that captures the overall model fit with the data is McFadden's-Pseudo- R^2 ; it is 0.21 for both models which suggests an acceptable model fit.¹⁶ The overall pattern of the individual-level variables confirms the suggestions from the literature. This is especially true for government approval (Franklin 1994a, Gabel 1998), cognitive mobilization (Inglehart 1970), and social class as conceptualization of egocentric utilitarianism (Inglehart, Rabier, and Reif 1987, Gabel and Palmer 1995). The political left-right orientation is no significant predictor in either of the models.

With regard to the context level variables tone of EU coverage and EU salience, salience has a positive effect on identification (0.054) and basically none for EU support. The effect of salience is not significant for EU support and reaches a significance level of $p=.10$ for identification. Following Steenbergen and Jones' (2002) suggestion for treating significance levels in multilevel models, rejecting the null hypothesis on the basis of a .10 significance level is not unreasonable, especially given the limited number of level two cases (22 countries) in this regression. However, since the effect disappears in the following models (table two), it seems premature to reject the null hypothesis without examining more data. Subsequently, one can comment on hypothesis one that suggested a positive relationship between salience and EU support. This hypothesis cannot be confirmed at this point.

¹⁵ Data available on request.

¹⁶ McFadden (1979: 307): "Those unfamiliar with the ρ^2 index [McFadden's notation] should be forewarned that its values tend to be considerably lower than those of the R^2 index and should not be judged by the standards for a 'good fit' in ordinary regression analysis. For example, values of 0.2 to 0.4 for ρ^2 represent an excellent fit."

Table 1: Random-Intercept-Random-Slope Models

	Identification	EU Support
	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>
<i>Intercept</i>	2.958***	3.959***
<i>Country Level Variables</i>		
<i>Tone of EU Coverage</i>	1.274	1.897*
<i>EU Salience</i>	0.054 ⁺	-0.005
<i>Individual Level Variables</i>		
<i>Social Class</i>	0.133***	0.120***
<i>Cognitive Mobilization</i>	0.243***	0.186***
<i>NP Consumption</i>	0.011**	0.008*
<i>TV Consumption</i>	0.007	-0.005
<i>L/R Orient.</i>	0.007	0.016
<i>Government Approval</i>	0.178***	0.260***
<i>Variance Components</i>		
<i>Intercept</i>	0.278***	0.147***
<i>Social Class</i>	0.003**	0.003***
<i>Cognitive Mobilization</i>	0.001 ⁺	0.004***
<i>L/R Orient.</i>	0.004***	0.004***
<i>Government Approval</i>	0.016***	0.014***
<i>Residual Variance</i>	1.668	1.203
<i>Level 2 cases</i>	22	22
<i>Level 1 cases</i>	17,467	17,600
<i>Bryk/Raudenbush L2-R²</i>	0.0282	0.077
<i>Bryk/Raudenbush L1-R²</i>	0.1176	0.1605
<i>McFadden-Pseudo-R²</i>	0.213	0.2141
<i>NP consumption: newspaper consumption; TV consumption: television consumption; L/R Orient.: political left-right orientation; Sal = salience</i>		
<i>Figures show unstandardized regression coefficients; ⁺p=0.10, *p=0.05, **p=0.01, ***p=0.001; two-tailed significance tests; individual level variables grand mean centered, i.e. base line model refers to social class, cognitive mobilization, NP consumption, TV consumption, left-right orientation, and government approval being at their grand means (EU wide average) and tone/salience at zero; a one percent increase of salience increases identification with the EU by 0.054 points (on a scale from 1 to 6), everything else being equal; a change from tone = 0.0 to 0.1 increases EU support by 0.1897 (on a scale from 1 to 6), all else being equal; McFadden-Pseudo-R² based on models with fixed slopes; in both models all slopes are random except those for newspaper and television consumption – they have been fixed for there not being a significant cross country variation in regard to the effect of NP & TV consumption on identity and support, see Appendix for the equations of both models</i>		

Tone, on the other hand, exerts a positive and significant effect ($p=.05$) on EU support. Besides, the effect seems robust (see table two). Hypothesis two expects a more positive tone of news media coverage on the EU to result in higher EU support. And indeed this relationship could be found. The corresponding coefficient is significant for support, but fails significance when it comes to identification. Hypothesis two can be confirmed in regard to support. This can be seen as support for the supposed mechanism that a flow of negative

cues increases the accessibility of disadvantageous evaluations on the EU in people's minds and vice versa for positive cues. When rating the EU in terms of costs and benefits, negative considerations seem to exert a particular influence and lead to lower (evaluative) support.

The context level predictors only explain a small amount of the context-level variation: three percent in case of identification and eight percent when it comes to support (see Bryk/Raudenbusch L2-R² of 0.0282 for identification and 0.077 for EU support). On the other hand, the individual level variables explain almost 12 percent of the individual level variance of identification and respectively 16 percent for support (see Bryk/Raudenbusch L1-R²).

The next hypotheses focus on the extent to which the effect of social class on EU support and identification is dependent on particular media content. The models in table two are similar to the aforementioned ones; they differ only in that they include the necessary interaction terms. According to past research, people differ in their support for European integration depending on their income and occupation – i.e. class situation. The result of this analysis reveals that the effect of a Europeanized national public sphere on support for European integration is not the same for all people. Rather, it depends on social class.

A significant¹⁷ interaction term of social class and salience both for identification and support indicates that people are reinforced in their different stances on the EU according to class: the skeptic opinion someone has in a lower class is strengthened by an increase in communications about the EU, as is the more positive one by someone that affiliated him- or herself with a higher social class (see figure one). A likely reason is that a higher salience of EU cues makes them more accessible and people much more aware of their attitudes. As salience increases, their positions and thus the differences become more pronounced. In contrast to tone, salience only captures the frequency of how often someone is “hit” by information about the EU, not what kind of information that is; it therefore makes sense that this aspect has an impact on identification rather than support. Hypothesis three stated that a higher salience increases the impact of social class on support and identification. This can be confirmed. In a context of minimum EU salience (smallest empirically existing value: 3.3 percent), a low social class goes along with a support value of 3.92; a high social class with a value of 4.16. In a context of maximum EU salience (15.3 percent), the support value of someone in a high social class changes to 4.22, while it decreases for someone in a low social class to 3.63.

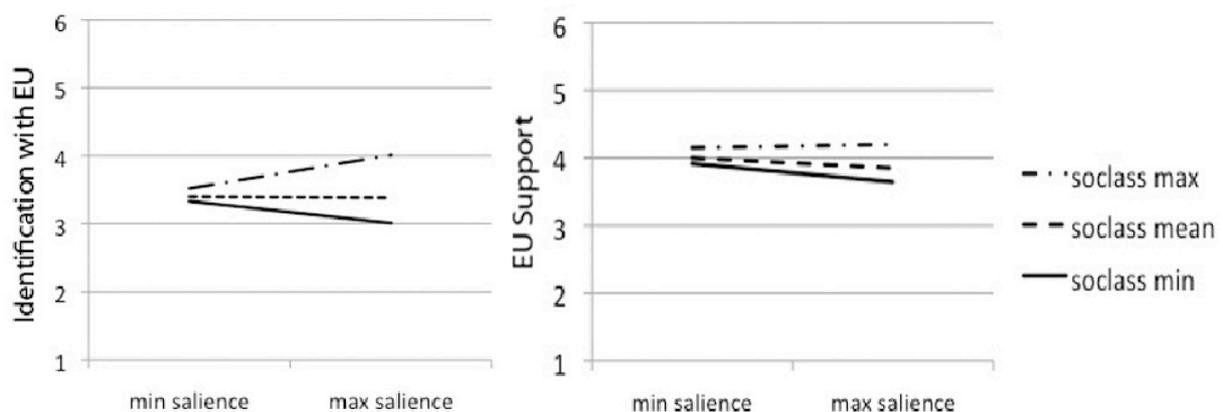
These differences become more apparent when it comes to identification. All other variables held constant at their means and a neutral tone, in a context of minimum EU salience, someone in a low social class has an identification value of 3.33, while someone in the highest social class has a value of 3.52. Against a background of maximum EU salience in the media, the same value for a person in the lowest social class decreases to 3.00, while it increases for a person in the highest social class to 4.04 (see figure one). According to this data, the increase from minimum EU salience to the maximum empirically existing value amplifies the gap in EU identification between people in different social classes by more than five times.

¹⁷ This again follows Steenbergen and Jones (2002) in their application of a p=0.1 significance level when analyzing EU support with a comparable multi-level regression model.

Table 2: Slopes-As-Outcome Models

	Identification	EU Support
	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>
<i>Intercept</i>	3.411***	4.05***
<i>Country Level Variables</i>		
<i>Tone of EU Coverage</i>	1.034	2.232**
<i>EU Salience</i>	-0.002	-0.013
<i>Individual Level Variables</i>		
<i>Social Class</i>	-0.008	0.038*
<i>Social Class x Tone</i>	0.035	-0.332 ⁺
<i>Social Class x Sal</i>	0.018***	0.007 ⁺
<i>Cognitive Mobilization</i>	0.243***	0.186***
<i>NP Consumption</i>	0.011*	0.008*
<i>TV Consumption</i>	0.007	-0.004
<i>L/R Orient.</i>	0.007	0.016
<i>Government Approval</i>	0.178***	0.260
<i>Variance Components</i>		
<i>Intercept</i>	0.270***	0.153***
<i>Social Class</i>	0.002	0.002**
<i>Cognitive Mobilization</i>	0.001 ⁺	0.004***
<i>L/R Orient.</i>	0.004***	0.004***
<i>Government Approval</i>	0.016***	0.014***
<i>Residual Variance</i>	1.66553	1.20159
<i>Level 2 cases</i>	22	22
<i>Level 1 cases</i>	17,467	17,600
<i>Bryk/Raudenbush L2-R²</i>	-0.034	0.060
<i>Bryk/Raudenbush L1-R²</i>	0.1178	0.1606
<i>McFadden-Pseudo-R²</i>	0.2135	0.2142
<i>NP consumption: newspaper consumption; TV consumption: television consumption; L/R Orient.: political left-right orientation; Sal = salience</i>		
<i>Figures show unstandardized regression coefficients; ⁺p=0.10, *p=0.05, **p=0.01, ***p=0.001; two-tailed significance tests; individual level variables grand mean centered, i.e. base line model refers to social class, cognitive mobilization, NP consumption, TV consumption, left-right orientation, and government approval being at their grand means (EU wide average) and tone/salience at zero; McFadden-Pseudo-R² based on models with fixed slopes; in both models all slopes are random except those for newspaper and television consumption – they have been fixed for there not being a significant cross country variation in regard to the effect of NP & TV consumption on identity and support; see Appendix for the equations of both models</i>		

In regard to social class and tone, one finds a positive, but not significant interaction term for identification, but a relatively strong negative and significant one for support. In a context of negative media cues on the EU, there are differences in people’s EU support according to their class, which do, however, become less as cues tend to be more positive (see figure two). A predominantly positive media coverage of the EU can for example entail a lot of arguments for European integration and its benefits, which then gives people in all classes good reasons for a more positive stance on this issue – and which might make it harder to keep a skeptical position. Since only (evaluative) support is based so much on benefits and ratings, it makes sense that this effect can be seen in regard to support rather than for identification. Hypothesis four is confirmed when it comes to support.



“min salience“ = smallest empirically existing percentage of EU issues in the media (3.3%); „max salience“ = highest empirically existing percentage of EU issues in the media (15.3%); “soclass min” = lowest social class category, i.e. „1“ on the five point scale; “soclass mean” = grand mean value, i.e. social class of 2.44; “social class max” = highest social class category on the five point scale; tone set to zero, i.e. neutral for these examples.

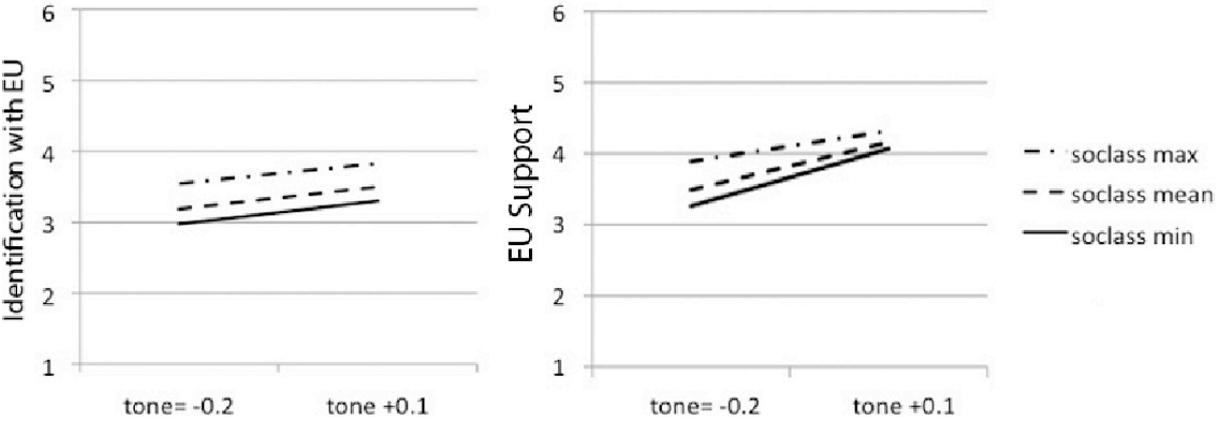
Figure 1: Effect of media salience of EU issues and social class on identification and EU support

In a positive media context, the support values for people in all considered classes converge slightly above 4 (support values for minimum/mean/maximum social class: 4.07/4.16/4.33). In a context of negative EU cues, the same support value for someone in the lowest class is 3.26 (a drop by 0.81 points), while it is still 3.91 (a drop by only 0.42 points) for someone in the highest class. Thus, the effect of tone on EU support depends very much on social class. A negative tone decreases EU support much more among people in lower classes than among those in higher ones.

The share of explained context level variation dropped both for identification and support. The share of individual level variance that can be explained remains almost the same. However, calculating the share of cross context variation in the effect of social class on EU support explained by the media context reveals an impressive figure of 43 percent for EU identification and 25 percent for support.¹⁸

¹⁸ The corresponding $L2-R_{BR}^2$ is 0.43 for EU identification and $L2-R_{BR}^2 = 0.25$ for support. The figures are based on a comparison of variance components of the random-intercept-random-slope models and the slopes-as-outcome models.

While it is particularly the salience of the EU in national public spheres that seems to be influential for identification, tone of coverage seems more crucial for (the more evaluative category of) EU support. Therefore, a simple answer on whether an emerging EPS is “good” for EU support is impossible. Given the interpretation of EU identification as diffuse, long-term and more stable support for a political system, its increase against a background of a higher salience of the EU in the media can be interpreted as a positive sign for European integration. Yet, not only the mere quantity of “Europe in the media” is crucial, but also what is covered and how it is covered. This becomes most apparent when comparing people in different class situations. Coverage including negative evaluations on the EU turned out to have a quite detrimental impact on EU support for those that consider themselves to belong to middle or low social classes, whereas those seeing themselves in higher classes seem to be rather untouched by (negative) evaluations on the EU in the media.



“tone = -0.2“ = most negative empirically existing tone average of EU issues in the media (-0.2); “tone = +0.1“ = most positive empirically existing tone average of EU issues in the media (+0.1); “soclass min” = lowest social class category, i.e. “1“ on the five point scale; “soclass mean” = grand mean value, i.e. social class of 2.44; “social class max” = highest social class category on the five point scale (=5); salience set to its mean (8.5%) for these examples.

Figure 2: Effect of tone of coverage and social class on identification and EU support

5. Discussion

As a part of a larger democratic deficit, this study considers the underdeveloped EPS a potential reason for low support of the idea of EU membership and limited identification with the supranational community. Rejecting the notion of a single pan-EPS, this study follows the suggestion to consider it an entity resting on Europeanized national public spheres. The goal was to find out whether the emergence of an EPS contributes to a diffusion of identification with the EU, as well as to an increase of support for the idea of EU membership.

While the mere increase of communications about the EU has no independent effect on EU support, the analysis shows that the tone of news is positively connected to higher EU support. Furthermore, the analysis shows that where tone of news is positive, people in different social classes are more similar

in their EU support than where the news environment is more negative. The data also suggests that a Europeanization of national public spheres seems to cause an amplification of the role of class affiliation in regard to both support and identification. Where the EU is more salient in the news media, people in higher and lower social classes differ much more in their identification with the EU and in their EU support.

What do the results imply for the emergence of an EPS, the diffusion of identification with the EU, and EU support? In a nutshell: the answer seems to be complex and a different one for Europeans that see themselves in different social classes. A higher salience of the EU in the media does not generally contribute to a diffusion of identification with the EU; such a process seems to be at work only in higher social classes: in higher classes a higher EU salience increases EU identification. A positive tone of media coverage on the EU seems to bring people closer together when it comes to EU support. But the findings can hardly be interpreted as a policy recommendation for the EU to come across more positively. Although this might be a remedy, it would also be naïve. If such attempts of the EU Commission to score with easily digestible positive information like introducing an EU-wide cap on roaming costs for cell phone users are sufficient, remains questionable. A strategy towards a higher EU support would rather need to approach the core of the problem: that only a specific fraction of EU citizens – i.e. those in higher social classes – thinks the community entails advantages for them. This study did not concentrate on whether this is the result of EU policies being focused on only a share of the people or if it is “only” a problem of how the EU is perceived. The study does demonstrate, however, that this is a crucial problem explaining low support for the EU and limited identification with the community. The evidence found suggests that an emerging EPS could increase the problem of low support by making people more aware that the EU entails (material) benefits only for some. It was found that where a national public sphere was more Europeanized, the class gap in EU support was much more pronounced.

At first glance, the results seem bad news for the question this paper tries to answer, i.e. if an emerging EPS is *good* for the EU in the sense that it contributes to a diffusion of support for European integration and individual level identification with the EU. The empirical evidence shows that the more people know about the community, the more likely they are to take a position towards the EU in accordance with their individual interests. If that is what is happening, the internal diffusion process taking place right now would be one bringing us further away from the permissive consensus (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970) towards a more critical public – one that is knowing, following, and restricting what is decided in Brussels. Against this background, policy changes allowing those who do not yet perceive the EU as being in their interest to do so in the future could then provide an important key to rising support levels for European integration and a diffusion of identification with the community. Seen from this perspective, one can comment on the question mentioned above and say that an emerging EPS *can* be good for the EU in the sense that it has the potential to contribute to diffusion processes leading to more identification with the EU and higher EU support.

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APPENDIX A: List of Variables

Dependent Variables

Name	Min.	Max.	Mean ^a	SD	Description
Identification with the EU	1	6	3.28	1.48	<p>Additive index based on someone's identification with the EU and proudness to be a citizen of the EU.</p> <p><i>Identification: Question item 171</i> "Do you ever think of yourself not only as a [country] citizen, but also as a citizen of the European Union? (1=never; 2= sometimes; 3=often)"</p> <p><i>Proudness: Question item 172</i> "Are you personally proud or not to be a citizen of the European Union?" (1=not at all; 4=very much)</p>
EU Support	1	6	3.76	1.25	<p>Additive index based on respondent's EU membership assessment and confidence that decisions taken by the EU are in his or her interest.</p> <p><i>Membership Support: Question item 155</i> "Generally speaking, do you think that [country] membership in the EU is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad ?" (1=a bad thing; 2=neither/nor; 3=a good thing)</p> <p><i>EU in respondents interest: Question item 213</i> "And how much confidence do you have that decisions made by the European Union will be in the interest of people like you?" (1=no confidence; 4=a lot of confidence)</p>

Country Level Independent Variables

Name	Min.	Max.	Mean ^a	SD	Description
Salience	3.29	15.26	8.47	3.36	<p>The media content analysis by Banducci and colleagues includes data of two television news programs and three newspapers from each of the 25 member states of the EU. For both outlets, the unit of coding and analysis is the individual news story. Intra- and inter-coder reliability tests showed agreement rates of 80 percent and above. The measures that were coded include the visibility of the EP elections in a story – i.e. its topic – as well as the story's tone. The differentiation between whether a story was domestic or European in nature was based on the actors that appeared in it. Actors such as persons (e.g. domestic politicians vs. EP candidates or EU Commission members), groups of persons (e.g. parties), institutions (e.g. the EP or national parliaments) or everything that neither falls into the categories of "European" or "domestic" (e.g. the Red Cross) were coded.</p> <p>Salience^b = (EU salience in newspaper + salience on television) / 2</p>
Tone	-0.2	0.1	-0.07	0.07	<p>It was coded whether stories included positive, predominantly positive, predominantly negative or negative evaluations or if coverage was neutral in that no evaluation was present; refers to newspapers & TV.</p>

Individual Level Independent Variables

Name	Min.	Max.	Mean^a	SD	Description
Cognitive Mobilization	1	6	3.69	1.24	Additive index consisting of education and interest in politics. <i>Education: Question item 216</i> "How old were you when you stopped full-time education?" Answers were merged into three categories: 1 (age 0-15), 2 (age 16-19), 3 (age 20 and above) <i>Interest in Politics: Question item 154</i> "To what extent would you say you are interested in politics?" (1=not at all; 4=very much).
Social Class	1	5	2.44	1.04	<i>Question Item 224</i> "If you were asked to chose one of these five names for your social class, which would you say you belong to - the working class (coded 1), the lower middle class (2), the middle class (3), the upper middle class (4) or the upper class (5)?"
Newspaper Consumption	0	7	3.9	2.75	<i>Question item 069:</i> "And how many days of the week do you read a newspaper?" (0=not at all; 7=every day)
Television Consumption	0	7	5.5	2.05	<i>Question item 034:</i> "Normally, how many days of the week do you watch the news on television?"
Left/Right-Orientation	1	10	5.39	2.38	<i>Question item 134:</i> "In political matters people talk of "the left" and "the right". What is your position? Please indicate your views using any number on a 10-point-scale. On this scale, where 1 means "left" and 10 means "right," which number best describes your position?"
Government Approval	1	3	1.86	0.94	<i>Question item 210:</i> "Let us now come back to [country]. Do you approve or disapprove the government's record to date?" (1=disapprove; 2=neither/ nor; 3=approve) ^c

a) grand mean; b) in countries for which the media data set did not provide values for EU salience on TV, the salience in newspapers-value was used instead to calculate the "total salience" variable; c) in countries where there is no "neither/nor" category, the "don't know" and "no answers" were put in the "neither/nor category" (refers only to government approval); Question item numbers based on EES 2004; all variables recoded: higher values indicate higher support

On Missing Cases:

The maximum number of level two cases available for involvement is 24 countries, while only 22 countries are included in the analysis. These differences occur, because while the media data set includes values for all 25 countries, the EES 2004 generally does not include individual level data for Malta reducing the maximum number of countries one can analyze to n=24. The number of countries is further reduced, because there is no individual level data for Lithuania and Sweden (n=22). The exclusion of these countries also explains a considerable share of the difference between the cases available in the EES 2004 (28861), and the individual level cases on which the results are based (around 17500). Further reasons for the reduction of cases are the exclusion of Northern Ireland and the omission of subjects giving no answer or saying "don't know" to any of the question items included in the analysis. It is common not to exclude this type of missing data by giving these cases, for example, the middle value of a question item. However, although such a procedure might increase the cases available for a regression analysis, it could distort the results. Since the total number of cases is still large enough when excluding missing cases, it was opted for this procedure.

Appendix B: Equations

Equations referring to models in table 1 (capital letters indicate country level variables)

$$\text{Identification with the EU}_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{social class}) + \beta_2 (\text{cognitive mobilization}) + \beta_3 (\text{np consumption}) + \beta_4 (\text{tv consumption}) + \beta_5 (\text{government approval}) + \beta_6 (\text{left right orientation}) + R_{ij}$$

$$\beta_0 = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} (\text{SALIENCE}) + \gamma_{02} (\text{TONE}) + U_{0j}$$

$$\beta_1 = \gamma_{10} + U_{1j}$$

$$\beta_2 = \gamma_{20} + U_{2j}$$

$$\beta_3 = \gamma_{30}$$

$$\beta_4 = \gamma_{40}$$

$$\beta_5 = \gamma_{50} + U_{5j}$$

$$\beta_6 = \gamma_{60} + U_{6j}$$

$$\text{EU Support}_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{social class}) + \beta_2 (\text{cognitive mobilization}) + \beta_3 (\text{np consumption}) + \beta_4 (\text{tv consumption}) + \beta_5 (\text{government approval}) + \beta_6 (\text{left right orientation}) + R_{ij}$$

$$\beta_0 = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} (\text{SALIENCE}) + \gamma_{02} (\text{TONE}) + U_{0j}$$

$$\beta_1 = \gamma_{10} + U_{1j}$$

$$\beta_2 = \gamma_{20} + U_{2j}$$

$$\beta_3 = \gamma_{30}$$

$$\beta_4 = \gamma_{40}$$

$$\beta_5 = \gamma_{50} + U_{5j}$$

$$\beta_6 = \gamma_{60} + U_{6j}$$

Equations referring to models table 2 (capital letters indicate country level variables)

$$\text{Identification with the EU}_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{social class}) + \beta_2 (\text{cognitive mobilization}) + \beta_3 (\text{np consumption}) + \beta_4 (\text{tv consumption}) + \beta_5 (\text{government approval}) + \beta_6 (\text{left right orientation}) + R_{ij}$$

$$\beta_0 = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} (\text{TOTAL SALIENCE}) + \gamma_{02} (\text{TONE}) + U_{0j}$$

$$\beta_1 = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11} (\text{TOTAL SALIENCE}) + \gamma_{12} (\text{TONE}) + U_{1j}$$

$$\beta_2 = \gamma_{20} + U_{2j}$$

$$\beta_3 = \gamma_{30}$$

$$\beta_4 = \gamma_{40}$$

$$\beta_5 = \gamma_{50} + U_{5j}$$

$$\beta_6 = \gamma_{60} + U_{6j}$$

$$\text{EU Support}_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{social class}) + \beta_2 (\text{cognitive mobilization}) + \beta_3 (\text{np consumption}) + \beta_4 (\text{tv consumption}) + \beta_5 (\text{government approval}) + \beta_6 (\text{left right orientation}) + R_{ij}$$

$$\beta_0 = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} (\text{TOTAL SALIENCE}) + \gamma_{02} (\text{TONE}) + U_{0j}$$

$$\beta_1 = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11} (\text{TOTAL SALIENCE}) + \gamma_{12} (\text{TONE}) + U_{1j}$$

$$\beta_2 = \gamma_{20} + U_{2j}$$

$$\beta_3 = \gamma_{30}$$

$$\beta_4 = \gamma_{40}$$

$$\beta_5 = \gamma_{50} + U_{5j}$$

$$\beta_6 = \gamma_{60} + U_{6j}$$