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Rethinking Election Debates: What Citizens Are Entitled to Expect

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Abstract

This article considers televised election debates from the perspective of Amartya Sen and Martha C. Nussbaum's notion of capabilities and entitlements. In contrast to the kind of predetermined "information needs" upon which most debate effects' studies have been based, the authors set out to ask citizens to explain what kind of democratic capabilities they hoped to derive from watching televised election debates. Through group deliberation within twelve focus groups, participants articulated five broad capabilities that they felt entitled to realize as viewers of televised election debates. Comprising the first stage of a larger project, which is developing an open-source, web-based platform that incorporates a suite of visualization tools that will help citizens make sense of televised political debates, the research reported here attempts to outline what such debates would be like if they were designed from the perspective of citizens rather than political elites.

Keywords

televised debates, citizenship, democracy, capabilities, entitlements, information needs

Introduction

This article explores the function of televised election debates and how their democratic role may be enhanced. Going beyond narrow accounts of the "information needs" election debates may serve, we identify five key democratic capabilities that we argue citizens are entitled to expect the political actors and media organizations

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involved in election debates to promote. These capabilities provide both a normative yardstick to evaluate election debates and a guide to thinking about how to reimagine and reconfigure them in future.

The research reported here constitutes the first stage of a larger project, which is developing an open-source, web-based platform that incorporates a suite of visualization tools that will help citizens make sense of televised political debates.[1] Establishing a cognitively efficient model for this heuristic strategy entailed the development of a theory of civic capabilities based upon debate viewers' own articulations of their needs as democratic citizens. We explicate this theoretical model in what follows.

The Democratic Functions of Televised Election Debates

The role played by televised election debates in making political democracy more intelligible to citizens has been the subject of an extensive literature, much of which has focused upon the effectiveness of these "media events" (Katz and Dayan 1992) as disseminators of political information to mass audiences. This emphasis upon information delivery has led researchers to evaluate debates in terms of their effects, two kinds of which have dominated research findings. The first relates to voter choice. Since the Kennedy-Nixon televised debates in 1960, a mainly U.S.-centered body of research has attempted to evaluate the extent to which debate watchers' voting preferences are affected by what they have witnessed live or heard about the debates through subsequent media reports. The evidence of such effects is mixed and complex. Like much else that people watch on television, what they see is more likely to tell them what to think *about* than what to *think*. Presented with rival viewpoints, viewers are more likely to pay attention to the perspective that is closest to their own and use the information derived from debate watching to reinforce their original position. Jamieson and Birdsell's (1988) claim that "debates don't very often convert partisans from one side to the other" (p. 161) is supported by a convincing body of research literature (Benoit et al. 2001; Holbert 2005; Holbert et al. 2009; Holbrook 1996). Other survey-based research findings suggest that the picture is rather more complex and that televised debates do have independent effects upon politically undecided citizens; upon voters with a weak allegiance to one party or candidate; upon viewers' assessment of the character strengths and weaknesses of candidates, especially when the latter have had minimal media exposure before the debates; and upon close electoral races in which a relatively small number of votes might make a difference to the result (Becker and Kraus 1978; Blum-Kulka and Liebes 2000; Chaffee and Choe 1980; Geer 1998; Katz and Feldman 1962; McKinney and Carlin 2004; McKinney et al. 2003; Pfau, 2002). Although it is difficult to think of more than one or two quite exceptional examples of a televised leaders' debate determining an election outcome, it would be unwise to conclude that debates merely reinforce preexisting preferences.

A second type of effect has been rather easier to identify. This involves a general heightening of debate viewers' interest in and engagement with the election campaign. What Wald and Lupfer (1978) refer to as "the presidential debate as a civics lesson" points to a broader social effect that goes beyond individual voting behavior. For example, debates have been said to stimulate citizens to seek out additional information; talk to others about problems, policies, and ideas raised within them; and experience an enhanced sense of confidence in their own political knowledge and capacity to engage in political action (Benoit and Hansen 2004; Benoit et al. 1998; Cho and Choy 2011; Jamieson and Adasiewicz 2000; Lemert, 1993; McKinney and Chattopadhyay 2007, McKinney and Rill 2009; McKinney et al. 2013; McLeod et al. 1979; Patterson 2002; Pickering and Rill, 2013; Weaver and Drew 2001; Zhu et al. 1994).

Both politicians and broadcasters argue that televised election debates fulfill a valuable democratic function by enabling voters to evaluate potential leaders and their policies. Whether as aids to simplifying voter choice or incentives to becoming more aware, confident, and engaged citizens, debates are conceived in terms of the provision of information needs. In the case of both effects—voter choice and civic engagement—information needs are assumed to be clear-cut. But are they? Could it be that both of the widely discussed effects of televised election debates are blurred by a persisting assumption that democratic information needs are normatively settled and unambiguous. In the context of both kinds of debate effects, such certainty is misplaced.

First, from the perspectives of politicians and party strategists, televised debates are hardly regarded as an innocent process of information dissemination. For political actors, the debates offer a competitive opportunity to assert the validity of their own messages, while dismissing the information value of opposing points of view. This often entails the public circulation of messages designed to misinform debate watchers about policies and records, cast doubt upon the trustworthiness of rivals, and evade complex reasoning for the sake of winning attention and gaining instant appeal. As persuasive strategies of the sort usually associated with advertising and public relations, such approaches may well have instrumental value, but it would be difficult to reconcile such value with the cause of enhancing public political education. It is hardly surprising that media reporting of televised election debates is all too often framed in terms of tactical game playing, with a focus upon "winners," "losers," and the potential for "knock-out blows" (Coleman 2011; Norton and Goethals 2004). Such metaphors are consistent with the ethos of narrowly conceived Machiavellian politics, but it would be difficult to make a case for these strategies as means of satisfying the information needs of people who are often confused, time limited, and weary of negative rhetoric.

Second, when it comes to determining the civic effects of televised election debates, this is not a simple empirical matter. Generally speaking, civic effects have been understood as referring to people's willingness to engage in the political process by voting, joining parties and interest groups, and informing themselves by following the news rather than their partisan allegiances and actions. But this notion of "civic effects" is open to theoretical contestation, for the norms of democratic citizenship are neither fixed nor uncontroversial. In its most parsimonious sense, engaged citizenship is manifested by adherence to the rules and roles of the political system. "Good citizens" are informed to the point of being able to perform their systemic duties. But what if democratic politics requires citizens to do more than keep up with the news agenda, find their proper place within the dominant narrative, and forever rehearse the role of an occasionally cheering and sometimes booing chorus (see Rancière 2004)? Although the orthodox model of civic information is based on the paternalistic assumption that the public cannot know what they need to know, but will benefit from the right information if it is placed before them, a radically different approach to democracy suggests that citizens, rather than being mere subjects, are knowledge makers as well as knowledge receivers; actors upon the dynamics of social power as well as victims of hegemonic structures, hierarchies, and beliefs.

In short, the notion of information needs, upon which most debate effects studies are based, is theoretically limited. What might a different theoretical approach involve? One alternative way of thinking about people's needs in relation to media is offered by the "uses and gratifications" approach (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch 1973; Katz, Haas, and Haas 1973). This approach begins by asking people what they want to gain from their media use and examines whether their preferences are met in practice. By emphasizing the views of media users themselves, the uses and gratifications approach challenges top–down approaches to defining information needs as well as narrow accounts of media use and effects. However, as a theoretical account of people's needs, the uses and gratifications approach is limited for a different reason. The uses and gratifications approach tends to assume that people's stated preferences are a reliable indicator of their needs. This fails to take account of the way preferences are socially shaped and, in particular, of the problem of "adaptive preferences," where the preferences of groups that are socially disadvantaged may be constrained by their social situation and the limited real possibilities available to them (Elster 1985; Nussbaum 2003).

Rather than focus on uses and gratifications, we advocate a different view of needs based on the idea of "capabilities," as this has been developed in theoretical accounts of social justice (Nussbaum and Glover 1995; Sen 1973, 1992, 2009) and interpreted subsequently by media theorists (Couldry 2007; Garnham 1997; Mansell 2002). This approach asks what things people should be able to do or be—what capabilities they require—to function as a member of society and to lead a fulfilling life. Given the problem of "adaptive preferences," these capabilities cannot be limited to the stated preferences of individuals. As Nussbaum (2003) argues, we must be "willing to make claims about fundamental entitlements that are to some extent independent of the preferences that people happen to have, preferences shaped, often, by unjust background conditions" (p. 34). In this view, some capabilities are so important that they should be made available to all citizens as "entitlements." How particular capabilities can be secured for different social groups in a meaningful way is a complex policy question. But, as is the case with rights, if a capability is understood as an entitlement, then obligations are placed on public authorities as well as other actors to recognize and help promote that capability (Garnham 1997).

One way to assess televised debates, therefore, is to ask which democratic capabilities they enable and which capabilities citizens are entitled to expect them to help realize. But how, then, can we decide what these entitlements are? Although we cannot rely on the subjective accounts of media users alone, it would be problematic to impose an objective list of entitlements from the top down that is uninformed by the perspective of citizens and may indeed be refractory to them. We take two responses to this problem. First, following Sen (2004) in emphasizing the importance of public deliberation and reasoning in deciding upon and evaluating capabilities, we adopt an epistemological and methodological approach that is intersubjective, rather than either subjectivist or objectivist (Bernstein 1983). As we describe in the "Method" section, we elicited the views of media users through focus groups, where we asked participants not only to reflect on their existing experiences but also to think beyond the constraints of the current realities of political communication and imagine what televised debates could and should be like. Through group deliberation, participants were encouraged to reflect on the views of others as well as their own and so develop and enlarge their original perspectives. Second, we used democratic theory to help us both pose questions to our participants and thematize the accounts they gave, such that theory and our data informed one another. As a result of this process, we arrived at a set of key democratic capabilities that we argue citizens are entitled to expect televised debates and the political and media actors involved in them to enhance.

Method

To explore the views of citizens, we conducted focus groups where we asked participants to reflect on their experience of watching or hearing about the British televised election debates that took place in 2010, involving Gordon Brown (Labour Party leader and then prime minister), David Cameron (Conservative Party leader), and Nick Clegg (Liberal Democratic Party leader). We then asked them to consider how future debates could and should be designed.[2] Focus groups are useful for exploring people's views and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way. In our case, focus groups enabled us to approach the research in an open-ended manner, allowing citizens to express views in their own terms and not be constrained by fixed questions and responses. Also, as noted above, the deliberative aspect of focus groups was important to our research. Unlike a social survey, where participants are limited to individual responses to questions, focus groups encourage individuals to reflect upon, clarify, and enlarge their perspectives through discussion with others and careful facilitation and probing by the moderator.

We conducted twelve focus groups in total, each comprising eight participants aged between eighteen and seventy from the Leeds area and lasting between sixty and ninety minutes in length. Our aim was not to select a sample of people that is representative of voters in the United Kingdom in a statistical sense. However, we wanted to select a diverse enough set of groups to capture the *range* of views people have about televised debates, even if we cannot know how particular views are *distributed* within the broader population (Morrison et al. 2007: 10). The groups comprised the following main categories:

1. Disengaged Females—mainly nonvoters and not interested in politics
2. Disengaged Males—mainly nonvoters and not interested in politics
3. Committed Female Party Supporters

4. Committed Male Party Supporters
5. Undecided Female Voters
6. Undecided Male Voters
7. First-Time Female Voters
8. First-Time Male Voters
9. Male Advanced Digital Technology Users
10. Female Advanced Digital Technology Users
11. Female Performers
12. Male Performers

The final four groups warrant further comment. We selected groups of advanced digital technology users, defined as those who use at least two different software applications and devices (see Dutton and Blank 2013: 10), because we were interested in our broader project in exploring how digital media could be used to complement and enhance televised election debates. The final two groups consisted of people who are involved in some way in the performing arts (music, drama, and dance). These groups were selected as, within the broader research project, we were also interested in their observations on the performative and rhetorical strategies adopted by political leaders in the debates. However, we will not isolate and discuss their specific perspectives here.

All the focus groups were recorded and transcribed. Data analysis was conducted through a close reading of the transcripts in which we explored responses to questions that referred to participants' frustrations at not being able to relate to, make sense of, or meaningfully act upon the debates, and to their expressed desires for debates to serve them better and for debaters to perform in different ways. Identifying key themes in the data and connecting these to relevant ideas in democratic theory, we then identified a number of democratic capabilities that participants sought to realize that seemed to be consistent with the most recurrent and intense patterns of participant expression. In the next section of this paper, "Democratic Entitlements," we set out our findings, and in the final section, "Conclusion," we draw some conclusions about the relevance of our research for the organization and mediation of future televised election debates.

Democratic Entitlements

When we asked focus-group participants to recall the first ever British televised prime ministerial debates, their responses broadly confirmed the findings from the five audience surveys that were conducted immediately after polling day in 2010. Approximately two-thirds of survey respondents had said that they learnt something new from the debates, three-quarters felt that they knew more about "the qualities of the party leaders" after seeing the debates, and as many as 70 percent felt that they knew more "about the policies of each party." In total, 87 percent of survey respondents reported talking about the debates with others—and this increased to 92 percent among younger voters (Coleman 2011: 4). Focus-group participants explained that they liked seeing the party leaders on one platform, making their pitches to the electorate, and exchanging views with one another:

> It gave you an understanding of how they were able to react to questions in real time and . . . a measure of how down to earth and how relatable they are to the UK general public. (First-time male voter)

Several participants recalled the debates as social occasions: not merely spectacles to be observed, but opportunities for sharing views with others:

> I watched the whole thing, but then talking to like my partner and stuff about what we thought, rather than listen to every word. It was kind of like the general how they were coming across. (Undecided female voter)

> I watched the debates, yeah, and also was looking at Twitter at the same time . . . and I remember a lot of things about Cameron doing his anecdotes. So he'd sort of say, "Oh I met a person the other day from," and then would use these little personal anecdotes and there were quite a lot of jokes about that, about his style in those debates. (Female advanced user of digital communication technologies)

A recurrent reference used by focus-group participants was to the debates as a "job interview" in which politicians (as potential hired servants) had to prove their worth to their employers, the voters:

> I see it's like a job interview. They want to run the country, so if you go for an interview you get asked questions and you have to answer them. (Disengaged male)

> Ultimately, it should be the hardest job interview that they've ever had to sit, and they should have to demonstrate their credentials to you. (Committed female party supporter)

Each time that this image was conjured, it was greeted with much vocal support. Some participants suggested that the debates should be modeled on the grueling final-show interviews in which candidates on the BBC TV show, *The Apprentice*, are put through their paces by Sir Alan Sugar's advisers. That, of course, would be a quite different media event, and one in which few political leaders would agree to participate, but that is not the point. Desire is often first articulated in terms that seem fantastic. The idea that the debates should be moments of public accountability to a critical and demanding electorate, rather than performances that are both designed and managed by the debaters and their advisers, serves to reframe the contest towards a more explicitly democratic orientation. With this in mind, we saw the focus groups as opportunities to probe further what viewers wanted the debates to offer them in order that they might realize the kind of confidence, autonomy, and discrimination that they associated with the metaphorical role of "electoral job interviewer." By sensitively unpacking the capabilities that focus-group participants sought to realize, we began to distinguish between what viewers and voters are told they need to know to be "good citizens" and what they think they are entitled to be able to do to exercise democratic agency. Our analysis led us to identify five key entitlements that were articulated by participants in our focus groups (subsequently referred to as "participants").

I. I am entitled to be respected as a rational and independent decision maker.

Participants were well aware that political leaders took part in televised debates with the aim of persuading a mass audience to support them. But they drew a line in their minds between persuasion and manipulation. The former entails being urged to support a particular outcome; the latter involves the use of language that is less than transparent to promote outcomes that are not clearly identified. In their evaluation of the debates, participants returned repeatedly to their concerns about being addressed by political leaders in ways that appeared designed to manipulate and confuse them. They felt that political leaders used language strategically, to secure electoral success, rather than communicatively, to promote reasoned discussion and shared understanding (Habermas 1987; Klemp 2012). In strategic communication, as Chambers (1996) argues, listeners are treated as means to an end rather than ends in themselves: "Strategic actors view their dialogue partners as means—as either limiting or facilitating their pursuit of their ends. Communicative actors view their dialogue partners as ends—as autonomous agents whose capacity for rational judgment must be respected" (p. 100). Participants were not naïve: They acknowledged that the language of persuasion should always be regarded critically. But they felt entitled, as democratic citizens, to be addressed by would-be leaders in ways that are not dominated by manipulative communication.

Although some participants hoped that witnessing exchanges between the leaders in a live context might cut through manipulative political talk, most felt that the debates failed to achieve this. Debate talk sounded "rehearsed," "scripted," and "staged." The language used by the political leaders seemed not to be their own, but something carefully selected and constructed for effect by teams of professional advisers. Distaste for overrehearsed presentation was prevalent:

> It felt like they knew exactly what was going to be asked before they were asked that question. So it felt a bit rehearsed for me, which is possibly why I didn't continue to watch it. (Committed female party supporter)

A desire to "catch them out" led participants to look for ways of creating trip-wire moments: ways of forcing the debaters into more authentic performances. Several participants wanted more direct answers to questions and were frustrated by what they referred to as "politicians' answers":

> I got frustrated by the end with some of it, because there was a lot of going round in circles and there were a lot of classic politicians refusing to answer the question, which always drives everybody nuts. (Committed female party supporter)

Several participants suggested that the debate moderators should play a more active role in challenging the leaders when they engage in manipulative strategies and fail to answer questions. Others suggested that viewers themselves, via the "red buttons" on their television sets or some other forms of interactive technology, should be able to vote on whether questions had been answered adequately by the political leaders.

For many of the participants, however, countering manipulative speech seemed to be too difficult to do in real time, and the work of deconstructing the political rhetoric should be left to more elaborate postdebate analyses (see the next section). In general, participants saw manipulation as much more than distorted speech. They were concerned about the strategic ways in which the debaters presented themselves beyond the words they uttered. Several participants talked about their need to make sense of the performative styles of the debaters, including nonverbal communication:

> I don't like them stood behind things, I thought that was . . . gives them a bit of a shield, I feel they'd be more exposed and you see more body language if they were not stuck behind something. (Undecided male voter)

> It's that real monotone thing when they're talking. They just need to sort of draw the audience in somehow. I don't know how, but they definitely need to sort of be more expressive or something in the way they speak. (Female advanced user of digital communication technologies)

It was quite clear from these repeated allusions to performance and the self-presentation of political leaders as "real people" that a key function of the televised debates is to provide "look into their eyes" moments. Participants wanted the debates to be occasions in which it is difficult for leaders to manufacture images. As one disengaged female nonvoter put it,

> It seems that everything they say and the way that they say everything is behind some kind of plastic sheet. Everything they say is really well vetted and written by people. Just let's see who you are a little bit.

Another participant in the same focus group (disengaged females) urged the debaters to "Just be human instead of this little machine that's been programmed." A commonly expressed wish to be addressed by speakers who are not programmed to manipulate ran through all of the focus groups. In addition, for some participants, it was important that political leaders not only talk straight but also reveal something of themselves as motivated human beings. A key entitlement articulated by debate viewers, then, is that they are enabled to see beyond the plastic sheet; that instead of being addressed by the disembodied voices of calculating performers, they are addressed in ways that respect them as rational and independent decision makers.

II. I am entitled to be able to evaluate political claims and make informed decisions.

Knowing what or who to believe is a formidable challenge for citizens. Beyond the debate performances, how are potential voters to decide which claims are credible and which are not? Although the arguments between leaders helped some viewers make up their minds about who or what was right, many participants felt that they lacked sufficient information with which to understand and evaluate competing claims. Participants were, therefore, eager to have opportunities to assess claims with reference to relevant background information and ways of challenging or correcting claims that they considered false or unproven.

One proposed way to encourage such critical evaluation would be to allow the moderator to intervene with a view to pushing the debaters to justify unsubstantiated claims. Participants referred to the weekly BBC *Question Time* program in which the moderator frequently performs this role. Others wanted the same real-time probing to be conducted by the studio audience or the viewers, using interactive technologies. But it was generally accepted that real-time evaluation of debate claims would be hard to make happen and difficult to trust. Most participants acknowledged the need to distinguish between the immediacy of real-time debate performance and the longer-term, reflective process of postdebate evaluation. They were optimistic that, having watched the debates, tools could be made available to them that would simplify the process of making sense of debaters' often complex claims and counterclaims.

Participants asked for help with three key questions:

- What did claims made in the debates mean?
- How factually valid were claims made in the debates and consistent with the leaders' political records when in office?
- To what extent do arguments made in the debates (both by and between individual speakers) add up to a coherent plan for governing the country?

On the first question, participants wanted *technologies of translation* that would take the often convoluted verbal constructions of rhetorical speech and make them accessible as meaningful policy proposals. They wanted to be able to make informed voting decisions based upon a clear sense of what the political leaders intend to do if elected:

> I think sometimes they could explain things in less political jargon and more sort of everyday speak so that people understand them. I've watched some of these programs when they've been on Question Time and things like that, and you just sit there and you think, "I have not got a clue what you've just said" because they've spoke how they may be speaking in Parliament or something like that, but it doesn't mean anything to the normal person and if they explained things more clearly I think we might have a better understanding and we might engage a bit more with them. (Female advanced user of digital communication technologies)

On the second question, participants wanted *evaluative tools* to help them assess the claims of political leaders. Participants wanted a way to assess the accuracy of the figures and statistics politicians cite:

> So, if they're talking about certain numbers or picking out certain figures that there's nothing there to say, "You're wrong" or "why have you picked that statistic when there's another one that says the opposite?" You find it a lot when you read the news a couple of days later. The one that they've picked is like not a true reflection. (Male advanced user of digital communications technologies)

> So, it would say "Is this particular claim true?" and then they'll give you a set of statistics and explain a bit . . . about where that information comes from. So you never kind of get a definitive answer. They'll say these are the different statistics that they're using in the program . . . and this is where it comes from. So, I like it because it gives you a bit more of a background about the figures and things. (Female advanced user of digital communications technologies)

Participants were also clearly frustrated by what they perceived as a conflict between what politicians say they will do and what they did in the past. They also wanted evaluative tools, therefore, that would answer critical questions about the relationship between current claims and past action:

> If there was an app and they could bullet-point what they have said they're going to do. When they previously went into power, what they said they were going to do and where they are at with that now. That would be quite interesting to see. (Disengaged female)

Several participants pointed to Nick Clegg's failure to honor his debate pledge regarding student tuition fees.

Participants were aware that televised debates are just one part of an election campaign, which in turn is just one part of an ongoing political process. They wanted to know how the barrage of information (and sometimes misinformation) received as they watched the debate cohered into a meaningful and convincing program of action. Seeing the debates as a key moment for weighing up claims and arguments, they wanted the clarity of these statements to be made more vivid to them. They wanted to know how voting for one party rather than another would make an overall difference. Participants were looking for what we might call *sense-making technologies* that could help them track, clarify, and visualize the key arguments. They were not expecting that their democratic responsibilities could somehow be rendered simple, but that the complex challenge of deriving meaning from technically complex and rhetorically charged speech making, often only witnessed fleetingly in real time, could be diminished.

We shall return in the final section to the challenge of designing technologies that might support this democratic entitlement. But we should note that, although several participants were enthusiastic about the creation of such tools, most recognized that the task of supporting citizen evaluation would inevitably be sensitive, calling for a considerable degree of public trust in whomever was providing such support. Given the ways in which background information can itself be manipulated, few participants believed that the debate broadcasters were sufficiently independent to provide such a service—although several tended to have more confidence in the BBC than other broadcasters. But most were in favor of having access to a much wider array of background material than is available to them at present.

III. I am entitled to be part of the debate as a democratic cultural event.

Consider the following exchange between three women in one of the advanced Internet users' focus groups:

> F8: All I can remember is it seemed like a very bare studio, not much colour and quite spaced out.
>
> F5: Like statues.
>
> F8: Yeah, dead boring, yeah. Even if they had some kind of pictures behind of streets or British life or something in relation to what they were talking about.
>
> F7: Yeah, I think they need to modernise it more, make it more modern. It's probably been like that for years and years and years.
>
> Moderator: So what would it mean to make it more modern and interesting?
>
> F8: Better visually.
>
> F7: Yeah. To make it look more like a debate rather than looking so professional.

What did participant F7 mean by making it "look more like a debate?" What was it about this televised event that appeared to be so professionally managed, visually dull, and uninviting to people wanting to participate? What should a real democratic debate look like?

As "media events" (Katz and Dayan 1992), election debates provide a space outside everyday routines for citizens to engage with and discuss politics. Although some viewers felt a connection and sense of involvement with the debates, others found them to be more remote and inaccessible. Instead of feeling involved in what was billed as a democratic event, they felt like onlookers upon an elite spectacle.

We noted earlier that the 2010 debates resulted in a general heightening of viewers' interest in and engagement with the election campaign. Several participants (but by no means all) recalled the debates as social occasions: not merely as spectacles to be observed but opportunities for sharing views with others. But there was a sense of separation between the two discussions: the formal one taking place behind podiums and the casual ones taking place in countless living rooms and workplaces. Because those involved in the latter had no way of directly connecting with the former, their responses to the debates ran along a spectrum ranging from political engagement to detached spectacle.[3] This exchange between male committed party supporters illustrates the diverse ways in which viewers felt themselves to be involved in the event:

> M1: It was more of a spectacle in terms of the way I discussed it with most of the people that I did talk about it with. If the thing you're driving at is did it actually stir debate amongst people? No, it didn't, not the people I spoke to.
>
> M6: The three ladies I work with, they have no interest in politics whatsoever. They were more interested in the spectacle and it was kind of, "This is something new," so they, like me, watched the first one and it was more around the visual element rather than listening to the content that was more of a discussion. And in the end, they just thought, like me, that it just became almost laughable.

> M4: I think it was a talking point that made it easier to talk about politics. There was something to reference and it made it more accessible in that form.
>
> M5: It was humorous with my father, to be honest with you. He rang me up, "Have you seen that?" and expletives, basically, and that was it!
>
> M2: All my colleagues at work—we're an educational charity—said the whole thing about tuition fees was really important for us at the time.

Others felt like outside onlookers who had stumbled into someone else's conversation:

> Someone coming in not really knowing a lot about it, it felt like I couldn't get into what they were talking about because it did feel like they were having personal conversations between each other rather than explaining to the audience what they were talking about and what they meant and what they were trying to do. They just didn't explain it very well, it were like almost a personal joke, if you can use that term, like between themselves and you couldn't really get into it. That's what I felt like anyway. (Female advanced user of digital communication technologies)

Participants proposed various ways of involving the public. One suggestion, repeated across focus groups, was that members of the public should pose questions for the political leaders to answer. Another suggestion was that the public could vote before the debates for the questions they were most eager to have answered. A suggestion, considered in more detail in the next section, was for different social groups to be able to communicate with the political leaders to tell them about their lives, values, and preferences. All of these suggestions are perhaps more important in terms of what they tell us about people's sense of what a genuine democratic debate involves than of practical proposals for format change. In the era of digital interactivity, a significant section of society—perhaps a majority—expects there to be opportunities to engage with public events, both while they happen and afterward. The terms of such involvement need to be thought through, but to dismiss this entitlement as a mere add-on to the one-way transmission of a broadcast debate may well be a recipe for alienating significant sections of the electorate.

> IV. I am entitled to communicate with and be recognized by the leaders who want to represent me.

Elections are moments in which the public decide how they want to characterize themselves, how they want to be seen and represented, and what sort of people they consider to be most appropriate to speak for, with, and to them (Coleman 2013). As one female party supporter put it,

> I need to know from the things that they say, the way that they say it and the way that they present themselves, that they do have a clue about the average people living in an average house in an average street in the middle of England and that they're not up there. (Committed female party supporter)

Participants were broadly skeptical about the extent to which political leaders were able to relate to the lives, values, and preferences of "ordinary" people. Given the glaring gap between the backgrounds and experiences of the leaders and themselves, several participants wanted opportunities to communicate with the debaters with a view to fostering a more direct form of representation (Coleman 2005).

Participants wanted to see leaders who were in some ways more like themselves. They suspected the leaders of being similar to one another, but different from the people they hope to represent:

> They're all white men of a certain age and from a certain background so I found that quite striking when you saw them all lined up together on podiums, that they all are very similar. (Female advanced user of digital communication technologies)

> They've got similar family lives; they've been to similar schools whatever party they're from. They've had similar education, similar backgrounds. (First-time female voter)

In the light of this, the televised debates are an opportunity for the party leaders to show how they differ from one another, not only in terms of backgrounds but also values. But political communication is not simply about politicians making themselves understood. It was clear from the focus groups that representation and recognition is understood as a two-way relationship. Participants wanted demonstrable ways of enabling the party leaders to listen to the people they wish to represent. One way of relating the debates to the experiences of viewers and voters that was suggested by several participants would be to link the central event to a number of venues around the country where ideas discussed by the debaters could be related to local conditions. An intriguing suggestion along these lines was to take the public to the debate by inviting a diverse range of individuals to produce short videos about their lives and challenges. After seeing these films, the political leaders would be asked to say how a government led by them could make a difference to people in the situations depicted:

> So you make short films, about 20 different people that you know have all got different stories—and make them completely different. So don't just focus on the single mum, and that's great; do one about her, but don't just do single mums. Do an elderly couple who have been married for 50 years—like my grandma and granddad—now my grandma has Alzheimer's and they can't pay for her treatment; they can't do it and they're getting no help. (Female performer)

While it is doubtful whether the parties or broadcasters would accept these format interruptions to the real-time debates, there is a strong case for adding them as postdebate features that could help viewers make sense of the differences between the policies and values of the competing parties and leaders. The recorded debate could be reshown, but this time as seen and discussed in various venues across the country. Short video life stories could be inserted into the debate recording and debaters (or party representatives) invited to respond to them. The debates could be rerun on social media sites, inviting people to comment on specific claims and policies and encouraging the party leaders to join in the discussion. A man in one of the performers' focus groups put into words this prevalent aspiration to change the dynamics of debate communication:

> I would want those people who sit at home, who are disillusioned by politics because they either don't think that they're eloquent enough to be allowed to speak . . . I want those types of people standing up and asking the questions in their way, not dressing it up, not being eloquent, not being nice, totally, totally saying what they want to say with no fear of political correctness and no fear of anything like that, and really putting them on the spot.

V. I am entitled to be able to make a difference to what happens in the political world.

The fifth entitlement, which was widely articulated by participants in the focus groups, relates to what political scientists refer to as political efficacy: people's belief in their ability to make a difference to what happens in the political world in which they live. The capabilities we have discussed above can all contribute to political efficacy, but there was another significant way the debates may affect political efficacy that we have not yet discussed. In the context of the televised debates, a sense of inefficacy, which seemed to be at a low level across the board, from the most disengaged to the most politically committed and from first-time voters to long-time voters, was related to the limited options that seemed to be on offer. Participants' perceptions were that all of the debaters were remarkably similar politically:

> [T]hey are all, as everybody's said, very similar these days. There's very little distinction between the three points of view. (First-time female voter)

> [They need to be] clear about the differences in their policies because there's a lot of fighting over the middle ground over very narrow sort of area. (Female advanced user of digital communication technologies)

When choices at the ballot box seem insignificant, voters understandably switch off. Are there ways of making the choices clearer? One participant suggested that each of the debaters should be required to,

> name one positive thing you're going to bring to this government. Who is that going to involve? What are you going to do? How are you going to do it and why? And I'd want them to also answer: tell us one negative thing that you're going to change? Who is going to be involved in that? Why are you going to be doing that? Which is a key question. And how that's going to work? (Disengaged female)

There is much to be said for this idea—and when we put it to subsequent focus groups, most participants agreed with it. In short, there seemed to be an appetite for bringing real political trade-offs into the debates, rather than perpetuating the strategy of median appeal based on the illusion that one policy fits all. Critically important here, particularly as televised debates come to be institutionalized, is a desire to see a clear relationship between claims and promises made before the election, and tangible differences brought about after the election.

Conclusion

How might the findings we have presented here contribute to productive ways of rethinking televised election debates? We approach this question from four angles.

First, without being naïve about the strategic considerations that preoccupy both broadcasters and politicians when planning debates, we would hope that our findings might be taken seriously by some actors within both of these groups insofar as they not only indicate the features of current debates that frustrate many viewers but also point towards communicative principles that could make future debates more appealing.

Televised election debates, as we have known them for half a century, have been products of negotiation between political parties and broadcasters. They are justified as events that will serve members of the public by providing them with the information they need to become well-informed voting citizens. But, as we have pointed out, these needs are largely determined by political elites and skewed by strategic interests. Let us imagine what televised election debates would be like if they were designed from the perspective of citizens rather than political elites. For this to happen, they would need to be designed in ways likely to enhance agreed principles of public or civic value. The five entitlements that we have outlined could provide a strong foundation for the elaboration of such principles.

Second, even if we were to resign ourselves to more pessimistic expectations regarding the willingness of political elites to democratize televised election debates as bilateral events, designed in accordance with an architecture of reciprocity, the findings presented in this article could still contribute to public understanding of debates in the crucial days or weeks between the live media event and polling day. This is a period in which potential voters need to make sense of the claims and counterclaims, as well as cognitive, affective, and semiotic appeals that pervade their experiences of the debates. For many citizens, the postdebate period of spin and counterspin is irritating and confusing. It is here that they might benefit most from what we have referred to as technologies of translation, evaluation, and sense making. As we noted in our introduction, the research reported in this article is part of a larger multidisciplinary research project in which we are producing an accessible digital platform that will make such technologies freely available. The outcome of this research is the *Democratic Replay* platform, which offers citizens a range of resources whereby they can monitor debaters' performances in relation to the five capabilities. In this sense, we are seeking to "slow down" democratic discourse and enable people to scrutinize it at their own pace.[4]

Third, we hope that our analysis will help problematize traditionally essentialist studies of information needs by providing a new normative vocabulary for the examination of media-politician-citizen relations. Rather than thinking of "informing the public" as a linear, top–down process of benign—and sometimes manipulative—edification in which needs are defined and evaluated for people by an external body, we favor moving the focus of "information needs" to people's own sense of their capabilities as morally autonomous social actors who are capable of making a difference. Building upon theoretical work on social justice (Nussbaum and Glover 1995; Sen 1973, 1992) that has been highly influential in recent studies of education (Biesta and Priestley 2013; Walker 2005), well-being (Kingdon and Knight 2006; Sen 1993), global inequality (Crocker 2008), and the media (Couldry 2007; Garnham 1997; Mansell 2002; Oosterlaken and van den Hoven 2011), the capabilities' perspective insists that the utility of information must be defined from the actors' point of view, in terms of the extent to which such information enables them to realize their full potential within a particular social context. Whereas earlier scholars pointed to the injustice—or inefficiency—of individuals and social groups having unequal access to useful information resources, the capabilities' approach goes further, suggesting that the determination of what constitutes necessary and valuable information should be just as much a matter of social equity as opportunities to access information that others deem to be necessary and valuable.

In the context of televised election debates, the capabilities' approach compels us to turn the usual effects questions on their head. Traditionally, researchers have asked whether debate watching leads to outcomes that we (scholars and policy elites) have defined as being politically important. This approach is unsuitable from a perspective of democratic justice because people often adjust their reactions to expectations that are limited by their social position (i.e., by the range of capabilities they already have). Instead, we are bound to ask what viewers feel entitled to gain from the debates and the extent to which these capabilities are enhanced, diminished, or unaffected by debate watching. In taking this approach, it is to be hoped that we shall not only acquire a richer sense of how citizens relate to televised election debates in various ways, but a deeper understanding of how people imagine themselves as democratic citizens and how the development of self-determined civic capabilities might impact broader patterns of civic engagement and disengagement.

Fourth, our findings are intended to contribute to a growing critique of the "methodological consensus" within political communication studies, which has not only overfocused upon quantitative methods of investigation but has limited the range of questions asked (Karpf et al. 2015: 1889). Critics such as Karpf et al. (2015) of this consensus have been attempting to make,

> a case for a new era of qualitative research, especially firsthand field research in the contexts where political communication occurs through methods such as observation, participant observation, and in-field interviews, as well as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and process tracing. (p. 1890)

Our concern in this article has been to explore how voters feel (Coleman, 2013) and how their sense of what they are capable of doing in the political world comes to bear upon their behavior. Acknowledging that performances of citizenship entail a relationship between what people think is expected of them and how far they perceive themselves to be potent democratic agents leads us to abandon functionalist accounts of political subjectivity and, along with others (Coole 2005; Eliasoph 1998; Perrin 2009), point towards a more nuanced account of the dynamics of political engagement.

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Notes

1. This project is being undertaken in collaboration with Dr. Anna De Liddo, Dr. Brian Plüss, and Harriett Cornish at the Open University and Dr. Paul Wilson at the University of Leeds.
2. We acknowledge the limitation of our qualitative research, insofar as it is confined to experiences of debate viewing in only one country, the United Kingdom. We accept that similar research in other countries may well produce different data, generating other conceptions and formulations of civic capabilities. At the time of writing, there are plans for conducting similar focus groups in the United States and Argentina.
3. Work by discourse theorists on interpretive repertoires and narrative positioning cast valuable light upon the ways in which citizens experience and articulate experiences of agency. See Bamberg (1997), Golden and Anita (2015), and Wetherell (1998).
4. In this respect, we are interested in helping citizens move between what Kahneman (2011) refers to as system 1 (intuitive) and system 2 (reflective) modes of thinking in their encounters with political claims and information. See http://edv-project.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/EDV-briefing-2014.02.pdf for more details about the technological process.

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Networks of Coproduction: How Journalists and Environmental NGOs Create Common Interpretations of the UN Climate Change Conferences

Julia Lück[1], Antal Wozniak[1], and Hartmut Wessler[1]

Abstract
This study examines the interrelations between journalists and communication practitioners from environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Taking the annual United Nations climate change conferences as a case in point, we show that the exceptional circumstances of these events foster a temporary blurring of the professional boundaries between both actor groups that partly results in a joint production of interpretations. Based on seventy-eight semi-standardized interviews with journalists and NGO representatives, we identify four distinct coproduction networks that pair particular types of journalists and NGO communicators. Our analysis shows that (1) the journalistic beat, (2) the type of media journalists work for, (3) journalists' and NGOs' perceived target audiences, and also (4) the NGOs' strategic orientation toward either lobbying or popular mobilization are decisive for the formation of these networks. Our study helps to systematically explain message production in a transnational context and provides a deeper understanding of the relationship between journalism and public relations.

Keywords
journalism, social movements, environment, global news, news events, news production

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Media attention for the issue of climate change has increased around the world during the last fifteen years (Schmidt et al. 2013) with a global peak around the United Nations (UN) climate change conference in Copenhagen in December 2009. But even before and after Copenhagen, the annual UN conferences (officially called Conferences of the Parties [COPs]) are important periodical drivers of media coverage on climate change (Schäfer et al. 2014). These conferences function as catalysts for the emergence of an issue-specific transnational public sphere: "The summits have become an intensive (and exceptional) example of a global mediatized political event where an enormous amount of knowledge production, economic lobbying, civic activism, and bargaining gravitate around potentially consequential political decision making" (Kunelius and Eide 2012: 267–68). The COPs thus uniquely combine the features of three types of events: (1) high-level international political summits ("HIPS"; Adolphsen 2014: 73), that is, cabinet-rank negotiation events aiming at policy-relevant output; (2) civil society protest and mobilization activities, which often accompany global meetings, especially since the 1999 World Trade Organization summit in Seattle (the "Battle of Seattle"); and (3) global forums dedicated to sharing knowledge and best practice among experts and stakeholders (realized at the COPs in the many side events held alongside the negotiation tracks). In addition, COPs feature a variable element of ritual celebration and symbolic loading reminiscent of the "peace ceremonies" that Liebes and Katz (1997) have studied as media events.

The research presented in this paper focuses on two particularly important actor groups that shape the messages communicated to audiences around the world and, by implication, the national and transnational debates revolving around the COPs, namely, journalists and public relations (PR) practitioners from environmental nongovernmental organizations (ENGOs). Transnational ENGOs are increasingly acknowledged for their role in communicating global problems and in linking local contexts to global debates (Reese 2015). Adolphsen and Lück (2012) stress the idea of coproduction between ENGOs and journalists in the context of the UN climate change conferences, relating to the image and message production from the conference site. They describe "the emergence of a unique actor constellation involving journalists and political PR professionals that essentially dissolve traditional boundaries between both sides and challenge their usual distribution of tasks" (Adolphsen and Lück 2012: 151). Results from their analysis of the 2010 COP in Cancun, Mexico, show that the emerging "camp feeling" (journalists and PR professionals working side by side and sharing workspaces) during the two weeks of the conference promotes the mutual supply with information and expertise. Journalists and PR professionals collaboratively create newsworthy information and visuals (Adolphsen and Lück 2012). To broaden the empirical basis and avoid event-specific distortions, we study three COPs in this paper: the conferences in Cancun, Mexico (COP16, 2010), Doha, Qatar (COP18, 2012), and Warsaw, Poland (COP19, 2013). More importantly, we aim at finding explanations for coproduction processes by asking the following question: Which are the decisive factors and underlying mechanisms that shape coproduction between journalists and PR practitioners from ENGOs at the UN climate change conferences? Answers to this question will advance our knowledge about strategic political communication as well as

PR–journalism relations in transnational settings. To find explanations, we apply a method derived from the process-tracing approach developed by George and Bennett (2005) using semi-standardized interviews with journalists and ENGO communicators in addition to participatory observations conducted on site the conferences, which will be used as ancillary information.

Conceptualizing Coproduction

In times of increasing economic pressure on media markets worldwide, there is a growing research interest in the relationship between journalists and strategic actors that advocate for certain interests—oftentimes connected to concerns about the quality and independence of journalism (Powers 2015). As both professions pursue their respective goals and interests, the relationship cannot be free from conflict. Scholars have looked at this relationship from different angles. Some authors emphasize the antagonistic relationship (e.g., Neijens and Smit 2003; Ryan and Martinson 1988); others highlight mutual dependencies and collaboration (Larsson 2009; White and Hobsbawm 2007). The characterizations of the relationship between these two professions often result from investigations of the use of PR material in the media coverage, specifically from looking at induction and selection quota (Cameron et al. 1997; Elfenbein 1986; Lewis et al. 2008; Reich 2010) or chances of different types of PR to attract media attention (Krøvel 2012). Direct contact and personal source–reporter relationships (Sallot and Johnson 2006; Shin and Cameron 2003) as well as mutual perceptions and expectations (Jeffers 1977; Sallot et al. 1998) have also received scholarly attention. In their intereffication (IE) model, Bentele and Nothhaft (2008) offer a complex and dynamic description of the relationship between PR and journalism in industrialized societies with democratic and relatively autonomous media systems. In an attempt to avoid merely metaphorical formulations—such as "love-hate relationship" (Ryan and Martinson 1988)—the authors coin the term *intereffication* derived from the Latin words "inter" and "efficare," meaning "to mutually enable." In the IE model, two types of communicative influences are distinguished: Inductions are defined as "intended and directed communicative offers or stimuli" (Bentele and Nothhaft 2008: 36) by one of the two systems toward the other; adaptations are defined as communicative organizational adjustments, that is, "actions by which actors or organizations consciously adapt themselves to changing circumstances . . . in order to maximize their own communicative success" (Bentele and Nothhaft 2008). Inductions and adaptations occur simultaneously on both sides but do not neutralize each other—the relationship between the systems (or individual actors within these systems) might be asymmetrical depending on power and resources. Our understanding of coproduction derives from this IE model and acknowledges the idea of mutual enabling through reciprocal action (induction and adaptation) without disregarding that such power differences can be critically imbalanced to a degree that would not be normatively desirable, for example, in cases where the power of PR outpaces journalism, rather disabling or even obstructing it.

The very different approaches to conceptualizing the journalism–PR relationship in general are also reflected in the recent scholarly investigations on the relationship of journalism and NGOs. NGOs pursue a special form of PR that is usually focused on issues of the common good. This aspect marks an important difference to the common notion of the strategic communication for special interests or economic success to which the scholarly theories usually apply. However, there are enough communalities between traditional PR and the PR of NGOs with a common-good orientation to apply the concept of IE to NGOs. Like many other competitors for attention in the public sphere, NGOs face the challenge to be heard and therefore aim at professionalization and use classical PR strategies (Greenberg et al. 2011).

Despite these efforts and a quickly growing media space, however, NGOs still struggle to achieve publicity. Compared with government or business representatives, their representation in the media is rather weak (Powers 2015). Instead of challenging dominant news norms, NGOs rather adapt to them, hoping to increase their chances of publicity (Powers 2015). Our own study contributes to this growing body of research on journalism–NGO relationships by identifying the decisive factors that directly influence interactions and their outcomes. In doing so, we also provide an explanatory basis for the IE model, which in its original form cannot explain under which circumstances we can expect which type of interactions. We also expand the scope of the IE model by accounting for the complex relations between national and transnational actors as well as between actors from different national contexts on both sides.

Understanding Journalists and ENGOs

Both environmental journalists and ENGOs have been studied before, yet most studies concentrate on one group at a time (Berglez 2011; Doyle 2009; Giannoulis et al. 2011; McCluskey 2008; Princen 1994; Warkentin 2001). Few studies explicitly examine the relationship by regarding both groups and their interplay as well as the ensuing consequences at once even though the very existence of environmental reporting was closely intertwined with the environmental activism movement emerging during the 1960s: "At the same time, environmental activists began flooding the media with releases, some media began environmental investigative reporting, and public awareness was heightened by a series of ecological disasters" (Sachsman 1973 cited in Sachsman et al. 2010). By investigating both groups within one study, we also aim at clarifying how these historical relations translate today and are actualized in coproduction processes at extraordinary occasions such as the climate change conferences. Although most literature focuses on one of the actor groups, in particular, we find several hints about factors that may be relevant for coproduction and that are necessary to structure our own empirical investigation.

The group of *journalists* that cover the COPs is rather heterogeneous. They work for different media types (print, broadcasting, online) and outlets with varying geographical scope (e.g., national, transnational) and thematic focus (e.g., science/environment or business). This diversity leads to important differences in how journalists approach the topic. Fahy and Nisbet (2011), for example, demonstrate that science journalists have a wider spectrum of role perceptions than other journalists. In addition to the more traditional journalistic roles of reporter, conduit, watchdog, or agenda setter, science journalists' role perceptions also include those of a curator, convener, public intellectual, or civic educator. McCluskey (2008) found that newspaper articles on environmental topics written by environmental journalists were more positive toward ENGOs than those written by business, political, or general news reporters. Giannoulis et al. (2011) find three distinct types of journalists that mainly cover environmental issues: the "scientifically led, environmentally responsible" journalist, the "environmental crusader," and the "impartial" journalist. This indicates different role perceptions but does not give any explanations for the differences that were detected. Brüggemann and Engesser (2014) find that most journalists who write about climate change agree with the consensus on anthropogenic climate change as put forth by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and also with common proposals for solutions. They therefore constitute an "interpretive community." Looking at factors that influence IPCC affirmation, the authors point to two statistically significant correlations. First, environmental journalists are more affirmative than political, general news, and business journalists (the latter were least affirmative). Second, journalists who are more affirmative with the IPCC consensus more often use "a triad of sources: environmentalists, scientific sources (e.g., researchers and their publications), and mass media reports" rather than only one or two of those sources (p. 20). For our own considerations, this supports the assumption that the varying journalistic orientations of political versus environmental journalists will result in different forms of coproduction. In another recent study, Engesser and Brüggemann (2015) further differentiate journalistic attitudes and opinions by investigating environmental journalists' cognitive frames of climate change in an international comparative survey. They identify five different cognitive frames and present evidence that certain individual factors such as specialization, professional aims, and political alignment influence journalists' frames. However, the authors cannot make any claims on the influence of these cognitive frames on the journalists' working practice and products. Such connections between personal attitudes of journalists and their practices when working with environmental NGOs can, if they exist, further complement the causal picture we are aiming at.

Berglez (2011) focuses more on consequences of journalistic decision making resulting from a particular audience orientation for the journalistic product. As a premise, he emphasizes that reporting on climate change entails the necessity to go beyond the usual logic of reporting and "no longer frame events and places as either domestic or foreign, local or global, but interrelate them." (p. 461). His interviews with Swedish environmental journalists reveal that this challenge is not managed well by most of his interviewees who address national audiences by emphasizing aspects relevant for their national context. Journalists retain the traditional bifurcated logic when they report transnational issues and events for national audiences and focus on the domestic ramifications. We therefore expect audience orientation to be quite influential for the work of journalists in the climate change context.

To sum up, journalists who report about environmental issues, besides sharing a common issue focus, differ substantially in their own role perception (Fahy and Nisbet 2011; Giannoulis et al. 2011), their attitudes toward the issue (Engesser and Brüggemann 2015) and different sources (McCluskey 2008), their audience orientations and reporting styles when it comes to the treatment of scientific uncertainty and critique (Brüggemann and Engesser 2014), and their national versus transnational orientation in making sense of the issue (Berglez 2011). If these diverse journalists are confronted with ENGOs at the COPs, we expect a spectrum of distinct relationships. Given that the literature does not offer support for concrete, directed hypotheses, our study aims at identifying that spectrum of relations in the first place.

The role of "ENGOs" on the global stage should be viewed against the background of political PR in modern societies where all different kinds of interest groups try to influence politics, media, and public opinion (Davis 2002). ENGOs have realized that they need to influence politics on a global scale to support structural changes and therefore support local projects on the one side and address the causes of global problems on the other (Princen 1994). To do so, ENGOs try to promote their issues, analyses, and proposals for solutions through international agenda building and international frame building (Sheafer and Gabay 2009).

By and large, ENGO activities can be divided into two main pillars: lobbying and mobilizing. Several studies on NGO communication strategies reflect this basic distinction. Princen (1994), for example, shows that NGOs create media attention to address the general public, draw attention, and promote communication (e.g., via publicity stunts, mass mailings, and local organizing)—activities aimed at mobilizing (potential) support. However, NGOs coordinate lobbying and provide scientific knowledge that back up their political claims to convince policymakers to act in their sense. Gough and Shackley (2001) summarize the strengths of climate-oriented NGOs as they pursue lobbying through advocating certain policy solutions, while at the same time, they try to reach broader support through the construction of knowledge and acts of campaigning.

Powers (2014) identified four factors that shape NGOs' publicity strategies: the form of funding, the NGOs' relationship with state authorities, organizational dynamics, and desired audiences and impacts. Beyond that, Powers notes that NGOs do respond to particular media logics but "are not mechanically controlled" (Powers 2014: 103) by them. This confirms Waisbord's (2011) findings that the worlds of news making and NGOs are heterogeneous and their relationships multifarious and changing. The Latin American NGOs that he investigated did not challenge the ideology of the newsrooms from which they wanted coverage, but they pursued different strategies that ranged from personally connecting with editors and reporters who would support their causes all the way to collaborating with "news making political elites to get attention" (p. 160). NGOs adapt to the media logic and "brand" themselves, use celebrities, regionalize and personalize ready-made media packages, and try to avoid scandals (Cottle and Nolan 2007). They even practice "news cloning" by reproducing the normative conceptions of journalism such as news criteria to make messages more newsworthy (Fenton 2010). From Krøvel (2012), we get insight into which kind of

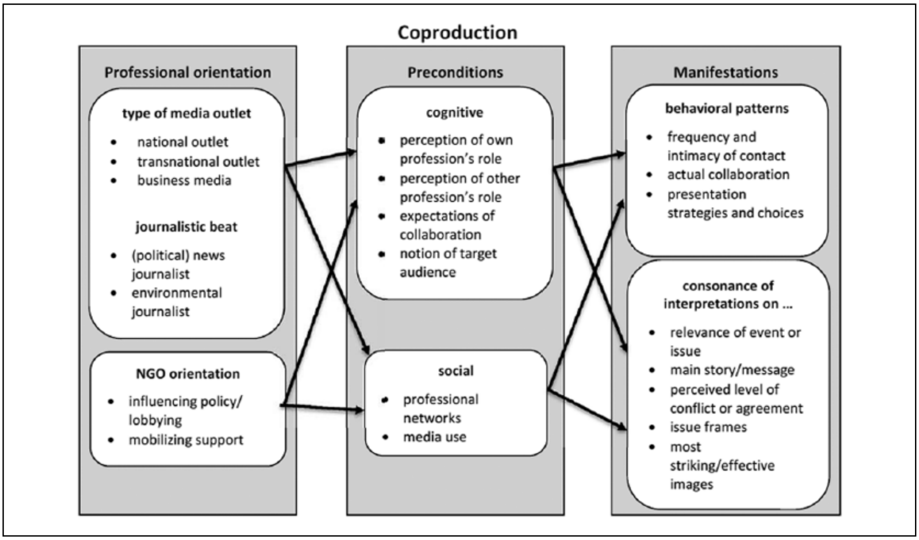
Coproduction
Professional orientation
type of media outlet
national outlet
transnational outlet
business media
journalistic beat
(political) news journalist
environmental journalist
NGO orientation
influencing policy/ lobbying
mobilizing support
Preconditions
cognitive
perception of own profession's role
perception of other profession's role
expectations of collaboration
notion of target audience
social
professional networks
media use
Manifestations
behavioral patterns
frequency and intimacy of contact
actual collaboration
presentation strategies and choices
consonance of interpretations on ...
relevance of event or issue
main story/message
perceived level of conflict or agreement
issue frames
most striking/effective images

Figure 1. Heuristic model of coproduction processes.
Note. NGO = nongovernmental organization.

information is most successfully distributed by NGOs. Investigating the impact of environmental NGOs on news media in Norway, his results of a quantitative content analysis over a period of ten years of Norwegian newspaper coverage indicate that those NGOs that rather focus on information and knowledge production are successful in getting representation in the media coverage on climate change. NGOs provide journalists with in-depth expertise on scientific background information and are therefore an important source. The study also highlights that it cannot support earlier findings that media only focus on NGO activities that are supposed to be media friendly and driven by activism. However, what we do not learn from this study is what the actual interaction looks like between NGOs and journalists and which mechanisms account for the form of NGO representation in the media.

Resulting from what we know about journalists covering environmental issues and ENGOs, we propose a heuristic conceptualization of coproduction and distinguish a number of aspects that have not been looked at systematically before (see Figure 1). Even though we present the model in total here it is worth noting that only parts of it existed prior to the analysis and that it was continuously refined as our qualitative data analysis progressed. It serves to clearly demarcate different components of coproduction and to distinguish possible explanatory factors.

We assume that the journalistic beat (political vs. environmental) on one hand and the strategic orientations of ENGOs (lobbying vs. mobilizing) on the other hand structure what we call cognitive *and* social preconditions of coproduction. On the cognitive side, the literature mentioned above suggests that different professional orientations go along with different perceptions of one's own professional role and the role of the respective other side, with expectations concerning the interaction and notions concerning the respective target audience. Concerning the social preconditions we assume that different professional orientations on the part of both journalists and ENGOs result in different kinds of professional networks that either side establishes and maintains. Journalists' and PR professionals' own strategic media use in pursuit of relevant information needed for the job will equally vary with these professional orientations.

Furthermore, we suggest that the actual *manifestations of coproduction* should be influenced by these cognitive and social preconditions. We propose a distinction between *behavioral patterns* of coproduction and the *consonance of interpretations* shared by journalists and PR professionals. On the behavioral level, coproduction is manifested in the frequency and intimacy of professional contacts, by instances of actual collaboration, as well as by the choice of particular presentation strategies. However, coproduction can also become manifest in shared interpretations between journalists and PR professionals concerning the relevance of the issue of climate change and the respective COP, concerning the main story or message associated with a particular COP, and the level of conflict perceived. Common interpretations can also extend to shared opinions between journalists and NGOs with respect to particular issue frames propagated by different stakeholders or to shared perceptions of what constitutes the most striking or effective images used to represent a particular COP.

In sum, the heuristic model serves two functions. First, it helps us to sort the remarks that interviewees have made into specific categories and compare them with other remarks on the same aspect of coproduction. Second and more importantly, the model guides the causal process tracing by directing our attention to possible explanatory relations between variables on the left side and those in the middle and on the right.

Method

To investigate coproduction processes between journalists and ENGOs, we conducted three comprehensive case studies at the COPs in Cancun, Mexico (November 29 to December 10, 2010), Doha, Qatar (November 26 to December 8, 2012), and Warsaw, Poland (November 11 to November 23, 2013). Access to the conferences was gained through accreditation as an official observer organization with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Our semi-standardized interviews were conducted on site the conferences with thirty-six journalists from nine countries (Germany, the United States, South Africa, Brazil, India, Britain, Mexico, Qatar, Poland) and transnational news agencies (AP, Reuters, Bloomberg), as well as with sixteen representatives from transnational NGOs (Climate Action Network, Friends of the Earth, Climate Analytics, Global Call for Climate Action, Greenpeace International, One World, Oxfam and WWF International). Some respondents were interviewed more than once over the years, resulting in a total of seventy-eight interviews. Country sampling followed two main criteria: First, we interviewed journalists from the political and economically most important democratic country in each of the five major continents (Germany for Europe, the United States for North and Brazil for South America, India for Asia, and South Africa for

Africa) to gain insights into how coproduction plays out under conditions of press freedom across the globe. Second, journalists from each of the three COP host countries (Mexico, Qatar, and Poland) were interviewed to gauge possible influences produced by the access of host country journalists to information from the respective conference leadership. Finally, British journalists were added because the *Guardian* was consistently named as an extremely important information source for journalists by many respondents. In the ENGO camp we focused on those NGOs and NGO umbrella organizations that act globally and thus develop PR strategies tailored to influence the interpretation of the COPs across the globe.

The media outlets that we investigate serve as agenda setters and leading media even in a highly fragmented media environment. However, many of the journalists who we have interviewed also produce for the online presence of their media outlet or a personalized blog and oftentimes not all reports that are published online automatically find their way into the paper or newscast. Beyond that, we know from our interviews that even in highly competitive media environments, NGOs still take pride in placing stories in mainstream news agencies and media outlets as these promise higher levels of outreach. NGOs' own media products or outlets try to respond to the lack of attention from traditional media (Powers 2015), but attention from traditional media is still a crucial metric of success.[1]

Interviews lasted between fifteen and forty-five minutes, and were mostly conducted in English and digitally recorded. A small number of interviews had to be conducted via telephone after the conference had ended. To obtain candid answers, most interviews were conducted under the condition of anonymity so that individual quotes from the interviews presented in this paper cannot be traced back to individual interviewees. The interviews were transcribed and then analyzed with the help of the software MaxQDA.

Distinct interview guides for both professional groups were developed deductively based on relevant literature and subsequently improved through team discussions. For the later case studies in Doha and Warsaw, both interview guides were reviewed before the conferences to make modifications where further clarification or elaboration seemed necessary. This was the case for the specification of respondents' contact to others, which was recorded more precisely in the Doha questionnaire, as well as the consonance of frame interpretations, which was a main research focus in Warsaw (see the appendix for the list of issue frames used in the Warsaw interviews).

To identify relevant factors and underlying mechanisms that explain coproduction, we pursue a process-tracing approach following George and Bennett (2005: 206): "The process-tracing method attempts to identify the intervening causal process—the causal chain or causal mechanism—between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable." We derived a number of factors from the literature that are likely to influence coproduction, but as there is no elaborate theory on coproduction yet, our model clearly needs to be understood as a heuristic that gives hints on what to look for while analyzing the interviews. The limited state of research especially regarding the existence of explanatory factors that underlie IE mechanisms precludes explicit hypothesis testing in this case. The interviews were analyzed by

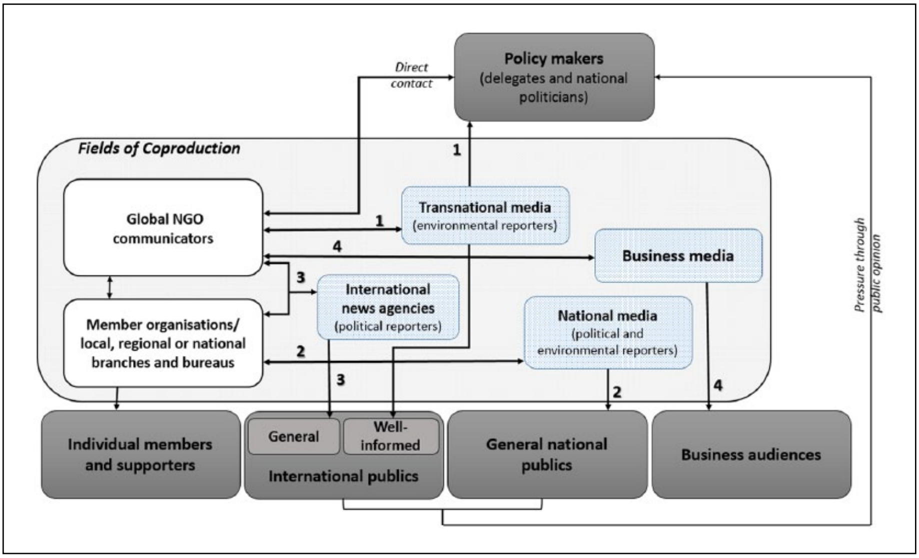
Direct contact
Policy makers (delegates and national politicians)
Fields of Coproduction
1
Global NGO communicators
Transnational media (environmental reporters)
1
4
Business media
3
International news agencies (political reporters)
Member organisations/ local, regional or national branches and bureaus
National media (political and environmental reporters)
2
3
2
4
Pressure through public opinion
Individual members and supporters
General
Well-informed
International publics
General national publics
Business audiences

Figure 2. Networks of coproduction.
Note. NGO = nongovernmental organization.

way of stepwise qualitative content analysis as developed by Mayring (2002). The interviews were first read to identify all statements that refer to aspects in the heuristic model or suggest additional elements for that model. Statements relating to the same category in the model were paraphrased to simplify them and make them more general. These paraphrased statements were then grouped across interviews to identify patterns and typical connections between the aspects in the data. Such patterns were then visualized in a complex network structure (see Figure 2). In this paper, we do not have enough space to recount the qualitative discovery process. Instead we offer network descriptions based on the final product of our analysis and enrich these with exemplary quotes from the original interviews.

Results

Looking at our journalistic interview sample first we find that our proposed distinction between environmental and political/news journalists is insightful when it comes to coproduction processes. Of the thirty-six journalistic interviewees, twenty-one can be classified as environmental journalists (of which five have a business focus) and fifteen are more general news reporters (twelve of these have a focus on political news, three have a business focus). Nineteen out of the twenty-one environmental journalists maintain close contacts with NGO representatives, but only six out of fifteen general news journalists report closer contact to ENGOs at the conferences.[2]

Our analysis reveals four distinct networks of coproduction as presented in Figure 2. Each network is crucially defined by the media type for which journalist members of the network primarily work (transnational media, national media, international news agencies, and business media) as well as the main target audiences at which communication is directed (policymakers, general national publics, general or well-informed international publics, or business audiences).

Network 1: Transnational Media and Global ENGOs

The first network consists of environmental journalists from transnational media (four journalists in our sample) and global ENGO communicators who put an emphasis on lobbying (eight interviewees), mainly head communicators from global ENGOs such as Climate Action Network International (CAN-I), Friends of the Earth International (FoEI), or the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF). Three out of the four transnational journalists work for globally distributed media outlets that are directly addressed to the end-user rather than to other media for further processing. The forth transnational journalist works for a specialized news agency, which is, however, also targeted at individual subscribers interested in specialized information on climate change. These transnational journalists in network 1 address their coverage to people who are directly involved and/or highly interested in the issue of climate change. This includes a well-informed international public as well as policymakers, who can be delegates present at the conference or national politicians in countries around the world. These audiences are at the same time highly relevant for the global NGO communicators in this first network. These are the people to whom they try to distribute their messages hoping to influence their decisions. They also maintain direct contact with policymakers on site the conference as well as with national politicians at home and therefore perceive transnationally distributed media (e.g., the *Guardian*, the *New York Times*, CNN) as most influential and therefore most useful in reaching these audiences. Within this network, journalists and NGO representatives tend to have long-lasting trustful personal relationships.

The transnational journalists try to account for the global scope of the issue. They do not look at information from a particular national angle and do not aim at breaking down the information to emphasize the relevance for a specific national audience. Instead, they concentrate on the main players (above all the European Union, the United States, China) and overall conference proceedings (especially on finance and emission reduction targets). Transnational journalists do not perceive themselves as educators of the general public but rather as providers of sophisticated information that provokes debate for people engaged and highly interested in the topic of climate change. To fulfill this role, these journalists are in need of information on what is going on behind closed doors in the negotiations to which they do not have direct access. Therefore, they try to glean insider information as well as context material from ENGO representatives. Sometimes, NGO representatives are even involved in negotiations and can provide journalists with first-hand insights:

> In some other countries they allow non-profits or students to be part of their delegation and [they] can go inside the closed rooms. A lot of the NGOs, because they work in different countries are very plugged into what . . .—you know, say, the Ethiopian delegation is doing a hearing or the Bangladesh delegation, and so we rely a lot on them to tell us, you know, the things that we can't get into. (Transnational journalist 2)

However, the journalists in this network are well aware of the NGO's strategic orientation. As one journalist put it, "NGOs use us and we use them" (Transnational journalist 1)—which clearly expresses the reciprocal relationship between the two actor groups. Interviewees from both groups were not only able to name organizations on the respective other side that are most interesting for them but also called their counterparts by their names. Network members meet rather informally in the hallways and workspaces, over coffee, or give each other a quick call or e-mail if some question or interesting detail arises. NGOs provide written information as well but do not neglect the personal contact:

> I think for the media, more than just giving them a press release that you want to get covered, it is really that long-term relationship-building with them that matters. You know, that credibility is a big factor. (ENGO 1)

The informal personal contact is highly valued for the exclusive information it might yield. But it also entails the risk that personnel changes and thus information channels run dry.

We find interesting similarities in interpretation between global NGO communicators and transnational environmental reporters in this network. In Warsaw, the three transnational journalists named "loss and damage" as well as "finance" as the central aspects.[3] Both topics were also named by the ENGOs as central for them. The three journalists all called Warsaw a "transitional COP" and a necessary step on the road to an agreement. This view was shared by the representatives of two of the ENGOs, whereas another emphasized that all COPs are highly important moments for decision making. Asking for the level of conflict experienced at the COP, we found one journalist stating that there is not much conflict as well as the representative from the first ENGO emphasizing the constructive and collegial atmosphere. A second ENGO representative detects the same level of conflict in these highly competitive moments where many different interests clash, and the third highlights the ongoing conflict between developing countries and developed countries. The two other journalists both underlined the strong frustration resulting from mutual accusations between the major players during the conference. Although these assessments seem different at first glance they indicate a certain level of routine and background knowledge among these experienced actors who constantly perceive the fundamental conflicts underlying the entire negotiation process even if these do not come to the surface at all times during the COPs. Comparing journalists' and ENGO assessments on the issue frames we provided in the Warsaw interviews (see the appendix), we do not find contradicting evaluations between the two groups although NGO representatives generally support or object to a particular frame more clearly. Journalists show more reluctance toward positioning themselves on the political subtexts of the frames but when they give an assessment they express opinions that are quite close to the NGO assessments.

Network 2: National Media and National ENGO Branches

The second network displayed in Figure 2 consists of journalists from national media (fourteen journalists in our sample, of which three are political and eleven are environmental reporters) addressing general national publics and representatives from ENGO member organizations and local, regional, or national branches and bureaus (nine interviewees). Reporters who mainly produce for domestically oriented media outlets mostly maintain contact to ENGO representatives from their own countries. These ENGO representatives, in turn, are involved in the communication within their global organizations or networks and transport messages that are then negotiated on these higher levels. They mainly aim at bringing these messages to the attention of broad domestic audiences to raise awareness and readiness to act. It is crucial for this network that ENGO representatives help journalists understand the conference proceedings and the course of the negotiations in general. Journalists produce their coverage for a general national audience and mostly seek information relating to their home countries. They want to produce reports that help their audiences understand how climate change is relevant to their lives and countries. For most of the journalists in this network, their respective national delegations constitute the first or favorite contact points but delegations are not always easily approachable. That is why journalists especially value NGOs as intermediaries.

ENGOs appreciate this need for information as a chance to place their messages. Although many ENGOs directly support projects and actively implement help and support for people and the environment, they use the conferences to bring forward their political arguments and demands and they “also want to use this as a time to showcase own efforts” (ENGO 5). Many ENGOs have policy staff at the COP who monitor negotiations in addition to communications staff who develop messages and create photo opportunities to “ensure attention of the non-specialist kind of an audience” (ENGO 5). Comprehensibility is an important keyword for the information provided to journalists in this network. ENGOs explain the technical and scientific details to journalists for them to work with in their coverage to build up public pressure:

> On the one hand, you want to have as much public attention as possible to ensure that there is a lot of pressure to get the most ambitious outcomes, that governments really feel that the public is supportive of strong climate action and all these sorts of things. (ENGO 6)

The direct contact between ENGO representatives and journalists is more formal in this nationally focused network than in the transnational network described above. Press conferences are the central occasions for journalists and ENGO PR professionals to meet on a regular basis. ENGOs meet beforehand, prepare their own press conference, gather the information they need to communicate and prepare their spokespeople (oftentimes experts or representatives from national offices). Journalists plan their day in consideration of their deadlines and the press conferences and side events scheduled for the day. Most journalists take notice of press releases that are usually sent out via mailing lists and use them as a hint to find useful interview partners or events that might be interesting for coverage.[4]

Assessments on the main story of the COP differ among the journalists and NGO representatives in this network as well as between both groups. Many journalists in this network named the second commitment period to the Kyoto Protocol as the main story of Doha and "loss and damage" as the main story in Warsaw whereas ENGO representatives concentrated on messages about finance issues and mitigation efforts. More unity can be detected with respect to assessments of relevance: There was a broad agreement among most network members that Warsaw was a "transitional COP" where particular steps toward the decisive COP to be held in Paris in 2015 had to be negotiated but no far-reaching breakthrough could be expected.

Looking at frame interpretations, we find high agreement in the direction and strength of elaboration between journalists and ENGO representatives in this network. The only truly striking difference concerns the "weighting uncertainty" frame where journalists emphasize the second half of the frame statement (scientific certainty on climate change and its expectable impacts) whereas ENGO representatives explicitly object to the premise in the first half, that is, that money would be wasted if the dire scientific forecasts should prove wrong. For ENGOs, it is important to emphasize that all actions taken against climate change today have genuinely positive effects, for example, on people's health, which seems for them an important strategic message to convince politicians to take action.

Network 3: International News Agencies and (Global and National) ENGOs

A third network consists of ENGO representatives (global communicators as well as representatives from regional or national branches) as well as political reporters from international news agencies (three reporters in our sample) who address general international publics by collecting information on all aspects of the issue and providing it to media outlets around the world. In Cancun, for example, AP had a team of five writers, two photographers, two camera operators, and several technical staff members to facilitate video transmission. In Warsaw, Reuters had four writers and two camera operators. Crew members meet daily at small editorial meetings to allocate events and topics to be covered. To track all important developments, the NGOs are useful sources for wire reporters, too. NGO voices are often used to balance news agency reporting, especially as a counterweight to national delegations and industry perspectives.

To obtain information, news agency reporters contact NGO representatives broadly before and during the conference. Wire reporters have a couple of contact persons whom they know but do not maintain very close relationships characterized by trustful permanent exchange. Their relations are more formal in the sense of a traditional journalist–source relationship. ENGOs are one source among others in the attempt to cover as many aspects as possible. Beyond that, ENGOs themselves create information for wire reporters particularly through protest events and photo opportunities that routinely attract photographers and camera people from international news agencies.

Communication between wire reporters and ENGOs mostly takes places through press conferences where journalists gather information as well as official statements through interviews. ENGOs try to deliver their information to the news agencies usually via press releases. ENGO interviewees reported to us that it counts as a great success to place a story with one of the international wire services. It is more difficult for ENGOs to meet news agency reporters personally because news agency teams have their own offices or booths in the conference media center and are thus less accessible through interaction in public workspaces.

Actual manifestations of coproduction are more difficult to detect in this network than in the two former ones.[5] Nevertheless, generally speaking, news agency reporters have a professional self-understanding predicated on a multiplicity of voices in textual reporting, but certainly value NGO-produced photo opportunities and publicity stunts in much the same way as other journalists do. Thus, they frequently pick up NGO messages and assessments by giving them attention and using them as contrasting positions to politicians and business representatives.

Network 4: Business Media and Global ENGOs

The fourth network that our analysis revealed matches environmental reporters working for business newspapers (five reporters) that address business audiences with an interest in the economic aspects of the issue with global ENGO communicators. These journalists focus on the effects and consequences that decisions at the COP might have for economies and markets (both national and global). The journalists in this fourth network are thus not classical environmental reporters but have been writing as business reporters on environmental issues for years. Renewable energy, emission reduction, carbon trading, green economy in general are at the center of their work. They write for a specialized business audience, that is, people who either have stakes in green business or who are generally interested in how climate change policy will affect their business.

Much like journalists in networks 1 and 2, the economic journalists highly value ENGOs' expertise and insider knowledge. They maintain close and trustful relationships with individual ENGO representatives whom they have known for years. These business-oriented environmental journalists emphasize more often than other interviewees that they tap into special NGO expertise on specific sub-issues, initiatives, or targeted programs in climate change mitigation.

All journalists but one in this last network were interviewed in Doha 2011, and we thus lack information on their issue frame assessments. Concerning the consonance of interpretations, we thus rely on their assessments concerning the main story, the conference's relevance and the perceived conflict—and find high agreement on these points. The strongest congruence between journalists and ENGO representatives in these networks is found on the assessment of the importance of the finance aspects and a binding treaty. However, the journalists generally assign less relevance to COP 18 (in Doha) where they do not see much progress to be made even though the conferences in principle are perceived to be serious international forums that generally have the capacity to be turning points in global climate policy. Journalists and ENGO representatives in this network agree that the low expectations toward the COP in Doha underrate its potential for finding solutions.

Journalists without or with Less NGO Connections

In our journalistic interview sample, we find eleven journalists who reported no or only very few and loose connections to and/or little interest in ENGOs at the COPs. These journalists differ in their audience orientation as well as in the perception of their own professional role. Nevertheless, they converge on two main reasons for their reluctant contact with NGO representatives. First, these journalists clearly focus on obtaining first-hand information from individual delegations who invite them for background briefings on a regular basis:

> To be frank, I don't find the NGOs that helpful at these meetings. . . . Frankly, they come here to see each other and to try and get quoted in newspapers. It's the delegates even more than their press people that I find most useful. [The delegation press officer from the home country] will sometimes talk with a small group of reporters on background, about what's really going on. (News journalist 3)

Second, journalists in this group expressed caution against the ENGOs' spin on the issue. They certainly keep an eye on NGO activity, for example, protests and public statements, and sometimes include a paragraph on a demonstration in their writing. They also attend NGO press conferences and use them as background context but treat the information given to them with a certain suspicion knowing that this information is naturally colored by the NGO's ideology. On some occasions, NGOs might provide an interesting point of view that some of these journalists would use to confront delegations with.

Last but not least, it should be noted that of course the networks presented are not set in stone. As usual in qualitative research especially when building groups and classifying types of actors, not all cases fit one type in pure form. At some points, decisions have to be made to categorize people according to dominant characteristics or practices. This means, for example, that transnational journalists can at some point focus on issues highly relevant for the domestic audience of their outlet's home country.

Conclusion

The complicated and often antagonistic relationship between journalists and PR professionals faces rather unusual circumstances at the UN climate change conferences. The complexity of the issue and, even more significantly, the "camp feeling" that develops due to two weeks of confinement to one conference location are conducive to processes of coproduction. These circumstances are in many ways different from the day-to-day work of both actor groups, especially because of the denseness of the event that progresses constantly and provides occasions for interactions that go back and forth and back again until they pause at the end of the conference, only to resume at the next COP. Instances of spontaneous communication or communication by chance in moments of idling during the conferences' daily routines occur more easily and add to a blurring of the lines in professional relationships.

We have shown that within these particular circumstances, the Intereffication model (Bentele and Nothhaft 2008) serves as a useful base to understand the communicative processes between the actor types as it strengthens our awareness of mutual influences and adjustments. However, the Intereffication model is limited in its power to explain different patterns in journalism–PR relationships. With the results of our analysis, we can elucidate production processes that shape the global image of the climate change conferences in much greater detail. The process-tracing approach that we have applied to identify causal mechanisms between the relevant factors and outcomes has revealed distinct connections between structural parameters and professional orientations of the actors and cognitive and social preconditions of coproduction as well as between such preconditions and the actual manifestations of coproduction in both behavior and interpretations (see Figure 1). Our in-depth analysis shows that coproduction works differently within subgroups of our actor sample. Thus, our general model can now be specified for these subgroups, and factors that decisively shape the coproduction relationships in each network can be identified. Very generally, we show that the journalistic beat is influential as is the type of media outlet for which journalists work. The latter is crucial for their audience orientation as well as for the understanding of their own role, which both constitute important *preconditions* of coproduction. *Manifestations* of coproduction differ accordingly—whether journalists need sophisticated background information from long-established personal relationships or occasional alerts on upcoming highlights from situational contacts.

Looking at the same process from the NGO side, the strategic orientations of the globally acting ENGOs are most consequential for the ensuing mode of coproduction. When ENGO communicators concentrate their strategy on mobilizing broad audiences and their own supporters, they will share a professional self-understanding (as a *precondition* of coproduction) that is focused on setting the media agenda and determining media imagery. When an ENGO decides to focus its strategy on direct lobbying with political decision makers, mass media access is less important and professional self-understanding is more geared toward expert communication and thus toward specialized journalists and delegations, sometimes directly via Twitter. It should be noted, however, that most global NGOs and NGO umbrella organizations we observed during the COPs try to follow both strategies at the same time if they judge the respective COP to be important enough. A global ENGO like Greenpeace or WWF might then bring on both campaigners to organize PR stunts and mobilize supporters as well as policy specialists who try to engage elite-oriented media and national delegations. On the behavioral level, the "manifestations" of coproduction will differ in form between the two strategies, but collaboration is common in both.

In this study, the COPs have served as a prism for coproduction patterns between ENGOs and journalists as they uniquely combine high-level negotiation, civil society mobilization, and expert communication. In all three process types, NGOs play a distinct role. They have access to negotiations, they engage in lobbying negotiators as well as in mobilizing outside supporters to attain visibility and mount pressure on negotiators, and they provide specialized information and expert assessment. The element of ritual celebration and symbolic loading, to which all parties involved—government, NGOs, the media, and broad audiences—would have to contribute, was somewhat weaker at the COPs we study here than at COP 15 in Copenhagen (and possibly at COP 21 in Paris in 2015), so this element cannot serve as a forth domain of NGO–journalist interaction in our analysis.

What, then, can we learn from our case study about journalist–NGO interactions in transnational political communication more broadly? When we try to analytically generalize our findings, we would expect to see more of the coproduction type exemplified by the news agency network 3 when we turn to inter-governmental negotiation events such as the EU and G7/G8 summits or the multiparty negotiations about Iran's nuclear program concluded in 2015: News agency journalists will collaborate with governments and other stakeholders in making sense of the power dynamics and the policy outcome of such events, but NGOs will be sidelined as one, relatively minor, type of source among others. In contrast, the transnational network 1, in which elite-oriented media collaborate with specialized NGO experts, as well as the business media network 4, which is built on domain-specific expertise, are more likely to be found at global conferences aimed at sharing knowledge and best practice such as, for example, the global AIDS conferences. Conversely, conferences marked by strong civil society mobilization as well as summits drawing extensive civil society "counter-summiting" activities such as the World Social Forum or Rio+20 might see a strong element of the network 2 type coproduction, in which NGOs try to mobilize broad audiences through protests and symbolic actions aimed at national media, and some media virtually join the mobilization in an effort to capture their audiences' presumed inclinations.

The main theoretical contribution of our study lies in moving beyond wholesale characterizations of the roles of "the media" and "the NGOs." Instead we specify four coproduction patterns that we hypothesize will recur in other transnational contexts and will structure the relationship of the news media and civil society actors more broadly. In addition, our analytical model also shows the significance of specific cognitive and social preconditions such as perceptions of target audiences and journalists' long-standing source networks in determining the level and type of coproduction between NGOs and journalists. Finally, our analysis draws attention to the influence of situational micro-contexts of media production often ignored in attempts to analyze general professional conduct. Our observations and interviews strongly suggest that unplanned personal interaction does influence what gets said and written even in contexts of strong deadline pressure.

Of course, a focused case study such as ours also entails certain limitations. First, both actor groups we have studied are certainly very important in the global communication process, but for all journalists interviewed, country delegations were highly important sources, too, although they are often less accessible than NGOs. For a complete picture of coproduction at the COPs, therefore, delegations should be brought into the picture in subsequent analyses. Furthermore, as we have seen, the agreement on anthropogenic climate change is high among environmental and climate change journalists. To further test the relevance of common interpretations as a manifestation of NGO–journalist coproduction more generally, it seems promising to study a second subject in comparison that is more controversial in its basic assumptions than climate change. The issues of poverty/hunger and terrorism/civil war seem to lend themselves to such an approach. With our present contribution, we hope to have furnished a basis for subsequent explanatory analyses of coproduction. Such analyses remain important precisely because the specific configurations of coproduction mold the content of national and transnational media debates in consequential ways and thus determine the success of strategic transnational agenda- and frame-building efforts.

Appendix

The following five issue frames were derived from the literature (e.g., Gordon et al. 2010; Nielsen and Schmidt Kjærgaard 2011; Nisbet 2009; Schlichting 2013; Shehata and Hopmann 2012), past interviews, and media debates at the time of the Warsaw conference (COP 19). The frame statements were shown or read to interviewees in Warsaw for an assessment of their agreement on a 5-point scale ranging from −2 to +2. Interviewees were also asked to elaborate on each frame, assess its importance in the debate, and name actors who would try to place such a frame in the debate. In analyzing the data, the agreement ratings and elaborations were then used to assess the degree of frame consonance between journalists and ENGO PR representatives as a manifestation of coproduction:

1. Common but differentiated: Industrial nations have a historic responsibility for climate change. Therefore, it is their obligation to carry out actions that remedy or mitigate the consequences of climate change. Inequality of economic, social, and institutional developmental conditions between the developed and developing worlds justifies differentiated emission reduction obligations, the general obligations of cooperation in technology transfer, and financial assistance for mitigation and adaptation for developing countries.
2. Inefficient UNFCCC: The UNFCCC process is inefficient. There will not be any significant progress toward saving the planet from climate change under the current conditions of the climate change conferences. Bilateral or smaller multilateral agreements would be more effective in fighting climate change.
3. Dominance of economic interests: Strong economic interests determine the negotiations. Influential economic actors hinder real progress by lobbying for their stakes behind the scenes. This pertains to carbon-intensive as well as low-carbon industry lobbying groups that have a grip on political actors.

4. Weighting uncertainty: If the world acts against climate change even if it turns out to be less problematic than the science has predicted, the worst thing that could happen is that a lot of money will have been spent for nothing. If the world does not act against climate change, and it turns out as bad as the science has predicted, the worst thing that could happen is an ecologic, social, and economic catastrophe.
5. More relevant social problems: Climate change is only one issue among a whole range of problems that societies are facing. Secure jobs for people as well as affordable energy and other resources are at least equally important—if not more important—at the moment.

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Notes

1. In a small side study, we also investigated the social media activities of government delegations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). We found huge variation worldwide in how social media are used; some delegations and NGOs do nothing in that direction, so that social media seem like an addition to the core mass-media-directed activities at the Conferences of the Parties (COPs). These findings support our decision to concentrate on traditional media.
2. The numbers reported here are indicative but should not be read as exact proportions. In this qualitative interview study, we cover journalists from the nine target countries and communicators from global environmental NGOs present at the COPs remarkably well, but we do not claim exhaustiveness or statistical representativeness for our sample.
3. Climate negotiations at the COPs are organized into several topical streams. Two of them focus on what to do about permanent "loss and damage" already incurred by changing climate conditions and on financial assistance to poorer countries to cope with the effects of climate change, respectively.
4. For example, the "Eco Bulletin" by CAN International is a newsletter published and printed daily during environmental conferences since 1972. It is especially valued by journalists as a source of information on where the negotiations are going and what demands NGOs are pushing.
5. Not all news agency reporters with frequent NGO contact were interviewed at all three COPs studied here, and only one was interviewed in Warsaw and therefore had the chance to answer questions on issue frame assessment, which leaves our information on consonance of interpretations rather patchy.

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Protest and Accountability without the Press: The Press, Politicians, and Civil Society in Chile

Sallie Hughes[1] and Claudia Mellado[2]

Abstract

We examine political news in Chilean newspapers after elections were reestablished, including a recent period of civic protests of policies linked to the authoritarian past. Data show that similar to journalism in Western democracies, throughout the twenty-one years under study, journalists relied upon official sources, allowed politicians to set the news agenda, and eschewed civil society in favor of representing citizens as voiceless individuals. However, news frames changed during the protest period in unexpected ways given current understandings of the press and civil society. During the protest period, the press framed a greater percentage of coverage as issues and offered contextualization while continuing to privilege official sources, defer agenda setting to politicians, and disregard collective organizations. Based on research elsewhere, issue frames and context may reorient causal attribution for social problems and encourage greater participation. Shortly after the study period, reform topped the political agenda, and disputed policies were overhauled. Connecting content to protests through time sequencing, findings suggest rethinking the relationship between civil society visibility in the press and processes of social accountability. They also provide an example of how legacies of authoritarianism may affect the press under democracy, helping advance theories of press performance beyond experiences in the West.

Keywords

journalism, civil society, political participation, democracy, Latin America

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Introduction

Relying upon western democratic experiences or normative theories, much of the literature on media–civil society relations argues that the press either does or should provide a public arena where civil society may contest public policies and demand accountability from government. Media visibility, according to this research, is a necessary ingredient for social movements to build consensus and mobilize participation around policy change. Similarly, the press has been called an important and perhaps even necessary ally of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and social movements pressing for social accountability in Latin American democracies. Press visibility and even active support for civil society groups are considered crucial in processes of social accountability, which have been found to reinforce traditional mechanisms of citizen control over politicians and governments.

Our study examines these claims and assumptions in a newly restored democracy. It provides an empirical examination of the public arena the Chilean press created between 1990 and 2011 as civil society reemerged to contest the social policies and structural limitations of a democratic system designed to reassure outgoing autocrats that socioeconomic policies and power structures would not greatly change under democracy. After the study period, politicians responded to several of the movements' major demands by passing significant social and political reforms. Although we do not claim the protesters achieved all of their demands, there was a significant policy response.

The study nests the recent six-year period of civil protest within a longitudinal content analysis of political news conducted across twenty-one years since Chileans restored democracy in 1990. We link our measures of official, citizen, and civil society representations in the press to Chile's major political events through time sequencing, what Neuendorf (2002: 61–70) calls a "second-order linkage," based upon the assumption that major protests and elections dominated the political news agenda in the years when they occurred.

Understanding Chilean press behavior during civic protests helps refine theories of the press, politics, and civil society by assessing these relationships outside of the historical and institutional contexts of the more-stable western democracies where most of these theories were formulated. To do so, we asked the following research questions:

Research Question 1: Were civil society organizations given the opportunity to advocate for policy change and launch processes of social accountability in the press by being mentioned and especially quoted in political news?

Research Question 2: Did the press diminish opportunities for civil society organizations to mobilize or persuade by representing citizens in political news as atomized individuals who are spoken for rather than collective organizations that have voice?

Research Question 3: Did the press diminish opportunities for civil society organizations to mobilize or persuade by emphasizing the actions and perspectives of the official sphere made up of government officials and politicians by predominantly mentioning and quoting them in the news?

Research Question 4: Did the press diminish opportunities for civil society organizations to mobilize or persuade by ceding control over the political news agenda to government officials and politicians?

Research Question 5: Did the press diminish opportunities for civil society organizations to mobilize or persuade by excluding background information and using news frames that support popular demobilization and closed processes of elite policy making?

We ask these questions of the elite political press read by Chile's political and policy establishment, as well as political news in popular tabloids that the same press companies price to attract low-income readers. This allows us to assess whether coverage changed in relevant ways depending upon whether the publication targeted the political elite or popular sectors from which many of the protesters emerged.

Our findings in some ways reflect and in other ways diverge from coverage patterns of politicians and civil society documented largely in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Western Europe. The western-based phenomenon of indexing political news to official perspectives and sources held true in the Chilean setting, and we also encountered a Chilean version of a journalistic "protest paradigm" supporting the status quo as researchers have in the United States and Hong Kong. However, findings that press behavior changed in other ways supporting policy change and political accountability contradicted claims of the necessity of press visibility for social movement success, and likewise suggested a rethinking of theories from Latin America about how the press may contribute to social accountability processes. During the protest period, the press framed a greater percentage of coverage as issues and offered contextualization while continuing to privilege official sources, defer agenda setting to politicians, and disregard collective organizations. Based on research elsewhere, issue frames and context may reorient causal attribution for social problems and mobilize participation. Thus, in contrast to normative theories and empirical studies, the evidence suggests that accountability processes worked without the press. Politicians and bureaucrats responded to protesters' issue agendas in their public statements, and a passive postauthoritarian political press covered them.

The Press, Politics, and Civil Society

Research in the United States and Europe has found that the press emphasizes official sources in its coverage of social movements, and of politics more generally, while alternatively ignoring collective organizations or disparaging them depending upon movements' goals and tactics (Boyle et al. 2005; Entman and Rojecki 1993). The press in western democracies tends to "index" national political coverage to the range of sources and opinions of elite politicians and officials, a phenomenon particularly documented in the U.S. press (Bennett 1990; Bennett et al. 2006; Benson and Hallin 2007). Although studies have found evidence of indexing in the United States, the

United Kingdom, France, and Israel, there is evidence that indexing in countries with multiparty parliamentary systems produced greater inclusion of civil society voices than indexing in countries with two-party majoritarian systems (Benson and Hallin 2007; Sheafer and Wolfsfeld 2009).

For protest news specifically, research in the United States and Hong Kong has documented a routinized template of coverage that marginalizes movements and civic organizations demanding change. These include reliance on official sources and news agendas, reduced presence of sources from protest groups, invocation of individual citizens as mainstream society that supports the status quo, and use of antagonistic frames (McLeod 2007; McLeod and Hertog 1999).

Recent studies have begun to elaborate differences in the protest paradigm depending upon the ideological orientation of media outlets and the degree of structural pluralism in communities or societies. Weaver and Scacco (2012) found that U.S. media outlets treated the conservative "Tea Party" movement differently depending upon their ideological orientations, whereas Lee (2014) found negative framing and exclusion of protesters' voices was more likely to emerge in politically conservative Hong Kong newspapers, especially when protesters targeted political issues. McCluskey and colleagues (2009) found that newspapers in U.S. communities with lower levels of structural pluralism, a concept representing the distribution of power, were less likely to quote protesters than newspapers in communities with higher levels of pluralism.

A related thread of research argues that even though social movements and change-oriented civic organizations can use social media to reach sympathizers, they still require mainstream media publicity to build consensus and recruit from the wider public as well as trigger elite reactions (Cammaerts et al. 2013; Koopmans 2004). According to this research, movements must obtain standing in the media before influential targets will grant recognition and respond to demands. Gamson (1990: 147) thus calls media the "central battleground" for challenging groups in the United States, whereas Koopmans contends from the German context that contemporary political contestation occurs not in the streets, but in

> the indirect, mediated encounters among contenders in the arena of the mass media public sphere. Authorities react to social movement activities if and as they are depicted in the mass media, and conversely movement activists become aware of political opportunities and constraints through the reactions (or non-reactions) that their actions provoke in the public sphere. (Koopmans 2004: 114)

Studies of social accountability processes in Latin American democracies often echo the media visibility claim of social movement research from the North, even suggesting that media participation through investigative reporting is necessary for social accountability to arise. In a strong version of this claim, Peruzzotti (2011) states,

> the presence of independent or watchdog journalism is essential for the success of any action of social accountability . . . The impact of any movement or NGO is directly proportional to the amount of media visibility it is able to gather. (p. 58)

Social accountability occurs when public denunciations impose reputational costs on politicians for perceived wrongdoing (Peruzzotti and Schmulovitz 2006). Social accountability can be achieved through public shaming, but is most likely to produce policy change when it activates other mechanisms of accountability, such as the "vertical" mechanism of control through elections or the "horizontal" mechanisms of congressional investigations and court interventions (O'Donnell 1998; Smulovitz and Peruzzotti 2000).

The concept of social accountability responds to observations that traditional forms of accountability remain weak in many Latin American presidentialist systems, but that under certain conditions, governors still react to public denunciations (Peruzzotti and Schmulovitz 2006; Waisbord 2000). The concept was developed in contemporary Argentina after the exit of a military junta from political power unshackled an externally diverse press system. Argentina's military government never institutionalized to the degree of the Chilean regime and departed political power in a weaker position than its Chilean counterparts (Loveman and Davies 1997). While repression of journalists was severe (Knudson 1997), media system pluralism reemerged after the return to democracy in Argentina (Hughes 2006). The contemporary Argentine press considers both politicians and members of mobilized civil society organizations as "primary definers" of the news agenda (Waisbord and Peruzzotti 2009: 704) and provides an arena for civil society to define wrongdoing, identify those responsible, and deliberate on solutions (Bonner 2009).

Other research has found that political news in many western democracies tends to be presented episodically without context to orient readers and framed as insider political games (Pedersen 2012; Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2006). Several researchers have similarly described market-driven or "tabloidized" news styles as being devoid of context or linkage of wider issues or social problems. Tabloid and market-driven news styles expanded in Latin American journalism when political and economic systems liberalized in the 1980s and 1990s (Guerrero and Márquez 2014; Hallin 2000), increasing in both mainstream news and new tabloids aimed at the popular sectors.

Background information is important in the press–civil society relationship because studies have shown that when news consumers have contextualized thematic information, as opposed to decontextualized episodic coverage, they are more likely to attribute problems to societal conditions and failed policies rather than individualize blame, as well as take a more critical stance toward elected officials (Iyengar 1992, 1994). If coverage is contextualized, it may educate readers to the problems that motivate mobilization, protesters' goals, and why civil society organizations turn to protest as a tactic.

Framing studies analyze the internal organization and emphases of articles based upon the assumption that frames reveal important insights about journalism culture and audience effects, among other things (De Vreese and Semetko 2002; Shoemaker and Reese 2013). Issue-framed news resembles Iyengar's (1992) thematically framed coverage, which was more likely than episodic coverage to prompt viewers to attribute responsibility to societal factors and government behavior. Alternatively, many studies have found that framing politics as an insider game increases cynicism, while recent evidence suggests framing political news as issues is more likely to mobilize citizens (Pedersen 2012; Shehata 2014).

To what degree do these findings travel? We briefly review the recent development of the Chilean press and political system before turning to our methodology and findings, believing, like Sheafer and Wolfsfeld (2009), that understanding institutional legacies and current political structures is crucial for data interpretation.

The Press under Authoritarianism and Restored Democracy

Chile's externally diverse and combative press system did not survive the country's seventeen-year dictatorship. Prior to the 1973 coup, Chile's press exhibited signs of a polarized pluralist system, with high political parallelism, external pluralism, and commentary-oriented journalism (Hallin and Mancini 2004; see also Bresnahan 2003; León-Dermota 2003). Every ideological strand found in the country's wide-ranging multiparty system was replicated in the press. Under the version of democracy that emerged after the dictatorship, newspapers reflect far narrower views than the press of the previous democratic period (Bresnahan 2003; León-Dermota 2003). Dailies *El Mercurio* and Copesa together own 90 percent of press outlets and are described as reflecting the establishment Center-Right to far Right.

The ownership concentration and rightward orientation of the present-day press have been attributed to a pact pro-democracy politicians made with autocrats at the end of the dictatorship to ensure the military's peaceful departure from government. Press properties transferred to private sector allies during the dictatorship stayed in their hands after the return to democracy and no public subsidies were allotted to restore external diversity in the press system. According to León-Dermota (2003), the pact assured that the press under democracy would remain "well tied down."

Another legacy of the pacted political transition could be journalistic norms. Today's journalists in greatest numbers voice a preference for civic roles that facilitate individual political participation through voting, but are less supportive of roles encouraging broader participation. In response to questions about potential civic roles of journalism (Mellado 2011: 283–85), the largest percentage in a national sample of journalists (44.1 percent) believed providing citizens with information to make political decisions was "extremely important." Journalists voiced lower support for roles associated with political participation beyond voting. These functions were advocating for social change (26.7 percent) and motivating people to participate in civic activity or political discussion (25.9 percent). These preferences closely reflect establishment views of acceptable forms of political participation (Hagopian 2005).

The Political System under Restored Democracy

Chile has been lauded for its peaceful transition from authoritarian rule, but criticized for the restricted range of political competition, expression, and participation democracy has produced. These limitations were built into the structures of restored democracy, and many have remained in place for reasons analysts attribute to fear of instability, a near-hegemonic economic ideology, a culture of closed elite-based policy making, and structurally limited elections (Aguero 2003; Navia 2010; Teichman 2011).

The 1973–1990 dictatorship banned political parties, killed, disappeared, or tortured more than forty thousand people, and by one estimate severely traumatized at least two-hundred thousand people while blaming a "hyper" mobilized society for initiating political violence. By imposing a laissez-faire economic model benefiting largest financial groups, and eradicating progressive political, labor, and social organizations, the military regime dismantled structures for collective action (Hagopian 2005). When democracy was reborn in 1990, a constitution enacted during the dictatorship protected many limitations established under authoritarianism. Members of the alliance of opposition political parties, called the *Concertación*, agreed to the institutional design to ensure the military would hold elections and leave power as promised.

Among the constitution's requirements were appointed senatorial seats that gave General Augusto Pinochet and other dictatorship leaders a built-in veto on progressive reforms. Appointed seats were finally removed in 2005, but a two-seat, proportional design for election to the lower house, called the Chamber of Deputies, remained. Chamber electoral districts sent two deputies to Congress, but candidates from a single party had to carry 60 percent of the vote to win both seats. This happened in only about 5 percent of districts, inflating the Right's representation in the chamber (Navia 2010). The "binomial" district design also created incentives to form party coalitions as it was impossible to win without them. In practice, this affected only the Left as the Right was ideologically narrower. The effect was to truncate the ideological spectrum in the chamber compared with the wider population, and through that erode policy responsiveness expected from elections (Hagopian 2005).

Concertación members also set aside changes in policies that weakened labor organization and public education quality in favor of ameliorating the worst poverty through targeted programs (Navia 2010). *Concertación* administrations successfully halved the poverty rate, but Chile's economic inequality remains among the highest in Latin America, with wealth especially concentrated in the richest 10 percent. Many supporters hoped the election of Socialist Party *Concertación* member Michelle Bachelet in 2006, the fourth uninterrupted *Concertación* presidency, would finally open policy making to equalizing reforms. However, Bachelet's promise to broaden participation in policy making was absent from priorities once in office, and calls to reform the districting process went nowhere.

Street protests erupted early in her first term, reviving fears of a hypermobilized populous among some of her advisors (Navia 2010). *Concertación*'s base constituencies protested policies that favored macroeconomic growth rates over social equity, environmental protection, and indigenous claims on ancestral lands (Fernandez and Vera 2012; Teichman 2011). The protests gathered numbers unseen since the political transition period. They were organized by constituencies disenfranchised by elite-driven policy making, colloquially called *cupulismo*, and marked the return of collective action (Fernandez and Vera 2012; Teichman 2011). Table 1 provides a protest timeline.

Table 1. Major Protests in Chile, 2006–2011.

Year	Protesters	Issue
2006	Students	Education Quality and Access
2007	Urban Services Users	Transantiago Cost and Delays
2007	Labor	Wages, Collective Bargaining
2008	Students	Education
2010	Students	Education
2010	Indigenous	Mapuche Land Rights and Police Violence
2011	Students	Education
2011	Environmentalists	Aysen Hydroelectric Dam
2011	Indigenous	Mapuche Land Rights, Autonomy

Source. Ruiz (2007, 2012); Teichman (2011); *The New York Times, Global Voices*, and other media websites.

In 2006, more than 800,000 high school students went on strike nationally in protest of education quality and difficult access to higher education. After arresting thousands, the government formed a large advisory council. Students and teachers walked out of the council months later, returning to protests in 2008, 2010, and 2011 (Ruiz 2012; Teichman 2011). In 2007, temporary workers took to the streets with organized labor unions whose reform petitions had been ignored. Like students, subcontracted workers not only protested material conditions but also demanded legal reform to change structures. Labor laws prevent formal sector workers from striking as a sector across companies unless management agrees, fragmenting workers into inconsequential numbers and individual firms. Temporary workers, predominantly female, are prohibited from striking at all, have no job security or benefits, and earn about one-third the rate of formal sector laborers (Ruiz 2012; Teichman 2011).

Lower income city dwellers made up a third group of protesters following reorganization of Santiago's transportation system, Transantiago, in 2007. To increase efficiency, the plan cut the number of buses in half, transferring routes of small independent operators to a few large companies. Numerous new transfers added hours to travel time. Along with exhaustion, this meant lost wages, leisure time, and time to spend with children. Neighborhood associations organized protests across the city. Finally, indigenous people and environmentalists have been at odds with macroeconomic policies since the return to democracy. Mapuche protesters and police clashed in 2010 and 2011 as the indigenous group opposed state-supported energy and commercial forestry mega-projects in Chile's South. Indigenous and environmentalist protests exploded again in 2011 over a proposal to build four hydroelectric dams (Latta and Cid Aguayo 2012).

Method

The study encompasses the period since the restoration of elections, assessed in five-year intervals between 1990 and 2005, and then in yearly increments during the protest years from 2006 to 2011. This allows us to nest the protest period within the longer time span to identify whether the press relationship with politicians and civil society remained consistent, changed across time generally, or changed during the protest period.

Although the overall period studied comprises 21 years, 40 percent of the stories in the sample were from one 6-year time period, specifically between 2006 and 2011, as we wanted to analyze in more depth what happened in press performance during the most-active period of protest since democracy was restored.

Sampling and Data Collection

The political content of five general-interest Chilean newspapers with national circulation was analyzed, including two elite commercial newspapers *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera*, a third elite broadsheet produced by the state, *La Nación*, and the two popular newspapers with national coverage, *Las Últimas Noticias* and *La Cuarta*. By including elite and popular newspapers, we capture press created for a wider swath of the public and can compare whether popular and elite press styles diverged in ways significant for the press relationship with civil society. The sample includes the two conglomerates that dominate print media (El Mercurio S.A.P. and Copesa), as well as the only national state-owned newspaper. *El Mercurio* is a conservative elite newspaper, while *La Tercera* has tried to distinguish itself by being Center-Right. *La Nación* was primarily owned by the government until 2012. Its print edition was discontinued in 2010 and its much smaller digital presence was sold to a private company in 2012. During the period we study, *La Nación* held a smaller participation in the media market than the other newspapers in the sample and maintained a pro-government stance. The tabloids *Las Últimas Noticias* (LUN) and *La Cuarta* (which belong to El Mercurio S.A.P. and Copesa, respectively) target lower income population segments.

Through the constructed week method, a stratified-systematic sample of each newspaper was selected. For each media outlet, one Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday edition was randomly selected for each semester of every year, making sure that every month of the year was represented by at least one day, thus assuring no over-representation of a particular period. Specifically, two constructed news weeks were sampled per year, per newspaper. The unit of analysis was the news story. A news story was understood as the group of continuous verbal and visual elements that refer to the same topic. Within each selected sample, all stories associated with politics were considered. A news item was considered political news and included in the sample when it corresponded to information related to formal and institutionalized political power in Chile. This includes news about governments and their services at all levels (local, provincial, and national). It also includes the activities of all government branches at the national level, including the executive, parliament, and the judicial branch. It also included stories about elections for government posts at all levels and stories focused primarily on the actions of political parties. The sample does not include news about politics in other countries unless it was primarily about the actions of the Chilean foreign affairs ministry, reception of a head of state by government authorities in Chile, or a presidential trip abroad.

We did not include supplements and/or magazines or the features sections. We also made a distinction between news and opinion, so articles in the newspapers' editorial sections as well as letters to the editor and opinion columns were excluded. Photographs with a caption only, single quotes, and headlines only were not considered as news items. A total of 7,386 news items were coded, of which 3,005 appeared between 2006 and 2011.

Fifteen independent coders were trained in the application of a common codebook. Coder-trainer tests were performed to ensure that they had similar understandings of the codebook to yield acceptable intercoder agreement. The coding was done manually between 2012 and 2013. After the coding was finished, a new coding of a randomly selected 10 percent of the total sample was carried out to determine intercoder reliability. Using Krippendorff's alpha, overall intercoder reliability was .75.[1]

Measures

To respond to Research Questions 1 through 3, following Benson and Hallin (2007), we coded for the explicit presence of individual citizens such as bystanders or people potentially affected by policies and protests; civil society organizations or movements operating outside of the state or economic market and their explicitly stated representatives or members including protesters; and explicitly mentioned members of the official sphere including government officials and employees at all levels, members of the partisan coalition holding the presidency at the time of coding, and members of the partisan opposition at the time.

To answer Research Question 4, we operationalized control over the political news agenda by coding news triggers. Coders were asked to indicate if the item was triggered through government officials' and politicians' initiatives, even when not literally mentioned, including press conferences, other events to which journalists were invited, or statements specifically prepared for an interview. These features may be evident to the coder where the item extensively quotes from an event, debate, or speech (Wolfsfeld and Sheafer 2006). A second option was to code the item as the journalist's or newspaper's initiative, including independent investigation by the journalist or newspaper staff, as well as changes in focus that add wider perspectives or transform the original premise for the story.

Finally, we answered Research Question 5 by coding for background information and news framing in the following manner. Background information was coded as factual information that would assist citizens in understanding political developments and was separated temporally from current facts (Benson and Hallin 2007). Background information includes explaining officials' positions or decisions (how they have voted, how they have previously behaved), the reasons behind demonstrations or protests, or the objectives of citizen groups, among others.

Coders were finally asked to indicate whether the news item mainly focused on game framing or on public policy issues. The game frame focuses on competition, winners and losers, or politicians' personal popularity, sometimes in combination (Aalberg et al. 2012; Valentino et al. 2001). Issue frames emphasize factual description of public problems and issues, as well as possible consequences, alternative solutions, and policies advocated such as legislative reforms or executive branch decisions (Rhee 1997; Valentino et al. 2001).

Findings

Political News Without Civil Society

Were civil society organizations given the opportunity to advocate for policy change and social accountability in the mediated public arena by being mentioned or quoted in political news? Data answering this question are reported in Table 2 as percentages of all political items with members of civil society mentioned or quoted on an annual basis, and then as adjusted standardized residuals for year-to-year chi-square tests.[2] They show that NGOs and social movements were given relatively few opportunities to enter the public arena created in the press and that these opportunities declined over time, with the exception of a single year prior to the protest period during which a reform-oriented candidate became president. Contrary to normative theories of the press in democracy, the presence of civil society organizations and their members declined by about half over the twenty-one-year period, from 11 to 6.1 percent when represented in news as sources, and from 18.1 to 9.2 percent when mentioned as actors in political news. These declines occurred in both elite and popular newspapers, and the decline across the entire time span (1990 vs. 2011) was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 4{,}571, p \leq .05$ for the elite press; $\chi^2 = 9{,}482, p \leq .005$ for the popular press).

Tracking the annualized adjusted standardized residuals across time, we see the presence of civil society both as political actors and news sources declined across the entire period with the clear exception occurring during the initiation of the reformist government of President Ricardo Lagos in 2000, including every year of the protest period. This means the Chilean press reduced the representation of citizens as organized collectives over twenty-one years of democratic consolidation, including the protest years, with the exception being a year of government-led reform.

Based upon this evidence, civil society had little opportunity to express its views in the public arena provided in the press and these rare opportunities declined across the entire democratic period as well as in every year of protest.

Citizens as Voiceless Individuals

Instead of collective actors outside of the state or economic market, were citizens represented in the press as atomized individuals who lacked voice? By comparing the presence of individual citizens and civil society in political news, also in Table 2, we see that citizens were much more often represented as individuals who are mentioned without being used as sources. This means individual citizens were talked about rather than represented as participating in the discussion of policies and politics or as demanding accountability. However, while there were very few stories that quoted individual citizens as sources, these tended to significantly grow in presence over twenty-one

Table 2. Individual Citizens, Civil Society, and the Official Sphere (Percentage of News Items and Adjusted Standardized Residuals; $N = 7{,}386$).

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
As sources										
Individual citizens										
Percentage	3.3	1.5	7.6	5.5	8.2	5.6	6.5	5.6	6.6	5.7
Adjusted Standardized Residuals	−3.5	−5.7	3.8	0.4	2.9	0.4	1.6	0.6	1.6	0.5
Civil society organizations										
Percentage	11	7.4	13.5	6.5	5.6	5.6	6.7	7	7.4	6.1
Adjusted Standardized Residuals	3.6	−0.9	6.5	−1.4	−2.1	−2	−1.5	−1.2	−0.8	−1.8
Politicians and officials										
Percentage	73.3	70	70.6	69.7	74.9	76.9	70.4	72.9	75.1	74
Adjusted Standardized Residuals	0.9	−1.9	−1.3	−1.2	1.4	2.2	−1.1	−0.5	1.7	0.8
As actors										
Individual citizens										
Percentage	32.8	22.7	34.3	34.3	30.1	29.8	27.6	39.2	35.2	41.5
Adjusted Standardized Residuals	−0.5	−7	1.5	1.2	−1	−1.1	−2.5	3.8	1.6	4.4
Civil society organizations										
Percentage	18.1	10.9	17.4	10	7	8.2	9.4	8.6	9.6	9.2
Adjusted Standardized Residuals	7.5	−1.4	5.5	−1.9	−3.4	−2.5	−2.3	−2.8	−2.1	−2.1
Politicians and officials										
Percentage	92.9	88.8	94.2	91.8	93.4	95.4	94.7	94.7	93.5	92.8
Adjusted Standardized Residuals	−0.5	−5.5	1.9	−0.9	0.4	1.9	1.8	1.9	0.8	0.3

years, and especially in the period of protest from 2006 to 2011 (χ^2 over the full period = 64,268; $p \leq .001$). This means that as Chile's young democracy aged, the press increasingly gave voice to individual citizens even though their overall presence in political news remained very low.

Two years stand out when examining this trend and help to clarify the relationships between coverage of individual citizens and major political events such as protests and elections. Quoting individual citizens jumped in 2000, when *Concertación* candidate Lagos was elected in January and installed his government promoting political reform. The second-largest expansion occurred in 2006. That was the year Michelle Bachelet was elected, promising to create a "citizens' government," and by year's end faced surging protests. This suggests that it was officials' rhetoric and policy promises that prompted the press to include a few more citizen voices rather than either actions by civil society or a change in journalistic culture as democracy aged.

Looking at representations of individual citizens as actors who are mentioned but not quoted, their presence increased across the longer time span ($\chi^2 = 87{,}312$, $p \leq .001$), from 33 percent in 1990 to 41.5 percent in 2011, more than in the case of the source analysis. Data in the shorter protest time span tell a more nuanced story. In the first three years of protests, from 2006 to 2008, the presence of individual citizens vis-à-vis other actors in the news went down and then rose again during the election campaigns in 2009 when protesters took a break and the first conservative coalition president took office in 2010. (However, individual citizens' presence also grew in 2011, which was another protest year without major electoral activity.) These trends

Table 3. Individual Citizens as Sources and Actors Mentioned According to Media Type (Percentage of News Items and Adjusted Standardized Residuals; $N = 7{,}386$).

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
As sources										
Elite										
Percentage	2.5	1.7	6.5	4.4	4.3	3.5	3.7	4.7	5.5	3.6
Adjusted Standardized Residuals	−2.7	−2.9	3.7	0.5	0.3	−0.4	−0.4	0.8	1.9	−0.4
Popular										
Percentage	5.3	1.1	10.3	13.8	24.7	15.6	25.6	11.5	12.5	16.7
Adjusted Standardized Residuals	−3	−6.7	0.9	1.6	5.1	1.9	5.3	0.9	1.2	2.4
As actors										
Elite										
Percentage	29.2	27.2	32.6	31.6	25.7	25.5	22.4	36.1	34.4	41.8
Adjusted Standardized Residuals	−1	−1.8	1.2	0.5	−2	−2	−4.2	2.7	1.9	4.8
Popular										
Percentage	36	17.1	35.6	53.3	42.7	46.8	57.7	55.4	35.7	41.4
Adjusted Standardized Residuals	0.6	−8.9	0.4	3.5	1.5	2.1	4.2	4.1	0.2	1.2

make sense when we consider that journalists' professed role orientations suggest they are more comfortable informing voters than motivating participation in political discussions, civic organizations, or social change.

Statistically significant differences between coverage of individual citizens in the elite-oriented press ($\chi^2 = 8{,}015$, $p \leq .005$) and popular newspapers ($\chi^2 = 28{,}788$, $p \leq .001$) further clarify these patterns. Table 3 shows year-to-year percentages and adjusted standardized residuals for individual citizens as sources and actors in popular and elite newspapers. Data show that both types of newspapers increasingly included individual citizens as sources and actors in political coverage across the entire democratic period, but the popular newspapers were much more likely to do so and the increases occurred across the entire period. When we look at the changes from 2006 to 2011, the elite press reduced the presence of individual citizens in political news when protests surged from 2006 to 2008, increased their presence in the campaign year of 2009 and the first year in office of conservative President Sebastián Piñera in 2010, and then reduced individual citizens' presence again in the protest year of 2011. Meanwhile, the popular press increased individual citizens' presence as sources and actors across the entire six-year period including the years of major protests. These findings support claims that tabloidization individualizes experience more than elite approaches, but at the same time cannot support the idea that tabloidization is somehow more harmful to civil society's objectives because tabloids were more likely to give voice to individual citizens and present them in a wider variety of contexts including protest years.

Overwhelming Official Presence and Perspectives

Our third research question asked whether official presence and perspectives precluded civil society participation in the press arena. Looking again at Table 2, we see the presence of official actors and sources is overwhelming compared with civil society. Politicians and government officials were quoted in 70 to 77 percent of news items across the entire twenty-one years. Official sources increased slightly in 2006, 2007, and 2010, the highest years of protest, but these percentages were not significantly different from other years ($\chi^2 = 12.685$, $p = ns$). Officials and politicians were mentioned as actors in 93 percent of stories across time. Significant differences were registered due to a unique 4 percent decrease from the average during 1995, when an economic crisis was affecting business leaders ($\chi^2 = 39.989$, $p \leq .001$).

Official Control of the Agenda

Research Question 4 asked whether the Chilean press ceded control over the political news agenda to the official sphere. We examined control over the political news agenda by assessing whether politicians and government officials "triggered" news items. Our data show official control of the news agenda was as overwhelming as official presence. These actors triggered 93 percent of political news items across the entire democratic period, including the protest period (one-way $\chi^2 = 2{,}352.6$; $p \leq .001$). This decisive control of the news agenda did not show any significant change across the entire period ($\chi^2 = 9.435$, $p = ns$), so civil society protests did not disrupt official agenda-setting control.

Greater Contextualization and Issue Frames

Our last research question asked whether the press supported civil society by including background information about politics and policy, and framing political news as public issues rather than insider games. Data show newspapers did gradually increase the inclusion of background information. The presence of background information tended to increase until 2007, when it stabilized ($\chi^2 = 134.797$, $p \leq .001$). Overall, only 20 percent of the news stories included background information, however, so while the presence of context grew, this feature remained present in a minority of stories. Data also register significant differences between the popular press ($\chi^2 = 15{,}388$, $p \leq .001$) and the elite press ($\chi^2 = 70{,}369$, $p \leq .001$) at all points of the twenty-one years analyzed. The elite press included more contextualized information in political news, as international research on tabloid news styles suggests, but both types of newspapers increasingly added context.

Framing politics as a game was a dominant and significant characteristic over the entire democratic period, one-way $\chi^2(1) = 283.30$, $p \leq .001$.[3] On average, six of ten news stories framed politics as a game. Nevertheless, the data showed an overall decrease (from 67.5 to 57.8 percent) in the presence of game framing ($\chi^2 = 84{,}896$, $p \leq .001$) and an increase (from 32.5 to 44.2 percent) in issue framing ($\chi^2 = 91{,}791$, $p \leq .001$). Type of newspaper did not explain any differences in this respect; both elite and tabloid newspapers increased issue framing in similar amounts and rates of growth. The increase in issue framing occurred in the last three years of the study period, that is, three years into the era of popular mobilization. Thus, we find evidence that a new political scenario, in which civil society was mobilized to press for political and policy change in the streets, coincided with an opening to issue framing in the press.

Discussion

Data collected across twenty-one years of restored democracy in Chile, including a six-year period of renewed civic mobilization, reveal that political journalism gave few opportunities to civil society organizations to advocate for policy change or launch processes of social accountability in the press. Political journalism in both the elite press serving the political establishment and the tabloid press aimed at popular sector readers overwhelmingly represented citizens as atomized individuals who are spoken for rather than collective actors who have voice. Political journalists instead emphasized the actions and perspectives of government officials and at the same time ceded control over the political news agenda to government officials and politicians.

Until this point, data show the Chilean press behaving much as theory derived from western liberal contexts would expect. However, at the same time that they excluded collective actors and ceded agenda-setting control to political and policy elites, political journalists increased the presence of background information and shifted news frames away from political gamesmanship toward issues. While contextualization increased more in the elite press, in line with ideas about tabloid versus elite newspapers, political journalism in both types of newspapers added context and increased issue frames across the democratic period.

In addition to calling for caution in the generalization of theories across the wide variety of contemporary democratic press systems, the findings raise questions about the roles press coverage played in the accountability processes the protests unleashed as greater contextualization and issue framing have helped citizens reattribute responsibility for social problems to politicians and political structures in other contexts. Shortly after the study period, reformist Senators voted to replace the binomial districting structure with a proportional election system for the lower house. Passage in the Chamber of Deputies and the signature of an enthusiastic second-term Bachelet were expected soon thereafter. Beyond political reform, Bachelet announced and the parliament passed the first phase of the largest educational reform in Chile's democratic period, funded by a tax overhaul (*Reuters* 2015; Marty 2015). Legislation on labor rights was to follow. The demands of civil society, and the first loss of the Center-Left *Concertación* presidential candidate to the Right, in 2010, could have strengthened vertical accountability pressures by reminding *Concertación* politicians that their electoral base could stay at home on election day.

Conclusion

Although a unique country-specific study, this work contributes to research outside the United States and Europe, as well as to social accountability theories from Latin America, by providing a specific illustration of how a country's particular institutional, cultural, and historical context effects the generalizability of hypotheses about press interactions with the state and civil society. In summary, the findings from this study support indexing as a generalizable phenomenon although probably for reasons related to legacies from the authoritarian period (e.g., a political culture fearing popular mobilization, the concentration and conservatism of press ownership, and an electoral structure limiting the range of ideological representation by creating only two viable party coalitions). There is also evidence of a Chilean version of the protest paradigm in democratic journalism that ignores civil society while atomizing citizens as voiceless individuals, conditions that likely originate in the same mix of democratic liberalism and holdover authoritarianism.

However, the findings reveal a weakness in the civil society literature on press visibility by suggesting that civic mobilization can influence press frames in ways that enhance civil society objectives even when civil society itself is not visible in the press and official actors control the news agenda. The data suggest civil society influence on the press occurred because politicians felt enough pressure for accountability through elections to respond to civic mobilizations in public pronouncements even though the Chilean electoral structure was created to limit the ideological breadth of political representation and support policy stability. Given that politicians almost exclusively triggered political news and the voices of collective actors were largely absent, it makes most sense that politicians and government officials themselves prompted the increase in issue framing by raising the contested issues in official press conferences, releases, and other pronouncements. In other words, civic pressures for government accountability influenced politicians and then changes in politicians' rhetoric influenced the press in ways affirmative for civil society influence, rather than the other way around. If we posit an iterative process based on this evidence, it runs from civil society to political representatives, and then to the press, which is contrary to most empirical studies and to the normative assumptions of liberal press theories making the press an intermediary between civil society and the political system.

Our results suggest social movement theory and social accountability theory may thus exaggerate the need for the media to give direct publicity to movement members and demands, or even further to act as allies to social movements and NGOs demanding accountability in new democracies. The press was neither the motor of democratic reform nor the caboose, as some have framed the question of the media's role in democratization (Lawson 2002), but rather the press was a passenger of change. It publicized politicians' responses to social accountability pressures from civil society, which mobilized without the overt support of the press. As civil society surpassed authoritarian repression and overcame depoliticization under restored democracy, politicians responded and press frames changed in ways that could support further mobilization and ultimately political and social reform.

We believe these findings reflect larger historical–institutional processes in Chile that diverge from patterns in countries where much of the research on civil society and the press, or even social accountability in new democracies, has been conducted. The patterns of press coverage we document suggest that "traces" of the country's past institutional structure and political culture continue to influence how the press is articulated with the political system and civil society, a phenomenon Milton (2000: 23) has noted in other new democracies. The previous authoritarian regime's realignment of press property ownership, the durability of political culture fearing mobilization across the authoritarian and democratic periods, and the pacted mode of transition back to democracy continue to shape the arena the press provides for political contestation.

We reiterate that there are two limitations to our study. One is its second-order linkage of content to social protests. Content analysis even with the unique nested design of our longitudinal study cannot alone do more than suggest the change in press frames responded to the resurgence of collective action in the manner we have laid out here. Our hypotheses about why frames changed without civil society visibility in the press should be tested in future case studies making a direct linkage between specific social protests and possible political responses. A second limitation is that we had to rely on other research to argue that the shift from game framing to issue frames could have influenced citizen appraisals and participation. We similarly are limited to studying the arena of elite contestation in the press rather than social media or television. Testing the effects of the press, television, and social media coverage on civil society in the Chilean context, and new or restored democracies generally, should be on the agenda of study.

However, the timing of the protests, the loss of the 2010 election, and the subsequent reelection of Bachelet and a roster of reformist parliamentarians in 2014 are suggestive that *Concertación* politicians perceived shifts in patterns of political appraisal and participation in the direction implied by increases in issue frames and contextualization. The pattern of coverage across twenty-one years then suggest a change in the environment pressured politicians to respond in the press in an attempt to preserve their electoral base. At the very least, these results call for reevaluation of common assumptions, and some research claims about the press, politicians, and civil society based upon empirical study in a wider range of democratic contexts. The Chilean case suggests that when other mechanisms of accountability work, even weakly, an indexing press that eschews civil society may support social movements, social accountability, and eventually democratizing reforms simply by going along for the ride.

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Notes

1. Intercoder reliability per individual measure was as follows: Individual citizens as sources (Ka: .72), mentioned as actors (Ka: .71); Civil society as sources (Ka: .75), mentioned as actors (Ka: .72); News triggers (Ka: .81); News frames (Ka: .84); and Background information (Ka: .72).

2. Residuals are deviations of the annual number of stories from the predicted annual number of stories under the chi-square model. Standardized residuals are divided by their standard errors to be comparable year-to-year.
3. Data on framing between 2006 and 2011 were previously reported in Mellado and Rafter (2014).

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"We Are Not Fools": Online News Commentators' Perceptions of Real and Ideal Journalism

Vera Slavtcheva-Petkova[1]

Abstract

Twenty-five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Eastern European countries face an increasing threat to their media pluralism and democracies after a lot of media corporations fell in the hands of local owners. The region is plagued by "mini-Murdochs," and Bulgaria is a case in point. This study investigates a subset of Bulgarian online newspaper readers' perceptions of the state of journalism. The article presents the results from a qualitative analysis of 1,583 comments about the media war between the country's biggest press groups. It focuses on 178 comments that discuss the role of journalists. Readers differentiate between "ideal journalism" and "real journalism." The former is based on an idealized view of journalists as detached watchdogs, whereas the latter depicts a dire picture of journalists as manipulative servants of their owners. The virtual space is a vibrant arena for democratic discussions and can also potentially serve as an accountability tool for journalists. A reconceptualization of Habermas's public sphere is needed if we are to more clearly understand how vibrant online spaces contribute to democracy even if they fall short of his normative ideal.

Keywords

Eastern Europe, journalism, media ownership, "mini-Murdochs," reader opinion, online comments

On July 11, 2014, Bulgarians woke up to the news that $136 million have disappeared from the fourth biggest lender—Corporate Commercial Bank. The news spread

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quickly around the world and the *New York Times*[1] reported that the Bulgarian Central Bank had accused the biggest shareholder Tsvetan Vasilev of taking the money from the bank's vaults in sacks. From one of the country's most respected and affluent businessmen, Vasilev turned overnight into an alleged criminal wanted by Interpol. The bank was shut down and lenders were denied access to their deposits. The international press[1] also picked up on the fact that the bank's surprising ordeal started after the local news outlets reported on a feud between Vasilev and Delyan Peevski, a media mogul and member of parliament (MP). "Mr. Peevski accused Mr. Vasilev of hiring people to kill him, and Mr. Vasilev has made similar accusations."[1] Prior to this, they were close allies. The "Murdoch of the East,"[2] Peevski was the behind-the-scenes owner of the biggest press group (officially headed by his mother). His company was allegedly financed by Vasilev and his bank, and PM Boyko Borisov's first government was accused of "indirectly subsidising" it by depositing public funds in the bank.[3]

What sounds like a film scenario is a logical development in a country where politicians, media owners, and businessmen have increasingly become interlocked in "an informal power alliance."[2] The demise of communism in Central and Eastern Europe brought about an influx of foreign investment and liberalization, but the global financial crisis in 2007–2008 led to a worrying development—investors started withdrawing and a lot of big media fell in the hands of politicians or businessmen with strong political agendas (Hume 2011; Štětka 2012). As Štětka[2] points out, Central and Eastern European countries are now "plagued by their own mini-Murdochs—and in these more fragile democracies, they represent an even bigger threat." Bulgaria is one of the most extreme examples because the feud between Vasilev and Peevski was only the tip of the iceberg in a long-running war for political and economic power between the two biggest press corporations—Peevski's New Bulgarian Media Group (NBMG) and his rivals' (also well-known local businessmen) Media Group Bulgaria (MGB). The war was led on the pages of their newspapers and on TV, and politicians and the judicial system were implicated in it via corruption allegations and lawsuits.

These regional processes of "Berlusconization" (Coman 2010: 58) went hand-in-hand with an important global trend—the advent of the Internet and social media, which brought about "unprecedented structural changes" in journalism as a profession (Weaver and Wilnat 2012: 1). The implications are multifold—from a blurring of the line between media "professionals" and their audiences to a rethinking of journalistic professionalism and speculations about the future/end of journalism. In the Bulgarian context, these interlinked developments present us with a unique opportunity to investigate audiences' views of the state of journalism as well as the "ideals" they believe in. This is precisely what this study will do by qualitatively analyzing the unsolicited views of a subset of online readers about the media war as posted in 1,583 comments on newspapers' websites. It will give us an insight into an underresearched context (a new Eastern European democracy) where online readers appear to be much more active than readers in established democracies (Richardson and Stanyer 2011) or non-democratic countries. Moreover, while on one hand, "scholars have been extensively and continuously tracking what journalists themselves think about their role in society" (van der Wurff and Schoenbach 2014: 434), and on the other hand, online comments have been studied from different angles (e.g., McCluskey and Hmielowski 2011; Nielsen 2014; Papacharissi 2004), the public's views on journalism have rarely been researched. When they have, they were usually solicited by surveys and questionnaires with predetermined notions/concepts (e.g., Chung 2009; Lowrey and Anderson 2005). Yet, as van der Wurff and Schoenbach (2014: 447) argue, it is important to research audiences' perceptions now more than ever because of "the shifting power relations between (what used to be) senders and receivers in the current media environment." Moreover, readers are important stakeholders in the debate about what journalistic professionalism entails if journalism's main function is to serve the public interest. The project also allows us to revisit Habermas's notion of the public sphere—while online boards have a deliberative democratic potential, most studies demonstrate that this potential is not realized (Dahlberg 2001; Papacharissi 2002; Richardson and Stanyer 2011). This study adds further weight to a growing body of research that calls for a reconceptualization of Habermas's normative ideal.

What Is Journalism? Audiences' Views

The conceptualization of journalism as a profession recently regained momentum due to the challenges posed by the "digital revolution" and the rapid advent of "citizen" journalists. Most of our knowledge of journalistic professionalism is based on studies with journalists—predominantly surveys (albeit with categories predetermined by academics) indicating what their role perceptions are. Thus, *The Worlds of Journalism* (2014) study, aimed at mapping "journalism's cultures" in twenty-one countries, shows that journalists play four roles: (1) detached watchdogs, (2) populist disseminators, (3) opportunist facilitators, and (4) critical change agents. It argues that there is a "global primacy of role perceptions" of "detachment and non-involvement," being a watchdog of government and providing political information (Hanitzsch et al. 2011: 286). This grand claim can hardly be made about Bulgaria, however, because only 14 percent of Bulgarian journalists fall into the "detached watchdog" category; 35 percent see themselves as populist disseminators, 32 percent as critical change agents, and 19 percent as opportunist facilitators (Worlds of Journalism 2014). Moreover, Curry (1990 as quoted in Örnebring 2009) and Wolfe (2005 as quoted in Örnebring 2009) claim that although there is a clear sense of professionalism among Eastern European journalists, it is based on very different values from the ones their Western colleagues cherish. Lauk (2009: 71) explains that despite efforts to export the Anglo-American model in Central and Eastern Europe, "there are no successful cases of replacing the Communist model with a 'western' one." Similarly, Weaver and Wilnat's (2012: 545) edited volume, which presents the results of surveys with twenty-nine thousand journalists from thirty-one countries, shows that there is "little evidence of a trend toward a global journalism culture," because "journalistic values and norms depend heavily on social, political, and cultural contexts." The reports produced as part of the "Media and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe" project (2009–2013) and Coman's (2004, 2010) studies in neighboring Romania give further weight to these claims.

While “scholars have been extensively and continuously tracking what journalists themselves think about their role in society” (van der Wurff and Schoenbach 2014: 434), “research on audience perceptions and demands of news journalism is scarce and fragmented.” This is surprising, given that the normative justification of journalistic professionalism is often based on the public interest notion. In their representative survey in the Netherlands, van der Wurff and Schoenbach (2014) demonstrate that audiences’ perceptions of journalism are not fundamentally different from the ones shared by journalists. Similarly, Lowrey and Anderson’s (2005) U.S. respondents “have a high opinion of journalism as an occupation.” Chung (2009) reveals a mismatch between online community newspaper readers’ views on perceived roles and journalists’ perceptions in representative surveys. The findings are really interesting indeed because they run counter to popular claims that the audience is “uninterested and hedonistic” (van der Wurff and Schoenbach 2014: 447). Nonetheless, all these studies are based on quantitative surveys with predetermined questions. They offer audiences’ views of existing and predefined (by journalists and academics) roles and values. However, the online space presents a unique opportunity for us—the ability to “observe” and analyze naturally occurring public conversations between a subset of audience members and to explore their unsolicited views. This is exactly what this article aims to do.

Why Online Comments?

Lots of recent studies (see below) use online comments as the object of their analysis. Key topics explored are the potential for democratic deliberation, interactivity, participatory journalism, and audience empowerment as well as ethical issues—anonymity, (in)civility, bigotry, and so forth. Why is it important to study online comments? First, they are a key interactive feature that illustrates the changing relationship between news producers and audiences—the potential for participatory journalism and audience empowerment. They also offer journalists “new ways of knowing about their audiences” (MacGregor 2007: 280). Second, at least in theory, like the letters-to-the-editor sections, online boards provide arenas for “public discussion by regular citizens” (Wahl-Jorgensen 2002: 69), and as such have a deliberative democratic potential (Dahlberg 2001; Papacharissi 2002; Richardson and Stanyer 2011). As Eveland et al. (2011: 1089) explain, “deliberative theory suggests that individuals should come together to share information and consider one another’s opinions on the important political issues of the day—and that this will improve the practice of democracy.” The quality of argumentation is of paramount importance—“a process whereby claims are attacked and defended and differences of opinion resolved” (Richardson and Stanyer 2011: 986). Most empirical investigations (e.g., Bergström 2008; Richardson and Stanyer 2011) suggest that this potential is not realized precisely because of the low quality of argumentation. Instead of extending the public sphere or leading to the development of a virtual one (Dahlberg 2001), online boards often turn into “a place where unashamed bigotry is all too easy to find” (Washington as quoted in Santana 2014: 20). Studies (Hlavach and Freivogel 2011; McCluskey and Hmielowski 2011;

Reader 2012; Santana 2014) explore the role anonymity plays. Santana (2014: 28) claims that "there is a dramatic improvement in the level of civility in online conversations when anonymity is removed," but he also warns that banning anonymous comments may have adverse implications such as a reduction in the number of participants and the range of views. Although incivility is clearly a hindrance (Papacharissi 2004), McCluskey and Hmielowski's (2011) study shows that anonymity encourages wider participation. Proponents of anonymity argue that it "allows people to speak truth to powerful institutions" and banning it will not curb the underlying attitudes that lead to incivility, racism, or bigotry (Reader 2012).

Overall, most investigations based closely on Habermas's normative ideal reach pessimistic conclusions. This has led some scholars to argue for a move away from deliberation, because "the deliberative framing of political conversation research can lead to unrealistic expectations about the function of political conversation" (Eveland et al. 2011: 1086). Papacharissi (2002) and Loke (2013) offer a more nuanced approach. They differentiate between the public sphere and the public space. Loke (2013: 184) argues that comment sections should be seen as "a new public space and should not be confused as the new public sphere." A public sphere can consist of different public spaces. The difference is that while "a virtual space enhances discussion; a virtual sphere enhances democracy" (Papacharissi 2002: 11).

This is the main theoretical premise this article is built on—though not a fully fledged investigation of the deliberative democratic potential of online comments (conducted as part of the wider study—see Slavtcheva-Petkova 2015), it will offer a useful account of virtual discussions about journalism. As Dahlgren (2005: 160) puts it,

> while it is important to keep a clear perspective and not exaggerate the extent of the activities or their impact, it would also be foolish to underestimate what seems to be a major development in the contemporary history of Western democracy.

This article will contribute to this body of literature in four ways. First, it is narrowly focused on readers' views of journalism. Second, unlike most studies that utilize predominantly quantitative research frameworks and rely on academics'/journalists' preconceived views and ideals, comments are analyzed in an open-ended qualitative way by adopting a grounded theory approach. Third, the project also shows some scope for optimism. Online readers in our sample seem much more active than readers in established democracies. Richardson and Stanyer (2011) found on average nineteen comments per article in a study of U.K. newspapers, versus thirty per article in my Bulgarian sample. The views they express about journalism show that these discussion spaces can be vibrant arenas for democratic debate. Finally, it will focus on a slightly different context from the ones frequently explored—an Eastern European new democracy.

As Ruiz et al. (2011: 482) point out, "the cultural context is relevant to the democratic qualities of the debates." While sharing the fundamental values of democracy, democracies in transition experience teething problems. The transition from communism to democracy “has been far from smooth” (Örnebring 2009: 7). As already indicated, there is not much evidence of the “global primacy of role perceptions that are characterised by detachment and non-involvement” in the Bulgarian case (Hanitzsch et al. 2011: 286). Moreover, even in the early years after the fall of the Berlin wall, Jakubowicz (1998/1999: 27) reported a high level of distrust in journalists in Central and Eastern Europe due to the fact that “lip service is paid to one set of concepts as regards the media and journalism, while quite different ones are applied in practice.” Coman’s (2004, 2010) more recent studies in Romania show similar trends. Increasingly academics started using the terms *Italianization* or *Mediterraneanization* to describe the situation in post-communist countries (Dobek-Ostrowska 2012; Jakubowicz & Sükösd 2008).

“Plagued by Mini-Murdochs”—Journalism in Eastern and Central Europe in the Context of the Bulgarian Media Wars

Eastern and Central European countries have gone through a rapid period of political and economic transformation in the last twenty years. Communist regimes were replaced by democracies and most countries “swapped” the Soviet sphere of influence and the Warsaw Pact with membership in the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization. As Metyková and Císarová (2009: 721) point out, “within a relatively short period of time privately owned media and public service broadcasting were established in these countries.” Foreign investors bought media companies or established new ones. However, the global financial crisis brought about a worrying regional trend—the withdrawal of foreign owners and appropriation of companies by “local entrepreneurs who are interested in harvesting the political potential of these now-established media venues” (Hume 2011: 6). Štětka (2012: 441) argues that the recession was not the only reason why foreign investors withdrew. Another key factor is “the increasing inability to compete in an environment ruled by other-than-market rules” due to “the widespread abuse of power” and “the close intertwining of oligarchs and political power”(as pointed out by the CEO of WAZ Bodo Hombach). As a result, the region is now “plagued by their own mini-Murdochs—and in these more fragile democracies, they represent an even bigger threat.”[2] According to Hombach, oligarchs are buying local media “not in order to win money” but “in order to exert political influence” to “promote business or political interests” (Štětka 2012: 441).[4]

Bulgaria is a typical example of these worrying developments. The country’s free press rankings considerably dropped and it is now classified as “partly free.”[3] Most newspapers are owned by two media groups—MGB, which was part of the German newspaper group WAZ till 2010 but then fell in the hands of local owners, and NBMG.[2] Thirty-five-year-old MP Delyan Peevski was the “de facto owner” of the latter until a few months ago. The corporation is allegedly related to the Movement for Rights and Freedoms—established as “a party of the Turkish ethic minority” (Tabakova 2014). It has “a history of strongly supporting whichever party was in power” and its owner is one of the most controversial figures—“practically running” his mother’s newspapers “by deciding on front page articles and editorial policy” (Štětka 2012: 448). Although similar intertwining of oligarchs and political power is evident in other countries in the region, Bulgaria and Romania exemplify "the crudest cases of political instrumentalization" (Štětka 2012: 448).

Peevski's political career has not gone unnoticed even in Western media. Although still a twenty-one-year-old student, he was appointed parliamentary secretary to the minister of transport as well as chair of the Board of Directors of the biggest port in Bulgaria. Then at 25, he became a deputy minister.[5] Peevski has been an elected MP from the Movement for Rights and Freedom since 2009. Euractiv[6] describes him "as a symbol of the shady power brokerage that has impoverished Bulgarians and ruined the country's reputation." Freedom House (2014) notes that "opaque collusion between media owners and political leaders came to the fore in June 2013 when the Socialist-led ruling coalition" appointed Peevski as head of the State Agency for National Security. His appointment was reversed because it led to a mass wave of street protests, which went on for months "amid deep public frustration with corruption in business, the media, and politics."[2] One of Peevski's closest allies and the person who allegedly financed his media group was banker Tsvetan Vasilev. A former right-wing government was accused of "indirectly subsidising" Peevski's media group through deposits by state entities in Vasilev's bank in exchange for political support by Peevski's newspapers. The former allies recently became public enemies. News reports implicated the banker's name in an alleged murder plot against the MP and soon after that his bank was closed down and fraud proceedings against him were initiated. Although it is not clear how and why Peevski and Vasilev became enemies, Peevski himself explained that the rift erupted when he refused to support Vasilev's political ambitions to become Prime Minister, while sources close to the banker claim that it all started when companies associated with Peevski defaulted on their loan payments.[5]

This saga was preceded by another long-running feud between Peevski's media holding and the other major player on the market—MGB. In WAZ's hands, the corporation owned the major newspapers—close to the legally allowed maximum market share with speculations about media monopoly (von Dohnanyi 2003). However, as soon as the new owners took over, an open feud between the press groups ensued. MGB's owners were very high-profile figures—Ognian Donev, CEO of Bulgaria's biggest pharmaceutical company, and Lyubomir Pavlov, a former banker and politician (Langley 2013). The dominating speculation was that the war started because Peevski wanted to buy MGB but was turned down by WAZ. Almost as soon as Pavlov and Donev took over, they were charged with fraud and money laundering. The war was openly led on the pages of their newspapers and on TV. Numerous articles were published about corruption practices and undue political influence. One of the culminating events was when TV presenter Nikolay Barekov tore to pieces an issue of *Trud* live on air in 2012. His show was aired by TV7—a company owned by NBMG. Barekov called the newspaper a rug and said that it would soon cease to exist.[6] Barekov is a very controversial journalist who subsequently formed a political party in 2013, allegedly financed by Vasilev. These negative developments prompted commentators to argue that "media freedom and pluralism' are in 'jeopardy.'"[2] Readers were constantly exposed to stories about the rival company/owners as well as articles vindicating their own proprietors. Although a few recent cross-national studies (Hanitzsch et al. 2011; Štětka 2012) have included interviews with Bulgarian journalists on different issues, readers' views have not really been researched. It will be interesting, however, to find out how those readers who take part as online commentators in active, digitally enabled public discussions around journalism interpret these largely negative developments and what role they think journalists (should) play in their societies:

> **Research Question 1:** What are Bulgarian online commentators' views on the current state of journalism and how do they define "ideal" journalism?
> **Research Question 2:** To what extent do these online conversations function as an arena for democratic deliberation?

Method

This is a mixed-methods study but the results presented come mainly from the qualitative analysis. The study combines quantitative content analysis with qualitative thematic analysis. The initial sample consisted of the four biggest-selling national dailies owned by NBMG and MGB—*Telegraph, Monitor, Trud*, and *24 chasa. Telegraph* is a very cheap tabloid currently with the highest circulation in the country. *Trud* and *24 Chasa* are second and third in circulation. They are classified as "hybrid tabloids"—"they combine and integrate elements of both tabloids and quality press, of serious and popular, even scandalous reporting" but they identify themselves as serious, quality newspapers (Tabakova 2014). *Monitor* is the quality version of *Telegraph* but again defined as a hybrid tabloid. Our original intention was to download and analyze all articles and the comments underneath containing the names of the (alleged) owners (and associates) of the two groups—banker Vasilev, MP Peevski and his mother Irena Krasteva who officially heads NBMG as well as MGB's owners Pavlov and Donev. However, only MGB's newspapers allow readers to post comments. *Telegraph* has a Web site but it contains only a screenshot of the print edition, while *Monitor* posts stories online but no comments are allowed. To post comments in *24 Chasa* and *Trud*, users have to either register (only email addresses are required) or log in via Facebook. Verification emails are not sent out and there is no reference to editorial policies. All user names were recorded in our database but they are not used in the article to prevent identification. Therefore, the final sample consists only of comments published in *24 chasa* and *Trud*. This is a limitation of the study that could not be avoided because it is a reflection of the actual situation. It also gives us an indication about the level of media freedom and potential audience empowerment. Although the wider issue the article address is how the audience perceive the real and ideal role of journalism, it is important to underline that the empirical evidence analyzed here is not representative of the Bulgarian population as a whole. The material analyzed expresses the views of a particular audience—those online readers of a few critically important Bulgarian national newspapers who have shown an interest in that topic and publicly expressed their views. While not necessarily indicative of the wider population's views, this active and engaged minority takes part in a public and in principle open and participatory debate around the real and ideal role of journalism in Bulgaria.

Because of the central role of ownership in connecting media and politics in Bulgaria, the data collection focused on discussions around 387 articles published with owners' names (keywords) mentioned in them. The articles cover the period between December 2010 and May 2013—when Pavlov and Donev owned MGB. The comments were retrieved from the Web sites between October 2013 and May 2014. The list of hyperlinks with all articles was downloaded in October 2013 and the comments were subsequently analyzed directly from the websites. Each comment was coded in Bulgarian and then translated into English and included into an SPSS/NVivo database. That left us with 5,305 comments. All articles were coded in SPSS and after the identification of main themes, the sample was further reduced to those comments explicitly discussing the media war—1583. They were subsequently coded quantitatively and then analyzed thematically in nVIVO. The coding frames for the quantitative analysis and all nodes/categories used as part of the qualitative analysis are available on request.

Given the focus of this article, comments that contained the words "journalism," "journalist(s)," or "journalistic" were then analyzed qualitatively in a third stage with the aim of identifying common themes and descriptions of audiences' perceptions of journalism and the role journalists (should) play in society. This project is of a qualitative nature and it adopts a grounded theory approach. Comments were analyzed in an open-ended way: Rather than starting with preconceived ideas of what readers' definition(s) of journalism might be, emerging themes were identified via the constant comparison method and then subsequently refined (initial and focused coding) before reaching conclusions on what readers' definitions actually are (Fielding 2001; Glaser and Strauss 1967). The main analytical themes in relation to the research questions are presented in the next section. Nodes were created in NVivo and every new comment was either coded under an existing node (emerging from the analysis of previous comments) or a new node was added. There were overlaps between the nodes/categories and some were later grouped into broader categories. For example, there were considerable overlaps between readers discussing "real" and "ideal" journalism in their online comments.

This three-stage process allowed for an initial screening and quantification based on a coding schedule adapted from previous research (Richardson 2008; Richardson and Stanyer 2011), followed by an in-depth qualitative thematic analysis based on a grounded theory approach. Nine percent of the quantitative sample was re-coded by a second researcher.[7] The qualitative categories were refined after presenting the data at academic conferences and consulting researchers working on similar projects. Negative case analysis was used where relevant. This is a standard procedure in qualitative analysis—it "involves searching for and discussing elements of the data that do not support or appear to contradict patterns or explanations that are emerging from data analysis."[8]

"Real Journalism" versus "Ideal Journalism": Online Commentators' Verdicts

The words "journalism," "journalist(s)," and/or "journalistic" were used in 178 comments—about 11 percent of the sample. The analysis of these comments will be presented in this section. Four main topics in the articles attracted the majority of comments. First, more than a third (35.4 percent) were discussing the scandal triggered by TV presenter Nikolay Barekov who tore to pieces an issue of *Trud* live on air. Second, a quarter (26.4 percent) were about events initiated by MGB's owner Pavlov (nickname "Papkata") in an attempt to clear his reputation after money laundering and fraud charges were pressed against him and his partner as well as a series of reports about his property portfolio abroad were published. The third topic (14 percent) was about the distribution war between the press groups. A company affiliated to NBMG owned the distribution chain and a scandal erupted with allegations about missed payments and disruptions in the distribution of rival titles. Finally, 6.2 percent of comments were about an article in the German newspaper *Die Welt* about the state of the Bulgarian media market.

What are online commentators' definitions of journalism? Three broad categories were identified with considerable overlaps between them. Two-thirds describe "real journalism" or the reality of journalism; 25 percent depict "ideal journalism," what journalism should be, and 8.6 percent explicitly talk about freedom of expression.

Real Journalism

A few sub-themes prevail in the "real journalism" category—again with considerable overlaps between them. Nearly half of all commentators (43.4 percent) who describe the current state of journalism in Bulgaria claim the newspaper articles are "pre-ordered" or "pre-paid" by somebody and/or that journalists themselves pose as "pretend readers" and publish comments. A similar phenomenon has been observed in other contexts—Chinese commentators refer to the "fifty cent party,"[9] posters who allegedly receive 50 cents per positive comment they write about government policies. It is beyond the scope of this study to investigate whether there is evidence to support these allegations but it is an interesting issue worth exploring in future research. A significant number of online commentators engage in discussions that promote conspiracy theories—often linked with allegations about corruption practices such as claims that the comments are preordered by a specific individual or people (most commonly a media owner) or that other online commentators are on payroll in a rival group[10]:

> Reader 1: There can hardly be a bigger humiliation for a journalist than to be forced to pretend he is a reader, write comments under his own article and then publish them by hiding the negative ones. This is what you call freedom of expression?

> Reader 2: If somebody shows me even a single journalist who cannot be bribed and even one independent medium, this person will get a Nobel prize from me for invention. Journalists have been and will always be dependent on someone or something.

> Reader 3: Bulgarian journalists will sell their mother’s milk for money and power!!! What a shame!!!
>
> Reader 4: Sue each other, why don’t you? Everyone has this right, but in the meantime nothing is getting better. Our medicines are still expensive so that Diliana Grozdanova (Pavlov’s wife) can sunbathe on the Riviera and some here are on payroll defending oligarchs for a few silver coins. Or copper coins?
>
> Reader 5: When Peevski’s writers on payroll have difficulty digesting the facts and have nothing to say in response, they try to divert attention. The truth is there is media monopoly and its inspirers and organizers are Peevski and his mother with the financial support of Corporate Commercial Bank (until recently a partner in their firm).

Online commentators often mention specific people they feel are behind the conspiracy plots and/or corruption practices—from media moguls to high-profile politicians. The level of argumentation is not particularly high. Commentators often engage with each other but though there are instances in which they tackle ideas and views previously expressed, very often these dialogues include accusations of dependency as well as occasional insults. Any burgeoning discussion is almost immediately stifled by corruption allegations.

Similarly damning are 39 percent of the comments in which readers argue that Bulgarian journalism is manipulative with examples of stories in which the “truth”/“reality” is distorted:

> Reader 6: Mr journalists, don’t mislead people through interviews with your colleagues. It’s clear that they will reprimand Barekov’s deed in front of the mass reader but they all say privately that he was right to expose the lies. Have you never thought of tearing a paper up when you come across blatant lies?
>
> Reader 7: Until the media are in the hands of oligarchs who use them for personal gain, journalism will be yellow press, flash drives (a common practice is for journalists to receive flash drives with information from anonymous sources) and articles unsupported by evidence with lots of assumptions and libellous statements.
>
> Reader 8: The two papers fill their pages with foreign words, write God with a small g, publish photos of nuns dressed as prostitutes. They write against doctors, lawyers, etc. but wouldn’t allow you to criticise their own mediocrity. I’m glad that journalists showed their real face—mediocre, malicious, petty and illiterate.
>
> Reader 9: Misunderstood journalism! When did objectivity and the search for impartiality disappear? I am tired of reading manipulative articles, twisting the truth to serve the respective editorial office. This is not journalism. This is an attack over freedom of expression forced to trade with its own body to please the sick ambitions of those who have enough money to buy it.

Again similar issues are discussed—many online commentators think that articles are manipulative and they identify specific practices as well as a potential cause: media ownership. This reality is seen as disappointing because they compare current practices with idealized views of what journalism should be about—objectivity and the search for impartiality. The last comment discusses the state of current/"real" journalism and contains a definition of "ideal" journalism. A small minority goes even further—they compare the quality of journalism with the quality of democracy. Most claim that the state of journalism is a direct reflection of the poor quality of democracy and the fact that oligarchs are allowed to be as powerful:

> Reader 10: Russians call their democracy демократия. Our journalism is the same as our political life. Radical right-wing and left-wing politics, radical right-wing and left-wing journalism. Such is Bulgaria's демократия.

> Reader 11: I've had enough of oligarchs such as Papkata and Donev. I will personally stop reading *24 Chasa* and *Trud* because true journalism in Bulgaria passed away.

> Reader 12: Let us not forget that the so-called fourth estate with its readiness to sell itself, its fruitlessness, greed, etc. (whatever negative I say, I won't be mistaken) is to blame for the swamp our society has delved deep into with the total exchange of values.

Most online commentators' verdict on the quality of democracy and journalism in Bulgaria is damning. The media war has led to an intended consequence—"oligarchs" have come more prominently into the limelight. The comparison between Bulgaria and other "civilised" countries (as opposed to Russia) is often present—Bulgaria is always described as inferior and many online commentators make references to countries in Europe and/or the European Union as being "superior"/"civilised." Moreover, Reader 12 claims that journalists are to be blame for the dire state of society. Yet again the reality of journalism is often depicted in contrast to what "ideal" journalism should be. In most online commentators' eyes, journalists are not holding the powerful into account and they are therefore (partially) to blame for the dire state of democracy. Clearly, Bulgarian journalists do not live up to the idealized perceptions this subset of readers has of journalists in "civilised" countries.

"Ideal Journalism"

A quarter of comments can be classified as discussing "ideal" journalism. Different issues are mentioned—from professional standards, values, and norms such as objectivity and ethical standards to serving the public interest and more generic references to "normal," "true," or western journalism:

> Reader 13: The publication is rubbish—couldn't you just both sides like they do in normal journalism—it's a pity!

> Reader 14: Journalists are to blame. When I say journalists are mean the real ones who do not toady to the powerful. Good luck to the brave ones!

> Reader 15: A real journalist is always led by the PUBLIC INTEREST! Whatever s/he does, no matter what preferences s/he has, the PUBLIC INTEREST has to be defended in the end.

> Reader 16: It's not the journalists' job to be watchdogs of society at any cost! This can be a main task for a rascal who keeps waving a journalism flag and critiques those in power only to come into it (when the criticised fall down). The task of REAL JOURNALISM, you bedpan, IS TO SERVE THE PUBLIC AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST!

> Reader 17: It's really unbelievable that *24 Chasa* thinks its readers are so silly that they believe the above opinion is some sort of journalism. And none of us cares about the intrigues in your media groups. Your job is to cover the news and not to create them through your internal intrigues.

As evident, definitions of "ideal" journalism revolve around what is sometimes seen as "western" principles—balance and objective coverage, journalism as the "fourth estate" and journalists as watchdogs of society as well as the public interest. This is an interesting finding because while Hanitzsch et al. (2011: 286) argue that there is a "global primacy of role perceptions that are characterized by detachment and non-involvement," being a watchdog of government and providing political information, only 14 percent of Bulgarian journalists share these values. Therefore, it appears as if Bulgarian readers in this sample have different expectations about the role journalists should play in their society than the ones journalists themselves share. This gap explains to an extent commentators' negativity toward Bulgarian journalism and journalists. However, Reader 16 elaborates by arguing that serving the public interest is different from being a watchdog. Unfortunately, none of the subsequent comments engage with this view so the potential for fruitful discussion is not realized.

Freedom of expression

Most of the comments in this category are very pessimistic. Online commentators discuss what they perceive as journalists' and owners' hypocrisy—the fact that although they make big claims about freedom of expression, there does not seem to be real freedom of expression in their own editions due to the controversial role oligarchs play. Some go as far as to say that because of that, there is no real freedom of expression in Bulgaria:

> Reader 18: The article is a good example of how journalists can twist the facts by modelling public opinion. The report is about ALL media and the omnipresent chairman of the Union of Publishers in Bulgaria (Lyubomir Pavlov) is the one who uses the media to behead as it became clear from a recent recording. There is no such thing as infringing freedom of expression, it is much more likely that the reader will get into a schizophrenic bewilderment when faced with the multi-faceted media truth that everyone is molesting.

> Reader 19: While there are paid journalists who serve Bulgarian oligarchs, there will be no freedom of expression.

Journalists are frequently accused of not practicing what they preach and one reader even argues that freedom in Bulgaria is equally as bad as freedom of expression:

> Reader 20: My message is to everyone: change the channel, we have discovered a long time ago that there are no professionals in all TV stations. I don't know the journalist (Barekov) personally, but what he did gives a bad name to journalists in Bulgaria where freedom is wrongly interpreted. We are all for freedom but look what freedom did in schools, in families, for the press. If he was working abroad, he would have been fired.

This reader actually echoes an argument shared by many Bulgarians "born 1970 and before" who use the terms *democracy* and *freedom of expression* "with open contempt," because what democracy has brought about in their eyes is "networks of oligarchies and clientilism" and "an ever-expanding economic gap" (Political Affairs 2013). The ongoing media war between the two press groups further exacerbates posters' negative views of the quality of freedom of expression in the country.

Engagement with Other Users and Quality of Argumentation

Online commentators express negative views on the state of journalism in Bulgaria, but there are nonetheless some valid points, perceptions, and expectations they share with one another. However, an interesting question yet unanswered is whether the online commentators actually listen to each other and engage in democratic discussions. Slightly more than half get involved in conversations (54.5 percent). Sixty-eight percent of them genuinely engage with issues put forward by other readers either by providing their opinion on topics previously mentioned or by asking questions. This is a positive finding because it shows the potential for these online spaces to turn into arenas for democratic conversations. The level of argumentation in the comments about journalism is much higher than in all other posts discussing the media war where mutual accusations of dependency and/or claims that journalists write under own comment are common. In these cases, online commentators genuinely discuss each other's ideas, reply, challenge, or agree with each other. Below is just one example:

> Reader 21: Unfortunately, Bulgarian media fell into the hands of fraudulent oligarchs and other artificial heroes of our transition. The journalists are to blame too. They kneeled down to defend their salaries instead of standing up as their colleagues in any civilised country would do when they see that their owners are trying to impose a dictatorship on them.
>
> Reader 22: This is an objectively substantiated opinion—I agree that journalists are to blame.
>
> Reader 23: I don't think that journalists are to take the whole blame. People like Peevski are making them like that. It's quite another matter that they have to come out of their handle with honour.

Nonetheless, due to the nature of online discussion and the focus of the study on comments using the word "journalism" and its derivatives, it is hard to fully evaluate the quality of argumentation. It is difficult to judge the extent to which participants "open themselves up to the possibility of having their opinion changed by the standpoint and reasoning of other participants" (Richardson & Stanyer 2011: 1000). Furthermore, while this potential for democratic discussion is utilized by some, a key feature of the majority of comments (89.3 percent) is their negativity. Overall, online commentators pass a very negative verdict on the state of journalism and the role journalists play. Very few side with their newspaper (namely, the newspaper they publish their comments in) and its owners. The majority are disappointed by the negative articles about the media war that constantly appear. The following post best summarizes the prevailing sentiment:

> Reader 24: That's enough! Barekov tore Trud up to pieces and the guild started shouting "fascism"! What is left for Barekov and his people but to start shouting "communism" and the show will be complete. The fight for viewers and readers reached its culmination—that's why they decided to drive the whole society crazy. I don't want to hear about your problems every minute and hour of the day, you pseudo journalists, who have distanced yourselves from real problems and have focused so much on your owners' issues! How much circulation goes down the toilets of millions of Bulgarians and this is the greatest use of the so-called journalism so that we have to deal with a torn-up newspaper? The truth is simple—no one trusts you, people are just having fun. The fact that you are so childish—playing fascists and partisans—will not move anyone!

Commentators are clearly disillusioned and often share stories about how they or people they know have stopped buying their newspaper regularly. "We are not fools" is also a statement that appears occasionally—indicating audiences' perceived empowerment. As most of the comments show, these actively engaged readers are not fools indeed. They clearly acknowledge some of the issues and challenges journalists face—mainly as a result of the pressures they experience from their owners. However, participants included in our sample have no sympathy for them—they do not condone what they regard as poor, manipulative, or corrupt journalistic practices—servile and mercenary articles and "toadying to the powerful."

Conclusion

The study shows that online commentators in our sample have clear views on the present state of journalism and provide interesting definitions of what journalism is or should be. Audiences' perspectives are important (van der Wurff and Schoenbach 2014) because they can potentially play two key roles in a democracy: (1) They can provide an online arena for democratic debate, and (2) they can also be used as a tool for journalistic accountability. The qualitative nature of this study also allowed us to adopt a grounded theory approach by analyzing online commentators' opinions in an open-ended way. Scholars rarely differentiate between real and ideal journalism as if the two are effectively the same (some notable exceptions include Mancini 2000 and Waisbord 2000). Online commentators, however, clearly do that. They differentiate between "the reality of journalism" or "real journalism" and what they perceive as "ideal journalism." They depict a dire picture of "real journalism" as manipulative with examples of "pre-paid" or "pre-ordered" articles and journalists serving their owners' interests. This negative portrayal is in contrast to the professional ideals many readers believe in—balance and objectivity, media's informational role, and journalists as watchdogs serving the public interest. The online commentators' ideas of what journalism should be about coincide with the ideals journalists share around the world (albeit predominantly in western countries; Hanitzsch et al. 2011). However, these are not the ideals Bulgarian journalists themselves cherish (Hanitzsch et al. 2011). If this is indicative of how the wider public views journalism, this major contradiction helps explain the widening gap in expectations and trust between Bulgarian journalists and their readers. Journalists seem to be experiencing an identity crisis—they are caught between their own perceptions of their role as mainly populist disseminators or critical change agents (Hanitzsch et al. 2011), readers' idealized views of journalists as detached watchdogs, and the numerous pressures and challenges from their oligarch owners. This is a very worrying trend indeed because it has far-reaching implications for the state of democracy in the country. The van der Wurff and Schoenbach (2014) study shows that audiences expect a certain degree of responsiveness. Nielsen's (2014) survey of 583 U.S. journalists, however, found that journalists often ignore reader input because their journalistic norms and conceptions of expertise prevent them from engaging with their readers. One noticeable change that occurred in the course of this research is that the initial articles published about the media war between the two press groups were signed whereas the latest ones were unsigned. Future studies with journalists might further explore the accountability and responsiveness issue particularly in relation to role conceptions. It is certainly worth conducting more immersive, in-depth studies that compare a publication's readers' views with those of the journalists working for the same organization.

Nonetheless, the very fact that we can paint such a picture on the basis of online comments indicates an important trend. Despite a growing body of cyberpessimistic studies, there is some scope for temperate cyberoptimism. The online space, albeit very limited in Bulgaria due to the fact that not all big newspapers have online fora, is and can be an important arena for democratic conversations in a country in transition from communism to democracy. It may not yet be fully developed as a virtual public sphere especially if we adhere strictly to Habermas's normative ideal but it is certainly an important virtual public space (Papacharissi 2002). A refining of or a move away from deliberative theory would certainly help better explain the situation we observe in Bulgaria. An important task for future research is a reconceptualization of Habermas's normative ideal in light of a growing body of evidence and especially in relation to the potential role virtual public spaces (as opposed to public spheres) play vis-à-vis democracy (Loke 2013; Papacharissi 2002). A systematic or in the very least a narrative review of existing work would be a useful first step in that direction. More qualitative work would also offer useful insights. Cross-national comparative research will further show us what contextual (political, economic, and cultural) factors play a role in the process of online deliberation. This study clearly showed that context matters, and the fact that the online spaces of western newspapers are full of insulting comments (Richardson and Stanyer 2011) does not mean that the same trends are evident in democracies in transition. The majority of comments are very negative but they discuss specific issues, and while some contain offensive statements or accusations, these are a minority in comparison with the ones that genuinely engage in discussion and debate. Some of the discussions are indeed stifled in their infancy by conspiracy theories and mutual accusations, but although this is true for the larger sample, the situation is different in the comments explicitly discussing the state of journalism. However, we should not jump to any grand conclusions because the level of argumentation could not be explored in much depth due to the focus on comments about journalism.

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Notes

1. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/14/business/international/large-bulgarian-bank-goes-bankrupt.html.
2. https://www.opendemocracy.net/v%C3%A1clav-%C5%A0t%C4%9Btka/there-and-back-again-media-freedom-and-autonomy-in-central-and-eastern-europe.
3. https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2014/bulgaria#.VImrBv3ri70.
4. A list of business tycoons in ten CEE countries is provided in Štětka (2012).
5. http://www.24chasa.bg/Article.asp?ArticleId=4145749.
6. http://www.euractiv.com/sections/eu-elections-2014/alde-affiliated-bulgarian-rogue-candidate-withdraws-302394.
7. Joyce argues that there is no clear standard for the percentage of content units one should recode to calculate agreement rates, and in general, it is lower for online content. See more at http://digital-activism.org/2013/05/picking-the-best-intercoder-reliability-statistic-for-your-digital-activism-content-analysis/#sthash.FPiR3pzr.dpuf.
8. http://www.qualres.org/HomeNega-3694.html.
9. https://freedomhouse.org/blog/china's-growing-army-paid-internet-commentators#.VZKcT0u0Jg0.
10. The online comments are numbered 1 to 24 for the purposes of this article only.

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Article

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A Question of Time? A Longitudinal Analysis of the Relationship between News Media Consumption and Political Trust

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Abstract
Although there is plenty of research investigating the linkages between news media use and political distrust, virtually all of these studies focus on the impact of media use on political distrust at a particular point in time. At the same time, the transition from low-choice to high-choice media environments suggests that the relationship might not be stable across time. Whatever the linkages between news media use and political distrust were in the 1980s, 1990s, or 2000s, it cannot a priori be assumed that those linkages are the same or of equal strength today. Against this background, the purpose of this paper is to investigate *the changing relationship between* news media use and political trust across time. Among other things, the results show that there is a positive linkage between news media use and political trust but also that for some media, this relationship weakens across time.

Keywords
political trust, media effects, opinion dynamics, changing media environments

Introduction

Although the last decade has witnessed an increasing awareness that comparing across countries is essential if we are to avoid naïve universalism (Esser and Hanitzsch 2012),

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less attention has been paid to the importance of comparing across time. This holds particularly true for research on media effects or the relationship between news media consumption and various outcome variables. Although there are numerous longitudinal studies on, for example, how the media cover politics, there are only few longitudinal studies on the antecedents and effects of news media consumption (but see Liu et al. 2013; Prior 2007; Strömbäck et al. 2013).

At the same time, both media environments and media consumption patterns have changed significantly during the last decades. Advanced democracies have gone from low-choice to high-choice media environments, fundamentally altering the dynamics of news media use (Prior 2007; Weibull and Wadbring 2014; Williams and Delli Carpini 2011). Thus, it cannot be assumed that a media effect or a relationship between media consumption and an outcome variable, established at one point in time, holds equally true at another time. It has to be treated as an empirical question.

For example, although there is plenty of research investigating the linkages between news media use and political trust (Aarts et al. 2012; Avery 2009; Just et al. 1999; Moy and Pfau 2000; Shehata 2014), virtually all studies focus on the impact of media use on political trust at one point in time. Many prominent studies were also done when media environments were less fragmented than today. Whatever the linkages between news media use and political trust was in the 1980s, 1990s, or 2000s, it thus cannot be assumed that those linkages are the same or of equal strength today. Simply put, assuming homogeneous content or effects across time is untenable (Liu et al. 2013).

Against this background, the purpose of this study is to focus on the importance of time with respect to the relationship between news media use and political trust, and more specifically to investigate *the changing relationship between* news media use and political trust across time. Theoretically, the study will draw upon theory and research on media effects on political trust or, more broadly, the linkages between news media use and political trust and the O-M-A framework. According to this framework, media use is a function of opportunities, motivations and abilities (Luskin 1990). Empirically, the study will draw upon the representative Society, Opinion, Media -surveys (SOM) conducted annually in Sweden since 1986. This will provide us unprecedented opportunities to investigate whether or how the relationship between news media use and political trust has changed across time.

The Impact of News Media on Political Trust

The impact of the news media on political trust has been on the research agenda since the 1970s, when Robinson (1976) coined the term *videomalaise* and showed that dependency on TV journalism was associated with political distrust as well as political inefficacy in more general terms. The reason, according to him, was “the abnormal size and shape of the television news audience” in combination with the perceived credibility of the networks and the interpretive, negative, and anti-institutional character of television news (Robinson 1976: 426).

It was not until the 1990s, however, that research on the impact of the news media on political trust took off, following a wealth of evidence from across the world that trust in politicians and political institutions was falling (Dalton 1999; Klingemann 1999; Listhaug and Wiberg 1995). In the United States, for example, the share of voters saying that they trust the government in Washington to do the right thing at least most of the time plummeted from three-quarters to one-quarter between 1958 and 1994 (Orren 1997). Such falls in political trust called for explanations, and many suggested that the news media might be one of the culprits, not least since the trend toward declining political trust seemed to coincide with the rise of more independent, negative, and assertive news media (Nye and Zelikow 1997).

In the mid-1990s, Cappella and Jamieson (1997) confirmed what many believed, that the news media do contribute to political distrust or what they label political cynicism. More precisely, through a number of experiments, they established that the framing of politics as a strategic game activates political cynicism:

> If any conclusion is supported by the pattern of findings, it is that strategy frames for news activate cynicism . . . The effect is not large; sometimes it is only marginally significant. But the pattern of differences is consistent. (Cappella and Jamieson 1997: 159)

Since then, several studies from different countries have shown, through panel data combined with media content data or experiments, that the framing of politics as a strategic game contributes to political distrust (de Vreese 2004; de Vreese and Semetko 2002; Schuck et al. 2013; Shehata 2014; Valentino et al. 2001). By framing politics as a strategic game, the media portray political actors as acting on their self-interest rather than on the common good. Through a process of strategic learning, those who are exposed to the framing of politics as a strategic game not only become more prone to adopt the strategy frame in their interpretations of political actors and their behavior but also become less trusting (Cappella and Jamieson 1997). As this framing of politics has become highly prevalent in political news in most countries, at least during elections (Aalberg et al. 2012; Patterson 1993; Strömbäck and Kaid 2008), this explanation has some face value.

Although research based on experiments or panel data combined with media content data has shown that the media tend to contribute to political distrust, research based on survey data has, however, shown more mixed findings or that news media use is correlated with higher political trust (Holtz-Bacha 1990; Newton 1999; Norris 2011). Norris (2000), for example, showed that across European countries, use of different news media is correlated with more trust in political institutions and actors or that there are no significant effects at all. A panel study in Britain at the time of the 1997 election also showed that political trust increased as election day drew closer, and that the movement was similar among the most and the least attentive to the news (Norris 2000). Based on this, and in contrast to the media malaise thesis, Norris (2000) developed her "virtuous circle" argument, according to which "attention to campaign communication and feelings of political trust are mutually reinforcing, producing a virtuous circle" (p. 251). Newton (1999) similarly found that use of news media is generally associated with more political trust as well as political knowledge and interest.

Other studies based on survey data also find that there are no or only weak effects of news media exposure on political trust, particularly after controlling for political interest or education (Aarts et al. 2012; Albaek et al. 2014). Several studies have furthermore shown that the association between news media use and political trust varies across contexts, and that the conflict between the perspectives of media malaise and the virtuous circle argument is exaggerated. As suggested by Avery (2009), "Media exposure discourages political trust under some conditions but promotes trust under other conditions" (p. 424). This underscores the importance of investigating the linkage between media use and political trust across time as well as across countries.

The Conditional Impact of News Media Exposure on Political Trust

Not all media are alike, and nor are all citizens. One rather consistent finding in previous research is that the linkage between news media use and political trust varies across media. Although use of morning or broadsheet newspapers and public service broadcast news is generally associated with greater political trust, general TV viewing is often associated with less trust (Aarts et al. 2012; Avery 2009; Moy and Pfau 2000; Newton 1999; Norris 2000). While one of the reasons might be different pattern of news coverage in different media, another reason is that different groups of individuals tend to use different media. For example, one consistent finding is that education and political interest is strongly related to news media use (Aarts et al. 2012; Albaek et al. 2014; Moy and Pfau 2000; Norris 2000; Prior 2007; Strömbäck 2015; Strömbäck and Shehata 2010). To the extent that survey data show positive associations between news media use and political trust, they thus raise the question as to whether this should be interpreted as a selection or media effect. As noted by Norris (2000), when arguing for the virtuous circle hypothesis,

> The argument so far has implicitly assumed that people who consume more news develop a more positive orientation towards the political system. But, equally plausible, it could be that those who are politically trusting pay more attention to news about public affairs. (p. 247)

Although cross-sectional data can never resolve the issue of causality, there are reasons to suspect that the importance of news media use vis-à-vis demographic and motivational factors for political trust has changed across time. Not least important is that the transition from low-choice to high-choice media environments has implications for how individual-level factors work (Aalberg et al. 2013; Bennett and Iyengar 2008; Ksiazek et al. 2010; Prior 2007; Strömbäck et al. 2013; Stroud 2011).

The most parsimonious framework for understanding these mechanisms is the O-M-A framework, according to which there are three factors explaining the extent to which people engage in a behavior such as, for example, following the news: *opportunities, motivations*, and *abilities* (Luskin 1990). As shown by Prior (2007), the key insight of this framework is that it highlights how changes in opportunities (a macro-level variable) affect the influence of motivations and abilities (individual-level variables). In a low-choice media environment, individuals' motivations and abilities are less important, simply because there are fewer choices, but as media environments transform into high-choice environments, individual motivations and abilities become more important.

Although the O-M-A framework on the individual level highlights the importance of both motivations and abilities, research on the implications of changing media environments has thus far mainly focused on the importance of motivations, largely leaving abilities aside (Aalberg et al. 2013; Prior 2007; Strömbäck et al. 2013). Following this line of research, three outcomes are likely to follow increasing opportunities in media choice. First, the importance of different antecedents of news media consumption is likely to change. Second, patterns of news media consumption and differences in news consumption between various groups are likely to change. Third, on an aggregate level, the effects of news media use or the relationship between news media use and various outcome variables are likely to change. Among other things, several scholars have argued that media effects are likely to become weaker. Bennett and Iyengar (2008) notes, for example, "As receivers exercise greater choice over both the content of messages and media sources, effects become increasingly difficult to produce or measure . . ." (p. 708). Although focusing on partisan media effects, Arceneaux and Johnson (2013) similarly posit that increasing media choice will lead to a dilution of media effects.

Substantiating that increasing media choice might alter the importance of individual-level factors, in Sweden, Strömbäck et al. (2013), for example, found that political interest became a more important predictor of news media use over time. Although aggregate news media consumption did not change much, they also showed greater individual variation and how two groups grew in size: on one hand news-seekers, those who are heavy users of news media, and on the other hand news-avoiders, those who hardly use any news media at all (see also Aalberg et al. 2013; Ksiazek et al. 2010). This reflects the growing importance of individuals' motivations for their news media use. Presumably, this process could result in changes in the relationship between news media use and political trust.

Changing Linkages between News Media Use and Political Trust? Research Question and Hypotheses

In most previous theory and research, political trust is conceptualized as the dependent and media use as independent variable. Although we prefer to speak of the relationship between media use and political trust rather than media effects—as cross-sectional data can never solve the question of causality—we will thus follow this path.

Although there are several indicators of political trust and similar concepts such as political distrust and cynicism that have been used in previous research, in this study political trust will be operationalized as trust in *the national parliament*. The first reason is that the national parliament can be considered the most important political institution in parliamentary democracies. The second reason is that the national parliament is less subject to variation in political trust based on the partisan composition than, for example, trust in government (Oscarsson and Holmberg 2013). The third and more pragmatic reason is that we have data for trust in the national parliament for almost three decades (1986–2013).

Although there are many studies on the linkages between news media use and political trust, there is no longitudinal study in this area focusing on the importance of time. On the most general level, the main research question is thus as follows:

> **Research Question 1:** How has the relationship between news media use and trust in parliament changed between 1986 and 2013?

Different scenarios are plausible. On one hand, increasing media choice suggests that individuals' motivations have become more important predictors of news media use (Arceneaux and Johnson 2013; Prior 2007; Strömbäck et al. 2013), while previous research as discussed above shows that political interest is correlated with news use. At the same time, those with greater political interest usually have greater trust in political institutions and actors and than those with less political interest (Holmberg 1999; Oscarsson and Holmberg 2013). One study, for example, shows that the difference between those very and not at all politically interested is 11 percentage points, a larger difference than between those with high and low education or high and low income (Norén Bretzer 2005). If it indeed is the case that political interest over time becomes a more important predictor of news media use while those who are politically interested have greater political trust, this implies a stronger and more positive relationship between news media use and political trust across time. Focusing on *total news media consumption*, this leads to our first hypothesis:

> **Hypothesis 1 (H1):** The relationship between total news media consumption and trust in parliament will (a) become stronger and (b) more positive across time.

On the other hand, research also shows that the framing of politics as a strategic game tends to decrease political trust, and there is some—albeit not covering the full-time period of this study—research suggesting that that this framing has become more common across time (Aalberg et al. 2012; Asp and Bjerling 2014; Strömbäck 2013). Thus, our contrarian and second hypothesis is as follows:

> **Hypothesis 2 (H2):** The relationship between total news media consumption and trust in parliament will (a) become stronger and (b) more negative across time.

The relationship between news media use and political trust may, however, vary across media. Avery (2009), for example, found support for the media malaise thesis with respect to the relationship between TV exposure and political trust but for the virtuous circle thesis with respect to the relationship between newspaper use and political trust. Along similar lines, Newton (1999) found a stronger relationship between reading broadsheet newspapers and political trust than between reading tabloids or watching TV news and political trust, while Holmberg (1999) found that exposure to public service TV and radio is associated with more trust in politicians while exposure to tabloids and commercial TV and radio is associated with less trust. At least in Sweden, one reason might be that commercial TV news and the tabloids have a consistently stronger tendency to frame politics as a strategic game and as scandals than public service TV news and the national morning newspapers (Strömbäck 2013). Swedish research also suggests stronger relationships between political interest and watching public service TV news or reading broadsheets, than between political interest and watching commercial TV news or reading tabloids (Strömbäck and Shehata 2010). Thus, previous findings pertaining both to the relationship between news media use on one hand and political trust and political interest on the other, and to the framing of politics in different media, lead us to the next set of hypotheses:

> **Hypothesis 3 (H3):** The relationship between watching public service TV news and reading morning newspapers on one hand, and political trust on the other, will (a) become stronger and (b) more positive across time.
>
> **Hypothesis 4 (H4):** The relationship between watching commercial TV news and reading tabloids on one hand, and political trust on the other, will (a) become stronger and (b) more negative across time.

Although our key interest is the importance of time with respect to the relationship between news media use and political trust, changes across time might not be linear. One finding in previous research is that election campaigns tend to mobilize people politically, leading to increasing political trust in election years (Holmberg 1999; Strömbäck and Johansson 2007). Whether that also means that the relationship between news media use and political trust will be stronger during election years compared with nonelection years is not entirely clear, but it is plausible and worth exploring. Thus, our fifth hypothesis is as follows:

> **Hypothesis 5 (H5):** The relationship between total news media consumption and trust in parliament will be stronger during election years than during nonelection years.

On a general level, and as reflected in previous theory and research, the relationship between news media use and political trust could be the result of a media effect or a selection effect, or a combination. As in all studies relying on cross-sectional data, it is impossible to establish the direction of causality. As most previous theory and research have conceptualized the relationship as one in which media use influences political trust, this is our starting point as well. Simply put, we want to know whether the relationship between news media use and political trust—or the media effects on political trust—has changed over time. To the extent that the relationship has changed, it does of course not preclude that the reason might be stronger selection effects across time. We will return to this discussion.

Data and Methods

To reiterate, the purpose of this study is to focus on the importance of time with respect to the relationship between news media use and political trust, and more specifically to investigate the changing relationship between news media use on political trust across time. Empirically, we will draw on the annual surveys conducted by the SOM Institute at the University of Gothenburg (Weibull et al. 2014). Starting in 1986, a random sample of the Swedish population drawn from census registers and including between three thousand and nine thousand persons aged fifteen to seventy-five years (recent surveys sixteen to eighty-five years) receive the survey. The response rate is on average 65 percent, ranging from 53 percent (2013) to 70 percent (1987; Vernersdotter 2014). The distribution of responses equals the proportion of the Swedish population with respect to gender and region, but there is a slight underrepresentation of younger people and those with an immigrant background. The data set used here consists of pooled data where all surveys over the years 1986–2013 have been combined in a single set.

Although cross-sectional surveys can never establish the chain of causality, based on previous theory and research about the relationship between media use and political trust, we will treat political trust as dependent variable and measures of media use as independent variables. We will also control for a number of other relevant variables.

Dependent Variable

The key dependent variable is "Trust in the national parliament," measured by the question, "How much trust do you have in the way the following institutions/groups do their job?" The institutions included in the questionnaire have varied over time but "Trust in parliament" has been included in the survey every year since 1986. The response alternatives range from 5 (*very much*) to 1 (*very little*). Because response alternatives were altered in 1987, this year is excluded from this study. In the analysis, we will treat the 5-point scale as an interval scale using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis. To validate the results, we have also tested all models using ordinal regression, and the ordinal analyses yield essentially the same results with regard to the significance and relative magnitude of effects.

Independent Variables

The main independent variables are different measures of news media use focusing on four categories of news media: morning newspapers (in print and/or online), tabloid newspapers (in print and/or online), TV (commercial and public service), and radio (commercial and public service). With respect to TV and radio, we will focus on national news.

The only true interval scale in the survey is the variable "newspaper reading," which ranges from 0 (*never/less frequently*) to 7 (*seven days a week*). To facilitate the OLS regression analyses, we transformed the other media use measures so that they can be treated as interval scales. To obtain interval measures for radio news, TV news, and tabloid newspapers, we recoded the original ordinal variables so that values assigned to the categories emulate the scale used in the newspaper-reading variable. For example, the response alternatives for watching TV news were assigned the following values: never = 0, less frequently = 1, one to two days/week = 2, three to four days/week = 3, five to six days/week = 5, and daily = 7.

Newspaper reading. Respondents were asked how often they read at least one morning newspaper in print or online. The response alternatives range from 0 (less often than one day/week) to 7 (seven days/week). A separate variable measuring newspaper reading in "print only," using the same question, was also constructed.

TV news. Respondents were asked how often they watch the news programs on public service TV (*Rapport* or *Aktuellt*) or on commercial TV. Commercial TV news comprises the major news shows on the commercial channels TV4 and TV3 (*Nyheterna* on TV4 and *Update* on TV3). Responses were coded as follows: 0 = never, 1 = less frequently, 2 = one to two days/week, 3 = three to four days/week, 5 = five to six days/week, and 7 = daily. Separate variables for watching public service TV and commercial TV news were also constructed, using the same question and coding of responses but only selecting the parts related to each form of TV news watching.

Radio news. Respondents were asked how often they listen to national news on public service radio (Eko-nyheterna) or on commercial radio. Responses were coded as follows: 0 = never, 1 = less frequently, 2 = one to two days/week, 3 = three to four days/week, 5 = five to six days/week, and 7 = daily.

Tabloid newspapers. Respondents were asked how often they read any of the tabloid newspapers *Aftonbladet, Expressen, GT*, or *Kvällsposten* in print or online. Responses were coded as follows: 0 = never, 1 = less frequently, 2 = one to two days/week, 4 = three to four days/week, and 6 = six to seven days/week. Using the same question, a separate variable measuring tabloid reading in "print only" was also constructed.

Total news media use (TNMU). The main independent variable in the study is total news media use. A major challenge was to handle the pooling of twenty-eight different data sets and to construct new variables that allow for an accurate comparison of the levels of news media use *over time*. During the examined time period, the media environment underwent fundamental changes, such as the introduction of cable and satellite TV (1987), terrestrial commercial TV (1992), digital TV (1999), and the introduction of the Internet (mid-1990s).

The TNMU variable must measure the level of news media use in a way that is comparable across time yet takes the fundamental changes in the supply of news media platforms through online publishing and the launching of commercial radio and TV into account. To achieve this, we created the "Total news media use index" (TNMU-index). This index aims at measuring the full extent of an individual's exposure to news with respect to all four media categories, regardless of platform. To accomplish this, we constructed variables that measure the highest news media use score for each of the four media categories (radio, TV, morning newspapers, and tabloid papers). For example, an individual's newspaper use is measured so that it registers the highest score, no matter if the reading is online or print. An individual who reads tabloid newspapers online three days/week and a print tabloid seven days/week would thus score 7 on the tabloid reading scale and vice versa. This platform-neutral approach is the only one that allows us to include online news media consumption into the time series.

The TNMU-index was computed by summing the individual scores for all four media categories (TV news + radio news + newspapers online/print + tabloid papers online/print) for each respondent. The index varies between 0 and 27, and the distribution of the variable is close to a normal distribution. The main advantage of the TNMU-index is that it measures the total amount of news consumption without presuming unidimensionality or a high correlation between the different varieties of news media use. Instead, the individual's pattern of news media use may vary so that some seek out all sorts of news (news-seekers) while others avoid news (news-avoiders) or choose different combinations of news media. All the news media use variables were finally rescaled to range between 0 and 1. This allows for an easier comparison of effects between variables while keeping the variance of each variable intact. The TNMU-index was constructed by rescaling the original index to range from 0 (*not using any of the four media categories*) to 1 (*daily use of all four media categories*).

The other independent variables used in the study are election year and time. To measure the "election year" effect, we included a dummy coded variable where 0 = not election year and 1 = election year (1988, 1991, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, and 2010). Finally, a variable indicating "time" was constructed with the range 0 to 27, where 1986 = 0 and 2013 = 27.

Control Variables

The control variables used are interest in politics, education, gender, and age. Interest in politics is measured by the question, "How interested are you generally in politics?" The response alternatives range from 1 (not at all interested) to 4 (very interested). The variable was dummy coded so that 0 = not interested in politics (not at all or hardly interested) and 1 = interested in politics (rather or very interested). The level of education is derived from a question containing eight educational alternatives, which were recoded into a variable with three categories: 1 = low (primary education), 2 = medium (more than primary education but not college or university), and 3 = high (college or university education). Respondents were also asked to indicate their gender (0 = male, 1 = female) and age (sixteen to seventy-five years).

Results

We will begin the analysis by examining our dependent variable: trust in the national parliament. In the total sample, the mean trust is 3.04 (*SD* = 0.961, *n* = 70,028), and

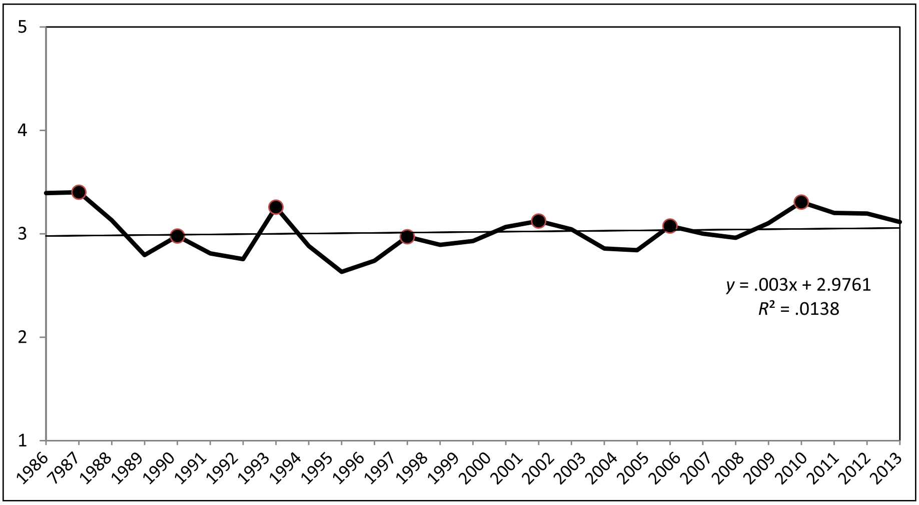

Figure 1. Trust in national parliament, 1986–2013, with trend line (*M*).
Note. Election years are marked by a black dot. The scale is 1 (*trust very little*) to 5 (*trust very much*). *n* varies between 1,556 (1986) and 4,814 (2013) due to different sample sizes. Trust in parliament is measured by the question, "How much trust do you have in the way the following institutions/groups do their job?" The question listed a number of institutions, and "Trust in parliament" has been included in the survey every year since the start in 1986 (1987 is excluded due to different response alternatives). The response alternatives range from 5 "very much," 4 "fairly much," 3 "neither much, nor little," 2 "fairly little," and 1 "very little."

the response distribution is as follows: 7.6 percent "very high"; 17.2 percent "fairly high"; 42.8 percent "neither high, nor low"; 28.1 percent "fairly low"; and 4.3 percent "very low." The fact that most respondents are centered on the mid-alternative suggests that many do not have strong views on how much they trust the parliament.

Figure 1 shows changes in trust in parliament across the period 1986–2013. As can be seen, the level of trust has increased slightly over time (Pearson's $r = .052$, $p < 0.001$), as shown also by other studies (Holmberg and Weibull 2014; Oscarsson and Holmberg 2013). The increase is, however, small, and there are noticeable jumps in the level of trust in election years. The slight increase in the level of trust is not unique for the parliament but holds true for other political institutions as well (Holmberg and Weibull 2014).

The aim of the study is to examine how political trust is related to news media consumption. A first step of this analysis is to examine the independent variables, that is, the development of news media consumption on various platforms 1986–2013 (Figure 2). Figure 2 shows that newspaper reading has decreased over time but also that the decline in readership is reduced by the growth of online newspaper reading. A similar, but more dramatic, pattern is evident for the reading of tabloids where the increasing use of online reading has offset the decline in print readership. Sweden is thus still a country where newspaper readership is very high. TV news viewing displays a fluctuating curve, with an increase in viewing connected to the start of commercial TV in the

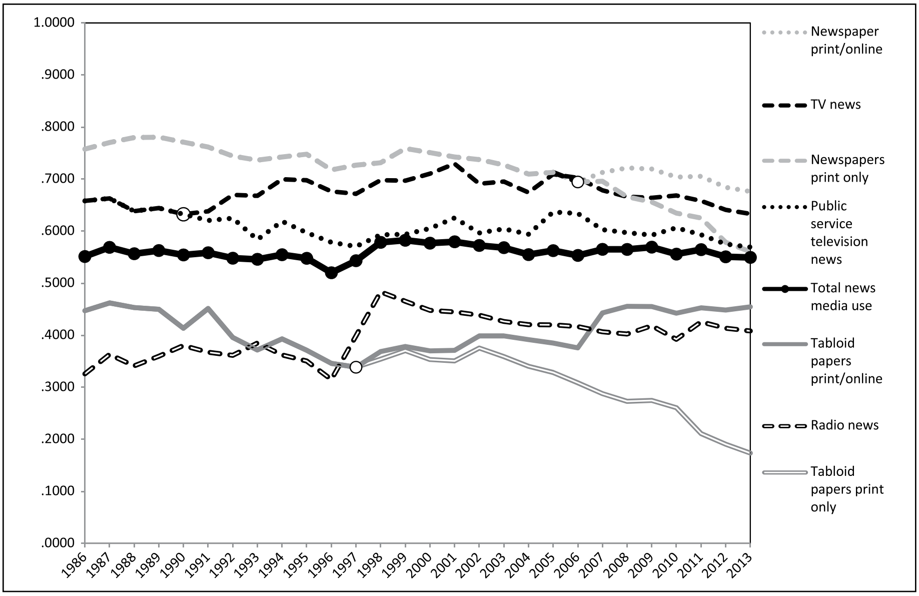

Figure 2. Longitudinal development of news media use, 1986–2013 (*M*).
Note. Number of responses (*n*) varies between 1,067 (1986) and 6,656 (2013). Newspapers print/online: Reading at least one newspaper (morning papers) in print or online, 0 = never/less frequently, 1 = one day/week, 2 = two days/week, 3 = three days/week, 4 = four days/week, 5 = five days/week, 6 = six days/week, and 7 = seven days/week. TV news: Watching Rapport (public service, national), Aktuellt (public service, national), Nyheterna (commercial, TV4, national), or Update (commercial, TV3, national), 0 = never, 1 = less frequently, 2 = one to two days/week, 3 = three to four days/week, 5 = five to six days/week, and 7 = daily. Radio news: Listening to news in public service (Ekot, national news) or news in private/commercial radio, 0 = never, 1 = less frequently, 2 = one to two days/week, 3 = three to four days/week, 5 = five to six days/week, and 7 = daily. Tabloid papers print/online: Reading Aftonbladet/Expressen/GT/Kvällsposten (evening tabloid papers) in print or online, 0 = never, 1 = less frequently, 2 = one to two days/week, 4 = three to four days/week, and 6 = six to seven days/week. Total news media use index (TNMU-index) = (TV news + radio news + newspapers online/print + tabloid papers online/print). All variables are rescaled to range from 0 to 1.

early 1990s but with a decline in recent years. The line showing radio news consumption also displays an irregular pattern, with some noticeable shifts. When a question about listening to news on commercial radio was added to the survey in 1998, radio listening took a huge jump but has since then declined slowly.

When TNMU is examined by the use of the TNMU-index (the solid black graph), the mean level of the index proves to be remarkably stable across time. This means that the total news media consumption among the Swedish population has been quite resilient to the transformative changes in the media environment, although research shows that there is an increasing variation over time across individuals in their news media use (Strömbäck et al. 2013). The TNMU-index captures the extent of an individual's exposure to news with respect to all media categories. The construction of the index does thus not presume a high correlation between the usages of different media.

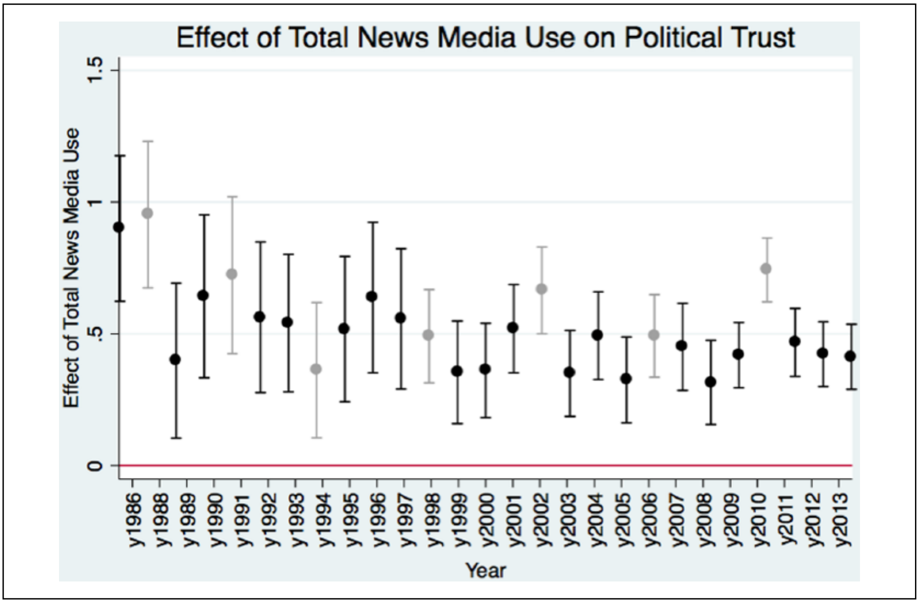

Figure 3. The bivariate effects of TNMU by year (unstandardized OLS coefficients).
Note. TNMU = total news media use; OLS = ordinary least squares.

Instead, individuals choose different combinations of news media in their media repertoire. The stability of the TNMU over time is due to the fact that the decline in the readership of print newspapers and watching TV news largely has been compensated by an increase in online news media use.

The next step of the analysis is to examine the effect of news media use on trust in the national parliament. The TNMU-index is subsequently used as the main independent variable, but the effects of different categories of news media use will also be estimated for different news media types.

H1 predicted that the relationship between TNMU and trust in parliament would become stronger and more positive across time, even after controlling for other factors that may have an impact on political trust. H2, however, predicted that the relationship between news media consumption and trust in parliament would become more negative across time. As a first test of this argument, Figure 3 displays the bivariate relationship between TNMU and trust in parliament for each year between 1986 and 2013, based on twenty-seven regression models. The gray dots represent election years. Although there are some clear variations over time, with election years showing somewhat stronger overall relationships, the pattern reveals two general findings. First, the relationship between TNMU and trust is consistently positive. Second, there seems to be a trend of weakening strength of the relationship over time. Even when disregarding 1986, which appears to be an outlier year, the bivariate positive relationship seems to become smaller as time goes by.

Table 1. Effects of TNMU, Election Year, and Time on Trust in the National Parliament, 1986–2013.

	Dependent: Trust in Parliament (1–5)				
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1c	Model 1d	Model 1e
TNMU (0–1)	.479*** (.033)	.384*** (.033)	.395*** (.032)	.503*** (.073)	.358*** (.026)
Gender (Reference = male)					
Female		.059*** (.009)	.059*** (.008)	.059*** (.008)	.059*** (.008)
Age (16–75)		−.000 (.001)	−.001 (.001)	−.001 (.001)	−.001 (.001)
Education (Reference = medium)					
Low		−.107*** (.027)	−.093*** (.018)	−.094*** (.018)	−.093*** (.018)
High		.203*** (.016)	.193*** (.010)	.193*** (.010)	.192*** (.010)
Political interest (Reference = not interested)					
Interested in politics		.213*** (.013)	.217*** (.013)	.216*** (.013)	.217*** (.013)
Election year (Reference = not election year)					
Election year		.155* (.067)	.166* (.064)	.166* (.064)	.081 (.051)
Time (0–27, 1986 = 0, 2013 = 27)			.006 (.005)	.009 (.005)	.006 (.005)
Interaction: Time × TNMU				−.006 (.004)	
Interaction: Election Year × TNMU					.151* (.069)
Constant	2.769*** (.035)	2.609*** (.050)	2.526*** (.102)	2.466*** (.098)	2.547*** (.101)
n	70,028	70,028	70,028	70,028	70,028
R^2	.009***	.047***	.049***	.049***	.049***

Note. Unstandardized *b* coefficients with year-clustered standard errors in parentheses. Highest VIF is 16 for interaction term, Time × TNMU. TNMU = total news media use; OLS = ordinary least squares; VIF = variance inflaction factor.
**p* < .05. ***p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

To examine the course of development between the two variables more comprehensively, stepwise OLS regression analyses were run. We use robust standard errors clustered by year to account for clustering in the data. Table 1 shows the results. In Model 1a, the effect of TNMU on trust in parliament is tested without any control variables. The result shows that trust in parliament is positively associated with TNMU: The higher the level of TNMU, the higher the level of trust (*b* = .479, $p < 0.001$). The effect is still not very large. The predicted value of the level of trust for an individual who is a total news-avoider (refraining from using news media at all) is 2.769 (the intercept). An individual who is a full-fledged news-seeker (a daily user of all four categories of news media) would score 3.248 on the 5-point scale—about 17 percent higher. The adjusted R^2 (.009, $p < 0.001$) indicates that only about 1 percent of the variation in trust can be attributed to variations in the TNMU.

When election year, gender, age, education, and political interest are added to the analysis in Model 1b, the effect of TNMU decreases slightly. The addition of these variables significantly increases the adjusted R^2 of the model to .047 ($p < 0.001$. There

Table 2. Effects of TNMU and Election Year on Trust in the National Parliament in 1986–1995, 1996–2004, and 2005–2013.

	Dependent: Trust in Parliament (1–5)		
	1986–1995	1996–2004	2005–2013
TNMU (0–1)	.475*** (.069)	.411*** (.050)	.403*** (.053)
Gender (Reference = male)			
Female	.080** (.018)	.044* (.018)	.052** (.011)
Age (16–75)	.002* (.001)	.000 (.001)	−.002** (.001)
Education (Reference = medium)			
Low	−.007 (.054)	−.092*** (.015)	−.167*** (.024)
High	.128* (.041)	.184*** (.016)	.216*** (.012)
Political interest (Reference = not interested)			
Interested in politics	.135*** (.020)	.210*** (.021)	.244*** (.018)
Election year (Reference = not election year)			
Election year	.254 (.146)	.122 (.073)	.141 (.090)
Constant	2.470*** (.104)	2.513*** (.067)	2.751*** (.055)
n	13,429	24,372	32,227
R^2	.035***	.041***	.065***

Note. OLS, unstandardized regression coefficients, year-clustered standard errors in parentheses. Data for 1987 are missing. TNMU = total news media use; OLS = ordinary least squares.
$^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

are clear election year effects, that is, trust in parliament increases during election years. Furthermore, higher education and political interest significantly increase trust; women display a higher level of trust than men while age does not have any effect on the level of trust. Taken together, these results show that there is a positive relationship between TNMU and trust even when education, gender, age, political interest, and election year are controlled for.

H1 stated that the relationship between news media use and trust would become stronger and more positive across time while H2 specified the reverse direction of the relationship. In Model 1c, "time" is added to the model. The effect of time is, however, not significant, indicating that trust does not change significantly over time. Furthermore, the interaction term between time and TNMU is not significant either (Model 1d), suggesting that the positive relationship between TNMU and political trust does not change linearly over time. These findings lend no support for either H1 or H2. In Table 2, we break down the effect of time by analyzing three phases: 1986–1995, 1996–2004, and 2005–2013. As can be seen, there is a slight decrease in effect size over time, corresponding to the weakening relationships displayed in Figure 3. But these changes are not statistically significant.

Altogether the results show that the evidence supports neither H1 nor H2. There is a positive relationship between total news consumption and trust in parliament, and it remains fairly consistent over time.

H5 stated that the relationship between total news media consumption and trust in parliament would be stronger during election years than during nonelection years. To test this, Model 1e includes an interaction term for Election Year × TNMU. The interaction term is positive and significant, which indicates that the relationship indeed becomes stronger during election years. This election year effect can also be seen in Figure 3, where the gray dots tend to score above average compared with nonelection years.

H3 and H4 stated that the relationship between watching public service TV and reading morning newspapers on one hand and political trust on the other would become stronger and more positive across time, whereas it would become stronger and more negative across time with respect to watching commercial TV and reading tabloids. We will thus focus on the relationship between watching TV news (commercial vs. public service) and reading newspapers (morning newspapers vs. tabloids) and trust in parliament. In Table 3, we proceed to analyze the relationship between the different categories of news media use and the level of trust. As viewing of commercial TV news has only been available since the early 1990s, the results in Models 3b, 3e, and 3f pertain to 1991–2013, whereas public service TV, morning newspapers, and tabloid papers have been measured since 1986.

Table 3 shows that the relationship between trust in parliament and news media use indeed varies between different categories of news media. Watching news on commercial TV has no relationship (−.030) while reading morning newspapers (.207, $p < 0.001$) and watching public service TV news (.231, $p < 0.001$) are positively associated with trust. With respect to the tabloids, reading tabloid papers has no relationship (.029) with trust. If we, however, only include reading tabloid papers in print (not shown in Table 3), there is, however, a negative relationship.

In relative terms, the positive relationships between watching news on public service TV and reading morning newspapers on one hand and political trust on the other appear to be stronger than any negative relationship with the use of other types of media. This result persists when the relationship between political trust and the use of all news media categories are tested simultaneously in Model 3e.

Finally, to test whether the relationship between political trust and each media category changes linearly over time, we tested four interaction models separately (not displayed in Table 3), each including an interaction term between time and the corresponding media use measure. The only significant interaction term found was between public service television news and time (−.008, $p < 0.01$), indicating that the positive relationship between watching public service television news and political trust has weakened over time.[1]

Overall, the results suggest that there is a positive relationship between TNMU and trust in the national parliament but also that the positive relationship is quite stable across time. Different categories of news media use relate to trust in dissimilar ways. Watching news on public service TV and reading morning newspapers are positively related to trust, whereas the effect of commercial TV and tabloid papers is nonsignificant. Of our hypotheses, only H5 related to the effect of election years is fully supported by the results. Instead, our results rather substantiate Avery's (2009) suggestion that "Media exposure discourages political trust under some conditions but promotes trust under other conditions" (p. 424).

Table 3. Effects of Different Categories of News Media Use, Election Year, and Time on Trust in National Parliament, 1986–2013.

	Model 3a Public Service TV News	Model 3b Commercial TV News[a]	Model 3c Morning Newspapers (Print/Online)	Model 3d Tabloid Papers (Print/Online)	Model 3e All[a]
Category of news media use					
Public service TV news (0–1)	.231*** (.017)				.222*** (.014)
Commercial TV news (0–1)[a]		−.030 (.020)			−.081*** (.019)
Newspapers print/online (0–1)			.207*** (.017)		.194*** (.016)
Tabloid papers print/online (0–1)				.029 (.020)	−.017 (.016)
Gender (Reference = male)					
Female	.057*** (.008)	.054*** (.009)	.054*** (.009)	.057*** (.009)	.056*** (.009)
Age (16–75)	−.002** (.000)	.000 (.000)	−.000 (.001)	.001 (.000)	−.003*** (.000)
Education (Reference = medium)					
Low	−.103*** (.018)	−.118*** (.018)	−.092*** (.018)	−.104*** (.019)	−.108*** (.017)
High	.194*** (.010)	.198*** (.010)	.181*** (.010)	.194*** (.010)	.181*** (.010)
Political interest (Reference = not interested)					
Interested in politics	.220*** (.014)	.256*** (.013)	.231*** (.013)	.242*** (.014)	.222*** (.012)
Election year (Reference = not election year)					
Election year	.166* (.063)	.179*** (.043)	.168* (.063)	.166* (.063)	.176*** (.042)
Time (0–27, 1986 = 0, 2013 = 27)	.006 (.005)	.016*** (.003)	.006 (.005)	.005 (.005)	.018*** (.003)
Constant	2.639*** (.098)	2.480*** (.054)	2.567*** (.104)	2.659*** (.010)	2.379*** (.056)
n	70,680	64,857	70,392	70,746	64,108
R^2	.049***	.059***	.048***	.044***	.068***

Note. OLS, unstandardized regression coefficients, year-clustered standard errors in parentheses. Data for 1987 are missing. Unstandardized *b* coefficients with year-clustered standard errors in parentheses. OLS = ordinary least squares.

a. 1991–2013 (commercial TV news was not included in the survey until 1991).

$^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

Discussion and Conclusion

Although there are several experimental and panel studies showing that the news media have or might have a negative impact on political trust (Cappella and Jamieson 1997; de Vreese 2004; Shehata 2014), survey-based studies have usually found more mixed and weaker results (Aarts et al. 2012; Albaek et al. 2014), with several studies showing a positive relationship between news media use and political trust (Newton 1999; Norris 2000, 2011). Despite such conflicting findings, the common denominator in most research is the assumption that time does not matter and that the relationship is stable across time. To our knowledge, this is the first longitudinal study of the relationship between news media use and political trust.

In line with previous survey-based research, the results show that there is a positive relationship between news media use and political trust, although the effect is quite weak. Also in line with earlier studies, the results show that the relationship varies across media. Although the relationship between news media use and political trust is positive with respect to morning newspapers and watching public service TV news, it is nonsignificant with respect to watching commercial TV news. It is more mixed with respect to the tabloids, depending on whether reading of tabloids take place offline or online.

Our key interest, though, is the importance of time. Interestingly, despite all the changes in media environments and media consumption patterns that have taken place during the more than twenty-five years covered by this study, there are no significant linear differences in the relationship between TNMU and political trust across time. The relationship becomes slightly weaker, but not significantly so. The only relationship that changes significantly across time is the relationship between political trust and watching public service TV, which over time becomes somewhat weaker.

Taken together, these results offer a complex picture with respect to the importance of time. In most of the cases, time appears not to matter that much, in the sense that the results show the same patterns over time and no significant, linear differences. In other cases, such as with respect to watching public service TV, the relationship becomes weaker across time, suggesting that time matters. In yet other cases, such as with respect to the significantly stronger relationship between news media use and political trust in election years compared with off-election years, time matters, but then it is not a matter of linear changes across time.

In essence, then, time *might* matter. From a broader perspective, there are at least two ways of looking at this. On one hand, our findings suggest that scholars should be careful not to a priori assume homogeneous relationships between news media consumption and various outcome variables—or media effects—across time. The strength and direction of the relationships between news media consumption and different outcome variables *might* vary across time, and thus there is a need for further longitudinal research related to other concepts where research at a particular time suggests a particular relationship or effect. On the other hand, and perhaps paradoxically, the findings also suggest that the *basic relationship* between news media use and political trust is quite constant over time in terms of its direction. Even though there are fluctuations, it is thus rather safe to conclude that the relationship between overall news media use and political trust in general is positive—regardless of all changes that have taken place during the last three decades.

One key question is, however, why the relationship between news media use and political trust has not changed more across time. Although this study cannot provide a definitive answer, there are several potential explanations. First, it might be the case that the relationship is quite stable, although the results pertaining to public service TV watching and the election year effects cast some doubts on such an explanation. Second, it might be the case that different forces cancel each other out. This would, for example, be the case if stronger selection effects (e.g., those who are politically interested and trusting follow the news media more closely) over time are offset by media effects (e.g., a stronger tendency to frame politics as a strategic game). Relatedly, the difference between print and online reading of the tabloids might reflect that the tabloids online have been able to attract not only a broader but also a different audience than the print tabloids. When we combine the measures, we find no significant relationships, but looking at print reading only, there is a negative relationship with political trust. Third, the results might reflect that other factors have become more important across time, thereby blunting the relationship between news media use and political trust. For example (see Table 3), both the importance of education and political interest for explaining political trust have increased over time.

Fourth, it cannot be ruled out that the increasing complexity of media environments and hence people's media use play a part. Toward the end of our time series, social media became more important as sources of information, and while our TNMU-index is comprehensive with respect to traditional news media, and most people in Sweden still rely on traditional news media for getting the news (Bergström and Oscarsson 2014; Strömbäck 2015), our media use measures do not include social media. At the same time, it is well known that self-reported media use often is problematic (see, for example, Prior 2009), and the more complex media environments and people's media use patterns become, the more difficult it becomes to capture people's media use through surveys.

To sum up, two key results of this study is that the relationship between news media use and political trust on a general level, across several decades, is positive, but also that time in some cases matters. Hence, it should not be assumed a priori that relationships between news media use and various outcome variables are consistent over time. It should rather be investigated empirically, to get a better understanding of when and under what circumstances time matters. In that context, more research is also needed to disentangle whether or to what extent changing relationships between news media use and, for example, political trust reflect changing media effects or changing selection effects. That would require panel rather than cross-sectional data, but whether we are witnessing changing media effects or selection effects is a key question to understand the mechanisms behind changing patterns between media use and various outcome variables.

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Note

1. In fact, using an ordered logit specification yielded a significant and positive interaction term between time and commercial television news as well, which would indicate that the negative effect of watching news on these channels has become weaker over time. However, the fact that this was a borderline case (p = .047) not replicated in the ordinary least squares (OLS) specification made us cautious not to overinterpret this finding.

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The Role of Intergovernmental Organizations in the "Battle over Framing": The Case of the Israeli–West Bank Separation Barrier

Elai Rettig[1] **and Eli Avraham**[1]

Abstract

Current studies focusing on the media's coverage of international conflicts have largely overlooked the important role that intergovernmental bodies may play in their framing. Still missing is an examination of how and to what degree do actions performed by such bodies help define the way journalists report on ongoing conflicts. We claim that in the absence of credible state actors to rely on for information during conflict, journalists will turn to statements made by international bodies as alternative sources of authority to shape their reporting. This study uses framing theory to examine how the United Nations General Assembly and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) became the primary definers for the international media during its coverage of the Israeli–West Bank separation barrier. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative content analysis, we examine the major news items related to the barrier that appeared between the years 2002 and 2011 in four leading newspapers in the United States and the United Kingdom (*New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Guardian*, and the *Times*). We determine what main media frames were being used during coverage of the barrier and point to the drastic change that occurred in their dominance following actions performed by the ICJ.

Keywords

framing theory, public diplomacy, international organizations, International Court, Israeli–Palestinian conflict, separation barrier

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Introduction

A large number of studies have attempted to analyze which factors are able to affect the framing of ongoing violent conflicts between states in the international media (Galloway 2005; Gutmann 2005; Iyengar and Simon 1993; Kalb and Saivetz 2007; Maslog et al. 2006; Wolfsfeld 1997). Still missing from this field of research are empirical studies examining under what circumstance and to what degree can actions performed by intergovernmental bodies affect the media's coverage of such conflicts. This study uses framing theory as a framework for understanding this mechanism. It argues that by serving as highly credible sources of authority that journalists believe they can rely on for information, official intergovernmental bodies such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the United Nations (UN) may replace traditional state actors as "primary definers" of an ongoing international conflict. This is especially apparent in cases where both sides of the conflict are engaged in a visible war of words to influence foreign media coverage over a high-stakes controversial issue, thus sending reporters to seek more reliable sources of information elsewhere.

This study demonstrates how intergovernmental organizations may thus play an important role in the way an ongoing conflict is framed in the media. Official statements issued by such bodies may not have legal standings in the eyes of a state, but the terminology they deploy and their conclusions might help define the frame through which the media covers the state's affairs. The degree to which such statements are able to shape the framing of an ongoing conflict depends in large part on the vacuum left by the actors involved in the conflict who are either unwilling or unable to fulfill their traditional role as sources of authority in the eyes of the reporter. If both sides in the struggle are perceived as being uncommunicative, unreliable, uninformed, or even deceptive in the information they make available, journalists will be more likely to turn to alternative sources of authority to help shape their reporting. These can often be found in the form of official public statements issued by credible intergovernmental organizations providing information or judgment on events within the conflict. Although attempts made by states to influence media coverage through the use of such third-party actors have become an increasingly used tool in their public diplomacy efforts, the theoretical links that tie such efforts with framing theory are still relatively underdeveloped (Gilboa 2008; Nye 2008).

This study examines the rise of intergovernmental actors as primary definers in the "battle over framing" during conflict by analyzing the ongoing media coverage of the Israeli–West Bank separation barrier. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative content analysis, we examine 135 major news items related to the barrier that appeared between the years 2002 and 2011 in four leading American and British newspapers (*New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Guardian*, and *London Times*). By coding seven distinct criteria in each news item, we determine the dominant media frames that competed over primacy in all four newspapers and point to the events that most influenced their dominance over time.

Theoretical Background

The Battle over Framing

In the context of communication studies, framing theory refers to the manner in which different meanings are given to an unfolding event depending on the emphases and omissions contained in the text (Entman 1993; Gamson and Modigliani 1994). Scholars of framing theory often track the development of recurring frames in the media to identify trends in public issues, compare coverage and variation between different news agencies, or examine the factors that influence the construction of public opinion (Chong and Druckman 2007; Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). Beyond acting as a tool for interpreting events, the power of a media frame lies in its ability to also create events by informing the audience what issues are important to know about and what are not (Ryan 1991). The ability to pick and emphasize certain information among all the noise in the media makes the process of framing a source of struggle between opposing interest groups wishing to influence public opinion (Carragee and Roefs 2004).

The decision to prefer one frame over another during news coverage depends on both internal and external factors that influence the media organization at all times. Within the newsroom, these factors include economic concerns, technical constraints, work routines, personal and ideological considerations of the editor, the owner, and of the journalist himself (Wolfsfeld 1997). Outside of the newsroom, these factors include the social environment and culture in which the media organization operates as well as the various external actors in society that hold the ability to construct and distribute their own frame of reference for a range of social issues (health, education, environment, security, etc.). These external actors have the ability to intervene in the production of news and are often termed as "organizational policy actors" (Andsager and Smiley 1998). They include government agencies, large corporations, elite groups, professionals, members of civic-society, and others.

The question of why some actors manage to influence the media's preferences more than others is often debated. Hall et al. (1978) argue that powerful institutions hold the ability to become "primary definers" for the media, supplying and defining information for the journalists who then translate it for the wider audience as secondary definers. Yet, it is the journalist who ultimately decides which of the competing and often conflicting sources of information will serve as the primary definers. Zoch and Molleda (2006) claim that the more reliable and accredited a source is perceived to be by the journalist, the more likely the frame offered and defined by him will find its way into the finished report. A large number of studies have shown that media coverage tends to be "authority-oriented" in the sense that it relies mainly on official government and public authority actors to serve as its primary definers (Hansen 1991: 449–50). Hale (1978) finds that newspapers in the United States tend to adopt verbatim the wordings of court-prepared news releases, because the justice system is traditionally perceived by U.S. journalists as very trustworthy. Similar studies have found supporting results (see Avraham 2003).

Actors vying to become primary definers of information are not limited to local players and surroundings, but often include state actors in the international level. The perceived ability to influence public opinion through mass media draws the state to engage with news agencies as a method of improving their image among publics and elites (Manheim and Albritton 1984). These efforts are either done for economic purposes, such as attracting more tourism and foreign investment, or for political purposes, such as garnering support for the state's policies (Avraham and Ketter 2008). Policy makers often assume that by influencing local media in a target country, they may change public opinion in their favor (Naveh 2002). Attempts made by states to contact foreign media and foster sympathy among foreign audiences have become a key tool in their public diplomacy efforts (Gilboa 2008).

The plethora of international and state agents wishing to influence media coverage creates a struggle over attention that is most apparent during times of war. As each side in an ongoing conflict tries to gain more favorable international coverage, it also attempts to tarnish the image of its rival, often viewing each media outlet as either "for" or "against" it (Galloway 2005). This is especially apparent when the media outlet does not originate or is not directly related to any of the warring sides, allowing both sides a more viable chance to influence coverage. Under such circumstances, journalists often lack traditional primary definers, as they are forced to rely on selective and, at times, misleading information provided to them by foreign-state agents engaged in a war of words over a high-stakes controversial issue. In search for more reliable sources of information, third-party actors may then surface as important definers of information for the media. Official intergovernmental organizations such as the UN and its affiliates, often perceived as highly regarded symbols of morality among international publics (Kacowicz 2005), act as substitutes to the media's "authority-oriented" tendencies, serving as alternative primary definers to the extent that they become involved in interpreting the conflict through publicly issued statements, declarations, and judgments.

Realizing their limited ability to define their media image, foreign countries at war may often turn to such third-party actors to serve as primary definers for their cause. This may range from small initiatives such as inviting international celebrities or religious leaders to tour the country and talk to the media (Cooper 2008), to more substantial initiatives such as cooperating with NGO (nongovernmental organization) reports who are perceived as reliable in the eyes of the international community, and up to officially petitioning intergovernmental organizations such as the UN Human Rights Council or the ICJ to condemn the other side. A number of studies in the past have examined the various efforts made by state actors to influence the frames deployed in the media during conflict situations. Yet, these mostly revolved around U.S.- or NATO-led conflicts where one side had a clear advantage over the other in its power to influence global media outlets, and so it did not actively seek to involve alternative definers. These include the first Gulf War (Iyengar and Simon 1993), Saudi Arabia's involvement in the 9/11 terror attacks against the United States (Zhang and Benoit 2004), or the United States's invasion of Iraq (Maslog et al. 2006). The Israeli–Palestinian conflict, however, presents a clear case where such efforts to involve intergovernmental actors as alternative definers were pursued by both sides, allowing us to examine their influence over coverage.

The Framing of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict

The extensive media coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict can be seen as a prime example of the emphasis that both state and non-state actors put on the cultivation of their global image during violent struggles. These efforts have been extensively researched by scholars in the past decade (Avraham 2009; Navon 2006; Schleifer 2003; Wolfsfeld 1997). Gutmann (2005) describes the meticulous efforts made by both official and non-official actors in the Israeli–Palestinian struggle to influence media reports, from staging scenes of destruction for photographers to giving organized tours for journalists in war zones, censoring or threatening wayward reporters, or creating online media campaigns to involve the public. Galloway (2005) sees the media efforts made by both sides in the conflict as being “even more important than the shooting war.”

The dominant media frames that characterize the coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict have changed over the years. Avraham (2009) describes this change from a mostly positive view in the 1960s and 1970s of Israel as a story of “few vs. many,” to a much more critical view of Israel as a “Goliath” fighting against a Palestinian “David” since the early 1980s. Wolfsfeld (1997) sees the events of the first Palestinian uprising in 1987 (the “Intifada”) as one of the major turning points in the coverage of the conflict. The violent pictures broadcasted from the uprising created a split between two main competing frames: the “law and order frame,” which sided with the Israeli authorities and presented the uprising as an internal disorder led by outlaws, and the “injustice frame,” which sided with the Palestinian population and presented the events as a struggle for rights. Both Schleifer (2003) and Aqtash (2005) argue that the coverage of the Second Intifada in the years 2001 to 2005 became a much more clear-cut case in the international media’s preference toward the Palestinian narrative, mainly due to the harsh images of injured civilians and fatalities on the Palestinian side. Other studies claimed an altogether balanced view (Galloway 2005; Kalb and Saivetz 2007).

Studies have pointed to the variation in coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict between different parts of the world. Although public opinion in most West European countries has significantly shifted over the years in favor of the Palestinian cause (Galloway 2005; Navon 2006), it has remained consistently pro-Israeli in the United States (Daniel 1997). Kalb and Saivetz (2007) also find a largely critical approach toward Israel in the United Kingdom. Gilboa (1993) claims that the large variance between Europe and the United States is related to the strong pro-Israeli and pro-Jewish sentiments among many in the American public as well as a basic view of the Arab world as a source of religious extremism.

A number of factors have been used in past studies to determine which frames are implemented by the media during coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Wolfsfeld (1997) finds major differences in the terminology used to describe people and events during the First Intifada, such as the intermittent use of the word "terrorists" or the choice between "outlaws" versus "combatants" to describe the Palestinian population. Liebes and First (2003) examine the powerful use of photographic violence to convey one narrative over the other. Navon (2006) finds anti-Semitic references in some news reports as a clear sign of an anti-Israeli framing, whereas Arikat (2011) finds orientalist references of Arabs in the United States reporting as a sign of a pro-Israeli framing. What these studies all have in common is their depiction of a growing polarization between news agencies since the Second Intifada regarding the frames through which they wish to construct their coverage of the conflict, allowing more room for both sides to try and influence each frame and pull it further to its side.

The Israeli–West Bank Separation Barrier

A convincing example of the increasing polarization among media outlets in their coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict can be seen in the framing of the Israeli–West Bank separation barrier. Starting with its construction by Israel in 2002, the barrier has since become a potent symbol of the conflict in its entirety. The barrier was initially designed as a 700 km obstacle along the 1949 armistice lines to separate between Israel and the West Bank, consisting mostly of a series of steel fences (94 percent) that includes portions of concrete walls studded with security towers (6 percent). The Israeli government advocated the necessity of the barrier as a security measure in response to a wave of Palestinian suicide attacks that occurred during the Second Intifada (2000–2005), killing hundreds of Israelis. The barrier was cited as a success by Israeli authorities as the number of suicide attacks dramatically decreased in areas where the construction of the barrier was completed (State of Israel, Ministry of Defence 2007). In contrast, Palestinians claimed that the barrier unilaterally annexes land from the West Bank under the pretense of security. Such claims cite the fact that in many areas, the barrier's route substantially deviated from the 1949 lines into the West Bank, thereby not only creating a de facto annexation of approximately 9 percent of the West Bank, but also severely restricting the movement and livelihood of Palestinians within those areas (B'tselem 2005).

Throughout the years, the question over the legality of the barrier's construction was repeatedly debated both in Israeli courts and in the international community. In July 2004, the ICJ concluded in a non-binding advisory ruling that the barrier was in violation of international law, referring to it as a "wall" (ICJ 2004/28). The UN General Assembly called for the immediate dismantling of the barrier shortly thereafter. The Israeli government refused to accept the ruling, claiming it was one-sided and beyond the scope of the court's authority. In the same month, the Israeli Supreme Court concluded that the barrier was legal, referring to it as a "fence," but adding that portions of the barrier should be rerouted due to violations of human rights. The Israeli government complied with the Israeli ruling by rerouting portions of the barrier around Jerusalem. A second major rerouting took place near the Palestinian village of Bil'in in June 2011 following a years-long series of weekly protests. Since 2006, very little progress has been made toward completing the barrier, and by mid-2012, only 62 percent of its original route has been constructed (B'tselem 2012). Even so, the barrier remains a hot-button issue and one of the main symbols of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Portions of its walled sections have become tourist destinations, whereas the debate over its role in the conflict remains controversial in the international media.

The different media frames used to cover events related to the barrier, as well as changes that occurred in those frames over time, have yet to be empirically examined. The visible efforts made by both sides in the conflict to garner favor in media coverage, along with the high involvement of third-party actors such as the ICJ and UN in defining and framing the barrier as either a "security fence" or an "apartheid wall," make the coverage of the Israeli–West Bank separation barrier an interesting case study for examining how intergovernmental actors may arise as primary definers during highly mediatized foreign conflicts. Within this role, the involvement of such actors may influence the media's (and thus the public's) perception of an international event in a substantial way.

Method

Three main research questions are examined in this study:

> **Research Question 1:** What media frames competed over coverage of the Israeli–West Bank separation barrier in American and British newspapers between the years 2002 and 2011?
> **Research Question 2:** Which media frame dominated the coverage of the separation barrier in American versus British newspapers between the years 2002 and 2011, and has this changed over time?
> **Research Question 3:** To what degree did actions performed by intergovernmental organizations such as the ICJ and UN helped define the coverage patterns of the barrier in American and British newspapers, and in what way can this influence be seen (changes in frame dominance, terminology, etc.)?

To answer these questions, we analyzed 135 news items published in four major English-speaking newspapers between the years 2002 and 2011 ($N = 135$). Sixty-four items were taken from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* in the United States, and seventy-one items were taken from the (London) *Times* and the *Guardian* in the United Kingdom. The four papers were chosen due to their influential role as leading sources of printed news in both countries as well as the detailed online archive they make available, as can be seen in their repeated use by researchers in the field of media framing from recent years (Aksoy 2009; Ten Eyck and Williment 2003). Ten major events related to the separation barrier were chosen between the years 2002 and 2011. These were the events that garnered the most media attention during this time period (i.e., the most news items in all four newspapers). All the items published in the two weeks following each event were included in the sample, creating a total of 135 items. The number of articles analyzed seemed sufficient when compared with other comparable studies from recent years, as argued by Day and Golan (2005). The years

2002 to 2011 were chosen to coincide with the beginning of the barrier's construction (June 2002) up until the last major rerouting of the barrier, which took place near the village of Bil'in (June 2011). The items were then analyzed using a combination of qualitative and quantitative content analysis. The qualitative content analysis was used to determine which frames arise in the reports, whereas the quantitative content analysis determines changes in their dominance over time. The use of mixed methods is for the sake of complementarity, as termed by Greene et al. (1989) to seek elaboration and enhancement of the results from one method with those of another.

The qualitative approach is especially effective for research attempting to explain social interaction generally and studies on news coverage in particular (Tuchman 1991). The qualitative method makes it possible to show how historical, cultural, or political connections in the use of language and communication penetrate a text's content, meanings, structures, or strategies (van Dijk 1991). The quality of coverage refers to the myths, generalizations, and definitions associated with media treatment of specific issues.

In the spirit of the qualitative–interpretive method, after reading through all 135 sampled news items, we determined seven criteria to provide the base for our framing analysis. These build on a similar analysis done by Wolfsfeld (1997) to distinguish between frames deployed in the U.S. media during its coverage of the First Intifada. By identifying recurring themes and patterns in the sampled news items, specific criteria are then chosen to distinguish between them and determine distinct frames. Accordingly, our analysis finds three recurring themes that appeared in news items in all four newspapers. As a convenient reference, we termed the first two themes as a "security theme" versus an "occupation theme." These two themes partly coincided with those of Wolfsfeld's analysis of the First Intifada (i.e., the "law and order frame" vs. the "injustice frame") and can also be viewed as the "pro-Israeli" theme versus the "pro-Palestinian" theme. In addition, a third theme that we considered unbiased toward a specific side in the conflict, and that contained elements from both other themes, was termed here as "neutral."

Our analysis coded the following seven criteria to distinguish between the three recurring themes in each news item: (1) What is the underlying problem presented in the news item—a security problem, a political/humanitarian problem, or otherwise? (2) To whom does the item point as being responsible for the problem—Israel, the Palestinians, or both? (3) What background does the news item provide for the reported event—of terrorist events, of occupation, or no background provided? (4) Who is interviewed/quoted and what is his or her affiliation—Israeli or pro-Israeli officials and citizens, Palestinian or pro-Palestinian officials and citizens, or otherwise? (5) What numbers or raw data are presented—number of terrorist events, data on demographics and economy of the West Bank, or otherwise? (6) What terminology is used in the item—preference toward the term "fence" and the use of informative wording, preference toward the term "wall" and the use of emotional wording, or neutral terminology? (7) What analogies, metaphors, or historical references are used during the report—security analogies of terrorism and religious extremism, humanitarian analogies of apartheid and the Berlin Wall, or otherwise.

Once the criteria were determined, each news item was coded accordingly. News items that featured at least five of the seven criteria supporting the security theme were determined as promoting a "security frame." Similarly, news items that featured at least five of the seven criteria supporting the occupation theme were determined as promoting an "occupation frame." News items featuring less than five criteria supporting one specific theme, or alternatively, featured criteria supporting a third neutral theme, were determined as "neutral frames." Items where a specific criterion did not apply, such as when no interviews were conducted or no data were presented, the criterion was dropped. In such cases, four criteria sufficed to determine the main frame used in the news item. Once the main frame was determined in each news item, we examined changes in their dominance over time in all four newspapers.

The quantitative technique deployed in this study is geared toward providing an objective, systematic, and quantifiable description of the manifest content through the accumulation of measurable quantitative data (Krippendorff 2012). Validity and reliability of our coding system were achieved through the use of two judges, and the agreement rate between them with regard to the seven chosen variables included in the coding page was 90 percent. To achieve such a high level of agreement, the judges were given training and several pre-tests were conducted. Reliability was tested using an ordinal Krippendorff's Alpha Reliability Test (Hayes and Krippendorff 2007), and the minimal coefficient was .753 on the second criterion ("who is responsible"). Results appear in the next chapter, followed by examples to each of the seven criteria and a detailed analysis of the differences between them.

Results and Discussion

An examination of the overall use of frames between the years 2002 and 2011 in all four newspapers reveals a relatively balanced coverage of the barrier in terms of frame occurrences, with the *Guardian* and the *New York Times* more clearly preferring the use of one frame over the other (as shown in Figure 1). In the *Washington Post*, eleven of the thirty (37 percent) examined news items published during these years show a preference toward the more pro-Israeli "security frame," another eleven (37 percent) can be characterized as "neutral," and eight items (26 percent) utilized the "occupation frame," providing a roughly equal use of all frames with no clear dominant frame preferred by the newspaper. The same can be said for the *London Times*, with eleven of twenty-nine items (38 percent) supporting the security frame and ten (34 percent) toward the occupation frame. However, a clearer preference toward the Israeli stance can be seen in the overall coverage of the separation barrier in the *New York Times*, with 17 of the 34 examined items (50 percent) characterized by the security frame, and only 10 (29 percent) by the occupation frame. The *Guardian* features an even wider gap in favor of the opposing Palestinian stance, with 23 of 42 items (55 percent) supporting the occupation frame and only 9 (21 percent) supporting the security frame.

In contrast to the overall balanced use of the two main opposing frames during coverage in all four newspapers, when examining the combined changes in frequency of the frames over a period of nine years, a sharp reversal can be seen. Although the

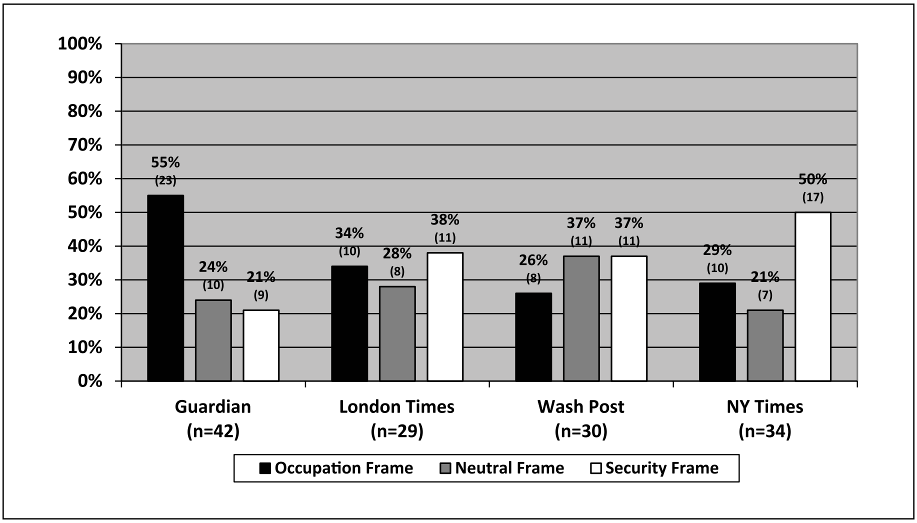

Figure 1. Frequency of frame appearance in four newspapers—2002 to 2011.
Note. Number of news items in parenthesis.

first two years of the barrier's construction (2002–2004) featured an overall average of 55 percent of all examined news items framing the barrier as a "security fence" (with only 28 percent framing it under the occupation lens), a clear turning point is reached in mid-2004. Since then, an overall average of 70 percent of items supported the occupation frame (as shown in Figure 2). The turning point is seen to occur immediately following a non-binding advisory ruling by the ICJ in July of 2004 that condemned the barrier as an illegal wall, giving a clear dominance to its framing as a political measure against the Palestinian people.

The sharp change that occurred since 2004 can also be seen in the dominant terminology used to describe the barrier in all four newspapers (as shown in Figure 3). Although in the first two years of the barrier's construction the term "fence" dominated most news items (with an overall average of 55 percent compared with only 10 percent using the term "wall"), it was immediately altered following the ICJ's ruling in July that referred to the barrier as an "illegal wall." Since then, the term "wall" had virtually replaced the term "fence" to describe the barrier in all four newspapers. Almost all items examined since July 2004 termed the construct as either a wall or a barrier (94 percent), and only rarely used the term fence. Of the fifty-eight news items examined since July of 2004, thirty-eight directly mentioned the ICJ's verdict of the barrier (65 percent), whereas others deployed the terminology used by the court without directly mentioning it (using the term wall or referring to it as illegal), demonstrating the ruling's strong impact on the barrier's coverage. Hence, the complete dominance of the term wall over fence in the media since 2004 can be convincingly attributed to its public use by the ICJ.

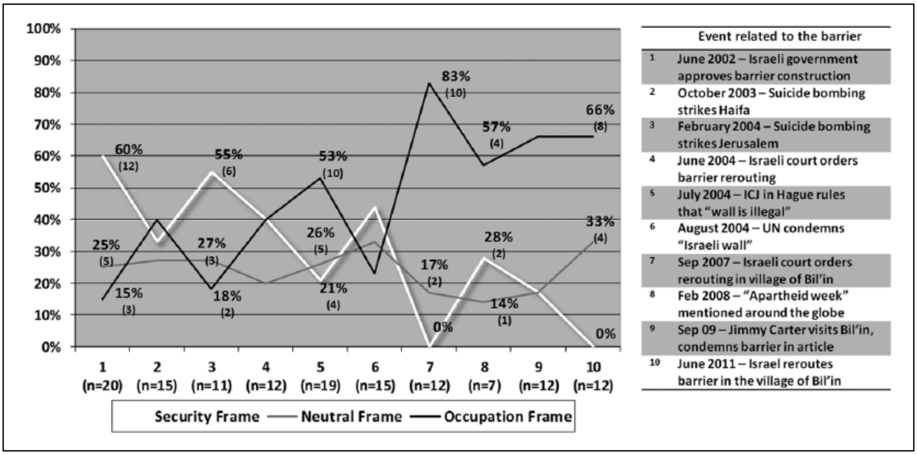

Figure 2. Changes in the frequency of each frame's appearance over time in four newspapers—following ten major events between the years 2002 and 2011.
Note. Number of examined news items in parenthesis.

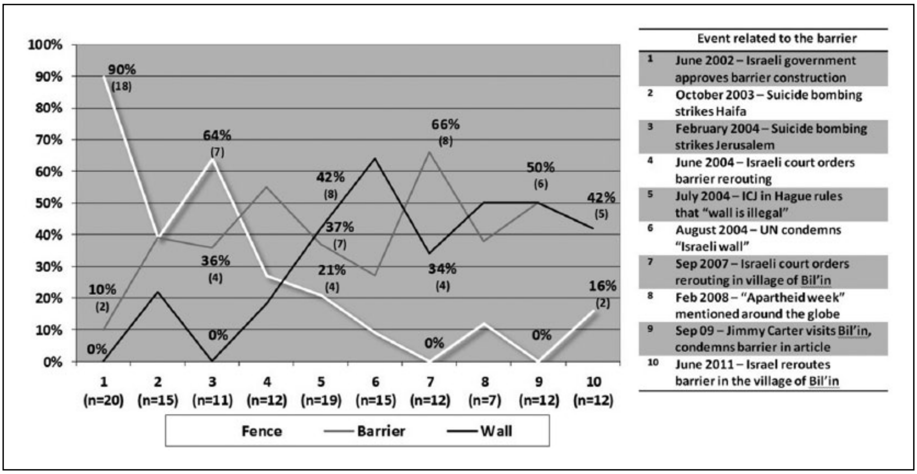

Figure 3. Changes in frequency of the terms "fence," "wall," and "barrier" in four newspapers—following ten major events between the years 2002 and 2011.
Note. Number of examined news items in parenthesis.

Analysis of Competing Frames

The following section elaborates on the differences between each of the seven criteria used in this study to distinguish between the "security" and "occupation" frames. Examples for each criterion are taken from the sampled news items. Table 1 presents

Table 1. Summary of the Two Main Competing Frames.

	Occupation Frame	Security Frame
The underlying problem	A political attempt to annex occupied land causes violations to the human rights of Palestinians	The need to stop terrorism collides with the need to reduce damage to local population
The cause of the problem	The Israeli government, the military, and the illegal settlements	Palestinian terrorist organizations, Palestinian population that support them, Palestinian government
Background provided	Israeli occupation since 1967, violation of Palestinian rights since 2002, or no background provided	Terrorist attacks since early 2000, First Intifada, past wars with neighboring Arab states
Interviews/quotes	PLO officials, victims of Israeli occupation, Jewish or Israeli peace activists, UN and EU officials	Israeli government and military officials, Israeli victims of terrorist activities, U.S. officials
Numbers and data	Palestinian economy (unemployment, average wage, etc.), demographic data of the West Bank	Number of terrorist bombings and victims before and after construction of the barrier, cost of barrier
Analogies/historical references/metaphors	Apartheid, Berlin wall, colonialism, the holocaust	"War on Terror," biblical references, anti-Semitism, religious extremism
Terminology	"Separation Wall"/"Apartheid Wall," emotional headlines, humanitarian jargon	"Security Fence"/"Anti-Terror Fence," informative headlines, security jargon

Note. PLO = Palestine Liberation Organization; UN = United Nations; EU = European Union.

a summary of the two competing frames. A description of the third neutral frame follows at the end.

The underlying problem. A basic criterion for distinguishing frames of reference in any given news item is by examining the manner in which the underlying problem is presented to the reader. News items characterized by the security frame reported events related to the barrier as caused by an inherent tension between Israel's need for security and its obligation to minimize damages caused to Palestinians as a result of that need. A good example for the use of such a frame can be seen in a report by the *New York Times* from June 30, 2004, on an Israeli Court ruling to change the barrier's route. The item opened with the following sentence:

> The Israel Supreme Court ruled today that the barrier the Army is building along the West Bank to wall off Israelis from terror attacks must take into account the needs of Palestinian farmers and others who would be cut off from lands they need for their livelihoods. (*New York Times*, June 30, 2004)

In this example, the reporter chose to describe the barrier as "walling off" Israelis from terror attacks, thus, presenting Israel's actions as defensive and the Israeli people as the main victims of its policy. Presenting the problem as such designated the barrier as a security measure meant to prevent violence, and therefore, framed any issue related to the barrier as an inevitable result of security constraints.

In contrast, items characterized by the occupation frame presented the underlying problem as a political and humanitarian issue, stemming from Israel's attempts to illegally annex parts of the West Bank by erecting a barrier, rather than a security issue. An example of this type of framing can be seen in the *Guardian*'s report of the same Supreme Court ruling from the previous example. The *Guardian* opened the report as follows:

> The Israeli government's security barrier is violating the human rights of Palestinians, the country's highest court ruled yesterday in a judgment that delivered a blow to prime minister Ariel Sharon's plans to seize large parts of the West Bank. (*Guardian*, July 1, 2004)

A report by the *Guardian* a week later opened in a similar way:

> The world court yesterday branded Israel's vast concrete and steel barrier through the West Bank a political not a security measure, and a de facto land grab. (*Guardian*, July 10, 2004)

In both examples, the *Guardian*'s reporter chose to describe the barrier as a "land grab" or a maneuver by the Israeli prime minister (PM) intended on "seizing" parts of the West Bank. Presenting the problem as such designates the barrier as a political measure in a long-standing dispute over land between Israel and Palestine and an act that is both illegal and immoral. Any reported events relating to the barrier are, thus, a part of an ongoing struggle against injustice, as opposed to an issue of security and conflict.

The parties responsible. The previous example not only establishes the underlying problem of the reported events, but also points to the main side responsible for causing it. By presenting the barrier as a security necessity, the security frame establishes the Palestinians as the main side at fault for the reported events. Conversely, by presenting the barrier as a political maneuver, the occupation frame points to Israeli authorities as the main offender at fault for the unfolding events. In an example from July 2004, the *New York Times* explains Israel's decision to reroute its barrier while directly linking it to a violent event from the day before:

> Two Palestinians were killed in southern Gaza when a bomb they were carrying exploded prematurely as they headed toward a Jewish settlement, a military official said. Israel says that the separation barrier is a shield against suicide bombers and that it has already contributed to a sharp decline in attacks. (*New York Times*, July 30, 2004)

By directly connecting a seemingly unrelated event (a failed attempt at a terrorist act) to the event reported in the article (Israel's rerouting of the barrier), the reporter alludes to the Palestinian militant groups as the sole party responsible for the barrier's imposition on Palestinian lives. By contrast, a piece published in the *Times* in the same week pointed a finger to Israel's policies as responsible for a terrorist attack. While referring to a suicide bombing of a restaurant in the Israeli city of Haifa, the article opened with the following line:

> To get to her target in Haifa, last weekend's suicide bomber had to travel 50 km from her home in Jenin across a security barrier built by Israel. (*Times*, October 11, 2003)

By opening a report about a suicide bombing with the mention of the security barrier that the bomber had to traverse, the writer alludes to Israel's policies as responsible for the event and to the bomber's actions as retaliation to such policies.

Quotes and interviews. The use of interviews and quotes helps frame a reported event while also giving an indication of the sources of subsidized information available to the reporter. News items utilizing the security fence mostly featured interviews with high-ranking officials from either the Israeli government or the Israeli military discussing the necessity of the barrier or its success in preventing terrorist activities. Israeli soldiers or citizens who have fallen victim to Palestinian terrorism were also often quoted. In contrast, items utilizing the occupation frame featured interviews with officials from the Palestinian Authority as well as Palestinian residents who experienced hardship or injustice due to the barrier. Jewish and Israeli sources criticizing or opposing the barrier's construction were at times quoted as well. In one example, a report of Israel's decision to reroute part of the barrier near the village of Bil'in was presented by two newspapers in contrasting ways, as seen through the use of quotes. The *Washington Post* reported the decision by quoting an IDF (Israel Defense Forces) spokesman:

> (Col.) Tzur said that the proximity of the barrier to the settlement would leave the army with less lead time to catch possible Palestinian infiltrators. "This is a new threat, but we can handle that," he said, adding that work on removing the old fence would be finished by the end of the week. (*Washington Post*, June 26, 2011).

In contrast, the *New York Times* emphasized the Bil'in decision as one small achievement in a larger struggle, quoting Palestinian PM Salam Fayyad:

> "It is a beginning, not the end," Mr. Fayyad said. The Israeli occupation, he said, was "beginning to be rolled back." "It is a victory for this approach of nonviolence," he added. "A sovereign state of Palestine in the territories occupied in 1967—that is what this is about." (*New York Times*, June 24, 2011).

Both reports failed to provide any quotes or interviews from the opposing side. The *New York Times* exclusively quoted Palestinian sources, whereas the *Washington Post* interviewed only Israeli sources. Both reports also ended by quoting the same announcement made by an Israeli human-rights lawyer who represented the villagers in court; yet, each quoted a different comment made by him. The *Washington Post* quoted his statement that Israel's defense ministry seems to have "given preference to the settlements over fulfilling the court's ruling to the letter," (*Washington Post*, June

26, 2011) whereas the *New York Times* used a harsher quote stating that Israel had "pulled every possible trick to avoid carrying out the Supreme Court decision." (*New York Times*, June 24, 2011)

Terminology. The terminology used in a news item has substantial weight in setting the tone of the reported event. In the case of the separation barrier, the choice of terminology is most noticeable when describing the barrier itself. News items characterized by the security frame mostly referred to the barrier as a "security fence" or at times as an "anti-terrorist fence," thus, emphasizing its role as a security measure. News items characterized by the occupation frame referred to the barrier as a "separation wall" or at times as an "apartheid wall," thus, emphasizing the humanitarian violations caused by the barrier. Examples of the differences in terminology can be found both in the content of the news items as well as in the tone of their headlines. Although news items under the security frame mostly featured neutral and informative headlines, news items under the occupation frame featured strong and emotional wording. One example of this difference can be found in two headlines of the same event as reported both by the *Guardian* and the *Washington Post* on September 5, 2007. A decision of the Israeli Supreme Court to reroute part of the barrier was headlined as such:

> **Israeli Court Orders Rerouting of Barrier**: Decision Backs Palestinian Villagers. (*Washington Post*, September 5, 2007)
>
> **Palestinians celebrate rare victory over hated barrier**: Supreme Court vindicates weekly protests and forces Israel to reroute security fences and roads. (*Guardian*, September 5, 2007)

The *Guardian*'s use of strong wording such as "hated barrier" and "rare victory" conjures emotions of joy and triumph over injustice for the reader. The *Washington Post*'s headline distances itself from such emotions by providing more informative wording, thus, emphasizing the event rather than the sentiments involved.

Analogies and historical references. The ability to conjure strong sentiments through intertextuality is an important element in the construct of a frame and can lead the reader to view a current global event with the same conviction as he did a past event closer to home. Items dominated by the occupation frame often use the term "apartheid wall" to evoke strong emotions against racism and injustice such as those associated with the former apartheid state in South Africa, whereas the use of the phrase "tear down the wall" associates it with the fall of the Berlin wall, a much less controversial issue among most Western societies. One such example of this reference can be found in the *Guardian*'s headline "World Court Tells Israel to Tear Down Illegal Wall" (*Guardian*, July 10, 2004). This is despite the fact that the Court's ruling reported that the barrier should be rerouted in parts, not "torn down." In contrast, the *New York Times*' headline from the same day read "Major Portion of Israeli Fence Is Ruled Illegal" (*New York Times*, July 10, 2004), thus, more accurately describing the ruling that took place. However, reports dominated by the security frame use historical references and metaphors that emphasize Israel's need for security and protection. Israel's past wars with neighboring Arab states will often be mentioned as well as the general global war on terror. The terms "terrorists," "suicide bombers," "Muslims," and "fanatics" were often used as a method to conjure anti-Arab and anti-Muslim feelings among Western audiences, especially in the United States. Biblical references are at times mentioned when referring to Israel as the "promised land" of the Jewish people or to the West Bank as Judea and Samaria.

Background to events. The type of background provided in a news item can have a strong influence on the manner in which it is perceived by the reader, more so when no background is provided at all. Items characterized by the security frame often mention the Second Intifada and the wave of terrorist attacks against Israel as a background to the reported event. Thus, the event reported, whether it is a protest against the barrier or a court verdict, is framed as a resulting consequence of these terrorist attacks. In a similar fashion, the lack of a background can serve the same function for the reader by disassociating one event from the other. Items characterized by the occupation frame often lack background that mentions terrorist activities so as to disassociate the barrier from security considerations. Any background provided usually focused only on events following the construction of the barrier that serve to critique it, such as past court rulings or protests. By neglecting to provide a background to the barrier's construction, the event is framed under the light of injustice, as there is no apparent reason to justify its occurrence. A good example of this effect can be seen in an item by the *Guardian* from July 13, 2004, focusing on the logistical and administrative troubles caused to Palestinians that live next to the barrier's route. The *Guardian* failed to provide any background as to why the barrier was constructed, and thus, an image of a Kafkaesque story emerged that shaped the event as a political and bureaucratic folly, rather than a result of security concerns.

Data presented. As with the use of quotes, the use of numbers and raw data helps frame the reported event and points to the source of information available to the reporter. Items utilizing the security frame often provided data on the number of terrorist activities and Israeli victims before and after the construction of the barrier, so as to present the barrier as a successful security measure. A typical example of a before-and-after comparison can be seen in the *New York Times*:

> The barrier, which is one-third complete, has almost eliminated attacks in northern Israel. There were 63 deaths from bus bombings on the east-west road between Afula and Hadera in 2002, but only 3 last year after the barrier was completed there, Captain Dallal said. (*New York Times*, June 20, 2004).

In contrast, items of the occupation frame often presented demographic and financial data regarding the condition of the Palestinian economy. This served to emphasize the hardships caused to Palestinians by the barrier and the Israeli occupation. Data regarding the number of unemployed Palestinians or people without access to basic services were presented in a similar before-and-after comparison so as to emphasize humanitarian injustice. Legal data, such as the number of petitions filed against the barrier, were at times used to emphasize the controversy surrounding the barrier's legality.

The neutral frame. As stated by Ryan (1991: 75), the battle over framing is not a zero-sum game, and opposing frames can coexist while competing for exposure. We find that among the 135 items examined, thirty-four items (25 percent) did not decidedly fit into either of the two dominating frames in our coding because they contained criteria from both the fence and wall frames. These items can thus be considered neutral. The neutral frame combined characteristics from both competing frames, yet avoided associating blame to one particular side. The barrier's necessity as a security measure was usually recognized in such items by providing the background to its construction and mentioning Palestinian terrorism, yet also critiqued it and called for its eventual dismantling. The underlying problem presented was not focused on the barrier itself but on the conflict as a whole and usually eluded to a solution that involves peace negotiations as opposed to just dismantling the barrier. The terminology was mostly neutral (barrier, as opposed to fence or wall), whereas historical references included both Jewish persecution as well as Israeli occupation. Such items can be considered unbiased or balanced, as they do not lean in favor of either of the two competing narratives or accommodate both arguments.

Conclusion

In our analysis of the barrier's coverage, we find two main frames that competed over dominance in British and American newspapers between the years 2002 and 2011, as in accordance with our first research question. These two frames directly reflected the main arguments raised by the two opposing sides of the barrier—the security frame, which emphasized Israel's need for security, and the occupation frame, which emphasized the violation of Palestinian rights caused by the barrier. Only 25 percent of the examined news items were found to be neutral, accommodating the arguments made by both sides. Of the four newspapers examined, the *Guardian* presented a clear preference toward the more pro-Palestinian occupation frame throughout the examined years, whereas the *New York Times* leaned more toward the pro-Israeli security frame. Both the *Washington Post* and the *Times* presented an overall balanced use of each frame with no clear preference toward one of them.

A second finding in our analysis points to a drastic change that occurred in the overall dominance of the two frames over time in all four newspapers—from a clear dominance of the security frame in the first two years of the barrier's construction (2002–2004) to an even stronger dominance of the occupation frame thereafter. We find that a major turning point in favor of the occupation frame occurred as a direct response to the ruling of the ICJ against the barrier's legality and the following condemnation issued by the UN General Assembly. This change can also be seen in the terminology used to describe the barrier, from a dominance of the term fence in all four newspapers up until mid-2004, to an almost complete disappearance of that term after the court's ruling. In addition, 65 percent of the news items examined since June 2004 directly mentioned the court's ruling in their report, whereas others deployed the terms suggested by the ICJ without mentioning it directly. This analysis implies that by condemning the barrier as illegal and using the term wall, the ICJ and UN spurred a major shift in the media's stance on the barrier's legitimacy and intention. This change is important to note due to three main points regarding the court's ruling: (1) The ruling was a non-binding advisory report with no official legal standing. (2) The use of the term wall does not faithfully represent the barrier's actual construct, as only 6 percent of the barrier is comprised of a wall whereas the rest is a fence. (3) The walled portions of the barrier most accessible to visitors and journalists (those surrounding Jerusalem and Bethlehem) were mostly constructed by July 2003, a year before the ICJ's ruling, yet the term fence was still dominant in media coverage up until the ruling. Our findings show that the court's ruling had a notable effect on the media's coverage of the barrier thereafter, and its choice of terminology was almost immediately adopted by all four newspapers.

By using this method of framing analysis, this study was able to identify that intergovernmental actors ultimately became the primary definers of the separation barrier in international coverage, as opposed to the state actors involved in the conflict itself. Meaningful actions performed by both the Israeli and Palestinian governments that may help define the barrier's image, such as rerouting the barrier, conducting weekly protests, inviting public figures, or even violent acts, did not appear to have the same strong impact on coverage as the ICJ's ruling. The barrier, thus, presents a case in which journalists preferred definitions provided to them by third-party actors rather than those willingly provided to them by governmental actors actively seeking to influence coverage. An argument can be made that in the absence of reliable sources of authority to rely on for information (as both the Israeli and Palestinian sides have strong incentives to present only partial information), intergovernmental organizations may arise as alternative sources of authority in the eyes of journalists. This coincides with the observation made by Hale (1978) regarding the tendency of journalists to adopt court rulings verbatim in their reports, making the ICJ an effective alternative for them in the international system to the high credibility offered by domestic courts during coverage of domestic affairs.

The case of the separation barrier's media coverage can thus serve as an example to the important role that intergovernmental actors may play in the framing of foreign conflicts. The sharp change in public opinion and the international pressure that followed the ruling of the ICJ eventually convinced the Israeli government to reroute significant parts of the barrier. Although this change in public opinion can be attributed to many other events that took place during that period (namely, those of the Second Intifada and the military operations that took place in the West Bank), the immediate and lasting effect that the court's ruling had on the media's specific treatment of the separation barrier points to its important role in the overall change that occurred. In this sense, intergovernmental bodies that are held in high regard among the international community, such as the ICJ, can be considered as potential primary definers, indirectly affecting local policy by influencing public opinion through global media, rather than solely as judicial or policy actors designed to directly enforce their rulings. Statements issued by such bodies are often considered "toothless" by policy makers. However, scholars of communication studies, especially those dealing with framing theory, may offer a better perspective to the importance of such processes. Statements issued by such bodies, though at many times having no immediate effect on the decision makers of the countries concerned, may still indirectly affect the state's policy by promoting certain frames in the media and influencing public opinion. The role of the ICJ as a source of authority in an international system lacking such traditional state roles makes it an important factor to be considered in the "battle over framing" during international conflict.

More importantly, these findings help us better understand what role intergovernmental organizations may play in the battle over framing of other highly mediatized conflicts in the international system. As the case of the separation barrier suggests, intergovernmental organizations may be able to become the primary definers of a high-stakes ongoing conflict if they are perceived as a better alternative to the information provided by the actors involved in the conflict itself. We can thus assume that less-mediatized conflicts involving fewer stakes or engaged by actors with fewer resources would leave an even wider room of influence for statements made by a credible international body to help shape the framing of media reports. The degree of this influence will depend mostly on the vacuum left by the actors involved in the conflict who are unable or unwilling to fulfill their role as traditional sources of authority in the eyes of the reporter. We suggest that the less credible the governmental actors of a conflict appear to be, either because they are uncommunicative, unreliable, uninformed, or even deceptive in the information they make available, the more impact intergovernmental actors will have in the shaping of the resulting coverage. This hypothesis may be applied on other ongoing conflicts in the international system to explain or anticipate the role of such bodies in their framing. For example, we should expect that intergovernmental organizations will have a higher likelihood of becoming the primary definers during coverage of the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine since 2014 (e.g., through their use of the term "Russian paramilitaries" vs. "Ukrainian rebels," "intervention" vs. "invasion," etc.) as both the Russian and Ukrainian governments are often perceived as equally unreliable sources of information despite the large variance in the resources at their disposal. Alternatively, we would expect that the media's coverage of the ongoing debate between states of the Eurozone regarding the framing of immigration as either a humanitarian or a demographic crisis to be less dependent on the definitions provided to them by intergovernmental actors and more on the policies and statements issued by credible sources of authority within the EU (e.g., the governments of Germany, France, etc.), as these are perceived to be sufficiently reliable and create less need for journalists to seek third-party alternatives.

Future studies may further develop the suggested link between intergovernmental organizations and media coverage during conflict through an examination of additional cases and variances. These variances may include the level of visibility of the conflict reported (high-visibility conflict in Ukraine vs. low-visibility conflict in the Congo), the level of credibility of the international body involved (high credibility of the ICJ vs. lower credibility of the UN Human Rights Council), the number of intergovernmental organizations involved (multilateral statements over climate change vs. IMF [International Monetary Fund] statements on fiscal policies), temporal variances of the event (ongoing conflicts, singular events, episodic, etc.), the type of actors involved (states vs. non-state actors—Syrian government vs. Syrian rebels), and issues of power and available resources involving the different stakeholders engaged in the battle over framing. Although interviews conducted with journalists on the issue of an actor's perceived credibility are beyond the scope of the current study, they may help future studies shed light on how such variances influence the reporter's decision to prefer third-party actors over traditional sources of authority for information. It may also be interesting to expand the treatment of this issue through scholars of international relations theory, as constructivist notions on the spread of ideas in the international system may offer insight to the influence that intergovernmental bodies may have over public opinion. These avenues of research may contribute not only to future academic studies focusing on the shaping of media coverage, but may also contribute to practitioners of public diplomacy. Although the actions of intergovernmental organizations such as the ICJ and UN may not have immediate direct consequences in terms of policy, they may still affect long-term public opinion through the shaping of media coverage. As such, cooperation with such bodies may promote the country's image, or at the very least, prevent it from being tarnished in a system increasingly concerned with public opinion and narrative.

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Book Reviews

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Stephen Coleman
How Voters Feel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. x + 267 pp. ISBN 9781107601628

Reviewed by: Matthew Powers, *University of Washington–Seattle, WA, USA*
DOI: 10.1177/1940161215611986

For decades, scholars of political communication have tracked declining levels of trust in political institutions across democracies in Western Europe and North America, a broad skepticism on the part of citizens toward authorities, and the widespread feeling that elections are a fixed game that benefit elites. Within this context, studies of voting typically focus on the factors that shape how—or whether—people cast a ballot. Researchers, for example, have examined the effect of different messaging strategies on voter preferences, the role of new technological platforms in coordinating campaigns, and the influence of social networks on decision-making processes. In each, scholars have developed—with increasing sophistication—ways to measure and analyze the procedural aspects of democratic politics today.

And yet, as Stephen Coleman argues in his remarkable new book, this research tends to leave the individual voter "as a disembodied cog in a vast political counting machine" (p. viii). Stripped away are the aspirations, hopes, anxieties, and uncertainties that mark the experience of those who do and do not cast ballots—and, by extension, a deeper understanding of the feelings that shape rising levels of distrust and skepticism in political life more generally. *How Voters Feel* aims to put these experiences of everyday democracy under the scholarly spotlight. The result—beautifully written and persuasively argued—is a book that gives cultural meaning to the pervasive skepticism found among voters in contemporary democracies.

As a project, *How Voters Feel* is unabashedly qualitative in nature. Similar to Nina Eliasoph's *Avoiding Politics*, it takes everyday citizens as its object of analysis and invites them to share their experiences of voting. Interviewees—sixty in total, taken from a cross section of voters and nonvoters in a single English city—were led through a series of open questions and visual prompts intended to move beyond the usual clichés about voting and instead create a space wherein they could "stray from conventional narrative paths." This methodological decision allows Coleman to explore the textures that individuals have toward voting in ways that other methodological approach (e.g., surveys, laboratory experiments) could only hope to approximate. Specifically, the interviews allow him to see the complex and sometimes contradictory feelings that individuals hold with regard to democracy's most fundamental performative act. Some vote dutifully, but doubt that their input makes any difference in the outcome. Others are "committed abstainers" (p. 132) who refuse to vote out of principle but protest when someone suggests taking away their right to vote. Nearly all the respondents seem to feel as though ticking a box is inadequate as a form of democratic political expression. "My opinion is not on that piece of paper," as one interviewee puts it emphatically (p. 142).

How Voters Feel is structured in two parts. The first examines the metaphors and framing devices that make voting simultaneously appear as expressions of ideals, rituals, routines, and pathologies. It draws on an impressive range of scholarly and literary sources to describe the various narratives and cultural meanings ascribed to the act. The final chapter in the section "Memories of the Ballot Box" provides a sustained methodological reflection on how the interviews were conducted and analyzed. The second part of the book dives into the interview data to show the different ways people do and do not acquire the voting habit, the anxieties they have about their votes (or nonvotes) being misunderstood (rather than miscounted), and the desire for voting to be rooted in something more than a passing moment of ballot casting. Throughout, Coleman is especially attentive to the social hierarchies that shape affective sensibilities—leading some, for example, to feel as if they have something important to contribute to the democratic process, whereas others remain silent. Taken together, these differences lead Coleman to conclude that although political representation "may not be in full-blown crisis . . . neither is it in ruddy health" (p. 233).

The book's final chapter takes up the question of what might be done to revitalize the culture of voting. Without reverting to an idealized vision of participatory democracy, Coleman identifies three areas in which voting could be reinvigorated: first, in the preparation of people as voters (e.g., through greater attention to the development of individual civic voices); second, in the experience of voting itself (e.g., by supplementing acts of voting with substantive and diverse forms of civic dialogue); and third, in linking the fact of voting with the feeling of being counted. In each, Coleman is interested less in a program for action and more in creating conditions that will lead to the possibility of new, as-yet-unscripted feelings and actions.

Given this interest in the conditions of democratic possibility, it is somewhat surprising that the very forces shaping contemporary feelings toward voting remain largely un-discussed until the book's final pages. There, Coleman notes that although political representatives could once be counted on to tame the excesses of market forces, today, they seem to function most frequently in the service of those entities. Given these conditions, the rage, anger, anxieties, and apathies of voters seem eminently sensible. It falls to future scholarship to situate these feelings in historical and comparative perspectives. For the moment, *How Voters Feel* provides a most welcome advancement to the cultural understanding of contemporary political life.

Philip N. Howard and Muzammil M. Hussain
Democracy's Fourth Wave? Digital Media and the Arab Spring. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. 145 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-993697-7.

Reviewed by: Naomi Sakr, *University of Westminster, London, UK*
DOI: 10.1177/1940161215611988

Published two years after the Arab uprisings, with "digital media" prominent in its subtitle, this book reaches a circumspect conclusion about the place of digital media in the uprisings. Its authors find it "difficult to say whether the revolutions would or would not have happened without digital media" because the public anger expressed through the uprisings was caused by "widespread poverty and governmental ineptitude" (p. 116). What they do say with certainty is that "patterns of political change in these protests were digitally enabled," both in the short term and during the preceding decade.

On this basis, looking beyond the burning issues of poverty, unemployment, corruption, and police brutality that were central to the protests, Howard and Hussain pursue the media-centric research trajectory of several journal articles they have written jointly since 2011 to investigate "digital connectivity and access to information infrastructure" as "central variables" in the so-called Arab Spring. They investigate them in relation to "contextual variables," such as average incomes, wealth distribution, and oil production, to "identify causal recipes that best predict the widest range of democracy promoting outcomes" (p. 111). The resulting causal recipes reflect the extent to which digital media "provided the very infrastructure that created deep communication ties and organizational capacity in groups of activists before the major protests took place" (p. 120).

It is not just the benefit of hindsight that sows doubt regarding the authors' assessments of "democracy promoting outcomes." In 2015, there are clearly problems in labeling Egypt as a "case of peaceful democratic regime change" or suggesting that Saudi Arabia made "major" political concessions in response to dissent (pp. 8-9, 111). More troubling is the extent to which the book's application of statistical procedures to explain regime fragility or social movement success (through "fuzzy set logic" leading to "parsimonious models") distances the reader from flesh-and-blood human beings who were still living the nightmare of political oppression when the book was being written. Notwithstanding the cover photograph close-up and the dedication to those who sacrificed for popular democracy, the remoteness of actual people within the research narrative deprives the work of a much-needed down-to-earth skepticism about alleged political gains.

To be fair, the authors adopt a wide definition of digital media that includes not only the technological tools but also the content carried and the "people, organizations and industries that produce both the tools and the content" (p. 13). But the "people" in this book are seen mainly from a bird's-eye view, perhaps because, judging from the "Acknowledgements" section, primary data collection in Arab countries seems to have been limited to fieldwork in Beirut along with input from graduate assistants in Cairo, Gaza, Sanaa, and Tunis. As for digital media content, when Howard and Hussain discuss Al Jazeera, as in their chapter "Al Jazeera, Social Media and Digital Journalism," their focus is Al Jazeera English, not Al Jazeera Arabic, and their sources are mostly secondary, in the form of academic journal articles. Their description of Al Jazeera as "adept and autonomous" (p. 90) and "independent" (p. 91) would have been debatable at any time, but is highly questionable since Qatari foreign policy in 2011 dictated Al Jazeera's differential treatment of the uprisings in Syria and Bahrain.

Reliance on secondary sources as evidence for upbeat assertions about the repeal of press laws or the introduction of new private radio and television channels can be risky if there are no "buts" in the text to accommodate the twists and turns of more downbeat realities. Thus, the statement that "many of Egypt's press laws were removed in 2006" (p. 94) should have been juxtaposed with a reminder that several Egyptian editors received jail sentences in September 2007 for writing about the president's health, that the country's emergency law remained in force to override any apparent liberalization, and that Egypt and Saudi Arabia tried hard in 2008 to curb both domestic and pan-Arab journalism through the Arab Satellite Charter. The positive spin on Morocco's new "private radio and television stations" (p. 94) needed to be offset with some mention of station owners' closeness to the government and how tightly the law controls what they are allowed to say.

Ultimately, the question the authors set out to answer here—whether digital media "caused" the Arab Spring—depends, as they say (p. 13), on what causality means. The authors looked for combinations of causal factors that would preserve "some nuance specific to particular cases" but also enable them to "generalize about a causal recipe that may be transportable to other cases." Readers' response to this endeavor will depend on whether they consider digital media use to be a more enlightening aspect of the 2011 uprisings than the political gains and losses that affected so many millions of lives.

Zizi Papacharissi
Affective Publics. Sentiment, Technology and Politics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
x + 160 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-999974-3 (paperback).

Reviewed by: Barry Richards, *Bournemouth University, Poole, UK*
DOI: 10.1177/1940161215611987

If you are looking for a rich and subtle vocabulary with which to fashion an evocative description of the role of Twitter in cohering social and political movements, Zizi Papacharissi's book is what you need. At its heart is the idea of "digitally afforded affect" (p. 8) and the argument that "online media facilitate political formations of been limited to fieldwork in Beirut along with input from graduate assistants in Cairo, Gaza, Sanaa, and Tunis. As for digital media content, when Howard and Hussain discuss Al Jazeera, as in their chapter "Al Jazeera, Social Media and Digital Journalism," their focus is Al Jazeera English, not Al Jazeera Arabic, and their sources are mostly secondary, in the form of academic journal articles. Their description of Al Jazeera as "adept and autonomous" (p. 90) and "independent" (p. 91) would have been debatable at any time, but is highly questionable since Qatari foreign policy in 2011 dictated Al Jazeera's differential treatment of the uprisings in Syria and Bahrain.

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If you are looking for a rich and subtle vocabulary with which to fashion an evocative description of the role of Twitter in cohering social and political movements, Zizi Papacharissi's book is what you need. At its heart is the idea of "digitally afforded affect" (p. 8) and the argument that "online media facilitate political formations of affect" (p. 9). Twitter, similar to other networked platforms, supports the emergence of networked publics around "structures of feeling" (Raymond Williams' term is brought into the world of social media and put to good use there). How does it do this? It enables individual citizens to "feel their place into a developing story" (p. 131), by sharing opinions, facts, feelings, and "performances" of the self. As "producers" they can contribute to news story-telling streams that "blend opinion, fact and emotions." Papacharissi is helpfully clear that this does not amount to a debasement by emotion of the pure currency of reason; her readers should be in no doubt that feeling and thought are intrinsically deeply interwoven. The flow of "affective news" (p. 80) that results is always on, a constant "electronic elsewhere" (pp. 67ff.) in which people can find commonality with others while making very personalized contributions to an inclusive narrative.

Her much nuanced analysis of Twitter is derived from work on some formidable data sets. There are three case studies: the Egyptian uprising of early 2011, the Occupy movement of 2011–2012, and some randomly chosen non-political trending topics. There was a corpus of 150,000 tweets collected from #egypt, 1 of 280,000 from #ows (Occupy Wall Street), and 2,800 from twenty-five trending tags over six months. Using the concepts of networked gatekeeping and networked framing, Papacharissi describes the processes by which opinion leaders and dominant frames emerge, all characterized by plurality and hybridity. Thus, in Egypt, for example, the dominant frame that developed as an "ambient chorus" (p. 59) was of "revolution."

There is a very different quality to this type of participation and mobilization from that of pre-digital eras. The author captures this in terms of the distinction between connective and collective action. The "connective polysemy" (pp. 87ff.), which is one of the key "affordances" of Twitter, enables people to join in without having to buy into an ideological package. They can make declarative contributions, while avoiding deliberative work and strategic decision making, as well as ideological negotiation and bloc membership. The thinness or weakness of collective identities in the social-media context is regretted by some researchers of online politics. Is the connective mode so well illustrated in Papacharissi's account of Twitter a regrettable shortcoming, or a necessary adaptation of politics to an era of individuality and fluidity, a way of precipitating involvement that would otherwise remain latent?

Although the discourse of #egypt apparently remained fairly homogeneous, within the very broad tent of "revolution," that of #ows came to include dissenting voices critical of the Occupy movement, a difference attributable to the obvious difference in context between a widely opposed dictatorship and the liberal democracies in which the Occupy movement predominantly flourished. How off-platform divisions of opinion structure the Twittersphere, and with what consequences, is an interesting question.

This book offers plenty of food for thought about that and many other questions. The chapters on Egypt and Occupy could perhaps have had more examples than they do, but they still convey a strong sense of what was happening on Twitter. For this reviewer, the only detraction from the book's merits lies in two chunks of theory at each end of it. First, the "affect theory" presented early on is somewhat esoteric and abstract. Fortunately, although the author does refer back to it on occasions, and it informs her use of the term “affective attunement,” this particular concept of affect does not vitally underpin the subsequent analyses of the emotional nature of the material she studies. Second, the theoretical summary in the final chapter appears to suggest that not all publics are affective. This might make sense in terms of the specific definition of “affective” adopted earlier in the book, but might mislead or confuse some readers because it does not square with the principle of the necessary interpenetration of reason and emotion, captured so well throughout the book.

As a more fitting summary note, we might end on Papacharissi’s comparison of Twitter with music, in terms of the role played in social and political movements. Just as music can “allow publics and crowds to feel, with greater intensity, the meaning of the movement for themselves” (p. 93), connective communities on Twitter can capture some of the calls, cries, and murmurs that music represents and tie them to a cause. This book explores or raises a number of important issues in our understanding of the emotional public sphere and points to a need for further study of how Twitter and other virtual platforms shape the nature and consequences of *interruptions* to the music, “Antagonistic content injections . . . creating an effect similar to that of noise interrupting a song” (p. 93).