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Chapter 1: Introduction

On November 18, 2009, the Austrian men's national football team competed against Spain in a friendly match. The Austrian team managed to score an early lead goal but then received five goals in a row and lost the match 1:5. Dieter Brosz, member of parliament (MP) for the Green party, found a possible reason for this sudden drop in performance: shortly after the first goal the ORF, the national public service broadcaster airing the match, showed Peter Westenthaler, member of parliament and speaker for sport for the Alliance for the Future of Austria (Bündnis Zukunft Österreich; BZÖ), sitting in the stands. Could the possibility be ruled out, he asked the Minister for Defence and Sports in a parliamentary question (PQ), that the showing of Westenthaler on TV had led to the drastic performance loss of the Austrian team? And which measures would the minister take to rule out future negative influence by Westenthaler on the national football team?¹

Needless to say, Brosz did not think that Westenthaler's presence had any effect on the match. The BZÖ MP had left a sitting of parliament to watch a football game for the third time in close succession. It was also not the first time Brosz publicly blamed Westenthaler; he had posed a very similar PQ to the Minister for Public Services and Sports nine years earlier, when Westenthaler, who back then was the leader of the parliamentary party group (PPG) of the Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs; FPÖ), missed a parliamentary session to see the national football team lose against the Croatian team.² The reactions of the ministers were similar in both cases: the question would not be answered as the right to ask parliamentary questions was restricted to subjects pertaining to execution – which these questions

¹Parliamentary question 3761/J (XXIV Legislature), retrieved from: www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXIV/J/J_03761/fnameorig_172621.html

²Parliamentary question 709/J (XXI Legislature), retrieved from: www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXI/J/J_00709/fnameorig_601578.html

certainly did not belong to. Getting his question answered, however, had not been Brosz's goal; of course he knew that he would not get a substantial reply. The MP wanted to expose Westenthaler, he wanted the public to know that his fellow parliamentarian would rather spend his evening in a football stadium than live up to his duties as an MP in parliament.

The Greens did not try to hide the true purpose of the PQ, they sent out press releases quoting the respective question in both cases to raise their chances of getting media publicity (Die Grünen, 2000, 2009). Their strategy was successful: news media picked up the PQs both in 2000 and in 2009 and reported on it, which made Westenthaler's absence from parliament for a sports event known to a wider public.

Even though it might not be that obvious in all cases, posing parliamentary questions for reasons other than information-seeking is not at all unusual. Wiberg and Koura (1994) call these sorts of questions 'perlocutionary questions' and state that "undoubtedly most *actual* parliamentary questions belong to this class" (Wiberg & Koura, 1994, p. 31, emphasis in original). While PQs may have limited direct political consequences and might not even be the best tool for getting information in many cases (Franklin & Norton, 1993b; Wiberg & Koura, 1994) they can be, and are, also used as a tool for getting attention by the media and the public. Having been called the "only remaining outlet for individual parliamentary behavior in most parliaments and as such not too much constrained by rules" (Müller & Sieberer, 2014, p. 323) they can, more specifically, also be used as a tool for getting *individual* attention.

Although getting media attention is seen as an important goal of MPs posing questions, the claim that written PQs, the by far most frequent type of parliamentary questions, are not the best tool to do so has been made multiple times by different authors. Scholars have claimed that written questions are mostly of interest for local media, but not for national news outlets (Wiberg & Koura, 1994, p. 323; Rozenberg & Martin, 2011, p. 397) or just not very relevant for news media in specific countries at all (cf. Gerlich, 1973, p. 231 for Austria; Wiberg, 1994b, p. 189f. for Finland; Mattson, 1994, p. 304 for Sweden). Jann (1986, p. 818) even specifically stated that, in Austria, mass media paid *too little* attention to written parliamentary questions.

These claims were usually not tested empirically. Contrary to these statements,

the (to the author's knowledge) only paper investigating the relationship between written PQs and the media (van Aelst & Vliegenthart, 2014) found that written questions are regularly reported on in newspapers in the Netherlands. The goal of this thesis is to find out to what extent this is the case in Austria and, more specifically, which factors determine whether a PQ is picked up by the media.

This thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 2 reviews current literature on parliamentary questions and media reporting on parliaments. In Chapter 3, the main theoretical considerations are presented, followed by the hypotheses that are tested in this thesis. Chapter 4 introduces and justifies the case that is investigated, outlines the data collection process and sampling, and presents the operationalization of variables. The results of the empirical analyses and their discussion are presented in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 provides concluding remarks and an outlook on possible future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter a review of previous literature concerning this thesis' topics is presented. It is split into three parts: Section 2.1 covers literature on parliamentary questions and their purposes. Section 2.2 discusses literature on the relationship between parliaments and the media, focussing on the questions whether the media sets the parliamentary agenda or vice versa and which factors determine whether MPs or their parliamentary activities get covered by media outlets. Section 2.3, finally, reviews the scarce body of literature on the relationship between parliamentary questions and the media that has only started to develop very recently.

2.1 Parliamentary Questions

Considering that the instrument of parliamentary questioning has been described as 'ubiquitous' and exists in all parliamentary democracies (cf. Russo & Wiberg, 2010, p. 215), it is surprising that they were not studied extensively until relatively recently. While 'Questions in Parliament' (Chester & Bowring, 1962), a monograph discussing PQs in the British Houses of Parliament in detail which was called "the standard work on the subject" (Norton, 1993, p. 3), was published more than half a century ago, Philip Norton lamented more than three decades later that "there has been no latter-day 'Chester and Bowring'" (Norton, 1993, p. 3) but that only a few book chapters and articles on parliamentary questioning had been released in the time that had passed since then.

This gradually changed in the years following the publication of the edited volume Norton's text was published in (Franklin & Norton, 1993a). PQs became a more prominent topic in research and an increasing number of texts studying their "shape, use and impact" (Rozenberg & Martin, 2011, p. 135) was published. To this date,

most of them, as well as the aforementioned books by Chester and Bowring (1962) and Franklin and Norton (1993a), are single country studies. Even though the tool exists in all parliamentary democracies, PQs are difficult to compare as they do not function the same in any two countries; each parliament has different, detailed rules and conventions regarding both written and oral questions – and these rules and conventions are subject to regular change in many countries, making cross-country comparisons even more complicated for longitudinal studies (cf. Russo & Wiberg, 2010; Rozenberg & Martin, 2011).

Attempts have been made to overcome these difficulties and to compare the shapes, uses, and impacts of different types of PQs in multiple countries, perhaps most ambitiously in an edited volume on PQs in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden (Wiberg, 1994a) and a special issue of the *Journal of Legislative Studies* that was later published as a book (Martin & Rozenberg, 2012), which compares the functions and uses of the tool in a number of Western European countries, the European Parliament, and Canada. Nevertheless, to this date the vast majority of articles on PQs is only concerned with a single country. The growing number of studies focussing on single countries accompanied by the growing knowledge on the shape and use of the tool in different countries, however, might facilitate future comparative work.

The focus on single countries also applies to the aspect most relevant for this thesis: the reasons for which MPs pose PQs. Nearly all publications dealing with the question why MPs pose questions to the government are restricted to one country; multiple texts by Matti Wiberg and colleagues (Wiberg & Koura, 1994; Wiberg, 1995; Russo & Wiberg, 2010) constitute an exception. They, reviewing the available literature on the topic, present (amongst other cross-country comparisons) a list on the most important functions of PQs they deem more universally valid:

1. To request information (IS)
2. To press for action (PA)
3. To gain personal publicity (PA)
4. To demand an explanation (IS, PA)
5. To test ministers in controversial areas of their policies (PA)
6. To attack ministers in difficult political situations (PA)

7. To deal with a large number of different topics rapidly and conveniently (IS, PA)
8. To show concern for the interests of constituents (PA)
9. To help build up a reputation in particular matters (PA)
10. To force compromises on an unwilling government (PA)
11. To delay a headstrong government until other forces and events make their influence felt (PA)
12. To demonstrate a government's faults (IS, PA)
13. To rally the troops within an opposition party, with only a remote intention of forcing change on the government (PA)
14. To create elements of excitement and drama (PA) (Wiberg & Koura, 1994, p. 30f.)

They divide the functions into two categories: IS, information-seeking questions, and PA, perlocutionary questions. As evident in the list above, only a single function is categorized exclusively as information-seeking, while all other functions – “and undoubtedly most *actual* parliamentary questions” (Wiberg & Koura, 1994, p. 31, emphasis in original) – are at least partly categorized as perlocutionary. It would not make sense, they argue, for MPs to pose purely information-seeking questions in many cases, as there are less formal ways of getting information which are faster and more accurate. These ways, however, would not produce publicity for the MP. PQs can be a means for getting publicity, which, in turn, can help to fulfill most of the functions listed above.

Publicity, however, is very limited if it is restricted to the parliamentary arena. Most people do not directly observe parliamentary behavior, watch question hour or, even less so, read written PQs and their answers. Therefore, for example, the personal publicity a parliamentarian can gain by posing a written PQ is basically not existent if it is limited to those people going to the official website of the parliament and reading it. Media attention is needed if an MP wants to reach a wider audience – which is a prerequisite for some of the functions outlined above.

The claim that media attention is an important goal for many PQs is reinforced by multiple single country studies. While Chester and Bowring, in their early study (1962), mostly stressed obtaining information and pressing for action as the reasons

why MPs pose questions and only mentioned gaining personal publicity in the media as a goal in passing, getting media publicity is mentioned as an incentive for asking PQs in most single country studies addressing the reasons for posing questions published since the 1990s (cf. e.g. Rasch, 1994 for Finland, Mattson, 1994 for Sweden, Bailer, 2011 for Switzerland, and Dandoy, 2011 for Belgium; cf. Lazardeux, 2005 for a counter-example) and is also mentioned by MPs themselves when asked about their reasons for posing questions (cf. e.g. Franklin & Norton, 1993b for the UK; Jenny & Müller, 2001 for anecdotal statements from Austrian MPs).

Getting media attention, therefore, can be regarded as a meta-goal of many, but not all, PQs which has to be fulfilled so that these questions can perform some of the more specific functions outlined above.

2.2 Parliaments and the Media

Many scholars have argued that parliamentary activities are of little interest to the media as topics addressed on the parliamentary floor usually have been discussed publicly before they enter parliament, positions of the parties and themembers of government are known beforehand and most discussions are led and decisions have already been made in the pre-parliamentary sphere (Müller & Steininger, 2001); journalists are “bombarded with political messages” (van Santen, Helfer, & van Aelst, 2015, p. 47) from different sources and usually do not depend on parliaments to get information. It has been shown that parliamentary coverage in the media has been steadily declining in multiple political systems for decades (Negrine, 1998).

However, it is usually agreed upon that publicity is an important function of politics – and that parliaments are the arena to create this publicity (cf. Norton, 1997 and the other articles in the special edition of *Parliamentary Affairs* on *Parliaments and Publics* for reasons why publicity is necessary for parliaments to fulfill all of their functions). Norton (1997) presents the three sources public awareness of parliamentary activity is based on: deliberate observation – requiring citizens to actively seeking out information on the parliamentary proceedings, watching parliamentary sittings or reading protocols; direct contact to parliamentarians; and what he calls “passive observation” (Norton, 1997, p. 352) – learning what is happening in

the legislature as a by-product of watching the news or reading a newspaper. As the first two sources of awareness of parliamentary activity obviously are not used by a big share of the population, reporting on parliamentary proceedings by the media is necessary for linking parliaments with the public. Therefore, even though the total amount of parliamentary coverage in the media might have declined in many countries over the years, the topic is regarded as important by many researchers and sparks a lot of interest in the scientific literature.

This section will review literature concerned with the relationship between parliaments and the news media. As the body of literature on this subject is vast, two limitations are made: Firstly, it can be assumed that MPs enter the media through other means than legislative behavior and that other rules apply during election campaigns than in routine times between elections. Therefore, texts exclusively focusing on the relationship of parliaments and the media during an election campaign are not discussed in this review (cf. Vos, 2014 for a review of news coverage during election campaigns). Secondly, most texts on parliaments and the media can be grouped into two different types, both of which are relevant in the context of this thesis: articles investigating agenda setting and articles investigating which factors determine which MPs or parliamentary activities are reported on in the news media. Articles not fitting in with either of these categories are not covered in this review either, the two types of texts will be discussed separately below.

The existing articles in this subject area mostly focus on European countries like Belgium (Walgrave, Soroka, & Nuytemans, 2008; Vliegenthart & Walgrave, 2010; Vliegenthart, Walgrave, & Zicha, 2012), Denmark (Elmelund-Præstekær, Hopmann, & Nørgaard, 2011), the Netherlands (Vliegenthart & Roggeband, 2007), Norway (Midtbø, 2011) and Switzerland (Tresch, 2009) and on the USA (Cook, 1986; Sellers & Schaffner, 2007; Fogarty, 2008; Waismel-Manor & Tsfat, 2011). However, studies conducted on the European Parliament (Gattermann & Vasilopoulou, 2014) and the parliaments in Canada (Soroka, 2002) and Israel (Sheafer & Wolfsfeld, 2004) will also be discussed.

The first group of texts, concerned with agenda setting, is testing whether the agenda of parliament follows the agenda of the news media, whether the opposite is the case or whether there is mutual influence or no influence at all. All of the

studies either use newspapers or both newspapers and television to measure the media agenda. There is universal agreement that the media agenda has an influence on the parliamentary agenda and that media coverage affects the topics that will be addressed in parliament – however, Vliegenthart and Roggeband (2007) only find long-term influence and no short-term influence and Vliegenthart et al. (2010) generally only find relatively weak influence. The influence is said to be stronger in specific areas, like environmental policy (Soroka, 2002; Walgrave et al., 2008) than in others, and stronger for opposition parties and for smaller parties (Vliegenthart & Walgrave, 2010). Influence of the parliamentary agenda on the media agenda is also found in all texts it is tested for, but it is said to be weaker than influence in the opposite direction in all cases (Soroka, 2002; Walgrave et al., 2008; Vliegenthart & Walgrave, 2010).

The second group of texts examines which factors determine whether MPs or certain activities in parliament are reported on in the news media. These articles use different sets of news values (see Section 3.1) to explain media visibility. They, as well, mostly use newspapers and television to test media visibility, but some papers also include (or exclusively focus on) radio (Sellers & Schaffner, 2007; Elmelund-Præstekær et al., 2011; Waismel-Manor & Tsfat, 2011). Even though not all of these texts use the exact same methodologies or factors, several factors are used multiple times, allowing comparisons.

Nearly all articles include one or multiple variables on *office*, indicating whether an MP held a post like party leader, PPG leader, or committee chair. These variables have a positive effect on media coverage in all cases. Similarly, variables on parliamentary *seniority* of MPs are included in most texts and have positive effects in all but one (Waismel-Manor & Tsfat, 2011). There is less agreement on the effects of some other variables: *gender* has no effect in some studies (Cook, 1986; Tresch, 2009; Gattermann & Vasilopoulou, 2014), other studies find that male MPs have a higher chance of being covered by the media (Elmelund-Præstekær et al., 2011; Midtbø, 2011; Waismel-Manor & Tsfat, 2011); similarly, higher *parliamentary activity* of MPs increases the chance of media reporting according to some texts (Tresch, 2009; Midtbø, 2011; Waismel-Manor & Tsfat, 2011), but not according to others (Cook, 1986; Gattermann & Vasilopoulou, 2014). Being member of a *gov-*

ernment party has a positive effect on news coverage in one article (Cook, 1986), no effect in others (Midtbø, 2011; Gattermann & Vasilopoulou, 2014), and a negative effect in a third group of texts (Fogarty, 2008; Elmelund-Præstekær et al., 2011).

All remaining variables that showed a significant effect at least once have only been covered by one or two studies each: the *age* of MPs is shown to have a positive (Cook, 1986) or negative (Gattermann & Vasilopoulou, 2014) effect on media coverage; being a member of an *extremist party* positively influences the volume of media reporting of MPs according to two articles (Cook, 1986; Waismel-Manor & Tsfat, 2011). Going *negative* in ones parliamentary speeches (Midtbø, 2011), possessing *charismatic communication skills* (Sheafer & Wolfsfeld, 2004) and having an *ideology that does not fit to one's electoral district* (Fogarty, 2008) all lead to more media coverage of MPs, their *physical attractiveness* also leads to more reporting on them – but only on TV, there is no attractiveness bonus in newspapers or on the radio (Waismel-Manor & Tsfat, 2011). Finally, high *attendance* in parliament and belonging to a *bigger party* are both shown to have negative effects on media presence (Gattermann & Vasilopoulou, 2014).

As evident in the last paragraphs, there is very little consensus on what factors determine newsworthiness of MPs. Comparative studies or using a more uniform methodology could help shedding light upon this.

2.3 Parliamentary Questions and the Media

Recently, research on the relationship between one sub-type of parliamentary behaviour, parliamentary questions, and the media has started to emerge. As only very few texts on this topic have been published, this section, to the author's knowledge, provides a complete review of the available literature.

Van Aelst and Vliegthart (2014) analyse the mutual influence between both oral and written PQs and mass media. Their analysis covers all written PQs in the Netherlands for the parliamentary years 1995-1996 to 2009-2010 and finds that about one in three questions refers directly either to a newspaper or a TV news broadcast, with newspapers being referred to far more often. The researchers also show that newspapers regularly explicitly refer to PQs – however, they only do so infrequently

and the ratio of newspaper articles referring to a (written or oral) question and the number of PQs has decreased steadily during their observation period. Van Aelst and Vliegenthart also examine all oral PQs that were posed in 1997 and 2009. They find that in about 79% of cases, the topics of oral questions were reported in at least one newspaper before the PQ was asked and that roughly 38% of oral PQs explicitly refer to a news outlet. The reverse influence of PQs on mass media is weaker: only about 50% of oral PQs receive media attention, with the share being higher in 1997 than in 2009. Government and opposition MPs are shown to be similarly successful in getting their questions into the media.

Van Aelst et al. (2016, originally published in Dutch as van Aelst et al., 2015), covering all oral PQs posed in the Netherlands in 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010, and 2011, research the mutual influence between PQs and the press. They find that preceding media attention on topics has a strong influence on posing oral PQs. PQs themselves are more likely to be covered by the media if they refer to topics that have been covered by the media before question hour and if they voice critique towards the member of government – especially if the critique comes from MPs from government parties.

Van der Pas et al. (2017), also examining the Netherlands, analyse all oral questions on immigration and European integration posed between 1995 and 2010 and their media coverage. They test whether political parallelism, ties between media and political actors, applies and whether reciprocal influence is stronger if many of a party's voters read a specific newspaper. They find that MPs indeed mostly refer to their voters' preferred newspapers and that the influence of the media agenda on the political agenda is stronger if a party and a newspaper are parallel. They also confirm that there is partisan bias in media reporting on PQs: questions by parallel parties lead to increases of newspaper articles on the issue.

Finally, van Santen et al. (2015) study the relationship between oral PQs and media coverage in three West European countries. They analyse all oral PQs that were posed in 2009 in the Netherlands and France and in 2010 in Germany, respectively. The researchers find that PQs have the highest chance to be covered by at least one newspaper in the Netherlands (40% of all oral PQs were covered), followed by France (18%) and Germany (5%). It is shown, that preceding media attention

on the topic of the PQ positively affects its press coverage. Voicing critique towards the addressed member of government has a positive effect on the chance of the PQ being covered; accusing him or her, however, of being the cause of the addressed problem has the opposite effect. No significant differences are found between the successes of members of government or opposition parties.

As was shown in this section, even the few studies that are available on the topic are mostly concerned with one type of PQs (oral questions) and one specific country (the Netherlands) and were written by a small number of researchers (Peter van Aelst co-authored all but one of them; only seven researchers were involved in all papers combined). This thesis, analysing a country that was not covered by previous research and using written (and not oral) questions, will make a small contribution to furthering the knowledge in this subject area.

Chapter 3: Theory

The central aim of this thesis is to explain which factors have an influence on whether a parliamentary question will be reported on in the media. The next section presents the theoretical background. In the following paragraphs, the concept of *mediatization* of politics will briefly be discussed and I will explain why I expect it to be relevant for PQs. This will be followed by an in-depth discussion of ‘news values’, factors on which the newsworthiness of events depends on, and the presentation of the hypotheses.

In the past decades, politics has been said to be increasingly mediatized by political- and communication scientists alike. The concept of mediatization can be described as “a long-term process through which the media have become increasingly independent from politics and through which politicians and political institutions have become increasingly dependent on the media” (Strömbäck & Van Aelst, 2013, p. 342). It has been argued that the media has its own logic, different from the political logic (cf. Altheide & Snow, 1979), but that the two systems that are based on these logics, politics and media, are interdependent. Many authors claim that the powers have shifted in the past decades and that the media’s influence over politics has increased and the influence in the opposite direction has decreased (e.g. T. Meyer & Hinchman, 2002).

Strömbäck (2008) defines four dimensions that determine the degree to which politics is mediatized: the degree to which the media constitutes the dominant source of political information; the degree to which the media are (in-)dependent of political institutions; the degree to which media content is controlled by political- or media logic; and the degree to which political actors are controlled by political- or media logic. He describes all these dimensions as continuums. Strömbäck also describes four phases of mediatization in his article. He states that in the fourth,

and most current, phase of mediatization, political actors not only think about the media when campaigning, but also in the governing- and policy-making processes. They adapt to and even internalize the media logic, making it a built-in part of the governing process (Strömbäck, 2008, p. 239f.).

This process of internalization has multiple facets, it affects both parties – their organizational structures, the positions media experts and press officers take within them, even the selection of representatives – and individual politicians. Politicians generally show increasing activity trying to proactively shape the media – and they, most importantly for this thesis, shape their messages so that they are in line with how journalists value and select what they report on: they adapt to news values (Strömbäck & Van Aelst, 2013, p. 343-345), a concept that will be addressed in more detail in the following sections.

These developments are not limited to forms of political communication exclusively directed at the press, like press releases or press conferences. As I have established in Section 2.1, PQs, in many cases, are posed for reasons which require media attention to fulfill their purpose. It has been argued in the literature that, due to their limited policy consequences, parliamentary questions should be considered “similar to other forms of political communication, in particular campaign communication” (Otjes & Louwerse, 2018, p. 497).

Therefore, there is no reason to expect that mediatization of politics does not have an influence on PQs – Kepplinger (2002) even named mediatization as the main reason for the rising number of PQs in the German parliament. I expect MPs to have (to some degree) internalized the media logic and, as they are barely restricted by rules when drafting their questions, to be able to design their PQs as media-friendly as they want to. Even though some factors cannot be influenced by the MP – like attributes of the MP him- or herself, which also might influence the newsworthiness of PQs – I expect them to strategically pose PQs on specific topics, at specific times, and that they draft them in a certain way if they want media publicity. In this thesis, I will test which factors actually have an influence on whether a PQ is reported on in newspapers in a specific case that will be introduced in Section 4.1.

The following sections will discuss which factors are said to have an influence on newsworthiness in the literature and how lists of these news values have changed

over time. At the end of the chapter, the hypotheses that will be tested in this thesis are presented.

3.1 News Values

News values are factors that, depending on the branch of the theory, are either described as factors underlying events or as factors attributed to events by journalists that determine the events' worthiness of being reported or, as Chang et al. (1987, p. 398) put it, "may help reporters and editors minimize the 'number of errors' in deciding which events should get covered and which should not".

Disregarding less systematic considerations that were authored a lot earlier (von Stieler, 1695), the basic idea of news values was first formulated by Walter Lippmann in 1922. "All the reporters in the world working all the hours of the day could not witness all the happenings in the world", he wrote, "[y]et the range of subjects these comparatively few men manage to cover would be a miracle indeed, if it were not a standardized routine" (Lippmann, 1922, p. 338). Newspapers, he argued, do not try to keep an eye on everything that happens in the world. They know where relevant events are most likely to occur and station their 'watchers' there. According to Lippmann, there is room for wide difference of opinion what constitutes this relevance that events need to be worthy of reporting. Reporters write bulletins about the events they deem newsworthy and send them to the editor. He reads a great amount of these bulletins and has to decide which of them probably are of interest to the public – or, as Lippmann already calls it, have 'news value' – and which are not. As the editor has to do this in a very short amount of time, Lippmann noted, he could not do it without standardization and routine judgments. What factors do newspapers take into account to decide where to send their journalists, what factors do editors use to decide which stories end up in the newspaper? "There are no objective standards here. There are conventions" (Lippmann, 1922, p. 354), Lippmann stressed. He already hinted on some aspects that could increase news value, like *unambiguity* or *surprise*, but did not present a list of 'news values' yet.

Systematic research on news values started in the 1960. Since then, two separate research traditions emerged in the United States and in Europe (particularly Scan-

dinavia and Germany) respectively (cf. van Ginneken 1997; Eilders 2006). Early empirical studies in the American tradition (e.g. Buckalew, 1969a, 1969b, 1974) were heavily influenced by gatekeeping theory (White, 1950) and the news values that were measured were just described as “dimensions of news which seemed important” (Buckalew, 1969a, p. 48), with no theoretical explanations given. In the late 1970s, Gans (1979), in a highly influential book, presented eight clusters of enduring social values that were, according to his analyses, held by many journalists (or their sources) in the USA and therefore influenced which events were picked up as news stories and how they were reported. These clusters of values are *Ethnocentrism*, *Altruistic Democracy*, *Responsible Capitalism*, *Small-town Pastoralism*, *Individualism*, *Moderatism*, *Social Order*, and *National Leadership*. These values have later been called news values by many scientists referencing Gans’ work, but as they are only intended to be valid for the USA and they are supposed to be values held by news makers and not factors underlying events, they cannot be applied in this case. Therefore, this thesis is based on the European tradition.

The article ‘The Structure of Foreign News’ by Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge (1965) is generally seen as both the most important theoretical contribution and first empirical study in the (European tradition of the) field (cf. e.g. Schulz, 1976; Bell, 1991; Hjarvard, 2002; Joye, Heinrich, & Wöhlert, 2016). In the words of Watson (2008, p. 117), “Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge, have become as associated with news value analysis as Hoover with the vacuum cleaner”. As it is the foundation of the European tradition of news values research and still can be regarded as the most important text in the field, it will be presented in detail in the next subsection.

3.2 ‘The Structure of Foreign News’

The article by Galtung and Holmboe Ruge includes both theoretical considerations regarding the flow of news and an empirical test of these considerations. Galtung and Holmboe Ruge stated that, while individual perception of news was already relatively well explored at the time, collective perception, where news makers construct perception to be relayed to their readers later, was much more complicated to explore and that not a lot of research had been done on it when the article was published. They were interested in explaining the transition of world events to news

and asked “*how do ‘events’ become ‘news’?*” (Galtung & Holmboe Ruge, 1965, p. 65, emphasis in original). Similar to Lippmann (1922), Galtung and Holmboe Ruge acknowledged that one cannot register everything that happens in the world and has to select. Treating newspapers as indivisible entities and not distinguishing between different people working on them, they constructed a list of 12 factors, later titled ‘news values’, which they expected to increase the likeliness of events being covered by newspapers.

The first eight of these factors are described as ‘culture-free’ as the authors did not expect significant variation in regards to differences in regards to different cultural parameters. These factors are *frequency*, *threshold*, *unambiguity*, *meaningfulness*, *consonance*, *unexpectedness*, *continuity* and *composition*.

The other four factors are described as ‘culture-bound’ and are expected to be “important at least in the north-western corner of the world” (Galtung & Holmboe Ruge, 1965, p. 68). They are reference to *elite people*, *reference to elite nations*, *reference to persons* and *reference to something negative*.

Additional to the twelve factors, the authors constructed three hypotheses regarding them:

- “1. The more events satisfy the criteria mentioned, the more likely that they will be registered as news (selection).
2. Once a news item has been selected what makes it newsworthy according to the factors will be accentuated (distortion).
3. Both the process of selection and the process of distortion will take place at all steps in the chain from event to reader (replication).” (Galtung & Holmboe Ruge, 1965, p. 71)

They also formulated two theoretical implications these hypotheses have: first, the factors are additive – the more of them apply, the higher the total ‘score’, the higher is the probability it will become news. Second, the factors are complementary: if one factor is absent in a certain event, it can be substituted by another factor and still be newsworthy. However, following the first theoretical implication, an event with both factors present would still be more newsworthy.

Galtung and Holmboe Ruge then went on to test whether some of the factors are relevant in the news reporting on the Congo and Cuba crises in 1960 and the Cyprus crisis in 1964 in four Norwegian newspapers. The methodology was widely criticized in other publications and the empirical tests will therefore not be described in detail here, however, the findings generally indicated support for the general hypotheses.

3.3 After Galtung and Holmboe Ruge: Critique and Further Advancements

The article by Galtung and Holmboe Ruge had a huge impact on media research in the decades following its release. The hypotheses were tested many times by a great number of different authors. Some of them confirmed the hypotheses by Galtung and Holmboe Ruge with very little or no objections (e.g. Sande, 1971; Peterson, 1979, 1981) but most of them, although still mostly giving the paper and its contributions to the field a lot of praise, voiced criticism towards some aspects of it. Some of the most common points of criticism will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

One frequent point of criticism is the paper's very narrow focus – a problem that Galtung and Holmboe Ruge themselves identified in their article (1965, p. 73, 80). The researchers only looked at content concerned with one of the three crises, which means its findings can hardly be generalized on foreign news in general or even day-to-day coverage of less important events (e.g. Tunstall, 1971, p. 21). Their list, therefore, might not be applicable to “lesser, domestic and bread-and-butter news” (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001, p. 276).

Another aspect that was criticized by multiple authors is the research design in their empirical tests. Galtung and Holmboe Ruge describe their factors as selection criteria regarding the characteristics of events, but they use a quantitative analysis of finished newspapers to test their hypotheses. However, “[i]t is not sufficient to count how many news items score on a news factor, if we have no idea of how the 'not-news' would have scored” (Sande, 1971, p. 223). This view is shared by many authors, Hjarvard (2002, p. 94) argues that content analysis of finished newspapers does not give any evidence about the selection process or the characteristics of the events. Both he and Rosengren (1970, 1974) argue that to test this, extra-media

data – the total quantity of events from which the news are selected – have to be taken into account.¹

A big bloc of criticisms concerns reality and objectivity. Different scholars criticized the implication that there was an objective reality ‘out there’ that journalists could perceive (e.g. Schulz, 1976; McQuail, 2010) and that news values themselves were objective and not subjective judgements by journalists (e.g. Donsbach, 2004). Additionally, it was criticized that Galtung and Holmboe Ruge were concerned with news values of events but were analyzing the final product, newspaper articles. It cannot be ruled out that journalists ascribe these factors to events to make stories more interesting to their readers or choose certain perspectives to highlight certain factors that are not necessarily strongly present in the events (e.g. Golding & Elliott, 1979; Westerståhl & Johansson, 1994). Subjectivity is, up to a certain extent, impossible to avoid in empirical studies on news values which is problematic. However, the problem should at least be considered and discussed (cf. e.g. Harcup & O’Neill, 2017)

A rather obvious but important point of criticism is that news values cannot provide a complete and exhaustive explanation for news composition. Some aspects, like political or economic factors, are not taken into account (cf. McQuail, 2010); some stories achieve wide coverage without fulfilling any news values (cf. Hartley, 1982).

Finally, many researchers, especially in the more recent past, made the point that the list by Galtung and Holmboe Ruge was just outdated. Obviously in the more than 50 years that have passed since the classic study was published, many cultural, economic, political, and social changes occurred which affected the media landscape. Factors that were relevant in the 1960s might not be relevant anymore and new factors might have emerged (cf. e.g. Brighton & Foy, 2007, p. 268). Over the decades, many researchers attempted to update the list of news values by Galtung and Holmboe Ruge and to create lists that were supposed to be better suited for their respective times (e.g. Schulz, 1976; Golding & Elliott, 1979; Westerståhl & Johansson, 1994; Harrison, 2006). Some are similar to the initial list by Galtung

¹This problem does not arise in this thesis as extra-media data is used to test the hypotheses, see Section 4.4.1.

and Holmboe Ruge and only some factors are left out, added or changed; others are completely different lists.

A revised list by Harcup and O'Neill (2001) has shown itself to be the probably most influential update to Galtung and Holmboe Ruge (cf. Joye et al., 2016). They conducted a content analysis of all page leads (i.e. the most prominent news story on the page) in three UK newspapers in March 1999 and attempted to identify which factors of the original list were present in the articles. They found it difficult to operationalize some of the factors and underlined that the factors, some more than others, can only be identified with a certain amount of subjectivity. Harcup and O'Neill found that some of the factors were much more present than others, with *unambiguity* and *reference to elite people* being identified in nearly half of the observed articles and *consonance* and *composition* present in less than ten percent of them. Following their analysis, they concluded that some factors were still important, others had lost in meaning and new factors had emerged and had to be included in such a list. The authors kept four factors of the original list basically unchanged, merged, split, or broadened others, discarded two factors and added a completely new one.

In 2017, Harcup and O'Neill revisited their text (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017). This time, they empirically tested how present the factors from their own list from their earlier text were and analyzed articles published in one week in November 2014 in ten different newspapers in the UK. Again, they only analyzed page leads and this time narrowed it down to front and right-hand-side news pages, which they regarded as more important than other pages. Once again, some factors were much more present than others: they considered more than 60% of articles they found to be *bad news* and nearly half of the articles to contain the elements *surprise* and *entertainment*, respectively, while *newspaper agenda* was only coded as a relevant factor for about seven per cent of the articles and a little less than 20% of the articles being *good news*. Considering their findings, points of criticism other researchers had made about their earlier study and the increased importance of digital media and social networking sites, they changed some of the factors of their initial list and compiled a new list of news values. Incorporating critique by Phillips (2015, p. 18) they made *conflict* a separate factor instead of including it into the *bad*

news category. Similarly, they split a separate category called *drama* from the *entertainment*-category and included it in their list for the significant amount of articles that were ‘darker’ but still entertaining (Harcup & O’Neill, 2017, p. 1479). Finally, they added three completely new factors: *exclusivity* to a specific medium, a factor that was proposed, amongst others, by (Schultz, 2007); and two factors deemed especially important with the rising importance of social media: *audio-visuals* and *shareability*. Table 3.1 presents the complete list and short descriptions provided by Harcup and O’Neill.

Even after two updates many factors of the original list are still included, although most of them have been changed considerably. Figure 3.1 depicts which factors remained (more or less) the same and which changed, were disbanded or added over the years.

Not all news values in the list by Harcup and O’Neill (2017) are of equal importance for this thesis. Several factors were not considered in this specific case for reasons that will be presented in the following paragraphs.

Shareability is hardly defined by the authors. They explain that in the newspaper articles shared most on social media, different factors are dominant than in newspaper articles in general. Harcup and O’Neill present *entertainment* as the most important news value for stories shared on social media with other factors, like *the power elite*, being less important than in classic newspapers. They conclude that shareability should therefore be a new news value – however, it does not become clear how it is a separate factor and not just a mix of other factors (Harcup & O’Neill, 2017, p. 1480)

Audio-visuals, a factor defined as providing the opportunity for good photographs, videos, audio or infographics, is hard to measure objectively even when analyzing finished newspapers and nearly impossible with the methodology used in this thesis, as the possible potential for good audio-visual elements of parliamentary questions would have to be estimated.

Exclusivity is not relevant with the research design used here. All PQs (and answers to them) are made publicly available right after they are posed (and answered). It is possible that politicians send questions they posed, or plan to pose,

Table 3.1: Overview of news values

Factor	Description
Exclusivity	Stories generated by, or available first to, the news organization.
Bad news	Stories with particularly negative overtones (death, injury. . .).
Conflict	Stories concerning conflict (controversies, arguments, fights. . .).
Surprise	Stories that have an element of surprise, contrast and/or the unusual about them.
Audio-visuals	Stories that have arresting photographs, video, audio and/or which can be illustrated with infographics.
Shareability	Stories that are thought likely to generate sharing and comments via social media.
Entertainment	Soft stories concerning sex, show business, sport, lighter human interest, animals, etc.
Drama	Stories concerning an unfolding drama (escapes, accidents, rescues, battles. . .).
Follow-up	Stories about subjects already in the news.
The power elite	Stories concerning powerful individuals, organisations, institutions or corporations.
Relevance	Stories about groups or nations influential with, or culturally or historically familiar to, the audience.
Magnitude	Stories perceived as significant in the large numbers of people involved or in potential impact.
Celebrity	Stories concerning people who are already famous.
Good news	Stories with particularly positive overtones (break-throughs, recoveries, wins. . .).
News organisation's agenda	Stories that fit the news organization's own (ideological or commercial) agenda.

Source: Harcup & O'Neill, 2017

Note: Descriptions were slightly shortened

Figure 3.1: Comparison of different lists of news values



Sources: Galtung & Holmboe Ruge, 1965; Harcup & O'Neill, 2001, 2017

Note: Order of factors changed for visual reasons. Factors connected by a straight, black arrow are very similar in meaning; black arrows with two lines and one head indicate two factors being merged into one; black arrows with one line and two heads indicate one factor split into two; white arrows indicate that the factor was included in a broader new factor.

to their journalistic contacts if they want to see them published. However, firstly it is not possible to find out whether this was done or not and secondly, if this is done before the question is posed (and the PQ therefore is really exclusive to a single newspaper) and an article is published before the question is publicly available, it does not count as a 'successful' PQ (see Section 4.4.1). Similarly, *newspaper agenda* is not of interest with the research design used – as a PQ is deemed successful if it was published in *any* newspaper and the newspapers included have very different agendas and editorial policies (see Section 4.2) this should not be a relevant factor.

Finally, there are six factors that might have an impact on the success of PQs but are hard to measure objectively with a single coder: *magnitude*, *surprise*, *relevance*, *entertainment*, *drama*, and *good news*. The point has been made that news

decisions and the attribution of news values always and necessarily involve subjective judgements and can never be fully objective (Donsbach, 2004; see also Harcup & O'Neill, 2017). However, some of the factors can arguably be measured more objectively than others: few people would deny that the president of a country is part of its 'power elite'; whether an article is seen as entertaining or surprising strongly depends on the person making the judgement.

This leaves five remaining factors. Assuming the theoretical assertions Galtung and Ruge made about additivity and complementarity of the factors, which have barely been contested in the literature, are true, these factors – *the power elite*, *celebrity*, *bad news*, *conflict*, and *follow-up* – will be used to construct the hypotheses in the following paragraphs.

The first news value I consider is *the power elite*. This factor was, still formulated a bit more generally, already part of the factors presented by Galtung and Holmboe Ruge (1965, p. 68) as *reference to elite people*. They called the news elite-centered as the actions of the elite were usually more consequential than those of non-elite people. Formal power in the political arena often translates into media power (Tresch, 2009, p. 71). Not all members of parliament have the same importance and the same power. The actions of MPs holding certain positions, such as high ranks in their parties or in parliament, might be more interesting to news makers and consumers alike than those of backbenchers with little influence. The most obvious more powerful positions MPs can hold are those of party leaders and PPG leaders.² My first hypothesis is therefore:

Hypothesis 1a: *PQs posed by PPG leaders are more likely to get covered by the media than PQs by regular MPs.*³

²The term party leader refers to the head of the extra-parliamentary party organization while the term PPG leader refers to the leader of the party's parliamentary group. In Austria, opposition party leaders usually also lead the PPG, while the positions are separated for government parties, whose leaders usually assume the posts of chancellor and vice-chancellor.

³A similar hypothesis regarding party leaders instead of PPG leaders was discarded as it, in this case, is basically identical. In the period of investigation, both posts were held by the same person in three of the opposition parties (FPÖ, Greens, BZÖ), with the Team Stronach, which only got into parliament roughly a year before the end of the investigation period, being the exception. The PPG leader of Team Stronach posed 28 written questions to ministers in this period, their party leader was not in parliament. Both government parties also had separate PPG leaders, but those of the SPÖ and the ÖVP posed zero and one question(s), respectively. As the leaders of the government parties were not in parliament and naturally did not pose any PQs, the total amount of PQs of party leaders and PPG leaders therefore was deemed too similar for two separate hypotheses.

In addition to MPs with important positions in their parties, parliamentarians with higher posts in parliament itself might also have more relevance for the news. Previous research has shown that MPs which are appointed chairmanship of a parliamentary committee in European democracies are usually more experienced parliamentarians or have a huge amount of social or political capital accumulated outside of parliament (Mattson & Strøm, 1995; Pukelis, n.d.). Therefore, they can also be expected to be more interesting to news media:

Hypothesis 1b: *PQs posed by committee chairs are more likely to get covered by the media than PQs by regular MPs.*

The second news value, *celebrity*, was also derived by *reference to elite people* by Galtung and Holmboe Ruge (1965). Harcup and O'Neill (2001, p. 269) split it from the 'power elite' factor to be able to "distinguish between the Spice Girls and the President of the USA" as it can hardly be argued that both belong to the same category. Some MPs are better known to the general public than others, independently of their current posts – partly for political reasons, like former party leaders or ministers, partly for non-political reasons, like previously held jobs or careers. As the media often prefers to report on persons that are already widely known to the public (van Aelst, Maddens, Noppe, & Fiers, 2008, p. 198), I expect that questions by more prominent MPs, independently of the reason for that prominence, to be more likely to be covered:

Hypothesis 2: *PQs posed by more prominent MPs are more likely to get covered by the media than PQs by less prominent MPs.*

The next news value, *conflict*, was not a separate factor in the original study but was mentioned as part of their factor *reference to something negative*. Harcup and O'Neill, in their more recent paper (2017) made it a separate category. As attacking ministers is a frequently mentioned reason for posing PQs (see Section 2.1), I expect conflict to be an important factor in the analyzed questions. As opposition MPs are much more likely to attack ministers with their PQs than government MPs are, my hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 3a: *PQs posed by opposition MPs are more likely to get covered than*

PQs posed by government MPs.

However, coalitions are not unified actors and are composed of different parties. The Austrian grand coalition, composed of the Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs; SPÖ) and the People's Party (Österreichische Volkspartei; ÖVP), has a history of *Bereichsopposition*, with both parties assuming some kind of opposition positions to those of the ministers of the other party (Müller, 2000, p. 107). Even though this form of opposition is not likely to be as strong as that of the opposition parties, an element of conflict might still be present in PQs from MPs in government parties to ministers from the other government party. In the past, Austrian MPs have been shown to attack ministers from other government parties in their PQs, albeit much less frequently than opposition MPs (Jenny & Müller, 2001, p. 313). Therefore, I suggest this alternative hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3b: *PQs posed are more likely to get covered if the MP posing it and the receiving minister are from different parties than if they are from the same party.*

Similar to what was argued for the first hypotheses, not all members of government have the same level of power either. Although there is no definitive, fixed rank order, few would dispute that the Chancellor or the Minister of Finance have more power than the Minister for Transport (cf. e.g. Laver & Hunt, 1992; Druckman & Warwick, 2005; Druckman & Roberts, 2008). As in Hypotheses 1a and 1b, I expect that more powerful actors are more likely to get into the media:

Hypothesis 4: *PQs posed to ministers holding more important portfolios are more likely to get covered than PQs posed to ministers holding less important portfolios.*

The fourth news value considered is *follow-up*, a factor present since Galtung and Holmboe Ruge's paper, the definition of which has barely changed – “once something has hit the headlines and been defined as 'news', then it will *continue* to be defined as news for some time” (Galtung & Holmboe Ruge, 1965, p. 67, emphasis in original). In other words: news outlets are likely to report on subjects that are already in the news, to adopt stories from other media and to add to prior stories by their own medium (cf. Vliegenthart & Walgrave, 2008). Unfortunately measuring the media presence of single subjects was not possible with justifiable effort for this

thesis. Because of the long investigation period and the huge amount of newspaper reporting happening in this time, manual procedures are not possible; as the news reports are stored in a non-downloadable online database automated text analysis is not an option either. Therefore, the presence of ministers is used as a very broad proxy for presence of their respective area of responsibility (see Section 4.4.2):

Hypothesis 5: *The more media presence a minister has when the PQ is posed, the more likely it is to be covered by the media.*

Finally, the last news value considered is *bad news*. It was, like conflict, subsumed under *reference to something negative* in the original list and split away by Harcup and O'Neill (2017). Negative events are said to be more unambiguous and consensual, more likely to occur unexpectedly and to occur over a shorter period of time than positive news (Galtung & Holmboe Ruge, 1965, p. 68f.), making them more interesting to readers. It has been argued that the factor has become even more important over the years and that negativity “shifted from a mere ‘news value’ to an overarching ‘news ideology’” (Lengauer, Esser, & Berganza, 2011, p. 168). However, I do not expect negativity to positively influence the chance of a PQ being covered for all questions. A certain type of PQs, what Fischer called ‘Materialbeschaffungs-Anfragen’ (material procurement questions; Fischer 1992, p. 111) have a different purpose than other questions. These are questions that are posed to most (or all) ministers at the same time for the purpose of collecting information for further political activities. I expect these to be most likely to be picked up by the media if they are formulated factually and soberly, meaning that they are more likely to get a substantive answer so journalists can use them to gather material as well.

For these reasons I expect negativity to increase the likeliness of PQs being covered for ‘normal’ questions and to decrease it for ‘material procurement questions’ that were posed as part of a series:

Hypothesis 6a: *More negative PQs are more likely to get covered by the media than less negative PQs if they are not part of a series.*

Hypothesis 6b: *More negative PQs are less likely to get covered by the media than less negative PQs if they are part of a series.*

Chapter 4: Case and Data

Before turning to the empirical analyses, the following chapter will present the case and detail the data collection and operationalisation processes. Section 4.1 justifies and introduces the case chosen for this analysis; section 4.2 outlines why this thesis uses newspapers and no other medium to measure media success and presents the Austrian newspaper landscape. Section 4.3 explains the data collection process and how a sample was drawn; section 4.4, finally, presents the operationalisation of all variables used in the analyses.

4.1 Parliamentary Questions in Austria

This thesis constitutes a single-case study, analyzing one legislative period (the 24th legislative period, lasting from 2008 to 2013) in one country (Austria). It has been stated multiple times in the literature that it is difficult to make cross-national comparisons in this subject area (e.g. Russo & Wiberg, 2010; Rozenberg & Martin, 2011) as there are many differences in regards to the functioning of parliamentary questions and no two parliaments where PQs function exactly the same. Even though both attempts to categorize parliamentary questions and explain their differences in a number of (European) countries (Russo & Wiberg, 2010) and some empirical studies comparing different aspects of PQs in multiple countries exist (Rozenberg & Martin, 2011; van Santen et al., 2015), most literature on PQs consists of single country studies. Even making temporal comparisons in a single country can be a challenging task, as the formal and informal rules concerning PQs regularly change (Rozenberg & Martin, 2011, p. 142). Studying one period with stable rules in one country thus makes it easier to make reliable claims about empirical relationships.

The Austrian case is highly suitable for studying the media coverage of PQs.

According to Russo and Wiberg (2010) the potential to get information using written PQs is low in Austria compared to other European countries. The time within which a reply must be given is much longer than in most other countries, meaning that PQs are not a very useful tool for quickly getting information, and individual MPs cannot pose written PQs on their own as they have to be signed by at least five MPs (even though this is not very relevant empirically, see below), placing Austria amongst the countries where written PQs have the lowest potential for information. This makes the Austrian case interesting for this study: as the potential for information is low but MPs still make heavy use of the tool, it can be expected that they also do this for other reasons than information-seeking – most of which require media attention (see Section 2.1).

The chosen time period, the 24th legislative period, is particularly interesting as well: it is a common theme in the literature on PQs in Austria to state that their number and the significance of the tool itself have increased over the years (Gerlich, 1973, p. 241; Neisser, 1986, p. 683; Fischer, 1992, p. 111). This claim still holds true, the number of PQs kept rising since then: as shown in Table A.1 in Appendix A, the number of written PQs rose, considering the different lengths of the legislative terms due to multiple early elections and the extension of the legislative term from four to five years in 2007, relatively steadily over the years since 1945. There have been multiple noticeable leaps when the party composition of the government changed: between 20 and 50 questions were posed per 100 days during the all-party-government from 1945 to 1947 and the subsequent first phase of grand coalitions that lasted until 1966; between 100 and 200 questions were posed per 100 days during the phase of single-party-governments (1966-1983) and the following coalition of the SPÖ with the FPÖ (1983-1986); between 400 and 500 questions were posed in the same time frame during the second phase of grand coalitions (1986-1999). This was followed by a small decline in PQs as the ÖVP-FPÖ and ÖVP-BZÖ-coalitions were in office (300-400 questions; 1999-2006) and a high increase as grand coalitions took over again (700-900 questions; 2006 until the end of the investigation period). The analyzed period represents the legislative session in which most PQs were posed, both in total numbers and set in relation to the length of the legislative periods.

Before explaining in detail which specific type of question was chosen for this thesis and for what reasons, the legal basis for parliamentary questions in Austria will be presented in the following paragraphs. They are regulated by paragraphs 89 to 97 of the *Rules of Procedure of the Austrian National Council*. There are two main types of questions: written and oral questions.

Written questions are regulated by paragraphs 89 to 93. Every single MP has the right to direct questions to the President of the national council, the chairpersons of committees or the president of the court of audit without needing the support of any other parliamentarians. MPs may also direct questions to members of government, but these questions have to be signed by at least five MPs, including the questioner. These questions may concern all matters of execution. The people questioned have two months to answer the question or, if they are not in a position to answer it, indicate the reason for this. Five members of parliament may demand a debate to be held on an answer to a question directed towards a member of government. This right can only be exercised once in every week of sitting by each PPG.

Paragraph 93 regulates a sub-type of written questions, namely urgent questions. Five MPs can demand that a written question has to be discussed in parliament the same day. They are strictly regulated: every MP may only sponsor one such demand per year and each PPG may make four additional demands per year. Only one urgent question is called up per day of sittings (as regulated in paragraph 57b). These debates can be exhaustive, the member of government has 20 minutes to answer the question, in the debate following the answer every PPG is allocated 25 minutes of speaking time. Even though legally urgent questions are a sub-type of written questions, they usually are treated as a separate, third type of question in the literature on PQs in Austria (e.g. Gerlich, 1973; Neisser, 1986; Fischer, 1992; Jenny & Müller, 2001).

Oral questions, which are regulated in paragraphs 94 to 97, can be posed by any MP to any member of government. The member of government has to respond the same session or indicate why he or she is not in a position to do so. MPs must not pose more than four questions per month. Question time usually does not take more than one hour, but exceptions can be made by the president of parliament. Questions have to be tabled at least 48 hours before the sitting. After the question

gets answered there can be a debate; the questioner and one MP of every PPG, except the questioner's PPG, may ask one supplementary question. If questions do not get answered within four weeks, the questioner may request a written answer within one month.

Only regular written questions will be analysed in this thesis, this was decided for several reasons. Firstly written, urgent and oral questions are different tools with different functionalities. Including multiple forms in the same analysis is barely justifiable in this context – while getting media attention is only seen as one of multiple reasons for posing written or oral PQs and some questions are posed solely for the purpose of gathering information, urgent questions in Austria have been described as a spectacle solely for the media that does not at all aim for information (stated by a FPÖ MP, cited in Jenny & Müller, 2001, p. 220). Existing empirical studies analysing any aspect of PQs either only picked one type or made separate analyses for both written and oral questions. Therefore, this thesis will also focus on one type exclusively.

Secondly, written PQs are seen as the only almost completely free tool that can be used by all MPs. Urgent questions are a tool mostly for party leaders and PPG leaders (Jenny & Müller, 2001) and oral questions are, mostly due to time constraints, not completely free either. Question time is limited to one hour per sitting. MPs have one minute to pose the question, ministers have two minutes to answer them and an MP of every parliamentary party group may ask one supplementary question, with both the question and its answer taking up to one minute. Single oral PQs, therefore, can take up a lot of time, making oral questions a relatively scarce resource. It can therefore be assumed that backbenchers are not always free to pose oral questions as more important PPG members will be given priority if there is not enough time for all questions (see also Martin, 2011; van Aelst & Vliegthart, 2014). Written questions, although more constrained by law than oral questions as they have to be signed by five MPs, are seen as completely free. The four additional signatures are regarded as a formality, the first signee is seen as the person posing the question and as being largely free in doing so (Jenny & Müller, 2001, p. 310). For these reasons, written questions are the most frequently used and most diverse form of questions, as it can be used by backbenchers and frontbenchers alike and

for a great range of different purposes.

Finally, written questions are seen as the most homogeneous form of PQs in all parliamentary systems (Russo & Wiberg, 2010, p. 220). Therefore, a single-country study analysing written questions provides the most useful base for possible future comparative work.

Additionally to only analysing written questions, another constraint is put on the sample: written questions directed towards the president of the national council, the chairpersons of committees or the president of the court of audit are excluded as well. Together they make up less than one percent of all written questions in the data and the assumption that media presence of a politician equals media presence for his or her area of responsibility (see the discussion of Hypothesis 5 in Section 3.3) does not hold true for the actor that received the by far highest number of PQs of these three groups, the president of parliament, as no substantive area of responsibility is associated with this position.

For all of these reasons, only written questions directed towards members of government, which make up the lion's share of all PQs in the period of investigation, will be analyzed. More than 97% of all PQs and more than 99% of all written PQs are written questions directed towards a member of government.

4.2 Newspapers in Austria

Newspapers, as a medium, were chosen to measure media success for two reasons. The first one, simply, is data availability. Unlike the contents of other types of media, like television, radio, or even the online versions of newspapers, all articles that were released in any Austrian printed daily newspaper in the investigation period are available in a searchable online database. The second one is that newspapers are still very important in Austria. Newspapers had a daily reach of more than 70% of the adult population throughout the investigation period, a value higher than that of television or the internet and only exceeded by radio (Aichholzer et al., 2014, p. 33).

Although Austrian newspapers have experienced a decline in readership over the years (cf. Stark & Karmasin, 2009), this decline is not as dramatic as it is in other

countries (cf. Schoenbach, Lauf, McLeod, & Scheufele, 1999). Compared to other Western European countries, the daily reach of Austrian newspapers is in the upper mid-range (cf. Vaskovich, 2007). Daily newspapers were mentioned second most frequently by Austrians when asked about their main source of political information in 2009 (27%; television was mentioned most frequently with 51%), the general trust in print media was much higher than the EU average in 2007 (Plasser & Lengauer, 2010). Summing up, printed newspapers were still a very important and popular type of medium during the investigation period and therefore are well-suited to measure media success with.

Table 4.1 presents the daily reach of all eleven newspapers included in the analysis in the first and last year of the investigation period.

Table 4.1: Austrian daily newspapers, share of readers of the total population in 2008 and 2013

Newspaper	2008	2013
Kronen Zeitung	41.9	34.3
Heute	-	13.8
Kleine Zeitung	11.8	11.2
Österreich	10.0	10.0
Kurier	8.9	7.6
Der Standard	5.5	5.5
Oberösterreichische Nachrichten	4.8	5.0
Die Presse	3.4	3.8
Tiroler Tageszeitung	4.4	3.7
Salzburger Nachrichten	3.7	3.6
Vorarlberger Nachrichten	3.0	2.3
Total	72.9	71.8

Sources: Die Presse, 2009; ARGE Media Analysen, 2014

Notes: Statistical population: all Austrian residents aged 14 or older; 'Heute' did exist in 2008 but was not included by the Media-Analyse;

Total = percentage of people reached by at least one daily newspaper.

As evident in table 4.1, the Austrian newspaper market remained relatively stable in the observation period. The total daily share of newspapers sunk marginally

(72.9% in 2008; 71.8% in 2013). *Kronen Zeitung*, while remaining by far the most read newspaper, lost a high percentage of its share (41.9%; 34.3%), *Kurier* also lost more than one percentage point (8.9%; 7.6%). All the other newspapers gained or lost less than one percentage point share (for *Heute* no comparison is possible as it was not included in the Media-Analyse 2008).

Even though it might seem illogical that newspapers with a relatively low circulation are included in the analysis and that it is sufficient for a PQ to be included in any of these newspapers to be counted as a success (see Section 4.4.1), it is necessary to include these smaller papers because of the heterogeneity of the Austrian media landscape. The smallest newspaper in the sample, Vorarlberger Nachrichten, reached 52.9% of all adults on a daily basis in the westernmost state, Vorarlberg, in 2013 while the second most prominent newspaper, Kronen Zeitung, only reached 5.5% the same year (ARGE Media Analysen, 2014). Although the paper only reached between 0.0 and 0.2 per cent of all adults in all other states, it might be more desirable for a MP from Vorarlberg who was elected via the regional list to be mentioned in the smaller newspaper than in the much bigger one that is barely read by their electorate. The situation is similar, albeit not as extreme, in other states, the so-called ‘Bundesländerzeitungen’ (state newspapers) hold the highest share of all newspapers in three further states (Styria, Carinthia, Tyrol) and the second-highest in two (Salzburg, Upper Austria). A list without these smaller newspapers would therefore not reflect the reality of the Austrian media landscape. As PQs are often associated with constituency interests, the presented list of possible reasons for posing questions includes showing concern for constituency interests, and it has been claimed multiple times in studies on different countries that written questions would mostly be interesting for regional media, it might have been of advantage to include even more regional newspapers, like weekly district newspapers. This, however, was not possible with justifiable effort for this thesis.

All the newspapers included in this thesis are independent of political parties. Newspapers owned by parties played an important role in Austrian media for a long time, in 1953 party-owned newspapers had a market share of about 50%. However, this share fell steadily, reaching 20% in 1971 and about 2.5% at the beginning of the 21st century (Steinmaurer, 2002, p. 14–17). None of the three party newspapers

that still existed during the investigation period had a relevant market share; none of them is included here.

The Austrian newspaper landscape has been described as highly concentrated (e.g. Steinmaurer, 2002; Plaikner, 2007; Plasser & Lengauer, 2010) as only relatively few newspapers exist and many of them are economically intertwined. However, high market concentration does not mean that there is no difference in content and political alignment between the newspapers. In addition to the five state newspapers (Kleine Zeitung, Oberösterreichische Nachrichten, Tiroler Tageszeitung, Salzburger Nachrichten, Vorarlberger Nachrichten) in the sample, which are usually not further classified by observers, three papers in the sample are usually regarded as tabloids (Kronen Zeitung, Heute, Österreich), two as quality newspapers (Der Standard, Die Presse; sometimes Salzburger Nachrichten is also added to this category) and one (Kurier) as a hybrid of these two forms (e.g. Plasser & Lengauer, 2010, p. 38–41).

Haselmayer et al. (2017) show, using data from the Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES; Kritzinger et al., 2016) collected in 2013, that the readership party orientation across these newspapers is very different. The FPÖ, for example, is much more popular among readers of the tabloids than among reader of other newspapers; the Greens are seen much more positively among readers of the quality newspapers. Assuming that readers choose newspapers with partisanship that somewhat fit their own ideology (as, e.g., Puglisi & Snyder, 2011 have shown), it can be concluded that the newspaper landscape, although concentrated, is ideologically diverse. Although political parallelism – increased reporting and responsiveness by certain newspapers for specific parties that are ideologically, organizationally, or institutionally close to them (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) – is likely to occur and has been shown to having been a relevant factor in the election campaign in 2013 (Haselmayer et al., 2017), no preferential treatment of any party by the newspaper system as a whole has to be expected.

4.3 Data Collection and Sampling

Data was collected in multiple steps by Lisa Hirsch and the author himself in a joint effort for both her (Hirsch, 2017) and this thesis using different web scraping tools.

Two datasets were compiled from the official web page of the Austrian parliament.¹ The first one, compiled by the author, contains all meta information of all PQs in the 24th legislature. These pieces of information include the title, a unique identifier, the dates the question was posed and answered, the names of the MP posing the PQ and the person receiving it, and the type of question.

The second one, compiled by Lisa Hirsch, contains information, including names, sociodemographic data, party affiliation, and political status and activities, of all MPs of that period. These two datasets were then merged.

For both the dependent variable and various independent variables, additional data sources – the full texts of the PQs and third party sources – had to be used. These were later collected and processed by the author and merged to the data set, more detailed descriptions are given in Section 4.4.

Because the data collection for the dependent variable had to be done manually and was a time consuming task (see Section 4.4.1), the total volume of PQs asked in the investigation period could not be included and a sample had to be drawn. The sample contains 20% of all written PQs to the government in the data set, leaving 3,193 questions. It was stratified by the party of the MP posing the PQ, the gender of the MP, and the party of the member of government so that the distribution of these variables approximated the aggregate.

4.4 Operationalisation of Variables

4.4.1 Dependent Variable

The dependent variable, *media success*, is a binary variable and measures whether a PQ was picked up by at least one newspaper in a specific timeframe (1) or not (0). The timeframe was set from the day it was submitted to the national council until four weeks after it was answered. The limitation of the timeframe has multiple reasons: firstly, sometimes newspapers report that MPs announce that they would pose a question before they actually do it. This cannot be counted as a success as no PQ has been asked at that point in time and the announcement does not always lead to posing the question. Secondly, in some cases PQs are reported about a long

¹www.parlament.gv.at

time after they are posed. For example, in 2013 FPÖ MP Norbert Hofer submitted a PQ about possible weather manipulation using ‘chemtrails’.² This question was not initially picked up by any media outlet but was, because of its curiosity, addressed by the media heavily in 2016, when Hofer ran for president.

Neither of the two cases can be counted as a successful PQ. In the first case, the MP successfully managed to get into a newspaper with a certain topic, but not using the instrument parliamentary question but rather just by announcing to use it in the future – an action that should theoretically be connected to doing it but is not in all cases. In the second case, the MP missed his goal to get attention by the media – for himself or for the subject – in the short term. It being covered three years later in the next legislative period cannot be seen as a success, in many cases MPs lose their seats or topics become irrelevant in such timespans. Additionally, using a very long timespan would cause methodological problems: as the search is conducted manually using relatively broad keywords, covering a span of multiple years for every PQ would make the research almost impossible for a large sample.

The timeframe is still longer than others used by similar papers in this field - van Santen et al. (2015), doing research on oral PQs, only look at the two days after the question was posed; Meyer et al. (2017) only consider press releases successful if they appear in a newspaper the day after they were published. However, such a short time frame is insufficient for the present purpose for two reasons: firstly, written questions seldom are ‘breaking news’. In the vast majority of cases it takes the minister answering the question several weeks to do so – the currency of a PQ is only marginally lower five days after it was answered than it is directly afterwards. While most PQs that are covered by a newspaper are reported on few days after they are either posed or answered, it often takes more than one or two days. Secondly, some MPs sometimes pose a series of questions, i.e. (virtually) the same question to multiple or all ministers. Newspapers might choose to wait until all the ministers have answered, until they report on the question: for example, in January 2009 BZÖ MP Gerald Grosz asked all members of government how high the expenses for their staff had been the year before. While some ministers answered by late

²Parliamentary question 15921/J (XXIV Legislature), retrieved from: www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXIV/J/J_15921

February or early March, newspapers did not cover the PQs until all members of government had answered in mid-March, adding all the numbers. While the time it takes ministers to answer questions varies, however, it does not do so greatly. The 5th percentile of the time between a question and its answer is 42; the 95th percentile is 62 (even though this should, according to the law, be the highest number, some answers take longer), which means that 90% of all PQs get answered in that timeframe. The timeframe of four weeks after the answer should suffice to cover possible media coverage, even if a PQ in the sample was answered earlier than other identical questions to different ministers.

The search was performed manually using the Austrian Press Agency's (APA) OnlineManager Library (AOM Library),³ a database containing all contents of all Austrian newspapers since 1990. This task could not be automatized as, firstly, it is not possible to download huge amounts of articles to automatically compare their contents to those of the PQs and find matches (as, e.g., done by T. M. Meyer et al., 2017) and, secondly, this approach would not work very well as journalists in most cases do not cite big parts of the PQ's texts in their articles.

For the manual search, each PQ was read by the author and assigned between one and five (groups of) keywords. The number of keywords varies greatly depending on the PQ. For PQs concerning a specific person, organization or event it is safe to assume that an article would contain the name of that person, organization or event – for example, the PQ ‘Costs for the cancelled Michael Jackson memorial concert in Schönbrunn Palace’⁴ was only assigned one group of keywords – ‘Michael Jackson’ – as any article reporting on this PQ would mention that name. Other PQs on broader issues were assigned multiple keywords – PQ ‘Immigration to Austria’,⁵ for example, was assigned multiple groups of keywords as newspapers could use a number of different terms, such as foreigners, migrants, or immigrants, to write about the PQ. Additionally, the PQ has 12 sub-questions and it had to be taken into account that journalists could pick a single sub-aspect and report on it without mentioning the others. Using these keywords, a search string was constructed automatically in

³www.aom.apa.at/AOMLibrary/AOMLibrary.html

⁴Parliamentary question 3444/J (XXIV Legislature), retrieved from: www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXIV/J/J_03444

⁵Parliamentary question 335/J (XXIV Legislature), retrieved from: www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXIV/J/J_00335

Microsoft Excel.

The string was constructed so that any article reporting on a PQ had to contain three elements:

1. One of the words ‘Anfrage’ (inquiry, part of Parlamentarische Anfrage, the German term for parliamentary question), ‘Frage’ (question), ‘Parlament’ (parliament), ‘Nationalrat’ (national council), or ‘Abgeordnete’/ ‘Abgeordneter’ (female and male version of MP), or variations of these words.
2. The last name of the MP asking the question, the name or a synonym of the name of his/ her party, or the name of the minister receiving the question.
3. One of the (groups of) keywords.

The AOM library allows the use of Boolean search operators (like *AND*, meaning that multiple keywords all have to be present for an article to be found, *OR*, meaning that either one of a group of connected keywords need to be present, or *AND NOT*, meaning that certain keywords must not be included in an article) and -search modifiers (like asterisks, which can be placed at any place in a string, replacing an arbitrary number of characters - ‘parliament*’, for example, would return results for parliament, parliamentarian, parliamentary and any other words starting with ‘parliament’). These operators and modifiers were used to automatically create relatively narrow search strings in Excel which, when entered into the data base, returned all articles that possibly contained a reference to the PQ.

As the search strings still had to be somewhat vague in order not to exclude articles that fulfilled all criteria, the searches also returned false positives - articles containing all words defined by the search but reporting on something different. All returned articles were therefore read by the author. The PQ was assigned a value of one or zero, depending according to whether a mention of the PQ was found or not.

4.4.2 Independent Variables

For the positions of *PPG leader* and *committee chair*, dummy variables are used that distinguish whether the respective MP occupied that specific position when the PQ was asked (1) or not (0).

The variable *prominence* measures how well-known the MP asking the PQ is, independent of the reason of their prominence. It is measured using survey data from the Austrian National Election Study (Kritzinger et al., 2017). The survey was conducted between November 2012 and July 2013 in preparation of the Austrian legislative election 2013. 3,266 respondents were asked whether they could name one or more members of parliament, they could give up to three names of MPs. In 1,118 cases a correct answer (i.e. the name of an MP in the 24th legislature) was given, MPs received between zero (multiple) and 64 (Josef Bucher) mentions. Both politicians who had important functions in their parties during the 24th legislature (e.g. Bucher who was party leader of the BZÖ during most of the legislature and PPG leader during the whole period) and politicians who did not (e.g. Peter Pilz, a former party leader of the Green party who did not have a specific position in his party during the observation period and did not head a parliamentary committee during that time, was mentioned 52 times) are among the most mentioned MPs.

To indicate whether an MP was in *opposition* (1) or not (0) when the PQ was posed, another dummy variable is used. Alternatively, an additional dichotomous variable distinguishes whether the MP was member of the *same party* (1) as the member of government the question was posed to or whether they belonged to different parties (0). Ministers were assigned to the party they were nominated by, even if they were not formal members of said party.

The variable *portfolio importance* is derived from an expert survey by Druckman and Warwick (2005). Country experts in 14 Western European countries were asked to rank the importance of different portfolios in their respective countries, with 1 being the score of a portfolio of average importance and portfolios with higher or lower importance receiving scores proportionally higher or lower. 14 Austrian country experts answered the survey; the mean of their scores is presented as an interval-level ranking. The Chancellor (with a score of 2.11) was seen as the most important government office by the experts, with Youth (0.53) being the least important ministerial portfolio. Some of the portfolios existent in the 24th legislature were not part of the survey in the exact same form (e.g. the portfolio ‘Economic Affairs, Family and Youth’ that existed in the Faymann I cabinet is not part of the Druckman and Warwick survey, however, the portfolios ‘Economic Affairs’, ‘Family

Affairs' and 'Youth' all are). These scores had to be slightly modified; the exact approach and the matching of portfolios and scores are presented in Appendix B.

Media presence of ministers was measured using the AOM Library. Even though the Austrian Press Agency provides a measure on the media presence of politicians⁶ it is not seen as sufficient for this thesis. The APA only reports data for full calendar weeks, only names the 20 politicians most present that week (which, of course, does not always include all ministers) and counts every mention of the politician's name. This method, however, is biased towards shorter names as longer names are substituted with synonyms more frequently when a politician is mentioned multiple times in the same article. For these reasons an alternative variable was generated by the author. The number of articles each minister was mentioned in in any of the newspapers analyzed in this thesis every day during the legislature was collected using the R package *rvest* (Wickham, 2016). As this required searching each minister's name on every day for a timespan of about five years, a web browser was controlled automatically using the R package *RSelenium* (Harrison, 2017). A variable containing the number of articles mentioning the minister in the seven days before the date the question was posed was then generated. It was then set in relation to the numbers of mentions of all other ministers; the variable is defined as the percentage of all articles mentioning a member of government in the past seven days that mention the specific minister. Previous studies show that the media agenda can best be explained with the media agenda one day prior in many areas like TV news (Vliegenthart & Walgrave, 2008) and, during election campaigns, also in newspapers (Vonbun, von Königslöw, & Schoenbach, 2016) and that this effect gets weaker when a longer timeframe is used in these areas. However, in other stages of the legislative term, intermedia agenda-setting seems to have a longer lag for newspapers. Vliegenthart and Walgrave (2008, p. 868) show that the media agenda of the last week has good explanatory power of the current agenda of newspapers. Van Santen et al. (2015), in their study on the media presence of PQs in three different countries, use a similar measure (the past five days) to explain the current media presence.

Automated text analysis was used to measure the *negativity* of PQs. For this variable, the texts of all parliamentary questions were loaded into an R environment.

⁶www.ots.at/politikerranking

All formal aspects of the question, punctuation, numbers, and stop words (i.e. very common words like *I*, *you*, *the*, or *and*), using the German stop word list of the Snowball stemmer (Porter, 2001), were removed. The remaining words were then tokenized and stemmed, also using the Snowball stemmer. Afterwards, the German negative sentiment dictionary for political language constructed by Haselmayer and Jenny (2016) was adapted for the purposes of this thesis. Their dictionary, which was compiled using crowdcoding, contains 5,001 words which have scores between 0 (not negative) and 4 (very strongly negative) assigned to them. Words with a barely negative score (<1) and those with a very high standard deviation (>1.5) were removed, the rest was divided into three categories: weakly negative (scores between 1 and 2), negative (scores between 2 and 3) and strongly negative (scores between 3 and 4). The words were then also stemmed and the dictionary was applied to the PQ corpus using the R package *quanteda* (Benoit, 2018). A simple bag-of-words approach – an approach treating each word as an independent unit and disregarding word order – was used to create this variable. Even though more sophisticated modeling techniques are slowly gaining foothold in the social sciences (cf. Rudkowsky et al., 2018) and n-grams – sequences of two (bigram), three (trigram) or more words – have been used as an alternative to single words (unigram) in many instances for a long time (cf. Jurafsky & Martin, 2000), bag-of-words-approaches using unigrams are still dominant in the social sciences and are seen as “sufficient to convey the general meaning of a text” (Grimmer & Stewart, 2013, p. 272) for sentiment analyses and similar applications most of the time. To calculate the score, the equation

$$negativity = \frac{n_1 + (n_2 * 2) + (n_3 * 3)}{t} * 100$$

was used with t being the total number of tokens and n_1 , n_2 and n_3 being weakly, medium and strongly negative words, respectively. This leads to a variable with a theoretical range of 0 (no negative words) and 300 (only strongly negative words). The de facto range of scores is between 0 and 62.47.

4.4.3 Control Variables

Several control variables have to be taken into account. Firstly, media attention is often biased towards male political actors, as multiple studies (e.g. van Aelst et al.,

2008; Midtbø, 2011; for contrary results see e.g. Tresch, 2009) show. A dummy variable that distinguishes between *male* (1) and female (0) MPs is included in the data.

Another factor that has to be considered is the *seniority* of MPs. Van Aelst et al. (2010) show that MP's experience in parliament correlates with the number of contacts they have with journalists. Various studies (e.g. Tresch, 2009; Elmelund-Præstekær et al., 2011; Midtbø, 2011) find that more experienced MPs therefore also receive more media attention. In a survey conducted during the 20th Austrian legislature, more than 50% of MPs in the national council stated that they used direct contacts to journalists to get into the media (Müller & Steininger, 2001). Presumably this is still a major strategy. Seniority is measured as the number of years the MP has either been in the national council or the federal council at the time the question was posed.

Finally, it has to be taken into account whether a PQ was part of a *series* of questions (1) or not (0). MPs sometimes pose the same question to every member of government (see above) or pose a number of very similar questions (e.g. the same question for every state or every district) to the same minister all at once. If a media outlet reports on these PQs, in most, but not all, cases all of them are mentioned and a summarizing article is published. This might lead to a higher media presence and has to be controlled for. Question series were identified manually; a series was defined as including at least four identical/ very similar PQs (i.e. the same question posed to two or three ministers does not count as a series) that were posed within seven days. Additionally an interaction term of the variables series and negativity was included in the models as the effect of negativity is expected to depend on whether the PQ is part of a series or not.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Results

This chapter presents the results of the empirical tests performed for this thesis and discusses them. Section 5.1 presents descriptive analyses of some variables and relationships between variables; Section 5.2 presents the results of the logistic regression models; Section 5.3 discusses them and turns to the evaluation of the hypotheses.

5.1 Descriptives¹

Some parties posed many more PQs in the 24th legislative period than others. As displayed in Table 5.1, MPs of the FPÖ were responsible for nearly half of all questions. MPs from the Greens and the BZÖ each posed more than 15% of all questions directed at members of government. MPs of the government parties posed fewer questions: SPÖ MPs posed 11.7% of all questions directed at members of government, the ÖVP's share was even lower with 2.5%. The Team Stronach only posed about 3.3% of all PQs.

These numbers, however, have to be set in relation to the number of MPs per PPG and the time they spent in parliament. Considering that the Team Stronach only formed about a year before the end of the legislative period and was composed of six MPs at its highest point, its members were the most active: they, on average, each posed 28.4 questions per 100 days, followed by the MPs of the FPÖ, the BZÖ, and the Greens. MPs belonging to the government parties were by far the least active: the average SPÖ MP only posed 1.8 questions every 100 days, the average ÖVP MP only posed 0.4 in that timeframe.

¹Most descriptives presented in this section are based on the full amount of written PQs to members of government in the period of investigation. The only descriptives using the reduced sample that is used in the empirical analyses in the following sections are those including the dependent variable, media success.

Table 5.1: Parliamentary questions posed by members of parliament, by party

Party	Absolute	Percent	Relative
SPÖ	1,862	11.66	1.80
ÖVP	403	2.52	0.44
FPÖ	7,790	48.80	11.93
Greens	2,731	17.11	7.81
BZÖ	2,504	15.69	8.20
Team Stronach	526	3.30	28.37
OK	147	0.92	5.21
Total	15,963	100.00	

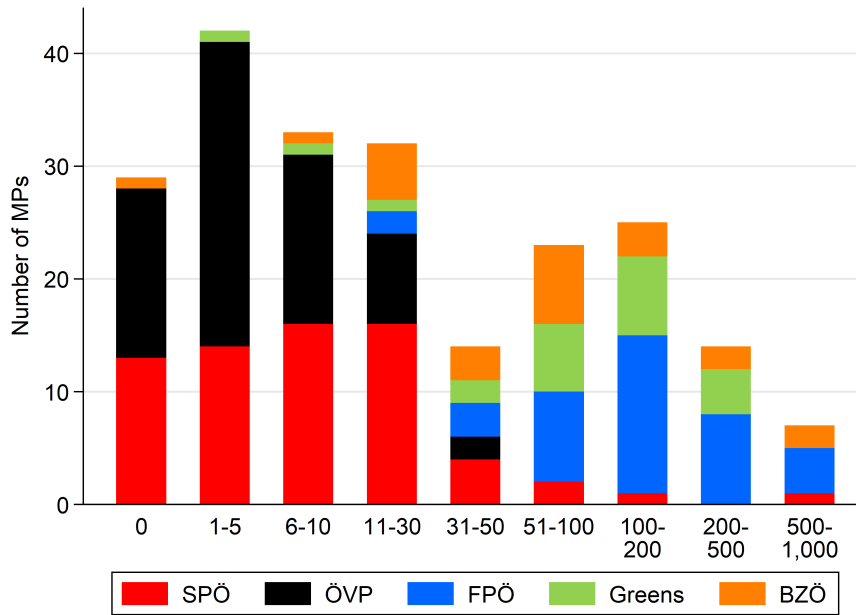
Note: Relative = PQs posed by the average MP of each PPG per 100 days, e.g.: all 68 MPs that were in parliament for the SPÖ at one time during the legislative period together spent 103,397 days in parliament – as all of them together posed 1,862 PQs they, on average, posed 1.8 PQs per 100 days; OK = Ohne Klub, not a member of a PPG.

The number of PQs posed by individual MPs varies greatly as well. Of the 219 MPs that occupied a parliamentary seat sometime in the 24th legislature (the number exceeds the total number of MPs in the national council, 183, as some left during the five-year period and were replaced by others), 29 did not pose a single PQ to a member of government, whereas the most active MP posed 999 questions to the government in the determined time frame. The number of PQs posed per MP and their party affiliation are displayed in Figure 5.1.

The seven MPs in the top category (500-1,000 PQs) alone posed 5,149 written questions to the government during the legislative period – nearly a third of all questions. This inequality is problematic or, at least, means one should be careful when interpreting results – SPÖ MP Johann Maier, for example, posed 971 questions – 52.15% of all SPÖ PQs and 42.87% of all PQs by a government party MP. There are several similar examples; Stefan Markowitz posed nearly 70% of all PQs by the Team Stronach, Gerald Grosz about 40% of all BZÖ PQs. These cases have to be taken into consideration when interpreting results.

The number of written questions directed at different ministries also differed vastly. Disregarding four ministries that only existed in the first few months of the legislature, during the Gusenbauer government (which only received between 8

Figure 5.1: Number of parliamentary questions per member of parliament



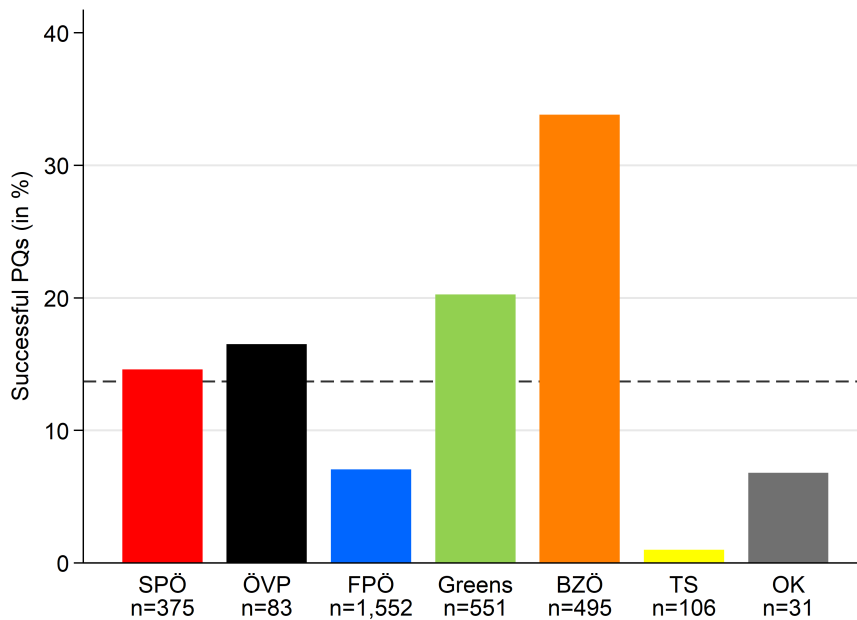
Note: Party changes not considered; party affiliation of each MP at the beginning of the legislative period or, if they entered parliament at a later time, when they first did so.

and 32 PQs, respectively), the Minister for Women and Public Service received the fewest questions (355; 2.2% of all written PQs) and the Interior Minister received the most (2,684; 16.8%). SPÖ MPs mostly addressed ÖVP ministers with their questions (77.8% of their PQs), ÖVP MPs mostly posed PQs to SPÖ ministers (94.8%), all opposition parties addressed ÖVP ministers slightly more frequently than SPÖ ministers. A more detailed depiction is presented in Table A.2 in Appendix A.

The percentage of PQs that were picked up by at least one newspaper in the sample per party is shown in Figure 5.2. In total, 13.69% (n=437) of all PQs were successful, i.e. they were featured in at least one newspaper article. This number is remarkably high considering the high number of questions posed during the legislative period and that the success rate is not much lower than that of press releases during the 2013 election campaign in Austria (16%, T. M. Meyer et al., 2017), that of oral PQs in France (18%, van Santen et al., 2015) and much higher than that of oral PQs in Germany (5%, van Santen et al., 2015), even though written questions are generally seen as less interesting for the mass media (e.g. Gerlich,

1973; Rozenberg & Martin, 2011) and are posed in much higher numbers. Figure 5.2 also displays the big differences in the success rates of the different parties. Both government parties, SPÖ and ÖVP, had slightly above average success, the success rates of the opposition parties vary strongly. The biggest opposition party, the right-wing FPÖ, which had posed nearly 50% of all PQs, had a success rate far below the average; only 6.7% of their PQs were mentioned in at least one newspaper. Only one PQ in the sample posed by an MP of the Team Stronach was picked up by a newspaper, resulting in a success rate of slightly below 1%. The Greens (19.24%) and especially the BZÖ (32.12%) managed to place an above average number of their PQs at least in one newspaper.

Figure 5.2: Percentages of successful PQs per party in the sample



Note: The dashed line indicates the total mean of successful PQs (13.69%). TS= Team Stronach; OK = Ohne Klub, not a member of a PPG.

Similarly, as shown in Table 5.2, the success rates vary widely depending on the ministry the questions are directed at. PQs were most likely to be picked up by at least one newspaper when they were directed at the Minister for Women and Public Service (22.1% success rate) and least likely when they were directed at the Minister for Agriculture and the Environment (7.8% success rate). Even though variation was expected, this result is surprising, as all ministries topping the table

Table 5.2: Success rates of PQs by receiving ministry

Ministry	N	Successful PQs (in %)
Women and Public Service	68	22.06
Justice	319	20.38
Science and Research	118	16.95
Health	300	16.00
National Defence	209	15.79
Finance	271	13.65
Federal Chancellor	118	13.56
Education, Arts and Culture	251	13.15
Economic Affairs, Family and Youth	211	12.80
Employment, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection	203	11.82
Interior	530	11.51
European and International Affairs	126	11.11
Transport, Innovation and Technology	240	10.42
Agriculture and Forestry, the Environment and Water Management	219	7.76
Total	3,183	13.67

Note: Ministries only present in the Gusenbauer government are not included in the table.

were given below-average or average scores in the Druckman and Warwick (2005) survey and PQs directed towards ministries seen as more important have average or below-average success rates.

5.2 Method and Results

As the dependent variable is binary, binary logistic regression models were used to test the hypotheses. Because the variables *opposition* and *same party* are similar and all *opposition* MPs have a value of 0 for the variable *same party*; and MPs that are either *PPG leaders* or *committee chairs* get significantly higher scores on the *prominence* variable (MPs holding at least one of the positions got, on average, 10.68 mentions in the survey the *prominence* variable is based on; others on average

got 3.86 mentions), these (sets of) variables were not used in the same models, respectively, to avoid multicollinearity. Therefore, multiple models were calculated, each only containing one of the (sets of) variables of each group. The results of the binary logistic regression models are presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Explaining the media success of parliamentary questions (logistic regression models)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
PPG leader	−0.860* (0.435)		−0.874* (0.433)	
Committee chair	−0.463** (0.150)		−0.471** (0.149)	
Prominence		0.005 (0.005)		0.004 (0.005)
Opposition	0.001 (0.169)	−0.118 (0.169)		
Same party			−0.352 (0.348)	−0.252 (0.348)
Portfolio importance	−0.236+ (0.141)	−0.263+ (0.141)	−0.236+ (0.141)	−0.264+ (0.141)
Media presence	−0.002 (0.010)	−0.003 (0.010)	−0.003 (0.010)	−0.003 (0.010)
Negativity	0.020* (0.009)	0.019* (0.009)	0.019* (0.009)	0.019* (0.009)
Negativity # Series	−0.088*** (0.015)	−0.086*** (0.015)	−0.087*** (0.015)	−0.086*** (0.015)
Series	1.880*** (0.230)	1.868*** (0.229)	1.867*** (0.229)	1.845*** (0.228)
Male	0.252+ (0.141)	0.248+ (0.142)	0.254+ (0.141)	0.252+ (0.142)
Seniority	0.031* (0.012)	0.027* (0.013)	0.033** (0.011)	0.032** (0.012)
Constant	−2.471*** (0.311)	−2.421*** (0.310)	−2.460*** (0.266)	−2.532*** (0.263)
Observations	3,191	3,191	3,191	3,191
Log likelihood	−1215.295	−1221.919	−1214.743	−1221.885

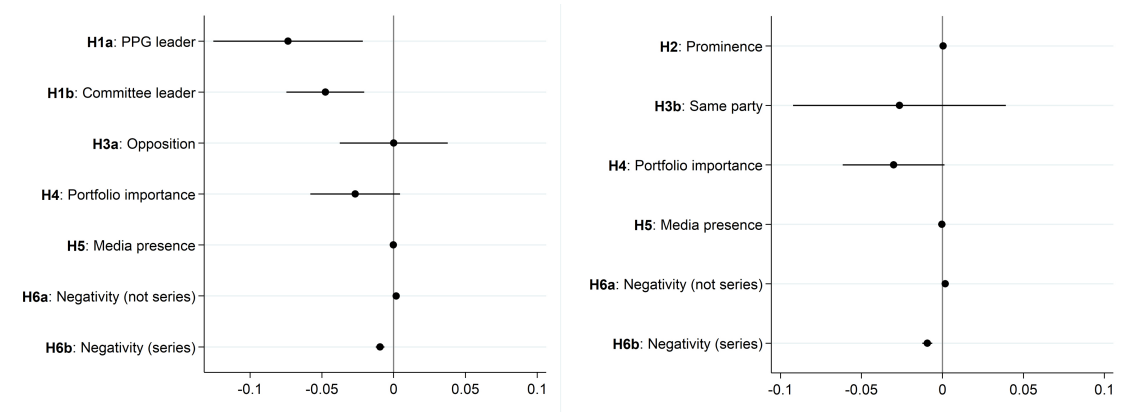
Standard errors in parentheses

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Only few of the independent variables have significant effects on the media success of parliamentary questions – at least in the expected direction. Figure 5.3 presents the marginal effects of all independent variables in Models 1 and 4.²

²For all predicted probabilities and in the marginal effect plots in Figure 5.3, all other values are

Figure 5.3: Marginal effects



Notes: Left figure is based on Model 1, right figure is based on Model 4 in Table 5.3. Marginal effects based on a change from 0 to 1 for indicator variables (used in Hypotheses 1 and 3) and average marginal effects for all other variables. Lines denote 95% confidence intervals. All remaining variables are held at their observed values.

The variable *PPG leader* has a negative effect in both models it is included in, the coefficient is significantly negative ($p=0.048$ in Model 1). Using Model 1, the MP's status as PPG leader reduces the estimated probability of a PQ being covered by a newspaper by 7.35 percentage points, from 13.9% to 6.55%. The variable *committee chair* is negative in both models as well, the effect is highly significant ($p=0.002$ in Model 1). In Model 1, the status of committee chair reduces the likeliness of an MP's question being picked up by a newspaper by 4.75 percentage points, from 14.6% to 9.87%. The *prominence* of MPs does not have any effect, the coefficients of the variable are positive in both models it was used in but miss statistical significance by wide margins.

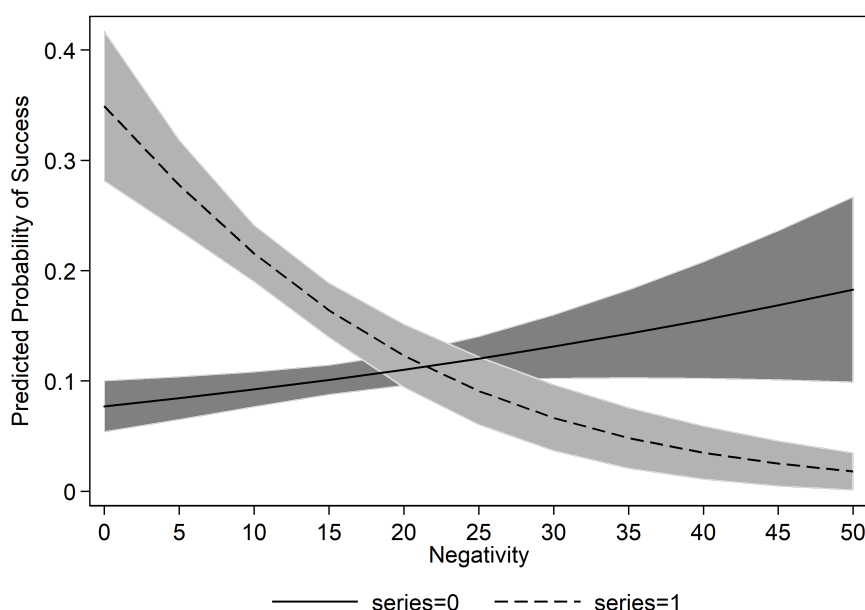
Opposition is very close to zero and not significant in Model 1 and slightly (but not significantly) negative in Model 2. The variable indicating whether the questioner and the questionee belonged to the *same party* is negative in Models 3 and 4 but, once again, clearly misses significance. The variable indicating *portfolio importance* has a negative coefficient in all models. It, however, misses conventional levels of significance (p -values between 0.061 and 0.095). The *media presence* of ministers, measured by their coverage in newspapers compared to the other members of government, does not have an influence on the chance of a PQ directed towards

held at their observed values. This decision was made as holding them at their medians or means can lead to making predictions about a very specific case that might be unrepresentative or not even existent (cf. Hanmer & Kalkan, 2013).

them being covered. The coefficients are negative but far from significant in all models.

The *negativity* of PQs has a significantly (p-values between 0.024 and 0.028) positive effect in all four models. Its interaction term with the *series* variable is highly significantly (p-values <0.001) negative in all models. Figure 5.4 presents the predicted probabilities of success for both PQs that were part of a series and those which were not depending on their level of negativity. The estimated probability of a PQ being successful changes by 1.82 percentage points, from 9.15% to 10.97%, when moving from the first to the third quartile on the negativity scale (as there are relatively few PQs with a very high value for negativity, the first and third quartile are at 9.25 and 19.75, respectively). The effect is stronger and in the opposite direction for PQs that are part of a series: for them, the estimated probability of being successful changes from 22.29% to 12.45%, 9.84 percentage points, when moving from the first to the third quartile.

Figure 5.4: Predicted probabilities depending on *negativity* over *series*.



Note: The shaded areas represent 95 per cent confidence intervals. Because of the low number of PQs with a negativity value above 50 in the sample, these cases were not included in the figure.

Turning to the control variables, being part of a *series* of questions has a highly significant (p-values <0.001) positive effect in all models. The coefficient for *male*

MPs is positive in all models but misses conventional levels of significance. Seniority has a significantly positive ($p=0.010$; $p=0.031$) effect in Models 1 and 2 and a highly significantly positive ($p=0.003$; $p=0.005$) effect in Models 3 and 4.

5.3 Discussion of Results

Before discussing these results and turning to the hypotheses, one methodological shortcoming should be addressed. The empirical analyses included attributes of the MPs posing the questions, the ministers receiving them and the questions themselves. A number of variables, like *magnitude*, *surprise*, *relevance*, and *entertainment*, all of which would relate to the contents of PQs, were not included in the analyses. This is problematic – at least some of these variables, which are all associated with news values, could be expected to have an effect on the media success of parliamentary questions. It was, for example, noticeable in the coding process that PQs which could be seen as particularly entertaining were featured in at least one newspaper in the vast majority of cases. However, as all of the empirical analyses in this thesis were done by the author himself and it was not possible to use additional coders (and therefore no reliability checks could be performed), all of these factors were deemed too subjective to be included (see also Section 3.3). As only a very small number of variables related to the PQs themselves is left in the analyses, this makes the results discussed in this section necessarily incomplete. Further methodological problems are discussed in the contexts of the variables they are linked with.

No support for **Hypothesis 1a**, stating that PQs by PPG leaders were more likely to be picked up by a newspaper, was found in the analyses. Contrary to the expectations, the variable even had a significantly negative coefficient. Even though this result should be taken with a pinch of salt – less than three percent of all PQs in the data were posed by PPG leaders and only four of the six PPG leaders in parliament during the legislative period are represented in the sample with parliamentary questions – there is a possible explanation for it. PPG leaders, other than backbenchers, have other instruments than written PQs available to them if they want media attention using parliamentary tools. It can be expected that PPG leaders would rather pose oral and especially urgent questions, instruments which are

said to be more interesting to the media, for issues they particularly want publicity for. Similarly, PQs by committee chairs do not have a higher chance of media success, as assumed by **Hypothesis 1b**. They also have a significantly lower chance to be covered by a newspaper. As urgent PQs primarily are a tool for party leaders and PPG leaders, it cannot be expected that committee chairs are usually able to use them for important questions they want to be seen by a wider public – however, as they usually have a good position within their parties they might be able to use oral questions more frequently than other MPs.

Hypothesis 2 has to be rejected as well. The prominence of MPs in the electorate does not have any effect on the media success of his or her PQs, the coefficient of the variable is close to zero and not significant in both models it is included in.

No evidence was found for **Hypotheses 3a** and **3b**. The opposition status of MPs did not have any effect on how much coverage their PQs got in newspapers. This does not come as a surprise as Figure 5.2 in Section 5.1 showed that, while two opposition parties were much more successful with getting their PQs reported on in newspapers, the biggest opposition party that posed nearly half of all questions, the FPÖ, and the fourth opposition party performed much worse than the government parties in this regard. More fine-grained analyses would be necessary to find out whether party affiliation has any influence on the success of PQs. The coefficients of the variable indicating whether the MP posing the question and the member of government receiving it were part of the same party are, as expected, negative in both models it is included in, but they clearly miss significance. As indicated by the big confidence intervals in Figure 5.3 in Section 5.2, however, only few cases, less than three percent of all PQs in the sample, fell into the *same party* category. Using a bigger sample might help to reduce uncertainty in this regard.

The claim that PQs directed towards more important ministries made in **Hypothesis 4** is not supported by the data either. As already shown in Table 5.2 in Section 5.1, PQs posed to the ministers controlling some of the, according to the data, least important ministries have higher success rates than those posed to more important ministers. This relationship might not be as strong as it seems at first sight: the variable *series* seems to have a moderating effect. Since fewer PQs are posed to less important ministries, their share of PQs that are part of a series is

higher than that of other ministries, as most question series include questions to all ministries. As newspapers more frequently pick up PQs that are part of a series and this type of PQ has a higher rate of success, this can partly explain the relatively higher success rates of PQs posed to less important ministries. However, the effect of *series* is controlled for in all models and the coefficients for portfolio importance are (not significantly) negative in all models. One possible explanation could be that less important ministries usually are not awarded to ‘1st rank politicians’ within a party, as these politicians are more likely to take the top positions. The ‘lesser’ politicians which hold the less important ministries might not be as experienced or as talented and therefore more likely to set themselves up as targets for questions that attack them or demonstrate their faults. More detailed analyses would be necessary to test whether this assumption applies.

Hypothesis 5, assuming a positive influence of previous media presence of ministers on the success of PQs directed towards them, also has to be rejected. The variable’s coefficients were negative, but very close to zero, in all models and missed significance by wide margins. When interpreting this result, it should be considered that the measurement of this variable was not ideal – media presence of ministers was used as a proxy for media presence for subjects falling into their areas of responsibility. This, firstly, equates a big number of different topics that belong to a certain ministry and, secondly, assumes that ministers never appear in newspapers for non-political reasons. Even though a better analysis was not feasible in the course of this thesis, the measure should ideally be more detailed.

Turning to the last pair of hypotheses, the evidence from the analyses supports the assumptions. As hypothesised in **Hypothesis 6a**, negativity has a significantly positive influence on PQs being covered if they are not part of a series and, as hypothesised in **Hypothesis 6b**, a highly significantly negative influence if they are. These results suggest that negativity really has an influence on the media success of PQs and that the direction of that influence depends on the kind of question.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to find out which factors determine whether a parliamentary question is picked up by the media. Members of parliament have different reasons for posing PQs to the government, many of which require media attention to fulfil their goals. News value theory claims that there are certain factors underlying events that determine whether they are deemed ‘newsworthy’ by journalists or not. One of the assumptions of this thesis was that politicians know about this media logic and are able (and have an interest) to adapt their communication to it if they want to have a higher chance to receive media attention. Hypotheses were developed and then tested to examine which of these news values indeed have an influence on the media coverage of PQs.

There are, however, some methodological difficulties that should be considered before addressing the main findings: firstly, as addressed in Section 3.3, not all variables that would be expected to have an influence on the dependent variable could be included. Ideally, more factors concerning the contents of PQs should have been coded and included in the regression models. Secondly, the measures for some independent variables, especially preceding media presence, were not ideal. These shortcomings were discussed in Section 4.4.2. Thirdly, as explained in Section 4.2, only national newspapers and not those of smaller geographic units could be included even though they might have been of interest in the case of parliamentary questions.

Finally, a factor that should be kept in mind is that, as I have shown in Section 2.1, many, but not all PQs are expected to pursue the goal of getting media attention. A relevant share of them is expected to be posed exclusively for requesting information. Unfortunately, disregarding obvious cases like the question referred to in the introduction of this thesis, it is not possible to reliably assess the true goal MPs had in mind for most PQs. Therefore, a question is deemed ‘not successful’

in this thesis if it is not featured in a newspaper, even if it exclusively aimed for information. This might lead to systematic errors, as personal strategies of MPs may vary and some might mostly pose questions to get information, while others might try to get as much media coverage as possible using the tool. Considering that a small number of MPs is responsible for a big share of all PQs, this might lead to bias in the results if some of these MPs pursue different strategies.

Keeping all of these points in mind, two main findings stand out: the first is that a surprisingly high number of PQs was featured in at least one newspaper. In the literature on PQs in Austria it has been stated that the public visibility of written questions was, contrary to oral and urgent questions, low (Gerlich, 1973, p. 231) and that the media paid too little attention to them (Jann, 1986, p. 818). The empirical results paint a different picture: 13.69% of all questions in the sample were reported on in at least one newspaper. Even though no expectations about the share of successful PQs were formulated beforehand, this number is remarkably high. Meyer et al. (2017), studying the success of press releases in Austria during an election campaign towards the end of the investigation period of this thesis, found that about 16% of them were mentioned in at least one newspaper – a number only slightly higher, even though they investigated the media coverage of a tool that is exclusively aimed at the media, during a time in which increased media presence of national politics can be expected. The visibility of written questions, it can be concluded, is higher than could have been expected and PQs can be regarded as a useful tool for getting media attention.

The second main finding is that surprisingly few of the factors expected to influence media success indeed were found to have significant effects on the dependent variable in the hypothesized directions. The prominence of the MP posing the question, opposition status, whether the MP and the member of government are members of the same party, the importance of the portfolio the minister receiving the question is holding, and previous media attention were all shown to have no significant effects on the media success of PQs in the analyses. Important posts in parties or in parliament, contrary to expectations, even had negative effects on the chance of media success of PQs posed by these MPs. In addition to seniority, which was used as a control variable and, in line with the literature, positively influences

the likeliness that a PQ is picked up by the media, the only factor that had an effect in the expected direction is negativity. PQs were more likely to be picked up by at least one newspaper the more negative they are; the opposite is the case if they were part of a series of questions. Considering that negativity was, besides preceding media presence (which, as mentioned before, had measurement problems), the only content-related variable that was included, this might indicate that the content of the questions, and not characteristics of the MP posing it, the minister receiving it or the ministry he or she is holding, is most important for the newsworthiness of PQs. It also reinforces the assumption that the aforementioned variables that had to be left out – all of which would have concerned the content of the questions – might have had significant effects on the dependent variable.

Because of all the issues addressed in this chapter, only limited implications can be drawn from the empirical analyses. As, as I have shown, PQs are featured prominently in the media but only few factors influencing whether they were reported on or not were found, it might be rewarding to add additional variables that might be relevant to the dataset used in this thesis and to refine the analyses. Additionally, as this thesis only dealt with a single case, it is not possible to generalize the findings. A revised version could, however, be used as the basis for comparative research. Future work building on these results could follow two different directions: firstly, it could be used to make longitudinal comparisons, including data from other legislative periods in Austria, to measure how the relevance of different factors changed over time. It might especially be interesting to include more recent data, to explore whether the ongoing slow but steady decline of printed newspapers changes the behavior of MPs in this regard and if, as Harcup and O'Neill (2017) assume, some news values lose or gain importance with the steady rise of social media.

Secondly, this data could also be used for cross-country comparisons. Even though, as mentioned before, it is challenging to compare PQs in different countries, written questions are less heterogeneous than oral questions across countries and comparing the similarities and differences in the media presence of PQs could produce interesting results if the differences of the functioning of questions in multiple parliaments and the differences of the media systems are considered.

This thesis demonstrated that written parliamentary questions are a useful tool

for members of parliament who want to get media attention, as they are available to all MPs and are regularly covered by newspapers. As the attempt to find out which factors determine whether a PQ has media success or not was only partially successful but possible additional factors which could play a role were identified, the topic constitutes a promising area for future research.

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Appendix A: Additional Descriptives

Table A.1: Number of written parliamentary questions per legislative period since 1945

Period	Government	Pres.Parl.	Comm.	Pres.Aud.	Total	Relative
5	380				380	26.76
6	603				603	49.18
7	457				457	38.79
8	400				400	36.5
9	296				296	23.05
10	384	5			389	32.36
11	1,570	10	1		1,581	108.14
12	860				860	147.51
13	2,428	4			2,432	166.46
14	2,480	1			2,481	189.68
15	2,541	1			2,540	175.9
16	2,365	1			2,366	180.89
17	6,063	20		12	6,095	429.53
18	7,126	35	6	19	7,186	491.18
19	2,140	17	1	10	2,168	499.54
20	6,711	59		27	6,797	491.47
21	4,411	25	4	11	4,451	387.72
22	4,721	51	3	17	4,792	339.86
23	5,058	43	2	7	5,110	700.96
24	16,018	122	2	28	16,170	885.06

Source: Data was collected on www.parlament.gv.at.

Note: Government = PQs to members of government; Pres.Parl. = PQs to the president of the national council; Comm. = PQs to the chair of a parliamentary committee; Pres.Aud. = PQs to the president of the audit court; Relative = PQs (all types) per 100 days. Urgent PQs are included in the columns and not listed separately for consistency reasons as they are only listed as a separate category on the website of the parliament since the 20th period. They only represent a marginal share of the total questions (between 13 and 68 questions in the periods they can be separated).

Table A.2: Numbers of written parliamentary questions by party of questioner and receiving ministry

Ministry	SPÖ	ÖVP	FPÖ	GRÜNE	BZÖ	STRONACH	OK	Total
Interior	464	4	1,436	314	416	32	18	2,684
Justice	321	4	652	324	297	16	11	1,625
Health	137	41	721	201	287	34	18	1,439
Education, Arts and Culture	32	83	893	208	142	31	7	1,396
Finance	172	5	682	241	205	75	15	1,395
Transport, Innovation and Technology	85	86	532	262	134	113	13	1,225
Agriculture and Forestry, the Environment and Water Management	202	2	421	216	157	116	10	1,124
National Defence	31	86	585	126	145	21	16	1,010
Economic Affairs, Family and Youth	151	1	464	200	148	17	12	993
Employment, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection	94	45	446	172	119	21	13	910
European and International Affairs	85	2	330	110	103	11	4	645
Federal Chancellor	18	23	262	125	121	10	2	561
Science and Research	49	3	223	133	96	17	4	525
Women and Public Service	14	18	122	85	100	12	4	355
Health, Family and Youth*	4	0	8	9	11	0	0	32
Economic Affairs and Labour*	1	0	9	4	7	0	0	21
Social Affairs and Consumer Protection*	2	0	3	1	9	0	0	15
Women, Media and Regional Policy*	0	0	1	0	7	0	0	8
Total	1,862	403	7,790	2,731	2,504	526	147	15,963

Note: Ministries marked with an asterisk only existed in the Gusenbauer government which was in office in the beginning of the legislative period

Appendix B: Portfolio Importance

For the variable on portfolio importance, scores by Druckman and Warwick (2005) were used (see section 4.4.2). However, the portfolios included by the authors do not completely match the ministries that existed during the 24th Austrian legislature.

In some cases, two or three portfolios that were part of the survey by Druckman and Warwick were concentrated in one ministry in the analyzed case. Ignoring this and just assigning the score of one of these portfolios to the ministry would undervalue these ministries, however, just adding together the two or three scores would make them seem more important than they are in reality (giving, for example, the Minister of Employment, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection a much higher score than the Chancellor). Therefore, a middle course between these approaches was chosen: ministries with more than one fitting portfolio were assigned the score of the highest rated fitting portfolio plus half of the score of the second highest rated fitting portfolio plus, if applicable, a quarter of the score of the lowest rated fitting portfolio.

Table B.1 presents all ministries that existed at some point during the investigation period and shows in detail which portfolios they were matched to, what scores these portfolios were assigned by Druckman and Warwick (2005) and what scores were assigned to the ministries using these numbers.

Table B.1: Matching of ministries to portfolio scores

Portfolio name (english)	DW 1	Sal 1	DW 2	Sal 2	DW 3	Sal 3	Importance
Federal Chancellor	Chancellor	2.11					2.11
Employment, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection	Social Welfare/Affairs	1.25	Employment	1.09	Consumer Protection	0.72	1.975
Economic Affairs, Family and Youth	Economic Affairs	1.2	Family Affairs	0.86	Youth	0.53	1.7625
Economic Affairs and Labour	Economic Affairs	1.2	Employment	1.09			1.745
Finance	Finance	1.64					1.64
Social Affairs and Consumer Protection	Social Welfare/Affairs	1.25	Consumer Protection	0.72			1.61
Health, Family and Youth	Family Affairs	0.86	Health	0.79	Youth	0.53	1.3875
Education, Arts and Culture	Education	0.98	Arts	0.58			1.27
Interior	Interior	1.25					1.25
Agriculture and Forestry, the Environment and Water Management	Agriculture	0.86	Environment	0.75			1.235
European and International Affairs	Foreign Affairs	1.18					1.18
Justice	Justice	0.99					0.99
Science and Research	Science & Research	0.89					0.89
Transport, Innovation and Technology	Transport	0.83					0.83
Health	Health	0.79					0.79
National Defence	Defence	0.71					0.71
Women, Media and Regional Policy	Women's Affairs	0.62					0.62
Women, Media and Public Service	Women's Affairs	0.62					0.62
Women and Public Service	Women's Affairs	0.62					0.62

Source: Druckman & Warwick, 2005

Notes: Portfolio names were translated by the author; DW (1-3) = names given to portfolios by Druckman and Warwick (2005); Sal (1-3) = salience scores assigned to the corresponding portfolios; importance = portfolio importance, calculated using the salience scores.

Appendix C: Abstracts

Abstract

Parliamentary questions (PQs) are a tool available to members of parliament (MPs) in all parliamentary democracies. Having been described as the ‘only remaining outlet for individual parliamentary behavior’, any MP can draft them and is usually relatively free in choosing their content and design.

Existing literature has shown that PQs can serve a broad range of purposes, from requesting information to attacking ministers to gaining personal publicity. As most people do not directly monitor parliamentary behavior, PQs need to be picked up by media outlets to fulfill some of these purposes. However, there is little research on which questions actually are reported on in the media.

This thesis is a single case study, analyzing questions posed in the Austrian parliament in the 24th legislative period, ranging from 2008 to 2013. Using a recently updated list of news values, a number of hypotheses are proposed on which attributes of the person posing the PQ, the minister receiving it and its content might increase the chance of it being picked up by at least one national newspaper, with printed media still being a highly relevant medium in Austria. The hypotheses are tested in a multivariate analysis using logistic regression models with a sizeable sample (n=3,191) of all written PQs posed to members of government in the national assembly during the observation period.

The empirical results show that a surprisingly high share of all PQs (13.69%) is reported on in at least one newspaper, but that there is no support for most of the proposed hypotheses. Contrary to what was hypothesized, PQs posed by MPs with important posts in their parties or parliament are even significantly less likely

to be picked up by newspapers than those from other MPs. Prominence, opposition status or gender of MPs do not have any effect, only parliamentary seniority (used as a control variable) shows a positive effect. No attributes of the minister answering (portfolio importance, party) have any effects. Preceding media coverage of the topic does not significantly change the chance of a PQ being covered. The only content-related variable that is shown to have a significant effect is negativity. As hypothesized it has a negative effect for so-called ‘material-gathering questions’ that are posed as part of a series of similar questions and a positive effect for all other questions.

Zusammenfassung

Parlamentarische Anfragen sind ein Instrument welches Abgeordneten in allen parlamentarischen Demokratien zur Verfügung steht. Jede/r Abgeordnete kann Anfragen, die in der Literatur als ‚letzte verbliebene Möglichkeit für individuelles parlamentarisches Verhalten‘ bezeichnet wurden, stellen und ist in der Regel relativ frei bezüglich der Wahl ihres Themas und ihrer Gestaltung.

Die bestehende Literatur zeigt, dass parlamentarische Anfragen einer breiten Palette von Zwecken – vom Anfordern von Informationen, über das Attackieren von MinisterInnen, bis zu persönlicher Werbung – dienen können. Da die meisten Menschen das parlamentarische Verhalten nicht direkt beobachten, müssen Anfragen von den Medien aufgegriffen werden, um einige dieser Zwecke zu erfüllen. Allerdings gibt es bisher kaum Forschung darüber, über welche Fragen in den Medien tatsächlich berichtet wird.

Diese Arbeit ist eine Einzelfallstudie, die Anfragen analysiert, die im österreichischen Parlament in der 24. Legislaturperiode, welche 2008 bis 2013 dauerte, gestellt wurden. Mithilfe einer kürzlich aktualisierten Liste von Nachrichtenwert-Faktoren wird eine Reihe von Hypothesen darüber aufgestellt, welche Merkmale der Person, die die Anfrage stellt, des Ministers oder der Ministerin, an den/die die Frage gerichtet ist, oder des Inhalts der Anfragen die Wahrscheinlichkeit erhöhen dass sie von zumindest einer Tageszeitung, einem in Österreich weiterhin sehr bedeutenden Medium, aufgegriffen wird. Die Hypothesen werden in einer multivariaten Anal-

yse unter Verwendung logistischer Regressionsmodelle mit einer großen Stichprobe (n=3.191) aller schriftlichen Anfragen, die während des Beobachtungszeitraums an Regierungsmitglieder im Nationalrat gestellt wurden, überprüft.

Die empirischen Ergebnisse zeigen, dass ein überraschend hoher Anteil aller Anfragen (13,69%) von zumindest einer Zeitung aufgegriffen wird, dass sich aber die meisten der vorgeschlagenen Hypothesen nicht bestätigen. Entgegen der Erwartungen werden Anfragen von Abgeordneten, die wichtige Ämtern in ihren Parteien oder im Parlament innehaben, sogar signifikant seltener von Zeitungen aufgegriffen als jene von anderen Abgeordneten. Prominenz, Oppositionsstatus oder Geschlecht der Abgeordneten haben keine Wirkung, nur die parlamentarische Seniorität (welche als Kontrollvariable verwendet wurde) zeigt einen positiven Effekt. Keine Attribute des antwortenden Ministers (Bedeutung seines/ ihres Portfolios, Parteizugehörigkeit) zeigen Auswirkungen. Die vorhergehende Medienberichterstattung über das Thema der Anfrage beeinflusst die Wahrscheinlichkeit, dass eine Anfrage aufgegriffen wird, nicht signifikant. Die einzige inhaltliche Variable, die einen signifikanten Effekt hat, ist Negativität. Wie angenommen, hat die Variable einen negativen Effekt für sogenannte ‘Materialbeschaffungsanfragen’, welche als Teil einer Serie von ähnlichen Anfragen gestellt werden, und einen positiven Effekt für alle anderen Anfragen.