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14 *Images of the US in the Netherlands*

14.1 Abstract

This chapter reports research on the images, knowledge, and presence of opinions and attitudes with respect to the United States of America among secondary education pupils in the Netherlands and into related variables.

Reconceptualizing political education for the 21st century will have to include the international dimension. One element of that dimension is teaching about foreign countries, in general, and about the world powers, in particular. To be effective, that teaching has to be an intentional and explicit

addition to (and, where necessary, a correction for) preceding socialization. Therefore, teachers need information about the "pre-concepts" which pupils have. The aim of this chapter's empirical study is to gain insight into the preconceptions of youngsters about the United States.

14.2 Previous Research

14.2.1 Motives and Aims

Research into the images, opinions, and attitudes with respect to the United States of America has several motives and aims.

The first aim is clarification. Regularly, Americans have made public statements that there is a strong anti-Americanism in Europe, believing (for example) that anti-Americanism was the underlying theme behind the trend toward neutralism in Europe. Many European researchers in the 1980s, however, concluded that anti-Americanism is at most marginal (e.g., Lenhardt, 1987). Are some American authors hypersensitive? asks Thornton (1988, p. 16). Maybe this is an "unsophisticated adjunct of the desire to be liked" adds Thompson (1988, p. 34). Who is right?

Another research motive is a concern about the relationship between these countries, both on the micro- and macro-levels. Negative and incorrect images and stereotypes may create deep fears, may bias future information acquisition and processing, and may create false expectations, misunderstandings, and frictions in personal interactions and communications. For example, one person complained: "I still do get quite upset when proper respect is not shown my flag and when the President [Reagan] is ridiculed because of his Hollywood past" (Fry, 1986, p. 145). On a macro-level, individuals' images and attitudes create a public opinion which may influence foreign policy.

The third aim relates to education. In Europe, education for international understanding has been one of the Council of Europe's main priorities since its establishment in 1949. In 1983, the Council's Committee of Ministers recommended that "schools should encourage all young Europeans to see themselves not only as citizens of their own regions and countries, but also as citizens of Europe and of the wider world." The Medium-Term Plan (1981-1986) stresses the importance of facilitating and strengthening "possibilities of dialogue and mutual understanding with other parts of the world" (Stobart, 1985). Teaching about the US in Europe should "overcome the misconceptions held by European teachers and students, especially

those with their roots in the media and popular culture" (Torney-Purta, 1985, p. 70). Before starting such teaching, these "misconceptions" need to be investigated.

14.3 Images, Stereotypes, and Pro- and Anti-Americanism

What people know, think, and feel about the US is a topic which social and political psychologists, political scientists, and educational scientists, among others, frequently study. The concepts and conceptual structures used differ. Social and political psychologists use concepts such as "image" or "belief", "proto- and stereotype", and "prejudice." Political scientists apply concepts such as "knowledge", "opinion", and "attitude." Educational scientists distinguish "pre-educational concepts", "misconceptions", "subjective knowledge" or "perceptions", and "(objective) knowledge."

The term "image" refers to "the organized representation of an object in an individual's cognitive system" (Kelman, 1965, p. 24). If a category of people is the object of study, the term "prototype" is used. "Prototype" refers to the whole of characteristics which are seen as typical for a category of people. The distinction between "image" and "prototype" corresponds with the observation that a judgement about a country may be not necessarily in accordance with a judgement about the people living in that country (Hewstone, 1986). "Image" and "prototype" are more or less interchangeable with concepts such as "subjective knowledge" and "pre-educational concepts." A stereotype is "an exaggerated belief associated with a category" (Allport, 1954, p. 79). Often, the boundary between a "prototype" and "stereotype" is difficult to draw because data are lacking about "reality." A negative or unfavorable image or proto- and stereotype is a "prejudice." A prejudice is one type of "attitude."

Other concepts, frequently used in the literature are "Americanism" and "pro- and anti-Americanism." "Americanism" can be both an image and a proto- or stereotype; it is the whole of characteristics which are seen as "typical" for the US (country) and for Americans (people). Verhagen (1988, p. 184), a Dutch journalist living in the US, offers an example of an image of the US. He says that freedom, priority for the individual, the free market and production by private enterprises, and an aversion to government and to centralization are characteristic of the US. Pro- and anti-Americanism are the extremes of a scale indicating respectively a positive or negative attitude toward that whole of characteristics perceived as typical of the US

and/or Americans. These range from "enthusiastic acceptance to bitter hatred" (Kroes, 1986, p. 41). Pro- or anti-Americanism is not identical with criticism of specific US characteristics. "The critique of specifics does not necessarily lead to a diminishing of the general appreciation of another country; it could even be understood as a sign of the existence of such general positive attitudes toward that other country" (Koch, 1986, p. 98).

Two types of (pro- or) anti-Americanism are distinguished in the literature:

". . . an anti-Americanism rejecting cultural trends which one tends to identify as American, while admiring America's energy, innovation, prowess, as inspired by its message of optimism, *or* an anti-Americanism in reverse, rejecting an American creed which for all its missionary zeal is perceived as imperialist and oppressive, while admiring or adopting American culture, from its high-brow to its pop varieties" (Kroes, 1986, p. 41).

The first type, cultural anti-Americanism, originated in 18th century England when Britain lost the War of Independence, and continued into the 19th century (Ibid.). The second type, a political anti-Americanism, developed in the 1960s and 1970s, criticizing the US because of its domestic and foreign policies. The favorable attitudes toward the US in the late 1940s and 1950s may be called "honeymoon" attitudes (Ibid.).

14.3.1 Research Topics on the US and Anti-Americanism

Past research has almost exclusively given attention to attitudes toward the United States, in general, and to anti-Americanism, in particular. In many publications in different countries, a love-hate relationship or an ambivalence in popular feelings in these countries toward the US has been either assumed or argued (for example, De Franciscis, 1988).

Some of these studies have used bivariate analysis, providing empirical evidence of a relationship between attitudes toward the US and age (Walker, 1988), gender (NIPO, 1987), level of education (Turner and deCilley, 1988), and class (Ibid.). Anti-Americanism in Europe now is viewed as largely an elite or intellectual phenomenon (Spiro, 1988). As one observer notes: "In case after case . . . anti-Americanism appears mainly as the preserve of the upper classes while the masses of the population is more tolerant of American shortcomings or even seeks to make American culture, if not values, its own" (Thornton, 1988, p. 13). Other research variables include political party preference or political ideology (Müller, 1986; NIPO,

1987), how individuals see their own country using the US model for positive or negative domestic changes (Turner and deCille, 1988), mass media reports of major US events (e.g., the Martin Luther King and Kennedy assassinations, racial discrimination, and Watergate), and the US in the international domain (e.g., the US and the Marshall Plan, involvement in the Indonesian Revolution, the Suez crisis in 1956, and the Vietnam war). Other such issues include the neutron bomb and deployment of cruise and Pershing II missiles on European soil, President Reagan's crude language regarding Russia and his off-the-cuff jokes, the Libya air raid, Black Monday on Wall Street, the El Salvador affair, Panama, Grenada, and Kuwait (Ibid.).

Relationships between international political socialization processes and structures of learning have been rarely studied. From our own studies, we know that samples (non-representative) of Dutch youngsters see the television, the (national) newspaper, and a study program in the US as the most influential socializers in this field. Formal education in school plays only a marginal role (see Dekker and Oostindie, 1988 and 1990 as well as their chapter with Hester in this book).

In such studies, several different methods, techniques, and instruments were used. Images were measured using an open question, such as "Please write down the first five words that come to mind upon hearing the word "America"/"Americans." Factual knowledge was measured using closed questions (e.g., asking the correct name of the President). Questions tapping opinions asked one to agree or disagree with a particular statement or to say that a given situation was good or bad. Attitude measurement used many different questions (such as asking one's willingness to move to the United States under the same working and living conditions; general feelings about the US; opinions on US foreign policy and world peace; opinions about the US President; one's preference for the US or the USSR as an ally or neutral partner; the acceptability of US investment capital; worth of US economic assistance; having confidence in the US' ability and responsibility in world affairs; importance of maintaining good relations with the US; the extent to which one's basic values are generally close or different; and popularity of US products and travel in the US). By contrast, stereotypes toward Americans were measured through content-analysis of official speeches (Herrmann, 1985), publications, and textbooks (e.g., Social Studies Development Center, 1984); films (Waller, 1981), television programs, and conversations; and experimental procedures, in-depth interviews, standardized inter-

views, and surveys. In standardized interviews and surveys, Osgood's "semantic differential" (Osgood, et al., 1957) and Katz' and Braly's (1933) "adjective check-list" or the "nomination technique" (Stephan and Ageyev, 1991) were used as well as the "percentage technique", the "diagnostic ratio technique", and the "pathfinder technique" (Ibid.).

14.3.2 Research on Attitudes Toward the US in the Netherlands

The first Dutch study after World War II examined perceptions and judgments of the population about the Marshall Plan (NSS, 1949; cited in Koch, 1986). NIPO (1975 and 1979) asked Dutch respondents if they had confidence in the US's peaceful intentions (Ibid.) and if the US was peace-loving (Ibid.). In a 1981 USIA survey (Ibid.), a Dutch sample was asked if they had confidence in the ability of the US to handle world affairs in a responsible way. Other studies asked how the Dutch perceive the US: as a good friend, a business partner, or an enemy, and if they had a positive attitude toward the US. Koch (1986, p. 98) concludes that the figures from opinion polls since 1975:

". . . suggest a remarkably stable attitude of the broad public toward the United States: some 10% is typically anti-American, some 30% is typically pro-American, in 1975 as well as in 1983, and a clear majority of the neutrals, when pressed to a choice, rally behind the United States."

Another study into anti-Americanism in 1983 (NSS, 1983), however, concluded that almost half of the Dutch adults (47%) have a "moderately negative" attitude (29%) or a "very negative" attitude (18%) toward America. The highest percentage of negative respondents was in the group of 18-29 year olds. A NIPO (1987) study also reported that one out of every five or six Dutch individuals is negative about the US. President Reagan was judged (60%) negatively. In 1987, on behalf of the Directorate General of Information, Communications, and Culture of the Commission of the European Community, a representative sample of the population aged 15 and more in all EC member states was surveyed. Half the EC citizens had a favorable opinion and 20% an unfavorable opinion. In the Netherlands, 54% claimed "good" or "very good" feelings about the US, 13% "neither good nor bad", 27% "bad feelings", while 5% gave "don't know" or no answer (cited in De Franciscis, 1988).

Commercial public opinion poll companies have conducted most studies into the images/stereotypes about the US or anti-Americanism in the Neth-

erlands. Such studies were frequently commissioned using party, partisan, or other interest group's or organizations' funds. In many cases, only one or two US-oriented questions were asked in a questionnaire embracing many other issues. Methodological accounts were missing in many cases and were not available for review. The research populations consisted mainly of adults, with children and adolescents excluded.

14.4 Research Design

In 1988, we decided to study Dutch young peoples' cognitions and affections with respect to the US. Our aim was to offer teachers and professors empirical results needed for an adequate preparation for courses on the US and adequate preparation for students in a NL/US joint study program (see section on "Our Motives and Aims"). The definition of our research problem was: What images, knowledge level, or opinions and attitudes do young people in the Netherlands have about the United States of America and what are the related variables?

The objects of research were the images, knowledge, and level or presence of opinions and attitudes with respect to the US. Two attitudes were included, namely interests and attitudes toward the US. Three aspects of the US were selected: politics, economics, and everyday life. "Politics" was operationalized through items relating to political structures, political processes, and political personalities. No questions included "the" American people or "the Americans."

The independent variables in this study were gender, level of education, political party preference, and television viewing behavior (subdivided into watching informative, current affairs programs or watching American entertainment and dramatic series). The selection of these variables was based on findings from previous studies (see section on "Research Topics on the US and Anti-Americanism") and on international political socialization research and theory in general (e.g. Brouwer, 1986; Hagendoorn, 1986; Claussen and Kili, 1988; Claussen and Mueller, 1990; and Dekker, 1991). Data were acquired via a written survey with 62 questions. Questionnaires were completed during school time. To avoid "socially desirable" answers, no social studies classes were used.

Images ("subjective knowledge") of the US were measured using an open-ended question. "Objective" knowledge was measured using 12 factual questions: five about politics, four about economics, and three about every-

day US life. Together, they formed a knowledge index (Cronbach's alpha: .2968). Each correct answer scored a certain number of points. A correct answer to a politics question resulted in either 0.5 or 1.0 point, while a correct answer on an economics or everyday life question received 0.8 or 1.0 points. The maximum score was 10 points (4 points for the politics questions, 3.6 points for the economics questions, and 2.4 points for the everyday life questions). Someone was considered as having no or little knowledge if he/she had less than 4.1 points; a score between 4.1 and 6.0 meant a moderate level of knowledge; and a score of 6.1 or more indicated much knowledge.

The presence or absence of opinions was also assessed. Ten questions were used, four about politics, three on economics, and three concerning everyday life in the United States (Cronbach's alpha: .7068). The answer category, "no opinion", was explicitly provided. For each question, 1 point was given if an opinion was expressed. A respondent was considered having an opinion on the US when he/she had 6.0 or more points.

Respondents' interest in the US was also measured. There were 10 questions: three on politics, three about economics, three concerning everyday life, and one about the US in general (Cronbach's alpha: .7087). The maximum score on each set of questions for the index were respectively 3.5, 2.5, 2.0, and 2.0 points. A respondent was considered being slightly interested in the US when he/she had 4.1 to 6.0 points and very interested with a total score of 6.1 or more.

Attitudes toward the US consisted of four questions about politics, one on economics, three on everyday life, and two for the US in general (Cronbach's alpha: .5401). Maximum subset scores for the index were 4.0, 1.0, 3.0, and 2.0 points, respectively. A respondent was considered having a negative US attitude when he/she had 0.0 to 4.0 points, a partially negative or partially positive attitude in the case of 4.1 to 6.0 points, and a positive attitude with 6.1 or more points.

The index for viewing information programs on television consisted of two questions about the frequency of watching the 8 o'clock news and other current affairs programs (Cronbach's alpha: .4824). The maximum scores were 4 and 6 points, respectively. The index for watching American drama consisted of one question, with 25 subquestions, each offering the title of a program broadcast at the same time as the study period. Respondents were

asked to say whether or not they watched these programs (i.e., never/rarely, sometimes, regularly, often, or almost always) (Cronbach's alpha: .8564).

Data processing used SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Correlation coefficients used were chi-square, Pearson's r (for variables of at least interval level), t -test (for comparing the means of two groups on an interval or ratio scaled variable), and the one-way analysis of variance (for comparing the means of different groups on the basis of one independent variable of ordinal level).

Subjects of the survey were secondary school pupils between 14 and 17 years old. The stratified sample consisted of 750 pupils from 30 third form classes in 30 schools, proportionately subdivided into various educational levels, religious and nonreligious groups, degree of urbanization (town or country), and geographic region. The questionnaire was completed by 723 pupils from 30 third forms of 23 schools in April 1989. Their ages were as follows: 14-year-olds, 26%; 15-year-olds, 49%; 16-year-olds, 21%; and 17-year-olds, 4%. Gender was represented in the following proportions: 350 boys (49%) versus 373 girls (51%). School types consisted of lower vocational education, 22%; lower general secondary education, 41%; higher general education, 19%; and pre-university education, 18%. Lower vocational education pupils were under-represented, while lower general secondary education and higher general secondary education pupils were over-represented. All these school categories form about one third of the total secondary population, according to figures from the Dutch Ministry of Education.

14.5 Findings

14.5.1 Image and knowledge

Concerning the US image, students were requested to write the first five words that came to mind upon hearing the word "America" (see Table 1). In total, 3277 words were mentioned (i.e., 4.5 words per person on the average). The greatest number (40.7%) of words concerned everyday US life (e.g., hamburger, milk shake, McDonalds, drugs, rape, sport, criminality, hard working, eating a lot, and pop music). In second place (23.4%) were words concerning US society/geography (e.g., beautiful nature, big cities, busy, crowded, rivers, states, sky-scrapers, and biological races). In the third place (15.1%) were terms concerning politics (e.g., world power, Reagan, defense, Iran scandal, democracy, East-West relations, and White

House). After this (11.3%), ascriptions concerning general characteristics and behavior of Americans were scored (e.g., chauvinistic, materialistic, beautiful people, desire to be popular, cowboys, family life, sturdy, and adventurous). Finally (9.5%), there were words relating to economics (e.g., dollar, homeless people, Wall Street, and poverty).

Table 1: What come to students' minds upon hearing the word "America."

Category	Number	%	Example
Politics	494	5.1	"world power"
Economics	312	9.5	"poverty"
Everyday life	1335	40.7	"hamburger"
Geography	766	23.4	"beautiful nature"
Americans	370	11.3	"chauvinistic"
Total	3277	100.0	

The factual knowledge measure used 12 questions about US politics, economics, and everyday life.

b

Figure 1: Dutch students' images of the US.

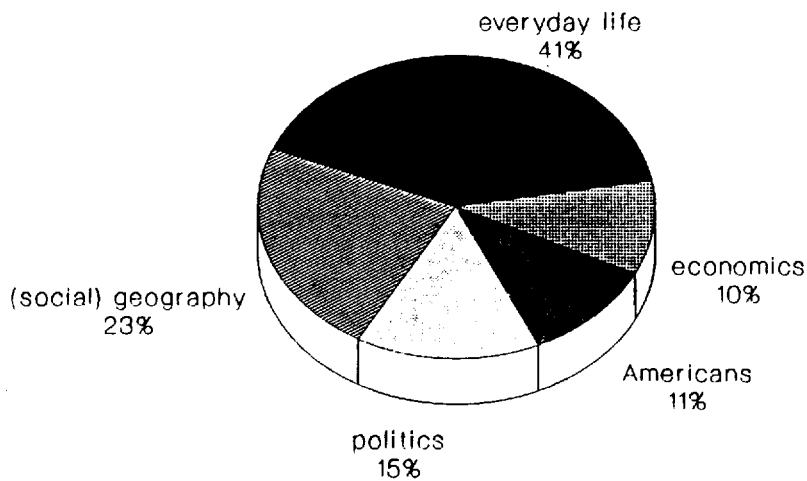


Table 2: Students' knowledge about US politics, economics, and everyday life (in %, by question).

Question	Correct Answer	Wrong/No Answer
- Name of present President	92.8	7.2
- Name of present Vice President	15.9	84.1
- Period between presidential elections	77.2	22.8
- Names of the two political parties	27.8	72.2
- Manner of electing a president	24.2	75.8
- Approximate percentage of unemployed (answer: between 4% - 7%)	6.8	93.2
- Is there a trade deficit/surplus?	13.3	86.7
- Is there a budget deficit/surplus?	32.7	67.3
- Percentage of population living below poverty line (answer: between 10-20%)	30.0	70.0
- Number of church members	23.0	77.0
- Most important means of transport	45.3	54.7
- Second language	27.2	72.8

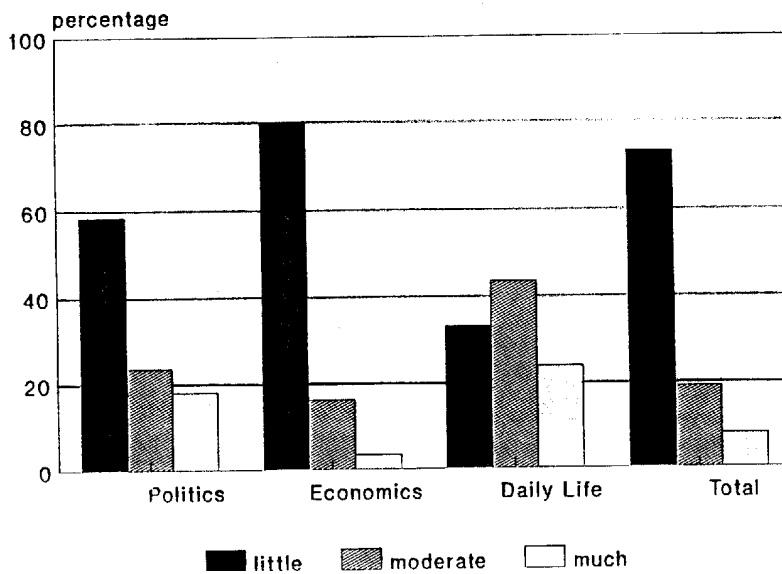
Total score results indicate a lack of factual knowledge about the US (i.e., 73.2 % had no or little knowledge, 18.9 % had moderate level knowledge,

and only 7.9 % had much knowledge. Knowledge about American economics, in particular, is poor.

Table 3: Students' knowledge about US politics, economics, and everyday life (in %, by category).

Knowledge Level	Politics	Economics	Everyday Life	Total
Little	58.6	80.8	33.1	73.2
Moderate	23.5	15.7	43.2	18.9
Much	18.0	3.5	23.6	7.9
N=	723.0	712.0	722.0	712.0

Figure 2: Dutch students' knowledge of the US.



14.5.2 Opinions

The presence or absence of opinions used ten questions: four about US politics, three about economics, and three about everyday life. The answer category, "No opinion", was also explicitly provided (see Tables 4 and 5).

Table 4: Students' opinions on US politics, economics, and everyday life (in %) (N=723).

Opinion (from above)	1	2	3	4	5
The US forces its policy on our country.	13.1	23.9	28.5	32.6	1.9
NL security is through cooperation with the US.	15.2	27.2	42.6	13.6	1.4
US policy is in favor of East/West detente.	25.2	25.2	13.3	35.1	1.2
Presence of US military advisors in Latin America.	15.9	32.0	23.2	27.2	1.7
US economic growth benefits all US citizens.	11.3	25.2	45.4	17.8	0.3
Reagan's decision to increase military spending.	3.6	15.9	76.4	3.6	0.5
Policy for increasing employment through military spending.	28.8	40.7	19.41	0.8	0.3
US is country with endless opportunities.	25.9	49.9	16.1	7.6	0.5
There is much crime in the US.	61.7	28.5	5.4	4.3	0.1
There is discrimination against blacks in the US.	44.5	33.9	13.2	8.3	0.1

Opinions about politics appear least frequently, while opinions about everyday life are most frequent.

Table 5: Presence or absence of students' opinions on politics, economics, and everyday life in the US (in % per category) (N=723).

Opinions	Politics	Economics	Everyday life	Total
Presence	71.1	88.6	93.4	90.0
Absence	27.5	11.1	6.5	10.0
No answer	1.4	0.3	0.1	

Total scores on the opinion index show that 90.0% of respondents had an opinion on the US.

14.6 Interests

Respondents' interest in the US had ten questions: three about politics, three about economics, three about everyday life, and one about the US, in general. All three questions about politics, economics, and everyday life asked about respondents' degree of reading newspaper articles, participation in discussions with friends, and the desire to know more about a subject (see Table 6).

Table 6: Students' interest in US politics, economics, and everyday life (in %) (N = 723).

	Politics	Economics	Everyday Life
Reading newspaper articles			
often/(almost) always	5.8	5.4	19.9
regularly	11.5	7.7	23.1
now and then	32.0	26.0	34.6
rarely or never	50.6	60.6	21.9
no answer	0.1	0.3	0.6
Discussions with friends			
participation	16.1	13.3	49.8
just listening	50.8	49.0	40.4
not listening	20.6	23.3	5.0
don't know	12.3	13.7	4.1
no answer	0.1	0.6	0.6
Wish to know more			
yes, interested	23.9	32.1	80.2
no, not interested	44.0	40.6	11.5
don't know	31.1	27.0	8.2
no answer	1.0	0.3	0.1
General interest in the US			
very interested	25.3		
a little interested	68.3		
not interested	5.8		
no answer	0.6		

Figure 3: Dutch students' interest in US

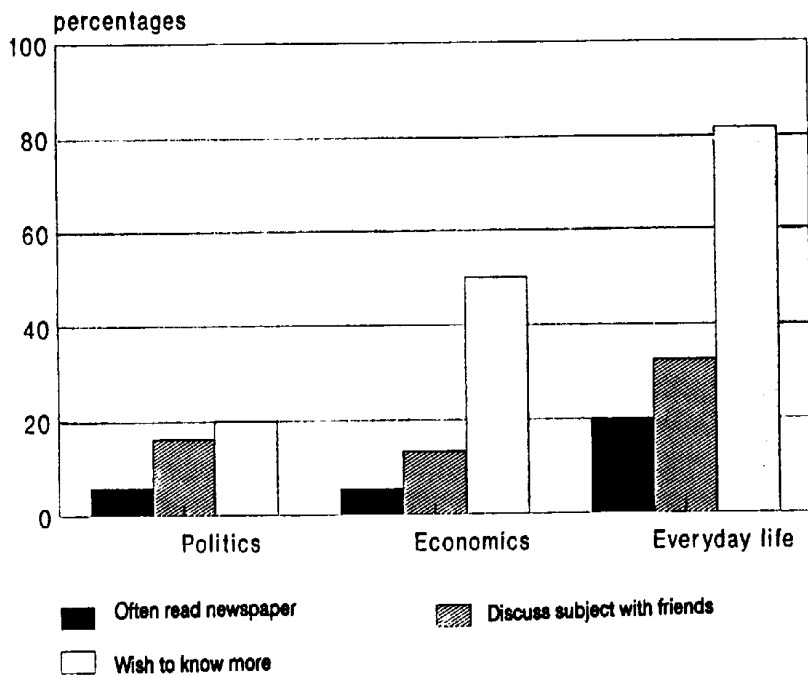


Table 7: Students' interest in US politics, economics and everyday life (in % per category).

Interest	Politics	Economics	Everyday Life	General US	Total
None	58.6	66.1	24.1	5.8	47.3
Slight	25.5	20.4	35.0	68.3	35.5
High	15.9	13.5	40.9	25.3	17.2
N=	711.0	717.0	717.0	719.0	701.0

The total scores on the interest index show that 47.3% say they are not interested (a score between 0 and 4.0), 35.5% are slightly interested (a score between 4.1 and 6.0), and 17.2% are very interested in the US (a score between 6.1 and 10).

14.6.1 Attitudes Toward the US

Attitudes toward the US used a second series of eight questions on opinions about politics, economics, and everyday life and two questions about the US, in general. This resulted in an index which ranged from 0 to 10. Findings on the eight opinion questions about US politics, economics, and everyday life are shown in Table 8.

The question about the US in general directly related to respondents' general US views. One-third (33.0%) indicated their attitude toward the US was positive to very positive; 47.1% had a partially positive and partially negative attitude; and 1.8% indicated that their attitude was negative to very negative (6.9% had no opinion; 10.8% did not know; and 0.4% did no answer).

The other question about the US in general consisted of two parts. As mentioned before, respondents were asked to write the first five words they associated with "America." This question included a request to give a value judgment for every word they mentioned. For every positively evaluated word, a positive attitude score was given; for every negatively evaluated word, a negative attitude score. In calculating the score, it was taken into account that when a respondent wrote just one word, the value judgment attached to it should be considered of greater consequence than those judgments attached to each word in a series of words. The maximum score for a positive attitude was 1.0. More than half of the respondents (57%) scored 0.6 or more on this question. The most positive value judgments were connected with words concerning American economics; the least positive with those about politics (see Table 8).

The whole body of questions about the respondents' attitudes toward the US resulted in a total attitude toward the US index score (see Table 9). It showed that 15.0% of all pupils had a negative attitude, 49.8% a partially positive and partially negative attitude, and 35.2% a positive attitude. Attitudes were most positive toward economics. Most negative were attitudes toward American politics; 30.3% of all respondents had a negative attitude in this category.

Table 8: Students' attitudes toward US politics, economics, and everyday life (in %) (N=723).

Opinion (from above)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Approach to drug problems	15.6	33.9	31.2	10.6	7.7	1.0
Policy observing world						
human rights	35.7	29.2	12.0	9.0	12.4	1.7
Policy on Israel	9.4	21.8	20.8	21.7	26.0	0.3
Policy on USSR	33.2	31.8	12.6	10.7	11.3	0.4
US economics	20.2	39.3	13.3	14.7	12.0	0.5
Belief in American Dream	32.4	28.4	17.7	4.3	6.6	0.6
Americans' behavior						
toward one another	18.1	44.0	16.1	11.9	9.8	0.1
Working in the US	35.7	36.5	17.0	6.1	4.0	0.7

Table 9: Students' attitudes toward politics, economics, and everyday life and the US in general (in % per category).

Attitude	Politics	Economics	Everyday Life	General US #1	General US #2	Total
Negative	30.3	13.3	25.2	1.8	18.2	15.0
Partially	52.1	66.3	54.5	64.8	25.0	49.8
Positive	17.6	20.4	20.3	33.0	56.8	35.2
N =	705.0	706.0	705.0	719.0	718.0	705.0

14.6.2 Correlations Between US Knowledge, Presence of Opinions, and Interests

The correlations between respondents' levels of knowledge, the presence or absence of opinions, the level of interest, and attitude toward the US are shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Correlations among students' US knowledge, presence of opinions, and interest and attitudes.

	Knowledge r =	Opinion r =	Interest r =	Attitude
Opinion	.3781**	-----	-----	-----
Interest	.3115**	-.2528**	-----	-----
Attitude	.0419*	.1110*	.3021**	-----

Note: 1-tailed significance level = * -.01 ** -.001

14.6.3 Independent Variables

The degree of knowledge had a relationship with gender, level of education, and watching current affairs programs on television. There was no relationship shown between either political party preference (with the exception of US economic knowledge) or viewing American drama on television. Girls showed a significantly lower degree of knowledge of American politics and economics than did the boys (see Table 11).

Table 11: Students' US knowledge correlated with gender, education level, and television information viewing (in %).

	Gender		Education level			TV-info viewing		
	Boys	Girls	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High
<i>Knowledge</i>								
Little	63.7	81.9	94.0	79.9	53.5	82.4	68.3	56.8
Moderate	23.7	14.3	05.3	16.1	29.7	14.1	25.1	21.6
High	12.6	03.8	00.7	04.1	16.8	03.5	06.5	21.6
N =	720		718			721		
X =	32.7		101.8			53.3		
r =	S, p<0.001		S, p<0.001			S, p<0.001		
						.2639, ** -.001		

The presence or absence of opinions on the US had a relationship with gender, level of education, and viewing current affairs television programs. There was no relationship with political party preference or viewing American television drama (see Table 12).

There is a difference between boys and girls in interest (see Table 13) in the US in general and in US economics; between respondents with higher

and lower levels of education in US politics and economics; and between respondents with a high or a low degree of viewing current affairs television programs with regard to interest in US politics, economics, and daily life (r 's are respectively .3578, .3766, and .2026). No significant differences were found between the amount of interest in the US and watching US television drama and political party preferences.

Table 12: Presence or absence of students' opinions on the US, correlated with gender, education level, and television information viewing (in %).

	Gender		Education level			TV-info viewing		
	Boys	Girls	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High
<i>Opinion</i>								
Presence	94.3	86.3	84.2	87.6	96.7	86.4	93.0	95.8
Absence	5.7	13.7	15.8	12.4	3.3	13.6	7.0	4.2
N =		722		720			723	
X =		12.8		21.2			12.2	
		S, p<0.001		S, p<0.001			S, p<0.05	
r =							.2266, **-.001	

Table 13: Students' interest levels correlated with gender, education, and television viewing (in %).

	Gender		Education level			TV-info viewing		
	Boys	Girls	Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High
<i>Interest</i>								
None	39.9	47.5	53.7	44.8	36.6	56.8	36.3	17.9
Slight	35.4	36.8	33.3	38.1	36.2	34.9	38.6	35.9
High	24.7	15.7	12.9	17.1	27.2	08.3	25.1	46.2
N =		700		698			701	
X =		9.5		18.8			102.8	
		S, p<0.05		S, p<0.001			S, p<0.001	
r =							.3832, **-.001	

When relating *attitudes* toward the US to the independent variables, we are first struck by the fact that there is practically no relationship with viewing current affairs television programs ($r = .1429$). There is a somewhat stronger correlation between attitudes toward everyday US life and viewing American television drama ($r = .2524$; $** = -.001$). No relationships were found with pupils' gender, education level, or political party preference.

The latter finding is quite surprising because it contradicts findings of other studies (e.g., NSS, 1983; NIPO, 1987; Turner, et al., 1988).

Table 14: Correlations between student dependent and independent variables (summary).

Dependent:	Knowledge			Presence/absence opinion			Interest			Attitude		
	Pol	Ec	EL	Pol	EC	EL	Pol	EC	EL	Pol	Ec	EL
<i>Independent:</i>												
Gender	+	+		+	+	+		+				
Education level	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				
Party preference		+										
TV info viewing	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**		
TV drama viewing												**

Note: EL = everyday life; ** = r; + = S.

14.7 Conclusions and New Perspectives

The aim of this empirical study was to gain insight into the images, knowledge, and presence or absence of opinions and attitudes of Dutch secondary education pupils aged between 14 and 17 regarding the US. Furthermore, we wanted to understand the relationship between these images and other variables, such as television viewing behavior (i.e., viewing television current affairs programs and American drama).

We asked third form pupils from a number of secondary schools to complete a questionnaire. It included questions about American politics as well as economics and everyday life to measure students' comprehensive orientations toward the US. In April 1989, 723 pupils completed the questionnaire. Pearson's r, chi-square, t-test, and one-way analysis of variance were used in the analysis.

The main findings were as follows (see Table 14). The image of the US is predominantly one of everyday life since students used words like "hamburger", "milk shake", "drugs", "rape", "criminality", "sport", and "hard working" in their descriptions. Almost three out of four pupils had no or little knowledge about the US. They knew least about American economics. However, as many as 90% of them had opinions about the US. Only one out of five pupils was very interested in the US, mainly in everyday life, not in politics or economics. About one-third of the respondents had a

positive attitude toward the US; 15% had a negative attitude. The component of American politics lowers this score on the attitude index.

Those who watch current affairs television programs often have more *knowledge* about the US than those who do not. No relationship was found between degree of knowledge and viewing American television drama. Boys knew more about the US than girls, except with regard to everyday American life. Degree of knowledge increased with higher levels of education. There was no relationship between degree of knowledge and political party preference.

The presence or absence of *opinions* had a relationship with gender, level of education, and viewing television current affairs programs. There was no relationship with political party preference or viewing American drama on television.

There is a difference in *interest* in the US in general and in US economics between boys and girls. Interest in the US in general and interest in US politics and economics differs among respondents, with respect to educational level. Finally, there is a difference in interest in US politics, economics, and daily life between respondents with a high or a low frequency of viewing television current affairs programs. No significant differences were found between amount of interest in the US and political party preferences.

No relationship was found between *attitudes* and viewing current affairs television programs. Students who watched American drama on television frequently had a more positive attitude toward everyday US life than those who did not. No significant relationship was found with students' gender, educational levels, or political party preferences.

The research results offer interesting directions for further study. Knowledge of, the presence or absence of an opinion about, and both interest in and attitudes toward Americans could be used as additional dependent variables. Other independent variables that could be included in future studies are travel or study experiences in the US (on this point, see Dekker and Oostindie, 1988 and 1990) and classes about the US at school (Social Studies Development Center, 1984; Council of Europe, 1985). In conjunction with this, we could investigate which factors are responsible for the viewing behavior regarding current affairs television programs (e.g., general political interest). Bi-variate analyses should be complemented with multi-variate analyses. Comparable studies should be done in other EC member states, thereby including nationality and national identity in the analysis.

The findings of this and future studies would provide an empirical basis for subsequent educational decision making. Teachers, educational authorities, and information services in Europe and/or the US should be able to increase the desirable quantity and quality of accurate knowledge about the US which is disseminated in Europe.

14.8 References

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