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Global Multimodal News Frames on Climate Change: A Comparison of Five Democracies around the World

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Abstract
This paper presents the first fully integrated analysis of multimodal news frames. A standardized content analysis of text and images in newspaper articles from Brazil, Germany, India, South Africa, and the United States covering the United Nations (UN) Climate Change Conferences 2010–2013 was conducted using a subset of photo-illustrated articles (*n* = 432) as well as the entire conference coverage (*n* = 1,311). In the photo-illustrated articles, four overarching multimodal frames were identified: global warming victims, civil society demands, political negotiations, and sustainable energy frames. The distribution of these global frames across the five countries is relatively similar, and a comparison of frames emerging from the national subsets also reveals a strong element of cross-national frame convergence. This is explained by the news production context at global staged political events, which features uniform media access rules and similar information supplies, as well as strong interaction between journalists from different countries and between journalists and other actors. Event-related frame convergence across vastly different contexts is interpreted as one mechanism by which truly transnational media debate can be facilitated that can potentially serve to legitimize global political decisions. In conclusion, perspectives for future qualitative and quantitative multimodal framing research are discussed.

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Most of our contemporary media environment is multimodal in character. Print journalism combines written text with visuals of various kinds, among which news photographs are paramount. Television news and online news videos offer multimodal compositions of moving images, spoken language, and sound, enhanced by written text inserts. Online news often combines all of the above in multimodal arrangements. But what do the different representational modes contribute to the meaning of news offerings? And how is meaning constructed synergetically using different modes at the same time? In political communication and journalism research, we do not find good answers to these questions and no general model of multimodal news provision. Moreover, in the analysis of text-based journalism (print and online), written text and images have traditionally been studied separately, even though captions have sometimes been used to interpret visuals. Or the study of one mode, mostly text, has been implicitly overgeneralized as if textual analysis were sufficient to capture the meaning of multimodal compositions.

In this study, we directly address these gaps in extant research by proposing a method to identify multimodal news frames related to a salient global issue, namely, climate change. More specifically, we study newspaper coverage of four annual United Nations (UN) Climate Change Conferences (officially called Conferences of the Parties—COPs) between 2010–2013 in five democratic countries around the world (Brazil, Germany, India, South Africa, and the United States). Instead of measuring the prevalence of individual textual or visual properties separately, a multimodal frame analysis reveals how the arrangement of these elements creates distinct perspectives on the issue across larger bodies of news items. In addition to proposing a new strategy of empirical inquiry, we also aim at ascertaining how uniform such multimodal news framing is around the globe. We therefore ask the following:

> **Research Question:** To what degree does a unique global political media event such as a COP entice cross-national similarities in multimodal framing that supersede country-specific context factors?

The growing importance of transnational and global governance regimes, which serve as common points of reference for nationally distinct journalistic systems, might result in commonalities in news framing, particularly when high-level meetings or summits interrupt normal news-making routines and provide a shared set of information inputs for journalists to cover (Adolphsen 2014). Global conferences and summit meetings typically feature uniform media access rules, as well as strong interaction between journalists from different countries, as well as between them and other actors such as government delegations, nongovernmental organizations (NGO), experts, and lobby groups. Adolphsen and Lück (2012) also report that a "camp feeling" has emerged between journalists and civil society groups because participants have

attended previous COPs together, and production facilities are often spatially confined and support dense interaction. It stands to reason that such a uniform global production context might produce similarities in media coverage even in vastly different countries and thus might contribute to what has been called "discourse convergence" in previous studies (Wessler et al. 2008).

Conversely, a prevalence of distinct national logics in news production should yield observable differences in frames present in the news across countries. For example, we could assume that frames focusing on the problems and victims of climate change would dominate coverage in less developed countries (Brazil, India, and South Africa in our sample) because coping with climate change-related damage might be more difficult for these countries and thus command more media attention. Alternatively, victim-related frames could be hypothesized to be more prevalent in the countries with the highest long-term Climate Risk Index (CRI) scores (i.e., India and, to a lesser degree, the United States and Germany; cf. Kreft and Eckstein 2013). Or we could deduce from previous studies (Grundmann and Scott 2014; Painter and Ashe 2012) that the denial of anthropogenic climate change ("climate skepticism") should be an important frame in the United States but not in any of the other four countries. Germany, in turn, should show the highest prevalence of support for an active climate policy aiming at emission reductions (Peters and Heinrichs 2008). In the Indian press, the prevalent critique of "carbon colonialism" by Billett (2010) attributes responsibility for climate change to the West, particularly the United States, and sees developing countries as victims—a pattern that, again, can be assumed to separate the framing in India, South Africa, and Brazil from the other two countries. Whatever the concrete assumption is, such statements predict considerable framing differences between countries or country groups that should surface in our analysis.

Multimodal Frame Analysis

News visuals are of great importance in globalized news production because they are often provided by globally operating news image agencies such as Associated Press (AP), Reuters, and Getty Images (cf. Fahmy 2005), particularly when they relate to global events such as the COPs. In addition, a staged political media event provides many shared photo opportunities for journalists from around the world. NGOs such as Greenpeace, in particular, produce such opportunities to strategically offer attention-grabbing motifs for news photographers who would otherwise be left mainly with ordinary "talking heads" as their subjects. Third, the perception of photographs is based on a relation of similarity between the image and what is depicted and thus "does not appear to require prior familiarity with the particular representational conventions of those pictures" (Messaris and Abraham 2001: 216). Their indexical quality constitutes the "potential value of photographs as evidence" (Messaris 1998: 130). This characteristic can obscure (more so than in written texts) the presence of diverse latent meanings embedded in photographic representations and entice journalists to assume that pictures are universally intelligible and can be unproblematically reproduced and understood across the globe.

The global proliferation, the strategic production, and the often assumed universal intelligibility of news visuals might foster similarities in the journalistic use of such pictures (see O'Neill et al. 2013) and, by implication, in the composition of textual-visual frame elements that would be missed by conventional text-based framing research. Conversely, an exclusive analysis of visual framing elements would neglect the potential of written news texts for contextualizing news photos through the presentation of speakers and arguments in line with national particularities. How these cross-cutting influences shape national news content about a global issue across countries remains an open empirical question that can best be answered through *comparative multimodal analysis*. We, therefore, present the first study to reconstruct issue-specific multimodal news frames by using textual and visual content elements simultaneously. Methodologically, we follow the classification procedure proposed by Matthes and Kohring (2008) for news texts, but we feed both textual and visual elements into a joint cluster analysis.

While multimodality has become a major focus in areas such as linguistic studies and critical discourse analysis, the existing research on news framing in general, and media framing of climate change in particular, is still largely characterized by an alternative between either textual or visual approaches. Only a small number of fairly recent studies have delved into the comparative analysis of written texts *and* visuals in climate coverage (DiFrancesco and Young 2011; Nielsen and Kjærgaard 2011; Roosvall and Tegelberg 2013). We argue for strengthening this focus for two reasons: First, a concurrent analysis of written text and visual depictions more closely resembles the reality of news production as described above, especially when considering the observable increase in visualization not only in popular, but also in quality news outlets. Second, a multimodal approach helps us uncover salient patterns of textual-visual compositions that are more akin to readers' holistic perception of such multimodal news items. Our results can then also serve as empirically validated journalistic repertoires for subsequent media effects studies on climate change.

Our methodological approach encompasses all three types of semiotic resources as defined by Bateman (2008): (1) text-typographic (the written words of a news item), (2) pictorial-representational (news photos), and (3) diagrammatic-representational (charts, diagrams, or maps). Recent comparative studies in visual communication on multimodality have used this basic typology in their analysis of structural aspects such as the visual grammar of online newspapers (Knox 2007) and the organizing of verbal-visual content in tabloid newspapers (Kong 2013). This analysis of such formal features along semiotic and linguistic paradigms can—and should—be complemented by a multimodal understanding of substantive news framing across the different types of semiotic resources.

Comparing Climate Change Frames

We study the topic of climate change for two reasons: First, the potentially disastrous effects of climate change make it a highly relevant societal problem. Journalism plays an important role in relating this issue (its causes, consequences, and political

treatment) to audiences. Media effects research suggests that the framing of climate change can affect climate-friendly attitudes and behavioral motivations in recipients (cf. Beattie et al. 2011; Nisbet et al. 2013; for the perception of visuals, see Metag et al. 2016; O'Neill et al. 2013; O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole 2009). Thus, an analysis of that framing carries strong social relevance. Second, to assess the degree of cross-national similarities in news coverage on a global scale, a single news topic is needed that receives substantial media attention across the globe. Climate change lends itself to this type of analysis, along with very few other topics of global importance, such as, for example, terrorism or poverty. While the basic parameters of the issue of climate change are quite robust (there is a very stable set of causes, risks, and treatment options), climate change affects different countries with different severity. Combined with varying levels of economic development and energy dependency, this leads to quite distinct vulnerabilities, to country-specific national action plans, and, hence, to differential discursive opportunity structures for publicly discussing the issue (cf. Ferree et al. 2002). While we keep system characteristics as similar as possible in a global study by choosing democracies only, our countries of investigation are marked by different levels of economic development (three newly industrialized and two industrialized countries), by nationally distinct issue cultures with respect to climate change, and by different journalistic cultures (cf. Shoemaker and Cohen 2005). Our study, therefore, serves as a hard test for the existence of similarities in national issue framing. The existing research on climate change coverage has not addressed the question we pose here. In fact, the relatively few internationally comparative studies either cover a set of more similar countries (mostly in the West) or focus on a fairly narrow aspect of climate coverage (e.g., climate skepticism, which is not salient in the material we study) or investigate issue attention rather than issue framing (see the studies meta-analyzed by Schäfer and Schlichting 2014).

Method

We conducted a comparative standardized content analysis of climate change coverage around the UN Climate Change Conferences in Cancún, Mexico (COP 16, 2010); Durban, South Africa (COP 17, 2011); Doha, Qatar (COP 18, 2012); and Warsaw, Poland (COP 19, 2013). The material was sampled from nationally distributed and widely read daily newspapers from Brazil (*Folha de Sao Paolo, O Globo*), Germany (*Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*), India (*Times of India, The Hindu*), South Africa (*Daily Sun, The Star*), and the United States (*New York Times, Washington Post*).[1] We analyze leading daily print newspapers for three reasons: First, newspapers, especially quality papers, are opinion-forming media widely read by political and business elites as well as journalists and, thus, constitute "leading media" in their respective countries. Second, the form and structure of a daily newspaper is quite consistent across countries, fostering cross-national comparability of media content largely undiluted by differences in medium-specific forms of presentation. Third, the national daily newspapers we study devote quite consistent levels of attention to the topic of climate change during the COPs. By contrast, preliminary analyses of

other media such as television news or weekly magazines showed relatively little to almost no regard for this topic over time. Therefore, national daily newspapers turned out to be the most expedient choice for tracking and comparing the framing of climate change across countries.

To be selected, articles either had to be highlighted by a layout element ("topical vignette") referring to a climate conference or had to mention one of the following keywords in the article's headline, subheadline, visual caption, or text body: climate change, global warming, Cancún, Durban, Doha, Warsaw, greenhouse effect, Kyoto Protocol, climate summit, climate conference, climate talks, climate politics, or climate science. In a second step, all selected units were manually checked for relevance.[2] In total, 1,311 text-based articles were found.

We use three strategies in analyzing the sample: In strategy 1, we select only those text-based articles for our multimodal frame analysis that were illustrated by at least one photograph or photomontage ($n = 432$) to assess articles that employ a multimodal arrangement of text-typographic and pictorial-representational resources. In strategy 2, we use the total population of text-based articles for our frame analysis, regardless of accompanying illustrations ($n = 1,311$) to test whether the frame structure found in the multimodal articles reemerges in the entire set of articles, or whether distinct non-visual or text-only frames exist in newspaper coverage of climate change. Finally, in strategy 3, we again use the subsample of photo-illustrated articles ($n = 432$) and conduct separate exploratory cluster analyses for all five countries to test whether frames found *across* newspapers from five countries can also be found when we cluster articles *within* the country-specific subsamples. This method of analysis allows for less salient but nationally flavored multimodal frames to be detected that might have been "swallowed up" by our clustering across all countries.

Each article was first segmented into statements attributed to actors ($n = 5,561$). A statement contained either (1) an utterance made by an identifiable individual, collective, or institution (in a direct quote or indirectly paraphrased) or (2) information given by the author of the article (most often a journalist). All statements were then coded for the presence or absence of a predefined set of climate-change-related frame elements.[3] As we defined a statement as a number of related direct or indirect quotes, stated by one and the same actor within an article or by the article's journalistic author, the coded statement of an actor could be distributed over various passages across the article. Building on Entman (2004), we coded text-based climate change framing on the following dimensions: (1) *problem definition* (consequences of climate change, such as increases in temperature, melting ice/glaciers, etc.), (2) identification of *causes* (e.g., greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation), and (3) *treatment recommendations* (remedies, such as clean energy, a global climate treaty, financial assistance to disadvantaged countries, etc.). The coding categories were based on the most salient attributes of climate change discussed in the Fourth Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2007). The final set of variables for the content analysis was developed through qualitative preexaminations of representative parts of our media sample as well as various rounds of pretesting categories for applicability to coding media content. The frame dimension of (4) *moral evaluation* proved difficult to

operationalize in our case. The only approximation of moral judgment to be systematically found in COP coverage were countries or groups of countries being singled out as the causal agents of climate change due to their greenhouse gas emissions. Because this measure, however, conceptually overlaps with the identification of causes, we refrain from including these measures in our frame detection analysis and use them as contextual information only. Explicitly positive evaluations of climate change—such as an outright denial of any problematic consequences or a highlighting of economically beneficial ramifications—were included as variables in our codebook but proved to be all but absent from the media coverage of the COPs.

Unlike news texts, visuals do not feature clearly defined propositional structures (cf. Messaris and Abraham 2001). Therefore, we followed Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) in coding image content on a denotative level by recording depictions of different types of actors relevant to the climate debate, as well as displays of environments, flora and fauna, technological objects or infrastructure, as well as public relations (PR) stunt installations by environmental NGOs. Coders had the opportunity to code multiple image content categories for a single visual. For example, a photo depicting a symbolic action staged by an NGO on the beach in Cancún would have been coded for the NGO personnel as actors, for the PR stunt installation, and for "ocean/ocean coast." In this denotative approach, the connotations of such depictions are not derived separately for the visuals, but surface in the multimodal cluster analysis that reconstructs which pictorial elements are typically combined with which text-based issue frames. The textual elements thus confer the connotations.

Six coders with near-native speaker status in at least two of the languages involved (English, German, and Portuguese) underwent an intensive, multiwave coder training. The final pretest was performed on random samples of seventy-six textual articles and ninety-one visuals. Despite the complexity of the coding scheme, intercoder reliability reached at least a .70 level with either Brennan and Prediger's kappa or Krippendorff's alpha for all textual frame and image content variables mentioned (see Wozniak et al. 2015 for a detailed discussion of the codebook development, as well as country-specific reliability scores for all individual variables).

Hierarchical cluster analyses on the textual and visual content data were conducted to explore the coverage for distinct multimodal frames of climate change. Cluster analysis is a statistical technique to group cases that are similar among each other but different from other groups of cases. It has become a common tool in framing analysis to identify groups of articles with similar combinations of frame elements. These group-wise combinations of frame elements can then be interpreted as frames (cf. Matthes and Kohring 2008). Such disaggregated data collection enables a more reliable and valid measurement of frames as compared with holistic ways of frame detection. Furthermore, this method allows for the discovery of frames (i.e., specific arrangements of textual and visual components in news items) not previously theorized and, thus, differs from approaches that identify predefined issue frames in the media material (cf. O'Neill et al. 2015).

Before the cluster analyses could be run, the frame element data had to be aggregated to the same unit of analysis. As textual frames were measured on the statement

level (i.e., below the article level) and image content was coded on the article level, we aggregated all data onto the article level using dummy variables (0 = *frame element absent in article*, 1 = *frame element present in article*). A frequency analysis of all aggregated text-based and visual frame element variables yielded thirty-three variables (nineteen text-based; fourteen visual) with a salience of at least 3.0 percent[4] across the sample of 432 illustrated articles (strategy 1), and thirty-four variables (twenty-two text-based; twelve visual) with a salience of at least 2.0 percent across all 1,311 articles (strategy 2).[5] For strategy 3, frequency analyses were conducted for each country subsample separately; the number of variables with a salience of at least 3.0 percent varied from thirty (Brazilian articles) to thirty-five (South African and U.S. articles). For each of the strategies, a separate hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted (Ward method, binary Euclidic distance) covering news items, as well as editorials and opinion columns.[6] We identified the number of clusters by using the "elbow" criterion.[7] To determine the structural compositions of these clusters—which we interpret as news frames—we cross-tabulate the cluster affiliations of the articles with the individual frame elements.

Results

The hierarchical cluster analysis across all five countries yielded four multimodal frames of climate change—both for the photo-illustrated subsample (strategy 1) and the total set of articles (strategy 2)—that are statistically distinct, substantively different, and rather nondiscriminatory across countries. Based on the 432 photo-accompanied articles, we found the following four multimodal frames: (1) the *global warming victims* frame, (2) the *civil society demands* frame, (3) the *political negotiations* frame, and (4) the *sustainable energy* frame (Table 1). Frame elements that satisfied a two-step criterion of salience are highlighted as defining the particular frame: First, within each cluster (vertical criterion), we regard a single frame element's presence of 20 percent as somewhat salient and a presence of 40 percent or more as highly salient. Second, a frame can be discriminated by those elements that may fall below the margins of the vertical criterion within a cluster, but still stand out as being distinct between clusters by exceeding the overall share of the respective frame element across all cases by more than 50 percent (horizontal criterion).[8] Frame labels were chosen on the basis of both the salient textual and visual frame elements in each cluster to avoid using visual elements as ancillary frame information only.

More than a third (36 percent) of the 432 articles belongs to a frame that can be described as the *global warming victims* frame. On the verbal level, this cluster emphasizes all possible consequences of climate change, with the increase in temperature figuring most prominently (71 percent). The burning of fossil fuels is explicitly attributed as the cause for climate change in half of the articles in this cluster. As regards remedial actions, we find a somewhat salient endorsement of clean energy (32 percent) and, in horizontal perspective, endorsements of reforestation and other local efforts of climate change mitigation. These salient textual frame elements are combined with depictions of ordinary citizens (35 percent) and scientists as well as a

Table 1. Composition of multimodal climate change frames (articles with photo only; column percentages).

	Text-based frame elements	Global warmingvictims frame	Civil societydemands frame	Politicalnegotiations frame	Sustainableenergy frame	total	λ (symmetric)
		n=156	*n=125*	*n=50*	*n=101*	*n=432*	
Consequences	increase in temperature	**71.2**	30.4	6.0	28.7	41.9	0.236
	extreme weather	**41.0**	9.6	2.0	17.8	22.0	0.057
	melting ice	**35.9**	8.0	4.0	4.0	16.7	0.043
	economic difficulties	16.0	10.4	6.0	12.9	12.5	0.000
	societal consequences	**34.0**	18.4	6.0	15.8	22.0	0.000
Causes	fossil fuels	50.0	52.8	4.0	72.3	50.7	0.094
	deforestation	12.8	9.6	8.0	5.9	9.7	0.000
	national interests	10.9	23.2	**34.0**	15.8	18.3	0.034
Remedies	clean energy mentioned	10.9	60.8	40.0	**71.3**	42.8	0.280
	reforestation mentioned	9.6	**20.8**	14.0	7.9	13.0	0.033
	new treaty mentioned	9.0	**44.0**	28.0	22.8	24.5	0.107
	financial help mentioned	10.9	**48.0**	24.0	13.9	23.8	0.113
	clean energy endorsed	32.1	36.0	24.0	**90.1**	45.8	0.257
	reforestation endorsed	**15.4**	4.8	14.0	5.9	10.0	0.000
	new treaty endorsed	14.7	27.2	20.0	17.8	19.7	0.030
	local efforts endorsed	**7.1**	2.4	0.0	4.0	4.2	0.000
	financial help endorsed	17.3	18.4	26.0	12.9	17.6	0.000
	no action rejected	17.9	16.8	22.0	11.9	16.7	0.000
	new treaty rejected	3.8	7.2	**8.0**	4.0	5.3	0.010

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

		Global warmingvictims frame	Civil societydemands frame	Politicalnegotiations frame	Sustainableenergy frame	total	λ
Text-based frame elements		*n=156*	*n=125*	*n=50*	*n=101*	*n=432*	(symmetric)
Visual frame elements							
Objects	urban landscape	14.1	21.6	4.0	18.8	16.2	0.014
	natural landscape	**37.8**	13.6	4.0	23.8	23.6	0.029
	ocean, coast	12.2	**20.8**	0.0	5.9	11.8	0.021
	snow, ice, glacier	**16.7**	0.0	0.0	3.0	6.7	0.000
	desert, steppe	**6.4**	0.8	0.0	4.0	3.5	0.000
	animal	**12.2**	1.6	0.0	4.0	5.8	0.000
	traffic	5.1	6.4	0.0	**13.9**	6.9	0.020
	conventional industry	5.8	12.0	0.0	**28.7**	12.3	0.061
	green technology	1.9	0.0	0.0	**10.9**	3.2	0.280
Actors	PR stunt	1.3	**29.6**	4.0	4.0	10.4	0.109
	politician	10.3	2.4	**92.0**	24.8	20.8	0.197
	NGO	5.8	**61.6**	10.0	4.0	22.0	0.261
	scientist	**12.2**	6.4	0.0	2.0	6.7	0.000
	ordinary citizen	**34.6**	14.4	2.0	22.8	22.2	0.013

DARK GREY: frequency of at least 40 percent of articles in cluster; LIGHT GREY: frequency between 20 and 39.9 percent of articles in cluster; **BOLD**: elements that stand out in cross-cluster comparison (exceeding average relative frequency of element by more than 50 percent)

variety of natural landscapes (38 percent), snow and ice (17 percent), and deserts and animals. The *global warming victims* frame thus presents both verbally and visually a panorama of problems and hardships as well as the people affected by them.

The second cluster, accounting for 29 percent of photo-illustrated articles, constitutes what we call the *civil society demands* frame. Unlike the victims frame, this frame focuses on the full range of potential remedies for climate change effects: from the mention or explicit endorsement of clean energy (61 percent) through financial help for disadvantaged countries (48 percent) and the adoption of a new binding global treaty to reduce carbon emissions (44 percent) to reforestation/prevention of further deforestation (21 percent). The textual emphasis on such demands for remedial action is supported by visuals of NGO representatives or environmental activists (62 percent) and their PR stunts (30 percent).

A surprisingly small amount of visualized articles (12 percent) is characterized by the *political negotiations* frame. Again, unlike the global warming victims frame, here, the consequences of climate change are virtually absent. Yet, similar to the *civil society demands* frame, a variety of remedies are emphasized in this cluster, clean energy being the most salient (40 percent) alongside the adoption of a new binding treaty (28 percent). Also, the explicit endorsement of financial help for disadvantaged countries stands out in this frame (26 percent), as does the call for action in general (22 percent). However, these solutions uniquely combine with colliding national interests (34 percent) as the central cause for the general problem of climate change. This textual framing becomes literally visible in pictures of politicians (92 percent) who engage in the often difficult and frustrating negotiations about potential solutions.

The fourth and final frame, shared by 23 percent of the 432 photo-illustrated articles, can be labeled the *sustainable energy* frame. It emphasizes the core narrative of the climate change debate, in which fossil fuels and the resulting greenhouse gas emissions are the central cause (72 percent) for an increase in temperature (29 percent). The solution offered in this cluster of articles is an expansion of clean energy (90 percent) and the agreement on a new binding treaty that would govern the worldwide reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (23 percent). The visual framing in this cluster mirrors the text, showing conventional industries (29 percent) together with traffic and green energy plants (14 percent and 11 percent, respectively, but both discriminatory between clusters). As regards the actors depicted, this frame displays both politicians (25 percent) and ordinary citizens (23 percent).

When we cluster all articles in the sample irrespective of their illustration by news photographs (strategy 2; n = 1,311), we also find four frames of which the *global warming victims* frame and the *sustainable energy* frame remain virtually unchanged in their composition of frame elements (data provided in the online appendix). The *civil society demands* and the *political negotiations* frames, however, appear as one composite frame in the full dataset. The resulting *political dispute* frame combines most of the demands elements with the most distinct elements of the negotiations frame, including photos of politicians during negotiations. Finally, from the clustering of the total population of articles, a fourth frame emerges, which we label *common sense* frame. It is both the largest and least distinctive frame to emerge from our

Table 2. Distribution of Multimodal News Frames per Country (Articles with Photo Only, *n* = 432).

Frame/Country	Brazil	Germany	India	South Africa	The United States	Total (Articles)
Global warming victims frame	34 28.8%	54 42.5%	30 30.3%	17 37.0%	21 50.0%	156 36.1%
Civil society demands frame	32 27.1%	29 22.8%	39 39.4%	15 32.6%	10 23.8%	125 28.9%
Political negotiations frame	14 11.9%	13 10.2%	22 22.2%	0 0.0%	1 2.4%	50 11.6%
Sustainable energy frame	38 32.2%	31 24.4%	8 8.1%	14 30.4%	10 23.8%	101 23.4%
n (articles)	118 100.0%	127 100.0%	99 100.0%	46 100.0%	42 100.0%	432 100.0%

Note. λ = .047 (asymmetric with frames as dependent variable).

analysis, with only 3 out of the thirty-four frame elements appearing in more than 20 percent of articles. This cluster constitutes a residual class for articles with a rather low incidence of framing devices. Articles in this cluster are shorter (roughly four hundred words as opposed to more than five hundred in other clusters), contain less visual elements (26.5 percent vs. 43 percent of articles in other clusters), and are more often opinion- rather than fact-based (27 percent opinion-oriented items vs. 17 percent in the other clusters).

To sum up, the simultaneous analysis of textual and visual elements has yielded a small number of clearly discernible news frames in newspaper coverage of the UN Climate Change Conferences. Textual and visual elements generally correspond well in substantive terms. Conversely, in the rather nondescript cluster that lacks a distinct textual frame content (the *common sense* frame in strategy 2), visuals are comparatively rare and varied. However, it is important to note that no text-only frame of climate change emerged from the analysis, even though two-thirds of the entire set of articles did not carry a visual. All of these findings hint at the crucial role of text-image correspondences in generating recognizable frame content in news coverage.

Comparing Multimodal Frames across Countries

The distribution of the four frames is relatively similar across the five very different countries (Table 2). For photo-illustrated articles (strategy 1), λ = .047, that is, the chance to correctly predict the frame of a random article increases by only 4.7 percent if we know in which country this article was published. In the entire population of articles (strategy 2), the association between frames and countries even disappears completely (λ = .000). The national context in which a climate change article is produced does not have a decisive effect on journalists' choice of multimodal frames. Still, a close examination of all the cells in Table 2 yields a few noticeable exceptions,

particularly relating to the Indian newspapers in which the *civil society demands* and the *political negotiation* frames are more salient on average than elsewhere. Conversely, the *global warming victims* frame is somewhat more prominent in the U.S. newspapers. While there are modest differences in individual cases, we do not find an overarching pattern that would clearly privilege certain frames in particular countries. In particular, we did not find evidence that the victims-centered frame is systematically more salient in the economically less developed countries (Brazil, India, South Africa) or in the countries with the highest long-term climate risk (India as well as the United States and Germany; Kreft and Eckstein 2013). Obviously, the global frames we detected constitute different *general* ways of approaching the topic across countries.

This result is even more significant in light of the fact that about 85 percent of the multimodal articles are original reporting produced by staff members of the respective newspaper. Only 4 percent of these particularly rich items originate from news agencies, while roughly 10 percent were written by other authors (mostly opinion pieces by politicians, scientists, or other stakeholders). The only exception from this pattern is South Africa, where about 60 percent of the photo-illustrated articles are original reporting, 10 percent come from news agencies, and no less than 30 percent from other authors. In the full sample that includes nonillustrated articles (n = 1,311), the same pattern emerges: original reporting 81 percent, news agencies 6 percent, and other authors 13 percent. Again, South Africa deviates from this average, with roughly half of the articles written by newspaper staff, and a quarter each for news agencies and other authors. These findings correspond well with our firsthand observations at the conferences in Doha (2012) and Warsaw (2013), wherein most of the newspapers whose coverage we study did send reporters—with the exception of the South African papers and *O Globo* from Brazil. The low numbers for news agencies in both samples of coverage belie the suspicion that the similarities in frame distribution we find could have been caused by the newspapers around the globe simply printing the same news agency reports. Of course, it is conceivable that on-site reporters use news agency reports among other sources as input for their stories without acknowledging this in the byline. But it remains significant that although the newspapers' own writers are responsible for the bulk of COP coverage, the framing of these conferences turns out to be relatively similar across these vastly different countries.

The overall frame distribution pattern becomes somewhat more ambiguous when we compute and compare *country-specific* cluster solutions (strategy 3). Given the exploratory character of hierarchical cluster analysis, it is not surprising that results vary across countries as regards the number of statistically recommended frames as well as their specific configurations. The Indian and the U.S. subsamples show the strongest similarities with the results of the global cluster solution (Table 3). Both countries yield four-cluster solutions, and a cross-tabulation of frame affiliations for articles based on strategy 1 and strategy 3, respectively, shows moderate to substantial associations (India: λ = .620, United States: λ = .435). By contrast, we find six frames in the Brazilian sample (λ = .429), five frames in the South African sample (λ = .382), and only three frames in the German sample (λ = .145).

Table 3. Multimodal Frame Comparison across Countries (Based on Photo-Illustrated Articles, n = 432).

Total (n = 432)	Brazil (n = 118)	Germany (n = 127)	India (n = 99)	South Africa (n = 46)	The United States (n = 42)
4 cluster solution	6 cluster solution λ = .429[a]	3 cluster solution λ = .145	4 cluster solution λ = .620	5 cluster solution λ = .382	4 cluster solution λ = .435
Global warming victims (n = 156) 1. increase in temperature 2. fossil fuels 3. extreme weather 4. V natural landscape 5. melting ice/rising sea levels 6. V ordinary citizens	Global warming victims (n = 12)—100%[b] 1. V natural landscape 2. melting ice/rising sea levels 3. V snow, ice, glacier 4. increase in temperature 5. societal consequences 6. V ordinary citizens	Victims + remedies (n = 43)—60% 1. fossil fuels 2. increase in temperature 3. clean energy endorsed 4. new treaty endorsed 5. no action rejected 6. new treaty mentioned	Global warming victims (n = 29)—86% 1. increase in temperature 2. fossil fuels 3. melting ice/rising sea levels 4. extreme weather 5. V ordinary citizens 6. V natural landscape	Global warming victims (n = 20)—60% 1. V ordinary citizens 2. increase in temperature 3. societal consequences 4. extreme weather 5. fossil fuels 6. natural landscape	Global warming victims (n = 17)—88% 1. increase in temperature 2. extreme weather 3. V natural landscape 4. V ordinary citizens 5. melting ice/rising sea levels 6. fossil fuels
	Victims + consequences and remedies (n = 11)—82% 1. increase in temperature 2. clean energy endorsed 3. extreme weather 4. financial assistance mentioned 5. societal consequences 6. reforestation endorsed	Global warming victims (n = 48)—48% 1. increase in temperature 2. V natural landscape 3. clean energy endorsed 4. melting ice/rising sea levels 5. extreme weather 6. societal consequences		Global warming victims + help (n = 6)—50% 1. extreme weather 2. societal consequences 3. clean energy endorsed 4. financial assistance endorsed 5. V politician	Global warming victims + help (n = 6)—83% 1. financial assistance mentioned 2. financial assistance endorsed 3. increase in temperature 4. fossil fuels 5. no action rejected 6. extreme weather

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Total (n = 432)	Brazil (n = 118)	Germany (n = 127)	India (n = 99)	South Africa (n = 46)	The United States (n = 42)
Civil society demands (n = 125) 1. V NGO activists 2. clean energy mentioned 3. fossil fuels 4. financial help mentioned 5. new treaty mentioned 6. clean energy endorsed	Civil society demands (n = 23)—83% 1. V NGO activist 2. clean energy mentioned 3. V PR stunt installation 4. fossil fuels 5. financial assistance mentioned 6. clean energy endorsed		Civil society demands or industry (n = 13)—77% 1. fossil fuels 2. V conventional industry 3. clean energy mentioned 4. new treaty mentioned 5. colliding national interests 6. financial assistance mentioned	Civil society demands I (n = 7)—100% 1. V NGO activists 2. clean energy endorsed 3. colliding national interests 4. financial assistance endorsed 5. new treaty endorsed 6. V urban landscape	Civil society demands or industry (n = 6)—67% 1. clean energy mentioned 2. new treaty mentioned 3. new treaty endorsed 4. increase in temperature 5. fossil fuels 6. financial assistance mentioned
			Civil society demands (n = 27)—81% 1. V NGO activists 2. financial assistance mentioned 3. clean energy endorsed 4. fossil fuels 5. clean energy mentioned 6. colliding national interests	Civil society demands II (n = 4)—75% 1. fossil fuels 2. new treaty mentioned 3. new treaty endorsed 4. increase in temperature 5. societal consequences 6. V PR stunt installation	

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Total (n = 432)	Brazil (n = 118)	Germany (n = 127)	India (n = 99)	South Africa (n = 46)	The United States (n = 42)
Political negotiations (n = 50) 1. V politician 2. clean energy mentioned 3. colliding national interests 4. new treaty mentioned 5. financial help endorsed 6. financial help mentioned	Clean energy/reforestation debate (n = 27)—41% 1. clean energy mentioned 2. V politician 3. reforestation mentioned 4. clean energy endorsed 5. reforestation endorsed 6. V natural landscape		Political negotiations (n = 30)—70% 1. V politician 2. clean energy mentioned 3. colliding national interests 4. financial assistance mentioned 5. no action rejected 6. financial assistance endorsed		
Sustainable energy (n = 101) 1. clean energy endorsed 2. fossil fuels 3. clean energy mentioned 4. V conventional industry 5. increase in temperature 6. V politician	Sustainable energy + causes & consequences (n = 15)—73% 1. fossil fuels 2. clean energy mentioned 3. clean energy endorsed 4. V politician 5. increase in temperature 6. colliding national interests Sustainable energy (n = 30)—60% 1. fossil fuels 2. clean energy endorsed 3. clean energy mentioned 4. V ordinary citizen 5. V urban landscape 6. V natural landscape	Sustainable energy (n = 36)—44% 1. clean energy mentioned 2. fossil fuels 3. clean energy endorsed 4. increase in temperature 5. financial assistance mentioned 6. new treaty mentioned		Sustainable energy (n = 9)—78% 1. clean energy endorsed 2. fossil fuels 3. clean energy mentioned 4. V business	Sustainable energy (n = 13)—54% 1. fossil fuels 2. clean energy endorsed 3. clean energy mentioned 4. increase in temperature 5. new treaty endorsed 6. V urban landscape

Note. NGO = nongovernmental organization. V = Visual frame.
a. Indicates overall symmetric association between articles' frame attribution in country-specific and overall cluster analysis.
b. Indicates percentage with which articles' frame attribution in country-specific cluster analysis corresponds with frame attribution in overall cluster analysis.

Despite mediocre associations between the global and the country-specific cluster solutions, a substantive comparison of frame content reveals rather high levels of consistency in how frames are configured: For instance, we find *global warming victims* frames in all five countries, *civil society demands* frames in all countries but Germany, and *sustainable energy* frames in all countries but India. The most volatile frame is the *political negotiations* frame, which only reappears in the Indian and Brazilian subsample and is specifically accentuated by the domestic deforestation/reforestation debated in the latter case.

More generally, we find three patterns of national/global cross-classification in Table 3: A few national frames completely *mirror* our globally detected frames with convergent classification of articles (between strategies 1 and 3) at 100 percent. A second group of national frames presents *variations* of the respective global frame. A case in point here is the splitting up of the *civil society demands* frame in India into one variant that highlights visuals of conventional industry and one that depicts NGO activists while both feature similar textual framing elements including the need for financial assistance. Both frame variants display a substantial level of convergent classification, with the global *civil society demands* frame ranging around 80 percent. In a third group of national frames, however, the respective global frame acquires a distinct *national flavor* in the coverage of a particular country. For example, the Brazilian newspapers merge the *sustainable energy* and *political negotiation* frames with the nationally significant de-/reforestation debate, a combination not found in any of the other countries. Consequently, the degree of convergent classification with the global political negotiations frame is only slightly above 40 percent in this case. This "national flavor" pattern speaks to the significance of journalistic domestication through which reporters and editors partly adapt the global frame supply offered at the global climate change conferences to national concerns (for qualitative analyses of domestication, see Eide et al. 2010). But it is important to note that in the case we have studied, this is by no means the overriding pattern.

Conclusion

In this paper, we report the first fully integrated multimodal analysis of news frames. We show that text and image elements uniquely combine in defining distinct issue frames. In selecting and highlighting aspects of the issue while omitting others in a given article, newspaper journalists utilize four distinguishable multimodal frames, in reporting the annual UN Climate Change Conferences. The correspondence of textual and visual elements in producing discernible frames becomes apparent in the subset of photo-illustrated articles. When all articles are clustered, of which two-thirds carry no illustration, the frame structure includes one residual frame with less distinct visual and textual content. However, we did not find a frame exclusively carried by text-only items, which shows that text-image relations are crucial in defining coherent news frames. This central aspect is missed by earlier studies that confine themselves to either textual or visual analysis in determining frames. Our multimodal model of frame analysis, thus, paints a more realistic picture of news media content and helps

move framing analysis closer to the actual production and reception situations in newspaper journalism.

Most important, the national context in which multimodal articles on the climate conferences are produced does not automatically lead to vastly different national framings. Instead, the cross-national similarity we find in the distribution of multimodal frames can be interpreted as the outcome of a shared globalized production environment that journalists encounter at global events (Lück et al. 2016). Our results support the idea that in the context of such events, relatively similar professional routines for identifying and arranging frame elements do exist across contexts. Particularly in multimodal content production that relies on globally distributed news images, the interpretive packages deployed by journalists can transcend the confines of nationally based journalisms. However, in comparing country-specific multimodal frames with the global frames, we find that some national frames do add distinct national flavors to more widely shared frame content. Journalistic domestication counterbalances the global trajectory to some degree. But our results suggest that we should not overestimate the power of this national logic.

What then are the larger lessons we can learn from our case study on the UN Climate Change Conferences when we look beyond the field of climate change communication? Our study speaks to the debate about whether, in the course of increasing globalization, news coverage becomes transnationally similar or rather remains nationally distinct, and about the driving forces for either of these tendencies (Hafez 2007; Reese 2008). In this context, the COPs serve as an example for global political events more generally and help reveal typical production features that will create event-driven frame convergence in other topical areas, too. For example, our results are in line with the study by Curran et al. (2015) who find remarkable convergences in cross-national coverage even for national political events (elections) that were reported globally.

Moreover, the existence of event-driven frame convergence is significant for the emergence of "global public sphere moments," that is, mediated discussion on global problems going back and forth between national public spheres of otherwise vastly different countries (Schäfer et al. 2014; Wessler 2012). It is beyond the scope of this paper to ascertain the level of such cross-border contention empirically, but we have established one mechanism by which such transnational discursive integration can be facilitated, namely, event-related convergence of news frames. Future research could look more closely at the extent to which global events have direct repercussions for how global issues are discussed in the various national media—and whether, by implication, the communicative basis for legitimizing global political decisions expands. In the case of climate change, the long-awaited adoption of the Paris Agreement at COP21 in 2015, by which all countries vow to follow nationally determined action plans and review their effectiveness regularly, offers an excellent case for evaluating whether the terms of this negotiation result actually reflect a common understanding of the issue circulating in transborder media debate.

Finally, in methodological terms, the increasing co-occurrence of different modalities in the reality of newspaper and most other forms of journalism is becoming ever

more important for journalism research to consider. Inferences about both the construction of meaning by journalists and the interpretation of meaning by media users can only validly be made if we account for the multimodal nature of media representations in our content analyses. The type of standardized frame analysis in the tradition of Matthes and Kohring (2008), which we apply to multimodal material here for the first time, records the presence or absence of particular frame elements in the news product. It, thus, focuses on manifest motifs in images and the explicit mentioning of topical aspects in news texts and reconstructs frames as nonrandom configurations of such motifs and aspects. This approach increases intersubjective reliability in frame analysis and facilitates etic comparisons across countries and journalism cultures.

However, the approach we have developed has limitations when it comes to capturing the forms in which motifs and issue aspects are rendered and the exact ways in which visual resources contribute to the resulting overarching frame. In particular, the approach presented so far disregards color, camera angles, image composition, and other elements of visual depiction, and it does not record metaphors, argumentative structures, or rhetorical strategies in news texts. Of course, such more formal elements of news framing can in principle be included in standardized, disaggregated frame analysis such as the one we have conducted. For example, one could include shot length as a visual framing device together with the motifs depicted in a cluster analysis to grasp more of the look-and-feel of journalistic coverage. Or the use of particular catchwords in written text (e.g., "climate change" vs. "global warming"; see Schuldt and Roh 2014) could be included as a textual framing element in standardized approaches.

Concerning the specific contribution of visual resources to the overarching frame of a news item, Martinec and Salway (2005) offer an important distinction between relations of elaboration, extension, and enhancement, which is based on Halliday's functional grammar. In relations of elaboration, the information already contained in the text is conveyed in a more general or more specific manner through the image. Extension means that new, related information is provided with the image that was not contained in the text. And in relations of enhancement, the image circumstantially qualifies the text temporally, spatially, or with respect to a reason or purpose. A thorough investigation of such logico-semantic relations between image and text would further illuminate how exactly a multimodal frame is built in the news.

Thus, we propose two complementary methodological avenues for future research on multimodal news frames. Quantitative framing researchers should find ways to incorporate a limited set of relevant formal framing features into their standardized schemes to capture more semiotic richness. This will allow for a reconstruction of news frames that comes even closer to the actual reading/viewing experience and, thus, offers more potential to adequately inform framing effects research. For qualitative researchers specializing in either visual or textual analysis, it seems paramount to leave the disciplinary confinements behind and study text-image *relations* in greater detail. Such qualitative multimodal frame analysis can help elucidate meaning construction processes that rely on distinct logico-semantic text-image relations rather than simple co-occurrence of elements. In the long-term vision, it might even be hoped

that these two avenues for future research will coalesce to reconstruct and compare across cultures the multimodal dynamics of sense making that lie at the heart of the journalistic profession, but that so often escape our attention.

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Authors' Note

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Notes

1. For India and South Africa, we selected English-language newspapers for practical reasons, possibly even enhancing the "elite" orientation of the sample. Sampling periods were for COP 16, November 22 to December 19; for COP 17, November 28 to December 14; for COP 18, November 19 to December 4; and for COP 19, November 4 to November 30.
2. At least one full paragraph had to focus on causes or impacts of global warming, climate change politics and policies, climate science, climate justice, and/or measures to mitigate or adapt to the effects of global warming.
3. The complete codebook is available in the online appendix at www.climate.uni-mannheim.de/downloads.
4. For statistical reasons, very rare variables should be excluded from the clustering procedure.
5. We decided on a lower threshold across all variables for the cluster analysis of all articles (strategy 2) to account for the fact that only 37 percent of articles contained images so that visual variables had a lower probability of showing up in the entire dataset from the outset.
6. There is discussion in the literature whether hierarchical cluster analysis may be performed with categorical data. We therefore first subjected all 34 variables to a principal component analysis with Varimax rotation, yielding a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .593 ("miserable," see Dziuban and Shirkey 1974: 359) and correlations between the variables ranging from −.206 to .451, with the majority in the range of −.10 to .10. We therefore refrained from a factor analysis and continued clustering with our initial variables (instead of principal components).

7. To apply the "elbow criterion," we checked the increase in the Sum of Squared Distances (SSD) for different cluster solutions and stopped clustering after an observed "jump" in the increase. To facilitate better interpretation, we calculated the relative "slope" between SSDs for the last ten clustering steps and then the "slope quotient" between slopes. The resulting "quotients" provide a quite clear numerical indication for the "jump" in the increase of SSDs.
8. In 154 of the 432 articles, causal agents were singled out as being responsible for climate change, four of which were particularly salient: China (in 39 articles), developed countries as a group (35), the United States (30), and India (13). The distribution of these responsibility attributions over the four multimodal frames did not reveal a consistent pattern.

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China in Africa: An Analysis of the Effect of Chinese Media Expansion on African Public Opinion

Catie Snow Bailard[1]

Abstract

In 2006, Chinese officials revealed an extensive plan to increase the nation's soft power in Africa through a number of initiatives to increase the presence and relevance of Chinese media in Africa. However, the question remains: Has China been successful in enhancing its soft power via its news media expansion in the African region? Although it is easy to find sweeping proclamations regarding the popularity of Chinese media throughout Africa, there have been limited efforts to systematically measure the effect of these media on African public opinion toward China. This study seeks to fill this void. Using Pew Global Attitudes Project data, I explore correlations between attitudes toward China and the extent of the Chinese media presence across six African nations in 2013. In addition, to better test for a causal effect of the post-2006 expansion, I employ a second analysis in which I compare these relationships in 2007 with these same relationships in 2013. By comparing changes in these relationships over time, this analysis provides tentative empirical support that the sweeping efforts undertaken to expand the reach and relevance of Chinese media in Africa have moved African public opinion in the desired direction.

Keywords

public opinion, Africa, Central Asia, comparative research, broadcasting news, media effects

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China held its third Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Beijing in 2006, where Chinese officials revealed a detailed plan to increase the nation's soft power in Africa through multiple levels of economic cooperation and infrastructure development but also, notably, through various "people-to-people" exchanges. These included expanding dialogue and visits between high-level diplomats, developing various training programs for African professionals, increasing travel rates between China and Africa, and establishing Confucius Institutes to provide extensive training in Chinese language and culture at African universities (FOCAC 2006). A significant portion of this plan also included provisions to increase the presence and quality of Chinese media in the region:

> Since the third Forum on China-Africa Cooperation . . . the Chinese media have begun a steady march to get closer to Africa and to gain influence in its mediasphere. This process has . . . included both old and new communication technologies and has developed through a mix of bold policy decision, and trial and error. (Gagliardone 2013: 25)

Specifically, the Beijing Action Plan (published as part of the 2006 FOCAC summit) called for a number of initiatives to increase the presence and relevance of Chinese media in Africa. First, it called for increased contact between the regions' respective news outlets to facilitate comprehensive and objective news coverage of the other side and to encourage mutual understanding and friendship. Second, the plan advocated for multilevel exchanges and cooperation between press authorities and media groups from China and the African countries. Third, China and the African countries should encourage more reporting by their own news media of one another, including providing mutual assistance to each other's news agencies. Next, the Chinese government should continue to host workshops for African correspondents and invite African press authorities and media groups to China to exchange views, cover news, and explore means of furthering cooperation. Finally, Chinese and African representatives agreed to expand cooperation in radio and television broadcasting, including Chinese officials helping African countries train radio and television staff (FOCAC 2006).

Of course, China has been an active and visible presence on the African continent long before 2006—not only in terms of its international aid and financial direct investment in the region, but also in its efforts to promote cultural understanding and exchange. As part of this multifaceted presence, the Chinese news media have broadcast in Africa for more than half a century. For example, China first began radio transmissions to the continent in 1956 (Shinn and Eisenman 2012). However, although the presence of Chinese media in Africa is not necessarily a new phenomenon, it is clear that the commitments made in 2006 have come to fruition in the form of an expanded Chinese media presence in Africa over recent years. A few examples of these efforts include moving the Xinhua news service's overseas headquarters from Paris to Nairobi in 2006, the creation of Africa-specific programming by China Central Television (CCTV) in 2012, and the formation of China Radio International's (CRI) first foreign-based radio station in Nairobi in 2006.

Soft power, originally articulated and defined by Joseph Nye (2004), is “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies” (p. x). While some argue China’s motives in enhancing its soft power in the region are purely economic, others argue that they are motivated by a foreign policy priority to counter the influence and appeal of American propaganda overseas, while others suggest that they are motivated by a sincere desire to share Chinese culture and develop mutually beneficial respect and cooperation between the regions. Although it may be difficult to declare conclusively which of these is China’s primary motive in its recent efforts to expand its soft power (and it is likely that all three of these weigh in to some degree), the potential public diplomacy implications of a popular and persuasive China in Africa are considerable.

In a bit more detail,

> in international politics, the resources that produce soft power arise in large part from the values an organization or country expresses in its culture . . . Public diplomacy is an instrument that governments use to mobilize these resources to communicate with and attract the publics of other countries, rather than merely their governments. (Nye 2008: 95)

China’s effort to enhance its soft power in Africa reflects a broader shift in recent years of Chinese foreign policy to more heavily weight public diplomacy. Wang (2008) attributes this shift in China’s foreign policy approach to the perceived need to counter the “China Threat” rhetoric abroad and promote, instead, the image of China’s “peaceful rise,” particularly in light of China’s remarkable economic growth and its increasing presence on the world stage.

The relevance of China’s international broadcasting presence in Africa to its soft power and public diplomacy objectives is clear. As Price and colleagues reflect, “International broadcasting, at its core, is about the behavior of states in various markets for loyalties; that expands to include entities other than states” (Price et al. 2008: 168). Youmans and Powers (2012) expand on this model of international broadcasting in light of the seismic changes new technologies have brought to contemporary information landscapes. They argue that international broadcasting should be thought of as a form of bargaining at the international level:

> Traditional bargaining involves directly engaging with another government or other governments toward an agreement, such as a formal treaty or a memorandum of understanding. International broadcasting targets the publics of other states. While it is not aimed at securing a legal agreement between states, it is undertaken to influence public perceptions about the broadcasting country or international issues. (p. 2152)

Perhaps most important, Youmans and Powers stress the necessity for international broadcasters, in the era of information abundance, to adapt their content to be more appealing to their target audience:

> Although the goal of the international bargainer is to maximize national interests, it requires finding a mutual agreement—some recognition of the other's needs and interests . . . broadcasting that only fulfills domestic political agendas and narrow notions of the national interest while disregarding the receiving public's tastes, preferences, and needs will fail to attract receiving publics. (p. 2159)

As the overview of the recent changes to Chinese media in Africa detailed in the following section illustrates, since 2006, China has, indeed, altered its approach to its international broadcasting, both organizationally and philosophically, in an attempt to generate content that is more attractive to African publics.

But, the question remains, has China been successful in enhancing its soft power via its recent news media expansion in the African region? Although it is easy to find sweeping proclamations from Chinese officials and media representatives as to the availability of Chinese media and conjectures about its popularity throughout Africa, there appear to be very limited efforts to actually measure the effect of these media on relevant African public opinion toward China. Most often, studies of Chinese media in Africa analyze the content of this media (Marsh 2016; Wekesa 2013a, 2013b; Wu 2013; Zhang 2013). Although these studies provide an important foundation, they stop short of systematically testing potential effects of this content on African attitudes toward China. This study seeks to fill this void.

Using Pew Global Attitudes Project data (Pew Research Center: Global Attitudes and Trends 2007, 2013), I first look at the distribution of opinion toward China in six African nations in 2013 across a range of measures—from attitudes about its general favorability, to the perceived influence of Chinese practices and ideas in that nation, to China's position as a world leader. I then explore correlations between these attitudes, the extent of the Chinese media presence in these countries, and the availability of access to relevant media technologies, such as televisions and radio. Admittedly, this portion of the analysis is purely illustrative—being a static analysis of these relationships at a single point in time, it can do little more than reveal correlations between access to media technology, the presence of Chinese media, and African attitudes toward China.

Thus, to better test for a causal effect of the post-2006 expansion of Chinese media and African public opinion toward the nation, I employ a second analysis in which I compare these relationships in 2007 (the first year after the publication of the Beijing Action Plan, which outlined China's plan to increase its media presence in Africa) with these same relationships in 2013 (seven years after China's commitment to expand its media presence). By comparing differences in these relationships over time, this analysis is better equipped to determine whether the sweeping public relations efforts undertaken by China to expand the reach and relevance of Chinese media in Africa after 2006 actually moved African public opinion.

Before moving on, it is necessary to discuss the fact that this analysis measures the availability and extent of Chinese media in these nations—not the actual exposure of the populations in these countries to that media. First, this is a product of necessity. There are simply no reliable numbers for how many people are actually consuming this media. Second, measuring access rather than actual exposure actually provides some advantages by enabling the analysis to avoid potential endogeneity risks.

Essentially, there are several likely correlates at the individual level between access to media, media consumption habits, and political attitudes. Thus, using the proxy of access at the state and province levels, rather than exposure at the individual level, actually avoids some of these potential risks. Moreover, opting for measures of access rather than use or exposure is growing increasingly prevalent in studies of media effects. "To overcome concerns over the endogeneity of media consumption to political attitudes, scholars have tried to establish the causal effect of access on attitudes and behaviors, exploiting idiosyncratic variation in the media menus of similar people" (Lelkes et al. 2015: 12).

In addition, this approach takes into account that it is not always the general population that is the intended or necessary target of international broadcasters. As Youmans and Powers (2012) note, to achieve its goal of "moving the needle" of public opinion in a meaningful way, international broadcasters may target a variety of audiences—from publics at large to specific issue publics to sets of elites. Relatedly, using a measure of access rather than exposure also takes into account the two-step flow of communication (Katz 1957), in which information is attained by opinion leaders through media use and then diffused via interpersonal communication between those opinion leaders and their group members. This further supports the utility of a measure of access to Chinese media in these countries, rather than the number of citizens directly exposed to that media, in terms of yielding a valid measure.

Before turning to the analysis, however, I begin with a broad overview of the Chinese interest in and relationship with the African region. Next, I review the history of Chinese media in Africa and highlight recent changes in the Chinese media presence as part of their post-2006 expansion campaigns in the domains of television, radio, news bureaus, and newspapers. This summary also touches on China's investment in telecommunication infrastructure in Africa, another avenue through which China may shape the content of African media.

China in Africa: A Brief Overview

Reliable records documenting regular interactions between China and the African region date back as far as the Tang dynasty (ca. 600 AD), with some evidence suggesting much earlier contact via trade along the Silk Road (Jinyuan 1984). In the modern era, Chinese activity on this continent took on a renewed intensity in the postcolonial and Cold War years when China was actively building its foreign relations, in part, to lobby international support for its position on Taiwan. Although somewhat episodic in terms of intensity in the decades since this reengagement, financial aid, direct investment, and resource extractions have consistently served as substantial components of China's foreign policy in Africa (Sutter 2012). As a result, China's investment in the African region far surpasses that of other leading world powers:

> What the Chinese did that no one else had done before was that they considered Africa as a market—a market for Chinese goods, institutions and services—when the rest of world viewed Africa as an economic basket case and a place for aid programs. (Powers 2013)

More recently, China's economic involvement in Africa has hit an even more accelerated pace, "China's economic ties with Africa have soared in recent years, with two-way trade in 2013 . . . hitting a record $200 billion, mainly in Chinese imports of African oil, copper and other raw material" (*Daily Mail* 2015).

Chinese Soft Power Efforts in Africa

In addition to providing more aid, trading at greater volumes, and investing more broadly on the continent than other world powers, the Chinese have also made a much more conscientious effort to shape a favorable image of its nation and culture among the African populace. For example, in only a decade after the program was initially created in 2004, there were twenty-five Confucius Institutes across eighteen African countries as of 2014 (Krageland 2014). These institutes are partnered with and hosted by African universities to provide in-depth instruction in Chinese language and culture. According to the program's Web site,

> Over recent years . . . they have become a platform for cultural exchanges between China and the world as well as a bridge reinforcing friendship and cooperation between China and the rest of the world and are much welcomed across the globe. (Confucius Institute Online 2014)

There is also China's "stadium diplomacy": a decades-old public relations tactic of building soccer stadiums throughout the developing world in an effort to build favorable opinion with local populations.

> China's stadium diplomacy has been evolving since it began giving aid to African countries in 1956 . . . Although only a sliver of China's 256.29 billion yuan, or $38.54 billion, in foreign assistance doled out between 1950 and 2009 went to the building of stadiums, the structures serve as permanent reminders of China's aid efforts in each location. (Will 2012)

As of 2010, there were fifty sports stadiums built by China across the African continent, one of which, somewhat ironically, served as the venue for President Obama's public address in Kenya during his 2015 trip to Africa (Kuo 2015).

Although Chinese media have already been broadcasting in Africa for several decades, there has been a visible push to expand the presence and relevance of Chinese media on the continent as part of the soft power campaign initiated after 2006.

> Beijing's media engagements with Africa are clearly expanding, and the benefits are widely felt. African countries are provided with the tools to strengthen their own media institutions and the ability to increase their own content output. At the same time, China is beginning to disseminate its media philosophy in Africa, where many countries are still searching for a media model. (Wu 2012: 18)

The following sections briefly outline both the historical presence of Chinese media on the continent, as well as recent efforts to expand these mediums' reach and relevance.

Radio

China Radio International (CRI) sent its first international broadcast in 1941. Since this time, its reach has expanded exponentially. In 2008, daily programming reached 192 hours in forty-three languages, and is purported to have reached more than two hundred million listeners across approximately two hundred countries (Scotton and Hachten 2010). As of 2015, CRI reported to broadcast in more than sixty languages across the globe, with more than thirty foreign correspondent stations (China Radio International 2015). These broadcasts are aired across the globe via a combination of satellites, shortwave transmitters, Web casts, CRI's own local radio stations, and partnerships with AM and FM stations to provide relays and rebroadcasts.

CRI began broadcasting in Africa specifically in 1956 (as then-named Peking Radio), and by 1965, broadcast "nearly 100 hours a week, making it 'the best-known and most effective propaganda channel of Red China in Africa'" (Shinn and Eisenman 2012: 209). Since 2000, China has donated radio equipment to a number of African countries to expand audience access to their broadcasts (Shinn and Eisenman 2012). And, in recent years, CRI has endeavored to improve the quality and relevance of its programming on the African continent. For example,

> In 2006, China Radio International (CRI) launched its first overseas FM radio station in Nairobi with a schedule of daily programming for 19 hours in English, Kiswahili and Chinese . . . sending localized programs live from its Nairobi studio shared with Kenya Broadcasting Corporation. (Li and Rønning 2013: 5)

CRI has since opened three additional local bureaus on the continent in Cairo, Lagos, and Harare. This has enabled CRI to create more localized and relevant content, with the goal of increasing its appeal and relevance to African audiences.

In recent years, China has also increased the availability of its CRI English Service on the African continent. The CRI English Service provides news, features, and music (Scotton and Hachten 2010). In part because of its accessibility to English speakers as well as its relatively higher production value, CRI English is touted as an effective "Bridge to China and the World." As of 2015, the CRI English Service broadcast more than 130 hours of programming a day across the globe (CRI English 2015a). In Africa, as of 2015, CRI English programming was available for at least two hours per day in twenty-nine different nations (CRI English 2015b).

In summary, although China has been transmitting radio broadcasts to Africa for more than half a century, both the quantity and quality of these transmissions have expanded over recent years. Since the 2006 FOCAC meeting outlined plans to improve and expand Chinese radio broadcasting in Africa, China has made visible progress in

expanding audience access to its international channel, creating more locally relevant content for African listeners, and increasing the production value of its broadcasts in the region.

Television

Founded in 1958, CCTV has been the Chinese government's flagship television broadcaster and its most visible mouthpiece. CCTV currently comprises dozens of channels—ranging from entertainment, to news, to sports—and reaches a global audience. CCTV launched its first international channel in 2000, an effort to provide a Chinese perspective to the growing market of international news channels such as Al Jazeera, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and CNN. CCTV's international presence has since increased to multiple overseas channels that broadcast in six languages (e.g., English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, and Chinese) (Rotheray 2010; Scotton and Hachten 2010). As of 2010, CCTV claimed to reach an overseas audience of 45 million viewers (Rotheray 2010).

To produce more relevant and appealing content to African viewers, in 2011, CCTV established the network's regional center for Africa in Nairobi, Kenya: "The state broadcaster has 50 local staff here and 14 correspondents across the continent in South Africa, Nigeria, Somalia, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Senegal with plans to expand to 150 staff" (Rhodes 2012). This opened the door to the production of daily television programming specific to the region in January of 2012: CCTV Africa. As reported by the CCTV Africa Web site, the motivation for this programming was to

> strengthen news coverage in Africa. In so doing, CCTV News wishes to promote communication and cooperation between China and African countries on politics, economy, trade and culture. CCTV Africa will be responsible for news-gathering and task assignments on the African continent. CCTV Africa produces two and half-hours news programs every weekday, broadcast through CCTV's English news channel. (CCTV Africa 2015)

Xinhua News Bureau

Xinhua is China's leading news service, originally founded in 1931. Although it was domestically focused in its early decades, in 1983, its content took a more global perspective when encouraged to do so under Deng Xioaping's economic reforms (Wu 2012). In recent decades, Xinhua's global presence has expanded dramatically, with more than one hundred regional hubs, editorial offices, and local bureaus across Asia, North and South America, the Middle East, and Africa (Xinhuanet 2004). According to its Web site, it is a "global news and information gathering network," which operates twenty-four hours a day to dispatch news across the globe in seven different languages (Xinhuanet 2004).

Turning to Africa specifically, "Xinhua's early presence in sub-Saharan Africa was to help the Chinese government form diplomatic relations with recently

independent African states . . . In the 1970s and 1980s, Xinhua opened 12 bureaus across Africa" (Wu 2012: 11). As of 2013, this number expanded to more than twenty Xinhua bureaus on the African continent (Li and Rønning 2013; Xinhuanet 2004).

Although Xinhua has long had a presence in Africa, following the trajectory of other Chinese media in Africa, Xinhua has endeavored to expand its reach and relevance on the continent in recent years. For example, "major changes came in 2006, when Xinhua moved its Regional Editorial Office from Paris to Nairobi—recognising the capital as a central hub in Africa for China's 'going abroad' media project" (Wu 2012: 17). In its first years, the Nairobi office employed sixty journalists and four hundred local staff in Africa, and it was reported to publish

> in every month around 1,800 pieces of news in English, 2,000 in French, 2,200 pictures and 150 pieces of video clips, surpassing its counterparts in Associated Press (AP), Reuters and Agence France Presse (AFP) in term of the quantity of news releases. (Li and Rønning 2013: 4)

In 2008, the Xinhua news agency also launched its China African News Service, another strategic effort to increase its appeal to African audiences by reporting on issues of mutual interest (Wu 2012). Over recent years, its news model in Africa has moved from generating primarily ideologically oriented stories to ones that are more geared at producing customer-oriented content (Wu 2012). In addition, to further expand its reach, Xinhua continues to provide free news, equipment, and technical support to those countries that cannot afford to pay for it (Wu 2012).

Newspaper

Although *China Daily* reaches a substantial domestic audience in China, since its inception in 1981, this English-language publication has primarily been targeted at reaching a broad global audience. As of 2015, the organization reports that it publishes,

> US, European, African, Asian and Latin American editions of the flagship brand with a total circulation of 900,000 . . . The readership, both in China and the rest of the world, is mainly high-level officials, diplomats, executives and academics . . . It uses cutting-edge design, allied with dynamic photographs and artwork, and encompasses in-depth reports to analyze affairs both in China and internationally. (*China Daily* 2011)

China Daily Africa debuted in 2012. Headquartered in Nairobi, this edition is a weekly twenty-four-page publication that covers issues specific to Africa–China relations, such as economic and trade cooperation, as well as cultural exchanges (*China Daily* 2012). As of 2015, *China Daily Africa* had circulations of 10,000 in Kenya, 9,000 in South Africa, and 5,000 in Ethiopia, with plans to expand to Nigeria in the following year (Zhen 2015).

Telecommunications Infrastructure

Although perhaps not as visible or tangible as its broadcast presence, another avenue through which China influences the content of African media coverage of its country is through its investment in telecommunication infrastructure on the continent:

> China's multipronged approach in Africa can also be seen in the telecommunications sector. China is engaged both in the production of content and meaning and in the infrastructure on which African information societies are being built. China has made inroads into the emerging telecommunications market in Africa through a mixture of loans, which are part of aid packages, and export credits, which are used to foster Chinese investment by offering resources to Chinese companies willing to invest in African markets. (Gagliardone and Geall 2014: 3)

The significance of this is the potential for Chinese investors and government officials to selectively grant contracts contingent on broadcasters adopting a preferred news model. Although the Chinese government adamantly insists that its approach in this sector is a "no-strings-attached" policy, a survey of recent contracts suggests that certain broadcasters are more likely to benefit from this exchange (Gagliardone and Geall 2014). Thus, as one scholar worries,

> The more concerning aspect of this trend, of course, involves independence and transparency. Chinese-owned media are censored. Expanding to markets where China has industrial holdings and ambitions, therefore, may not guarantee thorough reporting on business dealings, safety practices, environmental stewardship and other important issues related to these investments. (Glader 2013)

Analysis

In the following analyses, I test whether these post-2006 efforts to expand and improve the reach of Chinese media in Africa have moved public opinion more favorably toward China in six African nations. To do so, I employ multilevel mixed effects models, which are particularly useful for nested data, in which the data are clustered into multiple, hierarchical levels of interest. In this case, although the survey data are specific to the individual level, the province and nation in which each individual resides also play key roles in this dynamic. Thus, the random effects component of the model will estimate variance parameters that represent the spread (i.e., standard deviation) of the random intercepts around the common intercept of each level of interest—in this case, the country and province within which each individual lives. The fixed effects portion of the model produces estimates of the effect of Chinese media and access to media technology specific to the level of analysis of the observations—in this case, the individuals surveyed in the six African nations included in the data set. This enables the model to account for unobserved or unmeasurable variance that derives from residing in a particular country or province.

As part of this analysis, I control for both country-level and individual-level factors that are likely correlated with both media exposure and opinions about China. At the

country level, I control for the amount of aid the Chinese government gave to each country between 2001 and 2011 (Strange et al. 2013). Being that "there is a major transition in China's Africa investments from being government-driven to corporate-driven, in which private companies play an increasingly significant role" (Li and Rønning 2013: 1), I also control for the amount of Chinese foreign direct investment (Heritage Foundation and American Enterprise Institute 2016) in each nation over roughly the same period (i.e., 2005 to 2013). In addition, I control for other, nonmedia components of China's soft power campaign in Africa. Specifically, I control for the number of Confucius Institutes located in each country and the presence of soccer stadiums built by China as part of their "stadium diplomacy" campaign. Not only will these factors control for these specific nonmedia soft power efforts, but they likely also serve as proxies of the extent of broader, nonmedia soft power efforts made by China in these countries.

At the individual level, I control for a number of factors that are likely correlates of media use and public opinion toward China. These include gender, education, income, age, and whether the individual lives in an urban or rural community. Finally, I also measure the percentage of households that own a television and/or radio set at the level of each subnational province in which the respondent resides.[1] The obvious alternative to this would be to measure actual access to radio and television sets at the individual level. However, the Pew surveys did not ask about the respondents' media access. Thus, instead, I include measures of the percentage of households in each subnational province or state where an individual resides that own a TV and/or radio set. These measures are a valid—and perhaps even preferable—proxy for an individual's probability of media access, because the percentage of households that own a TV or radio in a specific province is highly correlated with an individual's likelihood of having access to a radio or television. Moreover, using this proxy for individual-level media access also has the added advantage of not being correlated with other individual-level factors that may confound the relationship between media use and public opinion.

Media access measures are necessary for this analysis because the presence and extent of Chinese media in a given country are only part of the story—after all, for Chinese media to reach and influence an audience, there must be a substantial enough portion of the population that have access to the technology that would enable them to consume that media. Therefore, several of the following tests consider the interaction between the extent of Chinese media presence in a nation and the penetration of the relevant media technology (i.e., radio and television) in the province in which the individuals reside.

Findings

Public Opinion toward China in 2013

This section begins with a simple overview of the distribution of public opinion regarding China in the six nations included in this analysis: Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda. The measures span a variety of attitudes—from opinions about the general favorability of China, to the extent and nature of China's influence in a given country, to China's role as a world leader. Figure 1 shows the

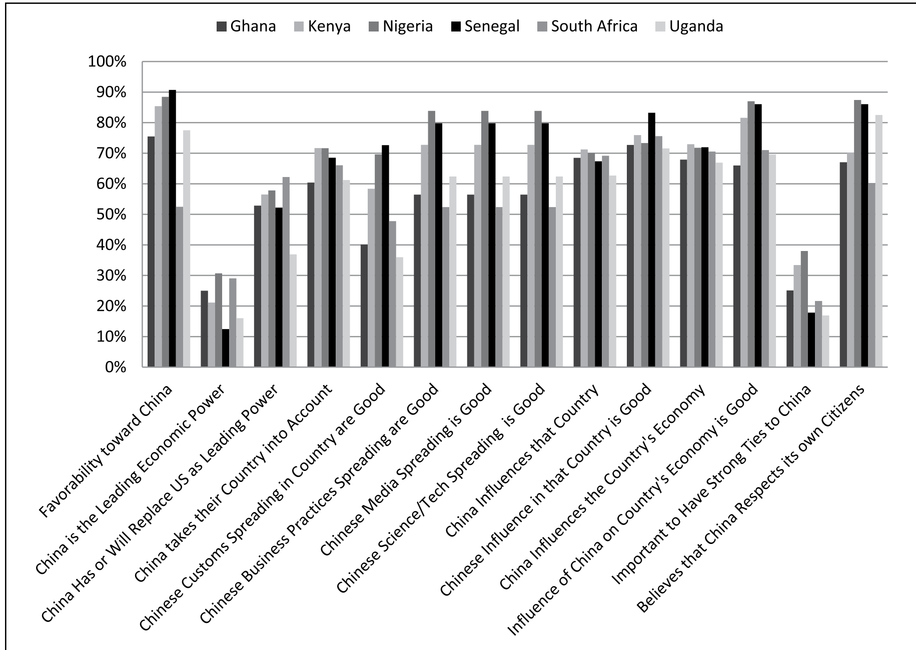

Figure 1. Public opinion toward China in six African nations in 2013.

distribution of opinion across these measures of public opinion toward China for the six African nations (see Figure 1). A cursory examination shows relatively favorable attitudes toward China across the board in all of these nations.

Now that we have a general sense of the distribution of opinion in these countries, the next step is to test whether access to media technology and the extent of the Chinese media presence in one's nation correlates with these attitudes. To facilitate this, I created a single additive measure representing the size of the Chinese media footprint in a given country. Specifically, I recode each of the individual measures of the types of Chinese media in Africa into a 3-point scale, from 0 to 1 (i.e., 0, .5, and 1). Zeroes are assigned if that type of Chinese media is not present at all in a given nation—for example, if *China Daily* does not circulate at all in that country. The intermediate value (.5) is assigned when the extent of the presence of a specific type of Chinese media in that country is greater than 0, but less than the mean value in our data set for that type of Chinese media. Finally, countries where the extent of Chinese media in a given country meets or exceeds the mean value of that indicator in this data set are assigned a value of 1. I then added each of these recoded measures together to create a single additive index representing the overall size of the Chinese media footprint in that country across the relevant dimensions (e.g., Chinese television, radio, Xinhua news service, newspapers, and investment in telecommunication infrastructure). (For more information about these measures, please refer to Table 1.)

Table 1. Chinese Media in Africa Variables Used to Build Additive Index of Chinese Media Footprint.

Country	CCTV (If Airs in Country)[a]	CCTV Correspondent (If Stationed in Country)[b]	CRI Local Language (No. of Hours of Programming)[c]	CRI English (No. of Hours of Programming)[d]	Amount of Private Telecom Investment[e]	Amount of Government Telecom Aid[f]	Xinhua Bureau (If Bureau in Country)[g]	Xinhua Bureau Staff (No. of Staff Working at the Bureaus)[h]	*China Daily Africa* (Size of Circulation)[i]
Ghana	1	0	0	0.5 (2)	0	0.5 (329)	1	0.5 (5)	0
Kenya	1	1	1 (14)	1 (5.5)	0	0.5 (94)	1	1 (35)	1 (10,000)
Nigeria	1	1	0.5 (5.5)	0.5 (2)	1 (1,650)	1 (3,192)	1	0.5 (8)	0
Senegal	1	1	1 (24)	0	0	0.5 (14)	0	0	0
South Africa	1	1	1 (29)	1 (3)	1 (380)	0	1	0.5 (Estimate)	1 (9,000)
Uganda	1	1	0.5 (5.5)	1 (5.5)	0	0.5 (113)	1	0.5 (3)	0

Note. Value recoded for index with original value in parentheses. CCTV = China Central Television; CRI = China Radio International.
a. For source of data, please see http://cctv-africa.com/.
b. For source of data, please see https://cpj.org/blog/2012/05/chinas-media-footprint-in-kenya.php.
c. Data attained from e-mail correspondence with Ying Lian, English Service, CRI, on June 28, 2015.
d. For source of data, please see http://english.cri.cn/4026/2007/04/27/44@221053.htm.
e. For source of data, please see https://www.aei.org/china-global-investment-tracker/.
f. For source of data, please see http://aiddata.org/aiddata-research-releases.
g. For source of data, please see http://203.192.6.89/xwcp.htm.
h. Data attained from e-mail correspondence with Daniel Ooko, Xinhua News Agency, Nairobi Bureau, on July 3, 2015. I was unable to receive personal confirmation of the exact number of staff at South Africa's Johannesburg bureau. Estimate is derived from journalists affiliated with published news stories out of that bureau, as well as LinkedIn profiles.
i. Data attained from LinkedIn correspondence with Zhen Liu, deputy director of Global Operations Office, *China Daily*, on July 6, 2015.

As discussed previously, having a large Chinese media presence in a nation is only part of the story. The other part is whether populations have access to the relevant technology to access that media content, such as radio and television sets. Thus, I run a number of tests interacting the size of the Chinese media footprint in a country and the accessibility of media technology (i.e., percentage of households in a province that own a radio or own a television set) to determine whether these measures correlate with specific opinions toward China. For clarity's sake, I report these findings as marginal effects figures, in which I map the average marginal effects of a one-unit increase in the percentage of households in the respondent's province that own a radio or television set across the spectrum of the size of the Chinese media footprint in a nation.

If China's extensive efforts to improve the reach and relevance of their media presence in these countries post-2006 had the intended effect on building their soft power, then we should see a positive correlation—so that the effect of radio or TV ownership on opinion toward China should become more positive the larger the Chinese media footprint in that nation. A negative slope would indicate that the greater the media footprint and the more access to media technology, the more negative that opinion about China grows. A flat slope indicates a null effect of the interaction of Chinese media and media access on that particular opinion. (Please see the online appendix for the regression tables that generated the marginal effects plots.)

In the first set of figures, we see a number of positive and negative slopes depicting the effect of Chinese media and access to media technology on various opinions toward China (see Figure 2a–2n). However, the 95 percent confidence intervals indicate that the size of several of these average marginal effects often fail to reach statistical significance. One important reminder, however, is these are maps of the *average* marginal effect of radio ownership. Thus, it remains possible that radio access may exert a significant effect on more of these opinions, but only at certain levels of radio ownership. For example, perhaps the effects are only evident when access to radio surpasses a certain threshold in a community.

The specific opinions where we do see the average marginal effect of radio ownership having a significant and positive interactive effect with the size of China's media presence include the belief that China is influencing the respondent's country generally, the belief that China is influencing the country's economy, that China is the world's leading economic power, and that the spreading of Chinese media and Chinese customs in that respondent's country is a good thing. There are no significant negative relationships for the interaction of radio ownership and the size of the Chinese media footprint.

Turning to the figures representing the interactive effect of the size of the Chinese media footprint in a given country and the prevalence of televisions in a respondent's home province, we see a significant positive effect on beliefs that China has an influence in one's country, that China has an influence on the economy of that country, and the belief that this economic influence is good (see Figure 3a–3n). As was the case for the analysis of the effect of radio ownership, however, there are also a number of figures that demonstrate both positive and negative slopes but with 95 percent confidence intervals that do not rule out a null effect.

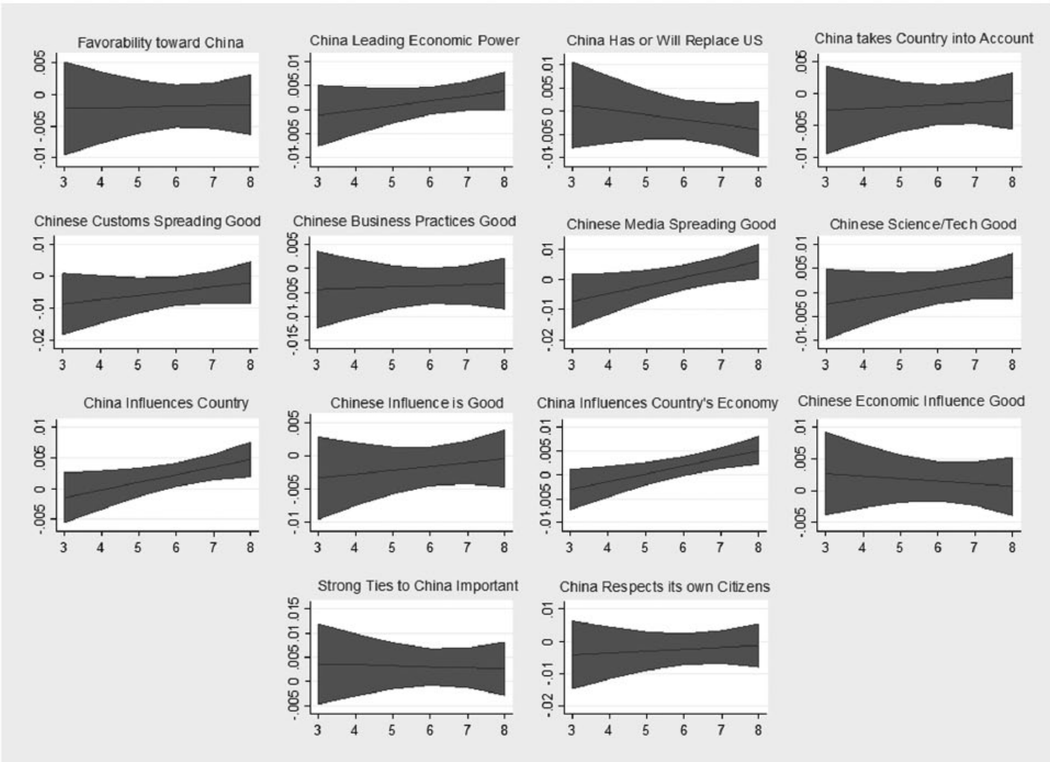

Figure 2. Results of interaction of radio ownership and size of the Chinese media footprint on opinion toward China in 2013.
Note. CI = confidence interval.

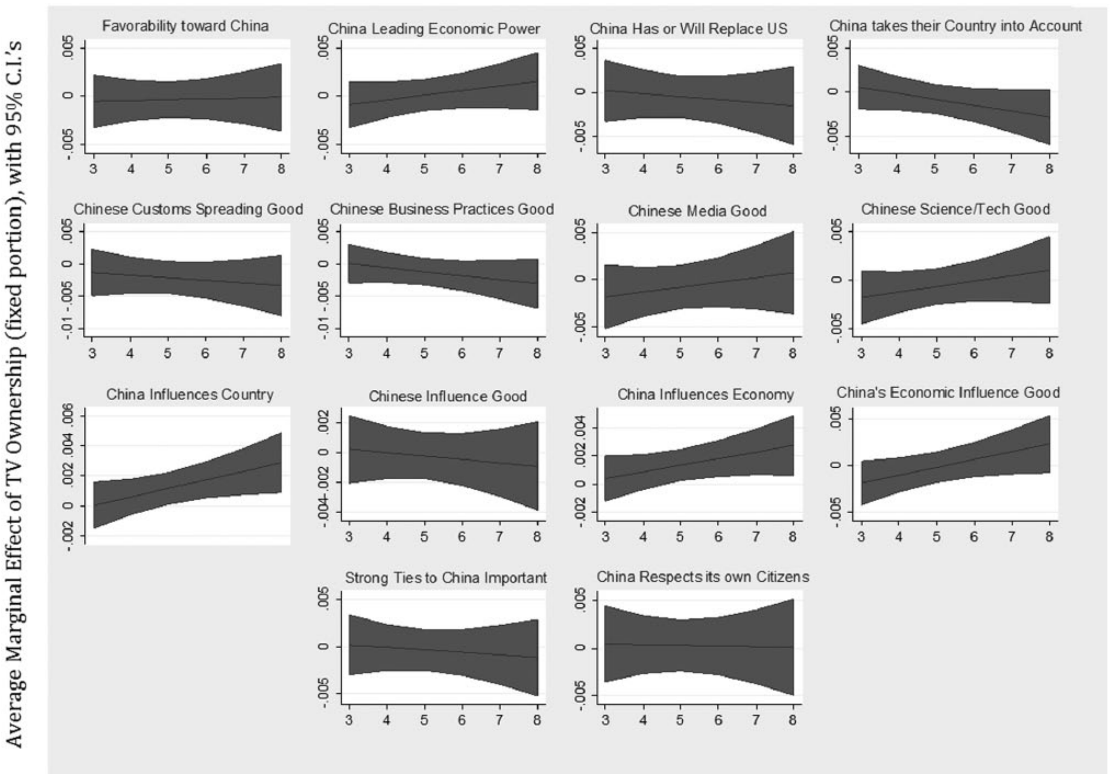

Figure 3. Results of interaction of TV ownership and the size of the Chinese media footprint on opinion toward China in 2013.
Note. CI = confidence interval.

The handful of positive correlations revealed by the interactions of radio and TV ownership with the size of the Chinese media footprint in a country suggests that, to some degree, the Chinese effort to expand and improve the presence of Chinese media in Africa may have had the intended effect of improving African public opinion toward China. However, as stipulated at the outset of this analysis, the best that these regressions can do is illustrate correlations. This is partly because these tests cannot rule out the possibility that there are other factors correlated with Chinese media and access to technology, which may really be driving these relationships. Fortunately, one way to address this is to compare the nature of these relationships over time—ideally, at the outset of China's push to expand its media presence in these countries and then again several years after this effort has been in place.

Changes in Public Opinion toward China in Africa between 2007 and 2013

As noted earlier, although illustrative, the previous analysis could not sufficiently control for potentially confounding factors that may be correlated with the extent of Chinese media, access to media technology, as well as public opinion toward China (i.e., omitted variable bias). Also, this analysis could not demonstrate temporal ordering, which makes the findings further susceptible to endogeneity concerns as it is not clear what moved first—public opinion toward China or the presence of Chinese media and/or access to media technology. Fortunately, we can begin to reveal a slightly better picture of the potential causal effect of China's post-2006 soft power campaign to expand its media presence in Africa by comparing the relationship between these measures in 2007 and in 2013, which somewhat assuages omitted variable bias and endogeneity concerns.

In a bit more detail, if China's concerted effort to expand and improve its media presence in Africa that began after 2006 was successful in improving opinion toward China, we should see a different (and more positive) relationship between these measures in 2013 relative to 2007. However, if there was a confounding factor that was really driving the findings revealed by the analysis of these relationships in 2013, which the analysis failed to control for, we should expect to see the exact same relationship (i.e., slope) between these variables in 2007 as in 2013.

To conduct these tests, I utilize a series of interactions, in which I compare the relationship between access to media technology and the extent of Chinese media presence on public opinion both in 2007 (the first year after FOCAC's commitment to expand their media presence in the region) and 2013 (seven years after these efforts had been underway). If there are differences in the relationships between Chinese media, media access, and public opinion toward China across these two points in time, this is a stronger test of whether the expanded Chinese media presence in a country post-2006 actually exerted the intended effect on African public.

Only three opinion variables were asked in both 2007 and 2013: how favorably the respondents viewed China, whether they believed China has an influence in their own country, and whether they believed that China's influence is good for the country. For clarity of presentation, as in the previous analysis, I include here figures of the average

marginal effects produced by the interaction of Chinese media presence and access to media technology on these three dependent variables. (See the online appendix for the tables of the regression results that generated these marginal effects estimates.)

The first sets of tests consider the effect of the size of the Chinese media footprint and the extent of radio ownership in 2007 compared with 2013 (see Figure 4a–4c). Whereas the slopes are identical in 2007 and 2013 in regard to opinions about the general favorability of China, there are distinctly more positive slopes in 2013 compared with 2007 in regard to whether China has an influence in that country and whether the influence is good. Admittedly, the 95 percent confidence intervals of these two slopes overlap, so the difference falls just outside of significance. However, the direction of the difference in these slopes is supportive of a positive effect of the expansion of Chinese media after 2006 on these two opinion variables.

Turning to the next set of tests, here I consider the interactive effect of the size of the Chinese media footprint and the extent of TV ownership in 2007 relative to 2013 (see Figure 5a–5c). In this case, there are significantly different slopes in 2013 relative to 2007 in regard to two of the opinion variables: whether China has an influence in that country, and whether that influence is good. In 2013, the larger the Chinese media presence in a country and the more access to TV's, the more favorably respondents felt toward China's influence in their country. However, six years earlier, this positive relationship was not present. This suggests that the post-2006 expansion of Chinese media presence may have exerted the intended positive effect on public opinion toward China.

Before concluding, it also seems worthwhile to look at an interaction that is more specific to the individual media considered in this analysis. Whereas up until now we have considered the total size of the Chinese media footprint in these countries, it may also be worthwhile to look at the relationship shared by access to media technologies and the specific content to which that particular technology provides access. Therefore, next, I look at the effect on public opinion of the interaction between the amount of local-language CRI radio programming in a country and access to radio sets (see Figure 6). As might be expected, there are significantly different and more positive effects in 2013 compared with 2007 for two of the opinions—both favorability toward China and whether China has a good influence in one's country.

Finally, this analysis explores the effect on public opinion of the least overt component of China's soft power campaign to expand its media presence in Africa: the effect of telecommunication infrastructure investment on public opinion in 2007 and 2013 (see Figure 7). In contrast to the other findings thus far, these tests reveal virtually identical relationships with the opinion variables in 2007 as in 2013. In both cases, there are nearly identical large and significant positive effects of telecommunication investment on these opinions toward China.

One explanation for the similarity of this relationship across these two periods may be the fact that telecommunication investment has been a prominent strategy employed by China on the continent well before 2006, with a sizable push beginning after 2000 (Wu 2013). As a result, perhaps the post-2006 change in this component of China's soft power campaign was not as dramatic as were changes to the quality and reach of

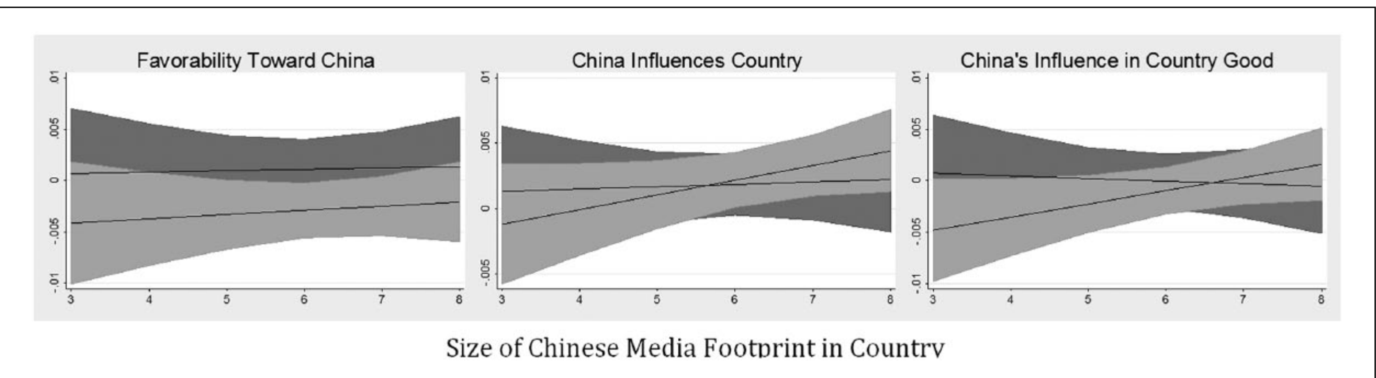

Figure 4. Results of interactive effects on opinion toward China in 2007 (light gray) and 2013 (dark gray).
Note. CI = confidence interval.

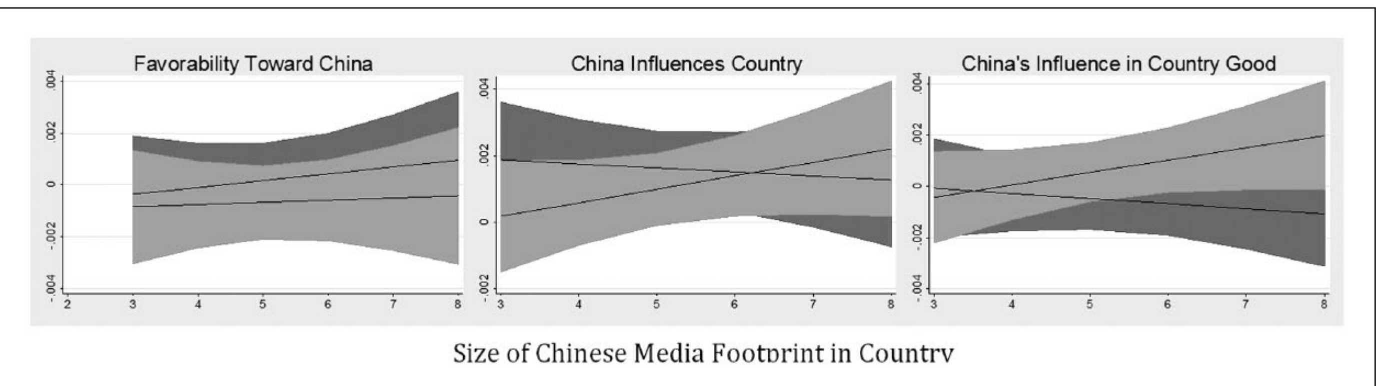

Figure 5. Results of interactive effects on opinion toward China in 2007 (light gray) and 2013 (dark gray).
Note. CI = confidence interval.

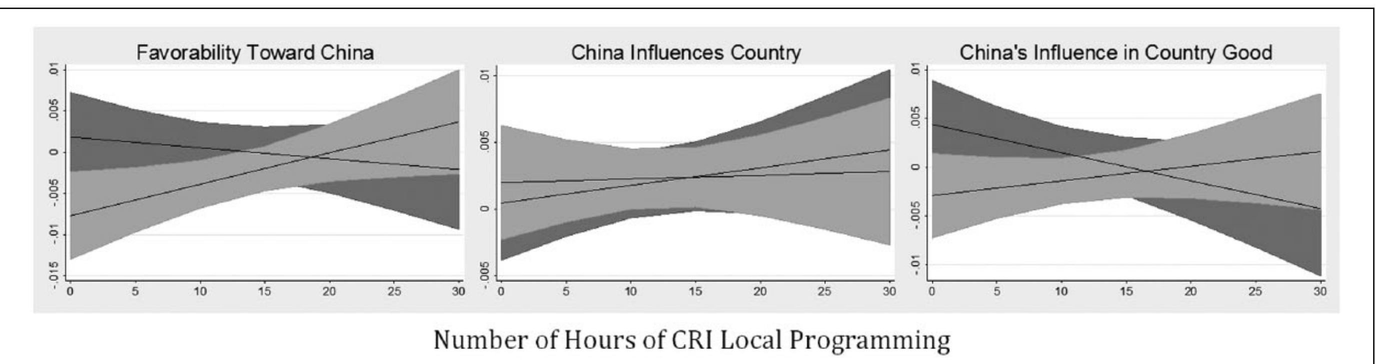

Figure 6. Results of interactive effects on opinion toward China in 2007 (light gray) and 2013 (dark gray).
Note. CI = confidence interval.

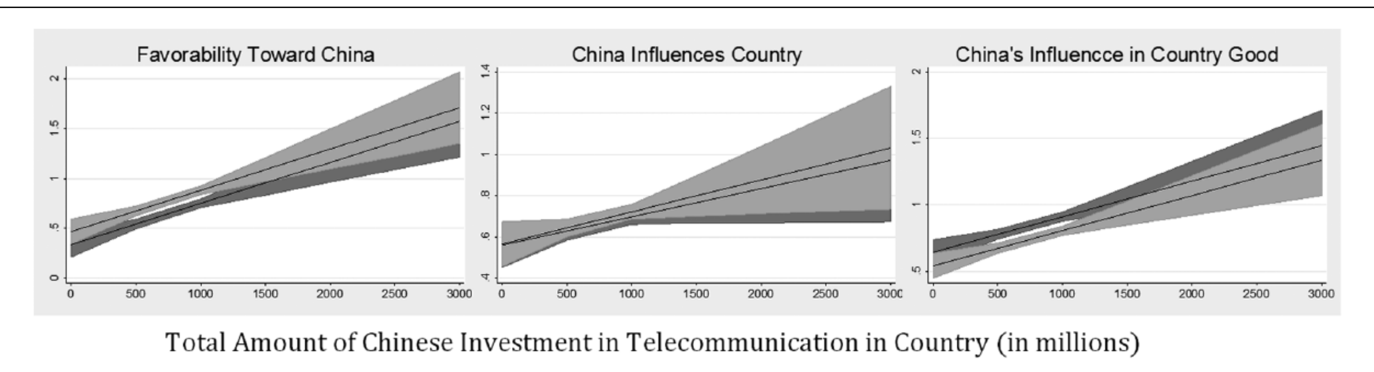

Figure 7. Results of interactive effects on opinion toward China in 2007 (light gray) and 2013 (dark gray).
Note. CI = confidence interval.

their media broadcasts on the African continent. Alternatively, it is also possible that endogeneity may explain this finding—so that China was more likely to invest more heavily in telecommunication infrastructure in African countries that were already more favorable toward its country.

Conclusion

In conclusion, although far from conclusive, the results of this analysis suggest that China's post-2006 media expansion on the African continent may be having the desired effect on African public opinion. In the years following the 2006 FOCAC summit, which detailed an expansive plan to improve its soft power in Africa, China has made deliberate and substantial efforts to improve both the reach of its media on the African continent and, perhaps more important, its relevance. Examples of these efforts include moving the Xinhua's news service's overseas headquarters from Paris to Nairobi in 2006, the Xinhua news agency launching its China African News Service in 2008, CCTV establishing the network's regional center for Africa in Nairobi in 2011 and the creation of Africa-specific programming in 2012, the launch of an Africa-specific publication by *China Daily* in 2012, and the formation of CRI's first foreign-based radio station in Nairobi in 2006.

Despite the sweeping expansion of Chinese media in Africa over recent years, there has been limited empirical analysis of whether these efforts have had the intended effect of improving African public opinion toward China. To begin to fill this void, this study utilized Pew Global Attitudes Project public opinion data to test the effect of the presence of Chinese media and access to technology on opinions toward China in six African nations: Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda. The analysis first considered simple correlations between the size of the Chinese media presence in a country and access to media technology across a range of opinions toward China. Next, to provide a stronger causal test, these relationships were compared over two points in time—2007 (one year after the initiation of the official plan to expand China's media presence) and 2013 (seven years after this effort began).

On the whole, the results suggest that this effort appears to have generated the desired results. In many cases, the larger the Chinese media presence in a country and the more access to relevant media technology, the more favorable public opinion toward China has grown across multiple dimensions. This suggests that China's recent foreign policy recalibration to more heavily weight soft power and public diplomacy may be paying off, particularly via its international broadcasting presence on the continent. The analysis also revealed that the amount of Chinese investment in telecommunication infrastructure in Africa has a large and consistently positive relationship with favorable attitudes toward China; however, it is not entirely clear which direction the causal arrow points in this case. Finally, this analysis makes a case for the utility and validity of using measures of media access, rather than actual use or exposure, not only in cases where this information is not available but also when doing so may enable the analysis to minimize endogeneity risks.

In closing, it is likely that efforts to expand and improve China's international broadcasting presence in Africa will continue in coming years. Thus, researchers

should continue to study its effects on African public opinion toward China in an effort to better understand and predict the full range of implications of this effort for China's soft power and public diplomacy objectives in this region.

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Note

1. Data for this measure are compiled from the Household and Respondent Characteristics data sets provided by the Demographic and Health Surveys (2006, 2008, 2010, and 2011) for all countries in the analysis except South Africa (see http://dhsprogram.com/Topics/Household-and-Respondent-Characteristics.cfm). South African measures are built from the General Household Survey (2010). (See https://www.datafirst.uct.ac.za/dataportal/index.php/catalog/192/data_dictionary.)

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Article

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Interpreting the Media Logic behind Editorial Decisions: Television News Coverage of the 2015 U.K. General Election Campaign

Stephen Cushion[1], Richard Thomas[1], Allaina Kilby[1], Marina Morani[1], and Richard Sambrook[1]

Abstract

This article enters into debates about media logic in political coverage by way of a case study of the 2015 U.K. General Election. We quantitatively and qualitatively examine two dominant themes of coverage—news about campaign rallies and horse-race reporting—as both are widely seen in political communication scholarship as symptomatic of a media logic. We draw on a content analysis of BBC, ITV, Sky News, Channel 4, and Channel 5 U.K. national television newscasts and semi-structured interviews with their heads of news and/or senior editors to help interpret how far a media logic was the editorial driving force behind coverage. At face value, our content analysis appears to support the media logic thesis, with all broadcasters—in particular commercial television newscasts—covering more process than policy issues. But our case study questions the antecedents of media logic and shines a light on a political logic that may have remained in the dark in large-scale content analysis studies. In following a political logic, we argue that this promoted the horse-race narrative, and naturalized the parties' highly stage-managed rallies and walkabouts.

Keywords

journalism, television news, news production, opinion polls, political parties, election campaign

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Election campaigns trigger an intense power struggle between media and political actors as competing interests fight to control the agenda. The intensity of this battle has been brought into sharper focus by an increasing scholarly interest in how media cover election campaigns. Strömbäck and Lee Kaid's (2008) edited volume, *The Handbook of Election News Coverage Around the World*, perhaps provides the most comprehensive global picture, signaling the multiplicity of explanatory factors that influence the reporting of campaigns between countries, from different political and media systems, journalism cultures and norms, to competing styles of party campaigning, rules regulating elections, and levels of engagement among citizens.

In considering the twenty-two countries featured within the volume, they concluded that a media logic was a prominent–or "even dominant"–characteristic of election coverage, with news about the strategy of parties, campaign events and horse-race type stories prioritized above more substantive policy issues (Strömbäck and Lee Kaid 2008: 425). More recent research has suggested that election coverage has become increasingly driven by news media values, although trends can be unidirectional, with different political and media systems playing a role in resisting—or encouraging—a media logic (Takens et al. 2013).

In this article, we enter into debates about media logic in political coverage by way of a case study of the 2015 U.K. General Election. We draw on a content analysis of the United Kingdom's leading television newscasts over the six-week election campaign, interpreting the volume and nature of coverage between different broadcasters. In doing so, we quantitatively and qualitatively examine two dominant themes of coverage–news about campaign rallies and horse-race reporting–as both are widely seen in political communication scholarship as symptomatic of a media logic in election reporting. To help consider how far a media logic was a driving force behind television news agendas, we draw on semi-structured interviews with the heads of news and/or senior editors from the BBC, ITV, Sky, Channel 4, and Channel 5.

As the United Kingdom has a hybrid media system, with a mixture of public and market-driven broadcasters, our study can examine whether newscasts operating under greater commercial influence pursued an agenda consistent with a media logic. But more broadly, our aim is to consider media logic in both quantitative and qualitative detail by understanding the editorial decisions behind the selection of news and comparing journalistic perspectives with a systematic review of how U.K. newscasts reported the campaign.

Media Logic, Reporting Elections, and Interpreting Campaign Coverage

The concept of media logic broadly describes the routine way in which media content is editorially shaped and structured. But scholars have criticized the abstract way in which it has been defined and the notion that one logic can encapsulate the diverse ways in which media operate (Lundby 2009). The concept of news media logic has been defined by Strömbäck (2011) as "the institutional, technological, and sociological

characteristics of the news media, including their format characteristics, production and dissemination routines, norms and needs" (p. 373).

In studies about the reporting of elections, the concept of media logic has generally been used to characterize the degree to which coverage subscribes to the values and conventions of news media rather than a political logic (Strömbäck and Lee Kaid 2008). According to Strömbäck and Esser (2014), a political logic refers to a "need to form, take decisions on and implement policies, and the need to be successful in different processes of winning support in elections or in the battle for publicity, public opinion, and in negotiations and bargaining" (pp. 15–16). When evaluating media coverage of election campaigns, many scholars interpret the contest as a battle between media and political logics. In doing so, it is often found that a media logic triumphs over a political logic because campaign and horse-race perspectives are reported above policy issues, or because journalists speak over politicians and interpret their behavior and actions, or because coverage is personalized and candidate centered (Cushion and Thomas 2013; Takens et al. 2013; van Aelst et al. 2008). Media logic, in this context, is seen to force politicians and political parties to adhere to news values and production routines, with journalists rather than politicians setting the campaign agenda. Of course, how effective media logic is in setting the public's agenda or engaging audiences remains open to debate. Although there is evidence to suggest that "horse-race" stories attract viewers, at the same time, they can contribute to more cynical attitudes toward politics (Iyengar et al. 2004; Jackson 2011). Similarly, understanding the effect of political logic in news coverage could be dependent on the type of policy agenda, with particular parties "owning" certain issues that might more favorably win voter approval (Kiousis et al. 2015). In recent years, scholars have more carefully considered—with mixed results—the electoral effectiveness of campaign strategies such as attacking opponents (Nai and Walter 2015) or adopting particular policy positions (Adams et al. 2011). In other words, the logic behind political reporting and their effect on audiences should not be assumed but carefully disentangled.

Nevertheless, the weight of scholarly evidence generally supports the proposition that an overarching media logic has increasingly shaped election agendas in many western countries (Strömbäck and Lee Kaid's 2008). But most of these studies rely on large-scale content studies, with similar operational definitions about what constitutes media logic. So, for example, Brants and van Praag's (2006) historical assessment of election coverage in the Netherlands interpreted media logic as horse-race coverage (via opinion polls or reflections) and hoopla reporting (via campaign-type news). By way of conclusion, they argued that "the 2003 campaign showed clear signs of media logic: performance driven campaign communication, media orientation on the public, on the whole less substantive and more horserace and poll driven reporting, journalistic dominance" (p. 38). The assumption here–shared by many scholars–was that poll-driven, campaign-related, and policy-lite agendas inherently represent an underlying media logic.

In our view, this broad and widely shared understanding of media logic can be potentially misleading. It assumes, for instance, that politicians *want* to engage with

policy matters when they may be actively seeking to avoid them. Indeed, there may even be a political logic behind prioritizing campaign coverage above issue-based news as party spin doctors can more closely control the backdrop of their leaders' appearances and the messages being conveyed. Similarly, although scholars have long associated media logic with the obsessive pursuit of the horse-race narrative, from a politician's perspective, it could act as a convenient distraction from answering more substantive issues or prove electorally advantageous for political parties.

Of course, it would be impractical to assume that large content analysis studies spanning many decades or even countries could provide the necessary context to disentangle the precise media logic behind editorial decision making. But although the longitudinal scope and cross-national depth of political communication scholarship has helped build a macro picture of election reporting internationally, the micro factors that help explain coverage have arguably been marginalized. This perhaps reflects a larger gap in political communication scholarship, with far less qualitative research about the editorial judgments shaping the production of news during the election than quantitative studies interpreting large data sets and trends over time. This is not to suggest that practitioners do not inform political communication scholarship. Indeed, academic libraries are often full of accounts, diaries, and memoirs written by journalists reflecting on their experiences of covering campaigns, although practitioners are often invited to share their postelection reflections in special editions of journalism or political communication journals. But, in our view, there is a limited supply of empirical studies—whether interviews or participant observation—exploring *the editorial judgments behind news selection at election time*.

Indeed, when production studies do inform empirical studies exploring media coverage of elections they can help explain editorial decisions. So, for example, Semetko et al.'s (1991) study comparing American and British elections revealed a number of important insights about the formation of election agendas and the influences shaping journalistic choices. Nevertheless, we would also agree with Semetko et al.'s (1991) conclusions that

> On-the-spot observation can shed much light on how media personnel interpret their roles and the kinds of reports they should provide, but only content analysis can show whether such orientations and aspirations have real consequences for what actually gets into the news. (p. 183)

It is in this context that this study enters into debates about how far a media logic shaped election reporting during the 2015 U.K. election. But we begin by providing some context to the 2015 U.K. General Election campaign.

The 2015 U.K. General Election: Media and Political Logics in Context

In the run up to the 2015 U.K. General Election, the main political parties—Labour and Conservative—were consistently tied in the polls, but the final result was a Conservative

Party majority. The polling industry undertook a review of their methodology, and identified among other factors that most organizations had overrepresented the likelihood of young people voting Labour and underrepresented elderly people voting Conservative. The perceived closeness of the race meant a coalition was widely viewed as the most likely electoral outcome. Many possible coalitions could have been fashioned, but perhaps because of the polling evidence and the campaigning tactics of political parties, a great deal of attention was paid to a potential alliance between the Labour Party and the Scottish National Party (SNP). Although Duch et al.'s (2010) longitudinal analysis of voters in twenty-three countries found "coalition-directed voting" regularly occurs in multiparty coalition governments, in U.K. politics, this approach to voting is relatively new (p. 698). Consequently, as our analysis suggests, broadcast editors may not have fully considered how to handle party political attempts to encourage tactical coalition voting. Indeed, the focus on a Labour/SNP coalition suited the interests of the Conservative Party, but it overshadowed Labour's campaigning. Reporters speculating about a possible coalition even led to the Labour Party writing a formal letter of complaint to the BBC about its impartiality. One study suggested that U.K. national newspapers helped legitimatize the editorial focus on a possible Labour/SNP coalition and played an intermedia agenda-setting role that encouraged broadcasters to join in the speculation about postelection deals (Cushion et al. 2016).

Consistent with international trends, the United Kingdom's main political parties have become increasingly professionalized over recent decades, with campaign agendas carefully orchestrated by dedicated spin doctors and public events tightly controlled by party officials. Press conferences, for example, have been held less frequently by political parties in recent elections, limiting the space for journalists to interrogate their policy proposals during the campaign. Instead, public campaign events tend to be more carefully policed by spin doctors, such as highly staged walkabouts in factories or campaign rallies primarily attended by party activists rather than members of the public.

In different ways, the U.K. media have responded to the increasingly savvy and sophisticated ways of party electioneering over recent years. Studies have shown, for instance, journalists becoming increasingly interpretive of political affairs, adopting a combative role and aggressive mode of address when questioning politicians (Cushion and Thomas 2013). This more skeptical approach to political journalism may also have informed the nature of campaign coverage, with an increasing emphasis on the process of politics in recent elections. During the 2010 campaign, Deacon and Wring (2011) found that 43 percent of television news coverage was about electoral process issues—including campaign events or horse-race reporting—rather than wider policy debates.

Our study will examine the balance between coverage of process and policy in television newscasts but also according to their ownership and regulatory characteristics. Although the BBC is a wholesale public service broadcaster, ITV, Channel 4, and Channel 5 are commercial public service broadcasters. Sky News, meanwhile, has no public service obligations but has to conform to the United Kingdom's strict rules about "due impartiality," which all U.K. broadcasters have to follow. Based on our content analysis of U.K. newscasts during the 2015 General Election and interviews with heads and/or senior editors, overall, we ask the following research questions:

Research Question 1: During the 2015 U.K. General Election, to what extent did newscasts operating under competing public service regulations and market pressures report policy or process issues?
Research Question 2: How was television news coverage of 2015 U.K. General Election shaped by media and political logics?

Method and Sample

Our content analysis systematically examined television news over the short campaign (March 30 to May 6, 2015, including weekends). A research team coded all news on the United Kingdom's leading evening newscasts—BBC News at Ten, ITV News at Ten, Channel 4 News at 7 P.M., Channel 5 at 5 P.M., and Sky News at Ten—enabling comparisons to be drawn between the proportion of news each broadcaster dedicated to the election. Our unit of analysis was the type of *news item* rather than the story. So, for example, a *story* about a Conservative pledge to create more jobs might involve two *items*—a reporter package and a live two-way. In total, 2,177 items were generated, of which 843 were election related. Although the unit of analysis in our study was primarily news items, we also examined references *within* news items, including references to opinion polls or to the likelihood of an SNP/Labour coalition.

Our variables included whether an item was election related; whether an item was predominantly about policy or process issues, along with the type of process issue (campaign rally, horse race, or TV debate); whether an opinion poll was referenced; and, finally, whether an item featured a reporter on the campaign trail. All variables achieved credible to high intercoder reliability scores according to Krippendorff's alpha.[1] In light of postelection debates about how the media had covered the campaign and some of the responses from our interviewees, we explored the logic behind the editorial decisions in more quantitative and qualitative detail. Three issues stood out, which we have already acknowledged. First, compared with previous elections, political parties tightly controlled their campaign rallies. Second, opinion polls distorted the agenda because of the (falsely) perceived closeness of the contest. Third, coverage was dominated by the possibility of an SNP/Labour coalition. To explore these observations, our follow-up analysis thus examined

- Every item featuring a reporter on the campaign trail and assessed the degree to which the stage-managed nature of a party rally was questioned or not (either comprehensively, somewhat, or not all).
- Every poll referenced in election coverage to assess how it was informing coverage (whether it related to the horse race, leadership popularity, or policy preferences).
- Every process item to assess the degree to which a Labour/SNP coalition deal was mentioned either implicitly or explicitly in process-related coverage (all variables achieved high intercoder reliability scores[2]).

In focusing on campaign rallies and horse-race coverage, our aim was to unpack the media logic behind their editorial selection. Both types of stories have broadly been labeled process-driven categories (Deacon and Wring 2011), often associated with a commercial attempt to attract audiences by reporting the razzmatazz of the campaign or the race to be elected ahead of covering policy issues. By considering the content and editorial decisions behind these stories, we question whether they reflect a media superseding a political logic. We acknowledge that there are other possible mediatized measures we could have explored, such as the degree to which reporting was personalized—a concern raised during the 2010 election when the first ever televised leaders' debates dominated coverage (Deacon and Wring 2011). We would also concede that media and political logics are often broadly operationalized, skating over the influence of commercial forces (Landerer 2013). So, for example, juxtaposing policy (political logic) and process (media logic) stories overlooks the influence of market-driven media, which typically pursues certain issues—crime, for instance—to a greater extent than public service media. We do not accept these logics as conventionally defined in many large *N* quantitative studies, and our more qualitative approach aims to more carefully understand the forces behind the editorial selection of news.

The lead author conducted semi-structured interviews with either heads of news or senior editors from BBC, ITV, Sky, Channel 4, and Channel 5 within a period of six months after Election Day.[3] These included Paul Royall (editor of BBC News at Six and Ten), Katy Searle (BBC Westminster editor), Sue Inglish, (head of BBC political programming), Geoff Hill, (editor of ITV News at Ten), Michael Jermey (head of ITV news), Ben De Pear, (head of Channel 4 news), Esme Wren (then head of politics at Sky News), and Cristina Squires (head of Channel 5 news).[4] Interviews lasted between approximately thirty minutes and one hour.

Interviews began with broad questions about the election, but more specific themes about editorial influence were then explored in more detail. These broadly included the following: the editorial focus on the process over policy stories, the role polls played in framing coverage, the challenge of despinning the agendas and campaign tactics of political parties, and the way future election campaigns should be reported. Although interviewing senior broadcasters and understanding their editorial judgments was central to our research design, our content analysis acted as the more objective yardstick to interpret the salient themes of coverage. But, as our study shows, *the combination of content and production perspectives* revealed important insights about the ascendants of media logic that may not have emerged had we relied on just one of these methodological approaches.

Findings: A Commercial Media Logic?

Of the 2,177 items examined over the 2015 U.K. General Election campaign, 843—38.7 percent—were election related. As a proportion of airtime—the measure we primarily use to compare coverage—47.1 percent of all news was about the election. Table 1 shows the percentage airtime dedicated to the election between broadcasters as a proportion of all news over the campaign.

Table 1. The Percentage of Time Spent Reporting Election, Policy, and Campaign Process Items in U.K. Newscasts during the 2015 U.K. General Election (*N* in Parentheses).

	BBC	ITV	Channel 4	Channel 5	Sky	Total
Proportion of all news about election	49.8	43.5	49.0	52.4	41.2	47.1 (843)
Policy issues	43.2	34.4	39.3	36.1	31.4	37.6 (319)
Campaign process	56.8	65.6	60.7	63.9	68.6	62.4 (524)
Totals	100.0 (210)	100.0 (167)	100.0 (174)	100.0 (153)	100.0 (139)	100.0 (843)

Channel 5 spent most time, proportionally speaking, reporting the election. The BBC and Channel 4, meanwhile, covered the election to a greater extent than ITV and Sky News. But, overall, broadcasters broadly dedicated a similar amount of airtime—between 41.2 and 52.4 percent—to reporting the election. However, we found that the BBC was the most issue based, while Sky News the most campaign driven (see Table 1). In other words, the most commercially driven broadcasters were the most likely to report items related to the process of the campaign rather than about specific policy issues.

But more generally, compared with content analyses of previous U.K. General Elections (Deacon and Wring 2011) or equivalent cross-national electoral contests (Strömbäck and Lee Kaid 2008), the 2015 U.K. television news agenda was far more about the processes of the campaign than about policy issues. By this measure alone, it would appear that the editorial agenda of the 2015 U.K. General Election—including on the main public service broadcaster, the BBC—was clearly driven by a media logic. When all process-type stories were broken down, coverage was primarily about the campaign (51.8 percent)—including rallies and walkabouts—or about the horse race between parties (30.8 percent), in particular about the possibility of a Labour and SNP coalition. The televised leaders' debates—which were widely reported in the 2010—also took up a reasonable share of campaign coverage (17.4%). We classified items about TV debates as process driven because they tended not to be about policy discussion. Although TV debates feature a considerable amount of policy discussion, coverage was primarily about the performance of leaders rather than about issues debated. We focus on the two dominant themes in coverage—news about the campaign rallies and the horse race—to explore how far election reporting was shaped by a media logic. In doing so, we consider the editorial judgments of the heads of news and/or senior editors, and compare them with our content analysis findings.

The Media Logic of Campaign Rallies

Half of our interviewees suggested that the focus on the campaign rather than policy issues was not always out of choice but necessity. As Sue Inglish, the head of BBC political programming, pointed out, "the parties, virtually all of them, did not hold morning press conferences. So their press operations . . . went out into the country,

they were very small controlled groups of people, often party supporters who were in the so-called press conferences." As a consequence, she argued,

> you didn't have any real forum in which the parties were quizzed about their manifestos across a range of different policies, and I think the one issue that one would want to look at next time round is how do you force that examination of policy when the parties don't want to talk about it? (Sue Inglish, BBC)

Put another way, in the absence of a regular and formalized exchange between journalists and politicians, this may explain why a large proportion of BBC—and TV news generally—was preoccupied by campaign stories. This hints more at a political than media logic shaping coverage as parties were strategically trying to avoid opportunities where journalists could interrogate them about their policy agendas. Indeed, the head of Channel 5 suggested that they tried to address policy debates over the course of the campaign, but parties would not enter into any detailed discussions, with some even encouraging broadcasters to run stories about the closeness of the race:

> I think it's really important to concentrate on the issues and I do think that we collectively as an industry perhaps concentrated too much on the polls and what they were saying . . . but do you know what, that's what the parties were telling us to do. There was a lot of pressure from the parties and the bottom line is . . . they wouldn't answer the questions. We had David Cameron on our programme live. We asked him about four times, "where was the £12 billion of cuts going to come from?" and he wouldn't answer it. (Cristina Squires, Channel 5)

This suggests that parties played a key role in editorial decision making, either by their refusal to answer specific policy questions or by encouraging a more process-driven agenda. Of course, arguably editors could have covered policy issues to a greater extent despite political parties not answering their questions. But several interviewees did reveal how parties were trying to exert control of the news agenda or how campaign events should be filmed. Esme Wren, head of politics at Sky News, for example, revealed that

> . . . there's lots of very heated exchanges with all the parties about the way the campaign was being driven, actually let's say the two main ones because the Lib Dems had a much more . . . they wanted you to feel like you could film everything . . . We have a number of run-ins where we say to them we're not part of your broadcast operation.

There was clearly an awareness from all interviewees about the carefully choreographed nature of campaign rallies as well as how closely they were being policed by party officials. Indeed, several made references to packages they had aired about controlled nature of the parties' campaign events:

> We did a piece that went behind the campaign and a lot of BBC outlets did this piece because . . . it [the election] was being described as the most carefully controlled campaign

Table 2. Percentage of Election Items Featuring a Reporter on the Campaign Trail and the Extent to Which The Stage-Management of a Party Rally Was Exposed (*N* in Brackets).

	BBC	ITV	Channel 4	Channel 5	Sky	Total
"On the campaign trail"	38.1	43.7	42.0	41.8	48.2	42.3 (357)
No exposing of rally	75.0	68.5	69.8	85.9	68.7	73.4
Some exposing of rally	18.7	30.1	19.2	10.9	22.3	20.4
Comprehensive exposing of rally	6.3	1.4	11.0	3.1	9.0	6.2
Total	100 (80)	100.0 (73)	100.0 (73)	100.0 (64)	100.0 (67)	100.0 (357)

and all of that. And we did a piece that went behind the campaign and how we couldn't hold microphones and things like that. (Paul Royall, BBC)

. . . we did a couple of pieces actually on all the campaigns, showing the fact that this is where we're allowed to stand, there's Cameron, we're not allowed in, we don't get to ask a question, we're on a bus, he's on a plane ahead of us. So if they were trying to control the situation too much, then yes we would expose that the way we saw it. (Esme Wren, Sky News)

Meanwhile, Ben de Pear even pointed out a rival reporter's unraveling of a party rally: "Someone from Sky I think took a picture of the Conservative launch which, when seen through a 9 × 6 lens looked absolutely massive but when you looked back, it was just 40 party activists in a massive empty warehouse." The photo in question—tweeted by a Sky News correspondent Niall Paterson—was widely shared on social media, but its popularity was perhaps because it represented a *rare* moment when journalists were not complicit with the imagery painted by the parties' publicity machines. Indeed, we revisited every item involving a reporter on the campaign trail—357 in total, representing 42.3 percent of election airtime—to explore how often a rally or walkabout was exposed in some way by a journalist.

Table 2 shows that Channel 5 was the least likely to question a campaign rally and Sky News the most, with more than two-thirds of items on BBC, ITV, and Channel 4 doing so.

Of course, we did not expect every item to question the stage-managed nature of the campaign but to establish the degree and depth in which they were. At first glance, although more than one in four items exposing stage-managed news might appear substantial, most of these were relatively fleeting references to campaign events (20.4 percent), such as the following:

The Conservatives have been criticised for control freakery during this campaign, but you know what, the reason they want things to be just so is because mistakes can be costly. David Cameron knows voters prize authenticity in their political leaders and that's why he'll be kicking himself. (Sky News at Ten, April 25, 2015)

As Table 2 further shows, more comprehensive treatment about the constructed nature of campaign rallies was less frequent—6.2 percent in total—but we did identify a number of lengthy packages—most strikingly on Channel 4—where the campaign tactics of political parties were exposed. One included inviting a war photographer to consider the parties' campaign tactics:

> A seat on the Lib Dem battlebus costs journalists £750 a day. Hmm. Let's see if it's worth the money . . . I've come all this way and it turns out that this blue rope means I can't get close. I'm not in the pool . . . When it comes to the media, the entire event has been carefully managed . . . The atmosphere seems stifling and controlled. You know you get a sense in your fingertips. I find everything is scripted, there seems to be no room for surprises . . . There's a fear, they don't seem to want to talk to the people direct, y'know, pump flesh and kiss babies and taste pastries. (Channel 4 News, April 5, 2015)

But although the contrived nature of campaign rallies was clearly exposed at times by broadcasters, overall, the majority of items did not meaningfully question them. In other words, the kind of campaign expose the Sky News correspondent's tweet revealed about a Conservative rally was not the norm in day-to-day reporting of the election campaign on U.K. newscasts. This demonstrates the importance of comparing our interview responses with a systematic content analysis of election coverage because the editorial impression was that they *did* address the stage-managed nature of the campaign. But our analysis reveals that only 6 percent of election news items did so comprehensively, with a fifth of items making what was often a fleeting reference to the constructed nature of the campaign.

From this perspective, the parties' political logic of staging tightly controlled campaign rallies with limited access paid off as broadcasters routinely—and, most of the time, unquestionably—covered them. Put another way, the political logic behind the parties' campaign events appeared to have superseded a media logic. When questioned about how they would cover future elections, almost all interviewees suggested that broadcasters may be more reluctant to commit resources to following leaders around the country or at campaign rallies.

Although a few interviewees also pointed out that it remains important to reflect the agendas of parties, most cast doubt on the editorial logic of following them on the campaign trail (e.g., the heads of news at Channel 4 and Channel 5 decided not to pay for their reporters to travel on the political parties' battle buses). This suggests that if parties do not open up access to their campaigns, such as holding regular press conferences, the political logic that arguably led broadcasters to routinely cover them on the campaign trail may be weaker in future elections.

The Media Logic of a Labour/SNP Coalition Deal

The horse-race narrative was another central theme of campaign-related coverage—representing 29.6 percent of airtime—with news typically informed by opinion polls, the leadership of party leaders, and, most prominently, speculation about possible

Table 3. Percentage of Election Items Featuring a Poll and the Nature of Them (*N* in Brackets).

	BBC	ITV	Channel 4	Channel 5	Sky	Total
Election items where poll is featured	20.5	31.1	20.7	22.2	28.1	24.2 (204)[a]
Of these, percent mentioned in passing	93.0	55.8	66.7	67.6	59.0	67.6 (138)
Horse-race poll	84.1	79.2	81.1	82.3	72.5	79.8 (166)
Leaders' poll	15.0	15.1	10.8	11.8	22.5	15.4 (32)
Policy poll	0.0	5.7	8.1	5.9	5.0	4.8 (10)
Total	100.0 (44)	100.0 (53)	100.0[b] (37)	100.0 (34)	100.0 (40)	100.0 (208)

a. This value is not identical to the total as on some occasions, more than one poll was referenced.
b. A small number of items on Channel 4 did not fit into any of these categories and were omitted from this table.

coalition deals in particular between Labour and the SNP. Of course, the use of opinion polls to fuel the horse-race narrative is long established in studies exploring election coverage (Strömbäck and Lee Kaid 2008). We examined all references to polls and found that close to a quarter of all election items were informed by them (see Table 3). Between one-half and three-quarters of these references on the commercial broadcasters were made in passing, compared with 91 percent on the BBC, which perhaps reflects its strict guidelines on leading with polls during elections.

Table 3 also shows the types of polls featured in television news coverage, which were primarily related to the horse race—79.8 percent of all references—with 15.4 percent about leadership, in particular after the TV debates. Just 4.8 percent of referenced polls—and none on the BBC—were about policy matters. Overall, the emphasis on horse-race-type opinion polls might again reflect an underlying media logic, with broadcasters fascinated with the closeness of the electoral race.

However, as almost all our interviewees pointed out, it would be difficult to overlook the political consequences behind the polling. After all, opinion polls consistently had the Conservatives and Labour neck and neck, with the SNP gaining a significant proportion of seats. This meant that the prospect of a hung parliament—and a postcoalition deal between Labour and the SNP—was the prism through which many reporters interpreted the campaign. There was, in other words, arguably a political logic behind the horse-race narrative because the SNP appeared to be heading toward a power-sharing position at Westminster. Several of our interviewees justified the prominence of the SNP in these terms:

> We were very conscious of the SNP being of enormous importance, not just to voters in Scotland . . . I think it was legitimate. We'd had five years of a coalition government, the pollsters were all telling us . . . that the most likely outcome was going to be a coalition

Table 4. Percentage of Campaign News Items Making a Connection Between Labour/SNP Coalition and Clarity of These References (*N* in Brackets).

	BBC	ITV	Channel 4	Channel 5	Sky	Total
Among election items, percentage referring to Labour/SNP coalition	27.2	38.6	28.8	23.8	39.6	31.3 (162)
Innuendo references to Labour/SNP coalition	67.7	71.8	83.3	83.3	68.4	74.8 (120)
Explicit references to Labour/SNP coalition	32.3	28.2	16.7	16.7	31.6	25.9 (42)
Total	100.0 (31)	100.0 (39)	100.0 (30)	100.0 (24)	100.0 (38)	100.0 (162)

Note. SNP = Scottish National Party.

> and, therefore, who was going to make up that coalition was really important. (Cristina Squires, head of Channel 5 News)

Indeed, most of the interviewees were broadly comfortable with the overall time spent featuring the SNP over the campaign.

However, relying on the length of time politicians spoke in newscasts alone to assess the relative degree of balance and editorial judgment in election coverage can be a crude measurement. The SNP might not have been heard as much as the Liberal Democrats, for example, but their presence and prominence throughout the campaign could have been more pervasive. We thus revisited every campaign-related item—from rallies to TV debates and the horse race—to assess the extent to which a Labour/SNP coalition deal was mentioned in coverage (see Table 4).

This was not a straightforward exercise. We found, for instance, forty-two explicit instances—or 25.9 percent of all references—related to a Labour and SNP postelection deal. So, for example, an ITV reporter claimed:

> David Cameron once again attacked Labour on Scotland, claiming a vote for them could lead to the frightening prospect of a government propped up by the SNP . . . [Labour has] rattled the Prime Minister enough to issue a warning about the dangers of a Labour government backed by the SNP. (ITV News at Ten, April 19, 2015)

At the end of the package, the backdrop—accompanied by a reporter voice-over—comprised of a Conservative poster showing Nicola Sturgeon working Ed Miliband like a puppet. The item ended: "But the Conservative posters are getting blunter. As is their message: vote Tory, to stop an alliance that would only favour the Scots." But we also found many more implicit connections—120 or 74.8 percent of all references—to a Labour/SNP coalition more subtly linking the two parties together. The following

example illustrates how a postelection deal was routinely implied without necessarily using the term *coalition*: "It's no surprise that the relationship between Labour and the SNP has gone from bad to bitter. But they could still be forced to work together after May . . ." (Sky News, April 10, 2015).

Overall, the repetition of these implicit references to a possible Labour/SNP coalition—along with more explicit connections—informed close to a third of all campaign-related items (31.3 percent). However, there were some differences between broadcasters, with close to four in ten of Sky News and ITV campaign news items—39.6 and 38.6 percent, respectively—referencing a Labour/SNP coalition deal, whereas less than three in ten were on BBC and Channel 4 (27.2 and 28.8 percent, respectively). Channel 5 had less than a quarter of items making a connection between a Labour and SNP postelection deal (23.8 percent).

The regularity in which this horse-race-type narrative shaped the campaign could be interpreted as a media logic driving the campaign. Interviewees not only considered focusing on a coalition deal involving the SNP a legitimate political story to pursue because of the SNP's potential role in a future U.K. government, with various degrees of certainty, but some interviewees also pointed out that the success of party campaign agendas played a role in their editorial decision making:

> . . . let's face it, the Tories were really successful in pushing this and they knew because they were saying privately to us that it was coming up again and again on our doorstep, which actually I think it proved to be right, although I slightly didn't believe it when they were saying that but I think it did. So it was very successful. (Katy Searle, BBC)

Rather than concluding that a media logic was responsible for the widespread speculation about a possible coalition deal between Labour and the SNP, from this perspective, a political logic was *also* driving the agenda. This was even acknowledged by reporters during the campaign: "Tories are still trying to push the possibility of Labour being controlled by the Scottish National Party after the election" (Channel 5 News, April 22). But perhaps the full extent of the Conservative's campaign political logic behind drawing attention to a possible Labour and SNP coalition deal only became apparent after the election—when the party won an overall majority. Ross's (2015) insider account of the Conservative campaign strategy, for example, revealed how their spin doctors sought to capitalize on anxieties from English voters about the potential involvement of the SNP in a U.K. government. As the BBC's Katy Searle pointed out, the Conservative Party's campaign strategy and ability to help shape the news agenda was impressive. For the purposes of our study, it demonstrates the importance of understanding the influences shaping editorial decisions when interpreting media and political logics and the need to interpret the micro context of specific campaign issues.

Interpreting the Logic behind Editorial Decisions

Overall, we found that the 2015 U.K. General Election was widely reported by all broadcasters. More than half of coverage across all broadcasters focused on

the processes of the campaign rather than policy issues. But consistent with the wider literature (Strömbäck and Lee Kaid 2008), the most commercially driven newscasts reported the most news about the process of politics, in particular, Sky News, which dedicated more than two-thirds of its agenda to stories such as campaign rallies and walkabouts, horse-race coverage, or TV debates. At face value, our findings appear to reinforce conventional academic wisdom that a media logic was largely responsible for shaping U.K. television newscasts' election agendas.

However, drawing on interviews with heads of news and/or senior editors together with our content analysis that dug deeper into campaign coverage than many election studies, we questioned whether the logic behind the news agenda could be explained by media values and conventions alone. Isolating news when a reporter was on the campaign trail and in horse-race coverage, we suggested that a political logic was clearly influencing editorial decisions. In the absence of regular party press conferences, for example, by necessity some editors felt compelled to cover party campaign events despite acknowledging the highly fabricated nature of them.

This lack of interaction between parties and journalists may have encouraged a policy-lite agenda, together with a reluctance from politicians—as Cristina Squires pointed out—to engage with difficult policy decisions such as cutting the welfare budget. Similarly, although the editorial pursuit of the horse race is widely viewed as fulfilling a media logic in political communication scholarship, we suggested that a political logic was *also* pushing it up the news agenda. This was because much of the horse-race narrative was informed by (misleading) polls that pointed toward the prospect of a hung parliament, and led to much speculation about a possible Labour and SNP coalition deal. But the attention paid to this coalition pact as opposed to other potential deals was not just down to projections about how many seats each party would win, it was driven by a political logic that wanted the media spotlight shone on the SNP's role in a future U.K. government (Ross 2015). This suggests that broadcast editors should pay greater attention to the party logic of coalition-directed voting (Duch et al. 2010) and consider how it can be impartially reported. For example, Faas et al.'s (2008) analysis of media coverage of polling in the German parliamentary elections found it influenced voters' expectations of a future coalition and may have had an effect on the electoral outcome.

We would also point out that the editorial explanations from our interviewees should not be uncritically accepted. Broadcasters were not editorially powerless during the campaign. After all, whether it was a political or media logic shaping coverage, we found that commercial newscasts editorially pursued a less policy-driven agenda. Put simply, broadcasters *could* have chosen alternative perspectives to the political logic being foisted on them. Indeed, the decision by broadcasters to air three prime-time evening leaders' debates during the campaign—including one with seven parties—demonstrates how editorial decisions can change the news agenda and the prominence granted to political actors. Our interviews with editors were wide ranging, but future research could explore in more detail their editorial decisions with the specific content of news they produced.

Given Conservative and Labour were consistently neck and neck in the polls, it is understandable why journalists interpreted the horse race as a close electoral contest.

But putting Labour and the SNP at the center of the horse-race narrative was not a "natural" consequence of media logic but, in our view, an influence of a *political campaign logic.* In following a political logic, we argue that this promoted the horse-race narrative and naturalized the parties' highly stage-managed rallies and walkabouts. Although some packages exposed the spin behind the parties' campaigns—on Channel 4 in particular—most of the time the imagery constructed by party campaign officials went unquestionned in election coverage.

In our view, if coverage had been driven by a more independently orientated media logic, it might have led to a more critical and issue-based election agenda. Why, for example, should broadcasters fall under the spell of political parties' campaign logic when reporting rallies and walkabouts? A more autonomous approach to reporting elections would be to ignore these rallies or, *more routinely*, expose the stage-managed nature of them. This would reflect a more interventionist approach to media logic (Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2011) and more discretionary form of journalism (Semetko et al. 1991). However, we are not suggesting that political actors should be marginalized with journalists interpreting their views—a hypermediatized trend most evident in the United States—but they could more regularly and robustly challenge parties' spin tactics in future campaigns. After all, as campaign rallies and walkabouts have become increasingly contrived affairs with reporters granted limited access to question politicians' claims, we would argue that there is little democratic value in journalists continuing to cover them so extensively. In trying to control the campaign message, political parties were perhaps responding to a media logic that editorially aims to package news according to its own editorial rules (e.g., Strömbäck 2011). But it would appear that political parties are subverting media logic—such as promoting a horse-race story to heighten fears about a Labour/SNP coalition—to further their own political logic. Of course, strategy news—discussing party tactics and electoral strategies—is a long-established trend in political journalism (Jackson 2011). But it is widely viewed as a media rather than political logic. Our conclusion, in this sense, echos Brants and van Praag's (2015) observation that there is an "operational fuzziness" to how media logic is often applied by scholars (p. 5).

Indeed, our study about coverage of the 2015 U.K. General Election questioned the antecedents of media logic and shone a light on a political logic that may have been remained in the dark in large-scale content analysis studies. Of course, our findings will not be straightforwardly generalizable to other western democracies because of specific micro factors influencing editorial decisions. But the wider relevance of our study points toward a qualitative need in political communication scholarship to more carefully consider the logic behind quantitative conclusions and widen the methodological scope of election studies to include editorial perspectives on campaign coverage. As our interviews with editors revealed, far from television news being obsessed by a horse-race approach to election reporting, wider (political) campaign influences shaped their decision making. Although scholars in recent years have sought to standardize variables in cross-national studies and deliver greater *conceptual clarity* to empirical research in comparative political journalism (Esser et al. 2012: 140, emphasis in original), our study has shown that media and political logics are not static but fluid concepts that need to be understood, scrutinized, and interpreted in their micro contexts.

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Notes

1. For example, election relevance was 0.93, with level of agreement 0.97; policy/process was 0.82, with level of agreement 0.92; while story subject was 0.74, with level of agreement 0.82.
2. For example, clear or comprehensive expose of a campaign was 0.87, with a level of agreement 0.91, while the explicit or implicit reference to Labour and coalition was 1.0.
3. The lead author conducted the interviews, oversaw the project, and wrote the article. Richard Sambrook helped in establishing contacts for interviews. Richard Thomas, Allaina Kilby, and Marina Morani carried out the content analysis. All authors reviewed the final manuscript.
4. Esme Wren from Sky News was only available for a phone interview.

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Article

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NGO Publicity and Reinforcing Path Dependencies: Explaining the Persistence of Media-Centered Publicity Strategies

Matthew Powers[1]

Abstract

Previous research finds that nongovernmental organization (NGO) publicity strategies—despite digital technologies—continue to focus heavily on garnering coverage in the mainstream news media. Drawing on theories of path dependence and interviews with NGO professionals, this paper identifies three factors that explain why this should be so. First, donors continue to value media coverage as a platform to learn about advocacy groups, as well as a mechanism for measuring their impact on political discourse. Second, political officials still value media coverage as a way to learn about advocacy demands. Third, NGOs occupy a position that is socially proximate to journalism, which leads the former to see the latter as an ally in the pursuit of publicity. Together, these factors confirm and extend the new institutional concept of "path dependence" by demonstrating how path dependence in one field (philanthropy, politics) can reinforce path dependence in another (NGO). These "reinforcing path dependencies" in turn interact with established mechanisms of institutional production (start-up costs, feedback effects, knowledge accumulation) to explain why NGOs continue to persist in media-centered publicity strategies despite new technological possibilities.

Keywords

advocacy, civil society, global news, new institutionalism

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Research shows that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) continue to prioritize coverage in the mainstream media (Fenton 2010; Lang 2013; Lück et al. 2016; Powers 2014; Wright 2015). This preference persists despite the explosive growth of digital technologies and staffing resources that make it possible to bypass the news media and target relevant stakeholders directly (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; McPherson 2015; Russell 2013). It also endures even though such groups are aware of the trade-offs in media-based activism: Advocacy groups garner media coverage only infrequently and often only by adapting their materials to the news media's needs for drama and timeliness, which potentially distract from advocacy goals (Cottle and Nolan 2007; Fenton 2010; Orgad 2013; Thrall et al. 2014; Waisbord 2011). Taken together, this research raises an important question: Why should NGOs continue to favor media-centered publicity strategies?

In this paper, I draw on—and contribute to—new institutionalist theories of path dependence to explain this persistence. Based on interviews with professionals working at leading humanitarian and human rights groups, I argue that NGOs are incentivized in three ways to continue their media-centered publicity strategies. First, donors continue to value media coverage as a platform to learn about NGOs, as well as a mechanism for measuring their impact on political discourse. They are also hesitant to fund new areas like analytics and content management that would allow advocacy groups to further develop their online strategies. Second, political officials continue to value media coverage as a way to learn about advocacy demands. Although digital technologies create new avenues for interactions with government officials, most examples of successful advocacy include mainstream coverage. Third, NGOs occupy a position that is socially proximate to journalism, which leads the former to see the latter as an ally in the pursuit of publicity. Together, these factors lead NGO media strategies to remain primarily focused on garnering mainstream media coverage, despite the possibilities offered by digital media to bypass conventional intermediaries.

Theories of path dependence typically focus on the internal capacity of institutions to reproduce themselves. On this view, institutions—once started—put in motion processes that make continuity more likely than change (e.g., via knowledge accumulation, feedback effects, start-up costs; Pierson 2000; Thelen 2002). This paper both confirms and extends this theory. On one hand, sizable public relations departments, staffed by former journalists who maintain semi-regular contact with current journalists, are evidence of precisely these types of path-dependent effects. On the other hand, NGOs maintain their publicity strategies in part because donors and political officials incentivize it. This is evidence of a different but complementary way in which institutional strategies are reproduced, which I term *reinforcing path dependencies*. In using this concept, I call attention to the way that path dependencies in one field (politics, philanthropy) interact with and reinforce path dependencies in another (NGOs).

In what follows, I review the literature that details the enduring media-centrism of NGOs despite opportunities for alternative publicity strategies, and proceed to present new institutional theories of path dependence as a way of explaining that continuity, while also extending those theories. I then draw on interviews with NGO professionals to identify the specific factors incentivizing humanitarian and human rights groups to

persist in their media-centered publicity strategies. I conclude by considering what types of conditions are necessary to incentivize NGOs to move beyond their present media-centrism, as well as discussing the broader applicability of the conceptual argument.

The Persistence of Media-Centric Publicity Strategies

NGOs have long relied on the news media to raise public awareness, attract donations, and influence political debates (Benthall 1993; Pollock 2014; Powers 2016a; Van Leuven and Joye 2014). For the most part, this struggle for publicity has been an uphill battle: Professional norms make journalists far more likely to utilize government and business officials—rather than NGOs or other civic actors—as news sources (Lang 2013; Powers 2016a; Sobieraj 2011). Moreover, in their quest for publicity, NGOs typically engage in trade-offs that threaten to dilute their messaging. To appear in the news, for example, human rights groups focus their publicity efforts on issues occurring in countries within the media's primary zone of attention (Thrall et al. 2014). Less covered or "forgotten" crises are not typically discussed (Ramos et al. 2007). Similarly, NGO messages often become sensationalized and distorted when the news media pick them up (Benthall 1993; Cottle and Nolan 2007). In short, reliance on the news media has long been recognized as both necessary and problematic for human rights groups.

Over the past few decades, several changes have made it possible to envision NGOs adopting publicity strategies that rely less on the news media. For starters, advocacy groups have increased the number of professional staff charged with researching and publicizing human rights conditions around the world (Powers 2016b; Reese 2015). This makes it possible for groups to produce a growing number of reports in a wide array of information formats, many of which deal with issues of minimal interest to the mainstream news media. Moreover, the advent of digital technologies diversifies their publicity options. Advocacy groups of all stripes are now able to publish their research in real time, and to use social media technologies to target relevant stakeholders about topics of interest (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Chadwick 2013; Russell 2013). Within the humanitarian and human rights sector, scholars have examined some of the ways that these technological developments might facilitate a shift away from media-centrism and toward greater engagement with diverse publics (Cooper 2011; McPherson 2015). Arguably, this may result in richer and more diverse forms of human rights news coverage.

Yet despite these suggestions, most research finds that the publicity strategies of humanitarian and human rights groups continue to be highly media-centric. Cottle and Nolan (2007) find that leading NGOs are just as interested in garnering mainstream media coverage today as they were in the past (see also Waisbord 2011). Relatedly, Fenton (2010) argues that NGOs use digital technologies to "clone" the news in an effort to have their copy picked up by cash-strapped news organizations (see also Wright 2015). These efforts are not absent of digital innovation, and studies highlight efforts to exploit digital tools for advocacy purposes (McPherson 2015; Russell 2013). However, most research suggests that NGOs continue to focus heavily on attracting media attention. Their use of digital tools supplements, rather than bypasses those

efforts, as they seek to gain media coverage, rather than engage with stakeholders directly (Lang 2013; Nolan and Mikami 2013; Sobieraj 2011; Waisbord 2008).

Why should advocacy groups persist in these media-centric strategies? For the most part, research has focused on whether (and, if so, how) publicity strategies have changed (Sobieraj 2011); questions about why they continue to pure media coverage tend not to receive sustained attention. Cottle and Nolan (2007) discuss the competitive landscape in which NGOs operate, and suggest that the need for funding leads many organizations to pursue media coverage. Yet why media coverage should remain an effective fundraising tool relative to online donation formats remains unexplained. Similarly, Fenton (2010: 156) suggests that online environments create a "tyranny of technology" where NGOs always feel the need to produce content. This explanation similarly neglects to explain why technologies are being used primarily to pursue media coverage and not alternative forms of publicity. As a result, scholars today know *that* NGOs continue to be media centered but lack an account of *why* this should be the case.

New institutional theorists have long explored the reasons why institutions persist in old practices despite new contexts. Within this school of thought, one major vein of theorizing suggests that institutional developments tend toward "path dependence" (Campbell 2004; Scott 2014). This concept states that previous decisions shape future actions. Because institutions generally tend to reproduce themselves, path dependence is seen as a constraint on radical change. Although critical junctures—moments of disruption when the status quo is thrown into question (Starr 2004)—may produce dramatic changes, more often than not change tends to be incremental, if it happens at all. The empirical challenge for the researcher is thus to locate the factors that incentivize an institution to follow a path-dependent trajectory.

Arguments about path dependence typically focus on a single field or institutional space. On this view, institutions incentivize and promote stability. This can occur in a number of ways: Institutions may develop routines and practices that persist despite new possibilities; they may prescribe the appropriate goals and forms of action as well as the acceptable ways in which those activities and goals should be pursued; and they may create taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of reality (Scott 2014). In each of these scenarios, institutions are primarily motivated by factors *within* the institutional fields in which they operate. For example, once a particular routine or practice has been adopted, actors accumulate knowledge about how those practices work. As they grow more comfortable with the practice, they become less likely to deviate from it (Pierson 2000). Relatedly, the development of any practice or arrangement typically involves large start-up costs, which disincentivizes an institution from changing its behaviors.

Theories of path dependence generally pay less attention to the role played by external pressures (i.e., pressures emanating from beyond the primary institutional domain) in reinforcing routines and behaviors. When institutions do not change, path dependence mostly ascribes resilience to the power of institutions. It is when institutions do change that institutional theories focus on external pressures. Yet these pressures are usually discussed in broad terms, as can be seen in notions of "exogenous

shocks" or "critical junctures." This has the unintended effect of leaving undertheorized the degree to which related institutional fields shape the behavior of any one institution. Moreover, it leaves unexamined the extent to which path dependencies in one field—philanthropy, politics—reinforce the path dependencies in another, like NGOs.

I will call this tendency—which I identify below empirically—*reinforcing path dependencies*. In using this term, I call attention to the way in which path dependencies in one set of fields (politics, philanthropy) constrain and reinforce the path dependent actions in related ones (NGOs). This notion takes seriously the relative stability of institutional practices over time, while more precisely identifying the various interinstitutional incentives that enable such stability. It builds on recent theoretical work—usually falling under the banner of field theory—that situates institutional activity within a wider constellation of interinstitutional relations (Benson 2013; Fligstein and McAdam 2012).

To be sure, and as I will suggest below, this path dependence must be "translated" into the relevant terms and ideals of a specific field. However, this translation often assumes many of the path-dependent tendencies already identified in the literature (e.g., start-up costs, feedback effects, knowledge accumulation). What the notion of reinforcing path dependencies accounts for is the way that proximate fields incentivize the reproduction of extant strategies, despite new developments that make it possible to imagine the introduction of new ones.

In sum, NGOs have long faced an uphill trajectory in their efforts to achieve publicity. Doing so required seeking out coverage in the news media, which in turn necessitated a number of trade-offs. Although NGO professionalization and technological developments create the possibility to reset this relationship, research suggests that NGOs continue to place a premium on media coverage. This raises questions about what factors incentivize humanitarian and human rights groups to continue following a path dependent strategy. Identifying those strategies requires greater attention to be paid to cognate institutional fields that impact NGOs. Taken together, then, a greater focus on the various ways that NGOs are incentivized to continue pursuing media coverage can clarify *why* these organizations continue to place such a high emphasis on garnering mainstream media attention.

Data and Method

The data for this article come from interviews with professionals working at leading humanitarian and human rights NGOs. This constitutes one of the best-funded sectors of NGO activity (Barnett 2011). Smaller organizations—as well as groups in other thematic sectors (e.g., environment)—often mimic their publicity strategies (Bob 2006). Thus, their publicity strategies are therefore important in their own right, and may also be hypothesized to shape the publicity strategies of other NGOs.

Between 2010 and 2015, I conducted seventy in-depth, semi-structured interviews with professionals at leading humanitarian and human rights organizations. Interviewees came from Amnesty International, CARE, Christian Aid, Concern,

Human Rights Watch, International Crisis Group, International Medical Corps, Médecins Sans Frontières, Mercy Corps, Oxfam, Save the Children, and World Vision. While focusing on established organizations—as opposed to digital-first ones (Karpf 2012)—increases the likelihood of continuity with past publicity practices, transformations in advocacy, journalism, and technology (discussed above) make it reasonable to posit changes in these strategies.

Interviewees included a cross-section of professionals working in the NGO sector. To ensure a diverse range of viewpoints within any one organization, research, advocacy, and public relations staff were included, as were junior and senior staff members. Whenever possible, interviews were preceded by my attendance at the organization's daily meeting, where the day's work agenda was discussed and decided. Interviews lasted anywhere between forty-five and ninety minutes. Most interviews were conducted in person at organizational offices in New York, Washington, D.C., London, or Brussels. Interviews not conducted in person were done by telephone or via Skype. Respondents agreed to be identified by organization and job title.

Interview questions covered a broad range of topics, from the relative importance of media coverage for organizational aims to the different ways NGOs use digital media in their publicity efforts. When interviewees stressed the importance of generating mainstream media coverage (as many did), follow-up questions asked them to discuss why this ongoing media focus endured despite the advent of alternative possibilities. Similarly, when they talked about digital developments, I asked what motivated the organization to pursue these developments. Throughout, my aim was to understand the factors that incentivized organizations to maintain or transform their publicity strategies.

Interviews were transcribed and analyzed for emergent themes according to the general precepts of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 2009). This analysis was iterative: Early interviews helped to shape and focus the questions asked in subsequent ones. From this analysis, I identified three primary factors, discussed below, that incentivize the media-centered strategies of leading humanitarian and human rights groups. Although not exhaustive of all incentives, these categories reflect the major drivers of an enduring media strategy that privileges coverage in the mainstream media. In what follows, I explore each of these factors by exploring first how the path dependency of stakeholders influences NGOs, and then why digital tools have not substantially altered this media-centric approach.

Findings

NGO professionals care a great deal about mainstream media coverage. Different organizations value different types of coverage for different reasons (e.g., some prefer coverage in the elite press as a way to influence policy debates, while others target television news media to raise public awareness or boost funds). Moreover, most interviewees acknowledged tensions in their organization's relationships with the news media (e.g., negative publicity, poor understanding of issues, etc.). Yet the enduring desire for positive publicity in the legacy news media was a constant theme across all

interviews. To many interviewees, coverage in the news media remains the leading aim of publicity efforts. As a media officer at Oxfam put it, “[A] page five in the New York Times will always be a page five in the New York Times. Nothing is ever going to change that” (media officer, Oxfam, February 18, 2011).

As many interviewees were quick to point out, the ongoing interest in cultivating mainstream media coverage does not mean that digital tools are shunned. In fact, most respondents discussed the possibilities (as well as emergent drawbacks) of using digital tools to explore new forms of publicity. Nearly all organizations studied have built up their digital media staff and these individuals help to conduct publicity campaigns that make innovative use of online tools (e.g., websites, social media feeds) to raise awareness of issues not covered by the news media. Yet as I discuss below, these investments—largely because of donor hesitation—tend to shy away from costlier tools, like analytics and content management systems, which would allow these organizations to more fully engage in digital activities. As a result, digital media tools are mostly used to interact with—rather than bypass—the mainstream media.

When asked why their organizations continue to emphasize coverage in the news media, interviewees described three factors that incentivize their publicity strategies. The first two—donor demands and government officials’ media consumption habits—had little to do with the factors new institutional theorists describe as path dependencies (e.g., start-up costs, feedback effects, knowledge accumulation). Instead, these factors detailed ways in which path dependence in the fields of philanthropy and politics incentivizes NGOs to continue in their “media-centric” publicity strategies. These “reinforcing path dependencies” are sustained via more standard forms of path dependence like start-up costs, feedback effects, and knowledge accumulation. In particular, respondents described a social proximity between NGOs and journalists that leads the former to see the latter as a potential ally in the struggle for publicity. In what follows, I describe each of these three factors in detail and show how, collectively, they help incentivize publicity strategies to focus primarily on generating mainstream media coverage.

The Need for Funding: “Our Fundraisers Do Better When We’re in the Media”

NGOs need money to survive, and media serve as an important platform for raising and maintaining those funds. To do so, organizations must achieve a degree of brand recognition so that potential donors can identify the organization to which they might provide funds. These donors can be individuals (people who donate money to an organization) or institutions (philanthropic organizations that provide humanitarian and human rights groups with funding). In either case, donors must be aware of the organization and its efforts: Media publicity continues to be one important way by which this awareness occurs. Furthermore, NGOs need to prove themselves as effective to maintain these funds. Donors identify effectiveness in different ways (e.g., projects completed, policy outcomes, etc.); however, in most cases, media coverage functions

as an important proxy for effectiveness. Despite the advent of online technologies, most interviewees suggested that donors continue to privilege coverage in the mass media, which provide larger audiences and constitute an acceptable measure of advocacy impact on public discourse. Interviewees also discussed hesitation on the part of donors to fund analytics and content management services, primarily because it was not an area they had funded previously. In part as a result of this donor path dependence, NGOs continue to place a high value on media-centered publicity strategies.

"Our fundraisers do better when we're in the media," one person explained. "So there is an objective in just keeping Amnesty out there" (press officer, Amnesty International UK Section, July 15, 2011). This sentiment was echoed at most organizations I visited. At Médecins Sans Frontières, the communication director described a number of strategic objectives in his organization's publicity work (seeking policy change on a specific issue, pressuring other stakeholders to act). Then, he paused and said, "Sometimes it could simply be that we want people to know [about MSF]—fundraising is an objective. Communications and media has a direct correlation with the fundraising support we receive. That's very clear" (communication officer, Médecins Sans Frontières, February 18, 2011). At Human Rights Watch, someone told me about a blog that some UN officials were reading. Would it sometimes be better, I asked, for the group to pursue publicity through that blog rather than an outlet like the *New York Times*, which has so many groups clamoring to get into it? She replied, "It's [the *New York Times*] never negligible because it's the newspaper of our donor base, or the largest chunk of our donor base, which is still about seventy percent American" (Deputy Executive Director of External Relations, November 29, 2010).

Once the funding comes in, NGOs need to highlight the effectiveness of their work. Interviewees discussed media coverage as a way of "making sure the Oxfam name is out there . . . so supporters can see it" (media officer, Oxfam, February 18, 2011). At Amnesty's U.S. branch, publicity professionals have consumer data on the types of publications their supporters read: "We did some research a few years ago that showed . . . that people who support human rights and are contributors to Amnesty and other groups read the *Economist* in huge numbers. . . . So we try to get into the *Economist* a lot" (media officer, Amnesty International, December 14, 2011). Professionals at other organizations noted that institutional donors often want to see that NGOs are influencing policy debates: "Our major donors want to see that we're in the *New York Times* or the *Financial Times* and having influence on debates" (communication director, International Crisis Group, July 4, 2011). In still other cases, professionals acknowledged that success in human rights advocacy or humanitarian work can be hard to judge: "We work in countries for 30 or 40 years. It's not easy to point to a single campaign and say, 'that worked'" (researcher, Amnesty International, June 5, 2013). In that context, media coverage demonstrates efficacy to donors looking for impact (researcher, World Vision, July 15, 2011). In all cases, the strategy of generating media coverage reflects a desire by donors to see media coverage as a proxy for the effective stewardship of their donations.

Online technologies do not change these equations dramatically. As several fundraising and marketing staffers stressed, donations still rely to a large extent on public

recognition. As one person put it, “You can’t donate to an organization you don’t know about” (advocacy officer, Save the Children, July 15, 2011). Mainstream media remain the best platform for reaching those large audiences. “Our own website gets around 30,000 visitors a day,” another person said. “It’s respectable for an NGO but it’s miniscule compared to the traffic on mainstream media sites” (Deputy Executive Director of External Relations, Human Rights Watch, November 29, 2010). Online tools seek to boost the chances for NGOs to get into the news or to make donating itself easier. As another person said, “A lot of the fundraising we do during big emergencies comes from the media profile we get at those moments. . . . That’s why we basically just push everything else aside. . . . Fundraising in those moments keeps our programs funded for the next few years” (press officer, Save the Children, July 14, 2011).

A second reason why NGOs continue in their media-centered efforts is because donors are unsure how to measure impact in the online environment. At one organization, I asked someone whether the donors care about the organization’s online efforts: “In our annual reports, we put how many downloads a month or something, but we really don’t care. If it’s 150,000 . . . or 100,000, that’s not the issue. The issue is who is downloading it” (communication director, International Crisis Group, July 4, 2011). At another organization, someone explained that though donors incentivize some online efforts (e.g., like the translation of their content in other languages), they continue to see media coverage as a clear indicator of influence (communication officer, Human Rights Watch, May 11, 2013). As several people suggested, it is hard for any one organization to prove that their publicity efforts effected change. Garnering coverage in the news media thus functions as a useful proxy for effectiveness.

Relatedly, several respondents suggested that though donors are willing to give short-term grants to support organizations in pioneering new digital efforts, less funding is available to support the long-term establishment of such efforts. One interviewee directed me to a survey of the NGO sector, which provides support for these claims. It finds that most large global organizations—like those studied here—allocate only 1 to 2.5 percent of their annual income to digital technologies and staff (Breckenridge and Maloney 2015). Donor hesitation is given as the primary reason for the underinvestment: “Funders are simply afraid to make investments in technology because it is something new for them. It’s not something they’ve done and they’re not excited to step into a new funding focus” (Breckenridge and Maloney 2015: 4). This leads to underinvestment in some of the key areas like analytics and content management that might allow NGOs to be less media-centric.

In short, the ongoing media focus by NGOs, in spite of alternative possibilities, stems in part from the path dependence of donor demands. Individual donors value media publicity as a way to identifying organizations worthy of their money. Similarly, institutional donors use media coverage as a tool for assessing the degree to which an organization is able to influence public discourse. Importantly, in the view of NGO professionals, nearly all donors still continue to see mainstream media publicity as an indicator of success. This donor path dependence thus conditions humanitarian and human rights groups to pursue publicity strategies in accordance with those demands.

The Quest for Political Legitimacy: "If We're Not in the News, Politically We Don't Exist"

Just as NGOs need donors to survive financially, they need government officials to recognize them as legitimate to thrive politically. According to interviewees, publicity in the news media provides an opportunity for advocacy groups to garner the attention of officials. Media attention does not guarantee officials will heed their advice, but interviewees report that coverage makes officials aware of their efforts. Although digital technologies broaden the consumption sources for government officials, internal research conducted by advocacy groups finds that officials still get the majority of their news from mainstream media. This reinforces extant perceptions among advocacy groups that the most reliable way to capture the attention of government officials is through mainstream media, and that efforts to generate publicity outside the mainstream media often fail to capture the officials' attention. Thus, another reason why NGOs pursue a media-centered strategy is because government officials incentivize this strategy.

"If we're not in the news," one interviewee explained, "politically we don't exist" (advocacy officer, Amnesty International, February 10, 2015). This dramatic statement was echoed in different forms by other interviewees. As one person put it, "They [government officials] can't ignore you when you're in the *New York Times*" (communication officer, Médecins Sans Frontières, February 18, 2011). These statements reflect a general view that officials pay attention to media coverage, even if they likely overstate the degree to which coverage in the media ensures that advocacy messages will be taken seriously (Wolfsfeld 2011). At the very least, though, media coverage makes government officials aware of their efforts. This point was nicely captured by a member of Oxfam while discussing efforts related to human rights issues in the Congo:

> When she [an advocacy officer] goes to the UN and meets some people about Congo and there has just been a piece or a letter to the editor about the role of the UN in protecting civilians from attack and rape. . . . Believe me, it has a greater impact. Because the first thing they do when they sit down is say, "Hey, I read your letter. That was interesting." You know, because they do read news as well. (Media officer, Oxfam, February 18, 2011)

When NGOs do get into the news, they report that political elites will sometimes take the issues they raise seriously. Although this is not the norm, it validates the pursuit of media coverage as a strategy. For example, one interviewee discussed a campaign his organization (International Crisis Group) conducted in 2011 on issues of governance in Afghanistan. At the time, U.S. officials were focused on exiting the country as quickly as possible. By contrast, "some of the stuff we're saying is really very different from what you're hearing now" (communication director, International Crisis Group, July 3, 2011). Efforts to engage political officials on their viewpoints were difficult. After garnering several prominent op-eds and news coverage, "all of the sudden, our talking points started developing some more traction" (communication director, International Crisis Group, July 3, 2011). Success stories like these reinforce

the view that mainstream media coverage can occasionally influence officials. This point was further made to me by a communication officer at Amnesty International, who in response to colleagues' questions about whether media coverage would influence government officials, said, "I have a three-word phrase for that, which is never say never. I have been surprised myself many times by things that I didn't think would be of interest did turn out to be interest" (communication officer, Amnesty International, December 14, 2011).

Digital technologies provide a number of new ways for NGOs to interact with political elites. And advocacy groups do make use of these affordances. When political elites are not addressing an issue in sufficient detail, NGOs use social media campaigns to "open up the blockage" (press officer, Médecins Sans Frontières–UK, July 19, 2011). Numerous interviewees pointed to the "Kony 2012" campaign by the California-based NGO, Invisible Children, as an example of such efforts. By reaching out to celebrities through social media, the group was able to build public awareness on a topic—human rights abuses in Uganda—that were otherwise capturing little media attention, and in turn get politicians talking about the issue in more detail. In these and other cases, NGOs use digital tools to garner media coverage and political legitimacy in new ways. On the whole, though, interviewees were quick to state that digital efforts supplemented, rather than replaced, efforts to garner mainstream media coverage.

Although digital technologies broaden the consumption sources for government officials, internal research conducted by NGOs finds that officials still get the majority of their news from mainstream media. Human Rights Watch commissioned studies of the news consumption of policymakers in both the European Union and United Nations: "And we did indeed determine that most of them read the *New York Times* but we also—it was interesting—a lot of them are checking BBC throughout the day" (Deputy Executive Director of External Relations, Human Rights Watch, November 29, 2010). Referring to the United Nations, the same interviewee stressed, "The *New York Times* is very influential at the United Nations. So if you really want the United Nations to sit up and pay attention to something, it's actually very helpful to have it in the *New York Times*." This view was echoed by a communication officer at Amnesty International: "If we have an action . . . to get the Security Council to act . . . we look at which countries are the most likely to be interested in our point of view and we go to the correspondents for those countries' newspapers" (communication officer, Amnesty International, December 14, 2011).

Where government officials are known to follow mainstream media, interviewees reported that it was difficult to know how to target government officials online. "It's a constant question for us . . . how the people we're trying to reach actually look at pictures or watch video [online]." A member of the online news team at Amnesty International remarked, "Sometimes it's hard to know whether they [government officials] see our stuff" (news unit producer, Amnesty International, July 22, 2011). Someone at Human Rights Watch described an effort to bring human rights violations in Uganda to the attention of elites before the Kony 2012 campaign: "We made a video in the hopes of getting people at the State Department to watch it. But we really don't

know if they did. That's the difference. If we were in the *New York Times*, we'd know" (communication officer, Human Rights Watch, September 4, 2013).

In sum, the media-centrism of NGOs stems in part from the path dependence of government officials. Like donors, government officials continue to pay attention to mainstream media coverage. Even if that coverage does not always influence their action, it puts advocacy groups on their radar, thus bestowing them with a degree of political legitimacy. Although digital technologies open up new avenues for interaction between advocates and government officials, interviewees note that it is difficult to predict the efficacy of any specific effort because of uncertainty about how best to reach target audiences. As a result, NGOs continue to favor publicity strategies that stand the greatest likelihood of capturing the attention of government officials.

The Social Proximity of NGOs and Journalists

The preceding two factors identify path dependencies in philanthropy and politics, which incentivize the media-centric strategies of NGOs. Interviewees suggested that these effects were sustained through more standard forms of path dependence like start-up costs, feedback effects, and knowledge accumulation. In particular, respondents described a social proximity between NGOs and journalists that lead the former to see the latter as an ally in the struggle for publicity. This social proximity is evidenced by the creation of organizational units—like public relations departments, often staffed with former journalists—that provide the news media with content, as well as by semi-regular interactions between researchers and journalists in the field. This social proximity leads NGO professionals to see digital tools as a way of complementing extant efforts to garner media coverage. Finally, this proximity to journalism often makes it difficult for advocacy groups to know how to engage in other forms of public engagement online. As a result, NGO publicity efforts are oriented primarily toward the pursuit of mainstream media coverage.

Because NGOs have long relied on the news media to garner publicity, they have built up institutional structures and practices to optimize their publicity chances. The amount of capital invested (what new institutionalists call start-up costs) in these structures makes any radical departure from it unlikely. For example, all organizations studied have sizable public relations departments whose primary task historically has been to pursue media coverage. These departments have sub-units—like audio-visual production—dedicated to the production of materials that news outlets can use. All typically dwarf the number of staff charged with working online (news writer, Amnesty International, June 18, 2013). Moreover, former journalists, who bring journalistic approaches to the organization, staff many of these departments. "I bring a news sensibility to our efforts here" is how one former journalist now working in the NGO sector put it (press officer, Save the Children UK, July 21, 2011). These sensibilities included structuring the workday around the monitoring of news flows (e.g., by having daily morning meetings to discuss the news agenda). These start-up costs represent a substantial investment for many organizations.

Researchers share a number of affinities with journalists, too. As several interviewees stressed, they occupy similar social spaces: "They're sharing planes, they're sharing cars, and they're sharing food. They're living together in many cases" (media officer, International Crisis Group, April 1, 2011). Researchers also to a large degree share a worldview with reporters. As one person put it, "We're out there, just like reporters, trying to figure out what happened" (country researcher, Amnesty International, June 19, 2013). Another echoed this value commitment while detailing the ways it shaped her organization's reporting techniques: "The process of research and what we do in the field is really very, very close to journalism and we really approach it without bias, without predisposition of who's guilty and what happened" (Executive Director of External Relations, Human Rights Watch, November 29, 2010).

This social proximity creates ongoing feedback channels between journalists and NGOs, which helps to shape the NGO's belief of the news media as a natural ally in the pursuit for publicity: "We try to meet with journalists from time to time to get a sense of what their interests are. Knowing that helps us craft our messages" (press officer, Amnesty International, July 26, 2011). Another person explained, "Every journalist has their own idiosyncrasies—the types of stories they like, how they want to be pitched . . . It's our job to match our asks to their needs" (media officer, Amnesty International, December 14, 2011). Another stated that regular interactions make it difficult for NGOs to ignore journalists when they call looking for a quote: "If we don't put a press release out, then people [journalists] think there are some politics behind it. And they will not buy it if we say the press office did not think it was newsworthy" (press officer, Amnesty International, July 15, 2011).

This social proximity to journalists generally leads NGOs to see digital tools as a way of complementing media-centered publicity efforts. Interviewees discussed using social media to know what journalists are doing, where they are going, and the types of information toward which they might be receptive: "If a reporter [on Twitter] says, 'I'm traveling to Sudan next week' . . . then we can pick up the phone and say, 'If you're going to Sudan, do you want to meet with our person while you're there?'" (media officer, International Crisis Group, April 1, 2011). Even formats—like podcasts—that could be used to directly target donors or policymakers are often produced to satisfy journalistic demand. A 2009 stadium massacre in Guinea, for example, led a researcher for International Crisis Group to be "bombarded" with media requests (media officer, International Crisis Group, April 1, 2011). The public relations team quickly decided that the only way to satisfy demand while also enabling the research to continue working was to conduct the interview themselves and make it available on the organization's website. The publicity person tasked with doing the podcast remarked that this work was typical in that it required her to produce news that could be picked up by news outlets.

Because NGOs are socially proximate to journalists, it is often difficult for them to know how to engage in other forms of public engagement online. For example, at several NGOs, I was told about ongoing problems responding to claims about their research being wrong. Human Rights Watch has received complaints from online bloggers about the accuracy of their reporting on Israel. Amnesty International's

Facebook page has received similar claims with respect to its reporting on Syria. In both cases, the organizations have responded to claims as if they were coming from serious journalists. Human Rights Watch, for example, sent its research team back into the field to conduct another round of investigations (Human Rights Watch 2006). Amnesty International writes back to each commenter individually:

> We write: Thank you for inquiry into what we have been doing . . . Please follow this link and you can see [our range of reports]. We only have one guy moderating [the online comments]. Newspapers that encourage commenting have like a whole army patrolling this stuff. (News writer, Amnesty International, July 22, 2011)

In sum, NGOs maintain research and public relations departments that are socially proximate to their journalistic counterparts. They travel to similar places and interact semi-regularly. These interactions provide the opportunity for NGOs to learn more about what does and does not succeed in getting the news media's attention. This proximity reinforces the media-centrism that path dependencies in the fields of philanthropy and politics incentivize. Online, this pattern is mostly reinforced. Advocacy groups use digital tools primarily as a way to capture the attention of the news media, not to route around it. Moreover, the social distance that NGOs have from other information producers (bloggers, online commenters) makes alternative forms of public engagement difficult. As a result, most humanitarian and human rights organizations continue to see the news media as an ally in their quest for publicity.

Conclusion

This article has investigated the factors that incentivize NGOs to continue in their media-centric strategies despite the rise of alternative forms of public engagement. Drawing on new institutionalist theories of path dependence, it highlights the important role played by three particular factors. First, it finds that donors continue to value media coverage as a platform to learn about NGOs, as well as mechanism for measuring their impact on political discourse. Second, it shows that political officials continue to utilize media coverage as a way to learn about advocacy demands. Third, it describes how the social proximity between NGOs and journalists leads the former to see the latter as an ally in the pursuit of publicity. Together, these three factors lead NGOs to adopt publicity strategies that remain centered on garnering coverage in the mainstream media.

Theories of path dependence usually focus on a single institutional setting. This article presents evidence that both confirms and extends this theory. Sizable public relations departments, staffed by former journalists that maintain semi-regular contact with journalists nicely demonstrate core mechanisms—like start-up costs, knowledge accumulation, and feedback effects—previously identified by scholars of path dependence (Pierson 2000; Thelen 2002). At the same time, this article highlights a different but complementary way in which institutional strategies are reproduced by *reinforcing path dependencies*. This term calls attention to the way path dependencies

in cognate fields (politics, philanthropy) reinforce and constrain the actions within another field (NGOs).

These findings contribute empirically to the study of NGOs and theoretically to studies of how institutions do—and do not—change over time. Empirically, it accounts for the incentives that shape NGO publicity strategies. This complements extant research that shows the persistence of media-centered strategies despite seemingly new possibilities (Cottle and Nolan 2007; Sobieraj 2011; Waisbord 2011). Moreover, by exploring the incentives motivating these strategies, this research extends this scholarship from describing whether advocacy groups remain wedded to mainstream publicity to explaining why they do so. Theoretically, the paper shows how persistent practices result from the trajectories of dominant institutions that surround a single organization field. This stands in contrast to theories that typically see path dependence as the result of internal field effects (Pierson 2000; Thelen 2002). Taken together, the findings show that though exogenous changes create the possibility for change, complex configurations within and across institutional fields are just as likely to refract those changes and create more incremental developments.

The findings presented here explore path dependence for a single thematic sector of professional advocacy work. Although it is not possible to generalize beyond it, there are good reasons to assume that the analysis would hold for other advocacy sectors (e.g., environment, gender equality, poverty, etc.). Each of these fields is subject to professionalization processes that make them reliant on donors, interested in influencing policy, and aware of journalism's role in shaping their messages (Dale 1996; Lang 2013). These pressures make it likely that their publicity strategies will similarly remain centered on generating mass media coverage, even as they adopt digital technologies. Of course, research into these various thematic sectors is necessary to confirm, modify, or dispute this suggestion.

Beyond its empirical findings, scholars might also find the conceptual emphasis on reinforcing path dependencies useful. Nearly every entity studied in political communication—interest groups, political parties, journalists—is embedded in a wider network of institutional relations. The precise nature of those relations (i.e., who holds power over whom, how that power is exercised) is an open empirical question (see Chadwick 2013). By extending inquiries about path dependence into the relationship between institutional fields, scholars may more fully account for these complex relations. In doing so, new institutional analyses may find room for further dialogue with other meso-level social theories, like field theory, which have generally paid more attention to the relationships between fields (Benson 2013; Bourdieu 1996).

This article highlights the path-dependent effects of various institutional fields in reproducing the media-centrism of NGOs. Yet when might change be possible? In principle, it seems that such change could come about in two ways. First, there could be changes within NGOs: In this case, advocacy groups would seek funds from different donors with less media-driven demands; they could pursue a more populist political strategy, thus partially eschewing the demands of political elites; and they could hire more people with backgrounds in digital advocacy rather than mainstream journalism. Second, there could be changes in fields with which NGOs interact: Donors

could change their demands and provide sustainable funding for digital efforts; politicians' media consumption habits could change. Changes in these areas would incentivize humanitarian and human rights groups to deviate from their current publicity practices more.

Yet these types of changes are relatively difficult to come by and will likely be slow to take shape if and when they do. In the meantime, theories of path dependence—including the concept of reinforcing path dependencies outlined here—suggest that it is more likely than not that NGOs will continue to persist in their media-driven publicity strategies.

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Article

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A Different Beast? Televised Election Debates in Parliamentary Democracies

Nick Anstead[1]

Abstract

Research on televised election debates has been dominated by studies of the United States. As a result, we know far less about other national contexts, including many parliamentary democracies that now hold televised election debates. This article makes two contributions to address this. Theoretically, the study argues that traditional approaches for understanding the development of campaign communication practices (particularly, Americanization and hybridization) are limiting when applied to television debates and instead offers an alternative theoretical approach, the concept of speciation drawn from biological science. This is then applied in the empirical section of the article in a comparative analysis of the evolution of televised election debates in four parliamentary democracies: Australia, Canada, West Germany/ Germany, and the United Kingdom. Based on this analysis, the article argues that the logic of parliamentary democracy coupled with more diffuse party systems has created a distinctive type of televised debate, generally more open to smaller parties based on their success at winning seats in the legislature.

Keywords

comparative research, election campaign, parliament, political parties, television debates

In many parts of the world, televised election debates are now a fixture of election campaigns. Despite this, our understanding of these broadcasts is largely shaped by research on the United States (for a discussion of recent literature on televised debates, see the next section). We know very little about how institutional variables, such as the

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system of government or party system, have shaped the format of election debates in specific national contexts. Elections are "a time when the self-representation of the political system and the political class is expressed most clearly" (Mergel 2009: 256). This is especially true in the case of election debates, which can be seen as manifestations of the choice the electorate faces. The way this choice is constructed and presented does not happen by accident but is the product of a political environment. Yet we know very little about these processes.

This is the gap this article aims to fill with a comparative study of the history of election debates in Australia, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom. These countries are all established liberal democracies and advanced economies. Most importantly for our purposes, they are all parliamentary democracies that have held election debates for varying lengths of time.

The role of election debates in parliamentary democracies is particularly ambiguous. In rejecting calls for election debates in the U.K. during her premiership, Margaret Thatcher argued, "We're not electing a president, we're choosing a government" (quoted in Cockerell 2010). The implication of Thatcher's statement is that the seemingly presidential form of election debates, focused on party leaders and not the wider party platform, is alien to parliamentary democracy.

This article offers a different perspective. Drawing on the metaphor of speciation from biological science, it argues that televised debates in parliamentary democracies have evolved in response to environmental pressures. As a result, in many countries, they have taken a distinctive form defined by their relative openness to smaller parties that are unlikely to wield executive authority.

Existing Literature Relevant to Understanding Election Debates in Parliamentary Democracies

Unsurprisingly, given their centrality to election campaigns in many countries, the study of election debates has produced a large body of research. Much of this work is in the "effects tradition" (Curran et al. 1982), focusing on the influence of television debates on voters' decisions and thinking. The general consensus is that debates have only a limited impact on most voters' electoral preferences, with some evidence of influence on undecided voters. Stronger evidence exists that debates can have other effects, including voter learning and agenda setting (Benoit et al. 2003; Schrott 1990). Effects research has been counterbalanced by more critical work. Some of this research has examined the rhetorical strategies used by politicians, frequently being critical of the standards of argumentation used (Marietta 2009; Siepmann 1962). Other researchers have critiqued the focus on debate winners, losers, and electoral impacts. Instead, they claim, it is more important to understand the role that debates play in democratic and civil life (Coleman 2010). Recent years have seen a newer strand of literature emerging, focused on countries in the developed world with high levels of Internet connectivity, examining how viewers now use two screens (the traditional television and a second Internet-enabled device) to comment on broadcasts in real time (Anstead 2015; Anstead and O'Loughlin 2011; Elmer 2013).

Debate research remains very U.S.-centric. This is not to say that there are no studies of other countries (for the best overview of debates in various countries, see Coleman 2000). However, as noted by McKinney and Karlin (2004) and Birdsell (2014), there is less work on televised election debates outside the U.S.. Recent debate literature provides further evidence of this. A Scopus literature search for articles on televised debates published between 2000 and 2015 reveals that a total of 166 articles have been published.[1] Although the language limitations of this search should be noted (as the search terms used were in English), an overview of the results is instructive: eighty of the articles are on the U.S.. The next most-studied country is France, with twelve articles. Only two other countries (Germany and the U.K.) make it into double figures. What is perhaps most striking, though, is the near complete absence of any comparative work. Only five articles were comparative, all examining just two countries. Of these, four used the U.S. as one-half of their comparison, with only Benoit and Henson's (2007) study of Australia and Canada drawing exclusively on non-U.S. examples.

Beyond the debate-specific literature, political communication research offers two theoretical perspectives that might provide tools for studying election debates in parliamentary democracies. The most obvious is Americanization, which is normally defined as the hypothesis that "campaigning in democracies around the world is becoming more and more Americanized, as candidates, political parties and new media take cues from their counterparts in the United States" (Swanson and Mancini 1996: 4; for a thorough discussion, see Negrine and Papathanassopoulos 1996). The Americanization thesis is an attempt to explain what Hallin and Mancini (2004) argue is the convergence of media systems and campaign communication in different countries. Trends include a greater focus on the party leader and candidate personality, the growing use of marketing-derived research methods, the proliferation of specialist political consultants, and an increased role for communication technology, especially broadcast media and, latterly, the Internet (Kavanagh 1996; Mergel 2009; Nord 2001).

Within this theoretical paradigm, we would understand the development of television debates in a non-U.S. context as the exportation of a U.S. political genre that is leader- and media-focused. Indeed, a number of scholars draw this link, seeing the development of televised debates in specific national contexts as influenced by the U.S. example (Nord 2001 on Sweden, and Downs 2012 on the U.K.). Televised debates are also an area where U.S. expertise is shared: the American Commission on Presidential Debates, the organizers of U.S. debates since 1988, spends a significant amount of its time advising other countries on best practice in debate organization (Minow and LaMay 2008). This would seem to support the idea that the spread of televised debates is an example of Americanization.

There are, though, problems in seeking to understand televised debates as Americanization. First, discussion of Americanization does not just relate to substantive changes in electoral practice, but also functions as a discourse. This discourse is not neutral but often negative. Rose (1974) argues that Americanization was used as an insult as far back as the 1830s, whereas Mergel (2009) notes that the term had developed negative connotations in Germany by 1900. Other writers note that

contemporary use is frequently critical (Nielsen 2013; Nord 2001; Scammell and Semetko 1995).

Second, the Americanization thesis has been critiqued for being overly simplistic. It has been argued that to focus on the role of the U.S. example is to misunderstand the processes that are driving changing political communication practices. It is for this reason that some critics argue that the concept of modernization is rather more useful. In this context, modernization is defined as "a wider, more general process that is producing changes in many societies, changes which are difficult to attribute to a single cause and which go far beyond politics and communication" (Swanson and Mancini 1996: 6). Modernization theory is concerned with the changing patterns of economic, political, and social life in advanced societies, and how this changes political communication practices.

However, both Americanization and modernization theories suffer from another problem when used for comparative analysis: they do not allow for distinctive national conditions in shaping electoral practices (Blumler and Gurevitch 2001). Writing about the U.K., Kavanagh (1996) argues that British institutions, including the frequency of elections, the ban on televised advertising, and more disciplined and centralized political parties, hold back the influence of the U.S. example. More broadly, in their comparative study of eighteen western democracies, Hallin and Mancini (2004) argue that, although there is a general trend of convergence toward practices found in the U.S., national politics and culture continue to impose limitations on this process.

Criticisms of this kind have led to an alternative theory being proposed: hybridization. In the context of political communication, hybridization is defined as the "merger of country and culture specific campaign practices with selected transnational features" (Esser and Strömbäck 2013: 292). In practice, this means that different countries can be subjected to the same external pressures (the increased professionalization of politics, for example), but divergent outcomes will occur when these trends are combined with national factors (Plasser and Plasser 2002).

Hybridization may seem like a more useful theoretical tool for understanding televised debates in parliamentary democracies. However, the metaphor of hybridization does have some important limitations. The use of the term is predated by two distinct ideas of the hybrid, coming from other areas of academic inquiry.[2]

In the first instance, hybrid is an idea drawn from biological science. The first recorded use of the term in the mid-seventeenth century references the issue of a tame sow and a wild boar (Stevenson 2015; for a discussion of etymology, see Chadwick 2013). In biology, a hybrid is the offspring of two different species. However, hybrids are normally sterile, unable to procreate further (Hine and Martin 2015).[3] This makes the metaphor of hybridity problematic, as it suggests that the moment of fission between the parents is also a moment of conclusion, leaving little room for development. In the case of televised election debates outside the U.S., where formats have changed over time, this assumption is not particularly useful.

More recently, the concept of hybridity has drawn interest in the social sciences, proving an attractive analytical tool for cultural and postcolonial studies, where it has been used to understand the movements of people, ideas, and cultural products in a

globalizing world. In this body of literature, the hybrid is produced by a process of continual cultural exchange and reinvention (Kraidy 1999). There remain problems with using hybridity as understood in this tradition for the analysis of election debates, however.

First, the history of the term when applied to human society is far from positive. Early usage reflected a nineteenth-century concern with racial purity and a fear of degradation (Young 2005). This use lingers in the implication that hybrid cultural products are impure compared with the forms that preceded them (García Canclini 1995). Second, the cultural studies definition of hybridity focuses on deterritorialization (Kraidy 1999). This assumption is hardly surprising in literature influenced by globalization but becomes problematic in the context of election campaigns, where national institutions retain significance. Finally, and in contrast to the biological hybrid, cultural hybridity is not static but characterized by "ambivalence and nonfixity" (K. Mitchell 1997: 533). Although the format of election debates might change over time, there are also certain periods when they are fixed and institutionalized—they have rules regarding participation, for example.

If neither Americanization nor hybridity provide suitable theoretical frameworks for explaining election debates, we shall turn our attention elsewhere. Biological science does offer us an alternative metaphor: speciation. In biology, speciation is the process where a new species emerges (Berlocher 1998). A full discussion of the various processes of speciation is beyond the scope of this article, but the metaphor is best illustrated by allopatric speciation. In this form of the process, a single species—a common ancestor—is divided by geography. The different environments the two groups inhabit create different evolutionary trajectories, driven by distinct logics of natural selection (White 1968).

The metaphor of speciation contains a number of assumptions. First, evolution is based on interaction between the species and the environment it inhabits. Over time, the latter shapes the former (Mayr 1963). Second, speciation focuses on a process of separation, contrasting with hybridization's focus on fusion. Third, biologists think of speciation in terms of a "continuum of divergence" (Nosil 2012: 3), meaning that it is a process that takes place over time, making it possible to find examples with degrees of divergence from the common ancestor.

These attributes make the metaphor of speciation a useful tool for understanding election debates in parliamentary democracies and how they have evolved. Using the theory of speciation as a metaphor to understand changes in election debates has an important normative consequence: unlike the negative discourses associated with either Americanization or hybridity, speciation stresses the distinctiveness of televised debates, removing the historical connotations of alien imposition or lesser offspring of a purer form.

Applying the Theory of Speciation to Televised Election Debates

To apply the theory of speciation to televised debates in parliamentary democracies, an analysis of the development of broadcasts in the four case study countries is offered,

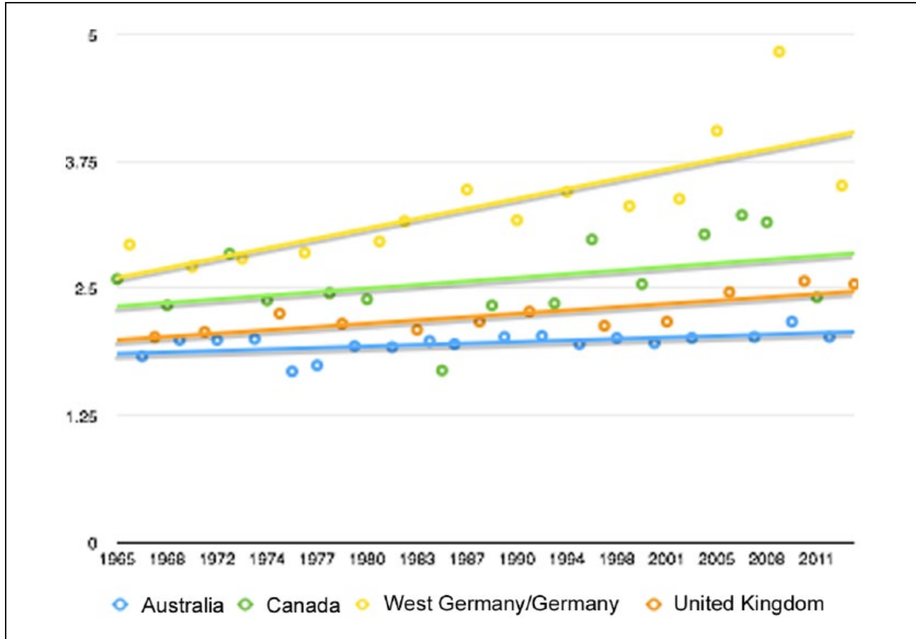

Figure 1. Effective number of political parties by seats won in various democracies, 1965–2015.
Source. Adapted from Brancati (2015).

focusing on the environmental pressures shaping them. Prior to this, though, two important general points are made.

First, speciation requires a single common ancestor. Although it might not technically be the first election debate,[4] there can be no doubt that the 1960 Kennedy–Nixon broadcasts created the genre's mythology (Kraus 1962). The Kennedy–Nixon contest continues to dominate popular and journalistic thinking about elections. Even as late as 2010, when the U.K. had its first election debate, it continued to be central to discussions: the Kennedy–Nixon debates were mentioned no fewer than thirty-one times in the national press during the election campaign.[5]

Second, it is worth considering some comparative data, especially the changing form of party systems in the case study countries.

Figures 1 and 2 show the effective number of political parties for seats won in the legislature and vote share, respectively, for the case study countries between 1965 and the present (for calculation, see Laakso and Taagepera 1979). These data lead to two important conclusions. First, to varying degrees, party systems in the case study countries contain an increasing number of political parties achieving some electoral success. As we shall see, this has had profound consequences for election debates. Second, Figure 2, for the purposes of comparison, also contains the effective number of political parties found in U.S. presidential elections since 1968. This figure is consistently

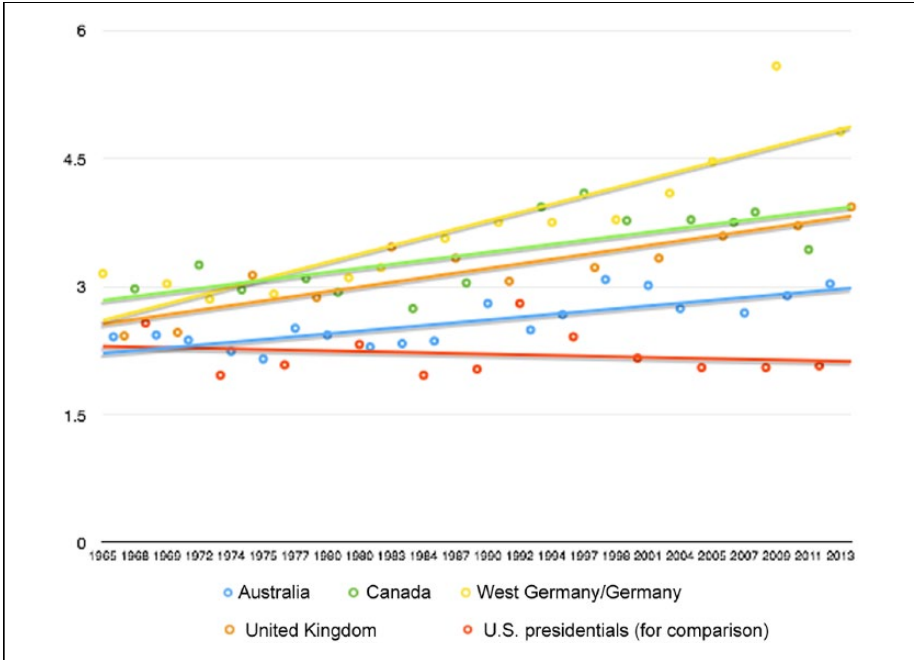

Figure 2. Effective number of political parties by vote share won in various democracies, 1965–2015.
Source. Adapted from Brancati (2015).

lower than in the case study countries. Although there have been third-party candidates for the U.S. presidency who have elevated the effective number of parties in the political system (and one, Ross Perot, who appeared in the 1992 presidential debates), the U.S. has experienced no multielection cycle challenge to the bipartisan system. This contrasts with the experience of the other countries and is a major environmental pressure explaining debate evolution.

Canada

Canada has two environmental attributes that have shaped the format of election debates. First, debates have long replicated the ethnic and linguistic division in the country. The French language has been a feature since 1968, when David Réal Caouette of the Ralliement des créditistes gave his responses in French, while Liberal Pierre Trudeau alternated between French and English answers. The two official languages have now become further embedded in the debate schedule, with distinct English and French contests. In 2004, the leaders of all the major parties were sufficiently proficient in French to fully participate in the French language debate (LeDuc 2005).

The second environmental force influencing Canadian television debates (related to the English and French communities) is the country's party system. In part, this relates to the success of smaller parties, such as the National Democratic Party, the Bloc Québécois, and the Green Party, in achieving parliamentary representation. Furthermore, the success level of larger parties in Canada has fluctuated. The most extreme example of this occurred in 1993, when the Progressive Conservative Party's support collapsed, falling from 161 to three members of parliament (MPs). More recently, in 2013, the Liberal Party—which had ruled Canada for sixty-nine years in the twentieth century—became the third-largest party, winning just thirty-four seats and 18.9 percent of the vote. In the subsequent 2015 election, they won 184 seats and 39.5 percent of the vote and returned to government (on Canada's party system, see Carty et al. 2007).

Given the relative fluidity of the party system, it is not surprising that Canada's election debates have evolved in two ways. First, they have increasingly included smaller parties, featuring up to five participants. Second, the criteria for debate inclusion are relatively formalized. It is broadly agreed that parties need to fulfill two requirements to participate:

- The party must have representation in the House of Commons.
- The party must consistently be polling above 5 percent in national opinion polls (Amber 2000).

The application of these rules has not been uncontroversial. In 2008, shortly before the general election, Independent MP Blair Wilson joined the Greens. Coupled with the party's poll ratings, this should have given the Greens access to the debates for the first time. However, two of the major parties tried to veto the inclusion of the Greens by threatening to withdraw themselves. Faced by losing major parties, the consortium organizing the debates backed down and withdrew the invitation to the Greens, although following a public outcry, the Greens were reinstated (CNW 2008a, 2008b; see also Burman 2008).

The power of informal criteria for debate participation can be compared with previous attempts by the Green Party to litigate its way into earlier broadcasts. Canadian law defines broad principles that broadcasters should adhere to during elections. Section 8 of the 1987 Television Broadcasting Regulations says,

> During an election period, a licensee shall allocate time for the broadcasting of programs, advertisements or announcements of a partisan political character on an equitable basis to all accredited political parties and rival candidates represented in the election or referendum. (Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission 1987: 8)

Based on these broad requirements, the Green Party sued for access to televised debates in 1988. However, the courts ruled against them in 1993 on the grounds that the debates included parties from across the political spectrum and so were not partisan. Provided this requirement is met, participation became a matter for broadcasters in

negotiation with political parties (Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission 1995).

The unfolding history of Canadian debates has been defined by three distinctive environmental features: a desire to reflect that Canada has an Anglophone and Francophone community; willingness to include smaller political parties (in this case, smaller parties being defined as those with seats in the legislature, but unlikely to hold any position in the executive, much less the premiership); and the development of informal rules for inclusion, as opposed to legal requirements for participation.

West Germany/Germany

West German citizens got their first taste of formal televised debates in 1972.[6] Termed the *Elefantenrunden* ("elephant round") due to the large number of participants, the requirement for participation was for a party to hold a seat in the Bundestag prior to the election, although it should be noted that the German electoral system has a 5 percent national vote share threshold for parties to be awarded list seats (Klingemann and Wessels 2001). The *Elefantenrunden* system was clearly a product of West German politics. As one scholar writing on the history of televised debates in the country argued in 1990, "The parliamentary nature of the West German political system, the coalition structures of the government, and the multiparty nature of the system prevent a head-to-head meeting of the two Chancellor candidates" (Schrott 1990: 570–71).

This comment was premature. Helmut Kohl used the dislocation in the party system caused by reunification as a reason to withdraw from subsequent broadcasts. This meant that election debates went on hiatus until 2002. When they returned, it was in a new format, the TV-Duelle (television duel) debates, only including the leaders of the two major parties, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Social Democratic Party (SPD).

Some scholars saw this development as Americanization and at odds with the logic of the country's constitution (Helms 2004). Smaller German parties reacted aggressively to the new debate format. In 2002, the Free Democratic Party (FDP) attempted to litigate its way into debates using Section 1 of the Political Parties Act to challenge its exclusion. This piece of legislation guaranteed that "parties should be treated equally if a public institution is providing them with facilities or other public resources" (Federal Republic of Germany 1967). However, the courts rejected the claim that airtime in an election debate was a public resource.

The court also considered noninclusion through the prism of the Basic Law. The German constitution guarantees political parties equal opportunities, and it also guarantees that broadcasters control their own programming (Federal Republic of Germany 2012). In light of these contradictions, the courts established a number of tests for inclusion in the TV-Duelle based on previous, current, and potential levels of support a party enjoys. One of the tests is the likelihood of a party's leader being Chancellor after the election. This requirement meant that the court had essentially backed the logic of the TV-Duelle as a contest for executive office (Gröpl 2002).

This is not quite the conclusion of the story. The 2013 election saw two distinct types of televised debate. Apart from the now regular TV-Duelle between the leaders of the two major parties, a format similar to the old *Elefantenrunden* reappeared. This broadcast, taking place three days before the election, was titled "Berliner Runde: Die Partieispitzen im Wahlkampfendspurt" ("Berlin Round: Top Candidates in the Final Phase of Election"). In a manner similar to the West German debate format, each party with members in the Bundestag was invited to send a representative. However, unlike debates in the 1970s and 1980s, the leaders of the two major parties did not attend and instead sent senior figures from their parliamentary parties.

By 2013, German debates had evolved into a multiformat system reflecting the environment created by parliamentary elections, which selects both the legislature and, through that decision, the executive. The combination of TV-Duelle and the new *Elefantenrunden* meant that parties had different levels of access, dependent on their size and likely role postelection.

Australia

In the ten elections held in Australia since the country's first election debate in 1984, only once has there been no debate, when incumbent Prime Minister and Labor leader Bob Hawke refused to debate Liberal John Howard in 1987. This decision was taken because Hawke believed that the 1984 debates had been detrimental to Labor. In the 1990 election, Hawke again agreed to participate. Debates have been a fixture in Australian elections since (Coleman 1997; Senior 2008).

Of all the case study countries, Australia has the most stable debate format. Only the two major parties, Labor and the Liberal coalition, have ever been invited to participate. The reason for this seems likely to be the relative stability of Australia's party system. Certainly in terms of seat share in the legislature (shown in Figure 1), Australia remains a two-party system. The Green Party has offered the most significant challenge to this duopoly, winning a seat in the Commons in both the 2010 and 2013 elections, as well as multiple seats in the Senate (the upper house, elected through the alternative vote). The Green Party has been even more successful in terms of vote share, as illustrated in Figure 2. The party's most successful election occurred in 2010, when they won an 11.76 percent vote share.

The Green Party has argued that this success provides justification for its inclusion in debates (Green Party of Australia 2013). It is also interesting to note that if the criteria for debate inclusion used in Canada or Germany were applied, the Greens would be invited. However, the efforts of the Greens have (thus far at least) proved to be futile, even at State level. In the 2015 Tasmanian elections, the Green Party leader in the State, Nick McKim, was invited to speak at the second of a three debate series due to consistent levels of support the party had received in multiple State elections. However, the invitation was later withdrawn during negotiations with the two larger parties (McCann 2015).

Of the countries in this study, it is Australian debates that have evolved least during their existence, and this is not really surprising. As Figures 1 and 2 show, the effective

number of political parties, measured both in terms of seat and vote share, has increased in recent decades. However, it has happened to a smaller degree than in the other countries in this study.

The United Kingdom

The U.K. organized its first debate broadcasts in 2010. Elections prior to this had seen numerous abortive attempts to organize televised election debates (A. Mitchell 2000). In 2010, though, the electoral arithmetic meant that all major parties believed they would gain from debates: the incumbent Labour Party was behind in the polls, whereas the opposition Conservative Party was not yet satisfied they could win a majority. As the third party, the Liberal Democrats always saw debates as a vital platform to raise their profile (Cowley and Kavanagh 2010).

After the first Prime Ministerial Debate (as the programs were branded) was broadcast, it was the third party that seemed to have read the situation most accurately, with the Liberal Democrat's leader Nick Clegg deemed the winner in post-broadcast polls and his party surging to unprecedented ratings (Wells 2015). Although the Liberal Democrats were not able to achieve these levels of support in the election itself, there is no doubt that the debates and the accompanying wave of "Cleggmania" played a pivotal role in shaping the course of the 2010 election campaign (Coleman 2010).

Partially because of this example, debate organization was more complex in 2015. The central question was which parties should be invited to appear, due to changes in the U.K. party system since 2010. The clearest manifestation of this was the level of support being achieved by the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in second-tier elections. In finishing top in the 2014 European Parliamentary Elections, UKIP became the first party other than the Conservatives or Labour to win a national election since the Liberals in 1910. In Scotland, polls gave the Scottish National Party (SNP) a significant lead that, if maintained, would win a huge increase in seats. Polls were also showing increased support for the Green Party, that already had one MP (for changing levels of party support prior to the election, see Wells 2015). In this climate, the broadcasters proposed a modified debate format. Instead of three debates featuring three party leaders as in 2010, they suggested a four-three-two format, where the first debate would include the Conservatives, Labour, the Liberal Democrats, and UKIP, with the second debate featuring the three established parties and the final debate the biggest two parties (see *BBC News* 2014).

The Conservative Party rejected this proposal on the grounds that the Greens, with an MP in the House of Commons, should be included (Wintour 2015). In part, this argument was driven by political self-interest. Following an indecisive result in 2010, many Conservatives blamed the debates for depriving them of a majority (*The Daily Telegraph* 2010). Nonetheless, the Conservative critique was not completely irrational in the increasingly fractured U.K. party system. Following extended negotiations, the politicians and broadcasters agreed a new and complex series of programs. In practice only one of these would be a true televised election debate featuring all the major

protagonists—a seven-way debate including the leaders of the Conservatives, Labour, the Liberal Democrats, UKIP, the Greens, the SNP, and Plaid Cymru.

Despite this complex party environment, the courts have not intervened in debate organization in the U.K.. In 2010, the SNP went to court to prevent election debates featuring the leaders of the major parties being broadcast in Scotland. The SNP argued that they were a major party in Scotland but excluded from the highest profile event of the campaign. The broadcasters argued that the SNP did not warrant a place in the U.K.-wide debate, as they were standing in insufficient constituencies to form a majority government. Furthermore, the broadcasters argued that they were holding election debates especially for Scotland, featuring all relevant parties. The court ruled that broadcasters had made sufficient effort to give the SNP a platform, so there was no case to be answered (Smith 2010). The idea that televised debates in the U.K. are a private arrangement between the broadcasters and political parties is reinforced by both the Electoral Commission and Ofcom (the U.K.'s regulator of independent broadcasters) stating that they are not responsible for participation in debates (Electoral Commission 2013; Ofcom 2015).

Of all the case study countries, televised debates in the U.K. have evolved at the most rapid rate. The fracturing of the U.K. party system between 2010 and 2015 created an environment that put huge pressure on a debate format that only offered a platform to the three largest parties. Ultimately, it was unsustainable.

Conclusion: Environmental Pressures on Television Debates in Parliamentary Democracies

Drawing on the metaphor of speciation, this article has examined the environmental factors that have shaped the evolution of televised debates in four parliamentary democracies. Three factors seem to warrant particular attention: country-specific events and trends, changes in party systems across all the case study countries, and the logic of parliamentary systems as distinct from presidential systems.

As is evident from the history of television debates in the four case study countries, evolution has frequently been driven by distinctive national circumstances. In Canada, multilingualism has indelibly shaped debate formats, while the rise of Celtic nationalism in the U.K. led to the inclusion of the SNP and Plaid Cymru in the 2015 debates. In Germany, reunification gave Helmut Kohl the excuse to refuse debates completely.

Beyond these country-specific environmental pressures, though, a broad pattern shared across all the case study countries is an increasing number of parties in the party system, measured either by seats won or national vote share. Correspondingly, in many of the case study countries, televised debates have included more participants. This is a radically different trajectory to the U.S. party system, which remains bipartisan, as do—in the vast majority of cases—U.S. televised debates.

Based on the history of the case study countries, two arguments might challenge the claim that the development of multiparty politics is driving the evolution of debate formats. First, Australia may appear an outlier. After all, its two major parties have managed to maintain their duopoly in debates. There are two responses to this. The

first is to note that this is actually not surprising. Compared with the other countries in this study, Australia is closest to retaining a classic two-party system. In addition, in Australia, the debate format has not been immune from pressure, with the Green Party campaigning for inclusion at both the federal and state level. Second, in Germany, the TV-Duelle introduced in 2002 might also be argued to undermine the idea of a distinctive species of parliamentary election debate. However, the return of the *Elefantenrunden* format in 2013 has ensured that multiparty politics has been reembedded in German televised debates.

It can also be argued that changes in debate format in the case study countries are related to the logic of parliamentary systems. Elections in a parliamentary democracy form the legislature, meaning smaller parties have a powerful argument in favor of being included in some form, even if they are unlikely to hold executive office. Certainly in Canada, Germany, and the U.K., holding parliamentary seats makes up an important element of discussion around debate inclusion (albeit coupled with other metrics such as opinion polls and second-tier elections). That the executive is formed from the legislature has a second important ramification. Unlike a presidential system, and especially one with separation of powers and federalism as in the U.S., political actors in a parliamentary system share the same institutional space to a far greater degree. Thus, premiers and government ministers regularly debate with representatives from all parties that have legislative seats. Multiparty televised election debates can be seen as an extension of this.

Televised election debates in parliamentary systems therefore have a greater openness to multiparty participation and at least some recognition that parties have a claim to appearing based on winning seats in the legislature. It is for these reasons that we can talk in terms of a distinctive species of televised election debate.

There are limitations to this analysis. This kind of comparative work suffers from two problems: too few cases and too many variables (Hallin and Mancini 2004). There are clearly other cases that could be considered, including other parliamentary systems with deeply embedded multiparty systems, such as Israel and the Scandinavian countries. In addition, very different examples might be studied. It would be fruitful, for instance, to examine how televised election debates are organized in multiparty presidential systems of the kind found in Latin America. It is possible that a broader study would reveal greater complexity, with additional variables creating other "species" of debate format, beyond the taxonomy described in this article.

Other variables could be considered too. This article has focused on the system of government and the party system, but we might also think about the role played by media systems, which can vary radically between different countries. Hallin and Mancini (2004) identify four media system variables (the development of the media market, political parallelism, the professionalism of the news media, and the role played by the state) that might usefully be utilized as a starting point for such an inquiry. Media systems are also dynamic, and technological changes will also play a role in evolving debate formats. In many of the case study countries considered in this article, debates began in the era of broadcast television when there were few channels. Today, there are not only more channels but also new media actors competing

to organize debates. In the last elections in both the U.K. and Canada, for example, nonbroadcasters attempted to negotiate with political parties to organize election debates.[7] Such developments have the potential to disrupt established debate formats.

Media systems and media system change may prove to be especially important because, in all the case study countries, television debates are organized through a private agreement between broadcasters and political parties, often after a process of hard-fought negotiations. The media system may well dictate the strength of political and media actors in these negotiations, while technological change may create new actors, disrupting established relationships.

This study has both specific and broad implications. Specifically, it means that televised debates should not be seen as an alien imposition on parliamentary democracies. Instead, they have evolved to reflect the institutional logic of that system of government, and so can step out of the long shadows cast by their U.S. counterparts and be understood on their own terms. More broadly, though, the theory of speciation can have applications for other areas of inquiry in political communication, especially where specific practices or institutional forms have been imported into new contexts but then went on to take a radically different form. This might prove useful in studying, for example, television advertising practices, data-driven campaigning techniques, or campaign fundraising efforts. These are all areas where the U.S. example plays a central role but where practices and outcomes are largely defined by national-level regulation. Perhaps most importantly, the theory of speciation points us toward a mode of inquiry more focused on change than stasis and using comparison to understand difference as well as similarity. Such an approach has great potential to open up new avenues of inquiry and generate insights.

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Notes

1. The data set for this analysis was constructed by searching for the appearance of the phrases "television debates" OR "election debates" OR "leaders debates" OR "Presidential debates" in Scopus. False positives were then removed to create the final data set.
2. It is worth noting that recent years have seen great interest in hybridity in another area of communication studies, with much discussion of a hybrid media system being forged through the interaction of old and new media (Chadwick 2013). Although not directly relevant to this study, this concept has been influential in debate research, especially on two-screen viewing.
3. This is generally, although not universally, the case. The most obvious example of a sterile hybrid is a mule, created by breeding a male donkey and a female horse. This is due to donkeys and horses having a different number of chromosomes. Plant hybrids are more likely to be fertile and able to reproduce than animal hybrids.
4. As with all historical constructs of this kind, the truth is rather more complicated. Radio debates between primary candidates took place in 1948 and 1956 (Benoit 2002). In terms of general elections, Sweden actually has a good claim to holding the first television debate, beating even the U.S.. However, the format of this event was closer to a joint press conference, with candidates answering questions in turn (Coleman 1997).
5. These figures were calculated by using Nexis to search for "Kennedy" AND "Nixon" AND "debate" between April 6 to May 5, 2010, the formal period of the election campaign.
6. Some literature on the topic claims that the 1969 election featured the first debate. This discrepancy appears to be because party leaders appeared together on regular news broadcasts in 1969 but not on a formal debate program. Kleinsteuber (2005) states 1969, and Baker and Norpoth (1981) and Schrott and Lanoue (1992) both state 1972.
7. This process is already ongoing. In the U.K. in 2015, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* newspapers unsuccessfully attempted to organize a debate in conjunction with YouTube. In Canada in 2015, a debate organized by *The Globe and Mail* newspaper and Google Canada featured the leaders of the Conservatives, the Liberals, and the National Democratic Party.

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Article

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Opportunity Structures for Selective Exposure: Investigating Selective Exposure and Learning in Swedish Election Campaigns Using Panel Survey Data

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Abstract

The transition from low-choice to high-choice media environments has raised new concerns about selective exposure. In this context, two types of selective media exposure are relevant. One is selectivity based on political ideological preferences, the other selectivity based on political interest. Evidence for both has been found primarily in an American context, while there is less research on European countries. This is problematic, as the opportunity structures for different forms of selectivity vary across media environments. Against this background, the purpose of this study is to investigate the two types of selective exposure in a country—Sweden—where the opportunity structures for selective exposure differ from the American context. This study investigates both types of selective exposure in relation to televised party-leader interviews. Based on panel survey data, the findings show that selective exposure based on political interest is substantially more important than selective exposure based on ideological preferences in explaining exposure to party-leader interviews. To substantiate this finding, the results are replicated with partisan learning as the dependent variable.

Keywords

media consumption, selective exposure, media environment, polarization, political information

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The transition from low-choice to high-choice media environments has fundamentally reshaped contemporary political information environments and drastically expanded the supply of all kinds of information. As a consequence, media consumers have more opportunities than ever to select and to avoid media content based on their own personal interests and preferences (Bennett and Iyengar 2008). These rich opportunity structures, in turn, may increase the importance of people's motivations and abilities when deciding what media and media content they expose themselves to (Luskin 1990; Prior 2007).

One key motivation to select media content is rooted in people's ideological leanings. Several scholars have argued that when people can choose among a variety of sources, they tend to select content that supports their political attitudes and beliefs while avoiding opinion-challenging information (Bennett and Iyengar 2008; Mutz and Martin 2001).

Another key motivation is interest in politics (Prior 2007; Strömbäck and Shehata 2010). Not only has the proliferation of media made it more easy to find attitude-consistent or avoid attitude-discrepant information, but it has also made it easier to find or avoid political information altogether. The growing media supply has made political interest a more important predictor of news media use, and some studies suggest an increasing gap between news seekers and news avoiders in terms of their news media consumption (Ksiazek et al. 2010; Strömbäck et al. 2013).

Both kinds of motivated selectivity present potential challenges to democracy, either by an increased polarization of political views and a lack of common ground for democratic talk, or by widening knowledge gaps. From a democratic point of view, it can be argued that it is essential that people are exposed to political information and opposing perspectives and viewpoints, as it tends to promote political tolerance, more careful information search, and political knowledge (Delli Carpini et al. 2004; Mutz 2006; Stroud 2010, 2011; Sunstein 2007).

Although the evidence for selective exposure is not entirely consistent (Mutz and Young 2011), American studies have provided compelling evidence for selective exposure based on both ideological preferences and political interest (Arceneaux and Johnson 2013; Iyengar and Hahn 2009; Prior 2007). Thus far, there is, however, only limited research on selective exposure beyond the American context. This is problematic, not least as *the opportunity structures for selective exposure* vary across media environments. Thus, it cannot be assumed that evidence of selective exposure found in the United States can be generalized to other countries, for example, in Europe. This holds particularly true with respect to television, where in most European countries, there are strong public service broadcasting outlets, characterized by norms of impartiality and internal pluralism but no partisan channels equivalent to FOX News or MSNBC (Esser et al. 2012; Hallin and Mancini 2004).

Against this background and focusing on television, the purpose of this study is to investigate the presence of selective exposure based on ideological preferences and political interest in a country—Sweden—where the opportunity structures provide plenty of scope for selectivity based on political interest but a narrow scope for selectivity based on ideological preferences. More specifically, based on a panel study during

the 2010 Swedish national election campaign, we analyze both forms of selectivity using exposure to televised party-leader interviews as well as partisan learning as outcome variables. By doing this, we also seek to highlight the theoretical importance of *opportunity structures for selective exposure* for a full understanding of selective exposure in contemporary media environments. The main reason to focus on television is that it remains one of the media sources where most people get their information about politics (Shehata and Strömbäck 2014; Strömbäck 2016).

Two Types of Selective Exposure and the Influence of Media System Characteristics

As noted above, the transformation from low- to high-choice media environments has prompted a concern for selective exposure to political information. In essence, growing media supply is said to increase the importance of personal motivations as predictors of what information people consume (Prior 2007). In *Changing Minds or Changing Channels*, Arceneaux and Johnson (2013: 52) define motivation "broadly as any goal-directed preference regarding what to watch on television." In other words, increasing media supply makes media consumers more likely to select content in line with their preferences (Bennett and Iyengar 2008; Iyengar and Hahn 2009; Mutz and Young 2011; Prior 2007).

In this context, there are basically two types of motivations that might lead to selective exposure. The first is rooted in people's *political interest*. Increasing supply enables people with low interest in politics to consume media while avoiding political information, whereas people with stronger interest can consume even more political information. In the United States, this gap in news media consumption between news avoiders and news seekers has been shown to increase the gap in political knowledge and turnout (Prior 2007). The other type of motivation is rooted in people's *political* or *ideological preferences*. Here, theory suggests that people prefer being exposed to arguments that are in line with their attitudes or beliefs, rather than to arguments running counter to them (Frey 1986; Lodge and Taber 2013). This leads to a tendency to select information or media sources that people expect will meet such demands (Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng 2009; Mutz 2006; Stroud 2008). This argument implies an ideological gap in exposure to political information.

The growing interest in ideological selective exposure is largely driven by the U.S. experience of increasing polarization in terms of both media and politics (Bennett and Iyengar 2008; Iyengar and Hahn 2009; Mutz and Young 2011; Stroud 2008, 2011). Apart from the fact that the Internet has introduced an almost infinite number of potential information sources for citizens in many Western democracies, a significant change in the American media environment is the political polarization of the broadcasting system, in particular, with the introduction of FOX News and MSNBC. In the United States, studies have also produced empirical evidence for ideological selective exposure (Iyengar and Hahn 2009; Pew Research Center for the People & the Press 2010). Stroud (2011), for example, finds substantial ideological selectivity of specific

content on television (Democratic and Republican presidential nomination acceptance speeches) as well as of politically biased news outlets (newspapers, radio, and television networks).

While the debate on selective exposure is primarily based on the U.S. experience, important to note is that the *opportunity structures* for selective exposure vary across countries. By *opportunity structures for selective exposure*, we refer to the availability of different media, media formats, media genres, and media content, and the ease with which citizens can select media and media content based on their personal preferences. In some media environments, it is easier for citizens to find content that matches their preferences, for example, in terms of ideological leaning, while it is more difficult in other media environments. This holds true both on an aggregate level as well as with respect to different media types such as newspapers, television, and the Internet.

We believe the concept of opportunity structures for selective exposure is important, not least considering research indicating that media use is influenced by the media environment in which people live, alongside individual abilities and motivations (Aalberg et al. 2013; Althaus et al. 2009; Curran et al. 2009; Goldman and Mutz 2011; Prior 2007; Shehata and Strömbäck 2011). Similar to other behaviors, media use is shaped by opportunities as well as preferences and abilities (Luskin 1990). Thereby, differences in opportunities for selective exposure across media environments should have an impact on the presence and ubiquity of selective exposure in countries with different media environments.

Although the growing popularity of the Internet and the multiplication of cable channels are more or less similar across media systems, the situation is quite different with respect to terrestrial broadcasting. Here, the strong position of public service broadcasting in many European countries has (thus far) prevented a political polarization of the broadcasting system similar to what has emerged in the United States. In many countries, public broadcasters hold substantial market shares. They are also obliged to work in accordance with norms of impartiality, objectivity, and political neutrality (Esser et al. 2012; Hallin and Mancini 2004). Next to the public service stations, a number of international cable channels offer pure entertainment programming and provide people the chance to avoid news and political information altogether in favor of entertainment. Comparing media environments in the United States and in European countries with strong public service suggests that the opportunity structures for selectivity based on political interest are great across media environments, but more narrow when it comes to ideological selectivity in European countries. Therefore, to understand the role of selective exposure, it is essential to broaden research to include European countries with different opportunity structures for selective exposure than the United States. One such country is Sweden, a typical example of what Hallin and Mancini (2004) has identified as the democratic corporatist model of media and politics. Other countries belonging to this model are, for example, Austria, Germany, and the other Nordic countries.

Selective Exposure Opportunities in the Swedish Broadcasting System

In this study, we will focus on selective exposure with respect to television. As mentioned earlier, one key reason is that television remains one of the most important sources of information for most people. As a typical democratic corporatist country, the Swedish broadcasting system is dominated by two public service channels (SVT1 and SVT2) and one commercial broadcaster (TV4). TV4 is also restricted by some public service obligations. Although there is a commercial cable television market, in terms of news and current affairs, SVT1, SVT2, and TV4 dominate and attract broad segments of the population (Ohlsson 2015). Together, these three channels provide a rich opportunity structure for political information.

In contrast with the United States, there are no partisan television channels in Sweden. Thus, it makes little sense to study ideological divides in the audience of different television channels. The lack of partisan channels does not, however, prevent programming that is partisan in nature. One prime example is the institutionalized party-leader interviews that are televised prior to each national election in Sweden. In this study, and inspired by Stroud's (2011) study on Democratic and Republican presidential nomination acceptance speeches, we thus focus on exposure to these party-leader interviews. In arguing why she studies exposure to presidential nomination acceptance speeches, Stroud (2011, 42) stresses the popularity and the blatant partisanship of the speeches as reasons to expect ideological selective exposure. In comparative terms, the televised party-leader interviews in Sweden are equivalent to the acceptance speeches in terms of being central to Swedish national election campaigns and reaching wide audiences (Esaiasson and Håkansson 2013; Petersson et al. 2006; Strömbäck and Shehata 2013). Moreover, they are equivalent in the sense that a television viewer can easily anticipate each interview to be either attitude-consistent or attitude-discrepant.

The party-leader interviews are broadcasted live during the final weeks of the Swedish election campaign. A pair of experienced professional journalists interviews each leader of the parties having seats in parliament for a full hour. The interviews are broadcasted live on prime time by one of the public service television channels, thereby providing a unique opportunity for parties to get their message across unedited and without having to face political opponents. Furthermore, as people know which party leader is being interviewed, they have every chance to select or avoid these interviews based on their political interest or ideological preferences.

With respect to the Swedish political system, it is essential to know that Sweden had seven parties in parliament at the time, but also that these parties formed two blocs, one Center-Left and one Center-Right. In the election, the parties in the Center-Right bloc—who had been in government since 2006—won about 49 percent of the votes, while the Center-Left bloc won about 44 percent of the votes. An eighth party—the Sweden Democrats—also entered parliament after having received 5.7 percent of the votes.

Hypotheses: The Role of General Political Interest and Ideological Preferences

Turning to our hypotheses, and based on the notion of different opportunity structures for selective exposure, our basic argument is that *the Swedish broadcasting system provides more choice opportunities at the genre level than at the ideological level*. As a consequence, we expect that *political interest will be more important than ideological leaning in explaining exposure to party-leader interviews*. Viewing decisions at the genre level refer to choices between watching news and current affairs, entertainment, sports, movies, sitcoms, and so on, while choices at the ideological level refer to the political leaning of a television program or channel (liberal, conservative, right wing or left wing, etc.; Webster 2014).

With respect to party-leader interviews, people with divergent political beliefs have the chance to either actively change channel or turn the television off to avoid these interviews, while citizens who share the political views of a particular party can tune in. Following Stroud's findings concerning ideological selective exposure to presidential acceptance speeches, we should expect some ideologically driven selective exposure to the party-leader interviews in Sweden as well. However, previous research suggests that television viewing is driven at least as much by habits and routines as by personal preferences (Diddi and LaRose 2006; LaRose 2010; Rosenstein and Grant 1997; Webster 2014; Wonneberger et al. 2011). Following Mutz and Young (2011), ideological selective exposure should thus be affected by habitual television viewing or channel loyalty. In a polarized broadcasting system such as the American, the opportunity structure enables citizens to develop viewing habits based on ideological preferences, resulting in what Mutz and Young term passive selective exposure. In contrast, the substantial audience share for public service broadcasting in Sweden means that a significant part of the habitual television viewing will take place on the main public service channels (Aalberg and Curran 2012; Shehata et al. 2015). Thus, the lack of opportunities for ideological selective exposure at the channel level combined with the importance of viewing habits can be expected to reduce ideological selective exposure to specific political content.

Despite this, we still expect to find some ideological selective exposure to the party-leader interviews. The *main gap* in exposure to Swedish party-leader interviews, we argue, is however not between citizens with different ideological leanings but between people with an ideological preference—either left-leaning or right-leaning—and those without. This argument is based on two propositions. First, on the individual level, previous studies indicate that people with ideological preferences are generally more politically active, interested, and knowledgeable than people who are neither left- nor right-leaning (Curran et al. 2012; Oscarsson and Holmberg 2008). Therefore, they are also more likely to watch the party-leader interviews. Second, while the Swedish broadcasting system provides limited opportunities to select television channels based on ideological orientations, there are a large number of national and international cable channels that broadcast entertainment, movies, or television shows rather than politics and current affairs. This makes it significantly easier to select

media content based on general interest in politics than on ideological preferences. Thus, while there are ample opportunities to seek out nonpolitical television programs for those uninterested in politics, people who are equally interested in politics but divided ideologically are dependent on the same channels for getting televised campaign information.

In this context, it is important to note that selecting information in line with one's attitudes does not necessarily imply avoidance of attitude-discrepant information. In fact, people have several reasons to expose themselves to attitude-discrepant information: It can be emotionally rewarding to argue against such information and reject it; such information can help people prepare a defense for their own position; or it could be useful to learn about attitude-discrepant information to reexamine one's own position (Garrett et al. 2013). However, it requires a certain degree of political interest to engage in such cognitive-demanding activities. Consequentially, those politically interested are more prone to embrace both attitude-discrepant as well as attitude-consistent information, and this general motivation is likely to be stronger among people with an ideological leaning than among those without.

Based on these arguments, we expect to find some ideological selective exposure to the party-leader interviews in Sweden, but also that political interest is more important than ideological leanings in explaining why people watch interviews. Our hypotheses, thus, are as follows:

> **Hypothesis 1a:** People with a right-leaning ideology are more likely to watch party-leader interviews with right-wing parties, while people with a left-leaning ideology are more likely to watch party-leader interviews with left-wing parties.
> **Hypothesis 1b:** People with an ideological leaning are more likely than those who are neither left- nor right-leaning to watch party-leader interviews, independently of the direction of their ideological leanings.
> **Hypothesis 1c:** General political interest is more important than ideological preferences for explaining why people watch party-leader interviews.

To extend our analysis and assess the robustness of our findings, we will also test our hypotheses in relation to partisan learning. If increased media supply results in less cross-cutting media exposure, it could lead to low awareness of attitude-inconsistent information, compared with the awareness of attitude-consistent information. Thus, by partisan learning, we refer to *one-sided* campaign learning, that is, learning about the proposals of parties with whom voters agree ideologically. Partisan learning should thereby be contrasted with general campaign learning, which reflects learning about parties from all political camps.

Intuitively, it would make sense that people remember information with which they agree better than information with which they disagree. However, this seems not to be the case (Eagly et al. 1999). The tendency to counterargue attitude-discrepant messages is part of the mechanism that makes counterattitudinal messages as memorable as pro-attitudinal messages (Eagly et al. 2000). A similar point is made by Taber and Lodge (2006), who show that people engage more in denigrating arguments they

disagree with than bolster arguments they agree with. Doing so requires a certain level of motivation and political interest, however. Therefore, we expect to find a similar pattern for partisan learning as for exposure to party-leader interviews.

Hypothesis 2a: People with a right-leaning ideology are more likely to learn about the proposals of right-wing parties, while people with a left-leaning ideology are more likely to learn about the proposals of left-wing parties, during the election campaign.

Hypothesis 2b: People with an ideological leaning are more likely than those who are neither left- nor right-leaning to learn about the proposals of all political parties, independently of the direction of their ideological leaning.

Hypothesis 2c: General political interest is more important than ideological preferences for campaign learning.

Data and Method

To investigate the hypotheses above, we will rely on a four-wave panel study conducted during the 2010 Swedish national election campaign. Compared with cross-sectional surveys, using panel data provides the opportunity to study how ideological preferences and motivations formed already prior to the election campaign influence information selectivity during the campaign, that is, whether citizens with certain ideological orientations measured months before Election Day are more or less likely to subsequently expose themselves to attitude-consistent and inconsistent media content. Thus, by analyzing these dynamics over time, the panel design provides substantially better opportunities to capture the causal effect of ideological preferences on selectivity and retention (Finkel 1995). The panel survey was conducted by the Centre for Political Communication Research at Mid Sweden University in cooperation with the polling institute Synovate in Sweden.

The sample was drawn using stratified probability sampling from a database of approximately twenty-eight thousand citizens from Synovate's pool of Web survey participants. Those included in this pool are recruited continuously using both random digit dialing and mail surveys based on random probability samples. Approximately 5 percent of those who are initially contacted and invited agree to be part of this pool of respondents. The pool of Web survey participants covers different segments of the population in terms of, for example, residence, age, education, and occupation.

The probability sample of 4,760 respondents aged eighteen to seventy-four from this pool was stratified by gender, age, county size, political interest, and Internet use, so as to be as representative of the Swedish population aged eighteen to seventy-four years as possible. Among these, we base our analyses on those 4,010 respondents who were invited to participate in all waves of the panel. These respondents were asked to complete a Web-based survey at four times during a period of five months leading up to the election. Wave 1 of the panel took place in May (May 3–May 20), wave 2 in mid-June (June 14–June 23), wave 3 in mid-August (August 16–23), and, finally, wave 4 immediately after Election Day (September 20–September 27). The total

cooperation rates were 63 percent in wave 1, 48 percent in wave 2, 43 percent in wave 3, and 39 percent in wave 4. However, not everyone participated in all waves, but a total number of 1,413 respondents did so—amounting to a 35 percent of all respondents initially contacted. While the overall response rates are relatively high given common problems of panel attrition, the sampling procedure and final cooperation rates certainly raise issues concerning external validity. Compared with available population statistics, the final sample is broadly representative with regard to sex, age, and geography (county size), but weaker in terms of education (47 percent with higher education in the sample, compared with 29 percent among the population). Compared with cross-sectional surveys based on traditional national probability samples, the panel respondents are also more interested in politics (63 percent compared with 52 percent) and more frequent users of the Internet (92 percent compared with 78 percent). Although the primary strength with panel data is the opportunity to analyze changes in communication and opinions over time—and, more specifically, to use measures of personal motivations (interest and ideological leaning) collected prior to the campaign as predictors of viewing behaviors during the campaign—we will base descriptive statistics on weighted data.

Measures

Our key variables in the present study are ideological orientation, ideological selective exposure, and partisan learning. While ideological orientation was measured in the first panel wave, both selective exposure and learning were tapped in the following waves—waves 2, 3, and 4. In addition, we use several control variables to identify the unique effect of ideological orientation on ideological exposure and partisan learning.

Ideological orientation was measured prior to the election campaign based on a standard Left-Right ideological scale. Respondents were asked to identify their orientation on an 11-point scale from 0 (*clearly to the Left*) to 10 (*clearly to the Right*). A three-level categorical variable was created by distinguishing respondents with a left-leaning orientation (0–4 on the original 11-point scale), from those lacking a clear ideological orientation (5 on the original 11-point scale), as well as respondents with a right-leaning orientation (6–10 on the original 11-point scale)—creating three groups of left-leaning (n = 1,000), center (n = 566), and right-leaning (n = 1,135) citizens.

As discussed above, the presence of selective exposure will be analyzed in relation to televised party-leader interviews. *Exposure to party-leader interviews* broadcasted on the main public service channels in the final weeks of the election campaign was measured in the fourth panel wave, based on a battery of survey items asking whether respondents watched each of the seven one-hour-long party-leader interviews. For each party-leader interview, the response categories ranged from 0 (*no*) to 1 (*yes, partly*) and 2 (*yes, the entire interview*). Apart from analyzing each of these items separately, we also computed two additive scales: (1) exposure to left-wing party-leader interviews (range = 0–6, M = 1.95, SD = 1.98), and (2) exposure to right-wing party-leader interviews (range = 0–8, M = 2.34, SD = 2.53).

To measure *learning* during the campaign, the panel survey included several items tapping campaign knowledge, that is, awareness of events taking place and policy proposals presented during the election campaign—measured in waves 2, 3, and 4. To capture potential partisan learning, we focus here on knowledge about specific policy proposals presented by the parties during the campaign. For instance, respondents were asked questions such as, "Which of the following proposals were presented by the left-wing parties in their joint party manifesto?" Five response categories, including *don't know*, were given for each knowledge question to minimize the chance of randomly guessing the correct answer. A time limit of 20 seconds for answering each question was used to avoid Web searches for the correct answers. For each knowledge question, respondents who gave a correct answer were given the value 1, while incorrect and *don't know* answers were coded 0. We identified nine items focusing on knowledge about the left-wing parties, and six items about the right-wing parties—creating two separate learning scales ranging from 0 to 9 (left-wing party learning) and 0 to 5 (right-wing party learning). Based on these items, we constructed a (1) left-wing party knowledge index (range = 0–9, M = 3.47, SD = 2.11), as well as a (2) right-wing party knowledge index (range = 0–5, M = 2.55, SD = 1.28).

In addition to these focal variables, the panel survey also included a number of key control variables such as age, gender, education, and income. Most important, however, given our focus on general political motivations and resources, the analyses will account for individual differences in political interest and general political knowledge. *Political interest* was measured in the first panel wave ($t - 4$) based on two four-level items focusing on respondents' interest in (1) politics, as well as in (2) the election campaign (Pearson's r = .73). The two items were summed to form a political interest index ranging from 0 (*no interest*) to 6 (*strong interest*). *General political knowledge*—representing the stock of political knowledge that citizens brought with them at the beginning of the election campaign—was also measured in wave 1 ($t - 4$). This is an additive index based on eight political knowledge questions focused on personalities (three items), political processes (three items), and issue positions (two items)—with acceptable reliability levels (Kuder-Richardson = .72).

Results

Table 1 presents some basic descriptive statistics covering initial differences between left-leaning, center, and right-leaning voters at the beginning of the election campaign. As can be seen, there are no major differences with respect to age between these groups, indicating that fundamental political orientations do not follow an age pattern. This is not the case for political motivation and resource variables, however. While right-leaning citizens score slightly higher than left-leaners on both news attention and general political knowledge, their interest in politics is fairly equal. The major gap, however, is found between people who are neither right- nor left-leaning and those who are either right- or left-leaning. Citizens lacking an ideological leaning are substantively less interested in politics, pay less attention to political news in traditional

Table 1. Descriptive Differences between Left-Wing, Center, and Right-Wing Citizens (Mean Values).

	Age (Years)	Political Interest (0–6)	News Attention (0–12)	Political Knowledge (0–8)
Left (*n* = 819)	48	3.74	6.05	5.21
Center (*n* = 461)	48	2.76	4.48	4.05
Right (*n* = 991)	51	3.75	6.34	5.48

Note. The reported number of observations represents the minimum number of cases for each row.

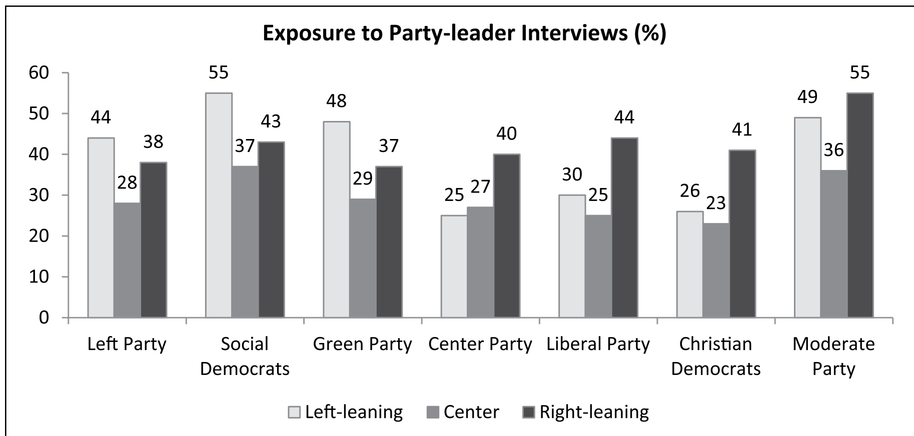

Figure 1. Exposure to televised interviews and use of party Web sites (percent).
Note: Total *N* = 1,864. The sample is weighted on gender, age, type of residence, education, political interest, general Internet use, and voting choice in the 2006 national election.

media, and score significantly lower on political knowledge, than do both left-wing and right-wing citizens.

Ideological Selective Exposure

The research question at the heart of this study concerns selective exposure, that is, the extent to which Left-Right orientations as well as general political interest influence (1) what media content citizens turn to, as well as (2) what political information they acquire during the election campaign. We start confronting the exposure dimension in Figure 1, which displays the relationship between Left-Right orientations and exposure to televised party-leader interviews. As can be seen, there is a consistent relationship between ideological orientations expressed prior to the campaign, and exposure to televised party-leader interviews in the final weeks of the election campaign. Citizens considering themselves as left-leaning are more likely to watch interviews

with party leaders representing the left-wing parties—the Left Party, the Social Democrats, and the Green Party—than are right-leaning citizens. The gap amounts to approximately 6 to 12 percentage points between the two ideological camps. A similar pattern is found for exposure to right-wing party-leader interviews. These are primarily watched by citizens with a right-leaning orientation, and this time, the Left-Right gap amounts to approximately 6 to 15 percentage points.

Furthermore, there is another striking pattern in Figure 1: Those who watch party-leader interviews to the least extent are citizens lacking a clear political Left-Right orientation, suggesting again that the primary gap in political information exposure is not due to ideological but to more general motivation factors. It is not the ideological divide that matters, but rather whether citizens possess ideological convictions or not, which is likely to be related to differences in interest, attention, and general knowledge, as documented above.

So far, the results presented have been descriptive—revealing a consistent pattern of ideological selective exposure to televised interviews. However, even though the findings indicate that ideological orientations are related to *what* partisan content citizens are exposed to—and that citizens seem to prefer attitude-consistent information—additional individual-level analyses suggest that these types of media use are far from ideologically divided. The bivariate correlation between watching party-leader interviews of the left-wing parties on one hand, and of the right-wing parties on the other hand, is very strong (Pearson's $r = .80$). This again suggests that general political motivations—or viewing habits—rather than ideological motivations drive television exposure during the election campaign.

In Table 2, we present a more critical test of the ideological selective exposure hypothesis by analyzing whether there are independent effects of Left-Right orientations on television exposure, controlling for a host of socioeconomic background, political resource (knowledge), and motivation (interest) variables. Here, we use left-leaning respondents as the reference group when estimating the effect of ideological orientation. Furthermore, we introduce general political interest and knowledge variables sequentially in the analysis.[1]

The patterns unraveled in Table 2 are revealing. First, model 1 includes ideological orientation and background variables only, and the results confirm previous bivariate findings indicating the presence of ideological selectivity. They also indicate that voters who are neither left- nor right-leaning are the least exposed to televised interviews irrespective of who is interviewed. Second, however, this "curvilinear" pattern disappears when political interest and knowledge are added to the regression in model 2. Once these variables are added, ideological orientation has a more linear impact on exposure to party-leader interviews: both center ($b = -.28$, $p < .05$) and right-leaning ($b = -.42$, $p < .001$) voters are significantly less likely to watch interviews with left-wing party leaders, while center ($b = .55$, $p < .01$) and right-leaning ($b = .99$, $p < .001$) voters are more likely to watch interviews with right-wing leaders—compared with citizens with a left-leaning ideological orientation. It is also evident that political interest has a much stronger and consistent effect on watching party-leader interviews than general political knowledge. Together, these two variables increase the amount of explained variance by approximately 16 to 17 percentage points (adjusted R^2 increases

Table 2. The Effects of Ideological Orientation on Exposure to Party-Leader Interviews (OLS).

	Interviews with Left-Wing Parties		Interviews with Right-Wing Parties	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Ideological orientation				
Center	−.79*** (.12)	−.28* (.13)	−.14 (.15)	.55** (.16)
Right-leaning	−.47*** (.10)	−.42*** (.10)	.88*** (.13)	.99*** (.13)
Political interest	—	.57*** (.03)	—	.72*** (.04)
Political knowledge	—	.06* (.03)	—	.05 (.04)
High School	.05 (.15)	−.15 (.16)	.11 (.19)	−.26 (.20)
University	.18 (.15)	−.21 (.16)	.24 (.19)	−.32 (.21)
Income	−.04 (.03)	−.06* (.03)	−.08 (.04)	−.11** (.04)
Man	.04 (.09)	−.20* (.09)	.13 (.12)	−.17 (.12)
Age	.04*** (.00)	.02*** (.00)	.05*** (.00)	.03*** (.00)
Adjusted R^2	.10	.27	.12	.28
N	1,864	1,573	1,864	1,573

Note. Estimates are unstandardized coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. OLS = ordinary least squares.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

from 10 percent to 27 percent and from 12 percent to 28 percent when these variables are added).

The importance of political interest as a predictor of exposure to party-leader interviews compared with ideological orientation can be further tested in two ways. First, what is the relative importance of each variable in terms of overall contribution to the model? By comparing the change in R^2 when both variables are excluded from the full model (model 2), one at a time, their individual contribution can be assessed. Dropping ideological orientation (the two dummy variables) from model 2 yields a decrease in adjusted R^2 of approximately 1–3 percentage points. Excluding political interest, however, results in a drop in adjusted R^2 of approximately 12 to 13 percentage points. Second, what is the substantive effect on exposure to party-leader interviews resulting from a change in ideological orientation as well as in political interest? One way to assess this is to look at the maximum possible effects. For instance, citizens with a right-leaning ideological orientation score, on average, 0.42 points lower on the exposure to left-wing party-leader interviews scale compared with left-wing voters, while the maximum effect of political interest is 3.42 on the exposure scale (6 × 0.57). Similarly, while having a right-wing leaning increases exposure to right-wing party-leader interviews by 0.99, the maximum effect of interest is 4.32 on the exposure scale (6 × 0.72). Although such comparisons are not straightforward, they illustrate the relative importance of general political interest as a motivation behind party-leader interviews.[2]

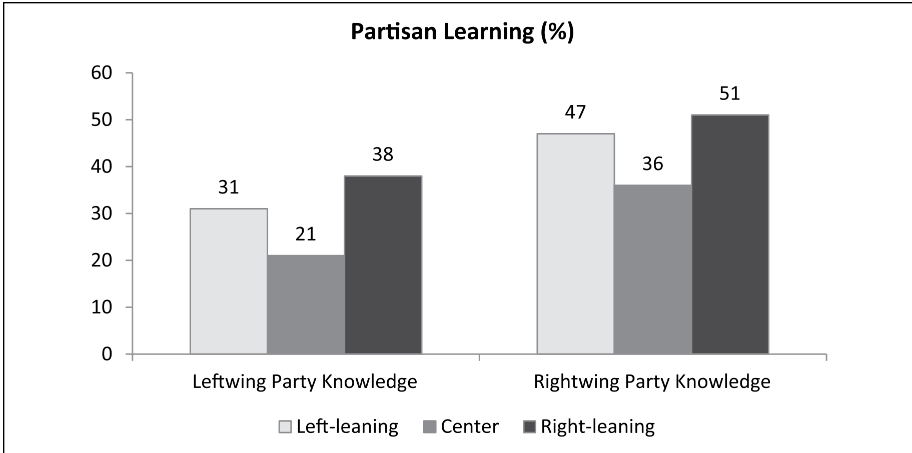

Figure 2. Partisan learning during the election campaign (percent correct answers).
Note. Total n = 1,084 for estimates of left-wing party knowledge and 1,254 for right-wing party knowledge. The sample is weighted on gender, age, type of residence, education, political interest, general Internet use, and voting choice in the 2006 national election.

Partisan Learning

As discussed above, one of the key concerns frequently raised is that growing opportunities for media choice will not only elevate the impact of personal motivations and preferences on what media content citizens are exposed to, but also what information they acquire. In terms of ideological selectivity, growing supply is assumed to result in less cross-cutting media exposure and, thereby, decreasing awareness of attitude-inconsistent information. Above, we found that while ideological selective exposure does occur, citizens who are exposed to partisan media content about parties with their preferred ideological leaning are also likely to be exposed to information about the nonpreferred parties. Thus, in this regard, a more general political motivation seems to be what distinguishes people who in terms of ideology are neither right- nor left-leaning and those who are either right- or left-leaning.

The question is whether the same pattern can be found with respect to partisan learning, that is, the extent to which citizens primarily learn about the policies and proposals of their own favored parties during the campaign. Figure 2 gives a first glimpse at this issue by illustrating partisan learning among citizens based on their Left-Right orientations. The findings reveal very little evidence of extensive partisan learning. While right-leaning citizens are slightly more likely to learn about the activities of the right-wing parties, they are also more likely to learn about the left-wing parties than left-leaning voters are. Again, however, the most striking learning gap is not found between partisans of different ideological camps, but between people with no clear ideological leaning and those who are either right- or left-leaning. Citizens lacking a clear left-right orientation score lowest on both left-wing party knowledge

Table 3. The Effects of Left-Right Orientation on Partisan Learning (OLS).

	Left-Wing Party Knowledge		Right-Wing Party Knowledge	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Ideological orientation				
Left-wing	0.84*** (.16)	−0.03 (.15)	0.47*** (.09)	0.07 (.10)
Right-wing	1.25*** (.16)	0.29* (.15)	0.43*** (.09)	0.05 (.09)
Political interest	—	0.45*** (.04)	—	0.19*** (.03)
Political knowledge	—	0.45*** (.03)	—	0.21*** (.02)
High School	0.41* (.20)	0.15 (.20)	0.19 (.11)	0.05 (.12)
University	0.89*** (.20)	0.20 (.20)	0.46*** (.11)	0.09 (.13)
Income	0.06 (.04)	0.03 (.03)	0.06** (.02)	0.04 (.02)
Man	0.82*** (.12)	0.30** (.11)	0.32*** (.07)	0.04 (.07)
Age	0.03*** (.00)	−0.00 (.00)	0.02*** (.00)	0.01*** (.00)
Pseudo R^2	.19	.46	.16	.31
N	1,084	924	1,254	1,057

Note. Estimates are unstandardized coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

(21 percent correct answers) and right-wing party knowledge (36 percent correct), compared with the left-leaning (31 and 47 percent) and right-leaning (38 and 51 percent correct) voters, respectively.

In Table 3, we conduct a more critical test of the partisan learning hypothesis based on a series of regression models predicting both left-wing and right-wing partisan learning. For both types of learning, two models are estimated to see how general political knowledge and interest influence the effect of ideological orientations on learning. Focusing on left-wing partisan learning, model 1 confirms the findings displayed in Figure 2, even when controlling for several background characteristics: Compared with citizens who are neither right- nor left-leaning (the reference category), both left-wing and right-wing citizens learn significantly more about the activities of the left-wing parties during the campaign. Once we include political interest and general political knowledge, however (model 2), this effect of ideological orientation is substantially reduced, while the important role of general motivations and knowledge is reflected both in their highly significant coefficients as well as the dramatic increase in R^2 when these variables are included (from .19 to .46). A very similar pattern is found for right-wing party knowledge. People who are neither left- nor right-leaning learn significantly less than people with an ideological leaning, irrespective of direction. But once interest and general political knowledge are included, these effects disappear.

Conclusion and Discussion

While most research on selective exposure has focused on the United States, in this study we extended research to a country that in many respects differs significantly

from the United States in terms of the opportunity structures for selective exposure. This, we argue, is important as there is ample evidence that media use is influenced by media environments as well as by individual-level variables (Aalberg et al. 2013; Althaus et al. 2009; Curran et al. 2009; Goldman and Mutz 2011; Shehata and Strömbäck 2011). Because the Swedish broadcasting system provides better opportunity structures at the genre level than at the ideological level, our expectation was that political interest would be more important than ideological leanings in explaining exposure to televised party interviews, without eradicating the importance of ideological leanings.

To briefly summarize, the results show support for several of our hypotheses. First, people with a right-leaning ideology were more likely to watch party-leader interviews with right-wing parties, while people with a left-leaning ideology were more likely to watch party-leader interviews with left-wing parties (H1a). These ideological selectivity effects—showing that citizens are more likely to seek out attitude-consistent than attitude-discrepant information—held up even when controlling for a range of background, political motivation, and resource factors. Second, however, the results indicate that basic political interest is substantially more important than ideological leaning in explaining why people watch party-leader interviews (H1c). Thus, rather than being driven by ideological preferences, exposure to party-leader interviews is primarily dependent on other types of motivations that differentiate people who are neither right- nor left-leaning from those who are either right- or left-leaning (H1b). According to the data presented here and elsewhere (Oscarsson and Holmberg 2008), people lacking an ideological orientation are less interested in politics, pay less attention to politics in traditional news media, and are less knowledgeable about politics. Finally, these patterns were also replicated using partisan learning instead of exposure as the dependent variable. That is, we found very little evidence of partisan learning occurring at all (H2a). Instead, gaps in learning emerged between people who are neither right- nor left-leaning and those who are either right- or left-leaning, and these gaps disappeared when accounting for political interest and general political knowledge (H2b and H2c).

Beyond these empirical findings, the main theoretical contribution of this study relates to the notion of opportunity structures for selective exposure. Defined as the availability of different media, media formats, media genres, and media content and the ease to which citizens can select media and media content based on their personal preferences, the concept of opportunity structures for selective exposure has several implications for theory and research on selective exposure. First, it is a reminder that empirical findings of selective exposure from any particular media environment and country, with its specific opportunity structure for selective exposure, cannot be transferred to media environments and countries with other opportunity structures for selective exposure. Second, it highlights and offers a framework for further research on how opportunities—a macro-level variable—influence and moderate the importance of individual preferences and abilities—micro-level variables. As part of this, it highlights the importance of distinguishing between different forms of selectivity in terms of what the opportunity structures look like and in terms of its presence and ubiquity. Third and related, it offers a framework for studies investigating differences in opportunity structures for selective

exposure across different countries, media environments, media types, and genres. With increasing media supply follows increasing selectivity, and media environments across democracies have all transformed from low- to high-choice media environments. However, the antecedents as well as the prevalence and consequences of selectivity might vary depending on the opportunity structures for different forms of selectivity. Fourth and related to the findings of this study, it suggests that media policy and policies aimed at strengthening public service broadcasting might offer a means toward counteracting selective exposure based on political or ideological preferences. This, of course, assumes that limited opportunity structures for selectivity with respect to broadcasting does not create incentives for those with strong preferences to migrate to other media where the opportunity structures are more conducive to selectivity based on political or ideological preferences or on political interest. This highlights the importance of understanding how different opportunity structures for selectivity with respect to different media are linked to each other and people's media use.

As this study is a single-country study, a key question, though, is how far the results can be generalized. While ultimately an empirical question, based on our reasoning above, our best estimate is that the findings can be generalized to countries with similar opportunity structures for selective exposure. What matters is not the country per se, but the opportunity structures for different types of selective exposure. Concerning more everyday coverage of political affairs, this also means that it is likely the case that *ideological selective exposure* to television is even more limited than suggested by the results in this study, as there is usually less partisan programming on television than during election campaigns. This should, however, not limit selective exposure based on political interest. Again, the key is the opportunity structures for different forms of selective exposure.

In essence, if we want to understand selective exposure across contemporary media environments and countries, we must understand the different opportunity structures for different types of selective exposure. We cannot think of or study selective exposure as a matter of individual preferences and traits only.

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Notes

1. Given the character of our dependent variables, we also estimated all models using ordered logit regression. The substantive results were, however, very similar in terms of effects and statistical significance.

2. For instance, while our political interest measure is a continuous scale capturing the strength of this motivation, ideological orientation is a categorical variable that does not take ideological strength into account. Thus, going from a minimum to a maximum value on these two measures has different implications substantively.

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The Paradox of Fixed Time Television News Bulletins

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This book is triggered by a paradox: The continuous popularity of fixed time television news bulletins—or newscasts as they are commonly known in the United States. The book describes how fixed time television bulletins started in the 1940s, first in the United States, a bit later in the United Kingdom, in a format with little resemblance to contemporary news bulletins. In the 1950s, the bulletins gradually developed a format of their own, acclimated to the visual potentials of the medium, only to become more distinctive in the 1960s and 1970s. Already in the early 1960s, a majority of the Brits chose television as their preferred source of news. However, with the emergence of *CNN*, the first rolling news channel, in the 1980s and later with digitalization, the media environments of the fixed time news bulletins became ever more competitive.

With the digital revolution, much popular and academic literature has predicted major changes not only in the media landscape but also in the social fabric at large. The book quotes *The Economist* for enthusiastically claiming in a 2011 special edition about the future of online news that contemporary news is "a far more participatory and social experience. . . . Readers are being woven into the increasingly complex news ecosystem as sources, participants, and contributors." But, despite all the choice, freedom, and immediacy offered to the audience, fixed time bulletins, despite being analogue and so yesteryear, continue to be the most popular format of news consumption in most advanced democracies. Despite all predictions, scheduled news somehow just refuses to die off. Why?

There are several answers to this question, and the book offers an important one: Fixed time television news bulletins could not have been able to survive had they not been able to adapt to new news environments. Theoretically, this adaption is understood through the prism of (institutionalist) mediatization. Whereas the concept of mediatization is normally used to investigate the extent to which the media, as an autonomous institution, shape other institutions, such as politics and religion, this book investigates how far competing media logics, in particular rolling and immediate forms of journalism, have influenced a specific news format, fixed time television news bulletins, over time. This is done by studying media interventionalism, that is, how far journalists intervene when reporting what is happening in the world. The less

journalists intervene, the more they rely on external sources to shape coverage; the more they intervene, the more they offer interpretations. Fixed news bulletins were traditionally pre-edited and scripted news, drawing on a range of political sources to construct "balance," whereas rolling news journalism has relied on live two-way communication between an anchor and a non-scripted political reporter offering interpretation. The book examines the extent to which fixed news bulletins have adapted to the format of rolling news journalism, that is, have become mediatized.

Empirically, the book relies on an impressive data set, including comparative and longitudinal data, collected by the author (in collaboration with colleagues) or by others. This allows for a number of interesting and in some cases, surprising findings. In general, the analyses do document mediatization in fixed time bulletins, which today, to a greater extent than earlier, rely on media rather than political actors. This is in line with other studies of mediatization of political news. However, the findings show how the form, structure, and style of evening bulletins can be examined in the context of different political identities and journalism cultures across nations. Furthermore, in contrast to the normal wisdom in the academic literature that sees pressures of commercialization as the likely cause of mediatization in political news, the evidence of this book suggests that political reporting is mediatized to a greater degree by bulletins with the strongest public-service obligations. Thus, mediatization may be driven by professional rather than commercial motives and as such, for instance, political two-way reporting "potentially has normative qualities of informing viewers about the substantive issues in everyday politics and public affairs." Thus, the book makes an important contribution to the ongoing debate on the extent, causes, and normative implications of the mediatization of political reporting.

The book takes some important steps toward solving the paradox of the continuous popularity of fixed time television news bulletins: They have adapted to mediatization trends to enhance the public's knowledge and understanding of public affairs and, the books seems to indicate, have therefore kept up their popularity. However, the evidence provided in the book that mediatized political reporting in fact does enhance the public's knowledge and understanding is scarce—and in all fairness, it was not the intention of the book to provide such evidence at any length. Also, other factors may contribute to the popularity of fixed time bulletins; for instance, they may simply be a very time-efficient way of getting an overview of the news of the day.

Jacques Gerstlé and Christophe Piar
La Communication Politique. 3rd ed. Paris: Armand Colin, 2016. 256 pp. ISBN 978 2 200 60247 5

Reviewed by: Raymond Kuhn, *Queen Mary University of London, UK*
DOI: 10.1177/1940161216660827

In this book, Jacques Gerstlé and Christophe Piar, two leading French specialists in the field of political communication, bring together the fruits of many years of research

use of political communication in the acquisition and exercise of power by elite political actors. Chapter 4 deals with the classic question regarding the role of the media in election campaigns, with a section on the continuing importance of political, institutional, and regulatory factors, rather than simply communication variables, on campaign strategies, candidates' positioning, and media coverage. Chapter 5 examines news management by the political executive (president, prime minister, and government ministers) and considers the links between communication and executive popularity. The final chapter considers citizen participation in political communication, levels of public interest in political issues, and the concepts of electronic and deliberative democracy. In their short conclusion, Gerstlé and Piar once again emphasize the complexity and multi-dimensionality of political communication, arguing against the temptation to prioritize a purely technical notion of communication, dominated by the idea of information transfer. Instead, they stress the importance of meaning and interpretation, alongside the need to focus on the complexity of content and not just the abundance of conduits.

The book contains an extensive bibliography and, unusually for a French work, an index. As the bibliography confirms, the authors make full use of a wide range of Anglo-American sources in addition to the relevant research literature in French. Examples and case studies throughout the text refer principally to the U.S. and French experiences, with the latter particularly important in the chapters on elections and executive power. The book should attract a wide audience among those who have a good reading knowledge of French and who are interested in benefiting from a non-Anglo-American perspective on research in contemporary political communication. Given the level of analysis, this work is more suitable for graduate students and for those who already have some knowledge of the field rather than those seeking an introductory text.

Elena Block

Political Communication and Leadership: Mimetisation, Hugo Chavez and the Construction of Power and Identity. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016. 265 pp. ISBN 978-1-138-90503-0 (Hardback).

Reviewed by: Heather Savigny, *Bournemouth University, Poole, UK*
DOI: 10.1177/1940161216659963

This book provides a fascinating insight into the charismatic leadership of Chavez and the ways in which his identity became intimately bound with the populace of Venezuela. Through a wealth of interview data with politicians, pollsters, media owners, and community leaders, Block traces how Chavez articulated a different kind of political communication than standard Westernized models propose. A "spellbinding story teller," Chavez mobilized support through his claims to be "a people," rather than just "a man." Harnessing media, Chavez was able to build a "culturally affective" form of

political communication where he transmitted emotional, cultural, and ideological issues and values. The role of emotion is becoming increasingly discussed in relation to politics (see, for example, Yates 2015); however, what Block has done is highlight its significance in processes of political communication. Drawing on cultural studies theories, she highlights how Chavez was able to evoke "structures of feeling" to explore tensions in the political landscape, alongside the ways in which Chavez himself was able to exert power and create connecting identity with the populace.

Block uses the concept of "mimetisation" to account for Chavez's populist style of connecting, and here she identifies four key components: the use of cultural symbols, populist ideology and practices, manipulation of media outlets, the construction of Chavez's identity which went beyond the man himself, to encapsulate "the people." As such, mimetisation comprises a series of events that combine to build a top-down identity, through the process of political communication.

In charting this process, Block identifies a number of key epochs in the Chavez era. The first is the "soft" period in political life, when emotion and "emotivisation" were key features of the Presidency. Interestingly, she also explores the way in which sentiment was used negatively, to deepen divisions within the country; where—anti-Chavistas were considered by Chavez as President, as members of the elite. This process took from 2000, to the final stages of his Presidency (2006–2013) where she charts how his discourse then became focused on unity and popular power with the goal of construction of a communal state. She argues that this ends the process of mimetisation; as such, she concludes by exploring the process of "mimetic closure," the final stage, the emotional journey from Chavez proclaiming he was the people, to the people becoming Chavez.

This is a careful and considered book. Block offers a timely intervention in to debates around the relationship between media, politics, and culture. Her book adds richness not only to our understanding of the appeal of Chavez and the particular kind of leadership that he articulated but also to our understanding of wider, culturally different, processes of political communication. Block observes that Chavez challenged the power and dominance of the market, particularly significant here in terms of media ownership; however, we are reminded that this style of personalized presidency could also be seen as a form of "authoritarian socialism." There is much here to both challenge and reinforce the Westernized view of the personalization of politics; on one hand, we see detailed accounts of a charismatic, popular, populist, leader, but on the other hand, we see a President with significant structural power and influence over what media outlets could and could not do. The latter may be inconsistent with liberal theories of media, or perhaps it is just more honest and visible than the manipulative practices that have become common place yet hidden in the "dog whistle" politics of some Western democracies.

Reference

Yates, Candida. 2015. *The Play of Political Culture, Emotion and Identity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hersh, Eitan
Hacking the Electorate: How Campaigns Perceive Voters. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015; 270 pp. $ 29.99, ISBN: 9781107501164

Reviewed by: Daniel Kreiss, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, USA*
DOI: 10.1177/1940161216650177

Over the past decade and a half, there has been a lot written about data and democracy in the context of U.S. elections. There are studies that look at the industry and practices of targeting, such as Phil Howard's *New Media Campaigns and the Managed Citizen*, and Rasmus Nielsen's *Ground Wars*, which provides an exemplary history of the databases that underlie much of contemporary field campaigning and reveals how voter data shape how campaigns use people as media for their strategic ends.

In general, these accounts, as well as my own, examine what political actors *say* they do with data, not *actually* do. And, even in the best field studies, researchers have generally been limited to *observing* what practitioners do with data, not actually *participating* in the practices of the modelers behind their curtains. Observing is not invalid methodologically, of course, but we have lacked a book-length, behind-the-scenes account of the data in contemporary politics that begins with working with the actual data itself.

Until now. Eitan Hersh has written an essential book for anyone interested in the ways contemporary politics is actually and subtlety data-driven. Empirically, it is the first book to go inside a major firm—the Democratic Party-allied Catalist—and actually work with its data, while supplementing this with survey data from users of the firm NGP VAN's field tools (which are in use within Democratic campaigns at all levels of office.) In sum, *Hacking the Electorate* is the first book-length account in the literature to actually have access to the data that contemporary campaigns themselves use. Analytically, Hersh develops the "Perceived Voter Model," which reveals how campaigns perceive the electorate through data and how these perceptions shape their subsequent decision making and ultimately action in terms of contacting and mobilizing voters.

On both empirical and analytical grounds, I believe this is a major work, and it should have broad audiences not only among students of U.S. electoral politics, but also scholars interested in the data-driven practices of contemporary campaigning more broadly. Even more, I believe that Hersh's perceived voter model has wide applications in terms of explaining how contemporary *organizations* more generally, in industries from journalism to marketing, use available data to perceive their audiences and subsequently make decisions based on what they see. Hersh's framework that details how the categories of available data intersect with practices of perception and representation is broadly portable across contemporary industry contexts.

Hacking the Electorate's theoretical contribution is the campaign version of James Scott's masterful *Seeing Like a State*, who Hersh quotes to open the book. Broadly, Hersh reveals how the categories of data available to campaigns shape their

perceptions of voters and subsequent communication practices. Campaigns see the world through the data they have access to, and that in turn shapes which voters they communicate with, what they say, and how they say it. Within this broad analytical framework, Hersh reveals a number of important things. First, Hersh shows that, contra much of the literature, campaigns do not have a precise and intimate knowledge of the electorate and mostly rely on publicly available records to predict the attitudes and behaviors of citizens, such as their likeliness to support particular candidates or be persuadable in response to strategic appeals. Public records, such as voter registration files and census information, are the most important from the perspective of campaigns, Hersh shows, because they are the most reliable sources of information and predictive of the political outcomes that campaigns care about. Other data sources, such as commercial records, only have a tenuous relationship to politics and often are modeled in and of themselves. Indeed, Hersh convincingly argues that public records are *designed*, in part, with electoral ends in mind by politicians. Hersh demonstrates the perceived voter model empirically by showing how data that are differentially available to campaigns depending on state—such as party registration and race/ethnicity data—result in different patterns of voter contact. Moreover, he shows how persuasion remains elusive for campaigns, precisely because they lack the attitudinal data in their voter files they need for this purpose. As Hersh notes, because campaigns lack detailed psychological portraits of registered voters, "the following variables contain nearly all of the predictive power in all targeting models: vote history, party registration, gender, age, geography, race, marital status, presence of children, Census measures (like percent urban, percent black), and precinct data" (152).

All of these findings suggest that some of the more extreme concerns over the erosion of political privacy and voter manipulation are over-blown. The field has been haunted by doomsday accounts of managed citizens, political surveillance, and the engineering of the electorate since the origins of digital politics two decades ago. And yet, Hersh's book shows that these accounts are far more speculative than empirical. Hersh's careful work on persuasion, for instance, reveals how campaigns find it hard to identify low information and cross-pressured voters given that they lack reliable data on these things in their voter databases. This has broader implications. Those deep-seated fears about voter manipulation through targeting and candidates speaking out of two sides of their digital mouths are over-blown. Campaigns do not really know what to say to whom to change voters' minds and even face significant electoral risk in targeting the wrong people (a fact which leads them to focus on known voters).

Instead, Hersh makes a number of recommendations that move the academic debate *away from privacy* and toward things that have received comparatively less attention, but are more important, what I think of as questions of *representation* and *democratic inclusion.* First, Hersh notes that there is an inherent conflict of interest in the fact that elected officials repurpose public data for political purposes. Hersh shows how there has been little public scrutiny of the public records that politicians seek to make available for electoral purposes, extending down to the categories of information that government agencies collect and politicans may use in ways that voters could perceive as coercive. Moreover, Hersh also shows that data can spillover

from campaigns to constituent services, and this raises significant concerns about potentials for abuse (such as an elected official being more responsive to constituents that are of the same political party.)

With respect to democratic inclusion, Hersh smartly synthesizes various strains of the debate over micro-targeting, including from those scholars who argue that data can facilitate democratic representation (in terms of candidates prioritizing positions on the basis of knowing the preferences of voters and seeking to mobilize those voters to participate) and the prevalent concerns of others that micro-targeting will simply leave broad swaths of the public untouched as candidates use data to narrowly make appeals to their own particular factions. Hersh's suggestion, which to me is entirely sensible, is to refocus the debate around public records—both because we have greater agency over them and because we can consider many different categories of public data and query whether they are good or bad from a normative democratic perspective in the context of electoral politics. Hersh urges creating a commission to oversee targeting in constituent services, before arguing that voters should have a say in the compilation and maintenance of the profiles of them compiled by campaigns, parties, and firms. This would enable voters to see how they are represented and change and update information about who they are and what they care about, and ultimately create the possibility that campaigns can perceive voters more accurately. These things may serve the ends of democratic inclusion by helping campaigns more accurately segment voters and try to reach those who may be open to their appeals.

It is hard to overstate the range of theoretical and empirical insight in this relatively slim volume. I think Hersh has written the best book about data in politics in the literature, and it should be the cornerstone for all subsequent studies. It should also receive a large audience among those journalists and members of the public interested in understanding contemporary democracy. Even more, Hersh's fundamental insight that basic categories of data have effects on how actors perceive the world and ultimately how they act in it is one that is broadly applicable to many other domains of social life. It is an important insight—and scholars can build from it in many other contexts.

Diana C. Mutz

In-Your-Face-Politics: The Consequences of Uncivil Media. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.263pp. ISBN: 978-0-691-16511-0

Reviewed by: Tim Groeling, *University of California at Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, USA*
DOI: 10.1177/1940161216662021

In her book, *In-Your-Face-Politics: The Consequences of Uncivil Media*, Diana Mutz argues that way we experience conflict on television has important effects on political communication. Mutz's examination of "in-your-face politics" combines two very different facets of the term:

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- incivility, which she identifies as "violations of norms for interpersonal interaction, the types of behavior that would be considered impolite in face-to-face contexts" (p. 6), and
- the appearance of physical closeness (literally, the feeling that the speaker is in your face).

Mutz argues that uncivil interaction and the use of extreme close-ups in televised political coverage produce visceral reactions among viewers as they violate social norms. Even though both violations occur at a great distance from the viewer's physical location, viewers evaluate them against the interpersonal standards for polite interaction.

After laying out her theory, Mutz provides a large array of empirical tests, drawing on an impressive variety of methodological approaches. These include experimental tests for possible effects of televised in-your-face politics on viewer arousal, memory, political trust, and legitimacy, as well as nationally representative survey samples testing for individual-level differences in effects and the consumption of such content. She then tests for the generalizability of these effects across different media types, and then tracks the prevalence of the in-your-face style of content across contemporary and historical television content.

This book appears to be intended to be read by a wider audience than most books by academics, so the combination of such disparate concepts and data is necessarily challenging. However, Mutz does an exceptionally effective job making the project clear and understandable, even for non-academics. The book's structure is logical and clearly laid out, and the data are presented in an intuitive and easy to understand manner. In addition, Mutz has a lively and entertaining writing style (including more than a few laugh-out-loud provoking turns of phrase). She also provides readers with a nuanced and honest analysis of her data, particularly in cases where her empirical analysis discusses unexpected results.

That said, the more accessible style presents some limitations for the traditional scholarly reader, as many of the interesting details of Mutz's project are relegated to endnotes, appendices, or are de-emphasized. On the latter point, the book tended to be less systematic in charting or otherwise presenting tests that failed to achieve statistical significance. To her credit, Mutz presents and discusses these results in the text, but the overall result is to make it more difficult to assemble a complete understanding of the book's findings. Similarly, given the individual-level differences Mutz observes in her survey analysis, it would have been helpful to know more about the composition and recruitment of the smaller convenient sample groups that are the basis of most of the experimental analysis in the book.

The book does reward political communication scholars with thought-provoking and wide-ranging analysis, drawing from such diverse sources as cinematography and evolutionary theory. It also connects to the burgeoning literatures on incivility, mediation, selective exposure, partisan news, and affective polarization, giving new insight as to how consumers might select and process contentious news. I particularly appreciated Mutz's evenhanded discussion of the implications of her findings, which avoided sermonizing about incivility without considering its potential benefits for learning and

engagement. Conversely, among committed political activists, a commitment by political elites to "cooperate to maintain each other's positive public self-images" (p. 6) might be interpreted as cozy status-quo elitism, rather than valuable civility.

Speaking of incivility, although Mutz does engage and address some of the critiques she encountered prior to publication, I would have liked more discussion of the evolving social norms regarding civility. If the effect of incivility stems from the arousal and shock value of witnessing the violation of a social norm, one might also expect that repeated violations might weaken both the norm, and thus, the shock value of its violation. For example, showing "groundbreaking" movies/musicians/comedians to a viewer from a subsequent generation invariably seems to bore them, as they have only experienced a world where that ground has been well-trod. And speaking of jaded millennials, although Mutz touches on the changing digital media environment at several points, I would have been interested in further experiments tracking the incivility, influence, and viral spread of political content online (particularly related to social media or click-baiting "news" sites).

As a Communication scholar, I also appreciate the professionalism of Mutz's experimental media content, as well as her useful and interesting television content analysis. I especially enjoyed Figure 6.1, in which she plotted highly rated television shows with political content based on their civility/incivility and use of distant/close shots: I am already imagining a follow-up study that tracks within-show variation in the civility and shots based on guest partisanship and ideology. Similarly, her forty-year comparison of evening news civility and composition was fascinating, even when results were unexpected (who would have guessed that the amount of political conflict shown on the news had *not* increased over that time?). However, even in that case, Mutz methodically drills down into the presentation style of those broadcasts and discovers a shocking increase in the news' *personalization* of that conflict.

Finally, speaking of the personalization of conflict, I found the book to be particularly interesting when viewed through the lens of the 2016 presidential election, which already promises to be among the most fascinating (and uncivil) in recent American politics. The 2016 Republican nomination was particularly interesting, as a party traditionally regarded as staid, square, and conventional backed a nominee who seemed to epitomize "in-your-face" politics and incivility. In her conclusion, Mutz cites a journalist who complained in a prior presidential election that even after spending hundreds of millions of dollars, and getting extensive free coverage,

> Not only have they failed to produce a spectacle as compelling as the World Wrestling Federation's "SmackDown!" they can't even muster the ratings of the "King of Queens" reruns . . . The candidates are staying above the fray, but as a result, there's no fray and little worth watching. (p. 209)

Mutz agreed, and argued that such spectacle and pageantry "appears to be what attracted the uninvolved into politics in the previous era" (p. 210). The record-breaking ratings and attention devoted to the 2016 election thus far suggest that she was on to something.

Alex Marland
Brand Command: Canadian Politics and Democracy in the Age of Message Control. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2016. 528 pp. $39.95 (hardcover). ISBN 9780774832038.

Reviewed by: Jennifer Lees-Marshment, *University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand*
DOI: 10.1177/1940161216658156

Alex Marland's *Brand Command: Canadian Politics and Democracy in the Age of Message Control* provides us with insightful and profound lessons about how government works behind the scenes. Marland collected and analyzed a wealth of fascinating primary government data to write the book, and as a result, it demonstrates how tightly government can manage its communications, raises questions about how effective centralized systems are, and requires us all to reflect on how (or even if) we can judge whether the practice of political management is acceptable or not for democracy.

The book explores the increasing controlled and centralized communications that developed in the Canadian Conservative Harper Government, both his Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and other areas of government, including ministerial departments. It does so through an understanding of political communication, the nature of the media, and political marketing, especially branding. When reading it, I was reminded of criticisms of Blair's New Labour Government in the United Kingdom: The lessons it has are relevant to scholars and students interested in any democratic system.

There are four key notable distinctions in the book. The first is that it shows how government works in practice. Chapter 9, "Politicization of Government Communications," covers the practical aspects such as coordinating and running complex government diaries, going into depth into the nitty gritty of communication planning. Chapter 7, "Central Government Agencies and Communications," also explains the different staff and units within the Canadian PMO. It gives a really valuable (and rare) sense of getting behind closed doors that is of interest to academics but also a guide to students wanting to go and work in government. It also discusses the pressures of working in government, commenting that "stress and anxiety are normal" (pp. 207–8) and "senior politicos learn on the campaign trail that barking orders at subordinates is tolerated and even rewarded if results follow" (p. 208). It also makes us think we need to do more in academia, media, and practice to improve working cultures in government and politics.

Second, the core methodological value is showcasing actual government documents. As well as conducting more than seventy interviews, Marland made 109 access to information requests to Canadian government departments and received four thousand pages of emails related to communications and branding. This is a methodology we could all consider copying where practical. The documents featured throughout the book bring the accounts of government communication alive and provide a fascinating insight into political behavior in government. For example, Marland notes on page 211 that memos to cabinet were required to include comments on how it relates to the

government agenda, analyze the public environment, including public opinion and consultation outcomes. I was able to identify the document which I can then use in research but also teaching graduates workplace skills. I hope Marland finds a way to publish the web links and references, as well as the government documents, online as it would in itself create a valuable data resource.

Third, the major intellectual contribution is actually communications management and the implications of centralized control. It is less about branding than I expected from the title—and indeed my main critique would be that key branding theory is missed out from the review in Chapter 2 and that political branding is policy and decisions not just communications. However, as Marland concedes in the last chapter, “This book uses the word brand as an amalgam of the outcome of marketing theory, image management, centralized decision making, and communications simplicity” (p. 350). By the end, the book seemed more about the political management of organizational communication, which there is little if any literature on. Marland has therefore broken new ground and discovered a new area of practice that we need the literature to catch up with. The wealth of empirical sources *Brand Command* features should be connected with management organizational communications theory. From this flows issues of control/freedom and costs/benefits of this—highlighted for me when at the end of Chapter 9 on p. 325 Marland notes in relation to Harper’s unemotional response to public opinion around the 2015 refugee crisis that “a glaring weakness of brand control is an inability to pivot quickly when circumstances demand it . . . the process of tight scripting for planned events does not provide sufficient flexibility to respond to the unforeseen.”

Finally, *Brand Command* raises fundamental democratic questions as to how we judge whether political practice is acceptable for democracy or not. I am not talking about the usual question, “Is political communication/political marketing good or bad for democracy?” The more challenging question for us as scholars to debate is just because we do not find it nice, does that make it wrong/something we should prevent? In the preface of the book, Marland calls growth of top down command “an unedifying proposition” (p. xiii). And with words like distasteful, I am reminded of the legal ruling on a Canadian Senator Mike Duffy’s expense scandal that the PMO’s handling of the issue: “The precision and planning of the exercise would make any military commander proud. However, in the context of a democratic society, the plotting as revealed in the emails can only be described as unacceptable” (Judge Charles Vaillancourt). We need to develop concepts or principles as to what makes for acceptable plotting before making such judgment. Although we are right to question the democratic impact, we also need to develop training in effective and ethical political management that takes account of the realities of the environment political practitioners face made so clear by Marland’s book. Only then will our ivory tower critique have any chance of affecting the command structure used within our governments.