

# Who's Hot and Who's Not? Factors Influencing Public Perceptions of Current Party Popularity and Electoral Expectations

The International Journal of Press/Politics  
2015, Vol. 20(4) 458–477  
© The Author(s) 2015  
Reprints and permissions:  
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav  
DOI: 10.1177/1940161215596986  
ijpp.sagepub.com



**Thomas Zerback<sup>1</sup>, Carsten Reinemann<sup>1</sup>,  
and Angela Nienierza<sup>1</sup>**

## **Abstract**

This study analyzes how perceptions of the popularity of political parties (i.e., the current opinion climate) and expectations about parties' future electoral performance (i.e., the future opinion climate) are formed. Theoretically, the paper integrates research on the sources of public opinion perception and empirically draws on a representative survey carried out before the 2013 German federal election. We show that the perceived media slant and opinions perceived in one's personal surroundings are closely related to perceptions of party popularity, whereas individual recall of poll results and personal opinions about the parties are not. However, poll results are shown to be the single most important predictor of expectations about the parties' future electoral success.

## **Keywords**

opinion climate perception, electoral expectations, polls, poll effects, social projection, wishful thinking, media slant

Individual judgments about the opinions, attitudes, and potential voting decisions of other voters have attracted increasing scholarly attention in recent election studies. These studies focus primarily on electoral expectations, like, for example, individual assumptions about which party, candidate, or coalition might win an upcoming

---

<sup>1</sup>Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, Munich, Germany

## **Corresponding Author:**

Thomas Zerback, Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, Oettingenstraße 67, 80538 Munich, Germany.  
Email: zerback@ifkw.lmu.de

election. This growing interest in voters' expectations is driven mainly by the potential impact on voting decisions and electoral turnout—two effects that are especially important in multiparty systems where governments are usually formed by coalitions and smaller parties have to pass an electoral threshold.

Integrating various strands of research, we develop a path model that considers a wide range of factors potentially influencing perceptions of current party popularity and electoral expectations. Using survey data gathered before the 2013 German national election,<sup>1</sup> we show that—all else equal—electoral expectations are mainly driven by individual poll recall, whereas assessments of current party popularity are affected by perceptions of media slant and of opinions in personal social environments. Although our results underline the importance of media coverage as a source of expectations, effects of social projection were almost absent.

To date, research on electoral expectations has concentrated mostly on three aspects: First, scholars have examined the origins of expectations by investigating the information sources upon which voters rely when predicting election outcomes (Blais and Bodet 2006; Irwin and van Holsteyn 2002; Krizan et al. 2010). Second, the quality and/or accuracy of expectations has been addressed (Lewis-Beck and Skalaban 1989; Lewis-Beck and Tien 1999), and third, the effects of electoral expectations on political preferences and behaviors have been studied—most prominently in relation to voting intentions (Morwitz and Pluzinski 1996), election participation (Hoffmann and Klein 2013), and actual voting behavior (Bargsted and Kedar 2009). This paper belongs to the first category, examining the origins of party-related expectations and extending existing approaches in three ways:

First, research has focused largely on single sources of electoral expectations and, among those, particularly on published polls. In contrast to this rather narrow focus, and in accordance with more recent studies (e.g., Blais and Bodet 2006), we assume that published polls constitute just one of several factors that contribute to the formation of electoral expectations. Aside from the well-examined tendency for “wishful thinking,” which means that people tend to project their personal political opinions onto other citizens and their voting decisions (Krizan et al. 2010; Marks and Miller 1987), both perceptions of opinions in one's personal network (O'Gorman 1979) and media coverage (Gunther 1998) play important roles as sources that inform electoral expectations. Although there is evidence that nearly all of the factors mentioned above have an impact, an integrative investigation that allows their relative effects to be determined is still pending. Second—and in line with research on perceptions of public opinion (Shamir and Shamir 2000)—we examine voters' perceptions of other citizens from a temporal perspective, by considering perceptions of *current* party popularity and judgments about their *future* performance in an upcoming election (i.e., electoral expectations). Third, we investigate the sources of electoral expectations about a wide range of parties that vary in size and current political standing. Considering smaller parties in the context of electoral expectations is particularly important because they have the potential to influence election outcomes, as they often serve as coalition partners. According to Hobolt and Karp (2010), who analyzed 479 Western European governments from 1949 to 2010, more than half of these were formed through coalitions.

Similar proportions can be observed in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) states outside Europe as well (Armstrong and Duch 2010). As voters are aware of the potential power of the smaller parties (Blais et al. 2006; Meffert and Gschwend 2011), perceptions of their current standing and future success can also influence voting decisions.

## Perceptions of Current and Future Public Opinion

When reviewing the literature on perceptions of public opinion, two perspectives can be identified: On one hand, researchers have examined how people judge the *current* state of public opinion—for example, present public support for a party or candidate. On the other hand, perceptions of *future* public opinion have been investigated by asking citizens to assess opinion trends or predict the state of public opinion in the future. Voters' expectations of electoral performance are the most prominent example of such subjective predictions (Shamir and Shamir 2000). To assess electoral expectations, researchers usually ask citizens to estimate the likelihood of a certain election outcome (Blais et al. 2008), for example, to predict the winning candidate (Delavande and Manski 2012), coalitions between parties, vote shares, or the chances of small parties entering the parliament (Meffert et al. 2011).

The differentiation between current and future perceptions of public opinion was first introduced by Noelle-Neumann (1974) in her “spiral of silence” theory. She justifies the distinction by claiming that

if there is a divergence in the assessment of the present and future strengths of a particular view, it is the expectation of the future position which will determine the extent to which the individual is willing to expose himself. (p. 45)

In other words, it is assumed that expectations about the future state of public opinion will have stronger behavioral consequences than perceptions of the status quo. Noelle-Neumann (1974) also suggests that the differences between both judgments reflect ongoing changes in public opinion and serve, therefore, as indicators of its dynamic nature, whereas congruent judgments point to a rather stable situation.

From an empirical point of view, assessments of current and future opinion climates are, in fact, often correlated (Marsh 1985; Petric and Pinter 2002). However, to date, it is unclear how the two relate to each other. Existing theoretical approaches consider assessments of current public opinion to be a source of future expectations (Petric and Pinter 2002; Taylor 1982), whereas most empirical studies do not link them in a causal way (e.g., Marsh 1985; Moy et al. 2001). In the current study, we follow the former view, assuming that people who perceive a party to be popular currently will also expect that party to be successful in an upcoming election.

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** The higher a person rates a political party's current popularity, the more favorable expectations that person will hold regarding the party's future electoral success.

## Sources of Public Opinion Perceptions

Social psychologists, as well as political and communication scientists, have identified various sources of public opinion perceptions and electoral expectations. Before we begin to examine these factors empirically, we will discuss existing theoretical approaches and empirical research.

### *Social projection*

One of the most stable phenomena in social psychology is the human tendency to assume that other people hold opinions, attitudes, or show behaviors that are mostly similar to one's own (Marks and Miller 1987). This effect is also known as "social projection," although where opinions are concerned, the terms "looking-glass effect" (Fields and Schuman 1976) and "false-consensus effect" (Ross et al. 1977) are more common. Numerous studies have reported (moderate) correlations between personal opinion and perceptions of public opinion (Mullen et al. 1985) though the exact reasons behind this relationship remain unclear (Marks and Miller 1987).

Empirical studies have demonstrated that the projection of opinions occurs in relation to a wide range of issues (Wojcieszak and Price 2009) and can also reduce the accuracy of public opinion perceptions (O'Gorman 1979). Furthermore, social projection is attenuated by heterogeneous social networks, in which individuals have higher chances encountering disagreement, which serves as a corrective factor (Wojcieszak and Price 2009).

The effects of social projection are especially prevalent when people assess future public opinion (Shamir 1995). In this regard, most studies have concentrated on how electoral expectations are influenced by personal political attitudes or preferences. It has been shown repeatedly that, compared with supporters of other political camps, voters tend to expect their preferred candidate or party to have greater success in a forthcoming election (Krizan et al. 2010; Meffert et al. 2011; Miller et al. 2012). This effect is also known as "wishful thinking" and it persists even when people receive more objective information about others (e.g., the results of election polls; Delavande and Manski 2012).

All in all, existing research suggests that personal opinions about parties are positively correlated with (1) perceptions of their current public popularity and (2) expectations about their future electoral performance. This leads us to put forward the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 2a (H2a):** The more positive a person's personal opinion is about a party, the more positively that person will assess the party's current popularity within the general population.

**Hypothesis 2b (H2b):** The more positive a person's personal opinion is about a party, the more favorable expectations that person will hold regarding the party's future electoral success.

### *Media coverage: Polls and general media slant*

The assumption that the media can influence perceptions of public opinion is not new (Katz 1982; Noelle-Neumann 1974). In fact, it is a view that frequently has been empirically supported (Gunther 1998; Mutz and Soss 1997; Tsfati et al. 2013). Some authors have even concluded that the media is far more successful in telling people what others think than in exerting a direct persuasive influence on their own attitudes and behaviors (Mutz 1998). Previous research indicates that there are two types of media cues that affect people's perceptions of public opinion: explicit cues and implicit cues (Zerback et al. 2015).

*Explicit cues* describe public opinion in a direct and aggregated way. Most important in this context are public opinion polls, which have become an integral part of political media coverage across western democracies (Brettschneider 2008; de Vreese and Semetko 2002; Lavrakas and Traugott 2000). As well as polls, subjective statements can also refer explicitly to public opinion; for example, a politician might declare that "Most European citizens support a more restrictive position on immigration." Such statements represent a considerable proportion of political coverage (Donsbach and Weisbach 2005; Reinemann et al. 2013). However, because of the importance of published polls in election coverage, we assume that they still constitute the main cues to public opinion. Moreover, research suggests that published polls play a key role when voters assess the current climate of opinion and future election outcomes. The effect seems to be especially prevalent among those who are highly involved and/or closely following a campaign (Blais and Bodet 2006; Irwin and van Holsteyn 2002; Meffert et al. 2011) and increases as the election approaches (Krizan and Sweeny 2013). Furthermore, polls have been shown to affect expectations about the success of certain party coalitions, whether small parties will enter a parliament (Meffert et al. 2011), and expected vote shares (Irwin and van Holsteyn 2002). These effects are especially relevant to multiparty systems that often have coalition governments involving two or more (smaller) parties—and even more so in electoral systems that impose electoral thresholds. Based on these findings, we consider published polls to be an important media cue that influences perceptions of current party popularity and electoral expectations, leading us to the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 3a (H3a):** The higher the poll result is that a person can recall for a political party, the more positively that person will assess the party's current popularity within the general population.

**Hypothesis 3b (H3b):** The higher a poll result is that a person can recall for a political party, the more favorable expectations that person will hold regarding the party's future electoral success.

*Implicit cues* are elements of media coverage that do not refer directly to public opinion and therefore require further cognitive elaboration by recipients. Among these, the general slant of news coverage (Gunther 1998; Gunther et al. 2001) is probably the most important. Regarding general media slant, the "persuasive press

inference” (PPI) suggests that people tend to think that the slant of coverage will have persuasive effects on other citizens (Gunther 1998; Gunther and Storey 2003). Therefore, they will assume that today’s coverage is tomorrow’s public opinion. The PPI has been supported by several studies and on a wide range of issues (e.g., Gunther and Christen 2002). These studies have also shown that perceptions of public opinion follow *perceptions* of media slant rather than actual media slant (Christen et al. 2002). This is important to note because perceived media slant can vary considerably, depending on a recipient’s personal opinion (*hostile media perception*; Vallone et al. 1985). We therefore propose the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 4a (H4a):** The more positively a person perceives the slant of media coverage about a party, the more positively that person will assess that party’s current popularity within the general population.

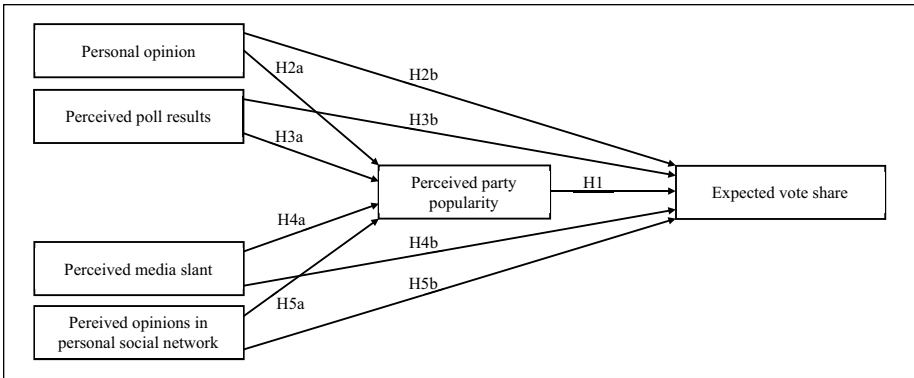
**Hypothesis 4b (H4b):** The more positively a person perceives the slant of media coverage about a party, the more favorable expectations that person will hold regarding the party’s future electoral success.

### *Personal social networks*

People’s personal social surroundings can be considered to play a decisive role in the formation of public opinion perceptions. Davison (1958) describes how people (accidentally or voluntarily) gather opinions from others to form impressions about the distribution of views in their immediate environment or in society in general. What he calls “person sampling” closely resembles the role of personal social networks in the “spiral of silence” (Noelle-Neumann 1974) and in more recent works (Wojcieszak and Price 2009: 29). According to Noelle-Neumann, individuals receive various signals from their personal surroundings and interpret them as indicators of the climate of opinion. Among these signals are publicly shown behaviors (e.g., wearing buttons, taking part in demonstrations, applauding a speaker) and statements made in public (Noelle-Neumann 1974; Shamir 1995).

Unfortunately, there are only a few studies that have examined the impact of personal networks on public opinion perception directly (e.g., O’Gorman 1979; Wojcieszak and Price 2009). Such research suggests that personal opinions tend to be rather similar to the opinions held in close social surroundings (e.g., those held by family and friends); a finding that has been explained by the distinct social homogeneity of interpersonal networks (Boomgaarden 2014; Mutz 1995). Accordingly, the probability of being confronted with different views increases when personal networks become more heterogeneous—for example, in surroundings that are socially more distant, like the workplace (Mutz 2006). Being confronted with opposing views also affects perceptions of public opinion by reducing bias caused by social projection (Wojcieszak and Price 2009) thus making public opinion perceptions more accurate (O’Gorman 1979).

People’s personal social environment may also influence their expectations regarding the outcome of elections. This notion is supported by studies investigating the effect of geographical locations (e.g., regions, towns, or electoral districts) on outcome



**Figure 1.** Factors influencing perceived party popularity and electoral expectations.

expectations (Babad et al. 1992; Meffert et al. 2011). Babad et al. (1992) call this the “neighborhood effect.” However, existing studies tend to compare large geographical regions with each other, thus overlooking the effect of the closer social environment. With this in mind, we propose our last two hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 5a (H5a):** The more positively a person perceives the opinions about a party in the closer personal social environment, the more positively that person will assess the party’s current popularity within the general population.

**Hypothesis 5b (H5b):** The more positively a person perceives the opinions about a party in the closer personal social environment, the more favorable expectations that person will hold regarding the party’s future electoral success.

### Analytical model

Based on these considerations, we propose a path model that integrates perceptions of current party popularity and electoral expectations with the different sources informing those perceptions (Figure 1). The model enables us (1) to estimate the relative impact of the various sources, while controlling for other factors; (2) to compare effect patterns for perceptions of current and future climate-of-opinion perceptions; and (3) to analyze the indirect effects of information sources on expectations, as mediated by their perceived current popularity.

### Method

To test our hypotheses, we conducted a regionally representative telephone survey with 1,012 Berlin citizens in the run-up to the 2013 German federal election. The survey was carried out by the Social Science Survey Center of a German University two weeks before the election, on September 22.<sup>2</sup> The respondents answered a series of questions about the key variables included in our model.

### *Personal Opinions about Parties*

Personal opinions about the seven most important parties (Christian Democratic Union / Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), Social Democratic Party (SPD), Green Party, Free Democratic Party (FDP), The Left, Pirate Party, and the Alternative for Germany (AfD)) competing in the election were measured by the following question: “Now we are interested in what you personally think about the political parties. Please tell us, in general, whether you hold a positive or a negative opinion about the different parties. What about the [party]?” The respondents answered the question using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (“very negative opinion”) to 5 (“very positive opinion”).

### *Perceived Opinion in Personal Networks*

The respondents were also asked to assess how those in their immediate social environment feel about the parties: “Now we are interested in your closer personal surrounding, for example your family and friends. What opinions do they hold about the different parties?” Again, the respondents used a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (“very negative opinion”) to 5 (“very positive opinion”) to answer the question.

### *Perceived Slant of Media Coverage*

The participants indicated their evaluation of the general media slant regarding every party. Once more, a 5-point Likert-type scale was used (from 1 “very negative” to 5 “very positive”) to answer the question: “And how do you think the media has covered the various parties over the last week? I will read the names of the parties to you again; you tell me whether you think the media has portrayed that party positively or negatively in general.”

### *Recall of Poll Results*

To measure individual recall of current poll results, we asked how often the respondents had engaged with polls within the last week. Those who indicated that they had seen polls were asked whether they could recall the poll share for each party (“Can you remember what share the parties had in the last poll that you saw? What about the [party]?”).

### *Perception of Current Party Popularity (Currently Perceived Public Opinion)*

The respondents were asked to assess the current popularity of each party:

Now think about the political parties again. This time, we would like to know how the Germans in general feel about the parties. I will read the names of each party to you; you tell me whether you think the Germans hold a negative or positive opinion about that



party. Please use values from 1 to 5. "1" means that the Germans hold a very negative opinion about the party, "5" means that they hold a very positive opinion. You can use the values in between to rate your judgment. What opinion do the Germans hold about the [party]?

### *Electoral Expectations (Perceived Future Public Opinion)*

Perceptions of the future climate of opinion were measured via expected vote shares for each party in the upcoming election ("Irrespective of the current situation, what vote shares do you think the different parties will achieve on September 22? What vote share will the [party] achieve?").

## **Results**

The assumed relationships between perceptions of party popularity, electoral expectations, and their potential sources were analyzed using path models estimated with the Mplus 7.0 software package. Path models allow estimating the effects of several independent on several dependent variables; furthermore, they offer the possibility of including mediating variables. In our analysis, for example, we can determine the indirect effects of the four key sources on the expectations mediated by the perception of current party popularity. All the models presented here are saturated, meaning that the information in the data (variances, covariances) is just sufficient to estimate the model parameters (standardized path coefficients and  $R^2$ ) but not to calculate model-fit-indices. Consequently, the quality of each model is assessed on the basis of the variance it explains ( $R^2$ ).

### *Current Party Popularity*

The parties included in the analysis differ with respect to how well perceptions of their current popularity can be explained by the four sources (Table 1). The amount of variance explained seems to be related to the size of the party and by the time it already is an established part of the party system. Popularity judgments regarding the two larger, well-established parties, the CDU/CSU ( $R^2 = .09$ ) and SPD ( $R^2 = .13$ ), can hardly be traced back to the independent variables in the model, whereas in the case of the smaller parties (the Green Party, the FDP, The Left, and the Pirate Party), considerable parts of popularity judgments can be explained ( $R^2$  between .19 and .33). For the AfD, which was founded just a few months before the election,  $R^2$  is even higher ( $R^2 = .49$ ). This may be due to the fact that voters did not have any prior, long-term experiences with this party, its image, or its former electoral success. In assessing the AfD's popularity, therefore, they had to be dependent mostly on the information sources included in the model.

Looking at the relative impact of the predictors across all the parties, one dominant pattern can be observed: Perceptions of media slant and personal networks were the two most important sources of perceived current party popularity. Perceived media

**Table 1.** Explaining Perceptions of Current Party Popularity\* (Standardized Path Coefficients and Standard Errors).

Perceptions of the Current Popularity of Parties (Current Climate-of-Opinion)							
	CDU/CSU (n = 568)	SPD (n = 566)	Green Party (n = 513)	FDP (n = 488)	The Left (n = 442)	Pirate Party (n = 309)	AfD (n = 259)
Direct effects							
Personal opinion	.04 (.05)	.03 (.05)	.05 (.05)	.22*** (.04)	.02 (.06)	.20*** (.06)	.12 (.07)
Perceived opinion in personal network	.13** (.05)	.21*** (.05)	.28*** (.05)	.27*** (.04)	.23*** (.06)	.20*** (.06)	.40*** (.07)
Perceived slant of media coverage	.22*** (.04)	.20*** (.04)	.25*** (.04)	.26*** (.04)	.30*** (.04)	.31*** (.05)	.33*** (.05)
Recalled survey results	.04 (.04)	.09* (.04)	.07 (.04)	-.03 (.04)	.15*** (.04)	.05 (.05)	.08 (.05)
Controls							
Gender	.01 (.04)	.07 (.04)	-.05 (.04)	.08 (.04)	.08* (.04)	.07 (.05)	.05 (.05)
Age	-.08 (.04)	-.05 (.04)	-.05 (.04)	-.01 (.04)	.04 (.04)	-.08 (.05)	-.06 (.05)
Interest in the election	.08* (.04)	.02 (.04)	.01 (.04)	.00 (.04)	-.05 (.04)	-.11* (.05)	-.04 (.05)
R <sup>2</sup>	.09***	.13***	.19***	.23***	.24***	.33***	.49***

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001. Parties included: Christian Democratic Union / Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), Social Democratic Party (SPD), Green Party, Free Democratic Party (FDP), The Left, Pirate Party, and the Alternative for Germany (AfD)

slant was found to be the single best predictor for the CDU/CSU, The Left, and the Pirates. In the case of the AfD, personal networks were most influential, whereas for the SPD, the Green Party, and the FDP, the effects of perceived media slant and personal network opinions were about the same size. So the more positive the respondents perceived party-specific media coverage and the opinions in their personal networks to be, the better they rated the party's popularity within the general population. Surprisingly, projection effects did not occur consistently—only for the FDP and the Pirate Party. In these cases, people with positive opinions about the parties tended to perceive them as being more popular. It is also noteworthy that recalled poll results are the weakest of all the predictors, although, compared with the others, they constitute a more objective source of information through which to judge current party popularity. The results show that poll recall only slightly affected the popularity ratings of the SPD and The Left (Table 1).

### *Electoral Expectations*

We will now turn to the expected vote shares as our central dependent variable. As depicted in Figure 1, perceptions of current party popularity now serve as an additional potential predictor of electoral expectations. When compared with perceptions of party popularity, the results show that electoral expectations can be explained better by the independent variables ( $R^2$  between .20 and .47; Table 2). However, the pattern of influences is different: Perceived media slant remained a significant predictor in just two cases (CDU/CSU and SPD), and similarly, the perception of opinions in one's personal network retained significance in relation to just three parties (CDU/CSU, SPD, and Pirate Party). All the other effects were small. Social projection was also evident; however, its effect was relatively weak (CDU/CSU, Green Party, and FDP). The single most important variable explaining electoral expectations was poll recall, which exerted a moderate (and, in some cases, a strong) influence. Thus, it can be concluded that the higher the poll results people recalled for a party, the higher they rated its expected vote share on Election Day. Furthermore, expected vote shares were influenced by perceptions of a party's current popularity. Although this was the case for two parties only (FDP and AfD), current popularity can still be considered a strong predictor—especially in the case of the newly founded AfD. Moreover, the effects of poll recall were smallest for these two parties. This means that expectations about vote shares were rather independent from poll results and more affected by the other predictors. This is especially interesting because the question of whether they would pass the election threshold or not was discussed very intensively in the media.<sup>3</sup>

Path analyses also revealed some indirect effects on expectations in the case of the FDP and the AfD, which were mediated by the perceptions of their current popularity. For the FDP, we found that indirect effects of personal opinion, perceived opinions in personal networks, and the perceived tone of media coverage were significant.

**Table 2.** Explaining Electoral Expectations (Vote Share; Standardized Path Coefficients and Standard Errors).

	Expectations of Election Outcome					
	Share of Votes					
	CDU/CSU (n = 568)	SPD (n = 566)	Green Party (n = 513)	FDP (n = 488)	The Left (n = 442)	Pirate Party (n = 309)
Direct effects						
Personal opinion	<b>.13***</b> (.04)	.05 (.03)	<b>.15**</b> (.05)	<b>.14**</b> (.05)	-.01 (.06)	.04 (.05)
Perceived opinion in personal network	<b>.08*</b> (.04)	<b>.08*</b> (.03)	-.02 (.05)	.05 (.05)	.02 (.06)	<b>.12*</b> (.06)
Perceived slant of media coverage	<b>-.08*</b> (.03)	<b>.08**</b> (.03)	-.02 (.04)	-.03 (.04)	.03 (.05)	.07 (.05)
Recalled survey results	<b>.60***</b> (.03)	<b>.63***</b> (.03)	<b>.46***</b> (.04)	<b>.34***</b> (.04)	<b>.44***</b> (.04)	<b>.57***</b> (.04)
Perceived current popularity	.03 (.03)	-.01 (.03)	.04 (.04)	<b>.13**</b> (.05)	.01 (.04)	<b>.08</b> (.05)
Indirect effects						
Personal opinion	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.01 (.01)	<b>.03**</b> (.01)	.00 (.00)	.02 (.01)
Perceived opinion in personal network	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.01 (.01)	<b>.04**</b> (.01)	.00 (.01)	<b>.10***</b> (.02)
Perceived slant of media coverage	.01 (.01)	.00 (.01)	.01 (.01)	<b>.04**</b> (.01)	.00 (.02)	<b>.09***</b> (.03)
Recalled survey results	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)	.02 (.01)
Controls						
Gender (female)	<b>.10***</b> (.03)	<b>.08**</b> (.03)	.05 (.04)	<b>.10**</b> (.04)	-.04 (.04)	<b>.11*</b> (.05)
Age	<b>.09**</b> (.03)	<b>.07*</b> (.03)	<b>.09*</b> (.04)	-.07 (.04)	.01 (.04)	-.04 (.05)
Interest in election	.02 (.03)	-.02 (.03)	.02 (.04)	.06 (.04)	.01 (.04)	.04 (.04)
R <sup>2</sup>	<b>.47***</b>	<b>.47***</b>	<b>.26***</b>	<b>.22***</b>	<b>.20***</b>	<b>.42***</b>

Note. Indirect effects are calculated as products of coefficients along the respective model paths. Because products of coefficients are not normally distributed, significance testing is based on a corrected test (Bias corrected bootstrap; MacKinnon et al. 2004). Parties included: Christian Democratic Union / Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), Social Democratic Party (SPD), Green Party, Free Democratic Party (FDP), The Left, Pirate Party, and the Alternative for Germany (AfD).

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

## Discussion

Voters' perceptions of the climate of opinion in election campaigns can have far-reaching consequences because they might impact individual voting decisions. This is especially the case in multiparty systems, where governments are usually formed from coalitions, and in electoral systems with electoral thresholds. Investigating such perceptions and their sources is not only relevant with respect to large political parties but also for smaller ones, due to their role as potential kingmakers. Voters' expectations about whether such small parties have a chance of entering parliament or not may influence voting decisions and therefore affect the outcome of an election. This study constitutes an extension to prior research on electoral expectations in three ways: First, and in line with existing theoretical approaches to research in public opinion perception, it has considered current and future political opinion climates. Second, this is the first study to compare the impact of several sources of public opinion perceptions at once. Third, this paper has taken into account both larger and smaller parties. Our results therefore offer new insights into the origins of electoral expectations in western democracies with multiparty systems, coalition governments, and/or electoral thresholds. The results can be summarized as follows:

1. Perceptions of current party popularity are influenced by perceived media slant and the opinions that respondents perceive within their personal networks (H4a and H5a are confirmed for all parties). In contrast to our assumption, poll results and personal opinions only play a minor role (H2a and H3a confirmed for two parties). This result also supports Noelle-Neumann's (1974) assertion that judgments about the climate of opinion can be derived from the immediate *and* the mediated social environment. The limited effect of poll results may be explained by their complexity; percentage shares often need to be interpreted and put into context for further inferences to be made. Most people probably have difficulty deducing the popularity of a party solely from numbers, except when very low or very high poll results are obtained.

Another interesting finding is that projection effects were almost completely absent in this study. The respondents rarely aligned their judgments about the opinions of others with their personal opinions. The reason might be that, in contrast to most previous studies, we controlled for factors that are partly confounded with personal views—most importantly the perception of opinions in personal networks. This suggests that studies not controlling for this aspect might overestimate the impact of personal opinions (see also Table 3). In some cases, projection effects may be a result of mere social selection because personal networks are often characterized by attitudinal homogeneity, which makes opinions that are similar to one's own more salient and accessible (Marks and Miller 1987).

2. The importance of the information sources is entirely different when it comes to electoral expectations: Poll results as recalled by the respondents are the most dominant factor (H3b is confirmed for all parties). Other sources are only

**Table 3.** Zero-Order Correlations (Minimum–Maximum across All Seven Parties).

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Personal opinion	—					
2. Perceived poll results	.02*–.18**	—				
3. Perceived media slant	.07*–.30**	–.01–.13*	—			
4. Perceived opinions in personal social network	.37*–.51**	.01–.10*	.06–.32**	—		
5. Perceived party popularity	.20*–.48**	.04–.21*	.26*–.52**	.13*–.43**	—	
6. Expected vote share	.10*–.29**	.38*–.67**	.03–.11**	.10*–.22**	.11*–.36**	—

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

influential in some cases, and their effects are much weaker (H2b, H4b, and H5b are confirmed only for two/three parties). A possible reason for the dominance of poll results might be that people perceive them as the most applicable source of information when predicting election outcomes, whereas other sources may be judged less valid. Supporting this assumption, polls covered by the media are often presented as forecasts rather than snapshots of the parties’ current standing, which might also foster their interpretation as valid predictors of future election outcomes (Weimann 1990). And although perceptions of the social environment and general media slant hardly influence electoral expectations directly, at least in some cases (FDP, AfD), they exert indirect effects mediated through perceptions of current party popularity.

3. Perceptions of current party popularity affect outcome expectations, at least in some cases (H1 is confirmed for two parties).
4. Besides the similarities in effect patterns across parties, we also found some differences between them. First, the amount of variance explained by the predictors in our models differs considerably. Second, not all predictors are equally important for all parties suggesting that popularity perceptions and expectations may, in some cases, depend on the specific characteristics of individual parties or the situational context of the election. During the 2013 German federal election, the sizes of the parties and the question of whether they were well-established parts of the party system seem to have had an important impact in this respect. For example, the perceived popularity and chances of success of the newly founded AfD can be explained particularly well by the sources we considered in our model. We assume that for a new party no prior experiences (e.g., election results and long-term developments of polls) exist that could have informed respondents’ estimates of public opinion. In contrast, expectations for the FDP, which has been in the federal parliament since 1949, were completely independent from the poll results that respondents remembered.
5. Although most respondents were able to recall poll results, others were not and therefore represent interesting cases for further analysis. Referring to this group, our data provide preliminary support for the conclusion that those people do not

entirely differ regarding the importance they ascribe to other sources of electoral expectations. Nevertheless, the case of lacking poll knowledge raises the question if long-term sources like the ones mentioned above may gain importance as substitutes in this case.

In addition to drawing a clearer picture of the relative influence of various information sources, our results also point to the responsibility of pollsters and the media. The information they provide, when conducting and reporting election polls, plays a crucial role in informing citizens' perceptions of political reality and therefore can also influence political behavior—especially in multiparty systems.

The present study has certain limitations. First of all, we have investigated a single election in a specific situational context, which means that some results may be election-specific. Future analyses should examine whether the findings can be generalized to other elections or even to nonelection times (e.g., Shamir and Shamir 2000). The limited setting of Berlin, however, does not impede the validity of our results because we were interested in conducting a theory-driven investigation of relationships between perceptions of public opinion and their sources that should be independent of whether the analyses are based on a regionally or nationally representative sample. What has to be stressed, though, is the fact that we focused on perceptions. Although we would argue that it is exactly those perceptions that potentially bring about behavioral consequences, our analyses, in a strict sense, cannot prove the actual effects of media slant or published polls. To do that, content analytical data on media slant and poll results would have to be included in the study. It should also be stated that, due to the cross-sectional design, the paths within our model should not be interpreted in a strict, causal manner. However, all the relationships assumed here are derived from careful theoretical considerations.

Another point worthy of discussion is the measures that we used. Relying on a 5-point scale to measure perceived party popularity might have affected the correlations with the percentage scales that we utilized to assess expectations because, in both cases, the respondents could differentiate their answers to varying degrees. Compared with the wider scale (0–100 percent), the narrow 5-point scale could have resulted in an underestimation of the relationship with the percentage scale.

Also the measurement of perceptions of current and future opinion climates has to be reflected upon critically. Probably, a part of the strong correlation between remembered poll results and electoral expectations is due to the formal similarity of the percentage scales used in these cases. Although we cannot rule out the possibility that this correlation is related to measurement, additional analysis suggests that it is probably not: Using a 5-point Likert-type scale, we also asked respondents whether they expected the smaller parties to exceed the election threshold of 5 percent and make it into parliament (5-point Likert-type scale: 1 = “clearly pass,” 2 = “narrowly pass,” 3 = “exactly get 5 percent,” 4 = “narrowly miss,” and 5 = “clearly miss” the threshold). The effect of recalled poll results still remains strong and significant when expectations are measured employing the 5-point-scale ( $\beta = .24-.40$ ). Hence, it can be suggested that the strong impact on expectations is not related merely to measurement.

Furthermore, substantial differences between the two constructs examined might have contributed to the findings obtained here. For instance, it can be argued that the

**Table 4.** Sample Descriptives\* (*n* = 1,012; Means and Standard Deviations).

	CDU	SPD	Green Party	FDP	The Left	Pirate Party	AfD
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
Personal opinion (5-point scale)	2.78 (1.06) <i>n</i> = 994	2.96 (0.94) <i>n</i> = 998	2.75 (1.13) <i>n</i> = 985	1.79 (1.06) <i>n</i> = 985	2.36 (1.22) <i>n</i> = 981	1.84 (1.04) <i>n</i> = 917	1.63 (1.02) <i>n</i> = 748
Perceived opinions in personal social network (5-point scale)	2.77 (1.14) <i>n</i> = 903	3.15 (0.88) <i>n</i> = 901	2.92 (1.08) <i>n</i> = 897	1.81 (0.95) <i>n</i> = 903	2.35 (1.16) <i>n</i> = 897	1.82 (1.02) <i>n</i> = 876	1.60 (0.98) <i>n</i> = 773
Perceived slant of media coverage (5-point scale)	3.56 (0.82) <i>n</i> = 922	3.19 (0.80) <i>n</i> = 928	2.86 (0.77) <i>n</i> = 887	2.61 (0.88) <i>n</i> = 879	2.47 (0.89) <i>n</i> = 879	1.94 (0.92) <i>n</i> = 744	2.00 (0.99) <i>n</i> = 647
Recalled survey results (%)	39.3 (5.3) <i>n</i> = 680	27.7 (5.4) <i>n</i> = 671	11.5 (3.6) <i>n</i> = 614	5.8 (2.8) <i>n</i> = 589	8.5 (3.6) <i>n</i> = 536	3.6 (2.1) <i>n</i> = 419	3.1 (1.8) <i>n</i> = 376
Perceived party popularity (5-point scale)	3.61 (0.77) <i>n</i> = 974	3.18 (0.70) <i>n</i> = 976	2.85 (0.75) <i>n</i> = 972	2.09 (0.80) <i>n</i> = 973	2.15 (0.86) <i>n</i> = 966	1.77 (0.90) <i>n</i> = 926	1.76 (0.92) <i>n</i> = 764
Expected vote share	38.6 (6.8) <i>n</i> = 932	30.4 (7.1) <i>n</i> = 934	12.7 (6.1) <i>n</i> = 924	6.7 (5.3) <i>n</i> = 924	8.9 (6.5) <i>n</i> = 918	4.2 (4.1) <i>n</i> = 891	3.5 (4.4) <i>n</i> = 822

\*Parties included: Christian Democratic Union / Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), Social Democratic Party (SPD), Green Party, Free Democratic Party (FDP), The Left, Pirate Party, and the Alternative for Germany (AfD)

formation of outcome expectations is also influenced by long-term factors and considerations such as previous election results and perception of long-term party affiliations. This would also help to explain why our models were especially effective in explaining expectations about the performance of the relatively new Pirate Party and the AfD.

Despite the limitations mentioned above, the present study has shown that the formation of public opinion perceptions in election campaigns is more complex than prior research has assumed. The processes involved and—most importantly—the behavioral consequences of voting decisions should be investigated further in light of these results. Future studies should replicate our analysis to investigate whether the patterns of influence we found can be generalized to other elections, other national contexts, or even nonelection periods. Finally, the considerable number of voters without any poll knowledge deserves further attention to determine which information they use instead to assess public opinion and to form electoral expectations.

**Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Funding**

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Notes**

1. The paper is not based on research that was funded entirely or partially by an outside source.



2. Participants lived in households with a private telephone connection and were eligible to vote. A random sample of households was drawn (random-digit dialing [RDD]). Respondents were selected via the last-birthday method; the maximum number of contacts was ten—52 percent of respondents were male, with an average age of 55 years ( $SD = 17.6$ ); 50 percent were qualified to enter higher education; 84 percent said that the result of the election was “important,” or “very important” to them; and 63 percent held a long-term party identification. This means that like in other surveys on similar topics, respondents were rather male, older, better educated, and politically more involved compared with the general population. The structure of respondents thus is more similar to those actually participating in the election.
3. Not all respondents were able to recall poll results, especially for the smaller parties (see Table 4). A reanalysis of the data including only persons without poll recall indicated that their perceptions of current party popularity were still mainly determined by the opinions they perceived in their social environment and by perceived media slant. However, the models predicting electoral expectations performed considerably less well, which underlines the important role of poll perception as a predictor.

## References

- Armstrong, David A., and Raymond M. Duch. 2010. “Why Can Voters Anticipate Post-election Coalition Formation Likelihoods?” *Electoral Studies* 29 (3): 308–15.
- Babad, Elisha, Michael Hills, and Michael O’Driscoll. 1992. “Factors Influencing Wishful Thinking and Predictions of Election Outcomes.” *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 13 (4): 461–76.
- Bargsted, Matias A., and Orit Kedar. 2009. “Coalition-Targeted Duvergerian Voting: How Expectations Affect Voter Choice under Proportional Representation.” *American Journal of Political Science* 53 (2): 307–23.
- Blais, André, John H. Aldrich, Indridi H. Indridason, and Renan Levine. 2006. “Do Voters Vote for Government Coalitions? Testing Downs’ Pessimistic Conclusion.” *Party Politics* 12 (6): 691–705.
- Blais, André, and Marc Andre Bodet. 2006. “How Do Voters form Expectations about the Parties’ Chances of Winning the Election?” *Social Science Quarterly* 87 (3): 477–93.
- Blais, André, Elisabeth Gidengil, Patrick Fournier, Neil Nevitte, and Bruce M. Hicks. 2008. “Measuring Expectations: Comparing Alternative Approaches.” *Electoral Studies* 27 (2): 337–43.
- Boomgaarden, Hajo G. 2014. “Interpersonal and Mass Mediated Political Communication.” In *Political Communication*, ed. Carsten Reinemann, 469–88. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Brettschneider, Frank. 2008. “The News Media’s Use of Public Opinion Polls.” In *The SAGE Handbook of Public Opinion Research*, ed. Wolfgang Donsbach and Michael W. Traugott, 479–86. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Christen, Cindy T., Prathana Kannaovakun, and Albert C. Gunther. 2002. “Hostile Media Perceptions: Partisan Assessments of Press and Public during the 1997 United Parcel Service Strike.” *Political Communication* 19 (4): 423–36.
- Davison, W. Phillips. 1958. “The Public Opinion Process.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 22 (2): 91–106.
- Delavande, Adeline, and Charles F. Manski. 2012. “Candidate Preferences and Expectations of Election Outcomes.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 109 (10): 3711–15.

- de Vreese, Claes H., and Holli A. Semetko. 2002. "Public Perception of Polls and Support for Restrictions on the Publication of Polls: Denmark's 2000 Euro Referendum." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 14 (4): 367–90.
- Donsbach, Wolfgang, and Kerstin Weisbach. 2005. "Kampf um das Meinungsklima. Quellen der Aussagen über den möglichen Wahlausgang." [The battle for the climate of opinion. Sources of statements on possible election outcomes] In *Wählerstimmungen in der Mediendemokratie. Analysen auf der Basis des Bundestagswahlkampfes 2002* [Voters' sentiments in the media democracy. Analyses based on the federal election campaign 2002], ed. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, Wolfgang Donsbach, and Hans Mathias Kepplinger, 104–27. Freiburg, Germany: Alber.
- Fields, James M., and Howard Schuman. 1976. "Public Beliefs about the Beliefs of the Public." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 40 (4): 427–48.
- Gunther, Albert C. 1998. "The Persuasive Press Inference: Effects of Mass Media on Perceived Public Opinion." *Communication Research* 25 (5): 486–504.
- Gunther, Albert C., and Cindy T. Christen. 2002. "Projection or Persuasive Press? Contrary Effects of Personal Opinion and Perceived News Coverage on Estimates of Public Opinion." *Journal of Communication* 52 (1): 177–95.
- Gunther, Albert C., Cindy T. Christen, Janice L. Liebhart, and Stella Chih-Yun Chia. 2001. "Congenial Public, Contrary Press, and Biased Estimates of the Climate of Opinion." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 65 (3): 295–320.
- Gunther, Albert C., and J. Douglas Storey. 2003. "The Influence of Presumed Influence." *Journal of Communication* 53 (2): 199–215.
- Hobolt, Sara B., and Jeffrey A. Karp. 2010. "Voters and Coalition Governments." *Electoral Studies* 29 (3): 299–307.
- Hoffmann, Hanna, and Markus Klein. 2013. "Wirkungen von veröffentlichten Wahlumfragen auf die Koalitionserwartung, die Wahlbeteiligung und die Wahlentscheidung bei der Bundestagswahl 2009: Eine Mehrebenenanalyse auf der Grundlage der Rolling Cross-Section-Befragung der German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES)." [Effects of published opinion polls on coalition expectations, voter turnout, and voting decisions during the 2009 federal election: A multi-level analysis based on a rolling cross-section-survey of the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES)] In *Koalitionen, Kandidaten, Kommunikation* [Coalitions, Candidates, Communication], ed. Thorsten Faas, Kai Arzheimer, Sigrid Roßteutscher, and Bernhard Weißels, 221–46. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.
- Irwin, Galen A., and Joop J. M. van Holsteyn. 2002. "According to the Polls: The Influence of Opinion Polls on Expectations." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 66 (1): 92–104.
- Katz, Elihu. 1982. "Publicity and Pluralistic Ignorance: Notes on 'The Spiral of Silence.'" In *Öffentliche Meinung und sozialer Wandel* [Public Opinion and Social Change], ed. Horst Baier, Hans Mathias Kepplinger, and Kurt Reumann, 28–38. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Krizan, Zlatan, Jeffrey C. Miller, and Omesh Johar. 2010. "Wishful Thinking in the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election." *Psychological Science* 21 (1): 140–46.
- Krizan, Zlatan, and Kate Sweeny. 2013. "Causes and Consequences of Expectation Trajectories: 'High' on Optimism in a Public Ballot Initiative." *Psychological Science* 24 (5): 706–14.
- Lavrakas, Paul J., and Michael W. Traugott, eds. 2000. *Election Polls, the News Media, and Democracy*. New York: Chatham House.
- Lewis-Beck, Michael S., and Andrew Skalaban. 1989. "Citizen Forecasting: Can Voters See into the Future?" *British Journal of Political Science* 19 (1): 419–27.

- Lewis-Beck, Michael S., and Charles Tien. 1999. "Voters as Forecasters: A Micromodel of Election Prediction." *International Journal of Forecasting* 15 (2): 175–84.
- MacKinnon, David P., Chondra M. Lockwood, and Jason Williams. 2004. "Confidence Limits for the Indirect Effect: Distribution of the Product and Resampling Methods." *Multivariate Behavioral Research* 39 (1): 99–128.
- Marks, Gary, and Norman Miller. 1987. "Ten Years of Research on the False-Consensus Effect: An Empirical and Theoretical Review." *Psychological Bulletin* 102 (1): 72–90.
- Marsh, Catherine. 1985. "Back on the Bandwagon: The Effect of Opinion Polls on Public Opinion." *British Journal of Political Science* 15 (1): 51–74.
- Meffert, Michael F., and Thomas Gschwend. 2011. "Polls, Coalition Signals and Strategic Voting: An Experimental Investigation of Perceptions and Effects." *European Journal of Political Research* 50 (5): 636–67.
- Meffert, Michael F., Sascha Huber, Thomas Gschwend, and Franz Urban Pappi. 2011. "More than Wishful Thinking: Causes and Consequences of Voters' Expectations about Election Outcomes." *Electoral Studies* 30 (4): 804–15.
- Miller, Michael K., Guanchun Wang, Sanjeev R. Kulkarni, H. Vincent Poor, and Daniel N. Osherson. 2012. "Citizen Forecasts of the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election." *Politics & Policy* 40 (6): 1019–52.
- Morwitz, Vicki G., and Carol Pluzinski. 1996. "Do Polls Reflect Opinions or Do Opinions Reflect Polls? The Impact of Political Polling on Voters' Expectations, Preferences, and Behavior." *Journal of Consumer Research* 23 (1): 53–67.
- Moy, Patricia, David Domke, and Keith Stamm. 2001. "The Spiral of Silence and Public Opinion on Affirmative Action." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 78 (1): 7–25.
- Mullen, Brian, Jennifer L. Atkins, Debbie S. Champion, Cecelia Edwards, Dana Hardy, John E. Story, and Mary Vanderklok. 1985. "The False Consensus Effect: A Meta-Analysis of 115 Hypothesis Tests." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 21 (3): 262–83.
- Mutz, Diana C. 1995. "Effects of Horse-Race Coverage on Campaign Coffers: Strategic Contributing in Presidential Primaries." *The Journal of Politics* 57 (4): 1015–42.
- Mutz, Diana C. 1998. *Impersonal Influence. How Perceptions of Mass Collectives Affect Political Attitudes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mutz, Diana C. 2006. *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Mutz, Diana C., and Joe Soss. 1997. "Reading Public Opinion: The Influence of News Coverage on Perceptions of Public Sentiment." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61 (3): 431–51.
- Noelle-Neumann, Elisabeth. 1974. "The Spiral of Silence. A Theory of Public Opinion." *Journal of Communication* 24 (2): 43–51.
- O'Gorman, Hubert J. 1979. "White and Black Perceptions of Racial Values." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 43 (1): 48–59.
- Petric, Gregor, and Andrej Pinter. 2002. "From Social Perception to Public Expression of Opinion: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach to the Spiral of Silence." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 14 (1): 37–53.
- Reinemann, Carsten, Marcus Maurer, Olaf Jandura, and Thomas Zerback. 2013. *Die Spätereisendeider. Medieneinflüsse auf kurzfristige Wahlentscheidungen* [The late deciders. Media influences on short term voting decisions]. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Ross, Lee, David Greene, and Pamela House. 1977. "The 'False Consensus Effect': An Egocentric Bias in Social Perception and Attribution Processes." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 13 (3): 279–301.

- Shamir, Jacob. 1995. "Information Cues and Indicators of the Climate of Opinion: The Spiral of Silence Theory in the Intifada." *Communication Research* 22 (1):24–53.
- Shamir, Jacob, and Michal Shamir. 2000. *The Anatomy of Public Opinion*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Taylor, D. Garth. 1982. "Pluralistic Ignorance and the Spiral of Silence: A Formal Analysis." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 46 (3): 311–35.
- Tsfati, Yariv, Natalie Jomini Stroud, and Adi Chotiner. 2013. "Exposure to Ideological News and Perceived Opinion Climate: Testing the Media Effects Component of Spiral-of-Silence in a Fragmented Media Landscape." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 19 (1): 3–23.
- Vallone, Robert P., Lee Ross, and Mark R. Lepper. 1985. "The Hostile Media Phenomenon: Biased Perception and Perceptions of Media Bias in Coverage of the Beirut Massacre." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 49 (3): 577–85.
- Weimann, Gabriel. 1990. "The Obsession to Forecast: Pre-election Polls in the Israeli Press." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 54 (3): 396–408.
- Wojcieszak, Magdalena, and Vincent Price. 2009. "What Underlies the False Consensus Effect? How Personal Opinion and Disagreement Affect Perception of Public Opinion." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 21 (1): 25–46.
- Zerback, Thomas, Thomas Koch, and Benjamin Krämer. 2015. "Thinking of Others. Effects of Implicit and Explicit Media Cues on Climate of Opinion Perceptions." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 92 (2): 421–43.

### Author Biographies

**Thomas Zerback**, PhD is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Communication Science and Media Research at Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, Germany.

**Carsten Reinemann**, PhD, is a Professor and Chair of Political Communication at the Department of Communication Science and Media Research at Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, Germany.

**Angela Nienierza**, MA, is a Research Assistant and Doctoral Candidate at the Department of Communication Science and Media Research at Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, Germany.